



HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT GRADUATES' PERCEPTION TOWARDS BUILDING THEIR CAREER IN HOTELS: A CASE STUDY OF DELHI NCR INSTITUTES

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Abstract

The hospitality industry in the entire world has been struggling with a genuine issue that is appealing and then retaining good quality employees. We know that students who were serious in their studies and practices can become the job generators in future and it is fundamental to understand their perception and the reality towards hospitality employment. The main objective of this study is to find out the perception of the hospitality graduates of Delhi NCR institutes regarding their mind set to build their career in the field of hospitality. Hence a self-administrated questionnaire was developed to find the importance of different factors that influences the career choice of hospitality graduates. The concluded result clearly indicated that hospitality graduates generally do not prefer to build their career in hospitality because of certain factors, however most of the respondents which was approximately (73%), indicates that if the industry offers certain factors which match with their expectation can really motivate them to join the industry. Ultimately, a set of specific corrective actions were discussed that could improve the perception of hospitality graduates towards building their career in hospitality industry.

Keywords: *hospitality graduates' perceptions, Role of Education criteria, Hospitality Career.*

Introduction

The hospitality industry can only sustain if they are run by employees who are skilfully sound, dedicated towards their job and who can mentally take the pressure of managing the entire operations which all leads to the customer satisfaction. Since all the industry whether it is IT, medical or even production houses are directly or indirectly associated with hospitality industry and because of their compulsion to maintain a cordial relationship with hospitality industry, the growth is immense. This exponential growth is ultimately leading to an issue of non-availability of good quality staff and on the other hand because of some crucial factors it is becoming very difficult to attract and retain these required number of skilful employees as well. This problem is very complicated and there are several factors which are fundamental behind creating this void of required skillful staff.

It is quite eminent that a specific industry creates its own image in the mind of its potential staff and this image is directly proportional to the quality of the staff it receives. Nevertheless, to say that the negative image of this hospitality industry is fundamentally creating the barrier in the mind of the hotel management graduates to pursue their career in the field of hospitality. It is quite clear from the data of the hospitality graduates passing out every year and their percentage of joining the industry. Only 30 to 40% of students are opting hospitality industry as their career. A very small percentage approximately 5 to 10 are only pursuing their career in the industry after a span of five years and about 50 of the graduates quit their job within the first year of their employment and they try and seek jobs in other industries. This is a sheer waste of talented, knowledgeable, skilful employees when they shift their career from a specific industry to some other industry for which they are neither educated nor practically sound. In India graduation in any field is the basic qualification required to seek job in government sector and that is why most of the hospitality graduates when they found it difficult to pursue their career in the field of hospitality go back for either further studies or for competitive exams which may lead to government administrative jobs. In addition to that a lot of hospitality graduates also prefer to seek employment in other tertiary industry which offers them a better job environment, better salary package or better balance of work and life.

This study is done keeping in mind to find out the perception of hospitality graduates who are currently pursuing their career in the field of hospitality in different institutes of Delhi NCR region. The population of this study is mainly the second year third year, fourth year and post graduate students of hospitality management institutes

Literature Review

Challenges in building career in Hotel Industry

In the current era hospitality industry is facing more and more problems in attracting skilled and professional employees (Kelley-Patterson & George, 2001). Roney & Öztin (2007) found that, with fast growth and development of the hospitality industry a lot of the employment has been generated but the kind of job which is been offered are of basic skill with a very low salary package which becomes a huge drawback for the potential graduates to join the industry. Hospitality industry is also been associated with a very negative image for not understanding the work life balance of the staff and that is why long hours of working without proper day offs is making it more difficult for the staff to pursue in the same industry (Inkson et al., 1999).

According to (Penny and Frances, 2011) majority of the graduates who are passing out to college have a very negative notion about their future in the hospital industry. (Kusluvan and Kusluvan 2000) found that more than 65% of the respondents believe that the opportunities of getting a promotion in the industry is very bleak. Since this industry works based on season the job security factor is also missing. There is no clear-cut policies and guidelines followed by the industry in context to promotion and increment which again becomes a major drawback for attracting potential staff.

