



GRIFFITH COLLEGE DUBLIN

Graduate Business School
Dissertation Submission Cover Sheet

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Study mode: Full-time X Part-time
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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Mr. Ronan Gallagher for his timely feedback and guidance in this process of dissertation writing. He has been an immense source of support in the whole journey of dissertation writing.

I would also like to thank my friends from MSc Pharmacy at Griffith College Dublin for participating in the pilot study.

I would also like to thank all the interviewees that took part in the interview.

Lastly I would like to thank my family for all the support.

Thank you all !

Abstract

The purpose of the research is to understand how the concept of Supply chain management (SCM) and concept of competitive advantage have evolved all these years. The research also examines the role of SCM in achieving competitive advantage in the Indian hospitality industry.

A non-probability convenience sampling method is used to collect primary data through three telephonic interviews. A total of three executives working in the Indian hospitality start-ups have participated in the research. A mono qualitative research method is adopted for this research.

The concept of SCM has expanded as it is not just management philosophy now. It is considered as a strategic concept . Likewise the concept of competitive advantage is not just related to cost leadership, differentiation in service or product and market focus (segmentation of market or customers). There are various competencies that can help companies attain competitive advantage.

The research adds to the literature of SCM and competitive advantage. The research also highlights that any competency can help companies attain competitive advantage but only an effective SCM can help companies achieve competitive advantage.

Key words: Hospitality, hospitality start-ups, competitive advantage, SCM

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Chapter 1: Introduction:

1.1 Research Background:

Not only in India but also globally, tourism and hospitality are the key drivers of economic growth. The potential of tourism and hospitality is significant considering the rich cultural and historical heritage, variety in ecology, terrains, and natural beauty spread in the length and breadth across India.

India is ranked 34th in the Travel and Tourism competitive index. The country is ranked 3rd among 185 countries in terms economic contribution to GDP of India. Apart from its economic contribution to Indian economy, the increasing market size of Indian tourism and hospitality industry and overwhelming interest of investors in the industry indicates that the industry is going to be very competitive (IBEF, 2019).

In the recent years Indian hospitality market has witnessed huge growth in domestic consumers. The rise in middle class population and increment in disposable income have boosted the growth of domestic and outbound tourism leading to significant market for hospitality industry (Song, H., 2012).

Apart from these positive macro factors, the steps taken by the Government of India have boosted the potential of tourism and hospitality industry in India. The Government initiative to expand E-visa scheme expects to double the tourist inflow to India. It is also estimated that the hospitality industry will expand 2.5 per cent on the back of higher budgetary allocation and low-cost health care facility (Li, S., Ragu-Nathan, B., Ragu-Nathan, T.S., Rao, S.S., 2006).

On consideration that tourism and hospitality industry is vital in the economic development of the country it is important that the organisations within the industry have competitive advantage not just to compete domestically but also internationally. The research topic looks into the role of supply chain management in achieving competitive advantage.

1.2 Justification of research

The change in the lifestyle and behaviour are the two main reasons among many that the industry is going through a transformational phase. The start-ups are driving the next-gen hospitality services in the country. The start-ups are merging elements such as hotels, food and beverages, life style and even travel to define hospitality in a new perspective (Mason-Jones, R., Towill, D.R., 2017).

There can be various factors that influence the growth and success of hospitality business but supply chain is one of the most important factors that holds a significant position in the growth and success of hospitality business in India. Supply chain management plays an integral part in the success of an organization. An efficiently running supply chain allows the organization to deliver end product quickly and also at low cost. Supply chain is an interlinked process that has huge influence on cost reduction, improved material delivery, shorter life cycle, quality improvement and access to product and process technology (Gold, S., Seuring, S., Beske, P., 2010).

Apart from this, the changing landscape in the Indian hospitality sector it is even important for hospitality industry to have an efficient supply chain management (Harrison, A., New, C., 2002). There is a need to relook at the importance of supply chain in the context of the changing landscape of Indian hospitality industry so that organizations can attain the same level of competitive advantage as they used to in the traditional hospitality business.

The hospitality industry can be categorized as unorganized, organized and franchise. There are unicorn start-ups at the forefront of growing organized hospitality industry in India. OYO has successfully expanded its business to multiple countries. It is a hospitality chain that has more than 8500 hotels. The Fabhotel is another hospitality chain that is differentiated as budget hotel aggregator. Colive is the aggregator that offers fully furnished serviced apartments at affordable prices. Room on Call is a start-up that works with hotels to book and offer expertise on infrastructure and budget management (R, R., 2018).

There are many start-ups in hospitality industry which are changing the ways business were done in the past. All these start-ups are technology driven and focussed on solving a multitude issues plaguing Indian hospitality industry. The main issues are related to cost such as material cost, material ordering cost, inventory costs, emergency purchase etc. Supply

chain management involves all the activities related to the flow and transformation of goods from the raw material stage through to the end users. It includes management of system, operations and assembly, purchasing, production schedule, order processing, inventory management, transportation, warehousing and customer service. It is therefore supply chain management is an important element in hospitality industry and helps organisations achieve competitive advantage (Sethu, H.S., 2007).

1.3 Research questions:

It is based on the background of the research the following research questions are organised for the research.

- 1) Have the concepts of “Supply chain management” and “competitive advantage” added a new perspective for next-gen hospitality start-ups?
- 2) What is the role of supply chain management (SCM) in the performance of the hospitality start-ups in India?
- 3) How can the Indian hospitality start-ups achieve competitive advantage through supply chain management?

1.4 Aims and Objectives of the research:

The aim of the research is to find out how supply chain management can help organizations in Indian hospitality industry achieve competitive advantages. In achieving the aim the following objectives are proposed for the research.

- 1) To examine how well the benefits of SCM are understood by the executives in the Indian hospitality sector.
- 2) To establish whether the hospitality industry values SCM
- 3) To understand the role of SCM in achieving competitive advantage in the hospitality industry.

1.5 Research Contribution:

The research helps to understand if there is still a positive relationship between supply chain integration and the performance of an organization or not. Apart from that the research helps to achieve the following research objectives.

- 1) To examine how well the benefits of SCM are understood by the executives in the Indian hospitality sector.
- 2) To establish whether the hospitality industry values SCM
- 3) To understand the role of SCM in achieving competitive advantage in the hospitality industry.

Furthermore, the research also helps to understand the impact of supply chain management through the four dimensions of supply chain management; strategic supplier partnership, customer relationship, level of information sharing, and postponement, conceptualised for this research. The research examines the impact of supply chain management in these aspects and provide a guideline to the supply chain practitioners on how supply chain management can be vital in helping an organization achieve competitive position in the Indian hospitality industry.

The findings of the research can be used for further research in a case specific company or different industry to check whether the theory that states, “there is a positive relationship between supply chain integration and the performance of an organization” is still valid or not. The conceptual framework can be utilised in different industry to assess the influence of supply chain on the performance of an organization in that different industry.

1.6 Structure of the research:

The research is presented in six chapters. The first chapter is introduction. It introduces the dissertation through a short introduction. The chapter includes background information to present the purpose of the research. It also provides the justification on the need to conduct the research. The chapter further presents the research questions and aims and objectives that guide the study. The chapter also includes the contribution the research can make to the existing research or theory.

The second chapter in this research is literature review. The chapter presents the secondary research that has already been reported. The chapter provides an insight into what has already been done by others and what has been planned for this research. The chapter also includes

the conceptual framework connects the literature review with the research questions and provides shape and structure to the research.

The third chapter is research methodology. In this chapter, the different types of research strategies and designs are explored and based on the requirement of the research the research methodology is designed for the research. The chapter presents the justification and explanation of the methodological approach taken to collect primary data. The chapter also includes the ethical issues and approach to data analysis.

The fourth chapter is presentation of data. The chapter presents the primary data collected through telephonic interviews, and findings are derived from the primary data.

The fifth chapter is discussion. The chapter discussed the findings based on the research questions and aims and objectives. The further presents the scope for further research and research limitations.

The sixth and the final chapter is conclusion and recommendation. It is based on the discussion of the findings; the findings are concluded. It is based on the conclusion the recommendation is presented in this chapter.

