In- Demand Lodging Management Competencies In Hospitality; Industry And Academic Perspective

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Abstract

This paper investigates the in- demand competencies required to succeed in hospitality industry. For this purpose the study explored the required competencies through in-depth interviews of prominent industry professionals and academic stalwarts through grounded theory method and furthers the perception of industry professionals and academic stalwarts regarding the in-demand competencies like interpersonal, on the job, technical and Covid competencies. For the same, the study adopted mixed approach of research, in which themes were extracted and analyzed first from the qualitative data collected through interview checklist from industry as well as academic stakeholders. Further based on the themes and literature scanning ("The Employment and Training Administration model") the questionnaire was designed which was used to collect data from the respondents. The study used descriptive statistics to analyse the data that lead the emergence of top ten competencies that are required by the lodging sector academicians and lodging management professionals

Keywords: Lodging Management, Hospitality, Interpersonal competencies, on the job competencies, technical competencies, and Covid competencies

Introduction

Hospitality refers to a relationship between a guest and a host in terms of being friendly, warm reception, kindness, smiling face, entertaining visitors in a great way. The hospitality industry can be empirically divided into two parts: lodging industry and foodservice industry. Lodging industry includes hotels, motels, resorts, camping grounds, and other alternative accommodations, while as food service industry includes: restaurants, coffee shops, fast food outlets, bars, etc. The Hospitality industry is labor-intensive, and the employees must possess many competencies to satisfy guests and provide high-quality service. To achieve the hospitality business goals, such as hotel enterprises, they should be equipped with definite competencies that enable them to deliver quality service and customer satisfaction. These key competencies can be developed through educational programs and providing training. The research question that needs to be answered is which skills and competencies lodging employees should cultivate. The union territory of Jammu and Kashmir is an important tourist destination and

depends much on the hospitality industry for its economic development. Essential for the survival and prosperity of the hospitality industry is the quality of service guests receive from the lodging sector, which mainly comes in the form of tangible and intangible services. Despite the positive trends in the hospitality industry of Jammu and Kashmir, many challenges are lying ahead that needs to be tackled, like political and economic developments, including the Covid 19 pandemic, which created uncertainty and instabilities with adverse effects on the hospitality industry. In 2020 & 2021, the world witnessed a sharp deterioration in global economic and financial investments, mainly due to Covid 19 and political instabilities.

In this turbulent business environment, there has been considerable growth in hospitality management education worldwide, especially in India that aims to fulfill the industry requirements for competent future employees (Kumar, M. 2014). The educators ensure that the graduates fulfill academic requirements and industry expectations in terms of required workplace competencies. As an outcome, there is a shared stake in the currency of workplace skills among educators, industry, and students. Because all three groups had a stake in the education process, the study included comments from industry practitioners, hospitality educators, and students. This paper aims to address the identified gap by investigating the following research objectives:

To explore the In-demand employee competencies required in lodging industry

To understand the perception of industry and academia regarding the requirement of in-demand competencies of professionals in lodging industry

Review of Literature

The responsibility of hospitality educators is to provide graduates with relevant competencies in the industry. Hotel management programs at universities and colleges are the primary means of preparing students to acquire essential competencies. The sector criticizes educators for producing incompetent graduates (Marneros et al., 2021). "Pizam (1982) stated that hospitality educational programs must broaden their curricula and not be limited to hospitality-specific content." Whatever the focus, educators must provide an educational program that meets the needs of both the industry and the students. The relationship between competency mapping and workforce attributes needs to be investigated and evaluate the connections to the educational system. "There is also a requirement to link competencies to critical success factors in the hospitality industry. Employers expect graduates to be job-ready and possess qualities and competencies (Yorke & Harvey, 2002)." Management education must importantly focus on competencies (Bath, Smith, Stein, & Swann, 2004). Educators are responsible for integrating and contextualizing competencies in curricula and developing a teaching strategy to ensure that students acquire the necessary competencies (Hind, Moss, & McKellan, 2007).