Perceptions and Attitudes towards the Hospitality Career

Domonte and Vaden (1987) ranked the following factors, considered to influence the attitude of a hospitality graduate's decision to work in the hospitality industry: (1) interesting work; (2) advancement potential; (3) secure future; (4) good salary; (5) opportunity for service to society; and (6) social prestige. McCleary and Weaver (1988) and Sciarini (1997), stated that nature of job and timely promotions are the most important factors in a graduate's decision to accept a job, almost every graduate expects a promotion within 2 years from the date of their joining. Ross (1994) found a high level of interest in management positions in the hospitality industry. This contrasts with Getz (1994) who concluded that perceptions towards a potential career in hospitality had become much more negative over a period of 14 years. Purcell and Quinn (1995) surveyed 704 former hospitality students and discovered that graduates complained of having little opportunity to develop their managerial skills. Pavesic and Brymer (1990) found that a substantial number of graduates leave the industry owing to poor working conditions. Most of these studies have argued that direct experience in the tourism and hospitality industry may cause students to hold negative views of the industry.

In a study conducted by Richardson (2008) stated that that more than 50% of respondents are already contemplating careers outside the industry. Students generally do not believe that a career in hospitality will offer them the factors that they find important. In other cases, Roney & Öztin (2007) showed that, overall, the respondents' perceptions are neither favorable nor unfavourable towards the hospitality career. In accordance to the literature review, we can clearly say that there are both positive and negative perceptions towards building career in the hotel industry. Studies already done prompts the

requirement for researching the case of hospitality students in Delhi NCR and their perception towards building career in hotels.

Research Questions

Q1: Do hospitality students prefer to start their career in hotels?

Q2: As a hospitality graduate, what factors are given importance to choose a career?

Q3: As a hospitality graduate, how they think and evaluate the factors offered by hotels?

Q4: Does qualitative factors (gender, duration of curriculum, work experience, and preference of course) affects the graduates' perceptions towards the industry?

Research Methodology

This research has four main objectives which are;

- ❖ Studying graduates' perceptions towards the hotel industry as a career choice.
- ❖ From graduates' view point, understanding the most important factors selecting a career.
- ❖ Investigating the correlation ship between gender, duration of curriculum, work experience, and preference of course and graduates' perceptions towards working in hotels.
- ❖ Suggestion of precise remedial actions for all the stakeholders of hospitality industry to improve the image of the hotels as a career choice.

Sampling Procedures

According to the survey it was found that numbers of students undergoing hotel management degree course in Delhi NCR to be 870. The technique used for collecting the data from students was convincing sampling. The study was based on the statistical informative data of students from top six institutes in Delhi NCR. These students were personally approached and according to their strength and willingness 600 questionnaires were circulated among them and out of those only 545 responses were found to be complete and usable for the analysis and simply due to the lack of information 55 questionnaires were rejected. Here the targeted population was considered after the exclusion of 1st year students due to their lack of exposure of the industry.

Table 1: The survey sample

Grade	Sample	Percent (%)
2 nd Year Students	150	27.5 %
3 rd Year Students	180	33.0 %
4 th Year Students	155	28.5%
Postgraduate Students	60	11.0%
Total	545	100%

Data Collection

A self-administrated questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. Students during their academic session in the class were personally approached and asked to fill the structured questionnaires. According to the strength of classes, 600 questionnaires were circulated for their opinion. Out of 600 questionnaires only 545 questionnaires were accepted and simply due to the lack of information 55 questionnaires were rejected.

The survey instrument comprises of two sections. The initial segment is the statistic information which incorporates gender, duration of curriculum, work experience, and preference of course and the second part covers their perception illuminated through 16 statements that determines the influencing factors graduates found important while choosing working in hotels as their career. On a three-point Likert's scale: "very important", "fairly important" and "not important", graduates were asked to rate each career factor in response to the question "How important is this factor to you when choosing your career?". Again, on a three-point Likert's scale, "definitely", "some" and "not at all", the respondents were then asked to rate each factor in response to the question "To what extent do you think a career in hotel will offer this factor?".

Data Analysis

1. Descriptive Analysis

Statistical analyses were done by the means of descriptive analysis method as it has given the researcher a clear picture of the data in terms of distribution and to determine the importance of each factor as well as the extent to which the graduates perceive the factors in choosing hotel as career. It has also been instrumental to identify typos and outliers. Descriptive analysis has also made the researcher to detect the relations between variables and ultimately enhancing for future analyses of statistics that were found in the form of relevant data.

2. Exploratory Factor Analysis

EFA is been done as in our study the statistics is multivariate statistics. In order to discover the core structure of the large set of variables, EFA is been done. Further there was a need to detect the core associations between measured variables that is why EFA technique was used to determine whether there are significant differences between the importance of factors in choosing a career in hotels and the extent to which students believe a career in hospitality will offer these factors.

