



A strategic framework for analysing employability skills deficits in rural hospitality and tourism destinations

Samuel Adeyinka-Ojo

Department of Marketing, Faculty of Business, Curtin University, Malaysia



ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Employability skills deficits
Rural hospitality
Rural tourism destinations

ABSTRACT

Recently, businesses are shifting towards service economy which is the traditional operational base for the hospitality and tourism industry. Globally, the experience economy is growing but there are very few talents to provide the expected “wow” experience to guests. Therefore, the aims of this paper are from two dimensions: to identify the employability skills deficits in rural hospitality and tourism (RHT), and to develop a framework for employability skills in (RHT) destinations. A critical review of the extant literature on human resource management, employability skills, competencies in hospitality and tourism, meetings, incentive, convention and exhibition were conducted and content analysed. Findings indicate there are 14 employability skills deficits in RHT, and also identified the skills valued most by employers in the hospitality and tourism sector. Contributions to the existing knowledge include the development of a framework for RHT destinations. Implications for the managerial practice and host community are discussed further.

1. Introduction

In recent years, businesses are shifting towards service economy which is the traditional operational base for the hospitality and tourism industry. According to Pine II and Gilmore (1998, p. 97), “as goods and services become commoditized, the customer experiences that companies create will matter most”. Basically, the hospitality and tourism industry is an experience economy with ‘four realms of an experience – entertainment, educational, esthetic and escapist’ (Pine II & Gilmore, 1998, p. 102). A review of extant literature revealed that employability skills especially on hard skills and soft skills have been documented (Clark, 1993; Wellington, 2005), and soft skills competencies required by the hospitality practitioners considered indispensable by the academic researchers has been well investigated (Weber, Crawford, Lee, & Dennison, 2013).

The concern of most rural hospitality and tourism destinations is to increase the number of tourist arrivals, receipts and repeat visits by previous guests and tourists (Adeyinka-Ojo & Khoo-Lattimore, 2013), and to develop a high yield tourist destination (Dwyer et al., 2006; Northcote & Macbeth, 2006). To achieve these goals, most rural hospitality and tourism destination management and marketing organisations (DMMOs) have developed different products, marketing and branding strategies (Tourism Malaysia, 2012). Today, the experience economy is witnessing global growth but there are very few talents to ‘identify the key drivers of the visitors’ experience’ (Ford, Sturman, & Heaton, 2012, p.477). In other words, the rural hospitality and tourism

operators must seek to provide both the basic or expected and “wow” experience to the guests (visitors and tourists) alike (Ford et al., 2012). In order to identify what the visitors want and satisfy their basic needs to create a “wow” visitors’ experience it is important to employ ‘the right people for the job’ (Ford et al., 2012). Surprisingly, the identification of employability skills needed in the rural hospitality and tourism (RHT) destinations have received minimal academic and practitioner attention. In this regard, the key element to meet the memorable experience sought by the guest or visitor in rural hospitality and tourism destinations is to identify these skills which are lacking in this segment of the hospitality and tourism sector. In particular, the aims of this paper are to: (i) identify and clarify the employability skills deficits in RHT and (ii) propose a framework for employability skills in rural hospitality and tourism destinations. In pursuit of the underlying purpose of this paper, a critical review of previous studies was conducted and asks one main question: What are the employability skills deficits (skills needs) in rural hospitality tourism destinations? The structure of this question is influenced by the fact that with the ‘growth of service economy, the type of employability skills required by the employers has also shifted.’ (Nickson, 2013, p.95).

2. Literature review

Generally speaking, research on human resource management, employees’ competencies, employees’ relations, compensation and employers’ skills requirements in different economic and business sectors

E-mail address: samuel.adeyinka@curtin.edu.my.

have received academic researchers' and practitioners' attention over the years (Nickson, 2013). Specifically, these studies include tourism workforce (Baum, Kralj, Robinson, & Solnet, 2016); and exploring tourism labour (Ladkin, 2011). There are also extant literature on labour mobility into tourism (Szivas, Riley, & Airey, 2003); employability skills required by employers in Asia (Zaharim, Yusoff, Omar, Mohamed, & Muhamad, 2009); employability skills for Australian small and medium sized enterprises (McLeish, 2002); Malaysian graduates employability skills (Singh & Singh, 2008); soft skills versus hard business knowledge (Andrews & Higson, 2008). Researchers have also explored engineering employability skills needed by employers of labour in Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore (Singh & Singh, 2008). In view of the cut-throat global competition, graduates from the universities do not match the requirements of employers (Singh & Singh, 2008). Most graduates are lacking in both hard (technical knowledge) and soft (generic knowledge) skills that meet the business expectation (Khair, 2006). As a result, educational institutions in recent times have been facing pressure from the society especially the employers of labour to produce graduates with employability skills and not just the academic skills (Singh & Singh, 2008). These skills needed by the employers are termed as core, key, soft, transferable, employable and generic skills.

