

Students' Preparedness to Enter Tourism Industry

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Abstract – Preparation of the students to join the workforce is the ultimate task of Higher education institution in equipping them with necessary skills and competencies for job placement after graduation. This study aims to assess the preparedness of the tourism students to enter the tourism industry. Specifically, it aimed to identify the profile of the respondents in terms of gender; assess the readiness of the students to enter tourism industry in terms of generic skills, functional area skills and concentration area skills; test the significant difference on the preparedness of the students when grouped according to gender. The study made use of descriptive research method with 134 fourth year tourism students of one higher education institution in the Philippines. Majority of the respondents were female, and they are considered prepared to enter tourism industry. Based from the test conducted, it was found out that male is more prepared than female with functionality skills.

Keywords: functional skill, concentration area skill

INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry sector is one of the world's fastest – growing industries. However, huge problems still exist in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce. Accordingly, two enduring things observed in the industry are high staff turnover which affects the ability to deliver a consistent brand experience, harming business and not enough people see the growing industry as an opportunity to build their careers [1].

Tourism and hospitality education is one of the fastest growing fields of study in the Philippines. Two reasons have explained the growth of hospitality and tourism programs: one was the strong, steady economy that increased the demands for quality hospitality establishments to provide services to domestic and international customers. It conducts and provides program that prepare the students and equipped them with knowledge about the concept of quality service and production of product innovation.

The workforce coming from Philippines who are employed in the hospitality and tourism industry and facing different challenges to need the skills needed in the industry [2].

Prior to deciding on which course or program to take, most students are able to identify their interest before they enter the program and the industry itself. They know their strength and weaknesses on which area of the tourism industry they could be an expert.

Hence, research on tourism industry is important, which is known for its traditional approach in terms of human resource management. It aims to develop an understanding of the current situation concerning tourism graduates' as well as managers' skills and competencies and career development.

The researchers conducted the study since they wanted to learn the preparedness of the tourism student in entering the industry and what their level of competitiveness that will provide opportunity for them to be part of the workforce. The study will be useful as basis for curriculum enhancement for the college of international and tourism management as they provide current and relevant education to travel and tourism students. The faculty and professors may also use this as basis on how to enhance the curriculum applicable for the students. The students themselves will benefit from this because they can better prepare before they enter the industry. The present researchers are currently taking ITTM program and it will help them to have more understanding of the industry they have chosen. Lastly, the future researchers may use this as part of their studies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to assess the preparedness of the tourism students of one private institution of higher learning in the Philippines to enter the tourism industry. Specifically it identified the profile of the respondents in terms of gender; assessed the preparedness of the students to enter tourism industry in terms of generic skills, functionality area skills and concentration area skills; tested the significant

difference on the preparedness of the students when grouped according to profile variables: and based on the results, what plan of action may be proposed.

METHODS

Research Design

The study used descriptive method of research. This method is a scientific technique that is used by most scholars to address the present and current situation that posed problems to the society and culture [3]. The scientific method will be used is through quantitative approach where the researchers will conduct interview using a structured tool that is to be analysed and statistically treated using certain formulas.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were 134 total population of fourth year International Travel and Tourism Management students enrolled at the University under study during the second semester of SY 2018 – 2019.

Instrument

The instrument of the study was adapted from Verano [4] and partially modified. The first part of the questionnaire is the profile of the respondents in terms of gender. The second part assessed the preparedness of the students to enter tourism industry in terms of generic skills, functionality area skills and concentration area skills. The instrument obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.785 which signifies that the questionnaire has a good internal consistency and reliable for use. To interpret the results, the following are used for the verbal interpretation of the study.

Option	Range	Verbal Interpretation
4	3.50 – 4.00	Highly Prepared
3	2.50 – 3.49	Prepared
2	1.50 – 2.49	Less Prepared
1	1.00 – 1.49	Not Prepared

Procedure

The researchers provided letters for the dean of CITHM, and the tourism students asking permission to conduct and participate in the study. After it was approved, the researchers gave sufficient time for the participants to answer the questionnaire and retrieved it immediately. The data was tallied, tabulated,

interpreted and statistically treated for further analysis.

Data analysis

Percentage and frequency distribution were used to present the profile of the respondents in terms of gender; weighted mean was used to assess the readiness of the students to enter tourism industry in terms of generic skills, functionality area skills and concentration area skills. Independent sample of t-test was used to test the significant difference on the preparedness of the students when grouped according to sex.