Research Findings

Nominal data analysis

This study surveyed 545 respondents (as shown in table 1), respondents tended to be male (88.2%) and (11.8%) were female. Almost (55.5%) of students reported that choosing hospitality as their career and studying in hotel management institute was their 1st preference while almost (44.5%) of students reported that studying in hotel management institute was not their 1st preference. Major part of respondents (62.5%) claimed to have practical work experience in the industry up to six months and approximately (37.5%) have no work experience. This was because six months industrial training was part of the curriculum in their third year and post graduates have only two months of industrial project in their curriculum.

Table 2: Nominal data in %

Percentage	
Gender	
Male	88.2%
Female	11.8%
Hotel Management 1 st preference of study	
Yes	55.5%
No	44.5%
Practical work experience in the industry up to six months	
Yes	62.5%
No	37.5%

Adjusted (Valid) percentages excluding missing observations.

According to the Students, these are factors they emphasize on while selecting their career

Table 3: Hospitality management graduates' percentage wise, preferred factors in choosing a career

Factor	Very Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Important %	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pleasant job profile.	79.5	18.9	1.6	1.14	.382
Contemporaries with similar mentality.	55.3	42.4	2.4	1.47	.547
Conducive working culture.	72.9	24.7	1.2	1.25	.491
Weekly off and yearly leaves	72.9	21.2	2.4	1.23	.529
Job security.	75.1	21.4	2.4	1.27	.499
Equal opportunities for promotion.	78.8	15.3	4.7	1.23	.548
Sense of responsibility.	68.3	28.2	2.4	1.24	.509
Gradual increment of salary and perks.	70.3	27.6	2.4	1.35	.527

Recognition of degree/diploma.	74.1	21.2	3.5	1.28	.528
Social respect.	76.8	17.3	4.7	1.23	.548
Working hours.	68.2	24.7	7.1	1.38	.619
Company's history and background.	50.6	41.2	4.7	1.50	.612
Events and incentives for staff.	72.1	27.9	0.0	1.25	.440
Easy to get similar job.	52.9	35.7	10.2	1.57	.681
Reasonable starting salary package.	73.4	21.9	4.7	1.35	.571
Availability of cross training.	54.1	35.6	10.3	1.56	.680

Note that the mean value (1 = very important, 2 = fairly important and 3 = not important).

According to Table 3, the most important factor identified by respondents was "Pleasing job profile", where (79.5%) of respondents considered to be very important. Based on the number of respondents who chose very important as their response, the next four most important factors in choosing a career from student's view point are "Equal opportunities for promotion." "Social respect" approximately (76.8%) of students rate as very important. On the other hand, only two factors received more than (10%) of respondents choosing not important including "Easy to get similar job" (10.2%), "Availability of cross training" (10.3%).

Table 4: Hospitality graduates' perceptions towards building their career in hotels

Factor	Defiantly %	Some %	Not At all %	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pleasing job profile.	22.1	70.4	6.4	1.72	.520
Contemporaries with similar mentality.	40.0	47.1	10.6	1.65	.699
Conducive working culture.	38.8	48.2	11.8	1.70	.687
Weekly off and yearly leaves	30.6	42.4	27.1	1.96	.762
Job security.	22.9	45.9	31.2	1.79	.719
Equal opportunities for promotion.	48.2	30.6	16.5	1.85	.704
Sense of responsibility.	49.4	41.2	7.1	1.54	.647
Gradual increment of salary and perks.	23.5	56.5	17.6	1.91	.680
Recognition of degree/diploma.	28.5	35.3	35.9	1.86	.818
Social respect.	22.6	46.4	31.1	1.96	.762
Working hours.	30.6	40.0	24.7	1.91	.788
Company's history and background.	52.2	40.7	7.1	1.38	.619
Events and incentives for staff.	24.7	44.7	30.6	2.05	.745
Easy to get similar job.	20.0	56.5	22.4	2.02	.658
Reasonable starting salary package.	22.4	33.5	42.9	1.98	.715
Availability of cross training.	35.3	52.9	10.6	1.72	.661

Note that the Mean value 1 = definitely offers, 2 = somewhat offers and 3 = does not offer.

