



Hospitality workforce dynamics: Addressing the skill gap in emerging markets in southwest Nigeria

¹ Oyinloye Shakirat Abolaji, ² Aliu Zainul Abideen & ³ Muhammed Faidat Abimbola

¹ Department of Tourism Management Technology, Federal Polytechnic Ayede, Oyo State

² Department of Office Technology and Management, Federal Polytechnic Ayede, Oyo State

³ Department of Hospitality Management, Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State

**Corresponding Author: aliuza@federalpolyayede.edu.ng

ORCID iD: 0009-0007-8787-3830

Abstract

The hospitality industry in Southwest Nigeria possesses the capacity to catalyze significant economic growth; however, it encounters substantial challenges because of a burgeoning skill gap within the workforce. This paper delves into the dynamics of the hospitality workforce in emerging markets—specifically within Southwest Nigeria—focusing on the root causes and implications of the skill deficit in the sector. The study examines the repercussions of inadequate training, outdated educational curricula and rapid technological advancements which hinder workforce development and diminish industry competitiveness. Drawing from theories such as Human Capital Theory and Skill Formation Theory, the paper presents strategies to mitigate these gaps, including enhancing education-industry linkages, promoting public-private partnerships and leveraging technology for training and professional development. Furthermore, it offers comparative insights from other emerging markets, highlighting potential benefits of addressing the skill gap for both workers and the broader economy. The findings underscore the necessity for collaborative efforts among government, educational institutions and industry stakeholders to ensure skilled, adaptable and competitive workforce. This paper contributes to ongoing debates in workforce development; it offers practical recommendations for enhancing skill set of hospitality workers in Southwest Nigeria. However, because of the complexities involved, achieving these objectives remains a formidable challenge. Although various stakeholders recognize the importance of this initiative, effective implementation often falters due to insufficient resources or lack of coordinated action.

Keywords: Hospitality industry, skill gap, workforce development, emerging markets, Southwest Nigeria

Introduction

The hospitality industry is a dynamic, rapidly growing sector that plays a pivotal role in economic development of nations particularly in emerging markets. In regions like Southwest Nigeria, hospitality industry encompasses diverse activities, including accommodation services, food and beverage operations, tourism and event management. It contributes significantly to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment and foreign exchange earnings; however, it also facilitates cultural exchange and global interconnectedness. Despite its potential, this sector encounters numerous challenges. Workforce development and skill acquisition are, therefore, critical issues that require attention, because they will ultimately determine the sustainability and growth of industry.

Emerging markets are distinguished by rapid economic growth, an escalation in urbanization and a burgeoning middle class with elevated disposable incomes. These factors—however, drive demand for hospitality services, thus positioning the sector as a principal catalyst for economic transformation (UNWTO, 2022). In Nigeria, for instance, the hospitality industry has witnessed consistent growth due to several factors: increased domestic and international tourism, the expansion of urban centers and investments in infrastructure (WTTC, 2023). The significance of industry extends beyond direct economic contributions; it encompasses indirect benefits such as supply chain development, job creation and skills transfer. Although these elements are crucial, they intertwine in a complex manner,

reflecting the multifaceted nature of economic dynamics in emerging markets.

Workforce development refers to the process of equipping individuals with knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to address the demands of specific industries. In hospitality sector, workforce development is critical because this industry is labor-intensive and heavily reliant on quality of human interactions to deliver exceptional customer experiences (Baum, 2019). Employees within sector are required to possess a diverse array of skills, including technical abilities e.g., culinary arts, housekeeping and event planning, as well as soft skills e.g., communication, problem-solving and cultural competence.

However, in emerging markets such as Southwest Nigeria, workforce development efforts are often hampered by systemic challenges, including inadequate vocational training facilities, outdated curricula and a lack of alignment between educational institutions and industry needs (Amoah & Baum, 2021). Although these issues result in a persistent skill gap, which undermines the hospitality industry's ability to meet customer expectations, it is important to recognize that such challenges can be addressed through strategic interventions.

