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NEED/IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

CONCLUSIONS

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STUDY OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS SELECTION OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT STUDIES AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO PURSUE THEIR CAREER IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AFTER COMPLETION OF THEIR COURSE

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ABSTRACT

Selection of higher education after intermediate is the most challenging part in everyone's life. Due to the several educational options available to students today, the traditional held perceptions about education in India have completely changed. Moreover, with the changing trends in the global and national economic scenario newer courses are fast emerging as alternatives to the traditional ones. Hospitality education commonly known as Hotel Management studies is one such option. However, it has been observed that students do not take the decision of selection of a particular programme or course with a conscious mind especially with regards to selection of non conventional professional courses like Hotel Management studies. The researcher through this research paper aims to analyze the students' perception towards selection of Hotel Management studies and their willingness to pursue their career in the Hospitality Industry after completion of their course and is limited to the city of Pune. The methodology adopted includes collection of data from the students pursuing their final year of Hotel Management studies. The study also aims at measuring the satisfaction level of the students from the college and the course content of Hotel Management studies. The findings suggest that most of the students pursuing the programme are unaware of the facts of the industry which leads to frustration and dissatisfaction about the course and thereby forcing them to seek alternative career options. Although the students are on threshold of their career, most of the students wish to prolong their employment for various reasons.

KEYWORDS

Education gap, Hospitality Industry, Students' perception, Hospitality education.

1. INTRODUCTION

 election of higher education after intermediate is the most challenging part in everyone's life. The decision made at this point of time acts as a turning point of the student's life. The seed of the students' career are sown once you take this decision because the education one chooses at this point determines his career path. With several educational options available to students today, newer trends are emerging in this field which has completely changed the traditional held perceptions about education in India. Students are getting attracted towards a more diversified career options which will enable them to widen their employment choice in the future. Thus many contemporary fields have emerged as the most sought after education and career options. Moreover, with the changing trends in the global and national economic scenario newer courses are fast emerging as alternatives to the traditional ones. Hospitality education commonly known as Hotel Management is one such option.

However important the decision of selecting the right option may be, it is observed that students do not make their selection with a conscious mind. Often students embark on their college search without asking themselves the all-important question: "What do I want to study?" or "What is my preferred career option?" This leads to a bigger problem of confusion, frustration, dissatisfaction and depression during their study if it does not match with their perception or expectations. Lack of interest, absenteeism, poor performance is the outcome of such a wrongly made decision.

In Hospitality education it is observed that students are enthusiastic while selection this as a career option but fail to main the same throughout the course. This mostly happens because of lack of initial awareness about the industry, wrong perceptions about the course, Conflicting interests etc. This results into a lot of dropouts in the initial stages of the course. Even if a few reluctantly manage to proceed, they lack the passion and determination. Gradually such students deteriorate on the level of their confidence and the knowledge and skill building as per the expectations of the industry resulting into low employability. They are thus trapped in the vicious circle of a wrongly made choice. The defense mechanism of such students is to prolong their employment for various reasons. However, there is a brighter side of this situation. There are a lot of students who pursue this option with a conscious mind and with the right perception about the programme. Most of the students are found to be passionate about working in the hospitality industry. Although hospitality industry is not known to most of the students, still the students make themselves aware of the facts of the industry. A large number of students make up their mind to pursue hospitality education even at the time of seeking admissions for XI th standard. These students select vocational courses in either cookery or bakery to be in the main stream of hospitality education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Andrew Kevin Jenkins, (2001) aimed at establishing students' perceptions of the international hospitality industry and, specifically, to establish the likelihood of the student seeking employment in the industry after graduating. The main findings were that students have a distinct preference for certain hotel departments, hotel chains and sectors of the industry. Most expect to be general manager/corporate manager ten years after graduating. As the degree progresses, the students' perception of the industry deteriorates.
2. Collins A. B., (2002), examined the relevance of Tourism & Hotel Management education from stakeholders' perspectives, namely, the THM sector, the current and graduate THM students and the results showed that there was an expanding need for university recognition of specialization due to new technologies and consumer maturation. Likewise, the need for an improved mix between the academic and practical experience and second language inadequacies were highlighted by joint concerns expressed by the sector representatives and the graduate students.
3. Alison Morrison, (2003) investigated the historical evolution of hospitality management education, concepts associated with liberal education, and provided an illustrative case study that evaluates how a more liberal base was introduced into the curriculum at two universities located in Australia and Scotland respectively.
4. Mike Raybould, Hugh Wilkins, (2005) investigated hospitality managers' expectations of graduate skills and compared those expectations with student perceptions of what hospitality managers value. The findings suggests that managers rated skills associated with interpersonal, problem solving, and self-management skill domains as most important while students appeared to have realistic perceptions of the skills that managers value when recruiting