In reference to table number 4 there were few outcomes which were quite clear that the factors which were given utmost importance by the respondents were not matched numerically when it comes to the claim that they are going to get the same kind of offering from the industry For instance, while (79.5%) of respondents claim that finding a Pleasing job profile is very important, only (22.1%) believe they will definitely find a Pleasing job profile at the starting of their career in the hotel industry. Let's mention two other factors, "Social respect" where (76.8%) of respondents rate it as very important and only (22.6%) of them claimed that the hotel industry will definitely offer this factor and "Job security", where (75.1%) of respondents think this an important factor in job choice, however, only (22.9%) of respondents believed that they will find a secure job in hospitality. At the same time, many students did not believe that their degree/diploma has substantial recognition (28.5%) in industry.

Few other financial factors were also evaluated where it was found that (73.4%) respondents stated "Reasonable starting salary package" is very important and only (22.4%) of respondents who believe that the hotel industry offers a Reasonable starting salary package, while a sizeable part of students (42.9%) claim that the hotel industry does not offer a good starting salary. Secondly, (70.3%) respondents stated "Gradual increment of salary and perks" is very important and only (23.5%) of respondents who believe that the hotel industry offers "Gradual increment of salary and perks." Finally, while evaluating two socio factors - Weekly off and yearly leaves and it was found that (72.9%) respondents stated "Weekly off and yearly

leaves” is very important for them and only (30.6%) of respondents believe that the hotel industry offers regular “Weekly off and yearly leaves” and (68.2%) respondents stated “Working hours” is very important for them and only (30.6%) of respondents believe that the hotel industry offers regular “Working hours.”

Variables Affecting Students’ Perceptions and Attitudes toward the Hotel Industry as a career choice.

This part measures the relationship between several variables that may have effects on hospitality students’ perceptions and attitudes toward the industry and their career in the industry. These contingency variables are: (1) gender, (2) Practical work experience in the industry up to six months (3) Degree in Hotel Management was 1st preference of study (4) Grade.

Gender

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to examine if significant differences were found between respondents’ perceptions of hospitality careers according to gender. The results show that female students tend to have less favourable perceptions (Mean=1.83) than male students (Mean=1.68) but, generally there was no significant gender-based difference in the perception of students toward the hospitality careers (see table 5).

Practical work experience in the industry up to six months

Tests were also conducted to examine if there were statistically significant correlations between the respondents having Practical work experience in the industry up to six months and their perceptions of the industry as a career choice. Students who have Practical work experience in the industry up to six months tend to have a more positive attitude (Mean=1.61), than those who did not work for hotels before (Mean=1.73).

Degree in Hotel Management was 1st preference of study

Referring again to table 5, the test indicated that the mean value of the perceptions of respondents whose doing Degree in Hotel Management was 1st preference of study (Mean=1.61) is much more favorable than those whose 1st preference of study was not doing Degree in Hotel Management (Mean=1.98). A significant positive correlation was found between student’s willingness to study tourism and their perceptions towards the industry as a career choice.

Grade

Finally, statistically significant correlations between Grades of study and career perceptions of the respondents were found. Positive attitudes towards the industry from the 4th Year Students (Mean=1.43), followed by 3rd Year Students (Mean=1.72) then 2nd Year Students (Mean=1.79). In other words, as the respondents progress in their degree, their perceptions of the industry improved. On the other hand, postgraduates had the least favourable image towards the industry (Mean=2.01).

Table 5: Variables Affecting Students’ Perceptions of and Attitudes toward the Hospitality Industry as A career Choice.

variables	Mean	SD	T	Sig. (2 tailed)
Gender				
Male	1.68	.320	1.825	.063
Female	1.83	.336		
Practical work experience in the industry up to six months				
Yes	1.61	.356		
No	1.73	.322	-7.672	0.327
Degree in Hotel Management was 1 st preference of study				
Yes	1.63	.331		
No	1.98	.302	-3.543	0.007
Grade				
2 nd Year Students	1.76	.254		
3 rd Year Students	1.72	.304		
4 th Year Students	1.43	.245		
Postgraduate Students	2.01	.367	F=6.873	0.000

Note n=545

Lastly, now a day it is very important to understand the mindset of the employees who belong to generation Z. This new workforce has their own perception and aspirations as far as the proposition of their career is concerned. According to this survey of students the most important factor for them while deciding to work in a hotel as a career are; “Pleasing job profile”, “Equal opportunities for promotion”, “Social respect”, “Job security” and “Recognition of degree/diploma”. Surprisingly, they also have a negative notion that the hotel job will not provide all the factors which they aspire for.

