

# WHY DO STUDENTS DECIDE TO STUDY CULINARY ARTS AND WHY DON'T THEY MAINTAIN INTEREST IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT?

**Fadzillah Mohd Shariff\*, Mohd Zain Kutut and Hamizad Abdul Hadi**  
*Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Puncak Alam*  
MALAYSIA

*Corresponding email: fshariff@salam.uitm.edu.my*

## ABSTRACT

*This paper reports the results of the research project (IRDC) into factors influencing students in advancing education in culinary arts at Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, UiTM. In other words, this study examines the moderating variables that influence a student decision to enter Culinary Arts program and subsequent interest towards industry employment. All students who enrolled at three levels of the Diploma culinary arts program (part one of first year, part three of second year and part five of third year) from Shah Alam, Penang and Dungun campuses was surveyed at the beginning of the semester and followed them through a second round survey at the beginning of another semester. Students' career choice and the decision of taking culinary arts program are influenced by various factors ranging from parents, immediate family, and glamorous image to advertisement on television, brochures, and newspaper. Among all, parents are found to be the strongest influence on the individual students' decision. Nevertheless, despite continuous encouragement, many students are becoming less positive in interest toward employment in the hotel industry and reduced intention to pursue such a career. These weakened employment intentions have given varying consequences and implications for the students, hospitality institutions, industry, and government.*

**Keywords:** *culinary arts, hotel, employment, interest, and commitment*

## INTRODUCTION

As a developing nation, Malaysia perceived the tourism and hospitality industry are providing an impetus for economic and social growth for the country. It is now considered as the greatest expansion industry compared to any other sector of the economy (Malaysian Economic Report, 2001/ 2002). The tourism and hospitality industry now has to become the second largest income generator in Malaysia (Malaysian Economic Report, 2002/ 2003). This is paralleling to the commitment from the government and the private sector, which contributes to the increased in the numbers of tourist arrivals to Malaysia. For instance, the international visitors' arrivals were increasing from 7.9 million in 1999 to 12 million in 2004 and generating RM 12 billion in foreign exchange earnings (MTPB, 2005). This growth not only raised the income for the country but created vast employment opportunities in the accommodations (hotels) and food and beverage operation such as restaurants, canteens, cafeterias, cafés and fast food outlets (Malaysia Economic Report 2001/2002).

In the verge of meeting the supply and demand, there recently been considerable growth and proliferation of hospitality institutions and programs in Malaysia (MOE, 2003). One of the domains of hospitality career education programs is culinary arts. This career program is intended to train individuals for a culinary career, professional chefs and foodservice professional in the hotels, restaurants foodservice and related industries. The offering and expansion of culinary arts program in the public institutions (UiTM, KUITHO, and Polytechnics) and private institutions (PTPL, INTI, KDU, Stamford, Taylor's, OUM, Nilai, Olympia and much more) strengthen this notion (MOE, 2003). Culinary education, in fact, is now playing a significant role in supporting the human resources need and development within the hospitality and foodservice industry in Malaysia. At some institutions, the student's enrolment have increased two fold and even higher. According to figures released by the Ministry of Education, the annual students' enrolment in the culinary arts program has increased from approximately 1000 in 1999 to about 1500 in 2001 (MOE, 2002).

Nevertheless, despite the increased in students' enrolment many new culinary arts graduates were found not pursuing a career in the hotel industry upon completion of their studies. Of those graduates who enter the hotel industry, many soon decide not to pursue a full-time, long-term career in this industry (Zahari, 2005). This situation has given serious education and economic consequences to the country. There has been considerable debate in recent years especially in the developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States about the "mismatch" between hospitality management education and the needs of the hospitality and tourism industry. In particular, there have been allegations of disproportionate "wastage" of hospitality graduates taking employment in other sectors of the economy (Purcell, 1993).

The industry has accused hospitality institutions of producing poorly prepared graduates with unrealistic expectations of an industry where practical operational competencies are paramount (Buchicchio, 1991; Mitchell, 1991; Brotherton, 1993). Educators conversely have suggested that the hospitality industry has been guilty of old-fashioned

attitudes and amateur approaches to recruitment and management in general, replicating well-entrenched customs and practices rather than appropriately sophisticated vision (Purcell, 1993; Purcell and Quinn, 1996).

