

# Factors Influencing Career Choices Among First-Year Students: Focus on Hospitality and Tourism Management

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**Abstract**— *The study aims to investigate how first-year students select a career in the hospitality and tourism industry. As the industry is growing globally, it is important to know students' motivation, perception, and career expectations to create development plans in alignment with their goals. It is surveyed using the Likert scale, which investigates the factors that have significant influence, such as personal interest, family, industry growth, and education. The result shed the foundation for designing an individualized career development plan to encourage students' academic progress while contributing towards their prepared future in hospitality and tourism management.*

**Keywords**— *Academic progress, Career choices, First-year students, Hospitality Management, Tourism Management*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Hospitality and tourism are among the world's fastest-growing industries, with many career opportunities. However, as noted by Qiu, S., Dooley, L., & Palkar, T. (2019), advice from teachers and counselors strongly influences students' decisions about careers in hospitality. Finally, it highlights the role of students' motivations, making navigating the terrain between external and internal trends worthwhile. Korir, J., & Wafula, W. (2021) showed intrinsic factors like expectations for a career that are desirable and extrinsic factors like support from family, which influences Kenyan hospitality students. Its emphasis on considering social and economic contexts involves examining external influences (e.g., family, societal). This study investigates the factors that impact first-year students in Nueva Ecija to take up careers in this industry. Kahraman, O. C., & Alrawadieh, D. D. (2021) illustrate the influence of perceived education quality and self-efficacy on the career decisions of hospitality students. It is also quite illuminating to consider what role educational curriculum plays in determining students' career paths. The research study aims to build a relationship between personal interest, family support, industry growth, the curriculum's effect, and its influence on students when choosing their careers by focusing on motivational and external factors. Anthony, G. (2020) The Career Aspirations of Undergraduate Hospitality Students in Ghana. He notes that

perceptions about the industry and an unclear picture of potential career pathways serve to deter students from pursuing careers in humble hospitality. This aligns with investigating the impact of personal enthusiasm and field expansion. These findings will inform the formulation of a customized career development program that will aid students' learning journeys with a pathway to success in the evolving hospitality and tourism management landscape.

### Objectives

1. Demographics of First-Year Students as a Hospitality and Tourism Management Career.
2. What motivates first-year students to pursue a career in hospitality and tourism?
3. How do external conditions, like industry expansion and educational curriculum, make students choose hospitality and tourism as their career?
4. What challenges do first-year students have to reaffirm their decision to pursue the industry?
5. How can a career development plan be developed that meets the needs of students and aligns with career aspirations in hospitality and tourism based on the findings?

**II. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study aims to investigate the dimensions of motivation and external factors that influence first-year students in Nueva Ecija to pursue careers in the hospitality and tourism industry. Based on a descriptive research design and an IPO framework, the study explores students' demographic profiles, personal interests, family influences, social perceptions, and the effects of industry expansion and educational curricula. A structured Likert-scale survey was designed to collect data on the extent of agreement with statements relating to personal motivation, family and social influence, industry growth, educational factors, and career expectations. Statistical analyses were conducted on the collected data to identify trends, key factors, and challenges affecting students' career decision-making. The results underscore the importance of intrinsic interest, parental encouragement, industry demand, and hands-on learning opportunities in career decision-making. Other challenges included uncertainty about the long-term outlook and the need for career guidance. The results of this study try to guide the response to developing the career development plan between students to guarantee students' skills required in the hospitality and tourism industry and their expectations of the job market. The study becomes a valuable input in knowing how to support students following their career purposes and how to approach what the industry needs. Al-Jubari, I., & Mosbah, A. (2023) examine the motivational dimensions of students in the hospitality and tourism industry and how these are affected by external factors such as education, family influences, and industry trends, analyzing survey data and using statistical analysis of results.

Chalapati, S., & Leung, R. (2018) found factors that affect first-year students' experiences in education as motivation, curriculum design, and outside factors (such as industry trends), which relate to many concepts in the statement.

