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Competency needs among managers from Spanish hotels and restaurants and their training demands[☆]

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Abstract

This study aims to: (1) identify managerial competency needs in the Spanish hospitality industry, (2) to differentiate present and future training demands requested by managers, and (3) to identify the relationship between managerial competency needs and training demands. The sample was made up of 80 Spanish hotel and restaurant managers.

Results show technical managerial competency needs mainly in computing, languages, and economic–financial management. Generic managerial competency needs appear mostly in job performance efficacy and self-control and social relationships. All training demands refer to technical issues, while none refer to generic managerial competencies. Moreover, these competency needs do not lead managers to demand training in order to meet them. Implications and limitations of the study and directions for future research are discussed.

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1. Introduction

The hospitality industry will have to face up to both present and future competition resulting from globalisation, technological, and market changes in order to remain competitive. To achieve this, organisations make changes to their

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structures, strategies, work systems, and management. Furthermore, increasing customer demand for care in quality of service is highlighting the critical role played by managerial competences in promoting quality performance from contact employees, thereby leading to customer satisfaction (Bitner et al., 1990; Martinez-Tur et al., 2001; Shemwell et al., 1998). All these challenges are even more critical for countries, such as Spain, with leading positions in the international tourism sector. Coping with these transformations requires managers—key figures in any organisation—to possess the appropriate competences to deal with them (Hotels Association of Spanish Tourist Areas, 1997). Thus, identifying this set of competences is a critical task for researchers and practitioners, although up to now, it has received limited attention. The aim of the present study is to contribute to competency¹ needs analysis in hotel and restaurant managers and to identify the areas in which managers recognise that they require training in order to develop the competencies considered.

1.1. Managerial competency needs

Managing an organisation involves adaptive responses both to the job tasks and the changing environment. To cope with these demands, the traditional management framework, mainly based on knowledge and skills, is insufficient. For this reason, the wider concept of managerial competences has been recently introduced (Kanungo and Misra, 1992; Lawler, 1994), which identifies two interrelated sets of managerial competences: technical and generic (Boyatzis, 1982; De Ansorena, 1996; Levy-Leboyer, 1997). *Technical managerial competence* consists of having the knowledge and skills that enable the manager to give an effective performance in specific areas of management such as marketing (e.g. “marketing and market analysis”), financial and accounting (“economic–financial management”), quality management (“service quality management”), customer care quality of service (“customer profiles and behaviours”), etc. *Generic managerial competence* refers mainly to managers’ capability of self-regulation and self-control in job development (Kanungo and Misra, 1992). It also covers other individual characteristics (e.g. attitudes, motivation, or personality traits) that involve coping with less programmed and technical tasks and more generic situations.² The literature has offered different and often overlapping taxonomies of generic managerial competences. In a previous review (Agut, 2000), they were classified into three areas: (1) Job performance efficacy: ability to apply knowledge and skills to perform tasks successfully (Kanungo and Misra, 1992), (2) self-control and social relationships: ability to adapt to and to deal with different people and situations, and

¹We will use the term “competency” when we refer to the ability of an individual and the term “competence” when we refer to the ability based on work tasks or job outputs (Vhiddett and Hollyforde, 2000).

²Despite, sometimes, those situations which require to express and manage one’s own emotions, we could not consider this competence as emotional, exclusively.

(3) proactive behaviour: ability to anticipate rather than react to work problems and opportunities. All these sets of competences are required for effective managerial performance nowadays. Thus, our study extends the analysis of managerial work to focus on those two types of managerial competences: technical and generic, and also when a managerial competency needs analysis is carried out.

A need derives from a gap between the required and the current results (Kaufman, 1998). Thus, a competency needs analysis seeks to identify the situation in which the manager's level of competency is lower than level of that required for the job.

However, most empirical studies have approached this issue by carrying out a training needs analysis, which has three main problems. First, the focus is narrowed by the method used to solve the needs (training) and thus some of the competencies needed might not be identified. Second, training needs analysis has mainly paid attention to knowledge and skills and has left out other characteristics included in the competence construct, especially the generic managerial competences. Third, managers are usually asked directly about the training needs they perceive, without focusing their attention on the gaps between the competences required and the competencies already possessed (Ford and Noe, 1987; Guthrie and Schwoerer, 1996; Tharenou, 1991). Hence, the results of these analyses could reveal training preferences rather than real needs arising from gaps. Due to these limitations, the present study emphasises the importance of carrying out a managerial competency needs analysis rather than a training needs analysis.

