

# Career Readiness among International Hospitality Management Graduates

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## ABSTRACT

*Global competitiveness in the hospitality industry demanded a lot from graduates in their preparedness in the field of work. The main purpose of this study is to assess the career readiness of CLOHS, CLOCA, CAKO, and HRM graduating students of LPU - Batangas. Specifically, it will present the profile of the respondents in terms of sex and program, assess the readiness of the graduates in terms of knowledge, skills and personality and test the significant difference on the readiness of the graduates when grouped according to program. The study used descriptive research design to find out how graduates evaluate their career readiness. The respondents involved in this study were the 110 graduating students of CLOHS, CLOCA, CAKO, and HRM programs. Frequency, percentage, ranking, weighted mean, t-test was the statistical tool. Based on the result, all graduating students under CLOHS, CAKO, CLOCA, and HRA, both male and female, strongly agreed that they are ready to enter the hospitality industry. The respondents taking CLOHS, CLOCA, and HRM are thirty each and respondents taking CAKO are twenty, with both fifty percent of male and female. The respondents all agreed that they exhibit career readiness in terms of knowledge, skills and personality. There is a significant difference between knowledge and skills when grouped according to program. It was found out that respondents taking CAKO program are more prepared for their future career as to knowledge while respondents taking CLOCA program are more ready as to skills. The International Hospitality Management program instructors may check the students' performance individually having the activities to ensure that the students' knowledge, skills and personality regarding hospitality management program are develop in a level that will make them prepared for their future career.*

**Keywords:** *Career Readiness, knowledge, skills, personality, program.*

## INTRODUCTION

Global competitiveness in the hospitality industry demanded a lot from graduates in their preparedness in the field of work. In order to prepare graduates in the hospitality industry, every institution is obliged to offer courses in hospitality management program that will develop them

into competitive individuals. Their preparedness will make them qualified to enter not only the local but as well as in the international hospitality industry (Schoffstall, 2013).

The curriculum with other factors, contribute to student preparedness. Learning competencies of the curriculum should academically and practically prepare the students in the hospitality world. The curriculum offered by the institutions plays a vital role in the career readiness of the students. Hospitality programs evaluate their curriculum in a way that will reveal what are needed to be revised, changed and added for the benefit of the graduates. Assessing the curriculum will lead the institutions to better one that will mold and develop their students to the global competitive level (Rahman, 2014; Borbon, 2016; Cueto, 2016).

Students should have the ability to achieve their goals as students and at the same time meet the set of skills the industry is expecting to be seen from them when they are already in their field of work. With these requirements, educational institutions strengthen their internship programs for the students' experience actual nature of their work applying the concepts they learned from school (Schoffstall, 2013).

Tourism is a service – oriented industry that makes employees as the most important individuals providing the product of the industry to the customers. Graduates, as future employees, hope that they can apply their academic skills and apply the conceptual and analytical skills that have learned. Human resources play vital role in the industry (Stefanescu, 2012).

When graduates are easily employed in their field of specialization, this shows that the institution has provided academic quality to their students. Educational institutions in the Philippines, being aware of the growing international market are doing their best to improve the learning competencies in their curriculum (Celis et al., 2013; Jarabe et al., 2017).

Shifting from being a student into a working professional is a change that is not easy. Students' life is very much different compare to a working professional. Working in the field, a graduate has to adapt to the new environment in the company and moreover, to apply efficiently what was learned in the educational institution a graduate came from Caiyod et al (2015). Among the factors that welcome graduates to the world of tourism are the knowledge and skills they have acquired in their university studies and developed personalities. These three factors are just few of the many factors that consider graduates in the extreme competitions in the world of tourism and services. Career readiness on hospitality management program will allow graduates to be welcomed in the field of application of what they have acquired in their studies and trainings.

Career counseling and job placement program has been formed by the Hotel and Restaurant Management program of the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management of Lyceum of the Philippines University in order to help and guide their students. The university has the aim of helping their graduates all throughout their journey of their chosen program. The university with its solid relation to local and international firms had able to assist their graduates in finding the right job for them. The College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management (CITHM) aims to produce quality graduates ready to face the challenges in the local and international hospitality industry bearing the values and mind set instigated by LPU (Ungui et al., 2014).

