

Innovation in Indian Hospitality Industry: A Reflection of Culinary Perspectives

P. P. Mohanty

Assistant Professor, School of Hotel Management, Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management, S O A (Deemed to be University), India, Odisha
richhmohanty@gmail.com

Abstract

The hospitality and restaurant industry is changing rapidly, but silently and inevitable from many points of view. These innovations are motivated by demographic patterns, by the demands of modern consumers and are also influenced by the global economic crisis. Modern consumers and their ever-changing needs prompt response and service personalised to their needs. It is a specific sector due to several factors that affect the customer's view of experience, and hence innovation in this sector is a dynamic and multidimensional process. In order to succeed in a competitive market and make sustainable profits, the hospitality industry needs to be different for competitive advantage and innovation. When the various theoretical backgrounds on culinary innovation in hospitality sectors are checked, it is found that studies representing the views of the hotel and restaurant chefs and cooks are inadequate and many of them are also unaware of this particular word called "innovation". Hence this paper tends to explore the various existing knowledge on food innovation and try to communicate it among the chefs and cooks working in hotels and restaurants. For this purpose, the secondary method of data collection has been initiated to find out through knowledge about it.

Key words: Innovation, Culinary, Indian hospitality, Food, Restaurants

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Corresponding Author: P. P. Mohanty, Assistant Professor, School of Hotel Management, Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management, S O A (Deemed to be University), India, Odisha, e-mail : richhmohanty@gmail.com

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Introduction

Innovation may not be a new entrant in the changing world of the service sector, but better perceived as an important commodity in the liberalization, privatization, and globalization of service enterprises. The intensely competitive world of the hospitality industry is searching for new ways for improved results compared to its rivalries. This calls for strategic advantage and is commonly used in the hospitality field relative to other service organizations. Innovation is one of the strong impulses driving and propelling the development and growth of the service industry in

the 21st century. The re-incarnation and re-engineering of innovation have become the lifeline of today's hospitality market. The sustainability of the current age hospitality sector recognizes developments and insists on a real person-centered approach to innovation. As a result, a wide variety of academics, hospitality professionals, and stakeholders are working on this.

The current trend in innovation helps to generate the advanced and unique technologies needed to grow the hotel industry. The hotel service of today is very different from the conventional one, where many multidimensional applications and

operations are used. Today's hotel operations are very different from the conventional one, where many multidimensional applications, operating processes, and the introduction of new innovations, concepts, and expertise facilitate the delivery of goods and services to customers. Thus in line with the above, creativity is instilled in the corporate culture of companies.

From a general point of view, hotel creativity starts with and focuses on the services provided to the customer, the value gained from them, and the efficiency of the service. Customer input describes the number of clients staying in hotels and leaving hotels. This is why the consistency of the hotel service influences the customer and their inner sensitivity. The level of service varies from front-line workers engaging with customers to a room boy cleaning and preparing a bed for customers, to alcohol served in an expensive bar to the guest, and food cooked and decorated by the chef inside the kitchen. As a consequence, the deviation in this point of service quality leads to dissatisfaction generating a poor customer experience. The standard level of service has changed, and consumers of the modern era are getting bored and asking for something out of the box.

At this juncture creativity plays a critical role by contributing to the nature of the product and service that delights the desires and wishes of the consumer. The hotel's main department relies to a large degree on personalised service and customer satisfaction consistency, but every time he enters the hotel, food preparation in the kitchen has a lot more to do for the customer. The discerning nature of the consumers, their changing eating habits, tastes, health, and nutritional issues are shaking the taste buds in a new way, constantly placing pressure on the kitchen organization and management to innovate processes and techniques to produce something special in terms of taste, scent, color, taste, and variety. Culinary have

therefore become a sought-after forum where innovation and imagination are very much required and regularly implemented in a very fervent way.

Food is a bare requirement and an integral part for the continuation of life on this planet. The tremendous growth of hotels and restaurants has tremendously bridged the food gap and at the same time created an inferior commodity that needs to be enhanced in order to retain quality. In an era of cutting edge technology, creativity helps to ensure continuity, standardization, and efficiency for the survival of the hospitality industry. The atmosphere in which the ingredients are processed and prepared is subject to a lot of physical and chemical changes at a specified time, and the kitchen is best regarded as a food laboratory, where constant research and development is required for innovation work. In the culinary landscape, food is the focal point where the preferences of consumers largely rely on its characteristics as well as on the service of food and on the experience of post-consumption. The creation of food characteristics depends solely on the chef's innovativeness and creativity, and the style of service also depends on the attitude and behavior of the waiting staff, both of which culminate in the customer's post-consumer meal experience and add value to all of these points. Thus, creativity could be introduced in every single point of food production, where it acts as a catalyst.

