



Journal of Hospitality, Leisure,
Sport & Tourism Education

Vol. 7, No. 2.

ISSN: 1473-8376

www.heacademy.ac.uk/johlste

ACADEMIC PAPER

Perceptions of hospitality and tourism students towards study motivations and preferences: a study of Hong Kong students

Myong Jae Lee (mjlee@csupomona.edu)

The Collins College of Hospitality Management, California State Polytechnic University
3801 West Temple Avenue, Pomona, CA91768, USA

Samuel Seongseop Kim (sskim@sejong.ac.kr)

Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Sejong University, Seoul, Korea

Ada Lo (hmada@polyu.edu.hk)

School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University,
Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong

DOI:10.3794/johlste.72.178

©Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education

Abstract

This study identifies reasons why college students in Hong Kong want to study hospitality and tourism management (HTM) and why they want to pursue HTM degrees abroad. It also aims to identify students' preferred HTM study areas. An empirical study of a cohort of 384 HTM students was conducted to determine their motives for their choice of HTM. The results indicate that there were five motivational factors among HTM students: self-actualisation, job opportunity, field attractiveness, ease of study, and scholastic achievement. Detailed information on the motivational factors along with preferred overseas study destinations and HTM study areas are discussed.

Keywords: Hospitality and tourism management (HTM); Study motivations; Study preferences

Myong Jae (MJ) Lee is an assistant professor in the Collins College of Hospitality Management at Cal Poly Pomona. Prior to joining the Collins College faculty, he served as a visiting assistant professor in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His hands-on experience in the hospitality industry, including Hilton and Aramark, has fostered his teaching and research in consumer behaviours, customer satisfaction and loyalty, and convention and exhibition marketing.

Samuel Seongseop Kim is an associate professor in the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Sejong University in Seoul, Korea. He received his PhD from the Texas A&M University and he has published more than 50 articles in various hospitality and tourism journals. His research interests are destination marketing, tourism forecasting, and convention and exhibition management.

Ada Lo is a lecturer in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She obtained her PhD from the School of Hotel and Restaurant Administration of the Oklahoma State University. She was a two-time graduate of the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University, where she obtained her Bachelor of Science and Master of Professional Studies degrees. Prior to joining the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Ms Lo was managing the Frequent Guest Programme for the Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts.

Introduction

The hospitality and tourism industry is one of the major economic value drivers in Hong Kong, along with logistics and financial services. The numbers of tourist arrivals and hotel rooms available have grown rapidly since the 1970s. According to the Hong Kong Tourism Board (2004), tourism was the second largest earner of foreign exchange, with a total tourism receipt of HK\$53,235 million in 2003. Not surprisingly, the hospitality and tourism sector was chosen as one of the strategically promoted areas by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) government. In an effort to promote the city as a top tourist destination in Asia, the Hong Kong government has invested in building the tourism infrastructure. Its efforts include developing modern facilities, improving existing facilities, enhancing service quality, facilitating visitor entry and upgrading overseas promotion. Government investment in higher education (HE) in hospitality and tourism management (HTM) has also played a critical role in providing the human resources needed for the fast growing hospitality and tourism industry in Hong Kong.

At the Year 3 college level, there are 11 degree-awarding institutions in Hong Kong, two of which offer HTM undergraduate degrees: the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). Until 1998, PolyU, where 1,166 undergraduate students are currently enrolled in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management, was the only institution offering an undergraduate programme in HTM in Hong Kong. In response to the strong demand for professionally trained graduates in the hospitality and tourism industry, CUHK started the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) in Hotel Management in 1999. Subsequently, the number of institutions offering HTM programmes rapidly increased. In addition to the courses run by these two major institutions (PolyU and CUHK), many HTM programmes at different levels exist in Hong Kong to train future leaders in hospitality and tourism (Lo, 2006).

Evaluating the popularity of HTM in Hong Kong HE may be useful. First, it may help to understand the current position of the HTM field in the Hong Kong HE system. Second, the findings of the investigation may affect curriculum development and the recruitment policy of HTM institutions. Third, other stakeholders, including the hospitality and tourism industry and educational authorities, may need information about HTM students and their study motivations and preferences for recruitment and policy decisions. Accordingly, the issue of HTM study motivation has drawn serious attention from some researchers (Airey & Frontistis, 1997; Bushell, Prosser, Faulkner, & Jafari, 2001; Hjalager, 2003; Huyton, 1997; Kim, Guo, Wang, & Agrusa, 2007; O'Mahoney, McWilliams, & Whitelaw, 2001; Purcell & Quinn, 1996; Zhao, 1991). To the authors' knowledge, however, there has been only limited research on students' motivations for choosing courses in HTM in Hong Kong. In particular, questions about students' motives for studying HTM abroad and their preferred study areas within HTM have remained unanswered for many years. The main purpose of this research is to fill this gap. Thus, the specific objectives of this research include: 1) identifying major motivational factors for studying HTM; 2) comparing motivational factors of male and female HTM students; 3) identifying students' motives for studying HTM overseas and their preferred destinations; and 4) identifying popular sub-majors within HTM.

In order to achieve these objectives, the authors contacted students who were enrolled in HTM courses offered by PolyU's School of Hotel and Tourism Management and examined their perceptions of HTM study motivation and preferred study areas. The authors chose PolyU as a target HTM institution for this study because its HTM programme best represents HTM HE in Hong Kong in terms of its size (1,166 undergraduate students), its history (27 years of existence) and its reputation as the one of top five HTM institutions in the world for research and scholarship (Jogaratham, McCleary, Mena, & Yoo, 2005). Furthermore, PolyU's HTM programme is the only undergraduate programme in Hong Kong where students can specialise in foodservice management and convention management. Although CUHK provides a BBA in Hotel Management, students at CUHK are required to take a core curriculum of business courses as well as courses in HTM, thus making it impossible for them to concentrate fully on HTM courses.

