

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMPUTER APPLICATION & MANAGEMENT

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## A STUDY ON CHALLENGES OF INDIAN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AND REMEDIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN THE EVER CHANGING MARKET SCENARIO

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### ABSTRACT

*Hospitality industry is poised for a steep growth over a long term period. This is mostly attributed to increase in domestic travel and high disposable income. The aviation industry, which directly impacts the hospitality industry has started to open up and will continue to grow over the years. Budget /Bed and Breakfast hotels are preferred by middle income groups and their business will grow with schemes/ price reductions offered by budget airways. National and international social travel sites have also brought about a transparency to the hospitality industry. They have increased the accessibility of hotels while providing information about lesser known places. All in all, there are many positives for the hospitality industry to look forward to in the coming years. However, there are many factors which are hampering the rate at which the industry could be growing. Some, the hotels can control and some need inputs from the government. The purpose of this study is to highlight the main challenges faced by the hospitality industry, envision a change and explore solutions for sustainability in the ever-changing market scenario. Sustainable development, customer relationship management, skilled staff shortage, employment turnover and talent retention, security and digital marketing have emerged as the major challenges. It is important for stakeholders of hospitality industry to consider these challenges in a dynamic market situation and counter them by adopting appropriate changes recommended.*

### KEYWORDS

Customer Relation Management, Hospitality Industry Challenges, Social Media and Tourism Industry, Sustainability.

### INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is considered the world's fastest growing industry contributing for nearly 10% of the world's GDP (Boella, 2000). In recent years, hospitality industry in India has seen a remarkable boom, propelled by the growth of Indian Tourism Industry. It has assumed a vital place in almost all businesses covering a diverse range of establishments in the form of accommodation, food and drinks thus encompassing hotels, motels, restaurants, bars, ships, airlines and railways. The industry is witnessing higher growth with the explosion of travel and tourism leading to several international hotels establishing themselves in India, with many eyeing for greater space. The arrival of foreign tourists has shown a compounded annual growth of 6 per cent over the past 10 years, placing travel and tourism as the second highest foreign exchange earner for India. Moreover, it is also estimated that the tourism sector will account for nearly 5.3 per cent of GDP and 5.4 per cent of total employment.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**WORLD ECONOMY:** With globalization, the Indian economy is integrated with the world economy wherein liberalization and privatization is the order of the day. Business models will have to measure up to the standards set by the leaders in the respective fields, anywhere in the world. The Indian industry which was until now working in a protected environment is exposed to global competition. Organizations are reacting to this phenomenon by resorting to restructuring and re-engineering, leading to cost cutting and competitiveness. Since the crash of the world economy, hospitality industry is faced with challenges with reduced demand and diminished returns leading to a squeezed budget.

**ECONOMIC GROWTH:** India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world recording a strong growth in the past few years, at more than 9% each during FY06 - FY08. Despite the global economic slowdown, the Indian economy clocked growth of 6.7%, 7.4% and 8.5% in FY09, FY10 and FY 11 respectively. Though hospitality industry contributed only 2% of the GDP in 2003-04, it is projected to grow at 8.8% from 2007-16, which would place India as the second-fastest growing tourism market in the world. Foreign investors are evincing interest in establishing operational facilities in India competing with the heavy investments made by domestic industries for expanding their facilities through greenfield and brownfield projects.

**AVIATION INDUSTRY AND THE HOTEL INDUSTRY:** There is a direct relation between the aviation industry and the hospitality industry. The growth of the aviation industry directly contributes to the development of the hospitality industry. As our aviation sector grows, more and more tourists, business professionals and seasoned travellers find their way into our country through bigger airports like Mumbai, Hyderabad, Delhi and Bangalore and eventually into smaller ones like Bagdogra, Port Blair, Srinagar etc., thereby augmenting opportunities of hospitality industry.

