

Training That Sticks: Rethinking Kirkpatrick for Hotels

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Abstract: The study aims to understand the adaptability of the Kirkpatrick model in assessing the effectiveness of learning and development programs in the context of Sri Lankan Hospitality industry. The study particularly investigates the extent to which the four levels of the Kirkpatrick model – 1. Reaction, 2. Learning, 3. Behavior, and 4. Results – are used in hotel industry learning and development programs and examine its applicability in this context. This conceptual paper is developed based on a theoretical review of prevailing literature on learning and development evaluation models, primarily centering on their use within the hospitality sector. By doing a comprehensive analysis on existing literature and case studies, the study critically examines how the Kirkpatrick model can be adapted or improved to be used in satisfying specific needs of hospitality sector in Sri Lanka. The findings of the study suggest that while Kirkpatrick model remain dominant in learning and development function in Human Resource Management, the model might not completely capture the unique challenges and outcomes particularly in the study context which is hospitality industry. The existing literature suggests that additional metrics related to service quality, customer satisfaction, and organizational performance must be included to fully evaluate learning and development program effectiveness in this sector. The findings of the study intend to offer practical implications as to how to improve the Kirkpatrick model in ensuring a more comprehensive evaluation of learning and development programs outcomes. Integration of customer satisfaction metric and linking behavioral changes more closely with key performance indicators (KPI) which are relevant to hospitality operations. Recommendations include integrating customer satisfaction metrics and linking behavioral changes more closely with key performance indicators relevant to hospitality operations.

Keywords: *Adaptability, Evaluation, Hotel Industry, Kirkpatrick Model, Training Effectiveness*

Background

Introduction to the Topic

Learning & development in the hospitality industry play a critical role, as employee performance significantly and directly affects guest satisfaction and overall organizational success. The hospitality industry worldwide contributes significantly to the world economy, accounting for 10.4% of global GDP and offering 334 million employment opportunities in 2019, (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2019). In Sri Lanka, hospitality and tourism is one of the key drivers in the local economy,

contributing 5.3% of the national GDP before the COVID-19 pandemic, (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority [SLTDA], 2019). Despite the major economic downturn in recent history (Central Bank of Sri Lanka [CBSL], 2023), hospitality and tourism sector continue to offer significant amount of foreign exchange earnings and employment opportunities, providing a crucial buffer to the country's economic crises. Considering the high customer-centric business environment, employee learning and development have become important to maintain service quality and

competitive advantages as the industry recovers.

Hotels, particularly in a service-driven economy like Sri Lanka, rely heavily on well-trained staff to deliver high-quality service that enhances guest experiences. A well-trained workforce not only boosts customer satisfaction but also improves employee retention and operational efficiency. According to the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), the hospitality sector employs over 400,000 individuals, with many more indirectly dependent on the industry. Given this significance, evaluating the effectiveness of training programs is crucial for ensuring that employees not only gain knowledge and skills but also apply them effectively in their roles.

Despite this, a recent study revealed that only 30% of hotel training programs globally are evaluated beyond the initial "reaction" level, such as participant satisfaction surveys. This highlights a gap in the thorough assessment of training outcomes, especially in regions like Sri Lanka where the unique cultural and operational context demands more targeted evaluation strategies. The effectiveness of training programs, particularly in dynamic, customer-centric environments like hotels, is not always easy to measure, making robust evaluation frameworks like the Kirkpatrick model essential.

Research Problem

While the Kirkpatrick model, encompassing Reaction, Learning, Behavior, and Results levels, is commonly used worldwide to assess training programs, its application to specific sectors such as hospitality is not fully examined. Worldwide, the model is acknowledged as a thorough instrument for evaluating short-term and long-term training results. Nonetheless, only roughly a quarter of companies effectively evaluate behavioral changes and results

levels. In the hotel sector of Sri Lanka, there is limited indication of organized assessment procedures going beyond basic satisfaction surveys (reaction level).

Hotels in Sri Lanka have a particular mix of cultural norms, customer engagements, and service criteria that make it difficult for standardized approaches like Kirkpatrick's to completely measure the effectiveness of training. For example, although the model evaluates responses, education, conduct, and outcomes, it might not adequately consider the unique client-focused and operational characteristics of the hospitality sector in Sri Lanka. This prompts consideration as to whether alterations or additional evaluation techniques are needed for the Kirkpatrick model to offer a more precise and situationally appropriate assessment of training effectiveness in this field.

Research Objective(s)

The primary aim of this paper is to examine the adaptability of the Kirkpatrick model for evaluating training programs in the Sri Lankan hotel industry.

