

**A STUDY OF WEBSITS RELATED TO HOSPITALITY INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Hospitality education is the form of training that provides educated knowledgeable talented and dynamic manpower to hospitality sector. Nowlis (1996) has stated that “hospitality education must undertake a comprehensive curriculum reform to better serve the hotel and restaurants industries on the threshold of the third millennium” and Ford and Bach (1996) have written that “the traditional skill-based focus of hospitality programmes is being challenged by the rapidly changing needs of industry for more general managerial skills and interpersonal competencies”.

The industry has certain characteristics that will influence the qualities needed by managers at all levels and thus the curriculum for hospitality graduates. Some of these features are:

- Production and delivery are inseparable, which implies high pressure (Dienhart, Geregorie and Downey, 1990) (Susskind, Borchgrevink, Brymer and Kacmar, 1990; Larsen and Bastiansen 1992; Susskind, Borchgrevink, Brymer and Kacmar, 2000);
- Customers are seen as guest, which involves a particular relationship (White and Rudall 1999; Yuan 1999; Susskind, Borchgrevink et al. 2000);
- It is a 24/7 business, which makes personal relationship difficult for employees (Brymer 1982; Krone, Tabacchi and Faber, 1989; Ross 1995);
- It involves ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of both guests and staff, which require high communication and interpersonal skills (Fritz 1988; Mallinson and Weiler 2000; Testa 2004; Baum 2006);
- Occupational and public health and safety issues exist which require specific skills (Johns 1993; Tranter 2002);
- It involves discretionary expenditure, which implies fluctuations in demand (Bull and Alcock 1993; Shi 1997; Hwang and Wilkins 2002);
- The industry has high fixed capital costs and highly volatile variable operating costs requiring diligence and prudence in the management (Abouzid 1988; Kim 1995; Nilsson, Harris et al. 2001; Mitchell 2002);

- The industry has low barriers to entry for capital and labour (Sciarini 1993; Shaban 1993; Kim 1995; Powell and Wood 1999; Nilsson, Harris et al. 2001; Christensen Hughes 2002; Mitchell 2002).

According to Ineson and Kempa (1996) identified four main skills, namely: oral and written communication skills, supervising skills (staff motivation and training), and ability to engender customer satisfaction and service skills.

Hospitality education at universities and IHM level is of great importance to fulfilling manpower needs with a quality workforce. These education institutes provide sufficient training in technological services and make perfect for Hospitality industry.

This research was constructed on the functionality of universities and Institute of hotel management websites. A questionnaire was prepared and 24 institute of hotel management & 15 universities websites are personally accessed to identify the functionality of university and IHM websites.

### **Hospitality Education in India**

Ministry of Tourism Government of India has promoted Hotel Management Programmes under Central Financial Scheme, and more than 25 universities are coming up with degree level programmes in Hotel/tourism management.

Ministry of Tourism Government of India has also running with Institutes of Hotel Management following National Council for Hotel Management & Catering Technology. Courses.

### **Review of literature**

A variety of methods can be used to evaluate websites, depending on what is being evaluated. Indeed, one of the main considerations in attempting to formulate an evaluative framework for the web is that of the differing functions of websites. However, evaluating of educational institute websites mainly belongs information provided to students. The common assessment categories used for the research evaluating website are:

- Functionality,
- Customization,
- Globalization,
- Communication

Functionality: has been used as a criterion to assess websites by many researchers. Baloğlu and Pekcan (2006) examined the websites of luxurious hotels with 45 criteria in three categories: interactivity, navigation and functionality. Using these criteria, he set 16 subcategories under 'functionality'. The research shows that the websites of luxurious hotels in Turkey are not functional at all. In their theoretical study, Lees et al. (2005) proposed that the functionality of websites is influenced by such factors as typology; transactionality; accessibility; customer type; and geographic scope. Doolin et al. (2002) assessed the websites of 26 tourism organizations according to the functionality criterion and found that the websites of the organizations were quite functional. Evett and Brown (2005) examined the effect of font types used in web pages and their functionality through a comparative theoretical study and determined what type of fonts should be used in designing functional web pages. Fang and Holsapple (2007) researched the effects of website navigation structures on functionality with seven basic features (interface, functionality, content, coordination, physical, control, customization) and found that website navigation structure affects the functionality of a web page to a great extent. Huizingh (2000) looked at 651 websites related to different fields in terms of content and design. He compared the features of the websites according to 'source', 'industry' and 'size' and came to the conclusion that the larger websites were richer and more professional in content. Karamustafa et al. (2002) searched the web pages of 241 accommodation facilities in Turkey using an evaluation form consisting of 21 criteria. The research found that accommodation facilities in Turkey were in good condition in terms of the functional features of their web pages, with such features as independent URL, email, language options and copying.

### **Customization**

Which can be defined as the feature to adapt according to personal requirements, can significantly affect web users' satisfaction (Muyllé et al., 2004). Middleton, McConnel, and Davidson (1999) proposed a model for the structure and content of a university website. In their study, content, accessibility, relevance and currency were all proposed for individual or group users. Representation, adequate promotion, innovation, satisfying users' needs and structure were proposed for institutional information needs. In an analysis of Spanish universities, a new web assessment index focused on four categories: accessibility, speed, navigability and content (Mateos, Chamorro, Miranda & Gonzales, 2001). Barnes and Vidgen (2003) revealed that redesigned websites with upgraded customization features

increased the visitors' satisfaction. Bauer and Scharl (2000) evaluated commercial, educational and non-profit organization websites in terms of content and adequacy. A scale consisting of three components – content, interactivity and navigation -was applied in the study; customization was used as sub-category under interactivity. Dervos and Psarras (2005) attempted to define criteria for academic website design and proposed a model in which an academic website must have the following features: personalization, customization, grouping and team-working, simplicity of use, modular design, and granular administration. Muylle et al. looked at the factors that affect visitors' satisfaction, and set out four basic features: layout, information, connection, and language customization.

### **Globlisation**

Meaning the ability to reach the whole world, also involves accessibility for all internet users to any website. However, owing to language barriers, it is not always possible for users to keep track of websites. Muylle et al. (2004) showed that multiple language options on websites helps increase the satisfaction of users. Susser and Ariga (2006) pointed out that websites must have language options appealing to the whole world to enable them to be comparable. Lees et al. (2005) asserted that different language options on websites can make a business 'local' or 'global'.

All organizations – commercial, educational or non-profit – want to communicate with their target group and identify their expectations and needs. Thus, communication features on websites hold great significance for those organizations. Barnes and Vidgen (2003) and Karamustafa et al. (2002) determined that communication features have become one of the features most desired by users. Baloglu and Pekcan (2006), Bauer and Scharl (2000) and Wan (2002) also used communication as a criterion under the category of interactivity in their website evaluation form.

Toro (2002) determined that the features that users are satisfied with include entertainment value, information value, interactive value, and design and usability, and that websites are supposed to satisfy all users. Barnes and Vidgen (2007) evaluated websites using a 23-item questionnaire called "Webqual". In this study, assessment questions are divided into five groups: usability, empathy, design, information and trust. Boisvert and Caron (2006) applied an evaluation form comprising 91 criteria to evaluate the websites from different fields in Canada and identified 18 essential features that websites must include. Cao, Zhang, and Seydel (2005) used an evaluation form consisting of the categories system quality;

information quality; service quality; and attractiveness, to evaluate e-trade websites. Chevalier and Bonnardel (2007) and Chevalier and Ivory (2003) proposed that the features client-oriented constraints (originality, branding usage, sales improvement, site structure and content) and user oriented constraints (aesthetics, attractive content) should be taken into account in website design. Cox and Dale (2002) stated that the characteristics ease of use; customer confidence; on-line resources; and relationship services, have a key role in determining the quality of a website.