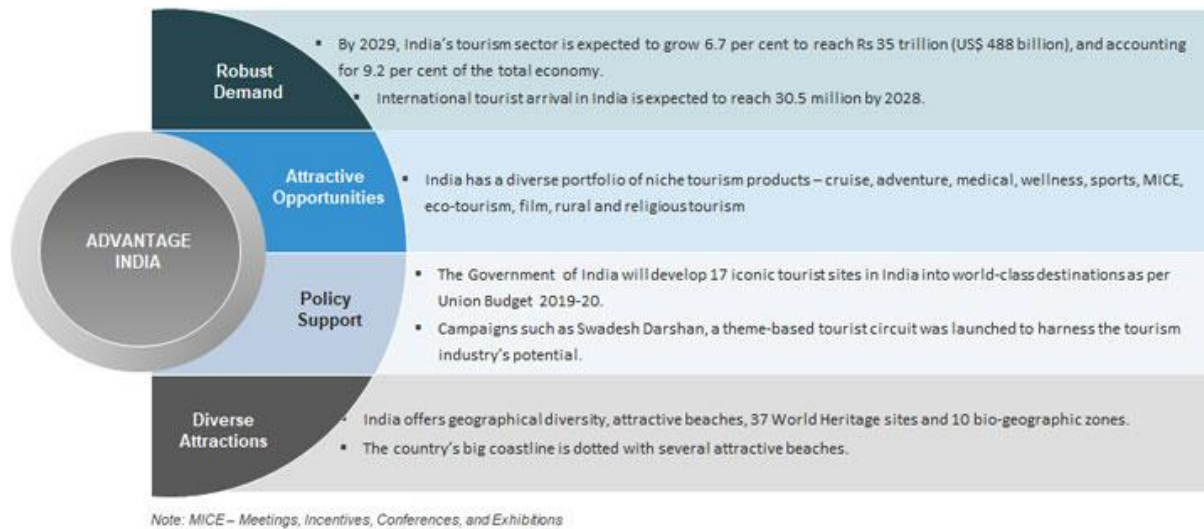
Chapter 2: Literature review:

2.1 Introduction:

The chapter explains the key concepts and terminologies related to the research theme. It also presents the changing dynamics of hospitality industry in India and role of supply chain management in this changing hospitality business. The concept of “competitive advantage” is also explained in the perspective of the changing hospitality business in India. Furthermore, the role of supply chain management in achieving competitive advantage in the Indian hospitality industry is also explained in this chapter. It also describes the conceptual framework developed for this research.

2.2 Indian Hospitality industry:

The Indian hospitality industry is one of the largest service industries in India and 8th largest in the world. The hospitality industry is considered as a complex industry as it includes a diverse portfolio of businesses such as restaurants, hotels, cruise, adventure, medical, wellness, sports, tourism, films and entertainment, casinos, and other tourism and travel related businesses.

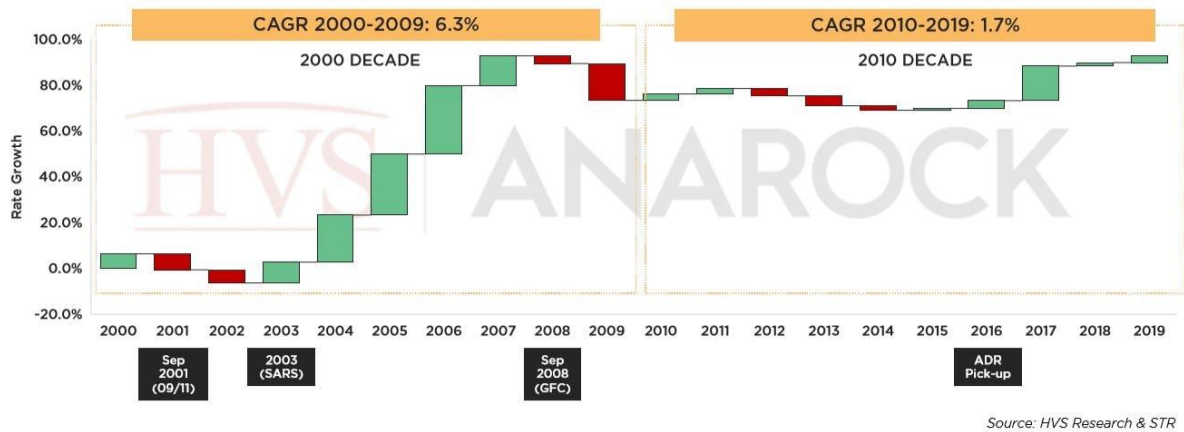


Source:

The Indian tourism industry's future looks positive because of anticipated robust demand, attractive opportunities in the diverse tourism products, policy support for the development of the industry and recognition of diverse sites and geographic zones. In addition, the rising purchasing power of the domestic tourists, an increase in international tourists, huge investment in the commercial development of the industry, growing airline industry and Government led policies and support are also responsible for prominent growth in the industry. However, the Indian hospitality industry is highly fragmented. The higher percentage of small and unorganised players dominated the Indian hospitality industry.

The Indian hospitality like any other country hospitality industry has severely hit because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The industry has witnessed massive reduction in the total revenue as compared to that in 2019. The total revenue loss in 2020 is expected to be Rs.89,813 crores* as compared to the total revenue of Rs. 1,58,113 crores* in 2019.

The Indian hospitality industry had witnessed the highest growth rate of 6.3 per cent in 2000, that is post liberalization but the average growth rate of the industry was 1.7 per cent post the global financial crisis during the 2010 decade.



*1 crore =10 Million

The recent pandemic has created a situation even worse for the Indian hospitality as compared to the global financial crisis from 2007-2010. The demand in the hospitality industry is correlated to the availability of the COVID vaccine and the Government's efforts in making the supply chain efficient in the industry. The shortage of labour, issues related to vendors and supply chain are some of the major challenges the hospitality industry is facing because of the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought low consumer confidence and inconsistent supply chain system in the ecosystem of the Indian hospitality sector. The impact of COVID-19 is going to continue demand and supply for the next few years. It is very imperative that the supply chain will need to go through huge transformations in the next few years. The recent disruption in the supply and demand framework has either broken the supply chain or effected it severely. The supply side challenges are getting addressed with the slow restart of the economy however the demand contraction is creating further disorder in the supply chain system in the hospitality industry.

2.3 Start-ups in the Indian Hospitality industry:

The hospitality industry is a diverse industry. Most of the start-ups in India are providing next-gen hospitality services that can be seen as merger of elements such as hotels, foods and beverages, lifestyle, travel and amusement/fun activities. The start-ups in the Indian hospitality industry is providing better customer service as most of the next-gen start-ups have technology driven models. The start-ups are looking to solve a diverse range of problems that are present in the traditional Indian hospitality industry.

The start-ups have embraced growth with some of the revolutionary technology advancements such as boom of hotel meta search engines, online travel agency, booking engine, tele medical tourism, etc in the Indian hospitality industry. Some of the well-established hospitality start-ups include OYO, Fabhotels, Colive, Room on Call, Zomato, Trilyo, Zostel and many others.

OYO is a chain of leased and franchised hotels. The start-up covers all category of hotels, from the budget hotels to presidential suites. The company has emerged as one of the world's leading chain of hotels, homes and spaces within a short time frame of 7 years. The company operates through 43,000 hotels with over more than 1 million rooms. The company provides its service in more than 800 cities in the world.

Fabhotel is a budget hotel aggregator and direct competitor to OYO. The company was started in 2015. The company has listed more than 600 hotels in more than 50 cities in India. Since the company has positioned itself as a budget hotel brand the company target the middle class and upper middle-class population as its customers.

Zostel is India's first and the largest chain of backpackers' hotel. The company was started in 2013. Since 2013, the company has expanded its business to 37 locations across India and Nepal. The company operates with more than 200 hostels in those 37 locations. The company has also started to franchise its brand to promote micro entrepreneurs.

The hospitality companies need to adapt to the situation of COVID-19 pandemic and build supply chain resilience to survive. The hospitality start ups cannot rely completely on the importing of the materials but they need to source materials locally. Since most of the companies need to source material locally there will be an increase in competition in the supply chain ecosystem in the Indian hospitality industry. The Government policies in favour of local manufacturing can push an establishment of global value chains in India, that can not only meet the local demand but also export internationally to meet the demand of international markets.