Specifically, the objectives of this conceptual paper are:

1. To investigate the extent to which the four levels of the Kirkpatrick model (Reaction, Learning, Behavior, and Results) are applied in hotel training programs in Sri Lanka.
2. To compare the effectiveness of the Kirkpatrick model with other established training evaluation models, such as the Phillips ROI and CIPP models, in addressing the specific training evaluation needs of the Sri Lankan hospitality sector.
3. To examine the adaptability of these models to the unique operational and cultural factors of the Sri Lankan hospitality industry and provide recommendations for HR professionals on selecting or

modifying these frameworks for improved training evaluation."

Literature Review

Overview of the Kirkpatrick Model

The Kirkpatrick model, initially presented by Donald Kirkpatrick in the late 1950s, is a well-known structure for assessing training programs. Over the years, it has evolved into a fundamental aspect of assessment methods, especially within the business and service industries. The model consists of four separate levels: Reaction, Learning, Behavior and Results. The initial stage of the Kirkpatrick model involves their contentment with the training material, presentation, and how it relates to their job duties. Typically, surveys or feedback forms are used to collect feedback at the conclusion of the training session. Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) argue that it is crucial to comprehend participants' responses, as having a positive attitude towards the training can increase motivation and dedication to utilizing new skills. The second level evaluates how much participants gain knowledge, skills, and attitudes from the training. The assessment can be done through pre- and post-training quizzes, tests, or evaluations. Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) highlight the importance of measuring learning outcomes to assess the effectiveness of training and confirm participants have achieved the desired learning goals. The third level evaluates if participants apply the gained knowledge and skills in their job performance, assessing the transfer of learning to the workplace. This assessment frequently includes monitoring, input from managers, or tracking performance data gathered over a period. According to Baldwin and Ford (1988), behavior change can be influenced by various factors such as organizational culture, managerial support, and the work environment. The last stage assesses the

overall effect of training on organizational results. This involves actions like boosting efficiency, enhancing the quality of service, achieving higher customer satisfaction scores, and improving employee retention. Phillips (1997) emphasizes the importance of measuring outcomes to evaluate the overall impact and ROI of training programs.

Critiques of the Kirkpatrick Model

Despite its widespread adoption and continued influence in training evaluation, the Kirkpatrick model has also encountered various criticisms. Critics say that the model simplifies the evaluation process too much by considering the four levels as linear and sequential (Brinkerhoff, 2003). Furthermore, the model's emphasis on numerical measurements might disregard valuable qualitative observations that offer a more profound comprehension of training results (Saks & Burke, 2012). Cultural and contextual factors, such as those mentioned earlier, can have a strong impact on behavior change and how it affects organizational performance. In the hospitality sector, these subtleties are crucial, as customer-facing positions frequently require intricate interpersonal relationships and understanding of customer behavior. Although these criticisms exist, the Kirkpatrick model remains a fundamental framework in assessing training effectiveness. Its systematic method helps organizations evaluate training programs and their influence on employee performance and organizational achievements. In the hotel sector of Sri Lanka, implementing the Kirkpatrick model can improve the assessment of training programs to cater to the specific demands and changes in this industry (Huang, 2013).

Application of the Model in Hospitality

The Kirkpatrick model is commonly used in the hospitality and tourism industry to assess training programs and their effects on employee performance and organizational results. Many research studies have examined how well this model works in different hospitality settings, pointing out its advantages and drawbacks. Huang (2013) conducted thorough research using the Kirkpatrick model to assess training programs in the Taiwanese hotel sector. Choudhary and colleagues (2020) utilized the Kirkpatrick model to study service quality training in Indian hotels. They found that even though participants had a positive response to the training (high satisfaction levels), there was a failure to follow up and assess if the learning resulted in better performance at work. Research conducted by Brewster et al. (2016) investigated the efficiency of training schemes in global hotel chains functioning in different cultural environments. The researchers discovered that cultural variances had a significant impact on training results, thanks to the Kirkpatrick model. The Kirkpatrick model has also been used to evaluate the increase of e-learning in the hospitality industry. Salas et al. (2012) assessed the efficiency of an internet-based training course for hospitality employees and applied the model to gauge its success. Their study showed that even though participants liked the flexibility of e-learning, the levels of knowledge retained varied in assessments. Kang et al. (2020) applied the Kirkpatrick model to assess the effectiveness of manager training initiatives in luxury hotels. The researchers discovered a direct relationship between the satisfaction with training and the implementation of acquired skills in practical situations. Nevertheless, they also highlighted the importance of ensuring that training goals are in line with the organization's objectives in order to assess the real influence on business results (Results).

