

PERCEPTION OF HOUSEKEEPING AS A CAREER AMONGST HOTEL MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Background: Hotel industry is contributing a magnificent proportion to the country's economy because of the exponential growth in travel. Whatever is the guest's preference but the first and foremost requirement of all is high standards of cleanliness and hygiene. All the professionals from the industry nod for this undoubted fact but still the hotel management students are not motivated to select housekeeping as a profession. **Objectives:** To determine the root cause of housekeeping not being selected as a career by the majority of hotel management students. It also focuses on the factors that lead to disinterest for housekeeping amongst the students. **Methodology:** The study was conducted in the top Hotel Management institutes of Chandigarh, Punjab, Delhi and Haryana. The data collection was based on questionnaires and interviews of final year students of respective institutes. **Results:** Only 20% of students were found to be opting for housekeeping as their career. The main reason given by students for not liking housekeeping subject were menial cleaning tasks involved for example bathroom cleaning and public area cleaning. The study clearly showed that 1st year syllabus creates an impression of housekeeping being a menial and monotonous subject which majorly is cleaning and this mindset then becomes difficult to change. 21% felt that housekeeping offers lower pay scale. **Conclusion:** The study found out the various reasons for making this subject unfit due to lack of communication skills, less training required etc. and the various reasons behind not selecting housekeeping as career like job nature, poor salary, delayed promotions, lack of creativity and monotony, lack of esteem etc.

Key Words: Housekeeping, Profession, Students, Placements, Career, Economy

INTRODUCTION

Hotel industry is contributing a superior proportion to country's economy because of the exponential growth in travel. Hotel industry is an integral component of tourism industry. The definition of tourism industry is incomplete without the mention of hotels. These days travellers have innumerable options to choose from when it comes to staying in hotels. Guests have distinguished needs while traveling and hence, select the type of property to stay accordingly. There are various considerations while

selecting a hotel like the brand name, facilities, value for money, location etc. But above all the basic prerequisite is of high standards of cleaning and hygiene. No guest would like to fall ill while travelling due to unhygienic conditions. Housekeeping is an integral part of the hotels. In fact, not even hotels but hospitals, malls, airports etc all require intensive housekeeping practices to be followed. Raghubalan (2009), states that nothing sends a stronger message than cleanliness in a hospitality operation. No level of service, friendliness, or glamour can equal the sensation a guest has upon entering a spotless, tidy and conveniently arranged room. Both management and guest consider the keeping of the place clean and in good order a necessity for hotel to command a fair price and get repeat business. This was evident in a survey carried out by Market Facts for company Procter and Gamble, in which 63% of the travelers rated cleanliness as the first priority in their quest for hotels.

Table 1: Reasons guests give for returning to a hotel

Reasons for returning	For all Travelers (%)	For Frequent Travelers (%)
Cleanliness/appearance	63	63
Good Service	42	45
Facilities	35	41
Convenience/location	32	38
Price/reasonable rates	39	35
Quite and Private	9	8

Source: Hotel Housekeeping Operations & Management, Raghubalan(2009)

Nevertheless cleanliness and appearance are of utmost importance for the hotel industry so is the requirement for manpower in the housekeeping department. According to NSDC report (2011) in coming years, there will be a huge requirement of 27,72,000 employees in the hotel industry. Table 2 shows the huge requirement of employees within hotel department by 2022. It is clearly visible that housekeeping department has maximum requirement of manpower in future.

**Table 2: Human Resource Requirement in various Departments of Hotels in India
(By the year 2022)**

Department	Human Resource Requirement (by 2022)	
	No of persons	Percentage share
Front Office	5,000	(0.18%)
F&B Service	58,300	(2.1%)
F&B Kitchen	3,93,000	(14.17%)
Housekeeping	6,34,000	(22.83%)
Total Requirement	27,72,000	

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Primary Research and IMACS Analysis

In this highly competitive world where selection of a profession after schooling depends majorly on the manpower requirement of that particular industry, housekeeping being the most demanding on this list is still not being opted as a career by most of the Hotel Management students.

All the professionals and academicians of the industry nod for the fact that housekeeping has the highest manpower requirement, still the students are not motivated enough to take it as career. If we compare the total strength of students in hotel management institutes and the number opting for housekeeping in interviews, the results are disappointing.

