

ASSESSING KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING THE EMPLOYABILITY OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT GRADUATES

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Abstract

The educational background, work experience, and necessary abilities of recent hotel management graduates are the primary foci of this study's evaluation of the variables impacting their employability. This study aims to identify the employability factors for hotel management graduates by analyzing their degree, job experience, and essential skills. We employed a standardized questionnaire to gather quantitative data on 125 participants' credentials, internship experience, and the criteria they consider important for employment. These results demonstrate how important it is to have both academic qualifications and job experience to increase one's chances of getting a job in the hospitality industry.

Keywords: Employability, Hotel Management, Education, Internship, Skills.

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Introduction

One of the world's most populous and rapidly expanding businesses, the hospitality industry—and the hotel industry in particular—makes a substantial dent in both employment and GDP growth. Talented individuals are in great demand in this ever-changing industry, particularly in the high-end hotel market where client satisfaction is of the utmost importance. Graduates of hotel management programs are prepared to work their way up the ladder, from entry-level operational personnel to upper-level management responsibilities, thanks to their extensive theoretical and practical training. Despite the many openings in the hospitality sector, there are several obstacles to overcome before recent graduates may be confident in their ability to find work. The purpose of this research is to identify the most important aspects that graduate students' employability, with an emphasis on the qualities, abilities, and credentials sought for by hotel companies. Alignment of school curriculum with industrial demands is a crucial component affecting employability. A hotel management institute's ability to provide a well-rounded education in areas like marketing, strategic planning, customer service, financial management, human resources, and hospitality operations is vital in preparing its graduates for the job market. But since the hotel business is always changing, educational programs need to be flexible to match the market's expectations. Hotel management programs must adapt to changing consumer tastes, new technology, and industry trends by teaching students to think like industry insiders while using cutting-edge technologies and putting an emphasis on providing exceptional customer service.

One of the most important factors influencing one's employability is practical experience. Internships and other forms of practical training assist students get experience in the real world of work and close the gap between classroom learning and real-world application. Graduates from

hotel management schools who are required to complete internships or industry-based projects have a leg up when applying for jobs. As a result, they are better able to complete work, deal with difficult circumstances, and communicate with clients, all of which make them more marketable to prospective employers. The hotel sector relies heavily on strong communication and interpersonal skills due to the customer-centric nature of the work. Communicating effectively with visitors, mediating disagreements, and guaranteeing a problem-free experience for customers are all skills that successful hotel management professionals should possess. Also necessary are leadership skills and the capacity to work well with teams that include members from different backgrounds. Employers are more willing to hire and promote recent hotel management grads with high levels of emotional intelligence, solid communication skills, and leadership potential.

The degree to which graduates are technically proficient is another important component that determines their employment. Technology is becoming more important to the hotel sector for many tasks, such as managing bookings, customers, and back-office operations. Recent college grads who are well-versed in social media, data analysis, and hotel management software are in great demand. Also, understanding sustainability methods and how to run eco-friendly operations is becoming more important, especially for high-end hotels that want to appeal to eco-conscious guests. Graduates' "soft skills," like initiative, problem-solving prowess, and flexibility, are also highly valued by employers. A high-pressure setting characterized by quick situational shifts is typical of the hotel sector. Success in the professional world is often reserved for those who can roll with the punches, think critically, and solve new challenges as they arise. Additionally, prospective employers seek for applicants with a strong work ethic, professionalism, and a positive outlook on lifelong learning. A graduate's employability may also be affected by their geographic location and the size of their professional network. Job opportunities are stronger for graduates from areas with a high number of five-star hotels, tourist hotspots, or other significant hospitality centers. A student's chances of getting a job offer in the hospitality sector improve if they have established strong networks via internships or industry events.

