

Impact Study On The Training Series On Guest Relation: A Banner Program Of Bs Tourism Of The UM College Of Hospitality Education

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Abstract

This paper measures the effectiveness of "The Training Series on Guest Relations Skills" program of the College of Hospitality Education Tourism Management Program of the University of Mindanao using a pretest-posttest approach. Further, the study determined the satisfaction of the beneficiaries with the implementation of the activities relative to the program. The study utilized a descriptive – comparative research design with 30 employees of D'Leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park, who were beneficiaries of the program, participating in the study using complete enumeration. Results revealed that the Training Series on Guest Relations Skills program of Tourism Management was effective, suggesting that the program implementer has achieved the program's desired outcomes. Essentially, the program implementation is satisfactory and has reached the objectives for which it was designed.

Keywords: guest relations, effectiveness, services, sustainability, community extension program

INTRODUCTION

An impact study is a method of assessing the effectiveness of organizational activities and determining the significance of the changes that these activities have caused. Impact studies also indicate one essential factor: whether or not there is a change. Hopefully, this will bring new policies to foster a difference within the system to benefit individuals and organizations. Furthermore, the results of this study will inform policymakers about the potential economic, social, and environmental effects of the training.

D'Leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park is one of the partner establishments of UM's Tourism academic program. It is located at forestal Road, Buhangin, Davao City, Davao del Sur. It offers 160 air-conditioned rooms. D'Leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park Davao features a tennis court, a bar, and entertainment activities. A chapel, a free car park, a jacuzzi, 24-hour room service, airport shuttle bus service, and 24-hour front desk help are also available. It is 10 kilometers from Davao City's core.

Tourism establishments like D'Leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park require that employees in the rank in file position, as well as managers, always manifest excellent Guest Service Skills and good character since these are basic requirements to achieve business competitiveness, maintain income stability and develop good branding given the fact that there are several resort competitors in Davao City. Moreover, it has been observed that the majority of the employees don't have background knowledge in Tourism and Hospitality services. It was also identified that employees lack training in Customer Services. Therefore, the Tourism Management program of the UM College of Hospitality Education decided to choose D'Leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park to be the beneficiary of its banner extension program. The program started last SY 2015-2016 and consisted of a training series conducted over three years. The training package consisted of the training on "Communicating to Customer with Tact, Diplomacy, Poise, and Finesse," which was conducted in 2015-2016, followed by the training on "Effective Customer Service for Tourism Related Establishments in 2016-2017 and the training on "Enhancement seminar on Guest Relations for D'Leonor Inland Resort" conducted on 2017-2018.

The training series was attended by 30 employees from different resort departments, including the Administration Staff, Front Office, Housekeeping, Kitchen, and Security personnel headed by its Resort Manager Mr. Jules Melencion. After the training period, initial feedback revealed the improvement of their guest relations skills. Participants showed progress and were able to communicate using the English language, make and receive calls, handle a guest with complaints and deal with difficult customers.

This study is based on the theory that there is a link between training and employee performance (Shahzadi, Javed, Pirzada, Nasreen, & Khanam, 2014). A trainee's motivation determines how quickly and methodically he or she can learn a new skill or knowledge. Moreover, the Implement Consulting Group said that to achieve impact is to change behavior and increase knowledge and capabilities.

Another theory says successful training leads to skills development. Well-defined training needs as well as precise, identifiable results contribute to the employees' accomplishment of the requirements of their jobs (Kraiger and Aguinis, 2013). Several common areas or dimensions of change should also be considered significant. Changes in income, literacy, other skills and knowledge, social ties, unity, and community norms are among them. In terms of job satisfaction, Azeem and Akhtar (2014) found that training had a positive relationship between motivations and job engagement for employees in firms. According to Naqvi and Khan (2013), useful training enhances the quality of the work process, which promotes employee performance. According to Muzaffar, Salamat, and Ali (2012), it is critical to motivate employees by filling the gap between abilities required and owned or run utilizing people by providing practical training. Manu (2004) also underlined the value of skilled employees in improving the organization.

This study aimed to evaluate the training program's impact on the guest relation skills of the D'Leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park staff. Moreover, this study was guided by the following questions: (1) what is the level of guest relation skills among beneficiaries of D'leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park before implementation of the program in terms of communication in the English language, make or receive calls to or from the customer, handling guests with complaints; and dealing with a difficult customer?; (2) what is the level of guest relation skills among beneficiaries of D'leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park after implementation of the program in terms of communication in the English language, make or receive calls to or from customers, handling guests with complaints; and dealing with a difficult customer?; (3) Is there a significant difference in the level of guest relation skills before and after implementing the training program?; and (4) What are the beneficiaries' experiences on the guest relation skills training?.

