Attitudes of institutional catering employees in Gauteng towards training programs

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Abstract: Training is an important contributor towards achieving satisfactory service quality levels and is significant for hospitality establishments to attract and retain customers. Numerous studies have been conducted regarding training employees on service quality with the aim of achieving customer satisfaction and meeting their needs and wants but these studies have overlooked the human-related issues involved in implementing an effective training program. When there is a gap between concrete performance and what is wanted by customers, i.e. quality standard and productivity gaps, and training can decrease these gaps. Furthermore, training is a dominant factor that can transform employees’ attitudes. Performance gaps derive from employees having a poor attitude towards the values or concepts of the training program and also a shortfall of skills and confidence. Training programs must be carefully designed to be effective and attain specific objectives and outcomes. Furthermore, the training program should focus on clearly defined goals so that employees recognize that the goals are closely related to their everyday tasks. This study focused on establishing the attitudes of institutional catering employees in Gauteng towards training programs. A total of 19 catering employees were part of this study. The results revealed that training reveals areas that need improvement, training builds confidence, training is based on interest and drive, not all training programs are relevant, training works for individuals who are willing to learn, and training programs are a necessity in the hospitality industry.
institutions in Gauteng were selected where data was collected from 25 participants who had been undergoing training. They were able to give their first-hand knowledge to their attitude concerning training programmes. Data was collected by interviewing participants using semi-structured interviews and then analysed using Atlas Ti. The research findings suggested that institutional catering employees’ were satisfied with the training programmes, their attitude towards training programmes was that training was an eye-opener and built their self-esteem. They were always motivated to attend training and they also alluded that training was necessary in the hospitality industry.

**Subjects:** Food Science & Technology; Social Sciences; Tourism, Hospitality and Events

**Keywords:** Attitudes; feelings; institutional catering; training; transfer

1. Introduction and problem statement

Today, hospitality businesses operate in an extremely competitive market, thus requiring a knowledgeable and skilled workforce in order to remain successful in this industry (Al-Kassem, 2014, p. 134). One of the impediments to a skilled workforce is a lack of training and development opportunities, thus it is important that organizational training programs are effective and satisfactory for both the organization and its employees (ElNaga & Imram, 2013, p. 144). A number of establishments have realized that training is a required investment and not a discretionary expenditure; it is an investment that aids employees to fit into organizations’ strategic human resource plans through the improvement of skills, knowledge, and capabilities that are necessary to accomplish their day-to-day job tasks (ElNaga & Imram, 2013: 144; Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2012, p. 889). ElNaga and Imram (2013, p. 140) and Fu and Deshpande (2013, p. 340) argued that developmental activities such as employee training have a positive impact on job satisfaction, productivity, and the overall profitability of organizations in the long run. An effective training plan should be derived from specific problems identified and detailed by the organization; for example, problems that are presently obstructing the organization's potential for maximum profitability. Interventions to address the identified problems should be the core of the training program (Fu & Deshpande, 2013, p. 340). Employees’ attitudes and orientation towards training can indirectly impact their motivation and productivity (Saltani & Liao, 2010, p. 128). According to Fu and Deshpande (2013, p. 342), a positive attitude is vital in the actual training situation and its content as this leads to greater satisfaction with the overall training program. Batool and Batoool (2012, p. 69) and Asim (2013, p. 9) stated that training and development activities are significantly linked to managerial competitive advantage because when employees are trained, it influences their input and promotes their competencies. In order to use training as a mechanism to build commitment, organizations need to ensure that training fulfils employees’ expectations and career needs. Furthermore, when organizations express commitment to training employees, it raises their sense of morale and their perception of being valued by the organization (ElNaga & Imram, 2013, p. 140). Jain (2014, p. 27) posited that employees can be trained but the actual training works only if they transfer and internalize (apply) the training. Confidence levels can be increased among employees when they see how they can apply training transfer and believe in their capabilities to perform given tasks. Transfer design is therefore an important factor for the training transfer process, because not only does it explain how to transfer skills learned but it also increases the efficiency level of the employees (Bhatti, Battour, Sundrum, & Othman, 2013, p. 274). It is imperative that the goals of training are in line with the company's strategic plan, and how those goals reinforce the larger mission of the company is also vital to the continued viability of the training program (Fu & Deshpande, 2013, p. 341). Bellary, Venugopol, and Ganesan (2014, p. 227) stated that it is essential for organizations to comprehend the requirements and the demands of employees’ job and background in order to provide direction on training that can meet their specific needs. Liebermann and Hoffmann (2008, p. 74–86) and Diamantidis and Chatzoglou (2012, p. 907)
explained that training is very important because when employees perceive the training as vital, practical, and as exceeding their expectations, they will then respond more positively and experience greater satisfaction.
The main question addressed in this study is: What are institutional catering employees’ attitudes towards training programs? The researcher acknowledged that hospitality establishments conduct regular training programmes to achieve desired service quality, but noticed that often, employees do not apply their newly learnt skills to maintain quality service standards. Therefore, the identified problem is that trained employees do not transfer the acquired knowledge to their daily activities. This then begs the question of why they are not utilising the training, which could be linked to their perception of the training. Thus, the purpose of this study was to identify, describe and recognise the attitudes of institutional catering employees whilst being subjected to training. Chiang, Back, and Canter (2005, p. 101) as well as Saleem and Raja (2014, p. 120) suggested that the service-profit
chain shows relationships between profitability, customer loyalty, and employee satisfaction, loyalty and productivity. Profit and growth are stimulated primarily by customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction affects customer loyalty (Kaura, Prasad, & Sharma, 2015, p. 418). Jahanshahi, Gashti, Mirdamadi, Nawaser, and Khaksar (2011, p. 259) found that satisfaction is largely influenced by the value of services provided to customers. Value is created by satisfied, loyal productive employees (Chiang et al., 2005, p. 101). Satisfaction results primarily from high quality support services and policies that enable employees to deliver results to customers (Nestoroska & Petrovska, 2014, p. 444). Dhar (2015, p. 420) stated that training can be used as a motivational instrument and that it plays a substantial role in improving employees’ performance in terms of contributing enhanced quality services and help the organizations obtain a competitive advantage.

