CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES OF ONLINE TRAINING FOR HOSPITALITY TRAINERS

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 has made a huge impact on human life in every sphere. Hospitality sector is no different and is one of the worst affected by this pandemic worldwide. Likewise hospitality education in present circumstances faces a double challenge firstly the job retrenchment in the hospitality sector has dampened the spirit of hospitality students secondly the offline mode of education has come to a virtual standstill. In the new circumstances online education has gained significant importance. In the present circumstances it is the only way forward in the arena of hospitality education also. The hotel management institutes have started online education, this is a new arena both for the hospitality educators and students. Although online education has a long history but the sudden change has posed challenges both for the hospitality educators and students. The challenge in hospitality education is more significant as the major components of the education is skill based and so the challenge to impart the skill component through online medium is more complex. This study is aimed to determine the challenges faced by the hospitality educators in hotel management institute in the conduct of online classes.

Keywords: online education, challenges, hospitality educators.

INTRODUCTION

The advent of COVID-19 has affected all facets of human life, hospitality industry is no exception one of the sectors most badly hit by this pandemic is the hospitality sector where all activities/business have been reduced to ground zero. Presently the hospitality education has also taken a set back because the hotel industry is facing a huge retrenchment of staff, and this has given a setback to new recruitment. The job offers to the passing out students are at a standstill and most of the hotels have also cancelled appointment letter where as many others have put the appointment letters in waiting.

Due to COVID-19 all education institutes have been closed till further order. Online education is the only mode through which Training/education can be imparted to the students. The expansive nature of the Internet and the accessibility of technology have generated a surge in the demand for web based teaching and learning. (Chaney, 2010) Distance learning is a rapidly expanding environment which allows users the flexibility of operating outside of the constraints of time and place (Chaney, 2010). Online learning can be defined as "learning that takes place partially or entirely over the Internet" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Online learning is now appealing to a wide range of learners and is becoming more popular from elementary schools to high schools and higher education. This paper examines the potential challenges of online learning.

Imparting education through online medium is a great challenge especially in the hotel management sector as most of components are skill based and imparting these skills through online medium is a challenge. Other impediments to online education are net connectivity, online infrastructure, electronic equipments and other difficulties like the inability to ensure the attention of the participants. Since presently this is the only medium of instructions and difficulties are being faced by both the trainers as well as the participants in this mode of education. In this research a study has been undertaken to find out the challenges faced especially by the hospitality trainers while imparting education and specifically the skill based components of hospitality education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The development of online courses in higher education has not happened overnight. In a study conducted by (Parsad, Lewis, & Tice, 2008) it was found that 68% of the student favour online courses due to flexible schedules. 67% of the students favoured online classes because otherwise it would not have been possible for them to get education in the normal classes. 45% of the students favoured online classes because it increased student enrolment. If we take a look at the history of online education the advent of World Wide Web (www) in 1991 proved to be a milestone in the rapid expansion and growth of online education.

The COVID-19 crisis has disrupted the offline education in hospitality sector and training sector in a big way (Dr. Vinay Rana, 2020). This sudden and almost forced immersion of learners and teachers into virtual learning has made a big impact on hospitality education. The immediate impact of COVID-19 pandemic on hotel management institutes in India has been that bearing a very few institutes and universities most have not been able to complete the examination due to the lockdown. The final year students in the hotel management institutes have been at the receiving end as the recruitment process and job offers from different hotels currently stands jeopardised.

As rightly pointed out by (Dr. Vinay Rana,2020) the biggest challenge for the hotel management institutes is to conduct the theory and practical classes by maintaining social distancing in the available infrastructure. This New norm has put-up a new challenge to conduct academic activity in the available infrastructure. The hospitality educators have to find a solution to this problem. Presently the NCHMCT and its affiliated institutes have started online theory classes for B.Sc. second year both Batches and third year and M.Sc. semester III which have commenced from 10th August, 2020. The institutes have been asked to prepare their own time-table accordingly (NCHMCT, http://nchm.nic.in/).

According to (Bates, T. 2011) Systematic barriers to online and distance education include faculty resistance and lack of sufficient training in this field. Other barriers according to (Bates, T. 2011) in this field are limited institutional and instructional goals, failure to provide adequate funds and requisite student mobility. However, in the present circumstances the only way forward is to adapt to the new circumstances as fast as possible.

