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# Evaluation of Hospitality Curricula, Industry Skillset Expectations and Student Preparedness

Jennifer Aarons

Nova Southeastern University, [jen062019@gmail.com](mailto:jen062019@gmail.com)

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Evaluation of Hospitality Curricula, Industry Skillset Expectations  
and Student Preparedness

by  
Jennifer Aarons

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the  
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University  
2019

## **Approval Page**

This applied dissertation was submitted by Jennifer Aarons under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

David Weintraub, EdD  
Committee Chair

Jo Campbell, EdD  
Committee Member

Kimberly Durham, PsyD  
Dean

## Statement of Original Work

I declare the following:

I have read the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Responsibility as described in the *Student Handbook* of Nova Southeastern University. This applied dissertation represents my original work, except where I have acknowledged the ideas, words, or material of other authors.

Where another author's ideas have been presented in this applied dissertation, I have acknowledged the author's ideas by citing them in the required style.

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May 23, 2019

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## **Abstract**

Evaluation of Hospitality Curricula, Industry Skillset Expectations and Student Preparedness, 2018: Jennifer Aarons, 2019: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education. Keywords: career skillset, curriculum design, higher education, hospitality, tourism

Colleges and universities have been burdened with the task of preparing students for a successful career in the hospitality industry. As the industry expectations of hospitality and tourism management degree graduates' change, postsecondary education institutions need to respond to the employment demands of the industry. Also, the global expansion of the hospitality and tourism industry requires that institutions evaluate their degree programs to ensure that graduates possess the essential skillsets to thrive in a global economy.

The purpose of this research is to determine if postsecondary institutions are adequately preparing hospitality and tourism management graduates with the necessary skillsets needed for successful careers in the industry. The expected outcome provides suggestions for curriculum improvement for hospitality degree programs.

This study was based on research previously conducted on the skillset expectations of hospitality industry leaders. Using a cross-sectional survey method, a modified version of a survey used for industry leaders in 2014 will ask recent hospitality program graduates to rank course subjects in order of relevance. Over 100 graduates from hospitality degree programs at two universities were invited to complete an online survey. The data results from graduates were compared to the results offered by the industry leaders. The course subject rankings by both groups were the same for the three highest ranked courses, indicating that all stakeholders support the importance of internships, leadership courses, and effective preparation for industry employment. The results did demonstrate some differences, especially in financial course subjects and human resources and diversity topics. The findings support the continued need for hospitality curriculum developers to work with industry leaders to determine the skillsets desired and create course programs that balance the theoretical and vocational needs.

## Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Nature of Problem.....	1
Evidence of Problem.....	1
Background and Significance of Problem .....	3
Deficiencies in the Evidence.....	4
Audience .....	5
Purpose of Study .....	5
Definition of Terms.....	6
Summary .....	7
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	8
Introduction.....	8
The State of the Hospitality Sector .....	9
History of Hospitality Degree Programs in Higher Education .....	11
Learning Theories as Applied to Hospitality Programs.....	13
Experiential Learning.....	14
Impact on Student Comprehension .....	15
Hospitality Program Design.....	16
Analysis of Hospitality Graduate Skillset Needs.....	24
Perceptions of Hospitality Programs by Student Graduates .....	29
Implications for Further Research .....	31
Summary .....	31
Research Questions.....	32
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	33
Participants.....	34
Instrument .....	35
Procedures .....	38
Data Analysis .....	39
Chapter 4: Results .....	41
Introduction .....	41
Demographic Characteristics .....	41
Data Analysis .....	42
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	46
Introduction .....	46
Interpretation of Findings.....	46
HTM Graduate Course Recommendations .....	51
Limitations of Study.....	51
Future Research.....	52
Recommendations for Local Practice .....	53
Summary .....	54

References .....	56
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## Appendices

A Permission to Adapt Survey Instrument .....	64
B 2004 Gursoy & Swanger Survey Results Table 1 .....	66
C 2012 Gursoy, Rahman & Swanger Survey Results Table 2 .....	69
D Survey Instrument.....	71
E Type of Business Where Participants Work .....	78
F Ranking of Course Subjects in Order of Importance by HTM Graduates.....	80
G Comparison of Means Between HTM Graduates and Industry Leaders .....	83

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Nature of the Problem**

Students graduating from hospitality and tourism management programs are unprepared to meet the needs of the industry. Hospitality graduates have indicated that the subject areas they felt need the most improvement are similar to those identified by employers as very important; professional management skills, leadership skills, human resource management, team building and crisis management (Wang, & Tsai, 2014). The difference in industry expectations versus what hospitality graduates are learning indicates a skillset gap that should be addressed. The top five hospitality-specific course subjects as identified by employers include internships/industry experience, preparation for industry employment, leadership, hospitality management and organization and ethics (Min, Swanger, & Gursoy, 2016).

The effect of the hospitality and tourism industry on the global economy is forcing college administrators to evaluate their degree programs to ensure that graduates are well-prepared for successful careers in this industry.

### **Evidence of the Problem**

This industry is forecasted to continue expanding globally, which creates an on-going need for businesses seeking graduates with employable skills. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2017), direct travel and tourism gross domestic product (GDP) will continue to increase over the next decade. Research by the WTTC (2018) determined that total travel and tourism contributions to the global GDP reached \$8.3bn, or 10.4% of the global GDP in 2017 (WTTC, 2018). In 2018, global tourism increased by 5.6% (WTTC, 2019). Industry forecasts indicate continued growth



globally to achieve 1.8 billion international travelers by 2030 (WTTC, 2019b). With such sustained growth, this will lead to an increase in employment needs by the hospitality industry. In 2014, the Global Wellness Institute (GWI) stated that the tourism industry employed 100 million people worldwide. The United States Department of Labor (DOL) Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) published statistics indicating that between 2009 and 2018, the employment in the leisure and hospitality industry in the United States has increased by an average annual rate of 2.8% (2019). Preliminary data through March of 2019 indicates the continued growth of an additional 0.8% over the December 2018 employment number (2019). In December 2015, the BLS released employment projections in all major industries through 2024. This data forecasts an increase of jobs in the leisure and hospitality industry to increase from 15.6 million in 2014 to 16.4 million in 2024, with an annual rate of change of 0.6% (U.S. DOL BLS, 2017b). In 2016, the number of lodging managers in the United States was 47,800 with projected growth to almost 50,000 by the year 2026 (U.S. DOL BLS, 2018).

