

Feature Article

Human resource development program: Designed with hospitality management

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the importance of providing an emotional experience has been emphasized in the service industry, and the word ‘hospitality’ has come to be used as a keyword for services and products that provide a better emotional experience to customers. Since hospitality has the characteristics of heterogeneity, intangibility, inseparable, and perishable, which are the characteristics of services, various attempts have been made to help hospitality management by clarifying the concepts and the factors that make them up. If hospitality management is defined as performance that exceeds customer’s expectations and obtains a far larger amount of customer satisfaction, it is possible to measure the degree of hospitality by improving customer satisfaction.

The tourism industry has more points of contact between employees and customers than other service industries, therefore the customer evaluation of employee behavior has a high influence on the performance of the company. In short, improving the performance of employees who provide hospitality to customers is an important issue. In recent years, customer needs have diversified and it has become difficult to predict customer intentions in advance, therefore it is necessary to immediately detect customer intentions when providing services and resolve them on the spot to exceed customer expectations.

In order to solve this problem, travel agencies offer a variety of human resource development programs depending on the employee’s career level. Traditional training in the travel industry is called ‘fam trip’, and it aims to acquire skills to create travel products and solve customer requests by familiarizing destinations. The main contents of the training are tours and experiences of local tourism materials in order to acquire knowledge.⁽¹⁾ After training, employees are expected to exert numerical effects, but in recent years there are many cases where the cost-effectiveness of training is not recognized, and there are pros and cons of conducting training within companies. For this reason, the travel industry needs effective strategies for fam trips to bring results. I would like to suggest that the implementation of a fam trip, as a human resource develop-

ment training aimed at improving the competency of employees, leads to work motivation and influences the result.

2. An old-fashioned ‘fam trip’

In 2015, when the word “shopping spree” was selected as a buzzword, the number of foreign tourists visiting Japan exceeded the number of Japanese tourists leaving Japan for the first time in 45 years. The impact of travel related consumption is expected to increase and not only the Japanese government but also local governments are focusing on inbound tourists.⁽²⁾ Japan, which has achieved a high degree of economic development, has adopted a policy of further economic growth based on tourism. It is certain that the tourism industry has great significance in giving economic value to things that have no monetary value, such as the local culture and scenery.

Implementing effective fam trips that will lead to an increase in tourists for the region will greatly contribute to tourism promotion as an activation measure against the declining population and changes in the industrial structure of the regions. In the travel industry, effective implementation of fam trip is an important training that contributes to business performance. However, in recent years, the cost-effectiveness of the training is often not recognized. One of the external factors is because of the internet, consumers can easily access to information of the destinations where they are going to visit. In the era without the internet, it was recognized that it would be possible to improve tour products by adding extra value based on the knowledge learned from fam trips, and to improve customer satisfaction that leads to increased sales amount by responding to customer inquiries in advance. However, that effect is decreasing because customers can easily access various information in recent years.

On the other hand, there are two internal factors. Suppliers tend to focus on entertaining participants of the fam trip rather than making them familiar with their product because the suppliers want more tourists sent by the participants. In addition, the travel agency on the customer side will also tend to implement fam trips as incentive trips for employees. Originally, the

implementation of fam trip is expected to result in an increase in the number of customers, which contributes to the receiving side and an increase in sales on the side of travel agent as the customer, but there is a growing concern of the cost-effectiveness.

3. Implementation of a ‘fam trip’ as a human resource development training

I would like to examine whether implementation of a fam trip shown in Figure 1, as a human resource development training aimed at improving the competency of employees leads to work motivation and influences hospitality skill that pulls out the result or not. The hospitality that individuals practice as a differentiation strategy in providing value to customers within the characteristics of services, heterogeneity, intangibility, inseparable, and perishable, is accumulated in human resources.

According to Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory of Motivation, hygiene factors such as policies and rules won’t encourage employees to work harder but they will cause them to become unmotivated if they are not present. On the other hand, motivators such as responsibility and achievement can encourage employees to work harder.⁽³⁾

In traditional fam trips, the recipient side often emphasizes the improvement of the area’s free WIFI environment, environmental improvement by multilingualized menus, facility guides, road signs, etc. Certainly, these are very useful factors for eliminating the inconvenience of travel due to differences in languages. However, referring to the Hertzberg’s two-factor theory, these improvements can be assumed as improvements in hygiene factors. In other words, the absence of hygiene factors will cause unpleasantness and even if those factors are improved, those won’t encourage people to visit the area. Also, it does not motivate participants of the training to sell tour products of the area. Free WIFI and multilingual restaurant menus will not be reasons to motivate people to visit the area.

