

Professional Competencies of Hotel Management Undergraduates in Relation to Hospitality Industry Demand in Nepal

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Abstract

Research Article

The hospitality industry needs career-ready graduates with practical competencies and professional skills to meet its dynamic demands. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence on how well the Bachelor of Hotel Management programmes in Nepal have prepared their graduates for the competencies required to meet employers' expectations. The study examined the impact of educational quality, professional competencies, and employability attributes on students' professional quality and industry readiness.

A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted to collect data from one hundred sixteen (n = 116) hotel management graduates in Nepal. Data were analysed using exploratory factor analysis, independent-samples t-tests, and binary logistic regression. The exploratory factor analysis identified seven latent factors: institutional support, applied curriculum, operational competence, professional competency, career readiness, professional preparedness, and career advancement. Logistic regression analysis showed the applied curriculum as the most influential educational predictor of graduates' professional quality ($p < 0.01$). Operational competence ($OR = 3.46$, $p = 0.002$) and professional preparedness ($OR = 2.71$, $p = 0.006$) significantly increased the probability of industry readiness. The findings empirically support human capital theory, in which competency-based education, authentic learning experiences, and industry-integrated curricula are more effective than institutional resources alone in developing industry-ready hospitality graduates. The study has practical implications for curriculum reform, internship enhancement, and university-industry collaboration in Nepal's hospitality education sector.

Article History

Received:

9 March, 2026

Reviewed:

20 April, 2026

Accepted:

1 May, 2026

Published:

31 July, 2026

Keywords: *competency-based education, competency-based education, employability, hospitality education, human capital theory*



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How to Cite: Adhikari Rajak, N., Tamang, S., Ghimire, A., Achrya, K., Shrestha, C., & Adhikari, S. (2026). Professional Competencies of Hotel Management Undergraduates in Relation to Hospitality Industry Demand in Nepal. *Central Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 1(1), 5-32.

1. Introduction

Nepal's tourism and hotel sector is gaining recognition as a vital economic driver, making significant contributions to national income, employment, and foreign exchange earnings. The country's natural beauty and rich cultural heritage attract a substantial number of international tourists, presenting tourism as a pivotal opportunity for sustainable development amid economic challenges. This sector's growth demands a skilled workforce, particularly bachelor-level graduates in hotel management programmes, who can adapt to the changing requirements of the hospitality industry while maintaining high service quality and a competitive edge (Adhikari et al., 2023).

While tourism and hotel management are vital for economic progress, especially in developing nations like Nepal, the country faces challenges, including inadequate management, a lack of a competent workforce, and insufficient strategic policies, which hinder investment and comprehensive development. More importantly, BHM students invest a substantial amount of money over eight semesters, including indirect study costs, yet their employment opportunities are very limited and unstable because BHM graduates are

equipped with theoretical knowledge but lack practical skills (Adhikari et al., 2023a; 2023b).

The tourism and hotel management industries demand a workforce with skills in customer service, including effective communication, professional and empathetic service, leadership, teamwork, and front-office operations management, which emphasise food and beverage service, housekeeping management, culinary skills, and hotel administration (Adhikari et al., 2024).

Additionally, digital literacy, including proficiency in online booking and digital marketing, is crucial. Intercultural communication and critical thinking are essential for engaging with diverse clients and effectively addressing challenges, yet current BHM graduates possess rich theoretical knowledge but lack these skills (Paudyal, 2017). The primary objective of this study is to examine whether the professional qualities and skills of bachelor's-level students in hotel management meet the current needs of Nepal's hospitality industry.

This study is significant because it identifies the gap between academic competencies and the demands of Nepal's hospitality industry and provides insight into the professional

skills needed in the tourism and hotel industries. It helps universities improve their bachelor's degree programmes in hotel management and enhance the employability of their graduates. The document advocates partnership between academia and industry, addresses increasing competency demands, and assists policymakers in formulating effective hospitality education policies. It emphasises the need for practical training and aligns education with international standards, thereby contributing to the sustainable growth of Nepal's tourism sector.

The study by Shrestha (2021) used a mixed-methods design to investigate students' and hotel practitioners'

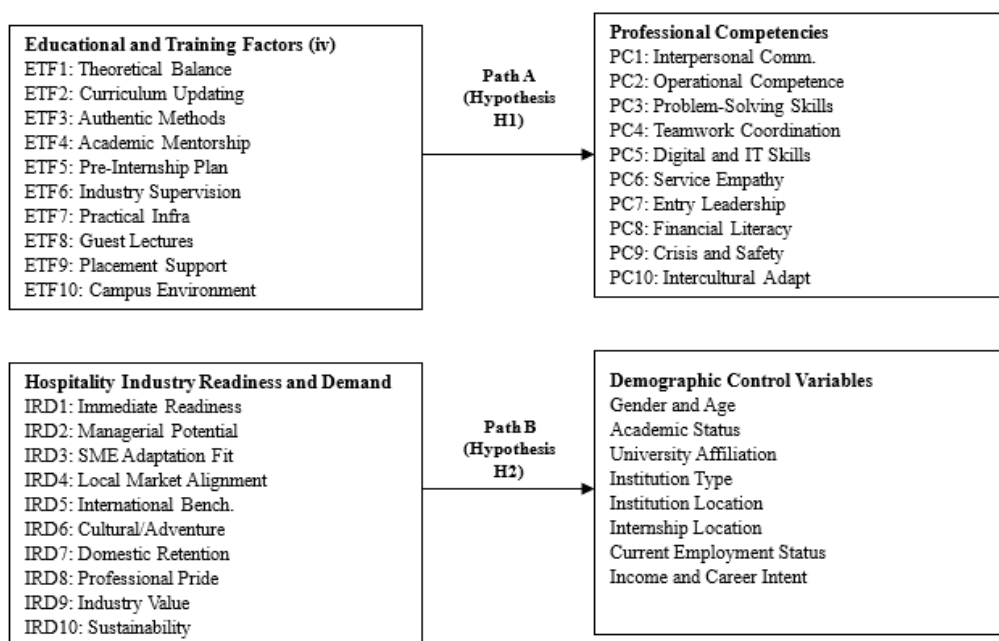
perceptions of hotel management courses in Nepal. It involved 180 final-year students from bachelor-level hotel management colleges and 10 human resource managers from a prominent state hotel. The findings indicated a significant mismatch between students' expectations of the Bachelor's in Hotel Management course and the skills they actually acquired. While practitioners acknowledged that graduates are qualified for entry-level positions, they noted a deficiency in the managerial skills needed to lead departments and organisations in the hospitality sector effectively.