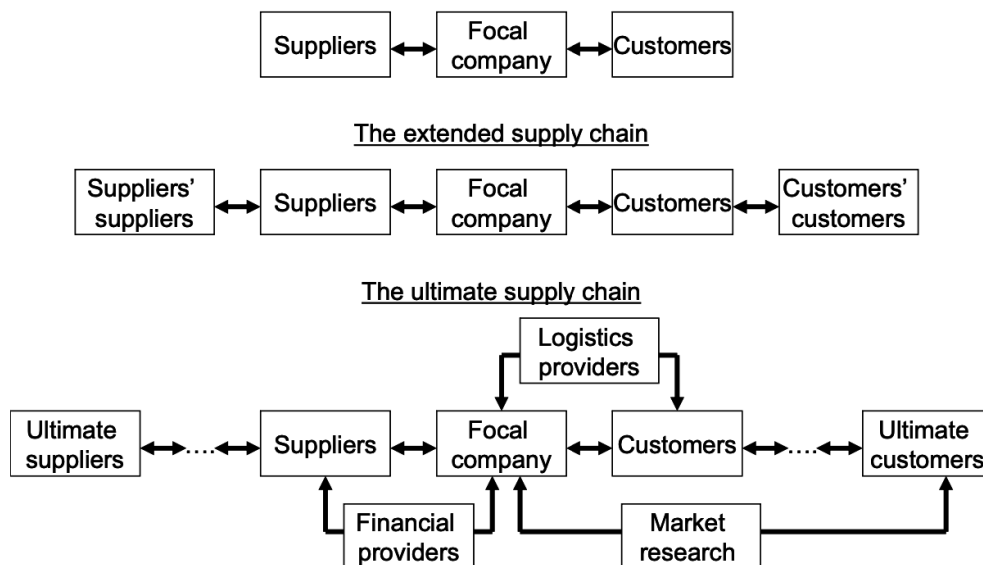
Even though all these hospitality start-ups are technology driven these companies need to enable innovative add-ons to supply chain and logistics management solutions to overcome the challenges in the supply chain system and achieve competitive advantage.

2.4 Supply chain management:

The early literature on supply chain indicates that supply chain is only the extension of operations, purchase and logistics. In the recent years the view on supply chain management has expanded. Bilgihan, A., Okumus, F., Kwun, (2011) have added information systems, and strategic management to the concept of supply chain management. In further addition to supply chain activities, Giménez, C., Ventura, E., (2003) explained that supply chain not only manufacturer and supplier but also transporters, warehouses, retailers, and customers.

Ellram, L.M., (1991) explains that supply chain management is the coordination of production, inventory, location and transportation. An effective supply chain management allows an organization to have processes, people and materials work more efficiently and reduce the cost significantly.

Stevens (1989) pointed out that the process of supply chain starts with source of supply while it ends at the stage of consumption. However, the supply chain can be explained in three levels; direct supply chains, extended supply chains and ultimate supply chain.



Different types of supply chain levels

Source:

The direct supply chain includes the focal company, suppliers and customers. In the direct supply chain, there is an upward or downward flow of products, services, finance and information. The extended supply chain is similar to direct supply chain but there are added immediate suppliers and customers. The ultimate supply chain has ultimate suppliers and customers apart from extended suppliers and customers.

Indian hospitality is known for low cost yet quality services (Mentzer, J.T., 2004). The differentiation of hospitality industry in general, compel to have an effective supply chain in place so that cost effectiveness is achieved in process, people and materials. Majority of the hospitality companies have direct supply chain and the extended supply chain as they are small companies.

2.5 Supply chain Integration

In simple terms, supply chain integration means redesigning the supply chain system in an organization (Jones, T.C., Riley, D.W., 1985). The main purpose of supply chain integration is to establish cooperation and collaboration between the actors in the supply chain system in an organization. A supply chain integration in an organization is an integration of suppliers, customers, and cross-sectional functions in the organization.

The previous studies have found that there is a positive relationship between supply chain integration and the performance of an organization (Xu, X., Gursoy, D., 2015a).

Supply chain integration is a process in which all the stakeholders involved in the fulfilment of a product or service are integrated into a single system. The integration of all the parties into a single system requires significant coordination and alignment so that everyone is effective working towards collective goal all the time.

The supply chain integration can vertical or horizontal in nature. In horizontal integration the same level of chain is merged while in vertical integration, the merger includes different levels of the chain.

It is irrespective of the nature of supply chain integration, the supply chain integration adds supply chain visibility, adds to the flexibility at work, reduce waste, centralize data, and improve margin. In the context of hospitality, the importance of supply chain integration even increases because it is a customer centric industry and there is a need to achieve a high level of customer satisfaction and at the same time reduce cost to be competitive in market.

2.6 Customer Service

In order to increase sales, hospitality sector needs to reduce the cost and improve the quality of service but the role of customer service cannot be ignored. The improvement in the quality

of service through the quality deployment function, allows an organization to exceed the customer's expectation leading to achieving customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction cannot be achieved only through quality food but quality of service is equally important. The activities such as management of system, operations and assembly, purchasing, production schedule, order processing, inventory management, transportation, and warehousing have direct impact on the quality of service and customer satisfaction (Fantazy, K.A., Kumar, V., Kumar, U., 2010).

Customer satisfaction is measured through the gap of expectation and perception. The organizations that are able to match the customer's expectation to what is perceived then that organization is able to satisfy the customer and can improve the customer satisfaction level.

2.7 Competitive advantage:

Competitive advantage is defined as the ability of a company or organization to develop a competitive position as compared to its competitors. ()

Tracey et al. (1999) explained that competitive advantage is distinctive competencies within an organization that keeps an organization apart from competitors thus providing an edge over them in the market place. The competencies are results of critical management decisions made at an organization.

Earlier competitive advantage was focussed in increasing the market share through the competition in price and sales. The quantity of sales and high pricing were mainly responsible for companies defending market share in the past. However, at present competition is referred as, "war of movement". It is based on the ability of a company to anticipate the changes in market and respond quickly, the competitive advantage is explained in recent times. Competitive advantage can be achieved through creation of competencies that help companies to create value for customers, achieve cost advantage, achieve differentiation advantage which results into increase in the market share of the company or increase in the profitability of the company.

The Porter's competitive strategy states that a company can attain competitive advantage cost leadership, differentiation in service or product and market focus (segmentation of market or customers). However, the recent research suggests that marketing, finance, human resource, customer service, supply chain management and other functions can also be instrumental in achieving competitive advantage.

Some of the other research has highlighted factors such as cost, quality, dependability, delivery of speed as critical competitive factors for manufacturing industry while pricing, quality, customer service, timely service, value for money are some of the important factors that can help hospitality companies achieve competitive advantage. Majority of the research has indicated price/cost, quality, delivery dependability, product innovation, time to market as some of the key factors that are responsible for competitive advantage.

2.8 Supply chain management as competitive advantage:

A supply chain management helps an organization to have an effective communication among the stakeholders that results into increased coordination and less faults. It also results into increased efficiency at processes, people and production (Xu, X., Gursoy, D., 2015b).

The supply chain management allows to integrate the processes of supply chain with technology so that the organization can utilize technology to add value. The integration of technology with the supply chain enables supply chain automation, leverage smart supply chains, automate orders and tackle customer service payment processing, IT support, and reduce overhead costs (Öztüren, A., Güven, S., 2009). The integration of supply chain with other functions enables agile process improvement. The supply chain helps to maximize supply chain partnerships by viewing suppliers as a valuable resource, and striving continuous improvement. Supply chain management cultivates ream innovation leading to put stakeholders together to maximize perspective and also understand risks (Michigan State University, 2019).

The main purpose of supply chain management is to create low cost and highly responsible supply chain mechanism in the organization. In order to achieve the purpose of the supply chain the organization needs to automate all routine processing of common transactions such

as orders, invoices, etc so that it helps the organization to increase productivity and at the same time decrease the rate of errors when done manually. The organization also needs to focus on more value-added activities such as customer service, inventory management and sales.

Supply chain management is a major strategic asset that supports an organization's competitive position. There are four important elements of competition; innovation, quality, customer service and cost. Even though the main focus of achieving competitive advantage is through cost reduction, the other aspects such as innovation, quality, and customer service cannot be ignored. The innovation in processes and functions can allow an organization to decrease time to market, increase quality and improve lead time and achieve customer satisfaction (Ventura, E., Giménez Thomsen, C., 2002).