1.2. The role of training in competencies development

In our view, training is not the appropriate criteria for the identification of competency needs. However, it does play a critical role in developing a number of the competencies needed. Indeed, the aim of training is to reduce or eliminate present deficits in knowledge, skills, and attitudes to improve job performance (Goldstein, 1993; Ford and Kraiger, 1995) and to develop new competencies that will enhance job content innovation, employability and career development (Peiró and Gracia, 2001). Hence, we expect that the greater the competency needs in a specific area, the more the manager will demand training in that area of competence. Moreover, as the hospitality industry is facing important technological, socio-economic, and organisational changes, we also expect that managers will request more training activities in order to adapt to future demands than to fulfil present demands.

1.3. The case of Spanish hotels and restaurants

In two previous studies (Grau et al., 2000, 2002) we explored competency needs among Spanish hotel and restaurant managers as gaps. Both studies used the qualitative methodology of focus groups made up of key Spanish tourism and hospitality industry informants.

The first study (Grau et al., 2000) analysed the content of four focus groups: two groups were composed of public administration staff, one group of hotel managers, and the other was comprised of restaurant managers. The respondents agreed that

Spanish hospitality industry managers have significant needs in computing, languages, health and risk prevention at work, marketing (technical managerial competencies), and impartiality towards problems (generic managerial competency). The second study (Grau et al., 2002) examined a further six focus groups: each of these was made up of hotel and restaurant managers, supervisors, tour operators, tourist customers associations, and trade union representatives. The respondents pointed out that managers from the Spanish hospitality industry should further develop technical managerial competencies (work organisation, human resources management, and customer profiles and behaviours) and also generic managerial competencies, mainly those needed to adapt to new and challenging situations. They also suggested that training was the main tool to solve these deficits.

Based on this qualitative information and the competences identified by the experts, the present study aims to appraise the competency needs using quantitative methodology. Hence, the aims of the present study are: (1) to identify managerial competency needs in the Spanish hospitality industry, (2) to differentiate present and future training demands requested by managers, and (3) to identify the relationship between managerial competency needs and training demands.

2. Method

2.1. *Participants and procedure*

Hotels and restaurants from the two main Spanish hospitality industry models (“sun and sand” and conference) were included. We contacted and explained the research aims to seventy hotels and 60 restaurant managers from both hospitality industry models from the Spanish Mediterranean Coast—a Spanish area with a highly concentrated hospitality industry.

The final sample was composed of eighty hospitality industry managers (nineteen “sun and sand” hotels, twenty-one conference hotels, twenty “sun and sand” restaurants, and twenty conference restaurants). Of these, 64 were men and 12 women (four individuals did not supply this data). The mean age was 41. Fifteen percent of the sample had completed primary school education, 22.5% high school education, and 56.25% university education (the rest did not provide this data). All the managers had the same professional status (top level managers). Average values for their current job tenure and managerial experience (in hospitality industry or other fields) were 7 and 16 years, respectively.

Data collection took place between 1997 and 1998. The managers filled out a questionnaire entitled *Questionnaire for the Analysis of the Role of Hotel and Restaurant Managers*, which was designed by the research team, based on the information gathered in the qualitative studies, to explore both managerial competences and training demands. Interviewers met each respondent in a face-to-face interview by using a semi-structured guide.³

³The questionnaire and the interview guide are available to any interested reader on request.

Competencies self-assessment was used, since a previous study of the same sample, that compared methodological biases of managerial competences self-assessment and the assessment of their subordinates, concluded that managers are as reliable and valid informants as their subordinates in the assessment of managerial competencies (Agut et al., 2001).

