

Graduates Employability of Bachelor of Science in International Travel and Tourism Management from 2013 to 2016

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Abstract – A tourism program that aims to prepare students for major roles as effective promoters and caretakers of a country's cultural and natural attractions to domestic and international communities would typically provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the tourism industry and the various factors that contribute to its success. This study determined the employability of Bachelor of Science In International Travel and Tourism Management graduates from 2013 to 2016. More specifically, it described the data and employment status of the graduates, assessed the work-related values to employment, and determined the school-related factors affecting graduate's employment. Descriptive design was used with 606 graduates from 2013-2016 as respondents of the study. Based on the result, the majority, or 94.72 percent, are gainfully employed in jobs which are related to restaurant service, hotels and lodging, and the airline industry. They are working abroad in a professional position wherein communication skills are the competency learned by the graduates that are useful to their jobs. Most of the work-related values gained from the university are much relevant to employment, primarily professional integrity, obedience to superiors, love for co-workers, leadership, and tolerance. The school-related factors are considered very relevant in honing the skills of tourism graduates through the support of the administration with quality instruction and student services.

Keywords – Employability, Tracer Study, Travel Tourism Program

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INTRODUCTION

Graduates of tourism programs possess a range of transferable skills that are highly sought by employers in the tourism industry. These skills include leadership, teamwork, communication skills, problem-solving,

customer service, IT skills, research skills, presentation skills, and the ability to work under deadlines [1].

In addition to these transferable skills, graduates of tourism programs must also have industry-specific knowledge and skills, such as knowledge of travel trends, marketing strategies, customer service techniques, and hospitality management. By combining both industry-specific knowledge and transferable skills, graduates of tourism programs can be highly competitive in the job market and have a greater chance of securing employment in the tourism industry. It is common for graduates in the field of Tourism to face stiff competition, and the job market can be challenging. However, the tracer studies conducted by Felicen & Mejia [2] and Felicen [3] found that the employability rate for Tourism graduates from the school years 2006-2010 and 2010-2012, respectively, was relatively high.

Employers have identified a gap in soft skills among graduates entering the workforce. Soft skills are transferable skills that are not necessarily related to specific technical knowledge or qualifications but are essential for effective workplace performance, such as communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability [4].

Therefore, it is important for academic institutions offering Tourism programs to ensure that their curriculum includes the development and assessment of soft skills alongside technical knowledge and competencies. This can be achieved through various means, such as experiential learning opportunities, internships, and service learning projects.

By providing a well-rounded education that emphasizes both technical and soft skills development, Tourism graduates can enhance their employability and competitiveness in the job market. The issue of employability has become increasingly important in higher education, and there are three different perspectives on this issue: the possessive, positioning, and processual approaches [5].

Achieving Level IV Re-Accredited Status by PACUCOA and being awarded the country's first Center of Development (COD) by CHED are both significant

achievements that recognize the quality of the program's curriculum, faculty, facilities, and student outcomes.

Furthermore, the full membership by the International Center of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education (THE-ICE) is also a noteworthy accomplishment that highlights the program's commitment to providing a world-class education in the field of tourism and hospitality.

These initiatives demonstrate that the program is dedicated to producing graduates who are well-prepared to meet the demands of the tourism market both locally and internationally. By aligning the program's curriculum and training with the needs of the industry, the program is positioning its graduates for success in a competitive and rapidly evolving field.

These recognitions and affiliations signify a strong commitment to academic excellence and professional preparation in the field of tourism and hospitality, and it is something to be proud of as a member of the institution.

School-related factors such as community extension, linkages and research, student services, faculty and instruction, and organization and administration can contribute to job placement success for students. These factors can create a supportive learning environment that can help students develop the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in their chosen careers [6].

This research aims to evaluate the employability of tourism graduates and identify factors that contribute to their preparedness for professional practice. The study will involve continuously tracking the employment status of graduates and gathering feedback from them regarding their experiences in finding employment.

