THE IMPACT OF E-LEARNING IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF VALUE AND EFFICIENCY THROUGHOUT THE HOPSITALITY INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The hospitality industry of online training is developing rapidly. Now it is easier than ever for employees everywhere to obtain their job training they need. E-learning in hospitality increases productivity and efficiency. On the other hand, e-learning contributes significantly to employees' motivation. To improve the employees' efficiency and to maintain their competitiveness in the market place many hotels continue to invest substantially in their knowledge capability.

The findings from research that includes a review of literature, internet search, and personal interviews show that e-learning is seen mainly as a training tool (e-training instead of e-learning) rather than as a strategic tool to support the creation of new knowledge, innovation, and competitive advantage. Based on the literature review, the absence of an extensive research on e-Learning in hospitality and tourism field was identified, as well as the lack of a map of online training courses; as a result the purpose of this paper is to examine the contribution of e-learning in the improvement of value and efficiency throughout the hospitality industry. More specifically, it investigates the different perception of hotel employees on the impact of hospitality e-learning investment on (a) knowledge usage by employees, (b) employee satisfaction with the e-learning systems, (c) changes in the level of employee performance. The main objective of this study was to investigate the impact of training on the productivity of workers by means of questionnaires.

Keywords: e-learning; tourism; hospitality; e-training; online courses; performance

INTRODUCTION

E-learning comprises all forms of electronically supported learning and teaching. The information and communication systems, whether networked learning or not, serve as specific media to implement the learning process. (Tavangarian and Leypold, 2004; Nölting et al. 2004) indicated that The term will still most likely be utilized to reference out-of-classroom and in-classroom educational experiences via technology, even as advances continue in regard to devices and curriculum. The digital revolution has placed great emphasis on innovation, new business models, new ways of organizing work as well as having a significant impact on the learning industry (Schertle and Dierich, 2001; Piccoli et al. 2001).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Defining e-learning

As there are many definitions available, we present here only a few of them to gain some understanding. (Kelly, 2005) stated, "E-learning is about information, communication, education and training. Regardless of how trainers categorize training and education, the learner only wants the skills and knowledge to do a better job or to answer the next question from a customer." – an independent site, providing information about e-learning announced that "instruction that is delivered electronically, in part or wholly via a Web browser, through the Internet or an intranet, or through multimedia platforms such CD-ROM or DVD." Brandon Hall argues that, as the technology improves, e-learning has been identified primarily with using the web, or an intranet's web. Increasingly — as higher bandwidth has become more accessible — it has been identified primarily with using the Web, or an intranet's web, forcing the visual environment and interactive nature of the web on the learning environment,(www.brandon-hall.com). (Rosenberg, 2001) explained that "E-learning refers to the use of Internet technologies to deliver a broad array of solutions that enhance knowledge and performance

Types of e-learning

(Broadbent, 2002). Identified four types of e-learning, namely: informal, self-paced, leader-led and through performance support tools. In informal e-learning, a learner could access a web site or join an online discussion group to find relevant information. Self-paced e-learning on the other hand refers to the process whereby learners' access computer based or web-based training materials at their own pace. Leader-led e-leaning as the name suggests refers to an instructor, tutor or facilitator leading the process. This type of learning can further be divided into two categories: (1) learners accessing real-time (synchronous) learning materials and (2) learners accessing delayed learning materials (asynchronous). The fourth and last type of e-learning described is through the use of performance support tools which refers to materials that learners can use to help perform a task (normally in software) such as using a wizard.

Advantages of e-learning

E-Learning offers multiple advantages to today's training challenges. With help of eLearning, companies can design and implement a training program specifically for themselves. By monitoring learning effects they can target the training in the areas where they are especially needed. (Stockley, 2006) Stated that the benefits of eLearning, which offers rapid delivery of a consistent message to a geographically dispersed audience, can offer Hoteliers many quantifiable benefits compared to traditional Instructor Led Training delivery. As with any other investment, executive management demands that eLearning proves its value. When discussing the implementation of eLearning and Return On Investment, the prime focus is usually based on the potential cost savings in replacing traditional Instructor Led Training with eLearning courses. However, there are other related benefits inherent with eLearning solutions, such as speed of delivery, consistency, and flexibility.