- hospitality graduates. The most substantial areas of disagreement came in those skills associated with the conceptual and analytical domain. Industry managers tended to discount the skills in this domain relative to students.
5. Yvonne Guerrier, (2006), argued that women's lack of success in line management within medium and large hotels can be explained by examining the traditional career route to hotel manager, characterised by a long apprenticeship, progress through informal contacts and high geographical mobility, and the way the role of hotel manager is defined, with its strong emphasis on the manager as 'figurehead'. It is argued that if women do not aspire to become hotel managers this is a response to the way this job is defined and the lack of opportunities they perceive.
 6. Niamh Hearn, (2007), aimed to assess a curriculum response within a specific vocational sector, hospitality, driven by the recent surge in intra EU labour migration and the ensuing increase in workplace cultural diversity. The findings suggest that the experience across business sectors, such as hospitality, emphasises the need for training that is geared to meet the needs of both international and indigenous employees and that, critically, intercultural issues represent a significant training gap.
 7. Yan (Grace) Zhong, (2009), commented that the increased number of women in the hospitality industry and their underrepresentation in top management positions makes women's status in the industry a great concern. The purposes of the study were to examine hospitality students' perceptions of factors that contribute to and constrain women's career advancement and determine whether there were significant differences in the perceptions of men and women.
 8. Rajiv Mishra, (2010), attempted to identify the ways to strengthen the delivery mechanism of Hospitality Management Education in India by applying the implications of sound pedagogical theories. The important findings of these theories bearing direct impact on hospitality education are identified in the paper and effort is made to analyze the rationale behind the present delivery mechanism with the purpose of its improvement.
 9. Ning-Kuang Chuang, (2010), assessed career decision making, expected outcomes, and items focused on academic-related decisions and demographic background. Logistic regression analysis revealed that career intentions in hospitality were significantly associated with students' gender, work experience, transfer status, and outcome expectations in the industry. Rewards most frequently reported by students focused on intrinsic outcomes of the industry (opportunities for career accomplishment and self-fulfillment)
 10. Guhangpeng, Siriwan (2011), investigated what factors appear to drive the career decision-making of Thai and Australian tourism and hospitality students. This study was conducted to identify various factors that Thai and Australian students perceived to play an important role in their decision to seek a career in the industry. It also sought to understand the way these factors impacted on Thai and Australians' career decision-making and how their cultural interpretations influenced their decision-making.
 11. Raymond Vassallo, (2012), collected invaluable data on how secondary school students view hospitality and tourism jobs to provide both the industry and the educational institutions a quantitative and qualitative analysis of student perceptions in these fields. The study provided a much-needed snapshot of why students are/are not choosing tourism and hospitality jobs and what they expect from such professions.

3. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

With the changing trends in the global and national economic scenario newer courses are fast emerging as alternatives to the traditional ones. Hospitality education commonly known as Hotel Management studies is one such option. However, it has been observed that students do not take the decision of selection of a particular programme or course with a conscious mind especially with regards to selection of non conventional professional courses like Hotel Management studies. This study thus aims at analyzing the facts pertaining to this issue.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1. Students do not take a conscious decision while selecting their study option.
2. Students pursuing Hotel Management course are observed to prolong their employment for some or the other reasons. But the fact is that they are not prepared enough to take over the challenges of the industry.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To know the various study options that are available for the students after their twelfth standard?
2. To understand the perception of the students behind selection of Hotel Management studies.
3. To analyze whether their initial perception about hospitality industry changes at the time of completion of their course.
4. To understand their views about pursuing their career in the hospitality industry after completion of their course.
5. To understand whether the students are keen on getting employed in the industry immediately after completion of their course or do they want to prolong their employment and for what reasons

6. HYPOTHESIS

It is hypothesized that

1. "Although most of the students have Hotel Management as a predetermined study option at their intermediate level, they have limited knowledge about the course and the industry at a large."
2. "Majority of the students do not wish to get employed in the industry immediately after completion of their programme and most of them want to pursue higher education."

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

COLLECTION OF DATA:

The data required for the research was collected using the following techniques:

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

The researcher conducted personal interviews with the final year students studying in the Hotel Management course in Pune to understand their *perception towards selection of Hotel Management studies and their willingness to pursue their career in the Hospitality Industry after completion of their course.*

QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire carrying 17 questions was drafted and handed over to final year students studying in the Hotel Management course in Pune to obtain their responses.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

A sample of 100 students studying in the final year of two different courses was selected on random basis to conduct the study.

8. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

EVOLUTION OF HOSPITALITY EDUCATION IN PUNE CITY

Pune has always been the educational hub of India. The city offers unlimited educational options to the global students' fraternity. Plenty of institutions have emerged in the city with a variety of educational options ranging from the traditional to the most contemporary ones. Hospitality is one such sought out options that has gained a lot of popularity amongst the students since the recent past.

