

Unraveling the Essence of Entrepreneurship Education in Hospitality and Tourism : A Qualitative Exploration of Indian Entrepreneurs' Insights

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Abstract

Purpose : This study's main goals were to obtain a thorough understanding of the experiences of hospitality and tourism (H&T) entrepreneurs and to learn more about their perspectives on the “what” and “how” of entrepreneurial education and how to use it to provide H&T students with pertinent entrepreneurial knowledge.

Methods : This study project investigated the viewpoints of H&T entrepreneurs in India using qualitative interviews. We carried out a thematic analysis of the collected data, producing insightful results that provide practical recommendations and a framework for improving entrepreneurial education in the field of H&T.

Key Findings : The results emphasized the significance of developing students' critical thinking and creative thinking skills through the use of up-to-date entrepreneurship content and a strong action-based learning-centric pedagogical approach, providing opportunities for in-depth self-exploration, and developing a thorough understanding of the tourism sector in order to prepare future entrepreneurs for their roles effectively.

Implications : This study offered the institutions in India a thorough framework based on a grounded theory approach to help them construct and create a course specifically focused on H&T-centric entrepreneurial education.

Originality Value : This study established a novel approach by conducting a qualitative inquiry into the fundamental components of entrepreneurship education in the dynamic hospitality and tourist sector of India. By directly capturing the distinct insights of Indian entrepreneurs, it provided new insights and closed a significant gap in the body of current research.

Keywords : entrepreneurship, education, India, hospitality, tourism

JEL Classification Codes : M13, I23, L83, Z32

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Many aspiring and early-stage entrepreneurs are intrigued by the prospects in the Indian hospitality and tourist (H&T) industry. In India, in particular, the sector's appeal stems from strong demand, supportive policies, and a variety of attractions (Bandyopadhyay, 2022; Shukla et al., 2023). For instance, the contributions from medical, rural, recreational, regional, and culinary tourism are predicted to reach \$150 billion by FY 2027, which is twice as much as they did in FY 2020 (\$75 billion). The Indian government is also promoting inbound tourism. In particular, under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme (SDS), the Indian government has sanctioned/approved projects worth \$ 863.60 million (India Brand Equity Foundation, 2022). Notwithstanding the appeal of India's tourism industry, enterprises providing food services (such as food trucks, theme restaurants, hotels, and lodging/accommodation facilities, including homestays) have a tonne of potential for entrepreneurship.

The field of entrepreneurship education has made great strides in light of the current patterns in the rise of startups and entrepreneurial endeavors (Kallmuenzer et al., 2019). In this context, the necessity of a well-crafted entrepreneurship education course or program for the H&T industry becomes paramount (Deale, 2016; Kaur & Arora, 2020; Kumar & Kumra, 2021; Kumar et al., 2023). Jones and English (2004) conceptualized entrepreneurship education as the process of providing individuals with the ability to recognize commercial opportunities and the insight, self-esteem, knowledge, and skills to act on them. It includes instruction in opportunity recognition, commercializing a concept, marshaling resources in the face of risk, and initiating a business venture. We have suggested that, despite the growing attention given to H&T entrepreneurship, the existing entrepreneurship courses and subjects in the H&T curriculum are likely poorly planned and constructed, making them incoherent with the prospects and demands of the H&T business (Deal, 2016; Horng et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2023). Additionally, experts have called for methodologically rigorous studies that could provide deeper insights into the various crucial aspects of education that could enhance entrepreneurial opportunities in various H&T areas, given the significance of striking a balance between “academics” and “practicals” and “theory” and “action” in H&T entrepreneurship education (Ayeh et al., 2023; Ratten, 2020; Ratten & Usmanij, 2021; Ramaprasad et al., 2022; Thirumalesh Madanaguli et al., 2021). Accordingly, the questions of “what” entrepreneurship should be taught and “how” entrepreneurship can best be taught to students are still largely unanswered in the domain of H&T.

To better understand H&T entrepreneurship education and learn more about “what” entrepreneurial content, pedagogy, and coursework would be beneficial to H&T students hoping to become future entrepreneurs, we investigated the perspectives, experiences, and perceptions of Indian H&T entrepreneurs. In the process, we developed a strong framework for H&T entrepreneurship education that may be applicable to all H&T students. To better understand the role that formal entrepreneurial education could play in assisting students who aspire to pursue H&T-related entrepreneurial opportunities, we specifically wanted to investigate the perspectives of H&T entrepreneurs.

Consequently, the following inquiries were investigated by our research:

- What content, courses, and experiences do practicing hospitality and tourism entrepreneurs believe are important for H&T students who wish to start their businesses?
- How do practicing entrepreneurs believe entrepreneurship in H&T should be taught?
- It is anticipated that the results would provide more understanding of how formal entrepreneurial education could benefit students who want to pursue H&T-related entrepreneurship.

