

Employees' Perspective Towards Competencies: An Empirical Study on Employees in Hotels of Haridwar and Rishikesh

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Abstract

Despite the modernization and technical development of hospitality industry, its main resource remains the human resource. This study aims to assess the employees' perspective and evaluates various aspects of employees' competency such as ability to perform Multiple tasks, Communication and Presentation Skills, Guest Satisfaction and Conflict Resolution, Self Discipline, Computer Skills and Technical Skills. The study revealed that the employees rated Multi tasking as the most important among all the skills required.

This study may help to identify and take remedial measures to improve employees' performance. Also, by determining relevant competencies and skill sets will help human resource managers to improve hiring and selection practices.

Data was collected from selected hotels of Haridwar and Rishikesh, famous religious and spiritual tourist destinations of the Uttarakhand state, en route to Char Dham Yatra. The sample was made up of employees working in different departments of various renowned hotels. The responses were recorded in a questionnaire over eight week period through 250 respondents between May and June 2018.

The findings suggested that employers and managers should emphasize the use of contemporary tools (both operational and training tools) to enable their employees to be more competitive, versatile, productive and hence result oriented. The standards operating procedures (as laid by the hotel management) should also be communicated regularly to all employees.

Keywords: Hospitality Industry, Competency, Multi Skilling, Conflict Resolution, Standard Operating Procedures

Introduction

Travel and Tourism is a dynamic engine of economic development and job creation throughout the world with some countries dependent on tourism as a catalyst for growth and development. In 2017, it directly contributed US\$2.6 trillion and nearly 119 million jobs worldwide. The sector contributed US\$8.3 trillion to the global economy and supported 313 million jobs in 2017. This was equal to 10.4% of the world's GDP, and approximately 1 in 10 of all jobs. India ranks 7th position in the list of world's largest tourism economy in terms of GDP. (World Travel & Tourism, 2018).

Hospitality sector, especially Hotel management has always been a fascinating career option for the youth as it promises a startling future on global level as well as in India it is the major source of foreign revenue generation and with the establishment of several multinational hotel chains like Sheraton, Hilton, Carlson, Kempinski, Starwoods, Western, Fairmont, Accor etc., the career opportunity are likely to get a huge boost in the upcoming future. Uttarakhand, being a favourite tourist destination under various topologies of tourism i.e Business tourism, Religious and pilgrimage tourism (chota char dham i.e. Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri), Adventure tourism like White water rafting, kayaking, bungee jumping, rock climbing, (Shivpuri, Rishikesh) ice-skating, para-gliding (Auli) etc., Yoga, spiritual, health and wellness (Haridwar and Rishikesh). The geographical distinctive features varies from plains of Haridwar, Khatima etc to one of the highest mountain

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peaks of India i.e Nanda Devi Peak provides extensive variety of flora and fauna (Rajaji, Jim Corbett National park, Valley of Flowers etc.) which turns Uttarakhand into a hot destination for researchers from different disciplines also.

Hospitality industry has always been considered of paramount importance to national economic growth. Uttarakhand is no exception. To boost the state's attractions for tourists, the government has been endeavouring to attract more tourists. Hotels and restaurants business soars high but the sector faces a number of employment and labour related challenges such as skills shortages, high staff turnover, lack of training, and a growing demand for flexibility and multi-skilling. Also, global trends such as the increased awareness of healthy lifestyle, individualisation in customer demands, environmental concerns and digitalization of information and communication systems will challenge the Hotels and restaurants sector, making the discussion of skills needs and emerging competencies even more relevant than ever.