Therefore, it is necessary that educational institutions work closely with the employers to meet and equip their graduates with these skills for better job opportunity and business growth of their future employers. This view is consistent with Bailey and Mitchell (2006) that in an ever-changing and increasingly competitive business environment, employees with competencies (employability skills) which increase employers' return on investment will always be in high demand. In this regard and from the employers' view point "employability skills" seems to be "work readiness", in other words, possession of the skills, knowledge, attitudes and business understanding that will help the new employees to contribute to the organizational goals soon after being employed (Mason, Williams, & Crammer, 2006). This is also true in the hospitality and tourism industry.

2.1. Hospitality and tourism industry

Despite the level of technological development within the workplace, hospitality and tourism businesses are largely rely on the labour-intensive (Baum et al., 2016). Extant literature on human resources, workforce, employees' competencies and skills in relation to hospitality and tourism have predominantly focused on the hospitality (hotel) sector in urban, cities, resorts and iconic destinations. Baum et al. (2016) conducted a systematic review of workforce research in the hospitality and tourism literature of four top hospitality journals and four top tourism journals from (2005–2014) as measured by the Impact Factor in 2014. Further analyses revealed that these eight journals collectively published 6449 articles. Those articles related to workforce in hospitality and tourism research were reviewed as presented in Table 2 (Baum et al., 2016). Notably, none of these top journals is dedicated to studies that are specific to employability skills requirements in rural hospitality and tourism destinations.

Furthermore, a dedicated journal in this field, the *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality and Tourism* had published series of articles on employment related issues and skills development as it affects hospitality (hotel) sector in general. These articles are featured within the soft skill competencies (Weber et al., 2013); skills needs of the tourism sector (Haven-Tang & Jones, 2006); employers' demand for personal transferable skills in graduates (Bennett, 2002); tourism and hospitality workforce planning (Bartlett, Johnson, & Schneider, 2016); employee perceptions of minimum wage in the hospitality industry (Joo-Ee, 2016); hospitality and tourism labour markets (Baum, 2008); hospitality employment issues in developing countries (Sobaih, 2015); the challenges of human resources in meeting, incentive, convention, and exhibition (MICE) industry (Sou & McCartney, 2015). Other studies include skills and training for the hospitality industry (Baum, 2002),

and human resources recruitment, selection and retention issues in the hospitality and tourism industry (Chan & Kuok, 2011). Surprisingly, this dedicated journal offers very limited studies especially on the employability skills requirements in the RHT destinations.

2.2. Skill and competency or competence

Skill and competency are synonymous terms. Based on literature it appears there is no general consensus on what could be regarded as the main difference between the two. However, for the purpose of this paper a brief description of these key terms are demonstrated. Skill is described as an ability coming from an individual acquired knowledge and practice to do a job well as demonstrated by action or behaviour due to training programmes or vocational instructions (Wickham, 2006). In other words, a skill is the ability to carry out a task successfully with pre-determined outcomes. Skills are needed to apply technical skills and knowledge in the work place (Kantrowitz, 2005). According to Katz (1974), skills required by effective managers can be divided into human, technical, and conceptual skills. Lazear (2005) argues that in order to be successful in business, it is important that one must possess skills in a variety of areas.

On the other hand, 'competence or competency' has been described severally and often used interchangeably as skill, proficiency, prowess, expertise, capability, mastery, ability and knowledge. According to Le Deist and Winterton (2005, p. 27), opined "the concept of competence or competency - 'competence' generally refers to functional areas and 'competency' to behavioural areas but usage is inconsistent". Competency is the capacity to employ a set of related knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) needed to execute tasks or assignments. It should be noted that 'competence' is the ability of an employee to perform a task excellently as required. Sandwith (1993) posits that there are five dimensions of competency which can be adopted by organisations for management training. These competency domains include leadership, technical, administrative, conceptual/creative, and interpersonal. Over the years, previous studies show that entrepreneurial skills and competencies have been developed by scholars (Man, Lau, & Chan, 2002; Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010; Phelan & Sharpley, 2012; Schallenkamp & Smith, 2008) as presented in Table 1. However, because of the aims of this study, the term employability skills will be adopted. This is presented in the next section.

2.3. Employability skills

There are different terms used to describe employability skills across the continents as revealed in literature. For example, expressions such as core competencies, basic skill, work skills, hard skills, generic skills, enabling skills, transferable skills, essential skills, soft skills, key skills, and personal skills (Department of Education Science and Training [DEST], 2006; Hiroyuki, 2004; Knight & Yorke, 2002). Descriptions of the terms "employability skills" have been well documented by many scholars (Weber et al., 2013; Wellington, 2005). Robinson (2000) describes employability skills as those basic skills and attributes necessary for securing, keeping and performing well at the work place.

According to Robinson (2000), employability skills can be viewed from three different categories: (a) basic academic skills – reading writing, science listening, verbal communication and mathematics, (b) higher-order thinking skills – problem solving, creative thinking, learning, decision making and reasoning, and (c) personal qualities – social skills, self-control, self-confidence, honesty and integrity. Likewise, the Department of Education (2006) posits that employability are the key skills and attributes or traits individual employees require to be gainfully employed and to perform effectively in the work place. Employability skills are important in all industries from entry level to the top management echelon and not just job specific (Singh & Singh, 2008). For example, Singapore Workforce Development Agency [WDA] (2006) developed ten generic employability skills that are applicable to

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7422462>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7422462>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)