HTM education in Hong Kong

It is the strategy of the Hong Kong SAR government to promote the city as a top-class destination for leisure and business visitors by making Hong Kong 'Asia's World City'. Government efforts include providing additional infrastructure, improving existing facilities, enhancing service quality, facilitating visitor entry and actively promoting tourism overseas. These initiatives, as well as the future expansion of tourism and hospitality, require well-trained people to work in the industry. Higher education in HTM certainly plays a critical role in preparing future employees and executives for the hospitality and tourism industry in Hong Kong, mainland China and destinations worldwide. Various HTM programmes are available in Hong Kong and can be categorised according to funding modes, degree offered and modes of study (Lo, 2006).

In Hong Kong, HTM education started with only a few vocational training programmes. It has evolved into a wide spectrum of programmes at various levels offered by government-funded institutions, self-financed professional and continuing education units, and other private enterprises, organisations and associations. Student choice of individual HTM programmes depends very much on the availability of financial subsidies from the government, their career aspirations and opportunities in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Sub-degree education

Sub-degree programmes include those leading to a qualification at associate degree (AD), higher diploma (HD) and professional diploma levels (Education and Manpower Bureau, 2005). These mainly target secondary school graduates. In general, AD programmes put more emphasis on general education, depending on the study discipline, while HD and professional diploma courses are more professionally oriented. PolyU's School of Hotel and Tourism Management and the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education offer government-funded HD programmes in hospitality and tourism-related disciplines. The main emphasis of these programmes is to equip students with technical, operational and professional skills essential for a career within the hospitality and tourism industry. Students are required to work in the industry on industrial placement for an extended period (between six and 12 months) before graduation (Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education, 2002; School of Hotel and Tourism Management, 2006a).

Non-funded sub-degree programmes are also offered by universities, vocational institutions and by private institutions and organisations. These are usually designed for those who have completed a diploma or foundation diploma in a related area of study. In terms of specialisation, these programmes are very much driven by demand from potential students and industry practitioners. For example, since conventions and exhibitions are one of the developing sectors of Hong Kong's tourism industry, a number of programmes are offered in the area of conventions and exhibitions, events and entertainment. Studies in cultural tourism, eco-tourism and heritage tourism studies are also in demand. Most of the AD programmes tend to be more general, either following a business-related or social science route, with an emphasis on tourism and hospitality areas.

Undergraduate and graduate education

Currently, there are only two government funded undergraduate degree programmes offered by PolyU and CUHK. Secondary school graduates with Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) results can apply for these programmes through the Joint University Programmes Admission Systems. PolyU's School of Hotel and Tourism Management offers Bachelor of Science degrees in Hotel Management and Tourism Management. Students admitted into the Hotel Management programme can choose to focus on Hotel/Lodging Management, Foodservice Management or Convention and Exhibition Management, while students on the Tourism Management degree programme can focus on Theme Park and Attractions Management, Aviation Services Management, or Convention and Exhibition Management. On the other hand, the BBA in Hotel Management offered by CUHK requires students to take the core curriculum of business courses as well as courses in hotel and tourism management. Recently, both universities have also started to admit associate

degree graduates directly into the second year of their course (Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2005; School of Hotel and Tourism Management, 2006a). Both universities are also the only two government-funded institutions offering government-funded postgraduate programmes such as research-based MPhil and PhD programmes (Chinese University of Hong Kong; School of Hotel and Tourism Management, 2006b).

Top-up degree programmes

With increasing numbers of graduates from sub-degree programmes offered by the different institutions over the years, the demand for top-up articulation programmes is high. Industry practitioners are seeking opportunities to upgrade their existing qualifications to a recognised undergraduate degree. Duration of study for these top-up programmes ranges from one to three years depending on the mode of study. Top-up programmes in Hotel Management, Tourism Management and Travel Industry Management are currently offered by PolyU's School of Hotel and Tourism Management. City University's School of Continuing and Professional Education offers a full-time top-up Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Travel and Tourism Management, jointly awarded by the University of Northumbria at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK. Its sister programme also offers a BA in International Hospitality and Tourism through the Vocational Training Council. The University of Hong Kong's School of Professional and Continuing Education offers two BA programmes in collaboration with the University of Strathclyde: a BA in Hotel and Hospitality Management and a BA in Tourism Management.

HTM study motivations and preferences

Motives for choosing college majors

Numerous studies investigating students' motives for choosing college majors have been conducted in various disciplines (Bedi & Gilthorpe, 2000; Brand & Chikte, 1997; Calkin & Welki, 2006; Giacomino & Akcrs, 1998; Gist, Goedde, & Ward, 1996; Kim et al., 2006; Orenuga & Costa, 2006; Schleef, 2000; Staniec, 2004; Vigild & Schwarz, 2001; Wong, Fiedler, & Liu, 2007). In a cross-sectional study of a cohort of 197 clinical dental students in four different dental schools, Orenuga and Costa identified four major motives for the choice of dentistry: interest, prestige, good employment opportunities and regular work hours. The results of their study indicated that the need for status and prestigious image projected by the dental profession appeared for many students to be a major motive for the choice of dentistry. Other reasons for the choice of dentistry identified by others include financial gain, opportunity to work with people, opportunity to serve the community, admission scores, and advice from parents, relatives, friends and teachers (Bedi & Gilthorpe; Brand & Chikte; Vigild & Schwarz). In particular, it is significant that parents played a key role by communicating the importance of educational choice in safeguarding social status (Schleef). Based on the empirical data collected from business students, Wong, et al. investigated what motivates a student to choose information systems (IS) as their study major. In a factor analysis with 24 motivational items derived from existing literature, they found eight motivational factors: 1) technical and functional competency; 2) general management competency; 3) autonomy/independency and lifestyle; 4) job security and stability; 5) geographic security; 6) entrepreneurial creativity; 7) service and dedication to a cause; and 8) pure challenge. In a similar study on why students do not choose economics as a major, Calkin and Welki found that interest in the subject, expected marketability and the approachability and the reputation of the faculty were major motivational (or de-motivational) factors. On the other hand, using semi-structured interviews with law and business students, Schleef found that students tended to choose their majors for similar reasons: professional status, intellectual interest and upper middle class lifestyle.