According to the article, “Housekeeping as a career option” published in Clean India Journal, 2012, In spite of having a good experience of doing the housekeeping job while training, the students were reluctant to take up housekeeping as a career. It was a big “NO” from most of them. The article depicted the viewpoints of various students which were as follows:

- Was it because they considered cleaning to be a girl’s job? No. Housekeeping is definitely not just a girl’s job. Currently, there are more men working in housekeeping than women. Front office perhaps has more women. Any day, catering or working in the kitchen is a better job to housekeeping.
- While, catering is the core subject and housekeeping perhaps an added necessity, it is not viewed as an independent profession.
- Even in a kitchen, it is the kitchen steward who is responsible for the cleanliness. Housekeeping does not have a role.
- Not just that, housekeeping has its limitations. It is a tough job and one cannot grow fast or get promoted in this profession.
- It is not a well-paying job either.

One of the most crucial impediments determining the students’ decision to take up housekeeping as a career is also family pressure. “We all love housekeeping but when it comes to explain to our families, we are helpless.” “After doing a degree course, you have learnt to sweep the floor. You could have done that without your degree too...” This was one of the students expressing his parents’ reaction.

However advanced the cleaning profession may be in the international market, and however important this operation may have turned into, most homes in India associate housekeeping to “saaf-safai” and find it demeaning to introduce their children to this profession. This attitude which percolates down to each and every institution has rendered it an unimportant job.

The housekeeping service providers engaged by client companies in India face severe discrimination right from payment terms to penalty to delayed payments to narrow margins. When there is limited dignity attached to the housekeeping profession, how can we expect parents to let the future generation

take up such jobs?

There are no professional courses either when it comes to housekeeping nor are there lucrative jobs to attract students to take up housekeeping as a career.

The study focuses on the following objectives:

- To determine the root cause of housekeeping not being opted as a career by hotel management students.
- To identify the factors that lead to disinterest for housekeeping amongst the students.
- To analyse the factors which lead to selection of housekeeping as a career amongst the few who opt for it.
- To study the overall impression about housekeeping on students.

METHODOLOGY

For the study quantitative research design was adopted. It consisted of 14 Hotel Management Institutes of Northern Region of India including government and private in which students filled up questionnaire regarding perception of housekeeping as a career. Random Sampling method was followed to get the questionnaire filled. The questionnaires were completed within 1 month. Altogether 125 questionnaires were distributed and 107 were collected, representing a response rate of 85%. A number of 11 were discarded because of incomplete information and mistakes. Thus, a number of 96 usable questionnaires were obtained.

A semi-structured questionnaire was developed based on an extensive review of literature. The questionnaire consisted of socio- demographic details like name and place of institute, gender, age, annual income of parents etc. It consisted of 10 questions which enquired about the various aspects of housekeeping selection by students as their career.

Statistical analysis was done using tables, columns, bar graphs and pie charts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The various data and figures collected during the research with the help of questionnaire are mentioned below.

Table 3 below shows the percentage of students opting for housekeeping as their career in various Hotel Management Institutes of Northern Region. This information has been collected from the institutes telephonically.

This comparison of total strength of students and number of students opting for housekeeping shows that less than 20% of the students of an institute were opting for housekeeping as their career. These

figures are quite alarming as housekeeping is also one of the four core departments of a hotel. It can be understood from the above table that students do not have much interest in housekeeping.

Table 3: Sample Institutes from Northern Region

S.No.	Name of Institute	Total strength of students	Number of Students Opting for Housekeeping	Percentage of Students opting for Housekeeping
1.	IHM Pusa	210	29	14%
2.	DIHM Lajpat Nagar	100	10	10%
3.	IHM Panipat	44	8	18%
4.	IHM Shimla	231	26	11%
5.	IHM Gurdaspur	147	21	14%
6.	CIHM Chandigarh	55	5	9%
7.	AIHM Chandigarh	210	25	12%
8.	IHM Rohtak	78	10	13%
9.	IHM Kurukshetra	90	12	13%
10.	Chitkara School of Hospitality, Rajpura	85	13	15%
11.	Chandigarh College of Hotel Management, Landran	70	14	20%
12.	Rayat aand Bahra Institute of Hotel Management, Kharar	60	10	17%
13.	University Institute of Hotel Management, Chandigarh	38	5	13%
14.	International Institute Of Hotel Management, Delhi	147	8	5%

Table 4 shows a large number of students from an institute opting for Food and Beverage Service as their Career. Students opting for Food Production and Front Office were 26% and 22% respectively. Only 14% of the students opted for Housekeeping as a career. It can be clearly analyzed that the number of students opting for housekeeping are fewer apart from those going for other ancillary departments like Sales & Marketing, Human Resource etc i.e. 4% only. 10% of the students admitted that they dislike housekeeping subject very much. 37% students had a neutral response. The main reason given by students for not liking housekeeping subject were menial cleaning tasks involved for example bathroom cleaning and public area cleaning and going into chemistry of the cleaning products which creates boredom.

