

FACTORS AFFECTING THE DECISION OF FRESHMEN STUDENTS IN PURSUING HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM PROGRAMS IN LYCEUM OF THE PHILIPPINES UNIVERSITY–LAGUNA: BASIS FOR ENHANCEMENT

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Abstract

Choosing a program in college is a complicated decision for students since it determines the kind of vocation they intend to pursue in life. This paper fills the gap in understanding the factors affecting the decision of freshmen students in pursuing Hospitality and Tourism programs in LPU–L. Specifically, this study aims to determine the demographic profile of the chosen respondents, to determine if there is a significant relationship between the demographic profile and the factors, and finally proposing enhancement programs that are in line with the results of the study. Through the use of self-made questionnaires given out to a total of 174 respondents, the necessary data were gathered. The results showed that the respondents were mostly in the age of 17 to 19 years old, female, Filipino, International Travel and Tourism Management students, and financially capable. Also, economic factor which includes the economic stable wages and job demand are the most considered factors of the students in pursuing Hospitality and Tourism programs. Significant relationships were also found between age and social factors, and nationality and economic factors. This study can be a good source for the CITHM faculty in understanding more the perception of the first year students and the proposed enhancement programs might also be a good way to improve the curriculum and the institution as a whole.

Keywords: *hospitality and tourism industry, higher education institution, Hospitality and Tourism programs, proposed enhancement programs*

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality and tourism industries are the largest and fastest-growing industries in the world (Walker, 2010). These industries are one of the most diverse, challenging, and exceptional industries as of the present as they both generate career opportunities that are mostly in demand in today's market. The tourism and hospitality industry are interconnected to each other.

According to Kasavana and Brooks (2009), the travel and tourism industry is composed of businesses like the tourism lodgings, the transportation services, food and beverage operations, retail stores, and the activities. While according to Jonsson and Devonish (2009), the hospitality industry includes the tourism lodgings, the catering companies, as well as the food and beverage departments operating within the lodgings.

These industries require strong sense of professionalism and the high level of enthusiasm in terms of customer service because those are what mainly the industry's focus. With these industries are being seen as one of the growing industries especially here in the Philippines, the demand for the Hospitality and Tourism programs is growing as well.

A higher education institution refers to an institution of higher learning that primarily offers degree programs. According to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), there are 2,299 higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country. Philippine HEIs can be classified into two: public and private. As for formal education, higher education is an optional state of learning since a lot of opportunities are already emerging for undergraduate students. Higher education offers programs not less than two years that entitles credit towards a degree and a training which is supposed to be not less than a year to prepare them for the future employment. With this

perception, the researchers believe that students should be able to have enough background about the industry.

In line with this, numerous degree programs in the hospitality and tourism field are offered by different universities and colleges. Lyceum of the Philippines University–Laguna is one of the higher education institutions that offer Hospitality and Tourism programs. They offer three vocational hospitality and tourism programs, namely: Associate in International Travel and Tourism Management, Associate in International Hospitality Management Specialized in Hotel and Restaurant Administration, Associate in International Hospitality Management Specialized in Culinary Arts and Kitchen Operations, and five degree Hospitality and Tourism programs, namely: Bachelor of Science in International Travel and Tourism Management, Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Administration, Bachelor of Science in Culinary Arts and Kitchen Operations, Bachelor of Science in Cruise Line Operations in Culinary Arts, and Bachelor of Science in Cruise Line Operations in Hotel Services. (Retrieved from www.ipu.edu.ph)

According to the International Centre for Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education, Lyceum of the Philippines University is the biggest Tourism and Hospitality Management universities in the country and in Asia with 14,000 students taking up Tourism and Hospitality programs. LPU has a working agreement with the leading hotel-brand in Thailand the Dusit Thani Public Company Ltd. since December 2008. The agreement includes curricula design and instructional material development assistance, support in refreshment training for faculty, laboratory and classroom facilities enhancement, with an end view of defining quality standards that meet international standards. (Retrieved from <http://www.the-ice.org/>)

Numerous factors can affect a student's decision in pursuing a career. One of the factors that might affect one's career choice is first, financial problem knowing that the Philippines is a third world country. Ismail's (2009) study on the mediating effects of information on college choice indicated that students are satisfied with college choice based on their information satisfaction with respect to financial factors (external influences) which include financial aids and affordable fees. Universities in the Philippines do not commonly issue financial aids such as academic scholarship and discounts easily. They have several qualifications and requirements in order to gain these financial aids. In line with this, families of students who cannot qualify on financial aids have a hard time sending their children to universities.

