Cooperative Education Report

Title: Taking OYO to Far-Western Nepal

Written by

Mr. Bikesh Shrestha

Student ID. 5808040051

This Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Cooperative

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Project Title : Taking OYO to Far-Western Nepal

Written by : Bikesh Shrestha 5808040051

Department : Bachelor of Business Administration (Marketing)
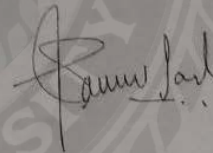
Academic Advisor : Dr. Parham Porouhan

We have approved this cooperative report as a partial fulfillment of the cooperative education program semester 2/2018
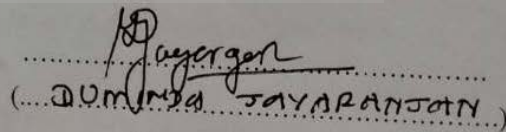
Oral Presentation Committees

....

(Dr. Parham Porouhan, Ph.D.)
Academic Advisor

....
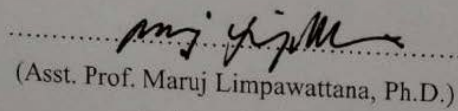
(Saurav Panda)
Job Supervisor

....

(....DUMINDA JAYARANJAN....)
Cooperative Committee

....

(Asst. Prof. Maruj Limpawattana, Ph.D.)
Assistant President
And Director of Cooperative Education

Project Title : Taking OYO to Far-Western Nepal

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By : Bikesh Shrestha, 5808040051

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Abstract

This internship has been conducted in OYO Rooms Nepal, South Asia's largest Hotel Chain as a university requirement. Objectives of the internship includes: (1) toknow the functioning of different departments at OYO Rooms, (2) to work in Business Development Department, (3) to improve Sales Skills- Sales Pitch and Closures, (4) to know the demand and supply of OYO Rooms in Nepal. They are helping consumers in Nepal to get a comfortable stay away from home at a reasonable price. Thus building the supply chain to meet the demand of consumers in different cities of the country.

With the company, the student was assigned to work as an Intern, in the Business Development Department for 14 weeks. Upon the completion of the internship, it was found that the problem was resolved by the means of practical learning and theories concerning Psychology, Sociology, Consumer Behavior, Sales and Marketing. In this matter, the student is able to learn more about negotiation, innovating oneself to speak, delivery mindset approach and relationship management which are very important for future career development and profession.

Keywords: Business Development / Sales / Clients / Relationship Marketing

Acknowledgement

I want to acknowledge Oravel Stays Pvt. Ltd also known as OYO Rooms for giving me the opportunity to complete my internship in such a reputed organization. The internship has provided me with an opportunity to test my abilities and attitudes toward career possibilities for the future. This exposure has helped me bridge the gap between learning in classroom and application in the work environment.

I am very grateful to my supervisor, Mr. Saurav Panda (Country Head- Business Development) who taught me the key concepts and overall functionality of the company. I thank him for his constant guidance and counselling during the entire internship program.

I would like to convey my deepest gratitude to Siam University for this opportunity. I am also very grateful to my academic supervisors Dr. Parham Porouhan andSharmilaSharan for their constant guidance and advice throughout the internship and also for helping me reflect on my internship experience.Finally, I would like to thank my family for giving me moral support.
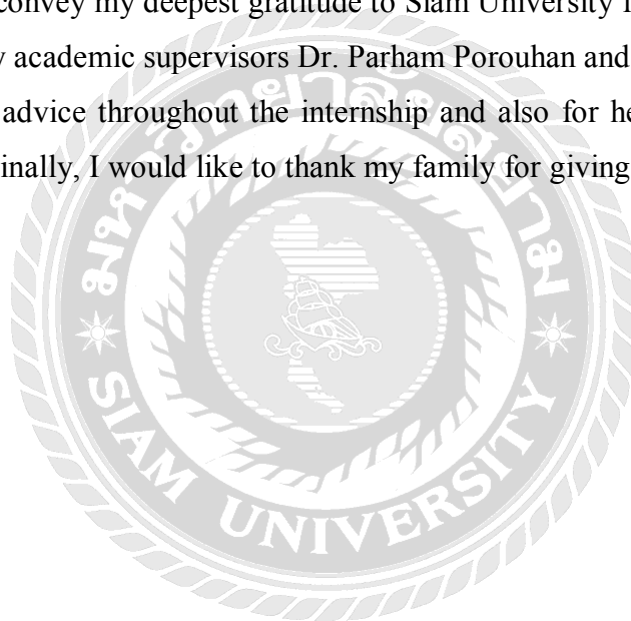
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List of Abbreviations

