

# Alternative Career for Hospitality Management Students: Perception and Preferences, in Context to Hotel Management Students of Kumaun Region

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## Abstract

Career choice is a conglomerate decision for students since it confirms the kind of profession that they choose to pursue in life. As students try to make career their choice, they face challenges of matching their career choices with their abilities, zeal and academic performance.

The growth of hospitality sector has resulted in an adequate scope for the ambitious hospitality professionals to take up careers in this largely growing sector. It is said, 'That a particular individual who has a fervour, passion, communication skills and able to remain steady, hospitality is the career for you'. The purpose of this study was the factors being examined that influence alternative career choices among students undertaking hotel management such as Knowledge, Skill and Attitude. This study enlarges the job perceptions of hotel management students towards alternative career opportunities. It aims to bring more about their skills, attitudes and career plans, and help to achieve comparative insights that will help in picking up opportunities towards other career avenues. Students in the hospitality industry have to be vigilant carefully their career planning in order to cope with the demands of the hospitality industry's ambitious environment.

This study tries to identify the attributes that makes hotel management students suitable for alternative career opportunities in the hospitality sector.

**Keywords:** Knowledge, Skill, Abilities, Attitude, Hospitality, Career Opportunity

## Introduction

To face quick changes in the economic environment, market pressures, and learner organizations, organizations

have had to become more flexible than rigid to maintain their competitive advantage, and this has had imputations for individuals' present-day career development (De Vos, De Hauw & Van der Heijden, 2011). In other words, employability requires not only the accountability demanded by the market providing jobs but also effective career planning and development. Therefore, a major solicitude of colleges is promoting college graduates in developing their employability by ensuring that they acquire the competencies needed in the job market and the accomplishment needed for career development (National Youth Commission, 2006).

The hospitality industry employs 10% of the global work force (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2018) and one of the major contributors of the gross domestic product (GDP) of many countries. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has diminished the fortunes of the industry, it has been predicted to recover within the shortest possible time, although operations in the industry will not be the same for some time (Gossling et al., 2020). For the industry to achieve the much-needed bounce back, staff will be a vital component. This is because, like all service industries, human resources are a requisite agent for success (Lee et al., 2008). For staff to be able to take over this role of improving the industry, there is a need for these staff members to possess the right knowledge, skills and attitude (Anthony et al., 2019). Hospitality professionals should be properly equipped with the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) necessary to enable them to face the industry's challenges and ensure their future success. Hence, it is time to re-examine the requisites needed for managers to be established in today's Hospitality environment and understand that are they satisfied with

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the hospitality career? (Brown, Arendt & Bosselman, 2014). Having these points in mind and literature reviews the authors have tried to explore the following research questions:

- Does willingness persist among hospitality management students towards alternative avenues for successful career?
- Does the alternative industrial personnel find suitability of hospitality management students for their industry profile?
- What all KSAs make them suitable for alternate industries placement?
- How KSAs positively correlate with hospitality management students' success in alternate career opportunities?

Through the years, the consensus among industry professionals has been those human resources-related skills represent the most important element of hospitality management success. Scholarly study into KSAs for hospitality management success represents a valuable resource to professionals and the other industry (Hsu, 2019).

This study is designed to examine the expectations of alternative industrial personnel's on KSA requisites for hotel management students. An investigation into the suitability of KSA's in alternative career profiles. Specifically, the study examines the suitability of KSA's they possess during course programme and availability of career opportunities in alternative fields in hospitality. The research then looks at the relative importance of KSA's for career enhancement and monetary success.

This study's results offer a resolution to the suggestion that KSAs perceived as important for hoteliers' success are suitable for alternative career profile in hospitality industry. Any gaps found between available KSAs and those required for alternative career avenues in hospitality success can provide direction for the future development of effective training programs for hotel management students.

With so many career possibilities available for professionals with a degree in hospitality management, often times the potential of alternative fields is overlooked among job seekers. Hospitality management professional

are highly sought after precisely for their flexibility and ability to adapt to different fields of work where service and customer satisfaction are important to a company's functions. So, today we have compiled a list of 17 careers to pursue with a hospitality management degree.