The research will also focus on evaluating the curriculum and services offered by the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management (CITHM) to identify areas for improvement. By conducting regular evaluations, the CITHM can ensure that its curriculum is relevant and aligned with industry standards and that its graduates are well-prepared for the demands of the workforce.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study determined the employability of Bachelor of Science In International Travel and Tourism Management graduates from 2013 to 2016.

More specifically, it will describe the data and employment status of the graduates, assess the work-related values to employment, and determine the school-related factors affecting graduate's employability in terms of curriculum, faculty and instruction, student

services, organization and administration, and community extension services

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The researcher used descriptive research to assess the employability of Tourism graduates. The descriptive method focuses on how to describe a certain population and situation precisely and systematically. This type of research design makes use of different research methods that provide an investigation of the variables [7].

Participants

The respondents of this study were comprised of 606 or 100% Bachelor of Science in International Travel and Tourism Management graduates of Lyceum of the Philippines University- Batangas from the year 2013 to 2016.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire for this research was based on a questionnaire designed by CHED to trace university graduates. This ensures that the research is conducted rigorously and reliably. The questionnaire was modified to suit the needs of the tourism graduates and professional courses from the Tourism program were incorporated into the instrument. This will help ensure that the questionnaire is relevant and appropriate for the target population and that the data collected will be meaningful and useful in understanding the experiences and outcomes of tourism graduates.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher used Google Forms to trace the graduates. The link to the Google form was sent through e-mail, Facebook, Messenger, Viber, Whatsapp, text, and other social media applications. Face to face survey was also conducted in this study. The contacted tourism graduates and practicums were those who assisted in the distribution of the questionnaire to the other LPU graduates working in the same company. A face-to-face interview was also conducted with those who are working near Batangas. This was facilitated to gain additional information regarding the topic.

Data Analysis

The following tools were used to interpret the data that were treated by statistical tools such as percentage, weighted mean, and ranking.

The frequency or percentage distribution was used in interpreting the profile and employability information

of the tourism graduates. The weighted mean and ranking were utilized to analyze the respondents' school and work-related values to know how they contributed to meeting the standards demanded by their present jobs.

Ethical Considerations

It is important to maintain confidentiality and privacy when conducting surveys and interviews, particularly if the information being gathered is sensitive. By not revealing the names of the respondents, you are respecting their privacy and protecting them from any potential harm or negative consequences that may arise from the disclosure of their identities.

As a researcher, it is also important to remain objective and impartial when reporting on the results of a study. By presenting only the data and information that has been gathered, without injecting personal opinions or biases, you are ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I. Data of Graduates Employment

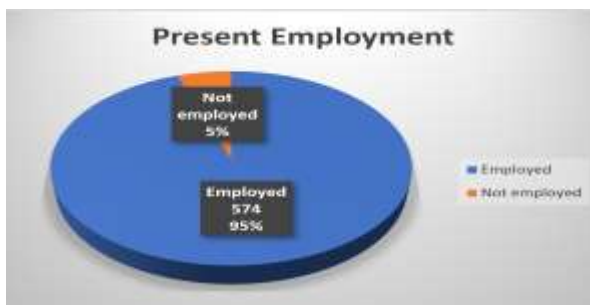


Figure 1. Present Employment

It appears that based on the results given, 574 out of the total number of graduates of Bachelor of Science in International Travel and Tourism Management from SY 2013 to 2016 are currently employed. This represents 94.72% of the total number of graduates. On the other hand, 32 graduates, which is 5.28% of the total, are currently not employed.

This means that LPU graduates are well-equipped for certain jobs based on their academic and practical training. Graduates of LPU have different strengths and weaknesses, depending on the specific program and courses they complete.

The travel and tourism sector is a diverse and multifaceted industry that encompasses a wide range of sub-industries and services. As a result, tourism graduates have a variety of employment opportunities available to them, ranging from working in hotels,

airlines, and travel agencies, to managing visitor attractions, events, and cultural heritage sites. The sector is also an important contributor to many national economies, generating jobs and income in both developed and developing countries. In addition, the sector has a significant impact on the wider economy, as it supports a range of other businesses, such as restaurants, cafes, and retail stores [8].



