Attitudes of Malaysian Tourism and Hospitality Students' towards a Career in the Industry

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This study explored Malaysian undergraduate tourism and hospitality students' views of the industry as a career choice. Four hundred and twenty-nine tourism and hospitality students, from three Malaysian institutions completed a questionnaire rating the importance of 20 factors in influencing their choice of career, and then the extent to which they believed tourism and hospitality as a career offers these factors. All of the 20 factors tested have been identified as being significantly different. From the results, it is clear that students generally do not believe that a career in tourism and hospitality will offer them the factors that they find important.

Key words: career choice, undergraduates, perceptions, tourism, hospitality

Introduction

The tourism and hospitality industry worldwide has been confronted with the problem of attracting and retaining quality employees, which has led to a shortage of skilled personnel to staff the large number of tourism and hospitality businesses (Deery & Shaw, 1999; Ferris, Berkson, & Harris, 2002; Freeland, 2000; Hinkin & Tracey, 2000; Powell, 1999; Tourism Division, 2002). This problem is complex with many different contributing factors, and it has been argued that there are a number of industry-specific characteristics that exacerbate this skills shortage. These characteristics include a young transient workforce, low levels of pay and formal qualifications, high levels of female, student, part-time and casual workers, a high proportion of low-skilled jobs, a large proportion of hours worked outside normal business hours, a negative industry image in the eyes of potential employees, a large number of migrant staff, poor utilization of student

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labour and high levels of staff turnover (Baum, 2006; Brien, 2004; Fraser, 2003; Riley, Ladkin, & Szivas, 2002; Service Skills Victoria, 2005; Tourism Division, 2002). These characteristics all add to the complex problems associated with recruitment and retention in the industry.

The tourism and hospitality industry in Malaysia is substantial, contributing nearly RM96.6 billion or 12.3% to Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2008, and contributes significantly to regional economies throughout the country (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2009). Total employment in the tourism industry totalled 1,165,000 or 10.8% of the total number of employed people in Malaysia (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2009). The number of international visitors travelling to Malaysia continues to grow each year. As can be seen in Figure 1 more than 23.5 million international tourists visited Malaysia in 2009, an increase of more than 7% over 2008. This showed that 2009 was a very successful year in terms of Tourism Malaysia's efforts in aggressively promoting Malaysia as one of the preferred holiday destinations in the region. The achievement is much more meaningful considering the many challenges and crises the industry faced throughout the year, such as the global economic crisis and the H1N1 flu outbreak. According to Tourism Malaysia (2010), the top 10 tourist-generating markets for Malaysia in 2009 were Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Brunei, China, India, Australia, the Philippines, the UK and Japan. In terms of growth, the Iranian market registered the highest increase, with 60.9% in 2009.

The growing importance of this sector is leading to issues surrounding the number of trained personnel available to fill the growing number of positions that are becoming available in the industry. For this reason it is imperative that the industry recruits and retains high-quality and well-trained staff, such as recent graduates of tourism and hospitality programmes. It is thus important to