Review of Literature

Entrepreneurship Education Research in Hospitality and Tourism

Through the efficient dissemination of current and relevant knowledge, the enhancement of critical skills and competencies, and the provision of chances for professional growth, education, both elementary and advanced, is crucial in boosting students' employability. Experts, however, believe that the traditional education system and approach, more often than not, fall short of delivering core and specific employability skills and also contextual skills like critical thinking capabilities, logical reasoning, pattern recognition, leadership, and management skills to students that facilitates them to succeed in their respective professions (Sarkar & George, 2019). In fact, experts have called for radical changes to hospitality education curricula in order to not only elicit effective learning experiences among the students but also to facilitate creativity, innovation, employability, and job creation avenues in this particular domain (Catrett, 2018; George, 2017; Goh & Okumus, 2020; Lashley, 2018). This is because students are ill-prepared for the workforce, lack confidence in general, and have a clear mismatch between industry and academic expectations. In light of this, lawmakers, scholars, and business professionals have highlighted the critical role that academic institutions play in bringing entrepreneurship to all educational levels through their curricula (Lackéus, 2016). Accordingly, the adoption of entrepreneurship education programs by academic universities and higher education institutions across the world has witnessed an exponential rise in the past few decades (Nabi et al., 2017). Despite the evidence supporting the necessity of entrepreneurship education, there has been conflicting empirical research on the effectiveness of this type of education in generating successful entrepreneurial outcomes (e.g., Maritz, 2017; Nabi et al., 2017). Thus, there is still a conceptual problem regarding the definition of entrepreneurship education (i.e., What is entrepreneurship education?), its goals (i.e., What does entrepreneurship education accomplish?), and its constituent parts (i.e., What should entrepreneurship education consist of?).

The literature that is currently available in the field of entrepreneurship also suggests that entrepreneurship education is “context-specific.” For instance, a variety of establishments and organizations, such as private businesses, training and development academies, undergraduate and graduate schools, and so on, provide entrepreneurship education programs. For example, additional entrepreneurship education programs should be contextual or tailored to various regions; categories of entrepreneurship; business and non-business fields; national, local, or international contexts; diversity of stakeholders (students, teachers, and gender); government initiatives and policies; and pedagogy and teaching methodology (i.e., theory centric and practice centric). One might also wonder if being an H&T entrepreneur is distinct from any other entrepreneur from any other kind of business. It can be argued that the H&T domain is predominantly experiential, and the customers and tourists are involved in both the production and consumption of H&T products and services. This feature means that the H&T industry can affect customers' and visitors' experiences in a way that goes well beyond any one entrepreneur's own actions. Delivering entrepreneurship education through appropriate and relevant teaching-learning processes requires diverse resources, skill sets, and delivery systems, depending on the situation (Deale 2016). Such contextualization is expected to influence entrepreneurship education programs' objectives and outcomes specific to H&T. Therefore, experts emphasize the need for an additional qualitative study to understand the H&T entrepreneurs better, and they note that the finer points of H&T entrepreneurial education seem to be receiving less attention (Deale, 2016).

In a unique study, Deale (2016) used a qualitative approach and an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to explore the opinions and perspectives of 12 small H&T business owners operating in North Carolina, USA, about entrepreneurship education and how formal education contributed to the potential success of entrepreneurial endeavors. In particular, Deale's study elicited responses on the courses perceived by the

entrepreneurs as important and the various mechanisms and methods that educators can adopt to teach entrepreneurship effectively to the H&T students desirous of starting their own H&T business. Entrepreneurs emphasized the importance of management subjects (e.g., finance, marketing, revenue management, and book-keeping) in entrepreneurship courses that would offer deep insights on the possible financial, marketing, and resource management challenges that students are expected to face in the real world and accordingly train and prepare them for countering any such issues. Entrepreneurs also stressed the need for entrepreneurship education that is structured around a pedagogy that delivers hands-on, real-world experiences to the H&T students through robustly designed role-plays, active interactions with other entrepreneurs in the field, “shadow” learning through dedicated mentors, and paid or unpaid internships and industrial pieces of training. Entrepreneurs expressed their opinion that there was a need for entrepreneurship education programs that improved the communication skills of those enrolled in them (inter and intrapersonal communication is important for customer service and management), networking abilities, resilience, creativity, and the ability to manage emotions.

Methods and Procedures

In order to obtain a deeper understanding of the perspectives, opinions, and experiences of each H&T entrepreneur, we used the IPA (Reid et al., 2005) as the primary methodological framework for this study. This allowed us to determine the essential components of a comprehensive program for H&T entrepreneurship education as well as the entrepreneurial competencies that are considered essential for H&T aspirants. A few criteria helped us select the knowledgeable responders for the qualitative stage. For example, the participants were required to be actively engaged in H&T-related entrepreneurship at the time of the survey. It is expected that they were previously exposed to formal H&T education, such as diplomas, graduates, post-graduate degrees, and above. Additionally, their respective enterprises should have been operational for the preceding 10 years, at least. Last, the respondents should have demonstrated interest in participating in this research.