Conceptual framework

Hypothesis

Figure 1

Association between independent and dependent variables



H₁: Educational and training factors (curriculum, internship, mentorship, teaching methods, and industry exposure) have a significant positive effect on the professional competencies of hospitality students.

H₂: Readiness and affiliation with industry demand in the hospitality industry are significantly positively affected by professional competencies (communication, leadership, technical skills, customer service, teamwork, and problem-solving) (see Figure 1).

Theoretical foundation

The theory we use is Human Capital Theory (HCT), developed by Becker (1964), which examines people in terms of education, training, and their roles in the hotel management industry to increase productivity and future income. This study has applied human capital theory (HCT) to examine the professional competencies of bachelor's-level students in hotel management in relation to the hospitality industry's demand in Nepal. This theory supports framing our study by treating the skills and competencies of our bachelor's-level students as economic and productive investments, rather than viewing them solely as an academic certificate (Nickson et al., 2000; Wuttaphan, 2017). This proposed theory provides a

structured framework for understanding how bachelor's-level education in hotel management translates into workplace value and skills (Becker, 1993). This theory argues that education, training, and experience are key indicators of increased productivity and earning potential for our BHM students in the job market. It is further argued that human capital theory holds that a BHM degree is not only a credential but also an investment in professional skills, such as customer service, front-office operations, food and beverage management, communication, and problem-solving (Marginson, 2019).

Therefore, this theory helps us examine whether our investments meet the demands of hotels in Nepal. The next advantage of using HCT is its ability to analyse the gap between supply and demand: higher-level educational institutions produce graduates with defined sets of competencies, but these competencies do not always align with market needs. The hospitality industry in Nepal often has specific human resource requirements. This theory significantly supports the analysis of any mismatch as a structure of underinvestment rather than simply as the poor performance of BHM students. The poor performance of BHM students is repeatedly shaped by skills developed in the tourism sector,

international standards, and service expectations (Wuttaphan, 2018).

Finally, this theory is appropriate for our study because it helps explain the association between hotel management education and the professional competencies required by the hospitality industry in Nepal and further examines whether bachelor's-level hotel management students possess the competencies employers demand (Cai et al., 2025).

2. Literature review

The current study primarily focuses on

Table 1

Nature of tourism education and research

Functional areas	Specific focus
Marketing	Service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty, marketing mix (product, place, price, and promotion), segmentation, target marketing, branding, and market research.
Finance	The topics include asset management, buyouts, profitability, economic forecasting, financial analysis and management, valuation methods, financial statements, and cash flows.
Administration	Strategic planning, accounting, management styles, organisational structure, information and communication, crisis management, and environmental trends.
Operations	Purchasing and inventory management, facility management, management contracts, legal and liability issues, safety and security, productivity, sanitation, energy and waste management, menu engineering and planning, food cost management, and quality control.
MIS/IT	Technology development, information collection and analysis, and innovation.
Human Resource Management	This section covers employee selection and training, turnover, job satisfaction, employee attitudes, sexual harassment, labour costs, empowerment, employee benefits, organisational behaviour, employer/employee liabilities, and workforce diversity.
Sources	Kabir & Rahman (2020). Law and Chon (2007); Jogaratnam et al. (2005); Kozak and Kozak (2016); and Taylor and Edgar (1996); Shrestha (2020).

students' competencies at the bachelor's level in Nepal's hospitality and tourism sector. This section highlights the main focus of the hotel management syllabus. The study by Thal et al. (2021) examined the opinions and perceptions of hospitality students and industry managers regarding the importance of hospitality and tourism management curricula. Using a survey of 224 respondents, they found gaps between academic preparation and industry expectations. The study further highlighted that while students perceived

themselves as adequately prepared, managers emphasised deficiencies in communication, leadership, and practical managerial competencies required in the hospitality industry.

Similarly Hair et al. (2019) examined how internship satisfaction and mentorship affect students' decisions to pursue long-term careers in the hospitality industry. The researchers used a survey to understand the career intentions of hospitality students participating in internships and analysed responses from 179 students. The study found that positive mentorship experiences and internship satisfaction significantly increased students' willingness to continue careers in the hospitality industry.

The study by Gong and Jia (2022) examined students' career intentions to assess the need for hospitality and tourism management through a systematic review of 71 articles. The review found that the HTM education system must clarify and standardise its career values. We need more qualitative and comparative studies to understand students' career intentions better, address additional research objectives, and consider macro-environmental factors when predicting them.

