

Bridging The Gap Between Hospitality Education and Industry Expectations to Develop Future Leaders

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ABSTRACT

Education and competence development have become strategic priorities due to the growing complexity and reliance on technology in the diversified hospitality and tourist industry. This has resulted in an increase in the skill requirements that new workers are expected to possess. Graduates of hospitality programs must be prepared to handle the dynamic demands of an industry where digitization and globalization are pervasive. This requires an ongoing effort to determine what capabilities employers are looking for in candidates. Meeting the ever-changing expectations of guests is essential in the rapidly expanding hospitality business, which is one of the world's fastest-growing service industries. This article delves at the disparity between the education offered by hospitality institutions and the demands of the business. It delves into the ways in which companies evaluate recent grads' preparedness for the workforce and identifies the technical, managerial, interpersonal, and digital skills that are most sought-after by employers. According to the results, while hospitality schools do a good job of teaching students the theory behind the industry, they fall short when it comes to teaching them how to lead, how to use technology, and how to deal with emotional intelligence. If we want graduates who are informed and prepared for the workforce, the report says we need to overhaul our curricula, work more closely with businesses and universities, and provide more chances for hands-on learning.

Keywords: *Industry; Expectation; Hospitality; Leader; Education*

1. Introduction

Emerging nations have begun to see hospitality education as a key to achieving their long-term goals of economic growth and development. Similar policies are in place in India, which places a heavy emphasis on the hotel industry and its related fields. Every year, the government shows its interest by increasing the sanctioned amount. Equal weight is given to the development of new attractions and the capacity of individuals to learn this trade through the establishment of educational institutions that provide hospitality, tourism, and related programs, while also enhancing the existing institutions' offerings in this area. That being said, India has long been considered a top location for international students seeking a university degree, and its hospitality school is particularly popular. In recent years, a proliferation of schools, both public and private, offering degrees in hotel management has been seen. Concerns about the program's viability arose since so few schools offered to launch new initiatives. The expansion of hospitality education was impeded by this problem. The goal of this article is to draw attention to the fact that there are several inconsistencies in today's curricula, one of which is that it does not adequately meet industry demands or produce

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professionals who are up-to-date. In order to meet the demands of the industry, experts in the field step forward to design competent and appropriate curricula.

Many positions in the hotel industry need not just practical knowledge but also the ability to manage, make decisions, innovate services, and think strategically beyond graduation having said that, a lot of hospitality schools put too much emphasis on classroom instruction and fundamental operations and not enough on internships and real-world experience. According to studies, there is still a big disparity between what students learn in school and what employers want. Various projects, coalitions, and national studies have been launched in response to rising global competitiveness in an ever-evolving market and worries over the readiness of the workforce. To close the skills gap in the workforce and better equip students for the future economy, the United States government, corporate sector, and academic institutions have all been working together to establish programs and policies.

1.1 Problems with Indian hospitality schools

- A course's curriculum and contents determine the course's success. The curriculum must be responsive to the ever-evolving demands of the hospitality business, which is characterized by rapid change. If the industry is going to have representation on the syllabus committee, it should be in the form of general managers or operation managers.
- Universities, the AICTE, and NCHM have all reorganized their curricula to better reflect values. Regardless, there is still a lack of consistency in the country's hospitality curricula.
- The diploma course outline provided by the State Council in some states is much more comprehensive than the degree course outline, which omits several irrelevant and non-essential subjects. Courses that focus on tasks and management should get a lot of attention. The curriculum need to include value-added subjects like personal development, leadership development, grooming, and similar subjects.
- Curriculum updates are necessary to include new areas of study, such as healthcare administration, retail management, and contact center administration. In order to create a standardized curriculum, the various organizations responsible for approving courses, such as NCHMCT, AICTE, and institutions, should work together effectively. Technology has become an essential element of our everyday lives, thus it would be beneficial to put all hospitality education under one roof for effective monitoring and standardization.
- The use of technology in hotel management is now essential. It is crucial to have knowledge of these technologies, especially in property management. Presenting, teaching, researching, etc., requires an increased emphasis on computer and PMS software usage at the institution level. Kitchen, restaurant, cleaning, and front desk staff should be more familiar with and able to operate current equipment, and this should be emphasized in the curriculum.