Even though the issue of HTM study motivation is significant to hospitality and tourism academia and industry alike, research on why students want to study HTM is somewhat limited. O'Mahoney, et al. (2001) revealed that Australian students choose HTM studies because of their interest in the hospitality and tourism industry and the influence of their parents and career counsellors. Huyton's (1997) study concluded that the rapid increase of HTM programmes in China is consistent with the growth of the hospitality and tourism industry; therefore, abundant job opportunities were a major motive. Also, Zhao (1991)

demonstrated that Chinese students prefer HTM studies because they believe that HTM degrees may lead to respectable careers. According to the results of a survey for study motivation of HTM masters' students in Sweden, the three most important motives were working with people and/or communication, work experience, and the value of the master's programmes in many trades and industries (Hjalager, 2003). In a comparison of Greek and UK student perceptions of HTM studies, Airey and Frontistis (1997) found that Greek students had a more positive view of job opportunities in the hospitality and tourism industry than their UK counterparts.

Demographic difference in motives

Assessing the influence of demographic factors such as gender, race, and ethnic background was another concern for some researchers (Giacomino & Akcrs, 1998; Gist, et al., 1996; Kim, et al., 2007; Malgwi, Howe, & Burnaby, 2005; Staniec, 2004). In particular, gender difference in motives for choosing college majors was significant. Malgwi, et al. (2005) found that for male students the choice of college major was influenced by the major's potential for career advancement, job opportunities and the level of compensation in the field. However, female students were more influenced by aptitude in the subject. Schmidt (2002) also pointed out that the decision to study HTM can be significantly affected by demographic factors. Introducing the concept of gender differences in the hospitality and tourism field, Aitchison (2003) asserted that HTM study motivations were different across the gender, social and cultural nexus. She concluded that such demographic differences in HTM study motivations should be taken into account in the development of HTM curricula and administrative support. In Hjalager's (2003) study, male HTM students were more highly motivated by previous experience in the industry than female students. In the same study, opportunities to work with people were more important for female than male students. In addition, Hjalager found that male students showed a higher level of motivation for opportunities for international careers than female students, whereas the female group had a higher level of motivation for a good salary than the male group. These results are similar to those of other studies that used different ethnic groups, including Australian, US, Korean, Taiwanese and Greek students (Airey & Frontistis, 1997; Clark, 1993; Kim, et al.; Ross, 1994; Szivas & Riley, 1999; Tepeci & Bartlett, 2002).

Studying HTM abroad

For many institutions, particularly Western universities, HTM is an attractive field to which to recruit international students (Khwaja & Bosselman, 1990; Khwaja, Bosselman, & Fernsten, 1990; Malfroy & Daruwalla, 2000). There is a good match of demand (Asian students) and supply (Western universities) in the international market of HTM education. From the perspective of demand, Barron (2002) suggested that motivations for study abroad include economic, political or organisational influences in certain countries. In particular, Asian students believe that educational institutions in their countries lack quality programmes, facilities and faculty (Diaz & Krauss, 1996; Zhao, 1991). Specifically, Asian HTM institutions are considered to have large class sizes, to provide an authoritarian teaching environment, to have a one-way teaching flow rather than interactive discussion between instructors and students, and to have insufficient facilities (Biggs, 1998; Pearson & Beasley, 1996). Thus, many Asian students head for Western universities seeking quality of education, a friendly atmosphere and a strong command of foreign languages (Huang & Brown, 1996; Khwaja & Bosselman; Niven, 1987; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000). In contrast, Western universities need more international students because of economic demands. Recruiting foreign students is likely to fill a deficit in financial subsidies by government, to prompt cultural diversity on campus, to increase resident students and to revitalise the local economy (Barron, 2002). According to Barron, more universities in Australia are keen to attract and retain international HTM students because they tend to pay tuition fees almost double those of domestic students for tertiary education.

Methodology

Measurement development

To assess students' motivations for choosing a HTM programme in Hong Kong, 23 motivation statements were predetermined through the review of extant research on study motivations (Airey & Frontistis, 1997; Bushell, et al., 2001; Huyton, 1997; Purcell & Quinn, 1996). Also, 13 motivation statements were selected to explore students' motivations for studying HTM abroad. Responses to all items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale, where '1 = strongly disagree', '4 = neutral' and '7 = strongly agree'. Initial measurements were refined through a pilot study of 55 undergraduate students in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at PolyU. Following the results of the pilot study, the contents of the questionnaire were slightly revised to ensure that the questions were not ambiguous and could all be clearly understood by potential survey participants (HTM students).