(Van Der Werf, M., & Sabatier, G., 2009) has rightly quoted **"**A fundamental transformation in the way students view higher education is well underway. While some public colleges and universities still cling to the traditional model of education, those who want to keep pace with the rapidly expanding group of for-profit educational institutions must adapt quickly, valuing student convenience as they increase hybrid class schedules, including strong offerings of online learning.**"**

Obviously artificial intelligence is the first step, Technology is changing who we are and education institutes will now have to digitalise class rooms and stream line internal processes which is the current need of the hour. Also the trend of constant change in the hospitality industries makes it

essential that people practice lifelong learning. According to an oxford university survey about 47% of total US employment will be computerised over the next two decades, which will require people to acquire new skills to remain employable.

According to (Bold, M., Chenoweth, L., Garimella, N., 2010) Distance learning is the new player in a global context: the right to education. Distance learning is the route to increasing access to education and has resulted in mega universities, open universities, ranch campuses by foreign institutions operating in a host country or in partnership with a local university and cross-border education. The Indian hospitality education industry has to take a clue and brace the upcoming situation.

The online learning environment allows educators and students to exchange ideas and information, work together on projects, around the clock, from anywhere in the world, using multiple communication modes. Given the advantages and resources of this rich learning environment, the traditional class room can be changed to meet the new challenges (Instructional Strategies for Online Courses. 2011). However, teachers role in online education has not been extensively examined.

(Wallace, R. 2003) states that teachers have crucial role in facilitating discussion providing direct instructions and giving feedback to the students. In addition (Wallace, R. 2003) have also raised several serious questions for future research such as investigating whether an online learning community has any direct impact on students learning outcomes.(Wallace, R. 2003) have also raised the importance of the presence of a teacher in online program as immediate feedback and responses from instructors are critical to students learning. So the hospitality educators in hotel management institutes have to learn these new online techniques which will be crucial for the success of online hospitality education.

Considering that hospitality education curriculum has a high degree of practical component a blended model comprising of both online education and traditional class room based mode will have to be used. According to (Dr. Vinay Rana, 2020) online learning model involves synchronous learning which is real time interaction between student and teachers and asynchronous learning in which the pace of the study is managed as per the pace of the students through recorded audio video content image message board etc.

Thus a more practical approach in the hospitality sector could be that the theory portion of the syllabus could be conducted through online classes and the practical classes could be done in offline classes followed with physical distancing norm. Thus future success of hospitality education will be based on well balanced and distinctly identified portfolios for offline classes and online classes. These blended models can reap benefits for both the students as well as the hospitality education.

The faculty in hospitality education also has a big challenge to address the present demand and formulate strategies and methods by which the gap between offline education and the online education can be met. The future efficacy the online education will be determined by the hospitality industry when the students who have taken education in the offline system will be placed for actual performance in the hospitality industry.

1. OBJECTIVES

- To find out whether the hotel management faculty members have the necessary equipments and infrastructure to conduct the online classes.

- To find out whether internet connectivity is affecting the classes.

- To find out the technical expertise of hotel management faculty in preparing PPTs and videos for online classes.
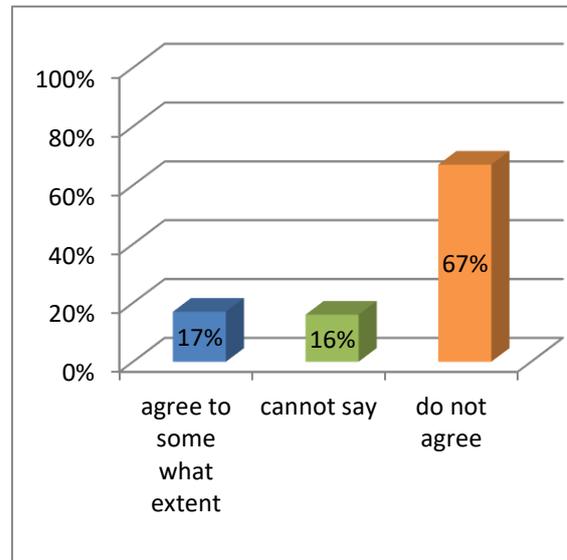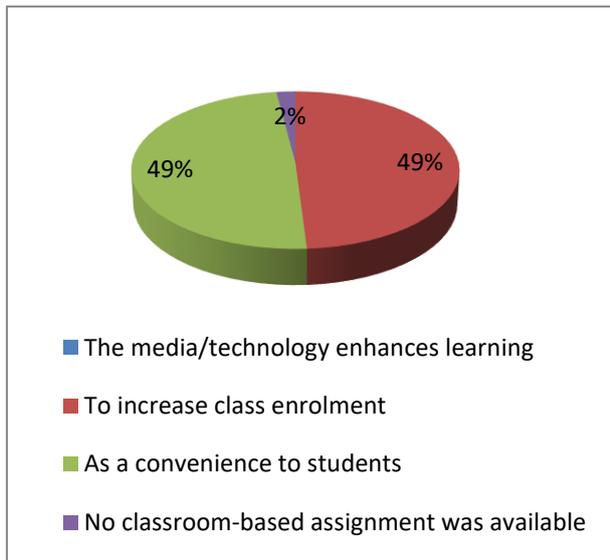
2.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the secondary data available in the net, magazines and other sources on online courses. Based on the objectives of the study a questionnaire was drafted which has been administered to the faculties of hotel management colleges. Based on the analysis of the responses of the questionnaire which have been administered to about fifty faculty members of the different hotel management colleges in India, the analysis of the data has been carried out. The analysis of the data has been put forth by way of pie charts and Cylinder charts and bar diagrams. The analysis is as follows.