INITIAL STAGE: (1986 – 1997)

The option of Hospitality education was introduced in Pune way back in 1986 with the initiative of the Govt. of Maharashtra who opened up an Institute which was then called as “Food Craft Institute (FCI)”. In the initial stages of its operations, the Institute offered short term certificate courses in Hotel operations. In view of the response received for these courses, FCI commenced with a Three years post intermediate Diploma course in Hotel Management & Catering Technology which was affiliated with the Maharashtra State Board of Technical Education (MSBTE). This course fetched a lot of popularity and soon it became the most preferred alternate education option amongst the students. Taking cognizance of this popularity, since the year 1993 even private educational Institutes introduced the same programme. However, students were awaiting a degree programme in the said discipline.

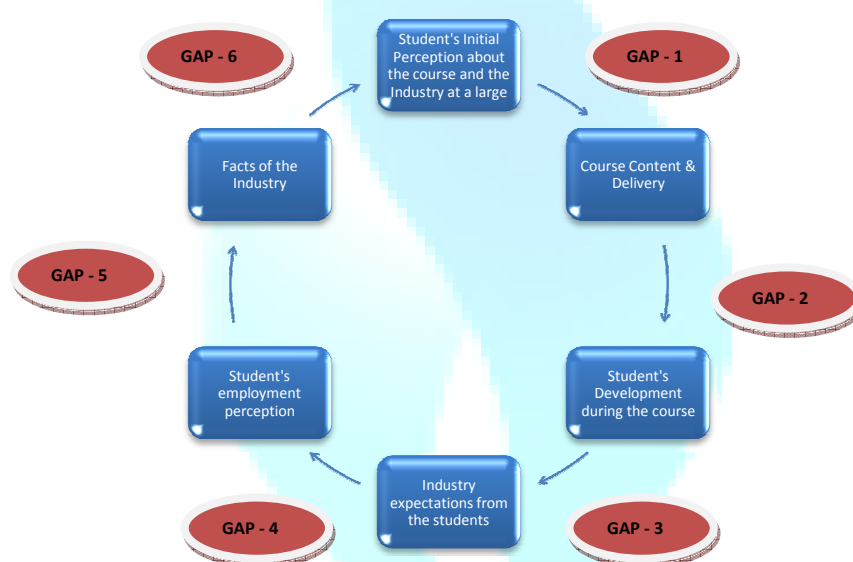
INTERMEDIATE STAGE: (1998 – 2006)

The popularity of Hotel Management courses were on the rise and thus in the year 1998, the University of Pune decided to offer an AICTE approved Four years Bachelors degree in Hotel Management & Catering Technology (BHMCT) through its affiliate colleges.. This acted as a revolution in the Hospitality education sector and was a welcome move since now the popularity of the course was supplemented by a University of Pune degree. This programme facilitated the students to pursue any post graduation programmes if they desired to. Acknowledging the overwhelming response for the course, the University of Pune decided to have an additional similar programme on offer with an addition of “Tourism” element. Thus since the year 2004, a Three years Bachelors Degree in Hotel Management Travel & Tourism (BHMTT) was on offer along with the earlier one. The students now had a choice between the two degree courses offered by the University of Pune. However, due to some technical reasons since the year 2006, the University of Pune had to replace the said programme with Three years Bachelors of Science (Hospitality Studies) (B.Sc.-H.S.).

RECENT STAGE: (2006 ONWARDS)

Gradually the three years programme gained students’ preference since the students could get a degree in three years time as against the conventional four years’ degree. Taking note of the same, in the year 2007, Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU) decided to offer a three years Bachelor Degree in Hotel & Tourism Management under distance education through a wide network of its study centers in Pune and all over Maharashtra. The USP of this programme was that the students who had a Diploma in HMCT could seek admission directly into the final year thereby upgrading his Diploma into a Degree in just one year. Most of the students who had completed their diploma in the initial stages took this opportunity and moreover since this programme was offered on a Distance mode, it was a boon for the working professionals who could pursue the same simultaneously with their jobs. In the year 2009, YCMOU also offered a 2 years Master Programme in Hotel & Tourism Management thereby giving the students the only option for a Masters programme in Pune.

Now the city is flooded with Hospitality colleges having an array of programmes on offer and gradually most of the colleges are struggling for their survival. The main reason for the same is lack of demand over supply. Moreover, the initial boom in Hospitality education is gradually diminishing for several reasons.

HOSPITALITY EDUCATION GAP MODEL**GAP – 1: (THE GAP BETWEEN “STUDENT’S INITIAL PERCEPTION ABOUT THE COURSE AND THE INDUSTRY AT A LARGE” & “COURSE CONTENT & DELIVERY”)**

The initial perception about the course and the industry is more glorified and the student expects the industry to be glamorous and easy going. However, in due course of time he realizes that the course content is extensive and touches all the spheres of management and all that is not as easy as he felt. The student also realizes that the hospitality industry is very demanding and requires a lot of hard work to be put in and thus it is not as easy as he perceived it to be. The major setback that the student gets is when he is required to sweep & mop floor, clean toilets, serve food, spend long hours standing in front of the gas range in heated kitchens and cook food. Most of the students come from well to do families who have never even made a cup of tea by themselves, never even thought of sweeping or moping floors even their own houses thus when they are asked to do so as a course requirement, they get a feeling that this is definitely not what they had perceived earlier. As a result most of the students decide to quit the programme in the first year itself. However this is not true with everyone. There are a large number of students who are determined enough to pursue their career in the hospitality industry.

