

STUDENT'S PERCEPTION AND WORKING COMMITMENT IN THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY SECTOR: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

Winne Chengai¹, Awangku Hassanah Bahar Pengiran Bagul²

Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy, Universiti Malaysia Sabah

Email: winne.pmba@gmail.com¹, hbagul@ums.edu.my²

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ABSTRACT

The tourism and hospitality sector has been recognised as one of the faster growing and largest economic sector in the world. It becomes the second-largest sector contributing to economic and employment in Malaysia. The study aims to investigate the perception among Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) students towards the tourism and hospitality sector. There are many debates about the perception in tourism and hospitality sector such as unstable job environment, low promotion opportunities, long working hours, family conflict, low prestige and unskilled job, lack of motivation and high turnover. This study had been designed based on the five dimensions to capture student perception. Data were collected from 95 respondents and, selected based on purposive sampling techniques. The quantitative research method was used in this study. The data obtained were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The results indicated that the tourism and hospitality sector were seasonal, unstable jobs and, insufficient pay. However, there are many positive responses had been identified such as respondents were exciting and enjoying to communicate with foreign visitors, proud about their career, satisfied with promotion opportunities, and they were pleased to attach with the tourism and hospitality sector after graduation. The multiple regression result indicated the working commitment most influence by social status compared to another dimensions. Recommended to future researcher to expand the sample size to other TVET institutions in other countries and, apply others method such as qualitative and mixed method to explore in-depth understanding of students' perception and working commitment in the tourism and hospitality sector.

Keywords: tourism, hospitality, perception, working commitment, TVET

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The travel and tourism and hospitality are one of the world's largest employers, driving socio-economic development and job creator across the globe. The sectors create new job opportunities in the developed countries especially to the local societies. The emerging new economies and fast spreading of economic have benefited all societies in urban and rural areas. In the year of 2019, the sectors had contributed to 10.3% of global GDL and 330 million jobs, or 10.4% of total employments in 2019 (World Travel and Tourism and hospitality Council, 2020). Year 2020, is a very crucial year to the sectors when the unpredicted and threat from the impact of the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The pandemic COVID-19 has affected the industry gravely such as border closing, travel restrictions, closure of accommodation, tourism and hospitality facilities, flight cancellation, room cancellation, cut off salary, unpaid leave employer and others. In the

year of 2020, Malaysia has registered 4 billion tourist arrivals in the half first year and decreased by 68.2% compared to the same period in the year 2019 (<http://www.tourism.gov.my/>, 2020).

The tourism and hospitality sector growth in Malaysia supported by required employees offer high quality of services and tourist's satisfaction (Lai, 2014). The rapid growing on international tourism and hospitality sector every year, customer service satisfaction become important the stakeholder attract tourists' stay longer or swiftly comes again. Based on previous literature review (Aksu & Köksal, 2005; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Penny Wan, Wong, & Kong, 2014; Richardson, 2009) student perception toward tourism and hospitality industry traditionally negatively. Based on these researchers, the development of sustainable tourism and hospitality needs high qualified qualifications and an educated workforce.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Nature of Work

The existing literature indicates the perceptions about the nature of work influence in choosing to work in the tourism and hospitality sector (Kuria, Alice, Peter and Wanderi, 2012; Wu, 2013; Brown, Thomas and Bosselman, 2015; Kim, Jung and Wang, 2016). All these studies show the harmful nature of work in students' perception for example, long working hours, no family life and stressful job (Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000)

The previous studies reveal that the nature of working in the tourism and hospitality sector is very stressful, long working hours, no family life, unstable job and give negative effect to family life, and working likes slave (Aksu and Köksal, 2005; Kuria et al., 2012; Richardson and Thomas, 2012; Wu, 2013; Brown et al., 2015; Tuzunkan, 2018). The negative images toward the nature of working in the tourism and hospitality sector effect the students' decision to choose this industry as a career choice. The sector should improve the negative image to attract the graduates to join the industry and provide a better workplace to work.

Working in tourism and hospitality sector can be an exciting, enjoyable job for the students' who like to challenge themselves and enhances their work experience. There are some positive response towards the nature of work from the previous study, (Richardson, 2010) mentions that the international students are attainable to work in the tourism and hospitality sector because they can learn new things and enjoyable to work and exciting (Barron, Maxwell, Broadbridge and Ogden, 2007; Bahcelerli and Sucuoglu, 2015). This positive working environment creates teamwork, trust between organisation and workers. Some students are willing to work even though this sector offers low pay, heavy workloads and long working hours (Stone et al., 2017), lack of appreciation (Indira Kandasamy and Sreekumar Ancheri, 2009) but they still enjoy working in this sector.