Another factor would be the influence of the people around them as well as through mediums like the mass media and word of mouth. Several studies have proven that families and friends are the biggest influences in one's life choices. People tend to make decisions considering the perception of parents and friends. Also, because of the innovation of technology in this generation, the researchers now have access to almost everything in the Internet, so numerous information found from different websites can also affect one's perception about something.

The last factor is the environment and other factors that include the university and the personal interest of the student. A university's reputation is something a lot of students consider especially here in the Philippines. Many universities and colleges offer the same programs but it all comes down to which one is the most convenient for a student. Even with numerous influences about choosing a program, a student normally decides on his own because no one will benefit the decision other than the student himself.

In pursuing with this study, the researchers want to determine the main factor affecting the decision of the First Year students in taking up the Hospitality and Tourism programs. The researchers also want to see if there is a significant relationship between the demographic profile of the students and the factors affecting their decision. The researchers aimed to determine the students' insight about taking up Hospitality and Tourism programs, and to help the students further their knowledge about the industry. As the number of interested students in the field of hospitality increases, the researchers are urged to conduct the study in order to bring enlightenment to the incoming students in the university on their insights about the programs. Also, this study includes proposed programs for the enhancement of Hospitality and Tourism programs offered by Lyceum of the Philippines University–Laguna. The outcome of this study will be a good source on what could be the driving force of the First Year students in taking up Hospitality courses and also helping the concerned authorities (professors and college dean) in understanding the students. This study also aimed to reach out to the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management to make various adjustments necessary to motivate the students on the numerous opportunities waiting for them in their chosen field and to make them more determined to do better.

Theoretical Framework

The study utilized Trey L. Mitchell's model of Career-Decision Making depicted in Figure 1. Mitchell (1975) presented a career decision-making model that assumes that a decision-maker will create a set of preferences or priorities when considering possible alternatives.

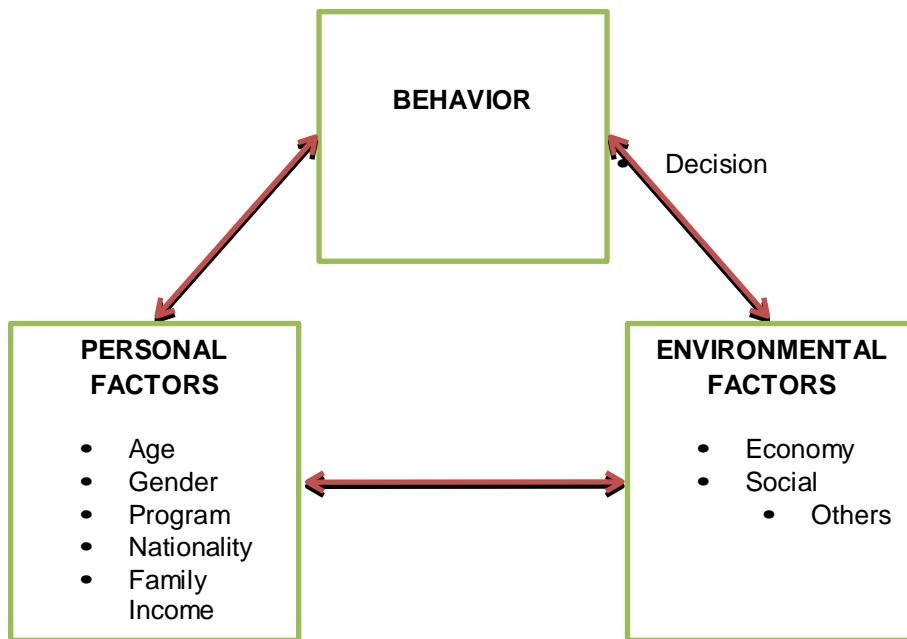


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

The framework shows that the interaction between a person and his behavior is influenced by his thoughts and actions, while the interaction between a person and the environment involves beliefs and cognitive competencies developed and modified by social influence. The interaction between the environment and the behavior involves a person's behavior determining his environment which, in turn, affects his behavior. These preferences will help the decision-maker distinguish between choices based on the values assigned to possible alternatives.