Some studies in hospitality education have focussed on the initial entry phase of hospitality programs and students' attitudes and perception of careers in the hospitality industry in general (Umbriet and Diaz, 1994; Davidson and Tideswell, 1998; Cothran and Combrink, 1999; Jenkins, 2001). Nevertheless, there has been a very limited analysis of the relationship between students' commitment and what moderates their decision to enter the culinary arts program, and this does not appear to have been widely researched in Malaysia at least according to the published literature. Thus, this study is to investigate the factors influencing students in advancing their education in the culinary arts program at the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, UiTM and subsequent interest commitment towards chosen career.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Longitudinal study approached using repeated measured was chosen for this study. All students who enrolled at three levels of the Diploma Culinary Arts program (part one of the first year, part 3 of the second year and part 5 of the third year) was surveyed at the beginning of the semester and followed through a second round survey at the beginning of another the semester. Students from UiTM Shah Alam and two other branch campuses (Penang and Dungun) were selected as a survey sample. It should be noted that no new intake of students (part one) in Shah Alam campus started from semester June 2005 as the responsibility was given to branch campuses. Therefore, the respondents for a new student were relied on Penang and Dungun campuses. While planning the style and type of questionnaire format, it was decided to use closed-ended questions using a numerical Likert-type of scale. Seven points Likert scale form was chosen in this study to give more refinement option to the respondents and expected them to choose one of the response options.

A series of questions were designed to measure the respondents' degree of agreement or disagreement with various statements to assess relevant attitudes. The survey questionnaire was divided into three major sections in the first round and two sections in the second round. Each section contained questions addressing the variables to suit the research objectives. Section A was designed using nominal scales and focussed on students' demographic background such gender, ethnicity, religion, level of the study program. Section B was intended to identify and measure the importance of various factors moderating student choice of culinary arts program and educational aspects. A total of seventeen items were used for students to report their levels of agreement. In section C, twenty-one items were concerned with interest and commitment to hotel industry career. The main purpose was to examine students' career intention and commitment toward the hotel industry and changes over time of individual students. Items in this section required the respondents to indicate their level of agreement with various statements about career commitment and interest in hotel industry career.

The survey was conducted in two stages. In the first stage a questionnaire was administered during the first week of the semester commencing in June 2005. This was immediately before the final year students (semester five of the third year) going out for their four months' practical experience. The timing of this round allowed the collection of data representing a preliminary picture of various influences on student attitudes, intention, and commitment towards a career in the hospitality industry.

For the second stage, the process was repeated in January 2006 using the same questionnaire. The process would thus allow measurement of the extent and direction of change in attitudes about and commitment to students' chosen careers. The data from the second round would obviously include the effect of any supervised work experience or other experience (e.g. part-time work) students may have undertaken during the inter-break at the end of July 2005 or in the evenings or weekends. It was intended to attempt to measure specific impact from work experience in term of the quality of that experience. Similarly, the teaching process was not investigated. Rather the observation of change ratings it was taken as a measure of the overall impact. Three hundred (300) useable questionnaires were collected from all campuses in both rounds consisted of 107 of the first year, 103 of the second year and 90 of the third year students. Both round datasets was easily matched without any major difficulty. Table 1 shows the breakdown in the number of respondents in each of the two survey periods

**Table 1: Showing the number of Diploma in Culinary Arts students who responded in each survey period, shown by cohorts, campuses, matched cases.**

Program	Institutions	June 2005	January 2006	
			Matched	% of matched
Dip. Culinary Arts (Part 1) YR 1	MARA University of Technology, SA	*		
	MARA University of Technology, CD	53	53	100%
	MARA University of Technology, PP	54	54	100%
	Total			
Dip. Culinary Arts (Part 3) YR 2	MARA University of Technology, SA	37	37	100%
	MARA University of Technology, CD	38	38	100%
	MARA University of Technology, PP	28	28	100%
	Total			
Dip. Culinary Arts (Part 5) YR 3	MARA University of Technology, SA	37	37	100%
	MARA University of Technology, CD	31	31	100%
	MARA University of Technology, PP	22	22	100%
	Total of all Respondents	300	300	100%

