

Navigating the Entrepreneurial Journey: *Motivations and Challenges of Hospitality Graduates in Nepal*

Binod Aryal¹
NATHM

Abstract

This study explores the motivations and struggles experienced by hospitality graduates who embark on entrepreneurial journeys in Nepal. Employing a narrative inquiry approach, the study examines the lived experiences of four hotel management graduates from the Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM). The study reveals two distinct motivation layers: the initial excitement driven by academic exposure and the persistent inspiration from external sources such as mentors, internships, and personal aspirations. However, significant barriers, including financial constraints, limited institutional support, and a lack of enabling policies, hinder entrepreneurial efforts. Graduates also cited cultural and familial expectations as critical influences on their career choices. This study highlights the duality of challenges and opportunities within Nepal's hospitality education and entrepreneurial ecosystem. The study recommends policy interventions, enhanced institutional frameworks, and targeted entrepreneurial education to support aspiring entrepreneurs. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on aligning hospitality education with the evolving demands of a dynamic global industry, offering valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and industry practitioners.

Key Words: *entrepreneurial intentions, hospitality graduates, motivations, struggles*

Introduction

Entrepreneurship within the hospitality sector is a vital catalyst for innovation, economic growth, and job creation globally. Graduates of programmes like the Bachelor of Hotel Management (BHM) are often expected to transition into entrepreneurial roles, leveraging their specialised skills and creativity to meet evolving market demands. In many regions, this progression is natural, with entrepreneurship seen as a dynamic avenue for hospitality graduates to build innovative ventures and address consumer needs. However, in Nepal, a country rich in cultural heritage and natural beauty, this trajectory is less common. Despite the hospitality and tourism industry's critical contribution to the nation's GDP, many hospitality graduates opt for stable employment in established hotels or seek opportunities abroad rather than venturing into entrepreneurship.

Nepal's tourism sector, with its immense potential for growth, depends on the active participation of both domestic and international players to cater to diverse tourist demands. Yet, the entrepreneurial capacity of its hospitality graduates remains underutilised, revealing a stark gap between their academic preparation and the opportunities within the sector. This raises fundamental questions: What deters hospitality graduates

¹**Mr. Aryal** is serving NATHM as a senior instructor of food and beverage service with an additional responsibility of Program Coordinator of the Bachelor of Hotel Management (BHM) program. He can be reached at binodaryal@nathm.edu.np

from pursuing entrepreneurship in Nepal? What motivational factors encourage some graduates to take the entrepreneurial leap? And what systemic and cultural barriers hinder the development of entrepreneurial intentions?

This study seeks to address these questions by examining the motivations and challenges faced by hospitality graduates who have ventured into entrepreneurship. Using a narrative inquiry approach, the research explores how internal and external factors influence entrepreneurial ambitions and identifies the barriers that impede their success. The findings aim to provide actionable insights to enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem within Nepal's hospitality sector, contributing to curriculum development, policy reforms, and broader socio-cultural shifts.

Hospitality education in Nepal, spearheaded by institutions like the Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM), has seen significant growth over the past two decades. While these institutions excel in producing skilled professionals for traditional industry roles, they fall short in nurturing entrepreneurial capabilities. The existing curriculum, though robust in technical and operational training, lacks a focus on entrepreneurial skills and the practical business knowledge needed to start and sustain ventures.

Beyond educational gaps, cultural factors deeply influence career choices in Nepal. A preference for stable employment, reinforced by familial and societal expectations, often discourages graduates from pursuing entrepreneurial endeavours. Financial constraints, risk-averse attitudes, and the stigma surrounding failure further compound these challenges, creating a socio-cultural environment that stifles entrepreneurial ambition.

This research examines these multifaceted issues, aiming to bridge the gap between hospitality education and entrepreneurship in Nepal. Exploring personal narratives and systemic factors highlights the need for a paradigm shift in educational practices and societal attitudes to foster a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurial growth in the hospitality sector.

Based on the above discussions, this study focuses on two primary objectives:

- To explore the motivational factors that drive hospitality graduates to embark on entrepreneurial ventures, and
- To identify the key challenges (and struggles) faced by hospitality graduates in their entrepreneurial journey.