2.9 Previous research

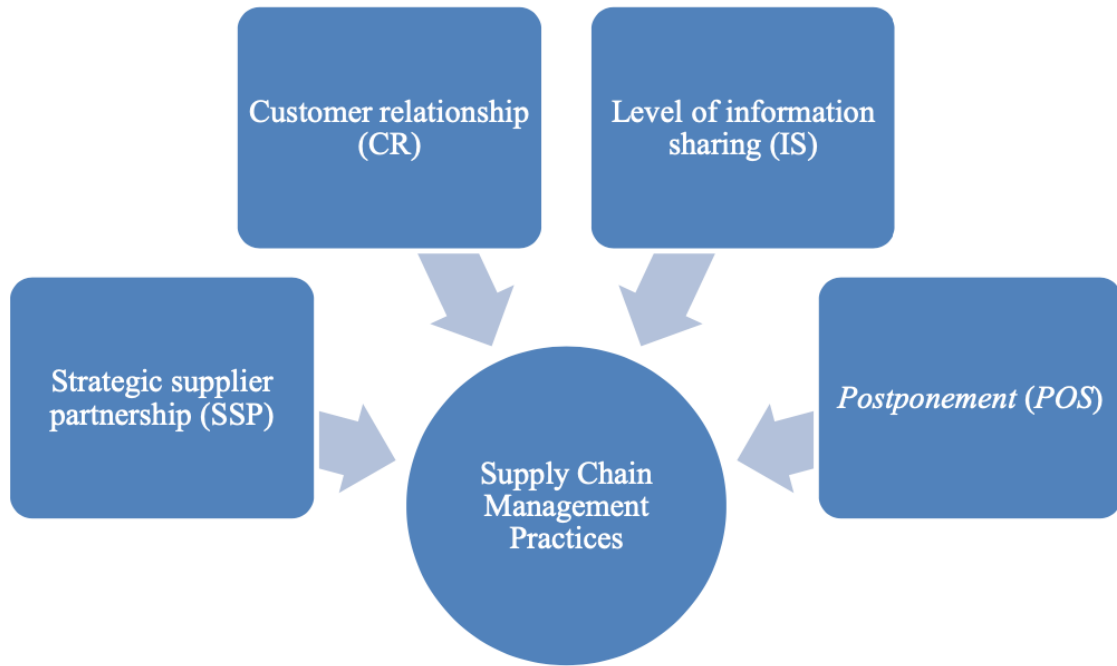
The previous research(Po and Deng,2011; Feller,Shunk and Callarman, 2006; Martha, Douglas, and Janus,1997) based supply chain management suggests that there is a need for some level of coordination of activities and processes within an organization and between the stakeholders in supply chain to have effectiveness in the supply chain management. There are five dimensions of supply chain management practice namely strategic supplier partnership, customer relationship, level of information sharing, quality of information sharing, and postponement. The high level of these five dimensions can lead to competitive advantage and improved organization performance (Zhang, X., Song, H., Huang, G.Q., 2009).

Concept	Dimensions	Items
Supply chain management practices	Strategic supplier partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality • Joint problem solution • Helping to improve quality • Continuous improvement programmes • Inclusion of supplier in goal-setting • New product development
	Customer relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction with customer • Evaluation of customer satisfaction • Determination of future customer expectations • Facilitation to customer • Periodical evaluation of customer relationship
	Level of information sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-information to trading partners • Trading partners' awareness about business issues • Trading partners share business knowledge • Trading partners exchange information • Trading partners inform to each other about changes
	Level of information quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely information exchange • Accurate information exchange • Complete information exchange • Adequate information exchange • Reliable information exchange
	Postponement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product design • Waiting for customer order • Waiting for nearest customer

Source : Barney, J.B., 2012.

2.10 Conceptual Framework

The supply chain management is conceptualized as a four-dimensional framework for this research. The four dimensions includes strategic supplier partnership, customer relationship, level of information sharing, and postponement. It is based on these four dimensions of supply chain management the impact of supply chain management on the performance of an organization is examined.



Supply Chain framework

Source: (Poirier, C.C., 1999)

It is based on the review of literature of supply chain management and the supply chain framework the conceptual frame is developed. The conceptual frame of the supply chain include is used to develop the conceptual framework for this research.



The conceptual framework mainly includes the role of supply chain management in achieving competitive advantage, its impact on the Indian hospitality start-ups and performance of the organization.

Chapter 3- Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The research methodology chapter explores the research strategy and design. It is based on the requirements of the research the chapter explains and justifies the selection of the research strategy and design. The chapter also includes the research methodology limitations and explains the ethical issues .

3.2 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions, which can be used to develop knowledge and theory. It is based on the philosophical assumptions as a multidimensional set of continua the research philosophy can be categorised as ontology, epistemology, and axiology. The ontology research philosophy deals with the nature of reality, the epistemology research philosophy deals with what constitutes acceptable knowledge, and axiology research philosophy deals with the role of values. The research philosophy in business and management includes five major philosophies; positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism and pragmatism (Bougie, R., Sekaran, U., 2020).

The positivism research philosophy deals with real, external and independent theory, which applies scientific method, observable, and measurable facts where the research is value free and researcher is neutral and independent of what is researched. The positivism research method is typically deductive, highly structured, involves large sample, large data, typically quantitative in nature. The critical realism research philosophy deals with knowledge, which is layered, external, and independent, and has objective structures. In this type of research philosophy researcher acknowledges bias by worldviews, cultural experience and upbringing. The research philosophy includes retroductive, in-depth historically situated analysis of pre-existing structures and emerging theories. The interpretivism research philosophy is related to complex, rich and socially constructed theory and knowledge through language and culture. In this research philosophy the theories and concepts are simple. The research philosophy focuses on narratives, stories, description, perceptions and interpretations. The nature of interpretivism research philosophy is value bound and subjective. This type of research

philosophy includes an inductive research approach, has a small research sample but involves in-depth investigations and is qualitative in nature. The post modernism research philosophy is nominal, complex, rich, socially constructed through power relations. In this research philosophy the truth and knowledge are decided by the dominant ideologies. This typically includes deconstructive reading texts and realities, and realities against them. The research philosophy is mainly used for research that includes in-depth investigations of anomalies, silences and absences. The pragmatism research philosophy is also including complex and rich external concepts that are influenced through reality. The research philosophy generally includes studies of true theory, which focus on problems and problem solving. It is more often used for value driven research. The research is applicable to research which follows research problems and research questions. The nature of research can be qualitative, quantitative, mixed and action research. The pragmatism research philosophy is used in research that has emphasis on practical solutions and outcomes (Cooper, D.R., Schindler, P.S., 2014).

The nature of the research is value bound and subjective. Apart from this the research has a small research sample but involves in-depth investigations and is qualitative in nature. The interpretivism research philosophy fits into the nature and the requirement of the research, so interpretivism research philosophy is selected for this research.

3.3 Research Approach

The research approach can be mainly explained through inductive, deductive and abductive research approaches. The purpose of deductive research approach is to direct knowledge and function control with the involvement of physical argument. The inductive research approach is aimed to control information. In this research approach there is use of structural and categorization arguments. The abductive research approach has a purpose to identify structures, connections, contexts and constraints through the use of cognitive argumentation (Hair, J.F., 2007).

Even though there are three types of research approaches, inductive and deductive research approaches are the commonly used research approaches. In deductive research approach hypotheses are developed based on the existing theory and then the hypothesis or hypotheses are tested. The main aim of this research approach is to test the relevance of the existing theory. The research approach is particularly suited for positivism research philosophy that

allows the formulation of hypotheses and statistical testing. In this research approach a general theory is tested with specific variables resulting in specific knowledge gain from the research process. The research approach is mainly suitable for quantitative research as it allows us to use questionnaires to create an understanding of observation from a large research sample.

The inductive research approach is mainly associated with phenomenology/interpretivism research philosophy. In this research approach a new theory is developed during the research. In this research approach generalisation of a knowledge is presented from specific knowledge. It is mainly used for research that is qualitative in nature (Newby, P., 2014).

Since the research adopts interpretivism research philosophy, an inductive research approach is the most appropriate research approach for the research. The deductive research approach is typically used for theory verification through testing the hypotheses developed based on the existing theory.

3.4 Research Strategy

Saunders et al. (2016) has suggested experiment, survey, archival research, case study, ethnography, action research, grounded theory and narrative enquiry as some of the main research strategies.

The experimental studies are positivistic in nature. Most of the experimental studies are conducted in a laboratory and have systematic approach in conducting the research. The experimental research strategy is mainly used to identify causal relationships. The experimental studies are inexpensive and not time consuming as compared to other research strategies. In this research strategy there is no room for any mistake in research design. A little mistake in the research design can result in the entire study into invalid study. Experimental studies as a research strategy is rarely used in short dissertations.

Surveys as a research strategy can be positivistic in the case of quantitative study while it can be interpretivism in the case of qualitative research. The research strategy can be used in both quantitative and qualitative study. In the quantitative study there is a need to infer a population so sampling is used in defining the research population but in qualitative studies not every time sampling is required. Surveys can be mainly two types; descriptive and

analytical. In descriptive surveys the main purpose is to obtain the frequency of particular attitudes among a research population but in analytical surveys the relationship between two variables is determined. In the context of qualitative research interviews are used as a tool to collect data (Saunders, M.N.K., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A., 2019).