It was observed that the 37% and 24% of the students dislike very much first year housekeeping practical and theory respectively (Fig 1). It means that students don't like the cleaning tasks which are to be performed in the practical like bathroom cleaning or other surface cleaning in public areas which

they consider as low esteemed jobs. This is what creates a negative impression of housekeeping in the minds of the students initially which carries on till 3rd year.

While 41% of the students have a neutral mindset about the 2nd year practical and 20% have moderate likely the practical as it involves creative elements like dress designing and flower arrangements which the students connect to after their I.T. And the response in 3rd year practical is 39% neutral and 21% likes housekeeping moderately as the content is more of management skills and interior decoration which creates interest for students which they find beneficial for them in their day to day routine also.

The study clearly shows that 1st year syllabus creates an impression of housekeeping being a menial and monotonous subject which majorly is cleaning and this mindset then becomes difficult to change for subsequent years though the liking and interest of students increases as compared to 1st year.

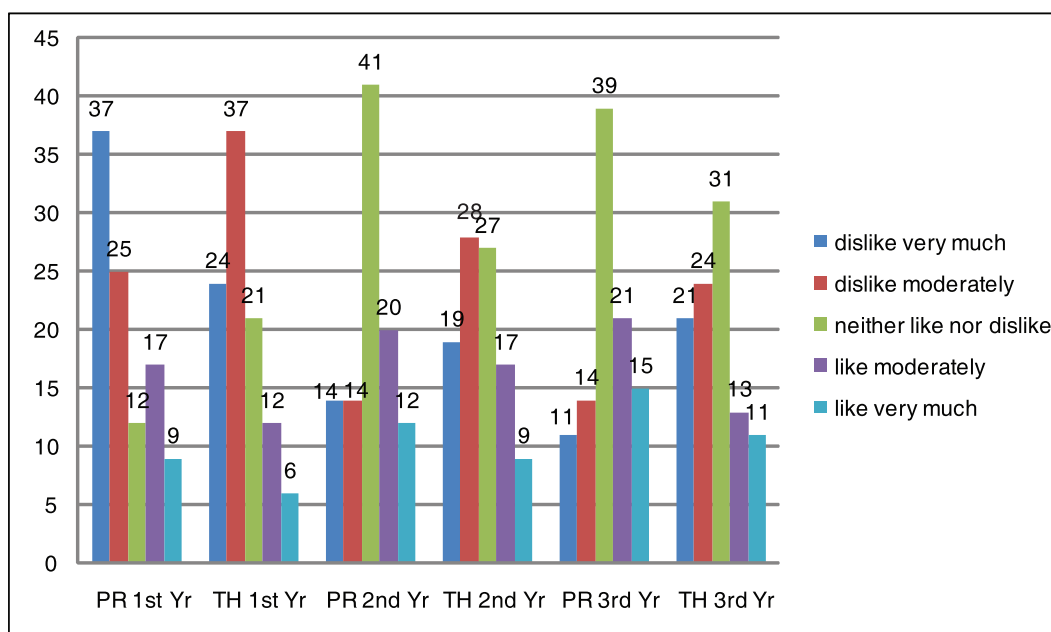


Figure 1: Rate your liking for housekeeping (Theory and Practical) classes on a scale of 1-5.

When students were asked about the first word that comes to their minds when they hear Housekeeping, 41% of them related to it as Cleaning (*Saaf - Safai*) whereas 15% considered housekeeping as aesthetic upkeep i.e. decoration and beautification of a place (Table 4).

11% thought housekeeping majorly as doing maintenance jobs like carpentry etc. 5% as horticulture and 9% as laundry work while only 9% thought that housekeeping is about management of work and employees. 2% felt housekeeping is interior decoration, dress designing etc.

It is observed that when a student selects housekeeping, it is perceived by other students that only 9% select it because of their interest while 16% and 6% due to poor communication skills and unattractive appearance as they think Housekeeping personnel are not so smart and effective in communication.

Maximum number i.e. 37% thinks that it is easy to get a job and growth in housekeeping and 27% feel that they will not fit into any other department so why not go for housekeeping. 5% opt housekeeping due to other reasons like limited working hours etc.

41% of the students have agreed that they don't opt for housekeeping because of the lower job esteem. While 21% feel that housekeeping offers lower pay scale. 15% don't choose housekeeping as they feel that the work is monotonous, 17% due to heavy physical work 4% due to delayed promotions and lack of growth and 4% due to other reasons like occupational work hazards, family influence etc

It was analyzed that the main reason for not joining housekeeping is the job nature. Students are ready to cook and serve but they are not prepared to clean because according to them cleaning is associated with low esteemed job and not meant for students who have completed a three years graduation from a reputed institute.