The Indian hospitality industry has emerged as one of the key industries driving growth of the services sector in India. Since last one decade, the boom in India's tourism and hospitality industry and the surge in the tourist inflow to the country have percolated to other associated sectors like hospitality. The revenues for the Indian hotel and restaurant industry in the year 2006-07 exceeded US\$ 118.85million, an increase of nearly 22 per cent over the previous year. ^[1]

The government of India expects the Hospitality sector to serve as an economic multiplier. Being one of the high priority sectors for the government it has stepped up various reforms to accelerate the industry growth with liberalisation in the dogmatic structure, venture friendly schemes, far-reaching support for developing a world rank infrastructure, initiating healthier air and land connection, incentivising regional set-up in tier III and IV cities, exploring the untouched environmental resources which has led to a wide-ranging growth of the Indian hospitality industry. ^[2]

Tourist is a population, which normally travels to pre-determined destinations for whatever purposes, consumes tourism products while travelling and returns home after a short period. Tourism became a major industry, only

after the world war-II. It is now recognized as an activity generating a number of social and economic benefits. It also creates employment international economy and raises the living standards of the people with comparatively less investment, unlike many other capital incentive industries. ^[3]

Tourism businesses depend extensively on each other as well as on other businesses, government and residents of the local community. Economic benefits and costs of tourism reach virtually everyone in the region in one way or another. Economic impact analyses provide tangible estimates of these economic interdependencies and a better understanding of the role and importance of tourism in a region's economy. ^[4]

Uttarakhand State as a Tourism Product

Uttarakhand State, known as Devbhoomi (the land known for its association of Hindu Gods and Goddesses) is located in the northern part of the country sharing international boundary with Nepal and Tibet (China) in the north, Himachal State in the west and north-west, Uttar Pradesh State in the south and Nepal in the east. The state abodes the four important shrines of Hindu religion and has diverse geographical features ranging from mountains, peaks and forests with breathtaking spectacular views of snow-capped Himalayas and its valleys, glaciers, rivers along with the famous world heritage sites the Valley of Flowers, Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve and the first national park of India, Jim Corbett National Park, which have made Uttarakhand State as an astonishing land in the northern part of India. ^[5]

Nature, adventure, wildlife, culture, heritage, pilgrimage, yoga and meditation, and a cocktail of opportunities for unlimited experience are the strengths of this Himalayan state. The region offers the attraction of an interesting landscape and a calm and serene environment conducive to different types of tourism in different climatic conditions and seasons. ^[6]

The region has been identified as an important ecotourism destination and others tourist potentials in the form of types of tourism are found. There are intraregional as well as interregional disparities within the region in the tourist flow. The Haridwar alone receives more than 50 percent of total tourist coming to Uttarakhand because due to

well connectivity by roads as well as railways. There is need to develop the vertical connectivity means Haridwar should be connected with the Char Dhams and other remote regions like Uttarkashi, Chamoli and Pithoragarh by a good network of railway. It is the duty of top priority government to develop railway tracks and connect the region with railway.^[7]

Study Area

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, the percentage share of Uttarakhand in domestic and foreign tourist visits during 2012 was 2.6 % and 0.7 % respectively (Indian Tourism Statistics, Ministry of Tourism, 2012). In view of this tourism has placed a higher demand for the quality hotels in the state as more affluent travellers travel to the tourist places of this area. The present study is based upon Haridwar and Rishikesh, famous religious and spiritual tourist destinations of the Uttarakhand state en route to Char Dham Yatra. Both the places are important tourist places of Uttarakhand, attracts significant percentage of religious tourists, pilgrims and recreationist for summer vacations and for fun and visiting scenic attractions.

Both the places enjoy maximum tourist visits for various purposes and saturated with the number of hotel properties including the hotel units of internationally renowned branded hotel chains that are influenced by the seasonality of tourism. The sample was made up of employees working with star categorised hotels (not less than 3 star) recognized by the FHRAI (Federation of Hotels and Restaurants Association of India) and HRACC (Hotels and Restaurants Approval Classification committee) governed by the Department of Tourism, India. A sample size of 250 employees was chosen including different levels of management from various departments of 12 such reputed hospitality organizations. The sample work was conducted between May and June 2018. A questionnaire as a survey instrument was developed to measure the employees' perspective towards the various competencies required in the hotels. In order to obtain detailed information concerning the performance measurement practices, semi-structured interviews were also carried out. The first section of the questionnaire included questions on demographics (age, gender, education, current position and work experience). The

second section included the various key competencies required and rated by the employees on the Likert scale of 5.