Review of Literature

Entrepreneurial education is increasingly recognised as an essential component of higher education globally, particularly in sectors like hospitality, where the industry's dynamic nature demands innovation and adaptability. While the primary aim of hospitality education traditionally has been to prepare students for employment in the tourism and hotel industry, recent trends show a growing emphasis on entrepreneurship as a viable career path. Globally, entrepreneurship within the hospitality sector contributes significantly to economic development, job creation, and the diversification of services offered to tourists (Andrews, 2007).

Entrepreneurship and Hospitality Education

Entrepreneurship education in hospitality management involves equipping students with the necessary skills, knowledge, and mindset to start, manage, and scale their own businesses. While traditional hospitality education focuses on operational skills such as hotel management, food service, and customer care, the contemporary entrepreneurial curriculum incorporates elements of business development, financial management, innovation, and sustainability (Hsu et al., 2014). This shift reflects the growing recognition of entrepreneurship as a critical driver of innovation and competitiveness in the hospitality sector.

However, critics argue that the integration of entrepreneurial education in the hospitality curricula often remains superficial and lacks contextual relevance. Similarly, scholars like Poudel (2019) highlight the importance of entrepreneurial education in preparing graduates for the evolving global tourism landscape: the practical implementation of such education often suffers from a disconnect between theoretical knowledge and real-world application.

Moreover, the focus on entrepreneurial education risks overshadowing the core operational skills that are essential for managing hospitality businesses, particularly in the regions where traditional service excellence remains a key competitive advantage. This raises questions about whether the entrepreneurial curriculum strikes the right balance between fostering innovation and maintaining foundational expertise.

Motivations for Entrepreneurship among Hospitality Graduates

Motivational factors for entrepreneurship among hospitality graduates can be broadly categorised into intrinsic and extrinsic drivers. Intrinsically, graduates are motivated by a desire for independence, creativity, and the opportunity to contribute to their communities. Many hospitality graduates view entrepreneurship to exercise their passion for hospitality and provide personalised services that larger businesses may not be able to offer. The autonomy associated with running one's own business also appeals to graduates who seek more control over their career trajectories (Rae, 2010). This states that while intrinsic motivations such as passion and independence are strong initial drivers, they are often insufficient to sustain entrepreneurial endeavors without robust external support. Graduates frequently encounter structural challenges such as financial constraints and inadequate entrepreneurial education that diminish the feasibility of their aspirations, undermining the initial enthusiasm generated by intrinsic factors.

Extrinsic motivations often stem from external influences such as family expectations, mentorship, and financial incentives. Family background plays a crucial role in Nepal, where cultural factors strongly influence career decisions. Graduates from entrepreneurial families may be more likely to pursue business ventures due to a supportive environment and financial backing. In contrast, graduates from non-entrepreneurial backgrounds often face discouragement from their families, who may perceive entrepreneurship as risky (Shrestha, 2020). These statements argue that highlighting familial pressures and societal expectations frequently steer graduates towards stable employment in established organizations rather than entrepreneurial ventures.

Additionally, mentorship and networking opportunities are significant motivators. According to [Cooper et al. \(2004\)](#), exposure to successful entrepreneurs and industry leaders can inspire graduates to take the leap into business ownership. Internships and practical exposure during hospitality programmes also play a vital role in shaping entrepreneurial intentions. Graduates who have the chance to work in smaller, independent businesses or who are mentored by experienced entrepreneurs are more likely to develop the confidence and skills necessary to start their own ventures ([Rae, 2010](#)). This indicates that these opportunities are not universally accessible, often limited by institutional shortcomings and a lack of structured mentorship programs in Nepalese hospitality education.