**TOURISM INDUSTRY AND HOTEL INDUSTRY:** Growth of hospitality and tourism industry depend on common factors. However growth of hospitality industry heavily relies on tourism industry and hence tourism is one of the most important growth drivers. According to the latest Tourism Satellite Accounting (TSA) research, released by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the demand for travel and tourism in India expected to grow by 8.2 % between 2010 and 2019 will place India in the third place and make it the second largest employer in the world. The report forecasts India to get more capital investment in travel and tourism sector thereby projecting it to become the fifth fastest growing business travel destination from 2010 through 2020. In the annual budget 2012-13 allocation for tourism sector saw an increase of 9.5 per cent over the previous year. Rs.548 crore is earmarked for creating new infrastructural facilities like constructing budget accommodations, wayside amenities, tourist reception centres, refurbishment and illumination of monuments, adventure and sports facilities and Rs.348.20 crore is earmarked for the 'Incredible India' campaign, which showcases India's major holiday destinations. To promote domestic tourists, the annual budget 2012-13 has allocated Rs. 81 crore, a hike from last year's Rs. 67.75 crore. All these measures augur well for the Indian hospitality industry.

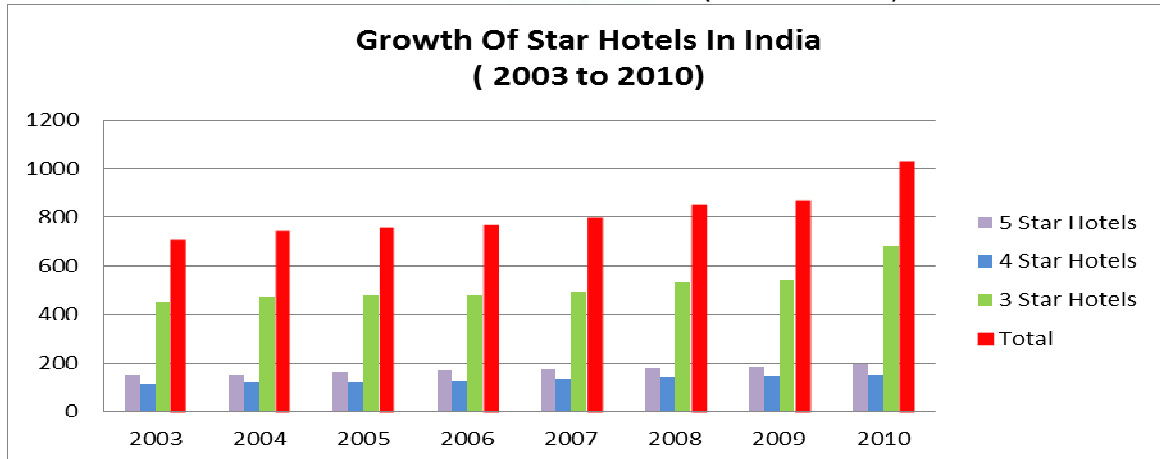
**GROWTH OF HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY:** The hospitality industry recorded strong growth in early 2000, translating it to a rise in occupancy rate during 2005/06 and 2006/07. The average rates for hotel rooms also increased in 2006/07 due to the demand-supply gap for hotel rooms, mainly in major metros. Hotels charged higher, compared to global rates which lured domestic and international players into hospitality industry, making India one of the most attractive destinations for such investments. Sharp rise in rates translated into cost-effective lodging options leading to emergence of corporate guest houses in major metros, and leased apartments as replacements for hotels. Though average room rates rose in 2007/08, occupancy rates slowly dropped reaching its lowest ebb during 2009-10. With the rise of domestic tourists, later part of 2010 showed improvement with increased occupancy and lower average room rates. During a survey, collected data of eight years (2003-2010) indicated steady growth of star hotels during the period. Some measures taken by the government allowing 100% FDI in the hotel industry (including construction of hotels, resorts, and recreational facilities) through the automatic route, elimination of customs duty for import of raw materials, equipment, liquor etc and certain policy measures for tourism industry will help the growth of hospitality industry in the coming decade.