Figure 2. Employment Status

Figure 2 presents the status of the graduates in their jobs. The result shows that the majority of the graduates (286 or 49.86 percent) are employed as contractual while 265 or 46.17 percent are employed as regular or with permanent employment status. There are also a small number of temporary (14) and casual (9) employees. Contractual employees are individuals who receive a fixed fee to work for a specified timeframe or on a certain project, while A regular employee has been engaged to perform activities that are usually necessary or desirable in the usual business or trade of the employer. On the other hand, temporary employment is for workers who are engaged only for a specific period, while casual employment is the practice of hiring employees on an as-needed basis to meet the company's staffing needs during peak business periods.

This is about the status of employment abroad, wherein employees are on a contract basis. However, their contract is mostly renewable every year.

Renewable contracts provide both the employer and employee with some degree of flexibility. For the employer, it allows them to adjust their workforce to meet changing business needs and to evaluate whether the employee is meeting their expectations. For the employee, it provides a sense of job security and the opportunity to renegotiate terms such as salary or benefits when the contract is up for renewal [9].



Figure 3. Place of work

In terms of place of work, 301 or 52.44 percent are working abroad, while 273 or 47.56 are working locally. Having the majority of the graduates employed abroad means that there are many available positions abroad that qualify LPU graduates. Aside from that, graduates may choose to work abroad because of better job opportunities, higher salaries, or the desire to gain international experience.

Overseas jobs are available. One of the sites that can support this is jobstreet.com wherein this site is approved by POEA. Numerous positions are needed in different countries like Malaysia, Singapore, Qatar, Saudi Arabia Kuala Lumpur. The positions needed are assistant duty manager, receptionist, hotel manager, hotel front desk manager, guest relations officer, reservation agent, reservation assistant, and many others [10].



Figure 4. Length of Time in Finding Job

The majority of graduates take between 1 month to 6 months to find a job, with just over half (52.09%) falling within this category. The second most common timeframe for finding a job is between 7 months to 1 year, with 27.35% of graduates falling within this category. Finally, a smaller percentage of graduates (20.56%) found their job in less than a month.

It's important to note that the length of time it takes to find a job can vary depending on various factors, such as industry, location, qualifications, and experience.

The result is in contrast to the study of Clarke [11], wherein in the current labor market context, graduates are taking longer to find a job. It considers the time taken to find a job, the type of job, and the length of time that graduates remain in their first job.

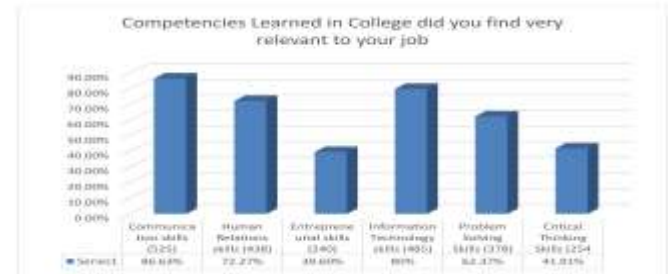


Table 1. Competencies Learned

Based on the result, the very useful competencies that they learned during college are communication skills, as agreed by 525 or 86.63 percent of the graduates, followed by information technology skills with 485 or 80 percent. The least useful is Entrepreneurial skills, with 240 or 39.60.

This result implies that communication skills are very useful, especially during job interviews. Having good communication skills is an advantage to the job applicants, which gives them an edge over other applicants.

Good communication skills are a vital aspect of any productive workplace. Employees with strong communication skills can convey ideas and information effectively, leading to better teamwork, fewer misunderstandings, and improved problem-solving. Small business owners can start by hiring employees who demonstrate excellent communication skills during the hiring process. They can evaluate a candidate's communication skills by asking open-ended questions that require thoughtful responses and observing how the candidate interacts with others during the interview process [12].

