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Transforming tourism education: Exploring the impact of activity-based learning

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Abstract

The rapid advancements in science and technology have significantly transformed various industries, including tourism and hospitality. As a result, there is a growing need for skilled personnel in the tourism sector who possess not only theoretical knowledge but also practical, hands-on experience. Tourism and hospitality management is increasingly recognized as a vital educational field that prepares individuals to navigate the dynamic and competitive business environment of the tourism industry. Courses in tourism education, such as Bachelor of Tourism and Travel Management (BTTM) and Master of Tourism and Travel Management (MTTM), are designed to equip students with insights into tourism economics, business management, market dynamics, and relevant legislation. However, with the rapid expansion of the Indian economy, it is essential that tourism education incorporates activity-based learning (ABL) to ensure students develop practical skills necessary for success in the field.

This study investigates the perceptions of tourism management students at Kurukshetra University regarding the effectiveness of ABL in tourism education. A total of 80 students, including BTTM, MTTM, and Ph.D. scholars, were surveyed to assess their views on the importance and performance of various learning methods. The study aimed to identify the gaps between students' expectations of activity-based learning and the current performance of these methods within the curriculum. Findings reveal that while students highly value experiential learning methods, such as field visits, role play, and industry engagement, there are significant gaps in the implementation and effectiveness of these activities within the current educational framework.

The results highlight the need for restructuring tourism education to better integrate activity-based learning approaches. This includes increasing industry collaborations, enhancing practical components, and refining course content to better align with the evolving demands of the global tourism industry. The findings underscore the importance of developing a well-rounded curriculum that blends theoretical knowledge with hands-on, practical experiences, ultimately preparing students for successful careers in tourism management.

Keywords: Activity based learning, tourism education, future professionals, learning approaches

Introduction

The recent economic change significantly affects the business entity. At present, the world is experiencing a high-tech revolution characterised by advancements in science and technology. It has generated a need for skilled personnel in the area of tourism and hospitality education with creative concepts. The field of tourism and hospitality management is currently well recognised as a demanding educational field. Engaging in a tourism course equips individuals with understanding of tourist business, market dynamics, fundamental principles of tourism economics, and legislation governing the tourism and hospitality industry. The idea of tourism encompasses several interdisciplinary fields such as tourism accountancy, tourism geography, business management, e-commerce, tourism economics, and tourism marketing. Given the rapid expansion of the Indian economy, there is a growing demand for skilled tourism experts who can actively contribute to the economic prosperity of the country. To fulfil this objective, numerous universities in India are providing high-quality education in tourism and hospitality. Due to the substantial contribution of the tourism industry, tourism education becomes of greatest significance.

Review of Literature

In today's world, knowledge is seen by many as the ultimate value. The allocation of funds

for the infrastructure and workforce has also experienced a significant surge. The globalisation, liberalisation, and privatisation processes have led to extraordinary growth in all business sectors of the international economy. The entire economy is currently experiencing a significant change, with the emergence of several new sectors such as financial services and professional services. The business environment is characterised by its dynamic nature, with such significant changes that a multitude of novel ideas and procedures are rapidly emerging, rendering the older and conventional ones outdated. The primary goal of tourism education is to equip individuals with comprehensive understanding of various functional aspects of the industry in order to assist travel agencies and tour operators. The tourist sector necessitates individuals with strong technical expertise, managerial skills, effective communication skills, good industrial acumen, and a global perspective in a fully advanced technological setting (Patika, 2010) [20].

This scenario has led to a restructuring of tourism education curricula at all levels to ensure its relevance and compatibility with the evolving business environment. It also aims to introduce appropriate concepts and techniques among tourism teachers to enhance and streamline their contribution (Reddy, 2007) [27]. Through the introduction of increasingly advanced professional skills, it is imperative that the output of graduates and researchers attains the highest level of quality globally. Several studies have been undertaken on the topic of tourist education, including works by Orr & Bantow (1983) [19], Khan (2008) [14], Roshan (2011) [25], Purohit & Purohit (2005) [22], Sagmi (2005) [27], Shrotryia (2010) [30], Dey (1996) [9], and N.C. Singh (2010) [18]. Although activities-based learning in tourism education have been the subject of few studies undertaken. The objective of this study is to investigate the students' perception of activity-based learning in the field of

tourist education.

Objective

The main objective of the paper is to find out the activities that are important for the tourism education from the perspectives of tourism management students to cope with the changing business environment. The sub objectives are as follows:

1. To study the efficiency of tourism education from students' perspective.
2. To study the importance and performance of activities-based learning in tourism education.