*Note: \* No new intake of students (part one) in Shah Alam campus for semester June 2005*

## RESPONDENT PROFILES

Table 2 reports the sex, ethnicity, religion and level of the program of the respondents. As can be seen, the number of females in the sample exceeded male respondents with 58.7 per cent against 41.3 per cent. This proportion is line with the ratio of the student population in most of public higher institutions in Malaysia. It also appears that both female and male students give equal importance to gaining their academic qualifications and completing the programs in which they are enrolled. About ethnicity, Malays constituted around 94.7 per cent of the total respondents, with only 5.3 from other ethnic groups. The higher proportion of Malay student is expected since UITM offered courses only for Bumiputra and the other ethnic is mostly Sabah and Sarawak. The rate for religion was similar in that Islam as an official religion represented about 95.3 per cent and 4.7 per cent Christian. On the level of the program, 35.7 per cent of the respondents in this sample were in the first year exceeding the second year (34.3 per cent) and 30.0 per cent in the third year.

**Table 2: Showing the number and percentage (%) of overall respondents reported by gender, ethnicity, and religion in the first and second round data collection**

Variables	Round	Diploma In Culinary Arts	
		n	%
Gender			
Male	1 and 2	176	58.7
Female		124	41.3
Ethnicity			
Malay	1 and 2	284	94.7
Others		16	5.3
Religion			
Muslim	1 and 2	286	95.3
Christian		14	4.7
Level of Program			
Year 1	1 and 2	107	35.7
Year 2	1 and 2	103	34.3
Year 3	1 and 2	90	30.0

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

The individual ratings from all responses in three level of study program to each of the items used in each round of data collection are reported. Tables 3 and 4 report the overall mean scores for all respondents for each round from the result of analysis identifying significant differences between each level of the study program. Also reported are the results of analysis identifying statistically significant changes between the first and second round for each item. This analysis was undertaken using the paired sample t- test procedure. The intention was to determine the existence of changes in students' interest in the hotel industry. The levels of significance identified by paired sample t-test procedure are shown in the following tables by mean of asterisks.

## Influences and educational aspects

Table two revealed that there are no distinct differences between first, second and third-year students relating to career influences as no statistically significant differences were identified in both round surveys.

**Table 1: Statistically significant item differences between different levels of the program were identified, the mean scores and level of significance.**

Items	Yr	n	First round (mean)	Sig	Second Round (mean)	Sig
My parents encourage me to study culinary arts	Y 1	107	5.06	.428	5.56*	.763
	Y 2	103	4.90		5.40*	
	Y 3	90	5.31		5.34*	
I was very satisfied with the offer of a place on this culinary arts program	Y 1	107	5.56	.389	5.50*	.119
	Y 2	103	5.13		5.06*	
	Y 3	90	5.45		5.14*	
The glamorous image of chef career influenced to take this course	Y 1	107	5.12	.236	5.16*	.201
	Y 2	103	4.66		4.75*	
	Y 3	90	4.51		4.64*	
My close friends encouraged me to study culinary arts	Y 1	107	4.81	.099	5.09	.818
	Y 2	103	4.00		4.97	
	Y 3	90	4.02		5.14	
I strongly believe that whatever I learn in this course will be useful in my future career	Y 1	107	5.90	.432	4.50*	.722
	Y 2	103	5.53		4.86*	
	Y 3	90	5.94		4.99*	
I strongly believe I knew enough about the hospitality industry before I chose this course	Y 1	107	4.43	.113	4.37*	.142
	Y 2	103	4.20		4.15*	
	Y 3	90	4.77		4.64*	
I think culinary arts program offer more practical skill training than academic work	Y 1	107	5.15	.447	4.85*	.825
	Y 2	103	5.56		5.18*	
	Y 3	90	5.22		5.15*	
My brothers/ sisters encouraged me to study culinary arts	Y 1	107	4.93	.059	5.00	.673
	Y 2	103	4.30		4.96	
	Y 3	90	3.82		4.74	
My interest in culinary arts comes from my upbringing	Y 1	107	4.28	.721	5.13	.538
	Y 2	103	4.13		4.93	
	Y 3	90	4.48		6.48	
I will use this course as a stepping stone to enter into an advance management program	Y 1	107	5.31	.966	5.28	.634
	Y 2	103	5.40		5.23	
	Y 3	90	5.34		4.94	
My SPM result only qualified me for this course	Y 1	107	3.59	.708	4.50*	.419
	Y 2	103	3.83		4.60*	
	Y 3	90	3.42		4.80*	
I chose this course because of opportunities to study overseas	Y 1	107	5.21	.794	4.71	.080
	Y 2	103	5.30		5.26	
	Y 3	90	5.17		5.22	
Hospitality course provide more nurturing and caring environment than other courses	Y 1	107	5.15	.999	4.90*	.101
	Y 2	103	5.16		4.62	
	Y 3	90	5.17		4.33	
I choose this course because I don't have	Y 1	107	3.87	.477	4.56	.839

