



PROFESSIONAL INDUSTRY EXPERIENCES AND COMPETENCIES OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM EDUCATORS: BASIS FOR A PROPOSED WORK IMMERSION PROGRAM

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Abstract

This study evaluated the competencies of faculty members in Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) across the Food and Beverage (F&B), Lodging, Recreation, and Travel and Tourism sectors. Data from 23 respondents were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a four-point Likert scale. Results showed that the majority of faculty members held Master's degrees (52.17%) and had industry experience (52.17%). Faculty were found to be highly competent across all sectors, with F&B competency in menu design and operations rated the highest (3.71), followed by lodging recruitment and property support (3.69), program monitoring in Recreation (3.61), and budget management in Travel and Tourism (3.62). Overall, HTM educators demonstrated strong capabilities in delivering industry-relevant knowledge, ensuring students are prepared for the evolving hospitality and tourism industries.

Keywords: Professional; Industry Experiences; Competencies; Hospitality; Tourist

1. Introduction

Professional experience played a pivotal role in shaping the education and effectiveness of faculty members in the fields of hospitality and tourism. In particular, for those who taught professional courses in the Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management (BSHM) and Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (BSTM), practical experience was invaluable. The reason behind this was clear: to properly equip students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to succeed in the fast-paced and dynamic hospitality and tourism industries, educators needed firsthand experience in these fields. Their professional background enabled them to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and the real-world application of skills, thus ensuring that students were prepared to face industry challenges and opportunities with confidence.

Moreover, the increasing demand for highly skilled professionals in hospitality and tourism led to a growing recognition of the need for faculty members to have substantial industry experience. Industry experience not only strengthened the faculty's credibility but also enhanced the learning environment by providing students

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with practical insights and examples drawn from the field. This allowed educators to impart real-world scenarios and case studies, fostering a more interactive and applied learning experience for students. However, discrepancies in meeting the required professional qualifications among faculty members were noted in some institutions, particularly regarding the minimum years of professional experience mandated by accrediting bodies such as the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

This study sought to address this gap by examining the professional work experiences and competencies of hospitality and tourism faculty members in local higher education institutions in the province of Pangasinan. The focus was on determining whether faculty members met the qualifications and industry standards expected for effective teaching in these specialized programs. Through a survey-based approach, this research aimed to identify areas where faculty members required additional industry exposure or training. The ultimate goal was to propose an appropriate work immersion program that would not only ensure compliance with CHED standards but also enhance the overall quality of education, preparing students for successful careers in the hospitality and tourism sectors.

2. Literature Review

The review of related literature explores key aspects of hospitality and tourism education, focusing on the importance of professional experience for faculty members, the role of work immersion for students, faculty development, and the challenges faced by educational institutions in meeting industry standards. Research highlights how faculty with industry experience contribute to better student outcomes by bridging the gap between theory and practice. Additionally, the review discusses the significance of internships and work immersion programs in preparing students for careers in the hospitality and tourism sector. It also examines the need for continuous professional development for faculty to stay current with industry trends and the regulatory challenges faced by institutions in maintaining high educational standards.

2.1. Importance of Professional Experience for Faculty in Hospitality and Tourism Education

Professional experience in hospitality and tourism management plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of faculty members. According to Bhaduri and Kaur (2020), faculty members with industry experience are better equipped to provide students with practical knowledge, ensuring that the curriculum aligns with the evolving demands of the hospitality industry. Faculty members with industry experience are also able to offer real-life case studies, thereby fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills in students (Kandampully & Dudley, 2014). Furthermore, industry-experienced faculty contribute significantly to creating industry partnerships and collaborations that benefit both students and institutions (De la Cruz, 2018). This aligns with findings from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) that emphasize the importance of industry experience for higher education faculty members teaching professional courses (CHED, 2017).

2.2. The Role of Work Immersion and Industry Exposure for Students in Hospitality and Tourism Programs

Work immersion, internships, and on-the-job training have long been considered vital components of hospitality and tourism education. Research by Villanueva (2019) noted that students who participated in internships gained crucial industry-specific skills, including customer service, communication, and time management, all of which are critical for success in the hospitality industry. Similarly, research by Lestari and

Ibrahim (2018) revealed that students who had exposure to actual hospitality settings were better prepared to transition into full-time employment after graduation. Work immersion programs not only allow students to apply theoretical knowledge but also enable them to adapt to industry standards, build networks, and understand industry challenges firsthand (Tan, 2017). Furthermore, faculties who have experience in the field are better positioned to mentor students during internships, ensuring that students gain maximum benefit from their immersion (Mocan, 2020).

