Studying the Perceptions of Hotel Studies Department Students in University Faculties toward Working in Hospitality Industry

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Abstract

This study aims to explore hotel studies department students' perceptions toward working in the hospitality industry and identify the impact on choosing it as a career path for them upon graduation. In order to achieve this objective, a questionnaire form was developed and directed to a random sample of students. A total of 480 questionnaires were randomly distributed among them; only 401 forms (83.5%) were valid. The obtained results indicated that the majority of respondents from students (61.4%) were preferred to work in hospitality industry and (62.8%) expect that they will work at managerial level after five years from graduation. There are many factors which effect on students' perceptions toward working in the hospitality industry arranged as follows: firstly, social status; secondly, nature of work; thirdly, promotion opportunities; fourthly, pay and benefits; finally, co-workers. Based upon the findings, some recommendations were suggested to improve students' perceptions toward working in the hospitality industry.

Keywords: Hospitality Industry, Hospitality Education, Hospitality Students' Perceptions.

Introduction

Hospitality industry in all world, and Egypt particularly, have been faced with problem of employing and retaining qualified employees as reason of poor image of the hospitality industry which has led to a lack of

skilled staff those working in the large number of hospitality establishments (Ferris et al., 2002). The reason behind a shortage of skilled staff is probably due to many different factors. These factors include low levels of pay, part-time and casual workers, promotions are unsystematic, a large proportion of hours worked outside normal business hours, a high proportion of low skilled jobs, a negative industry image in the eyes of potential employees and students, poor utilization of student labor and high levels of staff turnover. Students' perceptions toward working in the hospitality industry will impact on their decision to choose the hospitality industry as a career path for them (Busby, 2003).

Research aim

This study aims to explore the perceptions of hotel studies department students in university faculties toward working in the hospitality industry and identify the impact on choosing it as a career path for them upon graduation.

Research questions

1) How likely are students to work in the hospitality industry upon graduation?

2) What are factors which may affect on students' perceptions to work in the hospitality industry ?

3) What are the type of positions that students believe they will be able to obtain after five years from graduation?

4) What are student's view of the positives and negatives of working in the industry?

Review of literature

An overview of the hospitality industry

Hospitality is the act of courtesy in welcoming and performing the main needs of guests or travelers, essentially in relation to food, beverage and accommodation (Chan and Mackenzie, 2013).

To review the hospitality industry as a labor market, Kusluvan (2003) stated that there are a lot of employment opportunities in hospitality industry because it has various business sectors. According to International Labor Organization (ILO), the hospitality industry provides approximately 240 million jobs worldwide in 2010 (ILO, 2010). According to Chan and Mackenzie (2013), there are some positive and negative points for working in the hospitality industry as follows:

Positive views

- Variety of career choices
- Opportunities to meet people with different backgrounds
- Long-term career development
- Fringe benefits to employees

Negative views

- Long and non-regular working hours
- Low starting salary
- Working under pressure
- Perceptions of low job status

Realistically, in the longer-term employees who those have both large work experiences and university qualifications are more likely to getting supervisory positions or in management levels within hospitality establishments than those who do not have an university qualification (Harper *et al.* 2005). However, Harkison *et al.* (2011), found that, there are difficulty for graduates to obtain a promotion toward managerial positions, sometimes it takes ten years to get senior position.

An overview of the hospitality education

According to New Zealand Education guide (NEG, 2007), hospitality management courses help students to think more strategically about career paths in the industry to determine their future and to understand the method of managing hotel chains. Harkison, *et al.* (2011) suggested that students thought that they need an experience and knowledge more than qualifications to secure an employment opportunity in the hospitality industry.