2. Research objectives
The research objectives that guided this study was:

- To assess institutional catering employees’ attitudes towards training.
- Assess the monitoring and evaluation of training transfer.
- To determine the systems that are in place to encourage training transfer.

3. Literature review
The success of employees in their jobs depends highly on organizations establishing training and development opportunities to enhance employees’ full potential (Elnaga & Imram, 2013, p. 137). Furthermore, a continuous appraisal of knowledge, whether formal or informal, must be accompanied by employees’ positive attitudes, which are essential to success in performance. Moreover, organizational training is linked to accomplishing organizational goals and objectives (Momanyi, Adoyo, Mwangi, & Mokua, 2016, p. 1-2). Ubeda-Garcia, Marco-Lojara, Sabater-Sempere, and Garcia-Lillo (2013, p. 110) argued that organizations must pay attention to employees’ attitudes when training, therefore developing organizations’ human capital should be the main objective of training. Not only should the training consist of the transmission of techniques and skills but also values that can assist employees in giving meaning to their jobs and fitting into the organization. Shu-Rung and Chun-Chieh (2017, p. 128) write that the hospitality industry is full of challenges and quite competitive and that employees therefore need dynamic attitudes in order to survive in the industry. Like all of us, employees have moods and continuous training and education can inspire them, strengthen their mental state and maintain high morale.

3.1. Institutional training program: an overview
Khan, Abbasi, Waseem, Ayaz, and Ijaz (2016, p. 30–31) mentioned that establishments are faced with circumstances such as keeping up with competitors, which requires organizations to ensure that their employees are trained, advanced, and equipped to enable them to use new sophisticated technology and be able to apply the latest best practices and skills. It is vital that the human resource practitioners design training programs that equip their employees with the skills that they need to adapt to these changing technologies, contribute to continuous improvement, and promote an organizational learning culture in a positive way (Ismail, Foboy, Abdullah, Mat, & Makhbul, 2014: 62; Hasan, Rahman, & Rahman, 2013, p. 180). Training and development are not only interrelated to enhance organizational outcomes but are also a dominant factor in influencing employees’ attitudes (Al-Kassem, 2014, p. 133). Zumrah, Boyle, and Fein (2013, p. 289) found that employees who apply the attitudes, information, and skills gained from a training program should reflect effectiveness by contributing to changing other employees’ negative attitudes, enhancing their new competencies, and ensuring that their knowledge and skills are in line with organizational needs (Ismail et al., 2014, p. 62; Hasan et al., 2013, p. 180).