1. BD : Business Development
2. TR : Transformation
3. Ops : Operations
4. BDM : Business Development Manager
5. BDH : Business Development Head
6. AGM : Assistant General Manager
7. PM : Property Manager
8. OTA : Online Travel Agents
9. COO : Change of Ownership
10. RCOO : Reverse Change of Ownership
11. BG : Bodyguard
12. SRN : Sellable Rooms Per Night
13. CRS : Central Reservation System
14. PTA : Post Transformation Audit
15. PSA : Pre Signing Audit
16. HMS : Hotel Management Software
17. NOC : No Objection Certificate
18. PDC : Post Dated Cheque
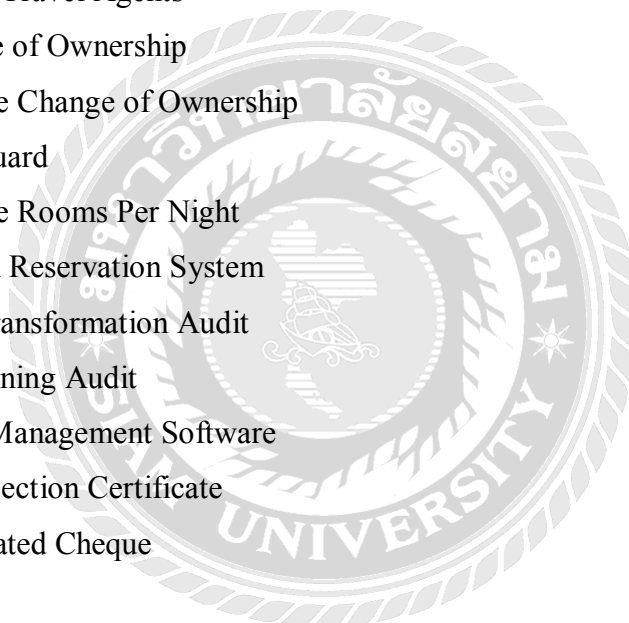
Chapter 1 : Introduction

1.1. Company Profile

Figure 1: Company Logo*(OYO, n.d.)*

OYO Rooms, commonly known as OYO was established in 2013. It is South Asia's largest hotel chain mainly consisting of budget hotels(ETBrandEquity, 2018). It was originally launched as Oravel Stays by Ritesh Agrawal which was later pivoted to OYO(Forbes India , 2017). OYO collaborates with hotels to give similar experience across cities. The first hotel that it standardized was in Gurgaon back in May 2013 and since then, OYO has now grown to over 8,500 hotels in India, Nepal, China, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore,Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, UK, UAE, Mexico and many more.OYO entered Nepal in 2017 after it was launched in Malaysia in 2016(Press Trust of India , 2017).

OYO provides its customers wide range of options for accommodation under three pillars- Availability, Affordability, and Predictability. OYO partners with hotels and mainly takes care of sales, operation, marketing and promotion. The hotels are to maintain minimum standards to be able to be listed in OYO's platform. After done the infrastructure and service standardization, OYO takes care of sales and operation of the hotel. There are various categories under which OYO sells rooms-

a) OYO Rooms/ SMART Properties- Super affordable with essential amenities

Figure 2:OYO Rooms- Prince Plaza, Nepal(OYO, 2017)

b) Premium- Hotels at prime location and premium amenities

Figure 3:Premium- Hotel Bangalore International, India*(Enidhi India Travel Blog, n.d.)*

c) Townhouse- Neighborhood-premium hotel for the millennial traveler

Figure 4: Townhouse- Dallas Park Central Galleria 2, USA (Orbitz, n.d.)

d) Flagship- Affordable hotels serviced by OYO at prime location

Figure 5: Flagship- Dwarka, India*(OYO, n.d.)*

e) Capital O- Comfortable stays curated for the modern travelers

Figure 6: Capital O- Yellow Pagoda, Nepal*(Asianpaints Nepal, n.d.)*

f) Edition O- Hotels for the business travelers serviced by OYO

Figure 7: Edition O- Calangute, India (OYO, n.d.)

g) Palette Resorts- Premium resorts across urban and holiday destinations

Figure 8: Palette Resort- Golden Heritance, India (OYO, n.d.)

h) OYOX Design- Beautifully designed, private homes crafted for the traveler who craves comfort

Figure 9: OYOX Design- Designer Stay, India*(OYO, n.d.)*

1.2. Organizational Structure

The organizational structure at OYO Rooms Nepal isn't a complex one which allows easy flow of communication amongst each department.Below is the organogram of OYO Rooms Nepal.
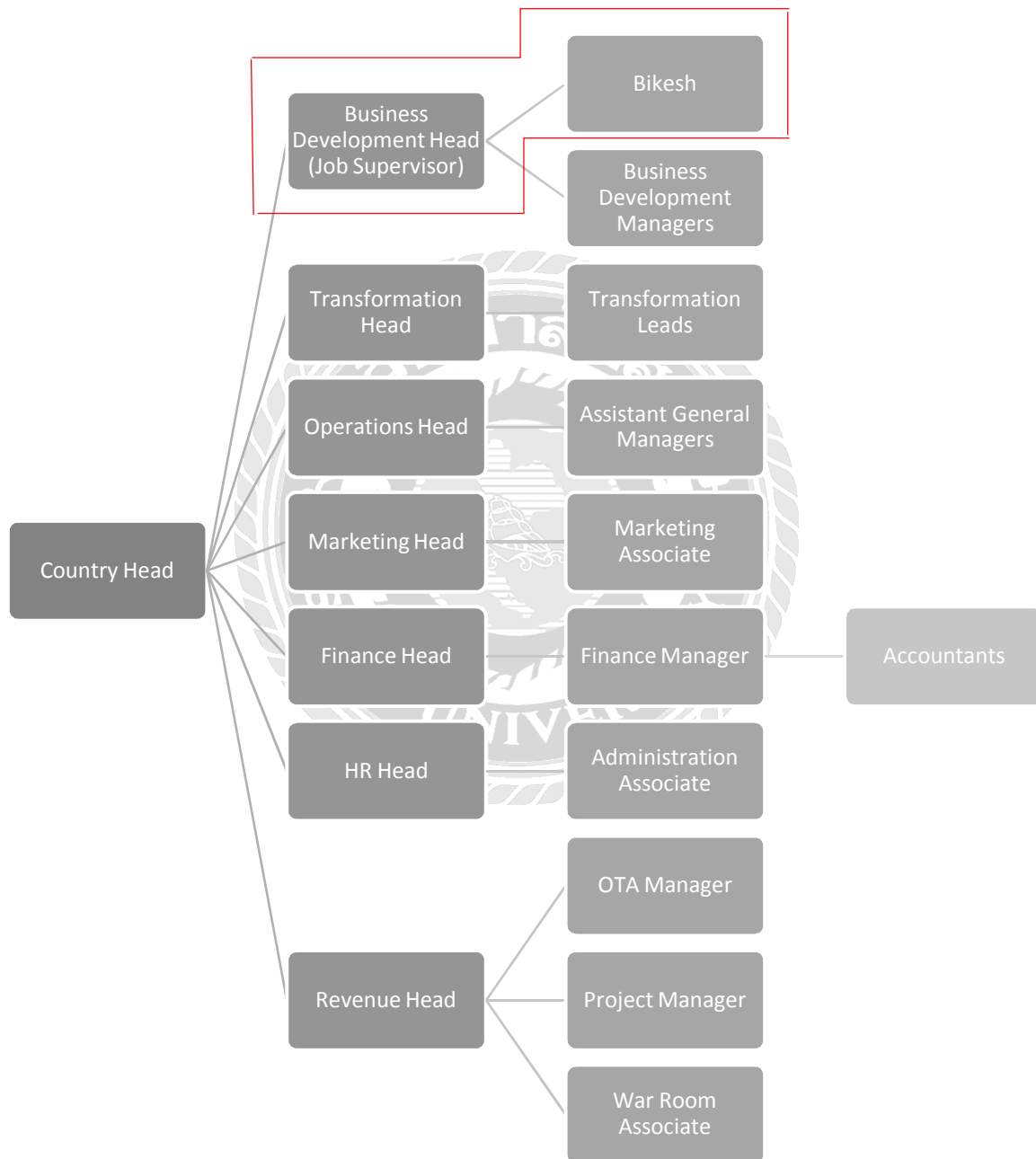