A snowballing technique was employed to find and invite possible experts for this research project, which is akin to Deale's (2016) sampling plan. Through personal connections and information, the investigator first went up to three H&T entrepreneurs. We received 31 more H&T entrepreneurs/potential respondents from these experts/respondents. A total of 31 H&T entrepreneurs signed up for the interviews, and 29 of them decided to take part. Nevertheless, five of the 29 candidates did not fit the requirements for the age of business (one was less than 5 years into operations) or education (one did not have a formal education in H&T but was moving from other domains to H&T). The 24 active H&T entrepreneurs who expressed interest in participating in this study were contacted to set up the interviews (see Table 1).

Table 1. Entrepreneur Profile

Type of Business	Location	Gender	Age (Years)	Education in H&T	Age of Business (Years)	Employees
1. Destination Management	New Delhi	Male	52	Graduate	25	25–50
2. Destination Management	New Delhi	Male	50	Graduate	24	25–50
3. Hotel, Leisure, and Restaurant Management	Lucknow	Female	42	Graduate	13	10–25
4. Hotel, Leisure, and Restaurant Management	Chennai	Male	50	Graduate	22	10–25
5. Micro-Brewery	New Delhi	Male	53	Graduate	19	10–25
6. Micro-Brewery	Bengaluru	Male	38	Post-Graduate	10	10–25

7. Food and Beverages	Gurugram	Female	42	Post-Graduate	13	10–25
8. Destination Management	Bengaluru	Female	45	Post-Graduate	15	25–50
9. Micro-Brewery	Hyderabad	Male	46	Graduate	20	10–25
10. Hotel, Leisure, and Restaurant Management	Chandigarh	Male	45	Post-Graduate	13	10–25
11. Food and Beverages	Bengaluru	Female	39	Graduate	10	10–25
12. Food and Beverages	Chennai	Male	43	Post-Graduate	10	10–25
13. Hotel, Leisure, and Restaurant Management	Ooty	Male	54	Graduate	19	50–100
14. Hotel, Leisure, and Restaurant Management	Cochin	Male	49	Graduate	14	25–50
15. Destination Management	Jaipur	Male	38	Graduate	12	25–50
16. Hotel, Leisure, and Restaurant Management	Jaipur	Male	42	Graduate	14	50–100
17. Destination Management	Coorg	Male	56	Graduate	18	50–100
18. Micro-Brewery	New Delhi	Male	40	Graduate	10	25–50
19. Micro-Brewery	Bengaluru	Female	42	Post-Graduate	12	50–100
20. Micro-Brewery	Hyderabad	Female	39	Post-Graduate	14	25–50
21. Food and Beverages	Chennai	Male	45	Graduate	13	25–50
22. Food and Beverages	Bengaluru	Male	46	Graduate	16	50–100
23. Food and Beverages	Bengaluru	Male	39	Graduate	12	25–50
24. Hotel, Leisure, and Restaurant Management	Kolkata	Male	44	Graduate	14	50–100

Semi-Structured Interviews

For this study, we adopted a semi-structured qualitative interview schedule. It facilitated us to be flexible with the follow-up questions based on the respondents' responses, allowing us to understand better the interviewees' responses. Furthermore, we used a topic guide (i.e., a schedule comprising the most important questions in a particular sequence) to conceptualize and operationalize the qualitative interviews. The participating entrepreneurs selected the day and hour of the interviews and sent an email to us with their choices. Between June 2022 and December 2022, a period of six months, 24 entrepreneurs were interviewed. We performed nine in-person interviews during the weekend, plus 15 virtual ones (as decided by the participating entrepreneurs). The interviews lasted an average of 72 minutes. In addition, we asked the participants (expert interviewees) for their permission to engage in the interviews freely after sharing the consent form with them. We ensured complete anonymity by pledging to withhold participant and company names, contact details, details about customers and competitors, and any other private information we could have collected while conducting the interviews.

Recording

We recorded the Zoom-Meeting sessions in relation to the virtual interviews. When conducting in-person interviews, we used a digital audio recorder program that works with smartphones running Android or Apple. Voice recording made it possible for us to go back over the content and add any missing details while precisely coding and transcribing the conversation topics.

Data Transcription

The interviewees responded in English, and we conducted the interviews in that language as well. The interviews didn't need to be translated into any other languages. Moreover, we used the NVivo program to transcribe the interviews. All uploaded audio and video files are transcriptions by the software, assuming the user has opted in for the transcription service. One thing to keep in mind is that while NVivo transcribes uploaded media files automatically, the transcription quality is primarily determined by the caliber of the attached media files. Furthermore, we carefully reviewed each transcript to identify any difficulties with language and clarity. When needed, we also listened to the interviews again, took notes, and edited the transcripts ourselves. Through this iterative process, we were able to fully immerse ourselves in the data and discover intriguing patterns and insights.

Data Analysis – Qualitative Phase

Content Analysis and Word Clouding Using Nvivo

We used NVivo software in addition to manual content analysis of the interview material to recognize the themes that naturally developed regarding the fundamentals of education in the context of entrepreneurship and other relevant concerns that were deemed significant. Additionally, we recorded individual experiences and opinions using the manual method, which allowed us to derive the essential components of H&T entrepreneurship education. Also, for both the manual and the automated process, we coded the text and, in the process, arrived at open codes, which were then integrated under second-level sub-categories/themes/higher-order codes that carried similar meanings. We then used the NVivo software to explore word clouds and project maps based on qualitative analysis.