3.2. Importance and benefits of training
Training is a vital component for any organization, and the ultimate objective should be to develop employees towards enhanced motivation, job satisfaction, and job performance. Furthermore,
Training is a critical element in shaping employees' attitudes and leads to organizational commitment (Ismail et al., 2014, p. 62). Training programs build confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging among employees; it also improves their productivity and leads to them ultimately becoming assets of the organization (Batool & Batool, 2012, p. 60). Furthermore, Shu-Rung and Chun-Chieh (2017, p. 127) mention that employee training is important because it improves employee work attitude and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the important role of training employees is to build their competences so that they can perform their jobs efficiently. Training is also a preparation for imminent positions for employees who are competent and assists them in overcoming deficiencies in any associated job area. Training is a tool for filling the gap between the performance that is needed and the current performance of employees. Training advances skills, know-how, and abilities and thus increases performance and the productivity of the organization (Elnaga & Imram, 2013, pp. 140–144; Ameeq & Hanif, 2013, p. 78). Al-Kassem (2014, p. 133) revealed that training and development have a direct link to achieving business goals, and is also a positive tool in shaping employees' attitudes.

### 3.3. Human resources and training programs

Horng, Liu, Chou, and Tsai (2013) describe education and training as prearranged learning that can improve employee self-efficiency and contribute positively to organisational development. Opperman and Meyer (2008, p. 33) and Nazli, Sipon, and Radzi (2014, p. 577) explained that organizations must be aware of the following pitfalls in training: (1) employees being wrongly selected for a training program; (2) frustration experienced by employees because of content duplication in a training program; (3) training programs that are not tailored to address specific needs; (4) lack of training transfer to the workplace; (5) absence of top-management support to encourage transfer of training and skills; and (6) inadequate association between needs analysis, assessment, and training evaluation.

Bellary et al. (2014, p. 227) established that it is imperative that organizations take into consideration trainees' job demands and background to enable the provision of training programs that meet the employees' specific needs. Training employees should be conducted at different levels of employment (Usman, Agenyi, & Mattew, 2015, p. 9). Ahmed, Phulpoto, Umran, and Abbasi (2015, p. 3) posited that when employees are trained, it serves as an element of improving their well-being through the development of employee engagement. Moreover, Thijssen (2015, p. 10) argued that there are two types of employees, namely actively flexible and passively flexible employees. Actively flexible employees are those who usually suggest training to management, easily adapt to change, and are always on a quest to seek new possibilities in order to improve themselves. Passively flexible employees are employees who are the direct opposite; they sometimes reject proposals for innovation.

### 3.4. Training in the hospitality industry

Bharwani and Butt (2012, p. 150) and Prud'homme and Raymond (2016, p. 631) indicated that the service sector has been at the core of the global economic revolution, with major developments taking place in the hospitality and tourism sectors respectively. The hospitality industry is rapidly increasing in size, thus creating a demand for a good labor force in a competitive market. Organizations utilize training programs to create awareness of practices, policies and procedures, to reduce resistance to change, building a shared sense of identity and purpose among employees, and realigning their goals with those of the organization. Nischithaa and Rao (2014, p. 54) and Elnaga and Imram (2013, p. 144) explained that the hospitality industry believes that consistent training and development are imperative and necessary for all employees. Al-Kassem (2014, p. 181) posited that the crucial nature of training programs is to achieve constant organizational development, cost saving, high productivity, and employee competence through qualified and experienced supervisors. Whitelaw, Barron, Buultjens, Cairncross, and Davidson (2011, p. 1–17) suggested that the hospitality industry is clearly moving away from using traditional reactive approaches to a more proactive engagement of training needs that are required in this competitive environment. Regardless of the wider economic circumstances, it is imperative to develop...
a form of career structure and career progression by which the industry can modernize the recruitment and training process.