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Managerial competency needs

Technical managerial competences were assessed with a 15-item scale (e.g. languages, computing, service quality management,...). The scale was elaborated by taking into account information from management studies in the tourist industry literature (Jones, 1993; Rogers and Slinn, 1993; Zeiger and Caneday, 1990) as well as the results obtained from the focus groups in the above mentioned studies (Grau et al., 2000, 2002). Respondents were asked to inform on both their present level of knowledge and skills and the required level of knowledge and skills, using a scale ranging from 1 (nothing at all) to 5 (high). Thus, managers were asked to respond to the following four aspects referring to every technical managerial competence listed in the scale (see the list in Table 1):

Present knowledge. Managers' knowledge level.

Required knowledge. Required knowledge level for the job.

Present skills. Managers' skills level.

Required skills. Required skills level for the job.

Table 1
Technical managerial competency needs ($N = 80$)

Topics	Knowledge need		Skills need		t-test		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	df	p
1. Economic-financial management	-1.31	1.15	-0.94	1.06	-2.38	68	0.020
2. Marketing and market analysis	-1.26	1.01	-0.84	0.88	-2.77	69	0.007
3. Service quality management	-0.94	0.93	-0.76	1.06	-1.83	69	0.070
4. Health and risk prevention at work	-0.92	1.13	-0.81	1.17	-1.11	69	0.267
5. Work organisation	-0.65	0.94	-0.37	0.80	-2.63	69	0.010
6. People and work team management	-0.74	1.01	-0.5	0.76	-2.00	69	0.049
7. Human resources management	-0.93	0.98	-0.62	0.76	-2.92	70	0.005
8. Tourism products and services	-0.78	1.02	-0.49	0.95	-2.44	70	0.017
9. Customers' profiles and behaviours	-0.77	0.94	-0.51	0.80	-2.22	68	0.029
10. Knowledge of environment and territory	-0.42	1.16	-0.35	0.97	-0.26	71	0.790
11. Computing	-1.23	1.50	-1.07	1.62	-1.10	69	0.272
12. Languages	-1.29	1.33	-1.00	1.37	-1.61	70	0.110
13. Commercial management	-0.99	1.11	-0.93	0.97	-0.25	68	0.80
14. Accommodation management	-0.47	0.98	-0.51	0.91	0.00	40	1.00
15. Food and drink management	-0.68	1.03	-0.60	0.82	-0.56	69	0.57

Mean value ≤ -0.51 = need; $-0.50 \leq$ mean value ≤ 0.50 = adjustment margin; mean value ≥ 0.51 : positive gap.

Table 2
Generic managerial competency needs ($N = 80$)

Generic managerial competences		Mean	SD	N
<i>Job performance efficacy</i>				
1.	Ability to express your thoughts, opinions and feelings to others freely.	-0.41	0.86	74
2.	Ability to go beyond the barriers or limitations that come up in the job.	-0.59	0.68	74
3.	Ability to argue your opinions in the decision making process.	-0.64	0.86	75
4.	Self-confidence in your ability to achieve job objectives.	-0.40	0.71	72
5.	Ability to manage your work time efficiently.	-0.77	0.94	74
<i>Self-control and social relationships</i>				
6.	Impartiality towards problems.	-0.80	0.83	74
7.	Control of hasty reactions in highly emotive situations (e.g. aggressiveness, resignation, excitement. etc.).	-0.88	1.08	73
8.	Ability to adapt behaviour and way of thinking to new situations.	-0.78	1.06	74
9.	Objectivity in judgement (people and situations).	-0.71	0.95	73
10.	Attitude towards others (being available to listen to other people).	-0.41	0.76	74
11.	Ability to adapt language, physical appearance, behaviour, etc. to specific job situations.	-0.42	0.86	74
12.	Stress tolerance. Being able to maintain efficiency under time pressure situations. Disagreement. Conflict, etc.	-0.72	0.91	74
13.	Consideration of ethical criteria in management.	-0.27	0.77	73
14.	Responsibility for decisions and behaviours.	-0.27	0.63	73
<i>Proactive behaviour</i>				
15.	Ability to maintain and create a high level of activity.	-0.46	0.71	74
16.	Efficiency and flexibility to solve problems detected.	-0.58	0.64	74
17.	Enterprising spirit. Active search for new opportunities.	-0.35	0.73	72
18.	Initiative to implement new plans.	-0.45	0.80	73
19.	Positive vision towards things.	-0.32	0.80	74
20.	Perseverance in solving problems and inconveniences.	-0.52	0.67	73
21.	Control of aims achievement within time limits.	-0.54	0.73	0.74
22.	Attitude to meeting targets.	-0.57	0.72	74

Mean value ≤ -0.51 = need; $-0.50 \leq$ mean value ≤ 0.50 = adjustment margin; mean value ≥ 51 : positive gap.