King *et al.* (2003) stated that there are various hospitality establishments that offer hospitality programs worldwide. While analyzing tertiary education through universities it was suggested that "tertiary education

providers must meet the needs of industry to offer a quality education to ensure intellectual development among some students for getting practical, training programs". There are increasingly interests in education to develop human resources in the industry. Current reality ensures that it is important to depend on hospitality institution to resolve the industry problems (NAQAAE, 2009).*

Egypt considers one of the first countries among the Middle East countries that pay much attention to the institutional tourism and hospitality education either at university or polytechnics level to train and qualify its labor as one of national economic assets (Zahran and Abdul-Qader, 2006; Elias, 2007).* There are 9 governmental faculties in Egypt; the study system of these faculties (except Helwan University) is two terms. In addition to that, there are 19 private higher institutes in addition to four technological faculties in (Cairo – Alexandria - Qenna – Port-Said). There are also two private faculties one of them in 6th October and Pharos in Alexandria (NAQAAE, 2009).*

Characteristics of working in hospitality industry

Tourism Queensland (2006) stressed that there are a number of skills that can be developed in the field of customer service such as interpersonal skills, effective communication, understanding reasons of customer dissatisfaction and considering the variety of customer's culture.

 Boella (2000) indicated that there are many factors affect labor turnover. These include the nature of work, the nature of the industry, the nature of individual managers and the long proportion of working hours rather than other businesses. Creighton and Stewart (2000) stressed that, there is no obligation on the employer to offer the casual worker any further work and the employees have not right to get permanent job. Soliman (2013) concluded that, approximately 24% of employees working casual as students because they work temporarily in term-time or summer holidays.

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*In Arabic

According to Baum and Lundtorp (2001) seasonality is one of the characteristics in the hospitality industry and effects not only on employment but also on many other areas of operations. The nature of seasonality in the hospitality industry leads to human resource managers requiring extraordinary procedures specific to recruitment and selection, training and retention of employees (Jolliffe and Farnsworth, 2003).

According to Jennings (2001), there are reports that students of tourism and hospitality have not interested towards working in the industry as caused by particularly poor image in their eyes about the nature of work, amounts of working hours and promotion opportunities, which suggested that the industry may have major difficulty of attracting, recruiting and retaining quality staff. Sturman (2001) argued that an industry is characterized by poor pay it must be compared to other industries that have a similar skills group. The majority of students in hotel management department are males. This may be because the industry does not attract females due to poor image of working in it (Gomaa and Sobaih, 2014).

According to National Tourism Investment Strategy Consultative Group NTISC (2006), the expression of skills now refers to a mixture of both behavioral and technical skills. The nature of working in hospitality industry needs some technical skills such as, employability skills, planning, teamwork, communication and the ability to learn. Employers are seeking graduates with behavioral skills such as honesty, obligation, enthusiasm and treat with kindness. There are two types of skills: competencies and foundations. Competencies are the essential skills for success in the organization, and foundations are skills and qualities that underlie the competencies (Chon and Maier, 2010).

Perceptions of students toward working in the hospitality industry

Pickens (2005) defined perceptions as "an attitude or a tendency to act in a specific way due to the person's experience, mood and temperament". There are five types of perception includes self-perception, environmental perception, learned perception, physical perception, and cultural perception (Hanapiah and Jenep, 2010).

Airey and Tribe (2005) said that the reasons behind shortage in hospitality labor are employers did not interested in students' degree and students have a poor image of the hospitality industry. Employers in hospitality industry prefer experience in the industry and soft skills such as good grooming and appearance (Costley, 2011). Academic degree is not appropriate for administrative positions such as managerial positions in the industry and post- graduate qualifications such as masters are required (Roberts, 2011).

There are some of factors which effect on students' perceptions toward working in the hospitality industry, these factors are long working hours, problems of family life as a reason of the complicated nature of work, low social status of hospitality jobs, seasonal jobs, unsatisfactory promotions, unqualified managers, poor attitudes of managers towards employees, low of remuneration, unqualified workmates and poor attitudes of workmates , working under pressure, and poor physical working conditions for employees (Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000). On other hand, students search for job security, suitable starting salary, stable promotions and an acceptable workload all of which currently students did not certify that hospitality industry could provide them these prospects (Richardson, 2010).

