

## EXPECTATIONS OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY: PERCEPTIONS OF THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

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### Abstract

This study aimed to determine the perceptions of the Tourism and Hospitality Management students toward the expectations of the tourism industry. Descriptive type of research was utilized in this study with questionnaire as the main instrument. One hundred fifty (150) First Year and Fourth Year BSHM and BSTM students enrolled in the 1st trimester of School Year 2018-2019 participated in the study. Results of the study showed that almost hundred percent of the respondents intend to pursue careers related to tourism and hospitality industry. Working in airline and hotel/accommodations were the preferred choice of work of the respondents after graduation. Department managers and supervisors including business owners/entrepreneurs were the perceived work positions of the respondents after five (5) years of working in the hospitality and tourism industry. Interpersonal skills, dedication/commitment and enthusiasm were the top three attributes of a hospitality/tourism professional as perceived by the respondents. Moreover, communication skills, interpersonal skills and thinking skills were the top three perceived competencies that the industry is looking for among hospitality and tourism management graduates. Based on the results of the study, it is recommended that the College of Hospitality Management and Tourism of the Baliuag University should continuously update the curricula of the BSHM and BSTM programs in order to meet the demands and expectations of the industry. Likewise, it is also recommended that the University should constantly adopt more English enhancement and customer service programs to further develop the communication and customer service relations skills of the students.

**Keywords:** perception, career, expectations, hospitality, tourism

Tourism industry continues to grow and extensive diversification of products is taking place in the industry hence, becoming one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. It is considered as a key for the development of socio-economic progress of a country. It is one of the world's most important industries and a major source of employment. Moreover, the tourism industry plays a significant role as a major player in international commerce and one of the main economic sources for developing countries (Arjun, 2013).

The United Nation's World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) Tourism 2020 Vision forecasts that international arrivals are expected to reach nearly 1.6 billion by the year 2020. East Asia and the Pacific, Asia, the Middle East and Africa are forecasted to record growth at rates of over 5% year, compared to the world average of 4.1%. The more mature regions, Europe and America, are anticipated to show lower than average growth rates. Europe will maintain the highest share of world arrivals, although there will be a decline from 60 per cent in 1995 to 46 percent in 2020. The contribution of tourism industry to the economic development of the country depends on the quality of the tourism industry offer (UNWTO, 2005). Therefore, considering the above facts and figures, it is necessary to maintain the quality and demand to remain competitive. To meet the quality and demand, the tourism industry requires skilled human resources.

The tourism industry looks for quality human resources who can respond positively to the planning of strategic or corporate businesses, expanding business, cost effective way to operate business and meeting new and demanding meets of tourists. The employers look for overall intellectual ability and concentrates on flexibility, language skills including good use of English plus other foreign language, oral and written communication skills, outgoing personalities and people skills and IT competencies. The most desired competencies includes: teamwork, communication skills, guest service skills, professional appearance, understanding of industry expectations, pride in self and preferring to work with people over completing administrative tasks (Rudolf, 2011).

The hospitality and tourism industries are unique and require individuals to demonstrate additional skills to achieve success. These skills focus on guest service and communication. Employees are the basic link between the guest and the service provider. A service staff member's interpersonal skills and treatment of a guest will help determine if that guest returns to become a repeat guest and loyal customer. Every hospitality and tourism employee uses communication skills throughout the day. Critical to success in these businesses are the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To be successful in the world of hospitality and tourism, an employee needs to become an active listener rather than a passive listener. Listening will make you a person more effective communicator and a valued employee (Arjun, 2013).

A career in hospitality and tourism offers many fascinating employment opportunities. Getting started requires research, preparation, and follow-up. Maintaining a strong ethic and demonstrating excellence will help to advance in a career. Graduates of hospitality and tourism management programs are well rounded with a combination of business and life skills that are in high demand with employers (Brien, 2009). However, the hospitality industry has been changing rapidly as a result of changing economies, societies, and fast developing technologies. To cope with these changes, employees need various skills and abilities. According to Shenoa Gittins (2014), there are six skills and characteristics that one needs to work in the hospitality industry; these are commitment, interpersonal skills, problem-solving, teamwork, organized and Tourism and hospitality graduates are expected to be appointed to professional managerial pathways (e.g. management training programs) in international hotels because they assume their qualifications will afford them greater opportunities for advancement (Brien, 2009).