Figure 10: Organizational Structure

1.3. Statement of the report

This Internship is completed as per the requirement of Business Administration undergraduate program at Siam University. This is a part of the curriculum to complete 14 weeks' internship for better understanding of the concepts and overall functionality of corporate industry.This internship also provides the opportunity to develop professionalism among the students and gain experience of working in actual market before completion of the undergraduate degree. The experience gained by an intern during their internship period will develop them as an elegant professional for their future job prospects.

1.4. Objectives of the study

There are four main objectives of doing this internship. they are:

1.4.1. To study about function of different departments at OYO Rooms.

As I aim in becoming an entrepreneur, I should be well known of the facts of how an organization functions. It is necessary to know the cross functionalities between the departments to better understand the business process. OYO is just a five-year-old company but is rapidly expanding into different countries worldwide. That is why I chose OYO to gain knowledge about fast pace working environment.

1.4.2. To work on Business Development (SMART Properties).

Business development is creating long-term value for organization and its stakeholders. To grow any business, this department is very much responsible. To gain knowledge on how to grow a tech company or in fact any other business in a fast moving and challenging business environment, I chose OYO.

1.4.3. To improve Sales Skills including Sales Pitch and Closure Techniques.

In today's world, if you need to sell any product; the packaging must be great. I was offered the position of a Business Development Intern where I had to visit prospective clients and make a sales pitch. The sales pitch was the packaging for my clients. A lot of factors come into play in B2B business where even though the pitch was good, at the end all that matters is the whether one is able to close the deal or not.

1.4.4. To know the demand and supply of room bookings through online channel.

Nepal is a country where tourism plays a vital role for the economic progress. As OYO entered the Nepalese market, there were lots of hotels in the offline market compared to the

online market. Through this internship, I intend to know whether customers prefer online booking for hotels or are they not being able to book a hotel due to lack of online presence.

1.5. Roles and responsibilities

OYO has different departments where different works are carried out and I was placed in the Business Development Department. The following were the roles and responsibilities of the student:

a) Visiting the market

b) Screening potential hotel to collaborate with.

c) Walk-ins

d) Generating sales leads

e) Deal discussions

f) Negotiations

g) Follow up to clients

h) Closures

i) Relationship management

j) Reporting daily planned meetings to Business Development Head (BDH)

k) Coordinating the process of transforming the hotel till the day it goes Live.

l) Intervening to solve issues with owner alignment whenever required
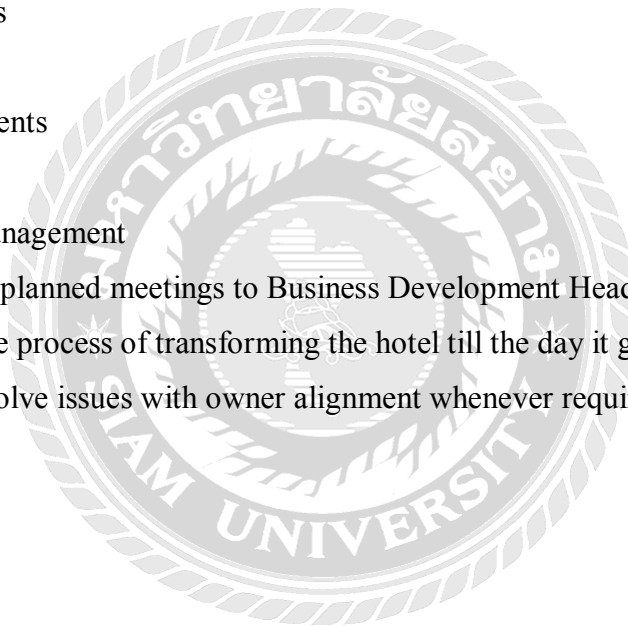
Chapter 2 : Internship Activities

2.1. Assignments and responsibilities

I was working under Mr. Saurav Panda, Country Head for Business Development who assigned me works related to BD Documents for expansion, Reverse Change of Ownership (RCOO) process for Churned properties, Testimonial Project and mainly Business Development at Dhangadhi and Mahendranagar including transformation works at the hotels.

