

Tourism Education in India: A Supply-Demand Gap

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Abstract *In the present time, tourism education has become a highly demanded discipline as a professionally-oriented course. The aim of this work is to determine the status of tourism education in India and to find out the lacuna between tourism educations, and the essential skills/ knowledge required by tourism industry from tourism graduates. This study attempts to investigate the perception of both 'tourism academicians' and 'industry professionals' about the nature of tourism education in India and assess if they feel same or differently about the quality of tourism education being imparted in the country. The study is based on a questionnaire survey conducted on 129 academic respondents and 129 travel trade professionals. The results suggest that as per academic respondents, the tourism institutions are providing 'moderate' tourism education. However, the industry professionals are of an opposite view and believe that amongst tourism graduates being produced, there is a 'considerable lack in knowledge and skills' required by the industry. The study suggests that tourism education in India can be strengthened through integration between the tourism course curriculum and required orientation in skill enhancement as desired by the industry. Since tourism is one of the keystone in generating revenue and employment, the industry requires a good number of graduates with significant academic merit and requisite trade skills to solve tourism management problems and run the industry. The areas identified for improvement in tourism education include, introduction of specialization courses in tourism and hospitality, improving digital skills, communication skills and strengthening of linkages of academia-industry collaboration among others. The study also suggests that the creation of an Indian Tourism Service (ITS) Cadre, on the lines of Administrative Services, catalyst to enhance the quality of tourism education being provided by institutions.*

Keywords: *Tourism Education, Essential Skills, Supply-Demand Gap*

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and International Labor Organisation (ILO) believe that tourism is one of the world's 'top job creators', a lead export sector, an important agent for development and can help in transition of economies (UNWTO & ILO, 2009). As tourism is not an entity in itself, the tourism industry comprises a wide variety of directly and indirectly related sectors. Therefore, tourism has the ability to generate thousands of jobs in various businesses. Specifically with regard to tourism, career avenues can be divided into five areas i.e. accommodation, food and beverage services, recreation and entertainment, transportation and travel services (British Columbia Jobs, 2015). The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has revealed tourism industry is a 'people

industry' and it creates thousands of jobs at all skill levels (WTTC, 2015).

However, though tourism is credited to provide plenty of career avenues, jobs in tourism are characterized by low wages, low level of skills (Shah 2008), graveyard shifts (Wan & Chan, 2013) and seasonality (Butler 2001). There is also a high degree of 'turnover' and 'burnout' in tourism jobs. Besides, jobs in this industry are regarded as 'demeaning on account of poor working conditions. In addition, it is noted that tourism employs more 'women' and 'young people' than most other sectors (WTTC, 2019). As for women working in the industry, they are underpaid, undervalued and exploited. Children too are working as child labor and often exploited. Considering the problems faced by human resource in the tourism sector, it is stated that attracting and retaining workforce are the major challenges in the tourism industry

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(WTTC, 2015). In the past few decades it has been observed that the tourism industry is rapidly changing on account of changes in the macro environment and introduction of information and communication technology. It implies that the pattern of tourism education is also changing very fast as there are transforming forces at different platforms like technology (Tourism Review News, 2019), globalization (Dwyer, 2015), climate change (Grimm, Alcantara & Sampaio, 2018) and demographic aspects (Yeoman & Butterfield, 2011), which have continuum impact on tourism or vice versa. In view of new innovations, new developments and a continuous volatile macro environment, the nature of tourism education requires changing to meet the specific demands of the industry.

In India, tourism education has been a late starter compared to the rest of the world. Over the last three decades the importance of tourism education has been realized in the country and therefore a number of institutions have started providing professional tourism education programs to produce professionals who can meet the demand of tourism service sector. Tourism education in India is highly significant as India is fast becoming a favored tourist destination in Asia. The country is long known for her diverse tourism product i.e. heritage, mountains, beaches, deserts, modern cities, heritage villages, wide variety of flora and fauna, diverse people and culture. India has been a sought after destination particularly for the European market since long and on account of improving tourism infrastructure and marketing, the country is now attracting a wide market base from across the globe. The economic survey of India 2019, projects that tourism as a major engine for economic growth. India is also projected to become the 3rd largest travel trade economy (in terms of direct and total gross domestic product) by 2028 and create 10 million more jobs (Travel News Digest 2018). However, recent reports suggest the contrary. Foreign Exchange Earnings have declined from 20.6% in 2017-18 (US 28.7 billion) to -3.3% in 2018-19 (US\$27.7 billion). The Outbound tourism has however increased to more than double in numbers than foreign tourist arrival in 2018-19. The number of outbound tourists in in 2016 it was 21.87 million and 2017, 23.94. The foreign tourist arrivals were 10.6 million in 2018-2019. The further growth of tourist arrivals will demand more product and hence there is a need for more service providers as well. Perhaps on account of provision of quality services related to lack of tourism education and tourism professionals, being one of the many reasons among others, the country has been a slow performer in with respect to attracting a major share of tourist arrivals. At this juncture, the need to assess the status of tourism education being provided in India arises.