METHOD

The quasi-experimental research approach was used in this study, which allows for a straightforward evaluation of an intervention given to a group of study participants. Research participants included 30 employees from D'Leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park who underwent the training program and have completed the required training sessions for the last three school years 2016-2019.

A pre/post-test is a diagnostic tool used to measure the amount of learning in a specific course. The pre-test determines a student's level of understanding prior to instruction or intervention, whereas the post-test is given to students after they have completed an instructional program or segment and is frequently used in conjunction with the pretest to determine their achievement and the program's effectiveness. The post-test score should be higher than the pre-test score to demonstrate that trainee's progress has been made during a given period.

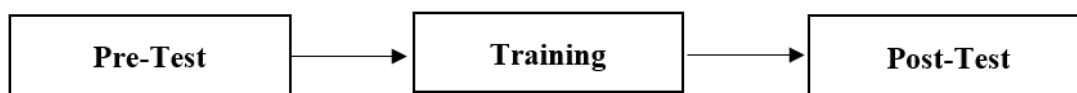


Figure 1. Pre-test & Post Test Diagram

The figure above shows one of the evaluation strategies for project implementation. At the start of the training, the participants were given a pre-test to measure their level of knowledge about the topics discussed in every session. During the course of the training, the participants were engaged through oral questioning, written exam, and demonstration after the discussion of every topic given by the Tourism Teachers who were assisted by the selected senior tourism students to help foster students' learning. Lastly, a post-test was given after the session to determine the students' performance and to measure how much students have improved after giving the pre-test. The pre-test and post-test questions consisting of nineteen items were made the same. Passing score was set at 14 or 75 percent. To quantify the degree of improvement, the number of students who passed the exam during pre-test and post-test was divided by the total number of students who took the examination times one hundred percent. This was how the calculations worked; this was intended to get the percentage of passers, compare if there was a significant change from the pre-test to the post-test, and evaluate if the enhancement program was beneficial.

The test results were analyzed to obtain the general results of their learning in the given training program. The Tourism faculty conducted a competency quality assessment through demonstration and oral and written exams.

The opening program of the Enhancement Seminar of Guest Relation Skills was participated by the community extension coordinator, four (4) faculty members, 4th-year tourism students, and thirty (30) employees of D'Leonor. The training activity covered several topics and divided into sessions. The teacher acted as facilitator with the assistance of selected 4th-year students. There were a total of four (4) courses that correspond with the following topics: (1) Communicate using the English Language, (2) Make/ Receive Calls to/from Customers, (3) Handle Guest Complaints, and (4) Deal with difficult customers.

The first training session was communicating using the English language; participants were taught how to speak politely to a guest in English and how to easily understand the guest and serve them accordingly. The second session was about making/receiving calls to/from customers. It discussed proper phone etiquette, which is important for keeping a solid connection with guests and projecting a professional image. Customers will call back if you treat them well on the phone.

On the other hand, the third session was about handling guest complaints. It was emphasized how visitor feedback is critical for all businesses, not only because it provides valuable customer information, but also because it enables for the identification of product or service flaws. Complaint management provides an essential chance for any company to identify areas for development.

In addition to that, the Chief Operations Officer of the University of Mindanao extended support to the Tourism Management Program Enhancement Seminar on Guest Relations Skills Series of Training by providing the funds to cover the expenses of the said activity particularly the provision of packed lunch and snacks.

During the training program, observations were made by both teachers and students through attendance and evaluations. Also, different hands-on activities were made after discussing every topic. They were assisted by selected 4th -year students to foster participants' learning. For assessment purposes, attendance was also checked every morning (8:00-12:00) and every afternoon (1:00-5:00).

Lastly, the post-test was given after the session to determine the students' performance and to measure how much students had improved after giving the pre-test. Both pre-test and post-test can be valuable diagnostic tools for measuring the amount of learning acquired by the students. The training series on Guest Relation Skills officially ended last 2018. As part of the completion, a culmination program held in D'Leonor participated again by the Community Extension Coordinator, Tourism Faculty Members, fourth-year tourism students, Employees of D'Leonor, and the Manager. The participants were also provided certificates of training completion.