9% and 41% of the students strongly agree and agree respectively that housekeeping job does not require much expertise i.e. it is only cleaning while 25% neither agree nor disagree to the statement believing that some jobs like horticulture, stain removal etc require expertise while cleaning doesn't. 45% of the students are influenced by industrial training for the selection of a department as their career. It is the time when they get a practical exposure of all the departmental work of a hotel and it becomes easy for them. Very few are influenced by senior students and family for selecting a department for their career i.e. 8% and 5% respectively. Personal choice and faculty guidance accounts for 27% and 14% respectively. Merely 1% is influenced by other factors like peer influence.

Students were asked about the toughest department amongst the four major 38% of the students found Food Production as the toughest while 43% considered F & B service as the toughest department. Only 17% felt Housekeeping is a tough department. These percentages show that students are ready to take challenges at work. A department being tough to work does not de-motivate students for selecting it as a career. In order to analyze whether monotony affects the department selection by students or not, students were asked the most monotonous department as per them on the basis of their industrial training experience. 48% of the students say housekeeping is the most monotonous department amongst all. 9%, 20% and 23% of the students felt Food Production, F & B Service and Front Office are monotonous respectively.

Table 4: Responses of the Subjects

Questions	Responses	Percentage
Which department do you want to pursue your career in?	Food production	26
	Food and beverage service	35
	Front office	22
	House keeping	14
	Any other	4

Questions	Responses	Percentage
Do you like Housekeeping subject?	Like very much	8
	Like moderately	22
	Neither like nor dislike	37
	Dislike Moderately	23
	Dislike very much	10
What is the First thing that comes to your mind with term Housekeeping?	Cleaning	41
	Aesthetic upkeep	15
	Maintenance	11
	Horticulture	5
	Laundry	9
	Management	17
	Any other	2
For which of the following reasons students opt for Housekeeping as a career?	Interests	9
	Poor communication skills	16
	Unattractive appearance	6
	Not fit for other departments	27
	Easy and high job opportunity	37
	Any other	5
For which of the following reasons students do not opt for Housekeeping as a career?	Lower job esteem	41
	High level of physical work	17
	Monotony of work	15
	Lower payscale	21
	Delayed promotions	4
	Any other	2
Housekeeping job doesn't require much of expertise in comparison to other departments?	Strongly agree	9
	Agree	41
	Neither like nor dislike	25
	Disagree	21
	Strongly disagree	4
According to you, selection of department for placement is affected by which of the following?	Industrial training	45
	Personal interest/passion	27
	Faculty guidance	14
	Family influence	5
	Senior students influence	8
	Any other	1

Questions	Responses	Percentage
Which of the 4 core departments did you find the toughest during your industrial training?	Food production	38
	Food and beverage service	43
	Front office	3
	Housekeeping	17
Which of the 4 core departments did you find monotonous during your industrial training?	Food production	9
	Food and beverage service	20
	Front office	23
	Housekeeping	48

CONCLUSION

However, it is very tricky task to understand the behavior of the students and to investigate the reasons of students for not choosing housekeeping. The study found out the various reasons why the students join the housekeeping department as a career like easy placement; student finding himself unfit for other departments due to lack of communication skills, less training required etc. and the various reasons behind not selecting housekeeping as career like job nature, poor salary, delayed promotions, lack of creativity and monotony, lack of esteem etc. Though the present study was just confined to few regions but still it can be helpful for the scholars & researchers, who are doing research in related field.

Also, the study depicted an analysis which shows that the current Housekeeping Syllabus in Hotel Management needs to be redesigned according to the main requirements and latest trends of the industry and inculcating and modifying the topics keeping in mind the interest factor of the students. This will certainly lead to change in the perception of students about housekeeping subject to a certain extent.

All the academicians would agree that they have seen the surprised faces of new students when they come to know that they have got to do the cleaning tasks as practical in housekeeping subject. As a matter of fact a major chunk of students do not know ins and outs of hotel management course. Students being grown in a society where cleaning is either females job or a maid's job, it becomes very difficult for them to accept that they have to perform a task which is being performed by servants at their homes. At the beginning of session when students are asked why they joined hotel management, the most common reasons we get to hear are passion for cooking, interest in travelling, good interpersonal skills or aspiration to become an entrepreneur. A faculty would never find a student saying, "My passion for cleaning brought me here." From that point itself, disinterest in the department starts which shows in the study where maximum students say that they don't like attending housekeeping classes which clearly shows that if a faculty teaching housekeeping fails to explain at that time that housekeeping is much more than just cleaning; students will never develop any interest in it. At the end they would join housekeeping only if they are not appropriate for any other department or if they feel that it would be

easier to get a job in housekeeping due to lesser competition and has easy growth options. But, also as the study shows that maximum students get influenced for a career in a specific department after their industrial training, the training manager has a vital role to play in guiding and influencing the students.

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