Trustworthiness

We ensured the “trustworthiness” of the qualitative interview process and the consequent information/data that emerged from such a design in multiple ways. We made sure the procedures were strong throughout the whole qualitative interview phase in order to establish credibility (Creswell, 2013). For example, we have provided a thorough description of the respondents' selection (i.e., who and why), the data collection techniques used, and the rationale behind them (questionnaire design, interview format, data collection tool, etc.), and the steps we took to analyze the qualitative data in this report. We kept two subject matter experts informed about the procedure and the results at critical points in the qualitative data analysis, particularly throughout the coding phase, to get their feedback and insights.

Additionally, we shared the same eight randomly selected entrepreneur respondents from the list of 24 after the codes were created, the data was processed, and the inferences and frameworks were formed. This helped to guarantee that the coding, conclusions, and inferences were adequate, relevant, and consistent. In addition, the majority of the study's participants were seasoned business owners with over 10 years of expertise in business operations, entrepreneurship, and the H&T field. As a result, it was considered that the interviewees were experienced businesspeople who would be best qualified to share their perspectives on H&T-specific entrepreneurial education.

Discussion

We analyzed the data collected through qualitative interviews for themes related to entrepreneurial

education—content, its focus, pedagogical approach, and preferred practices. As expected, our data analysis reveals an overlapping assumption that placed a strong emphasis on entrepreneurial education based on practical experience and a skills orientation rather than just the theoretical and conceptual knowledge that is required. Speaking on educational material and H&T-specific talents, the active entrepreneurs shared their insights.

Main Content and Pedagogical Approach for Entrepreneurship Education in the H&T Domain

The opinions of the 24 participating entrepreneurs, whose firms and ventures differed widely, were similar about the courses and their substance, which included theoretical and practical training for aspiring H&T entrepreneurs. Table 2 shows the opinions of entrepreneurs about the content that they believe is essential for aspiring entrepreneurs in terms of entrepreneurship education.

Table 2. Respondents' Examples of Emerging Elements of a Robust Entrepreneurship Education Program in H&T

Ecosystem	Content		Pedagogy	Assessment
	Foundational Level	Functional Level		
Respondent 2	Respondent 4	Respondent 7	Respondent 6	Respondent 1
[...] Any college should have a good infrastructure to support ideas and businesses.	[...] I guess students should know how entrepreneurship works, theories, etc. I learned it on my own. The experiences, I mean to say.	[...] I skipped classes in finance, accounting, HR, etc. I thought these were not for me. Now, after these many years, I realize what I missed. I had to redo it all again.	[...] Use more real-life case studies - both successes and failures. Get these children to meet them. Let them collaborate on a small assignment. Nothing succeeds like success.	[...] One-on-one feedback to students on assessment. Feedback should be more about learning from past actions.
Respondent 18	Respondent 17	Respondent 8	Respondent 12	Respondent 10
[...] I guess colleges should help students network with funding agencies and domain experts so that these students feel supported and backed.	[...] Shouldn't students know the background of 'what' entrepreneurship is all about even before jumping into the fire? I only knew that I didn't want to work under anyone anymore when I started. I had no damn clue of what I was getting into. It's been 15 years now.	[...] God, I hated finance, economics, and accounting. Now I know why they are so critical when I am running my business.	[...] Doing is fundamental to Entrepreneurship. Please go out and do it yourself. Experience it. Learn from it.	[...] Shouldn't reflective thinking be measured?
Respondent 15	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 7
[...] Institutes should have an enabling culture. Many colleges talk great things, but they back out when it	[...] I would have been greatly thrilled if someone had briefed me on the real-life span of an entrepreneur when I was still young and dreaming it would	[...] Years back, I would have loved to learn marketing strategies.	[...] If colleges can arrange for great internships with good entrepreneurs, it will be great. They need to see, explore, and live the business they observe.	[...] I guess it would be great if colleges moved away from exams, the kind we used to give - very theoretical and non-provocative. I mean, learnings should

comes to actual support. I mean, the leadership should be strong, focused, and supportive. More entrepreneurs emerging from institutes will only brand them better.

be a cakewalk.

be assessed based on some tangible outcomes.

Respondent 7

[...] Make available great teachers; the better if they happen to be entrepreneurs. They know their stuff. Don't make a non-entrepreneur teach these subjects. It kills the interest in children.

Respondent 11

[...] Much has been published on entrepreneurship models and frameworks. I guess they [students] would greatly benefit if they learn it. No one taught me SWOT and PESTLE. But I see now children are aware of these.

Respondent 9

[...] No one has so many ways of doing business. I have heard people talk about tech entrepreneurship in lean tourism startups. Are we even up to that to explore what all these are? I don't think so.