Barriers to Entrepreneurship in Nepal

Despite the motivations driving some graduates toward entrepreneurship, there are considerable barriers to starting and sustaining a business in Nepal's hospitality sector. One of the most significant obstacles is financial constraints. The lack of access to capital is a common challenge for aspiring entrepreneurs globally, but it is especially acute in Nepal, where funding options for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are limited ([Paudel, 2019](#)). Graduates often find it difficult to secure loans or investors due to the perceived risk of the hospitality sector and a lack of collateral. This reveals that while financial constraints are a well-recognized barrier, they are further compounded by graduates' limited knowledge of available funding options and the lack of tailored support mechanisms to help them navigate the funding landscape. The absence of clear pathways to secure capital, whether through government programs or private investors, often leaves aspiring entrepreneurs without viable financial solutions. This gap between motivation and practical feasibility stifles the entrepreneurial potential within the hospitality sector.

Moreover, the institutional support for entrepreneurs is inadequate. While institutions like NATHM offer hospitality education, they do not provide sufficient infrastructure or resources to foster entrepreneurial development. There are few incubation centres, mentorship programmes, or practical workshops that guide students through the process of business ideation, funding, and scaling. This underscores that, despite the presence of strong academic programs, there is a disconnect between the academic preparation graduates receive and the entrepreneurial skills required to succeed in real-world ventures. The institutional framework in the Nepal hospitality education system remains underdeveloped in this respect, leaving graduates partially equipped to transition from theory to practice.

This lack of institutional support is exacerbated by policy limitations, as government policies have not been sufficiently tailored to encourage entrepreneurship in the hospitality sector ([Shrestha, 2020](#)). This suggests that lack of policy alignment exacerbates the challenges faced by the graduates, who often find themselves navigating an unwelcoming environment without a clear support structure.

Cultural factors also play a significant role in deterring graduates from pursuing entrepreneurship. Social expectations in Nepal, particularly in more traditional families, often emphasise stable employment over the risks associated with starting a new business. The social stigma associated with failure in business can also deter many from

attempting entrepreneurial ventures (Gupta, 2017). These social and cultural pressures create an environment where entrepreneurship is often seen as a last resort rather than a viable career option for hospitality graduates. This focus on entrepreneurial education risks overshadowing the core operational skills that are essential for managing the hospitality business, particularly in regions where traditional service excellence remains a key competitive advantage. This raises questions about whether the entrepreneurial curriculum strikes the right balance between fostering innovation and maintaining foundational expertise.

Global Trends and Lessons for Nepal

Globally, there has been a significant shift toward integrating entrepreneurial education in hospitality programmes. Institutions worldwide are increasingly offering specialised programmes that blend traditional hospitality education with business skills, focusing on areas such as sustainability, digital transformation, and global market trends. For example, in countries like Switzerland, the United States, and the United Kingdom, hospitality schools have successfully implemented entrepreneurship-driven curricula that encourage students to think critically and develop innovative business models (Hsu et al., 2014). While these global practices serve as a valuable benchmark, their applicability in the Nepalese context is not without challenges. Unlike globally renowned institutions with strong funding and access to global industry networks, Nepalese hospitality schools often lack the financial and logistical capacity to establish comprehensive entrepreneurship-driven curricula.

These global practices provide valuable lessons for Nepal, where hospitality education is still evolving. Incorporating real-world case studies, entrepreneurial challenges, and industry collaboration into the curriculum can provide a more comprehensive learning experience that prepares graduates not only for employment but also for creating and managing their own businesses. Additionally, establishing entrepreneurial incubators and mentorship programmes at educational institutions can offer the support and guidance that Nepalese graduates need to succeed in the hospitality sector (Nelson & Dopson, 2001). The lack of institutional support deprives students of valuable opportunities to test their business ideas, receive constructive feedback, and build confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities.

Research Methods

This study used a qualitative research design to explore the struggles and motivations of hospitality graduates in Nepal who have ventured into entrepreneurship. A narrative inquiry approach was adopted, as it allows for an in-depth understanding of individual experiences, making it well-suited for exploring the personal stories of graduates who have navigated the challenges and opportunities of starting their own businesses. Narrative inquiry enables the researcher to understand how individuals construct meaning and make sense of their lived experiences, which is crucial for understanding the complex and subjective nature of entrepreneurship in the hospitality sector.