Conceptual Framework

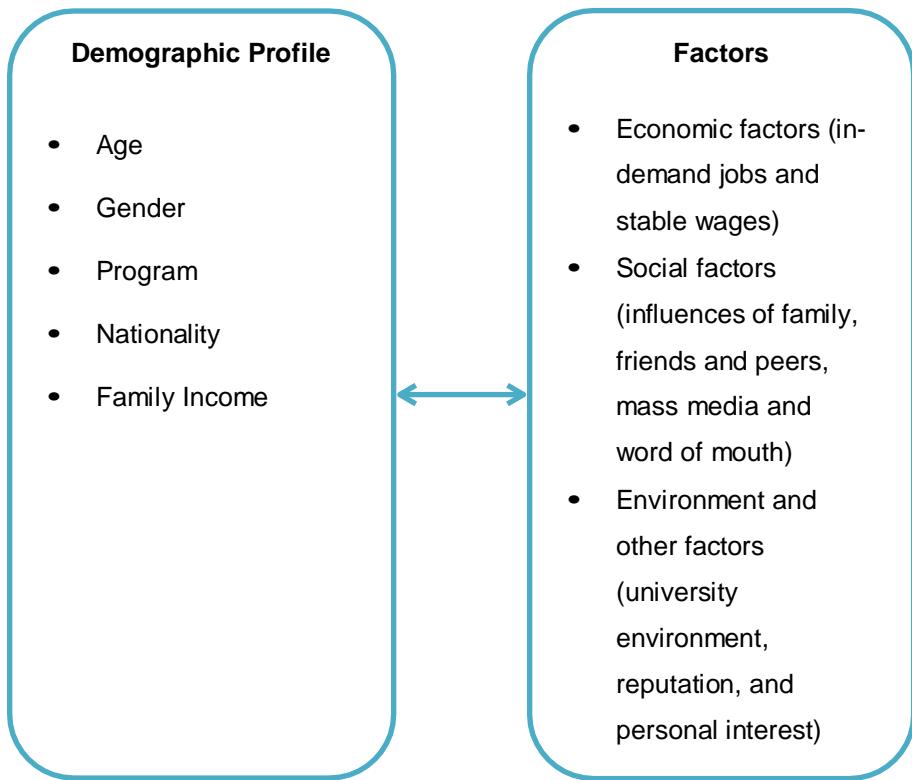


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

The study's emphasis is on the factors affecting the decisions of the students. The researcher will focus on three different factors which are the economic factors, social factors, and environment and other factors. After identifying the respondents' chosen factors, the researchers will now contemplate on their answers and ponder if there is a significant relationship between the demographic profile of the students and the factors affecting their decision in choosing Hospitality and Tourism programs.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to identify the factors affecting the decision of freshmen students in pursuing Hospitality and tourism Programs in Lyceum of the Philippines University–Laguna. Specifically, the objectives are as follows:

1. To determine the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Gender
 - 1.3 Program
 - 1.4 Nationality
 - 1.5 Family income
2. To determine the primary reason first year students take up Hospitality and Tourism programs with the analysis of the study focused on these factors:
 - 2.1 Economic factors (in-demand jobs and economically stable wages);
 - 2.2 Social factors (influence of family, friends and peers, mass media and word of mouth); and
 - 2.3 Environment and other factors (university environment, reputation and personal interest)
3. To determine the significant relationship between the demographics of the respondents and the factors affecting their decision in taking up Hospitality and Tourism programs;
4. To propose programs for enhancement.

Research Design

The researchers used descriptive method of research with correlational approach.

A descriptive study is one in which information is collected without changing the environment (i.e., nothing is manipulated). Descriptive studies can involve a one-time interaction with groups of people (cross-sectional study) or a study might follow individuals over time (longitudinal study). Descriptive studies, in which the researcher interacts with the participant, may involve surveys or interviews to collect the necessary information. Descriptive research involves gathering data that describe events and then organizes, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data collection. (Glass & Hopkins, 1984)

The researchers also used correlational because they want to know if there is a significant relationship between the demographic profile of the students and the factors affecting the decisions of freshmen students in pursuing Hospitality and Tourism courses.

Participants of the Study

Based on the data received from the Registrar's Office, the total number of students enrolled in Hospitality and Tourism courses is 482. However, with the use of G Power, it was determined that the sample size is 174 respondents.