Literature Review

Nazarian Alireza *et al*, (2017) quoted that the hospitality industry has become globalised and it is experiencing the same challenges as other globalised industries. For its managers not least among these challenges is to understand the impact of national culture and organisational culture on the performance of the employees.^[8]

Razak Roshita Abdul *et al*, (2016) stated that in management domain, ability to develop management skills and ability to write a standard operating procedure (SOP), ability to identify target markets, ability to develop a marketing plan, ability to forecast revenues and staffing needs, ability to interpret financial statements, ability to train others, ability to analyze financial statements, using ethics in decision making, ability to demonstrate people skills, ability to motivate others and demonstrate leadership abilities.^[9]

Baum Tom *et al*, (2016) found that perceived hotel career management and career commitment contribute positively to career competencies. The organizations and individuals have respective obligations in the career management of employees. In terms of the outcomes of career competencies, career competencies are positively related to career satisfaction, job involvement and job satisfaction.^[10]

Porngarm Virutamasen *et al*, (2016) found that knowledge in brand building/establishment, ability to generate consumer awareness and positive image through communication, ability to creatively manage brands in the organization were ranked the highest competencies. However, it is interesting to note that ability to communicate added value in a clear way, ability to manage and keep the brand management process 'alive', and ability to analyze data were the top-three rated expected brand management competencies from a management perspective.^[11]

Vide Romana Korez, (2016) explained individual's competences as a combination of personal characteristics, knowledge, skills, capabilities and motivation, used by an individual at the workplace. Self-control,

self-development, positive attitude towards work, cooperation readiness and creativity towards work, cooperation readiness and creativity impacts individual's successfulness at the workplace. Activation, usage and intertwinement of the entirety of knowledge, capabilities, motivation, self-image and values that enable the individual to be successful in complex, diverse and unpredictable situations.^[12]

Shosh Shahrabani *et al*, (2015) found that the tourism industry is one of the world's largest employers. This industry has a major impact on the economy of most countries, generates close to nine percent of the world's employment (WTTC, 2012) and accounts for nine percent of the world's GDP (WTTC, 2012). The hospitality industry is one of the oldest branches of tourism, yet despite its modernization and technical developments, its main resource remains the human resource, and high employee turnover remains one of the industry's major problems.^[13]

Alhelalat Jebril A, (2015) observed that the hotel executives require more problem solving skills, learning skills, technology, data collection and analysis, languages, management and leadership skills in order to match the standards of the industry.^[14]

Sarkodie Noble Amoako *et al*, (2015), pin point communication skills, multi lingual, operational skills and skills in computing as the most prominent skills needed to fit into the industry. Professional appearance and poise, communication skills in both writing and orally, positive customer relations, managing guests' problem with understanding and sensitivity are also important. In addition to these skills, first aids skills; tour guiding skills, security functions, moral skills, customer relationship, leadership skills, personal skills, and problem solving skills need attention in hospitality and tourism industry.^[15]

Shosh Shahrabani *et al*, (2015) emphasized upon professional development and further training are needed to help reduce the high turnover rates. These results can differ when multinational companies bring their global workplace practices to a developing country and a high proportion of the employees are international.^[16]

K Rajesh Kumar *et al*, (2014) quoted that all organizations are talking about competencies. Some have truly worked

the concept into several of their processes. A few have a fully implemented competency modelling and reporting system in place. However, quite a few organizations are still striving to build a competency model and implement it. Most organizations of all sizes are still struggling with defining, designing and implementing competency model projects.^[17]

Suhairom Nornazira, *et al*, (2014) highlighted that competency model will provide a fundamental guideline for employees in how they should act and what they should be doing. Later on, with the utilization of a competency model, the management could be informed on which characteristics of the employees are related to superior performance.^[18]