Evaluating eLearning effects

(Belle et al. 2003) Emphasized the importance of proper training evaluation. He states that every training program should be developed through four stages: training needs analysis, program design, program implementation and program evaluation. According to Mr. Belle, too often too few resources are dedicated to training analysis and program evaluation. Some companies do carry out a training evaluation but in most cases, it is incomplete. Mr. Belle suggests Donald Kirkpatrick's 4 level model (Picture 1) should be used in practice as a training evaluation standard. Donald Kirkpatrick, who is considered the main expert in training evaluation, introduced the 4 levels in training evaluation (Belle 2003). In addition to Kirkpatrick's 4 levels of evaluating training, Jack Phillips created level 5. Level 5 is a monetary version of level 4; it is a profitability ratio from the investment in training (Belle 2003).

Picture 1
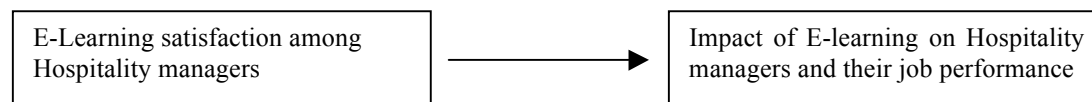**Four level training evaluation model**

LEVEL 1	REACTION	Measures participant satisfaction with the program
LEVEL 2	LEARNING	Measures increase in knowledge and skills
LEVEL 3	BEHAVIOUR	Measures the level of usage of the skills on specific job behaviours
LEVEL 4	BUSINESS RESULTS	Measures the impact of training on particular business areas
PHILLIPS LEVEL 5	ROI	Measures the monetary benefit from the training program

Kirkpatrick's four level training evaluation model (Belle, 2003)

METHODOLOGY

This study is aimed at finding the connection between the characteristics of hospitality managers and their satisfaction of e-learning in hospitality management industry. The experiment was done with the group of 335 hospitality managers, who were learning for hospitality courses at the five star hotel chains. The courses were divided into two parts where half of the course was delivered online and other half on in the training rooms with face-to-face learning. A multi method approach of combining the close ended and open-ended questions was used to carry out the experiment. The questionnaire was delivered to both of the hospitality managers who use the e-learning courses more than one year. in this study, the impact of e-learning will be measured on 7 items adapted from Halawi et al. (2009) who used the Bloom taxonomy in the e-learning context. Generally, Bloom provided the instrument that researchers use to determine the learning preferred behavior pattern of employees after taking the course. In their study, Halawi et al. used 27 items that measure the e-learning outcomes and the factors that influence such

outcomes such as individual and instructional factors. In the present study, the main focus is on the e-learning outcomes which are according to Halawi et al. 7 items. All 7 items were adopted and rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree (5). Consequently, in order to measure the impact of e-learning on their job outcomes in the present study, 7 items were adapted from DeLone and McLean (2003). After intensive literature review and they show reliability (internal consistency) for job outcomes factor of 0.95. These items were rated using a five-point Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, and 5=strongly agree.

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│ E-Learning satisfaction among   │  ──────> │ Impact of E-learning on Hospitality │
│ Hospitality managers            │          │ managers and their job performance │
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The open-ended part of the questionnaire asked questions about the reasons for high or low learning achievements. The assumption underlying this research is that there must be significant points of E-learning in the improvement of value and efficiency throughout the hospitality industry rather than the blended learning in hospitality industry.

For this sample of 5-hotel chains in Egypt were selected randomly from the hotel chains were use the e-learning in their training. However the study was conducted only on the hospitality managers, as these hotel chains conduct their e-learning programs with their managerial level only.