TABLE NO 1: GROWTH OF STAR HOTELS IN INDIA (SINCE 2003 TO 2010)

Year	5 Star	4 Star	3 Star	Total
2003	149	111	451	711
2004	152	120	472	744
2005	158	123	477	758
2006	167	125	480	772
2007	173	135	492	800
2008	179	141	534	854
2009	184	146	537	867
2010	199	151	683	1033

Source: Evolution and contemporary challenges facing Human Resource Professionals at the dawn of the XXI century: Effect of Social Media in Star hotels in India by Dr. Kunal Bhattacharya & Mr. Herman Singh Thomas

FIG. NO-01- GROWTH OF STAR HOTELS IN INDIA (FROM 2003 TO 2010)

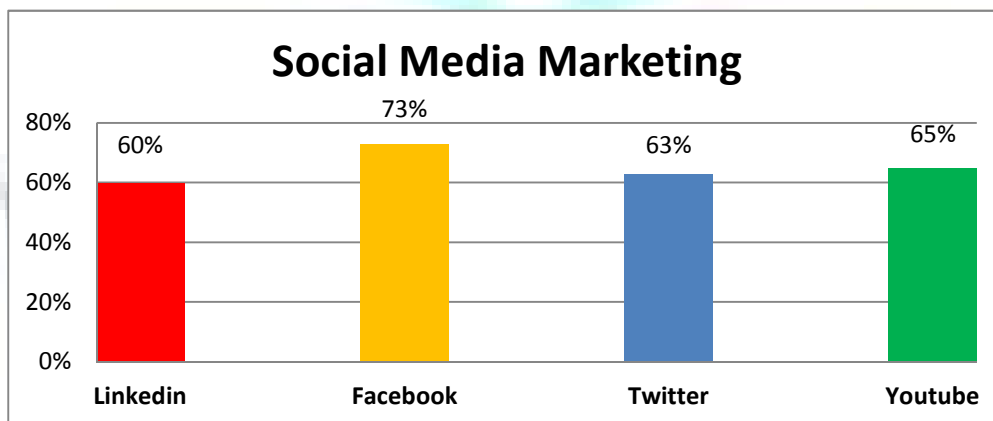


Source: Evolution and contemporary challenges facing Human Resource Professionals at the dawn of the XXI century: Effect of Social Media in Star hotels in India by Dr. Kunal Bhattacharya & Mr. Herman Singh Thomas

**INCREASE IN DOMESTIC TRAVEL:** Increased Free Trade Agreements (FTA) and tourist movement within the country has aided growth in the hospitality industry. Growing interest in domestic tourism and availability of matching and easy financial options, propels business tourism thereby positively impacting hospitality industry. As per the ICRA quarterly review of March 2012, the number of international tourists in India grew by 4.4% which is a tad lesser than the growth projections of last year which was at 7%. This could partly be associated to the natural disasters in Japan, unrest in middle-east and the ongoing economic crisis in Europe. Outbound travel too, has dropped drastically. Depreciating rupee has brought domestic travel back to the table with many families deciding to spend less on their holidays. The hotel industry has realized that they now have to deal with quantum of travellers and not aim to maximize margins because the domestic traveller is only too conscious about the budget. 5 star hotels as well as budget hotels are coming up with innovative offerings like a spa package or a free meal or happy hours to cater to the needs of the budget traveller.

**SOCIAL CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM):** Social media is fast becoming the choice of customers. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube are quickly becoming the best marketing tools at the disposal of hospitality industry. About one - third of online time spent by people is on networking and communicating through emails, social networks, blogs, and instant messages which is a 43 percent increase over 2009. CEO of Facebook reported that the site will have more than 1 billion users in 2011(Sweney, 2010). But, in 2012 the number of Facebook users in the world is 850 million. A survey carried in India indicated that Facebook with 73 % was the most used social website for corporate marketing. Overall, most social media sites have made the hotel industry deeply accessible as well as accountable for the services they offer.