Generic managerial competences, including the dimensions of Job performance efficacy, Self-control and social relationships, and Proactive behaviour, were assessed by a 22-item scale whose design took into account the literature on this issue (Boyatzis, 1982; Kanungo and Misra, 1992; McCauley et al., 1989) and the results from previous studies (Grau et al., 2000, 2002; Agut, 2000). Each dimension was measured by a sub-scale: Job performance efficacy (JPE) (5 items), Self-control and social relationships (SCSR) (9 items), and Proactive behaviour (PB) (8 items). The items are presented in Table 2. Respondents were asked to inform on their present level of competency and the level required for the job using a scale ranging

from 1 (nothing at all) to 5 (high). The scales used and their reliability indexes⁴ are as follows:

Present generic managerial competence. Managers' generic managerial competence level. Cronbach's alpha: JPE = 0.71; SCSR = 0.70; PB = 0.70.

Required generic managerial competence. Generic managerial competence level required for the job. Cronbach's alpha: JPE = 0.73; SCSR = 0.82; PB = 0.85. All Cronbach's alpha scores meet the criterion of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978).

The gap between the present and the required levels was calculated for each item. These gaps were considered as the particular competency need of the respondent.

Three different types of gaps were possible: (1) a positive gap (the present ability is higher than that required), (2) adjustment (the present ability is similar to that required), and (3) a negative gap (the present ability is lower than that required). As the variables were measured on a five-point rating scale, a statistical criterion was used to classify the gaps: mean values < -0.51 = negative gap (need), mean values from -0.50 to 0.50 = adjustment (no need), and mean values > 0.51 = positive gap (no need). This study only focuses on negative gaps (i.e. needs) and considers the three previously described types: *knowledge need*, *skills need*, and *generic managerial competency need*.

2.2.2. Managerial training demands

Training demands formulated by the managers were obtained by means of two open-ended questions: (1) "What training activities do you consider appropriate to enable you to fulfil your managerial training at the present?", and (2) "What training activities do you consider appropriate to enable you to fulfil the managerial training necessary to adapt to future changes?" (several answers were possible). In order to link competency needs to training demands subsequently, the training activities were classified by two judges (two members of the research team), on the basis of the competences included in the scales. First, they categorised data separately and then discussed the information jointly to reach a final classification. Two training-related variables emerged:

Present training demands in a competence: (1) "no training request" and (2) "training request".

Future training request in a competence: (1) "no training request" and (2) "training request".

2.3. Data analysis

Data analysis was carried out by using the SPSS 10.0 statistics programs. Descriptive statistics were used to obtain competency needs and a *t*-test to compare

⁴Reliability indexes indicate the reliability of a measurement scale. Cronbach's alpha is one of the most widely used indexes. It measures internal consistency among the different items included in a scale. Its values range from 0 to 1 and values over 0.7 indicate satisfactory reliability.

the mean values of knowledge and skills needs. The McNemar test was carried out to compare present and future training demand distributions (San Martín and Pardo, 1989). In order to study the relationship between competency needs and training demands, logistic regression analyses were computed. Independent variables were the competency needs and dependent variables were the training demands. Present and future training requests were aggregated to increase potential statistical regression. The logistic function is described as a probability (0–1). The parameters a and b have the same meaning as those used in ordinal regression and the statistical adjustment of the logistic model is Chi-square (see Kleinbaum, 1996).

$$P(X) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(a+\Sigma b_i X_i)}}$$

3. Results

3.1. Managerial competency needs analysis

Results referring to the technical managerial competency needs analysis are summarised in Table 1, where the average gap (in knowledge and skills components) and its standard deviation are presented for every technical managerial competence.

