
HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT GRADUATES EXPERIENCES AS INTERNS IN FIVE STAR HOTELS

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ABSTRACT

This study was based on a basic evaluation of the industrial training experience of second year hospitality management students. A questionnaire was given out to students to fill in their responses I terms of the quality of experience, interaction with hotel staff, working hours and the relevance of college education . The study provides valuable insight into the need for HR managers to take keen interest in students IT experience, their working hours and the quality of work experience. It also throws light on the importance of IT and its effectiveness, and also the need to make classroom sessions more relevant to hotel situation.

Keywords: *internship, training, hospitality,*

In order to meet the demand for trained workers in hospitality sector, ongoing collaboration with industry is required to ensure that the goals of all primary stake holders – students, educators and industry employers is met. One form of collaboration is internship or workplace experience. Prior research has shown that a good internship is viewed favourably by hospitality recruiters. (Petrillose and Montgomery, 1998)

Benefits of Internship

It is well researched fact that internship can be of immense benefit. To the industry it provides access to a pool of workers who are trained, enthusiastic and are aware of the industry and its demands. They also bring with them fresh ideas, which is actually the need of a fast changing business environment. It also provides opportunity to train employees without making long term commitment. (JU .E,

Claton and Reynolds, 1998/99; Johnson and Miller, 1989; Petrillose and Montgomery, 1998)

For the education sector it helps in enhancing collaborative research opportunities, raises institutions profile and establishes long term working relationships. It also ensures good graduate placements in the industry for the institutes (Bell & Schmidt, 1996; Walo, 1999).

For students, it provides opportunities to put to practise what they have learnt in the classroom situation. They gain a greater understanding of the industries requirements, test career choices and develop important hands on skills (Barron, 1999; Barron and Maxwell, 1993; Casado, 1991; Emenheiser, Clayton, & Tas, 1997; Petrillose & Montgomery, 1998). It also helps to develop managerial competencies among students (Knight, 1984; LeBruto & Murray, 1994; Mariampolski, Spears, & Vaden, 1980; Tas, 1988). Students can develop competence in several generic areas of management, including leadership, human resources, oral and written communication, interpersonal communication, problem solving and team work, planning and decision making. (Bell & Schmidt, 1996; LeBruto & Murray, 1994; McMuin, 1998; Tass 1988)

The Indian Scenario

The hospitality industry is all about perception. It is a glamorous industry. The students who enrol in the programme are also at first basically attracted by the glamour of the industry. However the training experience may be the one that may change their attitude towards the industry. As Collins rightly puts it “There is no substitution for the sting of battle”

The educational institutions on the other hand are dependent on the industry, as most do not have the needed set up, in terms of the kitchens or the restaurants, or the rooms to give a hotel like experience to the students. The colleges thus expect that the hotel HR managers will help in the process of training their students in hotel business.

However it is seen that the hotels give away the manual jobs to be done to the trainees. They do not interact with the trainees much and thus the experience may not be as fulfilling as expected. Jobs like brass cleaning, bathroom cleaning, dusting, peeling potatoes, etc if done repeatedly can lead to boredom and the students experience remains a very sketchy one. Sometimes he/she may be expected to work in one dept

for more than two months and that too may not be much appreciated by the students. They also expect some quality in the kind of work done by them in their four to six months of internship.

Working hours are normally 9 hours per day. But it has been observed that interns complain of it being longer, and that too occurs quite frequently.

In order to find out what was the situation that the trainees were facing, a study was planned with the following objectives in mind

Objectives

1. To rate the quality and kind of work experience gained by the trainees in different departments of the hotel.
2. To find out the training interventions provided by the hotel staff in the training process.
3. To find out if the students found the education imparted to them in college of any use to them during their training session.

Methodology

A random sample of sixty students from second year (of the three year degree programme) who had undergone training in five star properties was taken for the purpose of conducting the study. Sixty students each from only one college in Navi Mumbai region were taken. This college was taken keeping in mind the proximity of the researcher to the college for the sake of convenience. It is a pilot study done with the intention of giving feedback to the researcher and the institute that the internship programme was going well and that students were gaining the needed experience of hospitality operations. In order to see whether the students had any difficulty, they were asked to be frank in their opinion about the experience.

The students who were a part of the survey were all second year students who had undergone training in the hotels for a period of four to five months. The total strength of the college S.Y, Degree students was 180. Thus one third of the population was the sample size.

The study was aimed at giving feedback to the institute about the ongoing training programme.

Findings of the study

Age and sex of the respondents

It was seen that the majority of the students were males (83.3%). Only 20% of the students were females. All students were in the age group of 19-21 years and had joined the course out of their own wish. All were looking forward to training in hotels before they went for actual training.

Table 1
Departments trained with

Departments trained in	No	%
Housekeeping	46	76.6
Front office	22	36.6
F & B	50	83.3
Food Production	46	76.6
Bakery	8	13.3
Any other Sales	2	1.6

From the above table it is clear that a majority of the student's i.e., 83.3% were given training in food and beverage department. Nearly 76.6% were given training in housekeeping and food production. It is well known that all the three departments are core areas of the hotel. They are also labour intensive in nature. Plus the kind of work involved in the dept. is manual, guest contact is not so high. It is seen that the trainees too want to work in F&B and FP these there favourite areas o interest also. Housekeeping although not much popular with the students is one area that needs manpower. So trainees are expected to chip in, especially in the cleaning of public areas.

Students who show interest only are normally sent to bakery section. Although they have shown interest in training in HR, especially the girls, and some boys have shown interest in sale they have not been given any training in these areas so far.