GAP – 2: (THE GAP BETWEEN “COURSE CONTENT & DELIVERY” & “STUDENTS’ DEVELOPMENT DURING THE COURSE”)

The ever changing trends in the industry demands for an up to date knowledge in every sphere of the industry. The employees are thus expected to refresh and update their knowledge on a continual basis. However, the same is not true with the course content of hospitality education which follows the traditional approach. Since the curriculum is more of scientific in nature, it lacks practicability. These days the students get ample opportunity to get exposed to the industry during their course by way of “Out Door Caterings” & “Industrial Trainings”. These exposures consciously or subconsciously have a great impact on the development of the students. However, while the students are getting exposed to modern trends in the industry, and trying to inculcate the same, they are also continuously trying to link the curriculum with the facts of the industry. The resultant is confusion since the curriculum does not synchronize with the ongoing development of the student.

GAP – 3: (THE GAP BETWEEN “STUDENTS’ DEVELOPMENT DURING THE COURSE” & “INDUSTRY EXPECTATIONS FROM THE STUDENTS”)

The hospitality industry is characterized by dynamism. In spite of this fact, the curriculum is framed on the basis of the conventional approach towards the industry. Although the curriculum structure is revised at regular intervals, it has not been able to bridge the gap between Students’ development during the course & the expectations of the industry from the budding professionals. Thus even if the students complete the extensive course in hospitality, the industry perceives to be very raw and immature to be a part of the industry.

GAP – 4: (THE GAP BETWEEN “INDUSTRY EXPECTATIONS FROM THE STUDENTS” & “STUDENTS’ EMPLOYMENT PERCEPTIONS”)

The industry expects the students to join the industry from the scratch and believes in on the job development of the students. Most of the students are absorbed in the industry based on their requirement at the entry level. However, students have a different employment perception. They are on the lookout of

an employment where they would be absorbed at an intermediate level. Moreover, their salary expectation is also far more than the industry offers to an entry level. The students have a feeling that when they are expected to put in a minimum of 12 hours a day at work, then the hotels should compensate proportionately. However, the industry expects them to deliver without any additional compensation. It is due to this gap that the students decide to prolong their employment in the industry.

GAP – 5: (THE GAP BETWEEN “STUDENTS’ EMPLOYMENT PERCEPTIONS” & “FACTS OF THE INDUSTRY”)

Although, once the students take up jobs in the Industry, and have made their minds for a set of compromises that they will have to make to survive in the industry, they still carry their own perception about the glamorous job, career advancement, pay hikes etc. However, in due course of time they realize that the facts of the industry are much different from what they had perceived earlier and they are left with the only option of getting adapted to the situation. This gap is the root cause of maximum job hopping in the initial days of their career. In certain cases this gap is so wide that the employee decides to quit the industry and settle down with an alternative career option.

GAP – 6: (THE GAP BETWEEN “FACTS OF THE INDUSTRY” & “STUDENT’S INITIAL PERCEPTION ABOUT THE COURSE AND THE INDUSTRY AT A LARGE”)

The students aspiring to pursue hotel education carry a perception about the industry which is way different from the facts of the industry. The students are thus trapped in the vicious circle of the gaps in hospitality education.

This situation continues year after year in varying proportions. Thus it is time to act upon minimizing the gaps in the said field. This paper thus aims at finding the facts in current scenario of hospitality education which would be useful in identifying the problem clearly so as to minimize the gaps in the system.

9. FINDINGS

The findings of the survey through the questionnaires are as under:

Students having predetermined study options at interdemediate

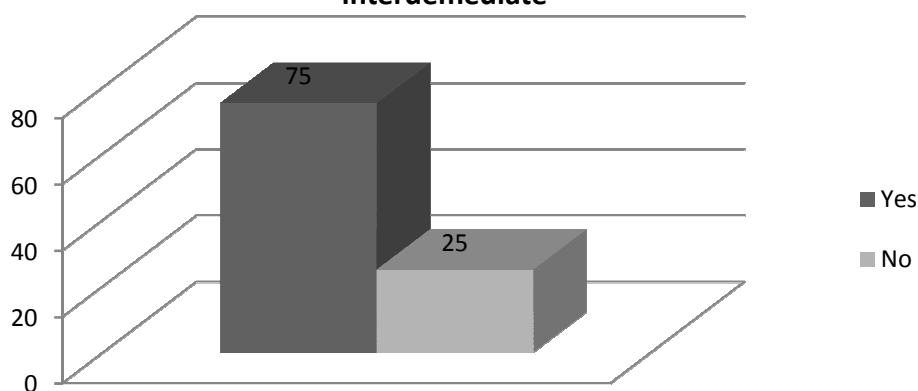


Figure 1:

It may be observed that around 75% students have a predetermined study option in their mind at the intermediate level. This study option may be through personal interest, general trend, popularity or external advice.