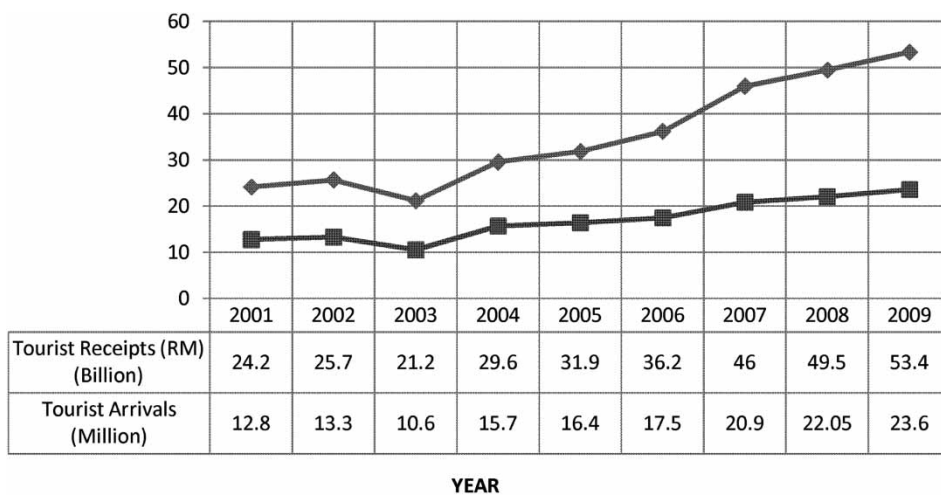|	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Tourist Receipts (RM) (Billion)	24.2	25.7	21.2	29.6	31.9	36.2	46	49.5	53.4
Tourist Arrivals (Million)	12.8	13.3	10.6	15.7	16.4	17.5	20.9	22.05	23.6

YEAR

Figure 1 International Tourism Arrivals and Receipts in Malaysia. Adapted from Tourism Malaysia (2010).

understand how employers in the tourism and hospitality industry are utilizing students as casual and part-time workers as well as in work-based learning programmes (internships), and how the utilization of these employees is affecting their decision regarding pursuing or continuing a career in the industry. This study measures the perceptions and attitudes of students who are currently studying tourism/hospitality management in Malaysia towards a career in the industry. It will first identify the factors that these respondents find important when choosing a career, and then compare this with the extent to which the respondents believe the tourism and hospitality industry offers these factors.

Some recent reports have highlighted the issue of labour and skills shortages in the tourism and hospitality industry worldwide (de Jong, 2008; International Society of Hospitality Consultants, 2006). At the 2006 International Society of Hospitality Consultants (ISHC) Annual Conference held in Miami, Florida, ISHC members participated in a series of round-table discussions to identify the top 10 issues in the tourism and hospitality industry for 2007. The debate included in-depth discussions on over 100 different issues. Ultimately, the issue thought to be the greatest contemporary challenge for the tourism and hospitality industry was labour and skills shortages (International Society of Hospitality Consultants, 2006). It is claimed that attracting and retaining qualified workers, once only an issue for a small number of regional, remote and niche markets, is becoming the most significant concern for all tourism and hospitality businesses globally. The International Society of Hospitality Consultants (2006) claims that demography, wage levels, failure adequately to address worker satisfaction and a repu-

tation for long hours and low pay are all contributing factors.

Literature Review

Peter de Jong (2008), the former President and Chief Executive Officer of the Pacific Asia Travel Association, claims that a shortage of human resources has been identified as one of four "mega forces" that are reshaping the demand for travel services. Mr de Jong (2008, p. 3) claims that:

the explosive growth of tourism infrastructure globally is placing incredible strains on the travel and tourism industry to deliver sufficient levels of suitably-skilled human resources to sustain this growth. In some cases the "hardware" is being built without concern for the "software" needed to run the operations. This is a huge, multi-dimensional dilemma covering issues such as recruitment, education, on-the-job training, language skills, performance management, retention and the mobility of labour.

One of the issues facing employers is to understand the new generation of employees entering the workforce. There has been much written about the characteristics that Generation Y employees exhibit towards a career. What is meant by the term "career" will be discussed first, followed by an analysis of the characteristics of the Generation Y employee. Some of the definitions of a career include: "the pattern of work related experiences that span the course of a person's life" (Robbins, Bergman, Stagg, & Coulter, 2006, p. 736); and "a career is a series of jobs arranged over time" (Riley & Ladkin, 1994, p. 225). While there are many definitions of what the term career means, Arthur, Hall, and Lawrence (1989) state that when considering these

the common theme is that a career is the unfolding sequence of a person's work experiences over time. Ayres (2006) claims that traditionally there has been a career-for-life philosophy adopted by workers, whereby workers will spend their entire working life working in one industry, and, in many cases, one organization. This philosophy has, in recent times, coinciding with Generation Y entering the workforce, been replaced by a more uncertain career structure, with employees frequently changing employers within their industry and many also pursuing work in different industries (Inkson, Arthur, & Pringle, 1999).