any other option	Y 2	103	4.00		4.80	
	Y 3	90	4.14		4.54	
I was influence by cooking program shown in television	Y 1	107	3.65	.193	5.03*	.200
	Y 2	103	3.81		4.57*	
	Y 3	90	3.33		4.55*	
If I do not get a job as a result of doing this course, getting formal education will still worthwhile	Y 1	107	5.21	.108	5.84	.167
	Y 2	103	4.90		5.13	
	Y 3	90	5.34		4.74	
I got information about culinary arts through advertisements on television, brochures and newspaper	Y 1	107	5.09	.771	5.21	.772
	Y 2	103	4.66		5.40	
	Y 3	90	4.67		5.20	

*Notes:*

1. *Statistically significant different between level of program shown in "sig" are based on ANOVA procedure*
2. *Statistically significant changes between round are based on paired sample t- test and level of significant are asterisk (\* =  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ )*
3. *Mean scores derive from paired sample t- test is not reported*

Students of all cohorts reported that they were influenced by various factors ranging from parents, immediate family, and glamorous image to advertisement on television, brochures, and newspaper in choosing culinary arts program. Nevertheless, inspection of the mean scores revealed that parents' encouragement was rated as far more important by all cohorts compared to other influences items in the first round. In fact, over time all students reported that parents still continued to support or encourage them to remain in the program. This can be seen through the mean scores that increased in the second round for parent encouragement from 5.06 to 5.56 ( $p < 0.05$ ) for the first-year, from 4.90 to 5.40 ( $p < 0.05$ ) for the second- year and from 5.31 to 5.34 ( $p < 0.05$ ) for the third- year. This result indicates that students agree with the statement that parents are obviously more influential than "friends" or "other influences." On the other hand, this implies that despite other factors alluring them into the program as well students still seeking advice from their parents for a final decision.

Another interesting result perhaps related to the item whether examination results only qualified respondents for a hospitality course. The interest lies in the fact that the differences are not consistent between rounds. All cohorts disagreed with this item in the first round. However, the scores reversed in the second round with all cohorts agreeing with the statement. This can be clearly seen through the increased of the mean scores from 3.59 to 4.50 for the first year, 3.83 to 4.60 for the second year and 3.42 to 4.80 for the third year with the significant level at  $p < 0.05$ . This is further supported with the increased of rating for all cohorts in item relating to choosing the course because of no other options ( $p < 0.05$ ). This fit the notion that some students enrolled in culinary arts program, not because of their long career interest or career choice but probably depend on their SPM result or was offered the course by Central Unit of University (UPU).

The changes in the mean scores in most items related to educational aspects between rounds also provide some useful insight. Of these, the more interesting perhaps is the slightly reduced rating of all year cohorts for items ' I strongly believe that whatever I

learn in this course will be useful in my future' and 'culinary arts courses provide a more nurturing and caring environment than other courses.' For example, first-year student slightly altered their perception that culinary arts provides a nurturing and caring program with the mean score decreasing from 5.15 to 4.90,  $p < 0.05$ . Further statistically significant changes over time are noted related to items dealing with 'satisfied with the offer of a place on the hospitality course' and 'culinary arts courses offer more practical skill training than academic work' with significance level at  $p < 0.05$ . A shift took place with mean scores consistently declining for all cohorts from the first to the second round. These probably reflect students' initial anxieties and courage with subsequent realization that the course is relatively demanding and involves more physical work with the combination of practical and academic work.