Research Paradigm

The research followed an interpretive research paradigm, which emphasises the understanding of human behaviour and experiences from the perspective of the

participants. The interpretive paradigm acknowledges that reality is socially constructed, and that individuals' experiences and perceptions shape their understanding of the world. As such, this study sought to understand the personal and contextual factors that motivated hospitality graduates to become entrepreneurs and the struggles they faced in their entrepreneurial journeys.

Philosophical Assumptions

The philosophical foundation of this research was guided by the following assumptions:

Ontological Assumption: The study operates on the assumption that multiple realities exist. The lived experiences of hospitality graduates who have pursued entrepreneurship are subjective and constructed through their personal perceptions, interactions, and environments. The research does not seek a singular objective truth but aims to understand the diversity of experiences among the participants.

Epistemological Assumption: From an epistemological standpoint, this research acknowledges that knowledge is co-constructed through the interaction between the researcher and participants. The stories shared by the participants were interpreted in relation to the broader context of entrepreneurship in Nepal's hospitality industry, and the knowledge generated was situated within these specific social and cultural contexts.

Axiological Assumption: This research values the personal experiences and stories of the participants as central to understanding their motivations and struggles. The researcher's values are acknowledged, and efforts were made to approach the study with reflexivity and an open-minded stance.

Research Design

To collect and analyse participants' stories, the present study used a narrative inquiry design, an approach that focuses on the stories individuals tell about their experiences. It involves collecting detailed, in-depth accounts of participants' lives, followed by analysis to derive meaning from these narratives. This method is particularly useful for studying complex personal experiences, such as entrepreneurship, which is influenced by a wide range of factors including personal aspirations, socio-cultural influences, and institutional frameworks.

The participants were selected based on their entrepreneurial involvement, and their narratives were captured through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for flexibility and depth in exploring their experiences.

Participant Selection

The study focused on four graduates of the Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM) who had completed their Bachelor of Hotel Management (BHM) programme and had initiated entrepreneurial practices in the hospitality sector. The selection of participants followed a purposive sampling technique, which was chosen to ensure that the individuals selected could provide rich, detailed accounts of their experiences as entrepreneurs.

Each participant had different entrepreneurial experiences, providing a diverse range of insights into the challenges and motivations faced by hospitality graduates in Nepal.

Respondent 1: A graduate who started an online bakery business in Kathmandu.

Respondent 2: A graduate who opened a restaurant in the Kathmandu Valley.

Respondent 3: A graduate who launched a business in a different field outside of hospitality but continues to employ hospitality graduates.

Respondent 4: A graduate who established a small café in Kathmandu after working in hotels for two years.

Data Collection Procedures

The primary data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews, which provided the flexibility to explore participants' narratives in depth while maintaining consistency in the questions asked. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they allow the researcher to probe deeper into specific issues while ensuring that key topics related to the research questions are covered.

Interviews were conducted in person at a time and place convenient for the participants, ensuring a comfortable and open environment for sharing their stories. Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent. The participants were assured of their confidentiality, and all identifying information was anonymised for ethical reasons.

The interview protocol included open-ended questions focused on the following themes:

- The motivation behind their decision to start a business in the hospitality sector.
- The challenges they faced before and after starting their business.
- Their reflections on the role of hospitality education in preparing them for entrepreneurship.
- The support (or lack thereof) they received from family, peers, and educational institutions.

In addition to the interviews, field notes were kept to document the researcher's reflections on the interviews, body language, and any contextual information that might enhance the interpretation of the data.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The data analysis process was based on thematic analysis, which involves identifying patterns and themes within the interview data. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the transcriptions were read multiple times to immerse in the participants' stories. The data were then coded and categorised into emerging themes related to motivations, struggles, and entrepreneurial experiences.

The analysis process followed the following steps:

Initial Coding: The transcripts were coded for significant words, phrases, and sentences related to the participants' motivations, challenges, and experiences.

Theme Development: The initial codes were grouped into broader themes, such as "financial challenges," "family support," "institutional gaps," and "personal aspirations."

Narrative Construction: The themes were used to construct detailed narratives that represented the key elements of each participant's entrepreneurial journey. These narratives were then compared to identify commonalities and differences among the participants' experiences.