Morton (2002) stated that Generation Y employees show a tendency towards valuing equality in the workplace and they seek positions that offer reasonable wages and good opportunities for training. Morton (2002) also claimed that they respect managers who empower workers and who are open and honest with employees. Martin (2005), who calls this generation "Yers", describes eight main characteristics shown by Generation Y towards their careers. These eight characteristics include the Generation Y employee being self-reliant and independent, techno-savvy, entrepreneurial, seeking flexibility, having an urgent sense of immediacy, wanting increasing responsibility, having a "get off my back" attitude and adopting a free agency attitude.

Oliver (2006) claims that recent interest in the Generation Y worker has intensified in recent years, and while generalizations are plentiful, he claims that the Generation Y worker is uninterested in a job for life, instead seeking flexibility and work–life balance. Lloyd (2005) states that in the current economic climate, with skills shortages prevalent, Generation Y employees know that they can pick and choose their employer and

they use this power to get what they want or else they will find another job. Oliver (2006) states that, overall, Generation Y workers are seen to have much higher expectations of a job than previous generations, including high expectations of pay, conditions, promotion and advancement.

Chan, Chan, and Qu (2002) claim that numerous researchers have examined theories on student attitudes, expectations and career choice from many different viewpoints. Domonte and Vaden (1987) have ranked the following influences that are considered to have the greatest influence on a graduate's decision to work in the tourism and hospitality industry: (1) interesting work; (2) advancement potential; (3) secure future; (4) good salary; (5) opportunity for service to society; and (6) social prestige. Blumenfeld, Kent, Shock, and Jourdan (1987) have also ranked the 10 most important factors in a graduate's acceptance of a position, which are: (1) type of work; (2) advancement opportunities; (3) company reputation; (4) salary; (5) job security; (6) hours of work; (7) benefits; (8) working conditions; (9) nature of co-workers; and (10) nature of supervisors. McCleary and Weaver (1988) and Sciarini (1997) agree that type of work and advancement opportunities are the most important factors in a graduate's decision to accept a position, with most graduates expecting promotions within 2 years of graduation.

Casado (1992) and Sciarini (1997) found that on graduation most graduates believed they were qualified enough to work as an assistant manager and were looking for a position that was of a managerial level rather than an hourly operational position. This is in contrast to Rimmington's (1999, p. 187) claim that "all graduates should be prepared to work in kitchens and restaurants to acquire practical skills. They should recognize that

with that kind of grounding they will be in an excellent position to reach a senior level".

When looking at the overall perceptions and attitudes of tourism and hospitality management students there is relatively little evidence that research has been conducted in this area (Barron, Maxwell, Broadbridge, & Ogden, 2007; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Ross, 1994). The study conducted by Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000) found that some of the factors that seemed to account for the negative attitudes towards careers in tourism, formed after students had undertaken a practical work assignment, are stressful jobs, lack of family life owing to the nature of the work, long working hours, exhausting and seasonal (unstable) jobs, low social status of tourism jobs, unsatisfactory and unfair promotions, low pay and insufficient benefits, unqualified managers, poor attitudes and behaviour of managers towards employees, unqualified co-workers and poor attitudes and behaviour of co-workers, and poor physical working conditions for employees. These negative attitudes have negative consequences for students, the tourism and hospitality industry, the government and tourism and hospitality educators.

The results of Kusluvan and Kusluvan's (2000) study concur with those of Getz (1994), Pavesic and Brymer (1990) and Barron and Maxwell (1993). Getz (1994) found that over a period of 14 years students' views of the tourism and hospitality industry had become much more negative. Pavesic and Brymer (1990) found that a substantial number of graduates leave the industry owing to poor working conditions, and Barron and Maxwell (1993) found that students just beginning their tourism and hospitality course have opposing views of the industry to those students who have undertaken a period of work experience. All of these studies have argued that direct experi-

ence in the tourism and hospitality industry may cause students to hold negative views of the industry.