Methodology

The present paper is based on empirical research. The study was conducted on the tourism students of Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra during the academic year 2023-2024. It aims to find out the perception of tourism students of different level towards Activity Based Learning. To find out their view, a discussion meeting was conducted to know their view regarding the ABL in tourism education before the final interview was made. By taking their suggestion a structured interview scheduled was developed incorporating all the queries to accomplish the set objectives of the study. A total of 80 respondents were interviewed purposively which include 52 BTTM students, 25 MTTM students and 3 Ph.D. Scholars. The collected data were analysed using percentage and Likert scaling techniques. Thus, the Likert scaling method assigns a numerical value to each of the five responses.

Results and Discussion

The following are the results and discussion made on the data collected from respondents towards activity-based learning in tourism education. The study reveals the following results:

Table 1: Respondents view on general aspects on B.T.T.M. course.

Sl. No.	Attributes	Excellent	Good	Average	Below average	Poor	Total
1	The broadness of the course material	7(11.3)	33(53.3)	17(27.4)	4(6.4)	1(1.6)	62(100)
2	Length of the course's coverage	9(14.5)	22(35.5)	25(40.3)	5(8.1)	1(1.6)	62(100)
3	Relevance and application of the course	8(12.7)	19(30.1)	23(36.6)	8(12.7)	5(7.9)	63(100)
4	Value of learning	6(10)	29(48.3)	17(28.3)	4(6.7)	4(6.7)	60(100)
5	Readability and applicability of the textual content	2(3.2)	16(25.4)	32(50.8)	7(11.1)	6(9.5)	63(100)
6	Importance of supplementary sources	3(4.8)	10(15.9)	28(44.4)	9(14.3)	13(20.6)	63(100)
7	The level of effort needed from the student	12(19.4)	17(27.4)	20(32.2)	8(12.9)	5(8.1)	62(100)
8	Duration of the course	4(6.7)	15(25)	22(36.6)	9(15)	10(16.7)	60(100)

Source: Field survey

In the above table respondents' opinion was taken on general aspects of the B.T.T.M. course. The majority of the respondents have found average on different attributes of the course. Many of the respondents also have found good on different attributes of the course. 53.3% of the respondents are of the view that the broadness of the course material is good and 27.4% respondents find it average. 40.3% of the respondents have expressed average on the length of the course's coverage and 35.5% respondents have expressed good. When the opinion of the respondents is taken on relevance and application of the course, it is found that 36.6% of respondents have found average and 30.1% respondents have found good. Of the total respondents

48.3% respondents have found that value of learning about the course good and 28.3% respondents have found average. Another question was about the readability and applicability of the textual content. It is found that half of the respondents i.e. 50.8% show average and only 3.2% shows excellent. At the same time 44.4% respondents have thought that the importance of supplementary sources like library facilities average. And when enquired about the level of effort needed from the student 32.2% respondents have found average and the remaining respondents find it good and excellent. Another query was about the duration of the course and found that 36.6% respondents have found average and 15% respondents have found below average.

Table 2: Respondents view on general aspects on M.T.T.M. course.

Sl. No.	Attributes	Excellent	Good	Average	Below average	Poor	Total
1	The broadness of the course material	5(20)	16(64)	3(12)	1(4)	-	25(100)
2	Length of the course's coverage	3(12)	14(56)	7(28)	1(4)	-	25(100)
3	Relevance and application of the course	4(16.6)	12(50)	6(25)	2(8.3)	-	24(100)
4	Value of learning	5(20.8)	11(45.8)	2(8.4)	2(8.4)	4(16.7)	24(100)
5	Readability and applicability of the textual content	3(13.1)	7(30.4)	9(39.1)	1(4.3)	3(13.1)	23(100)
6	Importance of supplementary sources	2(7.7)	9(34.7)	8(30.7)	3(11.5)	4(15.4)	26(100)
7	The level of effort needed from the student	10(40)	7(28)	8(32)	-	-	25(100)
8	Duration of the course	2(8.4)	6(25)	8(33.4)	4(16.6)	4(16.6)	24(100)

Source: Field survey

In the above table respondents' opinion was taken on general aspects of the M.T.T.M course. The majority of the respondents have found good on different attributes of the course. 64% of the respondents are of the view that the broadness of the course material is good and 20% respondents find it excellent. 28% of the respondents have expressed average on the length of the course's coverage and 56% respondents have expressed good. When the opinion of the respondents is taken on relevance and application of the course, it is found that 25% of respondents have found average and 50% respondents have found good. Of the total respondents 45.8% respondents have found that value of learning about the course good and 20.8% respondents have found excellent. Another question was about the readability and applicability of the textual content. It is found that 39.1% respondents show average and 13.1% shows excellent. At the same time 30.7% respondents have thought that the Importance of supplementary sources like library facilities is good. And when enquired about the level of effort needed from the student 40% respondents have found excellent and 32% respondents have found average. Another query was about the duration of the course and found that 33.4% respondents have found average and 16.6% respondents have found below average and another 16.6% respondents have also found it poor.