The study by Marneros et al. (2021)

and Kumar (2018) underscored the core competencies essential to success in the hotel industry. A survey of 158 hotels and 480 participants identified six key competency factors: leadership and critical thinking; information technology and financial analysis; human relations and communication; cultural diversity; human resource management; and operational knowledge. The above-mentioned results provide a model to guide both educators and professionals in developing the competencies required for this field.

The study by Ridzuan et al. (2015) examined the goals of higher education in preparing students for their future careers, using a survey of 200 students and finding a shortage of qualified employees, which led to an increased emphasis on internships within curricula. Aligning education with industry needs is essential to enhance students' practical skills and management competencies and to foster networking opportunities for potential employment.

The study by Jiang and Alexakis (2017) examined the knowledge and skills that employers most seek in entry-level managers in the hospitality management discipline, using a survey. The study further highlighted the long-standing concern in higher

education about graduates' industry relevance, as well as the increasing emphasis that business schools place on programme learning outcomes, prompting the researchers to investigate programme exit competencies. The study by Hu et al. (2025) investigated the influence of mentorship relationships between visiting teachers and interns on interns' post-graduation job-choice intentions in the hospitality industry, using a survey. The study further highlighted that mentorship positively influences interns' intentions to pursue jobs in the hospitality sector after graduation.

The study by Zhou et al. (2022) used a time-lagged design to investigate the interrelationships among perceived organisational support (POS), psychological capital, and organisational socialisation and to better prepare industry-ready graduates for the hotel industry, employing a survey method. The key finding indicates that POS has a significantly positive effect on interns' psychological capital. Additionally, both POS and psychological capital contribute to the intention to remain in the hotel industry, with competency skills mediating the effect.

The study by Kitchen et al. (2025) investigated higher education educators'

perceptions of the understanding and integration of authentic learning elements in their curricula, extending the three-factor authentic learning model (construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school) to prepare industry-ready graduates better, using an interview method. The study further highlighted that thematic analysis using NVivo revealed seven key themes within the authentic learning three-factor model: knowledge co-creation and scaffolding, customising knowledge and experiences, student engagement, educator capability, industry readiness, real-world problems, and meaningful connections.

The study by Kim et al. (2016) examined five objectives: understanding hospitality and tourism management (HTM) students' preference, their characteristics for a future HTM career, their motivations for choosing HTM as a major, their reasons for choosing or not choosing whether to work in the hospitality and tourism industry, and the important factors that they consider when making career decisions, using the survey method. The study further highlighted the importance of practical learning and interest in employment over scholastic pursuits and intellectual pursuits.

The study by Stansbie et al. (2016) investigated whether cooperative experiences in hospitality and tourism management support student learning and enhance knowledge gained from traditional classroom instruction, using quantitative data from a questionnaire completed by 339 respondents. The findings provide a sound first step in examining teaching effectiveness at Case University and offer opportunities for further research in a broader context.

The study by Ren (2017) investigated perceptions of professional happiness among hotel management majors at Guangxi Normal University using a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews. The study further highlighted five factors affecting the professional happiness of hotel management majors, as well as feasible strategies to improve it.

The study by Zhang and Tavitiyaman (2022) investigated the perceptions of sustainable issues among stakeholders (industry practitioners and students) to identify priorities for sustainability education. The triple bottom line approach is applied. The study further highlighted that industry practitioners and students generally agree on economic and social issues but not on environmental issues.

The study by Bharwani and Talib (2017) aimed to identify and map the competencies required for the pivotal position of a hotel general manager through a literature review to develop a holistic and relevant leadership competency framework. The study further highlighted a leadership competency model for hospitality organisations, comprising a 43-item framework for hotel general managers, which is categorised into four broad dimensions: cognitive competencies (knowledge), functional competencies (skills), social competencies (attitudes and behaviours), and meta-competencies (motives and traits).

The study by Hong et al. (2023) investigated how perceived curriculum, campus support, and self-efficacy affect the satisfaction of hospitality and tourism management students with the major and their career readiness during the COVID-19 pandemic, using a survey method. The study further highlighted that perceived curriculum, campus support, and self-efficacy positively influenced student satisfaction with their major.

The study by Wesley et al. (2017) examined how students ranked the importance of soft skills and compared their rankings with those of faculty in

retailing and tourism management, as well as with those of businesses, using a cross-sectional survey. The study further highlighted that students, faculty, and industry leaders also identified variations in the importance of soft skills.

The study by Stefanini et al. (2021) examined several evaluation models for educational competencies and proposed a survey-based evaluation model for Tourism and Hospitality (T&H) students. The study further supported the hypothesis, as the proposed model explained 41.5% of the variance in factors influencing tourism and hospitality students' engagement.

The study by Chen and Shen (2012) investigated students' satisfaction with their internship experience and its influence on their willingness to pursue a career in the hospitality industry, using a survey method. The study further highlighted that internship programme planning, Industry involvement, and student commitment positively influence overall satisfaction with the internship experience.

The study by Heimerl et al. (2020) examined factors influencing job satisfaction using survey methods. The study further highlighted that a positive relationship with the supervisor, adherence to the duty roster, and personal

development opportunities are the most important factors for job satisfaction. The study provides useful information about the sustainable and effective promotion of employee job satisfaction.

The study by Grobelna and Marciszewska (2016) investigated what motivates young people in their current and future employment, particularly in tourism, and how recognition of these motivating factors can change managerial approaches, using survey methods. The study further highlighted pay rates, intrinsic interest in a particular job, and opportunities for advancement and career development as the main motivating factors for undergraduates in tourism and hotel management.