2. Literature Review

Ivana, Ivančić & Mikinac, Krešimir & Čorluka, Goran. (2023) All parts of a developed industrial society have changed due to economic and technical progress. The educational sector is not immune to these changes; in fact, it is increasingly vital to make adjustments to the educational sector. Every part of education—curriculum, learning materials, teaching methods, and educational stakeholders—is impacted by the difficulties of systemic reform. The unique characteristics of the hospitality business, which relies on human resources to function, make it distinct from other sectors and have an effect on how schools prepare students to work in the field. With an emphasis on the top fifteen colleges in the world according to QS rankings, this article seeks to discover trends in hospitality-related higher education. In order to get insight into particular models for hospitality education, it is helpful to examine the educational systems of well-established colleges that offer programs in tourism and hospitality. According to the study's findings, schools are putting an emphasis on programs that allow students to develop a niche expertise while

also providing them with practical experience working at prestigious hotel chains and a solid grounding in hospitality, management, culinary arts, and marketing.

Kanitkar, Ketki & Chirmulay, Lalita & Patil, Madhurri. (2023) In 2021, the tourism and hospitality industry will add \$178 billion to India's gross domestic product, making it one of the country's fastest-growing sectors. With a greater employment rate, it has become one of the main sectors propelling India's service sector development. This research employs a descriptive and exploratory strategy. We surveyed 85 students from Pune's hotel management program to get our primary data. Publications such as journals, e-newspapers, and articles are consulted for secondary data. Job security, a safe work environment, fixed working hours, a stress-free workplace, on-the-job training with a high stipend, recruiting in 5-star international and national hotel chains with higher salaries according to industry norms, and healthcare facilities at the workplace are among the amenities that hospitality graduates expect from the industry, according to this study.

Kumar, Alok. (2018) Six percent of global production, one out of fifteen employment, and seven percent of capital investment have all come from tourism in the previous twenty years. Incredible cultural variety characterizes India, which is home to a unique culture and way of life. Each nation has established its own distinct cultural identity. Investment in the tourist industry is low compared to other export businesses. There is no limit to how far it can go. As an industry, it helps bring in money, particularly from outside, and it also boosts the country's reputation. The Indian government recognized the need for hospitality training and established IHMs and ITTMs under the auspices of the ministry of tourism. In order to meet the need for workers in the hospitality and catering industries, IHMs were established. In a similar vein, ITTMs were handling the tourist industry's need for human resources. As a natural part of hospitality education, inculcating values and culture in a typical Indian kid begins at a young age.

Mohd Shariff, Nurhazani & Kayat, Kalsom & Abidin, Azlan. (2014) Human resource managers from Peninsular Malaysian 4-star and 5-star hotels had their views and expectations about graduation skills studied. Despite being the second quality that the business anticipated graduates to have, the results of the questionnaire survey show that the industry views the ability to operate in teams as an important competency. However, the industry views the "ability to use technology" as the most unimportant talent, despite the fact that it was the competency that graduates were supposed to possess prior to joining the business. It follows that graduates need to be able to work in teams if they want to make it in the sector, but computer savvy isn't required. Because the competences acquired may reflect the cultural values of the workplace, this research makes a substantial contribution to the development of graduate-level curricula in the hospitality and tourist sector.

Kokt, Desere & Strydom, A.J. (2014) One of the biggest problems that the tourist and hospitality sector is experiencing is a lack of qualified workers with the necessary expertise. Staff recruitment and retention pose additional difficulties in a service-driven, customer-oriented company. Employees should have the necessary skills and mental toughness to handle the demanding nature of providing customer care. This study aims to meet the expectations of both students and industry stakeholders, since there is frequently a mismatch between the two groups. Students majoring in tourism and hospitality management at South Africa's Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) and other relevant industry members participated in the research, which took place in the Bloemfontein region. In a very demanding and labor-intensive field, the results highlight the significance of management/technical and people abilities.

3. Methodology

Research design

A four-step procedure was used to construct a survey instrument for data collecting from industry experts. Among the four stages were a battery of focus groups, the creation of a survey instrument to gauge how seriously the industry took the course material, its pilot testing with a cross-section of industry professionals via online survey, and finally, its refinement and finalization in light of the results. To address issues relating to non-response bias, phone interviews were conducted with a randomly chosen subset of the sample of people who did not reply to the initial survey. It was

determined that non-response bias did not exist. Table 1 displays the responder demographics. A total of 500 individuals were intended to get the survey. Three hundred and fifty people filled out the survey between 2023 and 2024.

Data Analysis

We used descriptive analysis to rank the means of the survey variables in both time periods. To compare the two ranks, a battery of independent samples t-tests was administered. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18 was used to conduct the data analysis. Final adjustments were made to the survey tool according to the results of the pilot study. To determine how significant each component was for success in the hotel business, we used a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 is very important and 1 is not important at all.