Gullikson et al. (1999) maintained that navigation and information are important for evaluation of a website and the evaluation process must be conducted according to these features. Djajadikerta and Trireksani (2006) applied the features of technical adequacy; information quality; service ability; and web appearance, to website assessment. Iwaarden, Wiele, Ball, and Millen (2004) used Servqual analysis to measure the quality of websites and developed a 50-item evaluation form. Marquis (2002) refers to short download time; ease of navigation; minimal menu options; ease of use/structure; and multiple links to pages, as desirable website features. Marsico and Levaldi (2004) determined the point at which travel agency websites stand in the categorization by classifying the websites and assessing the sites with questionnaires. A total number of 30 sub-criteria were used under appearance; navigation; ease of search; clarity-soundness-timeliness; and satisfaction, in the evaluation. McGillis and Toms (2001) drew the conclusion in their study on university students that library websites can be evaluated according to the criteria of satisfying, easy and clear. Mummalanei (2005) studied the effect of website features on clients' attitudes toward purchases. According to the findings, the quality of design; ambience; pleasure; arousal; By the review of literature the following model is adopted from a the research paper "Kasli and Avcikurt (2008) an investigation to evaluate the websites of tourism departments of universities in Turkey"

<b>Website features Category</b>	<b>Website features elements</b>
Independence	Independent Websites For The Departments
Globalisation	Foreign Language Options
Customization	Add to Favorites, Make Homepage, Personal Themes
Functionality	Update Info, Visitor Counter, Announcements, Forum, Site Map, Search in the site, Quick Links, Visitors Log, Links to Institutions,
General Publicity	Academic Staff, Information related to departments, Publicity Film/ Brochure, Local Information
Students intended	Information of Graduated Students, Student Affairs, Academic Calendar, FAQ, Library Links, Syllabus
Communication	E-mail Addresses, Telephone Numbers of Staff, Communication Form

**Methodology**

The study is based on analytical research was confined to Institute of hotel management (IHM) and universities offering hospitality education in India. 24 IHM and 15 universities websites were evaluated. Therefore the websites of 39 educational institutions were accessed. The parameters of research questionnaire were based on “Kasli and Avcikurt (2008) an investigation to evaluate the websites of tourism departments of universities in Turkey” the model but self administered. Twenty five variables were used in the study. Before finalizing the self administered questionnaire Delphi technique was used. The website evaluation form given in Appendix 1 was used in data gathering. Results from the website evaluation form are shown in following table

**Universities websites features**

S.No.	Features	Universities
1	Independent website for department	^
2	For foreign language language	
3	Add to favorites option	
4	make home pages option	^
5	personal themes	
6	Last update information	^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^
7	Announcements	^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^
8	site maps	^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^
9	search in site	^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^
10	quick links	^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^
11	visitors log	^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^
12	link to institutions	^
13	Academic Staff	^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^
14	information about departments	^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^
15	information related to departments	
16	publicity film/Brochure	^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^
17	local information	
18	information of Graduated Students	
19	Students affairs	^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^
20	academic calendar	^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^
21	FAQ	^ ^ ^
22	library links	^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^
23	E-mail Addresses	^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^
24	telephone no. of staff	^ ^ ^ ^
25	Syllabus	^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^

**IHM websites features**

S.No.	Features	IHM
1	Independent website for department	^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^
2	For foreign language language	^^^^
3	Add to favorities opteion	
4	make home pages option	
5	personal themes	
6	Last update information	^^^^^^
7	Announcements	^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^
8	site maps	^^
9	search in site	^^^
10	quick links	^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^
11	visitors log	^^^^
12	link to institutions	^^^^^^
13	Academic Staff	^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^ ^^^^^^^^^^^^^
14	information about departments	^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^
15	information related to departments	^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^
16	publicity film/Brochure	^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^ ^^^^^
17	local information	^^^
18	information of Graduated Students	^
19	Students affairs	^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^
20	academic calendar	^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^
21	FAQ	
22	library links	^^
23	E-mail Addresses	^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^ ^^^ ^^^^^^^^^^^^^
24	telephone no. of staff	
25	Syllabus	^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^

After creating the evaluation form, the websites of selected educational institutions were accessed through the search engines and through URL address. The data collected from educational institutional websites were entered in the evaluation form and a data base is created.