From the above two tables it is found that that the overall performance of M.T.T.M course is better than B.T.T.M course. To improve the quality of tourism education more emphasis should be given on new and well-defined curriculum which includes activity-based learning.

Importance and performance analysis of learning methods

The importance and performance analysis are an attempt to assess the level of importance as perceived by the respondents for selected learning methods and also rates the performance of each such method. In order to assess perceived importance, different aspects of 11 selected learning methods and their respective performance rating from the view point of the tourism students, the following methodology is adopted.

At the first stage, the respondents are asked to indicate the level of importance for each learning methods on five-point scale with the ratings extremely important, important, moderately important, less important and not important and weights have been assigned as 5,4,3,2 and 1 respectively.

At the second stage, the respondents are asked to rate the present status of the learning methods as performance of each learning method on a five-point scale with the rating excellent, good, average, below average and poor and to quantify these rating the values has been assign as 5,4,3,2 and 1 respectively.

The mean values have been calculated for each attribute as mention below

$$\text{Mean value} = \frac{fx}{n},$$

Where

f= number of responses obtain for each rating,

X = the value assign and n= number of observations

At third stage, the mean value of importance rating and performance rating of learning values along with the gap are shown in Table3.

Table 3: Performance and importance of learning methods in tourism education

Sl. No.	Attributes	U.G. Level			P.G Level		
		Importance	Performance	Gap	Importance	Performance	Gap
1	Current lecture delivery method	4.12	3.34	0.78	4.52	4.08	.44
2	Case study	4.52	2.51	2.01	4.26	3.38	.88
3	Group discussion	3.07	2.39	0.68	4.44	3.08	1.36
4	Role play	3.66	2.26	1.4	4.02	3.04	.98
5	Situation analysis	4.22	3.2	1.02	3.66	2.88	.78
6	Audio-visual method of teaching	4.07	2.02	2.05	3.98	1.96	2.02
7	Field visit or industrial visit	3.22	1.88	1.34	4.56	3.26	1.3
8	Summer training	3.86	1.32	2.54	4.02	1.88	2.14
9	Linkage of university and industries	3.97	1.54	2.43	4.19	1.55	2.64
10	Lecture delivery by industry experts/business manager	4.06	1.46	2.6	3.98	1.54	2.44
11	Lecture delivery by entrepreneurs	4.06	1.56	2.5	4.26	1.33	2.93

Source: Field survey

The scoring system assigns a maximum score of 5 to responses indicating very important attributes and a minimum score of 1 to responses indicating less important

attributes. And the response to various attributes regarding the performance are scored in such a way that a response indicative of the excellent is given the highest score 5 and

that with the poor is given the lowest score i.e. 1. The score for each statement is then added to calculate the final score. And weighted average is calculated by dividing the score by the numbers of respondents. The following score would be revealing. If the score is between 3 and 5, then it is favourable and if the score is below 3, then it is an unfavourable response. The table above shows the importance and performance of different activities in tourism education. The performance of the present method of delivering lecture is good and their importance is also found to be very important at B.T.T.M level. Another question was about the case study that is adopted in class room, the respondent feel that the performance is low and the importance is also found to be favourable i.e. case study is important in B.T.T.M course. At the same time, the respondents feel that performance of group discussion is low and respondents also reveal that it is also very important in the B.T.T.M level. Activities like situation analysis, field visit or industrial visit performance are poor. Performance of others activities like audio-visual method of teaching, summer training, linkage of university and industries, lecture delivery by industry experts or business manager and lecture delivery by entrepreneurs is poor. The study also reveals that importance of the activities like Situation analysis, audio-visual method of teaching, summer training, linkage of university and industries and lecture delivery by entrepreneurs is important and the activities like group discussion, field visit or industrial visit and lecture delivery by industry experts/business manager are found to be very important. The respondents also reveal that in M.T.T.M. level, the performance of present method of delivering lecture, case

study, group discussion, role play, situation analysis, audio-visual method of teaching and field visit or industrial visit are moderately good. The performances of summer training, linkage of university and industries, lecture delivery by industry experts/business manager and lecture delivery by entrepreneurs are poor. The study also reveals that the respondents is of the opinion that the important of these activities linkage of university and industries, lecture delivery by industry experts/business manager, lecture delivery by entrepreneurs, audio-visual method of teaching, field visit or industrial visit, present method of delivering lecture, case study and group discussion in M.T.T.M. is very important and inclusion of these activities will improve the quality of tourism education. The respondents feel that activity-based learning is comparatively more important in M.T.T.M. course than B.T.T.M course.