Through the use of random sampling technique, the researchers had 41 respondents both from BS ITTM and AITTM, 37 respondents from HRA, 33 respondents both from BS CLOCA and BS CLOHS, and 30 respondents both from AIHM-CAKO and BS CAKO.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Majority of the students (63 percent) are aged 17 to 19 years old, followed by respondents aged between 14 to 16 years old and a very minimal amount of the students were aged between 20 to 22 years old. This implies that most of the students taking up Hospitality and Tourism programs are 17 to 19 years of age and under the adolescent stage.

According to the study made by Corey (2012), adolescents experience increased pressure in making decisions and commitments that will affect the rest of their lives, and this includes choosing their career. In conclusion, students who are under adolescence stage are experiencing pressure in terms of making decisions that will affect the rest of their lives which includes choosing a career that they would want to pursue.

It shows that majority of the respondents are female, taking more than half of the population while the minority are male. This implies that most of the results gathered came from the female population, and most of the Tourism and Hospitality students are female.

This result was supported by a study made by Korir (2012) where he concluded that Hospitality and Tourism students are mostly female, and that females are more attracted to Hospitality and Tourism programs than males. Hence, it can be said that Hospitality and Tourism programs are generally female-oriented. The result of the present study that most female students take up the said programs is in line with these findings of Greenberger (2011), which stated that boys are still being steered toward the traditional “male” jobs; thus, females are engaged to cluster into more feminine professions.

It shows that ITTM students have the biggest population among the respondents (24 percent), followed by HRA (21 percent) students, followed by CLOCA (19 percent), and CLOHS (19 percent), then a few students from CAKO (17 percent). This implies that most of the data gathered for the study came from International Travel and Tourism Management students.

This result is supported by a study made by Kim et al. (2009) that says that from the demand perspective, there are many reasons that led students to study tourism hospitality, because they will be able to get more knowledge and increase their chances to get job opportunities by learning international languages and new cultures. This implies that Tourism programs are higher in demand rather than other Hospitality programs.

Majority of the respondents (93 percent) were Filipinos, three of the respondents are Nigerians, and four of the respondents are Chinese. Lastly, there are also two from other nationalities. It tells that most of the data gathered are from the viewpoint of Filipinos.

A study made by Nolan (2011) states that Filipinos have a deep regard for education, which they view as the main avenue for social and economic advances. It is also stated that the Philippines maintains an exceptionally good education system, and that the government and various universities offer numerous scholarship programs that provide students from low-income families with access to higher education.

Almost half of the respondents (47 percent) have family incomes ranging from P20,834 and over, followed by students who have the family income ranging from P8,334 to P20,833 (30 percent), followed by students who have family incomes ranging from 5,000 to P8,333 (13 percent) and students with family income ranging from P3,334 to P4,999 (6 percent), while a very minimal amount of the respondents (4 percent) have a family income

lower than P3,334. With this, it can be attributed that most of the participants belong to high-income earners. This is well reflected in the study done by Levitz (2012), who reported in his findings that financial stability of the family plays an important role in a student's decision-making.

Economic Factors Affecting the Decision of Freshmen Students in Pursuing Hospitality and Tourism Programs

The respondents agreed that the economic factors indeed affect their decisions in choosing Hospitality and Tourism programs to pursue in college. (I have a lot of career choices after graduation) ranked as the first factor considered by the respondents having the highest weighted mean of 3.39. Mainly, the economic factors the researchers focused on are the economically stable wages and the in-demand jobs after graduating though a large part of the respondents did not agree with their families running businesses that are connected to Hospitality and Tourism industry.

The availability of jobs has the largest weighted mean which only shows that this is one of the factors students highly consider. College students maintain that one of the mostly considered factors is the availability of jobs since they mostly look into what could be their future employment choices after years of learning.

This is well reflected in a study conducted by Edwards & Quinter (2011), wherein half of their participants agreed that in-demand jobs influenced their program choice. These findings could imply that most students were driven by the realistic feasibility of being employed in a stable job. Meanwhile, Table 1.1 also shows that "My family business is in the Hospitality and Tourism industry" ranked last and gained the lowest mean with 2.47. The family could be a big factor in influencing one's choice but staying in the field of industry one's family is presently committed to might not

be one of the factors considered by the students. It is contrary to the statement made by McCann (2009) saying that when your parents own the family business, your career decisions hit close to home.

Social Factors Affecting the Decision of Freshmen Students in Pursuing Hospitality and Tourism Programs

The respondents agreed that social factors also affect their choice of career. "My parents helped me decide my course" gained the highest weighted mean with 2.98 and ranked first among all the social factors. The family especially parents indeed play a vital role in the decision-making process of a student, a parent's point of view is always into consideration. This is a similar finding to Finlayson (2009) who emphasized that students tend to follow their parents' advice on choosing a course to take.