Skill acquisition is fundamental to workforce development: it ensures that employees are able to adapt to the evolving demands of hospitality industry. In a globalized and technology-driven world, skills required for success in sector are continuously changing. For example, integration of technology into hospitality operations—such as the use of

artificial intelligence for customer service and digital platforms for bookings necessitates new competencies among workers (Chuang et al., 2021). Moreover, hospitality industry thrives on service quality, which is directly influenced by skills and professionalism of its workforce. High levels of customer satisfaction are associated with well-trained employees who can provide personalized and efficient services. Consequently, skill acquisition is not only a driver of individual career advancement, but also a strategic imperative for growth and competitiveness of industry (ILO, 2020). However, this dynamic landscape presents challenges, because it requires ongoing investment in training and development to keep pace with technological advancements. Although some may argue that experience alone suffices, the reality is that without formal skill acquisition, workers risk becoming obsolete in a rapidly changing environment.

Southwest Nigeria despite being one of the most economically vibrant regions in the country faces significant workforce development challenges in the hospitality sector. The Nigerian education system often prioritizes theoretical knowledge over practical skills; this leaves graduates ill-equipped for the demands of the hospitality industry (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008). Limited access to financial resources restricts individuals and institutions' ability to invest in quality training and education programs. The slow adoption of technology in many hospitality businesses impedes development of modern skills, creating a mismatch between industry needs and workforce capabilities (Tang & Wang, 2020). Furthermore, the absence of robust policies

and partnerships between government, private sector and educational institutions exacerbates workforce challenges. However, addressing these issues is crucial for enhancing the sector's overall productivity and sustainability.

On a global scale, the hospitality industry is undergoing profound transformation, driven by technological advancements, shifting consumer preferences and the escalating significance of sustainability. These trends, however, present both challenges and opportunities for emerging markets, particularly in Southwest Nigeria. For instance, the ascendancy of sustainable tourism underscores the necessity for green skills such as energy management and waste reduction while the burgeoning popularity of experiential tourism demands a heightened degree of cultural sensitivity and creativity from the workforce (UNEP, 2022). Emerging markets can glean insights from best practices in workforce development that have been executed in other regions; for example, countries like India have effectively utilized public-private partnerships to establish world-class hospitality training institutes. South Africa, on the other hand, has made substantial investments in e-learning platforms to enhance accessibility to skills training (Baum, 2019). These instances illustrate the potential for innovative strategies in workforce development within Southwest Nigeria's hospitality sector, thus paving the way for a more sustainable future.

Statement of the Problem

The hospitality industry within emerging markets such as Southwest Nigeria possesses

considerable potential to foster economic growth, generate employment and enhance global competitiveness. However, one of the most substantial obstacles to actualizing this potential is the enduring skill gap present in the workforce. This gap characterized by employers' inability to locate adequately trained and competent employees undermines service quality, operational efficiency and the industry's overall capacity to flourish in a competitive global market (Baum, 2019). The skill gap in hospitality workforce arises from several interconnected issues. A critical factor is the misalignment (between the educational curriculum and industry needs). Many graduates entering the workforce lack practical skills required for customer-facing roles, problem-solving and adapting to modern technologies utilized in the sector (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008). Vocational training programs that could bridge this gap are often underfunded or poorly implemented, thus leaving significant portion of the workforce unprepared for the demands of the industry (Amoah & Baum, 2021).

Economic factors indeed play a crucial role in exacerbating the skill gap: high unemployment rates and limited access to affordable education and training facilities restrict opportunities for skill acquisition. Furthermore, the lack of structured career progression coupled with low wages in the hospitality sector often discourages skilled professionals from remaining in or entering the industry; this results in high turnover rates (Tang & Wang, 2020). Another contributing factor is the rapid pace of technological change. The hospitality industry increasingly relies on digital tools for operations, such as

AI-driven customer service systems, contactless check-ins and data analytics for personalized guest experiences. However, many workers in Southwest Nigeria's hospitality sector lack the technical proficiency to adapt to these advancements, thus further widening the skill gap (Chuang et al., 2021).