BACKGROUND

The UNWTO is the prime global organisation that looks over tourism development in the member countries. India

too is a member of UNWTO. Every year, UNWTO decides upon a theme for 'World Tourism Day'. Each year the theme identified guides all member countries towards working for tourism development on the lines of the theme. Over the last nine years the themes identified by UNWTO are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: World Tourism Day Themes (2011-2019)

Sr. No.	Year	Theme	Host Country
1.	2011	"Tourism – Linking Cultures"	Egypt
2.	2012	"Tourism and Sustainable Energy: Powering Sustainable Development"	Spain
3.	2013	"Tourism and Water: Protecting our Common Future"	Maldives
4.	2014	"Tourism and Community Development"	Mexico
5.	2015	"One billion tourists, one billion opportunities"	Burkina Faso
6.	2016	"Tourism for All - promoting universal accessibility"	Thailand
7.	2017	"Sustainable Tourism – a tool for development"	Qatar
8.	2018	"Tourism and the Digital Transformation"	Hungary & Budapest
9.	2019	"Tourism and Jobs: A better Future for All"	India

Source: UNWTO

Through Table 1, it can be assessed that broadly the themes can be categorized under culture, sustainable tourism, community development, information and communication technology and opportunities provided by tourism. It is noted that in 2019, India was the host country for celebrating the theme "Tourism and Jobs: A better Future for All". From the table is strikingly evident that that among all themes over the nine years none of the theme has addressed the issue of 'quality tourism education', though UNWTO directly talks about creating jobs through tourism. For any human resource to get an entry into tourism, is not possible until and unless proper tourism education is provided. Several studies have emphasized the importance of tourism education for the success of tourism and hospitality industry (Bodewes, 1981; Belhassen & Caton, 2011; Cervera-Taulet & Ruiz-Molina, 2008; Inui, Wheeler & Lankford, 2006; Sheldon et al., 2008; Sheldon, Fesenmaier & Tribe, 2011). Only a professionally educated human resource in tourism can guarantee the success of tourism industry in a country. Therefore, it is important to first and foremost emphasize on creating a firm quality tourism education system that is aligned with the needs of the tourism industry of the day.

With regard to India and tourism education, the founding stone of tourism education in India was laid down in the 1970s with the starting of a Post Graduate Diploma in Tourism. The Diploma was started by College of Vocational Studies (CVS) in 1972, University of Delhi (Singh and Singh, 2006). This course was introduced to integrate the span between “traditional university education and the changing socio-economic environment” (CVS 2016). It was followed by Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna University (HNBGU), Uttarakhand offering a Post Graduate Diploma in Tourism and Pilgrimage Studies under Department of Tourism in 1976 (HNBGU 2013). Later, this was renamed as Centre for Mountain Tourism and Hospitality Studies (CMTHS) in 2001. The Tourism Education has seems to have enter the 5th decade, if CVS is taken to be the founder of tourism education in India. CMTHS, HNBGU, have been

working with a vision to produce tourism professionals with lifelong creativity, productivity and satisfaction.

Ministry of Tourism Sponsored Tourism Education Programs

The State tourism departments and the Ministry of Tourism, Government India have also been playing an important role to produce a human resource to meet the needs of the tourism industry in the country. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, sponsors tourism education programs and tourism professionals’ up-skilling in India, in collaboration with below mentioned institutes. An overview of the nature of tourism programs being provided by Ministry of Tourism, Government India in various institutes is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Tourism Education Programs, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