3.5. Employees’ attitudes towards training

Peng (2015, p. 127) and Pekrun (2014, p. 12) posited that positive emotions can be developed by promoting trainees’ self-confidence, which can be stimulated by focusing on trainees’ strengths rather than their weaknesses; it increases feelings of hopelessness and anxiety when they are not confident. Furthermore, self-confidence is the perception that employees have of their own ability to solve tasks. Pekrun (2014, p. 12) suggested that when trainees enjoy a task, it can trigger a positive emotion, which leads to them paying full attention to a task. Positive emotions affect trainees’ attention and motivation. Motivation can be activated by trainees’ enjoyment of a task, as “enjoyment promotes their interest in learning material, as well as the intrinsic motivation to learn” (Pekrun, 2014, p. 14). The primary focus should be on trainees mastering the learning material because when they perceive learning material as valuable and interesting, they tend to enjoy the experience of learning more (Pekrun, 2014, p. 15). When employees feel that the content of the training is valuable and they feel in control, a sense of enjoyment is stimulated. Boredom in the training classroom is induced when activities lack enticement, motivation, and value (Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfeld, & Perry, 2011, p. 45–46; Pekrun, 2014, p. 12). Trainers should make an effort to promote trainees’ enjoyment of learning and get them excited about learning materials but they should not rely on triggering positive emotions that do not relate to learning (Pekrun, 2014, p. 13). Peng (2015, p. 126) stated that trainees’ learning efficiency is motivated by their interest and motivation. Pekrun (2014, p. 16) posited that self-confidence and task values are known to be the primary factors that are important for trainees’ emotions.

3.6. Methodology

A qualitative phenomenological study explored the attitudes of institutional catering employees towards training programs through in-depth interviews. The construction of research questions leads to the choice of a suitable method such as the qualitative one of in-depth interviews. Applying a phenomenological methodology allows a researcher to clarify assumptions by going past his or her own expertise (Creswell, 2009). This method was considered appropriate as no previous research has used a qualitative study in Gauteng and/or existing knowledge and theories were used for this specific study to provide an in-depth understanding of institutional catering employees’ attitudes towards training programs. A qualitative method was considered more suitable than a quantitative one as it allowed in-depth scrutiny of the research phenomenon rather than focusing on statistics.

3.7. Research design

This specific research study required institutional catering employees to disclose their emotions regarding the research topic. A qualitative research approach was used for obtaining in-depth information, and interviews were conducted for the purpose of collecting data. Struwig and Stead (2013, p. 90–91) explained that although personal interviews have a long lead time, they have an affirmative effect, an accurate foundation of information, and a decent response rate. Furthermore, to find answers for the study, a phenomenological approach was adopted; a study of people’s experiences of a phenomenon they have knowledge of (Creswell, 2013, p. 78). This qualitative methodological method was deemed suitable for this study because the researcher sought to understand what institutional catering employees’ attitudes are towards the phenomenon of training.

3.8. Sample

Typical case sampling entails the researcher categorizing and picking what is thought of as a distinctive or average case (Struwig & Stead, 2013, p. 128). The focus was on employees who have been undergoing training to enable them to supply first-hand knowledge attitudes concerning training programmes. The selection criteria used to qualify participants was any institutional catering employee who had been subjected to training (on or off the job, accredited or non-accredited).
qualified to be part of the sample (Ilker, Sulaiman, & Rukayya, 2016, p. 3). The researcher began by listing all catering institutions around Gauteng that met the criteria for inclusion in the study. However, due to language barrier limitations during the pilot study, the researcher decided to approach employees at management level e.g. supervisors, food and beverage controllers and unit managers, instead of service employees. The reasoning behind this approach was that the language barrier would be limited, if not completely eliminated (Drew, 2014, p. 80).

The listing was followed by phone calls to the institutions and requests to speak to employees (management) who was willing to assist. Initially, 20 participants were chosen for this study. These participants held managerial positions and deemed appropriate to provide responses on the research questions. Their positions made them ideal primary respondents. Moreover, to ensure that data saturation was achieved, an additional five interviews were conducted; tallying up to 25 interviews. The first interview was conducted with a food service manager at a well-known catering institution during lunch hour. The interview took place in the boardroom. Prior to the interview, the researcher asked the participant if he knew anyone who worked for an institutional catering company in a managerial position who might be interested in participating in the study. This is how the researcher identified the next participant. Moreover, the researcher adopted a non-probability sampling technique, convenience sampling for identifying the next participant. Non-probability sampling is a sampling method in which participants are selected according to personal decision or convenience (Conradie, 2012, p. 59).

The convenience sampling technique was selected because of its low cost, as it is useful when identifying the next participant because they are referred. Personal interviews are time-consuming and expensive hence the researcher had to choose a sampling technique which suited the research budget (Struwig & Stead, 2013, p. 90–91). Hinkin and Tracey (2010, p. 158–170) mentioned that the hospitality industry is an anti-social industry and employees work for long hours, referrals are easier and participants were more co-operative when they learned that someone they knew had participated in the study.