Creating the BD document included compilation of information required to be shared with the hotel owners before signing any contract. To do so, I was needed to educate myself on the process of different departments and by this, I got to understand the work process of my company very well. I discussed the very important points with each department heads that need to be clear to the hotel owners so that no complications arise later. This assignment made me more confident on my sales pitch as I knew the important answers to any questions that the client may have.

The assignment for churned properties was assigned to delist the hotels from all the OTA channels as OYO. This included coordinating with the OTA department and finance department. The hotels must have cleared the payments before the credentials could be transferred back. This was an important task for the company because it could bring legal issues later on if the hotel owners did not get the access to their OTA accounts. Asset owner success project was one of the assignment where I was assigned to create a presentation of the successful hotel owners partnered with OYO. Various parameters were reviewed and data were collected on particular hotels and how they have benefited from collaborating with us. The hotel owners were very positive about being interviewed by our central PR team for the Press Release.

The job that I was offered at OYO Rooms Nepal was the position of Business Development Intern. During the first week, my supervisor allowed me to be a part in all possible meetings where we discussed about churned properties, Walk-in Visits, Sales Pitch and Dispute Resolution. I was tagged along with a colleague for initial training and then I was sent to western region of Nepal for recce as the company was just planning to expand into other major parts of the country.

I spent majority of the internship tenure in the Far-western region of Nepal where I had the responsibility to kick start the expansion of the company. Several meetings and follow ups were

conducted with all the hotel owners in Dhangadhi and Mahendranagar to explore if there were any beneficial terms to work together.

Firstly, recce was conducted and I screened out potential hotels that OYO could collaborate with. Secondly, I set up meetings with the owners and pitched them about our brand proposition and how they could benefit from it. Then with constant follow ups, deal discussions and negotiations, the deal would be closed and transformation procedures started. So after signing any hotel, I was responsible to clear the OTA procedure at the central team. For that, I needed to take the No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the hotel printed in their letter head and submit it to the central team. There were also other procedures that happened with the transformation department- BD TR Handover and operations department- Ops BG which ensured that the owner was well known about the works that had to be done in order to meet the OYO Standards. In case we provided business advance to hotels, I needed to collect Post Dated Cheque (PDC) for the amount which would be invested by OYO that would be recovered in EMIs. The PDCs had to be submitted to the finance team before the payment would get released. Only after receiving the cheques, 50% amount was released before Live date and 50% after the property would go Live.
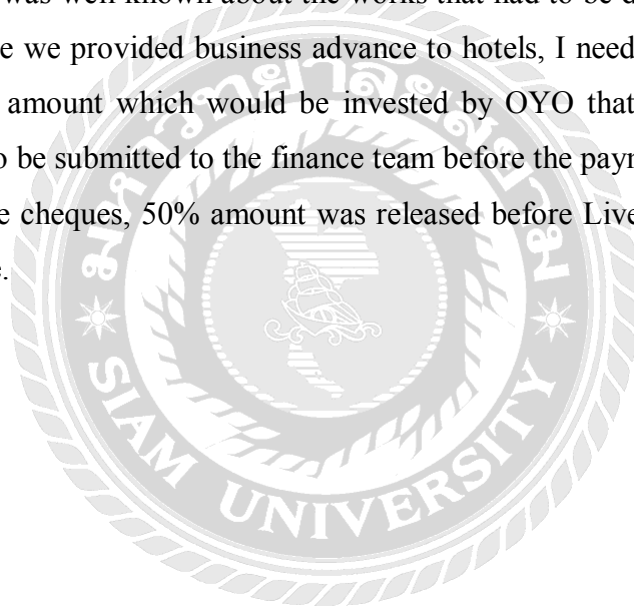
Chapter 3 : Identification of Problems Encountering during the Internship

3.1. Indication of how Isuccessfully solved the problems

There were lots of problem that I encountered while interning at OYO Rooms Nepal. I am glad that it came across because without the problems, I wouldn't have known how important the role of any individual is in the communication process. Working in the BD made me realize that we are responsible to follow-up for the TR Advance release to the upper management. If the TR Advance does not go out in time to hotel partners, then the Live date will get affected and hence operations cannot be started at the committed date.