The ramifications of this skill gap are extensive and profound. For businesses, it engenders reduced productivity, diminished customer satisfaction, as well as a waning competitive advantage. Economically, the inability to fully capitalize on the hospitality industry's potential curtails job creation, foreign exchange earnings and contributions to GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Individuals are not exempt; it perpetuates cycles of underemployment and unemployment, thereby restricting socioeconomic mobility (ILO, 2020). In summary, the skill gap existing within Southwest Nigeria's hospitality workforce represents a formidable challenge that necessitates urgent attention. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach: it must involve educational reforms, industry collaboration, policy interventions and investments in continuous professional development. Without such measures, the sector's ability to attain sustainable growth and contribute meaningfully to the region's economy will remain severely constrained. However, tackling this issue is not merely an option; it is a prerequisite for fostering economic resilience.

Objectives of the Paper

This paper aims to:

- 1) Analyze the dynamics of skill shortages in the hospitality workforce.
- 2) Explore theoretical approaches to understanding and addressing the skill gap.
- 3) Provide evidence-based strategies for workforce development in Southwest Nigeria's hospitality industry.

Literature Review

The hospitality industry a key driver of economic growth continues to evolve rapidly; particularly in emerging markets. Workforce dynamics and skill acquisition are critical aspects of this evolution. This literature review explores existing research on workforce challenges in the hospitality sector trends in emerging markets, theoretical perspectives and gaps in the current body of knowledge. It also highlights insights from relevant frameworks such as Human Capital Theory, Skill Formation Theory and Systems Theory. However, it is important to note that these frameworks, although valuable, may not fully encompass the complexities of the industry's transformation because they often overlook certain socio-economic factors. This is particularly relevant in a context where rapid changes necessitate a more nuanced understanding.

Workforce Challenges in the Hospitality Sector

The hospitality industry is, by its very nature, labor-intensive, necessitating a workforce that possesses both technical and interpersonal

skills. Research indicates that workforce challenges represent a global issue; however, their manifestations differ significantly across various regions. In emerging markets, such as Southwest Nigeria, these challenges are exacerbated by systemic issues—like inadequate training facilities, outdated curricula and limited industry-academia collaboration (Baum, 2019).

Staff retention emerges as another critical concern within the hospitality sector. High turnover rates are prevalent, primarily due to low wages, limited career progression opportunities and demanding work environments. According to Chuang et al. (2021), these challenges contribute to the skill gap, because the constant need to recruit and train new employees disrupts organizational continuity and quality standards. In Southwest Nigeria, economic instability complicates these issues, making it increasingly difficult for businesses to invest in long-term workforce development. Thus, addressing these multifaceted challenges is imperative for the sustainability of the hospitality industry.

Trends in Emerging Markets

Emerging markets are characterized by rapid economic growth, urbanization and increasing demand for hospitality services. This creates opportunities (and challenges) for workforce development. The rise of experiential tourism, for example, demands culturally aware and creative employees who can deliver unique and personalized services (UNWTO, 2022). However, these markets often lack infrastructure and resources to meet such demands.

In Southwest Nigeria, tourism and hospitality have been identified as priority sectors for economic diversification; however, the industry struggles with inadequate skill development systems, which limits its ability to attract international tourists and compete globally. Digital transformation is another significant trend impacting hospitality workforce in emerging markets. Technology adoption in areas such as guest management, reservations and data analytics has introduced new skill requirements, further widening the gap between industry needs and workforce capabilities (Tang & Wang, 2020).