3.9. Data collection
The researcher began by listing catering institutions around Gauteng favorable for conducting the study, the listing was followed by telephone calls to the institutions and asking to speak to any employee (management) who was willing to assist. A total of 19 catering units were selected for the study. The researcher conducted the interviews face to face, which aided in the clarification of any uncertainties and significant facts (Struwig & Stead, 2013, p. 90–91). The duration of the interviews was scheduled to be at least 40 minutes per session. The interviews were recorded by use of a high-tech audio recorder and a smartphone (with prior permission from the participants), and the recordings were later used for analytical purposes. Prior to the interview, participants had to sign a form that indicated the nature and rationale of the study.

3.10. Data analysis
Data were analyzed by conventional content analysis, as well as by direct content analysis of theory (codes that resulted from theory and research outcomes, as posited by Hsich & Shannon, 2005, p. 1286).

The analysis was supported by using ATLAS.ti, and the coding process involved “coding for frequency” as the means of identifying reoccurring codes from the data. A total of 45 codes emerged from analyzing the data; the codes were grouped in relation to what was found in the literature review (Babbie, Mouton, Vorster, & Prozesky, 2001, p. 492).

3.11. Relating research results to theories
The results are based on interviews with 25 participants. The groups that were formed after the coding process for reoccurring themes are discussed as follows: Employees disposition towards training (emphasizes the themes that emerged in relation institutional catering employees'
attitude with the training program); Importance of training (emphasizes the themes that emerged in relation with the benefits and outcomes of training); Training approach (emphasizes the themes that emerged in relation to the impact of company commitment, and management support.

The following interview questions was asked and the findings are discussed as follows:

Question 1: “What is your opinion about training programs? Please include how you value and feel about them.” Twenty two themes emerged from positive and two codes were from negative responses for this question (Table 1).

3.11.1. Positive responses
The positive responses were as follows: Five (20%) participants stated that training programs were important, seven (29%) participants expressed the view that training programs were a necessity in the hospitality industry, four (17%) participants expressed the view that training helped to keep abreast of change. The positive responses above is in line with the statement by Bhatti et al. (2013, p. 289) that business environments and customer prospects are continuously changing which forces organizations to place emphasis on training and development of their employees.

Three (13%) participants stated that training programs were used as refresher courses, three (13%) participants expressed the view that the information gained from training was used for training others, and finally, two participants mentioned that training was only of value if it was applied.

Trainers should use practical examples during training so that employees notice how the training is linked to their actual jobs, using actual life examples assists in motivating the employees and building their confidence to apply the training Bhatti et al. (2013, p. 291)

3.11.2. Negative responses
Two participants gave the following negative responses: One (4%) participant mentioned that there was not enough drive for training and the company did not offer equal opportunities, and the other participant (6%) expressed the view that training without accreditation was pointless and useless. Moreo, Green, and O’ Halloran (2017, p. 13) can be seen as support of this participants opinion as they postulated that there is value in obtaining formal certification in the hospitality industry.

Question 2 “How did you feel about the content in the training programme, had it any relevance, was it in line with your daily tasks”? Twenty six themes emerged from positive responses and one code emerged from a negative response for this question (Table 2).

3.11.3. Positive responses
There were positive responses; twenty-two (82%) participants expressed the view that the content of the training was relevant, When training employees the organization must consider the content and the background of the employees moreover their abilities (Lee & Burgler, 2017, p. 102)

Two (7%) participants mentioned that they made the training materials difficult and some people found it hard to follow.

Two (7%) participants said that the information gained from the training was helpful.

3.11.4. Negative responses
There were negative responses; one (4%) participant expressed that the training content was not helpful and was not relevant. The training programmes this employee were exposed to will likely not have any positive impact on him/her seeing that when employees perceive a training programme as useful it would have a positive impact on their enhancement of knowledge and skills (Dhar, 2015, p. 421).
Question 3: “What relevance did the training have on your personal growth and career aspects”? Nine themes emerged from positive responses for this question (Table 3).

3.11.5. Positive responses
There were positive responses; three participants mentioned that training boosted their careers, three (33%) participants stated that training gave them more confidence.