Data collection

Students majoring in HTM at PolyU were chosen for this study. Among the 67 undergraduate courses available at PolyU's School of Hotel and Tourism Management in spring 2006, a cohort of ten courses was randomly selected across all academic levels. The chosen courses included: Hospitality Facilities Management; Tourism and Hospitality Marketing; Lodging Management; Managerial Accounting in Hospitality and Tourism; Introduction to Foodservice Operations; Management and Organisation; and Convention and Exhibition Management. Instructors in each of the chosen classes were asked to conduct the survey and return the responses to the authors. This study did not target students in any particular academic year. Instead, students across all years (Years 1, 2 and 3) were targeted. A total of 384 usable responses were collected, indicating that 32 per cent of the total student population (1,166 undergraduate students) in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management participated in the survey. The demographic profile of respondents is summarised in the 'Results' section below.

Data analysis

A quantitative research approach was adopted for this study to accomplish the systematic testing and observation of underlying dimensions of HTM study motivations. In order to undertake quantitative research, motivational measurements were successfully predetermined through the literature review and the predetermined measurement items were systematically structured for the main survey. Data analysis for this study used a three-step approach. First, the results of descriptive statistics (means and frequency) showed the important study motivators and descriptive information on respondents. Second, collected data were factor-analysed in order to delineate the underlying dimensions of HTM study motivation. Based on Kaiser's (1974) suggestion, only factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1 were accepted, and only items with factor loadings and commonalities greater 0.4 were included in the final factor structure. In the factor analysis, reliability alpha within each domain was computed to confirm the factor's internal consistency. In the last stage of data analysis, independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine the statistically significant differences between female and male students in terms of study motivations.

Results

Demographic profile of respondents

Of the 384 respondents, slightly more than 77 per cent were female HTM students (n = 298), accurately mirroring the undergraduate profile in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at PolyU where female students account for 76 per cent of overall undergraduate population (n = 886). The dominance of female students in the HTM programme in this study is in line with a previous study of HTM study motivation in Korea, Taiwan and China (Kim, et al., 2007), indicating the popularity of HTM among female students in Asian countries. First year (n = 213) and second year students (n = 80) comprised 77 per cent of respondents. For students' interest in international HTM

programmes, 39 per cent of respondents (n = 148) indicated that they were interested in studying HTM aboard.

Motivational factors for choosing HTM

Five motivational factors were identified through the principal component factor analysis of the 23 motivational statements. Eigenvalues of all five factors were higher than 1 with relatively high reliability alpha coefficients ranging from 0.69 to 0.83 (see Table 1). The delineated factors were labelled as follows: 1) 'self-actualisation' (36 per cent of variance); 2) 'job opportunity' (8 per cent of variance); 3) 'field attractiveness' (6 per cent of variance); 4) 'ease of study' (5 per cent of variance); and 5) 'scholastic achievement' (5 per cent of variance). Combined, these five factors explained 60 per cent of the variance. Each motivational item's commonality was greater or closer to 0.50 and most factor loadings were over 0.55, indicating a reasonably high correlation between the delineated factors and their individual items.

Motivation items	Factor loadings	Communalities	Means (Comp.)	S.D.
<i>Domain 1: Self-actualisation (eigenvalue=8.28; variance=35.99; rel. alpha=.78)</i>				
I like to learn foreign languages	.677	.519	4.78	1.26
I would like to gain self-actualisation	.639	.618	4.80	1.16
This field suits my aptitude	.629	.597	4.62	1.20
Compared to other fields, it is possible to contact foreigners and foreign cultures	.607	.626	5.35	1.21
			(4.88)	
<i>Domain 2: Job opportunity (eigenvalue=1.78; variance=7.75; rel. alpha=.83)</i>				
I believe that this field has a growing potential	.751	.735	5.37	1.13
I believe that the percentage of employment is high after graduation	.718	.639	4.95	1.09
Working in this field apparently looks good	.635	.642	4.93	1.15
Scenes or pictures of the hospitality industry appearing in movies/TV look attractive	.606	.556	4.65	1.24
I believe that there are a variety of job opportunities	.550	.630	4.96	1.11
I believe that this field is practical rather than theoretical	.516	.583	5.23	1.19
			(5.01)	
<i>Domain 3: Field attractiveness (eigenvalue=1.34; variance=5.81; rel. alpha=.80)</i>				
I like to serve others	.705	.631	4.46	1.41
Jobs in this field look attractive	.630	.681	4.60	1.22
I would like to study more in this field	.628	.690	4.71	1.26
I believe that the level of salary is high in this field	.571	.579	4.20	1.15
I believe that I can have many opportunities to take more overseas trips	.489	.501	4.75	1.21
			(4.54)	

<i>Domain 4: Ease of study (eigenvalue=1.23; variance=5.35; rel. alpha=.69)</i>				
Compared to other fields, it is easier to get good grades in this field	.649	.559	4.27	1.14
This field was recommended by others (eg, parents, friends or teachers)	.643	.567	4.09	1.33
My score for university entrance exam qualified me for this major	.531	.491	4.61	1.26
Compared to other fields, it is easy to study this field	.506	.530	4.39	1.17
Compared to other fields, this field provides more opportunity to be promoted	.432	.480	4.46	1.12
			(4.36)	
<i>Domain 5: Scholastic achievement (eigenvalue=1.10; variance=4.80; rel. alpha=.70)</i>				
I would like to be a theoretical expert in this field	.906	.840	3.96	1.94
I have more interest in this field, compared to others	.834	.781	4.80	1.94
I would like to be an excellent scholar in this field	.562	.565	4.37	1.21
			(4.37)	

Table 1: Motivational factors for choosing an HTM programme. 7-point Likert-type scales were used and given the following corresponding values: strongly disagree (1) – neutral (4) – strongly agree (7).