3.1.1. Convincing Offline practicing hotels.

Until now, there are still some hotels in the far-western region of Nepal who are completely dependent on walk-in guests. By collaborating with OYO, they would be able to get high online exposure, technical assistance from OYO, OYO Captain for their timely infrastructure maintenance, staff training and motivation, and customer feedback management. In a place where our brand is not heard at all and people are still not positive about going online, educating the clients about our brand and informing them about the benefits of collaborating with us as a partner was a tough task. What happens in a hotel is known to another hotel owner in an instant. So, what I did was, I went to younger hotel owners because they were more technologically savvy person and they would understand the need of online booking. Also, the next strategy was to convince the president of Hotel Association of Kailali, because there is unity among hotel owners in such places. After collaborating with the owner of hotel who also happened to be the president of Hotel Association of Kailali, approaching other hotels was made easier. As it is a small city, deals given to a particular hotel owner was known to other hotel owners. To avoid this, we made them sign a confidentiality agreement that prohibited them to talk about the arrangement with OYO.
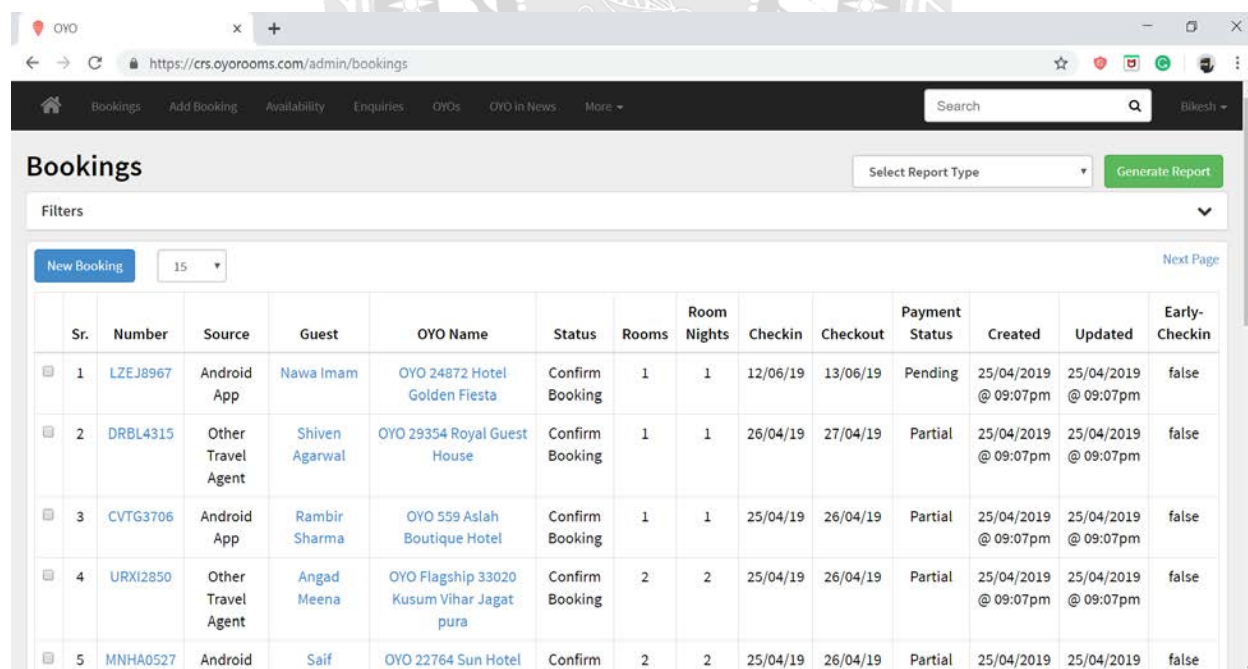
3.1.2. Meeting Live Date.

It is one of the most critical task in the supply chain of our business model. Unless the hotel goes Live in OYO platform, the sales cannot be started. So in order to push sales and meet the demand of customers in particular area, the transformation works at the hotel must be completed within specified time frame. This was a problem as there was very little skilled manpower to run the transformation works at Far-Western Nepal. If it were in Kathmandu, the

capital of the country the work that would have been completed in a week takes a month in Far-Western Nepal as there is lack of both raw materials and skilled manpower to perform the transformation tasks. So, the materials were sent from vendors located at Kathmandu to keep the work going.

3.1.3. Getting familiar with the software.

There were different software applications that each department used. Orbis for BD, Lifeline for TR, and Krypton for OPS. There would be some technical issues in the app due to which the process could not be continued. It took a while for me to get used to with the software application where BDM would create a lead and enter KYC details. Also, entering deals, approving the deals and uploading the contracts would all be done through the Orbis App. All these were separate apps for each department to streamline their work process. Besides these apps, there was a Central Reservation System (CRS) where all the employees could log in if they are authorized to do so and could know the entire back-end process of the company. However, I had some problems when I needed to resubmit the contract when a request for change in room categories was raised. It was a completely new process which I had to learn from my colleague.

Figure11: Central Reservation System (CRS)

3.1.4. Inter-Departmental work.

As I was in the BD department, I also had to do works related to Transformation Department and Operations Department. As the expansion plan was not planned well, there was shortage of employees across departments. The employees looking after certain regions in Kathmandu were also responsible for transformation and operations related works outside the capital. Most of the time they would be back and forth between cities and in their absence, I took over their responsibilities. Some of the responsibilities were managing the TR works and vendors to meet the Live date, also arranging professional photography for the hotels. Giving HMS (OYO OS) training to receptionists at the hotel and responding to any issues they encounter during booking, check-in and check-out of guests. Booking price modification would be sent to the AGM of respective properties.