Training programmes build confidence, self-esteem and a sense of belonging amongst employees, and it also improves their productivity and leads to them ultimately becoming assets of the organization (Batool & Batool, 2012, p. 60).

One (11%) participant said that the personal growth that came with training was amazing, three (33%) participants mentioned that the career advancement came in the form of a promotion.

Hospitality organizations are focussed on promoting internally thus they ensure that they provide excellent training development opportunities to their employees (Costen & Salazar, 2011, p. 280).

Training does not benefit the organization alone; it also benefit employees on a more personal level, their career and job-related knowledge and in turn they become more committed and tend to stay much longer with the organization (Ismail et al., 2014, p. 62). Two (22%) participants felt that training builds you as a person.

Question 4: “What systems are in place to encourage training transfer”? Twenty three themes emerged from positive responses for this question (Table 4).

3.11.6. Positive responses
There were positive responses—one (4%) participant expressed the view that application of training was not forced, you could choose to make training part of your life, four (17%) participants said that management would pose questions after training to determine whether they were using the training, fourteen (61%) participants mentioned that management determined transfer of training by conducting follow-up sessions in the form of meetings and regular reports, two (9%) participants said that the changes in their performance were an indication that they were transferring the training.

When organizations provide employees with training and development opportunities their performance and skills increase, and their satisfaction level is elevated. The missing link between knowledge and skills among employees and skills necessary to perform efficiently can be lessened by constructing awareness among employees regarding the benefits of training. When employees receive training they have the ability to become highly effective in their performances (Khan, Nawab & Wali, 2012, p. 580).

Two (9%) participants expressed the view that there were no follow-up sessions on service-related training, management would see that they were applying the training and that training was effective via customer feedback.

According to Jung and Yoon (2013, p. 1–8) there has been research supporting the belief that when employees are satisfied they are in a greater state of providing excellent service to customers and this can also be beneficial in achieving higher customer satisfaction.

3.12. Findings
The selected interview question was used to link the themes and research objective respectively, and they are discussed as follows:
“What is your opinion about training programs? Please include how you value and feel about them.”

Two themes emerged in relation to the opinions of the participants and the way in which they value training programs, namely attitude and opinions in terms of training programs.

3.12.1. Attitude
Most participants viewed the training provided by the organizations as positive and mentioned that they were motivated to participate in these training programs. Furthermore, the question of participating in training was based on individuals’ interest and motivation, and the value derived from the participants’ opinion regarding the training program.

“Training is based on drive and interest of an individual. The company would not want to put someone who is less interested in learning through a training program because that would be a waste of money, company resources, and time so it would be determined by a person’s characteristics and how well they perform and whether they want to learn” (Participant 19, four years’ experience).

“It just takes a person to be motivated and interested in improving themselves; as employees we are not really forced to be involved in training. It is so much easier when your staff is interested and eager to be part of the training” (Participant 2, twenty years’ experience).

Participant 2 and 19 described training as a great initiative for organizations but felt that training could only work if individuals were willing to learn; hence training had to be perceived positively by employees.

“Sometimes I think it can be a value or cannot be a value, the one I did, the management skills builder, was of value. I believe that training programs must make you excited! If you do not really want to participate, then there will be no value. I enjoy training that challenges me because it makes me go research things and that I can use it in my working environment. I think it is also related to your experience, how many years you have in the industry, that will directly affect how you were challenged and how you feel challenged in certain trainings” (Participant 3, ten years’ experience).

Participant 3 mentioned that organizations offer a wide range of training programs but the value of the programs is based on how useful and challenging the training programs are to employees. The participant also mentioned that not all training programs were relevant.

“I feel that the trainings are standard and there is no follow-up after the training has been done. I am not given a chance on how I view the trainings and what I have been taught. Therefore, it is just a nice relaxing outing and when you come back, everything is out. I think the thing that demotivates is that at the end of the training you don’t get recognition or something to say that I have attended this course and is accredited for this” (Participant 16, eight years’ experience).

Participant 16 felt that most of the training that the organization provided was mostly informal and was conducted on an annual basis: “It’s trainings that are mostly irrelevant.” The participant mentioned that she would rather attend training programs that she could use to channel her career. Training was provided as a measure of social responsibility compliance for the organization.