FIG. 2: GRAPH SHOWING DIFFERENT SOCIAL MEDIA SITES USED FOR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING



Source: Effect of Social Media in Star hotels in India by Dr. Kunal Bhattacharya & Mr. Herman Singh Thomas.

**INTERNATIONAL EVENTS AND INDIA'S EMERGENCE AS A BUSINESS HUB:** Growing number of international events being organized in India is another reason which has worked in the favour of Indian hospitality industry. Rock concerts, sporting events, business meets are all contributing towards large influx of foreign tourists.

**CHANGING CONSUMER DYNAMICS AND EASE OF FINANCE:** Highly disposable income arising out of high salary and choice of modern youngsters for quality life over personal savings, has changed the pattern of spending. Being brand conscious and having the power to spend has enhanced consumer spending. Affordability, credit culture, personal loans are chasing youngsters to week - end and periodical leisure hunts which is not only providing a facelift to tourism but is also propelling the growth of hospitality industry.



## NEED FOR THE STUDY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Hospitality industry is poised for a vertical growth in the coming years as there are many positives to look forward. However with the crash in world economy, there are many factors which are hampering the rate at which the industry could be growing. There is a need for the hospitality industry to identify these challenges and adopt remedial measures to counter them. This study aims to delve into these challenges and suggest changes for the benefit of hospitality industry.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To highlight the main challenges faced by the hospitality industry, envision a change and explore solutions for sustainability in the ever - changing market scenario.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper examined a number of hospitality and hotel associated websites from around the world, used publicly accessible secondary data in the form of customer reviews, published statistics, and texts including theoretical work, secondary analyses by 'experts' and reports to offer solutions to the challenges faced by hospitality industry.

## FINDINGS AND REMEDIES

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF HOTEL INDUSTRY

Environment conservation and enhancement are vital for hospitality industry. Sustainable dreams are in mind leading to discussions but less of action, though the evolving trend is to watch hotels on their degree of environmental and social commitment. Benchmarking is capturing attention and progressing to develop (Wöber, 2001). Aggressive social views on sustainable development and forthcoming government regulations, environmental issues and conservation add up to the challenges. Unless, stakeholders keep pace with these changes, it would affect their competitive positioning and profitability.

Environmental responsibility is turning out to be a corporate issue. Issues of sustainability will soon be enforced to safeguard the scarce natural resources leading to a tough business environment. Hence aspects associated with sustainable development should be embedded in most products offered by hotel industry.

### CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

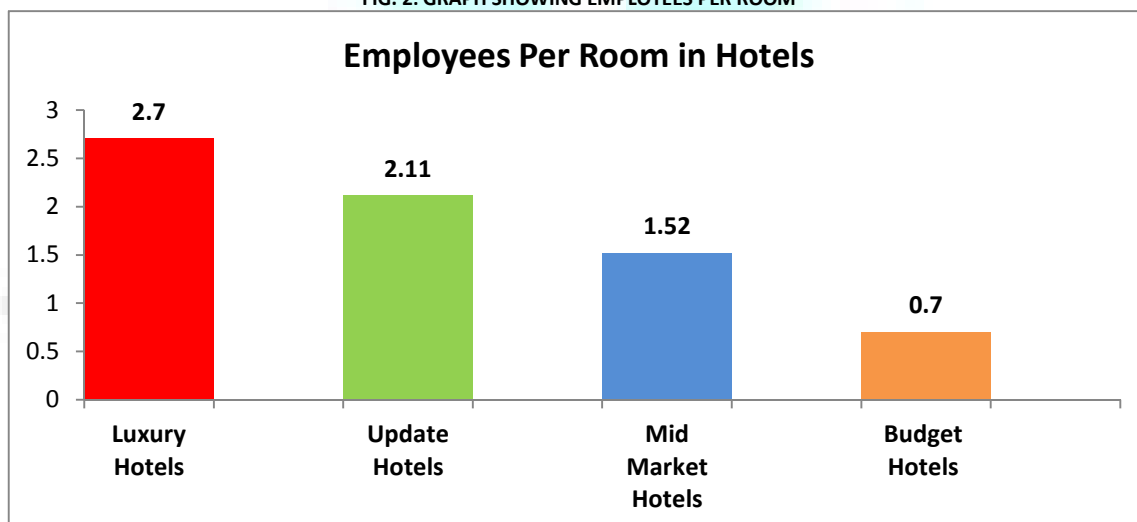
CRM in hospitality industry is used to find frequent but not revenue generating guests. Majority of guests enjoying loyalty programs do not bring in more revenue and hotels do not have a system in place to quantify the other income generated.