Observations based on the questionnaire which has been drafted and administered to fifty faculty members of different hotel management colleges. The following pie charts and cylinder charts have been made on the bases on the responses received on the questionnaire.
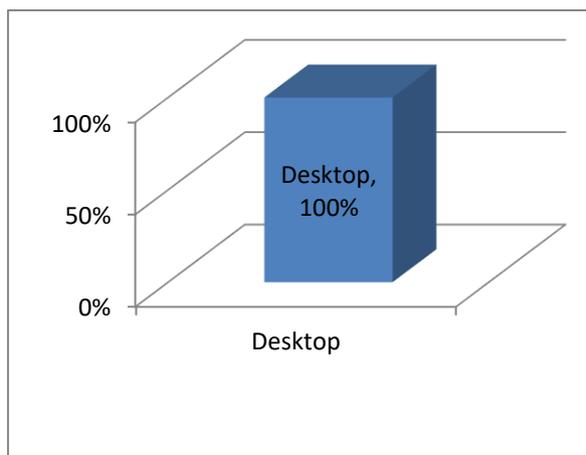
4.1 Observations based on the responses received on the questionnaire which has been drafted and administered to fifty faculty members of different hotel management colleges.

1. Primary reason in your opinion for conduct of online classes.

- The media/technology enhances learning
- To increase class enrolment
- As a convenience to students
- No classroom-based assignment was available

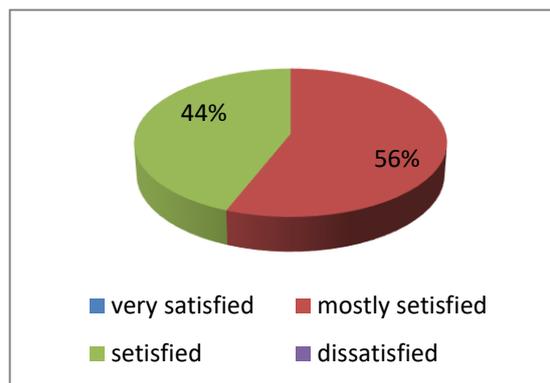2. Distance education teaching is easier than offline teaching.

- 49% of the respondents have agreed that online classes are a convenience to the students.
- 49% of the respondents have agreed that online classes were conducted as no class room based assignment was available.
- 2% of the respondents have agreed that online classes enhance learning.
- 0% of the respondents agreed that online classes are conducted to increase class enrolment.

- 67% of the respondents do not agree that distance education teaching is easier than offline teaching.

- 17% of the respondents agreed to some extent that distance education teaching is easier than offline learning.

- 16% of the respondents cannot say whether distance education teaching is easier than offline learning.

3. Most preferred gadget for online classes

- 100% of the respondents responded that desktop/laptop was the most favoured gadget for online classes.

5. What extra tools and equipment do you require other than what you are presently having/using for conduct of online class?

Special Cabin	8	16%
Digital attendance class	16	32%
Digital whiteboard	16	32%
Large touch screen	5	10%
Webcam with mice	5	10%

- 32% of the respondents wanted digital white board for conduct of online classes.
- 32% of the respondents wanted digital attendance as extra tool for the conduct of online classes.
- 16% of the respondents wanted special cabin as a special tool for the conduct of online classes.
- 10% of the respondents wanted touch screen as an extra tool for the conduct of online classes.
- 10% of the respondents wanted web camera with mike as extra tool for conduct of online classes.

