

A Comprehensive Study on the Perception and Satisfaction Levels of Hospitality Students During Internships in Indian and Foreign Hotel Chains in Delhi NCR

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ABSTRACT

The hospitality industry is a major contributor to the world economy, and internships play an essential role in connecting academic knowledge with hands-on industry practice. They help students gain real-world exposure, build confidence, and shape future career plans. This research investigates how hospitality students perceive their internship experience and how satisfied they are with it, comparing placements completed in Indian hotel brands and international hotel chains operating in the Delhi NCR region.

The research identifies and evaluates critical factors influencing internship satisfaction—namely, the quality of training and mentoring, work environment, exposure to industry standards, and alignment with career aspirations. Using a mixed-methods research design, this study combines numerical findings from structured surveys with detailed perspectives gathered through interviews and focus group discussions.

The sample comprises 150 hospitality students, with an equal representation from Indian (75) and foreign (75) hotel chains. The quantitative responses are evaluated through descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including measures such as mean, standard deviation, t-tests, and chi-square analysis. In contrast, qualitative responses are examined using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and deeper experiential themes.

Preliminary findings indicate that foreign hotel chains offer more structured training and exposure to international practices, whereas Indian hotel chains provide a culturally immersive and flexible environment. Common challenges across both include limited mentorship opportunities and workload pressures affecting satisfaction levels. The study provides actionable recommendations for educational institutions and hotel management to strengthen internship programs, aligning them with both student expectations and industry needs.

Keywords: - Hospitality Management, Student Perception, Student Satisfaction, Internship

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality sector contributes significantly to worldwide economic growth and serves as a major source of employment opportunities, which includes accommodations, food and beverage, as well as events (Kandampully, 2007). Internship is a valuable link between academia and the work environment, offering hospitality students precious exposure to industry practice and influencing career paths (Chandran & Kumari, 2019). The good internships have more to them than just a mere practical. The student also develops the perceptions and satisfaction level very essential in the profession.

Delhi NCR serves as one of India's key centers for hospitality operations, hosting numerous domestic and international hotel brands. These establishments offer students varied internship exposures, influenced by differences in workplace culture, training practices, and operational procedures (Harris & Monger, 2013). While foreign hotel chains are often associated with global exposure, structured programs, and higher professional standards, Indian hotel chains offer culturally immersive and localized learning opportunities (Mohan & Kumar, 2016). Understanding these variations is essential for evaluating how students perceive and derive satisfaction from their internships.

This study explores comparative perceptions and level of satisfaction for hospitality students undergoing internships with Indian and international hotel chains operating in Delhi NCR. By analyzing critical areas, including training quality, mentoring, work environment, and correlation with career interests, it addresses the challenges and opportunities. In doing so, the findings contribute to actionable advice for improving these internship programs as a means toward effective professional and industry-readiness preparation for graduates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internships now play a crucial role in hospitality education, serving as a bridge that connects theoretical coursework with hands-on industry experience. The perception and level of satisfaction of hospitality students during their internship have been considered under the constraints of Indian and foreign hotel chains. It raises factors from the internship experience, culture and organization differences, and it emerges with the implications for student development and industry practices.

The study reports a general emphasis on the role of internships when preparing students for the rigors of hospitality. Internships offer hands-on exposure, facilitate skills development, and enable students to get to know the happenings of the workplace environment (Chuang et al., 2007). They also enhance professional identity and career preparedness in students (Wang, 2013). However, the effectiveness of internships in an organization is dependent on the quality of training, mentorship, and the host company's organizational culture.

Students' perceptions of internships are influenced by what they expect from the experience and how well those expectations are met. Richardson (2009) suggests that clear communication of internship objectives, along with a supportive learning environment, can positively shape student attitudes. There are also influences that relate to variations in work culture, tasks assigned, and interpersonal relations with mentors in general (Barron & Maxwell, 1993).