2.3. Faculty Development and Continuing Education in Hospitality and Tourism

Professional development for faculty members is critical to ensuring that they remain knowledgeable about current industry trends and pedagogical practices. A study by Rajeev and Mitra (2016) found that continuous professional development programs for faculty members in hospitality and tourism led to improved teaching outcomes, as faculty were better prepared to integrate new trends and technologies into their courses. Faculty members who participated in ongoing development programs were more likely to incorporate innovative teaching methods, such as experiential learning, into their classrooms (Cowan & McKinley, 2018). According to a study by Alharthy (2020), faculty who pursue advanced degrees or certifications related to hospitality and tourism management can enhance their credibility and ability to deliver high-quality education. Moreover, professional development opportunities help faculty stay updated on changes in industry regulations, sustainability practices, and emerging technologies in the hospitality sector (Lim, 2019).

2.4. Challenges in Meeting Industry Standards and Regulatory Requirements in Hospitality Education

One of the primary challenges faced by hospitality and tourism education institutions is ensuring that faculty meet industry standards and regulatory requirements. A study by Aydin and Koseoglu (2016) revealed that many hospitality programs struggle with faculty members who lack sufficient industry experience, which can affect the quality of education and students' preparedness for the workforce. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED, 2017) set forth standards mandating that faculty members have at least one year of professional industry experience, yet many institutions face difficulties in meeting these standards due to limited opportunities for faculty to engage with the industry. Moreover, there are concerns about the mismatch between academic curriculum and industry needs, as highlighted by Gallarza et al. (2019), who noted that many hospitality programs fail to integrate emerging trends like digital transformation, sustainable practices, and global mobility into their courses. The gap between industry expectations and academic delivery often results in a misalignment between graduate skills and job market requirements (Goh & Lee, 2020).

3. Methodology

To gather relevant data, the researcher conducted a quantitative descriptive research design to explore the Professional Work Experiences of Hospitality and Tourism Management Faculty Members. This design Quantitative descriptive research design is a widely used research approach focused on describing the characteristics or behaviors of a population or phenomenon under study, using numerical data. This approach is non-experimental, meaning it does not manipulate variables but rather observes and describes them in their natural state. The primary aim is to answer "what," "how," or "where" questions, without delving into causality or underlying mechanisms (Creswell & Poth, 2024). The primary respondents for this study were the Instructors of the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Local Higher Education Institutions in the Province of Pangasinan. These faculty members were directly involved in the institution's work immersion program, making

them ideal participants. The study sample consisted of 23 respondents: 17 from the College of Hospitality Management (73.91%) and 6 from the College of Tourism Management (26.09%).

The researcher created a questionnaire for the survey and sent a letter of request to the appropriate deans or program heads of the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management to distribute it to the respondents. The survey utilized a Likert Scale, which assessed competencies based on the following categories: "Highly Competent," "Competent," "Slightly Competent," and "Not Competent." The responses were rated on a 4-point scale: 1.00 to 1.74 – Not Competent, 1.75 to 2.49 – Slightly Competent, 2.50 to 3.24 – Competent, and 3.25 to 4.00 – Highly Competent. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted with 15 respondents, and validation was sought from five industry experts. The data collected were classified, tallied, analyzed, and interpreted using statistical tools.

The data analysis involved using frequencies, percentages, and weighted averages. Frequencies and percentages were used to assess the respondents' professional profiles, making it easier to understand the distribution of data. For competency levels, weighted averages were calculated to account for the relative relevance of each factor. The weighted mean formula, $X = \Sigma[(F)(x)] / N$, was employed, where "F" represents frequency, "x" is the weight, and "N" is the number of respondents. The computed responses were analyzed to identify the level of competencies in various hospitality and tourism sectors, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the faculty's professional qualifications.

The study ensured voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the absence of harm to participants, adhering to ethical guidelines and ensuring the integrity of the research.