3.12.2. Opinions on the training program
Participants were adamant that it was crucial to undergo training in order to be able to deliver quality service to customers; moreover, they felt that training programs were important for people without experience and thus served as a stepping stone for students to prepare them for the work environment. Without training, they would not be able to keep up with new trends and, moreover, participants mentioned that it was imperative that the training had to be done within the workplace.
“There are companies that take advantage and think that training programs for students are like having your own personal assistant that you can use them anytime you wish, which is actually very wrong. Yes, training programs are very good and for students it’s like a preparation before getting into the real working environment” (Participant 4, fifteen years’ experience).

Participant 4 stated that he was in charge of student trainees, and that training was the tool that bridged the gap between tertiary institutions and industry: “Students often struggle to apply what they have learned”; therefore with practical work their duties become easier and they are equipped with more skills.

“Training is important because employees will now be able to deliver a service because without this training, they will not be able to perform what is expected on the standards, so training is very essential so that they know the basics of their role, so without the foundation of training it will be difficult to accomplish the service issues” (Participant 13, ten years’ experience).

Participant 13 related training to service standards, because without training employees would not be able to deal with service-related issues; training should be consistent because it ensures capabilities: “Training is compulsory and part of employment.”

Employees’ performance is directly improved by training; training increases concrete performance and the work proficiency of employees.

“The training is a good initiative but it is only effective if we put it into practice. Therefore, every training is for everyone but it depends who needs that training; it is not just everyone” (Participant 17, nine years’ experience).

Participant 17 described training as an opportunity to improve but that training also depends on personal preferences. Training must bring changes in one’s day-to-day tasks; there should therefore be improvement.

“So, because the reason is we learn on a daily basis for something new that is coming on a daily basis. It might be new technology; it might be new standards, so you need training in order that you may be on par with the rest or competitors” (Participant 6, fifteen years’ experience).

“Training programs help us to keep abreast with changes from time to time, so if you look at the hospitality industry, things have totally changed the way we do things now; it’s not the same as the way we did things before” (Participant 4, fifteen years’ experience).

“Things change all the time, so the more you go for training, the more you find your job easier and keep abreast with change” (Participant 20, twenty four years’ experience).

Participants 4, 6, and 20 alluded that with training, there are no limitations. They also indicated that training should accommodate personal preferences. Training creates awareness, equips employees, increases creativity, and it brings new ideas. Employees will be able to deal with service-related issues and the organization will maintain high standards.

What is in place to encourage training transfer?

There was one theme that emerged in relation “how management encourage training transfer” and the theme is Monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring and evaluation

It is evident that the monitoring “system” that the organization uses is follow-up sessions and giving the participants the opportunity to implement the training. Management measures effectiveness of training by discussions, meetings, and observation.
“After the training you get reports from your direct manager or the manager that has nominated you for the programme there is also a pre discussion before you attend the training, there they tell me why I am going on training what to expect from the training and then after the training you will have a meeting with the manager that nominated you, we have follow up sessions where they will say, we have noticed that your performance is better, are you implementing what you have learned from the training” (Participant 10, five years’ experience).

“With all the training I incorporate it into my job; I take a bit from there and there. For Example with customer care training, I make sure that I follow up with all departments and monitor them I have shown them how to do it so I check to see whether they are applying the training. So I constantly check whether they are they understand what must be done? Do I need to organize training for them, so I just engage with the staff, so everything I am trained on I apply it to the staff” (Participant 4, fifteen years’ experience).

Participant 4 and 10 explained that there is no training that does not have a follow-up session, as management is quite hands on and involved in the feedback sessions.

3.12.3. Relating research objectives to findings
The relationship between the findings and the research objective, “Assess institutional catering employees’ attitudes regarding training”, is discussed below.

The employees’ attitude towards training was that training revealed areas that need improvement: “Training gives you the opportunity to close the gap of uncertainties” (Participant 13, ten years’ experience). With regard to relevancy, the employees’ attitude was that they could apply the training only if the training was relevant to their jobs. With regard to a qualified trainer, institutional catering employees expressed that training was sometimes not exciting because of the way it was presented. With regard to clear training material, institutional catering employees’ attitude was that the material was not always 100%; furthermore, the material was often difficult for some employees because people do not learn on the same level, making it hard for them to follow during training: “All trainings should have materials for beginners and advanced level” (Participant 4, fifteen years’ experience). Institutional catering employees’ experience with training was that training refreshed the mind, created understanding, and helped them to keep abreast of change.

