

A Study on Attitudes of Tourism and Hospitality Students of Udaipur towards a Career in the Industry

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes and perceptions of current undergraduate and post graduate tourism and hospitality students in Udaipur toward careers in the industry. Areas that students have concerns over include respondent's relationship with their managers, promotion opportunities, career paths, and the pay and conditions offered within the industry.*

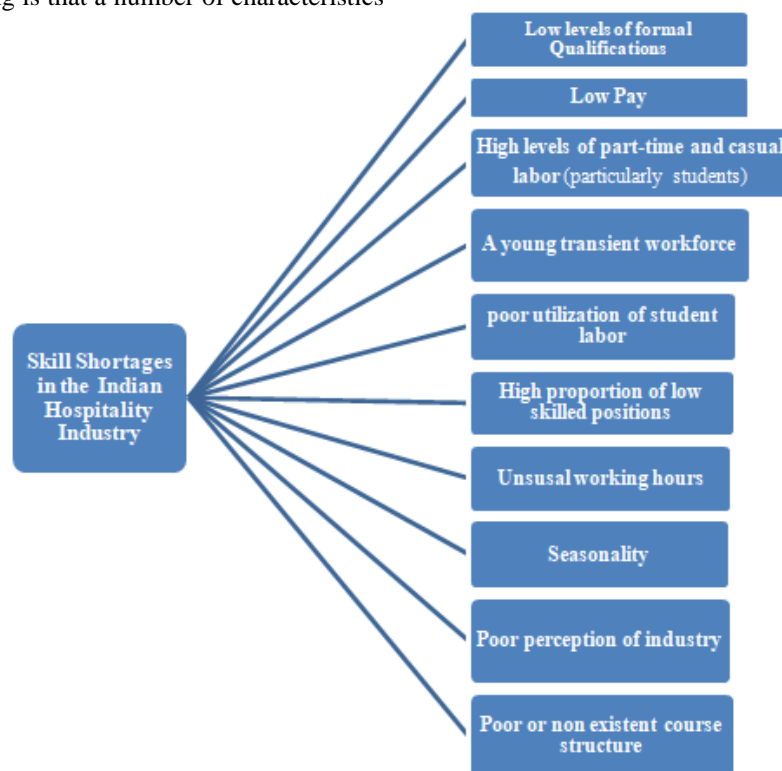
Keywords: Tourism, Students, Attitude, Career

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes and perceptions of current undergraduate and postgraduate tourism and hospitality students toward a career in the industry. The tourism and hospitality industry worldwide, and in India in particular, has been confronted with the problem of attracting and retaining quality employees. This has led to a shortage of skilled personnel to staff the ever-growing number of tourism and hospitality businesses (Andorka, 1996; Bonn & Forbringer, 1992; Breiter, 1991; Deery & Shaw, 1999; Dermady & Holloway, 1998; Emenheiser, Clay, & Palakurthi, 1998; Ferris, Berkson, & Harris, 2002; Heraty & Morley, 1998; Hinkin & Tracey, 2000; McDermid, 1996; Powell, 1999; Australian Government, Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, 2002). This situation is a complex one with many different factors contributing to the problem. The problem the industry is confronting is that a number of characteristics

have been commonly found in the tourism and hospitality industry in India impacting on the shortage of skills in the industry. These factors include a young transient workforce; low pay; low levels of formal qualifications; high levels of female, students, 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; poor utilization of student labor and high levels of staff turnover (Baum, 2006; Brien, 2004; Deery & Shaw, 1999; Freeland, 2000; Service Skills Victoria, 2005; Australian Government, Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, 2002).

A graphical representation of the factors influencing skills shortages in the Indian tourism and hospitality industry is given below. These characteristics all add to the complex problems associated with recruitment and retention in the industry. (Scott Richardson, 2008)



2. Literature Review

According to **Purcell & Quinn (1996)**, studies indicating that the proportion of workers in the tourism and hospitality industry who have tertiary qualifications is much lower than most other industry sectors. **Doherty et al (2001)** also indicate that many hospitality and tourism management graduates fail to enter the industry upon graduation due to low job satisfaction, poor employment conditions, and absence of motivating factors. This results in high staff turnover and waste of trained and experienced personnel. According to **Domonte and Vaden (1987)** the factor that had the greatest influence on career decisions of potential hospitality employees was work experience. For this reason work-based learning, either structured or unstructured, will play a significant role in tourism and hospitality students' attitudes toward pursuing a career in the industry upon graduation. **Boud, Solomon, & Symes, (2001)**; **Busby, (2003)** believes that emphasis should be laid on encouraging the students to gain skills that they will use in their future careers, rather than the experience which may actually lead to the students not pursuing a career in the industry at all. Therefore **Richardson, (2004)** emphasizes on ensuring that the student is given meaningful tasks and an opportunity to train in various departments or sectors of the business. **Kusluvan & Kusluvan, (2000)** says that in the tourism and hospitality industry, having a skilled, enthusiastic, and committed workforce is seen as vital to the success of firms in the industry. As most of the interactions between customers and clients in the industry are in the form of face-to-face exchange with the service being purchased and consumed at the same time, the standard of service provided is of paramount concern. **Heskett, et al (1994)** believes that employee attitudes, performance, and behavior are key determinants of service quality, which has a direct linkage to customer satisfaction and loyalty.

According to **Pfeffer, (2005)** this is becoming even more evident as the increasing international competition between firms and between destinations has led to organizations' using employees as a means of gaining competitive advantage over rivals. **Kusluvan & Kusluvan, (2000)** believe the education, training, skills, and motivation of staff play a key role in an organization gaining a competitive advantage, while their commitment to the industry or firm will determine if the company can sustain this competitive edge. An employee's commitment to any industry will be determined by his or her perceptions and attitudes toward working in the industry and the types of jobs available in the industry.

