CHANGING PERSPECTIVES OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN INDIA

Dr. Sheri Kurian
Professor & Group Director
AIMS Hospitality Management Programs

Abstract

Hospitality Management Education is one of the highly skill oriented and professional Programs offered across the globe. Hospitality Industry being popularly known as peoples industry dealing with experience of the Guest more than a product, face to face interaction with the customers and with a simile on face and warmth is very much essential component of the "WOW" factor. However, the COVID-19 19 Pandemic has forced everyone to change their lifestyles so as the education pattern across the globe. This paper on a Study conducted among the Hoteliers, academicians and the students of the Hospitality Management program across the country and abroad to understand practical aspects of online mode of classes and its effectiveness especially in the Hospitality Management Program.

Keywords: Hospitality, WOW Factor, Online Mode, Effectiveness. Blended Learning.

1. Introduction

The Hospitality & Tourism sector is predicted to grow at an average annual rate of 7.5 percent to 18.36 lakh crore (US$270 billion) by 2025 (7.2 percent of GDP). This makes India one of the fastest growing tourism industries over the next decade. The issue of skill gaps is a worldwide problem. In India, for instance, the shortage of skilled manpower poses a major threat to the overall development of tourism. In Dubai, a shortage of manpower poses the biggest challenge to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) tourism industry, according to industry management studies (Source: Bloomberg Nov 2019).

The growth of the Hospitality sector in India is immensely contributing and is projected to grow in the next decade. In today's context, the demand for hospitality professionals are also growing, and the sector is expected to come up with more trained professionals in the coming decade. Also, it has been observed that the demand for hospitality is also rising in small cities in India. People are involving themselves in travelling as compared to the past because of better connectivity and ease of flying. With the advancement in technology, hotels rooms can now be booked with a click of a button. From budget hotels to five-star properties and home stays to boutique resorts, there is something for every traveller. There is a growing awareness of hospitality standards in India and people are demanding high-quality services in hotels and restaurants. Social media are also giving a platform to offer and express their dissatisfaction. There are several brands and chains that have entered the Indian market and with high competition, customers are spoiled for choice. Overall, it is important for hospitality professionals to plan for the long-term, so ask for highly trained professionals are increasing more and more.

Talent gap refers to a lack of skilled individuals in the industry. Every sector occasionally faces the tough issue of the talent gap. It also leads to a negative impact on individual motivation as they feel demotivated due to lack of talented people. To fill this talent, gap an individual needs to know skills, abilities and knowledge about their sector. Due to technology, youngsters are not paying attention to the things which are necessary for them to learn in today's decade, but they are although ignoring and focusing up more on irrelevant things due to which the sector is facing the problem of the talent gap. While there are ample of opportunities, students need to evaluate their aptitude for a career in hospitality before coming right into it. A candidate must be willing to work in various areas as the profession may require that an employee should be multi-talented and can be asked to handle everything like work in management, food and beverage service, housekeeping, front office operation, sales and marketing or any other department depending upon the specific requirement.

The hospitality industry overall provides multiple ranges of experiences. It is often considered as one of the most interesting careers, but there is a lot of work and effort involved. However, with the positive growth of this industry, students with an inclination towards these careers have a bright future ahead. The only thing they have to pay particular attention to their skills so that they can settle down in the hospitality sector without a talent gap. (Source:Buisness world- April 2020)

Objectives of this Study
- The purpose of this study is to find out the effectiveness of the online mode of teaching and learning in the Hospitality Management Program.
- Hotel Management and Catering Science program being considered as the professional Skill oriented program; how does the online mode of delivery ensure its quality as per the Industry expectations?
- To find out the Students Perceptions about the online mode of learning and its applicability in the real-life situations.

Methodology

Webinars being conducted at different levels wherein; al the stakeholders were invited to participate and share their views on the theme. There were three webinars conducted at different intervals which were also organisedregion wise wherein, renowned academicians from reputed Hotel Schools, universities, students from various Hotel Schools across the country and hoteliers were part of it. Proceedings were recorded and the paper has been developed based on the deliberations and outcomes of these webinars. Fig: 01 indicates the responses of each webinar organised.

Webinar	Hoteliers	Academicians	Students	Total number of participants
19.06.2020	14	71	246	331
15.07.2020	10	56	137	203
20.08.2020	08	62	144	214
				748

Fig-01

Findings

Fig -02

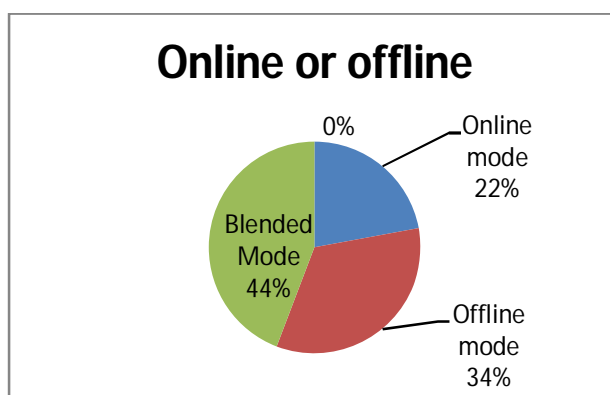**1. Online Mode or Offline Mode**

Based on the inputs received from the Participants out of three webinars organised, fig 2 indicates that 22% of the participants had opined that they are in favour of online mode of teaching and learning in Hospitality Management programs. Whereas, 34 % of participants opined that they prefer offline mode of education as it is more practical oriented and skill-oriented program wherein, face to face interaction and interpersonal skill development is more important.