These statistics demonstrate the expected domestic and international growth of the hospitality industry, and specifically management positions within the industry. This continued need for the industry to fill management positions puts added pressure on colleges and universities to produce students with employable skills. Research has demonstrated that hospitality employers continue to criticize hospitality programs (Min et al., 2016). Industry leaders have expressed concern that hospitality programs are creating unrealistic job expectations of graduates and lack appropriate levels of practical experience (Min et al., 2016). Hospitality executives believe that graduates are not adequately prepared, specifically in the subjects of communication skills, teamwork, time

management, and critical thinking (Alhelalat, 2015). Less than 50% of hospitality executives surveyed believed that hospitality programs were successful in teaching problem-solving skills, data analysis skills, ethics, leadership, and general management skills (Alhelalat, 2015). Research specific to the spa and wellness aspect of the hospitality industry has provided similar results. Spa industry leaders indicated that newly hired spa managers are deficient in general management skills, strategic thinking skills, leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills and time management (GSWS, 2012). The gap between the expressed needs and expectations of hospitality industry leaders and hospitality curricula continues to exist.

### **Background and Significance of the Problem**

Before an evaluation of hospitality degree programs can begin, one must understand what skillsets are needed by graduates. Although there has been much research on the design of hospitality programs, it has often focused on a competency-based approach where a list of competencies was identified and ranked in order of importance (Gursoy, Rahman, & Swanger, 2012). While some studies included perspectives of hospitality managers and others included input from hospitality educators, there appears to be a gap in opportunities to combine and utilize the information to improve hospitality degree programs (Gursoy et al. 2012). Including industry leaders in the identification and development of competencies for hospitality programs is an essential and vital aspect of curriculum development (Cecil & Krohn, 2012). Effective curriculum design cannot occur if hospitality educators do not first ask industry leaders what competencies they believe students should be taught (Millar, Mao & Moreo, 2010). Bridging this gap continues to be a substantial concern by hospitality leaders.

## **Deficiencies in the Evidence**

Research published as recently as 2017 continues to indicate that the skillsets taught in hospitality programs are not adequately preparing students for a career in that industry. In their cumulative research of hospitality and tourism research, Hsu, Xiao, and Chen (2017) determined that debate continues whether hospitality curricula should be more vocational, liberal, or business-centered. The impact of teacher preparedness and teacher support of curriculum may also influence a student's success after graduation. D'Souza and Vernekar (2017) found that hospitality educators in India expressed concern that without real life or simulated activities, students are not developing soft skills, such as empathy, teamwork, collaboration, and critical problem-solving. This supports the previously described gap between university programs and the expressed desired skillsets of hospitality industry leaders. Deficiencies in creating adequate real life or internship experiences continue to impact student satisfaction negatively.

Internships can be a useful learning tool if designed to meet the needs and expectations of the student (Stansbie & Nash, 2016). Students concentrating on the lodging aspect of hospitality expressed greater satisfaction with internships where they understood the task significance and received feedback from the school representatives, versus students concentrating in food and beverage who responded more positively to feedback from the job itself (Stansbie & Nash, 2016).

As it appears that these issues continue to be unresolved, one should question how students can be adequately educated for a career in hospitality. Hospitality seniors indicated that they ranked themselves as moderately ready for employment in the competencies of career planning and development skills, leadership skills, professional

management skills, and technical skills (Wang & Tsai, 2014). First-year hospitality students ranked academic support as highly important to their overall satisfaction of their course of study (O'Driscoll, 2012). Empirical evidence gathered in this study will provide a cohesive analysis documenting the influence and relationship of these factors.

**Audience**

This research will furnish hospitality educators, curriculum designers, and program administrators with information and suggestions for the improvement of student perceptions of preparedness for a career in the hospitality industry. Direct feedback from graduates of hospitality degree programs has provided insight regarding the ability of hospitality programs to meet the expectations of students. This research presents evidence supporting the compelling need for industry partnerships or influence on the design of hospitality curricula.

The study was conducted at two four-year universities. Participants in the study were recent graduates of a hospitality degree program, both who are and are not currently working in the hospitality industry. As an adjunct professor in the hospitality program at one of the universities, this research will be useful as an individual and as a member of the faculty. The University is currently expanding the hospitality program, which renders this research timely and impactful.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this research was to determine if postsecondary institutions are effectively preparing hospitality and tourism management graduates with the necessary skillsets needed for successful careers in the industry. The analysis of research conducted on skillset needs as expressed by industry leaders has provided the basis from which curriculum developers can begin to evaluate their programs. An examination of research

concerning the effectiveness and satisfaction of hospitality graduates provides further support of the suggested curriculum improvements. Suggested research methodology and objectives for future research to determine trends in skillset needs and gaps have been presented.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms have been used in this applied dissertation and may be unfamiliar to individuals not involved in the hospitality industry.

*Hospitality* has been defined as “a particular type of social practice in which exchanges of goods and services, both material and symbolic are used to establish new relationships or build existing ones” (Kunwar, 2017. p. 57)

*Hospitality industry* includes “commercial organizations that specialize in providing accommodations and/or, food, and/or drink, through a voluntary human exchange...” (Kunwar, 2017, p. 79)

*Internship* is a form of experiential learning that allows the student an opportunity to observe and apply theoretical teachings from the classroom in a real-life situation (Stansbie & Nash, 2016)

*Skillset* represents a list of skills determined essential for success in a specific discipline, i.e., communication, analysis, technology, teamwork, problem-solving and critical thinking (Alhelalat, 2015)

*Tourism* “comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes” (Walker & Walker, 2011, p. 7)

**Summary**

The hospitality and tourism industry is forecasted to continue healthy and steady growth into the next decade nationally and globally. This creates additional pressure on hospitality educators and administrators to prepare student graduates for a career in that industry effectively. Research has demonstrated the on-going need for hospitality curricula to include experiential learning opportunities and incorporate the expressed skillset needs of industry leaders. Researchers have also recognized the need for improved hospitality faculty development. These factors are directly influential on the satisfaction and success of student graduates. The results of this study provide direction for university hospitality program administrators to use when evaluating opportunities to improve their curriculum.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this research was to determine if postsecondary institutions are effectively preparing hospitality and tourism management graduates with the necessary skillsets to obtain an entry-level managerial position in the hospitality industry. Recent graduates of hospitality programs were invited to participate in surveys for data collection purposes. Questions regarding student skillset preparedness and whether current hospitality programs are meeting the needs of the hospitality industry were asked. This research supports the results of prior research to demonstrate further a continued need for higher education institutions to review and revise curricula.

The literature provides an overview of the research on the topic of hospitality students and career preparedness. The evolution of hospitality degree programs has been provided to serve as background information and to express the continued need for change. A summary of research on hospitality program design and the application of learning theories demonstrated the challenges and opportunities for program developers. Student graduate skillset preparedness and confidence was researched, and findings have indicated gaps between the expressed needs of industry leaders and the results of hospitality student graduates. A discussion presenting gaps in curriculum design and hospitality teacher effectiveness has provided greater detail for use by curriculum developers and institutions in analyzing their programs to ensure increased student satisfaction. Research documenting the perceptions of hospitality industry leaders regarding student skillset preparedness as compared to desired skillsets has identified gaps in hospitality curricula. The literature review synthesized research of hospitality

degree programs from both the student and industry perspective, which has demonstrated a disconnect between expectations and desired results of both stakeholders. Finally, the literature review concludes with suggestions for further research and presentation of research questions.