Sr. No.	Institutes for Human Resource Development Program	Name of the Programs	Purpose of Human Resource Development Program
1.	Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM)	MBA (TTM), BBA (TT), PhD	Specialized training and education. Skill development
2.	IITTM Camp Bodh Gaya & Shillong	Language and Guiding courses	Skill development
3.	Indian Culinary Institute (ICI)	BBA Culinary Art	To promote culinary research, specialized training and preservation of culinary Art.
4.	Institute of Hotel Management (IHM)	BSc HHA, MSc HA	Human resource
5.	Food Craft Institute (FCI)	Food craft courses	Skill level education in Hospitality Industry
6.	Capacity Building for Service Providers (CBSP)	Hunar se Rozgar Tak, Skill Testing & Certification, Entrepreneurship Program,	Train and upgrade manpower at every level i.e. to direct service providers or to teachers, administrators and trainers
7.	Schools/ITIs/colleges/Universities/PSUs	Vocational Courses	To take tourism and hospitality education into mainstream. Central assistance is there w.r.t fulfilment of guidelines.
8.	Other Programs are: Tourism Awareness programs Sanitation Programs, language programs for tour and tourist facilitators, Tourism Adventure and Travel Adventure Escort programs	Tourism Sensitization Programs	Around 17 iconic places for Dhabawalas, Taxi/Rickshaw Drivers, Police Staff, Hotel Staff and shop keepers etc

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

* BSc HHA- Bachelor of Science Hospitality and Hotel Administration, MSc HA-Master of Science Hospitality Administration. ITI-industrial Training institutes, PSUs-Public sector Units, MBA (TTM)-Master of Business Administration (Tourism and Travel Management), BBA (TT), Bachelor of Business Administration (Tourism Travel), PhD-Doctor of Philosophy, ITI-Industrial Training Institute, PSUs-Public Sector Units.

BSc HHA, BBA Culinary Art and BBA (TT) is offered after 10+2 of schooling and these are three years programs. The selection process in BSc HHA is through National Council for Hotel Management Joint Entrance Examination (NCHM-JEE) regularized by National Council for Hotel Management

and Catering Technology (NCHMCT), Noida, India and conducted by National Testing Agency (NTA). Beside this NCTHM private, deemed, State and Central universities also offer bachelor programs in hotel management along with affiliated colleges and institutes. The MBA (TTM) is a two years program and offered after 10+2+3 of education. Table 2 shows that the specialization of tourism programs at IITTM is restricted to tourism and travel alone. It is found that Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, is producing and training a wide range of manpower from ground handlers to policymakers. Yet, there is a gap in produced human resource and the skilled resource required by the industry. The need for Indian Tourism service cadre has been frequently raised since 1982 (Sofique, 2013).

Scholars have expressed different views about tourism education. Sutherland and Jarrahi (2018), state that technology is playing a great role in the transformation of economies, while Tourism Review News has emphasized the same about the relationship between tourism and technology. Urry and Larsen (2011) believe that “people gaze upon the world through a particular filter of ideas, skills, desires and expectations, framed by social class, gender, nationality, age and education” (p. 17). Tourism education opens the way for how a tourist destination prepares the human resources to be able to work professionally in developing the tourism sectors (Malihah & Setiyorini, 2014). Tourism managers, running travel companies in Athens have suggested that Tourism education must develop the ability among tourism graduates to apply tourism knowledge in ‘real-time situations’. There is no doubt that tourism education should be geared towards meeting the needs of the tourism industry (Wang et al., 2013)

Tourism managers demand both specific skill/knowledge and personality (Stergiou & Airey, 2018). According to Charlton, management students want a reflection of corporate values and purposes into the classes as well as their impact on society. Students want to go beyond the bottom line of business (Charlton, 2019). Employers want the incorporation of tech-savvy classes on data, coding and analytics. Sheldon et al. (2008) concur that tourism education needs to keep pace with industry needs. There is further need to identify skills relevant for the industry tourism students must be equipped with ethical, political, stewardship human resource and dynamic business skills. As regards tourism curriculum it has been stated that the ideal curriculum can be best framed with intense collaboration between academicians and industry professionals (Airey & Johnson, 1999; McKercher, 2002; Pavasic, 1993; Smith & Cooper, 2000; Wattanacharoensil, 2014; and Zagaroni, 2009).

Technology has reshaped the world of work, eliminating some roles, and evolution in online education (Charlton, 2019). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has put forward that world economy is knowledge-based i.e. technology, information and high level of skill are required in a knowledge-based economy and organisations are building networks to acquire specialized knowledge (OECD, 2005). The evolution in online education has led to the question of which education institute will sustain in the era of 4th industrial revolution (Xing & Marwala, 2018). Bagri and Babu investigated that Indian tourism education has not bought optimum share in tourism benefits, and has produced less professionals compared to other continents (Bagri & Babu, 2011).

