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Impact of COVID-19 on hospitality student's career advancement

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of COVID-19 on careers of the hospitality students in India with a focus on institutes of Delhi and NCR. Many studies have been done on the impact of COVID-19 on hospitality industry but little research has been done how it affected the students who were continuing their studies in years 2020 and 2021 when pandemic had caused most restrictions on the movement of human beings. Main objective of the study is to know the impact on the training and placement of students when learning was limited to online mode. Data of training and placement was collected from selected hotel management institutes in Delhi and NCR. It can be concluded that students had tough times in their learning's as well as placements which is going to impact their career in the long run. It gives an insight to the educational intuitions and hospitality industry to design a mechanism for students studied in these times and better prepared for future challenges.

Keywords: COVID-19, impact of COVID-19, education, hospitality

Introduction

In recent time's covid-19 pandemic has worst affected the world economies and its effect could be felt across the globe. It spread quickly because of the connectivity of nations through different mediums of transport like rail, road, sea and air. Within few months whole world was under the grief of this devastating pandemic. This resulted in restricted movement of the people within and outside the country. Though each industry had an impact of COVID-19 and one of the worst hit was hospitality industry because it relies on the movement of people for different reasons.

Undoubtedly, the restrictions of physical movement affected the studies from Nursery to University level students and it became a challenge for the professional practical oriented courses to impart learning in online mode. Teachers and students had to immediately switch from offline to online mode, something they never thought off. Now there were two questions to be answered: how students will continue their hands on learning and how it is going to affect their training and placement in the Industry. Fear of students was genuine as they could witness the slowdown of the economy and closing of many hospitality businesses.

Review of Literature

Impact on Hospitality Industry

The Covid-19 outbreak caused the global economy to collapse almost immediately (UNWTO, 2020). The epidemic has presented an unprecedented challenge to the hospitality sector. Many hospitality businesses have temporarily closed as a result of COVID-19 flattening strategies like community lockdowns, social withdrawal, stay-at-home orders, travel bans, and mobility restrictions. Demand for businesses that were permitted to continue operating has also been significantly reduced (Bartik *et al.*, 2020) ^[2]. Nearly all eateries were instructed to restrict their business to take-out orders only. Hotel occupancy and income both sharply decreased as a result of travel restrictions and government-issued stay-at-home directives. However, the process of reopening has slowed down, and authorities have started to loosen restrictions. For instance, they now permit dine-in restaurants to reopen with strict social distance guidelines but at a reduced capacity, and they are gradually easing the restrictions on domestic and international travel.

Even though the hospitality sector is gradually rebounding, the COVID-19 problem is still having a significant impact on how hospitality businesses run. In the COVID-19 business climate, hospitality organisations are anticipated to make significant adjustments to their

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operations in order to ensure the health and safety of their staff and clients, as well as to increase clients' willingness to use their services (Gössling *et al.*, 2020) ^[3]. The research priorities of academics who study hotel marketing and management are likewise likely to be significantly impacted by this pandemic. The hospitality business is likely to encounter significant hurdles in the COVID-10 age, and researchers are expected to refocus their research to create solutions for the sector. A lot of important questions, like: What are the consumers' sentiments, will need to be answered by hospitality scholars.

More than half of people (over 50%) are unwilling to eat in a restaurant right away. The same is valid for hotel stays. Over 50% of clients are unwilling to book a hotel stay and travel to a destination any time soon. Only around one-third of consumers are prepared to travel and stay at a hotel in the upcoming few months, and only about a quarter of customers have already eaten at a restaurant (Gursoy *et al.*, 2020) ^[4]. These results imply that, generally speaking, consumers still do not feel at ease dining at a sit-down restaurant, travelling to a destination, and staying at a hotel. Since the hospitality sector has a very high breakeven point because of high operating expenses, many hospitality organisations' sustainability strongly depends on growing demand for their services and goods. As a result, determining what would encourage repeat business is crucial and necessitates extensive research efforts. The COVID-19 epidemic has created an urgent demand for behavioural and operational research in hospitality marketing and management in both the industry and academia.