Review of Literature

Ngoepe, Lehlogonolo et al., (2023) The purpose of the research is to identify the variables that make hospitality school grads more marketable to potential employers. The research method used in the study was a qualitative one, based on semi-structured interviews. The viewpoints and expertise of hotel line managers at four-and five-star properties in Pretoria, South Africa, were gathered via the use of a purposive judgment sample technique. Based on the data, six themes emerged. The findings point to the following factors as influencing the employability of hospitality management: (i) the workplace, (ii) hospitality schools, (iii) the skills and qualities sought after by hotel managers, (iv) graduates of the field, (v) their preparedness for the future, and (vi) HRM practices within the hospitality sector. With the world becoming more interconnected, the information economy booming, and AI and other technical innovations advancing at a rapid pace, suggestions may be of great help to educational institutions, hotel managers, students, and aspiring researchers in the field of hospitality management. Graduate employability and HEIs in the hotel industry are topics to which this article adds to the existing literature. Keeping graduates in the field, making strides in the business, and securing more stable graduate jobs all hinge on our ability to identify and address the elements that make hospitality graduates marketable. The results of this research may also be used to assess the potential of recent graduates for managerial roles in the future.

Wang, Yao-Fen et al., (2014) Students in Taiwan need to give serious thought to their career planning if they want to meet the challenges of the cutthroat hospitality business. There has been a lack of research on the factors that senior students and managers believe contribute to graduates' overall employability, even though educators in the hospitality sector have started to concentrate on closing the skills gap between graduates and industry expectations. The perspectives of senior hospitality students and managers in the field on employability in the sector are explored in this research. The significance of each trait and the level of student preparation in each skill were measured by administering questionnaires to senior students (n = 193) and managers of hospitality firms (n = 105). Based on the opinions of upper-level students and managers, students and recent graduates alike do not have faith in their own employability, especially when it comes to their competence in professional management. Lastly, some recommendations are made to help recent graduates in the hotel industry in Taiwan get jobs.

Tan, Zubaidah et al., (2016) The research team behind this study hopes to learn what stops students from majoring in hospitality from working in the field. One hundred and ten last-year diploma students from the Hotel and Tourism Management program at UiTM (Pulau Pinang) filled out the survey for this research. Regression analysis revealed a statistically significant model including job characteristics, socioeconomic position, compensation and perks, and dedication to the hospitality sector; the model accounted for 45% of the variance in dedication. According to the results, social standing and financial rewards were the only two indicators that significantly impacted the dedication of the hospitality sector. When compared to other distinct factors, social standing had the greatest impact on loyalty to the hotel sector. Despite the critical need to recruit hospitality graduates to work in the hotel industry, the industry's negative reputation has dampened graduates' enthusiasm for pursuing careers in the sector. This is particularly problematic given the industry's current staffing crisis.

Hewitt, Kelly et al., (2023) This research set out to determine how well the curriculum of different hospitality schools relate to the needs of the hospitality industry, with the ultimate goal of gauging the expectations of graduates and their readiness for careers in the field. The numeric data comes from an online survey that included 48 students in their third and fourth years of university; the qualitative data comes from five managers in the hospitality business, one from each of South Africa's hotel chains, who were interviewed in semi-structured interviews. The participation of students in work-integrated learning (WIL) is consistent across all of these categories. Considering recent events like COVID-19, we asked hotel managers to share their expectations and suggest ways that recent graduates might meet industry standards. Students' passion for a profession in hospitality might take a hit if they are led to believe that their expectations will be met. Managers in the field stressed the need of students obtaining job experience both before and throughout their education to help them set reasonable goals. To properly educate students for the actual world of healthcare, it is also important to modify existing curriculum.

Alpler, Nazanin et al., (2021) In recent years, "Employability" has become a hot subject. Evidence of its influence on organizational behavior may be found in studies on unemployment and job searches. Being employable is being able to get a job and keep it. It requires initiative and the capacity to adapt to the ever-changing nature of careers in today's volatile job market. An investigation of the moderating role of employability in the correlations between service sabotage (SS) and job insecurity (JI) is the overarching goal of this empirical study. The effect of (JI) on (SS) behavior is also quantified. This particular study's sample consisted of front-line workers from three- and four-star hotels in Cameroon. The research hypotheses were validated by the use of hierarchical regression analysis to assess the study variables. It was predicted and found in prior

work that (JI) had a favorable and substantial effect on (S.S.). Interestingly, the results showed that the link between (JI) and (S.S.) is enhanced by employability. This study's results shed light on the significance of employability and the elements that affect workers' attitudes and actions on the workplace. Contribution to theory, consequences for practice based on the data, and suggestions for further study are all detailed.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study used a descriptive research approach. This layout works well for studying and characterizing the target demographic, which in turn helps to shed light on the most important aspects influencing the employability of recent hotel management school grads.