2.2 Social Status

Perception of social status may be in a different way. It could be a perception of workers about family pride in towards their jobs. Social status is one complex construct, and there are many definitions from scholar regarding social status in terms of individual's financial strength, power, the political influence of an employee's enjoys as compared to that of

another employee (Mahmood, Hussan, Sarfraz and Ibrahim, 2016). Social status can define as the perception of workers about their family pride can when they take a particular job and, society respects their role and its importance and benefits to their community (Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000; Choudhary, Prasad and Nair, 2017)

Tourism and hospitality sector are traditionally known as low skill and low prestige job (Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000; Aksu and Köksal, 2005) and contribute to of employment in this industry (Litvin, 2000; Roney & Oztin, 2007). Based on (Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000) there are several reasons to make it low status in the society views, for example low skilled job, seasonal job, unpleasant working conditions, low pay and long working hours. It can be an important factor to student's willingness to pursue to this industry.

A career in tourism and hospitality sector still lacks prestige in the student's perception due to low remuneration, but the student tolerated with the pay because they value their job to the extent that they make the effort of coping (Weaver, 2009). In Tibet China, working in government and state-owned companies are more privileged compared to the tourism and hospitality sector. There are some prejudices in Tibet China (Wu, 2013) towards a career in tourism and hospitality sector conversion reported as low pays, low skilled, low social status, seasonality industry and long working hours (Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000; Aksu and Köksal, 2005; Roney and Oztin, 2007; Richardson, 2010).

2.3 Pay and Benefits

Pay and benefits referred to as the reward that satisfies the needs of the staff to a certain extent (Lin, 2015). Meanwhile, interests is defined as an element in the compensation packages, other than payment of a contribution to staff in full or in part payment (Milkovich and Newman, 2008). For this study, the pay refers to as a salary or wages received by the employee (Lin, 2015).

According to (Hemdi and Nasurdin, 2007) the fairly and equitably compensated are influenced turnover intentions among employees in Malaysia hotels. (Wye and Lim, 2013) mentioned that most of the undergraduates in Malaysia expected to get a higher salary upon entering the tourism and hospitality sector after graduation. Such attitude increases the unemployment rate in Malaysia as students are seeking a career that offers a higher salary. The organisation should improve the paying system to meet the production need and services demand in the industry. The satisfy employees reflect services provides the employees to the customer.

Previous study regarding pay and benefits (Roney and Oztin, 2007; Brown, Arendt and Bosselman, 2014) found that graduates who left the hospitality industry indicated that it is essential to work in a career that could contribute to society, offer an excellent salary and work-life balance compared to graduates that stayed in the industry. Wages is one of the essential factors for graduates to continue in the industry. However, a study conducted by (Brown et al., 2014) revealed that higher salary is not necessary to start a job in the tourism and hospitality sector. The finding contrasts with the study by (Brown et al., 2015) which stated that a good salary as the one-factor affects the graduate's decision to choose tourism and hospitality as a career.

The study by Khuong, Khai, Huyen, Thuong, & Phuong (2016) in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam reported that organisation did not give concern or focus to the pay towards hospitality industry and compensation and benefits affect the employee performance to

work. The salary, bonus and some benefits as a motivation to the employee to perform their job at a higher level and cote indicator of individual career success and stay longer in the industry (Yew, 2008; Ng and Feldman, 2014), employees will leave the companies if they get higher pay from other companies (Wan & Chan, 2013). This situation occurs higher turnover and many vacancies in this industry due to the low income and benefits.

Some studies show positive finding towards pay by the organisation. In a study conducted by (Weaver, 2009), it found that graduates were more positive and tolerated even they get poor remuneration from the organisation because they value their jobs to stay in the industry. It shows that money is not a primary motivator for the graduates to enter the tourism and hospitality sector.

2.4 Promotion Opportunities

Promotion can is defined as an organisation which involves the rising of salary, prestige, power and authority, status, or special interests. Although it is sometimes used as a reward for productivity and achievement, it should reserve for those who have proven their potential and readiness for assignments to higher-level positions. It can be based on one or more factors: performance, organization-specific /fees, potential, company expansion and service duration, (Tracey, Ed and William, 2004). The promotion opportunities become a critical factor to employees longer stay at the organisations.

Every employee has fundamental desires to the higher positions, and the organisations should provide the opportunity to all employees. The organisations must have an excellent promotion opportunity policy to the employees, free from bias, and their equity of treatment (Choudhary et al., 2017) to prevent high turnover in the organisations. Le et al., (2018) in the study in Vietnam, believe the promotion opportunities a limited tomanagement level only and not based on employee"s ability to work and unfair (Rast and Tourani, 2012). The organisation should be clear and transparent in the promotion system must be fair and equitable to give promotion opportunities in every level of employees to encourage the worker to work harder and can benefit the organisation.

