

# HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY CAREERS: ANALYSIS ON STUDENTS INTEREST BASED ON DIFFERENT LOCATION OF UPBRINGING AND SECONDARY SCHOOL BACKGROUND

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## ABSTRACT

*This study investigated the relationships between the geographical location of upbringing, type of secondary schools attended and attitudes and motivation of Malaysian hospitality students towards a hospitality career. A sample of students (year 1, 2 and 3) of Diploma Culinary Arts, Hotel Management and Food Service Management from Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, MARA University of Technology, Malaysia (Shah Alam, Dungun and Penang campuses) were used in this study. A total 469 usable questionnaires were collected comprises of 173 of year -one, 161 by year- two and 135 of year three. Despite no sustained impact on the perceptions or expectations of hospitality students through the program, there are some distinct differences at the start of their tertiary program between students from different types of secondary schooling and areas of upbringing. Students from rural areas identify themselves of having unclear idea and less knowledgeable about the program and industry at the time of making their career choice as compared to those from towns and cities. Similarly, students from normal secondary school backgrounds also classify themselves as less informed, having more unrealistic perceptions and views about the industry than those from vocational schools. It is recommended that career guidance and orientation should be made more effective, especially for the normal secondary schools to ensure students are informed realistically and sufficiently about careers and working conditions in the hospitality industry. Developing more realistic and lower expectations about working in the industry will allow young people to choose to study in a hospitality program based on a considered career decision rather than by a chance matching of personal needs with what the industry has to offer. In addition, there is a need to educate parents, as well as young people, in the rural areas about these career options and vocational education should be more highly promoted to the rural youth.*

**Keywords:** *hospitality, industry, careers, upbringing, secondary school*

## INTRODUCTION

One of the many challenges facing the Malaysian hospitality industry nowadays is the attraction and retention of young people in the highly competitive employment market. Despite issues relating to shortage of supply, job-hopping, high staff turnover, the deficit in the number and poor transfer of graduates into the industry were found to be the most critical problem in the country. Many new hospitality graduates do not enter the industry upon completion of their studies. Of those who enter the industry, it contended that many soon decide not to pursue a full-time or long-term hospitality career. New hospitality graduates only work in their first job for a few months before moving to either gain experience or through a process of trial and error seeking more acceptable jobs in other industries (MAH, 1996: 1997). Many researchers argue that one of the causes of poor transition rates of hospitality students into the industry is that new student has unrealistic images of working life in the industry (Barron and Maxwell, 1993; Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000; Fraser, 2000; Zahari, 2004). It is believed that this phenomenon might be influenced by various factors impacting students' interest in, and attitudes towards, hospitality careers.

There have been a few studies of secondary students' attitudes and perception of careers in the tourism and hospitality industries. Some have found a positive response while others were negative. Ross (1991;1993) found that senior school students had positive attitudes towards potential careers and high levels of interest in management positions in the tourism and hospitality industry. Ross (1997) also examined travel agency employment perceptions and preferences among secondary school leavers. He found that travel agency employment was favoured among potential hospitality industry employees. In comparing the career attitudes of secondary students in Greece and the United Kingdom, Airey and Frontisis (1997) identified that the Greek students had positive attitudes towards hospitality employment. This positive view, however, was tempered by their suggestion that it was in part due to the students' relatively unrealistic views about careers in the industry, their limited experience as hospitality consumers and the employment structure in Greece. Differences in students' levels of experience and differences in the employment structures of the two countries played an important part in forming these attitudes.

A longitudinal study in Spey Valley in Scotland by Getz (1994) identified that the hospitality sector was a relatively unattractive option among high school students. The desire to pursue a career in hospitality employment had become much more negative over the 14 year period of the study. While some of this was due to a downturn in regional economies, jobs in the tourism and hospitality industry were largely perceived as undesirable. Besides the secondary school students, the attitudes of students who are studying hospitality management are of particular importance because this group is more than casually interested in hospitality, and they are the individuals who potentially will hold management positions in the industry. Charles (1992) identified that undergraduate students in the Bahamas have positive attitudes towards a career in hospitality and perceive the industry as exciting, stimulating and developing creativity,

but dislike the potentially disruptive effect their career could have on their personal, family and social life. Nevertheless, students' interest appears to be decreasing over time, and they have been most influenced in their view by their internship experience. These findings were supported by Barron and Maxwell (1993) who compared the attitudes of undergraduate students in their induction week at the start of their hospitality management course with students returning after a period of practical work experience. They found the marked disparity in the view held about hospitality between these students groups, with new students holding positive views, with the most experienced students being negative. Student expectations of good career opportunities, proper training and treatment of staff by employers and that the job does not demand a capacity effort changed to a perception of the industry as being not lucrative and treating employees poorly.

Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000) also reported that students' positive attitudes toward different aspects of working in tourism and hospitality decreased after practical work experience. Some of the factors which seemed to account for the decline in students' attitudes included job stress, lack of family life owing to the nature of the work, long working hours, exhausting and seasonal (unstable) jobs and the low social status of a hospitality job. The unfavourable evaluations of job aspects among the Turkish undergraduate students were attributed to insufficient prior information about careers and working condition in the tourism industry. Through his longitudinal study in New Zealand, Fraser (2000) ascertained that student' perceptions, aspirations, and expectations along with career commitment towards hospitality employment steadily declined over time. Interestingly, such changes in perception about the chosen career were noticed among the undergraduates, National Diploma, and one-year certificate students in all hospitality institutions across the country. Levels of commitment were not directly related to sex, qualifications, levels of industry knowledge and prior experience. He pointed out that young graduates are more likely to be seduced away from hospitality by other industries, and warned that industries would keep losing the young skilled workers if employment practices are not improved.