The study by Hoang et al. (2021) examined empirical research on empowering leadership in hospitality and tourism and proposed an associated research agenda based on a systematic literature review. The study further highlighted that research on empowering leadership in hospitality and tourism is primarily grounded in motivational and social-orientated theories. Empowering leadership has been examined across various cultures, mostly using quantitative methods. Multiple instruments are used to measure empowering leadership, a construct defined in various ways, which

promotes creativity and innovation, service performance, and various employee attitudes and behaviours.

The study by Jaykumar et al. (2015) investigated the career perceptions of final-year hospitality students of the hotel industry, using a quantitative research approach. The study highlighted that students' willingness to work in the hotel industry after graduation was high; 41 percent preferred to start their careers in the food and beverage department, with awareness of the working environment, positive perceptions of internships, and negative views of hotel careers.

The study by Bavik (2016) investigated organisational culture constructs within the hospitality industry and identified constructs relevant to the industry, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The study further highlighted the key factors affecting the business environment and the unique characteristics of the hospitality industry. The purpose of this study is to identify the scope of organisational culture, specifically in the hospitality industry, and to introduce a tailored organisational culture scale for this context.

The study by Tan et al. (2016) examined the barriers faced by hospitality undergraduates pursuing careers in the hospitality industry, using a survey

method. The findings showed that only two predictors made a statistically significant contribution to commitment to the hospitality industry: social status and pay benefits. In terms of importance, social status was the largest unique contribution to commitment to the hospitality industry.

The study by Testa and Sipe (2012) investigated this issue by developing a "service-leadership" competency model for use in the hospitality and tourism context. The study further highlighted the results of interviews with 110 industry managers, yielding a model of approximately 100 behaviours across 20 competency areas. The results of the study are discussed in the context of extant research.

The study by Gao (2017) investigated the main problems in the internship process and discussed how to optimise internship management in the hotel management speciality within vocational colleges and universities, in light of the current state of internships in hotel management in higher vocational colleges. The study further highlighted the numerous problems in the internship process, which lead to contradictions among hotels, schools, and students and seriously affect the achievement of the internship goal.

The study by Seyitoğlu and Yirik (2015), Menon et al. (2022) aimed to examine tourism students' satisfaction with internships and the impact of their internships on their professional development and industrial perception, using a survey method. The study further highlighted that students' internship satisfaction positively influenced professional development and industrial perspective, and that, together with the vocational tourism education they received, this impact increased.

The study by Katane and Īriste (2014) aimed to provide a scientific foundation for professional practice, contribute to the competitiveness of hospitality professionals from a pedagogical perspective, and conduct a pilot study to examine, analyse, and evaluate hospitality students' views on the organisation and effectiveness of professional practice. The study further highlighted that the issue of hospitality specialists' competitiveness concerns the transition of new specialists from acquiring higher professional education to professional activity.

The study by Suh et al. (2012) investigated the core competencies important to the success of future managers in the hospitality industry through surveys. The study further highlighted that factor

analysis generated six dimensions of core competencies: hospitality skills, interpersonal skills, supervisory skills, food and beverage management skills, leadership, and communication skills.

The study by Liu et al. (2022) aimed to synthesise and compare the effects of influencing factors on hospitality and tourism management students' career intentions across 34 studies, using a meta-analytic approach. The study further identified students' grades as factors that partially moderate some of the influencing factors, while no statistical changes in the relative influences were observed after the COVID-19 outbreak.

Research gap

The above-discussed literature in hospitality and tourism education offers rich insights into issues such as student competencies, curriculum design, internship experiences, career intentions, mentoring, and industry expectations. However, a critical review reveals several important gaps when viewed in the Nepalese context. Most competency frameworks and skill models are developed in international settings. They are not specific to the unique structure of Nepal's hospitality and tourism industry, which small and medium enterprises, informal practices, and a strong dependence on cultural

and adventure tourism characterise. Consequently, there is no Nepal-specific competency framework that reflects the needs of the local industry and employment realities. Second, while many studies have examined student readiness and employability, there is a lack of empirical studies focusing on hospitality students, especially bachelor-level students in Nepal, regarding their skill development, academic preparation, and workplace readiness.

Moreover, although global research has revealed a gap between academic curricula and industry expectations, there is little systematic evidence from Nepal that empirically measures the mismatch between hospitality education and industry requirements. Similarly, in the Nepalese context, studies on internships are largely lacking, despite internships being a critical component of hospitality education. There is limited understanding of the quality, structure, and impact of internships on student learning outcomes. Meanwhile, researchers have widely studied career intentions and industry retention internationally. However, research in Nepal has focused on the effects of foreign employment migration, perceptions of jobs, and local industry conditions on students' willingness to remain in the hospitality industry. Similarly,

researchers have under-researched emerging areas such as digital literacy, MIS/IT competencies, and sustainability education in Nepal, despite their growing importance globally. In general, there is a methodological gap, as most existing studies rely heavily on quantitative approaches and lack qualitative or longitudinal research that could provide richer, more context-sensitive insights into hospitality education and student development in Nepal.

3. Methodology

This study applied the survey design to collect one hundred and sixteen survey data of BHM graduates from Chitwan and Nawalparasi district of Nepal. Binary Logistic Regression (BLR) was used to find the association between professional competency of hotel management graduates and hospitality industry demand (Adhikari, 2022).