The term competency refers to the quality of being fit and able to perform any task. The operational definition, according to (Palan 2003) is the person's fitness concerning his /her job. (Parry, 1998;Lowry and Flohr 2005), competency is related knowledge, attitudes, and skills, a set of unified activities with performance and can be measured against standards, as shown in **figure-I**.

Fig- I, Concept of competency

(Campbell et al. 1993) defines competency as an ability of a person to apply knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and personal characteristics in a given role to perform successfully in critical work tasks. (Redman & wilkison, 2006) defined competencies as a cluster of all work related skills, knowledge, personal attributes, experience, values, and attitudes that a person draws on to perform their work well. Based on that, a study was conducted in U. K that revealed the hotel employers/ managers expect complaint handling, good communication skills, professional demeanor, customer relationship, and motivation from freshly graduated students who want to join the hotel industry. (Litchfield, Oakland, & Anderson, 2002) "states that competence comprises of higher level of skills such as critical thinking, cooperative works, effective communication, and use of lifelong learning resources." Buergermeister (1983) "identified the essential lodging-related skills essential for future hospitality managers. Within the hotel segment, the most critical competencies required for beginning managers are the promotion of the safety and security of guests." Herrera et al. (2003) identified the most crucial

cluster of skills for lodging executives' includes flexibility, adaptability, industry knowledge, leadership, and interpersonal skills

Since the lodging industry is growing at a perfect pace and has continued to grow, higher education institutions have rushed to produce future employees for placement as lodging managers by introducing bachelor's degree programs during the past 30 years. Several studies on graduate competencies looked at them from the industry's point of view.

(Zopiatis & Constanti, 2010), stated that to ensure the industry's success, the lodging management educators must understand the objective of the industry, also he identified the need to recognize the reality of the industry and adapt their curricula to this fast-changing environment. "According to research by Brownell and Chung (2001), Kriegl (2000), and Tsai et al. (2006), lodging management graduates should have excellent leadership qualities and exercise flexibility when working in the business."

Further review of the literature in the lodging industry, summarized in **Table I,** finds that numerous competencies have been identified as necessary for lodging industry professionals.

Table I, Summary of Competency Studies in the Lodging Industry		
S.No	**Authors**	**Key findings of the study**
1	Tas et al. (1996)	Rated Interpersonal and leadership competencies as most important while as Technical competencies as least important
2	Mayo and Thomas-Haysbert (2005)	Revenue management, communication and change management

3	Raybould and Wilkins (2006)	Rated Problem-solving, interpersonal skills and teamwork and leadership as most crucial competencies required by hospitality graduates.
4	Staton-Reynolds et al. (2009)	Emotional intelligence, technical skill set, integrity, enthusiasm and ability to learn
5	Suh et al. (2012)	Identified listening, effective guest interaction and leadership
6	Tavitiyaman et al. (2014)	Team building, ethics, leadership and communication skills
7	Shariff and Abidin (2015)	Communication skills, business fundamental skills and interpersonal skills

Table -3 : Research Paradigm	

Research Design	Mixed Approach
	    a) Qualitative
	    b) Quantitative

Research Instrument	a) Check list(Qualitative) b) Self-structured Questionnaire (Quantitative)
Sample Size	**For Qualitative:** Theoretical Saturation **For Quantitative**: 220 Students 20 Faculty 40 Industry As per Krejcie and Morgan's 1970 sample size formula
Data Analysis	a) Grounded Theory b) Ranking & Z-Score

The study is based on specific objectives like; to explore different types of Lodging Management competencies used in the hospitality industry and to rank the lodging management competencies for the hospitality industry, and compare the difference of opinion through the lens of Practitioners, Educators, and Students.