Table 1

Hotel Chain	No. Of distribution questionnaire
Four Sesaons	135
Fairmont	95
Sofitel	35
Marriott	50
Kempinski	20

RESULTS

The purpose of this experiment was to identify the differences of learning achievement and satisfaction between managers who are exposed to E-Learning and blended learning environment in five star hotel chains. This experiment attempted to test the following hypotheses
1. Employees performance will improve in the courses taken in E-Learning mode..
2. E-Learning will be more effective when integrated with a traditional learning in a blended learning environment as a part of the satisfaction due to receiving immediate feedback.

The survey asked 49 questions about the status of e-learning in respondent hotels as well as their predictions on future directions of e-learning. In the sections below are some findings from this survey study.
E-learning managers' Perceptions of E-learning:-
A large majority of respondents of this survey study indicated that they had a positive outlook on the future of e-learning. About 90 percent of the respondents described themselves as being supportive of or optimistic about e-learning. Also, they currently embraced e-learning to a varying degree; over 80 percent of those surveyed responded that they were using e-learning to train their employees. Interestingly, there were additional indicators that the respondents' hotels were making investments in e-learning. For instance, a majority of the respondents indicated that in 2010 their hotels spent between one and 60 percent of their total training budget on e-learning. Moreover, 60 percent of those surveyed responded that their hotel had a strategic plan for e-learning. When projecting the impact of e-learning by the year 2015, a majority of the respondents predicted that e-learning would have a positive impact on learners in many ways.

Figure 1
Graphical Representation Factors of results for Improvement in e- learning and blended Learning
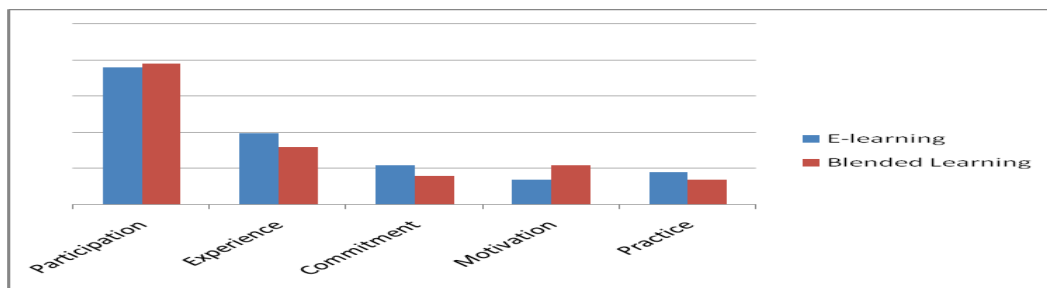
The most important factor for e-learning is considered to be the learning method design and its effectiveness. e-learning method ineffectiveness can lead to poor performance from the employees. Employees in blended learning mode expressed an experience of more learning in classroom discussion, assignments and personal interaction with tutors than the employees in E-Learning who solely relied on online contents. It was found from the gathered data and analysis of the data that there were no significant differences between both the groups in E-Learning and Blended learning mode in terms of the learning achievement. From this it can assume that delivery mode may not affect employees learning to a significant degree.

The research conducted by Lim et al (2007) revealed that the E-Learning mode reported more workload than the blended learning mode. This was also confirmed in this experiment as the employees had lot of things to do in a very short period of time with no feedback at the beginning and middle stages of their work which led to a lack of motivation. E-Learning employees relies solely on the online material so there was less support for them than the blended learning employees who also had the opportunity to meet their training manager face to face (Lim et al 2007). The finding suggests that collaboration is an important factor in both the learning modes to enhance the employees.

Reliability of Scales

Hair et al. (2003) quoted from Robinson et al. (1973, 1991) that generally the lower limit for Cronbach's alpha is 0.7, and it may be decreased to 0.6 in exploratory researches. Nunnally (1978) further suggested that an average reliability score of 0.70 would suffice for basic research. To determine the consistency of the constructs, reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's alpha. In terms of impact on job performance, to determine the consistency of the constructs, reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's alpha. Table 4.39 shows the values of Cronbach's alpha for the final two factors resulted from the seven factors analysis.