Employment skills needed in the workplace include: basic skills, such as reading, writing, mathematics, speaking, and listening; thinking skills such as creativity, decision making, problem solving, and the abilities to reason and learn; and personal qualities, such as responsibility, self-esteem, self-management and integrity. Skills that relate specifically to

hospitality and tourism careers include guest-service skills, which require interpersonal skills and communication skills (Silva, 2009).

Graduates may have difficulties adapting to working life in their first work experience, because their expectations do not match the reality of their first job role. Furthermore, their working life will differ from what they learnt on their academic programs. These differences may cause confusion, which can be stressful to students and may have a negative effect on their work career. Therefore, the hospitality and tourism management students benefit from education that provides a realistic appraisal of the environment of the industry and tourism work places. Students need the ability to cope with the obstacles associated with starting work in the hospitality industry (Waryszak, 2009).

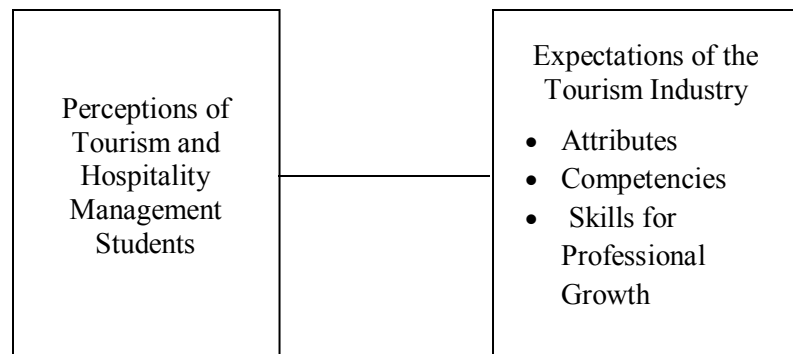
It appears that multi-technical skills, good communication skills, leadership skills and financial skills are necessary to operate effectively in the hospitality industry. Knowing the skills required by the hospitality industry is vitally important to hospitality students and education providers (Finegold, Wagner & Mason, 2011). Students may gain work experience through cooperative education program or internship. These programs are academic that encourage students to apply theory in work settings and gain greater work competencies. Internship program experience is seen as a cornerstone for students when they are employed in their first job in the hospitality industry (Ross, 2009).

A well designed and flexible curriculum is needed to integrate dynamic changes and strategic developments in the tourism and hospitality industry. As a vast dynamic and growing industry, hospitality and tourism provides tremendous opportunity for ambitious students who enjoy working with people. The hospitality and tourism industry operates in a highly competitive environment. It is important that those seeking careers as successful professionals develop a strong business foundation and customer service skills (CHED, 2017).

Given the abovementioned information, this research sought to determine the perceptions of the Tourism and Hospitality Management students on the expectations of the tourism industry. Specifically, it sought to answer the following sub problems:

1. What are the respondents' perceived career paths in terms of:
  - 1.1 preferred choice of work;
  - 1.2 employment position after five (5) years?
2. What are the important attributes that hospitality and tourism professionals must possess as perceived by the respondents?
3. As perceived by the respondents, what are the competencies that the tourism industry is looking for among graduates of hospitality and tourism management?
4. What are the respondents' perceived skills of hospitality and tourism professionals which are important for professional growth?

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1.** Figure shows the perceptions of the Tourism and Hospitality Management students to the expectations of the tourism industry.

### Method

Descriptive type of research was utilized in this study with questionnaire as the main instrument. The survey instrument was designed by the researchers to gather the perceptions, and views of the respondents in connection with the topic being studied. It consisted of six (6) questions to determine the perceptions of Tourism and Hospitality Management students on the expectations of the tourism industry. Survey questionnaires were distributed to the selected one hundred fifty (150) First year and Fourth year students of the College of Hospitality Management and Tourism students enrolled in the First Trimester of School Year 2018-2019.

The responses to every item in the questionnaire were tabulated and transmitted into percentages. The percentage of responses to every item was determined by dividing the total number of responses by the total number of respondents.

### Results

**Table 1.** Respondents' intention to pursue a career related to Tourism and Hospitality industry.

	<i>f</i>	%
Yes	144	96
No	6	4
Total	150	100

As shown in Table 1, out of 150 respondents, 96% of them intended to pursue a career related to tourism and hospitality industry after graduation while 4% answered No.