Gaps in Literature

Contextual Adaptation

Numerous research studies, including the works of Huang (2013) and Choudhary et al. (2020), predominantly concentrate on training initiatives in Western settings or other areas with diverse cultural and operational characteristics, using the Kirkpatrick model. Recent studies, including Brewster et al. (2022), have emphasized the importance of adapting training evaluation frameworks to consider specific cultural aspects and operational difficulties in hospitality environments. Furthermore, Perera and Dissanayake (2023) conducted research on the training and development practices within hotels in Sri Lanka, pinpointing deficiencies in the delivery and assessment of training. A different study by Fernando and Senevirathne (2022) highlighted how employee training results are affected by cultural dimensions in Sri Lanka, like collectivism and uncertainty avoidance. It is suggested to include culturally appropriate measures in training evaluations to more accurately gauge the impact of training programs within the local setting. Gunarathne et al. (2024) point out that incorporating local cultural aspects into the assessment of training programs in Sri Lanka can greatly improve their impact, enabling hotels to develop a more committed and skilled staff.

Focus on Immediate Outcomes

One prevailing theme in the literature is the focus on the initial two stages of the Kirkpatrick model, which are the Reaction and Learning levels, with little attention given to the Behavior and Results levels. Numerous research projects have concentrated on participants' instant reactions to their training experiences and the knowledge gained, rather than on how these factors actually lead to changes in workplace conduct and concrete organizational results. For example, research by Kang et al. (2020) and

Brewster et al. (2016) show that although training programs in the hospitality industry are generally well-received by participants, there is a marked absence of follow-up evaluations to gauge if these positive reactions translate into better job performance or improved service quality. Furthermore, Ranjit and Kumar (2023) highlighted that although prompt feedback can show contentment with the training, it may not accurately represent the lasting retention of information or abilities.

Moreover, Perera and Dissanayake (2023) pointed out that training programs in hotels in Sri Lanka frequently do not include methods to evaluate the implementation of acquired behaviors in the workplace. This lack of supervision not only obstructs the ability to assess the true effects of training efforts but also prompts concerns regarding the ROI of training programs. Additionally, research conducted by Gunarathne et al. (2024) emphasized that failing to take into account the Results aspect in training assessments may result in a gap between training efforts and overarching business results, including customer satisfaction, employee turnover, and financial gains.

Long-Term Effectiveness

Numerous research has not sufficiently considered the long-term effects of training on employee performance, leading to a notable gap in literature. For example, even though Salas et al. (2012) talk about the advantages of e-learning in hospitality training, they do not adequately cover the long-term retention of skills or knowledge. This mistake prompts critical inquiries into how relevant learned actions are in changing operational environments. Additionally, Huang's (2013) study suggests that a majority of training evaluations concentrate only on assessing employee behavior and organizational performance immediately after training, without considering the long-term effects. By not

doing this, they overlook important understandings about how training helps in the ongoing growth of employees and the overall process of delivering services.

Additionally, Choudhary et al. (2020) highlights that the hospitality sector experiences swift shifts in both customer expectations and service norms. Consequently, it is important to consistently assess and adjust training programs to maintain their relevance and efficiency in the long term. Recent research, conducted by Perera and Dissanayake (2023), has continued to highlight the importance of conducting longitudinal studies to analyze the influence of training on employee performance over long durations.

Qualitative Insights

The current research on assessing training, especially in the Kirkpatrick model framework, focuses on quantitative metrics and may not fully consider qualitative elements that could offer more in-depth understanding of employees' experiences and changes in behavior. This emphasis on numbers restricts the capacity to gather detailed, context-specific insights that can enhance the development and delivery of training. Brewster and colleagues (2016) highlight the significance of tailoring training programs to cultural settings but frequently lacks the inclusion of qualitative input from participants. Recent studies like Meyer et al. (2023) advocate for a comprehensive approach incorporating both qualitative and quantitative measures to assess the effectiveness of training. They recommend that qualitative data, such as interviews with participants and focus groups, can provide important background to the numerical results commonly assessed, aiding organizations in comprehending the reasons behind the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of training, not just its success.

Furthermore, Fernando and Senevirathne (2022) point out that qualitative approaches offer insight into the obstacles and factors that aid in the implementation of acquired abilities in a professional setting. Their study demonstrates that even though quantitative evaluations may suggest a training program is effective, qualitative analysis can uncover barriers. In addition, Gunarathne and colleagues (2024) highlighted the importance of qualitative evaluations in assessing training, especially in culturally vibrant and diverse environments such as Sri Lanka. They claim that taking into account the distinct experiences and viewpoints of employees can improve the development of training programs, making them more suitable and successful. Their research indicates that qualitative feedback can reveal the cultural subtleties that impact the reception and implementation of training, which enables more personalized and effective training measures.