Table 2
Reliability Test for Final Factor for impact of E-learning on the job performance

Factor	No. of Variables	Alpha- Value
Job Performance	4	0.863
Job Efficiency	3	0.794

Table 3
Reliability Test for Final Factor for impact of Hospitality managers' satisfaction from E-learning

Factor	No. of Variables	Alpha- Value
E-learning usage	3	0.805
Performance improvement	4	0,736

Results of Descriptive Statistics of Impact on the hospitality managers in terms of their job The descriptive statistics for e-learning impact on hospitality employees in terms of their job were conducted for each item. The results showed the highest score was 3.29 related to Job efficiency which is related to e-learning enables me to respond more quickly to change, while the lowest score 3.06 was related to job performance which is related to e-learning helps me to think through problems. The mean for elearning impact on hospitality employees in terms of their job were ranked based on their importance in the following order; job efficiency (3.17), job performance (3.16).

Table 4
Job Performance

No	Job Efficiency	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	E-learning helps me to provide better products/service to customers	335	3.12	1.359
2	E-learning helps me to enhance my job efficiency	335	3.08	1.315
3	E-learning enables me to respond more quickly to change	335	3.29	1.319
	Overall Job efficiency	335	3.17	1.121
	Job performance			
1	E-learning helps me to improve my job performance	335	3.16	1.510
2	E-learning helps me to think through problems	335	3.06	1.396
3	E-learning helps me to achieve my goals	335	3.15	1.392
4	E-learning helps me to provide new products/service to customers	335	3.28	1.423
	Overall Job performance	335	3.16	1.205

Descriptive Analysis for Hospitality managers' satisfaction from E-learning in their hotel

The means for overall impact of e-learning on managers in terms of their **satisfaction** were shown in Table (4). The results indicated that managers' **satisfaction** had the highest mean (3.45) while the performance improvement had the lowest mean (2.84).

Table 5
Hospitality managers' satisfaction from E-learning in their hotel

No	E-learning usage	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Overall, I was satisfied with the e-learning	335	3.48	1.178
2	Use of e-learning changed how I learn	335	3.44	1.222
3	The use of E-learning has helped me develop new skills	335	3.34	1.217
	Overall Satisfaction	335	3.45	1.022
	Performance improvement			
1	I feel that I will be able to apply what I have learned	335	2.77	1.434
2	Use of E-learning has helped me improve my computing skills	335	2.85	1.463
3	Using E-learning has helped me to learn my subject more quickly	335	2.82	1.452
4	I learned a good amount of knowledge	335	2.90	1.458
	Overall Performance improvement	335	2.84	1.110

Relationship between E-learning managers' satisfaction and its Impacts on hospitality managers

The mean objective of correlation analysis was used to inspect whether relationship exists between the E-learning managers' satisfaction and its Impacts on hospitality managers. The result in Table (5) and Table (6) show that there is a significant correlation between e E-learning managers' satisfaction and its Impacts on hospitality managers (positive correlation of 0.151), Job Efficiency (positive correlation of 0.248), and job performance (positive correlation of). The descriptive statistics for e-learning impact on hospitality managers in terms of their E-learning usage were conducted for each item. The results showed the highest score was 3.48 related to E-learning usage which is related to overall, I was satisfied with the e-learning, while the lowest score 2.82 was related to Performance improvement which is related to using e-learning has helped me to learn my subject more quickly. The mean for e-learning impact on hospitality managers in terms of their job performance were ranked based on their importance in the following order; E-learning usage (3.45) Performance improvement (2.84).