Gender differences in motivational factors

To determine any statistically significant differences between female and male HTM students in five motivational factors, an independent samples t-test was conducted. As Table 2 shows, there was no significant difference found among all five motivational factors. Interestingly, the two groups' composite means in all five factors were almost identical, with the mean of the female group being slightly higher than that of the male group. It can be observed that female students showed slightly stronger study motivation than male students.

Motivation factors	Female students (composite means, N=298)	Male students (composite means, N=86)	t-value	P-value
1. Self-actualisation	4.90	4.89	.045	.964
2. Job opportunity	5.02	5.00	.153	.880
3. Field attractiveness	4.56	4.49	.570	.569
4. Ease of study	4.37	4.36	.034	.973
5. Scholastic achievement	4.47	4.29	.881	.379

Table 2: Comparison of motivation of female and male students

Motivations for studying HTM abroad

Another main objective of this study was to examine students' intention to study HTM abroad and their motives for that intention. Of the 384 HTM students participating in this survey, 148 students (39 per cent) showed interest in studying HTM abroad. The descriptive summary of motivations for studying HTM abroad is presented in Table 3. Overall, students showed relatively high mean scores on opportunities for cultural experiences, such as: 'I would like to experience a new culture in the foreign country' (m = 5.89); 'I would like to have an opportunity to learn a foreign language' (m = 5.47); and 'I would like to develop relationships with foreign friends' (m = 5.44). To investigate statistically significant differences between female and male students in perceptions of studying HTM abroad, an independent samples t-test was again used. The results of the test revealed a significant mean difference between

female and male students in one motivational statement: 'I would like to live in a country that is not familiar to me.' Compared with male students ($m = 4.93$), female students ($m = 5.40$) indicated higher motivation for living in different environments. In other motivational statements, there were no significant differences between the two groups.

Motivation items	Mean (N=134)	Female (N=104)	Male (N=30)	t-value	P-value
1. I would like to have an opportunity to learn a foreign language	5.47	5.43	5.62	.747	.457
2. I would like to develop relationships with foreign professors and friends	5.44	5.47	5.33	.649	.517
3. I would like to write a thesis or dissertation of higher quality	4.88	4.85	4.96	.480	.632
4. I would be able to attain a teaching position easily in my country when I return	4.67	4.60	4.90	1.07	.286
5. There are more famous professors, compared to domestic professors	4.83	4.79	4.97	.668	.505
6. I would like to have more opportunities to publish papers for famous journals	4.32	4.27	4.50	.791	.431
7. I would like to live in a country that is not familiar to me	5.29	5.40	4.93	2.04	.043*
8. I would like to get a better job or position in my country when I return	5.55	5.54	5.60	.298	.766
9. The foreign country has a higher educational level than my country in this field	4.85	4.77	5.13	1.45	.150
10. The foreign country has better facilities than my country	4.96	4.89	5.20	1.37	.172
11. I would like to gain a job in the foreign country after I gain a graduate diploma	5.03	5.00	5.13	.482	.631
12. I would like to learn more practical than theoretical perspectives for my career	5.28	5.32	5.16	.709	.479
13. I would like to experience a new culture in the foreign country	5.89	5.90	5.86	.202	.840

Table 3: Motivation for studying HTM abroad

Note: * $p < 0.05$, Note: 7-point Likert-type scales were used and given the following corresponding values: strongly disagree (1) – neutral (4) – strongly agree (7).

Preferred study destinations

Table 4 presents students' preferred countries for HTM studies. Students chose the US (26.3 per cent) as the most desirable country for studying HTM, followed by Switzerland (23.6 per cent) and the UK (21.6 per cent). Combined, these top three destinations garnered 71.5 per cent of votes from the students. However, the order of preferred country is slightly different by gender. For the female student group, Switzerland (26.1 per cent) was chosen as the most preferred foreign destination for HTM studies, followed by the US (24.3 per cent) and the UK (21.7 per cent). On the other hand, male students chose the US (33.3 per cent) as the top destination for their HTM studies, followed by the UK (21.2 per cent) and Switzerland (15.2 per cent). Interestingly, more European countries, such as The Netherlands, Sweden and France, were found in the female students' lists.

Overall HTM Students (N = 148)		Female Students (N = 115)		Male Students (N = 33)	
Preferred country	Frequency (%)	Preferred country	Frequency (%)	Preferred country	Frequency (%)
1. USA	39 (26.3%)	1. Switzerland	30 (26.1%)	1. USA	11 (33.3%)
2. Switzerland	35 (23.6%)	2. USA	28 (24.3%)	2. UK	7 (21.2%)
3. UK	32 (21.6%)	3. UK	25 (21.7%)	3. Switzerland	5 (15.2%)
4. Australia	6 (4.1%)	4. Australia	4 (3.5%)	4. Australia	2 (6.1%)
5. Japan	3 (2.0%)	5. Netherlands	2 (1.7%)	5. Japan	2 (6.1%)
6. China	2 (1.4%)	6. Sweden	2 (1.7%)	6. China	1 (3.0%)
6. Netherlands	2 (1.4%)	7. Japan	1 (0.9%)	6. Europe (General)	1 (3.0%)
6. Sweden	2 (1.4%)	7. China	1 (0.9%)	Did not answer	4 (12.1%)
6. Europe (General)	2 (1.4%)	7. Europe (General)	1 (0.9%)		
10. Korea	1 (0.7%)	7. Korea	1 (0.9%)		
10. France	1 (0.7%)	7. France	1 (0.9%)		
Did not answer	23 (15.5%)	Did not answer	19 (16.5%)		

Table 4: Student preferences for foreign country for HTM study

Preferred study areas

The results of students' preferred HTM field of study are presented in Table 5. Female students reported Airline (Aviation) Management (27.2 per cent) as the preferred specialisation area, with Hotel Management (20.5 per cent) and Event Management (17.1 per cent) as second and third (See Table 5). Combined, these three areas drew 65 per cent of female student votes. On the other hand, Restaurant (F&B) Management (19.8 per cent) was the most popular HTM field among male students, followed by Airline (Aviation) Management (18.6 per cent). Overall, students chose Airline (Aviation) Management as the most preferred HTM study area.