The Tourism Management Program of the University of Mindanao – College of Hospitality Education firmly believes that these guest relation skills are very important because they will serve as a starting point for the participants in the workplace. Because guest relations officers spend so much time interacting with guests, good communication, interpersonal, and listening skills are essential. They should also be proactive problem solvers who can successfully manage emergencies. The statistical tool was used in the data processing. Mean was used to determine the level of guest relation skills of program beneficiaries. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranked Test was used to examine whether there was a significant change in the levels of guest relation skills among D'Leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park beneficiaries before and after the program's implementation. Thematic map analysis was used to convey the information of the experience of the participants after the training program.

The researcher encouraged the participants. They were told that they might opt out of the survey at any time if they felt compelled to do so. The respondents' permission was requested. The permission form outlines the study's goals, procedures, and potential benefits. The time commitment required to complete the questionnaire was discussed. The survey respondents were given plenty of time to complete the questionnaires. The responses' confidentiality was respected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the pretest and post-test are presented, analyzed in this segment, and ordered based on the objectives of this study.

Pre-test Result on the Level of Guest Relation Skills of Program Beneficiaries

Before the conduct of the program, the participants took a pre-test of their skills in guest relations. The table below presents the pre-test performance of the students according to the guest relations program topics.

Table 1 shows the results, which revealed that the participants obtained below passing scores for all of the topics before the program. This is demonstrated by average scores of 25 percent, 70 percent, and 49.17 percent for communicating in English, making/receiving calls from customers, handling a guest with complaints, and dealing with tough customers, respectively. This shows that before implementation, D'Leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park employees have low skills and knowledge in these areas.

Table 1. Pre-test level of Guest Relation Skills of Program Beneficiaries

Competency	Pre-test			
	Yes		No	
	\bar{x}	S.D.	\bar{x}	S.D.
Communicate Using the English Language	25.00	20.00	75.00	20.00
Make/ Receive Calls to/ from Customers	70.00	21.60	30.00	21.60
Handle guests with complaints	49.00	8.00	51.00	8.00
Deal with difficult customers	49.17	15.92	50.83	15.92

Thus, the enhancement training program was designed to address the identified skills gaps. The trainers then developed the training modules according to the needed skills of the trainees.

Imran & Tanveer (2015) confirmed the study's findings by emphasizing the necessity of improved employee performance as a result of increased work commitment and dedication. Learning organizations, according to Sekgala and Holtzhausen (2016), are those that recognize people's need to learn and grow while simultaneously providing them with opportunities to contribute to the organization's future. As a result, training and development programs are designed to help organizations meet their skill requirements while also ensuring that employees continue to grow. It is indeed easy to see how the inability to provide training and development programs to the organization would catalyze productivity and performance.

Post-test Result on the Level of Guest Relation Skills of Program Beneficiaries

Table 2 shows the level of guest relation skills among beneficiaries of D'Leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park after implementing the program. The participants' knowledge and skills were then evaluated to assess their current performance. Results revealed that for all areas, the students obtained passing scores. The mean performance for speaking in English, making/receiving calls from customers, handling complaints from guests, and dealing with difficult customers was 97.5 percent, 100 percent, 100 percent, and 98.33 percent, respectively.

Table 2. Post-test level of Guest Relation Skills of Program Beneficiaries

Competency	Post-test			
	Yes		No	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Communicate Using the English Language	97.5	2.5	2.50	2.50
Make/ Receive Calls to/ from Customers	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Handle guests with complaints	100.00	2.00	1.00	2.00
Deal with difficult customers	98.33	3.72	1.66	3.72

Both pre-test and post-test are useful indicative tools for assessing the amount of learning assimilated by the participants. It can be seen that the level of knowledge and skills of the participants have significantly improved which proves that the series of activities given to the trainees were helpful and useful in developing their skills.

The study's findings were supported by Sekgala and Holtzhausen (2016) stating that the employee training and development can transform organizations. As a result of the importance of effective employee training and development, organizations spend a significant amount of money and time on training to assist employees in learning job-related competencies (Nwaeke & Obiekwe, 2017), and employee competencies usually lead to organizational productivity.

Statistical Difference on the level of Guest Relation Skills after the Training Program

Table 3 shows the significant difference in the levels of guest relation skills among beneficiaries of D'Leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park before and after the program's implementation. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranked Test results revealed a significant difference between the pre-test with a p-value of 0.02 and the post-test with a p-value of 2.28 of the training series on guest relation skills. Therefore, the participants improved their guest relation skills, and the enhancement program conducted by the Tourism Management Program- College of Hospitality Education, is effective.