In view of literature review this research makes an attempt to identify the status of tourism education system in India from the perspective of i) academicians and ii) industry professionals, with the aim of finding out if both category

of respondents have similar views regarding the nature of tourism education being provided in the country or they differ. The study also aims to identify if there is match or mismatch between tourism education being provided (supply) and the knowledge demanded (demand) by the tourism industry.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried across India at institutes providing tourism education and at travel and trade sector organizations. The sample comprised of a total of 258 respondents i.e. 129 tourism academicians and 129 tourism industry professionals. An equal sample of both categories of respondents was taken to compare their views on tourism education being provided in the country. The study used a self-designed structure questionnaire comprising questions on nature of curriculum, training, digital skills and opinion of academicians and industry professionals about tourism education. The data was collected through the questionnaire sent online and personally as well. The data was collected over a one year period, December 2018 to December 2019. 129 filled questionnaires were received over the year from tourism professionals. Therefor the cap was limited to 129 questionnaires from academicians as well, received till the end of the year to have a comparative study. Data was analyzed through descriptive statistic (% method) using SPSS 20. The following research questions (RQ) were addressed in the study.

RQ1: To what level improvements are desired in various areas of tourism curriculum being taught?

RQ2: What do the academicians and industry professionals feel about the status of tourism education in India?

RQ3: Are the tourism academicians satisfied with the tourism syllabus being taught?

RQ4: How do the industry players rate the tourism professionals being produced by in the country?

RQ5: What are views of tourism academicians and industry professionals with regard to creation of an ITS cadre for promoting tourism in the country?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The finding pertaining to the research questions are discussed as follow:

Desired Improvements in Tourism Curriculum being Taught

The degree to which tourism academicians and industry professionals agree or differ with regard to various curriculum aspect is given in Table 3. The table shows

the opinion of academicians and industry professionals on Syllabus Update, Digital Skills, Student Exchange program

and academia-industry interaction being provided through tourism education curriculum in the country.

Table 3: Opinion on Areas of Improvement

Skills	Opinion of Industry Professionals					Opinion of Academicians				
	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
FSU	8 (6.2)	8 (6.2)	38(29.5)	22 (17.1)	53 (41.1)	6 (4.7)	17 (13.)	43 (33.3)	29 (22.5)	34 (26.4)
DS	7 (5.4)	12 (9.3)	28(21.7)	34 (26.4)	48 (37.2)	4 (3.1)	13 (10.1)	39 (30.2)	36 (27.9)	37 (28.7)
SEP	9 (7.0)	10 (7.8)	35(27.1)	31 (24.0)	44 (34.1)	9 (7.0)	14 (10.9)	27 (20.9)	27 (20.9)	52 (40.3)
AII	6 (4.7)	14 (10.9)	33(25.6)	36 (27.9)	40 (31.0)	3 (2.3)	7 (5.4)	38 (29.5)	29 (22.5)	52 (40.3)

Source: Primary data through questionnaire

FSU- frequent syllabus update, DS- Digital skills, SEP- Student exchange program, AII- academia industry interaction.

*Below mentioned numbers represent the majority view of respondents.

- Frequent Syllabus Update (FSU): In regard to syllabus update, 41.1% industry professionals have the opinion that FSU is *very highly* needed and 33.3% academicians feel *moderate* need for syllabus update.
- Improvement in Digital Skills (DS): As far as digital skills are concerned a high of 37.2% respondents from tourism industry have the opinion that improvement in digital skills among upcoming tourism graduates is *very highly* needed and similarly a high 30.2% academicians too are of the view that digital skills are needed to a moderate extent to produce ideal tourism professionals. It is apparent that tourism academicians perhaps are ignorant about the tourism industry and the growing use of information and communication technology in tourism sector.
- Student Exchange Program: Majority from both the groups i.e. 34.1% industry professionals and 40.3% academicians believe that Student Exchange Programs are very valuable. Student exchange program across the institutions lead to exposure in context of cultural familiarization, destination knowledge, and interaction with multiple experts from different areas of specialization, political scenario, economic role and different niche forms of tourism.
- Academia Industry Interaction: Both category of respondents i.e. academicians (29.5%) and tourism industry professionals (31.0%) have the opinion that academia-industry interaction is highly necessary,

as it provides inputs to both parties which can help in curriculum enhancement and enhancing skills of tourism students.