Literature review

In recent times, innovation has become a buzzword and has marked a distinct position in many areas, including the service sector. Some of the service sectors are late followers of this novel concept, and some are leaders in imbibing and performing this concept. And for others, it may be just like a catchy word or a style statement to attract their company. Fortunately, however, a growing number of innovation studies in the hospitality sector have shown its significance, as well as its conceptual and

methodological scope.

The hospitality industry of the 21st century has undergone transformations that have begun to pay close attention to innovation and analysis in a serious way, bearing in mind the socio-economic perspectives. To begin with, therefore, a general concept of innovation as a process of putting forth all sorts of novel and definitive ideas that temporarily and permanently alleviate the problems or problems of the generators. Innovation is a driving force that makes the best use of resource utilization and allocation bringing efficiency and effectiveness to the organization, which in turn benefits in the competitive advantage (Wu, 2013).

In a nutshell, the more of a very basic definition of innovation is “doing something different”. Innovation is a very common word that continued to be used in business enterprises. It can also be explained as a “new idea, product or device” (Stenberg, 2017)

Innovation in Hotels

Turning the chapters of the hotel industry from the past history of researcher's lens, the topic of innovation, in the stage of its significance was quite neglected (Chen 2011; Enz & Siguaw 2003; Wong & Ladkin 2008; Martínez-Ros & Orfila-Sintes 2012; Ottenbacher & Gnoth 2005). The finding of major international scientific journals shows that the innovation process was started in the hotel industry in the year 2004. However, in the European continent, the innovation geared up from 2010. In the present scenario, innovation is extensively carried on strategic business management, planning, business modules, service quality, and hotel management and quality of services. Moreover, the hotels of different categories of high-end luxurious hotels to mid-scale budget hotels have different approaches to the

innovation process. The non-categorized hotels are reluctant to for the innovation process (Orfila-Sintes, Crespí-Cladera and Martínez-Ros 2004; Hjalager 2010). Innovation in the hotel industry is carried out in the fields of customer care, quality of development, quality of service, competition, and various other important areas.

Innovation in the hotel industry is more favourable because it is labor and resource-intensive and easy to invest big chunks (Ottenbacher, Shaw, & Lockwood, 2005; Tigu et al., 2013). One of the most important factors that induce innovation in hotels dealing with all intangibility products and services is standardization (Sutthijakra, 2011). The research reveals 43 surveys with hotel managers in the United Kingdom and Thailand on the effects of international standardisation. Differentiating various products and services is one of the strategic processes that occurred in daily practices in hotels in order to grab a good market position. The research conducted by (Chen 2011; Ottenbacher 2007; Slåtten, Svensson & Sværi, 2011) reveals that innovation helps in differentiating the products and services by converting the opportunities and ideas fitting it into the business enterprise model. Innovation involves the discovery and introduction of exclusive processes, goods and services in order to create a competitive advantage over competitors and to achieve competitiveness (Divisekera & Nguyen, 2018; Hjalager, 2010; Zehrer et al., 2015).

Innovation and creativity go hand in hand, and research carried out on 105 hotel guests in Romania signifies the buying decision and guest satisfaction (Tigu et al. 2013). As stated by (Kandampully et al. 2016; Melhem, Zeffane, and Albaity, 2018) a significant number of authors carry out studies on innovation and imagination in order to gain a competitive edge. The recent studies by (Grobelna & Marciszewska, 2013; Río-Rama et al. 2017) in hotel innovation identify the innovation for the purpose of cost-cutting in

various key responsibility areas and simultaneously enhancing the quality. Similarly, most of the hotel customers in the 21st century are influenced by technological innovation (Law et al. 2014). Similarly, studies by Araújo and Ernesto Filho (2013), which reflect the extent of innovation in 25-star hotels in East Brazil, revealed that hotel establishments are involved with different technical advances in order to provide innovative services. According to Li and Hsu (2016) and Melhem et al. (2018) believe that innovation will leverage the service quality, as it matters a lot the hospitality industry.