According to Pownall, *et al.* (2007), students perceive to the hospitality industry as a respected profession only if they learn hospitality programs to realize the positives and negatives of the industry. Students find working in the hospitality industry is interesting (Jauhari and Manaktola 2009). The employment in hospitality industry prospects is wonderful in most positions, especially for managers. Indications ensure that the percentage of women in management roles in increasing (Barrows *et al.* 2012). Although hotel students realize the poor employment conditions; they argued that they want to work in the industry after graduation (Gomaa and Sobaih, 2014).

Research methodology

In order to explore hotel studies department students' perceptions toward working in the hospitality industry and identify the impact on choosing it as a career path for them upon graduation., students are enrolled at

departments of hotel studies at eight university faculties were surveyed. A total of 480 questionnaires were distributed equally in the classrooms at investigated universities during February to May 2015. The questionnaires were returned and the results then analyzed. Students at (2nd, 3rd and 4th) level were surveyed. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section intended to reveal the students' demographic data. The second section intended to determine the overall perception of students. The third section included 34 attributes covering the six investigated dimensions. This could be seen in the tables of results. The respondents were asked to answer the questions by using a five-point Likert-type scale (Strongly agree = 5, agree =4, neutral = 3, disagree = 2 and strongly disagree = 1) to determine the levels of agreement with the statements investigated. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 was used to analyze and compute the collected data.

The statements are grouped in the six dimensions as follows:

- Nature of Work (1-6)
- Social Status (7-11)
- Pay/Benefits (12-16)
- Promotion Opportunities (17-24)
- Co-Work (25-29)
- general perceptions (30-34)

The range of each level of agreement was calculated as follow:

$$Range = \ 5 - 1 / 5 = 0.8$$

- Strongly disagree = 1 to 1.80
- Disagree = 1.81 to 2.60
- Neutral = from 2.61 to 3.40
- Agree = from 3.41 to 4.20
- Strongly agree = from 4.21 to 5

Results and Discussion

The results involved two main stages. Descriptive analysis was used to discover participants' responses, correlation analyses and multiple

regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between intentions to work in the hospitality and the explanatory factors.

The total number of questionnaire forms distributed was 480 forms, and only 401 forms (83.5%) were valid. The results obtained were computed and analyzed in the following tables.

Table 1: The demographic profile of the respondents

Attributes		Frequency	Percent (%)	Ranking
Gender	Male	284	70.8	1
	Female	117	29.2	2
Academic Level	Sophomore	95	23.7	3
	Junior	141	35.2	2
	Senior	165	41.1	1

The demographic profile of the students is presented in table 1. The majority of the respondents were male 70.8%, while 29.2% of the respondents were female. In terms of year of the study, there were 95 respondents representing the second year Bachelor's degree program (2nd), 141 representing third year (3rd) and 165 representing the fourth year (4th).

Prefer		Undecided		Don't Prefer	
Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
246	61.4	82	20.4	73	18.2

Table 2: The preference of working in hospitality industry after graduation

From the tabulated data, it could be noticed that the majority of respondents 61.4% prefer working in the hospitality industry upon graduation, meanwhile 18.2% didn't prefer. The percentage of respondents those undecided (neither prefer nor don't prefer) represents 20.4%.

Table 3: Reasons which make students unlikely to work in the hospitality industry

Attributes	Frequency	Percent (%)	Ranking
Nature of Work	45	29.2	1
Social Status	34	22.1	3
Pay/Benefits	44	28.6	2
Promotion opportunities	25	16.2	4
Others	6	3.9	5
Total	**154**	**100.0**	-

Note: The percentages were calculated based on a total of 73 respondents who chose (don't prefer) to enter the industry but some respondents have chosen more than one answer.

The results state clearly that (Nature of Work) is the highest number for respondent's evaluation 29.2%. (Pay/Benefits) is the second 28.6%. ((Social Status) is the third 22.1%. (Promotion opportunities) is the fourth 16.2%. Finally (others) is 3.9%.

The results of "others" clearly shows that students unlikely to work in the industry because they prefer working in governmental jobs and they need just high degree of qualifications. The majority of male students hope to have their own project. However, female students state that all previous factors make them unlikely to work in hospitality industry.

