The purpose of this research was to identify the indicators and measures used to evaluate the effectiveness and return on investment of training in the accommodation industry in Ontario. A literature review of previous measurement of return on training investment (ROTI) indicates that training in the hospitality industry is, to a large extent, unstructured and informal. Although structured methods of evaluating return on training investment exist, there is little indication that these methods have been widely adopted or accepted. Training continues to be a function provided under the broad belief that training is somehow beneficial; yet research tells us that training is often cut when budgets are tight. Some business indicators are noted in the literature as useful but industry apparently fails to use these measurements as a yardstick to measure the effectiveness of training at both the beginning and/or the completion of the training program. Literature also indicates that "customer comment feedback" is gaining in importance as a more frequently used measurement of training success.

This research was composed of two phases and specifically examined the training of front desk agents as a control group and as an indicator of return on investment of training in a particular size and type of hotel/motel. The first phase used in-depth interviews in the accommodation sector (both hotel and motel operations) classified as "small and medium sized enterprises" (SMEs). The second phase used discussion groups from medium and large sized properties that in turn changed the geographic location more towards major centres such as Toronto. These two phases allowed a comparison between these two groups to determine if there were significant differences or similarities in the indicators used to measure training effectiveness or in the current challenges faced in training front desk agents.

The research determined that the most widely used indicator of ROTI for front desk agent training in all accommodation properties was customer satisfaction. Employee behaviour was the primary way in which training success was evaluated at the individual employee level; feedback from customer comment cards was the most important way in which training success was evaluated at the business level. Training was sometimes evaluated after the training program had finished, however, indicators were seldom measured. The research also found a lack of sophistication in measurement and evaluation, especially in smaller operations.

The research revealed some of the primary challenges to training front desk agents. In addition, it was determined that Return on Training Investment was not calculated by the majority of properties. Training was generally accepted, however, as necessary when employees were first hired.

Recommendations are made for further research in the area of training for the accommodation sector in Ontario.