Other researchers, including Sciarini et al. (1997) and Cothran and Combrink (1999) found some differences between white and minority students of Hispanic, Native American, African American, and Asian-Pacific origin. Generally, the minority had less knowledge about the industry and were more likely to hold favourable attitudes towards hospitality careers. None of the identified previous research considered whether student attitudes of the student are influenced by their secondary school background or the location of their upbringing. It is argued that the attitudes of the student toward a career in hospitality may be different depending on geographical location of upbringing. It is anticipated that there would be a greater likelihood of student from the city and town of having positive attitudes toward employment in hospitality compared to those from rural areas due to their experiences in much more sophisticated environments. Similarly, the type of secondary school attended may also have an impact on student attitudes toward hospitality careers. For example, vocational school is more specialized than the other secondary schools, offering hospitality related study as part of the

curriculum. This study, therefore, is to investigate the relationship between the geographical location of upbringing, type of secondary schools attended and attitudes and motivation of Malaysian hospitality students towards hospitality careers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Students in years 1, 2 and 3 of the Diploma Culinary Arts, Hotel Management and Food Service Management programmes in the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, UITM (Shah Alam, Dungun, and Penang campuses) were invited to be part of the study. Self-completion questionnaires were distributed along with an information sheet providing details about the research and the researchers as well as informing the students that participation was voluntary. The survey was conducted during the first week of the semester commencing June 2005. A total 469 usable questionnaire were returned with 173 from year-one, 161 from year two and 135 from year three students.

The surveys used 35 items to measure general career awareness, specific knowledge as well as the perception of a hospitality career. Respondents rated each item on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from totally disagrees to agree strongly. To identify underlying relationships and that the grouping for each of the item was consistent with the conceptualisation of the questionnaire, Principal Component analysis was used. The rotation converged in five iterations, and three components were extracted. With a few exceptions (four items), the grouping of the items and the relationship sign conceptually fit well together to form factors of interest that were named 'educational and industry' aspects (ten items), 'value of work' (eleven items) and 'commitment toward career' (thirteen items). The data were tested for reliability using Cronbach alpha procedure. The coefficient alpha value for educational and industry items is .712, for the value of work .724 and commitment toward career was .785 indicates reliable measures of the construct for each of the three dimensions.

## **RESPONDENT PROFILES**

Of the 469 respondents, 57.6 % were female versus 42.4 % males. This apparent imbalance is consistent with the gender balance reported for most hospitality courses in other countries and certainly matches the population of interest in Malaysia. Responses by female and male students give equal importance to gaining their academic qualifications and completing the programmes in which they enrolled. While Malay respondents (95.7%) greatly outnumber the 4.3 % from other ethnic groups this is expected as UITM primarily serves only indigenous students (Bumiputera) rather the other ethnic groups. The proportions of the respondent in each of three programmes were also similar. Regarding the type of secondary school attended, 70.4 % of respondents attended a regular school, 17.1 % came from vocational schools and 12.5 % came from boarding school. The result also shows that slightly more than half of the total respondents (51.6 percent ) who enrolled in the hospitality programme were from a suburban area (town) compared to 27.1 % from a small village and 21.3 % from a large city.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Each of the 35 survey items was analysed to determine what significant differences existed between respondent categories based on the location of their upbringing and the type of secondary school they attended. The One -Way ANOVA with the Scheffé *post hoc* procedure was used to investigate each of the independent variables as explanatory factors of variations in the responses. Only statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) items are reported in the tables.

### Differences between responses attributable to geographical location of upbringing

Table 1 shows the underlying patterns of differences found between students from the city and rural areas.

**Table 1: Showing the items of data collection where statistically significant differences between geographical locations identified, the level of that significance and the pattern of the difference between the mean scores.**

Item		Mean	Sig	Scheffé
I am happy to tell others that I am training to work in hospitality	Rural	5.15	.000	City > Rural
	Town	5.50		
	L. City	5.68		
I strongly believe I knew enough about hospitality industry before I chose this course	Rural	3.92	.041	City > Rural
	Town	4.46		
	L. City	4.75		
I have a higher career expectation of the hospitality industry than most of my classmates	Rural	4.37	.046	City > Rural
	Town	4.58		
	L. City	4.71		
I expect this course will only qualify me to do a specialised job in the hospitality industry	Rural	4.05	.010	City > Rural
	Town	4.41		
	L. City	4.57		
I am still as keen to work in the industry as when I first chose this training programme	Rural	4.77	.042	City > Rural
	Town	5.03		
	L. City	5.26		
At the time I decided to train for hospitality, there were other occupations I could have easily chosen	Rural	4.60	.001	City > Rural
	Town	4.87		
	L. City	5.01		
Living life my way and not having it determined by my work	Rural	4.85	.020	City > Rural
	Town	5.08		
	L. City	5.26		
Developing and using my skills and abilities at work	Rural	5.83	.049	City > Rural
	Town	5.09		
	L. City	6.00		
Working in pleasant surroundings	Rural	5.47	.022	City > Rural
	Town	5.70		
	L. City	5.79		