Integration with Other Evaluation Models

One major deficiency in the research is the lack of investigation into merging the Kirkpatrick model with other evaluation frameworks or methodologies to offer a more thorough evaluation of training effectiveness. Although the Kirkpatrick model is useful for assessing training programs, solely relying on it may not fully encompass the training impact, especially within the intricate hospitality industry. According to Meyer et al. (2023), using various frameworks can improve the quality of training assessments and offer a more comprehensive view of training effectiveness. Despite this, there is a lack of research that examines this integration specifically within Sri Lankan hotel settings. Not enough research on how local hotels can customize and integrate different evaluation models hinders the

development of relevant and thorough training evaluation strategies. Tackling this gap could greatly improve the Sri Lankan hospitality sector by offering a comprehensive view of training effectiveness while considering cultural and operational differences.

Scalability and Resource Constraints

Research conducted by Choudhary and colleagues (2020) highlights the fact that SMEs in the hospitality sector encounter distinct obstacles that require customized assessment methods. Furthermore, Ranjit and Kumar (2023) emphasize the importance of implementing practical approaches that smaller hotels can utilize to assess training programs efficiently despite limited resources. They recommend that organizations use simplified versions of the Kirkpatrick model or other less resource-intensive evaluation methods to effectively evaluate training while managing resources.

Methodology

Theoretical Approach

This theoretical paper utilizes a theoretical examination of the Kirkpatrick model to investigate its suitability for assessing training efficiency in the Sri Lankan hospitality industry. Due to the emphasis on theoretical investigation, the method involves conducting a thorough review of literature and integrating current research instead of gathering empirical data. This method enables a detailed analysis of how the Kirkpatrick model can be customized to suit the particular situations and obstacles encountered by hotels in Sri Lanka.

Literature Review and Theoretical Analysis

The initial stage of this theoretical framework consists of a thorough examination of the current literature on the Kirkpatrick model, including its four tiers

(Reaction, Learning, Behavior, and Results), and how it is utilized in different sectors, notably in the hospitality industry. This review will cover important works by Kirkpatrick (1994) and later studies that have either applied or evaluated the model. It will also encompass modern research that showcases the difficulties and constraints of the model in various organizational settings, including those recognized in the hospitality sector.

The literature review will provide the basis for comprehending the model's initial purpose and constraints, especially when applied in settings different from its original design. This paper will analyze key themes that arise in hotel training settings by combining findings from studies like those conducted by Huang (2013) and Salas et al. (2012). This compilation will demonstrate how the model can be modified to accommodate the distinct cultural, operational, and resource limitations present in the Sri Lankan hospitality industry.

Framework for Adaptability

Subsequently, the theoretical analysis will focus on developing a framework for adapting the Kirkpatrick model specifically for hotel training in Sri Lanka. This framework will consider the following key dimensions:

- I. **Cultural Context:** Referring to research that highlights the significance of cultural factors in assessing training (e.g., Brewster et al., 2016; Fernando & Senevirathne, 2022), this model will demonstrate the impact of cultural subtleties on training evaluation. It will propose ways to include local traditions, beliefs, and staff desires in the assessment criteria at every stage of the Kirkpatrick model.
- II. **Operational Challenges:** The study will examine particular difficulties in operations

experienced by the hotel industry in Sri Lanka, like frequent employee turnover, limited resources, and diverse customer service demands. The paper will suggest practical strategies for adjusting the model to these challenges based on an examination of relevant case studies like those by Choudhary et al. (2020) and Ranjit & Kumar (2023).

- III. **Integration with Other Frameworks:** The framework will also investigate how to combine the Kirkpatrick model with other evaluation frameworks, like the Phillips ROI framework or Brinkerhoff's Success Case Method, in order to offer a more thorough evaluation of training effectiveness. This comprehensive method is especially important for hotels trying to manage scarce resources while still conducting thorough training assessments.
- IV. **Long-Term Evaluation:** The framework will highlight the significance of evaluating long-term training results. The paper will discuss methods for conducting long-term evaluations to measure the lasting effects of training on employees and organizational outcomes, drawing from recent studies by Meyer et al. (2023) and Gunarathne et al. (2024).

This conceptual paper seeks to offer valuable insights and recommendations for HR professionals in the Sri Lankan hospitality industry by using a theoretical analysis of the Kirkpatrick model and its relevance to hotel training. In the end, the objective is to improve the efficiency of training assessments by customizing recognized frameworks to fit the unique requirements and obstacles of the local environment. This method not only adds

to the current knowledge base but also acts as a useful tool for professionals looking to carry out effective training assessments in their companies.

Methodology/Design/Approach

Even though this paper is theoretical and does not include gathering empirical data, it is crucial to establish a theoretical framework and strategy to direct the evaluation of how the Kirkpatrick model can be applied to hotel training in Sri Lanka. This part discusses the research approach, the reasoning behind choosing appropriate literature, and the techniques employed for synthesizing data.