Perhaps the study that has the most relevance to this study is that of Barron and Maxwell (1993), who surveyed nearly 1,500 tourism and hospitality students in Scotland. This study found significant differences between the new students' perceptions of the industry compared with the students who had undertaken their industry placement and graduated. They showed that there was not much change in the perceptions of the three groups (new students, post-placement students and graduates) with regards to the industry being one of growth with many career opportunities or the industry being financially rewarding. In the case of all the other statements, there were differences in the response given by new students as opposed to post-placement students and graduates. Two of the biggest differences were that while only 22% of new students believed manual staff in the industry to be poorly treated, over three-quarters (77%) of post-placement students and 73% of graduates claimed that workers were treated poorly. Furthermore, while only 18% of new students believed that the effort required in working in the industry outweighed the rewards, 73% of post-placement students and 80% of graduates claimed that effort does outweigh rewards.

The marked differences in the perceptions of new students compared with those of post-placement students and graduates lies in the difference between perception and experience in the industry. Barron and Maxwell (1993) claim that most new students in tourism and hospitality courses come straight from high school and have little, if any, real experience of working in the industry. Therefore, they have largely unrealistic views of what working in the industry entails, with their

perception of the industry being clouded by the glamorous images of the hotel and travel industry projected by the media. It is therefore only when the students experience working in the industry first-hand that they can get a clear picture of what working in the industry is truly like (Barron & Maxwell, 1993). West and Jameson (1990) agree, and claim that the more exposure hospitality students have to the industry, the less commitment they show.

If an employer cannot meet the expectations mentioned above, the Generation Y employee will pursue other avenues for employment. If employers can understand better the psyche of the Generation Y worker, it will allow them to provide greater opportunities for them based on their ideals and expectations. Barron et al. (2007, p. 122) also claim that "given the implications of this group's features on recruitment to, and retention in, the hospitality industry, in conjunction with management and development needs, it is important for the industry as a whole that this knowledge gap is addressed". The aforementioned claims highlight the importance of understanding the generation Y employee, as well as recruiting and retaining high-quality and well-trained staff such as recent graduates of tourism and hospitality programmes. It is thus important to understand what current tourism and hospitality students are looking for when they consider their future career and to what extent the industry offers them these factors.

Methodology

This study measures the factors students who are currently studying tourism/hospitality management in Malaysia find important when choosing a career and the extent to which they believe a career in tourism and hos-

pitality offers these factors. To undertake this research an online survey was developed based on the works of Richardson (2009b) and Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000). In this survey, respondents were asked to rate each career factor in response to the question "How important is this factor to you when choosing your career?" on a three-point scale: "very important", "fairly important" and "not important". Again on a three-point scale, "definitely", "some" and "not at all", the respondents were then asked to rate each factor in response to the question "To what extent do you think a career in tourism and hospitality will offer this factor?" This instrument has been tested extensively by Richardson (2008, 2009a, b, 2010), where validity and reliability have been proven.

To measure how the perceptions and attitudes of students who are currently studying tourism/hospitality management at undergraduate level in Malaysia are shaped by working in the industry and what impact this has on students' intentions on pursuing a career in the industry, it was decided to use an online survey/questionnaire. After extensive research into the types of online survey program available, Questionpro.com was chosen to construct and deliver the surveys owing to its intuitive survey designs, extensive reporting capabilities and cost. To ensure the security of the results of the survey the account can be accessed only with a username and password known only to the researcher. To guard respondents' anonymity the respondents are not asked to provide any information that could be used to identify them and are contacted by their university so their details are never given to the researcher. To overcome the problems associated with Internet junk mail, the email requesting a student to go to the survey website to complete the survey was sent out according to official university

policies, ensuring delivery to the inbox of each member of the sample.