Interpretation: The thematic analysis was informed by the research questions, the theoretical framework, and existing literature on hospitality entrepreneurship, allowing for a deeper understanding of the factors that influence entrepreneurial success in Nepal's hospitality sector.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were an essential part of this study. The following measures were implemented to ensure the ethical integrity of the research:

Informed Consent: All participants were provided with detailed information about the purpose of the study, the data collection methods, and their rights as participants. They were asked to sign an informed consent form before participating.

Confidentiality: The identity of participants was protected by using pseudonyms and ensuring that no personal information was disclosed in the research findings.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Data Security: All interview recordings and transcripts were securely stored and only accessible to the researcher.

Quality Standards

To enhance the reliability and validity of the study, several strategies were employed:

Member Checking: After the interviews were transcribed and analysed, participants were given an opportunity to review the findings to ensure that their stories and interpretations were accurately captured.

Triangulation: To strengthen the findings, data from interviews were triangulated with existing literature and theoretical frameworks.

Peer Debriefing: The researcher discussed the findings with colleagues and mentors to ensure the interpretation was grounded in the data and to minimise researcher bias.

Findings and Discussion

Motivations for Entrepreneurship

The narratives of the four hospitality graduates revealed two primary categories of motivation: initial academic inspiration and external influences. Both factors contributed to the graduates' decisions to start their businesses, though the specific motivations varied based on individual experiences and external circumstances.

Initial Academic Inspiration

- For all participants, academic exposure to hospitality management and entrepreneurship played a significant role in sparking their entrepreneurial ambitions. As students, they were introduced to the possibilities of entrepreneurship through coursework and lectures on business management, marketing, and operational skills.
- The first respondent, for instance, described being motivated by the academic focus on business development and innovation during his BHM programme at NATHM. He recalled how guest lectures from successful entrepreneurs and case studies of thriving businesses in the hospitality sector inspired him to consider starting his own venture. The exposure to entrepreneurship during his studies ignited a passion for creating something independent and meaningful, which led him to start his online bakery business.
- Similarly, the second respondent found the academic emphasis on hospitality operations and entrepreneurship to be a driving force. Although she had a general interest in food and beverage management, the BHM programme provided her with the practical knowledge and skills that she felt were necessary to run her restaurant. As she put it, "The real-world insights and mentorship provided during my programme made me realise that I could do more than just work in a hotel. I could create my own place, one that reflects my style and values."

External Influences

- Beyond the classroom, external influences such as family support, mentorship, and exposure to real-world entrepreneurial experiences were crucial factors in motivating graduates to start their businesses.
- For the third respondent, the decision to pursue entrepreneurship came after he faced challenges in the corporate world. Working in a hotel for several years, he realised that the conventional career path was not fulfilling his aspirations. The constant drive to explore more and be independent led him to start his own business outside of the hospitality sector, although still drawing upon the skills he developed in the hospitality industry. His motivation stemmed not just from personal ambition but also from witnessing successful entrepreneurs in his network.
- The fourth respondent also spoke about how external mentorship and family support encouraged her to pursue entrepreneurship. Despite initially working for

a well-established hotel, she struggled with low remuneration and limited career advancement. However, the support of her family, particularly her father, who had been an entrepreneur, inspired her to take the plunge into starting her own café. “My family’s belief in me was a huge motivator. They reminded me that if I put my heart into something, I could succeed,” she said.

- Thus, while academic learning provided a foundation, it was the external support system comprising family, mentors, and exposure to entrepreneurial success stories—that acted as the primary motivating factor for many graduates to pursue business ownership.

Struggles Faced in Entrepreneurship

While the participants’ motivations were strong, they all faced significant barriers as they navigated the complex path of entrepreneurship in Nepal’s hospitality sector. These struggles can be categorised into financial barriers, institutional gaps, socio-cultural pressures, and market challenges.