Study options explored by students after nterdemediate

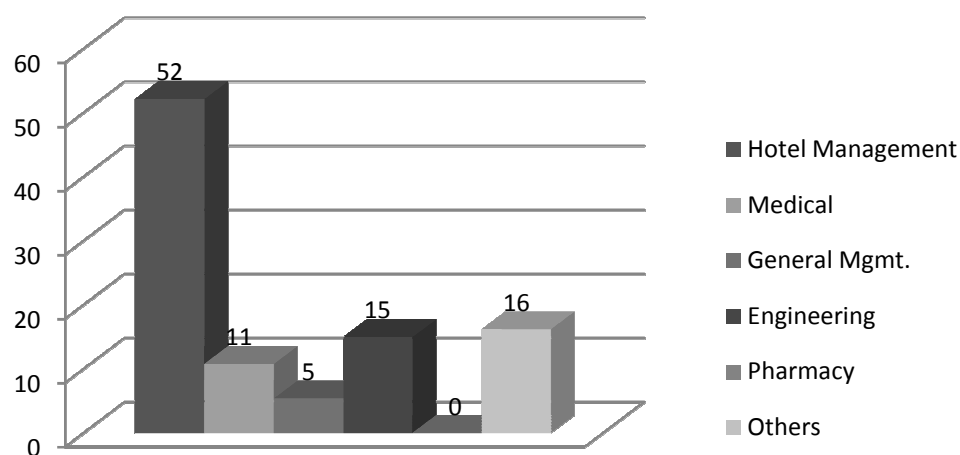
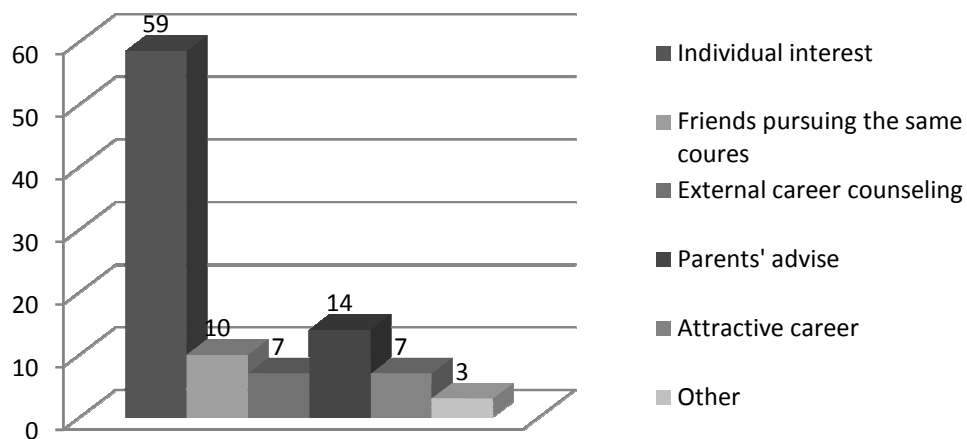
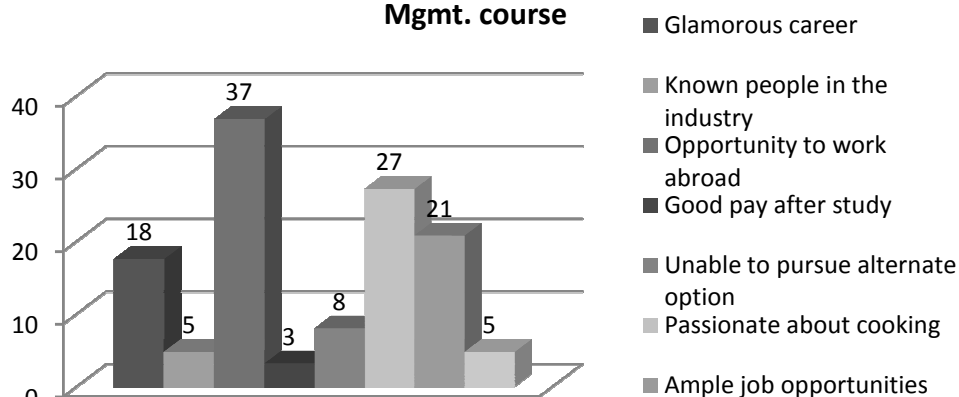


Figure 2:

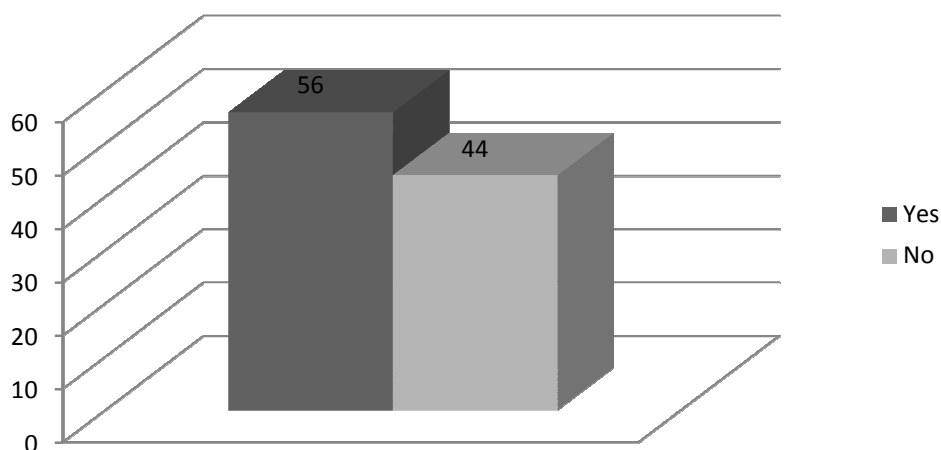
The chart shows the various options that the students explored before seeking admission in the Hotel Management programme. Although maximum students had Hotel Mgmt. as their study option, there were 50% students who were exploring various other options apart from Hotel Mgmt.

Factors influencing students' study option**Figure 3:**

Of the various factors that influenced the students' study option, "Individual interest" was the most influential factor followed by others.

Factors having an impact for students' selection of Hotel Mgmt. course**Figure 4:**

Out of the various factors that attracted students towards Hotel Mgmt. programme, "Opportunity to work abroad" was the most influential factor considered by the students followed by others.

Do the students carry any perception about Hospitality industry before pursuing the course**Figure 5:**

It is expected from the student that before he takes admission to a professional course, he should collect adequate information about the industry in which he aspires to make his career. However, it may be seen that almost 40% students do not carry any perception about hospitality industry before seeking admission in HMCT course.

Parameters of college selection

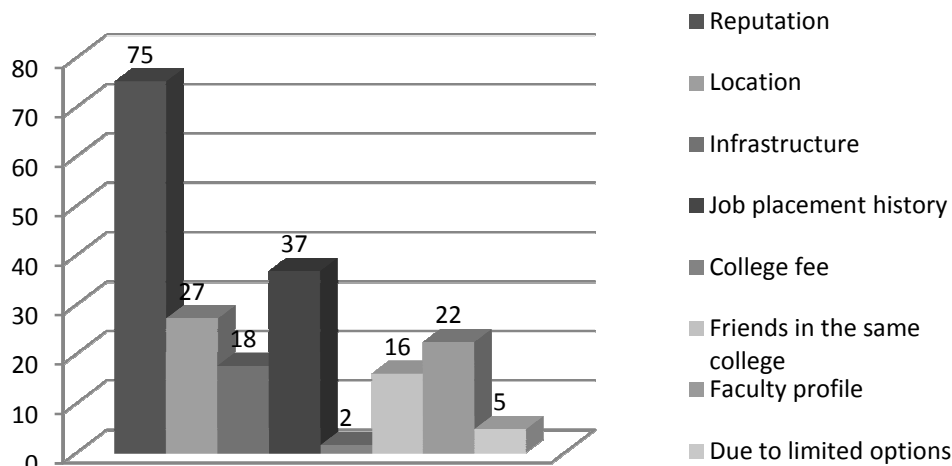


Figure 6:

Out of the various parameters of selection of a particular college, the most influencing parameter is the reputation of the college in which the student wants to pursue his education. Thus the reputation of the college plays an important role in attracting students.

Students' average satisfaction level on their college on a 7 point scale

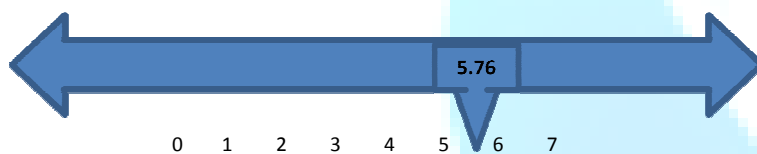


Figure 7:

As per the rating of the students' level of satisfaction on their college on a 7 point scale, an average of 5.76 level of students' satisfaction on their college is seen. The findings suggest that the students have achieved 82% satisfaction level from their respective colleges.

Students' average satisfaction level on the curriculum content of the course on a 7 point scale

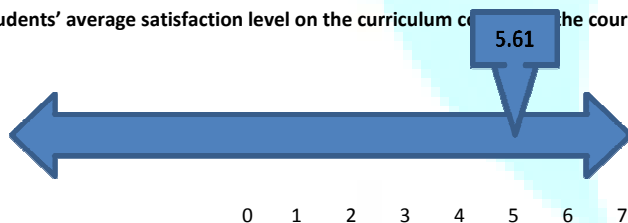


Figure 8:

As per the rating of the students' level of satisfaction on the curriculum content of their course on a 7 point scale, an average of 5.61 level of students' satisfaction was seen. The findings suggest that the students have achieved 80% satisfaction level from the curriculum content of their course.