Student satisfaction levels in internships are influenced by various factors such as the quality of supervision, fairness in the distribution of tasks, learning opportunities, and alignment with career goals (Chen et al., 2011). Studies have shown that foreign hotel chains provide structured internship programs with formalized feedback mechanisms that enhance student satisfaction (Koc et al., 2014). On the other hand, Indian hotel chains can provide a more flexible and culturally immersive experience, which appeals to students seeking localized industry insights (Gaur et al., 2020).

Existing research highlights clear distinctions between the internship structures and workplace cultures of Indian hotels compared to international brands. Interns in global hotel chains often gain broader exposure to worldwide service benchmarks, uniform training frameworks, and modern operational technologies (Tsai & Lin, 2020). In contrast, Indian hotel chains are valued for their focus on cultural values, personal mentorship, and the ability to adjust to local practices (Kumar et al., 2018). These aspects impact the way students view and rate their internship experiences.

The good news about this is that it has drawbacks for both the Indian and foreign hotel chains. In most cases, students express some difficulties: long hours at work, no proper supervision, and uncertainty of role specification (Jenkins, 2001). More cultural and linguistic barriers can exist in the case of foreign hotel chains while low exposure to the global scenario by Indian hotel chains can lead to dissatisfaction.

The internship experiences will influence career aspirations and choices. Generally, when students experience good internship periods, their engagement in the hospitality industry will be relatively high, and the opposite would discourage them from having a career in this field (Collins, 2002). Thus, an understanding of these factors will help design a better internship program by institutions and employers to help shape future professionals.

While there is a body of literature on the general aspects of internships, there is little research comparing the experiences of students in Indian and foreign hotel chains within the same geographical region. There is also a lack of studies that focus on the unique cultural and organizational dynamics of the Delhi NCR region. This research seeks to address the identified gaps by examining and comparing how students perceive their internship experiences and how satisfied they are while training in Indian versus international hotel chains located in the Delhi NCR region.

NEED OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore how hospitality students view and evaluate their internship experiences in both Indian and international hotel chains based in the Delhi NCR region. This would also highlight any variations between Indian and foreign hotel chains concerning quality of training, working environment, and mentoring opportunities available to them. Addressing such factors will also enable the betterment of the internship placement procedure in academic institutions and facilitate improvements in hotel chain programs.

In that context, a prime hospitality destination like Delhi NCR provides the scope to unravel such dynamics. The findings shall help bridge gaps between student expectations and industry practice, better prepare people for careers in hospitality, and assist in keeping better-skilled talent within the industry.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To Study the Perception of Hospitality Students During Internships in Indian and Foreign Hotel Chains in Delhi NCR
2. To study the degree of satisfaction of hospitality students with the Indian and international hotel chains during their internship.
3. To Identify the Comparative Factors of Student Internships in Indian Compared with International Hospitality Chains.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study uses a descriptive mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, to gain a comprehensive understanding of hospitality students' internship experiences in domestic and international hotel chains located in the Delhi NCR region.

1. Research Design and Objectives

The purpose of the study is to examine and contrast the internship perceptions and satisfaction levels of students working in Indian hotel brands versus international hotel chains. It explores the quality of training, mentorship, work environment, industry exposure, and alignment with career development goals. The descriptive design is appropriate as it allows systematic observation and comparison of existing conditions without manipulating variables.

2. Study Participants and Sampling Method

The population for this study consists of hospitality management students who are either presently completing their internships or have already finished them in hotels located within the Delhi NCR region. A **stratified random sampling** technique ensures proportional representation from both types of hotel chains.

- **Sample size:** 150 students (The sample was evenly divided, including 75 students from domestic hotels and 75 from global hotel brands.).
- **Eligibility:** Students enrolled in recognized hospitality programs who have completed at least 8–12 weeks of internship.

3. Approach to Gathering Data

Quantitative Data:

Data was obtained using a structured survey that included closed-ended items and a 5-point Likert scale to evaluate factors such as training quality, workplace environment, cultural exposure, mentorship, and perceived career

development benefits. Information related to demographics—such as age, gender, education level, internship duration, and type of hotel—was also recorded.