Financial Barriers

- The most pressing challenge reported by all participants was lack of capital. Despite having the motivation and ideas for business ventures, many struggled to secure the necessary funds to launch or scale their businesses.
- The first respondent faced immense difficulty in securing a loan to start his online bakery business. While he had a solid business plan and proof of concept, he was unable to get the financial support he needed from local banks. The high interest rates and lack of collateral made it nearly impossible for him to access credit. Instead, he had to rely on personal savings and borrowings from friends and family.
- The second respondent also encountered similar difficulties. She needed significant capital to establish her restaurant, but there was no clear avenue for financial support. “Banks do not see the potential in small businesses like mine. It took a lot of personal effort to raise the funds,” she reflected. The reliance on informal financial sources, such as family loans and personal savings, was common among all participants, which delayed their entrepreneurial plans.

Institutional Gaps

- Another major struggle cited by participants was the lack of institutional support for entrepreneurship. While hospitality education in Nepal is growing, it still lacks the necessary infrastructure to support graduates who wish to start their own businesses. There are limited incubation centres, entrepreneurship-focused mentorship programmes, and practical workshops that bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world business practice.
- The third respondent, who faced considerable hurdles when starting his business outside the hospitality sector, expressed frustration with the lack of entrepreneurial guidance at NATHM. Despite completing his studies in hospitality, he felt unprepared

for the financial and legal aspects of running a business. “There was no guidance on how to get funding or manage taxes. It would have been much easier if my university had provided more practical tools,” he noted.

- Participants emphasised that while hospitality education provided operational expertise, it lacked a focus on entrepreneurial skills such as business planning, financial management, and risk assessment. This gap was particularly noticeable in the early stages of their businesses, as many had to learn these skills on their own or seek guidance from external sources.

Socio-Cultural Pressures

- Nepal’s traditional view of career success, particularly in more rural areas, often prioritises stable employment over entrepreneurial ventures. This cultural preference for steady jobs, especially within established hotel chains or international corporations, posed a significant barrier to many graduates. Family expectations were a major source of pressure for participants, especially those from non-entrepreneurial backgrounds.
- The fourth respondent shared that her family was initially sceptical about her decision to leave her job at a well-regarded hotel to start her own café. She felt immense pressure to follow a more conventional career path, but ultimately her determination and family support helped her overcome this barrier.
- Participants noted that the fear of failure and social stigma surrounding business failure in Nepal contributed to their reluctance to take risks. This socio-cultural environment, where entrepreneurship is not always seen as a respected career path, was a recurring theme in their stories.

Market Challenges

- The final significant struggle was the competitive market environment. Nepal’s hospitality sector is becoming increasingly saturated, especially in urban areas like Kathmandu, which poses additional challenges for entrepreneurs looking to carve out a niche.
- The first respondent noted that while the demand for online delivery services was growing, the market was highly competitive, with numerous small businesses offering similar services. Similarly, the second respondent struggled to establish her restaurant in a highly competitive food industry. “I had to think creatively to differentiate myself from other restaurants. It’s hard to stand out when there are so many options in the market,” she said.

Discussion: Bridging the Gap Between Education and Entrepreneurship

- The findings underscore a critical gap between hospitality education and entrepreneurship in Nepal. While the academic curriculum in hospitality programmes provides graduates with essential operational knowledge, it does not sufficiently equip them with the entrepreneurial mindset and skills required to launch and

sustain a business. The lack of institutional support, such as incubation centers and mentorship programmes, further limits graduates' ability to transition from education to entrepreneurship successfully.

- This gap mirrors global trends where hospitality education has evolved from merely producing employees for the industry to actively promoting entrepreneurial skills. Countries with a stronger focus on entrepreneurship in hospitality education, such as Switzerland and the U.S., offer models that can be adapted to Nepal. These models incorporate hands-on training, internships with entrepreneurs, and business development support into the curriculum. In Nepal, there is a clear need for policy reform, such as tax incentives for startups, easier access to credit for young entrepreneurs, and government-led initiatives to foster entrepreneurship in the hospitality sector.
- Furthermore, the influence of family and societal pressures remains a significant barrier to entrepreneurship in Nepal. Overcoming this cultural hurdle requires a broader societal shift that redefines entrepreneurship as a viable and respectable career option for young graduates.

Conclusion and Implications

The study presented in this article explored the motivations and struggles of hospitality graduates in Nepal who have ventured into entrepreneurship. The findings shed light on the complex factors that drive graduates to start their own businesses and the significant barriers they face in pursuing entrepreneurial careers in the hospitality sector.