Table 3. Significance difference in the level of guest relations skills before and after the implementation

	P-value	W	Median	Average (\bar{x})	Z	H ₀
Pre-test	0.02345	0.8822	50	53.1579	-3.645b	Reject
Post-test	2.28E-07	0.4603	100	98.9474		

Nwaeke and Obiekwe (2017) backed up the findings of the study, indicating that the performance of an organization is highly dependent on the quality of the employees that work there to achieve organizational goals. The quality of training and development obtained by employees has a significant impact on their level of skills, knowledge, skills, capabilities, and capabilities. As a result, ongoing training focuses on increasing employee motivation, confidence, general behavior, and self-esteem (Saleem, Shahid, & Naseem, 2011; Imran & Tanveer, 2015). Similarly, they believe that training and development enhances employee happiness with their jobs, increases work efficiency, and provides a return on investment (ROI) by making people more knowledgeable, skilled, and productive (Imran & Tanver, 2015). It also makes them more committed, loyal, and productive members of the organization.

Experiences of the beneficiaries on the Training Program

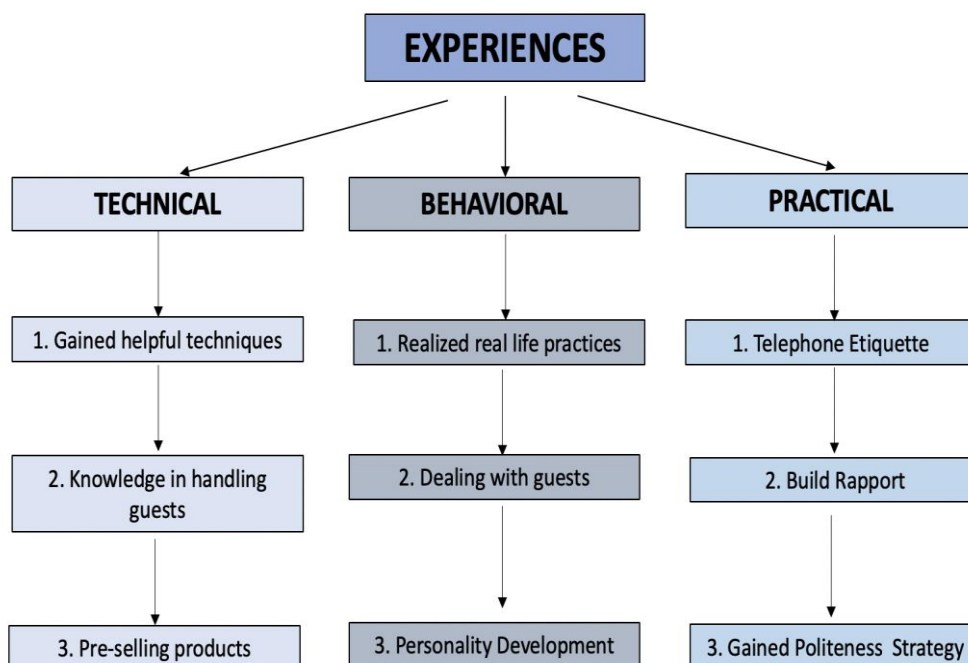


Figure 1. Thematic Mapping

The beneficiaries' experiences on the acquired guest relation skills were presented and analyzed based on this figure: Thematic Mapping. When the D’Leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park employees were asked about the most helpful topics taken up during the training, the participants’ replies were analyzed according to three themes namely technical, behavioral, and practical.

In technical, the majority of the participants expressed that they gained helpful techniques and increased their level of knowledge in Handling Guest. Moreover, they acquired techniques for pre-selling their products to the customers.

In behavioral, the participants in the training shared that they realized real-life practices during the training session. They also learned the standard way of dealing with guests and understood the importance of personality development.

In practice, the participants shared that they have developed their communication skills especially on telephone etiquette, building rapport, and strategies for being polite which are important in maintaining excellent guest service.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The Training Series on Guest Relation Skills implemented by the Tourism Management Program of the UM College of Hospitality Education has effectively improved the knowledge and the skills of D'Leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park employees of Davao City. The guest relation skills enhancement program is a quality program that aims to develop technical, behavioral and practical skills of the employees of the resort. It helped to fill the lacking competencies of the staff of D'Leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park. The training was well implemented and addressed the specific need of the recipients. Moreover, the guest relation skills enhancement program has brought a remarkable and notable impact to the employees of D'Leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park since the knowledge and skills they gained are beneficial in real life situations and future career development.

On the basis of the foregoing findings and conclusions made in this study, it is recommended that the guest relation skills enhancement program for the D'Leonor Inland Resort and Adventure Park be sustained and continued by the management of the resort for consistency in delivering excellent and standard guest service and to continuously offer optimum and profound tourism and hospitality products to both tourists and residents of Davao City.

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