Female HTM students (N=298)	Per cent	Male HTM students (N=86)	Per cent
1. Airline (aviation) Management	81 (27.2%)	1. Restaurant (F/B) Management	17 (19.8%)
2. Hotel Management	61 (20.5%)	2. Airline (Aviation) Management	16 (18.6%)
3. Event Management	51 (17.1%)	3. Hotel Management	11 (12.8%)
4. Restaurant (F/B) Management	17 (5.7%)	3. Hospitality/Tourism Education	11 (12.8%)
5. Convention & Exhibition	15 (5.0%)	5. Event Management	6 (6.9%)
6. Theme Park Management	14 (4.7%)	6. Convention & Exhibition	5 (5.8%)
7. Hospitality/Tourism Education	13 (4.4%)	7. Travel Agency Operations	3 (3.5%)
8. Tourism Development	11 (3.7%)	7. Theme Park Management	3 (3.5%)
9. Travel Agency Operations	7 (2.4%)	7. Tourism Development	3 (3.5%)
10. Tourism-related Public Agency	5 (1.7%)	10. Casino Management	2 (2.3%)
11. Casino Management	3 (1.0%)	11. Tourism-related Public Agency	1 (1.2%)
Others	17 (5.7%)	Others	6 (7.0%)
Did not answer	3 (1.0%)	Did not answer	2 (2.3%)

Table 5: Most preferred HTM field

Summary of findings

The results presented in Tables 1 to 5 show students' motives for the choice of HTM, their intentions and motivations for studying HTM abroad, their preferred foreign destinations for HTM studies, and their preferred study areas within HTM. For study motivation, five motivational factors were extracted through the principal component factor analysis of 23 motivation items. Five motivational factors include: self-actualisation, job opportunity, field attractiveness, ease of study and scholastic achievement. Of five motivational factors, HTM

students chose job opportunity (composite mean = 5.01) as the most important reason to study HTM, followed by self actualisation (composite mean = 4.88). This indicates that students have a natural desire to find their identities in the hospitality and tourism industry and that a favourable job market affected their decisions to pursue an HTM university qualification. Differences in study motivations between male and female undergraduate students were not statistically significant.

Another objective of this study was to identify students' motivations for studying HTM abroad. Of the 384 respondents, 148 students (39 per cent) indicated that they were interested in studying HTM abroad. Of the 148 students who showed interest in studying HTM abroad, their motivations for international HTM studies were examined using 13 motivational statements. Overall, the main reason for students studying HTM abroad was their desire to experience foreign culture, language and people. Significant gender differences were found in one motivational statement – 'I would like to live in a country that is not familiar to me' – suggesting that female students were more motivated to study HTM abroad because of the opportunity to live in a different cultural background. As for the preferred destinations for international HTM studies, Switzerland, the US and the UK were chosen as the top three destinations by the students. Female students chose Switzerland as the top destination, followed by the US and the UK; male students preferred the US for their HTM studies.

Finally, students' preferred study field within HTM was examined. Overall, Airline (Aviation) Management was the most attractive study area to HTM students. In particular, more female students (27 per cent) showed an interest in Airline (Aviation) Management than male students. The finding that female students had a strong desire to enter the airline industry is understandable given the strategic location of Hong Kong, long known as the hub of air transportation in Asia. In Hong Kong, most people travel by air and are therefore familiar with various aspects of airline businesses. Furthermore, the airline industry in Hong Kong provides plenty of job opportunities, particularly for female college students. On the other hand, male students chose Restaurant (F/B) Management as the most preferred study area, followed by Airline (Aviation) Management and Hotel Management.

Discussion and conclusion

The results of this study provide useful information to programme providers, end-users, and the policy-makers of HTM programmes in Hong Kong. First, the findings of this study may affect the curriculum development of HTM programmes. There are many HTM programmes at various levels (sub-degree, degree, associate degree and post-degree) in Hong Kong. Over the years these HTM programmes have provided education to meet the needs of respective target markets. As the hospitality and tourism industry flourishes, more institutions, particularly private, self-financed, and continuing education units, offer HTM education to fill the growing need for professionals in a fast-growing industry. In this environment, competition among HTM institutions for potential HTM students has become fierce as students are given more choices of HTM programmes. To be successful in such a competitive education market, HTM education providers must take students' study motivations into consideration in curriculum development. With student-oriented curricula, HTM programmes can generate quality learning outcomes and student satisfaction.

Second, considering that the hospitality and tourism industry is one of the strategically promoted areas by the Hong Kong government and that most HTM programmes, particularly degree programmes, are funded by the government, the results of this study may help Hong Kong educational authorities better understand the needs of HTM education and, therefore, correctly direct future HTM education. The future of the hospitality and tourism industry in Hong Kong relies on the people who work in the industry. Thus, higher education in HTM will play an important role in preparing future industry professionals. In view of the continuous increase in demand for professionally trained people in both Hong Kong and mainland China and the continuous government efforts to develop the hospitality and tourism industry as one pillar of Hong Kong's economy, it has become more obvious that the Hong Kong education authorities need to reconsider the management and presentation of their resources in the

wider marketplace of future HTM students. The results of the current study can help them take steps in the right direction.