**Table 2.** Respondents' preferred choice of work after graduation.

	<i>f</i>	%	R
Airlines	82	49.7	1
Hotel/Accommodation	54	32.7	2
Restaurant	15	9.1	3
Cruise line	9	5.5	4
Travel Agency	5	3.0	5
Total	165	100	

tion.

Table 2 shows that the airlines industry ranked 1 as the preferred choice of work after graduation by almost half of the respondents (49.7%), 32.7% preferred to work at hotels and other lodging accommodations that ranked 2 while restaurant ranked 3 as the preferred choice of work by the respondents. Very few answered cruise lines (5.5%) and travel agencies (3.0%) as work preferences of the respondents. Some of the respondents answered more than one item.

**Table 3.** Respondents' perceived employment position after

	<i>f</i>	%	R
Department Manager	45	30	1
Department Supervisor	32	21	2
Business Owner/Entrepreneur	30	20	3
General Manager	25	17	4
Company Director	15	10	5
Line Staff	3	2	6
Total	150	100	

five years of working

As seen in Table 3, 45 of the respondents perceived that after five years of working, they will become department managers (rank 1) followed by department supervisor that ranked number 2. It is also the perception of the 20% of the respondents of becoming a business owner/entrepreneur after five years of

working that ranked number 3.

**Table 4.** Respondents' perceived important attributes of a

Attributes	<i>f</i>	%	R
Interpersonal Skills	91	37.4	1
Dedication/Commitment	70	28.8	2
Enthusiasm	48	19.8	3
Flexibility	18	7.4	4
Effective Communicator	12	4.9	5
Team Leader	4	1.6	6
Total	243	100	

hospitality/tourism professional.

As reflected in Table 4, Interpersonal Skills ranked 1 (37.4%) as the most important attributes of a hospitality/tourism professional as perceived by the respondents. It is followed by Dedication/Commitment that ranked number 2 (28.8%) and Enthusiasm that ranked number 3. As seen in the table, some respondents answered multiple responses. The result of the study was supported by the article written by Dr. Shenoa Gittins (2014) which describes that commitment and interpersonal skills are two of the six key skills and characteristics that are sought after in the Hospitality industry.

**Table 5.** Respondents' perceived competencies that the tourism industry is looking for hospitality and tourism management

	<i>f</i>	%	R
Communication skills	115	26.2	1
Interpersonal skills	92	21.0	2
Thinking skills	88	20.0	3
Analytical skills	74	16.9	4
Technical skills	66	15.0	5
Time Management Skills	3	1.0	6
Total	438	100	

graduates.

Table 5 reveals that 26% (115) of respondents perceived that communication skills is one of the competencies that the Tourism industry is looking for among hospitality and tourism management graduates which ranked 1 followed by interpersonal skills and thinking skills that ranked 2 (21%) and 3 (20%) respectively. The result of the survey was supported by Rudolf (2011) which states that communication skill is one of the most desired competencies that should be acquired/possessed by employees and it is fundamental for career development in the hospitality industry.

	<i>f</i>	%	R
Technical skills	96	23.0	1
Interpersonal skills	86	20.6	2.5
Thinking skills	86	20.6	2.5
Communication skills	79	19.0	4
Analytical skills	70	16.8	5
Total	417	100	

**Table 6.** Respondents' perceived skill/s of hospitality and tourism professionals important for professional growth

As shown in Table 5, Technical skills ranked 1 (23%) as the respondents' perceived skills important for professional growth.

## Conclusions

1. Almost hundred percent of the respondents would like to pursue their career in the tourism and hospitality industry and that majority of the respondents preferred to work in airlines and hotel/accommodations.
2. Majority of the respondents were expecting to be department managers, supervisors and business owners/entrepreneurs after five (5) years of working in the hospitality and tourism industry.
3. Interpersonal skills, dedication/commitment and enthusi-

asm were the top three attributes of a hospitality/tourism professional as perceived by the respondents

4. Communication skills, interpersonal skills and thinking skills were the top three perceived competencies that the industry is looking for among hospitality and tourism management graduates.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions presented, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. The College of Hospitality Management and Tourism of the Baliuag University should continuously update the curricula of the BSHM and BSTM programs in order to meet the demands and expectations of the industry.
2. The University should constantly adopt more English enhancement and customer service programs to further develop the communication and customer relations skills of the students.

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