Research Strategy

The research approach of this conceptual paper is centered on conducting a thorough review of literature and analyzing theories. The goal is to carefully evaluate the current knowledge on the Kirkpatrick model, how it is used in the hospitality sector, and the specific factors in Sri Lankan hotels that impact its effectiveness.

Review of Literature: An organized method will be used to collect appropriate sources, such as scholarly articles, literature, conference papers, and business reports. Literature pertaining to the Kirkpatrick model and its use in evaluating training, specifically within the hospitality industry, will be chosen based on its relevance (Huang, 2013; Salas et al., 2012). The study will create a theoretical framework by combining results from existing literature. This model will address important topics such as cultural adjustment, operational hurdles, incorporation with other evaluation approaches, and lasting impact of training initiatives (Gunarathne et al., 2024; Meyer et al., 2023).

Sample Selection

Because this is a conceptual paper, the "sample" is made up of literature that was reviewed instead of a particular group of people or businesses. Criteria for selecting literature will consist of:

Significance: Research should focus on the Kirkpatrick model, assessing training in the hospitality sector, or both (Choudhary et al., 2020; Fernando & Senevirathne, 2022). Priority will be given to newer publications (within the past decade) to ensure that the discussion remains pertinent to current trends and practices in hotel training (Meyer et al., 2023). Literature that centers on South Asia, particularly Sri Lanka, will be given priority to offer understanding of local issues and factors (Ranjit & Kumar, 2023).

Different Perspectives: The literature will encompass research from different paradigms (qualitative and quantitative) to offer a well-rounded perspective on the effectiveness of the Kirkpatrick model in diverse contexts (Brewster et al., 2016; Kang et al., 2020).

Data Collection Methods

In the context of this conceptual paper, data collection will involve the following methods:

- I. **Document Analysis:** An in-depth analysis of the chosen literature will be carried out to gather important insights on the Kirkpatrick model and how it is used in hotel training. Key themes, discoveries, and perspectives will be organized in a structured manner for examination (Huang, 2013).
- II. **Thematic Synthesis:** Thematic synthesis will be used to analyze literature and uncover patterns, gaps, and recommendations related to the Kirkpatrick model's

adaptability (Brewster et al., 2022; Salas et al., 2012). This compilation will help gain a better comprehension of the model's advantages and drawbacks within the particular setting of hotels in Sri Lanka.

- III. **Critical Reflection:** During the analysis, critical reflection will be used to assess how suitable the Kirkpatrick model is in the Sri Lankan hospitality industry. This includes evaluating the cultural, operational, and resource-related obstacles that could impact the model's execution and success (Gunarathne et al., 2024; Ranjit & Kumar, 2023).

Through conducting a thorough examination of literature and theory, this conceptual paper seeks to offer a complete understanding of how the Kirkpatrick model can be applied to training in the hotel industry in Sri Lanka. The knowledge acquired through this method will not just add to the academic discussion on assessing training but also provide useful suggestions for HR experts in the hospitality industry. In the end, this approach acts as a base for creating a structure that improves the assessment of training programs, guaranteeing they address the specific requirements of the local sector.

Critical Analysis of the Kirkpatrick Model's Effectiveness in the Hotel Industry

When assessing how well the Kirkpatrick model works in the hotel industry, specifically in Sri Lanka, it is important to take into account different factors that impact training assessment. This examination looks into the impact of cultural variances, company structure, and distinct obstacles on the model's suitability and efficiency in hotel training schemes.

Cultural Differences

Cultural differences greatly influence how employees behave, prefer to learn, and perceive the effectiveness of training. In Sri Lanka, multiple ethnicities and customs exist together, leading to varying interpretations of training results among different cultural groups. For example, workers from diverse backgrounds might have different reactions to feedback tools like the "Reaction" level in the Kirkpatrick model, which measures participants' immediate responses to training (Huang, 2013).

Examining the impact of cultural factors like power distance and individualism versus collectivism on employee engagement and training retention is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of the Kirkpatrick model. Research conducted by Hofstede (1980) indicates that in cultures with high power distance, employees may be less likely to voice dissatisfaction or provide feedback, which can impact the accuracy of data collected in the Reaction and Learning stages of the model. Therefore, a critical examination should investigate strategies for modifying the model to include culturally appropriate feedback mechanisms that reflect the genuine responses of employees from various cultural backgrounds.

Organizational Structure

The way in which Sri Lankan hotels are organized can greatly impact how the Kirkpatrick model is implemented. Numerous hotels function with a hierarchical framework, with decision-making centralized among top management levels. This could obstruct effective training evaluation, especially at the Behavior and Results levels, which necessitate thorough performance assessments and measurable outcomes (Salas et al., 2012).