Research Methodology
The mixed strategy of the research is applied based on the qualitative and quantitative methods, taking into account the unique objectives of the study. According to the philosophical perspective of the research, constructivism epistemology is utilized since it allows for a better understanding of the reality of management competency practices in Srinagar Kashmir hotels and aids in the construction of that reality.

In the field of management research (Buchanan and Bryman, 2007) draw attention to the contextual issues surrounding the area of organizational study.

To meet the first objective of this study the data was collected through the interview checklist based on the literature scanning, the information has been collected from different hotel managers of Kashmir, as they possess actual knowledge and competencies adopted in the hotels after employing the purposive sampling. The interviews were recorded (with the participants' permission) using a high-tech audio recorder and a smartphone, and the recordings were afterwards transcribed into English and used for analysis. The transcribed data was submitted

back to the experts for any necessary revisions, and then it was coded using open, axial, and selective coding methods. Using inputs gathered during data gathering, different themes were formed and then discussed.

The second objective of the study was met by adopting the quantitative method. The questionnaire was designed using data collected from the first objective and employment training administrative model (ETA). The Z score was also applied to have the proper understanding about the deviation from mean and standard

deviation through the perspective of industry cum academia. This was done through the self-designed questionnaire on the basis of literature scanning and competencies derived from the coding of different competencies into themes.

The researcher distributed the questionnaire among 220 students, 20 faculty members, and 40 industry experts. The sample size determination is derivative from the sample size calculation formula (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970).

S.No	Name of the Hotel	Name of the Institution
	Table –4 : Sampling	
1	Taj Vivanta by Srinagar	Central University of Kashmir
2	Hotel Lalit Srinagar	University of Kashmir
3	The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa	Institute of Hotel Management Srinagar
4	Radisson Blu Jammu	Central University of Jammu
5	County Inn Jammu	Food Craft Institute Jammu

Findings

The following section details the different elements found to contribute towards lodging management competencies and practices to be adopted in the lodging industry at Srinagar, along with suggestive comments and insights from the literature. A figure is also provided to help detail the nature of lodging management competencies and practices.

Human relation Competency

Among all the competencies in any sector, the fundamental competency that every employee must possess is Human relation competency because it is something which employees should compulsorily acquire to accomplish the job. Human relations competencies are essential home learned competencies and are further developed in academic and workplace environments. These are a personal attribute that enhances the ability of an individual and supports situational awareness to get a job done. (Hewitt Sean, 2008) states that Human relation competencies are non-technical intangible, personality-specific competencies that determine the strength of an individual as a leader, a good listener, negotiator, and a conflict mediator as well. (Chrysalis Development, 2013) states that Human relation refers to making use of all the human resources at your disposal, i.e., skills, talents, time, and energy, which enables an individual to achieve both work and life goals. "The careeronestep website offers a more detailed description of the (ETA) model's development (Careeronestep, 2017)." According

to which Personal effectiveness competencies are a cluster of attributes such as integrity, professionalism, interpersonal skills dependability, reliability, initiative, adaptability, flexibility, and lifelong learning. "(Hodges and Burch ell, 2003) investigated the perceptions of employers towards the importance of different skills. It was found that eight out of top ten important competencies required were related to Human relation which included the ability or willingness to learn, cooperation, teamwork, energy, passion, interpersonal communication, and problem-solving skills. Moreover, Human relation according to (Dr. Hina Juneja 2018) involves personal improvement and initiative, goal setting, stress management, positive self-talk, time management, taking responsibility of ones work, achieving excellence and success and finally self-awareness and assessment." Human relations is an ability of individual to adapt skills, qualities and interpersonal style to achieve high quality results, further modifying behaviors to accommodate tasks, situations and individuals (University of Strathclyde, Glasgow).

> The interviewees have mentioned that human relation competencies form the base of all other competencies, without it the employee can't perform especially in front of the area. These competencies are not only essential in professional life but also in personal life. Our industry demands these competencies as we have to deal with the guests. According to them Human relation skills include good behaviour, ethics, personal appearance, social

responsibility, motivation, punctuality, obligations and lifelong learning.