Respondent 1

[...] I would tell students. Get your hands dirty! Get out there to do projects and internships. Spend more time with these entrepreneurs (mentors) than on your mobile.

Respondent 19

[...] I have heard of relative grading but don't know it. People talk great things about it. In my daughter's college, they use this.

Respondent 12

[...] Promote incubation centers.

Respondent 1

[...] Someone should train students on communication. I mean, the formal business type of communication. That one. I know it's complex, but we need to know it. People lose partners, businesses, and all due to this. I even struggled with English 20 years ago.

Respondent 15

[...] I say this accounting and bookkeeping are super important. One needs to learn to make sense of the numbers from these.

Respondent 19

[...] Spend less time in college. Spend the second half with mentors.

Respondent 4

[...] Not all students will take up entrepreneurship once they graduate. It is good to track the progress of the ones with strong intentions to see what they ended up doing, say, 5 years down the line.

Respondent 7

[...] Handhold students till they start their business. Aid them financially. Let there be incentives to start own businesses. I guess these aspects are missing today in most universities.

Respondent 9

[...] Teachers should guide students on different types of business entities right at the beginning. I mean to say for-profit and hybrid and all. At some point in time, they should want to know why

Respondent 16

[...] Everyone talks of numbers, research, and how they drive businesses. But does anyone teach the value of these to our students in H&T. They run away? When I faced a huge chunk of data in business,

Respondent 8

[...] I attended many workshops after I finished my graduation. It would be great if colleges arranged for multiple workshops and hackathons. Live feedback from experts does a world of good to the confidence of

Respondent 23

[...] I guess more than exams, seminars and project evaluations may be more useful.

they want to be
self-employed.

I didn't know what
to do with it. It was
garbage for me until my
friend helped me
find patterns. That helped.

individuals. Believe
me on this.

All participating H&T entrepreneurs emphasized the importance of subjects that would give students insights into the domains of entrepreneurship – fundamentals, ecosystems, frameworks, technology, leadership, and strategy; idea development; business models, and business communications at the foundational level of entrepreneurship education (refer to Figure 1).

The majority of interviewers said that the course's instructional material on “entrepreneurship fundamentals” would provide students with a thorough introduction to the field at the outset and, in doing so, set the stage for them to think about entrepreneurship as a future career. While few interviewees stressed the importance of exposing students to the personality traits specific to individuals considered important for becoming an entrepreneurial leader, others emphasized the importance of students learning different entrepreneurial ecosystem practices and processes and the entrepreneurship ecosystem's sustainability drivers right at the course's foundational level. The necessity of teaching students about entrepreneurial frameworks in order to theoretically expose and teach them the fundamental components such as Lean, PESTLE, SWOT, etc., was a topic of much discussion (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Content Domain – Foundational Level



Figure 2. Foundational Level Entrepreneurship Education Focus



Figure 3. Content Domain – Functional Level



Figure 4. Functional Level Entrepreneurship Education Focus



In contrast to the H&T EE course's foundational level, every H&T entrepreneur who took part in the discussion stressed the importance of providing students with comprehensive training in the areas of emerging entrepreneurship domains, marketing, finance, enterprise operations, data sciences, and new venture management at the course's functional level (see Figure 3).

Interestingly, all interviewees emphasized the importance of business management-related courses like, for example, marketing management, financial management, workforce management, accounting, etc. They explicitly spoke about the need for comprehensive and exhaustive educational experiences that center on the different financial challenges and opportunities that H&T entrepreneurs are usually confronted with (i.e., startup valuation, budgeting, financial analysis, financial risk assessment, and management) and also one that trains students on optimal resource management (i.e., financial or otherwise). The respondents underlined the necessity for the students to gain further knowledge about marketing their prospective businesses and, eventually, their ventures. Deeper marketing education, according to most participants, would help entrepreneurs better identify their target markets and market segments and equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote their ideas through a variety of marketing channels, such as social media marketing. They also spoke about the importance of subjects relating to workforce management.

One respondent opined, "...knowledge of human behavior would surely help entrepreneurs deal with their customers better; It does for me."

Another important point in contention concerns the participants' sentiment around numbers and the need for H&T students to learn data science to understand numbers, process information, analyze, and identify data patterns to engage in evidence-based decision-making (see Figure 4).

Predominant Pedagogical Approach

All of the interviewees emphasized the need to have a well-rounded educational program that combines traditional teaching methods (such as lectures and class debates) with experiential learning to enable students to gain knowledge from "real-world" situations and experiences.