### **The State of the Hospitality Sector**

The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) defines the leisure and hospitality supersector as part of the service-providing industries supersector group (US DOL BLS, 2018a). This supersector is further subdivided into to sub-sectors, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Service (US DOL BLS, 2018a). It is the accommodation aspect of this sub-sector that is the focus of this study. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (US DOL BLS, 2017a), employment within the leisure and hospitality sector increased by 1.8% (annualized) from 2006 through 2016. The agency forecasts employment within this supersector to continue an annual growth of 0.8% through 2026. At the end of 2018, the leisure and hospitality industry employed over 16.5 million people (US DOL BLS, 2019). By 2026, this number is expected to achieve almost 17 million (US DOL BLS, 2017a). Lodging managers numbered 47,800 jobs at the end of 2016 and by 2026 are forecasted to increase to 49,700 (US DOL BLS, 2018). The leisure and hospitality industry is also expected to experience continued growth globally. The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) stated that in 2017, the global tourism industry represented 10.4% of the global gross domestic product (GDP) and 313 million jobs (WTTC, 2018). WTTC forecasts the global tourism industry employment to grow to over 400 million jobs and contribute 25% of global net job creation by 2028 (WTTC, 2018). With the projected growth of the hospitality industry



and lodging management positions, it is necessary for a thorough examination of hospitality degree programs and their effectiveness in preparing graduates for careers in this industry.

**The hospitality industry and college curricula.** Research demonstrates a continued schism between hospitality curricula and industry expectations. Hospitality curriculum designers should focus core course subjects on those consistently ranked as important to industry leaders (Min et al., 2016). Industry professionals have argued that hospitality curricula are not maintained to meet the current and up-to-date needs of the industry (Min et al., 2016). A primary focus of hospitality industry professionals is whether or not students have had previous working experience in the industry. Hospitality professionals expressed a strong preference to hire graduates who have practical skills, such as problem-solving, decision-making, and collaboration (Trajanoska & Kostovski, 2016). Internships, professional skill development, and leadership have been ranked as highly important to the employability of students and yet are topics in which students feel least prepared (Wang & Tsai, 2014).

Current research supports the theme that hospitality curricula do not meet the needs of industry professionals. However, gaps do exist in the ability to provide hospitality curriculum designers, school administrators, or teachers with practical tools by which changes can be made. It was the intent of this study to synthesize past research with current information and provide educational stakeholders with well-grounded suggestions that can be implemented into their curriculum.

## **History of Hospitality Degree Programs in Higher Education**

Hospitality degree programs have existed for almost one hundred years. In 1893, the first dedicated hotel school, Ecole Hoteliere de Lausanne, was established in Switzerland (Hsu et al., 2017). Hospitality degree programs started in the United Kingdom in the late 1960s and early 1960s (Airey, 2015). By 2011, hospitality degree enrollments in the United Kingdom had grown to 9,000 (Airey, Tribe, Benckendorff, & Xiao, 2015). Since the introduction of hospitality degree programs in Australia in 1978, the number of programs had grown to 41 in 2011 (Airey et al., 2015). In China, student enrollment in hospitality degree programs had grown to 596,100 by 2010 (Airey et al., 2015). While hotel schools expanded in Europe, it is in the United States that the most growth was experienced. This growth began with the first undergraduate program in hospitality management launched by Cornell University in 1922 (Hsu et al., 2017). Through the twentieth century, hospitality programs expanded nationally and globally in response to the growing trend in tourism activities. Specifically, in the past 30 years, the number of hospitality degree programs quadrupled in the United States (Lee, Dopson, & Ko, 2016). As has been documented, the hospitality and tourism industry continue to be one of the fastest growing industries nationally and globally, which has had a direct relation to the surge in hospitality degree programs and student enrollment. The hospitality industry impacts the global economy as both a cause and consequence of economic development as derived from increased disposable income and travel trends (Trajanoska & Kostovski, 2016).

The growth of the hospitality industry directly translates to a need for additional hospitality employees and also a need for more and better hospitality education programs

(Gursoy, Rahman, & Swanger, 2012). Hospitality degree programs have evolved from a highly vocational orientation in the 1960s and 1970s to include more mainstream social science topics (Hsu et al., 2017). As the hospitality industry has matured, industry professionals have begun to recognize and analyze the skillsets and education received by graduates. Industry professionals are exerting more pressure on educational institutions to produce graduates who are adequately prepared for a successful career. There is a greater need for institutions to generate students with employable skills that will positively support a career in hospitality (Gursoy et al., 2012). With this increased pressure by industry professionals grew the need to research the effectiveness of hospitality degree programs. Research dating back to the early 2000s has documented the changing skillsets as expressed by industry leaders as necessary. However, the debate between vocational education and a comprehensive curriculum in hospitality education continues to exist. Although the first cooperative education program launched in the early 1900s at the University of Cincinnati, the majority of educational institutions continued to focus on the academic nature of hospitality (Stansbie, Nash, & Chang, 2016). Questions surrounding the influence of vocational versus theoretical programs on curriculum and pedagogy continue among hospitality educators (Hsu et al., 2017). Often the design of hospitality curricula is influenced by the history and traits of each institution and may not accurately reflect the needs of the industry. This has caused a lack of central identity among hospitality programs and has led to a wide variety of concentrations, specializations, and formal degree programs among higher education institutions (Lee et al., 2016).

## **Learning Theories as Applied to Hospitality Programs**

The multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary aspects of hospitality programs have directly resulted in the lack of a coherent theoretical framework to guide the evolution of these programs (Hsu et al., 2017). Airey (2015) also noted the lack of a coherent theoretical framework as a sign of the immaturity and inability of tourism and hospitality programs to evolve in academia. While the lack of a coherent theoretical framework may exist, the diversity of hospitality programs provides an opportunity to embrace various learning theories in program design.

**Cognitivism and constructivism.** Cognitivism focuses on what learners know and how they achieve learning success (Yilmaz, 2011). Cognitive theorists support the role of culture as a significant role in the development of cognition (Yilmaz, 2011). Cognitivists maintain that the learner must experience the content in an authentic learning environment (Jaramillo, 1996).

Constructivism developed as an expansion of cognitive learning theories. Constructive learning theory has been described as “meaningful learning in which a learner actively builds a mental model of the system she is to learn” (Chi, 2009, p. 2). Yilmaz suggests the use of cognitive apprenticeship, inquiry learning, discovery learning, and problem-based learning as effective teaching methods that support constructivist theories of learning behavior (Yilmaz, 2011). Problem-based learning (PBL) encourages an active level of involvement by students (Cheng, 2013). An aspect of constructivism, cognitive engagement is correlated with student motivation for learning and has a significant role in student satisfaction (Cheng, 2013). Through PBL activities, students have opportunities to demonstrate higher levels of cognitive engagement strategies.