In addition to the online survey some interviewer-completed surveys were also conducted to increase the number of surveys completed. These interviews were conducted on campus at three Malaysian tertiary institutions: Taylor's University, Management and Science University and Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka. The researcher and an assistant conducted these interviews over a 2-week period in April 2010.

The questionnaire used in this research contained closed-ended questions consisting of demographic questions and Likert scales. There are two advantages of using closed-ended as opposed to open-ended questions. The first advantage is that the analysis of open-ended questions can be laborious and may result in a final set of categories that provide the researcher with no more value than a well-constructed closed-ended list (Veal, 2006). The second advantage is that, although open-ended questions can obtain a richer response to questions, in the case of respondent-completed questionnaires, response rates to this type of question can be very low, as people are either too lazy or too busy to take the time to answer these questions (Veal, 2006). Although a questionnaire of this type can be very useful in understanding the attitudes and perceptions of respondents (Petrova & Mason, 2004), it should be noted that using closed-ended questions can increase the risk of "reducing something that is rich and complex to a single index that assumes an importance out of all proportion to its meaning" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 3). To help reduce this risk, some open-ended questions have also been used to allow respondents to express their thoughts and opinions in their own words.

To test statistically whether significant differences occur between the importance respondents place on career factors and the extent to which they believe tourism and hospitality offered these, a paired sample t-test was used. Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1995) say that a paired sample t-test is used to assess the statistical significance of the difference between two sample means on a single dependent variable. Ukaga and Maser (2004) state that the paired sample t-test is used to test for differences between related or paired samples, such as when the scores or values whose means are to be compared case-for-case are from the same subject. The usual null hypothesis is that the difference in the mean values is zero. A significant difference is found if an alpha level (p-score) is less than 0.05. This test is applicable in this study as we are trying to determine whether there are significant differences between the importance of factors in choosing a career and the extent to which students believe a career in tourism and hospitality will offer these for each unit of the sample.

To undertake this study, an email was sent to 450 students studying tourism or hospitality degrees at Taylor's University in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, asking them to complete the online survey. In total 287 students viewed the survey, with 256 of those starting the survey. There were 27 students who did not complete the survey after starting it, leaving 229 completed, usable surveys from the online version. This meant that the response rate for the online survey was 50.88%. In addition to the 229 surveys received online, a further 210 surveys were collected from students attending three different institutions, Taylor's University, Management and Science University and Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka, 70 from each institution. To collect these surveys, respondents were chosen randomly

on each campus to undertake a researcher-completed survey. The purpose of using both types of data collection was to help increase the number of surveys completed.

Analysis

As discussed above, the questionnaire used in this research was developed based on the works of Richardson (2009b) and Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000). The first part of this research aimed to gain an understanding of the factors students find important when choosing a career. The percentage of respondents' ratings of the importance of each factor in choosing a career can be found in Table 1. This table also highlights the findings of the second part of the research, the extent to which each respondent believes that the tourism and hospitality industry offers these factors. In analysing the findings of this study it can be seen that respondents rate each item as important, with very few respondents choosing not important for any of the factors. As reported in Table 1, only one factor received more than 10% of respondents choosing not important: "A job that can easily be combined with parenthood" (12.3%). The most important factor identified by respondents was "A job that I will find enjoyable", which 81.6% of respondents considered to be very important. Based on the number of respondents who chose very important as their response, the next three most important factors in choosing a career are "Pleasant working environment" (71.3%), "Good promotion prospects" (67.2%) and "High earnings over length of career" (65.8%).