The action research strategy is mainly used for phenomenological studies. The strategy is based on the principle that the social world is changing constantly and the researcher and research is part of this change. This research strategy mainly involves planning of change in social systems. The research strategy allows researcher to make suggestions to bring about change and then observe the results. This research strategy requires very close relationship between the researcher and the client organisation to collect data and make suggestions on the changes that have developed during a course of time.

The case studies are also mainly used for phenomenological studies as a research strategy. In this research strategy there is a need of extensive examination of a single instance of a phenomenon of interest. Apart from a single focus the research strategy also needs the context in which the study is performed. The case study research strategy implies a single unit analysis that can be a company, an industry, an event or even a process. The research strategy seeks an understanding of a dynamics of a situation. It is relevant to both qualitative and quantitative studies. The case study research strategy can be mainly divided into five case studies; exploratory case study, descriptive case study, illustrative case study, experiment case study and explanatory case study (Saunders, M., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A., 2019).

The ethnography research strategy is also widely used in phenomenological research. The research strategy roots in anthropology. It is commonly used for study of human behaviour and activities. The strategy mostly uses participant observation as a tool for data collection. It allows the researcher to gather extensive data from different sources including the thoughts, feelings, opinions, and experiences of the researcher.

The grounded research strategy is also used for phenomenological research. The strategy helps the researcher to build theory that illuminates the area under investigation. In this strategy there is no prior assumptions and existing theory are used. The strategy involves concurrent processing of data collection, coding and analysis(Bell, E., Bryman, A., Harley, B., Bryman, A., 2019).

It is based on the analysis of all the research strategies, the researcher has adopted both case study as the research strategy for this research. The case study allows the researcher to

present the descriptive analysis as well as helps to add exploratory perspective to the study. Apart from these, case studies are relevant to qualitative research.

3.5 Time Horizon

Saunders et al (2009) articulates that it is depending on the research methodology the time taken to research the phenomena is determined. It is based on the research methodology the time horizon of the research is defined as cross sectional studies and longitudinal studies.

The cross-sectional studies are designed to obtain information from the variables in different contexts but at the same time. This means the nature of research is time bound. In the cross-sectional studies research population is defined and based on the context of the research the data are collected. The collection of data is done in more than one case at a single point of time. Most of the cross-sectional studies are conducted when there are constraints of time or resources or both. Once the data is collected in cross-sectional studies within a short period of time the data are analysed and interpreted to generate results. The cross-sectional studies present the snapshot of the on-going situation through their research.

Longitudinal studies are studies over time that involve different variables or groups of subjects. The main aim of these studies is to study the dynamics of the problem. In longitudinal studies the same situation is investigated several times or continuously over the period in which the problem runs its course. The studies involve repeated observations so that relative stability of the phenomena is examined (Lancaster, G., 2007).

Cross sectional time horizon is adopted for this research as it has to be completed in 15 weeks' time and the research presents the snapshot of the on-going research on the concept of supply chain management in the role of providing competitive advantage.

3.6 Data Collection

The nature of research suggests it to study the “description of things” which means the research method suitable for this research is qualitative. Since the primary data is collected

directly from the experts in hospitality industry in India, the nature of research is subjective. It is therefore important to have an in-depth study on the subject matter. The quantitative research method cannot be an appropriate research method because the quantitative research method is the most suitable method for objective research where the data is collected from a large research population (Saunders, M., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A., 2012).

The research sample is determined through a convenience sampling method. There are many sampling methods used in qualitative research. Some of the most common qualitative sampling techniques include purposeful sampling technique, and convenience sampling technique. The purposeful sampling technique is also known as purposive and selective sampling technique. It is through purposive sampling techniques researchers can recruit participants who can provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under study. Apart from this, the sampling technique allows the researcher to develop the qualifying criteria for each participant must meet in order to participate in this research (Zikmund, W.G., 2010).

The convenience sampling technique allows the researcher to recruit participants who are easily accessible and convenient to the researcher. It also allows researchers to utilise geographic location and resources in recruitment of participants for the interview.

The primary data is collected through semi structured interview. A total of 3 telephonic interviews are conducted with the experts working in hospitality industry in India. The first interviewee is a Senior Manager at OYO rooms. He has more than six years of experience in working in the Indian hospitality start up. The second interviewee is Strategy manager at Fabhotel. He has experience of working more than four years in the Indian hospitality. The third and the last interviewee is working as Sales Director for Zostel. He has experience of more than 10 years in the Indian hospitality industry.

The following interview questions are used to collect primary data.

- 1) Please introduce about yourself
- 2) What is your current role in the organization?
- 3) How long have you been working in hospitality industry in India?
- 4) What do you think about the concept of supply chain management ?
- 5) What is the role of supply chain management in hospitality business?
- 6) Do you have supply chain management mechanism in your organization?
- 7) How do you think supply chain management has impacted your organization?

- 8) Do you think an effective supply chain management have positive relationship with the performance of an organization?
- 9) What do you understand by the concept of competitive advantage?
- 10) Do you think your organization has competitive advantage as compared your competitive?
- 11) How do you think supply chain management can help your organization achieve competitive advantage?

In order to finalise the final set of interview questions a pilot study was done. In the pilot study a group of 3 students from Master’s programme at Griffith College Dublin were approached. All the three participants in the pilot study were able to understand the interview questions in the same way it was prepared.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data collected through three telephonic interviews were analysed using the thematic analysis method. Since the research is qualitative research and the data collected is subjective in nature the thematic analysis method is selected to analyse the primary data.

The data analysis under the thematic data analysis is performed in following six steps:

- a) Familiarization: The data collected through the interviews are recorded as interview transcripts . The interview transcripts were then read to understand the content.
- b) Coding: The coding of the interviewees were done as presented below

Interviewee	Designation	Company	Code
Interviewee1	Senior Manager	OYO	OYO1
Interviewee 2	Strategy Manager	Fabhotel	FAB2
Interviewee 3	Sales Director	Zostel	ZO3

Once the coding was done it was decoded so that it could be understood by the readers.

Decode	Interviewee	Designation	Company
OYO1	Interviewee1	Senior Manager	OYO
FAB2	Interviewee 2	Strategy Manager	Fabhotel
ZO3	Interviewee 3	Sales Director	Zostel

The interviewees were coded to maintain the confidential about the details on the interviews.

Once the interviews were coded the different phrases in the interview transcripts were coded as below

Interview extract	Codes
<p>I think the concept of supply chain management is related to improvement in the performance of supply chain. It has a series of steps such as planning, sourcing, making, delivering, returning and enabling, hope I have not missed anything.</p> <p>It is a process rather than management of sourcing the raw materials and components to create a product or service.</p>	Possibility
<p>I think I have comprehensively answered this in your previous question. However, an effective supply chain management allows an organization to identify problems before they actually happen, optimize price dynamics and improve the allocation of available rooms .</p>	Possibility

<p>Of course, it is because of the innovative business model and the effective supply chain management mechanism in place, OYO has been able to differentiate itself from its competitors and achieve competitive advantage.</p>	<p>Certainly</p>
<p>Well if you want me to define supply chain management then I would define supply chain management as “ a linked mechanism of physical flows and information flows”.</p>	<p>Unwillingness</p>
<p>In order to explain the role of supply chain management in the hospitality business let me first explain to you the common challenges in supply chain management in the hospitality business. Material Cost, material ordering cost, inventory holding costs, and emergency costs.</p>	<p>Clarity</p>
<p>Supply chain management as the words explain is all about managing supply chain activities. The supply chain activities include planning, sourcing, making, delivering, and returning. Supply chain management design, plan, execute ,monitor, and control these activities with a purpose of building value, achieving competitive advantage, achieving coordinated supply chain and improving the performance of an organization.</p>	<p>Unwillingness</p>
<p>When I say physical flows I mean</p>	<p>Clarity</p>

<p>transformation, movement and storage of goods and materials whereas information inflows mean real time information and details about goods and materials that allows various supply chain partners to co-ordinate their long term plans and monitor and control the day to day activities related to supply chain.</p>	
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- c) Generating themes: The themes were firstly generated based on the interview transcripts.

Interview transcripts	Generating themes
Please introduce about yourself	Introduction
What is your current role in the organization?	Role
How long have you been working in the hospitality industry in India?	Experience
What do you think about the concept of supply chain management ?	Meaning
What is the role of supply chain management in the hospitality business?	Role
Do you have a supply chain management mechanism in your organization?	Supply chain mechanism
Do you think an effective supply chain management has a positive relationship with the performance of an organization?	Relationship

What do you understand by the concept of competitive advantage?	Concept
Do you think your organization has competitive advantage as compared to your competitors?	Competitive advantage
How do you think supply chain management can help your organization achieve competitive advantage?	help

d) Reviewing themes:

After reviewing the themes that were generated the following were presented.