**III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

*Table 1 Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Demographic Profile*

Demographic Variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>		
18-20	45	60%
21-23	25	33.3%
24 and above	5	6.7%
<b>Gender</b>		

Male	40	53.3%
Female	35	46.7%
<b>Family Income</b>		
Below Php 20,000	30	40%
Php 20,001-40,000	25	33.3%
Above Php 40,000	20	26.7%
<b>Previous Exposure to Industry</b>		
Yes	50	66.7%
No	25	33.3%

The respondents' demographic information adds to the knowledge regarding the possible demographics they could have been the indicators of their choice of career in hospitality and tourism. 60% of the respondents were between 18 and 20 years old, while 33.3% were between 21 and 23, and only a small group (6.7%) was above 24. The split is almost even in gender, as only 53.3% of the respondents are male and 46.7% female. As for family income, most respondents (40%) have families earning below Php 20,000, which shows a moderate financial background. Remarkably, a high percentage of respondents (66.7%) were previously introduced to the hospitality and tourism industry by traveling, working part-time, or being influenced by other family members. This was a young and engaged demographic, with a more or less even gender split and a fair amount of prior exposure to the industry, all of which potentially shaped their motives and challenges to work in this space. Other researchers, Aziz, Y. A., Hussin, S. R., & Nezakati, H. (2018) also investigate demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and socioeconomic background, which relate to socioeconomic implications of the statement, particularly in addressing if gender is parity between genders based on interest or earlier occupational experience.

*Table 2 Motivational Factors Influencing Career Choice*

Statement	Mean (M)	Verbal Description
I have a strong personal interest in hospitality and tourism.	3.60	Strongly Agree
I believe the hospitality and tourism industry offers promising career opportunities.	3.45	Agree

My passion for travel and service motivated my career choice.	3.50	Agree
I see myself working in the industry for a long time.	3.40	Agree
<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.49</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Legend: **3.50 - 4.00**: Strongly Agree, **2.50 - 3.49**: Agree, **1.50 - 2.49**: Disagree, **1.00 - 1.49**: Strongly Disagree

The survey used to gather the data was beneficial to general research on student motivations and to help readers understand why students choose these careers in hospitality and tourism. With a mean of 3.60, the statement "I have a strong personal interest in hospitality and tourism" also indicates that most students strongly agree that they are personally passionate about the field, which suggests that intrinsic motivation is critical when making decisions. A mean determination of 3.45 was also noted for the statement, "I believe the hospitality and tourism industry offers promising career opportunities," which signifies student agreement that the industry offers a good career prospect.

The response "My love for travel and service drove my career choice" had a mean score of 3.50, indicating that students are motivated by their passion for travel and providing excellent service; it is at the heart of the industry. Moreover, this also reflects the student's "I see myself working in the industry for a considerable time" score of a mean of 3.40, which implies the confidence of students that they will have a sustainable and long-lasting career in hospitality and tourism.

This indicates that when combining all responses, students agree that personal interest, career opportunities, and passion are the motivational factors that heavily impact their decision to choose a career in hospitality and tourism (weighted mean = 3.49).

Findings indicated that personal interest and career opportunities are the most important factors that push students to enter hospitality and tourism. Their excitement for travel and service is a natural fit for the field, and they show poise in making long-term career commitments.

These findings highlight the importance of institutions supporting students' motivations by providing programming that extends to their interests and career aspirations. Farmaki, A. (2018); High-Impact Internship for Tourism and Hospitality Students Career Decision-Making: Impact of Internship Experiences; Motivational factors are found to drive decision-making processes among tourism and hospitality students when considering an internship

experience, focusing on personal interests, career opportunities, and experiential learning.