In the final year of the course, do the students feel that they have made the right career choice

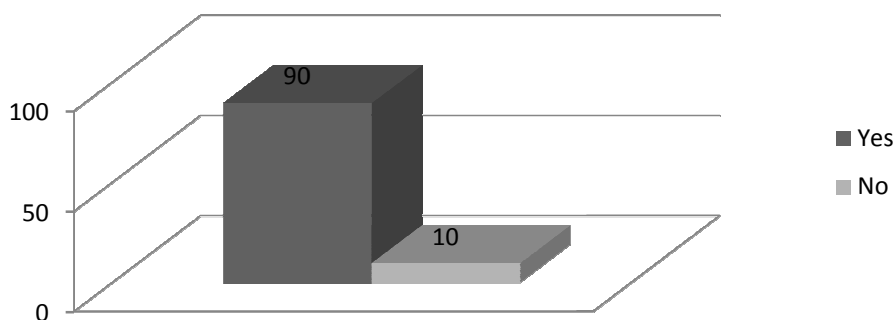


Figure 9:

It may be seen that in the final year of the programme 90% of the students feel that they have made the right career choice. However, 10% students feel that their choice was wrong.

Do the students' initial perceptions match with the current facts with the industry

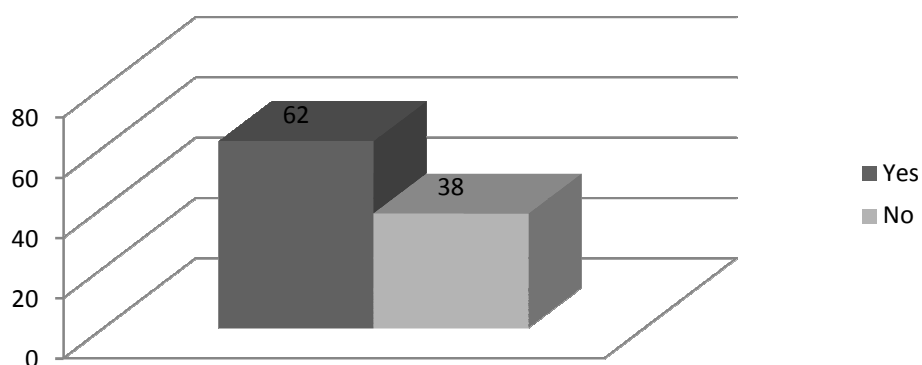


Figure 10:

From the adjacent chart, it can be seen that 63% students feel that their initial perceptions about the hospitality industry match with the current facts of the industry. However, 37% students feel that their perceptions are not in line with the current facts.

Do the students think of an alternative career option

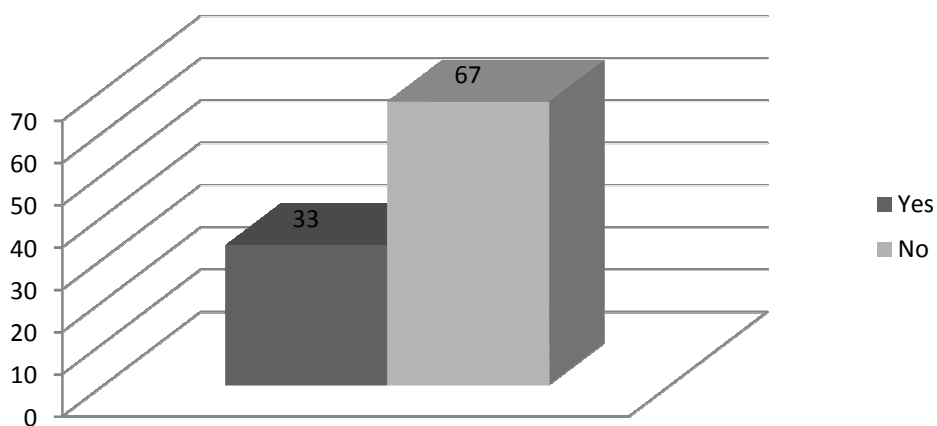


Figure 11:

Out of the students who feel that the hospitality industry is different from what they had perceived it to be, 66% of the students wish to pursue their career in the same industry and 34% students feel that they need to have an alternative career option.

