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A Review of Employee Training Initiatives and Their Impact on Workforce Satisfaction in Luxury and Budget Hotels

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ABSTRACT

Employee training has emerged as one of the most consequential levers through which hotels manage service quality, retention, and competitive positioning. This study examines how training initiatives shape workforce satisfaction across the contrasting operating contexts of luxury and budget hotels. The hospitality industry is uniquely dependent on its human capital because the service product is largely co-produced at the moment of guest contact, making the competence, confidence, and emotional engagement of frontline staff inseparable from the guest experience. Within this context, training functions not only as a mechanism for skill transfer but also as a signal of organisational investment that influences how employees perceive their value, their prospects, and their psychological contract with the employer. The review organises the literature around four analytical themes: the conceptual relationship between training and satisfaction, the differentiated training architectures of luxury and budget segments, the mediating and moderating variables that condition training outcomes, and the measurement and methodological practices that characterise the field. Evidence consistently indicates that well-designed, adequately resourced training is positively associated with job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and reduced turnover intention, yet the magnitude and mechanism of this relationship differ markedly by segment. Luxury hotels tend to deploy extensive, individualised, and career-oriented development that reinforces professional identity, whereas budget hotels rely on compressed, standardised, and task-focused training shaped by cost discipline and high labour turnover. The review concludes that training is best understood as a contextually embedded practice whose satisfaction benefits depend on alignment with reward systems, supervisory support, and credible advancement pathways. Persistent gaps in longitudinal evidence, cross-segment comparison, and measurement consistency limit causal claims and frame an agenda for future research. The synthesis offers implications for human resource practitioners seeking to calibrate training investment to segment realities while sustaining workforce satisfaction in a labour-intensive and increasingly digitalised industry.



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1. Introduction

The hospitality sector occupies a distinctive position within the global service economy because its core offering is produced, delivered, and consumed simultaneously through direct human interaction. Unlike manufacturing, where quality can be inspected and corrected before reaching the customer, a hotel's service is enacted in real time by employees whose attitudes, skills, and discretionary effort are immediately visible to guests. This structural feature places extraordinary weight on the people who staff the front desk, housekeeping, food and beverage outlets, and concierge functions, and it explains why human resource practices, and training in particular, have attracted sustained scholarly attention over the past decade. Training is the principal instrument through which hotels attempt to standardise service delivery, transmit brand values, and cultivate the interpersonal competence that distinguishes a memorable stay from a forgettable one. At the same time, training carries symbolic meaning for employees, communicating the extent to which an organisation is willing to invest in their growth, and this symbolic dimension links training directly to workforce satisfaction.

Workforce satisfaction matters in hospitality for reasons that extend well beyond employee wellbeing. A satisfied workforce is more likely to remain with the organisation, to display the emotional warmth that guests interpret as genuine hospitality, and to engage in the discretionary behaviours that smooth service recovery and personalisation. Conversely, dissatisfaction is associated with absenteeism, turnover, and the erosion of service consistency, all of which impose substantial direct and indirect costs in an industry already characterised by thin margins and intense competition. Because training and satisfaction are so tightly interwoven with retention and service quality, understanding how training initiatives influence satisfaction is of considerable practical as well as theoretical importance. This review addresses that question while paying particular attention to the contrast between luxury and budget hotels, two segments that pursue fundamentally different value propositions and, consequently, different approaches to developing their people.

1.1 Background and Context

Over the period covered by this review, the global hotel industry has navigated rapid digital transformation, shifting guest expectations, acute labour shortages, and, most disruptively, the COVID-19 pandemic, which reshaped both demand patterns and the availability of skilled staff. These pressures have intensified interest in training as a tool for resilience and differentiation. Luxury hotels compete on the basis of exceptional, personalised, and often anticipatory service, which requires employees to exercise judgement, emotional intelligence, and deep product knowledge. Budget hotels, by contrast, compete primarily on price and operational efficiency,