Customers should be well understood as their needs are fluid and by the time one comes to terms with them, fresh needs will be there to be taken care off. Rather than implementing a CRM loyalty program just because a competitor has one, hospitality executives need to look at how CRM tools can give necessary information to find high-value customers and find specific needs, said Suzanne Clayton, director of hospitality and gaming at SAS Institute, Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina Area. An effective data base can give a background check on the clientele and help the service provider to give satisfying customer experience by catering to their needs. Hotels should use available or generate such tools to differentiate between frequent and profitable customers and formulate a strategy to engage them in lavish spending by establishing a long but continuous relationship. This will help in predicting their future requirements and plan in investing in such facilities. Organizations should come out of conventional thinking and be innovative. Creativeness and innovation will not only play a role in the growth of hospitality industry, but, play a major role in attracting and retaining new guests while keeping the existing guests happy.

### SKILLED STAFF SHORTAGE

Hospitality industry being one of the largest employment generators in the country, provides employment to 36% skilled and 64% semi-skilled/unskilled persons (Baum, 1995). Three to five jobs are created for every room constructed. There is an acute shortage of skilled staff (Choi et al, 2000) making it a critical issue to balance supply and demand. In India, the average employee-to-room ratio at 1.6 (2008-09), is higher than that for hotels across the world. Hotels try to make their property special to customers leading to higher need of skilled workforce. Though talent crunch is felt at senior and mid management levels, shortage of front line staff is acute due to their demand in service heavy industries like airline, banking, BPO, etc which leads to a mismatch of demand and supply. A study report of Tourism Ministry indicates that existing supply of human resources do not even cater to 40% of the demand leading to employment of untrained persons compromising quality of services offered by hotels.

FIG. 2: GRAPH SHOWING EMPLOYEES PER ROOM



Source: HVS IHMS Survey, 2011 Edition

Few corporate hotels have established their own culinary school to feed them with trained and skilled workforce. Other hotels should have a memorandum of understanding with hospitality institutes for their staff requirement. Simultaneously hotels should have close cooperation with such institutes for student training, staff orientation capsule, funding for research and training on modern gadgets and equipment.

### CULTURAL DIVERSITY, EMPLOYEE TURNOVER AND TALENT RETENTION

Hotel industry highly depends on effective and quality human resources who can woo their customers and retain them. According to a study by Nelson and Dobson, the main elements of success in the hospitality education are the excellence of graduates and their retention in industry (Nelson and Dobson, 2001). Race for talent from the competing service sector and within the sector has made attrition a significant issue for the industry, especially when availability of quality talent is scarce. Over the last three years, attrition rates in entry and mid-management level have doubled. Employee attrition rate in industry is at 25-

30 per cent across different levels. High staff turnover is a perpetual problem plaguing the hospitality industry due to shortage of skilled labour and the industry does not have any control on staff retention. Pay, incentives, working conditions, employee welfare and employer credibility are moderate in the industry making it difficult to attract experienced and skilled workforce and retain them which has become the greatest challenge for hospitality industry (Barron, 2008). Diverse work force is slowly catching up in hotels for efficient service and profitability but it would be difficult to manage such diversity.