After completion of the course, when would the students want to get employed in the industry

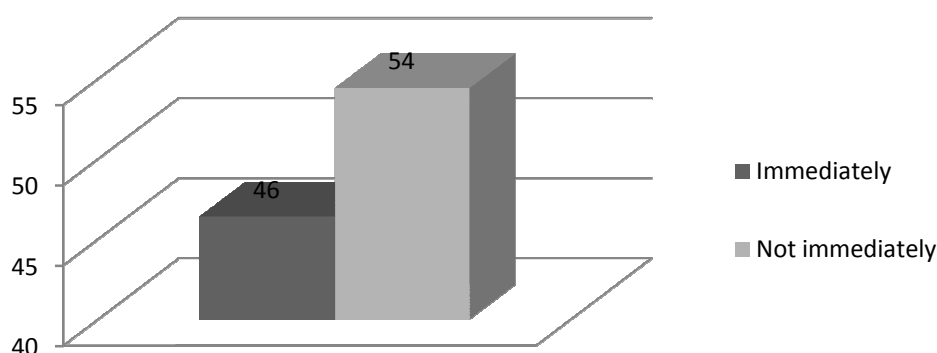


Figure 12:

Ideally after completion of a professional programme like HMCT, the students are expected to join the industry immediately after completion of their course; However, 54% of the students are of the opinion that they are not geared to join the industry for various reasons.

Reasons for prolonging employment

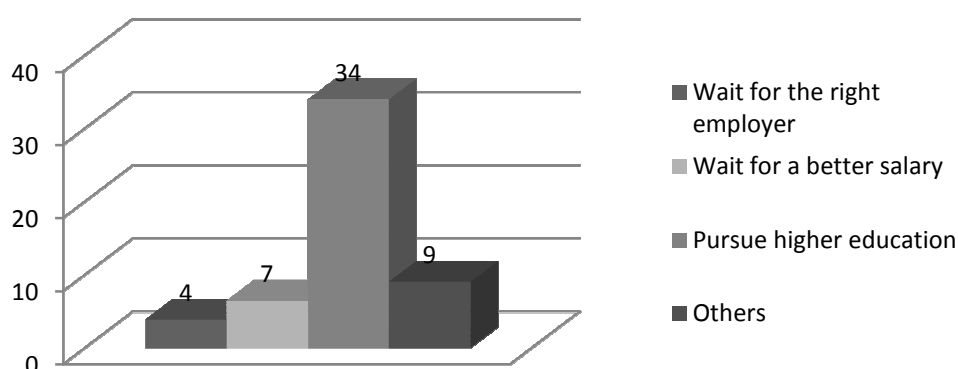


Figure 13:

Out of the students who wish to prolong their employment in the industry after completion of their course, 63% students wish to pursue higher education.

10. SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the responses received from the students on their perception towards hospitality education, the following suggestions & recommendations can be made:

- Students counseling at entry level:** It may be observed that the students do not have clear idea about the hotel management course and the Hospitality industry at a large at the time of taking admission to the programme. They should be therefore counseled by the concerned college to get a clear idea about the programme and then take a conscious decision.
- Dynamic Course Content:** The course content should be reviewed at regular intervals and efforts should be taken to make it compatible to the modern trends in the Hospitality industry. The content should thus be dynamic or ever-changing to accommodate the newer challenges of the Industry.
- Enhanced Industry exposure of the students:** As observed, the students' development during the programme is not in line with the industry expectations from the aspiring professionals. The root cause of the problem lies in poor exposure of the students to the industry. It is a known fact the "Seeing is Believing" thus the students should be exposed to the industry frequently to inculcate the required approach and attitude amongst them. The better the exposure to the industry, the better is their knowledge and skills level resulting into better employability.
- Placement counseling of the students:** The students studying in the final year of the course should undergo counseling sessions by experts from the industry to get the right employment perception. Students who wish to prolong their employment for undue reasons should be motivated to face the situation and increase their confidence level to join the industry by assisting them to get adapted to the challenges of the industry.
- Creating an employee centric approach in the Industry:** The hospitality industry is characterized by challenging work conditions and the employees are expected to get adapted to such situations without any reservations or demands. However, due to this situation the attrition rate in the industry is on the rise, it is high time that the industry takes cognizance of this fact and adopt an employee centric approach that would focus on employment issues and design policies that are favorable for employment in the industry.

11. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the research can be concluded as under:

- Although most of the students have Hotel Management as a predetermined study option at their intermediate level, they have limited knowledge about the course and the industry at a large.
- "Opportunity to work abroad" is the most influential factor for the students to pursue Hospitality education.
- Reputation of the college is the most important factor for selection of the college.
- The students' level of satisfaction on the college and the course content is observed to be above average.
- Although the students feel that they have made a right career choice, in most of the cases their initial perceptions about the course and the industry do not match with the current facts of the industry.
- There are some students who wish to seek alternative career option due the non conformity of their perceptions about the industry.
- Majority of the students do not wish to get employed in the industry immediately after completion of their programme and most of them want to pursue higher education in spite of knowing the fact that it would not help them get a better positions in the industry.

12. SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. The study does not differentiate students on basis of their demographic factors which may have an influence of their perception and expectations thereby identifying scope for further research.
2. There may be a few other parameters that have an impact on the satisfaction level of the students which needs to be further researched.

13. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am heartily thankful to my Research center head Dr. Verulkar, whose encouragement, guidance and support from the initial to the final level enabled me to develop an understanding of the subject.

Lastly, I offer my regards and blessings to all of those who supported me in any respect during the completion of the research paper.

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