V Jaykumar, (2014) quoted that the hotel managers have different viewpoints about the demands of the hotel industry. The expectations, competencies and assumptions of needs and requirements of the industry are important. However, employees' seemed to be thinking more of their companies' goals resulting in the gaps of perception. Empowerment may lead to an advanced level of employee organisation commitment, motivation, productivity and improve service for the customers.^[19]

Srinivasan Sunder *et al*, (2014) affirmed that the training program saves not only recruitment and hiring time but also proves to have financial benefits for fulfilling staffing needs effectively and efficiently. The human resource department of the hotel should interact more often regarding the competencies required, appraisals, and briefings, motivational talks which will keep the trainee motivated and excel in hospitality field.^[20]

Rok Marija, (2013) described that employability include: knowledge and skills, work experience, personal attributes and behaviour. Along with job marketability and tailor-made applications were also added. These are components related to individual capabilities; however, there are also external influences on employability in the labour market through social, educational reforms and labour legislation.^[21]

J Krishnaveni, (2013) mentioned competencies as ability to maintain relationship with others, communication, task proficiency, leadership and adaptability of the employees. Structured competency model for each job along with competency mapping is an essential task

for all the organisation and employee development to maximise utilization of these talents to gain competitive advantage.^[22]

Shruti Ahuja, (2012) emphasized upon the competency mapping process which is designed to consistently measure and assess individual and group performance as it relates to the expectations of the organization and its customers. It is used to identify key attributes (knowledge, skills, and behaviour attributes) that are required to perform effectively in a job classification or an identified process. The value of competency mapping and identifying emotional strengths is that many employers now purposefully screen employees to hire people with specific competencies.^[23]

Kamau Sarah W *et al*, (2012) asserted that the contemporary management considers the skills and competence considered as next in importance as crucial for the success of any business. The specific technical skills and good interpersonal skills are important in the provision of quality service in the hospitality industry. The employees should be encouraged to have competitive skills in problem-solving, creativity and originality. It is also recommended that a professional body to address the issues in the hospitality industry be established.^[24]

Prachanant Nawamin, (2012) stated that English, which is associated with host-guest interaction in the service business, should be termed as the “language of hospitality” which refers to all linguistic expressions related to and represented in hospitality concerns. This increases the importance of communication skills as an essential competency. The language of hospitality is often formal, though it very much depends on the level of acquaintance among the participants themselves.^[25]

Lan Sun, (2011) stated that a flexible and flatten organization structure allow the hotel employees to response to change and to make decisions more quickly which lead to superior services. In addition, the nature of hotel business is highly interactive with its customers. To response the needs quickly, this requires the decentralize authority.^[26]

Cathy A. Enz, (2011) said that a hotel can begin internal analysis by listing it's resources and capabilities, including both tangible resources (such as the physical property or

financial assets) and intangible resources (such as brand or organizational culture, and human, innovation, and reputation resources). These resources and capabilities are the source of your hotel's core competencies, which form the basis of your competitive advantage.^[27]

Misty Johanson et al, (2010) emphasized upon the various competencies like communication skills, the ability to speak on one's feet to customers, employees, managers, suppliers, and partnering agencies is a skill needed and used on a daily basis. Furthermore, being able to communicate ideas to lead, instruct, motivate, train, and coordinate often involves writing skills. Guest satisfaction and conflict resolution by resolving customer problems, manage guest problems with understanding and sensitivity, and solve customer problems. Computer skills are essentially required with the growth of social media venues and the corresponding opportunity for businesses representing all sectors of the economy points to the need for the development of skills in this area.^[28]

Blayne Candace, (2009) addressed that competencies are those that apply to a specific managerial job and organization and were determined to be the important factors, especially where flexibility may be required. In the hospitality industry, flexibility and quick reaction are deemed critical skills due to continuous dynamic market conditions.^[29]

Donna Dickson, (2008) affirmed that Employee satisfaction is characterized as a feeling of gratification and contentment that leads to customer satisfaction and profit. Managers must look beyond ensuring employee satisfaction to fostering employee engagement. Employee engagement is characterized as a feeling of commitment, passion and energy, which translates to high levels of effort, persistence with even the most difficult tasks, exceeding expectations, and taking initiative. From lower turnover rates to higher productivity, the engaged employee is a valuable business asset.^[30]

Objective of the Study

- Finding out the employee perspective towards competencies in different departments of the Hotels.
- Identifying the training and development needs of individual and formulation of appropriate future plans.