Programs should be evolved periodically to involve the family and create an atmosphere which would make it difficult for an employee to break the bond. Manager's personal rapport and good relationship with employees, understanding their personality, family background and problems, helping attitude, social interaction, celebration of multi religious festivals, and adopting a policy of being listened and respected would definitely support turnover reduction. It is proved that creating such a family atmosphere can successfully help retention (Frabotta, 2001). Employee relationship management is key reason for employee retention, especially in an increasingly multi-cultural and competitive scenario. Multicultural training will enhance awareness of cultural diversity in employees and enable a culturally enriched environment (Baum et al, 2007), thus enabling their retention.

#### SECURITY

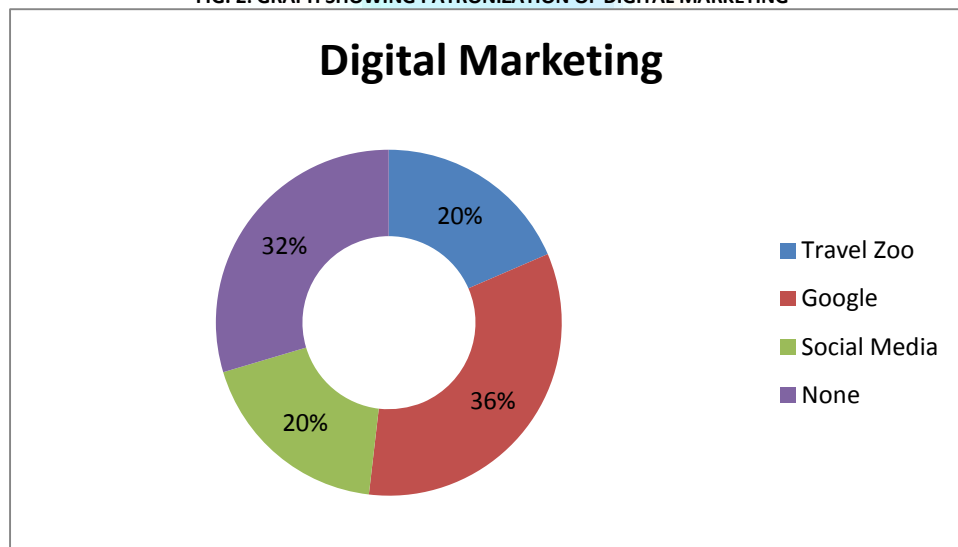
Security is becoming an important factor dictating the growth of hospitality industry. Hotels are not designed with security in mind and thus become soft targets. Terror strikes, insurgency in north and east, political unrest in various parts of the country, moral policing issues have all hampered the security environment of hospitality industry adversely affecting tourist sentiments. Mumbai terror attacks were depressing and raised safety concerns leading to customer discomfort, owing to tight security measures at vital areas and vulnerable points. Cybercrime is fast catching up and turning out to be a serious issue with innumerable internet frauds adversely impacting online spends. Theft of data related to guest identity profile due to phishing is another danger of technology. Overall the security environment is challenging.

Enhanced security screening balanced with favorable customer perception should differentiate a suspicious activity from a tourist activity. Security should not be intrusive but indiscreet and professional. As a deterrent some security measures should be visible. Proactive security plans interfaced with modern security devices along with trained staff will provide a safe environment, protect guest interests and enhance the image and reputation of hotels. Department of Tourism had warned that luxury hotels would lose their star rating if effective security plans are not in place. Training the staff on cyber security threats, protection and responsibilities along with adoption of current cyber security systems will help avert cyber thefts.

#### DIGITAL MARKETING

Contrary to established opinion, a recent research by Ecole hoteliere de Lausanne (Switzerland) and Rate Tiger finds that social media is shunned by hotel industry as only one in three hotels use them where as one in eight do not use them, relying on direct booking. In the short – term, hotel industry would be in a quandary whether to invest in social media.