4. Results

The results of the exploratory factor analysis indicate that two key latent factors influence students' perceptions of hospitality education: institutional support and applied curriculum. The first factor, institutional support, includes elements such as well-equipped training facilities and supportive services, with loadings ranging from 0.610 to 0.866,

Table 1

Factor loadings of the first independent variable

Variables	Factors loading	Scales
My college possesses well-equipped training kitchens, restaurants, front desks, and housekeeping labs.	0.866	Institutional support
My college fosters a culture that prioritises student welfare and builds confidence in pursuing careers in the hotel and tourism sectors.	0.848	
The college provides systematic briefing, proper preparation, and structured placement matching before the internship begins.	0.837	
The campus provides robust job placement support and career networking opportunities upon graduation.	0.723	
I receive valuable career guidance and academic mentorship from my college faculty members.	0.610	
Faculty members utilise case studies, role-plays, and real-world hospitality problem-solving in their teaching.	0.868	Applied curriculum
The academic programme hosts regular sessions for interaction with hotel managers and practitioners, as well as with guest lecturers.	0.791	
The BHM syllabus is updated regularly to reflect modern industry trends, such as digital hospitality and sustainability.	0.775	

indicating strong associations with (see Table 1).

students' readiness for future careers. The second factor, applied curriculum, reflects practical, industry-oriented teaching methods with loadings from 0.524 to 0.868; experiential learning strategies and industry interaction emerged as significant for educational quality. Collectively, the two factors mentioned above constitute essential components of hospitality education, contributing to students' professional preparedness and graduate employability

The results show that the reliability and construct validity analyses identify two key dimensions that affect the quality of hospitality education: institutional support, applied curriculum and practical integration. Institutional support had a mean score of 2.21 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, explaining 50.44% of the variance and indicating its significant influence on student perceptions. Applied Curriculum scored 1.78, with an

Table 2

Mean, SD, Cronbach's alpha, variances, and KMO values of factors identified

Scales	Mean	SD	Alpha	Variances	KMO
Institutional support	2.21	0.72	0.87	50.44%	0.703
Applied curriculum	1.78	0.63	0.84	14.78%	

Table 3

Summary of the table of independent T-test results

Factors	Male		Female		t-statistics	P-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Institutional Support	1.74	0.36	2.28	0.74	-6.10	0.001
Applied Curriculum	1.39	0.37	2	0.65	-5.56	0.001

alpha of 0.84, accounting for 14.78% of the variance and emphasising its role in educational quality. Overall, the above-mentioned two dimensions explained 64.78% of the variance, confirming the model's adequacy and supporting further exploration of practical integration in the context of internships (see Table 2).

Results of the students' independent t-test indicated that the mean score for males (N = 43) on the first subscale, institutional support (M = 1.74, SD = 0.36), significantly differs [t (116) = -6.10, p = 0.001] from that of females (N = 73) for the same variable (M = 2.28, SD = 0.74). The results show that the mean score for male students (N = 43) on the second subscale, Applied

Curriculum (M = 1.39, SD = 0.37), significantly differs [t (116) = -5.66, p = .001] from that of female students (N = 73) for the same variable (M = 2.00, SD = 0.65) (see Table 3).

Binary Logistic Regression model

The binary logistic regression model showed a good fit to the data. The Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 42.05$, df = 2, p = 0.001), which indicated that the predictor variables significantly improved the model compared with the null model. The Hosmer–Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test was not significant (p > 0.05 preferred). However, only the chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 59.204$, df = 8) is provided, so the exact interpretation of

Table 4

Regression analysis of model 1

Statistical tools	Model summary	Hosmer-Lemeshow	Omnibus tests of model
		test	coefficient
Chi-Square		59.204	42.05
df		8	2
Significance		<0.001	0.001
Cox & Snell's R-squared	0.304		
Nagelkerke R Square	0.526		
-2 Log likelihood	58.069		
Block zero overall %		84.5 %	
Block one overall %		89.7%	

Table 5

Binary logistic regression model to predict

Variables of the equation	B	SE	Wald	df	Sin	Exp (B)	Exp (B)	
							Lower	Upper
Institutional support	-0.15	0.24	0.39	1	0.52	0.85	0.53	1.38
Applied curriculum	-2.10	0.47	19.98	1	<0.001	0.12	0.048	0.30
Constant	-2.97	0.57	26.61	1	<0.001	0.051		

model fit should be confirmed with the reported p-value. The model accounted for 52.6% of the variability in the outcome (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.526$), showing a moderate to strong explanatory power. The Cox and Snell R^2 value of .304 indicates that the predictors accounted for approximately 30.4% of the variance. Without predictors (Block 0), the model correctly classified 84.5% of cases. When the predictors were included

(Block 1), the model correctly classified 89.7% of cases, indicating improved predictive accuracy (see Table 4).

The binary logistic regression analysis indicated that the applied curriculum was a significant predictor of the outcome ($p < .001$) and institutional support was not ($p = .52$). Applied curriculum was significantly associated with lower odds of the outcome (OR = 0.12, 95% CI = 0.048–0.30), whereas institutional

Table 6

Factor loadings of the second independent variable.