Statistically significant changes from first to second round is also shown in regard to the items dealing with students' prior knowledge about the hospitality industry before choosing the course, with mean scores declining for all cohort ( $p < 0.05$ ), influenced by the glamorous image of chef career (mean scores increased for all cohort with  $p < 0.05$ ) and influenced by cooking program in television (mean scores increased for all cohorts with  $p < 0.05$ ). This seems to show that students have come to realize that their general knowledge of the hospitality industry was very limited before enrolling in the program. However, this argument should only hold true for first-year students given that second year and third-year students are all more experienced than the first year, and given this item relates to a time before entry into the program. Consequently, the average ratings for the second year and third year students should be stable as they had already been in the program for at least a year or more. Nevertheless, examination of the mean reveals that the third year students had the least decline in mean score in most of the items in this section. This fits well with the idea that these groups were experienced and more knowledgeable and perhaps had well-formed expectations about educational program compared to those in the first and second year. An alternative explanation is that these students' views have simply stabilized more during their studies. On the other hand, this result also indicates that the first year students, in particular, may have been less informed before entry into the program.

## **Level of interest and commitment toward career intention**

About the items in this section (Table 4), nine out of twenty-one items showed statistically significant differences between students in a different level of the study program. Apparently, the differences appeared mostly among the first year students. Of particular items, first-year students placed a greater level of agreement (5.71,  $p = .027$ ) than the second year (5.62) and third year students (5.45) on item 'culinary arts is an exciting and challenging environment to work in'. The first year students also started out giving somewhat higher ratings to wanting to work in the industry for the whole of their life (4.88,  $p = .013$ ) compared to (4.72) for second year and (4.54) for the third year), keen to work in the industry.

( 5.34, 5.27 and 5.20 respectively,  $p = .023$ ), being committed to a career in hospitality (5.19, 5.07 and 5.03 respectively,  $p = .013$ ), will accept almost any job to stay in hospitality industry (4.82, 4.60 and 4.50 respectively,  $p = .029$ ) and believing their



effort will be well rewarded (5.50, 5.30 and 5.29 respectively,  $p = .038$ ). They were also stronger in their belief that the hospitality industry provides more employment opportunities than other industries (5.20, 5.03 and 5.08 respectively,  $p = .019$ ) and willing to stay in the industry if it provides them with best career option (5.82, 5.80 and 5.77 respectively,  $p = 0.35$ ) and believing that culinary arts give brighter career development (5.94, 5.07 and 4.57 respectively,  $p = .000$ ). Nevertheless, these differences were eroded over the period of the research as both all cohorts decreased their rating such that mean scores became more similar in the second round. This change resulted in no statistically significant differences between the cohorts. As there is no consistent pattern exhibited between other cohorts, the initial differences among first-year students in the first round are considered temporary. From these outcomes, it seems that first-year students at an entry to the hospitality programs while having somewhat differing views adjust to fairly common perceptions with the seniors.

While there is an absence of any statistically significant differences in the second round, there is a clear pattern of change that suggests progressively reduced career interest. This can be seen through the changes in the patterns of mean scores between rounds. Although, all cohorts are still positive in their views they consistently show significant decreases in their ratings for a majority of items. The clearest identification of this pattern can be found in the declining ratings for items related to expectations to work in hospitality most of their working life ( $p < 0.01$ ), being committed to a career in hotel ( $p < 0.01$ ), willingness to stay in hotel industry if it provides the best career option ( $p < 0.05$ ) and being less sure about accepting almost any job to stay in the hotel industry ( $p < 0.01$ ). In fact, this was further supported by the fact that they had the greatest decline in mean scores about hotel providing greater promotional opportunities and their keenness to work in the industry with the shift being statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ )

**Table 4: Statistically significant item differences between different levels of the program were identified, the mean scores and level of significance.**