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delivering a reliable but pared-down experience in which speed, consistency, and cost control take precedence. These divergent strategies have direct implications for how each segment conceives of, resources, and delivers employee training, and they shape the kinds of satisfaction outcomes that training can realistically produce. Recognising this segment-level variation is essential to interpreting the often-cited general finding that training improves satisfaction, because the same intervention may operate quite differently depending on organisational context.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The significance of examining training and satisfaction jointly across luxury and budget hotels lies in the practical decisions that hospitality managers must make under resource constraints. Human resource budgets are finite, and training represents a discretionary investment that competes with other operational priorities. Managers therefore need evidence about which training approaches yield the strongest satisfaction returns within their particular segment, rather than generic prescriptions that assume a uniform industry. For luxury operators, the question is often how to sustain the high-touch development that underpins service excellence while containing escalating labour costs. For budget operators, the challenge is how to extract meaningful satisfaction and retention benefits from necessarily lean training systems. By synthesising the evidence across segments, this review aims to inform these decisions and to clarify the conditions under which training delivers genuine value rather than functioning as a compliance exercise. The synthesis also carries significance for theory, as it tests whether established human capital and social exchange explanations of the training–satisfaction link hold uniformly or are themselves contingent on segment context.

1.3 Scope and Objectives

This review concentrates on empirical and conceptual scholarship published between 2015 and 2024 that addresses employee training and its relationship to workforce satisfaction within hotel settings, with particular emphasis on studies that distinguish between or are situated within luxury and budget segments. The objectives are fourfold: to clarify the conceptual relationship between training and satisfaction as articulated in recent hospitality literature; to characterise how training initiatives differ between luxury and budget hotels and how these differences shape satisfaction outcomes; to identify the mediating and moderating factors that condition the training–satisfaction relationship; and to appraise the methodological practices through which the field has generated its evidence. The review deliberately spans onboarding, technical skills training, soft-skills and service-orientation development, leadership and managerial training, and increasingly prevalent digital and e-learning modalities, treating these as components of a broader training architecture rather than as isolated interventions.



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1.4 Structure of the Review

The remainder of the review is organised as follows. The literature review section examines the accumulated evidence through four thematic lenses, beginning with the conceptual foundations linking training to satisfaction, proceeding to the comparative analysis of luxury and budget training architectures, then to the mediating and moderating mechanisms that explain variation in outcomes, and finally to the measurement and methodological characteristics of the field. The conclusion consolidates the principal findings, distils their theoretical and practical implications, and acknowledges the limitations that temper the strength of the inferences that can be drawn. The review closes with a discussion of future research directions, identifying the gaps in longitudinal evidence, cross-segment comparison, technological integration, and methodological rigour that most urgently warrant attention. Throughout, the aim is to present a balanced synthesis that respects the heterogeneity of the evidence while offering usable guidance to scholars and practitioners alike.

2. Literature Review

The body of scholarship addressing training and workforce satisfaction in hotels has grown substantially over the past decade, reflecting both the strategic importance of human capital in hospitality and the methodological maturation of the field. This section organises that scholarship around four interrelated themes that together capture the conceptual, comparative, explanatory, and methodological dimensions of the literature. Rather than cataloguing studies in isolation, the discussion seeks to draw out points of convergence and tension, to highlight where the evidence is robust and where it remains tentative, and to situate findings within the contrasting realities of the luxury and budget segments that frame this review.

2.1 Conceptual Foundations of the Training–Satisfaction Relationship

At the conceptual level, the relationship between training and workforce satisfaction is most commonly explained through human capital theory and social exchange theory, two perspectives that emphasise complementary mechanisms. Human capital theory frames training as an investment that augments employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities, thereby increasing their productivity, their sense of competence, and their employability. From this vantage, satisfaction arises partly because trained employees feel more capable of performing their roles successfully and experience the intrinsic rewards of mastery. Social exchange theory, by contrast, foregrounds the relational meaning of training, interpreting an employer's investment as a gesture of goodwill that employees reciprocate with heightened commitment, loyalty, and satisfaction. Recent hospitality research has drawn on both traditions, frequently arguing that training influences satisfaction through a dual pathway in which competence gains and perceived organisational support operate together.



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Empirical studies over the review period have repeatedly reported positive associations between training participation, perceived training quality, and various facets of job satisfaction. This pattern holds across diverse national contexts, suggesting a degree of generalisability in the underlying relationship. However, the conceptual literature also cautions against treating training as uniformly beneficial. Several scholars note that training perceived as irrelevant, poorly delivered, or disconnected from advancement can generate frustration rather than satisfaction, particularly when employees invest effort in development that yields no tangible recognition or reward. This qualification has given rise to a more nuanced conceptualisation in which it is not training per se but the perceived quality, relevance, and consequence of training that drives satisfaction. The emphasis on perception is significant because it relocates the causal action from the existence of a training programme to the employee's subjective interpretation of it, thereby explaining why objectively similar programmes can produce divergent satisfaction outcomes.