What do you think about the concept of supply chain management ?	Meaning
What is the role of supply chain management in the hospitality business?	Role
Do you have a supply chain management mechanism in your organization?	Supply chain mechanism

Do you think an effective supply chain management has a positive relationship with the performance of an organization?	Relationship
What do you understand by the concept of competitive advantage?	Concept
Do you think your organization has competitive advantage as compared to your competitors?	Competitive advantage
How do you think supply chain management can help your organization achieve competitive advantage?	help

- e) Defining themes: The research themes were then defined based on the research questions and aims and objectives of the research .

Concept of Supply chain Management
Role of supply chain management in the hospitality business

supply chain management mechanism
Impact of supply chain management in an organization
Relationship of supply chain with the performance of an organization
Concept of Competitive advantage
Supply chain management and competitive advantage

f) Writing up : This is explained in the data presentation chapter .

3.8 Research methodology limitations

The qualitative research method adopted for this research cannot have findings that can be generalised to the study population however it can provide more detailed information on the subject matter. In order to overcome this limitation, the researcher could have adopted a mix research method of both qualitative and quantitative research methods but it is because of time constraints the selection of mixed research methods was not feasible.

Apart from the research method, the inability of researcher to conduct face-to-face interviews due to Covid-19 restricts the researcher from gathering information through the gesture, emotions and activities of participants during the interview. This can affect the quality of data but the data quality analysis performed by the researcher has enriched the quality of data.

3.9 Ethical consideration

The most common ethical issues in conducting research include informed consent, beneficence, anonymity and confidentiality, respect and privacy of the participants. In order to overcome these potential ethical issues, the researcher has adopted convenience sampling to recruit participants who are available and willingly ready to participate in the research. The purpose of the research was explained to each participant and also mentioned about the volunteer participation in the interview. It is based on the agreement of participants to participate in the interview a convenient time and date was fixed. It is during the brief about the interview the researcher had made very clear that all details of the participants would be kept confidential and not disclosed to anyone (Saunders, M.N.K., 2011).

There are other ethical issues because of controversy, contentious subject matter, sensitive subject, embarrassing or upsetting event or activity, however it is because of the nature of the research subject and informed consent about the process and participation of the interviewees, none of these ethical issues are relevant to this research (Vogt, W.P., 2007).

Chapter 4: Presentation of data:

4.1 Introduction:

The chapter presents the qualitative data collected through three telephonic on the defined themes for the research.

4.2 Presentation of data from interviews:

4.2.1 Concept of Supply chain Management:

OYO 1, “I think the concept of supply chain management is related to improvement in the performance of supply chain. It has a series of steps such as planning, sourcing, making, delivering, returning and enabling, hope I have not missed anything.

It is a process rather than management of sourcing the raw materials and components to create a product or service.”

FAB 2 “Supply chain management is strategic in nature as it allows companies to have competitive advantage over their competitors. An efficient supply chain management allows a company to maximize customer value.

Well if you want me to define supply chain management then I would define supply chain management as “A linked mechanism of physical flows and information flows.” When I say physical flows, I mean transformation, movement and storage of goods and materials whereas information inflows mean real time information and details about goods and materials that allows various supply chain partners to co-ordinate their long term plans and monitor and control the day to day activities related to supply chain”.

ZO3 “Supply chain management as the words explain is all about managing supply chain activities. The supply chain activities include planning, sourcing, making, delivering, and

returning. Supply chain management design, plan, execute ,monitor, and control these activities with a purpose of building value, achieving competitive advantage, achieving coordinated supply chain and improving the performance of an organization”.

4.2.2 Role of supply chain management in the hospitality business:

OYO1, “ An effective supply chain management can provide an enterprise competitive advantage over its competitors in the hospitality business. An improved supply chain management allows an enterprise to have timely and accurate information leading to cost reduction in the form of inventory cost, input cost, shipping, insurance cost, storage cost etc”.

FAB2 , “In order to explain the role of supply chain management in the hospitality business let me first explain to you the common challenges in supply chain management in the hospitality business. Material Cost, material ordering cost, inventory holding costs, and emergency costs. An effective supply chain management allows to establish a stronger relationship between the suppliers and companies through the process of supplier identification, supplier evaluation and selection and supplier management. It helps companies in significant cost reduction by developing and implementing contracts and agreements with the suppliers.”

ZO3, “ Supply chain management helps to maintain the balance between demand and supply, not just in hospitality business but any business that has supply chain activities”

4.2.3 supply chain management mechanism:

OYO 1, “ Yes, we do have. Even though we don’t manufacture any product, yes, we provide room services. The business model of OYO started as a hotel aggregator but now it is working on franchise business model. The business model involved partnership with hotels, and selling their rooms under the name of OYO at competitive prices.

Coming back to your question, there is a supply chain technology mechanism at OYO. The main process in this supply chain technology mechanism is transformation. It is through this process every property that comes to OYO platform is transformed so that it can meet the

OYO standards. Some of the activities include air conditions installation if not available, installation of TV if not available, linen, bed sheets etc. This supply chain technology through transformation allows the company to improve the ordering process, improve productivity, minimise the error probability, and increase visibility in the order fulfilment process, which is a part of supply chain management.”

4.2.4 Impact of supply chain management in an organization:

OYO 1, “ Yes, the chain management has impacted OYO in a positive way. The effective supply chain management has improved the order processing and tracking resulting in reduced business loss, the supply chain efficiency has improved and there is reduction in on ground operation to huge saving in the manpower (resource).”

FAB 2, “ Supply chain management allows our company to identify critical suppliers and manage supplier readiness, quality and compliance” .

ZO3, “ Supply chain management helps to keep balance between demand and supply in our organization.”

4.2.5 Relationship of supply chain with the performance of an organization:

OYO 1, “An effective supply chain management allows an organization to identify problems before they actually happen, optimize price dynamics and improve the allocation of available rooms”.

ZO3, “ An effective supply chain management has a positive relationship with the performance of an organization. It helps an organization to add value to its services, reduce cost through better coordination between the various supply chain stakeholders and the organization, and monitor and control supply chain activities and increase productivity” .

4.2.6 Concept of Competitive advantage:

OYO 1, “ The concept of competitive advantage can be achieved through cost advantage, product/service differentiation, and niche strategies. In the case of OYO product/service differentiation is providing the competitive advantage”.

FAB 2, “ Competitive advantage is like an upper hand an organization has as compared to its competitors. It can be achieved through cost leadership , differentiation and focus. At our company, we have a mix of all of these three as we are budget hotel aggregators, provide hotels at competitive rates and our focus is on the 3.5 billion middle class and upper middle class population around the world”.

ZO3, “ Competitive advantage means having an edge over competitors. The edge can be in the form of price advantage, place advantage, quality advantage and so on. All these aspects result in better customer service and greater value resulting in competitive advantage.

Zostel is one of the largest and the oldest networks of hostels in India. The first mover of Zostel itself is an example of competitive advantage . Apart from the first mover experience and competitive pricing have provided competitive advantage to Zostel”.

4.2.7 Supply chain management and competitive advantage

OYO1 , “ It is because of the innovative business model and the effective supply chain management mechanism in place, OYO has been able to differentiate itself from its competitors and achieve competitive advantage.

Supply chain management (SCM) is an integral part of OYO. The company has been efficiently able to utilize technology to add value to its services. SCM enables agile process improvement, maximizes supply chain partnerships and enables the services to reach to the customers faster, more efficiently and more economically as compared to its competitors” .

FAB 2, “ we have cost leadership, differentiation in the service and focus on the middle and upper middle population allowing us to have competitive advantage as compared to our competitors.

Supply chain management interconnects various supply chain stakeholders such as suppliers, producers, distributors, transporters etc so that a quality service is provided to the customers. An effective supply chain management allows better coordination among these so that the cost of delivery of final service is reduced. This way it helps to achieve cost efficiency. Fab hotel having cost leadership is one of the three aspects of competitive advantage. So, you can see how supply chain management is helping Fab hotels to achieve competitive advantage ”.

ZO3, “ Supply chain management helps Zostel to achieve price advantage, place advantage, and quality advantage which is nothing but competitive advantage for the organization”.

Chapter 5: Discussion:

5.1 Introduction

The chapter provides a comparative analysis of the primary data collected through interviews and the secondary data presented in the form of literature review. The chapter discusses the data based on the research questions and research objectives presented for the research. The research also presents the research limitation.

5.2 Research questions revisited

- a) Have the concepts of “Supply chain management” and “competitive advantage” added a new perspective for next-gen hospitality start-ups?