4. Results & Discussion

Table 1 Respondents' Demographic Profile

Demographic variables	2023		2024	
	N	%	N	%
Gender				
Male	210	69.9%	149	49.7%
Female	90	30.1%	151	50.3%
Present Position				
Sales/Marketing	27	8.9%	44	14.6%
Finance/Accounting	20	6.5%	30	10.1%
General Manager	31	10.2%	29	9.8%
Human Resource	25	8.3%	29	9.8%
Chairman/President/CEO/CFO/COO	23	7.6%	17	5.6%
Business Owners	27	8.9%	17	5.6%
Educator/Teacher/Trainer	14	4.5%	14	4.5%
Other Managers	43	14.3%	45	15%
Retired/Unemployed	22	7.3%	27	9%
Other	72	23.9%	48	16%
Education Level				
Bachelor's Degree	196	65.2%	253	84.4%

Graduate Degree	49	16.2%	32	10.8%
Some Graduate Level Work	30	9.9%	14	4.8%
Some College or Technical Degree	13	4.4%	1	0.3%
Associate/Certificate	8	2.8%	0	0%
High School Graduate	5	1.6%	1	0.3%
Type of Ownership				
Company Owned	166	55.2%	165	55.1%
Independently Owned	80	26.5%	91	30.2%
Franchised	43	14.4%	44	14.7%
Other	12	3.9%	9	3.11%

According to the demographic statistics, men made up the majority of responders in 2023, but by 2024, the gender ratio had evened out significantly. Across both years, a highly educated sample was shown by the majority of respondents holding Bachelor's degrees. Job roles such as "Other Managers" and "Sales/Marketing" were prominent, indicating a varied representation of functions. Strong corporate involvement was indicated by the majority of ownership types being company-owned firms. The fact that the number of privately held companies will gradually increase in 2024 is indicative of a surge in entrepreneurial activity. Compared to 2023, the professional mix in 2024 is more varied and inclusive.

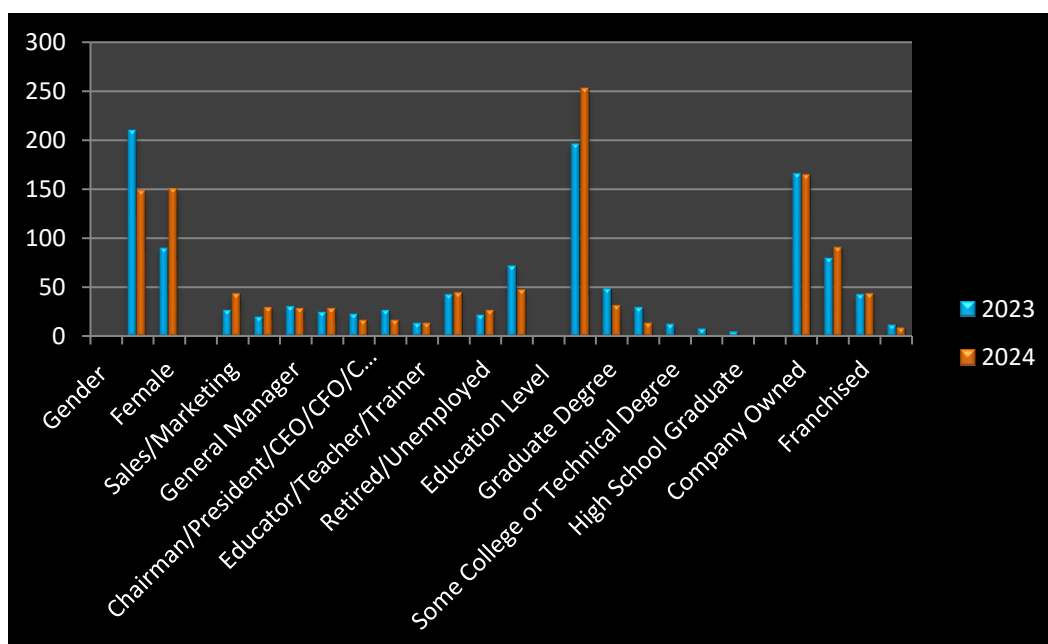


Fig. 1: Respondents' Demographic Profile

Ranking by Industry Expectation

The most up-to-date rankings of significance are shown in Table 2. The mean answer for 27 out of 33 topics was more than 3.0, while 4 regions scored higher than 4.0. Leadership, internships/industry experience, ethics, industry overview, revenue/asset management, hospitality management and organization, hospitality operations analysis, computer/information technology, foodservice operations and controls, and management and organization were the top ten subject areas found.

Based on the statistics, it is clear that Leadership and Internships/Industry Experience are highly valued in hospitality education. Also highly regarded were topics like Ethics and Preparation for Industry Employment, which demonstrate how important these are for future professionals. The curriculum seems to provide moderate emphasis on courses like Technology, Operations, and Revenue Management, as shown by mid-range results in these areas. Weak emphasis on international experience and property development is shown by lower averages for Study Abroad, Real Estate, and Foreign Language. Respondents' differing views are shown by the larger standard deviations in some categories. Overarching, developing practical skills and leadership are given more weight than specialized or global subjects.