Jiang & Tribe, (2009) mentioned in their study that the organisations did not have proper mechanisms of employment and appointment. The organisations choose the relationship with employees rather than abilities to doing jobs. The employees need to make a good relationship with the manager to get promotion opportunities in the tourism and hospitality sector. This study also revealed that the promotions opportunities in the tourism and hospitality sector were generally pessimistic and unexpected career development opportunities.

2.5 Working commitment

Yew (2008) referred to organisational commitment or working commitment as a person's identification strength with the goals of multiple organisations. It is about positive engagement which is essential to build shared goals and objectives in one organisation. Roney & Oztin (2007) believed that one of the factors that shape the image of the tourism and hospitality sector is the individual commitment to work. The high turnover in the tourism and hospitality sector, show the employee less commitment disadvantage to the organisation and need training new employee (Robinson, Kralj, Solnet, Goh and Callan, 2014).

The organisation should focus on tactics and strategies to that required to keep the employee stays, for example, some benefit and rewards. Several studies show the job satisfaction and working commitment is influenced by salary (Poon, 2004; Zubaidah Mohd Ali Tan et al., 2016). The higher pay can increase employee loyalty to the organisation and give a positive impact on the tourism and hospitality sector. The high turnover and less commitment to the organisation give negatively impact on the quality of service in the tourism and hospitality sector. Employees are the organisation assets, the organisation need to build commitment in its employees, for example, the organisation contributes significantly to the growth and development of the society, the employees may automatically develop a sense of responsibility to work

3.0 METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research approach was used in this study. A set of questionnaires was designed to measure the perception and working commitment in the tourism and hospitality sector. It measured all four independent variables including the nature of work, social status, pay and benefits, and promotion opportunities. The dependent variables are working commitments which were adopted from a study by (Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000; Aksu and Köksal, 2005). The items in the questionnaires were mainly to measure the TVET students' perceptions toward tourism and hospitality sector. A Likert type scale with five categories was used: 5 strongly agree, 4 agree, 3 neutral, 2 disagree and, 1 strongly disagree. The questionnaire was created using the google forms tool, and the URL hyperlink was attached and given to the respondents.

This study used nonprobability sampling technique. The nonprobability sampling means the population does not have any probabilities attached to their being chosen as sample subjects (Sekaran, 2003). This shows that the findings from the study of the sample cannot be confidently generalised to the population. The samples were chosen because they have working experiences or have gone through the internship programme at least two months in the industry. There were 95 respondents involved in this study. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyse the data. The data were presented in Mean, Frequency, Percentages and Standard Deviation.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Demographic of respondents

Demographic of the respondents is shown in Table 1. (75.8%) of respondents were female, and (24.2%) were male. The respondents in semester six were 25.3%, (74.7%) students not graduate yet. First choice programme (72.6%) respondents. Meanwhile (27.4%) respondents did not choose this programme as their first choice. The most significant number of respondents to choose tourism and hospitality programme without anyone persuade is (62.1%), undecided (5.3%), and someone persuades (32.6%). The most preferred department in tourism and hospitality industry career were airlines and their office (29.5%), the travel agent (26.3%), others (22.1%), front office (14.7%), food and Beverage (4.2%), accountancy (2.1%), and housekeeping (1.1%).

Table 1: Demographic of respondents

Items	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	72	75.8
	Male	23	24.2
Semester	Semester 6	24	25.3
	Not Graduate	71	74.7
First choice Programme	No	26	27.4
	Yes	69	72.6
Did you choose this programme by yourself?	No	5	5.3
	Undecide	8	8.4
	Yes	82	86.3
Did anyone persuade you to choose tourism and hospitality studies?	No	59	62.1
	Undecide	5	5.3
	Yes	31	32.6
Which department do you prefer to work in the tourism and hospitality sector?	Airlines and their office	28	29.5
	Travel Agent	25	26.3
	Others	21	22.1
	Front Office	14	14.7
	Food and Beverage	4	4.2
	Accountancy	2	2.1
	Housekeeping	1	1.1

4.2 Perception and attitudes

Table 2 shows the items for nature of work. 96% of respondents agreed with the statement "It is very nice to have the opportunity to communicate with foreigners while working in the tourism and hospitality" (M=4.60). 95% respondents agreed (M=4.49) the statement "I find jobs in the tourism and hospitality sector interesting". On the others hand, 60% respondents agreed with the statement "Owing to seasonal vacancies it is difficult to find a stable job in tourism and hospitality" "Working hours in the tourism and hospitality are not suitable for a regular life" (M=3.26). Overall, the Mean values for the nature of work are 4.01 out of 5, which shows that the respondents show the positive response towards this dimension.

