

# CHANGING PERCEPTION OF CAREER CHOICE AMONG HOSPITALITY STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** *The boom of other parallel industries of the hotel industry has given a great competition of human resource as the source is same that is Hotel Management graduates. The situation has led to fear of a decline in the qualified future hoteliers in hotels.* **Objective:** *To study the factors that are influencing the students opting out of hotels and looking forward to start a career in other allied industries.* **Methodology:** *In this study, quantitative research method was used and research data were collected by questionnaire technique. The sample comprised of 60 students of batch 2015 and 2016 of IHM PUSA, New Delhi. The attitude was assessed using likert scale questionnaire.* **Results:** *The subject has very high preference for starting their career in industries other than hotels. It was also observed that around 35% subject wants to join Hotels or Retail sector.* **Conclusion:** *Many of hotel management graduates are not joining hotels due to various factors from Industrial Training to remunerations.*

**Key Words:** *Career choice, Hospitality, Placement, Retail, Students, Trends*

## INTRODUCTION

According to world travel and tourism council (WTTC) the Indian hospitality sector has been growing at cumulative annual growth rate of 14%. As per WTTC India's travel and tourism sector is expected to be second largest employer in the world, employing approximately 50 lac people, directly or indirectly by 2019. Hospitality sector is one of the major sectors that contribute to FOREX directly. Strengthening this sector with human resource is done by various colleges and institutes across India. The need in hotels for skilled labour is much higher than the amount of the hotel management graduates per year. In the latest trend we have seen that hotel management graduates are not opting for hotels. Instead of this they are opting other sector like airlines, retail, QSR, entertainment etc. Many students are not keen to join the hospitality industry even after being enrolled in a 3-year hospitality program. (Pang, 2010)

A report by Price Water Cooper on Indian hospitality says that there is a growing concern for huge challenge and co-rivalry from other sectors like airlines, retail, QSR etc. for the talent, groomed human

resource of the hospitality industry. The hotel industry is losing its credibility for available career due to various reasons which includes long hours, loss of interest, job profile etc.

In various colleges of Hotel and Hospitality Management across India, options are given to the students of third year to sit in campus placement. These option range from reputed international hotel chains like Hilton, Starwoods, Four Season etc. to Indian Hotel Chains like Taj, Oberoi's, the Lalit, Lemon tree and various independent hotels. Other sectors are also seeking for hotel management students which include fast food chains, multiplex chains, retail stores, malls etc. for their need of skilled manpower. Due to a variety of options available at the time of placement a larger segment of students are opting for other sectors. At this time it is also observed that they follow gamesman's decision making model (Soelberg, 1967; Kumar and Sajnani, 2003) for the selection of best career choice suited for them.

Industrial training is a very important part of hotel management and it becomes primary factor to help understand hotel operations. Various factors like low salary prospectus, lack of respect and self-esteem from other hotel employees, low salaries, long working hours, high physical and mental stress, less amount of holidays etc. creates a negative image among the hospitality students hence affecting their career choice. Better remuneration and incentives, work life balance, a flexible timing etc. fascinates hotel management graduates to join retail sector thus students are drifting away from their core industry. The comparative analysis of the pay package offered at Hotel Management College is as follows:

**Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Pay Package**

S.No.	Segment	Position Offered(during training)	Time Period of Training(in months)	Remuneration/ Month(during Training)
1.	Budget hotel	MT (respective department)	24	9000 – 12000
2.	Luxury Hotel	MT (respective department)	24	18000 – 22000
3.	Entertainment	MT(training/Box office/F&B)	6	20000
4.	Airline	Cabin Crew-Trainee	6	25000
5.	B to B Company	MT		22000
6.	Fast Food Chains	MT(storekeeper/outlet manager)	18	20000

According to the National Employability Study for Hotel Management graduates(2014) the key findings were: Based on the candidate's assessment on cognitive skills, personality and domain knowledge, it was found out that only 4% to 11% of students passing out from Hotel Management institutes are fit to work in the hospitality sector. Females were more fit for hiring (8% to 18%) as compared to males (3% to 10%) across all profiles. Hotel management education in India is still following the age old syllabus and focusing more on literature than practical aspects of hospitality.

Internship plays an important part in the development of management competencies (Walo, 2001). Riley et. al. (2002) claim that the tourism and hospitality industry has two sides in which one is glamorous and other is seen as a low skill, low status and low pay. So because of this the recruits have a perception of confusing complexity of tourism employment thus hampering the quality and quantity of future staff. There are also reports that much tourism and hospitality management graduates leaving the industry or even failing to enter the industry upon graduation due to low job satisfaction, poor employment conditions and absence of motivating factors resulting in high staff turnover and wastage of trained and experienced personnel. As suggested by Jenkins (2001) and Doherty et al. (2001) fresh hospitality management graduates are leaving or not joining the industry due to poor employment condition, low job satisfaction etc. and thus high attrition and wastage of skilled staff.

The specific objective of the study was:

To study the factors that are influencing the students opting out of hotels and looking forward to start a career in other allied industries.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The tools used for the data collection (structured and direct) were General Performa. The study was based on the exploratory survey and the students studying hotel management were identified as sample. Total 60 respondents of Institute of Hotel Management, PUSA, New Delhi of batch 2012-2015 (graduated) and 2013-2016 (final year) were approached to fill the questionnaire.