When focussing the quality service, the customer satisfaction cannot be neglected. Most of the innovation process happens on customer satisfaction and competitive advantage in the global hotel industry (Kallmuenzer, 2018; Río-Rama, Álvarez-García & Coca-Pérez, 2017; Zehrer, Muskat, & Muskat, 2015). The research study reveals that (Campo et al., 2014; Kessler et al., 2015; Río-Rama et al. 2017) the purpose of adopting the innovation as suggested by the various authors in hotels are for improving and optimizing the process, creating a conducive business culture driven by leadership and profitability. Other key indicators of innovation to be initiated by the hotel companies and other stakeholders are to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage for the sake of value creation and strategies the product and services in an innovative way (Grobelna & Marciszewska, 2013; Tajeddini & Trueman, 2012).

Innovation is also another way to promote a perpetual patronising hotel guest by stimulating loyalty and revisit of intent (Chen, 2015). Furthermore, the hospitality industry left a huge carbon foot print so that environmentally, a lot of detrimental changes happened on a daily basis, so innovation is essential to face these challenges (Fraj, Matute and Melero, 2015). As stated by

(Chen 2011; Nagy 2014; Ottenbacher 2007, Sandvik, Duhan & Sandvik 2014) the hotel industry's problems have come from multiple viewpoints, but creativity acts as a hedge against this by reacting in a positive way. Hotel innovation can be categorized into two formats one in the front of the house (FOH) and another in the back of the house (BOH) innovation. Both these formats acquire innovation in the context of creating a competitive environment for the sake of survival in the competitive market. The front of house innovation can usually be referred to as service innovation related to the quality of services contributing to customer satisfaction, and the innovation at the back of the operation is similarly called innovation in product quality. The key advantage of good innovation is, therefore, to be or become more competitive in hospitality and restaurants in general (Ottenbacher and Gnoth, 2005).

The back of the operation is the only food production or food preparation department which involves a series of processes from the start-up to the final production of the finished product. It includes the method of food chemistry, food microbiology, food technology, and is thus collectively referred to as "art and science." Again the advances in the food production sector are divided into two specific categories: hard innovation and soft innovation. Soft innovation is the food craftsmanship and creativity starting from preparing to servicing and hard innovation determines the kitchen, equipment design, and layout. Food production, the only manufacturing function in the hospitality sector (Jones and Lockwood, 2002), is increasing in volumes and becoming more technical (Meiselman and Edwards, 2001).

The demand for innovation recently takes the centre stage due to the discerning taste and demands from customers, from suppliers, and from

the employees, in a view to putting them in a comfort bubble to serve, involve, and to participate more. Given the organisational structure of a hotel, Hjalager (2010) categorised innovation into the following categories, such as product innovations, process innovations, management innovations (innovation related to human resources, i.e. training methods, employee empowerment, etc.), and logistics innovations. The above innovation process stated by Hjalager (2010) can be further extended and expressed in a quantified manner and would be helpful for the food and beverage management department of the hotel, where the pricing of the menu and menu as a marketing tool can be best judged as also another parameter of innovation. Innovation in the food service industry occurs in five main functional areas like planning the layout, kitchen design and creating a proper ambiance, maintaining the food and beverage standard production and service standards like portion size, portion control, standard recipe, indigenous ingredients, food safety, and hygiene, technological adoption like PMS, POS, online reservation, digital KOT, and sustainability application like kitchen ethics, sustainable packaging, organic ingredients, smart kitchen equipment and accessories, and sustainable purchasing. Now-a-days, hotels have extended of exploring the newer avenues of innovation in the form of green marketing, energy and water conservation, sustainable hotel constructions, waste disposal, even in receiving and storing of food ingredients. In the Indian context, it may be in the form of creating a new dish or planning and compiling the menus, or sometimes menu engineering. A plethora of restaurants and hotels on daily basis are opened in the Indian market for purpose of selling the food and very few or handful of restaurants or kitchen staff focus on innovation. A study conducted by Wall, Berry (2007) revealed that a great share of customers' perceptions about the innovation directly linked to the kitchen and service area interior and exterior design that may

call for service quality innovation (Chen, 2011). In the modern hospitality scenario, the high-end luxurious restaurant having skilled chefs are eyeing on food innovation. In some parts of the universe, the innovation is still not clear to many budding or enterprising chefs. In this regard, valuable lessons to be learned from the Michelin starred chefs working in high-end lavish restaurant kitchens and their way of managing the innovation. Thus, for them the innovation is very individual, genuine, and authentic by nature, involving the highest quality product and services, and also the skilled professionalism to adapt to the situations. Most of the kitchen staff adopt the conventional style of research and development as compared to the Michelin starred chef, as they are quick to adopt the new trends in cooking styles, technology, etc.