The study's findings also suggest that about 25% of consumers won't feel secure dining at a sit-down establishment until their localities' capacity for identifying, tracking down, and isolating COVID-19 incidents has greatly increased. When a location has a low number of COVID-19 cases and the capacity to test, trace, and isolate COVID-19 cases, about 18% of visitors will feel confident booking travel and lodging there. In addition, when the COVID-19 vaccination is made accessible, a certain segment of customers (about 14%) and travellers (roughly 17%) will only feel comfortable visiting places and staying in hotels (Gursoy *et al.*, 2020) ^[4]. These results unmistakably indicate that more study is required to determine the elements that can encourage repeat business for the hotel industry.

While preliminary research suggests that the most crucial safety precautions customers expect from a restaurant and a hotel are visible sanitising efforts (such as hand sanitizers at the entrance, staff wearing masks and gloves), implementing social distance, limiting the number of customers served, more rigorous and frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces in common areas, and employee training of health and safety protocols, more behavioural and cognitive safety measures are still needed.

These results strongly imply that the adoption and integration of technology into hospitality operations will probably play a crucial role in the near future. While studies on the use of various technologies in the delivery of hospitality services have been conducted throughout the years, the majority of those studies have been on the use of unintelligent technology. The Covid-19 pandemic may accelerate the use of such technology for public safety concerns. Recent advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and

social service robot technologies have permitted the employment of AI technologies in service delivery. Therefore, it is imperative for researchers in the hotel industry to look at how the usage of AI devices in service delivery would affect operations, personnel, and clients. It is also crucial to recognise the physical and psychological elements that may affect how well customers and staff members embrace the usage of AI devices in service delivery.

Impact on Education

In a survey it was found that over 1.58 billion students from schools and colleges who were getting the education- from 200 countries around 94% of them no longer went to educational institutes in March 2020 and had to switch to various modes to continue their learning's. In order to impact knowledge and skills, teachers had to quickly switch to digital modes of teaching. In order to encourage the remote student's participation, intervention of technology was must. Various methods of teaching and learning in the new normal were adopted in order to ensure continuity of education and results from the study found out there should effective strategies to ensure flexibility and resilience for continuity of education in the future in times of crisis. It was important to understand that emergency remote teaching was different from online courses. A different kind of support system was required for the faculty members and students to impart effective learning's. It was pertinent to take steps to prevent the loss of learning by providing effective measures to accelerate the education in general. Institutions went to hybrid mode of learning post COVID-19 in order to take advantage of the technology as well as continuing with the hands on practical. Students did learn from online teaching and realized their potential but their concern on future amidst COVID-19 increased the anxiety and frustration.

Method

Data was collected from selected hotel management institutions in the year 2020-21 from April 2020 to July 2021. Data pertaining to student's industrial training and placement was procured from the training and placement coordinators. Following information was desired -

1. Number of students due for industrial training/specialized training in the year 2020-21
2. Number of students pursuing industrial training/specialized training in the year 2020-21 but left in between due to pandemic breakout
3. Number of students retained by Industry to continue their training
4. Number of students due for placement in the year 2020-21
5. Number of students got the placement

Discussion

Data was taken from training and placement cell coordinators of the different institutions of the Delhi and NCR in order to know the status of the students training and placement. It shall assist in knowing the struggling phase of the students learning missed due to COVID 19 as they either couldn't pursue their industrial training as per curriculum schedule or missed it completely. Similarly, their placement got affected as hospitality either delayed new recruitments or closed it for unprecedented period.