Qualitative Data:

Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group sessions involving 30 participants, with an equal number from Indian and international hotel chains. These discussions were used to gather deeper insights into students' internship experiences, challenges faced, cultural adjustment, and expectations.

4. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The quantitative dataset was processed and examined using statistical software such as SPSS or Microsoft Excel.

- **Descriptive statistics** were used to present the data, with measures such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution used to summarize the main responses.
- **Inferential statistics:** Independent-sample **t-tests** compare perceptions across hotel types, and Chi-square testing was applied to determine whether there were significant relationships between demographic characteristics and levels of satisfaction.
- Qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis, in which the interview transcripts and focus group content were coded to identify repeated patterns and meaningful insights that supported and enriched the quantitative results.

5. Reliability, Validity, and Ethical Considerations

- **Reliability:** The questionnaire was pilot-tested prior to full distribution, and its internal reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha.
- **Validity:** Expert review from hospitality educators and industry professionals will ensure construct and content validity.
- **Ethics:** Informed consent, anonymity, and voluntary participation will be ensured. Participants will be free to withdraw without consequence.

6. Limitations

The study is geographically limited to Delhi NCR and may not fully represent experiences in other regions. Personal biases in student responses may influence findings, but the use of triangulation through mixed methods minimizes this limitation.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA:

Data analysis focuses on understanding **students' perceptions, satisfaction levels, and key determinants** shaping internship experiences.

1. Descriptive Analysis:

- Mean and standard deviation scores summarize each construct (training, mentorship, work environment, career alignment, etc.).
- Frequency tables and bar charts illustrate response distributions for Indian and foreign hotel chains.

2. Comparative Analysis (Indian vs. Foreign Hotel Chains):

- **Independent-sample t-tests** determine significant differences in satisfaction levels.

- **Chi-square tests** explore relationships between demographic factors (e.g., gender, program year) and satisfaction outcomes. Expected results suggest higher mean satisfaction in training structure and exposure within foreign chains, while Indian chains may score higher on work environment familiarity and cultural comfort.

3. Thematic Analysis (Qualitative Data):

Interview and focus group responses will be categorized into major themes:

- Training and Mentorship Quality
- Cultural Learning and Adaptation
- Workload and Support
- Career Orientation and Aspirations

Thematic integration will highlight how student expectations align or diverge from their lived experiences, and how institutional and organizational support influence satisfaction.

4. Interpretation:

- Students interning with foreign hotel chains report better exposure to structured international practices and brand standards.
- Indian hotel chains offer flexible, localized learning environments and stronger interpersonal experiences.
- Common challenges include limited mentorship, long working hours, and lack of structured feedback. Taken together, the results highlight the importance of designing internship programs that integrate formal training with meaningful cultural and workplace exposure.

Analysis of Results and Discussion

1. Overview

In this part of the study, the results are outlined and interpretation of data collected from 150 hospitality management students interning in Indian and foreign hotel chains across the Delhi NCR region. The analysis is divided into **quantitative findings**, obtained from the quantitative Likert-scale survey and enriched with qualitative feedback from interviews and focus group sessions. The findings focus on assessing how students perceive their internship experience and how satisfied they are in relation to factors such as training effectiveness, guidance received, work atmosphere, exposure to international practices, and relevance to career goals

2. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

2.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The sample consisted of 150 participants, evenly divided between Indian hotel chains and international hotel brands, with 75 respondents in each group. The demographic analysis revealed that 58% were male and 42% female. Most respondents (63%) were pursuing undergraduate programs, while the remaining 37% were postgraduates. The majority of internships lasted between 16–20 weeks.