Gaps in Existing Literature

Although substantial research exists regarding workforce challenges in developed nations, studies specifically targeting emerging markets remain relatively sparse. The existing literature frequently generalizes findings derived from developed contexts these may not be entirely applicable to regions characterized by unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics such as Southwest Nigeria (Amoah & Baum, 2021). Furthermore, the role of policy interventions in tackling workforce challenges is notably underexplored; few studies delve into how government policies, private sector initiatives and educational reforms can collectively ameliorate the skill gap in the hospitality industry. Similarly, there is a dearth of research concerning the impact of global trends such as sustainability and digitalization on workforce development in emerging markets (ILO, 2020). This gap in the literature underscores the necessity for more focused investigations into these critical areas.

Relevant Theories

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory posits that investments in education and training enhance workforce productivity and economic growth; however, this theory underscores the importance of developing a skilled workforce to meet the demands of the hospitality industry. Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) emphasize that in regions like Southwest Nigeria, limited investment in human capital development constrains the sector's potential (because of various factors). By aligning educational programs with industry needs, stakeholders can improve workforce readiness and competitiveness, although challenges remain.

Skill Formation Theory

Skill Formation Theory (SFT) concentrates on processes and institutions involved in developing workforce skills. This framework emphasizes the significance of vocational training; apprenticeships and on-the-job learning in addressing skill gaps. In the context of emerging markets, Amoah and Baum (2021) assert that integrating industry-specific training into educational curricula is crucial for bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. However, this integration poses challenges, because it requires collaboration between educational institutions and industries. Although the potential benefits are substantial, the implementation remains complex and fraught with difficulties.

Systems Theory

Systems Theory provides a holistic perspective on workforce dynamics by

considering interconnections between various elements: education, industry, policy and technology. This approach is particularly relevant for addressing complex challenges in hospitality sector, where multiple stakeholders must collaborate to achieve sustainable workforce development. According to Chuang et al. (2021), a systems-based approach can help identify bottlenecks; however, it also aids in designing comprehensive strategies for addressing workforce challenges in Southwest Nigeria. Although there are numerous obstacles, this methodology proves invaluable because it encourages collaborative solutions.

Strategies for Addressing Workforce Challenges

Research underscores various strategies for addressing workforce challenges within hospitality industry. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) represent one effective approach: they leverage strengths of both sectors to deliver targeted training programs. For instance, countries such as India and South Africa have successfully implemented PPPs to establish world-class hospitality training institutions (Baum, 2019). Technology-enabled learning, however, emerges as another promising solution. E-learning platforms and virtual simulations can make skill development more accessible and cost-effective particularly in resource-constrained settings. In Southwest Nigeria, the adoption of such technologies could help bridge gap between urban and rural areas in terms of access to quality training (ILO, 2020). Policy interventions also play crucial role in workforce development. Governments can incentivize businesses to invest in employee training and create frameworks that

promote industry-academia collaboration. Policies that support lifelong learning and continuous professional development are particularly significant in an industry characterized by rapid technological and market changes (Tang & Wang, 2020).

Comparative Insights from Other Markets

Insights garnered from both emerging and developed markets can significantly inform strategies aimed at addressing workforce challenges in Southwest Nigeria. For instance, Singapore's hospitality industry has indeed reaped benefits from government-led initiatives designed to enhance workforce skills through continuous training and certification programs. Similarly, Brazil has prioritized (and continues to prioritize) vocational training and social inclusion within its hospitality workforce development strategies (UNWTO, 2022).

Moreover, developed markets, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, have illustrated the substantial value of leveraging technology for workforce development; from online training platforms to AI-driven recruitment tools, these innovations provide crucial insights for emerging markets seeking to modernize their hospitality sectors (Chuang et al., 2021). However, it is essential to recognize that while these lessons are applicable, adaptation to local contexts is imperative. This necessity arises because the socio-economic dynamics in Southwest Nigeria may differ markedly from those observed in the aforementioned regions. Consequently, careful consideration of these differences will be critical for the successful implementation of similar strategies.