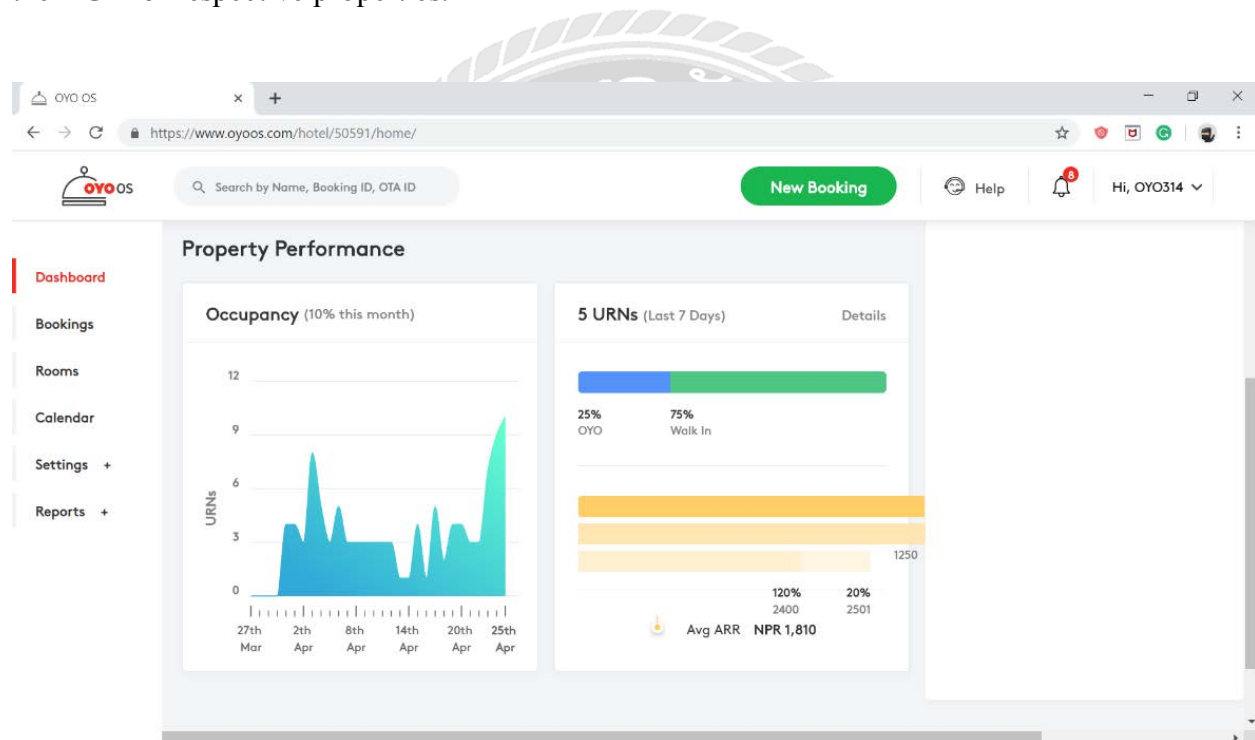Figure 12: OYO OS Software used to manage a property's operations

3.2. Examples

The Far-west cities like Dhangadhi and Mahendranagar are actually not a tourist destination. The hotels are able to sustain there by the means of business travelers and INGOs and NGOs. OYO's Sales Team approached business houses and organizations for their booking with OYO. This is how we changed the offline trend into online.

Coordinated very closely with the finance department for the TR Advance release. Because the payment was received by the hotel owner in time, the transformation works could get completed in time and the Live date was not affected and we could meet our commitment.

Getting used to online bookings where the market place was completely offline based was a challenge. The property managers (PM) were trained on how to use the software and create bookings on OYO OS. Further, in case of any problem during check in and check out; it was coordinated between AGM and the PM.

Studying the societal behavior of the city, it was first needed to make a first client as all other hotel owners were skeptical about OYO. Once, we got few young owners onboard with OYO who understood the need of technology and online presence for their hotel to actually operate well; other hotel owners started following the wave.

Chapter 4 : Contribution and Learning Process

4.1. Contributions of student made during the internship

The contributions made during the internship was focused on "Business Development". Along this, contributions in other departments were also made.

4.1.1. Reached out to more potential clients.

I consider myself lucky enough to have done internship at OYO during the expansion phase in Nepal. Right after one week of starting my internship, I visited the western cities in Nepal- Nepalgunj, Surkhet, Kohalpur, Dhangadhi, and Mahendranagar. The company was present only in two cities- Kathmandu and Pokhara before expansion of the company nationwide. Me and my colleague travelled for weeks conducting recce and understanding the market we were going to enter into. There were hundreds of hotels in those cities and we collected the number of rooms in all the hotels to come up with a rough idea about the size of the market.

4.1.2. Building a brand through word of mouth.

OYO was not much known in the western part of the country. While developing the business in the Western Nepal, I met hundreds of hotel clients and also vendors to supply us skilled manpower and materials. During this process, everyone was informed and educated about the company and what it was trying to accomplish worldwide.

4.1.3. Increasing the supply of SRNs.

Signing the contracts with potential clients and generating OYO's presence in the Western Nepal was done by the student. The student brought in total of 6 hotels with total of 130 SRNs during his internship tenure which amounts to **$597,870** (130*$18*365*0.7) of annual business for the company. These SRNs were also important numbers to help the firm reach the target of 2700 SRNs in the month of March, 2019

4.1.4. Assisted in Churned Properties Project and Property Owner Success Project.

As important it is to sign a hotel and follow the Change of Ownership (COO) procedure, it is equally important to delist the hotels from OYO's platform that have terminated our contract- a process also known as Reverse Change of Ownership (RCOO). It is a serious issue when a hotel terminates the contract with OYO but is still seen as OYO in the internet sites. So, in order to give the hotel owners back their credentials of all OTAs, their financials must first be

cleared. Only after the financials are cleared, the RCOO can move forward. I was responsible to coordinate the OTA Department, Operations Department and Finance Department for delisting the churned properties from OYO's platform.

The next project that the student worked on was Property Owner Success Project. It was about those hotel owners who had a very successful collaboration with OYO and respond positively to our practices. Later, these testimonials were a fact to new skeptical clients and it would make their decision making easier. This project helped the company to increase the number of skeptical clients to potential clients.