The innovation process can be enhanced by comparing and considering the Michelin starred restaurant kitchen with the Indian style of kitchen, and further, it is a need of the hour and a step ahead of innovation. Because Michelin stars are awarded to restaurants on five criteria: the quality of products, mastering of flavors and cooking, personality of the cuisine, and value for money and consistency. One star is considered "a very good restaurant in its category", two stars reflect "excellent cooking, worth a detour", while three stars display "exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey" (Michelin, 2006). Needless to say the modern chefs should always strive for exploring the customer's food preferences and habits, to suit the model of innovation. There is also a point to be noted not a single study has been done for the innovation for customers' needs and it should be an emerging area. The tremendous growth of the restaurant industry and dining out habit of urban people have called for differentiating the product in an innovative way such as healthy food, organic food, low-calorie food, and sugar-free, these tagline has compelled chefs driving towards innovation to keep their customers intact. In

hotels, the food preparation department is the only manufacturing segment that prepares the food (Jones and Lockwood, 2002), in a bulk quantity and becoming more technical (Meiselman and Edwards, 2001).

Research gap

By the extensive literature review, the present author identified the various key areas where the innovation has been explored and still a way of continuous process. Hence the present author congregates all the statements of existing research-based on innovation and finds the suitable gap. Sutthijakra's (2011) study, involving 43 hotel managers in the United Kingdom and Thailand, established standardisation in hotels through innovation as a global imperative to recognise the needs of customers. Similarly keeping in mind the guest satisfactions, Tigu et al. (2013) did the research on 103 hotel guests in Romania where the maximum percentage of guest opinion go in the favor of innovation enhances guest satisfaction. As Kandampully et al. (2016) point out that innovations are key to competitive advantages for hotel businesses. In the context of innovation in the Indian hospitality industry, very few researchers like Gunjan M. Sanjeev Rumki Bandyopadhyay, (2016) emphasizes on the over all innovation in hospitality sectors in India, similarly study done by Sonia Bharwani and David Mathews (2016) explore the innovation process in customer service in Indian hospitality sectors. Hence a plethora of research works on hotel innovation with subject to quality, service, business, profitability, competitiveness and attractiveness, value addition, loyalty, etc, but very few studies apart from Michael Otenbacher and Robert J. Harrington who

explores some food innovation in the context of new food product development in Michelin-starred restaurant. Although other authors have done some little research on food innovation in hotels, there is a lack of full-fledged food innovation in the Indian counterpart which needs to be done in the present scenario. Therefore, in Indian hospitality industry, there is a wide gap in food innovation, and the author has tried to fill that gap in this paper.

Objectives

- To explore the existing theoretical knowledge pertaining the food innovation in hospitality industry.

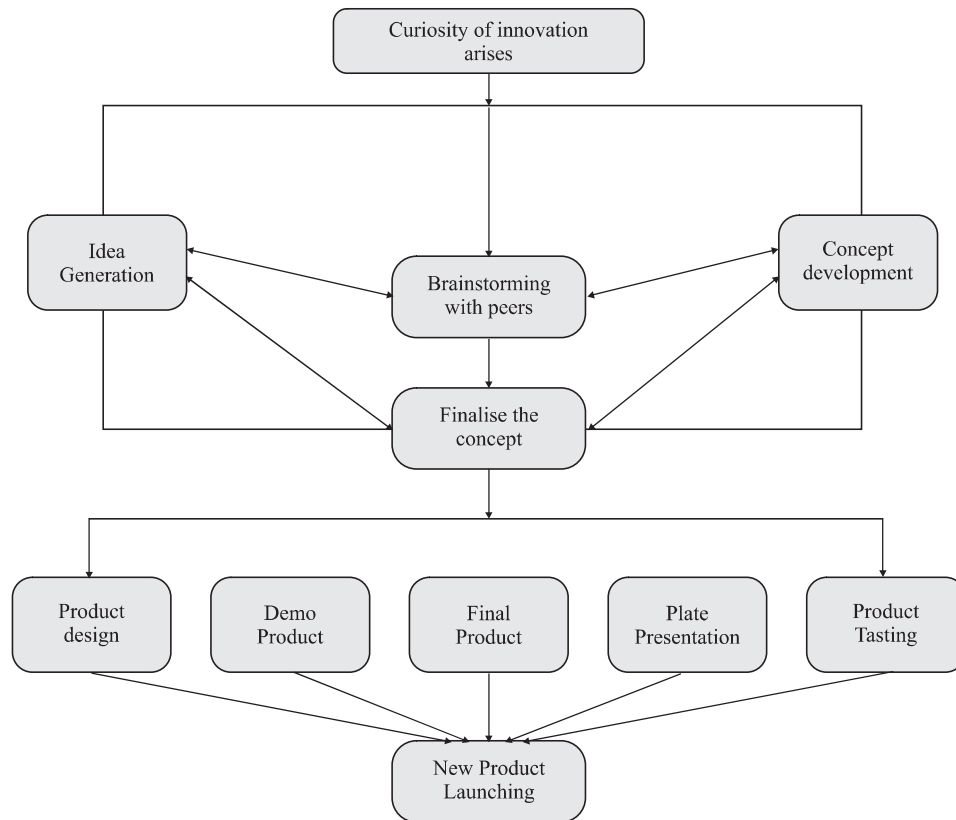
To find out the gap by identifying the areas of innovation in hospitality industry