A further conceptual development concerns the distinction between different training contents and their differential effects. Technical training that builds task proficiency may enhance satisfaction through competence, while soft-skills and emotional-labour training, which is especially salient in guest-facing roles, may influence satisfaction through its effect on employees' ability to manage demanding interactions without emotional exhaustion. The conceptual literature increasingly recognises that training interacts with the emotional demands of hospitality work, and that development which equips employees to perform emotional labour authentically can buffer against the burnout that otherwise undermines satisfaction. This insight integrates the training literature with the broader study of emotional labour in service work and underscores that the satisfaction benefits of training depend on the alignment between training content and the specific demands of the role.

2.2 Training Architectures in Luxury versus Budget Hotels

The comparative dimension of the literature reveals pronounced differences in how luxury and budget hotels design and deliver training, differences that flow directly from their contrasting value propositions and cost structures. Luxury hotels, whose competitive advantage rests on personalised and anticipatory service, typically invest heavily in extensive onboarding, ongoing professional development, brand-immersion programmes, and individualised coaching. Training in this segment is frequently oriented toward cultivating a professional identity and a service philosophy rather than merely transmitting discrete tasks, and it often extends over a prolonged period that signals a long-term developmental relationship between employee and employer. This investment is consistent with the luxury segment's reliance on employee discretion and emotional intelligence, capacities that cannot be scripted and must instead be developed through sustained, reflective practice.



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Budget hotels operate under a markedly different logic. With competition centred on price and operational efficiency, and with labour costs representing a major controllable expense, budget operators tend to favour compressed, standardised, and task-focused training that brings new employees to functional competence as quickly and cheaply as possible. Standardisation serves the budget model well because it ensures predictable service delivery across properties and reduces dependence on individual employee judgement. The literature documents a heavier reliance in this segment on structured checklists, e-learning modules, and on-the-job shadowing, modalities that economise on trainer time and accommodate the high turnover that characterises budget operations. While efficient, this approach can limit the depth of development and the sense of career investment that employees experience, with implications for the satisfaction outcomes that training can generate.

These architectural differences carry distinct satisfaction consequences. In luxury settings, the literature associates rich developmental investment with stronger professional identity, greater organisational commitment, and elevated satisfaction, partly because employees interpret the investment as recognition of their value and as a credible signal of advancement opportunity. In budget settings, the satisfaction effects of training are more contingent. Where lean training is paired with clarity, supportive supervision, and at least modest progression prospects, it can still yield meaningful satisfaction by reducing role ambiguity and building confidence. Where it is experienced as perfunctory or as a mere compliance requirement, its satisfaction benefits attenuate. The comparative literature thus suggests that segment does not determine satisfaction outcomes mechanically; rather, it shapes the resources and expectations within which training operates, and the same nominal investment can mean very different things to employees depending on the surrounding organisational context.

It is also worth noting that the luxury–budget dichotomy, while analytically useful, oversimplifies a more continuous reality. Many properties occupy intermediate positions, and brand-level standards, ownership structures, and national labour markets introduce further variation. Some budget brands have adopted elements of luxury-style developmental practice as a deliberate differentiation strategy, while some luxury operators have rationalised training to contain costs. The literature increasingly acknowledges this blurring, cautioning against essentialising either segment and encouraging attention to the specific configuration of training practices within particular organisations rather than to segment labels alone.

2.3 Mediating and Moderating Factors

A substantial strand of recent research has moved beyond establishing that training affects satisfaction to explaining how and under what conditions it does so. This work identifies a range of mediating variables that transmit the effect of training on satisfaction and moderating variables that strengthen or weaken it. Among the most prominent mediators are perceived



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organisational support, employee engagement, self-efficacy, and organisational commitment. Training appears to enhance satisfaction in part because it raises employees' perception that the organisation values and supports them, which in turn fosters engagement and commitment that manifest as satisfaction. Self-efficacy operates as a complementary mediator, with training building the confidence that makes work feel manageable and rewarding. These mediating pathways help reconcile the human capital and social exchange perspectives by showing that competence and perceived support are not competing explanations but sequential links in a causal chain.