A critical analysis would require investigating how this hierarchical system influences communication and the

distribution of information about the effectiveness of training. Employees who work directly with customers may have important insights into training results, but may be hesitant to speak up because of the hierarchy in the organization. Examining ways to promote open communication and enabling lower-level staff to participate in training assessments can improve the effectiveness of the Kirkpatrick model in this scenario.

Resource Constraints

Constraints on resources, especially in smaller accommodations in Sri Lanka, present another obstacle to the effectiveness of the Kirkpatrick model. Numerous organizations may face challenges in providing enough resources for thorough training assessments as outlined in the model. Frequently, there is a focus on Reaction and Learning levels, overlooking Behavior and Results levels, which are vital for grasping long-term training effects (Kang et al., 2020).

An examination is needed to understand the impact of resource limitations on training evaluation implementation and to consider different methods for assessing performance with restricted funds. Smaller hotels, for instance, could use simplified evaluation techniques or utilize technology to collect data in a cost-effective manner.

Integration with Local Practices

When critically examining the relevance of the Kirkpatrick model, it is important to consider how it can be combined with local training methods that align with the Sri Lankan environment. Several hotels might already be using conventional training evaluation techniques that are deeply rooted in the culture. Comprehending these specific customs and finding methods to incorporate them with the Kirkpatrick model can improve the model's pertinence and efficiency.

Conclusion of Critical Analysis

Looking at it critically, it is clear that even though the Kirkpatrick model offers a structured way to assess training success, effectively implementing it in the Sri Lankan hotel sector calls for careful attention to cultural variations, organizational setups, limited resources, and customary rituals. By tackling these specific difficulties, HR experts can adjust the model to better fit the particular requirements of the Sri Lankan hospitality industry, ultimately boosting the efficacy of training initiatives and leading to better service standards and staff productivity.

Theoretical Discussion

Analysis of Kirkpatrick Model Adaptation

When examining how the Kirkpatrick model is applied to hotel training programs in Sri Lanka, it is crucial to carefully evaluate all four levels: Reaction, Learning, Behavior, and Results. This conversation will investigate how each level can be used in hotel training and the specific difficulties encountered in the hospitality industry in Sri Lanka.

Reaction: Employee Satisfaction with Training

The Reaction level provides immediate feedback about participant satisfaction and engagement with the training. According to Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick (2006), positive reactions can enhance motivation to apply learned skills. Alliger et al. (2006) argues that while Reaction surveys are easy to administer and provide quick insights, they are only weakly correlated with actual learning or behavioral changes. Their meta-analysis revealed that high satisfaction does not necessarily predict improved job performance or skill application. Saks & Burke (2012) highlight that focusing

exclusively on Reaction data can create a false sense of training success, as satisfaction does not always equate to effective learning or behavior change.

Learning: Knowledge and Skill Acquisition

The Learning level captures the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes from the training, which is critical for assessing immediate cognitive outcomes (Alliger et al., 2006). Studies by Saks & Burke (2012) emphasize that pre- and post-training assessments at this level help organizations measure knowledge retention and identify gaps in the training design. Alliger et al. (2006) caution that this level often overemphasizes cognitive gains without adequately considering practical skill application. In industries like hospitality, training needs to incorporate role-play or simulation exercises to better evaluate practical learning.

Behavior: Application of Learning in the Workplace

The Behavior level focuses on the application of learned skills in the workplace, which is pivotal for determining the effectiveness of training in real-world scenarios. Saks & Burke (2012) underscore the importance of ongoing feedback and observation in measuring behavior change. This level allows for the integration of employee performance metrics and supervisor evaluations to assess skill application, aligning closely with organizational goals (Alliger et al., 2006). Baldwin & Ford (1988) identify a significant gap between learning and behavior change, driven by factors like organizational culture, resource availability, and peer support. These factors are often not addressed adequately by the Kirkpatrick model. In the context of high-turnover environments like Sri Lankan hotels, consistent behavior change is challenging to sustain, as noted by Perera & Dissanayake (2023).

Results: Measuring Organizational Impact

The Results level evaluates the broader impact of training on organizational performance, including metrics like customer satisfaction, financial outcomes, and operational efficiency. Alliger et al. (2006) highlight that this level aligns training outcomes with strategic goals, making it highly relevant for decision-makers. Measuring the impact of training on organizational outcomes is complex, as external factors often influence results. Saks & Burke (2012) note that it can be difficult to isolate the effects of training from other variables, such as market conditions or organizational changes. The time lag between training implementation and observable results is another limitation, particularly in industries like hospitality where customer satisfaction metrics fluctuate based on seasonal demand (Brewster et al., 2016).

Incorporating studies like those by Alliger et al. (2006) and Saks & Burke (2012) enriches the discussion by highlighting the strengths and limitations of each level in practical settings. While the Kirkpatrick offers a structured framework, it is evident that supplementary strategies (e.g., qualitative feedback, longitudinal studies) are necessary to address its gaps.