4. How satisfied are you with the overall reliability of technology for online class?

- 56% of the respondents were mostly satisfied with the overall reliability of technology for online classes.

- 44% of the respondents were satisfied with the overall reliability of technology for online classes.

- 0% of the respondents were very satisfied with the overall reliability of technology for online classes.

- 0% of the respondents were very dissatisfied with the overall reliability of technology for online classes.

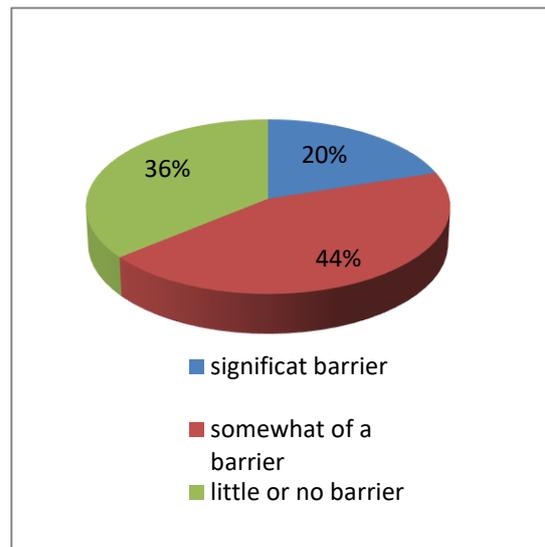6. To what extent connectivity is a barrier in conducting classes.
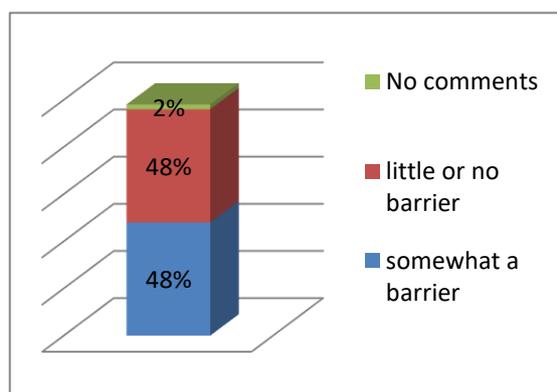
- 48% of the respondents responded that connectivity is little or no barrier in the conduct of online classes.

- 48% of the respondents responded that connectivity is somewhat barrier in the conduct of online classes.

- 2% of the respondents did not give any comments.

7. How would you rate your technological skills as a barrier to conduct online class?
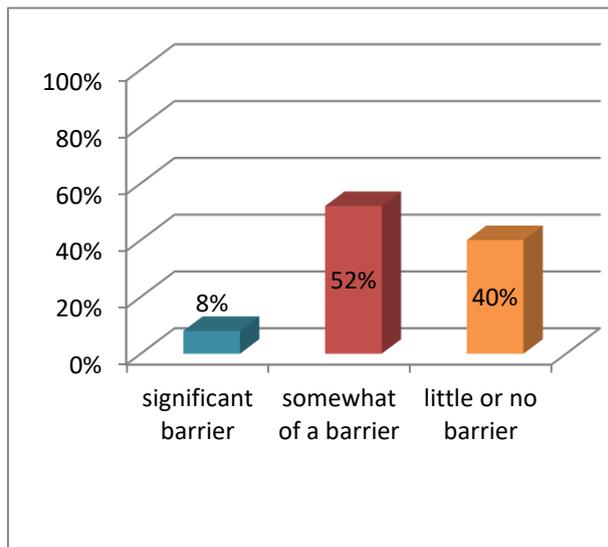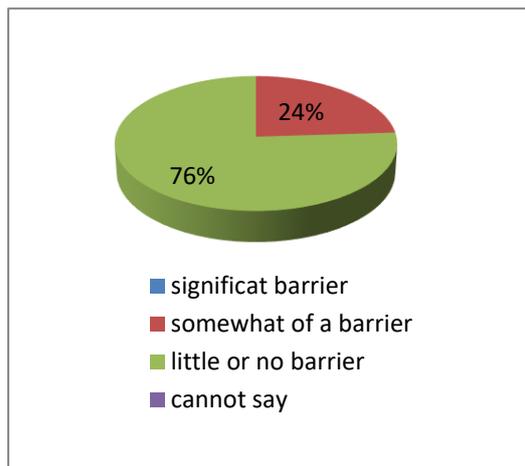
8. To what extent is technological support a barrier in the conduct of online class.