The research revealed two main sources of motivation: academic inspiration and external influences. While hospitality education provides graduates with essential operational knowledge, it lacks a strong emphasis on entrepreneurial skills and practical business development. External support from family, mentors, and personal networks plays a crucial role in encouraging graduates to take the leap into entrepreneurship. However, socio-cultural pressures, financial barriers, and institutional gaps remain significant hurdles that often discourage aspiring entrepreneurs from pursuing their business ventures.

The struggles faced by these graduates are reflective of broader systemic issues in Nepal's hospitality education system and entrepreneurial ecosystem. The absence of sufficient institutional support, such as incubation centres and mentorship programmes, coupled with limited access to funding and financial resources, creates an environment where entrepreneurial potential is stifled. Moreover, socio-cultural expectations around stable employment and the fear of failure contribute to a risk-averse mindset among many graduates.

This research highlights the need for a more integrated approach to hospitality education that not only prepares graduates for employment but also fosters an entrepreneurial mindset. It also underscores the importance of providing greater institutional and policy support to create an enabling environment for entrepreneurship in Nepal's hospitality sector.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while the motivation for entrepreneurship among hospitality graduates in Nepal is present, it is tempered by significant barriers related to finance, institutional support, socio-cultural expectations, and market saturation. By reforming hospitality education, providing better access to resources and finance, and fostering a supportive cultural environment, Nepal can create a thriving ecosystem for entrepreneurial ventures in the hospitality sector.

The recommendations outlined above emphasise the need for collaboration across various stakeholders, including educational institutions, government bodies, and the private sector. With these changes, Nepal's hospitality graduates will be better equipped to embrace entrepreneurship and contribute to the growth and innovation of the sector.

Managerial and Policy Implications

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the entrepreneurial landscape for hospitality graduates in Nepal:

Reforming the Curriculum to Focus on Entrepreneurship

Incorporate entrepreneurial modules: Hospitality education should go beyond operational training and integrate entrepreneurial education into the curriculum. Offering courses on business planning, financial management, innovation, and sustainability will equip students with the tools they need to start their own businesses.

Practical exposure: Institutions should partner with local businesses and entrepreneurs to provide students with hands-on experience in running a business. This could include internships, business incubators, and collaboration with industry professionals to bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world entrepreneurship.

Case studies and mentorship: Bringing in successful entrepreneurs as guest lecturers and mentors can provide invaluable insights into the challenges and opportunities of starting a business in the hospitality industry. Case studies of successful startups within the hospitality sector could also be included in the curriculum to inspire and inform students.

Enhancing Institutional Support for Entrepreneurs

Establish incubation centres: Universities, particularly NATHM, should establish entrepreneurship-focused incubation centres where students can receive mentorship, business development assistance, and access to resources such as office space, networking opportunities, and seed funding. These centres can serve as platforms for aspiring entrepreneurs to develop and test their business ideas.

Develop networking and support programmes: Institutions should facilitate networking opportunities with successful entrepreneurs, industry experts, and investors. Creating support networks can help graduates build the connections needed to launch and sustain their businesses.

Create entrepreneurship clubs or societies: Student-led entrepreneurship societies can provide a platform for like-minded individuals to share ideas, collaborate on projects, and receive guidance from faculty and external mentors.

Improving Access to Finance

Facilitate access to funding: Financial barriers remain one of the most significant challenges faced by aspiring entrepreneurs. The government and financial institutions should collaborate to offer low-interest loans and start-up grants for young entrepreneurs in the hospitality sector. Special schemes could be designed for graduates who wish to start businesses in the tourism or hospitality industry.

Offer microfinance options: Since many hospitality graduates lack the collateral required to access traditional loans, microfinance institutions can play a critical role in providing funding to small-scale hospitality entrepreneurs. Simplifying the loan application process and reducing interest rates would make entrepreneurship more accessible.

Encouraging a Shift in Socio-Cultural Norms

Promote entrepreneurship as a viable career choice: Government and educational institutions should work together to promote entrepreneurship as a respected and viable career option. Public campaigns, seminars, and workshops can help shift societal attitudes and encourage young people to view entrepreneurship as a respectable and rewarding path.