Measuring On-the-Job Skill Application in Dynamic Hotel Environments

Measuring "Behavior" in a dynamic, customer-facing environment like a hotel necessitates a multifaceted approach that captures the on-the-job application of learned skills. Below are several strategies to effectively assess this level of the Kirkpatrick model, supported by relevant literature.

Direct Observation

Managers and supervisors can regularly observe employees in action, taking note of their application of training content in

real-time scenarios. This method allows for immediate feedback and can highlight specific behaviors that align with training objectives. Studies have shown that direct observation by supervisors can significantly enhance employee performance evaluations (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). Colleagues can assess each other's performance through structured peer reviews, fostering a supportive environment where employees feel empowered to learn from one another. Peer feedback can provide valuable insights and increase accountability among team members (Huang, 2013).

Customer Feedback

Implement surveys or feedback forms to gather information from guests regarding their interactions with trained employees. Questions can focus on service quality, problem-solving abilities, and overall guest experience. Research indicates that customer feedback is crucial for understanding service delivery effectiveness (Kwortnik & Thompson, 2009). Monitor online platforms (e.g., TripAdvisor, Google Reviews) for customer comments about staff performance. This indirect feedback can provide insights into how well employees apply their training in customer interactions (Baker et al., 2018).

Performance Metrics

Establish KPIs related to employee behavior, such as service response times, complaint resolution rates, or upselling success. Analyzing these metrics over time can reveal trends in behavior changes following training (Brewster et al., 2016). Utilize mystery shoppers to evaluate employee performance anonymously. These trained evaluators can provide detailed reports on staff interactions, adherence to service protocols, and application of learned skills (Baker & Matzler, 2018).

Self-Assessment

Encourage employees to complete self-assessment questionnaires after training sessions and periodically afterward. This introspection can help them identify areas where they feel they have successfully applied their training and areas for improvement (Saks & Burke, 2012). Implement a journaling practice where employees document their daily experiences and reflections on how they utilize training content in their roles. This qualitative data can provide valuable insights into behavioral changes over time (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006).

Structured Follow-Up Sessions

Organize follow-up meetings or discussions to revisit training content and assess how employees have implemented skills in their roles. These sessions can also serve as an opportunity to provide additional support or retraining if necessary (Brewster et al., 2016). Pair employees with mentors or coaches who can provide ongoing guidance and feedback on their application of learned skills. Regular check-ins can help reinforce positive behaviors and address any challenges (Baker & Matzler, 2018).

Integrated Technology Solutions

Utilize software that tracks employee performance metrics in real-time. These systems can aggregate data from various sources, such as customer feedback and sales performance, to provide a comprehensive view of behavior change (Brewster et al., 2016). Implement mobile applications that allow employees to access training resources and engage in practice scenarios while on the job. These tools can provide immediate reinforcement of skills and facilitate on-the-spot assessments (Huang, 2013).

Longitudinal Studies

Conduct evaluations before and after training to measure changes in behavior over time. This approach allows for a

more nuanced understanding of how training impacts behavior in the context of evolving customer demands and operational challenges (Saks & Burke, 2012).

In a dynamic hotel environment, effectively measuring the "Behavior" level of the Kirkpatrick model requires a blend of qualitative and quantitative methods. By combining direct observation, customer feedback, performance metrics, self-assessment, structured follow-ups, integrated technology, and longitudinal studies, hotels can obtain a comprehensive view of how well employees apply their training in real-world situations. This multifaceted approach ensures that training programs are not only assessed for immediate impact but also for their long-term effectiveness in enhancing service quality and employee performance.

Challenges in Measuring Organizational Impact in Sri Lanka's Hotel Industry

Measuring the organizational impact of training in Sri Lanka's hotel industry is complex due to diverse organizational structures, cultural nuances, and the absence of standardized metrics. The range of establishments, from luxury hotels to budget accommodation, creates inconsistencies in training practices and outcomes, while cultural factors, such as collectivism, influence how training benefits are perceived. The lack of KPIs further complicates quantitative assessments, and external economic factors like political instability and tourism dependency obscure training-related results. High employee turnover adds to another layer of difficulty, disrupting the long-term application of learned skills. Additionally, the qualitative aspects of training outcomes remain under-researched, limiting effective evaluation frameworks. Overcoming these challenges demands context-sensitive strategies and robust tools to measure

training results accurately and sustainably in the hospitality sector.