Simulations, an example of constructive learning, further encourage student engagement and the development of problem-solving skills (Pratt & Hahn, 2016). The broad scope of the hospitality industry offers students opportunities to learn the intimate connections between knowledge and daily life as well as the capacity for mindful, critical, and reflective interpersonal skills (Airey, 2015). These connections are best explored through various experiential learning opportunities.

### **Experiential Learning**

Educational theorist John Dewey promoted education through both a psychological and sociological aspect to be taught by experiential learning (Stansbie et al., 2016.) Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) espoused the role of experiential learning as a method to respond to students' different learning styles and also to provide opportunities for students to hone various communication and analytical skills (Stansbie et al., 2016). Students need to be able to demonstrate, practice and receive constructive critical feedback on their communication and interpersonal skills through hands-on experiences (Lolli, 2013). Experiential learning activities, such as internships and role-play activities, encourage active participation (Lolli, 2013). The evolution of the hospitality industry has led to an increased emphasis on the balance of attainment of technical skills and managerial concepts (Stansbie & Nash, 2016). Experiential learning techniques, such as internships, afford students with the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in real-life scenarios (Stansbie & Nash, 2016).

**Service learning.** Service learning is another technique used in the hospitality industry to teach students different skillsets. Interpersonal skills can be taught and learned more effectively in a service learning situation (Lolli, 2013). Listening has been

identified as a critical interpersonal skill required by industry professionals (Lolli, 2013). Service learning opportunities can counteract the perception that students are ill-prepared to interact with guests in problem-solving situations (Lolli, 2013). Research demonstrates that on the job training is ineffective in the development of successful employees (Pani et al., 2015). Therefore, hospitality programs should focus on service learning opportunities for students to enhance their employability.

### **Impact on Student Comprehension**

It has been suggested that students who participate in PBL activities not only exhibit enhanced levels of student engagement, but the thought processes used promote lifelong learning as active reflection is encouraged (Cheng, 2013). Supported by Pearson's Product Moment Correlations, Cheng (2013) determined a significant relationship between self-efficacy, motivation, and deep processing engagement when students participate in PBL activities. A study conducted of hospitality educators at universities in India revealed that the educators believed that although the students learned hospitality management and technical skills in the classroom, without an opportunity to practice students are not adequately trained in communication skills, teambuilding, empathy and problem-solving techniques (D'Souza & Vernekar, 2017). The effect of the simulation HOTS was evaluated and determined to have a significantly positive impact on student learning of decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, and their overall understanding of hotel management (Pratt & Hahn, 2016). While these studies promote the positive impacts of experiential learning, some researchers argue that empirical evidence is unclear about its effectiveness on student learning (Matthews, 2003). Matthews points to the value statements of constructivism that students are

motivated to learn internally and the use of extrinsic rewards or traditional grading systems negatively impact a student's intrinsic motivation to understand the world (2003).

With the majority of research supporting the inclusion of experience-based learning techniques, educators and curriculum designers are strongly encouraged to determine methods that will support student learning in their programs. Educators in hospitality have an essential role in shaping the minds of students and preparing them for successful careers in this industry. Thus, hospitality educators significantly impact the future growth of the hospitality industry.

### **Hospitality Program Design**

**Curriculum design.** Much research has been conducted on effective curriculum design for hospitality programs in higher education institutions (HEI). A consensus among researchers is that curriculum design should be dynamic, respond to the current needs of the industry, address the learning styles of students, and be a balance of both operational and behavioral skills. Additionally, researchers have documented the importance of educators and curriculum designers in building strong relationships with industry professionals to help analyze programs to ensure that HEIs are generating students with the desired skillsets. Curriculum designers are encouraged to work with the various stakeholders, including industry professionals, students, and educators, regarding course content and the degree to which it applies to current industry requirements (Alhelalat, 2015). Curriculum designers should continuously review the changing trends of industry and student learning styles to develop a comprehensive program designed to meet the needs of a global industry (Airey, 2015). Through working with various

stakeholders, gaps between industry expectations and educational programs can be identified, and then the curricula can be revised to produce better qualified and educated students (Alhelalat, 2015). The focus of hospitality curriculum design has moved from a content-oriented program to one that contains a stronger emphasis on a balance of technical skill and philosophy to prepare students for a successful career (Airey, 2015). Instructors of hospitality programs have the unique position to create employable students who possess both the technical skills and the behavioral skills required by industry. In order to accomplish this goal, curricula must include humanities and liberal education courses, which will create a well-balanced program designed to meet the needs of a global industry (Hsu et al., 2017). Because it draws from a variety of disciplines, hospitality programs are well-suited to design educational experiences that effectively and efficiently prepare students for a successful career in a changing and global environment (Airey, 2015).

The challenge for curriculum designers continues to be how to strike a balance between technical and behavioral knowledge while acknowledging and supporting the constantly changing expressed needs of the industry. It is necessary for curriculum designers to strive for a balance between effective curriculum design and pedagogical innovations (Hsu et al., 2017). Curriculum designers first must identify what core components the curriculum should address. Gursoy, Rahman, and Swanger (2012) suggested that the three major components of a hospitality program should be “substantive knowledge, skills, and values” (p. 32). Similarly, Reich, Collins, and DeFranco (2016) identified “knowledge, skills and attitudes” (p. 23) as primary learning outcomes of hospitality programs. What knowledge, skills, and values or attitudes should



be taught has been identified through research of current expectations of industry professionals. Results of prior research indicate a gap between industry expectations and student learning outcomes. There is a concern by industry professionals that educational programs do not consider their point of view when designing effective strategies to teach employable skills to students (Eurico, Matos da Silva, & Oom do Valle, 2015). The Association of American Colleges and Universities found that employers are concerned that graduates are ill-prepared in skills such as communication and teamwork (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017). This skillset gap exists internationally as well, as research in India demonstrated the lack of industry and academic collaboration has led to mis-matched educational experiences by students in hospitality programs (Pani, Biswajit, & Mahesh, 2015). There is a push by industry professionals for educators to adjust curriculum from one that is theoretically based to one that includes more authentic learning experiences and addresses the desired competencies (Hsu et al., 2017).

**Hospitality curricula competencies.** Numerous studies have attempted to identify the desired competencies and skillsets by industry for inclusion in hospitality programs. Most research has provided rankings of competencies and skillsets considered as a priority from both the perspective of industry professionals and students (Min et al., 2016). One study in 2003 found that self-management, ethics, time management, and adaptability were important to include (Min et al., 2016). Pani, Biswajit, and Mahesh (2015) determined a need to prioritize experiential learning opportunities, grooming, and communication skills. The lack of interpersonal communication skills has been identified as a priority among 21st-century students. Their entrenchment in using technology as a primary form of communication has led to an under-developed ability to read non-verbal

cues (Lolli, 2013). Listening skills and communication skills have been ranked as high priority to industry professionals but ranked as only third to educators (Lolli, 2013).