Analysis of the Skill Gap Issue in Emerging Markets

The hospitality industry (in Southwest Nigeria) faces significant skill gaps as in many emerging markets, which has serious implications for sector's development. This skill gap is driven by various interconnected factors that hinder the ability of workforce to meet increasingly complex demands of the industry. To understand root causes of this issue, it is essential to examine both educational challenges and economic and technological constraints that contribute to this gap; however, the interplay of these elements is multifaceted and often overlooked. Although one might argue that investment in training could remedy the situation, systemic issues persist because they are deeply rooted in societal structures. This complexity necessitates a nuanced exploration of how these factors converge and impact overall efficacy within the sector.

A fundamental root cause of the skill gap within the hospitality workforce pertains to the disjunction or mismatch existing between what is imparted in educational institutions and the actual exigencies of the industry. In Southwest Nigeria, numerous educational programs concerning hospitality and tourism are either outdated or deficient in practical training components (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008). Academic curricula frequently prioritize theoretical knowledge over hands-on skills, thereby leaving graduates ill-equipped to meet the immediate demands of employers within the hospitality sector. This predicament is further compounded by the subpar quality of vocational training programs, which ultimately fail to furnish workers with the

practical skills and industry-specific knowledge requisite for success (Amoah & Baum, 2021). The absence of training programs that are aligned with contemporary industry standards and trends (such as digitalization, sustainability and customer experience management) ensures that many prospective employees remain inadequately prepared.

Economic factors also play a significant role in exacerbating the skill gap: the hospitality industry is often viewed as low-wage sector and despite its importance, the industry's labor market in Southwest Nigeria struggles to attract qualified professionals due to poor compensation and absence of clear career progression pathways (Baum, 2019). This lack of incentives results in high employee turnover, a major challenge for businesses that depend on skilled workers to maintain customer satisfaction and operational efficiency (ILO, 2020). The scarcity of financial resources for training and development further exacerbates the problem, however both employers and employees are often unable to invest in skill enhancement because of budget constraints (Chuang et al., 2021).

A fundamental root cause pertains to the accelerated tempo of technological evolution within the hospitality sector. Contemporary innovations including artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning and automation—are fundamentally altering operational paradigms within the industry. From AI-driven customer service bots to cloud-based property management systems, these advancements necessitate a workforce that is not only digitally literate but also adept at

maneuvering through intricate technological landscapes (Chuang et al., 2021). However, numerous workers in Southwest Nigeria's hospitality sector find themselves devoid of the requisite technical expertise to effectively adapt to these innovations, which exacerbates the existing skills deficit. The sector's sluggish pace of technological adoption attributable to financial limitations, lack of awareness, or resistance to transformation further impedes the cultivation of the workforce's digital proficiencies (Tang & Wang, 2020).

Consequences for the Hospitality Industry

The skill gap within the hospitality workforce engenders profound repercussions for businesses, employees and the overarching economy. At the level of enterprise, this skill gap undermines competitiveness and efficiency of hospitality firms; service quality critical to customer satisfaction and repeat patronage is intricately linked to the skills and expertise possessed by the workforce. However, when employees lack requisite skills, businesses often encounter diminished productivity, an uptick in customer complaints and, in extreme circumstances, detrimental reputations that can dissuade prospective clientele (Baum, 2019). For instance, the hospitality industry is immensely reliant on personal interactions, which necessitate exceptional communication skills, adept problem-solving capabilities and emotional intelligence (Amoah & Baum, 2021). A workforce that is either untrained or insufficiently skilled in these crucial domains is likely to falter in delivering high-caliber service; thus, leading to a significant loss of business.

From an economic perspective, the skill gap restricts full potential of hospitality industry to contribute to national and regional economic growth. The hospitality sector is major source of employment, particularly for youth and women, in many emerging markets (ILO, 2020). However, inability to meet industry's demand for skilled workers means many individuals remain unemployed or underemployed. This leads to inefficient use of human resources, preventing sector from expanding its contribution to GDP and limiting its role as a driver of economic transformation. Moreover, the lack of skilled workers affects industry's ability to attract foreign investments, because investors are more likely to hesitate in markets where labor quality is uncertain.