The concept of supply chain management has expanded in the recent times. Earlier SCM was associated with operations, purchase and logistics. SCM has added information systems, and strategic management in its concept. The SCM is not limited to manufacturer and supplier but there are some additional stakeholders such as transporters, warehouses, retailers, and customers.

SCM is not only seen as a management philosophy but the concept of SCM is a strategic approach that is related to improvement in the performance of supply chain. Even though SCM is considered as a series of steps such as planning, sourcing, making, delivering, returning and enabling, the gen-next hospitality start-ups see SCM as a process rather than management of sourcing the raw materials and components to create a product or service.

SCM is a linked mechanism of physical flows and information flows. Supply chain management design, plan, execute, monitor, and control the activities with the supply chain management process with a purpose of building value, achieving competitive advantage, achieving coordinated supply chain and improving the performance of an organization.

The concept of competitive advantage is all about having an edge over competitors. The edge can be in the form of price advantage, place advantage, quality advantage

and so on. All these aspects result in better customer service and greater value resulting in competitive advantage. It can be achieved through cost leadership, differentiation and focus. Cost advantage, product/service differentiation, and niche strategies are instrumental in achieving competitive advantage.

Competitive advantage is explained as the ability of a company or organization to develop a competitive position as compared to its competitors. However, the companies need distinctive competencies to achieve competitive advantage. The distinctive competencies have been added or prioritised as per the change in the business dynamics or consumer behaviour. Price, market share, sales, pricing are still important for the gen-next hospitality start-ups but those are not enough. The ability of the hospitality start-ups to create competencies to add value for customers, achieve cost advantage, and achieve differentiation advantage can certainly help to achieve competitive advantage. However, the scope of competitive advantage is expanded as business functions such as marketing, finance, human resource, customer service, supply chain management and other functions can also be instrumental in achieving competitive advantage.

There are also other factors such as cost, quality, dependability, delivery of speed, pricing, quality, customer service, timely service, and value for money they can also result into competitive advantage. Even though there can be different factors for different type of businesses that can achieve competitive advantage, the purpose of the company is to have cost leadership, differentiation in service or product and market focus (segmentation of market or customers).

The literature review supports the primary data as the concept of SCM and the concept of competitive advantage have not changed, however, the concept of SCM is expanded and so is the concept of competitive advantage. The SCM is described in broader context and competitive advantage is defined in industry specific term. The purpose of the concept of SCM and competitive advantage have not changed even though the perspectives have changed.

- b) What is the role of supply chain management (SCM) in the performance of the hospitality start-ups in India?

An effective supply chain management allows to establish a stronger relationship between the suppliers and companies through the process of supplier identification, supplier evaluation and selection and supplier management. It allows companies to overcome the common challenges such as material Cost, material ordering cost, inventory holding costs, and emergency costs.

Supply chain management helps to maintain the balance between demand and supply. The SCM helps companies to have effective communication among the stakeholders that results in increased coordination and less faults. It also results in increased efficiency at processes, people and production.

The hospitality start-ups see SCM as a tool that can help companies achieve competitive advantage through timely and accurate information availability leading to cost reduction in the form of inventory cost, input cost, shipping, insurance cost, storage cost etc. The concept of SCM has become strategic in nature that allows companies to have competitive advantage over their competitors. An efficient supply chain management allows a company to maximize customer value.

The main purpose of supply chain management is to create a low cost and highly responsible supply chain mechanism in the organization that can create competencies that can be instrumental in attaining competitive advantage. Supply chain management is a major strategic asset that supports an organization's competitive position. There are four important elements of competition; innovation, quality, customer service and cost.

- c) How can the Indian hospitality start-ups achieve competitive advantage through supply chain management?

The real time update on the movement and storage of goods and materials allows various supply chain partners to co-ordinate their long- term plans and monitor and control the day to day activities related to supply chain. This helps companies to have better co-ordination between the stakeholders and improve the relationship.

The supply chain management allows to integrate the processes of supply chain with technology so that the organization can utilize technology to add value. The integration of technology with the supply chain enables supply chain automation,

leverages smart supply chains, automates orders and tackles customer service payment processing, IT support, and reduces overhead costs (Öztüren, A., Güven, S., 2009). The integration of supply chain with other functions enables agile process improvement. The supply chain helps to maximize supply chain partnerships by viewing suppliers as a valuable resource, and striving continuous improvement. Supply chain management cultivates ream innovation leading to put stakeholders together to maximize perspective and also understand risks (Michigan State University, 2019).

Supply chain management allows our company to identify critical suppliers and manage supplier readiness, quality and compliance. It enables agile process improvement, maximizes supply chain partnerships and enables the services to reach to the customers faster, more efficiently and more economically as compared to its competitors. Supply chain management interconnects various supply chain stakeholders such as suppliers, producers, distributors, transporters etc so that a quality service is provided to the customers. An effective supply chain management allows better coordination among these so that the cost of delivery of final service is reduced.

5.3 Research limitation

The limitation of the research can be presented in two aspects; research methodology limitation and general limitation. The research methodology limitation is already explained in the research methodology chapter.

In the general limitation, time is the biggest constraint in doing this research. Apart from time, the COVID-19 pandemic has also posed limitation in conducting the research. The research has to be done with limited interviews and the mode of interview has to be telephonic. Since the interviewees were not comfortable with the video interview the mode of interview was limited to telephonic.

An untimely demise of my father also posed personal challenges while conducting this research.

Chapter 6: Recommendation and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The chapter presents the recommendation for the industry and further research. It also concludes the study based on the discussion presented in the previous chapter of the research.

6.2 Recommendation

6.2.1 Recommendation for the industry

The Indian hospitality industry is a fragmented industry where majority of the companies are small in size. The concept of SCM is understood by most of the hospitality start-ups and large organization however SCM cannot be understood by the small hospitality companies. It is therefore important that the Indian hospitality industry educate the concept of SCM and scope of SCM in achieving competitive advantage.

The gen-next hospitality companies are majorly technology driven but the lack of empathy and personalised servicing are important in hospitality industry to have better customer service. The over reliance of hospitality start-ups on the technology has diminish the culture of human participation in the customer service leading to challenge for companies to achieve competitive advantage through better customer service.

The hospitality industry has become complicated as the stakeholders are not limited to customers and supplier but there are added stakeholders such as financial providers and logistics providers. The companies need to strike the balance between all the stakeholders so that a better co-ordination can be established and the same can impact companies in achieving competitive advantage.

The hospitality industry cannot afford to have disbalance in the demand and supply so it is important that the industry has a flexible SCM mechanism for all type of needs and requirements.

The SCM cannot be universal for the Indian hospitality industry so it is important that the companies understand their requirement and build SCM that can create competencies and help them attain competitive advantage.

6.2.2 Recommendation for further research

The research is conducted with limited cases of Indian hospitality start-ups. The future research can either concentrate on one case study in detail or examine a particular business in hospitality industry. The research has conducted only three interviews however the future research can have more interviews to generate data from a larger research sample. A mixed research methodology (qualitative and quantitative) can be used as an alternative to gather more data. The in-depth interviews can be more instrumental in generating conclusion in the subject matter.

6.3 Conclusion

The Indian hospitality industry has shown robust growth in the recent times. The recent pandemic has created a situation even worse for the Indian hospitality as compared to the global financial crisis from 2007-2010. The shortage of labour, issues related to vendors and supply chain are some of the major challenges the hospitality industry is facing because of the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

The fragmented nature of the Indian hospitality industry along with inconsistent supply chain has posed challenges for the hospitality companies to transform their SCM. The SCM mechanism cannot be the same in all situations, so it is important that hospitality industry has a flexible SCM in place. Even though an effective SCM is considered as an asset for a company there is a need to prioritize the parameters that are important to build an effective SCM. Cost effectiveness, market leadership and market focus can be the three key aspects that can help companies to attain competitive advantage but the companies cannot just limit themselves to only these aspects. There are various factors such as customer service, delivery speed, quality, dependability, pricing, quality, accuracy, and value for money that can be equally important for the hospitality start-ups to attain competitive advantage.

Most of the hospitality start-ups are technology driven that allows companies to have accuracy, and efficiency however the companies cannot just rely on one aspect of

competitive advantage. The companies need to build competencies that can be leveraged and add value to the existing ability.

The concept of SCM has changed in recent times. It is not only considered as a management philosophy or concept associated with logistics, it has emerged as a strategic concept that can provide competitive advantage to the companies in hospitality industry. SCM has huge role in decreasing to cost of production that results into cost efficiency.