Comparison with Other Training Evaluation Models for Hospitality: Phillips ROI and CIPP

Evaluating training effectiveness in Sri Lanka's hospitality industry requires comparing models like Kirkpatrick, Phillips ROI, and CIPP to address unique contextual needs. The Kirkpatrick model, with its four levels (Reaction, Learning, Behavior, Results), offers simplicity and insight into immediate and behavioral outcomes but lacks emphasis on financial ROI and long-term impact. The Phillips ROI model builds on this by adding a fifth level, focusing on the financial impact of training, which is critical in the competitive hospitality sector but demands resource-intensive implementation and may underemphasize qualitative aspects like employee engagement. The CIPP model, with its Context, Input, Process, and Product evaluation, provides a holistic, flexible approach, making it suitable for diverse organizational structures in Sri Lanka. However, its comprehensive nature may require significant resources and lacks a strong focus on financial returns. Combining these models or tailoring them to align with the hospitality sector's specific needs could offer a balanced approach to training evaluation.

Implications for Adaptation of the Kirkpatrick Model in Hotel Training

Several changes can be suggested to improve the usefulness of the Kirkpatrick model in hotel training programs. These changes are meant to tackle the specific hurdles encountered by the hospitality sector, especially in the Sri Lankan setting, where cultural subtleties and operational requirements are crucial for effective training. Here are a few recommendations for modifying the model:

Several changes can be suggested to improve the effectiveness of the Kirkpatrick model in the Sri Lankan hotel sector. Introducing a new sustainability-focused fifth level would evaluate both short-term effects and the continued use of skills in the long run. This may include further assessments at designated times after training to see if employees are still using acquired skills and if these skills are benefiting the organization's performance. For instance, analyzing customer satisfaction ratings or employee performance data half a year post-training may offer insights into the longevity of training outcomes. Furthermore, considering the importance of customer service in the hospitality industry, it is essential for the model to specifically include customer feedback as a vital performance metric during different evaluation stages. The "Results" level may be altered to prioritize customer satisfaction and loyalty measures by tying employee training directly to customer experiences. Using customer surveys, online reviews, and Net Promoter Scores (NPS) can effectively measure the influence of training on service delivery.

Moreover, in addition to quantitative measures, incorporating qualitative data collection in the Kirkpatrick model may offer a more comprehensive understanding of employee experience and the contextual elements impacting training efficacy. Approaches like focus groups, interviews, and open-ended survey questions can be used to collect qualitative feedback from employees and customers, aiding in pinpointing areas for improvement and understanding the intricacies of how training affects service provision. Additionally, it is crucial to modify the model to fit the cultural background of Sri Lanka, considering the wide array of cultures present in the country. Creating training materials and evaluation criteria that are culturally appropriate and engaging local experts in the design process can help ensure that

content is in line with cultural expectations and practices of local employees.

Furthermore, making use of technology for instant feedback can enable immediate reactions and ongoing education, which is crucial in the fast-moving hospitality industry. Introducing mobile learning platforms or apps enables employees to access training materials and give immediate feedback, closing the distance between training and practical application in the workplace. Encouraging ongoing education and growth is just as crucial, given the ever-evolving nature of the hospitality sector and the regular shifts in customer preferences and service standards. Establishing a structure that supports constant learning through ongoing training, refreshing courses, and mentorship can assess the impact of continued learning efforts on improving employee performance and customer service long term. Ultimately, it is essential to correlate training with business objectives; training initiatives must be closely connected with company goals to cater to the hotel's specific requirements. By applying the "Context" phase of the Kirkpatrick model, organizations can link training efforts to important business objectives like boosting guest satisfaction, retaining employees, and improving operational efficiency, illustrating the concrete influence of training on overall business success.

Ultimately, organizations can improve their training programs and achieve better outcomes in employee performance and customer satisfaction by customizing the Kirkpatrick model to suit the hotel industry's specific needs. These changes will create a more thorough structure for assessing training results, leading to the prosperity and longevity of the hospitality industry in Sri Lanka and other places. In the Kirkpatrick model, the Response level focuses on how participants react to

training, usually assessed through surveys or feedback after training; evaluating employee satisfaction in the hotel industry is key to determining their engagement and motivation during training. Yet, depending only on this criterion to assess training success comes with significant limitations, underscoring the necessity for a more comprehensive evaluation strategy.

Reiteration of the Importance of Study

This study highlights the importance of adapting training evaluation frameworks to meet the unique needs of the hospitality sector, particularly in Sri Lanka. By identifying gaps in the Kirkpatrick model,

it calls for a more customer-centric approach, emphasizing metrics like guest satisfaction, service quality, and financial ROI. Practical recommendations include blending evaluation models, such as the Kirkpatrick and ROI frameworks, to capture both qualitative and quantitative training impacts. It also advocates leveraging technology for continuous feedback, integrating qualitative observations, and conducting regular training needs analyses to align with organizational goals. By embedding these strategies into broader HR plans, companies can foster a culture of ongoing learning, enhance employee performance, and achieve business success in a competitive industry.

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