Note:

1. Inter-groups differences are based on Scheffé procedure
2. Statistically, significant differences are indicated by being bolded

3. *Rural (n = 127, Town (n = 242), Large City (n = 100)*

Respondents from the city report a greater level of agreement with some educational and industry-related items. This is seen in their reporting themselves as somewhat agreeing that they had prior knowledge about the hospitality industry before choosing the programme (4.75,  $p = .041$ ) and slightly keener to work in the hospitality industry when they first chose the hospitality programme (5.26,  $p = .042$ ) as compared to students from rural areas (3.92 and 4.77, respectively). Similarly, they reported being happy to tell others that they are trained to work in hospitality (5.68 compared to 5.15,  $p = .000$ ) and had a higher career expectation than their classmates (4.71 compared to 4.37,  $p = .046$ ).

In addition, they also attach slightly more agreement to the item relating to 'I expect this course will only qualify me to do a specialised job in hospitality industry (4.57 compared to 4.05,  $p = .010$ ) and 'At the time I decided to train for hospitality there were other occupations I could easily have chosen (5.01 compared to 4.60,  $p = .001$ ). It is also not surprising to see that this group attached greater importance to developing their skills (6.00 compared to 5.83,  $p = .049$ ), expect to work in pleasant surroundings (5.79 compared to 5.47,  $p = .022$ ) and not having their work determine the way in which they live their lives (5.26 compared to 4.85,  $p = .020$ ).

Together these points might suggest that respondents with a city upbringing are more definite about what they want and expect from their studies and career compared to respondents from more rural backgrounds. This fits the idea that the hospitality and tourism industries are more developed in cities as compared to towns and rural areas. These students may, therefore, have been more aware or had a greater exposure to the industry through family or individual experiences. It is possible that the increased sophistication of city life leads to more concise expectations than those of the more tentative and naïve country raised counterparts.

To assess whether this is an enduring difference respondents' responses were analysed by their cohort years. It was anticipated that the differences would become less pronounced as students gained more exposure to the industry in their second and third years of study. As can be seen in Table 2 there are some significant differences between city and rural respondents in the first year but that there are none between the sub-groups in the second or third year cohorts. It is possible to argue that the respondents from rural backgrounds indicate a lower level of certainty about their careers and awareness of what the industry entails. This can be seen in both the significant differences and the less positive responses than the town and city respondents. However, as students gain more exposure through their programmes, thus developing increased understanding and greater knowledge and insight into the industry, their personal view and attitudes become more similar to students from other areas of upbringing.

**Table 2: Showing the mean scores and standard deviation for "Educational Factor" items for respondents based on geographical location of upbringing, identifying significant differences by level of study programme**

Items	Y	Geo Upb	n	Mean	Std Dev	Sig	Scheffe
I was very satisfied with the offer of a place on this hospitality course	Y1	Rural	42	5.09	1.33	.029	City > Rural
		Town	83	5.34	1.41		
		City	48	5.52	1.20		
	Y2	Rural	47	5.31	1.26	.989	
		Town	81	5.33	1.32		
		City	33	5.33	1.35		
	Y3	Rural	38	5.27	1.25	.175	
		Town	78	5.63	1.04		
		City	19	5.52	.97		
I think hospitality course offer more practical skill training than academic work	Y1	Rural	42	5.26	1.53	.044	City > Rural
		Town	83	5.31	1.35		
		City	48	5.35	1.21		
	Y2	Rural	47	5.21	1.55	.574	
		Town	81	5.24	1.31		
		City	33	5.38	1.42		
	Y3	Rural	38	5.30	1.29	.321	
		Town	78	5.55	1.36		
		City	19	5.36	1.43		
I expect this course will only qualify me to do a specialized job in the hospitality industry	Y1	Rural	42	4.42	1.49	.023	City > Rural
		Town	83	4.40	1.64		
		City	48	4.93	1.68		
	Y2	Rural	47	4.32	1.38	.784	
		Town	81	4.41	1.47		
		City	33	4.55	1.45		
	Y3	Rural	38	4.60	1.74	.060	
		Town	78	4.72	1.55		
		City	19	5.52	1.36		
I strongly believe whatever I learn in this course will be useful for my future career	Y1	Rural	42	5.97	1.08	.029	City > Rural
		Town	83	5.93	1.22		
		City	48	6.18	1.04		
	Y2	Rural	47	5.88	1.18	.948	
		Town	81	5.93	1.24		
		City	33	5.93	1.31		
	Y3	Rural	38	6.18	.90	.768	
		Town	78	6.09	1.17		
		City	19	6.01	1.29		
I choose this industry because of the opportunities to travel overseas	Y1	Rural	42	4.19	1.43	.036	City > Rural
		Town	83	4.27	1.81		
		City	48	4.56	1.83		
	Y2	Rural	47	4.76	1.63	.272	
		Town	81	4.98	1.48		
		City	33	4.45	1.85		
	Y3	Rural	38	4.52	1.82	.446	
		Town	78	5.23	1.50		
		City	19	4.42	1.80		
I am happy to tell other that I am	Y1	Rural	42	5.14	1.52	.028	City >
		Town	83	5.22	1.32		