II. Work-Related Values

Based on the result, graduates of Lyceum of the Philippines University (LPU) found the work-related values they gained during their four-year stay to be highly relevant to their careers. The composite mean of 4.53 suggests that they rated the importance of these values very highly on average. The graduates rated professional integrity as the most important work-related value (4.94), Obedience to superiors (4.80) ranked second, and Love for co-workers (4.77) and others ranked third. However, love for God, courage, perseverance hard work, and nationalism were rated only

as much relevant, with weighted mean scores of 4.35, 4.27, and 4.05, respectively.

When values such as professional integrity, leadership, and tolerance are integrated into the curriculum and indicated in the syllabus of different courses, it implies that these values are important for the faculty members to embody and impart to their students. The faculty members must not only teach their subject matter but also model these values through their actions and behaviors in the classroom and their interactions with their students. This can help students develop a better understanding and appreciation of the importance of these values in their future careers and personal lives. Graduates of LPU gained valuable work-related values that have served them well in their professional lives.

The formation of professional integrity in university programs is essential for the overall benefit of society and organizations. Professional integrity refers to the adherence to ethical standards, values, and principles that are inherent to a profession. It includes a set of behaviors, attitudes, and actions that reflect an individual's commitment to ethical conduct and accountability [13].

III. School-Related Factors to Job Placement

a. Curriculum and Instruction

The study assessed the relevance of general education courses to job placement; as denoted by the composite mean of 4.06 general education subjects are relevant to job placement. Languages (4.56) are very relevant, followed by Mathematics (4.35) but rated only as relevant. Graduates considered Natural Sciences (3.28) as only moderately relevant.

General education subjects are important for job placement; students should also consider developing other skills and experiences that may be relevant to their intended career paths. It is important for students to have a well-rounded education and to take advantage of opportunities to develop skills and knowledge beyond their core academic subjects.

It is important to have a solid foundation of knowledge and skills in various disciplines because it helps individuals develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills that are essential for success in all areas of life. This is why many universities still maintain rigorous general education requirements, as it allows students. Universities that provide a comprehensive and rigorous general education can help prepare students for success not just in their chosen careers but also in their personal lives and as engaged

citizens of society to explore a range of subjects and gain a well-rounded education [14].

The study also assessed the relevance of different professional courses to job placement and found that overall, professional courses are relevant to job placement, as indicated by a composite mean score of 4.18. The study found that Front Office Operations and Travel and Tour Operations ranked highest in terms of relevance to job placement, with scores of 4.48 and 4.43, respectively.

Knowledge and skills in Front Operation are very important. This suggests that individuals who complete courses in these areas are more likely to find employment in related fields. It implies that all professional courses learned by the students are important to their job. It suggests that the specific professional courses individuals choose to pursue can impact their job prospects and that certain courses may be more valuable than others in terms of employability.

However, Tourism Development, Entrepreneurship, and Business Planning were found to have lower relevance to job placement, with scores of 3.65 and 3.62, respectively. This may indicate that individuals who complete courses in these areas may face more challenges in finding employment in related fields. It's important to consider a variety of factors when evaluating the potential for job placement in a particular field or area of study. While the relevance of coursework is one factor, it's not the only one and should be considered in context.

The argument that if students can develop their autonomy in studying at the beginning of their studies, this will pay off later is based on the idea that students who take control of their learning and become more independent learners will be better equipped to succeed both academically and professionally [15].

b. Faculty and Instruction

Based on the result, faculty and instruction play a significant role in job placement, according to the composite mean of 4.34. The two most highly rated indicators were related to how well the teacher relates the subject matter to real-life situations (4.63) and how the teacher conducts themselves in a professional and dignified manner (4.57). The third most highly rated indicator was the teacher's mastery of the subject matter (4.48).

This implies that students value teachers who are knowledgeable and competent in their subject area. Faculty and instruction are important factors in job placement, and teachers who can relate the subject

matter to real-life situations and exhibit professionalism are highly valued. However, it may be useful to explore why some indicators received lower ratings and what improvements could be made to enhance the quality of education received by students.