Interviewees believed that engaging in educational experiences that involve simulations, case studies, projects, role-plays, and paid and unpaid internships, for example, would make students multi-skilled and aid

them in complex decision-making processes that they would be involved in while performing various tasks. Also, all the respondents emphasized the need to learn good interpersonal and intrapersonal skills of communication, in particular, customer skills. They believed that one's ability to work with people (i.e., multiple stakeholders that include, for example, vendors, retailers, customers, colleagues, peers, etc.) and discover their sense of the self goes a long way in running the business ventures successfully. Many interviewees believed that real/hands-on encounters/experiences with customers are the most unsurpassed ways of learning customer skills. This, they believed, could happen through internships and projects. Many participating respondents believed that the educators should conceptualize an H&T entrepreneurship education program that encourages students to visit, meet, and talk to different practicing entrepreneurs to gain insights on the real aspects (challenges and opportunities) of running an enterprise, even encouraging students to explore entrepreneur interviews on social media platforms as a potentially excellent source of firsthand information and a learning tool. In fact, all of the participating entrepreneurs stated that they learned most not only through their own experiences of running a business but also from acknowledging other entrepreneurs' journeys and observing their sweat and tears (i.e., both success and failure). In this connection, all interviewees stressed that students would greatly benefit through mentoring experiences received from actual entrepreneurs. In addition to offering guidance to aspiring entrepreneurs on crucial matters concerning the conception of their ideas, mentors also provide students with an equitable chance to watch, listen, discuss, clarify, and ask questions of these business owners in order to obtain a deeper understanding of their operations and business practices, such as how they handle customer service, stakeholder relations, entrepreneurial ethics, work-life balance, network support, etc.

Other Key Elements of Entrepreneurship Education

All participants agreed that an institution's supportive ecosystem and a program assessment system that heavily depends on a continuous feedback loop are necessary for the successful conception and implementation of an entrepreneurship education program, even in light of the suggested content and pedagogical approach that the interviewees felt were crucial for H&T students to learn entrepreneurship. All of the interviewees thought that H&T educational institutions ought to work toward developing an ecosystem that continuously fosters creativity and innovation by offering supportive leadership and providing valuable resources (such as an alumni/mentor network, funding support, idea development centers/incubators, and excellent teachers). Further, the respondents contended that the assessment of any H&T entrepreneurship education program should not only focus on measuring student learning, knowledge acquisition, and feedback about the course in the short term but also examine the entrepreneurship program's influence on attitudes, behaviors, motivation, and experiences of budding entrepreneurs — that potentially could lead to functional startups, job creation, and the overall socio-economic impact in the long run.

Implications and Conclusion

This study examines the perspectives of H&T entrepreneurs in order to learn more about the methodology and content of entrepreneurship education as well as the emerging entrepreneurial competencies that they believe will help H&T students who may go on to become future business owners.

Implications for Practice : Proposing a Dedicated H&T-Centric Entrepreneurial Education Course

Three key components make up our suggested H&T entrepreneurship education framework: learning outcomes, pedagogical technique, and content (i.e., *what to learn*). As a result, we have determined and developed the three

elements of a specific H&T entrepreneurship program in three stages that are progressively related to one another: need analysis, content, pedagogy, conceptualization and development of learning outcomes, and validation (see Appendix).

The necessity of introducing H&T students to entrepreneurship in a stepwise manner—that is, by creating a strong curriculum that progressively advances from the foundational level to the functional stage—was underlined time and time again by the participating entrepreneurs. In the course of the interviews, the majority of participants stressed the importance of providing students with early program insights into entrepreneurship fundamentals, market systems, ecosystems, frameworks, business models, idea development, and business communication (Kumar et al., 2023). In addition, interviewees emphasized the need for specialized training workshops in problem identification, opportunity recognition, and idea development for the establishment of company concepts (Srivastava et al., 2019). According to Srivastava et al. (2019), entrepreneurs argued that a foundational stage of a balanced entrepreneurship program should primarily consist of traditional classroom lectures and talks/seminars by industry experts, researchers, and practicing H&T entrepreneurs. Additionally, a practicum that emphasizes a “do-in” orientation” should be included. This, they felt, would open up a communication scene for young budding H&T entrepreneurs/students to interact with practitioners, improve their social network, and give a realistic preview of what entrepreneurship is in *reality* right at the initial stages of the course. Additionally, the working entrepreneurs underlined the necessity of exposing students to general management courses, data science, and the developing H&T entrepreneurial fields at the functional level. Additionally, they emphasized that experiential learning, hands-on approach simulations, workshops, mentored projects/internships, business plan preparation and presentations, and certifications should be given more attention throughout the functional stage of the H&T entrepreneurship program (Srivastava et al., 2019).

Implications for Education

With the explosive growth of entrepreneurship and students' willingness to run their businesses, learning more from the experienced H&T entrepreneurs about what they believe the H&T entrepreneurship education program should include has significant implications for H&T institutions and academicians. Traditional H&T subject curriculum in India is found to base industry-specific content that is sector/domain-specific. But among the many topics that were discussed, working H&T entrepreneurs emphasized the importance of integrating coursework in data science and business communication, emphasizing risk awareness, problem identification, opportunity recognition, creativity and innovation, as well as the necessity of practical training that revolves around the notion of “concepts” and “practice” of entrepreneurship with a predominant “doing” orientation (Deale, 2016). The participating entrepreneurs' surprising call for educators to devote their time and attention to teaching students about entrepreneurship-related risk management, enhancing their capacity for creative and innovative thinking, and fostering a deeper sense of self-discovery in order to prepare them for future entrepreneurial roles in the H&T sector surprised us, even though we had expected them to stress the need for a “business-oriented” entrepreneurship education program (Deale, 2016). Additionally, all of the interviewees who took part in the study acknowledged the value of traditional entrepreneurship.