Types of Instruments and Methods Used for Research

- Data collection through Questionnaires with employees from different departments of the hotel.
- Respondents Core and functional competencies are recorded in questionnaire.

Analysis Tools

- Development of Hypothesis.
- For analysis of data, descriptive statistics is used.

H₀: Employees perspective towards the required competencies is significant.

H₁: Employees perspective towards the required competencies is not significant.

Universe and Sample

The data was collected from the employees of twelve star category hotels (not less than 3 star) of Haridwar and Rishikesh. There are 250 respondents of the various levels taken as samples.

Sampling Techniques and Tools

Sampling is a method, which enables to get a statistical image of the population. In order to carry the study, a sample size of 250 employees of twelve star category hotels (not less than 3 star) of Haridwar and Rishikesh was chosen for the study. The systematic Random Sampling method was used for the research. A self developed questionnaire was prepared for the data collection.

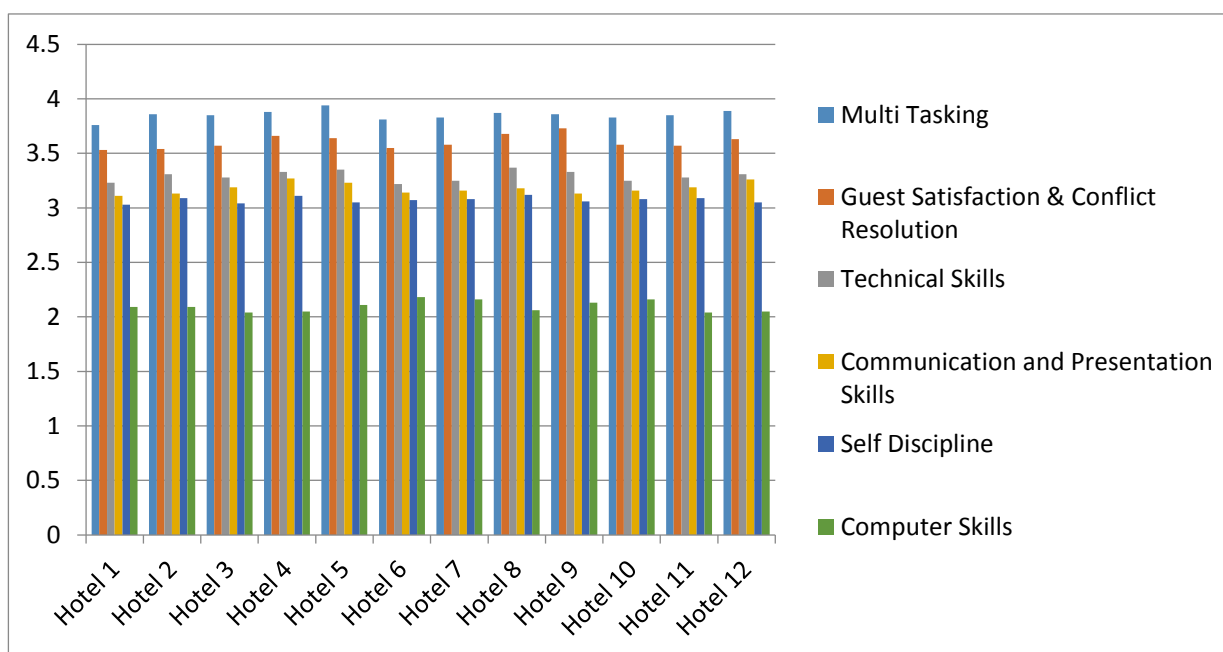
Data Analysis (Demographics)