2. COVID19 Impact

According to UNWTO, April 14- 2020 report, the tourism sector is currently one of the hardest-hit by the outbreak of COVID-19, with impacts on both travel supply and demand. This represents an added downside risk in the context of a weaker world economy, geopolitical, social and trade tensions, as well as uneven performance among major outbound travel markets.

Considering the evolving nature of the situation, it is too early to estimate the full impact of the COVID-19 on international tourism. For its initial assessment, UNWTO takes the SARS scenario of 2003 as a benchmark, factoring in the size and dynamics of global travel and current disruptions, the geographic spread of COVID-19 and its potential economic impact:
• As of today, UNWTO estimates that in 2020 global international tourist arrivals could decline between 20-30%, down from an estimated growth of 3% to 4% forecast in early January 2020.
• This could translate into a loss of US$ 30 to 50 billion in spending by international visitors (international tourism receipts).
• Estimates for other world regions are currently premature in view of the rapidly evolving situation.

UNWTO underscores that any estimate must be treated with caution due to the volatile and uncertain evolution of the outbreak which might lead to further revisions.In a recent talk at IIM-Calcutta, the Chief Economic Advisor mentioned that "the outbreak of coronavirus provides a good opportunity for India to follow an export-driven model." But the question remains whether India has the necessary tools and infrastructure to replace China. India does not only have the potential to match China in terms of scale, but it is endowed with rich pool of unskilled labour, and a robust service sector. Given the complex supply chains that China operates, the biggest stumbling block will be the lack of skill that has to be addressed in the war foot manner as there is a huge potential for India by the year 2025 in the manufacturingand service sector. However, the Major Impacts on Hospitality management studies this year is

that No recruitments for the Final year students, No Industrial Exposure for the Hotel School students, as such many are opting for Higher studies and few have evinced interest in becoming and entrepreneur (Ref; fig 03)
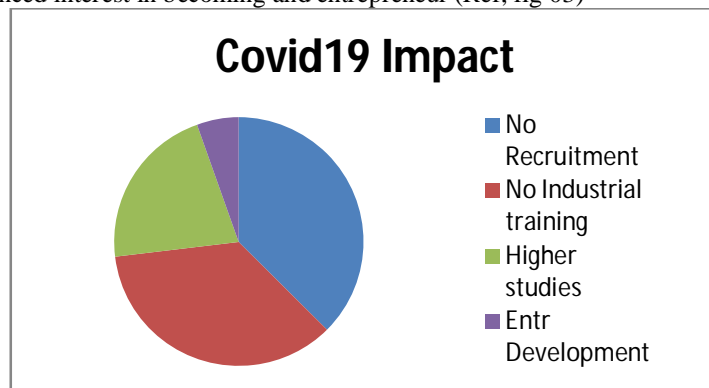

Fig-03

3. Changes expected in the education system Post COVID-19

No more teacher centric approach in the education system. Education Institutions across the country would be changing their perspective now to facilitating centres and collaborative learning centres. However, active industry Academia interactions are inevitable; Employability of the students and acceptability of the products by the industry is going to be the major yardstick for measuring the quality of the Institute. Education 4.0 is developed in lieu with Industry 4.0 which is very much phenomenal in terms of Industry and academia interface and collaborative learning for the students.   More of technology-based teaching and learning would be in place from now onwards. However, there are certain constraints for switching over to 100 % technology based distance and online programs for those practical oriented courses like Hospitality Management, Culinary arts, medical science and engineering etc. wherein, students needs to do practical experiments on a regular basis and that could be under the direct supervision of the faculty .Therefore, the new model of curriculum would be ensuring certain amount of class room, laboratory sessions compulsory for the students to attend at the college especially for professional and practical oriented courses.

Hospitality Management institutions need to give more importance to Housekeeping management and food Hygiene and sanitation since both subjects are going to be more prominent in the changing scenario especially post COVID-19.

4. Importance of Blended Learning for Hospitality Management Programs

Today, many hospitality schools are embracing blended learning. For example, William Blue College of Hospitality Management in Sydney offers online and on-campus study options for most of their degrees, as well as a blended-learning model that allows students to mix their online and on-campus study.