Variables	Factors loading	Scale
I understand customer psychology and can deliver intuitive, empathetic, high-quality customer service.	0.883	Operational competence
I possess the fundamental leadership traits needed to direct work groups and delegate operational duties.	0.881	
I understand baseline financial metrics, food costing, inventory management, and resource budgeting.	0.719	
I am well-prepared to serve international tourists by adapting to distinct cultural etiquette and hospitality-tourism offering expectations.	0.608	
I am knowledgeable about hotel security protocols, sanitation codes, and occupational safety procedures.	0.923	Professional competency
I am highly proficient in managing property management systems (PMS), setting up online hotel reservation booking systems, and using basic hospitality software.	0.876	
I can communicate effectively and professionally with guests and colleagues from diverse backgrounds.	0.679	
I work seamlessly in team structures to achieve daily operational targets in a restaurant or hotel setup.	0.671	

Table 7

Mean, SD, Cronbach's alpha, variances, and KMO values

Scales	Mean	SD	Alpha	Variances	KMO
Operational Competence	2.090	0.63	0.83	39.97	0.488
Professional Competency	1.92	0.53	0.80	21.89	

support was not significantly associated (Exp (B) = 0.85, 95% CI = 0.53–1.38). The results of this study suggest that of the variables studied, only Applied Curriculum was a statistically significant predictor of the dependent variable (see Table 5).

The results of the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) identified two key latent dimensions for hospitality students: operational competence and professional competence. Operational competence comprises five variables, with factor loadings ranging from 0.608 to 0.883, highlighting strong customer service capabilities and managerial skills as crucial to success in the hospitality industry. Professional competency comprises four variables, with loadings ranging from 0.671 to 0.923, emphasising safety compliance, technological proficiency, and effective communication as critical components; suggesting that successful hospitality

performance relies on a blend of operational skills, adherence to industry standards, and teamwork; and reinforcing the importance of comprehensive training for student employability in hospitality roles (Hair et al., 2019; Succi & Canovi, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2023) (see Table 6).

The results show that the reliability and construct validity analyses identify two key dimensions that affect the quality of hospitality education: operational competence and professional competence. Operational had a mean score of 2.09 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83, explaining 39.97% of the variance and indicating its significant influence on student perceptions. Professional competency scored 1.92, with an alpha of 0.80, accounting for 21.89% of the variance and emphasising its role in educational quality. Overall, the above-mentioned two dimensions explained 61.83% of the variance (see Table 7).

Table 8

Summary of the table of independent T-test results

Factors	Male		Female		t-statistic	P-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Operational competence	2.04	0.75	2.13	0.55	-0.85	P = 0.49
Professional competency	1.81	0.55	1.98	0.51	-1.625	P = 0.10

Results of the students' independent t-test indicated that the mean score for males (N = 43) on the first subscale, Operational Competence (M = 2.04, SD = 0.75), did not significantly differ [t (116) = -0.85, p = 0.49] from that of females (N = 73) for the same variable (M = 2.13, SD = 0.55). The results show that the mean score for male students (N = 43) on the second subscale, Professional Competency (M = 1.81, SD = 0.55), did not significantly differ [t (116) = -1.625, p = 0.10] from that of female students (N = 73) for the same variable (M = 1.98, SD = 0.51) (see Table 8).

Binary Logistic Regression model

The binary logistic regression model fit the data well. The Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients was statistically significant, χ^2 (2) = 41.08, p = 0.001, indicating that the predictor variables significantly improved the model over the null model. The Cox and Snell R² and the Nagelkerke R² explained 29.0% and 51.0% of the

variance, respectively, indicating moderate explanatory power of the model. The overall classification accuracy increased from 84.5% in the baseline model (Block 0) to 92.2% when predictor variables were included (Block 1), suggesting good predictive power. However, the Hosmer-Lemeshow test was significant (p < 0.01), indicating a poor fit of the model. As a good-fitting logistic regression model often has a Hosmer-Lemeshow p-value > 0.05, this value should be checked before final interpretation (see Table 9).

The binary logistic regression analysis indicated that both operational competence (p = 0.002) and professional competence (p < 0.01) were significant predictors of the dependent variable. Operational competence was positively associated with the likelihood of the outcome (OR = 3.46, 95% CI = 1.55–7.74), and professional competency was negatively associated with the likelihood of the outcome (OR = 0.20, 95% CI = 0.08–0.50). The results

Table 9

Model Summary of Logistic Regression model

Statistical tools	Model summary	Hosmer-Lemeshow Test	Omnibus tests of model coefficient
Chi-Square		50.63	41.08
df		8	2
Significance		<0.001	0.001
Cox & Snell's R-square	0.29		
Nagelkerke R Square	0.51		
-2 Log likelihood	59.03		
Block zero overall %		84.5 %	
Block one overall %		92.2%	

Table 10

Binary logistic regression model to predict hotel industry demand

Variables of the equation	B	SE	Wald	df	Sin	Exp (B)	Exp (B)	
							Lower	Upper
Operational Competence	1.24	0.41	9.17	1	0.002	3.46	1.55	7.74
Professional Competency	-1.57	0.45	11.99	1	<0.001	0.20	0.08	0.50
Constant	-2.45	0.40	37.57	1	<0.001	0.08		

show that both variables significantly analysis (EFA) identified three key predicted the dependent variable, but in latent dimensions for hospitality opposite directions (see Table 10). students: career readiness, professional preparedness, and career advancement. The results of the exploratory factor