Table 4: The expected level of employment after five years of graduation

Attributes	Frequency	Percent (%)	Ranking
Line level	111	33.84	2
Supervisory level	143	43.59	1
Managerial level	66	20.12	3
others	8	2.34	4
Total	**328**	**100.0**	-

Note: The percentages were calculated based on a total of 328 respondents who chose (strongly agree, and neither agree nor disagree) to enter the industry.

The results state clearly that (supervisory level) is the highest number for respondents' evaluation 43.59%. (Line level) is the second 33.84%. (Managerial level) is the third 20.12%. Finally (others) is 2.34%.

Table 5: Students' perceptions toward nature of work in the hospitality industry

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value	Relative Weights	R
1. Working in the hospitality industry is interesting.	3.65	1.143	*0.022	73.00%	5
2. Most jobs in the hospitality industry are high skilled.	3.99	.817	*0.000	79.80%	3
3. Working hours are long in the hospitality industry.	4.01	.803	*0.036	80.20%	2
4. There are always new skills to learn each day during working in the hospitality industry.	4.34	.913	*0.002	86.80%	1
5. There is a high risk of work accidents in the hospitality industry.	3.85	.906	*0.001	77.00%	4
6. It is easy to find a stable job in the hospitality industry.	2.79	1.148	*0.000	55.80%	6
Average of items	**3.77**	**0.96**	***0.000**	**75.43%**	**-**

* = significant at P≤ 0.05

The results in table 5 depicted that, there was a significant difference among respondents' answers ($p < 0.05$). The majority of respondents were strongly agreed that there are always new skills to learn each day during working in the hospitality industry (mean=4.34). Meanwhile they agreed that working hours are long (mean=4.01), most jobs are high skilled (mean=3.99), there is a high risk of work accidents (mean=3.85) and

working in the hospitality industry is interesting (mean=3.65). This result is in agreement with what has been reported by Jauhari and Manaktola (2009). Moreover, their perceptions toward find a stable job in the hospitality industry was neither agree nor disagree (mean=2.79).

Table 6: Students' perceptions toward the hospitality industry from social perspective

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value	Relative Weights	R
7. I talk to my relatives and friends with pride about my profession in the hospitality industry.	3.65	1.143	*0.007	74.20%	4
8. Working in the hospitality industry is a respected (prestigious) vocation.	3.99	.817	*0.000	75.40%	2
9. There was a widespread belief that those who study the hospitality industry will be waiters or chefs.	4.01	.803	*0.000	77.80%	1
10. Working in the hospitality industry is valued in society.	3.34	.913	*0.036	63.40%	5
11. Family is proud of my profession in the hospitality industry.	3.85	.906	*0.000	68.80%	3
Average of items	**3.60**	**1.07**	***0.000**	**75.43%**	_

* = significant at P≤ 0.05

The results in table 6 revealed that, there was a significant difference among respondents' answers ($p < 0.05$). The majority of respondents agreed that working as waiters is most popular jobs in the hospitality industry (mean=4.01); working in the hospitality industry is a respected vocation (mean=3.99). This result in agreement with what have been stated by Pownall, *et al.* (2007), when they noted that students perceive to

the hospitality industry as a respected profession only if they learn hospitality programs to realize the positives and negatives of the industry. Students (mean=3.65) and their families are proud of their profession (mean=3.85). Meanwhile, their understanding about the value of working in the hospitality industry in society was neither agree nor disagree (mean=3.34).

Table 7: Students' perceptions toward pay and benefits in the hospitality industry

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value	Relative Weights	R
12. Pay is high for most jobs in the hospitality industry.	3.01	1.036	0.885	60.20%	4
13. Considering the long hours and work load the pay in the hospitality industry should be higher.	4.21	1.002	*0.033	84.20%	3
14. The level of fringe benefits (bonuses, leisure, holidays, meals etc.) is sufficient.	2.85	1.248	*0.017	57.00%	5
15. Employers should pay more penalty rates for the unusual hours worked.	4.58	0.767	*0.000	91.60%	1
16. Moral benefits are important part of the remuneration package	4.45	0.760	*0.000	89.00%	2
Average of items	**3.82**	**0.96**	***0.000**	**76.40%**	**-**