Methodology

The main objective of this study is to systematically collect, identify, and document the data on food innovation by exploring the existing theoretical background from the various valid sources to complete the research. The secondary data collection sources were extracted from various national and international referred and peer reviewed journals, conference proceeding papers, books, edited book chapter, websites, social media, trade journals, hospitality and tourism magazines. The keyword such as 'Innovation', 'creativity', 'imagination', 'Food Innovation', 'culinary', have been used in various platforms like "Web of Science", "Publons", "Google Scholar", "Sci hub" to get the relevant and appropriate data.

Findings

Figure 1 Conceptual Model of Culinary innovation



Source: Designed and developed by the Author

From the above study, innovation regards to food and any other aspects generally follow the above conceptual model as proposed by the present author. From this above model, the first step includes the arouse of curiosity to do the innovation that links to the last as it helps in the development of new dish or product. In step two, the curiosity furthers instigate of generating a novel idea , and that idea agitates in the minds of the chef and cook to bring something new that differs in taste, flavour and texture and aroma. In the next step, the germinating ideas polished by the brainstorming process among the peers resulting of finalising the idea into concept. In the next step, once the concept is finalised , the chef like to design the product from many dimensions considering the availability of ingredients, cooking methods, and equipments

which helps it to prepare a demo version of the product. Once the demo product is finished, the chef looks for any changes or corrections before preparing the final product. On the next process of preparing the final product, the cook is very enthusiastic to give a lifeline to the product, and presented with proper garnish and accompaniment. Then the product goes for the trial by the panel members for suitable evaluation. Once the product is confirmed, the final step is lunching or introducing the new product in the menu.

Conclusion

The present paper concentrates on creativity and innovation found in different restaurants in India conceptually and subsequently can be adopted by

the professional chefs and cooks. The paper also unfolds the belief of imagination is the fundamental source of innovation motivated by the chefs and cooks from time to time. This particular study is a part of the work-in-progress research. The study shows three main factors that have a very different impact on innovation such as novel ideas, creativity and imagination. Chefs and cooks of different level approach these three variables as essential parameters for successful culinary innovation. The study also explore the various individual factor of chefs' contribution in creating innovative dishes by putting knowledge and pragmatic skills, keen interest, eye for details, motivation, and social obligation. Food innovation is always influenced by the external factors, that every chefs and cooks needs to be aware of to make the harmony of food and outside physical environment. Interaction of food and environment is essential for a successful innovation process.

Recommendations

From the above study and thorough literature review, it has been clearly envisaged that innovation is a prerequisite tool for competitive advantages in the hospitality industry. To remain to survive in this cutthroat era, the hotels need to trained and groomed their chefs and cooks to imbibe the above innovation process model developed in the Michelin star restaurants, and this may bring revolutionary changes in the way of cooking and presenting the dishes to the customers. The 21st century customers seek unforgettable culinary experiences. Hence it is highly recommended to adopt the above innovation process for the improvement of the hospitality business.

Scope for future research

There is ample scope for innovation in the

hospitality industry, though the present paper highlights the various innovation process from the culinary perspectives. The future research agenda directs the innovation process in other departments of the hotel such as room service, front office operation, restaurant theme and design, innovation in the front office lobby, innovation in hotel sales and product marketing, and menu planning. Further, the present paper may facilitate future research design in order to mitigate the crisis situation through innovation. The present paper may also pave the way for signifying the innovation process Post-Covid-19 considering the demand for technological innovation, contactless and touchless guest services.

Limitation

The present paper highlights the innovation process among the hotel and restaurant chefs working in India considering the culinary perspectives. The research may be carried out on various other segments like quick service and casual dining restaurants, emphasizing their service quality, and service scape, similarly the innovation can be carried out on food safety and hygiene, on cloud kitchen and other food aggregators. Hence the paper is limited to the certain boundaries of culinary areas

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