- 52% of the respondents responded that technological skill is somewhat of a barrier in the conduct of online classes.

- 40% of the respondents responded that their technological skills were little or no barrier in the conduct of online classes.

- 8% of the respondents responded that their technological skills are a barrier in the conduct of online classes.
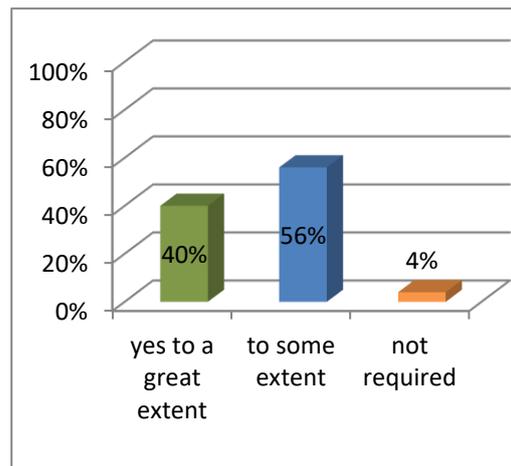
- 44% of the respondents responded that technological support was somewhat of a barrier in the conduct of online classes.

- 36% of the respondents responded that technological support was a little or no barrier in the conduct of online classes.

- 20% of the respondents responded that technological support was a significant barrier in the conduct of online classes.

9. In your opinion is the size of a class a barrier in the conduct of online class.

10. Need for training for technical expertise to conduct online class.

- 76% of the respondents responded that the size of the class was little or no barrier in the conduct of online classes.

- 24% of the respondents responded that the size of the class was somewhat of a barrier in the conduct of online class.
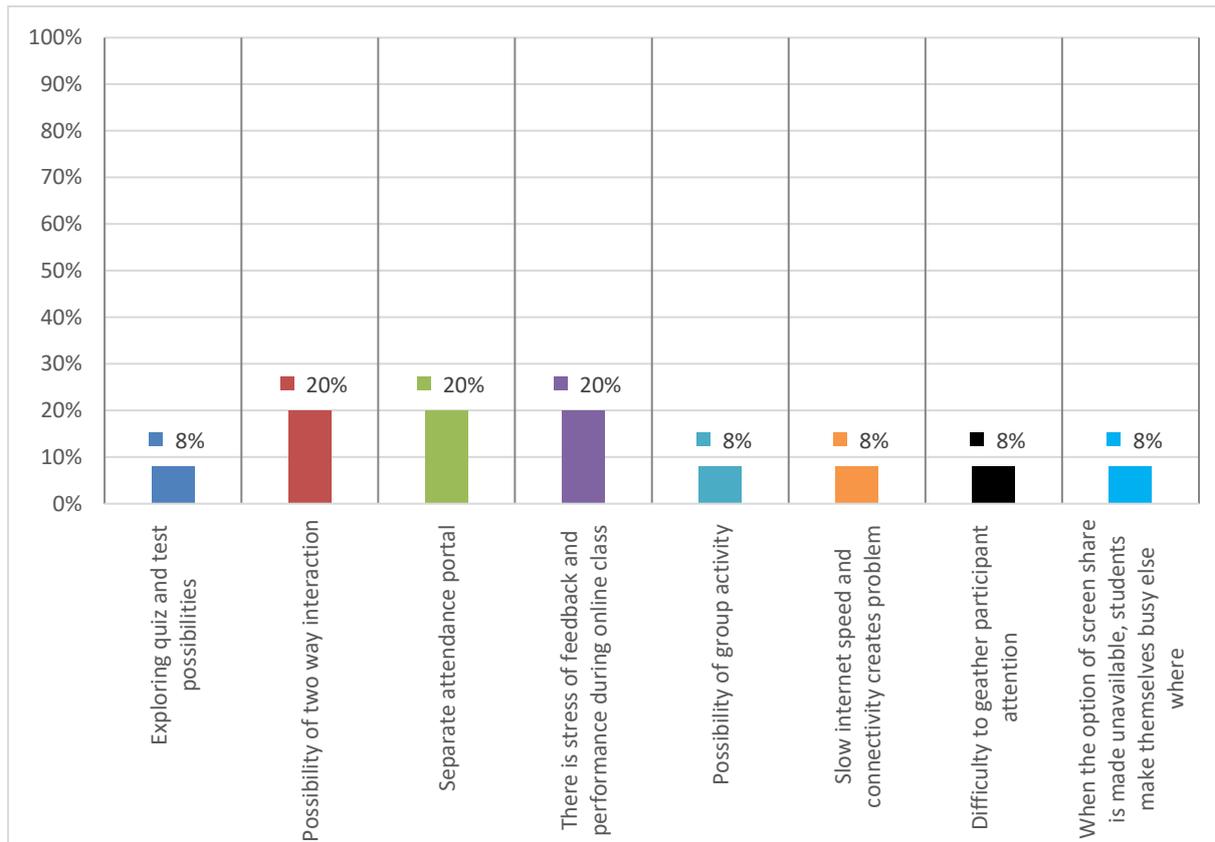
- 0% of the respondents responded that the size of