### Alternate Career Opportunities for Hospitality Graduates

- *Dietary Services Manager / Hospital F&B Manager* - Working in such locations as schools, healthcare facilities and workplace cafeterias, dietary service managers supervise all of the behind-the-scenes work it takes to feed employees, patients and other diners. They will often work with a nutrition specialist to make sure that all of their patrons' nutritional and dietary needs are being met (Ohio State University, 1995).
- *Corporate Liaison* - A corporate liaison ensures effective communication and co-operation between two entities, both business, public and private institutions (Barron et al., 2007).
- *Community Relations Speciality* - Community relations specialists work for government agencies, non-profit organizations and private companies to manage the relationships necessary to the growth and success of the enterprise.
- *Theme Park Manager* - A theme park manager is responsible for every aspect of the day-to-day running of a theme park. This includes key functions, such as managing the customer experience, strategic planning and development, monitoring health and safety, overseeing the park's finances and staff management.
- *Coaching, Training & Development Advisor* - Coaching & Development Advisors manage and deliver a high standard of training, coaching and development to support the commercial needs of the business. To provide new management trainees with induction and training support to ensure they are equipped with the basic knowledge and skills required to succeed in their role.
- *Food Photography* - There is a bright prospect of food photography but it is still an untapped market in the country. Some of the major clients of food photographers are hotels and restaurants, ice cream

and dairy companies, exporters, recipe book and magazine agencies, and newspapers.

- *Country Club Manager* - A clubhouse manager oversees the food, beverage, dining and catering operations at the country club, usually in consultation with the executive chef. Hiring, firing, training and supervising food and beverage staff takes a lot of a clubhouse manager's time, wedding planner and other catering events are additional roles that they perform.
- *Food Quality Manager* - The profile of a food quality manager often revolves around monitoring and advising on the performance of the quality management system, producing data and reporting on performance, measuring against set standards.
- *Quick Service Restaurants* - Chain Outlets like McDonald's, Dominos, KFC, Hard rock Café, etc.
- *Industrial Canteen* - They can begin as a canteen supervisor in the industrial catering companies on the company payroll or under third party contractor.
- *Teaching & Research* - They can choose to be a faculty in hotel management or food craft industries and share their knowledge with aspirants. They may join hotel schools/colleges or private colleges after having Industrial experience and depending upon their academic performance.
- *Marketing & Sales Executives in Hotel / Multinational Companies* - Sales and marketing executives in hotel / multinational companies can also be a good option because this field requires good convincing skills, good communication skills and good personality which is relevant to hotel industry requirements.
- *Entrepreneurship* - After pursuing hotel management course, one can start their own venture and can be an entrepreneur. They have the option of making a good restaurateur or can open a good restaurant. (Wang & Sang, 2014)
- *Retail Sector and Lifestyle Management* - Has a wide range open for hotel management graduates. It includes multiplex cinema (like PVR & carnival etc.) Malls, and Back Office jobs, joining as receptionist in corporate offices, Hospitals and BPO industry. It depends on what position you have in retail industry.

- *Hospitality Journalism* - Has a wide career opportunity for hospitality graduates. It includes spreading awareness about services and facilities available in hotels and restaurants.
- *Food Reviewer* - Food critic or food writer is a broad term used to describe a writer who explores food or restaurants and then publishes the results of their findings. Those who share their opinions via food columns in newspapers and magazines are known as food columnists (Lau & Shaffer, 1999).
- *Event Management* - Is also a good option for hotel management students because they can bring in their organizing skills to good use in this field, not only execute the event but also brand building, marketing and communication strategy and go up in the ladder (Masdonati, Fournier & Lahrizi, 2017).

## Objectives of this Study

This study has four major objectives:

- To examine the perception of hotel management students on alternative career avenues.
- To measure the willingness of hospitality students on alternative career avenues.
- To compare the perceptions/expectations of alternative industry profiles with KSA's obtained by hotel management students.
- To understand the alternative career avenues in the hospitality sector.

## Literature Review

Panwar (2012) examined the reasons, why the employees are not able to cope up with the industry environment. A survey was conducted of different hotel employees and observed that most of the employees want to be work in other Service oriented industries such as Airlines, Sales & Marketing, Retail and Financial services.

McGinley et al. (2014) in a grounded theory approach to developing a career change model in hospitality, covered following key points - Job Satisfaction, Work-life conflict, Dissatisfaction with career progression, Weak ties: social support and professional identification, as the main

reasons for switching jobs elsewhere by the hospitality professionals and for seeking alternative career avenues.

Brown et al. (2014) the research is guided by two objectives examining the significant difference between perceptions of career factor importance and career factor experience and exploring the perception of hiring managers to identify career importance factors. This study concludes that the researchers have found 29.1% of the recent, participating, graduates from hospitality programs of departments had already left the hospitality industry. According to the research the main reasons for high labour turnover ratio are long working hours, slow growth and inaccurate understanding of industry profile.