It may be observed from the above table that the mean values of gap between importance and performance of B.T.T.M ranged from between 0.68 to 2.6 and M.T.T.M. ranged from 0.44 to 2.93. The study reveals that the gap is more in learning methods like lecture delivery by industry experts/business manager, lecture delivery by entrepreneurs, field visit or industrial visit, summer training, linkage of university and industries and audio-visual method of teaching, so more preference should be given to these learning methods by the concern authority in framing the course curriculum. The gap is less in these learning methods in present method of delivering lecture, case study, group discussion, and role play and situation analysis. The students feels that they are satisfied with these present learning methods.

Table 4: Respondents view on general aspects on tourism education.

Sl. No.	Statements	Rating
1	Professionalisation of tourism education is necessary to fulfil the demands of the global economy.	4.55
2	Infrastructural facilities are provided for tourism education	3.71
3	After completing a B.T.T.M., employment opportunities are severely limited.	3.43
4	Self-employment should be the focus of tourism educations rather than job placement	3.1

Source: Field survey

There are others queries like the person who encourage them to take up tourism stream. This will show their interest in the concern subject. They study reveals that 1.7% respondents have been encourage by their friend, parent also plays an important role for respondents for taking up tourism stream i.e. 26% respondents says that their parent encourage them to take up tourism stream, maximum respondents which account for 60.3% have taken up tourism stream because they have interest in it and the remaining have been encourage by teacher and friend.

Respondents are asked about the specialization of B.T.T.M course. For these queries, the respondents have been explained the meaning about the specialization i.e. there should be B.T.T.M accountancy and finance, B.T.T.M marketing, etc. the study reveals that maximum respondents that account for 77.6% says that B.T.T.M course should be made more specialized. The respondents are of the view that in the competitive market, specialized B.T.T.M is much more demanded and specialization enables person to have more expertise in their interested area and further promotes efficiency.

The study also shows favourable opinion towards different attributes of tourism education. The attributes are

professionalisation of tourism education is necessary to fulfil the demands of the global economy, infrastructural facilities are provided for tourism education, after completing a B.T.T.M., employment opportunities are severely limited and self-employment should be the focus of tourism educations rather than job placement. As the job prospect is limited, entrepreneurship should be encouraged.

Respondents are also asked about the component of practical in some of the main papers in B.T.T.M course. 44.4% respondents have opined that in travel agency and tour operations business paper, 40-60% of the paper should be practical. In airline ticketing and online travel business, half of the respondents which account for 51.85% and 53.70% respectively say that practical composition should be 0-20%. For tourism marketing, respondents' views vary from 20% to 60% practical composition. In sales management in tourism paper, 31% respondents are of the view that practical composition should be 40-60% and 29% respondents say that composition of practical should be 20-40%. Of the total respondents, 50% opined that in event management practical composition should be 0-20% and in computer application composition of practical should be 40-60% in each paper. At the same time, around 47%

respondents feel that practical composition in tourism economics and business communication should be 0-20%. And at last, 27% respondents say that practical composition in tourism marketing should be 20-40% and another 25% respondents say that it should be 0-20%.

Conclusion

In a globalized world, education at all levels is more important than ever. Education deficits can hinder a society in isolation. The countries that have been able to improve their productivity and find areas of competitive advantage have thrived. Those that have not have floundered. Education has been a vital component of the successful globalizers' progress. Those growing economy require skills and knowledge manpower. Our market is vast and their requirements are varied. Changes are very fast and our courses also must keep pace with the changes. Therefore, we have to adopt ourselves to the changing environment. The pedagogy (teaching methods, teaching aids) which includes case study, group discussion, audio-visual teaching, etc. should be kept in mind for framing the course objective and course content. Preferably, such colleges and university may be asked to have industry linkage with a Memorandum of Understanding with industry with regard to practical training, guest lectures, etc. Tourism Education - its objectives, its problems, its job potential, its quality and its relevance to the present day needs of our country should be design properly to meet the present environment and futuristic.

There is an immediate need for revising the tourism curriculum particularly at the UG level focusing on practical aspect with specializations like Event management, travel agency management, tourism accounting, HR, and tourism marketing to suit the needs of industry. At the input level increasing awareness about tourism education should develop a better backward linkage. Career guidance by means of book-lets, pamphlets, organizing meeting etc., should be done. On this respect teacher's association can play a very positive role.

For qualitative improvement of tourism education, co-ordination the universities will help each other in developing better curriculum, better library facility, and better instructional facilities and thereby conserve resources. Higher Secondary schools should be encouraged to start tourism classes for their student. The Board of Studies in Tourism Department of Universities should include representative from trade, industry or practitioners so that curriculum may be prepared, reviewed or revised according to the requirements with their counselling.

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