training to work in hospitality	Y2	City	48	5.50	1.39		Rural
		Rural	47	5.02	1.56	.148	
		Town	81	5.48	1.38		
	Y3	City	33	5.57	1.39		
		Rural	38	5.02	1.46	.110	
		Town	78	5.78	1.32		
I strongly believe I knew enough about hospitality industry before I chose this course	Y1	City	19	5.89	1.04		
		Rural	42	3.80	1.71	.045	City > Rural
		Town	83	3.98	1.52		
	Y2	City	48	4.52	1.60		
		Rural	47	3.91	1.86	.240	
		Town	81	3.97	1.48		
	Y3	City	33	4.81	1.48		
		Rural	38	4.05	1.67	.151	
		Town	78	4.65	1.48		
My interest in hospitality comes from my upbringing	Y1	City	19	4.42	1.57		
		Rural	42	4.41	1.60	.017	City > Rural
		Town	83	4.45	1.28		
	Y2	City	48	4.58	1.76		
		Rural	47	4.95	1.28	.397	
		Town	81	4.67	1.56		
	Y3	City	33	5.03	1.40		
		Rural	38	4.39	1.65	.154	
		Town	78	4.92	1.60		
		City	19	4.31	1.66		

Note:

1. Inter- group differences shown are based on Scheffé procedure
2. Statistically, significant differences are bolded

A similar pattern was identified among items making up the value for work factor. The items showing differences among year one students are reported in Table 3. Again the differences are between students from the large cities and rural areas. The differences are only found in year-one rather than among year-two or year-three students.

**Table 3: Showing the mean scores and standard deviation for "Value of Work Factor" items for respondents based on geographical location of upbringing, identifying significant differences by level of study programme**

Items	Yr	Geo. Upb	n	Mean	Std Dev	Sig	Scheffe
Developing and using my skills and abilities at work	Y1	Rural	42	5.51	1.03	.000	Cty > Rur
		Town	83	5.93	1.00		
		City	48	6.01	1.14		
	Y2	Rural	47	6.23	.93	.424	
		Town	81	6.13	.94		
		City	33	6.15	.80		
	Y3	Rural	38	6.00	1.03	.309	
		Town	78	6.26	.87		
		City	19	6.01	.87		
Making or doing something original	Y1	Rural	42	5.30	1.07	.004	Cty > Rur
		Town	83	5.68	1.11		
		City	48	5.83	.92		

through my work	Y2	Rural	47	6.03	.98	.718	
		Town	81	5.75	.96		
		City	33	5.62	.98		
	Y3	Rural	38	5.61	1.23	.608	
		Town	78	5.96	.98		
		City	19	5.52	1.05		
Earning large amounts of money as the reward for my work	Y1	Rural	42	5.08	1.36	.038	Cty > Rur
		Town	83	5.44	1.21		
		City	48	5.54	1.28		
	Y2	Rural	47	5.36	1.35	.333	
		Town	81	5.31	1.33		
		City	33	5.45	1.14		
	Y3	Rural	38	5.30	1.26	.426	
		Town	78	5.40	1.25		
		City	19	5.15	1.35		
Working in pleasant surroundings	Y1	Rural	42	5.38	1.28	.031	Cty > Rur
		Town	83	5.55	1.31		
		City	48	5.71	1.21		
	Y2	Rural	47	5.59	1.46	.863	
		Town	81	5.65	1.20		
		City	33	5.71	1.48		
	Y3	Rural	38	5.39	1.32	.131	
		Town	78	5.75	.90		
		City	19	6.06	1.54		

Note:

1. Inter- group differences shown are based on Scheffé procedure
2. Statistically, significant differences are bolded

As such, year-one students from the rural areas gave a lesser rating than those from the city to the importance of developing and using skills at work (5.51 compared to 6.01,  $p = .000$ ), making something original (5.30 compared to 5.83,  $p = .004$ ), earning a large amount of money (5.08 compared to 5.54,  $p = .038$ ), working in pleasant surroundings (5.38 compared to 5.71,  $p = .031$ ), being in charge of other workers (4.58 compared to 4.71,  $p = .008$ ) and being free of having to work at their spare time (4.71 compared to 4.22,  $p = .025$ ). These differences presumably occur because the new entry students from the rural areas may have less understanding of what is important to them to the value of work due to less industry exposure. It could also be contended that these students may still have a lower level of certainty of where they are heading in their future careers, compared to the more demanding and concise expectations of classmates from town and cities, as previously discussed.

Growing up and gaining a better understanding of the work aspect through progression and experience in the programme have altered rural area students' perceptions and created a greater commonality of the views by them and other groups. The absence of statistically significant differences in the second round supports this contention. The above notion is clearly evident when looking at the mean pattern between the cohorts. The scores given by year-two and year-three students from rural areas were slightly higher than those from towns and city. The clearest example can be found in items 'working with people who are friendly and understanding', 'developing and using skills

and abilities at work ' and ' working in pleasant surroundings .' These patterns have reduced the means gaps between all student cohorts, but in fact this indicates that all respondents are becoming more similar in their perceptions. Overall it is notable that the respondents have increased their expectations as they increase in life experience.