Table 5
Correlation Coefficients between E-learning managers' satisfaction and its impact of on the job performance

Impact	Job Efficiency		Job performance		E-learningusage		Performance improvement	
	Sig	r	Sig	r	Sig	r	Sig	r
Satisfaction	.006	.151		.026	.000			

Table 6
Correlation Coefficients between E-Learning Factors and Impact Measures

		Job Efficiency	Job performance	E-learning usage	Performance improvement	satisfaction
Job Efficiency	P.Correlation Sig (2-tailed) N	1 335	-.047 .395 335	-.055 .312 335	-.055 .313 335	.151 .006 335
Job performance	P.Correlation Sig (2-tailed) N	.047 .393 335	1 335	.064 335	.101 .064 335	.026 .639 335
E-learning usage	P.Correlation Sig (2-tailed) N	.055 .312 335	.101 .064 335	1 335	1 335	.248** .000 335
Performance improvement	P.Correlation Sig (2-tailed) N	.055 .313 335	-.168** .002 335	.160** .003 335	.160** .003 335	.218** .000 335
satisfaction	P.Correlation Sig (2-tailed) N	.151** .006 335	.026 .639 335	.248** .000 335	.248** .000 335	1 335

Impact of E-learning on Hospitality managers and their job performance

Performance of the **Hospitality managers** with the e-learning is important to motivate learners. Learners that can quickly access and navigate courses and see the relevance of what they are learning with their jobs will be more likely to become engaged with e-learning. The types of analyses that are conducted at the beginning of the e-learning solution can help to create learning experiences that will make the learner feel comfortable, and motivated to learn. If learners' lack of basic skills (computer skills, reading skills, for example) and their belief that they cannot be successful (low self-efficacy) has not been uncovered via analyses, the likelihood that learning and transfer of learning on the job may occur could be minimal. Ensuring, then, that Hospitality managers and performance problems are explored within their contexts is critical to providing the best e-learning solution. Nevertheless, the results of factor analysis on impact on Hospitality managers in term of their job variable had identified two new factors and were labeled as job efficiency and job performance. The empirical results of the present study there were revealed no significant differences between the two groups based on job efficiency. While, in terms of job performance revealed significant differences between the two groups. However, evidence of contrasting gains accrued by different two is also being observed. The findings show that high-satisfaction have gained higher job performance compared to low-satisfaction and low-learners.

In addition, the results suggest a valid connection between e-learning satisfaction usage and job performance. The results indicate managers' acquisition of knowledge, skills and work attitudes through e-learning tools. E-learning is associated with training transfer, which facilitates job performance and satisfaction. E-Learning satisfaction are designed to implement the process of learning. In the virtual learning context, the results show that users benefit from the use of e-learning.

CONCLUSION

This study has documented importance of technology and face to face tutoring in a virtual learning environment augmented within a blended learning environment framework. But employees and Training managers will base there final analysis on the effectiveness of both E-Learning and blended learning when given the opportunity on a large scale. This means that the hotel chains must be very clear and realistic about what they are delivering to the employees and do not raise employees' expectation too high. An assessment system needs to be in place which helps to determine what information employees are learning and to provide feedback to inform managers of how successful employees are in the modules.

Recruiting large number of employees based on good marketing strategy can be one good starting point for hotels chain but the real success lies in the satisfaction and achievement of employees. At the same time hotels should provide necessary training to the trainers with all the latest technology and E-learning packages which are

essential for learning and training must also show enthusiasm to learn about new technology and use them in the learning process. Hotel chains should also invest into research in the area of E-Learning and blended learning. It is learning for all the employees and no one should take it for granted.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As with other studies in this field, the present study had its limitations. The sample in this study was department managers' in five-star hotels in the Egypt. It is suggested that future studies should be conducted in other industries in Egypt to examine different viewpoints. This study investigated managers' perceptions of the four factor among the e-learning and satisfaction. These findings were based on Managers' perceptions' viewpoints. Subordinates' should be addressed in future research to observe both subordinate and manager perspectives.

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