*Table 3 External Factors Influencing Career Choice*

Statement	Mean (M)	Verbal Description
I chose hospitality and tourism because of the industry's growth.	3.55	Strongly Agree
The wide range of job opportunities influenced my decision.	3.50	Strongly Agree
I believe the hospitality and tourism industry is stable and has long-term prospects.	3.40	Agree
The curriculum offered in my chosen course helped me make my decision.	3.45	Agree
My professors' experiences and teachings motivated me to pursue this field.	3.50	Strongly Agree
<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.48</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Legend: **3.50 - 4.00**: Strongly Agree, **2.50 - 3.49**: Agree, **1.50 - 2.49**: Disagree, **1.00 - 1.49**: Strongly Disagree

The survey results reveal how outside variables shape students' career decisions in hospitality and tourism. With a mean of 3.55, "I decided on hospitality and tourism because of the growth of the industry" implies considerable agreement, highlighting the rapidly growing trend in the industry and its importance in securing a position and a career in the long run. Likewise, "The wide range of job opportunities influenced my decision," which means 3.50, meaning most students agree that the broad range of career options available within the industry heavily affected their decision.

The mean score of 3.40 for the statement "I believe that there are stability and long-term prospects in the hospitality and tourism industry" indicates that students agree that the industry provides stability even in a rapidly changing world. In addition, the statement "The curriculum offered in my chosen course helped me make my decision" had a mean of 3.45, emphasizing how course design and content assisted in the decision process of student career choice. Finally, the statement "My professors' experiences and teachings motivated me to pursue this field" provided a mean of 3.50, indicating that faculty members impact students in educating and encouraging students toward this career path.

The weighted mean of 3.48 thus indicates that students agree to a certain degree that external factors, namely industry growth, job opportunities, stability, educational curriculum, and faculty influence, are significant in their career decision-making process.

Perceived industry growth and opportunities within it as key external factors shaping career decisions. Students include the growth of the industry the job is within and the variety of jobs available as two of the key external factors that impact their career decisions. Also, educational curriculum and professors' experience contribute to their decisions.

It is also worthwhile for educators and industry leaders to reinforce students' aspirations to build careers in hospitality and tourism by highlighting the industry's stability and tailoring such a curriculum toward current workforce demands.

Future Directions for Research Chuang, N. K., Lee, P. C., & Kwok, L. (2020) provide a good understanding of the backing provided to students from industry growth, casual-level careers, and well-being in education as external influencing factors in hospitality and tourism career choices, further highlighting the influences of those in behind the scenes of choice selection.

The challenges of first-year students have to reaffirm their decision to pursue the industry:

Revisiting the decision to establish a career in hospitality and tourism as a first-year student is very common. The biggest concern is uncertainty about long-term job security — particularly in a rapidly changing economy and amid global emergencies like COVID-19. This frequently results in students straying away from the field they originally signed up to pursue. Students also complain about the lack of career guidance and mentorship throughout their studies, pointing to an absence of structure to assist them in relating their area of study with their post-university jobs.

Additionally, students from low-income households face increasing financial obstacles that could prevent them from pursuing specific work or placements. Those fears only grew during the pandemic, which prompted some students to reconsider their career aspirations in the industry.

More applicable/correlational education can also help students do well because they will be interested in their learning. It can pose universities to themselves by establishing a proper career guidance program, mentorship opportunities, skill development programs, workshops, and internships, catering to its challenges.

Sayitoğlu, F. (2019) explores the challenges for hospitality students, such as their experience and barriers to practical training, financial hardships, and career prospects. Interviews are excellent for showing how internships and exposure to real industry play a role in career decisions.

However, in your statement, you mentioned a set of themes that we /particular/all focused on and reacted to. The research explored challenges hospitality education students face, such as career development path certainties, tuition structures, and advocacy for structured mentorship and support (Mooney, S., & Jameson, S. 2018), which points to key student struggles.