Items	YR	n	1 st round (mean)	Sig	2nd round (mean)	Sig
I am committed to a career in hotel industry	Y 1	32	5.19	.018	4.91**	*.165
	Y 2	30	4.93		4.63**	
	Y 3	35	5.03		4.97**	
I expect to work in the hotel industry most of my working life	Y 1	32	4.88	.013	4.57**	.198
	Y 2	30	4.72		5.53**	
	Y 3	35	4.54		4.50**	
I expect this course will only qualify me to do a specialised job in the hotel industry	Y 1	32	4.03	.253	4.38	.425
	Y 2	30	4.47		4.87	
	Y 3	35	3.69		4.51*	
I will stay in this industry if it provides me the best career option	Y 1	32	5.82	.035	5.66*	.098
	Y 2	30	5.80		4.67*	
	Y 3	35	5.77		5.43*	
Disallow females employees of using “tudung” affect my career progression in hotel industry	Y 1	32	4.67	.899	5.00*	.696
	Y 2	30	5.23		5.40*	
	Y 3	35	5.45		5.90*	
I will accept almost any job to stay in the	Y 1	32	4.82	.029	4.74*	.120
	Y 2	30	4.60		4.50*	

hotel industry	Y 3	35	4.60		4.56*	
The hotel industry is an exciting and challenging environment to work in	Y 1	32	5.71	.027	5.22	.768
	Y 2	30	5.62		5.20	
	Y 3	35	5.45		5.40	
I will readily take a job in another industry if it offers slightly more money	Y 1	32	4.90	.971	5.02	.528
	Y 2	30	4.70		5.57	
	Y 3	35	4.97		5.29**	
I am still as keen to work in the industry as when I first chose this training program	Y 1	32	5.34	.023	4.84*	*.421
	Y 2	30	5.27		4.20*	
	Y 3	35	5.20		5.23*	
I am very satisfied with my choice of career in hotel industry	Y 1	32	5.31	.218	5.28	.625
	Y 2	30	5.027		5.13	
	Y 3	35	5.23		5.40	
I don't really mind which industry I work in, as long as the job is interesting	Y 1	32	5.72	.231	5.03	.596
	Y 2	30	5.17		5.37	
	Y 3	35	5.40		5.20	
Jobs in the hotel industry involve harder work than I previously realised	Y 1	32	5.03	.568	5.28	.148
	Y 2	30	5.33		5.87	
	Y 3	35	5.06		5.19*	
Religious beliefs will help career progression in hotel industry	Y 1	32	4.69	.904	4.45	.781
	Y 2	30	4.43		4.03	
	Y 3	35	4.30		3.89	
If I put a lot of effort into my hotel career I will be well rewarded	Y 1	32	5.50	.038	5.50	.076
	Y 2	30	5.30		4.97	
	Y 3	35	5.29		4.83	
I think hotel industry provides greater promotional opportunity than other industries	Y 1	32	5.28	.896	5.00*	.000
	Y 2	30	5.07		5.04*	
	Y 3	35	5.14		4.89*	
I believe the hotel industry provides more employment opportunities than other industries	Y 1	32	5.20	.019	4.75	.566
	Y 2	30	5.03		4.43	
	Y 3	35	5.08		4.80	
Culinary art give brighter career development as many people told me	Y 1	32	5.94	.000	4.94	.321
	Y 2	30	5.07		4.63	
	Y 3	35	4.57		4.32	
I definitely work for long in as culinarian	Y 1	32	6.19	.773	5.86	.543
	Y 2	30	6.13		5.47	
	Y 3	35	5.89		5.61	
I will work for a few years in this industry	Y 1	32	5.66	.133	5.97	.100
	Y 2	30	5.63		5.93	
	Y 3	35	5.11		5.80**	
I will definitely change my career	Y 1	32	5.38	.241	4.06	.352
	Y 2	30	5.27		4.93	
	Y 3	35	5.66		5.14	
I am not really interested to work as a chef and might find job in other industries	Y 1	32	5.22	.479	4.66	.422
	Y 2	30	5.37		4.97	
	Y 3	35	4.97		4.26	

## Notes:

1. Statistically significant different between level of program shown in "sig" are based on ANOVA procedure
2. Statistically significant changes between round are based on paired sample t- test and level of significant are asterisk (\* =  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ )
3. Mean scores derive from paired sample t- test is not reported