4. Study limitations
There were several limitations to this study; one of which was that the study cannot be generalized to institutional catering employees in other parts of the country because the sample comprised institutional catering employees in Gauteng. The researcher acknowledges that qualitative study findings cannot be applied to other institutions in other contexts. Shenton (2003, p. 69) posited that the findings of a qualitative study cannot be generalized because the project includes a small number of the population; moreover, the aim of the study was to improve grading systems and not to change behavior.

5. Recommendations
In light of the findings, the researcher was motivated to make recommendations after exploring the institutional catering employees’ attitude towards training programs with the aim to assist in developing good practice standards for managing effective training. The participants expressed the view that some training programs were not relevant, they were useless, and most of the time they did not even know what the training was about: “Training is like a day off work” (Participant 16, eight years’ experience).

The researcher recommends that organizations should communicate training objectives and content to employees as this can encourage employee motivation and higher rates of participation.
Organizations must design training programs that have objectives, that are clear, and that take into consideration the needs of the organization and employees.

The participants articulated that there were some instances where they would attend training and management would not follow up with them, making the training pointless. Moreover, training without recognition was demotivating.

The researcher's recommendation is that organizations should have a support policy in place, followed by a reward policy, so that employees can be motivated to transfer learning into their jobs. When employees feel that they have support from their supervisors, it has a positive influence on them to be motivated to transfer learning. Motivation mediates peer support, supervisor support, and training transfer.

Institutional catering employees felt that the training materials were difficult for some employees to understand: "The trainers must do research on people they are going to train; whether they are skilled, unskilled, educated, or uneducated" (Participant 2, 20 years’ experience), they sometimes use terminologies that most employees could not understand. The findings also revealed that institutional catering employees rated the training programs as satisfactory when simple, understandable language was used. Moreover, the educational background of trainees should be established prior to the training.

Training techniques should be designed according to employees’ requirements, so that the anticipated knowledge and skills can be communicated in a comprehensible and comfortable way. Training should also be organized for employees at different levels of employment, and training program planners should design training handbooks and resources accessible to employees so that it is simpler for them to follow the teachings of the trainer.

6. Conclusion
This study brings attention to institutional catering employees' attitudes towards training programs. Conclusions were drawn based on the results achieved from this study, which revealed that institutional catering employees' attitude towards training programs was that training is an eye-opener, builds self-esteem, is informative, and that it is important and a necessity in the hospitality industry because it helps them to keep abreast of change.

7. Study implications
The data from this research indicate that institutional catering employees consider training to have value when it is relevant to their current jobs. Training is recognized as a tool to bridge the gap of uncertainties leading to self-efficacy and an increase in confidence levels. Furthermore, when management communicates the need for training clearly and takes the employees' expectations into consideration, there is an increase in employees' motivation to attend the training and this leads to a positive attitude. When institutional employees perceive the training as relevant, it stimulates their interest and drive to attend. The hospitality industry is a service industry and is dependent on employees to deliver an exceptional quality of service. To achieve quality service, management must ensure that their employees are empowered by offering them training programs. Poor service continues to be a problem in the hospitality industry. This draws attention to the fact that it is not sufficient for management offers training programs; it is imperative that management makes sure that the training is applied. Moreover, when management gives employees support after the training, this encourages employees to incorporate what they have learnt into their jobs, and support correspondingly triggers a positive attitude and encourages training transfer. Data have shown that the employees become more satisfied with the training when there is follow up from management; therefore management must ensure that there are solid systems put in place to ensure that the employees are applying what they have learnt in their training.
7.1. Research questions

Research topic: Experience, feelings and attitudes of institutional catering employees towards training programmes

(1) What is your opinion about training programmes, please include how you value and feel about them?
(2) How does management go about selecting employees who need to be trained?
(3) How does management motivate/initiate a training programme?
(4) Were you given an option not to be part of the training?
(5) How did management explain and communicate why there was a need to undergo training?
(6) What was your experience with the training programme?
(7) How did you feel about the content in the training programme? Did it have any relevance to your job?
(8) In what way did the training improve your performance?
(9) Did the overall experience of the training meet your specific job needs and career development expectations?
(10) How has management encouraged the incorporation of newly acquired skills, knowledge into your job?
(11) What systems are in place to encourage training transfer?
(12) How do you apply the training?

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