The Glion School of Hospitality and Business in the UK and Switzerland also offers blended learning options to their students. The university offers an MBA **in** hospitality that can be studied full-time on campus, completely online, or as a blended option that alternates between campus-based and online courses. Blended classrooms are designed to meet personal learning needs of every college student by allowing tutors to formulate personalized educational strategies and instructions. Blended learning is implemented not only at colleges, but also on any grade level. It combines both – face to face and online communication between learners and educators. Due to this combination, students can work with tutors when they are at school, as well as use additional online resources at home. In class they can ask teachers for some help, and work on their projects and papers at home, using online materials. Having these materials at hand, they also use online methods of communication with teachers to get support and advice outside of the class. As Laura Lloyd Smith suggests in her exploring the Advantages of Blended Instruction at Community Colleges and Technical Schools, study materials available in a variety of formats can help maximize a learner's engagement. So generally, this approach leaves more space for students' creativity and allows to dive deeper into subjects. However, this method also has some limitations. The successful realization of blended learning at college depends on a number of factors.

As a matter of actual practice, blended learning requires a different percentage of online and in-class settings. It turns out that not all learners engaged in blended learning have a sufficient level of motivation to study. For this segment of students blended learning is a weak method since motivation is a critical factor here. Managing motivation and creating a personal curriculum for every student sometimes becomes a real problem.

5. Role of Hospitality Industry in this Changing Scenario

The lack of connectivity between industry professionals and academicians is also a critical issue. It is essential for both industry professionals and academicians to maintain a healthy network. This will aid both of them to stay updated with the current trends and share knowledge mutually benefit to one another. In the academic side, Seminars, conferences, guest lectures, and other events should be regularly organized. Efforts should be made to ensure students interact and network with these industry professionals. Regular meetings should be conducted to update and upgrade the syllabus and offer value added programs which will help the students once they are placed. Industry Support is very much essential for developing effective teaching and learning through blended learning.

On the industry side, Hotel professionals should invite academicians in Hospitality trade shows, road shows, etc and should assist them in research relatedactivities. Anumber of researches conducted in this field suggest that Hospitality & Tourism sectors recruit employees who have just completed 12th grade. If they are provided three to four months of training, they are prepared to take up responsibilities. If organizations were to hire Hospitality Management students directly from colleges then it is absolutely critical for the academicians and industry professionals connect and work together and reduce the gap which exists. This will result in long term sustainable and mutually benefit outcomes for one another.

6. Challenges expected in the higher education Post COVID-19

Karnataka state is well known as a higher education hub In India. There are more than 1000 institutions for higher education in the Karnataka state alone at present. Most of the institutions are entirely depending on those students coming from different states and countries at present. However, inflow of such migrant students from other places might be a question mark now especially after COVID-19. Therefore, there is a possibility of some kind of consolidation or setback expected in terms of admissions for such institutions in this 2020-21 academic year. Moreover, the economic situations of the country and citizens especially post COVID-19 would be adding fuel to this consolidation as well.

Placements for the current batch of hospitality management students are at stake?Yes, most of the Hotel groups and other service sectors are closed and with no business at present, and almost all have informed the Institutions where they had conducted campus recruitments before lockdown to "hold on" till further instructions from them. Since the hospitality and Tourism sector is the worst hit Industry sector worldwide because of this pandemic and it will be taking time to recover from the present situations, students and their parents may think twice now to take admissions in the Hospitality and Tourism courses. However, most of them would be focusing towards medical, paramedical science courses at least in the academic year 2020-21. Moreover, many would opt for low-cost education schemes.

7. Strategies adopted to come out of the present crisis
7.1. Challenges to be converted into opportunity

As our Economic advisor to the central government emphasised on the importance of war foot level of actions in terms of providing adequate infrastructure facilities to the MNCs willing to shift their base from china to India indicates that if we succeed in bringing them to India would in turn helping us to create adequate employment opportunities at least by 2025. Hence, it's an opportunity for the students to invest now and harvest by the end of their professional academics.

7.2. Confidence building measures among the travelers and tourists

India has all potential now to market it as a safest destination for tourism and business. Both governmentand private sectors need to join hands and initiate this campaign at the earliest with facts and figures so that it would certainly going to help the Tourism and Hospitality industry to recover from the present crisis. Also promote inland travel and tourism more to support the hospitality industry in the country.

7.3. More scholarships and financial assistance to the students

It is the time now for the financial Institutions to liberalise a bit of their stringent norms and provide financial support to the students interested to get admitted in the professional courses. Also, Institutions to offer more merit scholarships so that students and their parents would have some kind of support in terms of their investments for the future.

7.4. More focus on to the entrepreneurship development

It is the need of the hour now to focus more on to the entrepreneurship development so as to create more job opportunities in the market. Educational Institutions need to give more emphasis in terms of incubating the business ideas and developing the same to successful ventures

Conclusion

Challenges are always a part of the Hospitality & Tourism industry so as to the Hospitality Management Education service in India. It is important for all the stake holders of this sector to join hands and with the helpof the technology and makes combined efforts to overcome the present crisis. Therefore, innovation and creative thinking is very much inevitable for the students, faculty and Industry professionals to covert the challenges to opportunities.

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