Supportive family policies: Many hospitality graduates face significant resistance from their families when pursuing entrepreneurship. Encouraging family support for entrepreneurial endeavours through education and advocacy programmes can help reduce the cultural stigma associated with failure and risk-taking.

Celebrate entrepreneurial success: Public recognition of successful hospitality entrepreneurs can inspire others and normalise entrepreneurial success as an aspiration. Highlighting stories of local entrepreneurs in media outlets and at industry events can further boost the status of entrepreneurship.

Policy Reform for Entrepreneurship Development

Government support and incentives: The Nepali government should implement policies that create an enabling environment for entrepreneurs, such as tax incentives for startups, especially in the hospitality and tourism sectors. Additionally, establishing special economic zones or business clusters for hospitality-related ventures could encourage innovation and attract investment.

Promote social entrepreneurship: The government should also encourage social entrepreneurship, which focuses on creating positive social or environmental impact alongside financial success. Hospitality graduates could be incentivised to start businesses that address local issues, such as sustainable tourism or community-based accommodations, thus contributing to both the economy and society.

Long-term Focus on Building Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

Create an entrepreneurial ecosystem: Building a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem in Nepal's hospitality sector requires collaboration between universities, industry, government, and financial institutions. Creating platforms for collaboration, such as entrepreneurial conferences, innovation hubs, and joint projects, will provide the necessary environment for entrepreneurial ideas to flourish.

Foster international collaboration: Nepal can benefit from collaboration with international hospitality schools and organisations to exchange knowledge, research, and best practices. Partnerships with foreign universities could offer joint programmes in entrepreneurship or provide students with access to global networks and funding opportunities.

Funding

The author declared having received no funding for this study.

Conflict of interest

The author declared having no conflict of interest associated with this study.

References

- Airey, D., & Tribe, J. (2010). *Education for hospitality*. In C. Lashley & A. Morrison (Eds.), *In search of hospitality: Theoretical perspectives and debates*. Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Andrews, S. (2007). *Introduction to tourism and hospitality industry*. Tata McGraw-Hill.
- Clandinin, J. D., & Connelly, F. M. (2010). *Narrative inquiry: Handbook of complementary methods in education research*. Routledge
- Cooper, S., Bottomley, C., & Gordon, J. (2004). Stepping out of the classroom and up the ladder of learning: an experiential learning approach to entrepreneurship education. *Industry and Higher Education*, 18(3), 11-22
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Frese, M., & Rauch, A. (2008). *A personality approach to entrepreneurship*. In S. Cartwright, & C. L. Cooper (Eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Personnel Psychology*, 121-136.
- Gupta, M. (2017). Corporate social responsibility, employee-company identification, and organizational commitment: Mediation by employee engagement. *Current Psychology*, 36(2), 101-109.

- Hsu, C. H. C., Xiao, H., & Chen, N. (2014). Hospitality and tourism education research from 2005 to 2014: "Is the Past a Prologue to the Future?" *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 29(1), 141-160. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-09-2015-0450>
- Nelson, A., & Dopson, L. (2001). Future of hotel education: Required skills and knowledge for graduates of U.S. hospitality programs beyond the year 2000. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, 13(5), 58-59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10963758.2001.10696715>
- Paudel, S. (2019). Entrepreneurial leadership and business performance: Effect of organizational innovation and environmental dynamism. *South Asian Journal of Business Studies*, 8(3), 348-369. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SAJBS-11-2018-0136>
- Rae, D. (2010). Universities and enterprise education: Responding to the challenges of the new era. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 17, 591-606. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/14626001011088741>
- Richardson, S. (2008). Undergraduate tourism and hospitality students' attitudes toward a career in the industry: A preliminary investigation. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 8 (1), 23-46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15313220802410112>
- Shrestha, S. K. (2020). Status of hospitality education in Nepal: Analysis of the perspective of hospitality students and practitioners. *Nepalese Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 2(1), 61-79. <https://doi.org/10.3126/njhtm.v2i1.44396>