Third, the results from students' motives for studying HTM abroad can provide international HTM institutions targeting Hong Kong students with valuable insights to inform their recruitment policies and tailor their curriculum development for international students. Because of the international nature of the hospitality and tourism industry, more HTM students have sought opportunities to study HTM outside their home country. Asian students in particular, including those from Hong Kong, have been the target of many international HTM programmes, particularly in North America, Australia and some parts of Europe (Kim et al., 2006). Not surprisingly, almost 40 per cent of students contacted for this study showed interest in studying HTM overseas. As the hub of international tourism activities, the demand for professionally trained professionals who have international exposure is always high in Hong Kong. Recognising this industry need, more Hong Kong students seek international exposure. To be successful in competition for recruiting international students, particularly from Asian countries, international HTM institutions should consider Asian students' educational needs and develop curricula based on those needs and study motivations.

Finally, the methodology and measurement items used for this study may be adapted to investigate study motivations in other majors or disciplines. The five motivational factors identified in this study could be piloted, analysed and modified for other specific fields in order to generate field-specific implications which could be used for marketing and promotion to boost enrolment. Also, it may be useful to replicate this study in other cultural backgrounds. A cross-cultural approach could explore implications relative to national and ethnic dimensions of study motivations.

Limitations and future research

Hospitality and tourism education in Hong Kong has grown rapidly from vocational training programmes in the 1970s to a variety of degree programmes now offered by different institutions. In this study, we identified the motivators for HTM study among students in Hong Kong. Although this research provides valuable insights, the results did not come without limitations, which indicate future research areas. The major limitation of this study rests in the sampling. This study cannot claim to be representative of all HTM students in Hong Kong because it focused only on one particular HTM institution, which may weaken the generalisability of the findings. In order to enhance the generalisability of the findings of this study, a cross-institutional study including more HTM programmes should be conducted in the future. Also, the comparison of HTM study motivations among students at various levels (sub-degree, associate degree, degree and post-degree levels) would provide a more comprehensive understanding of HTM study motivation.

Another area for future research is the integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods. This combined approach would advance our understanding of HTM study motivations. For example, textual data collected through student interviews could be analysed through the text mining method. This looks for relationships, patterns or trends in textual data (using a quantitative approach), and then utilises an in-depth analysis of content or expert judgment to explain the identified trends and patterns (a qualitative approach). This combined approach would thus provide a systematic and explained summarisation of HTM study motivations.

References

- Airey, D., & Frontistis, A. (1997). Attitudes to careers in tourism: An Anglo Greek comparison. *Tourism Management*, 18(3), 149-158. [doi:10.1016/S0261-5177\(96\)00116-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(96)00116-1)
- Aitchison, C. (2003). Exploring engendered education and research: Adapting models from sociology of education for leisure, sport and tourism in higher education. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 2(1), 93-104.
- Barron, P. E. (2002). Providing a more successful education experience for Asian hospitality management students studying in Australia: A focus on teaching and learning styles. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 2(2), 63-88. [doi:10.1300/J172v02n02_04](https://doi.org/10.1300/J172v02n02_04)