Ethical Consideration

The researchers used ethical consideration as guide during the data gathering of the study. They assured that they will protect and maintain the safety and confidentiality of the participants through informed consent and strictly prohibiting the use of videos, audio and pictures during the distribution of questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of the Respondent's Sex

Profile Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	18	13.40
Female	116	86.60

Table 1 presents the percentage distribution of the respondents' sex. It shows that majority of the respondents are female with higher frequency of 116 or 86.60 percent while male got 18 or 13.40 percent.

This means that tourism industry is composed of female population because of the interest they have in the industry. Tourism is composed of different job network that is connected with services and visitation to attractions and sites. This area of service is more interesting to women because of reflexive way to encourage people to visit attractions. They often use marketing skills where they will uplift the brand and image of destination, provide basic necessities of the customers and increase the likelihood of tourists to visit the sites.

As concluded in the study [2], tourism is appealing to females compared to males. Since tourism is about how to change the tourist perspective about an environment, attractions and services, this is more alluring among women. In addition, this is a

customer-centered industry that focused on providing quality service. Industry partners and the human resource personnel of different transport service institution tend to give numerous opportunities. However, in order to succeed in any of these dynamic fields, the importance of college-level hospitality administration training cannot be underestimated.

Table 2. Assessment in Students' Preparedness to Enter Tourism Industry in terms of Generic Skills

Generic Skills	WM	VI	Rank
1 Communication Skills	3.63	Highly Prepared	1
2 Conceptual Skills	3.42	Prepared	7
3 Analytical Skills	3.43	Prepared	6
4 Team work related skills	3.59	Highly Prepared	2
5 Leadership skills	3.49	Prepared	4
6 Interpersonal skills	3.49	Prepared	4
7 Curriculum related skills	3.49	Prepared	4
Composite Mean	3.50	Highly Prepared	

Table 2 presents the assessment of students' preparedness to enter tourism industry in terms of generic skills. It obtained the composite mean of 3.50 and verbally interpreted as highly prepared. It shows that the respondents are highly prepared to enter tourism industry as they demonstrate generic skills because of its common concept as their behavior and attitude. These skills were learned and acquired from the time that the person able to socialize with others. They are able to practice and apply this kind of behavior with their everyday activities.

The generic skills of the students are composed of their general knowledge about how professionalism provided to the customers of tourism industry. The need to have skills and the level of empowerment varies depending on the kind of business and industry they belong. The service industry is dependent on the level of empowerment given to the employee and managers and chooses personnel who are highly skilled to encourage the patronage among the customers. The management of service is about the skills of the front-line managers and employees and how they deliver training to the personnel. When the employees are inspired by the mission and vision statements of the organization and they are satisfied with it, then they will do everything to make sure that it is maintained even being extra polite and enthusiastic towards the customers. This is to encourage them to return and acquire same services when the customers are satisfied and happy with the quality of service and atmosphere of the service environment [5].

Among the items cited, "Communication Skills" got the highest weighted mean of 3.63 followed by "Team work related skills" with 3.59 and "Leadership skills", "Interpersonal skills", and "Curriculum related skills" with 3.49. This shows that the respondents are highly prepared with their communication skills because they underwent different programs to effectively increase their conversational abilities and gained international standards. They even studied basic foreign languages so that they will be able to communicate effectively with other races that they will meet in tourism industry. Students are demonstrating effective communication skills in international practicum because of their proficiency in English, Spanish, French and Mandarin.

It is part of the curriculum in the University that the students are required to take foreign language subjects to develop their communication skills with other languages. During the second half of the IHM program, students are required to take foreign languages. These include French, Spanish, and Mandarin during the first semester of fourth year. To understand and speak the language, there is a need to evaluate its importance and analyse its relationship with other languages. It can also be affective by considering the languages as an edge in belonging to the tourism industry and exhibiting curiosity and interest in learning. In terms of psychomotor outcomes, good participation in class activities are being signified.

Important behavior is having clear communication to be able to disseminate the necessary information about how a certain skill or talent of the staff will be able to enhance. Usual technique used is to provide training and conduct meetings to make a clear view of issues that the staff wanted to address at the moment [6]. Organizations and firms must communicate clearly to increase engagement to the organizational operation established by having a good vision and objectives of the company. They are able to acquire the point of view of colleagues and co-workers on how to achieve the goals. By undergoing trainings and team building, they tend to be associated with the organizational activities as well as working as team to achieve the same goals [7].