The second stage in this research was to understand the extent to which respondents think a career in the tourism and hospitality industry offers them the factors they find

important. The first noticeable fact is that while more than 50% of respondents rate 16 factors as very important, there is only one factor ("A job which gives me responsibility") where more than 50% of respondents claim the industry definitely offers these factors. For instance, while 81.6% of respondents claim that finding a job that is enjoyable is very important, only 36.4 % believe they will definitely find an enjoyable job in the tourism and hospitality industry. Two other attributes where major differences occur between the importance respondents place on career factors and the extent to which the tourism and hospitality industry offers the factors are related to earnings. The first of these, "High earnings over length of career", found that 98.6% of respondents think this an important factor in job choice, while a third of respondents (33.0%) do not believe that they will be able to attract high earnings over the length of their career in tourism and hospitality. The second factor relating to earnings asked respondents how important a "Good starting salary" was to them, with 96.4% of respondents stating that it is important. This is in stark contrast to only 15.9% of respondents who believe that the tourism and hospitality industry definitely offers a good starting salary, while a sizeable 38.3% claim that the tourism and hospitality industry definitely does not offer a good starting salary. The final factor that is worth discussing is "A job that can easily be combined with parenthood". The majority of respondents (87.7%) claimed this to be an important consideration when choosing a career. Although this is the case, very few respondents (13.4%) claimed a job in the tourism and hospitality industry could definitely be combined with parenthood, with 38.3% claiming that they did not believe they could easily combine a career in the industry with raising a family.

Table 1 Percentage of Students' Ratings of the Importance of Factors in Choosing a Career and the Extent to which Students Believe a Career in Tourism and Hospitality will Offer These

Factor	Importance when Choosing a Career (%)[a]			Extent to Which T&H Offers it (%)[a]		
	Very	Fairly	Not	Definite	Some	Not
1. A job that I will find enjoyable	81.6	18.2	0.2	36.4	59.5	4.1
2. Colleagues that I can get along with	55.6	38.0	6.4	25.6	70.8	3.6
3. Pleasant working environment	71.3	28.0	0.7	24.8	70.2	5.0
4. A secure job	64.9	33.7	1.4	23.7	55.6	20.7
5. A career that provides intellectual challenge	48.5	49.0	2.5	34.1	54.7	11.2
6. Good promotion prospects	67.2	31.7	1.1	32.8	46.2	21.0
7. A job that gives me responsibility	64.7	32.6	2.7	51.2	44.9	3.9
8. High earnings over length of career	65.8	32.8	1.4	24.6	42.4	33.0
9. A job where I will contribute to society	44.8	49.0	6.2	26.2	54.0	19.8
10. A job where I can use my university degree	50.6	44.4	5.0	36.3	51.9	11.8
11. A job where you gain transferable skills	60.8	36.9	2.3	46.5	48.2	5.3
12. A job that is respected	58.4	38.0	3.6	27.3	58.6	14.1
13. Reasonable workload	52.2	43.3	4.5	25.0	43.3	31.7
14. A job with high-quality resources and equipment	51.3	44.9	3.8	24.6	67.0	8.4
15. The opportunity to travel abroad	54.9	41.7	3.4	44.7	50.1	5.2
16. Job mobility – easy to get a job anywhere	61.0	34.2	4.8	44.0	49.0	7.0
17. A job that can easily be combined with parenthood	39.4	48.3	12.3	13.4	48.3	38.3
18. Good starting salary	60.4	36.0	3.6	15.9	45.8	38.3
19. A job where I can care for others	42.1	49.0	8.9	23.3	61.2	15.5
20. A job that offers opportunities for further training	64.9	32.6	2.5	39.0	57.4	3.6

Notes: N = 439. T&H: Tourism and hospitality.
[a]Adjusted (valid) percentages excluding missing observations.