4.2. Details of the related learning process and new knowledge student has received

4.2.1. Proficiency in software; Orbis, OYO OS, Krypton.

OYO has various software that enables it to run its interdepartmental operations smoothly. Since I was involved not only in BD but also in operations, I got the chance to use Orbis, OYO OS and Krypton App. Orbis is the in-house application used by Business Development Manager (BDM) to create leads, fill up KYC details, analyze deals, get deals approved and upload contracts.
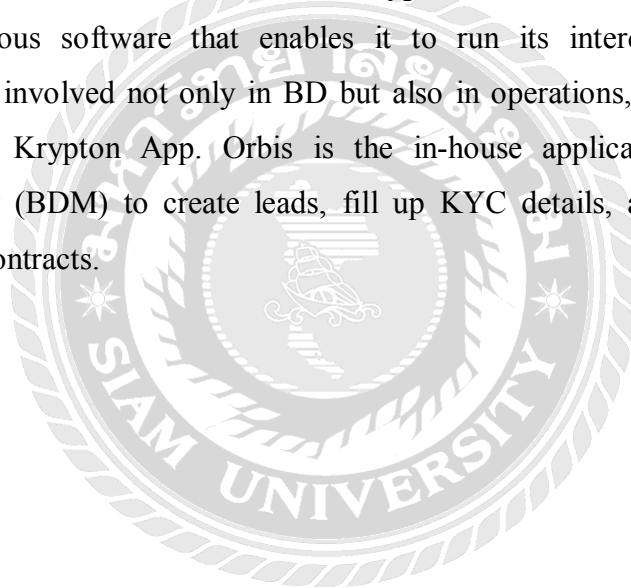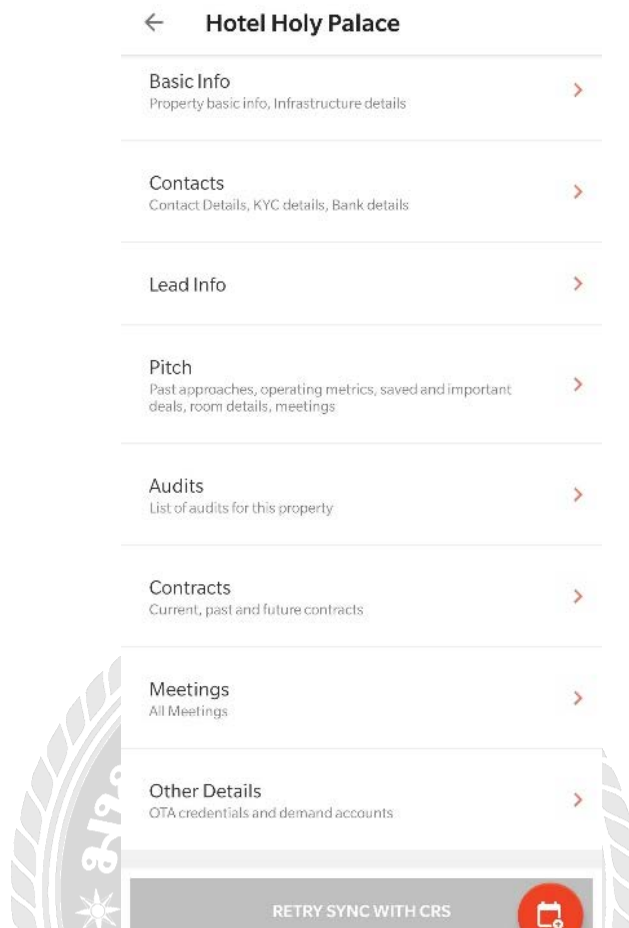
Figure 13: Orbis Application used by BDM

OYO OS is the Hotel Management Software (HMS) used by hotel clients to manage their room bookings and operations. The Krypton is in-house application of Operations team. It is used to submit the Post-Transformation Audit (PTA) to the central team for approval, after which the property goes Live. Krypton is also used to manage all the properties assigned to a specific Assistant General Manager (AGM).
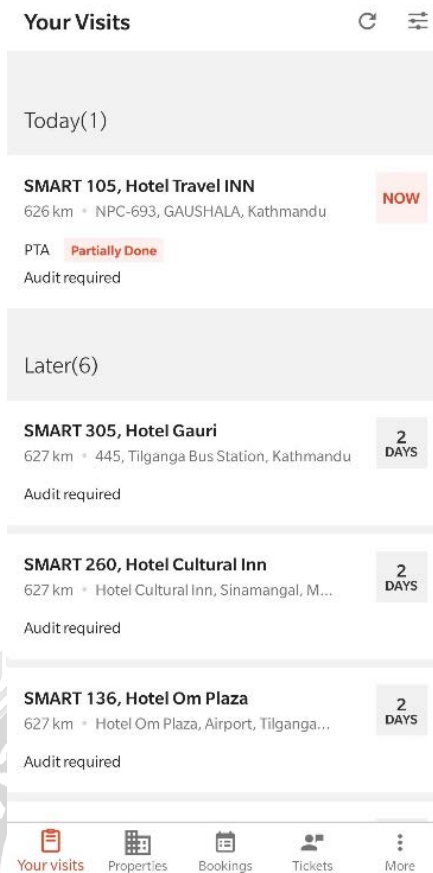
Figure 14:Krypton Application used by AGM

4.2.2. Analyzing consumer behavior and their needs.

The first thing my supervisor taught me was to notice the clients' moves. Act accordingly to what the client desires and eyeing for closure. Clients don't really know if they really want to collaborate until they are shown the benefits. As a hospitality tech company, OYO provides necessary online exposure and technological requirements to enable online booking. Some hotel owners are interested in revenue share while some are interested in the operational help that OYO provides whereas some hotel owners are interested in boosting revenue through online bookings. Every hotel partner is different for us and we treat them accordingly. We provide the necessary deal types that owners are looking into and eye for closure.