These results show that managers have a negative gap (i.e. mean values ≤ -0.51) in most of the technical managerial competences (knowledge and skills). Specifically, the highest knowledge need was in economic–financial management, while the highest skills need was identified in computing. The managers had no gaps in work organisation (skills), tourism products and services (skills), accommodation management (knowledge), and knowledge of environment and territory (knowledge and skills).

In order to identify whether needs were significantly higher in their knowledge or their skills component, the t -test was computed. Results indicate that knowledge needs were significantly greater than skills needs in economic–financial management, marketing and market analysis, work organisation, people and work team management, human resources management, tourism products and services, and customer profiles and behaviours. On the other hand, knowledge needs did not differ from skills needs in the remaining competencies.

Results of the generic managerial competency needs analysis are presented in Table 2. The average gap and its standard deviation are presented for each generic managerial competence. Competency needs (mean < -0.51) were identified for 12 out of the 22 competences listed. The highest values are presented for control of hasty reactions in highly emotional situations and impartiality towards problems. In general, the generic managerial competency needs identified mostly refer to self-control and social relationships and job performance efficacy. However, deficits in generic managerial competences, in general, were not very high and in many cases were even lower than those obtained for technical managerial competences.

3.2. Present and future managerial training demands

Regarding the second objective of the study (analysis of present and future training demands), results indicate that demands concentrated on technical issues, while none referred to generic managerial competences (see Table 3). Specifically, present oriented training demands were in the areas of economic–financial management (21.43% of the total demands), computing (16.31%), service quality management, and languages (12.25% each one). Only one manager requested additional training in health and risk prevention at work, tourism products and services, and accommodation management.

Important changes appear when future oriented training demands are considered. Almost half the total demands concerned computing (41.76%), and nearly a fifth, languages (17.72%). The remaining items received little attention. Only one manager expressed an interest in training in managing people and work team management, customer profiles and behaviours, knowledge of environment and territory, and commercial management.

The result of the McNemar test (see Table 4) shows that managers demanded significantly more present than future oriented training in economic–financial management, service quality management, and computing. In the remaining items, there were no significant differences between present and future training demands.

3.3. Relationship between competency needs and training demands

Our third aim was to identify whether there was a relation between the competency needs identified and the managers' training demands. The analyses

Table 3
Present and future managerial training demands

Present training demands			Future training demands		
Topics	N	%	Topics	N	%
1st Economic–financial management	21	21.43	1 st Computing	33	41.76
2nd Computing	16	16.31	2nd Languages	14	17.72
3rd Service quality management	12	12.25	3rd Food and drink management	7	8.86
3rd Languages	12	12.25	4th Marketing and market analysis	5	6.33
4th Human resources management	9	9.19	5th Work organisation	4	5.06
4th Food and drink management	9	9.18	5th Tourism products and services	4	5.06
5th Marketing and market analysis	5	5.10	6th Economic–financial management	3	3.80
5th People and work team management	5	5.10	6th Service quality management	3	3.80
6th Work organisation	3	3.06	7th Human resources management	2	2.53
6th Commercial management	3	3.06	8th People and work team management	1	1.27
7th Health and risk prevention at work	1	1.02	8th Customers' profiles and behaviours	1	1.27
7th Tourism products and services	1	1.02	8th Knowledge of environment and territory	1	1.27
7th Accommodation management	1	1.02	8th Commercial management	1	1.27
Total	98	100	Total	79	100

Table 4
Comparison of present and future managerial training demands

		Future		Total
		No	Yes	
1. Economic–financial management				
Present	No	56	1	57
	Yes	21	2	23
	Total	77	3	80
McNemar test		Chi-square = 16.05		$p = 0.0001$
2. Service quality management				
Present	No	65	3	68
	Yes	12	0	12
	Total	77	3	80
McNemar test		Chi-square = 6.67		$p = 0.035$
3. Computing				
Present	No	37	27	64
	Yes	10	6	16
	Total	47	33	80
McNemar test		Chi-square = 12.89		$p = 0.001$

used to test these relations were only carried out for technical managerial competency needs, since managers did not request training in generic managerial competences. Results⁵ show that only in the areas of economic–financial management (44.828; g.l. = 1; $p = 0.028$) and languages (5.243; g.l. = 1; $p = 0.022$) there was a significant relation between both competency needs and training demands. The likelihood of managers' requesting present and future training in these areas, in which they need to improve their competencies, is 0.24 and 0.26, respectively. That means that managers who presented a greater need to develop economic–financial management and foreign language competences were more likely to request this type of training. What it is striking is that these results did not occur for other technical or generic managerial competency needs.