At the individual level, skill gap affects career development and income potential for workers in hospitality industry. Many hospitality workers are caught in cycles of low-wage, low-skill employment due to lack of opportunities for career advancement (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008). This not only limits their earning potential: however, it also contributes to job dissatisfaction and high turnover rates, which further destabilize sector. Although workers strive for improvement, they often find themselves trapped because of systemic barriers.

Application of Theoretical Insights

Several theoretical frameworks can help understand and address the skill gap in the hospitality workforce. Human Capital Theory (HCT), for instance, emphasizes the importance of education and skill development as key drivers of economic growth and individual productivity (Olaniyan

& Okemakinde, 2008). According to HCT, investments in human capital such as vocational training, higher education, and continuous professional development are essential for improving workforce capabilities. In the context of Southwest Nigeria, this means aligning educational institutions with industry needs to ensure that graduates possess the necessary skills to thrive in the hospitality sector.

The Skill Formation Theory (SFT) provides another lens through which to analyze the issue. SFT suggests that the acquisition of specific skills is influenced by both the formal education system and the informal mechanisms within the labor market, such as on-the-job training and apprenticeships (Baum, 2019). In the case of Southwest Nigeria, there is a need to enhance collaboration between educational institutions, government agencies, and hospitality businesses to create more structured and comprehensive training programs that cater to the sector's evolving needs.

Lastly, Systems Theory offers valuable insights into how various factors economic, technological, and educational interact and contribute to the broader workforce development challenges. According to this theory, addressing the skill gap requires a systemic approach that takes into account the interconnectedness of these factors (Amoah & Baum, 2021). For example, the government could create policies that incentivize both businesses and educational institutions to invest in workforce development. This holistic approach can foster the growth of a

skilled and adaptable hospitality workforce in Southwest Nigeria.

Proposed Strategies for Addressing the Skill Gap

In order to address the skill gap within Southwest Nigeria's hospitality industry, several strategies may be implemented. First: educational institutions must collaborate more closely with industry stakeholders, ensuring that curricula align with current industry standards and trends. This could involve the incorporation of practical skills (e.g., digital literacy and customer service excellence) into hospitality programs. However, partnerships between universities, vocational schools and industry players could significantly help bridge the gap between formal education and real-world application. Second, the establishment of public-private partnerships (PPPs) could provide necessary funding for the creation of training institutes and certification programs specifically tailored to the hospitality sector. These institutes might focus on niche areas such as culinary arts, event management and tourism marketing; they could offer both entry-level and advanced certifications that meet industry needs (Baum, 2019). Although these strategies show promise, their successful implementation will depend on collective commitment from all involved stakeholders.

The integration of technology within the training paradigm can significantly mitigate the existing skill gap; however, it is essential to consider various factors that influence its effectiveness. E-learning platforms alongside virtual training programs and simulation tools serve not only to impart technical competencies but also to cultivate soft skills in

a manner that is simultaneously flexible and accessible. This flexibility enables workers to engage in upskilling at their individual paces, thereby lessening the constraints imposed by geographical and financial barriers (Chuang et al., 2021). Furthermore, the establishment of enhanced career pathways, coupled with the provision of competitive wages and improved working conditions, can effectively attract and retain adept professionals in the hospitality sector. Policies designed to elevate wages and bolster job security, as well as to present clear avenues for career advancement, could substantially diminish turnover rates and, thus, ensure a more stable and proficient workforce (ILO, 2020). Nevertheless, achieving these outcomes necessitates a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in workforce development.