* = significant at P≤ 0.05

The results in table 7 revealed that, there was a significant difference among respondents' answers ($p < 0.05$). The majority of respondents were strongly agree that employers should pay more penalty rates for the unusual hours worked (mean=4.58). This result in agreement with what has been stated by Sturman (2001). Moral benefits are important part of the remuneration package (mean=4.45), and considering the long hours

and work load the pay in the hospitality industry should be higher (mean=4.21). Meanwhile, respondents are neutral (neither agreed nor disagreed) that pay is high for most jobs in the hospitality industry (mean=3.01), and their perceptions toward the level fringe benefits (bonuses, leisure, holidays, meals etc.) is sufficient are neutral (mean = 2.85).

Table 8: Students' perceptions toward promotions opportunities in the hospitality industry

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value	Relative Weights	R
17. Promotions are based on merit in the hospitality industry	3.78	1.16	*0.013	75.60%	**4**
18. Promotions opportunities are satisfactory in the hospitality industry.	2.81	1.087	*0.000	56.20%	**8**
19. Promotions are handled fairly in the hospitality industry.	3.02	1.101	0.6830	60.40%	**7**
20. The opportunity of getting promoted to managerial positions is limited.	3.97	1.022	*0.000	79.40%	**3**
21. Academic qualifications are taken into consideration in promotions.	3.49	1.173	*0.043	69.80%	**5**
22. Training courses and individual skills are taken into consideration in promotions.	4.03	0.931	*0.005	80.60%	**2**
23. Number of years worked in the industry is taken into consideration in promotions.	4.13	0.918	*0.037	82.60%	**1**
24. Promotions are systematic in the hospitality industry.	3.35	1.04	*0.000	67.00%	**6**
Average of items	**3.57**	**1.05**	***0.000**	**71.45%**	**-**

* = significant at $P \leq 0.05$

As seen in table 8, there was a significant difference among respondents' answers (p < 0.05). Respondents were agreeing that number of years worked in the industry is taken into consideration in promotions (mean=4.13), training courses and individual skills are taken into consideration in promotions (mean=4.03), the opportunity of getting promoted to managerial positions is limited (mean=3.97), promotions are based on merit in the hospitality industry (mean=3.78), academic qualifications are taken into consideration in promotions (mean=3.49). This result in contrast with what has reported by (Roberts, 2011). Meanwhile, respondents are neutral (neither agreed nor disagreed) that promotions are systematic in the hospitality industry (mean=3.35), promotions are handled fairly in the hospitality industry (mean=3.02), and promotions opportunities are satisfactory in the hospitality industry (mean=2.81).

Table 9: Students' perceptions toward relationships among co-workers in the hospitality industry

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value	Relative Weights	R
25. There is team work spirit amongst co-workers in the hospitality industry.	3.22	1.320	*0.001	64.40%	2
26. There is cooperation amongst employees in the hospitality industry.	3.17	1.220	*0.006	63.40%	3
27. Workers in the hospitality industry have qualifications in hotel studies.	2.41	1.242	*0.000	48.20%	4
28. I think that employees without degrees from university are jealous of hospitality graduates.	3.94	1.126	*0.020	78.80%	1
Average of items	**3.19**	**1.23**	***0.000**	**63.70%**	**-**

* = significant at P≤ 0.05

From the tabulated data, it could be noticed that, there was a significant difference among respondents' answers (p < 0.05). Respondents were in agreement that the majority of work-mates have not qualifications in hotel studies and they are jealous of hospitality graduates (mean= 3.94). However, respondents' perceptions toward team work spirit amongst co-workers in the hospitality industry were neutral (mean= 3.22), and respondents have not any idea if there is cooperation amongst employees and they work as team or not (mean= 3.17). Meanwhile, respondents were disagreeing that workers in the hospitality industry have qualifications in hotel studies (mean= 2.41).