4. Conclusions and discussion

The aims of the present study were (1) to identify managerial competency needs in the Spanish hospitality industry, (2) to differentiate present and future training demands requested by managers, and (3) to identify the relationship between managerial competency needs and training demands. To do this, we asked managers to focus on the competences required by the job and the extent to which they possess

⁵The complete results (Chi-square tests and probabilities calculation) are not included due to their excessive length, but they are available on request.

each competency. Thus, we obtained a gap that informed on the needs of both technical and generic managerial competence development. By examining the job requirements and focusing on the gap, we attempted to reduce managers' subjectivity and preference on identifying their managerial competency needs. At the same time, we asked managers to take into account both current and future training when stating their demands. In this way we aimed to clarify whether managers are guided mainly by their preferences and self-esteem when expressing training demands or whether they also take the competencies needed into account.

4.1. Managerial competency needs

First, managers present technical managerial competency needs in most of the areas. Economic–financial management and computing are the items with the highest deficit. Furthermore, managers present more knowledge needs than skills needs in economic–financial management, marketing and market analysis, work organisation, people and work team management, human resources management, tourism products and services, and customer profiles and behaviours. This result implies that the strategy chosen to improve competencies by reducing or eliminating needs should reinforce the knowledge component of these competencies rather than the skills component.

These findings confirm those of [Grau et al. \(2000, 2002\)](#), which used focus groups composed of other informants as well as managers. Thus, despite the use of different techniques and respondents, the results of two previous studies and the present one coincide in that Spanish hotel and restaurant managers need to improve mainly their knowledge and skills components in competences involving computing, languages, health and risk prevention, marketing, work organisation, human resources management, and customer profiles and behaviours.

Second, managers also display needs in more than half of the 22 generic managerial competences considered. The average highest deficit is identified in “control of hasty reactions in highly emotive situations”. This result is not so strange if we consider the emotional nature of this competence. Results obtained here do not coincide with those obtained by [Grau et al. \(2000, 2002\)](#) where deficits were only detected in two generic managerial competences. One possible explanation for this discrepancy could be that respondents other than the managers themselves might consider most of the generic managerial competences studied as personality traits, rather than competences that can be developed for effective job performance.

4.2. Present and future training requests

One relevant issue when planning competence and training development is to be proactive and to anticipate changes in job and organisational context. With this in mind, we explored the extent to which managers' training demands are present or future oriented. Results indicate that managers focused mainly on current training needs and very seldom did they have a proactive anticipatory orientation towards their training. Contrary to expectations, managers were significantly more interested

in present than in future training in economic–financial management, service quality management, and computing. This low emphasis on the future scope of training could prove very risky, since present training approaches emphasise the lifelong learner role of facing up to future technological, labour market, and socio-economic changes (Thayer, 1997; Peiró and Gracia, 2001).

Furthermore, when managers request training they mainly demand training oriented towards the improvement or development of technical managerial competences and very rarely do they request training in generic managerial competencies. One interpretation of this could be that they do not identify these generic managerial competency needs as relevant or as a priority for the performance of their job. Another interpretation could be that they do not think that this kind of competences can be attained through training. This explanation seems likely if we consider the *Spencer and Spencer approach* (1993), which states that generic managerial competences are actually part of the personality, and thus their assessment and development are more difficult through a traditional training process.