4.2.3. Functioning of hospitality business and a tech startup.

It was very valuable for me to work as an intern at OYO as it gave me an opportunity to understand the hotel business maximum insights. As I plan in becoming an entrepreneur, and also Nepal being a tourism country, this internship was very helpful in knowing what I am about to get into. Hospitality business is a service industry and the most crucial points are the front-end

staffs. This is an era of technology and by working in OYO, I was able to know the power of Internet and technology. This will help me when I plan to start my own business.

4.2.4. Improved communication and closing skills.

As being a BD intern, the most important task was to build a good relationship with clients. It could be done only when one develops an attitude to listen more and speak less. By listening more to the clients, I was able to understand exactly what they were wanting from us. This resulted in better cooperation among ourselves and more closures. Relationship management not only includes business relation but also to be able to empathize with the clients on a personal level. This internship helped me develop my people skills. This skill was useful to resolve the conflict that arose among a client where the TR Advance was being delayed due to central office issues.

Chapter 5 : Conclusion
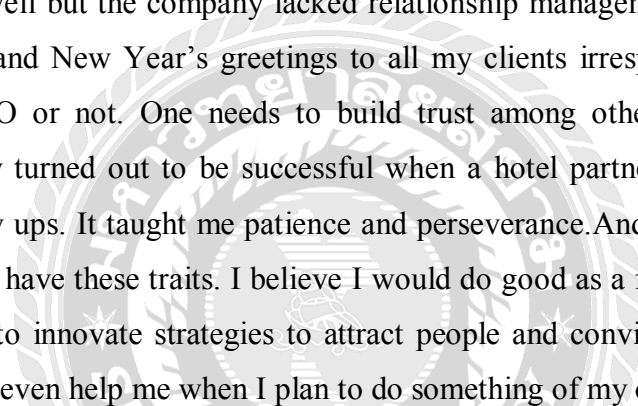
5.1. Self-assessment as a professional

The internship was very productive and helped me develop my professionalism as well as grow as a person. Most of my internship was done away from home in the Far-Western Nepal. It was a challenge for me and took some time to get along but I quickly started performing. Sales and marketing has always been my cup of tea and through this internship I was able to look back upon myself and evaluate my future as a Sales and Marketing professional. My supervisor at work was very satisfied with my work and also offered me a job. Though the internship time period was small, I was able to gain much knowledge in the field of Business Development. I was able to understand the hospitality industry of the country.Nepal has a huge scope for hospitality industry especially in the cities where tourism effects are more distinct. The main problem faced by this industry is the lack of skilled manpower. The employee turnover ratio is high in Nepal. This is because of the more inviting opportunity and higher pay in foreign countries.

Internship in the Business Development Department helped me look into business with innovation point of view. It helped me evaluate the internal segments of the company-marketing, sales, customer service, operations along with external segments- client relationship and potential clients. The demand for online booking is slowly taking pace in Nepal. It was especially very low at Far-western Nepal until OYO took over. During the first month 38 rooms were booked online at the first property at Dhangadhi. In the next month that number increased as other hotels also went Live and the board of OYO was placed at hotels which increased footfall and brand recognition.

This internship allowed me to step outside college boundaries and involve in corporate business world where I was able to use the knowledge gained from the university. It was needed of me to use software like Orbis and OYO OS which both help in the smooth functioning of the company's separate departments. Some of the most relevant courses that had a great significance during my internship were Management Information System, Sales Management, Psychology, Sociology, Consumer Behavior, Marketing Management and Brand Management. Practical learning is a dynamic process; it was very challenging and at the same time encouraging to work with OYO. The major departments in the company were Business Development, Transformation,

Operations, Sales and Revenue. BD team brought in hotel partners (supply) whereas TR team made sure the properties are as per OYO Standards. Ops team were responsible for smooth functioning of the hotel and guest experience. Sales team brought in bookings from travel agents and business houses (demand) and Revenue team managed the demand and supply to maximize the hotel revenue. The knowledge about functioning of these inter departments will help me in my future ventures.

This internship also allowed me to make judgements on the type of deals for a prospective client. As quoted by Patricia Fripp - You don't close a sale, you open a relationship if you want to build a long-term, successful enterprise (Anderson, 2013); I too followed these steps into building relationship with my clients. Hotel partners that leave OYO leave not because OYO didn't perform well but the company lacked relationship management with their clients. I sent festive greetings and New Year's greetings to all my clients irrespective of whether they collaborated with OYO or not. One needs to build trust among other partner to conduct a business. This strategy turned out to be successful when a hotel partner agreed to collaborate after continuous follow ups. It taught me patience and perseverance.And I believe to succeed in any field, one ought to have these traits. I believe I would do good as a future professional. This is also because I like to innovate strategies to attract people and convince them it is good for them. These skills will even help me when I plan to do something of my own in the future.

Annex

Figure 15: Contract signed with the President of Hotel Association of Nepal- Kailali

Figure 16: Contract signed with AfnoGhar Temple Resort

Figure 17: First Contract signed with Shanti Hotel

Figure 18: With Job Supervisor, Mr. Saurav Panda

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