4. Findings

4.1. Profile of the Respondents

Table 4.1.1: Profile of Respondents in terms of Educational Qualifications

Educational Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
Doctorate Degree	4	17.39%
Master's Degree	12	52.17%
Bachelor's Degree	7	30.43%
Total	23	100.00%

Table 4.1.1 presents the educational qualifications of the respondents, revealing a diverse range of academic backgrounds among the Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) educators. Among the 23 respondents, the majority (52.17%) hold a Master's degree, while 30.43% have a Bachelor's degree, and 17.39% possess a Doctorate degree. This distribution suggests that a significant proportion of the HTM faculty members are highly educated, with a strong representation of Master's degree holders. This reflects the advanced academic requirements commonly found in higher education institutions, where the emphasis on expertise at the Master's level is considerable.

Table 4.1.2. Profile of Respondents in terms of Teaching Experiences

Teaching Experience	Frequency	Percentage
With Teaching Experience	23	100.00%
Without Teaching Experience	0	0.00%
Total	23	100.00%

Table 4.1.2 examines the respondents’ teaching experience, showing that all 23 participants (100%) have teaching experience. This indicates that the HTM educators surveyed are well-versed in educational practices, ensuring they are capable of contributing effectively to the academic environment. The homogeneity in teaching experience supports the assumption that the respondents possess the foundational pedagogical skills required for higher education instruction.

Table 4.1.3: Profile of Respondents in terms of Industry Experience

Industry Experience	Frequency	Percentage
With Industry Experience	12	52.17%
Without Industry Experience	11	47.83%
Total	23	100.00%

As shown in Table 1.3, the majority of the respondents (52.17%) have industry experience, while 47.83% do not. This balance suggests that many HTM educators have practical, real-world experience in the hospitality and tourism sectors, which could enhance their ability to provide relevant, industry-based knowledge to students. However, there is still a notable portion of the respondents without direct industry experience, which may limit their capacity to integrate practical insights into their teaching methods.

4.2. Level of Competencies of Faculty Members

Table 4.2.1: Level of Competencies of Faculty Members in terms of Food and Beverage Industry

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
<i>The faculty member can...</i>			
manage all F&B and day-to-day operations within budgeted guidelines and to the highest standards	3.78	Highly Competent (HC)	2
design exceptional menus, purchase goods and continuously make necessary improvements	3.82	Highly Competent (HC)	1
preserve excellent levels of internal and external customer service	3.74	Highly Competent (HC)	3
lead F&B team by attracting, recruiting, training, and appraising talented personnel	3.72	Highly Competent (HC)	4
identify customers’ needs and respond proactively to all of their concerns	3.70	Highly Competent (HC)	5
provide a two-way communication and nurture an ownership environment with emphasis in motivation and teamwork	3.69	Highly Competent (HC)	6
comply with all health and safety regulations	3.67	Highly Competent (HC)	7
report on management regarding sales results and productivity	3.65	Highly Competent (HC)	8
establish targets, KPIs, schedules, policies, and procedures	3.64	Highly Competent (HC)	9

General Weighted Mean **3.71** **Highly Competent (HC)**

Table 4.2.1 illustrates the competencies of faculty members in the Food and Beverage (F&B) industry, based on a four-point Likert scale, showing that the HTM educators are highly proficient across key areas of F&B management. The highest-rated competency, with a weighted mean of 3.82, highlights their ability to design exceptional menus, purchase goods, and drive continuous improvements. Following closely, the second-highest rated competency (3.78) reflects their skill in managing day-to-day F&B operations within budgetary constraints. Additionally, the faculty's ability to maintain excellent customer service (3.74) and effectively lead F&B teams (3.72) underscores their broad expertise in the field. With an overall weighted mean of 3.71, the responses suggest that the faculty members are "Highly Competent" in managing and teaching the key aspects of the F&B industry.

Table 4.2.2: Level of Competencies of Faculty Members in terms of Lodging Industry

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
<i>The faculty member can...</i>			
conduct recruitment for front office and housekeeping divisions	3.85	Highly Competent (HC)	1
support the General Manager in property initiatives	3.80	Highly Competent (HC)	2
oversee inventory and ordering	3.79	Highly Competent (HC)	3
ensure the property meets brand standards	3.78	Highly Competent (HC)	4
check guest reviews for improvements	3.74	Highly Competent (HC)	5
manage housekeeping supervisors	3.66	Highly Competent (HC)	6
oversee front office operations	3.61	Highly Competent (HC)	7
monitor daily staff attendance, training, and communication	3.60	Highly Competent (HC)	8
supervise cleanliness of hotel's public areas	3.54	Highly Competent (HC)	9
ensure security of facility	3.50	Highly Competent (HC)	10
General Weighted Mean	3.69	Highly Competent (HC)	

In the Lodging industry, Table 4.2.2 shows that the highest competency (3.85) among the respondents is the ability to conduct recruitment for front office and housekeeping divisions. This indicates a strong capability to manage one of the most critical aspects of lodging operations—staffing. Other notable competencies include supporting the General Manager in property initiatives (3.80), overseeing inventory and ordering (3.79), and ensuring the property meets brand standards (3.78). These competencies, with an overall weighted mean of 3.69, suggest that the respondents are highly competent in their ability to contribute to lodging management and operations.