On the job Competencies

It is a description of a relevant skill, attribute or behavior for a specific job used to define and measure an individual's effectiveness in an organisation. According to (sharma, 2017) on the job are related skills and abilities that allow individuals to function in an organizational setting or at a job place which include teamwork, resource allocation and utilization, leadership, interpersonal skills, communication (written and oral), problem solving, creativity and innovation, technical expertise, planning and organizing, etc are the majorly accepted on the job to attain the organizational goals efficiently and effectively. A more extensive discussion of the (ETA) model's evolution may be found on the careeronestep website (Careeronestep, 2017). "According to which on the job competencies consists of Team work, Customer focus, planning, organizing, Creative thinking, problem solving, decision making, Working with tools and technology, Business fundamentals, Scheduling, coordinating, and inventory Management." On the job competency defined by Mansfield, Richard S. (1996) is a detailed and exact set of skills and attributes that employee's need to performer on their jobs.

The respondents defined on the job competencies as the skill, attitude, behaviour and knowledge of a personal at his/her workplace. These competencies enable an employee to work with his peers in a very efficient way. These include teamwork, customer services, idealistic, innovative, positive attitude, problem solving, and ethics towards business, leadership, communication and problem solving

Technical Competencies

These are defined as the specific technical/Hard workplace skills that allow an individual to perform at a workplace more accurately. Jon Zamboni (2018) defined technical competency as an area of knowledge or skill that can be used in the specific industry further, he added in order to become a skilled employee one must master these required technical competencies of a field and occupation. Technical competencies according to (Zopiatis, 2010) is ability of an individual to use

knowledge and techniques to accomplish a particular goals, it also includes working methods and work technologies, knowledge of equipment, further he added the technical competencies the skills and knowledge associated with the actual hospitality work. According to (Porter, 2005 and Cizel et al, 2007), the technical competencies in an organisation are concrete, primarily concerned thing required by are simply the greatest number of people in an organisation as it is performed by most of the employees. (Porter, 2005) "further outlines that the technical domain involves knowledge and skills related to work processes and methods, machines, equipment, facilities and new technologies. It also includes monitoring, reporting and evaluating processes related to production output, quality, productivity and sales." (Bailly and Lene, 2013 and Weber, Crawford, Lee & Dennison, 2013) "agree that requirement of technical skills at entry-level restaurant managers jobs are very important, for example, calculating food costs in a restaurant, menu development for a restaurant, culinary skills, and basic food serving methods and etiquette."

The respondents mentioned technical competencies as hard skills and more part of these competencies are important for employees who actually perform the task or work at operational level I.e. entry level employees. The interviewees were from both front office and Housekeeping department and agreed on, on hand computer literacy, work on hotel software, equipment handling, health and safety skills, first aid and basic accounting are the technical competencies required at operational level

Covid Competencies

Covid Competencies are the abilities, knowledge, experience, and attitude needed to do a task correctly while minimizing the risk of Covid infection transmission. The commitment and behavior of the hospitality workforce toward the control of Covid infection are critical. Leadership, adaptability & flexibility, critical thinking, computer savvy, communication & emotional intelligence, creativity & innovation are among the nine qualities required to flourish in any business world following the coronavirus pandemic, according to (Stephanie, 2022). Leadership, soft skills, social media, digital

technologies, artificial intelligence, cleanliness, and housekeeping abilities were listed (Browne, 2021) as necessary qualities for a career in hospitality after Covid. As a result of the pandemic, the hospitality industry has evolved and will continue to do so. The hospitality sector that has battled to recover from the outbreak will look for competent individuals to help them get back on their feet.