- 56% of the respondents responded that the need for training for technical expertise to conduct online class was required to some extent.

- 40% of the respondents responded that the need for training for technical expertise to conduct online class was to a great extent.

the class was a significant barrier in the conduct of online class.

- 0% of the respondents responded as cannot say that size of the class is a barrier in the conduct of online class.

- 4% of the respondents responded that there was no need for training for technical expertise to conduct online training.

11. Any other suggestion/feedback for online training.

- 20% of the respondents suggested for a two way communication during the conduct of online class.
- 20% of the respondents suggested for a separate attendance portal for online classes.
- 20% of the respondents accepted that they felt stress due to feedback and fear of performance during online class.
- 8% of the respondents felt that it was a difficult to get the attention of participants during online class.
- 8% of the respondents suggested that slow internet and connectivity creates problem during online class.
- 8% of the respondents suggested for provision of group activity during online class.
- 8% of the respondents suggested for quiz and tests options during online classes.
- 8% of the respondents suggested that when the options of screen share are made available the students, they make themselves busy elsewhere.

3. RESULT ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Based on the analysis of the responses of questionnaire the following findings have been made.

- 49% of the respondents have agreed that online classes are a convenience to the students. 49% of the respondents have agreed that online classes were conducted as no class room based assignment was available. Only 2% of the respondents have agreed that online classes enhance learning. No respondents agreed that online classes is conducted to increase class enrolment.

- A majority 67% of the respondents do not agree that distance education teaching is easier than offline teaching. 17% of the respondents agreed to some extends that distance education teaching is easier than offline learning. 16% of the respondents cannot say whether distance education teaching is easier than offline learning.

- 100% of the respondents responded that desktop/laptop was the most favoured gadget for online classes.

- A majority 56% of the respondents were mostly satisfied with the overall reliability of technology for online classes.44% of the respondents were satisfied with the overall reliability of technology for online classes. 0% of the respondents were very satisfied with the overall reliability of technology for online classes.0% of the respondents were very dissatisfied with the overall reliability of technology for online classes.

- 32% of the respondents wanted digital white board for conduct of online classes. 32% of the respondents wanted digital attendance as extra tool for the conduct of online classes. 16% of the respondents wanted special cabin as a special tool for the conduct of online classes. 10% of the respondents wanted touch screen as an extra tool for the conduct of online classes. 10% of the respondents wanted web camera with mike as extra tool for conduct of online classes.

- 48% of the respondents responded that connectivity is little or the no barrier conduct of online classes. 48% of the respondents responded that connectivity is somewhat barrier in the conduct of online classes. 2% of the respondents did not give any comments.

- A majority 52% of the respondents responded that technological skill is somewhat of a barrier in the conduct of online classes. 40% of the respondents responded that their technological skills were little or no barrier in the conduct of online classes. 8% of the respondents responded that their technological skills are a barrier in the conduct of online classes.

- 44% of the respondents responded that technological support was somewhat of a barrier in the conduct of online classes. 36% of the respondents responded that technological support was a little or no barrier in the conduct of online classes. 20% of the respondents responded that technological support was a significant barrier in the conduct of online classes.

- A majority 76% of the respondents responded that the size of the class was little or no barrier in the conduct of online classes. 24% of the respondents responded that the size of the class was somewhat of a barrier in the conduct of online class. 0% of the respondents responded that the size of the class was a significant barrier in the conduct of online class. 0% of the respondents responded as cannot say that size of the class is a barrier in the conduct of online class.