Sample Size

The study's sample size was determined to be 125 participants.

Data Collection Method

A structured questionnaire with both open-ended and closed-ended questions as well as Likert-scale items was used to gather data. The purpose of the survey was to collect numerical information on the following:

- **Educational Background:** The responders' educational background (e.g., certificate programs, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, etc.).
- **Practical Experience:** Whether the respondents had any internships or work experience at all during their time in school or after graduation, and for how long (e.g., none, one to three months, four to six months, seven months or more).
- **Key Factors Influencing Employability:** Educational background, internship experience, technical proficiency, leadership potential, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities are some of the qualities that respondents were asked to rank in order of priority with employment.

Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistics were used to examine the survey data. Respondents' demographic and experience details were summarized using percentages and frequency distributions. The analysis of the Likert-scale questions revealed the respondents' perceptions of the most relevant aspects about their employability in the hotel business. Insights into the proportional weight of education, work experience, and soft skills in predicting the employability of hotel management graduates were revealed by the results of the data analysis.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Respondent Educational Background

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Diploma in Hotel Management	30	24%
Bachelor's Degree in Hotel Management	65	52%
Master's Degree in Hotel Management	20	16%
Certification Courses (Short-term)	10	8%

Half of those who took the survey had a bachelor's degree in hotel management, suggesting that the curriculum is well-aligned with what employers are looking for. Only a quarter have a bachelor's degree, while 16% have an advanced degree, and 8% have taken some kind of certification course. It is evident from the distribution that bachelor's degrees are the main need

for joining the sector, indicating that colleges of hotel management are generating graduates with a strong educational background.

Table 2: Practical Experience in the Hotel Industry

Years of Internship or Industry Experience	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No Internship or Experience	15	12%
1-3 Months of Internship	30	24%
4-6 Months of Internship	50	40%
7+ Months of Internship	30	24%

Many hotel management schools provide a large amount of practical exposure, as shown by most respondents (40%) who had 4 to 6 months of internship experience. A sizeable proportion (24%) had internships that lasted seven months or more, which shows that longer internships are increasingly valued for the extensive industry expertise they provide. Employers greatly like hands-on training in this field, yet a tiny percentage (12%) lacked internship experience, which might impact their employability.

Table 3: Key Factors Influencing Employability

Factor	Highly Important	Moderately Important	Slightly Important	Not Important
Relevant Educational Background	85 (68%)	30 (24%)	5 (4%)	5 (4%)
Internship/Practical Experience	90 (72%)	25 (20%)	5 (4%)	5 (4%)
Communication and Interpersonal Skills	95 (76%)	20 (16%)	5 (4%)	5 (4%)
Technical Skills (Software, Tools)	70 (56%)	40 (32%)	10 (8%)	5 (4%)
Leadership and Problem-Solving Abilities	80 (64%)	30 (24%)	10 (8%)	5 (4%)

The statistics show that several things are essential for getting a job in the hospitality sector. When it comes to getting a career in the hotel industry, the most important things are having the right kind of education (68%) and work experience (72%). Having strong communication and interpersonal skills was also highly valued (76%), highlighting their significance in professions that involve interacting with customers. While 64% place a high value on leadership and problem-solving abilities, 56% consider technical skills, such as mastery of hotel management software, to be significant. The importance of a combination of academic credentials, practical experience, and people skills for recent college grads looking for jobs in the hospitality sector is highlighted by this.

Conclusion

Factors such as relevant coursework, relevant work experience, technical proficiency, and soft skills all contribute to a hotel management graduate's employability. Graduates have much better chances of finding work if they participate in internships, take classes that are relevant to their fields of study, and work on their communication, leadership, and flexibility abilities. The

importance of being tech-savvy and having a grasp of sustainability is on the rise in the hospitality sector. Higher education programs in hotel management would do well to pay close attention to these areas so that their graduates are well-prepared to enter the field and make positive contributions to the development and prosperity of the hospitality industry.

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