On the moderating side, supervisory and managerial support emerges repeatedly as a decisive condition. Training delivered within a supportive supervisory climate, where managers reinforce newly acquired skills, provide feedback, and create opportunities to apply learning, produces stronger satisfaction effects than training delivered in isolation. Reward and recognition systems function similarly, with the satisfaction benefits of training amplified when development is linked to tangible advancement, pay progression, or acknowledgement. The literature also highlights the moderating role of career-growth opportunity: training that is perceived to lead somewhere enhances satisfaction more than training that appears to be an end in itself. This finding is particularly relevant to the segment comparison, because luxury hotels are generally better positioned to offer credible advancement pathways, whereas budget hotels, with flatter structures and higher turnover, may struggle to make such promises convincing.

Individual and cultural characteristics further moderate the relationship. Employee career stage, prior experience, and learning orientation shape how training is received, with developmentally oriented employees deriving greater satisfaction from training opportunities. National and organisational culture also condition outcomes, as the meaning attached to employer investment and the expectations surrounding development vary across cultural contexts. Some studies report that the training–satisfaction link is stronger in cultures that emphasise long-term employment relationships and reciprocal obligation, consistent with the social exchange interpretation. The accumulation of these contingency findings has shifted the field toward a more conditional understanding in which the central question is no longer whether training improves satisfaction but for whom, in what circumstances, and through which mechanisms it does so most effectively.

2.4 Measurement and Methodological Approaches

The methodological character of the literature both enables and constrains the conclusions that can be drawn. The dominant approach over the review period has been cross-sectional survey research, in which employees report on their training experiences and their satisfaction at a single point in time, with relationships estimated through correlation, regression, or structural equation modelling. This design has produced a rich body of evidence on the associations among



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training, its mediators, and satisfaction, and structural equation modelling in particular has allowed researchers to test complex multi-path models that capture mediation and moderation simultaneously. However, the reliance on cross-sectional, self-report data introduces well-recognised limitations, including the difficulty of establishing causal direction and the risk of common-method bias inflating observed relationships. Because training and satisfaction are measured concurrently and from the same source, it is often impossible to determine whether training raises satisfaction, whether satisfied employees evaluate their training more favourably, or whether both are driven by some third factor.

Measurement practices also vary considerably across studies, complicating the synthesis of findings. Training is operationalised in diverse ways, ranging from the mere presence or frequency of training, through hours of training received, to perceptual measures of training quality, relevance, and satisfaction with training. Satisfaction itself is sometimes treated as a global construct and sometimes decomposed into facets such as satisfaction with work, supervision, pay, and advancement. This heterogeneity means that ostensibly comparable studies may in fact be measuring rather different things, and it cautions against drawing strong quantitative conclusions from any simple tally of significant relationships. The field would benefit from greater consistency in construct definition and measurement, and from more transparent reporting of how training and satisfaction are conceptualised and assessed.

A smaller but growing body of work has begun to employ qualitative, mixed-methods, and longitudinal designs that address some of these limitations. Qualitative studies offer richer insight into how employees interpret training and into the contextual factors that shape its meaning, while longitudinal designs hold the promise of clarifying causal order by observing how changes in training relate to subsequent changes in satisfaction. Mixed-methods research, by combining the explanatory depth of qualitative inquiry with the generalisability of survey data, is particularly well suited to a field in which perception and context loom so large. Nonetheless, such designs remain relatively rare, and the segment-comparative dimension that is central to this review is seldom addressed through rigorous matched comparison. Much of what is known about luxury–budget differences is inferred across separate studies conducted in different contexts rather than established through direct comparison within a single design, a methodological gap that materially limits the confidence with which segment differences can be asserted.

3. Conclusion

This review set out to synthesise a decade of scholarship on how employee training initiatives influence workforce satisfaction in luxury and budget hotels, and several robust conclusions emerge from that synthesis. First, the evidence consistently supports a positive relationship between well-designed training and workforce satisfaction, a relationship that holds across a wide range of national and organisational settings and that is theoretically grounded in both



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human capital and social exchange explanations. Training contributes to satisfaction by building competence and self-efficacy and by signalling organisational investment that employees reciprocate with commitment and loyalty. This dual mechanism helps explain why training so reliably correlates with satisfaction and why its effects are transmitted through mediators such as perceived organisational support, engagement, and commitment.