Still, they also said that students needed to have a thorough understanding of the potential and developing business sectors in the H&T domain. Thus, in light of the results of this study, we urge H&T educators to play a significant role in the following:

- ✧ Deeper brainstorming/mind-mapping sessions to develop and augment creative thinking in students.
- ✧ Using entrepreneurship role-plays, mentored projects, entrepreneurship simulators, and other resources, teach H&T students about risk management and risk-mitigation strategies to increase their overall risk tolerance.

- ☞ Nurture a sense of the H&T community. Gaining a perspective of the H&T community could be key in the EE program and is probably best explored by hands-on classroom demonstrations of community-building and H&T entrepreneurial experiences.
- ☞ Engage in entrepreneurial contests for students to create innovative H&T business ideas.
- ☞ Engage in curricular and extra-curricular workshops that offer a platform for children to develop innovative product/service ideas in the H&T domain.

Exploring the Possibility of Developing a Comprehensive Learning Outcomes Matrix to Evaluate the Course Usefulness

Developing entrepreneurial abilities in H&T students that align with 21st-century KSAs will undoubtedly empower them to consider pursuing a career in entrepreneurship. If they consider acquiring particular and pertinent industry expertise and knowledge before pursuing their entrepreneurial ideas, it would also give them a fair chance to get work. Therefore, the H&T entrepreneurship education program will be more successful if the usefulness of the course is gauged and measured through specific and tangible learning outcomes. Accordingly, educators can develop a customized *learning outcomes matrix* for their respective entrepreneurship programs (Boyles, 2018). Educators can map the learning objectives to the available EE courses and subjects. The predicted entrepreneurial skill levels of each course can be compared to the introduced, developed, and mastered learning outcomes. Through the creation of this matrix, educators in H&T can assess their program thoroughly, taking into account how these courses specifically contribute to the overall learning objectives of their students. Further, educators can engage in an in-depth competency mapping of students and alumni to chart them to evaluate their skills in specific areas of H&T and entrepreneurship with a robustly designed learning outcomes matrix.

Using a Robustly Designed Entrepreneurship Education Program to Elicit Entrepreneurial Behavior in Students

Furthermore, the main practical implication for those H&T institutions developing entrepreneurship education programs is the program's quality that they should emphasize rather than focusing on mere integration of the traditionally conceptualized entrepreneurship education course in the H&T curricula. It has to be noted that the H&T institutes with a — strong supportive institutional ecosystem to promote and support H&T entrepreneurship with contemporary subjects relevant to the domain of H&T entrepreneurship and dedicated and expert H&T entrepreneurs as teachers and mentors who adopt a coherent mix of theory, action-based, and experiential learning techniques to engage with their students and practice a course assessment system that is transparent and objective are expected to do well in triggering entrepreneurial behavior in students. The development of an institutional framework that supports H&T entrepreneurship, including a robust course outcome assessment system, relevant and up-to-date content, theory-based and experiential learning-centric pedagogy, and a supportive entrepreneurship ecosystem, is something that emerging H&T institutions can actively work to achieve. Moreover, the entrepreneurship education courses for the undergraduate/post-graduate H&T students, as operationalized by the H&T institutes in India, follow a semester pattern of six months duration. H&T institutions should ideally design and operationalize a 12–18 months duration dedicated post-graduate program on H&T entrepreneurship, allowing students to further explore entrepreneurship opportunities in domains like for example, agri-tourism, rural tourism, franchising and restaurant management, food technology, and health management/well-being (e.g., gastronomy, organic, ayurvedic-culinary/cuisines, etc.).

Limitations of the Study and the Way Forward

This study's findings offer valuable insights into how education can support individuals pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities in the H&T sector in India. This knowledge can guide further research on entrepreneurship education in this sector, particularly given the country's progressively growing national focus on entrepreneurship. The study's interviewees offered insightful opinions on the fundamental ideas of entrepreneurship in addition to views on education concerning entrepreneurial activities. It is important to remember that the teacher plays a critical part in this process. College and university instructors who teach entrepreneurship may become overly focused on details rather than providing a broader perspective. Moreover, they may not have experience as entrepreneurs themselves or be unfamiliar with the diverse array of entrepreneurial activities. However, as Deale (2016) and Hindle et al. (2021) argued, students and teachers can learn together through the process of *reciprocal apprenticeship*. It is important to acknowledge that this study has limitations. The sample size was small, and we used a purposive sample, so there are concerns about whether the findings of this study can be generalized.