Table 11

Factor loadings of the third independent variable

Variables	Factors loading	Scale
I plan to build a long-term, stable professional career inside the lessee hospitality sector.	0.971	Career readiness
I believe the hospitality profession carries respectable social status and provides rewarding long-term benefits and recognition.	0.776	
I am competent at executing green operations, minimising waste, and meeting environmental expectations within e-hotels.	0.691	
I feel competent in handling the specialised operational needs of cultural and adventure tourism operations in 1.	0.668	
My practical preparation aligns with international hospitality industry standards and global service expectations to become a globally skilled workforce.	0.433	
I feel fully prepared to begin working in a professional hotel environment immediately after graduation.	-0.051	Professional preparedness
I feel a high level of professional satisfaction, pride, and happiness regarding my career choice in the hotel management/ tourism and travel management/aviation industries.	0.751	
The competencies I learned align with the specific service expectations and demands of these hotel employers.	0.695	
My competencies allow me to function effectively in small and medium-scale tourism enterprises (SMEs), typical of 1.	0.922	Career advancement
My training qualifies me to transition quickly into supervisory or departmental manager tracks, rather than getting stuck in basic entry-level chores.	0.881	

Table 12

Mean, SD, Cronbach's alpha, variances, and KMO values

Scales	Mean	SD	Alpha	Variances	KMO
Career Readiness	1.96	0.56	0.71	29.47%	0.620
Professional Preparedness	1.97	0.37	0.74	26.66%	
Career Advancement	2.17	0.57	0.78	22.14%	

The results show that the highest loading factor for the first Principal Component (PC) is 0.971, whereas the lowest is -0.051. The second PC has the highest factor loading of 0.751, followed by the lowest of 0.695. Similarly, the third PC has the highest factor loading of 0.922, followed by the lowest of 0.881 (see Table 11).

The results show that the reliability and construct validity analyses identify three key dimensions that affect the quality of hospitality education: career readiness, professional preparedness, and career advancement. Career readiness had a mean score of 1.96 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.71, explaining 29.47% of the variance. Professional preparedness scored 1.97 with an alpha of 0.74, accounting for 26.66% of the variance, and career advancement scored 2.17

with an alpha of 0.78, explaining 22.14% of the variance. Overall, the above-mentioned two dimensions explained 78.27% of the variance (see Table 12).

Results indicate that female respondents felt more career-ready ($M = 2.03$, $SD = 0.48$) compared to male respondents ($M = 1.86$, $SD = 0.31$), with a significant p-value of 0.045. However, perceptions of professional preparedness were similar between genders, with both genders averaging 1.91 ($p = 0.577$). In terms of career advancement, females ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 0.64$) had a significantly higher perception than males ($M = 1.88$, $SD = 0.32$), showing marked confidence in growth opportunities ($p = 0.001$).

Binary Logistic Regression model

The Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients was significant, $\chi^2(3) = 36.13$, $p = 0.001$, indicating that the predictors

Table 13

Summary of the table of independent T-test results

Factors	Male		Female		P-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Career readiness	1.86	0.31	2.03	0.48	0.04
Professional preparedness	1.91	0.4	1.91	0.8	0.57
Career advancement	1.88	0.32	2.28	0.64	0.001

significantly enhance the model over the intercept-only version. The Hosmer–Lemeshow test showed a chi-square statistic of 24.37 ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that although the predictors improve prediction, the model’s fit is questionable. Model statistics revealed a Cox and Snell R^2 of .26 and a Nagelkerke R^2 of 0.46, indicating moderate explanatory power. The model’s -2 log-likelihood was 63.99, with lower values indicating a better fit (see Table 14).

The binary logistic regression analysis revealed that professional preparedness significantly increased the likelihood of the outcome ($B = 1.00$, $SE = 0.36$, $Wald = 7.62$, $OR = 2.71$, $p = 0.006$), while career advancement significantly decreased the likelihood of the outcome ($B = -1.34$, $SE = 0.43$, $Wald = 9.55$, $OR = 0.26$, $p = 0.002$). Career readiness was not a significant predictor ($B = 0.00$, 0.29 , $Wald = 0.06$, $OR = 1.08$, $p = 0.790$). The results suggest that professional

Table 14

Regression analysis of model 1

Statistical tools	Model summary	Hosmer-Lemeshow test	Omnibus tests of model coefficient
Chi-Square		24.37	36.13
df		6	3
Significance		<0.001	0.001
Cox & Snell’s R-square	0.26		
Nagelkerke R Square	0.46		
-2 Log likelihood	63.99		
Block zero overall %		84.5 %	
Block one overall %		92.2%	

Classification accuracy improved from 84.5% in the baseline model to 92.2% after adding predictors, demonstrating a significant gain (see Table 14).

readiness and career development are important predictors of the dependent variable, but career readiness alone does not predict the outcome (see Table 15).

Table 15

Binary logistic regression model to predict hotel industry demand

Variables of the equation	B	SE	Wald	df	P-value	Exp (B)	Exp (B)	
							Lower	Upper
Career readiness	0.07	0.29	0.06	1	0.79	1.08	0.605	1.92
Professional preparedness	1.00	0.36	7.62	1	0.006	2.71	1.33	5.52
Career advancement	-1.34	0.43	9.55		0.002	0.26	0.11	0.61
Constant	-2.12	0.34	37.17	1	<0.001	0.12		

Strong predictors

The binary logistic regression analyses identified different significant predictors of students' professional competencies and industry readiness. Among the educational factors, an applied curriculum emerged as the strongest predictor ($OR = 0.12, p < .001$). In contrast, institutional support did not significantly predict the outcome ($p = .52$). Regarding competency dimensions, operational competence ($OR = 3.46, p = .002$) demonstrated the strongest positive influence on the dependent variables. At the same time, while professional competency also significantly predicted the outcome, although in the opposite direction ($OR = 0.20, p < .001$). Within the employability dimension, professional preparedness significantly increased the likelihood of the desired outcome ($OR = 2.71, p = .006$), whereas career advancement also significantly predicted the outcome ($OR = 0.26, p = 0.002$). However, career readiness alone was not a statistically significant predictor ($p = 0.790$). Finally, applied curriculum, operational competence, professional preparedness, and career advancement are the most influential determinants of students' professional quality in Nepal's hospitality sector.