However, the findings presented in the study are contrary to Pascual (2014), and Alba, et al. (2010), who highlighted that parental factor does not influence the decision of the students. Pascual (2014) also stated that when it comes to course preference, not much are affected by decisions of peer which is well reflected in the findings presented in Table 1.2 that (I want to have my friends with me so I chose the same course they were taking) gained the lowest weighted mean with 2.47 and ranked last among the social factors.

Environmental and Other Factors Affecting the Decision of Freshmen Students in Pursuing Hospitality and Tourism Programs

The respondents agreed that freshmen students consider the environment and other factors in making a career choice. The findings show that "The school has good reputation" and "The school offers quality education" gained the highest weighted means that mainly shows how the

reputation of a higher education institution can affect their decision. Numerous higher education institutions have established their own images and own reputations in respect to offering high quality education. and students consider this factor in trusting a university. This notion is supported by the work of Kee Ming (2010), who highlighted the most influential factor that students will evaluate in selecting their choice was reputation of the institution. It is also clearly stated that "I have connections in the university" is the least considered factor and gained the lowest weighted mean of 2.44 which is contrary to the conclusion made by Smith (2014) saying that establishing and maintaining external relationships with on and off campus partners is a significant area of focus.

Level of Significance between Age and The Factors Affecting the Decision of Freshmen Students in taking up Hospitality and Tourism Programs

There is a significant relationship between age and social factors affecting the decisions of freshmen students in pursuing Hospitality and Tourism programs because the p-value is less than 0.05. However, there is no significant relationship between the age and the other factors such as economic factors and environmental and other factors. The p-values of the remaining three factors are all greater than 0.05.

This is well supported by the study made by Schaar, et al. (2009), that the older a person, the more involved he is with using social media thus making a significant relationship between the social factors and age. Also, a study made by Depping & Freund (2011) states that older adults tend to make more responsible decisions considering their future. This emphasizes that older ones prioritize things that might happen in the future and tend to be more responsible with the choices they make thus making a significant

relationship between the age and the environment and other factors which includes personal interest.

Level of Significance between Age and Factors Affecting the Decision of Freshmen Students in taking up Hospitality and Tourism Programs

There is a significant relationship between age and social factors affecting the decisions of freshmen students in pursuing Hospitality and Tourism programs because the p-value is less than 0.05. However, there is no significant relationship between the age and the other factors such as economic, environment and other factors. The p-values of the remaining three factors are all greater than 0.05.

This is well supported by the study made by Schaar, et al. (2009), that the older a person, the more involved he is with using social media thus making a significant relationship between the social factors and age. Also, a study made by Depping & Freund (2011) states that older adults tend to make more responsible decisions considering their future. This emphasizes that older ones prioritizes things that might happen in the future and tend to be more responsible with the choices they make thus making a significant relationship between the age and the environmental and other factors which includes personal interest.

Level of Significance between Gender and Factors Affecting the Decision of Freshmen Students

There is no significant relationship between gender and the factors affecting the decisions of freshmen students in pursuing Hospitality and Tourism programs because the p-value is greater than 0.05.

The result is contrary to some of the conclusions made by Kitsawad (2013) stating that both male and female respondents stated that the

university that the provides environment and atmosphere conducive to learning as the most important factor in choosing a university. He also stated that almost all of the respondents deemed the factor of the university's reputation as of some importance and nearly all the respondents considered the factor of universities in a convenient location as important factor in their choice thus making a significant relationship between gender and environment and other factors that includes the location of the university.

Level of Significance between Program and Factors Affecting the Decision of Freshmen Students

There is no significant relationship between program and the factors affecting the decisions of freshmen students in pursuing hospitality and tourism programs because the p-value is greater than 0.05.

This is a contrary to the study made by Stage and Hossler (2009). They proposed that the effects of external influences such as parents, teachers, and friends on students' career choices may play a role in students' academic performance. Also, a related study by Braxton (2009) says that the level of success of this influences, in turn, students' decisions to persist in or depart from their career training programs thus stating that there is a significant relationship between the program and the social factors.

Level of Significance between Nationality and Factors Affecting the Decision of Freshmen Students

There is a significant relationship between nationality and economic factors affecting the decisions of freshmen students in pursuing Hospitality and Tourism programs because the p-value is less than 0.05.