Table 2: Nature of work

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Strongly disagree/ Disagree	Neither	Strongly agree/ Agree
I find jobs in the tourism and hospitality sector interesting	4.49	0.581	0.00	4.21	95.79
Working hours in the tourism and hospitality are not suitable for a regular life (R)	3.26	1.132	26.32	29.47	44.21
It is very nice to have the opportunity to communicate with foreigners while working in the tourism and hospitality sector	4.60	0.591	1.05	2.11	96.84
Owing to seasonal vacancies it is difficult to find a stable job in tourism and hospitality sector (R)	3.69	1.011	10.53	29.47	60.00

Table 3 depicts the detailed result of dimension social status. 88% of respondents agreed with the statement "I talk to my relatives and friends with pride about my career in the tourism and hospitality sector" (M=4.37), and 81% agreed with the statement "My family is proud of my profession in the tourism and hospitality sector" (M=4.15). In comparison, 72% agreed with the statement "Working in the tourism and hospitality sector is a respected career in Malaysian society" (M=3.99). However, less than half of the respondents agreed with the statement "It is a widespread belief in Malaysian society that those who study the tourism and hospitality sector will be waiters /waitresses" (M=3.08). Overall, a Mean value for social status is 3.89 out of 5, which interprets the optimistic respondents toward the social status dimension.

Table 3: Social status

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Strongly disagree/ Disagree	Neither	Strongly agree/ Agree
My family is proud of my profession in the tourism and hospitality sector.	4.15	0.714	0.00	18.95	81.05
Working in the tourism and hospitality sector is a respected career in Malaysian society.	3.99	0.917	7.37	20.00	72.63
It is a widespread belief in Malaysian society that those who study the tourism and hospitality sector will be waiters /waitresses.	3.08	1.358	36.84	21.05	42.11
I talk to my relatives and friends with pride about my career in the tourism and hospitality sector	4.37	0.745	2.11	9.47	88.42

Table 4 presents the pay and benefits items. A total of 58% respondents agreed with the statement "I find the fringe benefits (holidays, meals, bonuses, etc.) sufficient in the tourism and hospitality sector" (M=3.68), and less than half of the respondents agreed with the statement "I think that the salary for most tourism and hospitality sector jobs as sufficient to lead a satisfactory life" (M=3.32). Meanwhile, it was found that 50% of the respondents were disagreed with the statement "Considering the long hours and workload, salaries are low in the tourism and hospitality sector" (M=2.49). Overall, a Mean value for pay and benefits is 3.16 out of 4, which demonstrates the respondents were neither agreed nor not disagreed towards pay and benefits.

Table 4: Pay and benefits

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Strongly disagree/ Disagree	Neither	Strongly agree/ Agree
I think that the salary for most tourism and hospitality jobs as sufficient to lead a satisfactory life	3.32	1.055	17.89	36.84	45.26
Considering the long hours and workload, salaries are low in the tourism and hospitality and hospitality industry. (R)	2.49	1.129	50.53	33.68	15.79
I find the fringe benefits (holidays, meals, bonuses, etc.) sufficient in the tourism and hospitality sector	3.68	1.055	12.63	28.42	58.95

Table 5 shows the promotion opportunities result. The data depicted that 66% of the respondent agreed with the statement "Number of years worked and experience are taken into promotion decisions" (M=3.80). In contrast, 56% respondents agreed with the statement "Promotions opportunities are satisfactory in the tourism and hospitality sector" (M=3.61) meanwhile, 48% respondent agreed with the statement "It is very difficult to get promoted if you do not "have an uncle in the court" in the tourism and hospitality sector" (M=3.31). Overall, the Mean for promotion opportunities are 3.57 out of 5, which is interpreted as a positive response from the respondents.