This study will prepare graduates on the paths of employability evaluating their readiness on hospitality management program. Assessing their knowledge, skills and personality preparedness to the field of work will make them realize their career readiness in the hospitality industry. CITHM students will benefit from the study by being aware on their level of career readiness. The result of the study will be their basis on their readiness in facing the challenges in their chosen field of work since they graduated in the same school. This will boost their confidence when they are already in the field of hospitality industry and at the same time, give more attention in aspects that need improvement.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to assess the career readiness of CLOHS, CLOCA, CAKO, and HRM graduating students of LPU - Batangas. Specifically, it presented the profile of the respondents in terms of sex and program, assess the readiness of the graduates in terms of knowledge, skills and personality and test the significant difference on the readiness of the graduates when grouped according to program.

### **METHODS**

#### **Research Design**

In descriptive research, subjects in the study's similarities and differences are being described, important things about it are kept in an account, every part are examined and explained carefully in terms of its present conditions or occurrences Joy, C. (2014). This study used the descriptive survey method to find out how graduates evaluate their career readiness on hospitality management program. In gathering the information needed, a survey questionnaire was used.

#### **Respondents of the Study**

The respondents of the study were the 110 graduating students of CLOHS, CLOCA, CAKO, and HRA programs. The entire population of graduating student names and other information were asked from the office of the registrar. Different means of communications were used by the researchers in order to disseminate the questionnaires and retrieved from the respondents.

#### **Data Gathering Instrument**

The researchers used adapted survey questionnaire as a main tool for gathering data based from the questionnaires in the study of Ciceron, C. M., et al (2017) "Front Office Competencies of International Hospitality Management Students". The questionnaire consists of two (2) parts. The first part was about the demographic profile of the respondents. The second part was about the graduates' evaluation on their career readiness in terms of knowledge, skills and personality. The questions in Part II of the questionnaire were based from the knowledge, skills and personality traits discussed and studied in the related researches used.

**Procedure**

The researchers humbly requested permission from the dean of each program to administer the questionnaire to the respondents. A formal letter asking permission was presented to the deans. The success of the administration was made possible with the effort of the researchers and with the full cooperation of the graduating students.

**Data Analysis**

The data which were obtained from the questionnaire were collected, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted by the researchers. The statistical techniques were used to further understand the data of the study include frequency, percentage, weighted mean and t-test. Frequency was used to get the number of respondents who answered accordingly to questions. Percentage was used to get the percentage of the respondents in terms of their demographic profile. Weighted mean was used to show evaluation of the respondents on their career readiness on hospitality management program in terms of knowledge, skills and personality. Ranking was used to determine the positional importance of responses in the questionnaires regarding the answers of the graduates based on the scale used. T-test and Analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to test the significant difference on the readiness of the respondents when grouped according to profile variables.

**Ethical Consideration**

Highly confidential nature of the survey and the interviews was observed, no names were mentioned in the report. The identity of the respondents was not revealed except that they are graduates of Lyceum of the Philippines University – Batangas. No opinion was given by the researchers, only information and results based on the data gathered.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Table 1. Percentage Distribution of the Respondents’ Profile**

<b>Profile Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Program</b>		
CLOHS	30	27.30
CAKO	20	18.20
CLOCA	30	27.30
HRM	30	27.30
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	55	50.00
Female	55	50.00

Table 1. presents the respondents’ profile in terms of program and sex. There was a total of one hundred ten (110) respondents. Respondents taking CLOHS, CLOCA, and HRM programs have the same number of respondents with 30 or 27.30 while respondents taking CAKO program

is 20 or 18.20 percent. The respondents were fifty percent (50%) male and fifty percent (50%) female. Respondents by program were allocated almost equally to get the reliable result of the study. Sex/gender of the respondents was unintentionally resulted to be fifty percent each. It happened to have equal number of male and female respondents.