Course subjects identified by industry professionals as a priority include

“internship/industry experience, preparation for industry employment, leadership, hospitality management and organization, and ethics” (Min et al., 2016, p. 16). As the priority of course subjects and competencies are reviewed, curriculum designers need to incorporate these into their program design.

The intense focus on employable skills learned by students must be supported by a variety of teaching methods. It is the responsibility of HEIs to effectively facilitate the teaching of employable skillsets to students (Wang & Tsai, 2014). Many researchers support the inclusion of collaborative or experiential learning experiences in hospitality programs. In this manner, a tri-relational approach between educators, industry professionals, and students can enhance the efficacy of hospitality programs (Feng, Chiang, Su, & Yang, 2015). The wide variety of programs and industry needs internationally supports the need for regular assessment of curricula to ascertain what topics should be included in a program (Lee et al., 2016). The assessment of student learning outcomes is also vital to hospitality professionals because of the specific skillsets desired (Reich et al., 2016). A recent study indicated that only 6% of HEIs could provide measurable improvements in student learning outcomes based on set competencies (Reich et al., 2016). While a strict competency-based program may be desirable and more understandable by industry, it poses a challenge for educators due to the broad and diverse subject expressed as a priority (Gursoy et al., 2012). It is both industry professionals and educators who stress the integration of knowing and doing, individual

and cooperative learning by students in the 21st-century (Pratt & Hahn, 2016).

**Instructional design.** Upon researching and identifying the expected competencies and skillset by industry professionals, one should note the importance placed upon the need to address gaps between knowledge and application. When designing instructional activities, the focus should be less on what educators think students should learn, but more on what the industry expectations are (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017). As previously described, many of the competencies expressed as a priority by industry professionals include the development of soft skills, such as communication, leadership, teamwork, and critical-thinking skills. Research has found that the incorporation of collaborative or experiential learning activities greatly enhances student engagement and learning achievement of those competencies. The use of experiential learning techniques dates to the writings of Aristotle and Confucius, who promoted the theory that learning should be supported by experience (Stansbie & Nash, 2016). Scholars, such as Dewey, Freire, and Kolb, have espoused their support for experiential learning as an effective method of blending the academic and practical development of student knowledge (Stansbie et al., 2016). Support for collaborative learning methods continues because they encourage knowledge and skill development by students by engaging them in the learning process, rather than as just a spectator (Ali, Nair, & Hussain, 2016). Learning experiences have a significantly positive impact on student motivation for achievement, student engagement, and self-efficacy (Cheng, 2013). The shift of curriculum from a traditional didactic format to one that is more learner-centered encourages students to take a more active role in their educational experience (Pratt & Hahn, 2016). The benefit of collaborative or experiential learning experiences is that

students can connect the abstract principles and theories of knowledge learned in the classroom with practical contexts as they are given opportunities to apply their knowledge in real-life scenarios (Feng et al., 2015). There are many options for including experiential learning activities into hospitality programs. While field trips have evolved into a signature pedagogy for hospitality programs, other activities such as computer-supported learning systems, internships, and simulations all provide opportunities for students to hone their problem-solving, critical thinking and other interpersonal skills (Airey, 2015; Lolli, 2013). These experiential learning activities also provide students an opportunity to practice soft skills, such as communication, listening, ethics and cultural appreciation, all of which are identified as highly expected by tourism consumers (Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012). Experiential learning is described as “a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition and behavior” (Pratt & Hahn, p. 10, 2016). A study of 600 hospitality students who participated in experiential learning activities supported the need for the functions of experiential learning and classroom activities to be synergistic as they cannot be successful independently (Stansbie et al., 2016). The International Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (ICHRIE) identified a strong correlation between authentic learning experiences and student development of interpersonal, problem-solving and leadership skills (Stansbie et al., 2016). The design of course subjects and activities within a hospitality program should include the use of innovative learning methods and pedagogy to provide a well-rounded education that prepares students not only for an entry-level position but a lifelong career.

**Components of successful hospitality curricula.** Three primary competencies

necessary in hospitality programs have been identified as knowledge, skills, and values or attitudes (Cecil & Krohn, 2012; Gursoy et al., 2012). When designing a successful curriculum, one must also consider how to link these competencies to the desired student learning outcomes (Cecil & Krohn, 2012). One method for linking these competencies is the use of problem-based learning (PBL), which focuses the student's attention on a primary question and encourages them to solve real-world problems using knowledge previously gained in the classroom (Cheng, 2013). Students who participated in a PBL environment exhibited higher levels of active learning. PBL activities promote active reflection and promote lifelong learning habits (Cheng, 2013). A strong correlation between intrinsic motivation, student ability to apply academic knowledge and self-efficacy has been proven as additional positive results of PBL activities (Cheng, 2013). Similar results of student achievement have been documented through research of learning by the use of journaling, student-initiated group projects, interactive technologies, and internships (Hsu et al., 2017). Successful internships should be designed based upon the job characteristics and student interests (Stansbie & Nash, 2016). Students who pursue a degree and career in the hospitality industry are often drawn to it because of its diverse nature. Therefore, internships should provide students with opportunities to experience different aspects of the industry to help their understanding of inter-departmental relationships (Stansbie & Nash, 2016). Successful internship programs support the blending of theoretical knowledge and practical application and enhance student motivation to learn. Also, it is a strong perception by students that internships are an essential and integral part of a quality hospitality program designed to prepare them with the necessary skills for a career (Stansbie et al., 2016).

Internships have evolved into practical methods for bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills (Hsu et al., 2017). An example of the use of a computer simulation is the incorporation of the Hotel Operations Tactics and Strategy (HOTS) simulation. Pratt and Hahn found that students who participated in HOTS expressed an increased understanding of inter-departmental relationships (2016). Additionally, students demonstrated stronger collaboration skills, motivation to learn, and enhanced teamwork skills (Pratt & Hahn, 2016). Upon completion of the HOTS simulation, students expressed satisfaction with their opportunity and ability to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios with constructive critical feedback from the teacher and fellow students (Pratt & Hahn, 2016). The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) produced a report advocating the use of experiential learning as a key component of instructional design (Stansbie et al., 2016). NSSE research strongly advocates the role of experiential learning in preparing students for a career by encouraging active participation by students (Stansbie et al., 2016).