Similar analysis was undertaken with items relating to Career Intention and Commitment. Some differences were found. Year-one students from the rural areas agreed somewhat more (5.29,  $p = .040$ ) than those from the city upbringing (5.19) that they were 'committed to a career in hospitality', 'keen to work in the industry' (5.29 and 5.16, respectively,  $p = .023$ ), would accept almost any job to stay in the hospitality (4.80 and 4.58, respectively,  $p = .016$ ) and 'expect to work in the industry most of their working life' (4.85 and 4.72, respectively,  $p = .011$ ). They also somewhat believed 'the hospitality industry provides more employment opportunity than other industries' (5.67 and 5.15, respectively,  $p = .019$ ), 'will stay in the industry if it provides the best career option for them' (6.03 and 5.73, respectively,  $p = .012$ ) and 'satisfied with their choice of career in hospitality' (5.43 and 4.89, respectively,  $p = .005$ ).

However, despite there being statistically significant differences, in absolute term this difference cannot be generalised, as none of these items appeared in the overall responses analysis (Table 2, or even between other year cohorts. It could be argued that the difference between year one respondents is that student from the rural upbringing in particular, at the start of their programme probably did not fully realise what they were taking on as a career compared to town and city upbringing students. This also supports the contention of some level of naivety. This argument is further supported by the mean score rated by year-two and year three students from the rural area consistently decreased for all these items and similar to those from the town and city upbringing. In other words, this indicates that those in year-two and year-three from rural areas are more likely to report that they now know a lot more about the industry than before.

Overall findings of these analyses indicate that the tertiary educational programmes not only provided students with the more realistic knowledge and greater understanding of how the hospitality industry operates but that maturation process and progressive exposure bring about changes in student perceptions and attitudes toward their future employment and a career in the hospitality industry. Further, while differences based on students' place of upbringing were found these differences are rural students come to adopt similar value judgements as their more urban contemporaries.

### **Differences between responses attributable to secondary schools background**

The corresponding Scheffé *post hoc* procedure revealed that most differences were detected between respondents from vocational and normal secondary schools. Ten statistically significant differences were found. Vocational school students reported themselves the slightly higher level of agreement that their interest in hospitality came from their upbringing (5.07,  $p = .004$  compared to respondent from normal (4.52) and

boarding school (4.72). They also clearly were identifying themselves as knowing about the industry before choosing the course (4.93,  $p = .000$  compared to 4.10 and 4.18 respectively), satisfied with the offer of a place (5.50,  $p = .002$ ) more than respondents from normal (5.39) and boarding school (5.13). The marked differences clearly indicate that parents who send their children to vocational schools may have already inspired them to pursue a specialized programme rather than a more conventional secondary educational structure. They at least accept that their children will be exposed to these vocational influences. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that they had a distinct view about hospitality programmes compared to respondents with normal and boarding school backgrounds.

About industry employment, vocational secondary school students again reported themselves as more positive related to intention to work in the industry most of their working life. Their mean score was at 5.17;  $p = .011$  compared to 4.76 for normal and 4.83 for a student from boarding school background. They also somewhat more committed to a career in the hospitality industry (5.52,  $p = .006$ ) compared to 5.20 and 5.41, respectively), developing using their skills and abilities (6.40,  $p = .033$  compared to 6.12 and 6.13, respectively) and had greater expectations of wanting to be in charge of others in their future work (5.12,  $p = 0.40$  compared to 4.73 and 4.94 respectively). These results suggest that vocational school students are optimistic about the hospitality industry as their future employer and place of employment. Whether this is because their parents chose vocational schools for them in order that they learn more specialised skills related to hospitality and tourism industry rather than those in the normal and boarding secondary schools or is simply a consequence of this choice is not evident.

**Table 4: Showing statistically significant item differences between secondary school, the level of that significance and the pattern of the difference between the mean scores.**

Item		Mean	Sig	Scheffé
I strongly believe that whatever I learn in this course will be useful for my future career	Normal	6.00	.025	Voc
	Boarding	6.11		>
	Vocational	6.20		Nor
I was very satisfied with the offer of place on this hospitality course	Normal	5.39	.002	Voc
	Boarding	5.13		>
	Vocational	5.50		Nor
I strongly believe I knew enough about the hospitality industry before I chose this course	Normal	4.10	.000	Voc
	Boarding	4.18		>
	Vocational	4.93		Nor
Hospitality course provides a more nurturing and caring environment than other courses	Normal	5.09	.007	Voc
	Boarding	5.10		>
	Vocational	5.16		Nor
I am still keen to work in the industry as when I first chose this training programme	Normal	4.93	.019	Voc
	Boarding	4.87		>
	Vocational	5.00		Nor
My interest in hospitality comes from my	Normal	4.52	.004	Voc

upbringing	Boarding	4.72		>
	Vocational	5.07		Nor
I am committed to a career in hospitality	Normal	5.20	.006	Voc
	Boarding	5.41		>
	Vocational	5.52		Nor
I expect to work in the hospitality industry most of my working life	Normal	4.76	.011	Voc
	Boarding	4.83		>
	Vocational	5.17		Nor
Being in charge of other workers	Normal	4.73	.040	Voc
	Boarding	4.94		>
	Vocational	5.12		Nor
Developing using my skill and abilities at work	Normal	6.12	.033	Voc
	Boarding	6.13		>
	Vocational	6.40		Nor

Note:

1. Inter groups differences are based on Scheffé procedure
2. Statistically significant differences are bolded
3. Normal School ( n = 330), Vocational School ( n = 80), Boarding School ( n = 59 )

Again, increasing knowledge, familiarity with, or understanding of what the industry is really like, particularly among those students from normal and boarding school backgrounds might reduce reported differences in perceptions between these three student groups. If this argument is valid, there should be a few differences between year-two and year-three sub-groups with the differences identified above being largely confined to year-one. This should be the case simply because the year-two and year-three groups of students have developed more realistic perceptions as compared to new entry students. Therefore, the next section of analyses investigates in greater detail the underlying pattern of these causations.