Table 5: Competencies

Human Relation Competencies	On the Job Competencies	Technical Competencies	Covid Competencies
People skills Integrity Professional demeanor Resourcefulness Reliability Flexibleness Lifelong learning	Team work	Computer Literacy	Digital Engagement
	Customer Centric	Equipment Handling	Communication & Emotional tolerance
	Stress Management	Organizational & Administrative	Distance Economy
	Creative	Health and safety	Critical thinking & Innovation
	Positive attitude	Basic Accounting	Cultural Competency
	Working with tools and technology	First aid	Crises management and problem solving
	Inventory Management	Maintenance procedures	Leadership

The respondents stated that Covid-19 has increased the demand for specific skills in lodging sector. These competencies will help the employees to reduce the transmission of Covid infection among themselves or to the guests. The employees of both the departments agreed on knowledge and implementation of Sop's, self-hygiene, social distancing, self-isolation, digitally sound, critical thinking, decision making qualities, and emotional intelligence

Competencies	Industry			Educators			Students		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Z-Score	Mean	Std. Deviation	Z-Score	Mean	Std. Deviation	Z-Score
Human Relation Competencies									
Professional demeanor	16.786	8.229	**0.304**	15.071	3.316	**0.237**	15.000	5.189	**0.138**
Integrity	9.643	4.986	-0.788	8.500	4.398	-1.315	9.929	4.233	-1.029
People skills	20.357	11.345	**0.535**	21.786	9.924	**1.806**	20.357	10.825	**0.561**
Resourcefulness	12.143	5.082	-0.422	12.214	4.154	-0.499	11.857	3.613	-0.672
Reliability	11.786	4.209	-0.594	11.714	3.474	-0.740	13.143	3.505	-0.326
Flexibleness	13.929	5.942	-0.060	17.857	5.447	**0.656**	15.714	3.315	**0.431**
Lifelong learning	14.643	6.344	**0.056**	12.857	3.231	-0.442	14.000	3.961	-0.072
On the Job Competencies									
Team work	14.625	7.404	**0.046**	20.400	6.906	**0.833**	15.789	7.502	**0.201**
Customer Centric	14.000	7.200	-0.040	9.605	5.476	-0.921	15.000	6.009	**0.119**
Stress Management	15.625	7.372	**0.182**	18.605	9.634	**0.411**	18.947	9.801	**0.475**
Creative thinking	12.125	3.652	-0.592	15.120	5.125	-0.298	11.053	4.588	- 0.704
Positive attitude	14.625	6.404	**0.053**	18.000	6.405	**0.523**	12.368	5.861	- 0.327
Working with tools and technology	15.000	6.405	**0.609**	10.525	5.476	**1.100**	16.316	5.229	**0.388**
Inventory Management	14.250	7.210	-0.005	8.105	3.904	-0.767	10.526	4.971	- 0.751
Technical Competencies									
Computer Literacy	15.421	6.995	**0.162**	18.372	8.845	**0.465**	18.000	6.405	**0.523**
Equipment Handling	16.316	5.229	**0.388**	11.977	7.954	**0.287**	10.525	5.476	**1.100**
Organizational & Administrative	18.947	9.658	**0.483**	15.581	8.396	**0.157**	9.605	5.476	-0.921
Health and safety	11.737	5.009	-0.509	12.442	5.708	-0.319	18.605	9.634	**0.411**
Basic Accounting	14.842	5.419	**0.103**	11.978	5.471	-0.417	20.400	6.906	**0.833**
First aid	8.526	3.821	-1.507	18.023	8.461	**0.445**	15.120	5.125	-0.298
Maintenance procedures	14.211	4.791	-0.016	11.395	5.381	-0.532	8.105	3.904	-0.767
Covid Competencies									
Digital Engagement	16.316	5.229	**0.388**	21.395	10.540	**0.681**	12.214	4.154	-0.499
Communication & Emotional tolerance	15.000	6.009	**0.120**	11.512	4.437	-0.610	15.071	3.316	**0.237**