Second, and central to the purpose of this review, the relationship between training and satisfaction is contextually contingent rather than uniform, and the contrast between luxury and budget hotels illustrates this contingency vividly. Luxury hotels typically deploy extensive, individualised, and career-oriented development that reinforces professional identity and that employees experience as recognition and opportunity, producing strong satisfaction benefits. Budget hotels rely on compressed, standardised, and task-focused training shaped by cost discipline and high turnover, and the satisfaction returns to such training are more conditional, depending heavily on supportive supervision, clarity, and credible progression. The same nominal training investment can therefore mean very different things depending on the segment context and the surrounding human resource practices, and segment labels are best understood as shorthand for configurations of resources and expectations rather than as deterministic categories.

Third, the review underscores that training does not operate in isolation. Its satisfaction benefits are amplified or attenuated by supervisory support, reward and recognition systems, career-growth opportunity, and individual and cultural characteristics. This conclusion carries a clear practical implication: managers seeking to raise satisfaction through training must attend not only to the training itself but to the organisational ecosystem in which it is embedded. For luxury operators, the priority is to sustain rich development while linking it to advancement in ways that remain credible under cost pressure. For budget operators, the opportunity lies in extracting maximum satisfaction value from lean training by surrounding it with supportive supervision, clear role expectations, and whatever progression prospects the structure allows. In both cases, alignment between training and the wider reward and support system is the decisive factor.

Finally, these conclusions must be tempered by the methodological limitations of the underlying literature. The predominance of cross-sectional, self-report, single-source survey data constrains causal inference, measurement heterogeneity complicates synthesis, and direct, matched comparison across luxury and budget segments is scarce. The confident generalisations that pervade the field therefore rest on a foundation that is broader than it is deep. The training–satisfaction relationship is real and practically important, but the precise magnitude, mechanism, and segment-specificity of that relationship remain less firmly established than the volume of literature might suggest. Recognising this gap between the apparent consensus and the evidentiary base is itself an important conclusion, and it frames the agenda for future research.



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4. Future Work

The limitations identified in this review point toward several priorities for future research that would strengthen both the rigour and the practical utility of the field. The most pressing need is for longitudinal research capable of clarifying causal order. Because the dominant cross-sectional designs cannot disentangle whether training raises satisfaction or satisfied employees evaluate training more favourably, studies that track employees over time, observing how changes in training provision relate to subsequent changes in satisfaction and retention, would substantially advance understanding. Such designs would also illuminate the durability of training effects, distinguishing transient enthusiasm following a programme from lasting shifts in satisfaction and commitment.

A second priority is rigorous, matched cross-segment comparison. At present, conclusions about luxury–budget differences are largely inferred across separate studies conducted in disparate contexts, leaving genuine segment effects confounded with national, cultural, and methodological variation. Research that compares training and satisfaction across luxury and budget properties within a single, carefully designed study, ideally controlling for confounding factors, would permit far more confident statements about how segment shapes the training–satisfaction relationship. Such work could also explore the intermediate and hybrid positions that many properties occupy, moving beyond the simplifying dichotomy toward a more continuous and configurational understanding of training architectures.

Third, future research should engage more deeply with the technological transformation of training. The rapid adoption of e-learning, mobile micro-learning, virtual and augmented reality simulation, and increasingly artificial-intelligence-enabled personalised development is reshaping how hotels train their workforce, yet the satisfaction implications of these modalities remain underexplored. Important questions concern whether digital training can replicate the relational, identity-forming benefits of high-touch development, how different employee groups respond to technology-mediated learning, and whether such modalities narrow or widen the training gap between resource-rich luxury operators and cost-constrained budget operators. Given the pace of technological change, this is likely to be among the most consequential frontiers for the field.

Fourth, methodological diversification and measurement standardisation deserve sustained attention. Greater use of qualitative and mixed-methods designs would enrich understanding of how employees interpret training and of the contextual factors that condition its effects, complementing the generalisability of survey research with explanatory depth. At the same time, the field would benefit from convergence toward shared, validated measures of training and satisfaction, and from designs that mitigate common-method bias through multi-source data and temporal separation of measurement. Finally, future work could productively extend beyond



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satisfaction to examine the downstream consequences of training-enhanced satisfaction for guest experience, service quality, and financial performance, thereby closing the loop between human resource investment and the business outcomes that ultimately justify it. Pursuing these directions would move the field from a well-established but loosely specified consensus toward a more precise, causally grounded, and practically actionable body of knowledge.

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