After analyzing responses to "Educational Factor" items, six inter-group differences were found (Table 5) between respondents regarding what they expect from the programme they enrolled in. Similar to previous sections, again the differences predominantly appeared among the year-one sub-groups and mostly between students from secondary vocational schools and normal schools. To mention a few, this group place a greater believed that hospitality courses provides more nurturing and caring environment than other courses (5.50 compared to 4.84,  $p = .039$ ), opportunities to travel overseas (5.45 compared to 4.37,  $p = .003$ ), qualify to do a specialised job in the hospitality industry (5.19 compared to 4.51,  $p = .000$ ) and very satisfied with the offer of a place on this hospitality course ( 5.36 compared to 5.20,  $p = .019$ ). From these results, it could be contended that students from secondary vocational schools are coming to the tertiary programme with a clearer idea and better knowledge about the industry compared the other two secondary schools.

**Table 5: Showing the mean scores and standard deviation for "Educational Factor" items for respondents based on secondary schools, identifying significant differences by level of study programme**

Items	Yr	Sec Sch	n	Mean	Std Dev	Sig	Sch
Hospitality courses provide a more nurturing and caring environment than other courses	Y1	Nml	127	4.84	1.46	.039	Voc > Nml
		Brd	24	5.02	1.29		
		Voc	22	5.50	1.29		
	Y2	Nml	104	5.17	1.19	.778	
		Brd	27	5.03	1.34		
		Voc	30	5.21	1.29		
	Y3	Nml	99	5.28	1.29	.273	
		Brd	8	5.41	.79		
		Voc	28	4.91	1.34		
I chose this industry because of the opportunities to travel overseas	Y1	Nml	127	4.37	1.53	.003	Voc > Nml
		Brd	24	4.48	1.55		
		Voc	22	5.45	1.53		
	Y2	Nml	104	4.56	1.62	.339	
		Brd	27	4.84	1.67		
		Voc	30	5.03	1.57		
	Y3	Nml	99	5.08	1.58	.063	
		Brd	8	5.58	1.22		
		Voc	28	4.41	1.63		
I expect this course will only qualify me to do a specialised job in the hospitality industry	Y1	Nml	127	4.51	1.36	.000	Voc > Nml
		Brd	24	4.57	1.52		
		Voc	22	5.19	1.25		
	Y2	Nml	104	4.55	1.37	.059	
		Brd	27	4.86	1.34		
		Voc	30	4.63	1.24		
	Y3	Nml	99	4.53	1.65	.382	
		Brd	8	4.47	1.80		
		Voc	28	4.45	1.55		
I strongly believe whatever I learn in this course will be useful in my future career	Y1	Nml	127	5.92	1.09	.041	Voc > Nml
		Brd	24	5.87	1.46		
		Voc	22	6.30	.98		
	Y2	Nml	104	6.00	1.14	.409	
		Brd	27	5.68	1.42		
		Voc	30	5.91	1.46		
	Y3	Nml	99	6.06	1.24	.432	
		Brd	8	6.02	.82		
		Voc	28	6.00	.88		
I was very satisfied with the offer of a place on this hospitality course	Y1	Nml	127	5.20	1.10	.019	Voc > Brd
		Brd	24	5.29	1.12		
		Voc	22	5.36	1.32		
	Y2	Nml	104	5.06	1.24	.068	
		Brd	27	5.37	1.33		
		Voc	30	5.66	1.34		

I strongly believed I knew enough about the hospitality industry before I chose this course	Y3	Nml	99	5.49	1.09	.857	Voc > Brd
		Brd	8	5.69	.91		
		Voc	28	5.60	1.06		
	Y1	Nml	127	4.07	1.51	.002	
		Brd	24	3.08	1.79		
		Voc	22	4.64	1.39		
	Y2	Nml	104	4.10	1.55	.066	
		Brd	27	3.59	1.79		
		Voc	30	4.70	1.64		
Y3	Nml	99	4.42	1.63	.449		
	Brd	8	5.12	1.12			
	Voc	28	4.35	1.39			

Note:

1. Inter- group differences shown are based on Scheffé procedure
2. Statistically, significant differences are bolded

Again, both maturation and experiential factors among all students especially those from normal and boarding schools have eroded the differences between the sub-groups and lead to relatively common perceptions as reported among year-two and year-three respondents. This can be clearly seen when comparing the mean scores between all year cohorts. A general observation shows that despite being positive, the mean scores for all items consistently declined for a year- two and year –three students from the vocational school but increased for students from normal and boarding schools background. Therefore, it could be concluded that individual students in different levels of the programme irrespective of their secondary school attended developed similar perceptions and views about the hospitality course over time.