Peshave et al., in JOHAR - Journal of Hospitality Application & Research said that although to a student the sector appears lucrative, but practically it has its own issues including little job security, Less salaries and long working hours, limited growth, no clarity in promotion and growth policies and no work life balance are few parameters due to which hospitality attrition rate is high and people are switching to alternative career choices.

Singhal (2018) the article informs that among the emerging alternative career avenues that have attracted the youngsters in the recent years are food photography, research, outdoor media, automobile, wedding planner, photography, real states, blogging, food journalism, health and fitness, dietary services, etc.

Other than hospitality other employers are ready to take the hospitality graduates because they have an affinity towards socializing and understanding the needs of the people, ready to face the challenges of this competitive world.

Shah et al. (2021) in "Hospitality Students' Perception of Career Opportunities and Future Prospects" wrote in his article that students anticipated fewer job openings, reduced job security, higher terminations during probation period and slim chances of promotions are the main reasons for switching towards alternative career avenues. The study conducted on 353 students and 104 employers that tries to find how, prospective hospitality graduates deal with the alternative career decision-making task. Through the surveys conducted for graduate hospitality students and the other employers in India it was found that it was challenging to make career decisions within

the context of a changing graduate labour market. It is found that both the entities i.e employee and employer both are eager to join/take alternative career choices.

Spencer and Spencer (1993) conducted a study on competence at work: Models for superior performance. through this study the researcher has enlighten the fact that job performance is closely related to professional knowledge attributes and and personal motives. Thus, student's competency can be forecasted by providing a measure of endogenous factors (such as personal motives, traits, and self-concept) and exogenous factors (such as knowledge and skills). According to Knight and Yorke (2004), the attributes for employing someone includes knowledge and skills, capacity for learning.

Cupper et al. (2008) referred employment competencies in his study. These competences include knowledge, skills, and abilities that needed to adequately perform various tasks and carry out responsibilities within a job and to that individual's learns adaptability to adjust in organizational environment.

Wang and Chen (2014) investigated on the employability of hospitality graduates and the importance of each competency from the perspective of students and industry professionals. He stated that employability can be measured by both job as well as personal competency. This study found that students lack confidence in their employability. Thus, hospitality education should focus not only on generating technical skills but also on reinforcing competency development, motivating students to learn professional management skills and promoting their self-efficacy. The ultimate goal is to prepare students to be competent employees who meet their requirements of businesses.

## Research Methodology

The objective of present investigation is to measure the awareness and preference of hospitality students for alternative career opportunities. For that purpose, a sample of 353 students of Hospitality management from Kumaun Region of Uttarakhand and 104 Professionals of alternative industries were selected.

In this study the researcher has developed a self-administered mail survey instrument based on exploratory survey to examine KSAs that were derived from a review

of the hospitality literature on management competencies. Various researches of University’s hospitality literature database have shaped more articles addressing KSAs and competencies, from which we gathered a voluminous list of KSAs. From this list, we grouped similar KSAs together, that fell under the following three domains: (Attitudinal suitability, Skill suitability and Knowledge suitability).

The universe of the study comprised of two professional profiles: (1) Professionals of alternative industries and (2) Students of Hospitality management from Kumaun Region of Uttarakhand. In the present investigation purposive sampling technique has been used for the selection of study area and random sampling technique has been used for selection of respondents from both professional profiles. To investigate the awareness and preference of hospitality students for alternative career opportunities factorial analysis has been used in the study. The questionnaires are designed to get information about awareness and preference of hospitality students for alternative career opportunities and to get information about industry professional’s preferences and their suitability criteria for hospitality students regarding alternative career avenues. The respondents were asked to evaluate KSAs based on the level of importance for career success and to report their current competency levels in each KSA. The self-appraisal of competency level was also measured.

## Result and Discussion

In this sub-section an attempt has been made to analyse the perception of Professionals of alternative industries and hotel management students on suitability of alternative career avenues.

### Alternative Industry Professionals

In the study Fig. 1 represents that (7.7%) professionals are Facility Management and and Event management respectively, (6.7%) are from cruise lines and sales & marketing, respectively, Retail, Armed Forces, Bank (4.8%) respectively, (3.8% from Customer care and (2.9%) from Aviation Industry. The result shows the professionals from these industries found suitability of hotel management students for their respective career

avenues. The mother 50% includes professionals from Entertainment, Fun Parks, Insurance, Academics, Research, Outdoor media, Automobile, Wedding planner, Photography, Real Estates, Blogging, Food journalism, Health and fitness, Dietary Services, etc.