With regard to 'areas' of improvement in tourism education, both professionals and academicians have similar views except for 'digital skills' and 'frequent syllabus update' which are not being regarded for serious improvement by academicians, perhaps as academicians believe that they are providing satisfactory syllabus and perhaps as they are not interacting with the industry to assess the requirements.

Opinion on Status of Tourism Education in the Country

Among tourism professionals, the highest percentage i.e. 45.0% respondents feel that that only a *moderate* level of tourism education is being provided. A high 45.7% of academicians feel similarly that the educations provided is moderate.

Table 4: Status of Tourism Education

Rating of Tourism Education	Tourism Professionals	Tourism Academicians
Very Low	18 (14.0)	7 (5.4)
Low	18 (14.0)	23 (17.8)
Moderate	58 (45.0)	59 (45.7)
High	20 (15.5)	31 (24.0)
Very High	15 (11.6)	9 (7.0)
Total	129 (100.0)	129 (100.0)

Source: Primary data through questionnaire

The results suggest that there is a major room for improvement in the nature of tourism education being provided.

Opinion of Tourism Academicians Regarding Satisfaction with the Tourism Syllabus being Taught

Table 5: Satisfaction with Tourism Education (Academicians)

Satisfaction with Tourism Education	Tourism Education being Provided in the Department/ Institute
No	61 (47.3)
Yes	68 (52.7)
Total	129 (100.0)

Source: Primary data through questionnaire

52.7 academicians are *satisfied* with tourism education being provided in the concerned departments, while a close 47.3 respondents are *not satisfied* with tourism education being provided. Hence discussions and exercises need to be undertaken to evaluate the curriculum and see what can be done to identify areas of improvement to provide high quality tourism education.

Opinion on Tourism Professionals being Produced in the Country

Table 6: Rating of Tourism Professionals (Industry Professionals)

Rating of Tourism Professionals	Percentage of Tourism Professionals being Produced by Tourism Education
Poor	25 (19.4)
Moderate	87 (67.4)
Excellent	17 (13.2)
Total	129 (100.0)

Source: Primary data through questionnaire

Table 6 indicates that 67.4% respondent feels that tourism professionals produced are only of a *moderate* nature. The industry does not seem to be satisfied with human resource being produced by tourism education institutes, perhaps as they do not meet the state of art knowledge and skills required. Hence tourism programs should be revised and framed to meet the needs of the industry in order to produce professionals high in demand by the industry.

Opinion on Creation of Indian Tourism Services (ITS)

Opinion of tourism academicians and industry professionals for creation of ITS for promoting tourism and tourism education in the country.

Table 7: Creation of ITS

Indian Tourism Services	Tourism Professionals (%)	Tourism Academicians (%)
No	15 (11.6)	11 (8.5)
Yes	114 (88.4)	118 (91.5)
Total	129 (100)	129 (100)

Source: Primary data through questionnaire

Among the respondents a high percentage of both tourism academicians (91.5) and tourism professionals (88.5) believe that the creation of an ITS can help in producing tourism professionals who can aid tourism of the country in the right direction. The majority of academicians and tourism professionals feel that incorporation of ITS for tourism graduates can help in framing proper tourism policies for the country and can help promote tourism in the country.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study reveals that tourism professionals have kept frequent syllabus update on priority to bridge the gap between produced human resource and industry requirements. On the other hand, tourism academicians believe that student exchange programs and industry-academia networking can help bridge the supply-demand gap of nature of tourism professionals being produced and that demanded by the industry. Knowledge of digital skills is a high priority demand by the industry. The industry professionals are of the view that academia-industry networking is necessity to enhance tourism education, similar to the findings of Cooper and Shepherd (2014).

The following recommendations are made with regards to enhancing the quality of human resource produced by institutes.

- Networking among educational institutes, technocrats, private sectors and government should be implemented to review tourism education in context of futuristic needs.
- Scholarships, internships and specialized tourism education are the tools to bridge the supply demand gap.

- Tourism education, training and employment through tourism should be taken up at the center of economic development while framing national and international tourism policies.
- Incorporation of an Indian Tourism Service (ITS), can attract talented tourism graduates in academia and industry, similar to that of Administrative Services. ITS can go a long way in enhancing tourism education and attracting students in tourism academics and tourism industry.
- Constant interaction between tourism education providers and industry professionals should be taken as the key to deliver required need-of-the-hour tourism education in order to meet the demand of the industry.

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