The items relating to "Value of Work Factor" should a similar set of patterns as found in 'Educational Factor' items with statistically significant differences only occurring among the year-one of student cohorts. For instance, a student from boarding school background place greater importance on developing and using skills and abilities at work (5.93,  $p = .025$ ) than vocational school students (5.53), making something original (5.90 compared to 5.60,  $p = .008$ ). They also attached a greater importance of earning a large amount of money (5.44,  $p = .026$ ) than a student from normal school (5.09). Conversely, those from normal schools attached greater importance to the items ' people think that my work is important ' (5.15,  $p = .000$ ) as apposed to 4.66 rated by vocational school students and ' working in pleasant surrounding ' (5.63 compared 5.45,  $p = .035$ ). Together these points suggest that students from boarding and normal secondary schools possibly did not have strongly developed ideas about the value of work. They, therefore, see things in a different way from vocational school students when they first enter the tertiary educational programme.

**Table 6: Showing the mean scores and standard deviation for "Value of Work Factor" items for respondents based on secondary schools, identifying significant differences by level of study programme**

Items	Yr	Sec Sch	n	Mean	Std Dev	Sig	Sch
Developing and using my skills and abilities at work	Y1	Nml	127	5.85	.99	.025	Brd > Voc
		Brd	24	5.93	.93		
		Voc	22	5.53	1.18		
	Y2	Nml	104	5.76	.92	.788	
		Brd	27	5.70	.95		
		Voc	30	5.90	.80		
	Y3	Nml	99	5.91	1.10	.061	
		Brd	8	5.96	1.12		
		Voc	28	5.70	.75		
Making or doing something original through my work	Y1	Nml	127	5.59	1.20	.008	Brd > Voc
		Brd	24	5.90	0.92		
		Voc	22	5.60	1.25		
	Y2	Nml	104	5.57	1.02	.493	
		Brd	27	5.56	.94		
		Voc	30	5.43	.82		
	Y3	Nml	99	5.48	1.17	.620	
		Brd	8	5.56	.74		
		Voc	28	5.55	.65		
Earning large amounts of money as the reward for my work	Y1	Nml	127	5.09	1.32	.026	Brd > Nml
		Brd	24	5.44	1.32		
		Voc	22	5.24	1.31		
	Y2	Nml	104	5.26	1.31	.588	
		Brd	27	5.47	1.33		
		Voc	30	5.09	1.23		
	Y3	Nml	99	5.41	1.20	.136	
		Brd	8	5.17	1.50		
		Voc	28	5.04	1.26		
People thinking that my work is important	Y1	Nml	127	5.15	1.24	.000	Nml > Voc
		Brd	24	4.95	1.26		
		Voc	22	4.66	1.38		
	Y2	Nml	104	4.97	1.31	.108	
		Brd	27	5.41	1.09		
		Voc	30	5.20	1.28		
	Y3	Nml	99	5.23	1.23	.165	
		Brd	8	5.05	1.47		
		Voc	28	5.00	1.02		
Working in pleasant surroundings	Y1	Nml	127	5.63	1.14	.035	Nml > Voc
		Brd	24	5.55	1.21		
		Voc	22	5.45	1.24		
	Y2	Nml	104	5.57	1.26	.340	
		Brd	27	5.70	1.33		
		Voc	30	5.84	1.22		

	Y3	Nml	99	6.00	.93	.241	
		Brd	8	5.90	1.29		
		Voc	28	5.39	1.08		

Note:

1. Inter- group differences shown are based on Scheffé procedure
2. Statistically, significant differences are bolded

In contrast, students with vocational school backgrounds have clear and possibly more realistic in their perceptions and views as compared to those from normal and boarding schools. However, progression and experience during the educational programmes lead to the creation and development of common views, perceptions, and expectations among the students. The absence of statistically significant differences on any items among the year-two and year-three student support this contention.

When the results for "Career Intention and Commitment Factor" items were considered five items were found to have significant differences based on respondents' secondary school background. As shown in Table 8, the differences were most notable between students from the vocational schools and normal schools. The vocational school group was found to have rated higher mean scores for most of the items. However, these differences, again only occurred among the year-one sub- groups. As such, more year-one students from vocational schools reported themselves as being keen to work in the industry (5.60,  $p = .006$ ) than did the normal (4.78) and boarding school students (5.00). They also were more in agreement that hospitality would provide an exciting and challenging environment (5.93,  $p = .025$  compared to 5.70 and 5.78 respectively) and believed that hospitality provides more employment opportunities than other industries (5.41,  $p = .022$  compared to 5.11 and 5.21 respectively), committed to career in hospitality (5.36,  $p = .011$  compared to 5.15 and 5.27 respectively) and will accept almost any job to stay in hospitality industry (5.30,  $p = .008$  compared to 4.47 and 4.84 respectively). These differences support the idea that students from secondary vocational schools are better informed about the industry as a result of early career guidance being applied in their education process compared to those from conventional normal and boarding secondary schools. In other words, they are more definite about what they expect from their study and future career.