A career development plan was developed that meets students' needs and aligns with their career aspirations in hospitality and tourism:

This development proposal addresses key elements to cultivate student growth and preparedness in the hospitality and tourism industry. On campus, students benefit from the dedicated career center, which offers workshops on career planning, resume building, and interview skills to strengthen career guidance, giving students clarity and confidence in their careers. This will be achieved by cooperating with local and overseas organizations for practical exposure where intern and student training opportunities exist. Mentorship programs where students will enter their university years can tap into alums and faculty mentors who could help provide personalized mentoring on academic and career development based on their lived experiences. In some organizations worldwide, we must adapt the curriculum according to industry directions and trends: sustainability, cultural compatibility, and technological evolution. Workshops will also be organized as part of the program to upskill the participants with soft skills like communication, teamwork, leadership, and adaptability. Supported by collaborative initiatives and finances from academia and industry members, these programs can prepare students for careers beyond hospitality audit and management.

Area for Development	Program/Activities	Objectives	Person Involved	Resources Needed	Source of Funds	Time Frame	Expected Results/Outcomes
Career Guidance and Counseling	Organize career planning workshops, resume building, and interview skills sessions.	To provide personalized career guidance and address students' concerns.	Career counselors, faculty, external speakers	Workshop materials, counseling space, audio-visual aids	University budget, external sponsors	Every semester	Students gain clarity in career paths and confidence in job readiness.
Industry Exposure and Internships	Develop partnerships with local and international hospitality organizations for internships.	To offer practical experience and prepare students for industry demands.	Faculty, industry professionals, internship coordinators	Partnership agreements, internship coordinators, training materials	Industry partnerships, university grants	Ongoing throughout the academic year	Students acquire hands-on experience and understand industry demands.
Mentorship Programs	Connect students with alumni and faculty mentors for guidance.	To guide students in academic and career planning through experienced mentors.	Alumni, faculty mentors, industry experts	Mentor database, communication tools	Alumni contributions, university funding	Initiate during the first semester and continue year-round	Students receive tailored guidance, boosting academic and career outcomes.
Curriculum Enhancement	Update the curriculum to include sustainability, cultural sensitivity, and technology advancements.	To ensure the curriculum aligns with current industry trends and demands.	Curriculum developers, faculty members, industry consultants	Updated teaching materials, industry reports, technology resources	University funds, government grants	Review annually, implement changes in the following academic year	Curriculum meets industry standards, enhancing student preparedness.
Skill Development Workshops	Conduct workshops on communication, teamwork, leadership, and adaptability.	To enhance students' soft skills critical for hospitality and tourism.	Workshop facilitators, industry professionals	Workshop materials, event space, training equipment	University budget, private sponsorships	Quarterly workshops	Students improve soft skills, fostering success in the industry.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finally, this study determines what factors can be explored, considering the first-year student in Nueva Ecija's choice for a career in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry. The research is based on a combination of internal and external drivers that influence career decisions within the industry. The primary drivers are that the working student loves to travel and serve people and that they see a thriving industry with great opportunity.

The results suggest that students find the sector stable, with a long-term impact and guaranteed work opportunities, which aligns with their preference for a sustainable and rewarding career. This study also highlights the significant influences of family and school faculty. Upon being asked, the students thanked their training programs and the formal guidance they received from their teachers and programs, and they acknowledged that the industry was growing.

However, financial challenges, such as lack of exposure and inadequate guidance due to global impulses

like COVID-19, can destabilize their motivation. Therefore, the study recommends the importance of a mentorship and formal career development plan structured to meet the needs of both the students and the industry. It includes career guidance and counseling, experiential learning from internships, mentorship, and curriculum adjustment to reflect current talent needs.

Therefore, workshops to improve student communication, leadership, and teamwork skills are fundamental to preparing an adequate workforce.

In conclusion, while compelling career motivation is found in the first-year students in Nueva Ecija, these recurrent challenges necessitate stakeholders' cooperation in a well-structured industry talent training plan. Such a plan will ensure that the industry has the requisite talents and is well-motivated toward career achievement. This will happen when the learning institutions motivate their students to achieve the integral paths toward the industry they desire to develop.

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