*Table 2: No. of Respondents per Batch*

S.No.	Batch	No. of Students
1.	2012-2015	27
2.	2013-2016	33

The method of sampling design was simple random probability. This research study was designed to analyse factors that influence career choices of hospitality graduates, both those that are opting for Hotel industry and those that left or are in the industry. The focus was on the perceptions of career factor importance and career factor experience of hospitality graduates.

The target population for this research study was graduates from year 2012-2015 (45%) and 2013-2016 (55%) of Institute of Hotel Management, PUSA, New Delhi. The researchers identified and distributed the questionnaire link hosted on Google Doc ([https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1T4PFCe8-sOrA9w-utONmkCQo1jg5Mpb2Woy87l\\_mamU/edit?usp=drive\\_web](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1T4PFCe8-sOrA9w-utONmkCQo1jg5Mpb2Woy87l_mamU/edit?usp=drive_web)) to the sample. The questionnaires were self administered. 35% were female and 65% were male out of total respondent.

A 16-statement questionnaire was designed to examine the variables like job profile of company, internship, public relation, academics, college placement rules, brand of the company, flexibility,

location, remuneration, incentives, communication skills, previous year placement etc. that affect choice of placement of a third year student. The Likert scale was from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree). These questionnaires were administered in a web-based format. Links to the survey, hosted on Google Docs, were emailed to participants by the researcher. Within each questionnaire there was a section rating importance of career factors and experience of career factors.

The modified questionnaires were pilot tested to detect problems with understandability and wording of the survey. The pilot test group consisted of 10 students. The pilot testers were asked to complete the questionnaire as well as provide feedback regarding understandability. After analysis of the pilot test data, a few minor modifications were made with the formatting of the questionnaire, including a change of format for some directions, a redesigned webpage, and addition of a progress tracking mechanism.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On the basis of data collected in questionnaire from 60 students, data was compiled and analysed to find out various results.

Only 18.3% students showed interest in the hotel industry. Rest 81.7% preferred other segments which includes quick service interest, retail, airlines, cruises, IT/ITES, government job etc.

*Table 3: Preference for Placement*

S. No.	Sectors	Percentage
1.	Hotel	18.3
2.	QSR	15
3.	Retail	35
4.	Airlines and Cruise	67
5.	IT/ITES	5
6.	Others	20

As the statements were taken in Likert Scale, it was found that various variables affected the career choice among hospitality students. Variables like communication skills, brand of the company, job profile, Industrial training strongly affects the placement choices. It was also found that respondents agreed that previous year placement trends, remuneration, incentives, work location, flexible working hours, placement rules of the college, academic performance, and position of management training irrespective of sector is seen while deciding the career.

The result of the present study was in confirmation with the study of (Srinivasan et.al. 2014) regarding the change in the final career option as compared to first year. The findings are consistent with the findings of (Gupta, 2013) regarding the competitive remuneration, work life balance, industrial training etc. of

hotel with other parallel industries. Schoffstall (2013) identified that better compensation and hours are major reasons for the career shift. Jenkins (2001) found as employees progressed professionally, salary becomes the most valued factor. Pang (2010) also identified that job environment and having lower starting remuneration was a major cause of the same.

The following table depicts the analysis of variables that affects placement choice on a Likert scale with ratings between 1 and 5, with 1 being Strongly Agree and 5 being Strongly Disagree.

**Table 4: Mean Likert Scale Rating for the factors affecting placement choice**

S. No.	Factors	Mean Likert Scale Rating
1.	Previous year placement trends affects the placement decision of current years	1.9
2.	Communication skills	1.36
3.	Incentives attached to the salary	1.7
4.	Remuneration	1.73
5.	Work location	2.2
6.	Flexible work hours	1.68
7.	Management trainee position is important irrespective of any sector	2.06
8.	Brand of the company	1.45
9.	Hotel jobs are very tiring	1.7
10.	Placement rules set by the college after placement	1.7
11.	Academics affect the career choice	2.36
12.	Job profile of the company	1.33
13.	Industrial training	1.35

## CONCLUSION

For College/Universities: It is suggested that the NCHMCT and Universities should include the latest trends followed by hotels in the curriculum and the same must be imparted to the students via Lecture, Industrial visit, Seminars, Workshops etc.

The Colleges and universities must develop a well-designed module for the industrial training of the students and must be followed by the hotels too. A proper mentor mentee relationship must be established at the college level as well as during training time. A well functioned counselling session must be conducted in respective college to know about the psychological pressure on students because of Industrial Training. Feedback from the students must be considered as it will help the college to keep a record about the hotel's policy on working hours and training methods. More subjects that are in demand must be included like revenue management, sales, marketing, public relations related to hotels. This will keep the interest of students in this sector.

For Industry: The industry must put more emphasis on work life balance. They should also check the level of work that an Industrial trainee is doing. A weekly/monthly review is important for the training department of the hotel for the students about the problems that they are facing. A proper well-designed training module must be implemented on grounds. Feedback system must be executed so that one can get the real picture of the operation of the hotel. Nowadays with many hospitality firms advocating a 5 day work-week, companies that are still practising a 6-day work-week should follow suit.

The students sit in the placement keeping various factors in mind. They take suggestion from parents, faculty members and more over they follow their own experience. As the case study states that students of final year were opting for various other fields which are competitors to the Hotel Industry in terms of manpower. Hotel Management graduates are well groomed that's why the other sectors give an additional incentive to these new graduates to attract them which range from good remuneration to good work life balance. The training also aids them in improving their personalities and overall confidence and the same can create a pseudo-status of the hotel industry. Ultimately it can be concluded that a proper liaison between college, hotel and students can help retain hotel management graduates in the hotel industry only.

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