However, the item "Analytical Skills" got 3.43 whereas "Conceptual Skills" got the lowest mean score of 3.42 and verbally interpreted as prepared. The respondents are prepared with their conceptual skills because they are able to visualize the overall process

and flow of the industry. They understand the conception of the industry wherein they can identify the kind of services it needs.

The conceptual skills are about the ability of a person to be creative and visualize the abstract of ideas. This is usually learned this while facing different situations and exposures to activities that could make them competent in the future [8].

Table 3. Assessment in Students' Preparedness to Enter Tourism Industry in terms of Functionality Area Skills

Functionality Area Skills	WM	VI	Rank
1. Applying tourism marketing fundamentals	3.25	Prepared	8
2. Applying tourism promotion techniques	3.51	Highly Prepared	1
3. Applying human resource function and policies	3.34	Prepared	4
4. Applying supported population and labor relations	3.23	Prepared	9
5. Analyzing accounting data	3.29	Prepared	6
6. Applying tourism financial management fundamentals	3.33	Prepared	5
7. Use of IT in the tourism industry	3.28	Prepared	7
8. Applying analytical skills related to tourism industry	3.43	Prepared	3
9. Knowledge of travel and tourism service systems and revenue management and reservation system	3.48	Prepared	2
Composite Mean	3.35	Prepared	

Table 3 presents the assessment of students' preparedness to enter tourism industry in terms of functionality skills. It obtained the composite mean of 3.35 and verbally interpreted as prepared. This means that the respondents are prepared to be part of the tourism industry as to functionality skills. The functionality skills are those practical abilities of the students in relation to their industry wherein they are allowed to make decision making and practiced problem solving.

Study [9] revealed that to determine the relationship between service and customer satisfaction, the service must demonstrate competence and the employers intend to hire those people who have the capacity to provide the needed service

especially when the industry has been in the business for longer year in operation. This is how to deliver their service can affect their performance and expectation of customers. The businesses are expected to be professional in the area of service quality and will be able to demonstrate to their employees and personnel how to give their best in providing the best experience of their customers. One factor is their attitude which requires them to be more warm and welcoming to the customers to attain sufficient customer satisfaction.

Among the item cited, "Applying tourism promotion techniques" got the highest weighted mean of 3.51 followed by "Knowledge of travel and tourism service systems and revenue management and reservation system" with 3.48 and "Applying analytical skills related to tourism industry" with 3.43.

This means that the respondents are able to apply tourism promotion techniques because they need to market the services that the industry could provide. They need to make sure that the market is aware of the existence of tourism services and products so that they will have ideas on how to make themselves convenient in travel and tourism process.

Tourism students in Lyceum of the Philippines University Batangas had a subject Tourism Management where they learn how to promote products and services in a certain area. The Tourism Promotion Services National Certificate II which is required to take by the tourism students, acquire the knowledge and skills in operating an automated information system, providing destination information and advice, suggesting products to meet customer needs and identifying customer needs and wants.

Moreover, study [10] stated, that the marketing strategy are done by the tourism industry and is important in disseminating information about their services Among the long list of marketing tools, word-of-mouth is the most inspiring because when a customer refers a travel agent to another customer, it means that they had the great pleasure of experiencing the same services others seek. The customers would even prefer referral compared to seeing the advertisement through social media due to the risk of being hack or fake post (or account).

However, the item "Use of IT in the tourism industry" got the weighted mean of 3.28, "Applying tourism marketing fundamentals" with 3.25 and the least is "Applying supported population and labor relations" with the lowest mean of 3.23 and verbally interpreted as prepared. This means that the

respondents are prepared to apply support to population and labor relations because they know the laws and regulations that protect the rights of employees of the industry and the customers. They know that the employees must be protected on the extent of how the market is addressed during business transactions.

Market research is important to any organization to assure that they can be positioned in the market and if their competitiveness is an advantage against their competitors. They should learn how other company operation and process flows to gain insights on how to further develop their strategic plan. Hence, they are encouraged to continue the research through benchmarking to assure that they are still in the right path and to help the industry be at its competitive phase. The performance of others will be their guide to analyse if they are doing well in the market [11].