4.3. Relationship between competency needs and training demands

If the demand for training were strategic and functional, it should prioritise competencies that present more deficits or those that would be more relevant in the short term. However, training demands could also follow another rationale which is more oriented to fulfilling training preferences unrelated to competency needs. In fact, our results do not, in general terms, confirm the hypothesis of the fit between competency needs and training demands. Only two competences (for economic–financial management and languages) were significantly linked to training demands. Moreover, the likelihood of managers' requesting present and future training, even when they have a competency need in those areas, is very low. Therefore, we can conclude that this sample does not regard training as the appropriate strategy to solve their deficits and develop their competencies. Several interpretations can be put forward for this poor relationship between competency needs and training demands.

First, managers may perceive that their needs are not alarming, so they do not consider investing time and money in training as a useful course of action. Another explanation could be that managers do not attribute benefits to training participation in those areas. This is possibly more understandable when certain training data from the Spanish hospitality industry is analysed. They question the usefulness of many training activities, because they do not arise from a rigorous needs analysis and their efficiency is not evaluated (Llorens et al., 2000). Managers might even consider other strategies to solve these competency deficits. Indeed, other solutions could also be identified, such as job redesign, job content innovation, or enhancement of organisational climate (Peiró and Gracia, 2001; Goldstein, 1993).

To sum up, the present study has shown that when competency needs analysis is carried out independently and separated from training needs analysis, competency needs are identified. In our study we have done so for both technical and generic managerial competencies. In addition, focusing on the gap between competences required by the job and competencies that the managers possessed has proved to be

an adequate and suitable method. In fact, these results confirm those obtained in two previous studies (Grau et al., 2000, 2002) as well as those mentioned in a study on hospitality-related institutions which indicated that Spanish hotel and restaurant managers need competence development in key technical and generic managerial competences to improve their job performance (Hotels Association of Spanish Tourist Areas, 1997). However, managers are not as interested in present and future training as was expected. Their present training demands are limited and their training requests oriented to cope with future changes in this industry were even poorer. Moreover, and in contrast to what was expected, hardly any relationship between competency needs and training demands were found. Thus, the managers in our study did not regard training as a suitable strategy to solve most of their competency needs.

4.4. Implications, limitations and suggestions for further research

This study contributes to the analysis of managerial competences. This construct is relevant because it allows us to explain why the manager performs specific job tasks and also how he or she copes with non-programmed situations efficiently. This research also has implications for human resources development in the hospitality industry. An operative method for the analysis of competency needs as gaps is applicable to organisational settings. Moreover, this gaps-based method provides more rigorous information than the training needs analysis based method, which is only able to identify training preferences. Therefore, as long as competences deficits are properly identified, they can be tackled by the most appropriate strategy, and job performance could be improved. This could also lead to better service quality and greater customer satisfaction. (Martínez-Tur et al., 2001).

Once competency needs have been analysed, another complementary strategy could be the confirmation of these results through a larger sample and by using other techniques (e.g. 360° feedback) that allow for a more in-depth analysis.

This study has some limitations. First, the required competence level is measured only by using managers' self-assessment. It may be the case that individuals do not always know exactly what knowledge they lack, and that would flaw the requirements identified. However, Agut et al. (2001) previously showed, in a study using the same sample, that managers are as reliable and valid informants as their subordinates. In future studies, other respondents (e.g. subordinates, customers, or industry experts) should also be included. Second, the inclusion of questions regarding other tactics for improving managerial job performance (e.g. job enrichment, enhancement of the organisational climate), in addition to training, could be useful. The size of the sample also limits the generalisation of results to other managers from the hospitality industry and other sectors. On this point, the difficulty of obtaining study data must be emphasised, as many managers did not wish to collaborate due to their heavy workload.

Previous studies (e.g. Ford and Noe, 1987; Tharenou, 1991; Guthrie and Schwoerer, 1996) explored the impact of several factors on training needs self-assessment. Their results did not focus on the hospitality industry and did not

analyse competences deficits. Thus, future research should explore whether individual and contextual variables also influence competency needs. Therefore, as long as we know the manager's profile with its competency needs, we could fit the solution(s) to the needs to that profile. Moreover, we could change the factors that could have a negative effect on the implementation of the solution(s). Finally, the studies about the benchmarking of managerial competences are not extent, so another interesting research topic could be the benchmarking of the generic managerial competences, due to their relevance to deal with non-program situations at work.

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