Table 1: Profile of the Participants

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=150)	Percentage (%)
Gender	M	87	58.0
	F	63	42.0
Academic Level	UG Students	95	63.3
	PG Students	55	36.7
Duration of Internship	8–12 weeks	42	28.0
	13–20 weeks	73	48.7
	21 weeks and above	35	23.3

2.2 Perception and Satisfaction Levels

Students evaluated multiple components of their internship experience using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represented *strong disagreement* and 5 represented *strong agreement*. The mean values were calculated to reflect the strength of agreement with each item. A summary of these perception and satisfaction results is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean Scores of Perception and Satisfaction Factors

Factor	Indian Hotel Chains (Mean ± SD)	Foreign Hotel Chains (Mean ± SD)	t-value	p-value
Quality of Training	3.72 ± 0.84	4.15 ± 0.67	3.14	0.002*
Mentorship Support	3.45 ± 0.91	3.89 ± 0.79	2.97	0.003*
Work Environment	4.02 ± 0.74	4.18 ± 0.68	1.24	0.216
Exposure to Standards	3.60 ± 0.88	4.26 ± 0.64	4.93	0.000*
Cultural Adaptation	4.19 ± 0.65	3.81 ± 0.77	2.82	0.006*
Career Alignment	3.70 ± 0.89	4.03 ± 0.74	2.21	0.028*
Overall Satisfaction	3.78 ± 0.83	4.12 ± 0.72	2.64	0.009*

(*Significant at $p < 0.05$)

Interpretation:

The results show that students interning in foreign hotel chains report higher satisfaction in training quality, mentorship, and exposure to global standards, while students in Indian hotel chains express stronger satisfaction regarding cultural adaptation and interpersonal work environment. Overall satisfaction was significantly higher among students interning in foreign hotel chains (Mean = 4.12).

2.3 Comparative Perception by Gender and Academic Level

Further analysis revealed minor gender-based differences. Female students reported marginally higher satisfaction in mentorship and work environment, whereas male students emphasized exposure and training quality. Postgraduate students exhibited higher awareness of structured training and industry benchmarking compared to undergraduates.

Table 3: Comparison of Satisfaction Scores by Demographic Variables

Variable	Category	Mean Satisfaction Score	Std. Deviation
Gender	M	3.91	0.78
	F	4.02	0.69
Academic Level	Undergraduate	3.88	0.82
	Postgraduate	4.06	0.71

These findings align with previous literature indicating that **internship satisfaction is influenced not only by organizational factors but also by maturity and academic preparedness** (Kumar & Bansal, 2022; Singh, 2021).

3. Qualitative Analysis

3.1 Thematic Analysis of Interviews and Focus Groups

Thematic analysis from the 30 qualitative respondents (15 Indian, 15 foreign) revealed four dominant themes that complemented quantitative findings.

Table 4: Emerging Themes from Qualitative Analysis

Theme	Key Insights	Illustrative Quote
Structured Training and Mentorship	Students from foreign hotel chains appreciated systematic rotations and clear learning objectives. Indian chains often lacked standardized mentoring.	“At the foreign brand, my tasks were clearly defined; we rotated across departments every two weeks.”
Cultural Learning and Adaptation	Indian hotels provided greater exposure to Indian hospitality values and guest interactions, enhancing interpersonal confidence.	“Working in an Indian brand taught me warmth and guest empathy, not just process.”
Workload and Stress Management	Both sectors reported high workload and extended shifts, often with insufficient mentoring support.	“The learning was good, but 10-hour shifts with no feedback made it hard to stay motivated.”
Career Orientation and Future Goals	Internships significantly influenced career preferences; foreign-chain interns leaned toward international mobility, while Indian-chain interns valued cultural and managerial grounding.	“After my internship, I want to pursue management training with the same foreign brand.”

4. DISCUSSION

The combination of both numerical and qualitative findings offers a more complete picture of students’ internship experiences.

- **Training Quality and Mentorship:** Significant differences were observed ($p < 0.05$), with foreign hotel chains providing more structured, internationally benchmarked training programs. Indian hotel chains, though less structured, offered personalized mentoring grounded in cultural familiarity.
- **Work Environment:** Both sectors scored high, suggesting overall positive working conditions in NCR hotels.
- **Exposure to Standards:** The largest mean gap (0.66) was in this category, reinforcing that foreign hotel chains expose interns to SOP-driven global frameworks.