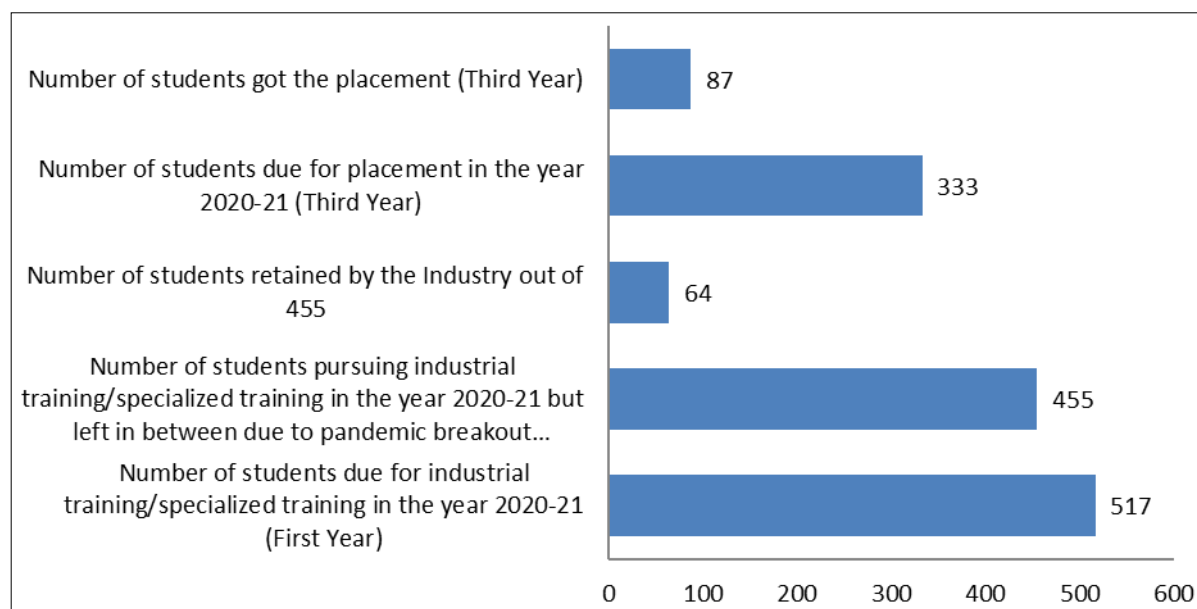
Table 1: Socio demographic profile of the students

Parameters	Variable	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	1137	87.12
	Female	168	12.87
Age group	19	506	38.77
	20	312	23.90
	21	414	31.72
	22 and above	73	5.59
Location	Delhi and NCR	719	55.09
	Other than Delhi and NCR	586	44.90
Education	First Year	517	39.61
	Second Year	455	34.86
	Third Year	333	25.51
Parent's Occupation	Self Employed	94	7.02
	Pvt. Employed	847	64.90
	Govt. Employee	364	27.89
Monthly Family Income	Below 50000	107	8.19
	50000-200000	679	52.03
	200000-500000	438	33.56
	500000 and above	81	6.20

Source: Data from Institutes under survey

In the demographic profiles, it was observed that gender-wise 87.12 percent of the respondents were male and 12.87 percent were female. In age group, 38.77 percent are 19 years, 23.90 percent are 20 years old, 31.72 percent are 21 years old and 5.59 percent are in the age group of 22 years and above. In geographical profile, the percentage was 55.09 and 44.90 percent respectively for the students belonged to Delhi & NCR and others. In educational qualification, 39.61 percent were studying in first year,

34.86 percent were in second year and 25.51 percent were in third year. To know the parents occupation, it was observed that 7.02 percent of the parents were self employed, 64.90 percent were private employed and 27.89 percent were government employees. In family monthly income, 8.19 percent had below INR 50000 income, 52.03 percent were in the income range of INR 50000-200000, 33.56 percent were in the income range of INR 200000-500000 and rest 6.20 percent were in income group of above INR 500000.



Source: Output from Excel

Fig 1: Status of Industrial Training/Placement

Figure 1 shows that majority of the students were either due for their industrial training or had to leave it in between due to sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. There were 517 students who were going to pursue their Industrial Training in the academic year 2020-21 which was shifted to next year. Even the winter batch students who commenced their training in the month January were sent back by the hotels and only 64 students were able to continue as hotels went with minimum manpower to continue the operations. Passing out batch also had tough times as they did not get

the placement or it got delayed as Industry to struggling to continue with existing manpower. Only 87 out of 333 students were placed. Apprehensions of the students was genuine.

Conclusion

A slow start in the career due to hampered learning and delayed training and placement is going to affect their career advancements in the long run. Though industry in itself went through a rough phase and knows the reason behind it

still many are going to doubt the capabilities of the students graduated in those times. It is important for the industry and institutes to provide them enough opportunities so that they can cope up for the learning compromised at the time COVID-19 restricted learning's. This shall give the students a confidence and pace to quickly come out from this trauma and serve the industry and society to the best of their capabilities. The COVID-19 epidemic has presented the hotel industry and academia with unexpected difficulties, but it has also created fantastic research opportunities. In comparison to earlier crises, the severity of this one and its destructive impact on business, personnel, and clients are unparalleled. Because of this, it is crucial to produce new knowledge that can inform the industry about how to transform its operations in response to newly emerging customers' needs and wants as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, even though using prior conceptual and theoretical frameworks may be beneficial for future research.

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