Table 1, shows the demographical characteristics of respondents. 118 (47.20%) of respondents were from age group of 21-30 years and 86 (34.40%) were from age group of 31-40 years while, 40 (16%) were from

41–50 years. 06 (2.40%) were from age group of 51–60 years. This shows that there is a balance of young and aged workforce in the hotel industry. The percentage of the males as respondents is 78.40% while rest of 21.60% constitutes by the females. The highest number of the respondents 90 (36%) indicated they had a diploma in hotel management; 72(28.80%) had a professional degree in hotel management. 59 (23.60%) of all respondents had a graduation degree. 70 (28%) respondents had working experience in the hospitality field for 5-10 years; 35 (14%) respondents had 10-15 years working experience in this field. There is a considerable number of respondents 102 (40.80%) working experience less than five years, which depicts the trend of freshers' in the hospitality industry. Respondents were selected from various departments of the hotels i.e. Front Office, Housekeeping, Food and Beverage production, Food and Beverage service, Human Resource etc.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Characteristics		No of Respondents	%
Age	21-30 years	118	47.20
	31-40 years	86	34.40
	41-50 years	40	16.00
	51 and above	06	2.40
Gender	Male	196	78.40
	Female	54	21.60
Education	Graduate	59	23.60
	Graduate (HM)	72	28.80
	Post graduate	18	7.200
	Diploma	90	36.00
	Others	11	4.40
Experience	< 5 years	102	40.80
	5-10 years	70	28.00
	10-15 years	35	14.00
	15-20 years	36	14.40
	>20 years	07	2.80
Total Number of Respondents		250	100%
Number of Hotels		12	



Graph 1: Composite Graph for Competencies

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 2: Key Competencies Required in Hospitality Industry (Composite Mean Value)

Hotel	Multi Tasking	Guest Satisfaction & Conflict Resolution	Technical Skills	Communication and Presentation Skills	Self Discipline	Computer Skills
Hotel 1	3.76	3.53	3.23	3.11	3.03	2.09
Hotel 2	3.86	3.54	3.31	3.13	3.09	2.09
Hotel 3	3.85	3.57	3.28	3.19	3.04	2.04
Hotel 4	3.88	3.66	3.33	3.27	3.11	2.05
Hotel 5	3.94	3.64	3.35	3.23	3.05	2.11
Hotel 6	3.81	3.55	3.22	3.14	3.07	2.18
Hotel 7	3.83	3.58	3.25	3.16	3.08	2.16
Hotel 8	3.87	3.68	3.37	3.18	3.12	2.06
Hotel 9	3.86	3.73	3.33	3.13	3.06	2.13
Hotel 10	3.83	3.58	3.25	3.16	3.08	2.16
Hotel 11	3.85	3.57	3.28	3.19	3.09	2.04
Hotel 12	3.89	3.63	3.31	3.26	3.05	2.05
SD	0.044338573	0.062304239	0.048453352	0.051778959	0.027675063	0.050871198

Findings and Results

The composite mean scores of the competencies rated by employees are presented in Table 2. Employees rated Multi tasking skills from 3.94 down to 3.76 which clearly affirm

the fact that Multi skilling has always been considered as an important trait in an employee. Supporting the fact, the Standard deviation was found to be 0.044 which depict the less of difference between the mindsets of the employees from the different hotels.

Employees rated Guest satisfaction and Conflict resolution from 3.73 down to 3.53 which shows the uniformity in the competency as the factor itself plays a dominant role in the hospitality industry. Supporting the fact, the Standard deviation was found to be 0.062 which depicts the less of difference between the mindsets of the employees from the different hotels.