Biological and social similarities and differences between sexes can be used in the analysis of a problem in a study (Runnels et al., 2014)

**Table 2. Readiness of Graduates in terms of Knowledge**

<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>	<b>Rank</b>
1. I am knowledgeable in using computer prior in using computer during my study in LPU.	3.73	Strongly Agree	2
2. I have the knowledge in promotions and transactions involve in hospitality program.	3.63	Strongly Agree	3.5
3. I have full understanding of the marketing concepts and applying hospitality marketing functions.	3.75	Strongly Agree	1
4. I am knowledgeable about the rules and roles of human resources in hospitality program.	3.60	Strongly Agree	6.5
5. I understand and can analyze accounting data.	3.55	Strongly Agree	9
6. I understand and can apply hospitality financial management fundamentals.	3.60	Strongly Agree	6.5
7. I am knowledgeable of revenue and profit-generating systems in lodging and food service.	3.53	Strongly Agree	10
8. I can show vibrant understanding of every principle about food and beverage such as production and safety.	3.57	Strongly Agree	8
9. I know the classification of beverages and its management.	3.62	Strongly Agree	5
10. I am knowledgeable in everything about tourism.	3.63	Strongly Agree	3.5
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.62</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.49= Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree*

Table 2 shows the readiness of graduates in terms of knowledge with a composite mean of 3.62 and with verbal interpretation of strongly agree, in all indicators.

Graduating students perceived that they are ready to enter the tourism industry equipped with enough knowledge they learned from the program they enrolled. Students are satisfied with the learning process that they have gone through during their study in the institution. The learning competencies in each subject in the curriculum were met in the learning process.

Since the students and faculty members are the individuals involved in the educational system of an institution, their assessment of the hospitality programs is very much reliable (Conradie, 2012).

Among the items cited, 'I have full understanding of the marketing concepts and applying hospitality marketing functions' (3.75); followed by "I am knowledgeable in using computer prior in using computer during my study in LPU" (3.73); third on the rank, "I have the knowledge in promotions and transactions involve in hospitality program" and "I am knowledgeable in everything about tourism" (3.63).

The result shows that graduates are knowledgeable about marketing. Managing a business requires different skills including marketing, a skill that a hospitality management program graduate should have. Principles of Marketing has given the students enough knowledge in marketing they can use when they are already in the workplace. In the different activities that took place in the university such as the "Restaurant Challenge and International Week and many more to mention, students were able to use the knowledge they gained in the subject.

Hospitality management courses offered by universities surely develop the knowledge of students in marketing management (Ko, 2015).

Among the low result items "I can show vibrant understanding of every principle about food and beverage such as production and safety" (3.57); followed by "I understand and can analyze accounting data (3.55) and "I am knowledgeable of revenue and profit-generating systems in lodging and food service" (3.53).

Respondents need to give focus in the mentioned areas of learning to master its concepts. It cannot be denied that generally students are not comfortable with numbers such as profits, revenue and the likes. This calls for the institution to look for a way to help the students and at the same time, students to do their best to attain progress in areas of learning involving numbers. The university certainly has concern with this, but the general negative notion of the students should be changed into a positive one to attain greater success in the learning process.

Future leaders should be knowledgeable about revenue management. Companies' talented revenue management professionals are the future of the revenue management success which will lead to the maximum increase in profit for the benefit of the company (Wang, Heo, Schwartz, Legohérel & Specklin, 2015).

Table 3. below shows the readiness of graduates in terms of skills with a composite mean of 3.62 and with verbal interpretation of strongly agree in all indicators. Result shows that respondents are prepared in terms of skills. The learning competencies of the curriculum were able to provide the necessary skills of the students. Different skills of students are needed to be developed for them to perform their job well in their field of work. The subjects offered by the curriculum of the university fully develop the skills of their students. The competent faculty members contribute a lot in this area of learning. The trainings attended by the students, offered and required to them shares a lot in the students' improvement. The internship programs which makes the students apply and practice what they have learned contributes a lot in the students' development for the hospitality industry they will join after graduation. An individual's behavior and performance are affected by the skills that are learned from the learning competencies of the curriculum (Ciceron, Evora & Mandigma, 2017).

Among the items cited, “I can effectively use appropriate form of communication during operation” (3.74) rank the highest. Tied on the next rank “I can handle multiple responsibilities in an effective manner” (3.70) and “I can communicate effectively through verbal and written communication” (3.70).