Table 10: Students' general perceptions toward working in the hospitality industry

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value	Relative Weights	R
29. I am satisfy to have chosen the hospitality as a career path	4.03	0.931	*0.017	80.60%	1
30. The advantages of working in the hospitality industry outweigh the disadvantages.	3.65	1.143	*0.000	73.00%	4
31. I would do any jobs in the hospitality industry after graduation	2.41	1.242	*0.026	48.20%	6
32. I will work in the hospitality industry after graduation only if I become a manager or supervisor.	3.97	1.022	*0.039	79.80%	2
33. I would only work in high paid jobs in the hospitality industry	3.94	1.126	*0.000	78.80%	3
34. I do not plan to work in another industry other than the hospitality industry.	3.22	1.320	*0.001	64.40%	5
Average of items	**3.54**	**1.13**	***0.000**	**70.80%**	**-**

* = significant at P≤ 0.05

The results in table 10 revealed that, there was a significant difference among respondents' answers (p < 0.05). The majority of respondents were

in agreement that they satisfy to have chosen the hospitality as a career path (mean= 4.03). This result agreed with (Gomaa and Sobaih, 2014), they stated that although hotel students realize the poor employment conditions; they argued that they want to work in the industry after graduation. They will work in the hospitality industry after graduation only if I become a manager or supervisor (mean= 3.97), would only work in high paid jobs in the hospitality industry (mean= 3.94) and the advantages of working in the hospitality industry outweigh the disadvantages (mean= 3.65). Moreover, respondents' perceptions toward planning to work in another industry rather than the hospitality industry were neutral (mean= 3.22). Meanwhile, respondents were disagreeing that they would do any jobs in the hospitality industry after graduation (mean= 2.41).

Table 11: Correlation analysis (R) and Overall the coefficient of determination R Square

Overall Correlation (R)	Overall the coefficient of determination (R Square)
0.750	0.562

The tabulated data in Table 10 shows that the overall correlations between "students' perceptions toward working in the industry" (Dependent variable), "Nature of Work", "Social Status", "Pay/Benefits", "Promotion opportunities" and "Co-Work" (independent variables) is 0.75 at the 0.001 significance level, The overall the coefficient of determination is 56.2%. This positive and extreme correlation refers that when these factors will improve it should improve students' perceptions toward working in the industry.

Table 12: Independent variables &dependent variable

Factors affecting on students' preferences	Parameters of Regression	T-test	p-value	Rank
(Constant)	-2.215	-1.473	.141	
Nature of Work	.302	3.863	.000	The second
Social Status	.613	10.781	.000	The first
Pay/Benefits	.073	4.686	.009	The fourth
Promotion opportunities	.153	3.681	.000	The third
Co-Work	.061	3.509	.011	The fifth

* = Highly significant at P≤ 0.05

It could be seen that, the values of the Parameters of Regression are less than 0.05.There is significant at the 0.05level of significance. social status ranked as the first factor which effect on students' perceptions toward working in the industry, then nature of work was ranked as the second factor. Meanwhile, pay and benefits in fourth degree. Finally, co-workers ranked as last factor which effect on students' perceptions toward working in the industry.

Multiple Regression Model:

General perceptions = .613 Social Status + .302 Nature of Work + .153 Promotion opportunities + .073 Pay/Benefits +.061 Co-Work.

Recommendations

Based upon both the literature reviewed and the field study findings, the following recommendations could be suggested:

1) Conducting orientation sessions to provide potential students with realistic information about type of work opportunities and work conditions in the industry.

2) Activate the role of educators by giving hospitality students an overview of career in the industry.

3) Increasing the relationship between hotel management departments and hospitality organizations.

4) Educators need to provide programs that match the industry's requirements.

5) Hospitality foundations should remain relevant to the industry. It should be hire more professionals from newer hospitality sectors.

6) Students should be supported to get work experience in the hospitality industry through the studying.

7) Applying innovate practices by managers in hospitality organizations particularly human resource management to overcome poor image of the industry.

8) Hospitality organizations may need to take action with respect to minimum wage levels, the duration of the working week and unsociable working hours" and offer hospitality fresh graduates higher rates of salary and more opportunities for promotions to managerial levels more than employees with other qualifications.

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