Table 4 presents the assessment of students' preparedness to enter tourism industry in terms of concentrate area skills. It obtained the composite mean of 3.59 and verbally interpreted as highly prepared.

The concentration area skills are the expertise of the students in relation to the actual work environment they planned to be part of. Tourism industry is the general knowledge about the services that is provided for the customers of the industry, but the students must learn to identify their weakness and which area of tourism is best fit for them.

The importance of the guest privacy must be one of the top priorities of any service company. The guest privacy is connected to their safety and security that may increase their satisfaction and motivation to return and repurchase the services. Furthermore, there should be consistency with the experiences of the customers so the management must make sure all procedures and operations are implemented efficiently as well as effectively [12].

Among the cited items, it shows that "Demonstrating flight attendant management skills", "Understanding both internal and external travel and tourism environment" and "Applying management competencies in travel and tourism" got the highest weighted mean of 3.63 followed by "Identifying types of travel management and knowledge of flight attendant industry management" with 3.62 and "Applying travel agencies management competencies" with 3.61.

Table 4. Assessment in Students' Preparedness to Enter Tourism Industry in terms of Concentrate Area Skills

Concentrate Area Skills	WM	VI	Rank
1. Clear understanding of critical issues related to travel and tourism management	3.52	Highly Prepared	9
2. Identifying types of travel management and knowledge of flight attendant industry management	3.62	Highly Prepared	4
3. Meetings and convention management skills	3.56	Highly Prepared	7
4. Travel management skills	3.60	Highly Prepared	6
5. Demonstrating flight attendant management skills	3.63	Highly Prepared	2
6. Applying managerial and supervisory skills in different functionality areas of tourism and travel agencies	3.49	Prepared	10
7. In depth travel management knowledge and fundamental of tourism management	3.55	Highly Prepared	8
8. Understanding both internal and external travel and tourism environment	3.63	Highly Prepared	2
9. Applying travel agencies management competencies	3.61	Highly Prepared	5
10. Applying management competencies in travel and tourism	3.63	Highly Prepared	2
Composite Mean	3.59	Highly Prepared	

This means that the respondents are highly prepared to demonstrate management skills and be able to understand internal and external aspect of the industry. Being competent in management aspect can increase the productivity of the people who wanted to enter the industry of travel and tourism. They must understand the internal and external factors that could affect their performance related to tourism industry,

The setting of this study is one of the most trusted and popular school for tourism students in the region. Flight Attendant demonstration is one of the prides of this school because they are not only

teaching English language of Flight Attendant Showmanship, but they also teach different languages like Mandarin, French and Spanish.

One of the factors that increase the competitiveness of tourism industry is the knowledge of the staff about the airline industry which is part of any tour packages. Since flight attendant industry is gaining more attention and the competitiveness of stewardship has reached out to customer satisfaction issues, those who are planning to enter the industry must have full knowledge and underwent trainings relevant to the kind of services that airline industry need [13].

However, “In depth travel management knowledge and fundamental of tourism management” with 3.55, “Clear understanding of critical issues related to travel and tourism management” with 3.52 and the least is “Applying managerial and supervisory skills in different functionality areas of tourism and travel agencies” with lowest mean of 3.49 and verbally interpreted as prepared. The respondents are prepared to apply managerial and supervisory skills in travel agency because of their knowledge on how the employees must perform their duties as well as how to be part of the organization. They are equipped with sufficient knowledge and updates in the social trend of tourism industry. This is because the effort done in preparation for travel is very stressful due to different companies to coordinate with transport services including airline and cruise ship, hotel or resort bookings, and visitation to different attractions.

Skills relevant to travel services must be taught to students. Travel agency services is done to be highly satisfied with itinerary and consultations with travel agencies since they employed travel agents who are supposed to be competent in providing information about tourism and travel management. It is expected that agents suggest attractions on what is the easiest way to process documents and acquire tickets from different travel accommodations such as airlines cruise and even land based transportations [14].

Table 5. Summary Table of Students' Preparedness to Enter Tourism Industry

	WM	VI	Rank
1. Generic Skills	3.50	Highly Prepared	2
2. Functionality Area Skills	3.35	Prepared	3
3. Concentration Area Skills	3.59	Highly Prepared	1
Composite Mean	3.48	Prepared	

Table 5 presents the summary table of students' preparedness to enter tourism industry. It obtained the composite mean of 3.48 and verbally interpreted as highly prepared. The need for tourism professionals who can be ethically competent in the industry is high because of their knowledge about tourism services.