FIG. 2: GRAPH SHOWING PATRONIZATION OF DIGITAL MARKETING



Source: Ecole Hoteliere de Lausanne (EHL) Research

Till such time it becomes possible to track the sales through online marketing, it would be premature for the industry to avoid digital marketing. More and more people are joining the wagon of tech savvy customers and hence hotels must explore the growth potential of online spending and smart phone technologies by embracing social media and mobile marketing strategies. Simultaneously the hospitality industry must integrate digital technologies with marketing strategies, gain access to client relationships that would otherwise be lost to online travel agencies, position the brand at the forefront of online discussions, increase profit margins with direct client bookings and further the brand's image by communicating core values directly and in a complimentary environment to garner greater advantage.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

**SUSTAINABILITY:** Global environmental degradation should be countered with environmental protective measures to tread on a sustainable path. For enhancing environmental awareness and evolving an eco-friendly practice on architecture, construction and operation of hotels, necessary training should be organized by the government and NGOs to the stakeholders.

**EMPOWERMENT OF TOURISM MINISTRY:** India has the potential of a worldwide tourist hot spot. India's tourism ministry should be equipped with enough powers and authority to realize that potential. To enable completion of ongoing projects and provision of loans at lower rates for future capital expenditure, infrastructure status should be granted to hospitality industry.

**EMERGING REGULATIONS:** Regulation will continue to be an important initiator of change, and driver of momentum in business sustainability between now and 2015. This is particularly evident in the hospitality sector. Efficiency of hotel buildings can only be improved by offering special incentives like lower interest on investment and tax concessions to hospitality sector. Application of uniform luxury taxes and applicable tax on food and beverages across the country will streamline operations and add transparency to the functioning of the hotel industry. Initiatives to speed up the process of visa procurement and extension will help the tourism industry and enhance the performance of the hospitality industry.

**TRAINING INSTITUTES:** Huge gap exists between the training capacity of educational institutes and the real need of the hospitality industry. A "first of its kind" finishing school which will offer soft skills training to youngsters aspiring for a career in the hospitality industry was launched at Calcutta. Similar schools should be planned by other state governments to overcome shortage of skilled workforce. Over 25% of students trained by IJHM opt for overseas jobs. Staff shortage can only be overcome by establishing additional professional institutes, says Shalini Khanna of IJHM, Bangalore.

**COLLEGE FACULTY AND CURRICULUM:** Good pay and incentives will overcome shortage of qualified and experienced teaching staff. Outdated college curriculum and hospitality education literature should be revamped and revised periodically (Reigel, 1995), training facilities improved and state of art kitchen

established to meet current industry needs. There was a hotel boom in the late 1980s and 1990s but demand for hotel staff was met by hotel management and catering institutes, but, this time, the industry is not ready. Hotel industry will need to add 100,000 staff within four years, but only about 20,000 are even being trained and a big slice of them will not join the hotel industry, opines Anand, president of the Hotel Association of India.

**HUMAN RESOURCE:** Current room inventory of major hotel chains is around one lakh which will more than double in the next few years. According to the 2011 Indian Hotel Industry Manpower Survey, the Indian hospitality industry will need skilled manpower of close to 3 lakh people by 2021. A recent Employment Trend survey indicates 40,000 people are required by the end of 2012. India Hospitality Review brings to light that while hotel management schools in India turn out 10,000 graduates a year on an average, the need is much more. Also according to industry experts, the available talent pool has to be re-trained once they get on board for at least three months since there is considerable industry-academic gap. In-house training and development programmes, creation of a talent pool through public private partnerships, opening of hotel management institutes are measures to tide over the problem.

## CONCLUSION

The pace of change will differ across the globe but we are approaching a tipping point. Initiated by regulation and changing stakeholder attitudes, by 2015 the political, business and consumer sustainability agendas will have converged on the hospitality industry. Looking further ahead, by 2030 the hospitality landscape will be unrecognizable compared to that of today and sustainability will be one of the pervasive drivers of change. Operations, financial planning, technology, human resources, business models, physical assets and infrastructure have to be synergized to address the challenges encountering hospitality industry from a 360-degree perspective.

## SCOPE OF RESEARCH

Related study needs to be conducted to facilitate the hospitality industry to understand futuristic opportunities and threats for evolving a sustainable growth strategy.

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