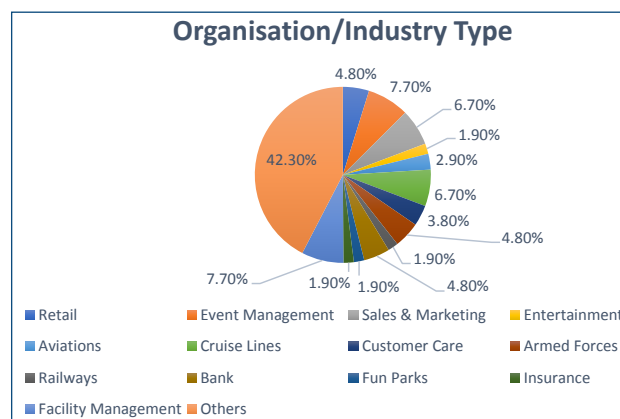


Fig. 1: Professionals from Alternative Industries

### Students Response

The results in Fig. 2 shows that 83.1% students are aware about alternative career avenues that are available for hotel management students.

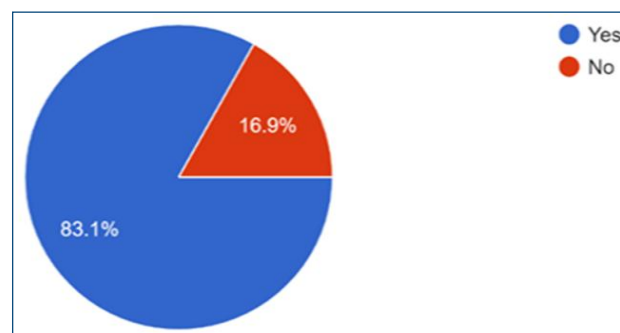


Fig. 2: Students Awareness about Alternative Employment Opportunities

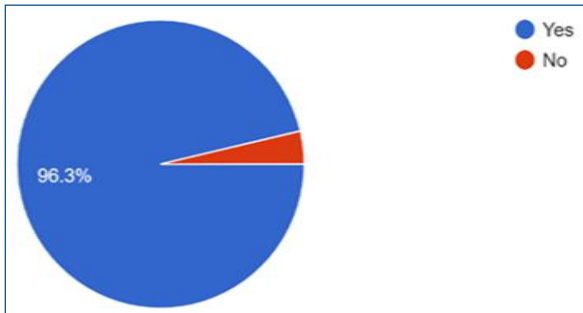
## Professionals’ and Student’s Response on Alternate Employment Opportunities

### Preference for employment opportunities to Hospitality Students

#### Professionals Response

As per the results shown in Fig. 3 (96.3%) professionals prefer to employ hospitality students for alternative

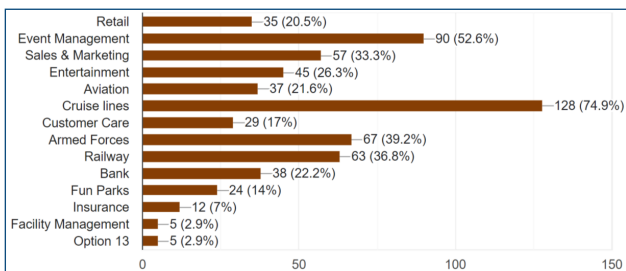
industries. This shows the appropriateness of hospitality students for alternative careers and availability of alternative career avenues for future growth. The information related to suitability of KSAs are available in the below surveyed questions.



**Fig. 3: Preference for Employment Opportunities to Hospitality Students**

*Students Response*

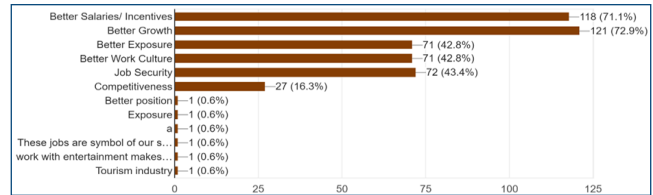
In Fig. 4 it has been analysed that majority of students prefer cruise lines (74.9%), event management (52.6%), armed forces (39.2%) and railway (36.8%). The result represents that the hotel management students found themselves well suitable for above career avenues. Other alternatives preferred by students are sales & marketing (33.3%), entertainment (26.3%), retail (20.5%) and bank (20.5%).