However, there is no significant relationship between the nationality and the economic factors, and environmental and other factors. The p-values of the remaining three factors are all greater than 0.05.

The result was contradicting to the study made by Weiten, et al. (2009), that says ethnic differences are still found in aspirations of the students and might be enhanced with help of parents that seems to have more influence thus proving a significant relationship between social factors and nationality. Though there is a significant relationship between nationality and economic factors.

Level of Significance between Family Income and Factors Affecting the Decision of Freshmen Students

There is no significant relationship between family income and the factors affecting the decisions of freshmen students in pursuing hospitality and tourism programs because the p-value is greater than 0.05.

This contradicts to the conclusion of Kitsawad (2013) saying that most of the respondents of all level of household income indicated that all aspects of the university reputation were important for their choice of university, thus making a significant relationship between family income and environment and other factors. Moreover, the findings depicted in Table 2.5 above is contrary to the study done by Foskett (2009) who highlighted that students consider more carefully economic factors in times of distress and financial difficulty, thus making a significant relationship between family income and economic factors.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses the conclusions of the researchers from data gathered from the respondents. Also, this chapter contains the recommendations the researchers want to suggest for further studies in relation to their topic.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The researchers found out that the respondents are mostly in the age of 17 to 19 years old, mostly female, majority of whom are Filipinos, and with family incomes ranging from P20,834 and over.
2. The study also shows that the primary factor affecting the decision of freshmen students in taking up Hospitality and Tourism programs is the economic factors that include economic stable wages and in-demand jobs.
3. Lastly, within the demographic profile and the factors affecting the decision of freshmen students, only age, social factors, nationality, and economic factors have significant relationships while other variables do not show either.

4. Proposed Enhancement Programs

Proposed Enhancement Program	Projects	Activities	Persons Involved
Program on Job Opportunities	To further the knowledge of the students about the opportunities waiting for them in the industry.	Job Fair	HR Department, Palaestra Consortio Office, Industry Partners, Dean (CITHM) Program Chair, CITHM Faculty, Students
Program on Job Training	To let the students experience the real world by being a trainee on improved industry partners for a longer period of time.	Internship	Palaestra Consortio Office, Industry Partners, CITHM Dean, Program Chair, CITHM Faculty, Students
Program on Personality Development and Career Guidance	To see the full potential the students along with parents for them to encourage their children to work better in their chosen program.	Workshop	Students, Parents, Dean, Faculty
Program on Improvement of Website Social Networking Accounts and Moodle	To attract more students through the continuous innovation of technology.	Seminar	Administrators, HR Director, MIS Director
Proposal for Development of New Facilities: —Library and E-Library —Front Office, Hotel Room and Hotel Suite —Travel Bureau —Hot and Cold Kitchens	To enhance more the skills and knowledge of the students through interactive learning with the new and existing facilities.	Workshop	Administrators, CITHM Dean, CITHM Faculty, Students
Benchmarking of LPU Manila, Cavite, Batangas and Makati	To adapt with the continuous growth of other LPU branches and as well as to meet the international standard of Dusit Thani in terms of hospitality and tourism educations.	Seminar	HR Department, Dusit Thani Administrators, Administrators of all LPU branches, Dean, Faculty members, Students
Improvement of Hospitality and Tourism Curriculum in preparation for International Competency	To be able to give the students the quality of education they deserve. and to shape them for the international competency.	Seminar	Administrators, Dean, Faculty, Students

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions and the data gathered by the researchers, these are the following recommendations:

1. The researchers recommend that the CITHM department should encourage activities for the students to lessen their stress level, attract more male students, and create activities to ensure that parents get value for their money.
2. Researchers recommend counseling as an integral part of the university's curriculum. Palaestra Consortio should help the students to appreciate more of the industry by choosing industry partner companies that will offer jobs that the students might find interesting. Also, parents should be consulted more and involved in the decision-making process.
3. It is highly recommended for the institution to constantly implement a series of activities for students which involves social gathering such as team building to prevent stress, anxiety, and depression that could affect the decision-making.
4. The researchers recommend to the concerned authorities and administration in Lyceum of the Philippines University–Laguna to consider the proposed enhancement programs made by the researchers themselves that were based on the survey.
5. The researchers highly recommend for future researchers to use other relevant variables that they might find useful and interesting since the focus of the study was very limited in the factors the researchers found significant.

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