Employees rated Technical Skills from 3.37 down to 3.22 which play an important role in the effective and efficient service delivery of an employee. Supporting the fact, the Standard deviation was found to be 0.048 which shows that there is no as such disparity among the perceptions of employees while rating this competency.

Employees rated another important skill i.e. Communication and Presentation Skills from 3.27 down to 3.11. The Standard deviation was found to be 0.051 which depicts the less of difference between the mindsets of the employees from the different hotels.

Employees rated Self discipline from 3.11 down to 3.03 which once again show the similarity between the rating trends of the employees. The Standard deviation was found to be 0.027 which depicts the less of difference between the mindsets of the employees from the different hotels.

Employees rated Computer Skills from 2.18 down to 2.04 which signify that the employees are more likely towards possessing the required computer skills. The Standard deviation was found to be 0.050 which depicts the less of difference between the mindsets of the employees from the different hotels.

Discussion

The calculated ranking of the competencies on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, in the hospitality industry can be analyzed by the employee perspectives. The study reveals that the managers rank essential competencies such as Multi tasking skills (3.94), Guest satisfaction and Conflict resolution (3.73), Technical Skills (3.37), Communication and Presentation Skills (3.27), Self discipline (3.11), Computer Skills (2.18). The positive value of the Standard Deviation shows that the perspective of the employees from different hospitality organizations seems to be in relevance with each other.

It is widely acknowledged that tourist destinations are becoming more competitive and hotels must catch up with effective and efficient staff equipped with contemporary traits in order to remain into existence and be competitive.

The present study shows enough evidence towards inclination of majority of the respondents towards Multi tasking as crucial skills which is not only required to carry out the daily operations effectively and efficiently but also helps the business i.e. hotels to increase customer satisfaction, leading to repeat business and increase in the number of tourists in a particular destination also.

Nowadays, hotels face many challenges with regard to improving the profitability of operations and exploiting the new opportunities that have arisen due to the growth in the economy and the changing nature of tourism in India. To cope up with this challenge, employees must be given proper training and exposure in all the aspects of operations in order to brush up their Multi tasking skills and deliver the things with great perfection on consistent basis.

The study supports the Hypothesis that Employees perspective towards the required competencies is significant as it is also evident that followed by Multi skilling, Guest satisfaction and Conflict resolution, Technical Skills, Communication and Presentation Skills, Self discipline, Computer Skills are rated respectively. These skills are the major decisive factors in future prospects of an employee with the hotel industry which will definitely lead to fill-in those skills-gaps and will also help in communicating and understanding well between the employees and the customers.

Conclusion

The research reported in this paper provides an understanding that Multi tasking skills plays a vital role in effective and efficient service delivery. From the study, it can be concluded that the perspective of employees towards such key skills is positive and they rated the same as per their requirements and with great logical ability.

The research reported in this paper also provides an understanding that hotel management should incorporate dimensions related to the overall development of the employees. From the study, it can be concluded that the

perspective of employees towards key competencies is overwhelmingly dominated by emphasizing upon the Multi tasking ability because that is the only trait (as rated by them) which will help them to survive, sustain, establish and finally succeed in this era of competition.

Also, from the customers' point of view, with the help of these skills a better understanding is established between the service providers and customers. Such experience will surge the customers to provide repeat business to the hotels and augment the tourism potential of the destination as well.

Limitations and Scope for Future Research

The industry population surveyed represents employees in some selected hotels of Haridwar and Rishikesh; therefore it is not appropriate for this study to make the claim that the findings are applicable to the hospitality industry in the whole state and outside Uttarakhand also. However, it is hoped that the study can be reproduced to test the extent of the applicability of the findings. On the other hand, this limitation may provide an opportunity for future research on such competencies. The future research could use a larger sample to enable a test for skills required by the hospitality industry and cause-and-effect relationships between employees' perspective and the impact of those skills.

Due to the fact that it being the busiest industry, the employees remain occupied with their operations which was a limiting factor for accepting an interview. Therefore, the method that was employed to obtain the primary data was the questionnaire survey.

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