- 56% of the respondents responded that the need for training for technical expertise to conduct online class was required to some extent. 40% of the respondents responded that the need for training for technical expertise to conduct online class was to a great extent. 4% of the respondents responded that there was no need for training for technical expertise to conduct online training.

- 20% of the respondents suggested for a two way communication during the conduct of online class. 20% of the respondents suggested for a separate attendance portal for online classes. 20% of the respondents accepted that they felt stress due to feedback and fear of performance during online class. 8% of the respondents felt that it was a difficult to get the attention of participants during online class. 8% of the respondents suggested that slow internet and connectivity creates problem during online class. 8% of the respondents suggested for provision of group activity during online class. 8% of the respondents suggested for quiz and tests options during online classes. 8% of the respondents suggested that when the options of screen share are made available the students make themselves busy elsewhere.

4. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the detailed analysis of the responses received from the questionnaire administered to faculty of hotel management colleges to find out whether the faculty have the necessary equipments, net connectivity and requisite expertise to conduct the online classes. The following suggestions and recommendations are made. Firstly majority of the faculty feel that online education is not easier than offline education. Majority of the faculty members also feel the need for some kind of training to upgrade their technical skills to conduct online training. Majority of the hospitality trainer have also expressed the need for better connectivity to conduct online classes.

The faculty members have also suggested for the need of a separate attendance portal for online classes. Many hospitality trainers also feel a need for two way communication during the online class. Many faculty members also feel stressed due to the feedback and fear of performance during online classes. Other barrier to online learning as felt by the hospitality trainers was lack of interest amongst students and inability to carry out group activity and exercises during online classes. Some of the faculty members also felt the need for quiz and test during the conduct of online classes. The other equipments required for the conduct of online classes by majority hospitality trainer was digital attendance along with digital white boards. Some of the faculty members also expressed the need for special cabins large touch screens and web camera with mike to conduct online classes.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the detailed analysis of the responses carried out the following conclusions have been arrived at. Majority of the respondents have stated that online classes have been conducted as a convenience to students and because no class room based assignment was available. A majority 67% of the respondents do not agree that online teaching is easier than offline teaching. The most preferred gadget which was agreed by almost 100% of the respondents to carry out the online classes was a desktop/laptop. A majority 56% of the respondents were satisfied with the overall reliability of technology and another 44% were satisfied with the overall reliability of the technology for the conduct of online classes. A majority of the respondents were also satisfied with the connectivity during the online classes. Majority of the hospitality trainers felt that the technical skills where somewhat of a barrier in the conduct of online classes. Majority of the respondents also felt the need for some kind of a training to enhance their technical skills for the conduct of online classes. Lack of interest among students and inability to get their attention during online class where some of the barrier to online training.

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Questionnaire

1. Name of the Faculty

2. What according to you is the primary reason for conducting online class?

   o   The media/technology enhances learning

   o   To increase class enrolment

   o   As a convenience to students

   o   No classroom-based assignment was available

3. Distance education teaching is easier than offline teaching?

   o   agree

   o   agree to some extents

   o   cannot say

   o   Do not agree

4. Which of the following is your most preferred gadgets for online classes?

   o   Mobile

   o   Desktop/Laptop

   o   Other

5. How satisfied are you with the overall reliability of the technology used in your online class?

   o   Very Satisfied

   o   Mostly Satisfied

   o   Satisfied

   o   Dissatisfied

6. Are there any tools which you would like to use in the online class but which you do not have at yourinstitute? Please let us know by listing them here.

7. To what extent is connectivity a barrier to the implementation of effective online education?

   Significant barrier   Somewhat of a barrier   Little or no barrier   Do not know

8. How would you rate your technological skills as a barrier to the conduct of your online classes?

   Significant barrier   Somewhat of a barrier   Little or no barrier   Do not know

9. To what extent would you rate technological support as a barrier in the conduct of online class?

Significant barrier   Somewhat of a barrier   Little or no barrier   Do not know

10. To what extent would you rate the size of the class as a barrier to the conduct of online class?

Significant barrier   Somewhat of a barrier   Little or no barrier   Do not know

11. Do you feel the need of training for getting technical expertise to conduct online class?

    o Yes to a great extent

    o To some extent

    o Cannot say

    o Not required

12. Is there anything else you would like to tell about online training?

(Suggestions, complaints, compliments, ideas or improvement?) Please tell us now!