Moreover, all the participating H&T entrepreneurs in this study were at least college-educated/graduates, which may not represent many entrepreneurs who are not formally educated but operate successful enterprises. Indeed, the role of formal education for entrepreneurs continues to be debated. Future qualitative research could explore the perspectives of entrepreneurs from different demographic backgrounds and locations to understand their unique experiences and educational needs. The significance of entrepreneurship education in educating aspiring entrepreneurs about their business strategies, financial and operational operations, and creative pursuits in the tourism industry also needs further quantitative research, especially with bigger samples.

Authors' Contribution

Dr. Manoj Kumar Sharma is the principal investigator in this study. Dr. Badrinarayan Srirangam Ramaprasad and Dr. Mohit Jamwal conceived and conceptualized the qualitative research approach relevant to this study. Dr. Ravi Phadke and Dr. Nidhisha H. executed the data collection plan. Furthermore, Dr. Manoj Kumar Sharma and Dr. Mohit Jamwal analyzed the qualitative data to arrive at the emergent themes using NVivo software and a thematic analysis approach. After that, Dr. Badrinarayan Srirangam Ramaprasad and Dr. Ravi Phadke developed a comprehensive framework for H&T entrepreneurial education. Drs. Badrinarayan Srirangam Ramaprasad and Mohit Jamwal also contributed to this article in separate portions.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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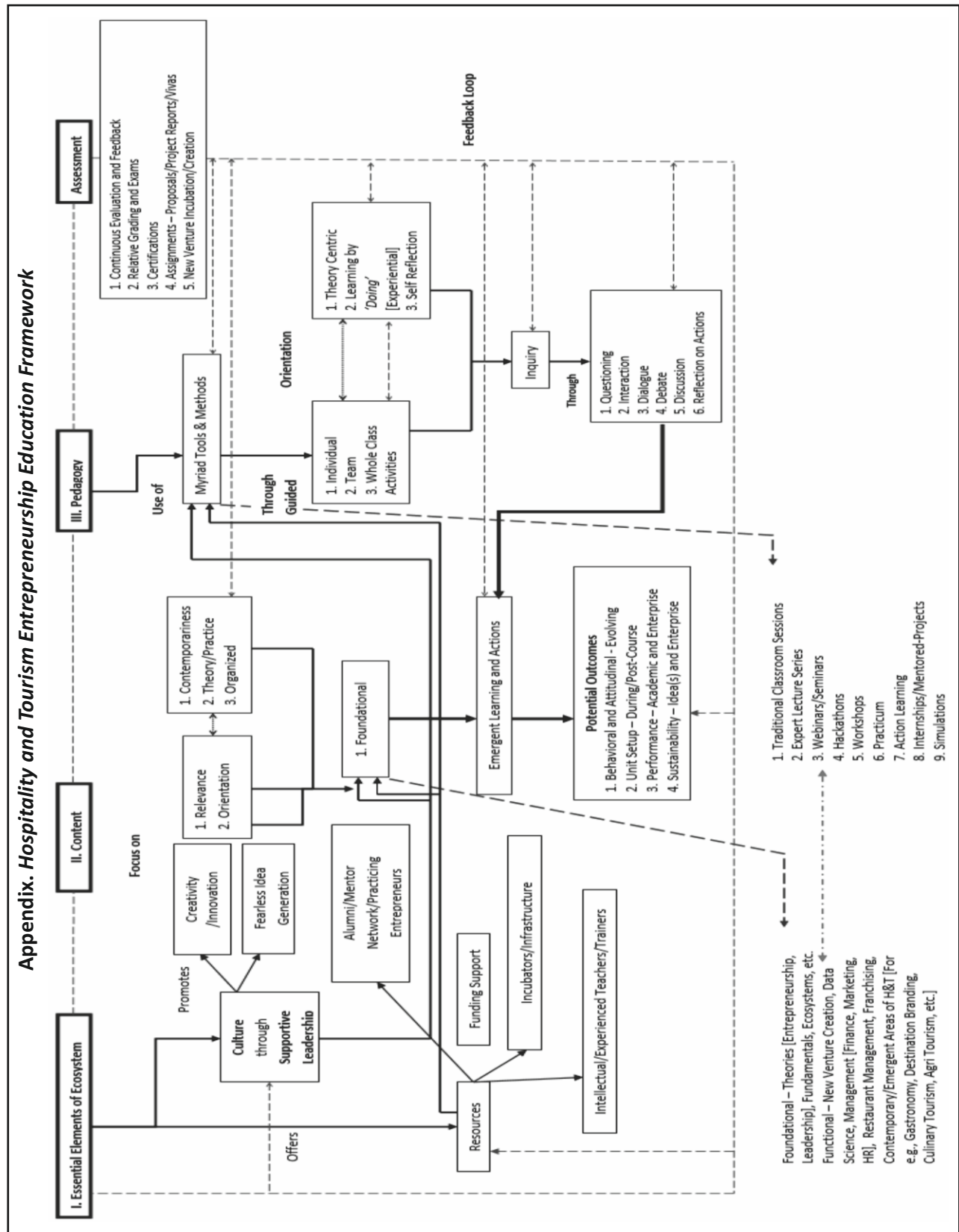
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Appendix. Hospitality and Tourism Entrepreneurship Education Framework



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