Distance Economy	12.368	5.861	- 0.327	13.256	6.444	-0.150	7.593	4.398	-1.315
Critical thinking & Innovation	11.153	4.588	- 0.704	12.674	5.809	-0.266	11.714	3.474	-0.740
Cultural Competency	9.998	4.971	- 0.751	12.326	4.799	-0.395	12.857	3.231	-0.442
Crises management and problem solving	18.957	9.801	**0.475**	11.519	4.161	**0.649**	17.857	5.447	**0.656**
Leadership	15.789	7.502	**0.204**	16.860	5.776	**0.457**	22.010	9.924	**1.806**

Human Relation Competencies

The first factor discussed by industry, educators, and hospitality students about human relation competencies was measured through seven items. Their mean value ranged from 20.357 to 9.4643 (Industry), 21.786 to 8.500 (educators), 20.357 to 9.929 (students), and based on Z- score professional demeanor and people skills were identified as the essential competencies by all the stakeholders; however, industry professionals also identified lifelong learning as necessary. Further flexibleness was found high rated competencies through the prism of educators and students.

On the Job Competencies

The second-factor measures On the Job competencies are composed of seven items, and the mean values range from 15.625 to 12.125 (industry), 20.400 to 8.105 (educators), 18.947 to 10.526 (students). All the three stakeholders rated teamwork, stress management, and working with tools and technology as essential competencies. Industry professionals and educators further agreed on a positive attitude as critical competency, whereas students rated customer-centric as the vital competency.

Technical Competencies

The technical competencies were also measured through seven items, and their mean varies from 18.947 to 8.526 (industry), 18.372 to 11.395 (educators), 20.400 to 8.105 (students). Industry, educators, and students agreed upon computer literacy and equipment handling as the most important technical competencies required.

Industry and educators also rated administrative & organizational competencies as important, while industry and students rated basic accounting as important. Lastly, educators identified first aid competency as most important.

Covid Competencies

The Covid competencies, whose mean varies from 18.957 to 9.998 (industry), 21.395 to 11.512 (educators), 22.010 to 7.593 (students), were measured on seven items. All the three stakeholders agreed upon leadership and crises management & problem-solving competencies as most important; also, digital engagements were found significant by industry and hospitality educators. Furthermore, Communication & Emotional tolerance were rated as important by industry and students.

Top compentencics
The high rated competencies on which both the groups (Industry, Educators & Students) agreed are identified using the Z score. The reason to choose Z scores, as it takes into account the mean as well as standard deviation of the item. The top ten competencies are as follows; professional demeanor, people skills, teamwork, stress management, working with tools & technology, computer literacy, equipment handling, leadership and crises management & problem-solving

Conclusion and Implications
The paper presented an investigation on the In-demand competencies to succeed in hospitality industry. The study was carried tin the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. During the coding procedure the final themes emerged were

identified and divided into four main competencies i.e. On the Job, technical competencies and Covid competencies Further interpersonal relation competencies include people skills, Integrity, professional demeanor, resourcefulness, reliability, flexibleness, and lifelong learning. On the Job competencies includes team work, customer centric, stress management, Creative thinking, positive attitude, working with tools and technology and inventory management. Technical competencies include; computer literacy, equipment handling, organizational and administrative, basic accounting, first aid and maintenance procedure furthermore Covid competencies includes digital engagement, communication & emotional tolerance, distance economy, critical thinking and innovation, crises management & problem solving and leadership. The final outcome of this study, clarifies the requirement of prominent competencies in the industry with the agreement of industry as well as academic professionals, i.e., both the groups-academia as well as industry professionals are in consonance with the professional demeanor, people skills, teamwork, stress management, working with tools & technology, computer literacy, equipment handling, leadership and crises management & problem-solving are top level competencies required in the sector for effective lodging management operations and customer satisfaction. This outcome is based on the Z score scores as well as outcome of grounded theory analysis of qualitative data. It proves that these are the main skills which must be inculcated in the trainees, so that the effective outcome can be achieved in the lodging industry.

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