Another issue which was highlighted during the study was that most of the graduates find it very difficult to apply their knowledge that they gained during their graduation in the institutes. The moment they want to apply their current skills and knowledge, they are stopped and not allowed by the old school mentality managers. They say that try to forget the learned things that means try to ignore whatever knowledge you have acquired from the institute because that is not applicable in the industry. This becomes a major problem for new joiners as it is very difficult for them to showcase their skills and knowledge and ultimately, they get frustrated and quit the job within the span of 2 years, which results in a very high rate of attrition. Since there is a big loss of trained and experienced personnel, industry professional and employees should deal this situation carefully and pick up a progressive approach towards the new joiners.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The entire focus of this research was to find out the students’ perception regarding joining hotel as their career. This study states that although maximum or we can say that majority of the students who are doing hotel management degree want to join the hotel industry but there are certain factors which are missing to make them sustain in the hotel industry. These findings highlight that the industry needs to adopt certain strategies and tactics to ensure that the students who are passing out of the hotel management institutes do not leave the hotel industry and enter a new industry within a span of one year. One of the major objectives of this research was to give precise remedial actions that could be practiced by all the stakeholders of hospitality industry whether it is the government the industry or even the institutes.

The State

Both the governments whether it is the state government or the central government should fill the void which is there between active jobs seekers and the actual job providers. This is only possible when the government put meaningful efforts along with financial support on the promotion of hospitality education and to ensure that the hospitality graduates get ample opportunities when they pass out from institutes. It must be also mentioned here that the Ministry of Tourism needs to put extra effort for creating new job opportunities by promoting the heritage tourism. Also, through infrastructural development the state should create new destinations for tourism and hospitality and making it conducive for hotel brands to open their new ventures there. Ultimately the market becomes such that it attracts more and more employees and employers.

State should take the responsibility of creating forums of hospitality industry experts and hospitality education professionals. This forum could be fundamental for the beneficial relationship between industry and educators for planning the future of hospitality in the state. Different internship practices and new curriculum designing could one of the few highlights for bridging the gap between educational theory and actual practice.

State should also take the responsibility of General Tourism Awareness Activities. This could be done through different informational campaigns, organizing competition related to hospitality industry, felicitating prominent industry leaders, giving permissions to conduct educational field trips, organizing events and training programs for students and graduates.

Hotel Industry

Specially after the COVID, it is high time now that hotel industry start thinking about improving the working conditions of the staff. There are many areas where they should improve their standards particularly when it comes to the factors like salary package, timely promotions, job security and some factors related to socio needs like weekly offs, yearly leaves and the long continuous working hours in shifts.

Hotel industry should also check the payments they make to students for ODCs. Long working hours and minimal wages discourage the students to join the industry. Secondly, hotel industry should also go for tie ups with hospitality institutes so that they can have a mutual beneficially relationship as far as internship requirement of the hotel and placement of pass out students of the institute are concerned.

It is also found that hotel industry gives more importance to highly skilled uneducated staff and not the degree holders with moderate skills. This discourages students to join hospitality degree programs. Also, for promotions and increment hotel industry do not follow written HR guidelines which needs to be changed. In addition to that treating new joiners or trainee

is also very important as word of mouth from students who started their career in hospitality plays in developing student perceptions towards the industry.

Institutes

Hospitality institutes must revise their curriculum time to time and inculcate all the latest that is happening in industry. Hospitality Institute should focus more on actual learning through field visits, lectures from industrial experts and should focus student exchange programmes with other educational bodies.

It's the duty of the institutes to give their students a real picture about the working conditions, the expectations of the industry, the promotion opportunities and the salary packages so that students could make their mind in a realistic manner and prepare themselves for the industry.

Since it is an era of Internet and social media it is very important that institute also plays an important role utilised by utilising these two sources of communication and social outreach. With proper planning and preparation, the social media platform could be utilised to create a positive environment for all the hospitality graduates in developing their perception towards making their career in the field of hotel industry.

Hospitality educators must put their best effort to clean the negative perception towards hotel industry from the mind of the hospitality graduates, by projecting their true qualities and uniqueness of such an educational experience. Also, they need to clear the fact that only through proper degree one can carve a long and good career.

Research Limitations and Further Research

Although the research outcome was quite comprehensive but it has a lot of limitations. Only hotel management graduates from Delhi NCR region were included in the survey that means that data was not enough to generate a good generalized statement. Also, the number of participants chosen, were only students but another very important stakeholders that is the faculties were not included in the survey, which could have added another dimension in the outcome. Additionally, this research was only based on quantitative approach that is factor analysis. This could also have been done on qualitative aspects, which might have given us a clearer outcome of perception and attitude of hotel management graduates.

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