Kusluvan & Kusluvan, (2000) says that by using staff as the mechanism to gain an advantage over competitors, it is therefore argued that it is essential for tourism and hospitality management graduates to have a positive attitude toward working in the industry. The aforementioned factors raise the issue of finding out and explaining the attitudes of students who are likely to enter the tourism and hospitality industry workforce, to explore what impact work experience plays in shaping these attitudes. **Airey and Frontistis (1997)** comment that perhaps the most important reason for undertaking this type of study is that there are so many questions which still need to be answered about the attitudes

of young people to tourism careers. **Fazio (1986)** also states that many authors have argued that perceptions and attitudes based on direct experience will leave people with a stronger and more realistic view of the industry and will therefore be more predictive of future behavior. This leaves us with the problem of trying to understand how undergraduate tourism and hospitality students' attitudes and perceptions of the industry are affected by their work experience and how this experience affects their intentions of pursuing a career in the industry.

3. Research Gap

The review of previous literatures has revealed that not much research has been done on perceiving the attitude of students towards their career in the tourism and hospitality industry. It is still unclear what students want, what their misconceptions towards the industry are, what they are expecting from the hospitality industry and whether they see their career in the industry. The research seeks to study and answer many questions that tourism students face regarding their choice of tourism as a career.

Objectives

- 1) To study the attitudes of students towards their choice of career in the Tourism & Hospitality.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research design is initially exploratory in nature and will further turn descriptive in nature during the course of research. The study makes use of Primary and secondary sources of data.

Sample Design

The universe of the study is the 2nd year graduate and post graduate students of Tourism and Hospitality faculty in Udaipur, The sample size is taken to be 130.

Sources of Data

The study utilizes both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary sources of data include a structured questionnaire to be filled by the students followed by interview. Secondary sources of data include extensive literature from books, journals, magazines, newspapers and e-libraries such as JSTOR.

Hypotheses

To accomplish the objectives of study, the following hypotheses have been framed:

- 1) Students are satisfied with their choice of career in the tourism and hospitality industry.

4. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The study was conducted on 130 respondents out of which 115 were utilized for the study, the rest being rejected due to insufficient information. The demographic profiling of the respondents was done and the following results were arrived.

Research Findings

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The primary objective of this research paper is to illustrate the attitudes and perceptions of undergraduate and post graduate tourism and hospitality students toward careers in the industry. The following description is an outline of the attitudes of the students who took part in this activity toward a career in the industry.

Demographic Findings

This study surveyed 115 tourism and hospitality undergraduate and post graduate students at Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur, Rajasthan. The research showed that respondents are male (88.6%), enrolled full-time (92.1%), domestic students (55.6%). Respondents indicated that their primary motivators for choosing these majors were the growth in the industry or personal interest in travel and for this reason (81.7%) of the students had tourism and hospitality management as their first career choice.

Gender	Male	88.6%
	Female	11.3%
Current Enrollment	Full-Time	92.1%
	Part-Time	7.8%
Student Type	From Udaipur	55.6%
	Outside Udaipur	44.3%
Was tourism your first choice	Yes	81.7%
	No	18.2%

Attitude towards choice of career

Do you regret the decision for choosing tourism & hospitality as career	Yes	40.8%
	No	59.1%

Attitude of students towards industry

Would you like to work after graduation	Yes	98.2%
	No	1.7%
Would you prefer any job after education	Yes	40.8%
	No	59.1%
Will you prefer only high paying jobs	Yes	77.3%
	No	22.6%
Do you believe you will secure this salary	Yes	25.2%
	No	13.9%
	Unsure	60%
Do you have any plan to work in any other industry	Yes	29.5%
	No	40.8%
	Unsure	29.5%

The reliability was tested using Cronbach’s alpha and the test result was 0.756. The further data was tested using chi square test. The chi square test value was 12.037 which was significantly higher than the p value. This resulted in the non acceptance of the null hypothesis. From this we infer students are not satisfied with their choice of career in tourism and hospitality management.

5. Interpretation

A number of interesting results have been noted in this research work:-

Despite of choosing Tourism and Hospitality management course willingly students regret decision. Students’ expectations from the industry is very high in terms of salary and working hours on the contrary they are not sure that they will be able to secure those expectations if fulfilled. Students

who are working in the industry do not further want to work in the industry this clearly shows that working in the industry do have a major negative impact on respondents’ intentions to pursue careers in the industry. Majority of students said that they would work in the industry if only they get high paying jobs else they would prefer to work in other industry. Study also revealed that the tourism and hospitality management career is not so famous among the female students.

6. Limitations

The results of this study are useful; however, some limitations of this study should be acknowledged. A weakness is the study conducted considered students of Udaipur city only which means that it is difficult to generalize from the data analyzed.

7. Conclusion and Future Research

The growth of positions in the tourism and hospitality industry in India and around the world has been widely reported. If we take the standpoint that students should be encouraged to stay within their trained industry, these findings, albeit from a small sample, suggest that industry and educators must work together to solve employment shortfalls by recruiting and retaining qualified graduates. This highlights the need for the industry to adopt tactics and strategies aimed at ensuring that potential employees, that is, tourism and hospitality students, are not leaving the industry or even failing to enter the industry upon graduation. It is clear that there are a number of areas—particularly pay, promotion opportunities, and the relationship between respondents and their managers—that the industry must work on to ensure students are receiving positive experiences while they work during their degree.

There is vast scope for further research which will help in the assessment of how working in the industry affects students’ intentions of working in the industry. It is hoped that such follow-up research will provide employers with reasons why students are not entering the tourism and hospitality workforce upon graduation.

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