Table 2: Current Ranking of Subject Areas according to Hospitality Professionals and Industry Expectation

Industry Expectation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Leadership	4.31	1.04
Internships/industry experience	4.30	1.05
Preparation for Industry Employment	4.23	1.06
Ethics	4.01	1.09
Overview of the Hospitality Industry	3.99	1.08
Revenue/Asset Management	3.95	1.08
Hospitality Management and Organization	3.93	1.01
Hospitality Operations Analysis	3.92	1.00
Foodservice Operations and Controls	3.89	0.99
Computer/Information Technology	3.85	1.07
Food and Beverage Management	3.75	1.02
Food Safety and Sanitation	3.72	1.52
Finance	3.70	1.06
Strategic Management	3.69	1.05
Human Resource Management	3.66	1.07
Lodging Operations	3.66	1.04
Sales/Sales Management	3.63	1.00

Service Management	3.62	1.01
Principles of Marketing	3.61	1.87
Hospitality Marketing Strategy	3.61	1.00
Public Relations	3.37	1.91
Entrepreneurship	3.33	1.13
Meeting Planning/Convention Management	3.22	0.96
Statistics for Management Decision Making	3.15	1.04
Introduction to Management Theory	3.13	1.11
Convention and Meeting Planning	3.10	0.95
Business Law	3.09	1.03
Wine and Specialty Beverage Service / Production	2.99	1.00
International Tourism	2.92	1.89
Innovation and Product Development	2.88	1.01
Foreign Language	2.75	1.08
Real Estate/Property Development	2.61	1.04
Study Abroad	2.50	1.15

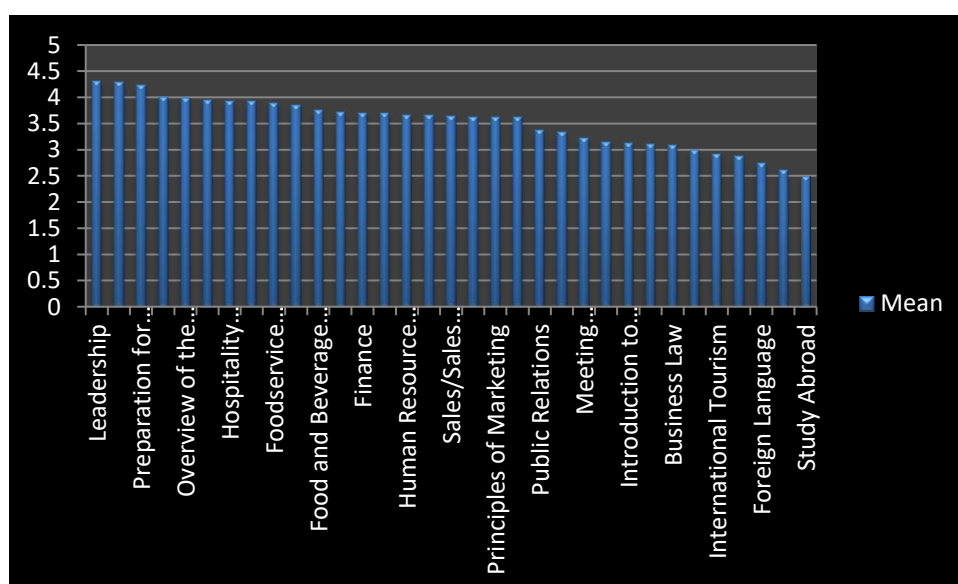


Fig. 2: Current Ranking of Subject Areas according to Hospitality Professionals and Industry Expectation

5. Conclusion

We can conclude that each school year, students should have gained more information, competence, and wisdom than they had upon enrollment. The same holds true for hospitality programs. A distinct feature of hospitality programs is the interdisciplinary character of the curriculum, the variety of its academic roots, and the growing ties to the hospitality sector. The ever-evolving demands of this massive sector must be represented in the curriculum of any hospitality school that aspires to produce graduates who are employable. Graduates with strong technical skills, strong interpersonal abilities, leadership potential, and the capacity to adapt to new service innovations are highly sought after by the sector. Consequently, colleges in the hospitality sector need to alter their teaching methods to be more industry-focused and experiential by working directly with businesses, incorporating new technology into existing courses, and placing an emphasis on addressing problems in the real world. Educators and practitioners must maintain a constant dialogue in order to reimagine learning outcomes and guarantee that students graduate prepared to fulfill professional standards throughout the world. Competent, self-assured, and creative hospitality workers who are prepared to thrive in a global marketplace will be the end result of education that is in sync with industry standards.

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