**Opportunities for program development.** Higher education institutions (HEI) are pressured to continually review changes in industry needs while determining which competencies are best learned in the classroom versus other learning experiences (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017). HEIs are charged with the task of creating learning environments where students are encouraged to use broad-minded thinking and critical analysis skills and incorporating appropriate teaching of industry desired competencies (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017). Curriculum designers and educators are urged to develop strong relationships with industry stakeholders and create programs that demonstrate a secure connection between theory and practical application (Stansbie et al., 2016). Based upon

the expressed needs of industry professionals, hospitality educators should shift their focus from a liberal academic education to a more vocational, business-oriented curriculum (Airey et al., 2015). In order to meet the current and future needs of the industry, courses that encourage the development of critical-thinking skills, communication skills, and interpersonal skills should be included (Airey, 2015). The diversity of the hospitality industry requires an increase in collaboration among all stakeholders i.e., educators, curriculum designers, industry professionals, and students. Collaborative learning environments require a time commitment from all stakeholders, which can be a challenge. However, long-term gains in student achievement and career success make it a necessary consideration for curriculum designers and educators.

### **Analysis of Hospitality Graduate Skillset Needs**

As the hospitality and tourism industry has evolved, questions surrounding the ability of HEIs to accurately and quickly respond to the changing needs have been a subject of much debate. The curriculum content and how it fits into the perceived needs of the industry continues to dominate education research and application in this arena (Airey, 2015). In order to understand and address this issue, it is necessary first to understand the perceptions of industry professionals of graduate preparedness, and then identify what gaps in education exist and examine the role of the teacher in facilitating student learning.

**Perception of industry leaders of student career preparedness.** Industry professionals are an important stakeholder in the success of hospitality degree programs. As such, they should be considered an integral part of shaping the course subjects within programs. Studies have indicated that industry professionals are concerned that students

are not graduating with the necessary skillsets. As early as the 1990s, industry professionals expressed concern about the worth of hospitality graduates (Gursoy et al., 2012). A study dating back to 2005 indicated that hospitality employers believe that half of student graduates are ill-prepared, especially in communication skills, teamwork, and time management (Alhelalat, 2015). As recent as 2012, research of including focus groups with program alumni and industry professionals also found similar results that hospitality graduates lack business communication skills (Cecil & Krohn, 2012). However, the 2015 study of industry professionals found that those skillsets as observed by hospitality graduates had been taught effectively and that students were satisfactorily demonstrating their use at work (Alhelalat, 2015). Therefore, there may be some improvement in the teaching of these skills. However, the same study revealed that industry professionals believe students are less prepared in problem-solving, teamwork, analysis, culture, and leadership. Another perception presented by industry professionals was that graduates tend to have unrealistic job expectations after graduation about job responsibilities and tasks but seem to possess a great deal of theoretical knowledge without practical experience (Min et al., 2016).

**Gaps in hospitality programs.** Research conducted both nationally and internationally has attempted to identify gaps in course offerings and teaching methods between industry expectations and current hospitality programs. A study in Ireland found that industry professionals are more likely to hire students who have participated in experiential learning activities where they have been able to learn and apply practical skills (Trajanoska & Kostovski, 2016). In China, research revealed that graduates from hospitality programs often failed to meet the industry needs, even after several



educational reforms (Trajanoska & Kostovski, 2016). While there may exist a match between education standards and industry requirements, the gap between education outcomes and industry expectations of skill competency continues (Alhelalat, 2015).

As previously discussed, there is a continued need for hospitality curriculum designers and educators to review and analyze industry trends to determine what changes may need to be implemented into programs. Methods for obtaining this information have included reading research studies, informal interactions with industry professionals and the use of advisory boards. Working directly with industry professionals can provide educators with information on the current desired management knowledge and skills by potential employees (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017). There is a consensus among educators and industry professionals that hospitality programs must include course subjects and activities that promote leadership and managerial competencies (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017). In a study of 252 hospitality managers, the top three essential competencies were communication, adaptability/flexibility, and technology (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017). In their longitudinal study comparing industry professional ratings of important competencies, Min, Swanger, and Gursoy (2016) noted changes in course subject rankings. Internships/industry experience and preparation for industry employment each increased their rankings by two points between 2004 and 2014 and are currently ranked as number one and number two, respectively. Although leadership declined from ranking first to third, it is still considered highly important to industry professionals. The 2014 survey included a new subject, diversity management, which points to the increased focus on globalization and cultural diversity (Min et al., 2016). Interestingly, operational courses, such as revenue/asset management and lodging operations, dropped in rankings

from fourth and sixth in 2009 to ninth and seventh, respectively (Min et al., 2016). The top-ranked courses focus on students achieving practical experience where they can learn and apply communication and management skills. This information, when shared with educators and curriculum designers, should inspire changes to their curricula.

**Hospitality teacher effectiveness.** The impact and influence of teachers on student educational success have received a nominal amount of research. This is unfortunate as they are responsible for imparting knowledge and preparing students for successful careers. A concern expressed by industry professionals is that educators and administrators rarely focus on improving instruction or demonstrating gains in student achievement (Reich et al., 2016). There is a greater push for increased accountability of faculty with regards to student learning outcomes (Reich et al., 2016). It is a perception by education that better-qualified instructors possess more considerable experience in teaching and research than actual work experience (Kalargyrou & Wood, 2012). While this may work well in many academic settings, industry professionals question the validity of this when they are relying on educators to prepare students with specific skillsets (Feng et al., 2015). It is a challenge, though, to find educators who possess both industry experience and a terminal degree (Lee et al., 2016). Whether to prioritize a new educators experience versus their expertise in a specific industry was discussed without result among a group of educators (Cotterill, 2015). A set of interviews of higher education faculty found that being an inspirational teacher requires more than personality and charisma (Cotterill, 2015). A key aspect of inspiration was the connection of the educator to the subject taught. If the subject matter was something that inspired them, then their ability to shift from merely teaching to inspiring others to learn increases

(Cotterill, 2015). This can be demonstrated by educators who act sincerely and with great interest to their students through constant and supportive communication both in and out of class (Heo & Lee, 2016).

A challenge that exists among educators is how to balance their in-class and outside of class performance expectations. With the focus on research by many universities, educators may be torn between their time as a researcher and their time as a teacher (Airey, 2015). Some authors of research have expressly noted the lack of hospitality and tourism research outputs by educators (Airey et al., 2015).

A suggestion to enhance the role of educators may be for industry and faculty to work together to create opportunities for the educators to spend time with them learning and updating competencies (D'Souza & Vernekar, 2017). This may counteract the potential for knowledge gained from prior industry experience to become detached from current trends. Educators should be encouraged to seek industry professionals for continued learning experiences or resources they could offer (Feng et al., 2015). The benefits of educators working closely with industry include opportunities for the educators to remain abreast of current trends; research can be conducted through these enhanced relationships and constant exposure to potential course content changes (Stansbie et al., 2016). Additionally, hospitality programs are increasing their focus on faculty possessing a terminal degree, which may imply a trend toward increasing the standards for newly hired educators (Lee et al., 2016). That, however, leads to the question of whether or not a masters or other terminal degree in hospitality matches the industry expectations (Lee et al., 2016). While there are several opportunities to enhance the skillsets of hospitality educators, there does not yet exist a solution or path by which

to attain these goals.