Comparative Insights

Lessons may be drawn from other emerging markets (which have successfully addressed the hospitality workforce gap); for instance, in India: the government has partnered with private training providers to offer industry-specific vocational programs aligned with global standards. This initiative has resulted in an increase in employability of young workers in the hospitality sector (Tang & Wang, 2020). Similarly, South Africa has leveraged digital training platforms to provide affordable and accessible education for hospitality workers, enabling them to gain relevant skills and certifications without burden of traditional educational costs (Baum, 2019). These models provide valuable insights for Southwest Nigeria, where similar initiatives could potentially be replicated to improve workforce development; however, challenges remain.

Conclusion

The hospitality industry in Southwest Nigeria harbors considerable promise as a catalyst for economic growth, job creation and the enhancement of the region's global competitiveness. However, the pervasive skill gap within the workforce presents a critical challenge that must be addressed for the industry to realize its full potential. This paper has explored various root causes of this skill gap, including deficiencies in educational systems, the economic constraints faced by workers and employers and the rapid technological changes reshaping the sector. Although understanding these challenges is essential, we can begin to formulate strategies that align the workforce's skills with the demands of the industry, because this alignment is imperative for sustained growth.

A fundamental takeaway from the analysis which is critical is that the skill gap is not merely a consequence of individual or organizational shortcomings; it represents a systemic issue that involves multiple factors: education, economic conditions and technological advancements. The current misalignment which is significant between educational curricula and industry needs contributes substantially to the skill shortages. Furthermore, economic constraints hinder both workers' and employers' ability to invest in skill development. Although the hospitality industry continues to embrace digital technologies, the lack of technological literacy within the workforce exacerbates the problem. This highlights a pressing need for ongoing upskilling and reskilling initiatives; however, the challenge persists.

The proposed strategies for addressing this gap including improving alignment between education and industry needs, creating partnerships between private & public sectors and leveraging technology for training are practical solutions that could significantly improve skill level of workforce in Southwest Nigeria. These approaches also offer valuable lessons for other emerging markets that face (similar challenges): underscoring the importance of a holistic, integrated approach to workforce development. However, this does not imply a one-size-fits-all solution; although some elements may be replicated, each context must be carefully considered, because unique factors influence outcomes.

Recommendations

In order to effectively confront the skill gap prevalent within the hospitality workforce in Southwest Nigeria a matter of significant concern and to bolster the industry's overall competitiveness, a comprehensive array of recommendations is requisite. These suggestions must prioritize the enhancement of education quality, foster collaboration among industry stakeholders, leverage technology for training purposes and institute policies that substantiate workforce development.

Establish formal partnerships between hospitality institutions and industry bodies to co-develop curricula that meet both academic and practical needs. These partnerships can also facilitate internship and apprenticeship programs to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Develop a national or regional workforce development program that encourages public-

private partnerships (PPPs) to address skill shortages through targeted training and certification programs in the hospitality industry. This could also involve collaborations with international training providers to ensure world-class standards.

Implement nationwide initiatives aimed at improving digital literacy among the hospitality workforce, with a focus on both foundational skills (e.g., basic computer usage) and more advanced skills (e.g., digital marketing, data analysis, and hospitality management software). Public-private partnerships can support the establishment of digital training centers that offer both in-person and online courses.

The government should introduce and implement policies that provide financial support for the hospitality industry to invest in workforce development, including tax incentives, grants for training programs, and vocational scholarships for workers pursuing careers in hospitality. Furthermore, policies should be designed to improve working conditions, wages, and career prospects to attract and retain skilled professionals in the industry.

Encourage the establishment of industry-specific professional development programs, including online courses, workshops, and certification programs. Employers should be incentivized to support their staff in acquiring new skills by offering training stipends or professional development leave.

Promote entrepreneurship in the hospitality sector by providing training and mentorship programs for aspiring entrepreneurs. Government and industry associations could

offer startup grants or microloans to support the creation of small-scale businesses in the hospitality and tourism sectors.

Establish a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system that tracks workforce development efforts in the hospitality sector. Regular surveys of employers and employees, as well as periodic assessments of training effectiveness, will ensure that the skill development strategies remain relevant and impactful.

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