5. Discussion

This study aimed to examine the professional competency of Bachelor of Hotel Management (BHM) students in the context of the competency needs of Nepal's hospitality sector. In conclusion, the results indicate that real educational experiences, competency development, and professional preparedness are more relevant than institutional resources alone for producing industry-ready graduates, thus supporting both the study's hypotheses and the Human Capital Theory (HCT).

The first major finding was that the applied curriculum was the only significant educational predictor of students' professional quality, and institutional support did not significantly predict the outcome. This finding indicates that students derive greater benefit from experiential learning approaches, such as industry projects, case studies, simulations, internships, guest lectures, and problem-based learning, than from physical infrastructure or administrative support alone. Institutional resources are still required, but not enough unless they are transformed into real learning experiences that reflect real workplace practices.

The results of this study corroborate previous studies. Kitchen et al.

(2025) argued that authentic learning experiences are central to industry-ready graduate preparation. Likewise, Ridzuan et al. (2015), Chen and Shen (2012), Ali and Amin (2017). and Hu et al. (2025) found that the quality of internships, practical learning, and industry mentorship significantly influences students' employability and their long-term career commitment in hospitality. The present study extends these findings by providing empirical evidence from Nepal that curriculum relevance is a stronger determinant of graduate competencies than institutional support alone.

The second main result concerns students' competencies. The strongest positive predictor of industry readiness was operational competence, suggesting that practical managerial skills, customer service capability, leadership, financial understanding and operational knowledge have significant effects on graduates' employability. The results are consistent with the findings of Marneros et al. (2021), Suh et al. (2012), Bharwani and Talib (2017), and Jiang and Alexakis (2017), who identified operational knowledge, communication, leadership, interpersonal abilities, and technical competencies as the core competencies required by hospitality employers.

Professional preparedness was also a significant predictor of the outcome, indicating that students who perceive themselves as being professionally competent are significantly more likely to meet industry expectations. This finding is consistent with Hong et al. (2023), who demonstrated that curriculum quality, campus support, and self-efficacy positively influenced hospitality students' career readiness, and with Zhou et al. (2022), who found that competency development mediated students' intention to stay in the hospitality industry.

Interestingly, career readiness did not significantly predict outcomes, despite students' moderate perceptions of their readiness, suggesting that the sense of being "ready" for employment does not necessarily translate into professional quality. Instead, employers appear to prefer demonstrable competencies, practical experience and workplace preparedness to students' subjective confidence. This finding is somewhat at odds with Hong et al. (2023), who reported a stronger relationship between perceived readiness and career outcomes and suggested that, in Nepal, structural labor market conditions and practical experience may be more important than perceived readiness.

The results of the independent t-test also indicated that the female students reported significantly higher perceptions of institutional support, applied curriculum, career readiness, and career advancement than the male students. However, there were no significant gender differences in operational competence and professional preparedness. These findings indicate that female students receive more educational support and career opportunities. Still, there are no significant differences in actual professional competence, suggesting that gender differences stem from differences in educational engagement or career expectations rather than from the acquisition of competence itself. The logistic regression models explained 46% to 53% of the variance in the dependent variables and had classification accuracies ranging from 89.7% to 92.2%, indicating moderate to high explanatory and predictive power.

Linkage of findings with Human Capital Theory

The results of this study offer solid empirical support for human capital theory (Becker, 1964; Wood & Brotherton, 2008), which views education and training as investments that increase workers' productivity and economic value. The importance of applied

curriculum, operational competence, and professional preparedness, in particular, indicates that educational investments translate into valuable human capital only when they develop competencies directly applicable to the workplace requirements. Students are gaining practical knowledge, leadership skills, customer-service competence, digital hospitality skills, and operational expertise, which makes them more employable and better aligned with hospitality industry expectations, rather than just gaining an academic qualification.

Yet, the non-significant effect of career readiness extends human capital theory as well by suggesting that investing in education is not sufficient unless it translates into quantifiable workplace competencies. Competency-based education is the means by which investment in education translates into productivity in the labour market.

6. Conclusion

This study assessed the sufficiency of BHM education in Nepal to develop the professional competencies demanded by the hospitality industry. The findings imply that curriculum quality and competency development are more important than institutional support in generating industry-ready graduates.

The most powerful educational predictor was applied curriculum, and the most powerful competency predictors were operational competence and professional preparedness. Conversely, career readiness alone was not a significant predictor of professional quality, indicating that students' perceived confidence is less important than demonstrated workplace competencies. The findings of this study support human capital theory by showing that investments in education create economic value only when they lead to real thought by employers. The study contributes to the hospitality education literature by providing empirical evidence from Nepal linking higher education to industry expectations.

The practical implication is that universities need to improve competency-based curricula by integrating authentic learning, industry-integrated internships, digital hospitality training, leadership development, customer service simulations, and closer collaboration with hospitality employers. Policymakers should promote curriculum reforms that stress employability skills alongside academic knowledge. Hospitality industries should be involved in curriculum design, internship supervision, and graduate mentoring. The study in general suggests

that a paradigm shift from knowledge-orientated teaching to competency-based education, which produces graduates who can meet the changing needs of Nepal's tourism and hospitality industry, is needed to improve the quality of hospitality education.

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