### **Perceptions of Hospitality Programs by Student Graduates**

The literature presented thus far has focused on the perceived gaps in hospitality programs from the perspective of industry professionals. Another aspect to consider is the expectation of students as consumers and whether they believe that they are adequately prepared for a successful career. Hospitality programs must not only consider the influence of industry professionals on course subject and competencies, but if students do not perceive the program as having high-quality standards and a reputation for strong student outputs, then the program is at risk of attracting fewer students (Airey et al., 2015). Students will seek programs based upon the institution's reputation, academic quality, accreditation, and industry recognition (Alhelalat, 2015).

As there is a discrepancy between industry expectations and hospitality course programs, there also exists a gap between student expectations, industry needs, and hospitality programs. It is becoming clear that HEIs must study and identify the needs and expectations by students in providing exceptional learning experiences and employable skillsets (Eurico, Matos da Silva, & Oom do Valle, 2015). A study in 2011 found that graduates believe that their knowledge gained in school was sufficient enough to obtain a job, hospitality executives focus on attitudes and personality suggest their preference to focus on communication and managerial competencies (Alhelalat, 2015). Two-hundred sixty students were surveyed and identified their top essential skill required as communication, time management, and teamwork. While communication was also ranked within the top three by industry managers, adaptability/flexibility, and technology rounded out their rankings (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017). A survey of hospitality students in

Taiwan indicated that students felt ill-prepared in professional management skills, leadership, technical skills, and career planning (Wang & Tsai, 2014). The same survey pointed to the use of internships or other experiential learning opportunities as effective methods for students to learn and gain more confidence in these competencies. A common theme between industry and student expectations is the focus on the use of experiential learning activities where students can not only learn but also apply skills in real-world settings.

Student satisfaction has been proven to be directly correlated with employability upon graduation (Eurico, Matos da Silva, & Oom do Valle, 2015). Students in programs in both the United States and Hong Kong identified five factors that directly impact student satisfaction, which are relationship benefits with personnel, shared values, communication, opportunistic behavior and perceived quality of teaching (Heo & Lee, 2016). Strong links between student satisfaction and student performance, students' perceived learning, and student motivation support the need for hospitality programs to create cohesive programs that address both industry and academic expectations (Pratt & Hahn, 2016). Studies of student perceptions of internships demonstrate higher student satisfaction when participating in these types of experiential learning as they were able to develop new skills and competencies not addressed in the classroom (Stansbie et al., 2016). It is important for hospitality programs to realize that students are consumers, and they will conduct research and make selection decisions based upon what institution they believe will provide them with the best opportunity for a successful career.

### **Implications for Further Research**

Methodologies used in previous research have included obtaining information from all stakeholders, industry professionals, educators, and students. A variety of types of data collection methods have also been used, including surveys, focus groups, and topic rankings. Much of the research reviewed provides data and information for educators, curriculum designers, and administrations to consider when reviewing their current hospitality programs. However, a gap exists in the ability of these individuals to be able to translate this information into actionable steps. Part of this challenge exists because of the lack of research and empirical data on which to base curriculum design (Hsu et al., 2017). There is also a lack of the research on student learning experiences and outcomes, as most research has focused on career success. Another aspect worthy of additional research is the analysis of successful versus unsuccessful programs, likely because institutions tend not to publish or share information about unsuccessful programs. Research of this type would provide curriculum designers with insight as to what changes they may want to include in their programs without fear of failure. This would support the creation of a more cohesive program across institutions. Finally, more significant research into faculty development regarding work experience, educational degree attainment, and work satisfaction should be explored. Hospitality educators have a great responsibility in creating employable student, and therefore, research should be conducted to ensure they are adequately trained to educate and inspire.

### **Summary**

The literature review demonstrated the need for all stakeholders, industry professionals, educators, curriculum designers, and students, to collaborate on hospitality

program design. Research presented has revealed several gaps in the education provided to students, from both the industry and student perspectives. Successfully implemented experiential teaching methods validated these activities as increasing student satisfaction and positively impacting student learning. The question of balance between theoretical teachings and practical application was explored and suggestions for creating a cohesive program were provided.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How did students rank courses as effective or ineffective in preparing them for an entry-level managerial position in the hospitality industry?
2. What gaps continue to exist between HTM course programs and industry expectations?
3. What are the three most important course subjects identified by graduates of HTM programs?

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The purpose of this research was to determine if postsecondary institutions are effectively preparing hospitality and tourism management (HTM) graduates with the necessary skillsets to obtain an entry-level managerial position in the hospitality industry. For this quantitative dissertation, a cross-sectional survey was used. Survey research design is a form of quantitative research that involves the administration of a survey to a select population to collect quantitative, numbered data that can be analyzed (Creswell, 2015). Cross-sectional surveys collect data at a specific point of time and can be compared to the results of past research studies (Creswell, 2015). This research attempted to identify the effectiveness of HTM course programs on students' abilities to obtain an entry-level managerial position in the industry. Additionally, the results of the research indicated courses that students identified as irrelevant or unimportant. As stated by Creswell (2015), surveys can provide useful information to be used in the evaluation of course programs.

Hospitality and tourism management graduates identified courses within their curricula that were effective in preparing them for entry-level managerial positions by the completion of a cross-sectional survey. Gaps between HTM course programs and current industry expectations have were identified by comparing data obtained from the graduate surveys and the results of the longitudinal study published by Min, Swanger, and Gursoy in 2016. Implications and suggested opportunities for HTM course modifications are provided based upon analysis of the quantitative data collected. This chapter includes a description of the participants, explanation of research instruments selected, a discussion of the research procedures and data analysis, and review of the research findings.



## **Participants**

Participants in the exploratory correlational research portion of this project included graduates from four-year institutions of higher education who have obtained a degree in hospitality and tourism management. Two universities within a 100-mile radius of Atlantic City, New Jersey were identified because of their proximity to localities that thrive on the tourism industry. Each university has an established HTM degree program with relationships with local, national, and international hospitality business organizations. Graduates who received their degree on or after 2016 were contacted. This was estimated to be between 100-200 students. A letter describing the purpose of the study, required participants of the study, and benefits of the study to the institution was sent to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of each university selected for the study. Once approval was received from each university, a submission was made to the IRB at Nova Southeastern University (NSU). After receiving approval from NSU, those graduates received an introductory letter describing the purpose of this research. This letter was then followed by a consent form and the survey instrument.

For this quantitative research, purposeful sampling was used to select participants. Purposeful sampling is used by the researcher when a specific characteristic of the sample population directly relates to the purpose of the study (Fink, 2017). The purposeful sampling method was selected because the objectives of the research are targeted to HTM programs based upon feedback from students within those programs (Creswell, 2015). The target population for this research is representative of graduates of HTM programs from other universities. Confidentiality was maintained because the survey was conducted anonymously via an online website. This also protected against

any potential bias in the population group (Creswell, 2015).