**Fig. 4: Student’s Preference for Alternative Employment Opportunities**

*The Reason for Choosing the Alternate Career*

The preferences for choosing the alternate career are shown in the Fig. 5, the biggest reason is better growth, chosen by 72.9% students, 71.1% gave the consideration for better salaries. The other big motivators are Job Security at 43.4% and Better Exposure & Better Work Culture at 42.8%.



**Fig. 5: Students Preferences for Choosing Alternate Career**

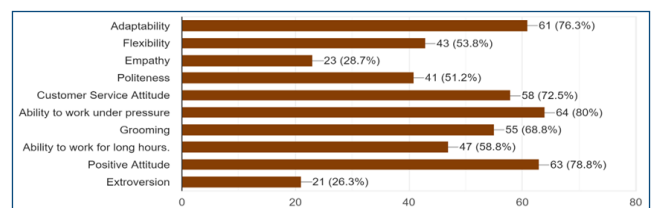
*Comparison between the Responses*

The analysis represents positive correlation between the response of professionals and students. The awareness level is high and professionals found suitability of hospitality graduates for alternative jobs. The correlation is positive due to the preference level from students is also marking positive sign.

**Attitudinal Suitability**

*Professionals Response*

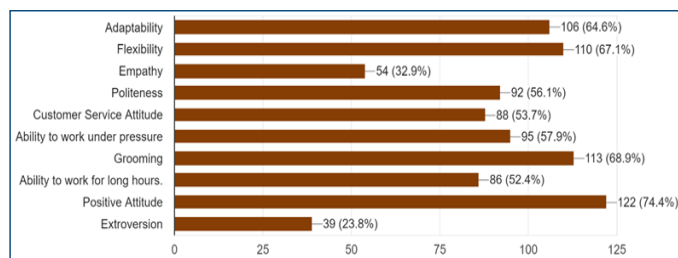
According to the Fig 6. ability to work under pressure (80%) and positive attitude (78.8%) has been considered as most important and suitable attitudinal attribute by professionals. Other attributes that make alternative carrier as an opportunity are adaptability, customer service attitude and grooming with 76.3%, 72.5% and 68.8% respectively.



**Fig. 6: Suitability on the basis of Attitude**

*Students Response*

According to the Fig. 7 students find themselves well suitable for alternative opportunities on the basis of positive attitude (74.4%), flexibility (67.1%), grooming (68.9%) & adaptability (64.6%). The other attitudinal attributes that make them suitable are ability to work under pressure (57.9%), customer service attitude (53.7%), Politeness (56.1%), ability to work for long hours (52.4%).



**Fig. 7: Suitability on the basis of Attitude**

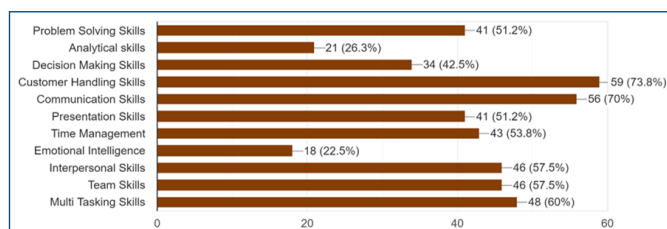
*Comparison between the Responses*

The data represents positive correlation among the factors selected by the respondents that makes hospitality students suitable for alternative career avenues. That shows students have better understanding for the career need.

**Skill Suitability**

*Professionals Response*

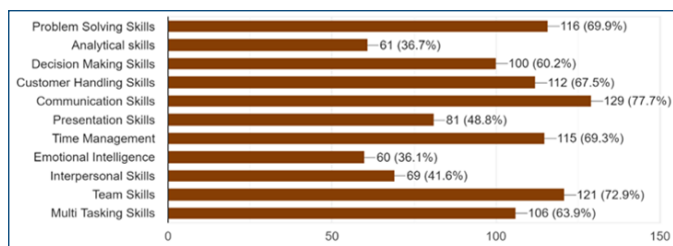
According to the Fig 8. customer handling skills (73.8%) and communication skills (70%) are considered as key skills suitable for alternative organizations. Other skills that considered suitable are interpersonal skills, team skills and multitasking skills with 57.5%, 57.5% and 60% respectively.