In this analysis, fam trips are conducted as human resource management training designed with motivation factors, and the effect of training is measured by comparing the differences be-



Figure 2: Employee directing students

tween training participants and non-participants. The content of the training program is to provide guidance to students participating in the paid career design program about the management of events held in Hawaii by employees. This is designed to make employees as participants of the human resource development program feel responsibility and achievement by directing the student who joined the career design program. (Figure 2)

The program requires the student to direct participants of the event and answer questions from the audience. (Figure3)



Figure 3: Student directing participants of the Event

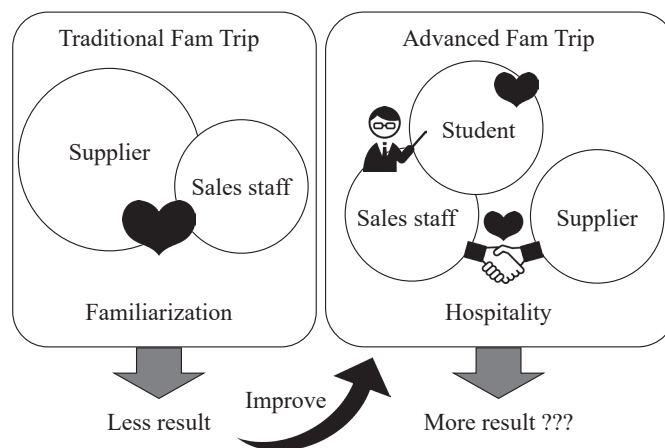


Figure 1: Implementation of a fam trip

For example, predicting and confirming customer's questions in advance, such as questions about the location of a toilet or a smoking area, helps to solve the question on the spot immediately, which leads to customer satisfaction.

Even for the task of distributing water to event participants, this leads to the realization that it is better to distribute water after performance than before to increase the value of water. This is because the performers are thirstier after performing than before performing. This means that employees as leaders need to advise students how to react to real customers. Through this task, employees and students learn the importance of proactively detecting and responding to customer needs, which produces a spirit of hospitality. By including this series of work into the training content, employees can feel a sense of accomplishment and responsibility through instructing students.

A total of 77 students from 20 universities participated in the four years from 2014 to 2017, and a total of 34 employees were in charge of teaching the students. The effect of incorporating motivation factors into training was measured by comparing the performance of 34 employees who participated in this training with those who did not. The comparison factor was the ratio of Hawaii product proposals to all overseas product proposals after participating in the training. The reason why sales and order rates are not used as comparison factors is that external factors such as price and purchasing abilities might influence the result.

4. Importance of motivation factors and social value

The ratio of Hawaii product proposals to all overseas product proposals from 2014 to 2017 is as shown in the Figure 4. As indicated by the results, the effect of designing fam trip as human resource development training incorporating motivation factors was confirmed. In order to provide design guidelines for fam trips as human development program that encourages employees lead to the result, this result managed to extract elements of fam trip that influences future possibility.

In addition, the employees who participated in the training not only felt a sense of responsibility and motivation, but also realized the social value of this tour product through the product itself designed for the experience of teaching students. The

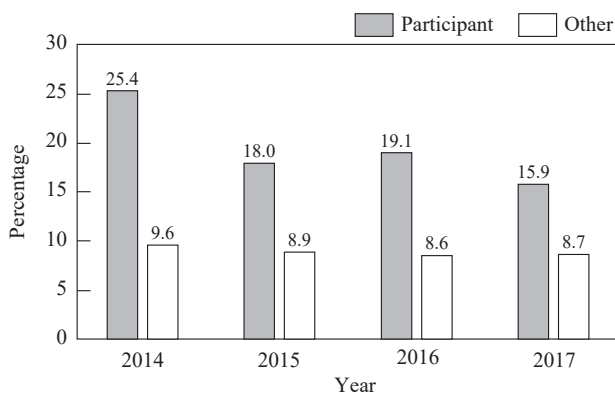


Figure 4: Sales challenge ratio for Hawaii

tour price of this career design program for students is higher than the usual Hawaii tour products. Consumers are generally price sensitive. Due to its nature, travel products are considered to be easy to imitate and quickly become commoditized. However, consumers can only compare products that exist in the market, and it is impossible to compare those that do not exist in the market. In other words, it is necessary to bring products with value to the market in order to make consumers aware of the subconscious mind and encourage consumers to purchase. Consumer needs are diversifying as credible information diversifies. Taking a product-out strategy based on the former mass-production and mass-consumption type has brought about an era of price competition, and the same applies to the service industry. Providing uniform services is an old idea in a diversified world. We must recognize that the way we develop products and services is also different from what it used to be.