Likewise, the concept of competitive advantage has also changed in recent time. Competitive advantage is just not only associated with high profit and high market share but also related to quality, cost, added value and competencies. The concept of competitive advantage is now related to the ability of the company to perform better in a marketplace and establish a leadership position in cost, quality, product type or focus.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Transcripts

Interview 1: OYO Rooms – Senior Category Manager

- 1) Please introduce about yourself

I have been working for OYO for the last 3 years. I work as Senior manager at OYO.

- 2) What is your current role in the organization?

I have started to work for OYO as Manager and got promoted to Senior manager recently. As a senior category manager I am responsible for managing revenue of newly launched categories at OYO home. My responsibilities include building and communicating the OYO home value proposition to the online consumers, building pricing strategy, forecasting and trend analysis to devise sales strategies, and take initiatives to grow revenue of the portfolio through different sales channels.

- 3) How long have you been working in the hospitality industry in India?

I have over six years of experience in working in Indian hospitality industry.

- 4) What do you think about the concept of supply chain management ?

I think the concept of supply chain management is related to improvement in the performance of supply chain. It has a series of steps such as planning, sourcing, making, delivering, returning and enabling, hope I have not missed anything.

It is a process rather than management of sourcing the raw materials and components to create a product or service.

- 5) What is the role of supply chain management in the hospitality business?

An effective supply chain management can provide an enterprise competitive advantage over its competitors in the hospitality business. An improved supply chain management allows an enterprise to have timely and accurate information leading to cost reduction in the form of inventory cost, input cost, shipping, insurance cost, storage cost etc.

6) Do you have a supply chain management mechanism in your organization?

Yes, we do have. Even though we don't manufacture any product, yes, we provide room services. The business model of OYO started as a hotel aggregator but now it is working on franchise business model. The business model involved partnership with hotels, and selling their rooms under the name of OYO at competitive prices.

Coming back to your question, there is a supply chain technology mechanism at OYO. The main process in this supply chain technology mechanism is transformation. It is through this process every property that comes to OYO platform is transformed so that it can meet the OYO standards. Some of the activities include air conditions installation if not available, installation of TV if not available, linen, bed sheets etc. This supply chain technology through transformation allows the company to improve the ordering process, improve productivity, minimise the error probability, and increase visibility in the order fulfilment process, which is a part of supply chain management.

7) How do you think supply chain management has impacted your organization?

Yes, the chain management has impacted OYO in a positive way. The effective supply chain management has improved the order processing and tracking resulting in reduced business loss, the supply chain efficiency has improved and there is reduction in on ground operation to huge saving in the manpower (resource).

8) Do you think an effective supply chain management has a positive relationship with the performance of an organization?

Yes, I think I have comprehensively answered this in your previous question. However, an effective supply chain management allows an organization to identify problems before they actually happen, optimize price dynamics and improve the allocation of available rooms .

9) What do you understand by the concept of competitive advantage?

The concept of competitive advantage can be achieved through cost advantage, product/service differentiation, and niche strategies. In the case of OYO product/service differentiation is providing the competitive advantage.

- 10) Do you think your organization has competitive advantage as compared to your competitors?

Of course, it is because of the innovative business model and the effective supply chain management mechanism in place, OYO has been able to differentiate itself from its competitors and achieve competitive advantage.

- 11) How do you think supply chain management can help your organization achieve competitive advantage?

Supply chain management (SCM) is an integral part of OYO. The company has been efficiently able to utilize technology to add value to its services. SCM enables agile process improvement, maximizes supply chain partnerships and enables the services to reach to the customers faster, more efficiently and more economically as compared to its competitors.

Interview 2 : Fab hotels – Manager -Strategy

- 1) Please introduce about yourself

I have worked for Fab hotels as Manager for the last 2 years.

- 2) What is your current role in the organization?

I am a strategy manager. In my current role, I work with the leadership teams in coordinating cross-functional projects, and finding process/product solutions. I am responsible for setting quarterly/ annual targets, introducing metrics to monitor the target , and also responsible for the expansion and growth of Fab hotels.

3) How long have you been working in the hospitality industry in India?

I have four years of experience in working in the hospitality industry in India but with Fab hotels it has been 2 years now.

4) What do you think about the concept of supply chain management ?

Supply chain management is strategic in nature as it allows companies to have competitive advantage over their competitors. An efficient supply chain management allows a company to maximize customer value.

Well if you want me to define supply chain management then I would define supply chain management as “ a linked mechanism of physical flows and information flows”. When I say physical flows I mean transformation, movement and storage of goods and materials whereas information inflows mean real time information and details about goods and materials that allows various supply chain partners to co-ordinate their long term plans and monitor and control the day to day activities related to supply chain.

5) What is the role of supply chain management in the hospitality business?

In order to explain the role of supply chain management in the hospitality business let me first explain to you the common challenges in supply chain management in the hospitality business. Material Cost, material ordering cost, inventory holding costs, and emergency costs. An effective supply chain management allows to establish a stronger relationship between the suppliers and companies through the process of supplier identification, supplier evaluation and selection and supplier management. It helps companies in significant cost reduction by developing and implementing contracts and agreements with the suppliers.

6) Do you have a supply chain management mechanism in your organization?

Yes, we have an effective supply chain management mechanism at our organization.

7) How do you think supply chain management has impacted your organization?

Supply chain management allows our company to identify critical suppliers and manage supplier readiness, quality and compliance.

- 8) Do you think an effective supply chain management have positive relationship with the performance of an organization?

Yes, definitely.

- 9) What do you understand by the concept of competitive advantage?

Competitive advantage is like an upper hand an organization has as compared to its competitors. It can be achieved through cost leadership , differentiation and focus. At our company, we have a mix of all of these three as we are budget hotel aggregators, provide hotels at competitive rates and our focus is on the 3.5 billion middle class and upper middle class population around the world.

- 10) Do you think your organization has competitive advantage as compared to your competitors?

As explained in your previous question, we have cost leadership, differentiation in the service and focus on the middle and upper middle population allowing us to have competitive advantage as compared to our competitors.

- 11) How do you think supply chain management can help your organization achieve competitive advantage?

Supply chain management interconnects various supply chain stakeholders such as suppliers, producers, distributors, transporters etc so that a quality service is provided to the customers. An effective supply chain management allows better coordination among these so that the cost of delivery of final service is reduced. This way it helps to achieve cost efficiency. Fab hotel having cost leadership is one of the three aspects of competitive advantage. So, you can see how supply chain management is helping Fab hotels to achieve competitive advantage.

Interview 3: Zostel, Director - Sales

- 1) Please introduce about yourself

I work as a Sales Director for Zostel. I am in charge of sales of South India. I am mainly responsible for development of new products at Zostel and implement the sales plan for South Zone in India. Setting the sales target and achieving it within a time frame is another important responsibility of mine.

- 2) What is your current role in the organization?

Already answered.

- 3) How long have you been working in the hospitality industry in India?

It is more than a decade.

- 4) What do you think about the concept of supply chain management ?

Supply chain management as the words explain is all about managing supply chain activities. The supply chain activities include planning, sourcing, making, delivering, and returning. Supply chain management design, plan, execute ,monitor, and control these activities with a purpose of building value, achieving competitive advantage, achieving coordinated supply chain and improving the performance of an organization.

- 5) What is the role of supply chain management in the hospitality business?

Supply chain management helps to maintain the balance between demand and supply, not just in hospitality business but any business that has supply chain activities.

- 6) Do you have a supply chain management mechanism in your organization?

Yes, we have a supply chain mechanism in our organization.

- 7) How do you think supply chain management has impacted your organization?

Supply chain management helps to keep balance between demand and supply in our organization.

- 8) Do you think an effective supply chain management has a positive relationship with the performance of an organization?

Yes, an effective supply chain management has a positive relationship with the performance of an organization. It helps an organization to add value to its services, reduce cost through better coordination between the various supply chain stakeholders and the organization, and monitor and control supply chain activities and increase productivity.

- 9) What do you understand by the concept of competitive advantage?

Competitive advantage means having an edge over competitors. The edge can be in the form of price advantage, place advantage, quality advantage and so on. All these aspects result in better customer service and greater value resulting in competitive advantage.

- 10) Do you think your organization has competitive advantage as compared to your competitors?

Zostel is one of the largest and the oldest networks of hostels in India. The first mover of Zostel itself is an example of competitive advantage . Apart from the first mover experience and competitive pricing have provided competitive advantage to Zostel.

- 11) How do you think supply chain management can help your organization achieve competitive advantage?

Supply chain management helps Zostel to achieve price advantage, place advantage, and quality advantage which is nothing but competitive advantage for the organization.