This section of the survey has investigated undergraduate students' attitudes towards important factors in choosing a career as well as their perceptions as to the degree they believe tourism and hospitality careers offer these factors. When testing for significant differences, as can be seen in Table 2 every factor is seen to be significantly different as their p-value is less than the critical value of 0.05. In each of these factors the importance factor has a lower mean than the extent to which students believe a career in tourism and hospitality offers that factor. This infers that students do not believe that a career in tourism and hospitality will offer them the factors that they find important in choosing a future career. These results correspond closely to the findings of Richardson (2009b), who found that students in Australia have similar feelings about the factors, or lack of, that the industry offers potential employees.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Although this study was undertaken nearly 20 years after Barron and Maxwell's (1993) study, it seems not much has changed. Students still do not see the industry as an appealing career path because many of the factors they find important in a career are missing. These findings highlight the need for the industry to adopt tactics and strategies aimed at ensuring that potential employees, i.e. tourism and hospitality students, are not leaving the industry or even failing to enter the industry on graduation. It is clear that the industry is not offering current students the factors that they find important when choosing their future careers. Unless the industry can offer higher wages, facilitate work–life balance by offering flexible work hours and

improve relationships between employees and managers, the industry will continue to lose these highly skilled and highly trained employees.

The projected growth of positions in the tourism and hospitality industry around the world over the next decade has been widely reported. If we take the standpoint that students should be encouraged to stay within their trained industry, these findings suggest that industry and educators must work together to solve employment shortfalls by recruiting and retaining skilled and qualified graduates. These graduates will have a combination of core business and management skills, as well as specialist property skills and knowledge. The holistic approach of modern tourism and hospitality degrees enables graduates to identify and articulate the functions and dynamics of the industry. Graduates will also have skills in designing and facilitating strategic thinking and visioning, by using complex theories. Graduates also possess a deeper understanding of sustainability of the environment and understand the role of corporate social responsibility and accountability in today's highly sensitive environment. As well as university training, these graduates usually have some form of training and experience working in the industry while they completed their studies. This combination of theoretical knowledge as well as on-the-job experience and training makes graduates an extremely valuable resource for the tourism and hospitality industry.

In the following are some recommendations for both educators and industry to try to alleviate some of the concerns of graduates and students and help to attract and retain more of these highly trained people. Universities need to play their part in ensuring that students are being given realistic expectations of the types of position available in the industry.

Table 2   Differences between Importance of Factors in Choosing a Career and the Extent to which Students Believe a Career in Tourism and Hospitality will Offer These

Factor	Importance		T&H Offers		Mean Difference	*T*	*p*
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
1. A job that I will find enjoyable	1.19	0.396	1.68	0.549	-0.49	-15.59	0.000
2. Colleagues that I can get along with	1.51	0.615	1.78	0.494	-0.27	-8.133	0.000
3. Pleasant working environment	1.29	0.471	1.80	0.510	-0.51	-16.43	0.000
4. A secure job	1.36	0.509	1.97	0.667	-0.61	-16.20	0.000
5. A career that provides intellectual challenge	1.54	0.547	1.77	0.633	-0.23	-6.010	0.000
6. Good promotion prospects	1.34	0.498	1.88	0.724	-0.54	-13.61	0.000
7. A job that gives me responsibility	1.38	0.539	1.53	0.572	-0.15	-4.138	0.000
8. High earnings over length of career	1.36	0.507	2.08	0.755	-0.73	-18.19	0.000
9. A job where I will contribute to society	1.61	0.601	1.94	0.676	-0.32	-8.386	0.000
10. A job where I can use my university degree	1.54	0.591	1.76	0.650	-0.21	-5.316	0.000
11. A job where you gain transferable skills	1.42	0.538	1.59	0.590	-0.17	-4.938	0.000
12. A job that is respected	1.45	0.567	1.87	0.631	-0.42	-11.21	0.000
13. Reasonable workload	1.52	0.584	2.07	0.751	-0.54	-12.27	0.000
14. A job with high-quality resources and equipment	1.53	0.572	1.84	0.552	-0.31	-8.756	0.000
15. The opportunity to travel abroad	1.49	0.565	1.61	0.587	-0.12	-3.305	0.001
16. Job mobility – easy to get a job anywhere	1.44	0.585	1.63	0.612	-0.19	-5.124	0.000
17. A job that can easily be combined with parenthood	1.73	0.667	2.25	0.676	-0.52	-12.25	0.000
18. Good starting salary	1.43	0.565	2.22	0.702	-0.79	-19.98	0.000
19. A job where I can care for others	1.67	0.633	1.92	0.619	-0.25	-6.479	0.000
20. A job that offers opportunities for further training	1.38	0.534	1.65	0.550	-0.27	-8.000	0.000