5. Relationship between price and social value

As a result of seeking economic efficiency, people have come to question economic priority. Since the Lehman shock, corporate social responsibility and new ways of capitalism have been debated,⁽⁴⁾ and the social value of solving global issues through work and products has been drawing attention. As a general theory, prices are determined by the balance between supply and demand. On the other hand, introducing a product with a social value to the market even if the price is higher than that of a regular product will trigger consumers to notice the value. This is the first step in creating new demand to avoid price competition. Consumers who feel the social value of the products put on the market will purchase even if the price is high. (Figure 5)

Coles is a popular Australian supermarket that sells a variety of canned tuna that is caught by pole and line in the Maldives.⁽⁵⁾ Pole and line fishing is a selective fishing method that significantly reduces bycatch of species such as sharks and turtles. Bottom trawling fishing method can make the product cheaper but it has a negative effect on the environments. Although the price of canned tuna caught by pole and line fishing is higher

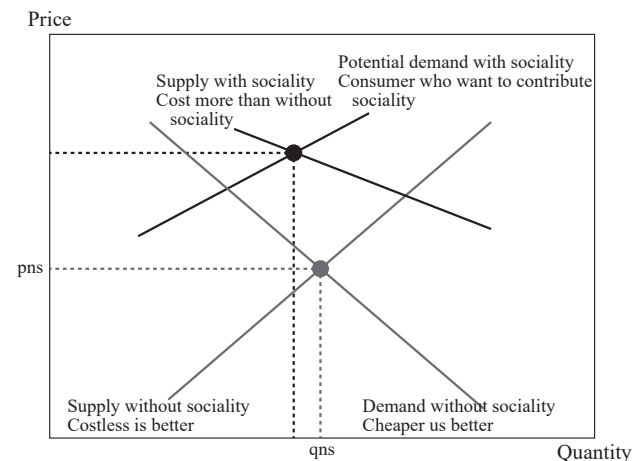


Figure 5: Mechanism of how to determine the price

than that of canned tuna caught by bottom dragnet, there are consumers who are willing to purchase higher priced canned food. Tuna is tuna, but the way it is caught is different. There are consumers who pay not only for the value of the tuna itself, but also for the social value created by the fishing method. It is important for employees to realize that it is possible to avoid price competition and increase sales by adding social value to products. Making employees aware of the social value added to tour products through this training will be a source of increasing the value of the products they will bring to the market in the future, and will contribute to sales growth.

6. Conclusion

I would like to suggest that the implementation of a fam trip as a human resource development training aimed at improving the competency of employees leads to work motivation and influences the result. Indicated by results. The effect of designing fam trip as human resource development training incorporating motivation factors has demonstrated the possibilities to improve the sales amount of the company. In addition, the awareness of the social value of the product by the employee was the trigger for introducing the product into the market, which could lead the consumer to discover new value. In order to increase the credibility of what is confirmed, I intend to further analyze the factors to further contribute to the tourism industry, which is responsible for Japan's economic growth.

Notes

- ⁽¹⁾ Ai, H., Maezawa, Y., Hompo, Y., and Aso, M. (2016). What makes familiarization trip effective to enhance tour product developments.
- ⁽²⁾ Japan Tourism Agency. Youth outbound promotion executive meeting (Retrieved September 28, 2020 from <https://www.mlit.go.jp/common/001270463.pdf>).
- ⁽³⁾ Herzberg, F. (1987). One more time: How do you motivate employees? *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 81, No. 1, 87-96.
- ⁽⁴⁾ Idowu, S. O. (2012). Corporate social responsibility: A capitalist ideology? *International Journal of Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 239-254.
- ⁽⁵⁾ Coles Brand Canned Tuna Sustainable Sourcing Policy (Retrieved September 28, 2020 from <https://www.smh.com.au/cqstatic/gj9cf8/ColesTunaPolicy.pdf>).