**Results and discussion**

The results from the compilation of the data on general institutional features for the departments/programmes and the findings from the evaluation of the institutions’ websites are presented.

- The investigation of websites found that all the IHM has their own domain or website but in other hand the universities providing hospitality education in their campus mostly have a separate department for the same but they were not providing the

separate domain or website for the department, are giving the information in same domain through a sub link in the website and that is the part of university website.

- In another phase we found that there is no institute of hotel management and universities were providing the foreign language option in their domain or website, however only a handful of universities are providing language option in Indian context and a university providing foreign language option through Google translation.
- During the investigation the result of website evaluation shows that neither universities nor institute of hotel management were providing add to favorites option during opening of home page of the website of these educational institute
- The investigator also found that the domain or websites of selected hospitality education institute are not having the facilities or option to make homepage option.
- The websites are designed and updated by academics who are enthusiasts. The functionality of the websites is greater or lesser depending on the time the academics have and their level of knowledge. There is also a lack of co-ordination within universities. In other words, there may be a great many differences in functionality between two units belonging to the same university
- The following information is available on the websites: ‘contact’, ‘announcements’, ‘last update info.’, ‘local info’, ‘academic staff’ ‘search in site and content’
- It can be seen that the information concerning universities departments is superficial; no information is given about the departments’ activities. Most departments do not have their own URLs
- Many institutions with websites use contact forms instead of email addresses
- It is noteworthy that almost none of the websites offer functional elements such as ‘set as home page’, ‘add to favourites’, ‘search the site’, ‘site map’. All of these increase the rating of the website and make it more functional for the user.
- University and IHMs websites do not generally provide their services in a foreign language.
- Publicity information is found on the websites, but a system enabling interaction does not exist
- Audio-visual features, which are essential for commercial organizations’ websites, are not valid for university websites



### **Suggestions and recommendations**

This study was designed to analyze the content of websites belonging to academic units at universities offering hospitality education. These websites were classified according to universities and IHM

An evaluation was then conducted to find out whether differences existed between the websites with regard to the features mentioned above.

The significant differences between the content of IHMs and university websites suggest that they have differing perspectives. IHMs see themselves as businesses and their potential students as customers. On the other hand, universities do not advertise sufficiently on their sites, since there is no competition for students and their students do not provide extra financial resources. Universities need to perceive their websites as one of most important tools for communication between the university and students. They must therefore design their websites to enable a more interactive channel of communication. IHMs have a social role to give their potential students good information. They must act effectively to inform students. Universities need to change their views on web users for the reasons mentioned above. Some suggestions and implications for hospitality departments and their websites are proposed:

- Universities institute units must have their own URLs
- A professional team should be created within universities in order to design web pages. The careful design of websites enables them to be more accessible, effective and useful for users.
- Websites are also important for the scholars who use them and for the web educators who need to identify best practice as discussed by Thelwall and Harries (2004)
- Staff responsible for updating the sites should be employed and trained
- If activities are announced to groups, motivation will increase. Events held by the related unit must be advertised either through audio or visual channels
- To maintain efficient communication, there must be a contact form in addition to email addresses on the websites
- The websites must include features such as a site map or search engine to achieve effective communication with users
- Websites must be designed so as to include different language options
- Audio and visual features must be increased and the content of the websites must be made more attractive

- Hospitality departments of universities should make use of their web pages.
- Websites and other technology can be used effectively in the marketing of departments and universities

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**Appendix 1** website evaluation form

S.No.		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
1	Independent website for department																									
2	For foreign language language																									
3	Add to favorites option																									
4	make home pages option																									
5	personal themes																									
6	Last update information																									
7	Announcements																									
8	site maps																									
9	search in site																									
10	quick links																									
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17	local information																									
18	information of Graduated Students																									
19	Students affairs																									
20	acedmic calendar																									
21	FAQ																									
22	library links																									
23	E-mail Addresses																									
24	telephone no. of staff																									