Notes: N = 439. T&H: Tourism and hospitality; SD: standard deviation.
Importance mean value 1 = very important, 2 = fairly important and 3 = not important.
T&H offers mean value 1 = definitely offers, 2 = somewhat offers and 3 = does not offer.

They need also to provide students with a greater awareness of the working conditions in the industry. The careers and career paths offered by the industry also need to be more adequately developed, and these paths require more extensive and comprehensive marketing and promotion. Information about the career paths available should be made easier to access for current and prospective staff in order for them to start planning their careers. This information could be provided during induction with the company when students begin their casual or part-time positions while they are still studying. This will introduce students to the career paths on offer and advise them of the skills and training they will require to pursue these opportunities. This will facilitate career planning whereby these students will begin to plan their career with the company from their first days on the job.

Educators must work more closely with industry partners when designing future curricula. This study has found that many employers do not see the relevance of tourism and hospitality programmes to the industry. Many claim that the number of practical courses covered by the current tertiary curriculum is insufficient. There is also a feeling that certain sectors of the industry, in particular the Meeting, Incentive, Conference and Exhibition (MICE) sector, were largely ignored within current tourism and hospitality programmes.

Finally, the image of employment in the tourism and hospitality industry needs to be improved. This can be achieved only if the industry works collaboratively to address the issues surrounding low pay and long and unusual hours. As discussed previously, the current generation of workers (Generation Y) are looking for a career that offers them work–life balance. These employees do not want to work every weekend or on every holiday. They also do not want to work late

nights or early mornings on a consistent basis. They want flexibility in their rostering and freedom to have a life outside the workplace. It is imperative that the industry works on using innovative rostering techniques to ensure these workers can get the work–life balance that they require. If this were to occur then all parties would benefit. The employee would be happy, therefore more productive and more likely to stay with the employer, and the employer would benefit through reduced staff turnover, lower costs and higher productivity of the workforce, which all add up to greater profits for the organization. Also, as Generation Y employees are extremely concerned with their work–life balance, if the employer can meet their needs in this area the workers are less likely to be concerned about the wages offered.

Some may argue that it does not matter if graduates enter fields other than those in which they have studied and been trained. The turnover culture in the tourism and hospitality industry facilitates this argument because it is seen as the norm (Kraft, 1993) to change positions and companies frequently. Tourism and hospitality degree programmes can also inadvertently add to this problem, as generally these programmes develop a range of transferable skills, making tourism and hospitality graduates attractive to employers in other industries. This paper argues that an attitude that it does not matter if graduates leave or fail to enter the industry is flawed, as the cost of losing these graduates is extremely high. The cost of this turnover has been widely discussed and has financial as well as psychological implications for tourism and hospitality organizations. These financial costs include: the cost of recruiting, selecting and training a new employee as well as other associated costs (uniforms, induction, etc.);

the lost productivity while new staff are trained; and the loss of money spent training and developing the departing staff member. The psychological implications encase staff morale and commitment to the company.

Limitations

Some limitations associated with the research must be addressed. First, students from Taylor's University are over-represented in the sample. This is due to the fact that this is the researchers' own institution, therefore greater access to students was possible. Non-response bias is another issue that must be considered. Again owing to resource constraints no formal investigation of non-response was carried out. However, it would seem probable that students with strong feelings about these issues, either positive or negative, would be more likely to complete the survey than those with no strong feelings.

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