Teachers have control over the curriculum and classroom approaches they use, and it is their responsibility to ensure that their teaching methods are inclusive and considerate of the diverse backgrounds and needs of their students. Teachers who are willing to learn about the cultural backgrounds and experiences of their students and incorporate that knowledge into their teaching can create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment that supports the success of all students [16].

c. Student Services

The result reveals that student services were relevant to job placement, as indicated by the composite mean of 4.14. the College Dean's Office services (4.54) ranked first, followed by CITHM Laboratories services (4.51), both rated as relevant. Third in rank was library services (4.36). However, Registrar's Office services (3.87), and health services(3.85) rank low and are rated as relevant. Physical plants and facilities (3.45) rank lowest and are rated only as moderately relevant.

The result implies that services given by the different work units are very important to the students since tourism students will provide services to their guests or customers on their future jobs. The services offered by these work units, especially their Dean's office, will contribute to the awareness of the students on how services will be given to their guests.

d. Organization and Administration

Organization and administration are considered to be highly relevant to their work, as indicated in the composite mean of 4.45. Department heads are seen to have a positive attitude towards their work, staff, and students (4.65), which is ranked as the most important attribute. They are also effective in guiding and developing students (4.58), and the school officers and heads are also seen as responsible for all vital activities in the institution and colleges (4.53), which are all rated as very relevant.

The result implies that the university's organization and administration are also important to the students because of their relevance to job placement. Providing continuous development of the curriculum and accreditation of the program are important factors that can contribute to the development of the students

during their stay in the institution. Even though the administration has an indirect connection to the students, they can still attest to what the administration does for the university.

In the context of course development, this may mean carefully considering factors such as the available resources (e.g., faculty expertise, funding, technology), student needs and preferences, and the competitive landscape. By taking a strategic approach to course development and management, faculty and department can ensure that they are effectively utilizing their resources and meeting the needs of their students while also staying competitive and achieving their goals [17].

e. Community Extension, Linkages, and Research

Community extension, linkages, and research are relevant to their job, as indicated by the composite mean of 4.83. Research activities(4.58) rank first and are rated as very relevant. It was followed by community extension services (4.45), rated as relevant. The lowest in rank was linkages with other institutions and OJT (3.42) rated as moderately relevant.

The development of research activities in the college is considered very relevant to the students because of the experience they had during the conduct of their research as part of their requirements for graduation. Personal experience can help them realize the importance of having such activities.

Research can help businesses evaluate their performance and identify areas for improvement. By analyzing performance data and comparing it against projections, businesses can identify areas where they are falling short and make adjustments to improve performance. This can help businesses stay competitive and adapt to changing market conditions[18].

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The majority, or 94.72 percent, of Bachelor of Science in International Travel and Tourism Management graduates are presently employed. They are gainfully employed in jobs related to their field of specialization and working abroad in a professional position wherein communication skills are the competency learned by the graduates that are useful to their jobs. The program has been effective in preparing its graduates for employment in their field of specialization. The fact that a majority of the graduates are gainfully employed and working abroad is a testament to the quality of the program.

Most of the work-related values gained from the university are relevant to the employment of Tourism

graduates, primarily professional integrity, love for co-workers, obedience to superiors and leadership, and tolerance. The work-related values gained from universities and colleges can be beneficial for Tourism graduates in their future employment, as well as for any other profession they choose to pursue.

School-related factors are very important in honing the skills of tourism graduates. The support of the administration in providing quality instruction and student services can greatly enhance the learning experience of students and prepare them for successful careers in the tourism industry.

It is recommended that the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management (CITHM) continuously conduct a tracer study every three to four to improve and update its curriculum. Tracer studies can provide valuable feedback from graduates about the skills and knowledge they have acquired during their studies and how these are relevant to their current employment. Conducting regular tracer studies is a proactive approach to curriculum development that can help CITHM maintain its reputation as a leading institution in the field of tourism and hospitality management.

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