**Table 7: Showing the mean scores and standard deviation for "Career Intention and Commitment factor" items for respondents based on secondary schools background, identifying significant differences by level of study programme**

Items	Yr	Sec Sch	n	Mean	Std Dev	Sig	Sch
I am committed to a career in hospitality	Y1	Nml	127	5.15	1.32	.011	Voc > Nml
		Brd	24	5.27	1.32		
		Voc	22	5.36	1.21		
	Y2	Nml	104	5.08	1.23	.867	
		Brd	27	5.29	1.15		
		Voc	30	5.81	.88		
	Y3	Nml	99	5.46	1.18	.433	

		Brd	8	5.31	1.27		
		Voc	28	5.61	1.11		
I am still as keen to work in the industry as when I first chose this training programme	Y1	Nml	127	4.78	1.31	.006	Voc > Nml
		Brd	24	5.00	1.29		
		Voc	22	5.60	1.12		
	Y2	Nml	104	4.94	1.25	.053	
		Brd	27	5.09	1.30		
		Voc	30	5.23	1.36		
	Y3	Nml	99	5.25	1.10	.170	
		Brd	8	5.47	1.28		
		Voc	28	5.79	1.47		
I will accept almost any job to stay in the hospitality industry	Y1	Nml	127	4.47	1.57	.008	Voc > Nml
		Brd	24	4.84	1.62		
		Voc	22	5.30	1.13		
	Y2	Nml	104	4.55	1.30	.072	
		Brd	27	5.05	1.40		
		Voc	30	5.06	1.27		
	Y3	Nml	99	4.68	1.56	.458	
		Brd	8	4.47	1.32		
		Voc	28	4.37	1.13		
The hospitality industry is an exciting and challenging environment to work in	Y1	Nml	127	5.70	1.18	.025	Voc > Nml
		Brd	24	5.78	1.11		
		Voc	22	5.93	.95		
	Y2	Nml	104	5.66	1.18	.340	
		Brd	27	5.75	1.22		
		Voc	30	5.96	1.07		
	Y3	Nml	99	5.81	1.05	.375	
		Brd	8	5.86	1.16		
		Voc	28	6.01	1.17		
I believed the hospitality provides more employment opportunities than other industries	Y1	Nml	127	5.11	1.44	.022	Voc > Nml
		Brd	24	5.21	1.43		
		Voc	22	5.41	1.42		
	Y2	Nml	104	5.25	1.24	.413	
		Brd	27	5.49	1.15		
		Voc	30	5.72	1.25		
	Y3	Nml	99	5.51	1.21	.376	
		Brd	8	5.37	1.20		
		Voc	28	5.94	.82		

Note:

1. Inter- group differences shown are based on Scheffé procedure
2. Statistically, significant differences are bolded

Again, with the passing of time bringing more self-knowledge, improving their awareness and increasing their depth of understanding about the industry, their view altered. This contention is evident when the mean scores consistently increased among year two and year- three students from normal school. These results again strongly

support the concept of the progressive revelation or discovery leading to a shared vision among the respondents, as previously discussed.

## **CONCLUSION**

Some findings emerged from this study. One important result was that while there are some distinct differences in values between students from different backgrounds at the start of their tertiary study, these differences are not sustained over time. At the point of entry, the type of secondary school attended and whether they were raised in the country or a city has an impact on the values held. The result show that students from the town and city upbringing clearly identify themselves of having a clearer idea and more knowledgeable about the programme and industry at the time of making their choice than those from a rural area. Similarly, students from vocational secondary schools backgrounds classify themselves as better informed, having more realistic in perceptions and views about the industry than those from conventional normal and boarding secondary schools. These outcomes, in fact, support the notion that the urban environment provides a better stimulus for students for higher education, easy access to information about wider career opportunities and early career guidance applied in education process gives better awareness about the career options (Dhesi, 2000). The availability of such information is likely to motivate them to increase the effort of taking hospitality programme.

Conversely, results also provide strong evidence that there is some level of naivety, less understanding of what is important about the value of work, have a lower level of certainty of future careers at the time of entry to their study programme among students from the rural area and normal secondary schools. As indicated in this study vast majority of students from rural and normal school backgrounds seem to enroll on the hospitality programme with insufficient information and unrealistic about careers and employment in the hospitality industry. Therefore, for these students to have at least realistic or positive perceptions of the industry, there are three issues that must be addressed. First of all, career guidance and orientation should be made more efficient especially at the normal secondary schools. If a student were informed realistically and sufficiently about careers and working conditions in the hospitality industry at the early stage, they will form more realistic and lower expectations with regards to a job in the industry and choose to study hospitality based their career decision on choice rather than by chance.

It is suggested that there is a need to educate parents in the rural areas as to the profound effects their attitudes have on their children's career aspirations. Parents are normally found to play a strategic part in the process of young adults career choices (Dhesi, 2001). Consequently, it may be necessary for recruiters in hospitality institutions, along with government representatives (Ministry of Education) and school counselors, to shoulder some responsibility to inform parents more fully. This will ensure that parents understand more thoroughly the types of career potential in the hospitality industry. This could be done through forums, career workshops, seminars or similar means. Such

activities will enable parents to develop more positive views of hospitality and pass this to their children. This also applies to teachers whose attitudes and opinions significantly influence post-school career plans. If the teachers do not adequately understand and convey an accurate picture of the nature and demands of the industry, then students may develop false impressions that could lead to personal dissonance upon graduation and assimilation into the industry.

Finally, vocational education should be promoted among the rural youth. As is anecdotally evident, vocational education is believed to be the most preferred option among the least academic achievers and particularly among the rural area students. If the government is serious about ensuring that prospective future hospitality students possess realistic perceptions and are better prepared for a hospitality career, then more vocational secondary schools which offer courses related to hospitality should be opened. This is especially important in the rural area. Early career guidance and nurturing of hospitality career interest could better equip secondary students to make more informed career choices. This will further ensure students can be more definite and realistic about what they expect from their study and future career. As a result, they would be less disappointed when they commence study in hospitality programmes and later enter the industry. Together these can reduce future industry attrition.

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