Table 2
 Rating of work experience in different departments of hotel

Hotel Dept.	Very good		Good		Average		Not good	
	No	%	No	%	No	%		
housekeeping	24	40	20	33.3	2	1.6		
Front office	16	26.6	6	10	-		-	
F&B	24	40	24	40	2	1.6		
Food Production	18	30	20	40	8	13.3		
Bakery	6	10	6	10				
Any other Sales			2	1.6				

The interns were asked about the work experience in the departments in which they had their training. Almost 30 to 40% of the students rated their experience in various departments as very good. Only few reported it as average. It is also seen that only 40% of the interns were given to handle front office. This is also one department which is popular with the students specially girls.

It could be concluded from the above that those who did not enjoy were also the one who did maximum manual work in their respective dept. A lack of challenge in work would have resulted in boredom and therefore their lack of enjoyment in the experience. Students also complained that they were not given front office to handle. One of the reasons for this could be the lack of communication skills of the students. The hotels did not find it right to give front office operations to be handled by a trainee.

The interns said that they learnt a lot as far as housekeeping is concerned. They felt more confident of doing buffet setups, clearance, handling guest luggage, bed making, room cleaning, and handling guest requests.

Table 3
 Kind of tasks done during training

Kind of work	No	%
Manual	50	83.3
Clerical	16	26.6
Standing at the door	16	26.6
Mis en place	32	53.3
Any other		

It is seen that nearly 83% of the trainees had to do manual work. The industry has no time to teach the intern's .it is seen that it expects them to observe more and reduce the load of manual work. Washing and wiping the dishes, brass cleaning, cleaning the terraces or other public areas, peeling potatoes or slicing onions, running errands or just waiting at the door, filing paper or stacking were the kind of jobs that were mostly done by them. Handling guest requests, managing live counters were done by a few.

Although the tasks were manual, it is seen that the interns enjoyed doing so. This could be attributed to the fact that it gave them an idea of the volume of work involved in these large properties and also gave them a confidence in their abilities in terms of the amount of work they were capable of doing. It is this confidence in their abilities that changes them. This change is seen in all students after they come back from training.

Table 4
Guest interaction

Guest interaction	No	%
Yes	34	56.6
No	04	6.66
Occasionally	24	40

An important aspect of joining the hotel industry is the desire of the person to interact with well known people and also well off people who visit the hotels. Trainees were asked if they were allowed to interact with the guests. Normally hotels would prefer it that they do not interact as one mistake by the trainee could cost them a lot in terms of loss of a client. However, it was satisfying to note that almost 56% trainees were allowed to interact with the guest on a regular basis. Around 40% were allowed to do so occasionally. However some properties 6.66% did not allow at all.

Table 5
Interactive sessions with HR manager

Interactive sessions	NO	%
Yes	30	50
No	30	50

Human resources Manager in a property plays a major role in training the Manpower that is recruited by the hotels. Interns fill in a major requirement of manpower in the hotel. They also help the colleges who depend to a large extent on imparting the needed training to enter the hospitality industry. Good attention if given to the interns could add meaning to the industrial training programmes. McMohan and Quinn in their study have reported that colleges must build successful relationships with individual companies and companies must develop a professional attitude towards placement and students should be positive and forthright in their attitude towards the whole process. Thus the role of training manager is extremely significant and he needs to be more active.

Table 6
Cooperation extended by the hotel staff

Cooperation extended	NO	%
Yes	58	96.6
No	02	3.33

Almost all students expressed satisfaction with other staff of the hotel. They got help and assistance whenever they wanted. This is a welcome sign in an industry where competition is tough. One feels welcome when one gets such a warm response.

Table 7
Did you enjoy your training experience?

Did you enjoy your IT experience?	No	%
Yes	40	66.66
No	20	33.33

A large majority of the students enjoyed their IT experience. Nearly 66.66% reported that the experience was good. However 33.33% reported it not good. This could be attributed to the long working hours. Almost all worked for 9 hours daily, but this exceeded upto 12-14 hrs many a times. This has been reported as many as three to four times a week. Mostly, housekeeping F & B and FP depts have been reported as the ones demanding long working hours.

Table 7
Has college education helped you?

Has college education helped	No	%
Yes	22	36.66
No	38	63.33

It was also observed that the students said that college education did not help them. This could be attributed to the fact that college does not provide the same environment that a hotel provides and thus when actually goes for training everything appears new to him. Subconsciously, though he/she may be using the knowledge, but on the surface it is all a brand new experience.

Summary and Conclusions

- Internship does make a valuable contribution to the learning experiences of HM students.
- Most students have enjoyed the learning experience, which shows that the hotel is receptive to the interns and interns are welcome. This could be attributed to the fact that they do need interns and they also know that in future these would be a part of the trained workforce that the industry wants.
- Although a large number of students show interest in front office, only a few get a chance to be there as interns. This could be because the hotels are not ready to risk the new interns at the front desk. Maximum get placed in HK and FP departments.
- It is seen that HR managers are not involved with the training of interns in nearly 50% of the cases. The educational institutions have viewed this as not a very happy situation. This was also expressed at the Trainers Meet held recently at Grand Hyatt, Mumbai.
- The colleges are looking forward to greater support for hotel management as far as quality of work experience goes. Too much of manual work and long working hours put of the trainees who may undergo a change of attitude. He may develop such a negative attitude that he may leave the industry for good in which case the very purpose of HE is lost.
- Colleges must liaise with the industry and establish a good rapport so that they are able to check the progress of their intern in the industry and the industry is also alert about its role.

Implications of the Study

- It would be appreciated if the hotel management takes keen interest in the interns who come in for training. It would add value to their training experience.
- They should provide them with quality experience along with getting quantitative manual work done. Physical labour is equally important at the start of the career and internship prepares them for it.
- Long working hours should not become a norm in the industry. The time factor needs to be regulated, overtime also need to be controlled.

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