Craig [15] noted that to be able to provide the services in a timely manner, there is a need to increase the number of personnel to supply the needs of the customers. The customers are satisfied when the services are given to the promised time frame and would be happier if they will not wait longer. It is a fact that the success of any organization is to achieve the satisfaction of their customers. They will need to compromise their products and services to assure that the needs and preference of the clients are attained.

It can be seen that “Concentration Area Skills” is the variable that obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.59 followed by “Generic Skills” with 3.50 and the least is “Functionality Area Skills” with the lowest mean of 3.35 and verbally interpreted as prepared.

This means that the respondents are highly prepared on concentration skills because they can identify the overall services provided of the tourism industry. They became prepared as they underwent different programs and activities that could enhance their knowledge and skills.

Hospitality is one of the world's biggest and quickest developing industries. Today, it positions as the biggest manager on the world (after the government) offering a wide assortment of employments in a wide range of parts inside hospitality and tourism such as hotels, restaurants and resorts to name just a few. They were the ones who interact with the guest by providing dining services like food preparation, handling, serving and sanitation. The food and beverage department increase the revenue of the restaurant through fast dining experience with quality service [16].

Table 6. Difference of Responses on Students' Preparedness to Enter Tourism Industry Between the Two Groups of Respondents

	group	N	Mean	t-value	P-value
Generic Skills	male	18	3.63	1.55	0.124
	female	116	3.48		
Functionality Area Skills	male	18	3.53	1.996*	0.048
	female	116	3.32		
Concentration Area Skills	male	18	3.62	0.414	0.679
	female	116	3.58		

Legend: *Significant at p-value < 0.05

Table 6 presents the responses of male and female on their preparedness to enter tourism industry. It was observed that there was a significant difference on functionality area skills since the obtained p-value of 0.048 was less than 0.05 alpha level. This means that the preparedness vary significantly and based from the test conducted, it was found out that male are more prepared than female with functionality skills.

Male are more prepared than female with functionality skills because male preferred to do power-based jobs such as practical or manual jobs rather than female who usually want to work with less power or strength such as office works.

The examine whether gender is associated with hospitality undergraduates' perceived career barriers and how gender affects two career-related variables when considering internal or external career barriers. Females were more sensitive to gender issues than males, whereas females were less likely to explore their career options as fully as males [17].

Table 7. Proposed Plan of Action to Enhance the Students' Preparedness to Enter Tourism Industry

Key Area Result Objectives	Strategies	Outcome
Generic Skills To enhance the conceptual skills of the tourism students	The College may emphasize the importance of exploring the content outside of the student's comfort zone	The students are able to concentrate with their task and workload and feel that they are competent in the area of tourism industry
Functionality Area Skills To enhance the ability of the students when it comes to decision making, problem solving and labor relations	Include human behavior in organization about the importance of labor confederation and unions, its goals and perspective in the tourism industry Include Philippine Governance subject about the function of Department of Labor and Employment and the rights of workers	The students are able to apply supported populations, and labor relations as well as laws protecting the rights of employees
Concentrate Area Skills To be able to apply managerial and supervisory skills	Students may be encourage to use reviews to create vision related to managerial and supervisory level.	The students are able to apply managerial and supervisory skills through vision and being accustomed in giving positive words of encouragement

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Majority of the respondents are female who are taking BS ITTM at the University. The respondents are prepared to enter tourism industry in terms of concentration area skills, generic skills, and functionality area skills. The preparedness of students vary significantly and based from the test conducted, it was found out that male are more prepared than female. The proposed plan of action was developed to enhance the level of preparedness of tourism students to enter tourism industry.

It is the role of the Higher Education Institutions to deliver the necessary student outcomes as part of the implementation of Outcome-Based Education [18]-[25]. Ensuring the quality of tourism graduates through monitoring and evaluation of skills and competencies per academic year may enhance the capability and confidence of the students to face the challenges of the world outside the academe.

It is suggested that the CITHM may provide school training programs for tourism students about the different functionality area of the tourism industry. Supervisory and Managerial Skills Internship may be provided for tourism students. The plan of action may be used by CITHM to enhance the level of preparedness of tourism students to enter tourism industry. A future study is recommended.

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