Table 4. 2.3: Level of Competencies of Faculty Members in terms of Recreation Industry

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
<i>The faculty member...</i>			
can monitor the success of programs through feedback and the number attending the event	3.92	Highly Competent (HC)	1
oversee a facility or program's daily operations by keeping records and monitoring employees responsible for certain duties	3.86	Highly Competent (HC)	2
plan individualized activities based on participants' interests	3.82	Highly Competent (HC)	3
attend board meetings and other community meetings as representatives	3.73	Highly Competent (HC)	4
organize group events, such as camps, classes, and youth sports leagues	3.69	Highly Competent (HC)	5
encourage community participation through public events and presentations	3.54	Highly Competent (HC)	6
provide excellent customer service to participants by answering their questions	3.48	Highly Competent (HC)	7
oversee employee recruitment, training, and scheduling to ensure quality service	3.47	Highly Competent (HC)	8
manage special events, such as craft fairs and concerts	3.39	Highly Competent (HC)	9
control costs and generate revenue by managing a facility's budget	3.20	Highly Competent (HC)	10
General Weighted Mean	3.61	Highly Competent (HC)	

As illustrated in Table 4.2.3, the faculty members are highly competent in various aspects of the Recreation industry. The highest-rated competency (3.92) is monitoring the success of programs through feedback and the number of participants attending the event. Other top-rated competencies include overseeing daily operations of a facility or program (3.86) and planning individualized activities based on participants' interests (3.82). With a general weighted mean of 3.61, faculty members demonstrate strong competencies in the Recreation industry, reflecting their ability to handle operational and event-based tasks.

Table 4.2.4: Level of Competencies of Faculty Members in terms of Travel and Tourism Industry

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
<i>The faculty member can...</i>			
manage budgets, meet sales targets, and maximize profits	3.90	Highly Competent (HC)	1
sell package holidays and individual travel elements	3.84	Highly Competent (HC)	2
arrange work routes for staff and allocating tasks	3.68	Highly Competent (HC)	3
update holiday information and draw any important new information to the attention of the staff	3.68	Highly Competent (HC)	4
supervise all types of ticket sales	3.62	Highly Competent (HC)	5
plan itineraries for clients	3.61	Highly Competent (HC)	6
monitor and maintain records and documentation	3.52	Highly Competent (HC)	7
ensure all information is presented clearly and correctly to clients	3.47	Highly Competent (HC)	8

assist in managing tours and excursions	3.46	Highly Competent (HC)	9
handle complaints or disputes	3.40	Highly Competent (HC)	10
General Weighted Mean	3.62	Highly Competent (HC)	

Table 4.2.4 indicates that faculty members are highly competent in several areas within the Travel and Tourism industry, particularly in managing budgets, meeting sales targets, and maximizing profits (3.90). Other key competencies include selling package holidays and individual travel elements (3.84) and managing staff and routes (3.68). The overall average competency of 3.62 reflects the ability of faculty members to effectively impart knowledge and practical skills related to the travel and tourism sector.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings from the study highlight the exceptional competencies of Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) educators across various industries, with a particular emphasis on the Food and Beverage (F&B) sector. The results demonstrate that the faculty members possess high levels of expertise in key areas such as menu design, operational management, customer service, and team leadership, all of which are critical components in the F&B industry. With an overall weighted mean of 3.71 in the F&B industry, the educators exhibit a "Highly Competent" level of proficiency, confirming their ability to effectively manage and teach essential skills in this field. Similar high competency levels were observed in other sectors, including Lodging, Recreation, Travel and Tourism, and Meetings and Events industries, indicating that the HTM faculty members are well-equipped to provide comprehensive education and training across diverse hospitality disciplines. These results suggest that the faculty is not only knowledgeable but also capable of delivering quality education that aligns with industry standards and demands.

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