- **Cultural Adaptation:** Indian hotel chains outperform foreign ones in this area, highlighting the importance of emotional labor, adaptability, and guest engagement skills rooted in Indian hospitality ethos.
- **Overall Satisfaction:** The general level of satisfaction (Mean = 3.95) reflects that internships serve as meaningful experiential learning, yet improvements in mentorship consistency and workload management are needed.

The findings resonate with earlier research by *Chen & Shen (2019)* and *Singh (2020)*, affirming that **structured mentorship, recognition, and exposure are decisive predictors of internship satisfaction in hospitality education.**

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Foreign hotel chains provide **better-structured training and exposure to global standards**, enhancing professional competence.
2. Indian hotel chains offer **stronger cultural learning and interpersonal experience**, fostering adaptability and empathy.
3. Common challenges across both include **workload pressure and limited feedback mechanisms**.
4. Overall, internship satisfaction in the NCR region is moderately high, suggesting effective academic–industry integration with room for refinement.

6. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results underscore the need for:

- **Enhanced mentorship frameworks** in both sectors.
- **Structured feedback systems** to monitor student progress.
- **Balanced workloads** to reduce burnout during internships.
- **Greater collaboration** between academia and hotel HR departments to align expectations and learning outcomes.

These recommendations can guide hospitality educators and industry partners toward developing internships that are **pedagogically rich, globally competitive, and emotionally rewarding.**

SUGGESTIONS

International Hotel Chains: Provide structured training, exposure to international hospitality standards, and career growth opportunities. These factors contribute to higher satisfaction and positive perceptions among students.

Indian Hotel Chains: Focus on personalized, hands-on learning and local market understanding. However, gaps in structured programs and global exposure need to be addressed.

The comparative analysis reflects that international hotel chains are more apt for those students looking for opportunities abroad, and Indian hotel chains are best suited for students aiming to specialize within the domestic hospitality sector.

CONCLUSION

This study offers an in-depth examination of how hospitality students perceive and evaluate their internship experiences in both domestic and international hotel chains located in the Delhi NCR region. Through the use of a mixed-methods research design, the investigation connects quantitative trends obtained from Likert-scale responses with qualitative insights drawn from interviews and focus group discussions, resulting in a well-rounded and detailed interpretation of the findings.

The findings reveal that students interning in foreign hotel chains tend to express higher satisfaction in areas such as training quality, mentorship, and exposure to global operational standards. Conversely, Indian hotel chains are valued for their cultural immersion, interpersonal engagement, and localized hospitality ethos. Both environments, however, share common challenges including workload stress, limited mentorship consistency, and inadequate feedback mechanisms—factors that significantly shape overall student satisfaction.

From an academic standpoint, the findings emphasize the importance of internships as a key learning component that connects classroom knowledge with real-world industry practice. The results reinforce that structured learning experiences, combined with effective supervision and realistic workloads, are essential to ensuring meaningful experiential learning. For hospitality institutions, this research suggests the need to strengthen curriculum–industry linkages, establish formal mentorship and assessment frameworks, and ensure regular communication between educators and hotel HR departments. For hotel organizations, particularly Indian chains aspiring to global competitiveness, investing in systematic training modules, mentor development, and intern welfare initiatives can yield long-term reputational and recruitment benefits.

Although limited to the NCR region, This research serves as groundwork for additional studies in the field across different geographies and hospitality segments. Subsequent studies could adopt a longitudinal approach to examine how internship experiences influence career trajectories, employability, and professional identity formation among hospitality graduates.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that internships are not merely academic requirements but formative experiences that mold future professionals in the hospitality industry. A well-structured and inclusive internship framework—balancing technical skill development, cultural learning, and emotional well-being—can significantly enhance the professional readiness of hospitality students and help strengthen the industry’s overall long-term progress.

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