Table 5: Promotion opportunities

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Strongly disagree/ Disagree	Neither	Strongly agree/ Agree
Promotions opportunities are satisfactory in the tourism and hospitality sector	3.61	0.960	8.42	34.74	56.84
Number of years worked and experience are taken into promotion decisions	3.80	0.882	5.26	28.42	66.32
It is very difficult to get promoted if you do not "have an uncle in the court" in the tourism and hospitality sector	3.31	1.337	24.21	27.37	48.42

The detailed result of a commitment to work was presented in Table 6. 90% of the respondents disagreed with the statement "I am very pleased to chosen tourism and hospitality, and hospitality as a career path" (M=1.62) and, 77% disagreed with the statement "It was a big mistake to choose tourism and hospitality as a career path" (M=1.75), 52% respondents disagreed with the statement "I will work in the tourism and hospitality sector after graduation provided that I become a manager of department head" (M=2.38) and, 52% disagreed with the statement "It is definite that I will not work in the tourism and hospitality sector after graduation" (M=2.26). The overall Mean, is 3.57 out of 5, which means that positively responses were received from the respondents toward the working commitment. It was also found that they are happy to choose the tourism and hospitality as a career path and will join this industry after graduation.

Table 6: Commitment to work

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Strongly disagree/ Disagree	Neither	Strongly agree/ Agree
I am very pleased to chosen tourism and hospitality as a career path (R)	1.62	0.801	90.53	7.37	2.11
It is definite that I will not work in the tourism and hospitality sector after graduation	2.26	1.084	52.63	40.00	7.37
I will work in the tourism and hospitality sector after graduation provided that I become a manager of department head	2.38	1.159	52.63	29.47	17.89
It was a big mistake to choose tourism and hospitality as a career path	1.75	0.989	77.89	16.84	5.26

4.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

The R² values (.149) as shown in Table 7 indicated that 14.9% of the variance in perception and attitude can be explained by four dimensions (nature of work, social status, pay and benefits and promotion opportunities. The P-value (.005^b) means the overall regression model in this study is a good fit to indicate the coefficient of the multiple determination R² which is significantly different from zero.

The results depicted that social status was the most significant factor of perception ($\beta = -.373$, sig. < 0.05), followed by promotion opportunities ($\beta = .163$, sig. > 0.05) and, nature of work ($\beta = .154$, sig. > 0.05). Meanwhile, pay, and benefits have a low impact ($\beta = -.006$, sig. > 0.05). Comparatively, social status has the highest beta coefficient and followed by promotion opportunities. The results indicated that working commitment is influence by the social status, promotion opportunities and nature of work.

Table 7: Multiple Regression Analysis

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t-Value	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.152	.753		2.856	.005
Nature of work	.236	.160	.154	1.475	.144
Social status	-.464	.131	-.373	-3.531	.001
Pay and benefits	-.008	.131	-.006	-.060	.952
Promotion opportunities	.207	.130	.163	1.591	.115
R = .386 ^a					
R ² = .149					
Adj. R ² = .111					
F Change = 3.948					
P = .005 ^b					
a. Dependent variable: Working commitment					

5.0 DISCUSSIONS

This paper seeks to address the students' perceptions and working commitment in the tourism and hospitality sector, especially in Sarawak. Based on the results reported, the students' perception is 3.33 out of 5. The respondents have positive respond toward the perception and working commitment in the tourism and hospitality sector. Besides that, a majority of the students chose this program as their first choice when applying to future study, and more than half of them decided to choose this programme without anyone persuaded them to select this program. The airlines and travel agent are the most popular choice among the students.

The results have identified one negative respond toward tourism and hospitality sector which is seasonal and unstable job. Interestingly, the respondents found out that this industry is exciting because they would be able to meet and communicate with the foreign visitors. The tourism and hospitality sector are known as seasonal jobs, the organisational should creative to create as strategies to attract tourist come and enjoying their holidays.

On the other hand, the students are very proud to share with their relatives and friend about their jobs in the tourism and hospitality sector, and found it as a respected career (Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000; Aksu and Köksal, 2005; Roney and Oztin, 2007; Jiangand Tribe, 2009; Richardson, 2010). The multiple regression analysis highlighted that the social status is the most influence working commitment in tourism and hospitality sector, and consistent with the findings in several studies (Wan et al., 2014), and Malaysia (Zubaidah Mohd Ali Tan et al., 2016).

Meanwhile, in terms of pay, the respondents were satisfied with the benefits offered by the organisation. Pay satisfaction had been discussed in the studies by (Aksu and Köksal, 2005 and Richardson, 2008). It is advisable that the industry players improve the pay and benefits, and promotion opportunities to lead satisfying, attract the employer to stay longer

in order to improve their career development. Besides that, the respondents have positive perceptions regarding the commitment to work.

The main pitfall in this present study is the sample size. It is recommended that future researcher should expand the sample size in order to capture the actual student's perceptions and working commitment in the tourism and hospitality sector. In addition, similar research can be applied to be conducted in other TVET institutions in other countries. Since this research used the quantitative research approach, future researchers may apply other methods such as qualitative and mixed method explore in-depth understanding of students' perception and working commitment in the tourism and hospitality sector.

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