**Table 3. Readiness of Graduates in terms of Skills**

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>	<b>Rank</b>
1. I can effectively use appropriate form of communication during operation.	3.74	Strongly Agree	1
2. I can handle multiple responsibilities in an effective manner.	3.70	Strongly Agree	2.5
3. I can communicate effectively through verbal and written communication.	3.70	Strongly Agree	2.5
4. I am fully prepared in using numerical ideas and technique.	3.57	Strongly Agree	7
5. I can show managerial skills, planning skills, staffing n my work.	3.64	Strongly Agree	5
6. I can show analytical problem-solving and critical reflective thinking skill in my work.	3.51	Strongly Agree	10
7. I have entrepreneurial skills that make me confident in performing my job related to it.	3.52	Strongly Agree	9
8. I am good in using the computer prior to the knowledge and practice I acquired from school.	3.58	Strongly Agree	6
9. My interpersonal skills, self –management and adaptability to different situations help me a lot in performing my work.	3.69	Strongly Agree	4
10.I have conceptual skill in Hospitality Law.	3.54	Strongly Agree	8
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.62</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.49= Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree*

The results show that the students are prepared in terms of communication skills in appropriate form during operation. Different guests, persons and situations calls for different forms of communication. It shows that students can apply the appropriate form either oral or written, through telephone or online. The respondents feel that the curriculum was able to provide the needs of the students in terms of communication skills. The subjects in communication offered by the university have developed well the communication skills of the students. Requiring the students to perform and talk in front of the class help attain self-confidence which also help the students easily absorb the learning being conveyed to them. A student shows career readiness if he has well-developed communication skill (Conradie, 2012; Balanon et al., 2017; Felicen & Borbon, 2017).

Items such as “I have conceptual skill in Hospitality Law” (3.54); “I have entrepreneurial skills that make me confident in performing my job related to it” (3.52) and “I can show analytical problem-solving and critical reflective thinking skill in my work” (3.51) rank the lowest. Working and facing different guests every day in their field of work, students should have the ability to analyze a problem and think of the best solution for it making the guests satisfied with their services. Practicing these skills in the actual work is a tough responsibility. The curriculum of the university offers subject where these skills can be developed. In the learning competencies of the curriculum, these skills develop through the examinations given to the students. Different events such as the “Restaurant Challenge and International Week, students’ analytical problem-solving and critical reflective thinking skills are also enhanced, they actually experience having the restaurant business facing the different successes and problems they experience through.

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The best way to elevate problem-solving skills and work performance of employees are to place them in real life situations where they can practice how they will solve a problem. This is a training that will make them prepared when they already in the actual job (Shao & Cho, 2017).

Table 4 shows the readiness of graduates in terms of personality with a composite mean of 3.72 and with all indicators rated as strongly agree.

Graduates feel they are very much prepared in terms of personality. Personality of graduates was well developed by the learning competencies of the curriculum concerned with the development of one’s character and behavior. Subjects such as Human Behavior in Organization, develop the students’ personality preparing them for their career in the hospitality industry. Internship programs play a vital role in the personality development of the students. Experiencing the actual situations where they can apply what they have learned develop their skills and at the same time, their personality. The rules and regulations of the university have also molded them to a level that makes them feel how they are ready to face the hospitality world.

Compared to other attributes of a person, personality rank first in importance. When applying for a job, this will be first recognized by the employer that will decide whether a person will be accepted in the job or not (Yurcu, Zeki, & Kasalak, 2017; Felicen et al., 2014).

Among the items cited, “I can promote goodwill by being courteous, friendly and helpful to guests and colleagues” (3.80) ranked the highest followed by “I can improve my grooming to have a better disposition in my job” (3.78) and “I can communicate well with customers with respect and pleasing personality” (3.76).



**Table 4. Readiness of Graduates in terms of Personality**

<b>Personality</b>	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>	<b>Rank</b>
1. I can promote goodwill by being courteous, friendly and helpful to guests and colleagues.	3.80	Strongly Agree	1
2. I can work well with others and listen attentively and constructively to ideas, suggestions, issues and concerns among co-workers.	3.73	Strongly Agree	4
3. I can calmly and unobtrusively handle problems with the guests who have their complaints.	3.66	Strongly Agree	10
4. I can communicate well with customers with respect and pleasing personality.	3.76	Strongly Agree	3
5. I can attain and maintain professional competence while doing the assigned tasks.	3.71	Strongly Agree	5
6. I can apply maximum tolerant in stressful situations. I am smart enough in applying solutions to problems.	3.68	Strongly Agree	8.5
7. I have work-related values that can help me give the demands in my work.	3.70	Strongly Agree	6
8. I have faith in God that gives me a positive attitude in my everyday life especially in fulfilling my work.	3.69	Strongly Agree	7
9. I am confident in myself in performing my job because I have the knowledge and skills it requires.	3.68	Strongly Agree	8.5
10. I can improve my grooming to have a better disposition in my job.	3.78	Strongly Agree	2
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.72</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.49= Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree*