**Fig. 8: Suitability on the basis of Skills**

*Students Response*

The result in Fig. 9 shows according to the student’s communication skills (77.7%), team skills (72.9%), problem solving skills (69.9%), customer handling skills (67.5%) & decision-making skills (60.2%) are suitable skills that they commonly possess. Other skills that make them suitable are multi-tasking skills (63.9%), interpersonal skills (41.6%), presentation skills (48.8%), analytical skills (36.7%).



**Fig. 9: Suitability on the basis of Skills**

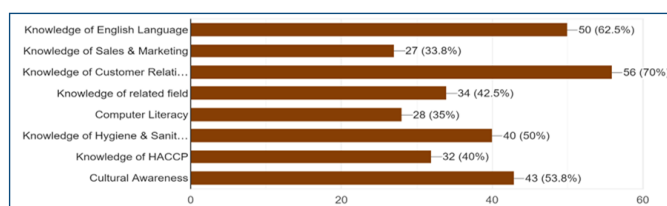
*Comparison between the Responses*

According to the above represented data the perception of professionals and students regarding skill suitability displays similarity. There is significant correlation among the responses of professionals and hospitality students.

**Knowledge Suitability**

*Professionals Response*

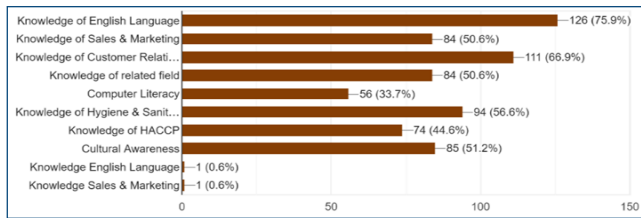
Fig. 10 represents that as per the professional’s knowledge of English language (62.5%) and knowledge of customer relationship management (70%) makes hotel management students more compatible for alternative jobs. Other important knowledge proficiency attributes are Knowledge of hygiene & sanitation (50%), cultural awareness (53.8%) and knowledge of related field (42.5%).



**Fig. 10: Suitability on the basis of Knowledge**

*Students Response*

Fig. 11 shows according to the students’ knowledge of English language (75.9%) and knowledge of customer relationship management (66.9%) makes them compatible for alternative jobs. Apart from that knowledge of hygiene & sanitation (56.6%) is an important attribute and present in the students.



**Fig. 11: Suitability on the basis of Knowledge**

### Comparison between the Responses

The data indicates high correlation between the perception of respondents. The respondents perceive similar knowledge factors that makes hospitality students more suitable for alternative avenues.

### Comparative Analysis between Preferences of Industrial Professional's and Students on Suitability

The result shows the responses from various professionals belongs to alternative industries. The responses shows the professionals prefer to give opportunities to the hospitality students. According to the results ability to work under pressure, positive attitude, customer handling skills, communication skills, professional's knowledge of English language and knowledge of customer relationship management has been considered as most important and suitable KSAs by professionals. It shows resemblance between the responses and preferences of professionals and students on suitability for alternative career opportunities. According to students the most important KSAs that make them suitable for Alternative industries are positive attitude, flexibility, grooming, adaptability, communication skills, team skills, knowledge of English language and knowledge of customer relationship management. The responses from both the respondents represents similarity and better understanding from students related to alternative career opportunities.

### Conclusion

The study performed by Natarajan and Raman (2018) supports the information revealed through this study. According to the researcher with the gathered evidence, it has been concluded that there is a demand for hotel

management education, Internal and External factors influence perception and preferences and there will be qualified human capital available to the hotel industry. The growth of hospitality sector has resulted in ample scope for the aspiring hospitality professionals to take up careers in this booming sector. They say if you have zeal, passion, good communication and ready to move on, hospitality is the career for you. The hospitality graduates ideally look for Kitchen, F&B Service and Accommodations in hotels as their career options on completion of their course. The times have changed and the hospitality too has evolved over the period. The graduates now can look at the career options other than core departments of hotels.

The key findings of the study were that most of the students were aware and preferred taking the occupations such as entrepreneur, event management, facility management, sales & marketing, teaching, food photography, research, outdoor media, automobile, wedding planner, photography, real states, blogging, food journalism, health and fitness, dietary services, etc. whereas stress free career and monetary benefits are the pull factor for choosing career options amongst those mentioned.

As observed from our survey, many organisations are willing to provide opportunities to the students coming from hospitality sector and even students are enthusiastic to join other sectors as per their capabilities.

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