- Bedi, R., & Gilthorpe, M. S. (2000). Ethic and gender variations in university applicants to United Kingdom medical and dental schools. *British Dental Journal*, 189(4), 212-215. doi:10.1038/sj.bdj.4800725a
- Biggs, J. B. (1998). Learning from the Confucian heritage: So size doesn't matter? *International Journal of Educational Research*, 29(8), 723-738. doi:10.1016/S0883-0355(98)00060-3
- Brand A., & Chikte, U. M. (1997). Students' attitudes to dentistry in South African dental school. *Journal of the Dental Association of South Africa*, 52(17), 713-720.
- Bushell, R., Prosser, G. M., Faulkner, H. W., & Jafari, J. (2001). Tourism Research in Australia. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(3), 323-326.
- Calkin, L., & Welki, A. (2006). Factors that influence choice of major: Why some students never consider economics. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 33(8), 547-548. doi:10.1108/03068290610678707
- Chinese University of Hong Kong (2005). *Programmes*. Retrieved January 31, 2005, from <http://www.baf.cuhk.edu.hk/>
- Clark, M. (1993). Communication and social skills: Perceptions of hospitality managers. *Employee Relations*, 15(2), 51-60. doi:10.1108/01425459310031822
- Diaz, P. E., & Krauss, J. L. (1996). A needs analysis of and expanding hospitality market-Asian students. *Hospitality Research Journal*, 20(1), 15-26. doi:10.1177/109634809602000103
- Education and Manpower Bureau (2005). Post secondary and higher education. Retrieved February 1, 2005, from <http://www.emb.gov.hk/index.aspx?langno=1&nodeid=2118>.
- Giacomino, D., & Akcrs, M. D. (1998). An examination of the differences between personal values and value types of female and male accounting and non-accounting majors. *Issues in Accounting Education*, 13(1), 565-584.
- Gist, W., Goedde, H., & Ward, B. H. (1996). The influence of mathematical skills and other factors on minority student performance in principles of accounting. *Issues in Accounting Education*, 77(1), 49-57.
- Hjalager, A. (2003). Global tourism careers? Opportunities and dilemmas facing higher education in tourism. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 2(2), 26-37.
- Hong Kong Tourism Board (2004). *A Statistical Review of Hong Kong Tourism 2003*. Hong Kong Tourism Board.
- Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (2002). *25 Years of Hospitality Education*. IVE (Haking Wong), Hong Kong.
- Huang, S. E., & Brown, N. E. (1996). First year international graduate students in hospitality programs: School choice, career expectations and academic adjustment. *Hospitality Research Journal*, 20(1), 109-117. doi:10.1177/109634809602000109
- Huyton, J. R. (1997). The implications of cross-cultural communication in the hotel industry: A Chinese case. *Proceedings of the 7th National Tourism and Hospitality Research Conference*. Sydney: Bureau of Tourism Research.
- Jogarathnam, G., McCleary, K., Mena, M., & Yoo, J. (2005). An analysis of hospitality and tourism research: Institutional Contributions. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 29(3), 356-371. doi:10.1177/1096348005276929
- Kaiser, H. F. (1974). An index of factorial simplicity. *Psychometrika*, 39(1), 31-96. doi:10.1007/BF02291575
- Khwaja, H., & Bosselman, R. (1990). Cultural adjustment of international graduate students in American hospitality and tourism programs. *Hospitality Research Journal*, 14(2), 75-82.
- Khwaja, H., Bosselman, R., & Fernsten, J. (1990). Perspectives on hospitality and tourism graduate programs: The view from international students. *Hospitality Tourism Educator*, 2(3), 26-29.
- Kim, S., Guo, Y., Wang, K., & Agrusa, J. (2007). The study motivations and study preferences of student groups from Asian nations majoring in hospitality and tourism management programs. *Tourism Management*, 28(1), 140-151.
- Lo, A. (2006). The past, present, and future of hospitality and tourism higher education in Hong Kong. *Journal of Teaching in Travel and Tourism*, 5(1/2), 137-166. doi:10.1300/J172v05n01_07
- Malfroy, J., & Daruwalla, P. (2000). Culture and communication in a postgraduate hospitality program. *Australian Journal of Hospitality Management*, 7(1), 27-34.
- Malgwi, C. A., Howe, M. A., & Burnaby, P. A. (2005). Influences on Students' Choice of College Major. *Journal of Education for Business*, 80(5), 275-282. doi:10.3200/JOEB.80.5.275-282
- Niven, A. (1987). Salad days without the dressing? What British higher and further education institutions can do for their overseas students. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 41(2), 144-161. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2273.1987.tb01773.x
- O'Mahony, G. B., McWilliams, A. M., & Whitelaw, P. A. (2001). Why Students Choose a Hospitality-degree Program. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 42(1), 92-96.
- Orenuga O., & Costa, O. (2006). Characteristics and study motivation of clinical dental students in Nigerian Universities. *Journal of Dental Education*, 70(9), 996-1003.
- Pearson, C. L., & Beasley, C. J. (1996). Reducing learning barriers amongst international students: A longitudinal development study. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 23(2), 79-96.

- Purcell, K., & Quinn, J. (1996). Exploring the education-employment equation in hospitality management: A comparison of graduates and HNDs. *International Journal Hospitality Management*, 15(1), 51-68. [doi:10.1016/0278-4319\(96\)00002-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0278-4319(96)00002-3)
- Robertson, M., Line, M., Jones, S., & Thomas, S. (2000). International students: Learning environments and perceptions: A case study using the Delphi Technique. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 19(1), 89-102. [doi:10.1080/07294360050020499](https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360050020499)
- Ross, G. F. (1994). What do Australian school leavers want of the industry? *Tourism Management*, 15(1), 62-66. [doi:10.1016/0261-5177\(94\)90028-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177(94)90028-0)
- Schleef, D. (2000). That's a good question! Exploring motivations for law and business school choice. *Sociology of Education*, 73(3), 155-174. [doi:10.2307/2673214](https://doi.org/10.2307/2673214)
- Schmidt, R. (2002) A student's initial perception of value when selecting a college: an application of value added. *Quality Assurance in Education*. 10(1), 37-39. [doi:10.1108/09684880210416094](https://doi.org/10.1108/09684880210416094)
- School of Hotel and Tourism Management (2006a). *Undergraduate programmes*. Retrieved June 20 2006, from http://www.polyu.edu.hk/htm/main_ugrad.htm
- School of Hotel and Tourism Management (2006b). *Post-graduate programmes*. Retrieved June 20 2006, from http://www.polyu.edu.hk/htm/main_pgrad.htm
- Staniec, J.F. (2004). The effects of race, sex, and expected returns on the choice of college major. *Eastern Economic Journal*, 30(4), 549-562.
- Szivas, E., & Riley, M. (1999). Tourism employment during economic transition. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26(4), 747-771. [doi:10.1016/S0160-7383\(99\)00035-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(99)00035-3)
- Tepeci, M., & Bartlett, A. (2002). The hospitality industry culture profile: A measure of individual values, organizational culture, and person-organization fit as predictors of job satisfaction and behavioral intentions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 21(2), 151-171. [doi:10.1016/S0278-4319\(01\)00035-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0278-4319(01)00035-4)
- Vigild, M., & Schwarz, E. (2001). Characteristics and study motivations of Danish dental students in a longitudinal perspective. *European Journal of Dental Education*, 5(3), 127-133. [doi:10.1034/j.1600-0579.2001.050306.x](https://doi.org/10.1034/j.1600-0579.2001.050306.x)
- Wong, R., Fiedler, A., & Liu, C. (2007). Exploring the motivation of students in choosing information systems as their major. *Issues in Information Systems*, 53(1), 198-203.
- Zhao, J. L. (1991). A current look at hospitality and tourism education in China's colleges and universities. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 10(4), 357-367. [doi:10.1016/0278-4319\(91\)90017-C](https://doi.org/10.1016/0278-4319(91)90017-C)