Treating well the customers is one of the greatest responsibilities of a hospitality student. The graduating students have the assurance to themselves that they have the personality that can win the heart of the customers as well as their co-workers. Students learned the importance of these personalities in the hospitality management program through their subject Human Behavior and Organization. The subject develops the students' personalities which are fully developed through the internships and trainings they have attended which are essential parts of the curriculum of LPU – Batangas.

Friendliness and service attitude goes together to attract positive first impression of customers. Both can be seen and feel by the customers which are implied by giving a smile, courteously treating them, showing concern and serving them in short periods of time will win the customers (Shao & Cho, 2017).

Handling complaints is a very big responsibility which calls not only for basic knowledge about the procedures of the institution but as well as of the personality of the personnel in front of the complaining customers. It is important that complaints-handling personnel are aware on how

to understand and follow the policy complying with all the procedures of the company on how to attend to complaints. They should respectfully attend to the needs of the customers with pleasing personality. One thing more, they should give the customer the assurance of the action taken regarding the complaint (Ramphal, 2016). In case of complaints from the customers, it is advisable for employee to ask for an apology which must be followed by an action (Wasfi & Kostenko, 2014).

**Table 5. Difference Response in Readiness of Graduates when Grouped According to Profile**

	Program			Sex		
	F-value	p-value	I	F-value	p-value	I
Knowledge	5.000	.003	S	1.514	.133	NS
Skills	4.931	.003	S	1.654	.101	NS
Personality	2.152	.098	NS	.081	.935	NS

*Legend* : Significant at  $p$ -value < 0.05; S- Significant; NS-Not Significant

Table 5. presents the responses on the readiness of graduates when grouped according to profile. It was observed that there was a significant difference on knowledge and skills when grouped according to program since the obtained  $p$ -values were less than 0.05 alpha level. This means that there was a significant difference observed and based from the post hoc test, it was found out that respondents taking CAKO program are more ready as to knowledge while respondents taking CLOCA program code are more ready as to skills.

Respondents in the two programs differ on how they rate their readiness in terms of knowledge and skills. There might be different reasons for this result. Different person may rate themselves differently depending on their perceptions. Another reason is that the questions made by the researchers may do not suit exactly the learning competencies of the curriculum. The researchers are taking CLOHS program while the whole respondents are taking CLOHS, CAKO, CLOCA and HRM. They are from different hospitality programs, it cannot be denied that different groups can have different perceptions regarding on the learning competencies in every subject. Different group has different culture, being in the different departments of the university, ruled by different deans and having different group of faculty members. Although learning competencies may be the same, it's the perceptions of the group that may be different.

In making questions in a study, the researchers should base them on the skills that are learned by the students. They can ask for the help of the professors who are handling the subjects. This is to make sure that the questions made to be answered by the respondents are in line with what the students have learned. This will give the assurance of the correct and accurate result of the study (Rahman, 2014).

## CONCLUSIONS

The respondents taking CLOHS, CLOCA, and HRM are thirty each and respondents taking CAKO are twenty, with both fifty percent of male and female. They all agreed that they

exhibit career readiness in terms of knowledge, skills and personality. There is significant difference on knowledge and skills when grouped according to program. It was found out that respondents taking CAKO program are more prepared for their future career as to knowledge while respondents taking CLOCA program are more ready as to skills.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The International Hospitality Management program instructors should always check the students' performance individually having the activities to ensure that the students' knowledge, skills and personality regarding hospitality management program are develop in a level that will make them prepared for their future career. The instructors should focus on the students' performance to ensure they are following correct procedures effectively to check the accuracy of the work of the students. Department heads should strengthen off-campus internship to further enhance students' knowledge, skills and personality in hospitality management program. And for the future study may be conducted focusing on other variables such as internship, employability, and work experience during undergraduate study.

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