Also, students in particular among the third year students are signalling quite clearly their much higher likelihood of switching to another industry when money is involved. This perhaps best explains the increased of the mean scores for the item 'ready to take a job in another industry if it offers slightly more money' and 'working only a few years in the industry' for third-year students in the second round ( $p < 0.01$ ). This is at least partially explained this group reporting an increased belief that hotel industry work is very stressful and pressured ( $p < 0.05$ ) and involves harder work ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Another interesting result from this analysis is dealing with the issue of wearing "tudung" among the females' employees in the hotel industry. There was increased in the mean score in the second round, and the change distribution is statistically significant (from 4.45 increasing to 5.00 for the first year, from 5.23 increasing to 5.40 for the second year and from 5.45 increasing to 5.90,  $p < 0.01$ ). This shift shows that more students in particular among the females are believing that by employment in the industry they are not allowed of wearing "tudung", especially in the customers' contact area. This result, in fact, fits the reality in Malaysia that most hotel organization commonly disallows their females Muslim employees of wearing such attire.

The overall result of this analysis clearly indicates that there is no convincing evidence that the perceptions of first-year students distinguish them from second and third-year students as a very small number of statistically significant differences appear among them. However, there is evidence to support that growing up or maturation process and increased more exposure in the programs, developing understanding and gaining greater knowledge and insight about the industry, they are becoming less positive toward the hotel as a long-term career option. In other words, as student progress in their study program, they not only adjust the false impression they at entry but become more realistic and serious about what they expect to get out from their educational program.

## **CONCLUSION**

By this research findings, students' career choice and the decision of taking culinary arts program are influenced by various factors ranging from parents, immediate family, and glamorous image to advertisement on television, brochures, and newspaper. However, parents are found to be the strongest influence on the individual students' decision in advancing their education in the culinary arts program. In fact, parents still continued to support or encourage them to remain in the program. Nevertheless, despite continuous encouragement many students are becoming less positive in interest toward employment in the hotel industry and reduced intention to pursue such a career. They became less committed to a chosen career, less keen to work and less certain that would be prepared to accept any job in order remain in the hotel industry. One of the main reasons is that many students seem to enroll in the program with inadequate knowledge and possibly unrealistic perception of the employment condition in the industry. Also, the issue of attire "tudung" among the females' employees, lack of interest at the entry of the program may also cause weakened employment intentions among the culinary arts students.

The above scenario highlights several important points, which should be noted and addressed by educators (Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management), UiTM, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Tourism and Industry at large if there are to be more qualified students to career in the local hotel industry. On the part of educators (lecturers in the faculty), they should concentrate on findings way of engendering more realistic perceptions of the industry among the new students to at least moderate the potential levels of cognitive dissonance. This can be done, for instance, dissemination of more direct information about the nature of the industry work through a session of practical orientation before commencement of the program. This could also be achieved by seminar introducing working life in the industry using industry personnel (ex-students). By doing these, it would at least help students to form more realistic and lower expectations concerning hotel job so that they may feel less disappointed as they progress through the program.

Also, UiTM should allow the faculties to re- use the interview process as a screening measure to select more suitable candidates for the hospitality program to at least prevent the program decision being based on chance rather than choice. Thus, the current student selection system practices for public higher tertiary education, which determined by Centre Unit of University should be supplemented by interviews organized by the faculty. The same approach should also be adopted in certain faculties whenever appropriate.

In order to increase students interest, UiTM also should re- activate academic missions for all faculties (practiced before) together with Ministry education and school counselors to educate the potential students and parents, especially in rural areas secondary schools to understand more thoroughly the types of career potential in the industries. As previously mentioned, parents are found to be the most influential individual and very supportive of students' pursuit of a career. This can be done through a forum, seminar, career day or other means. On the part of Ministry of Education, more vocational secondary schools focusing of on hospitality related study and other skill-based courses should be built more to early nurturing the potential candidates. By doing this, more qualified students with positive attitudes will pursue their study in a culinary arts program and continuing intention towards a career in the hotel industry.

Finally, on the matter of attire (tudung) for Muslim females' employees, it is essential for UiTM, Ministry Education, Ministry of Tourism and industry practitioners to discuss this serious issue for the benefit of the nation to at least some decent dressing code could be developed. Settling this issue, more participation among the females' graduates from UiTM pursuing a career in hotel industry can be assured. In sum, it strongly believes that developing such a commonality of approach the UiTM missions of producing more qualified Bumiputera involvement in the local hotel industry will be achieved.

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