### **Instrument**

A modified version of the survey instrument used by Min et al. in 2014 was used for this research (Appendix D). This survey was used to collect responses from recent graduates from two hospitality programs. The instrument used in this study was modified to obtain information from the targeted sample population. Permission to use and modify the original instrument for this survey was granted by Min (Appendix A).

**Content validity.** Content validity of the instrument has been established by obtaining input from participants and adjusting the content based upon industry trends. The survey instrument used in Min et al.'s 2014 research was modified from the surveys used in 2009 (Gursoy, Rahman & Swanger, 2012) and 2004 (Gursoy & Swanger, 2004). The original survey in 2004 was developed based upon procedures suggested by Churchill and DeVillis for creating a standardized survey (Gursoy & Swanger, 2004). The original survey contained 40 course subjects that were ranked on a five-point Likert scale. The 40 course subjects identified were developed from existing hospitality curriculum and focus groups consisting of advisory boards, industry executives, and hospitality educators (Gursoy & Swanger, 2004). Of the 2,339 surveys sent to industry professionals, 328 were returned for a response rate of 14.02% (Appendix B) (Gursoy & Swanger, 2004, p. 18). In 2009, the survey instrument was modified following the same process used in the development of the 2004 survey (Gursoy et al., 2012). The final version of the 2009 survey contained 33 course subject areas, based upon suggestions to remove 11 topics and add four new topics to better reflect the then current needs of the hospitality industry (Gursoy et al., 2012). The 2009 survey was sent to the same

participants from the 2004 survey, with 369 responding and a return rate of 15.78% (Appendix C) (Gursoy et al., 2012, p. 37). The version of the survey instrument used in 2014 was again modified to be reflective of current trends in the industry. The 2014 version included the removal of one course subject and the addition of four new topics for a total of 36 items (Min et al., 2016). The changes to the course subject items were based upon the review of curricula from the 18 top-ranked hospitality programs in the United States by TheBestSchool.org (Min et al., 2016). In 2014, 1,555 hospitality executives were invited to participate in the online survey. Two hundred forty-six individuals contributed, resulting in a response rate of 15.8% (Min et al., 2016).

**Reliability of instrument.** The studies in 2004 and 2009 included the use of pre-tests to review and finalize subject areas to be ranked (Gursoy & Swanger, 2004; Gursoy et al., 2012). All three research studies employed the use of descriptive statistics to rank the course subjects in order of importance (Gursoy & Swanger, 2004; Gursoy et al., 2012; Min et al., 2016). The results of the 2009 and 2012 studies were subjected to a series of independent-sample *t*-tests to compare results to previous data (Gursoy et al., 2012; Min et al., 2016). Data analysis for the 2009 and 2012 research was conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18 (Gursoy et al., 2012) and version 22 (Min et al., 2016). The results of the longitudinal study conducted in 2012 have been referenced in several other works to support the changing needs of the hospitality industry and curriculum (Williams, Seteroff, Hashimoto & Roberts, 2011; Sisson & Adams, 2013; Oktadiana & Chon, 2017).

Data was collected using an online survey tool. The survey was distributed via email. Participants were instructed to click on a link that lead them to the survey, which

was then completed anonymously. The survey contained nine questions, eight of which were required and one that was optional. The first five questions asked the respondent to provide demographic information, including gender, race/ethnicity, highest level of education completed, description of the type of property where they work and the type of ownership structure of that company. This information was used to identify trends or relationships between demographic data and responses to the subject questions.

Participants were asked to rank course subjects in order of importance to career preparation. A five-point Likert rating scale (*1=not important at all; 5=extremely important*) was used to rank the course subjects. For purposes of this research, the survey instrument developed included the same 36 course subject items used in the 2014 Min, Swanger, and Gursoy study. However, this instrument was provided to recent hospitality college graduates to complete. The previous research used responses from industry executives to formulate suggestions. Data analysis of this question has identified those course subjects that were effective in preparing them for an entry-level management position in the hospitality industry. By surveying recent hospitality graduates and comparing their responses to those provided by industry executives, conclusions have been drawn regarding the similarities and differences, and curriculum gaps identified. Participants were asked to review a list of specific courses and select the three most relevant and three least relevant courses to their career preparation. Results from these questions support the need to either enhance or modify current course programs. Final analysis of the data will provide the institutions with specific information geared toward their programs and offer suggestions on how to apply this information to current hospitality curricula.

## **Procedures**

This quantitative study incorporated a cross-sectional survey research design. Surveys are an effective research design because the data collected is obtained directly from the participants, the structured questions provide data relevant to the research questions, and one can expect an adequate response rate (Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2012). Cross-sectional surveys are conducted to create a snapshot at a specific period (Creswell, 2015). In cross-sectional surveys, the structured question design, ease of completion, and assurance of data confidentiality often lead to a higher response rate (Vogt et al., 2012). These factors supported this researcher's role as a data collector and analyzer, who has no authority over the respondents. The cross-sectional survey design was selected for this research to evaluate hospitality curriculum based upon graduate feedback. The data obtained from the cross-sectional survey has been analyzed to determine research-based conclusions and suggestions about current hospitality program effectiveness.

The targeted population for this research included students who graduated from two four-year universities with a degree in hospitality and tourism management from 2016 through 2018. The process of data collection was as follows:

1. The researcher sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at two universities. The researcher asked for email contact information for potential participants.
2. Once IRB was received from each university, a submission for IRB approval from NSU was submitted.
3. After receiving approval from NSU's IRB, potential participants in each study were contacted via email introducing the purpose of the research, consent forms,

procedures, and possible ethical issues. The email contained a link to the online survey, which could be completed anonymously.

4. Participants were asked to return the survey within two weeks of the date of the original email.

5. A reminder email was sent to those who have not responded one week after the initial email was sent.

### **Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistical analysis is used to indicate general tendencies in the data, provide an understanding of the variability of the data, and offer insight regarding the relationship of the data (Creswell, 2015). Surveys are a frequently used method for collecting descriptive data (Fink, 2017). Data collected from the research instrument have been analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The descriptive statistics calculated from SPSS include a summary of the data, measures of general tendencies (e.g., mean, median and mode) and measures of variation (e.g., range and standard deviation) (Fink, 2017).

Inferential analysis of the data obtained from Survey Questions 6-8 identified correlations between the student responses, current hospitality curriculum courses, and industry responses. Through content analysis of the responses to question six, an interpretation of course subject effectiveness answers Research Question 1. Independent sample *t*-tests were conducted to test for differences between the student responses and industry responses from the 2014 Min, Swanger & Gursoy study. The results answer Research Question 3. Responses to Survey Questions 7-8 have also been analyzed using a *t*-test. The results of the study and data analysis will provide the researcher with

substantive information to present as suggestions for current hospitality curricula.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this quantitative research study was to determine if postsecondary institutions are effectively preparing hospitality and tourism management (HTM) graduates with the necessary skillsets to obtain an entry-level managerial position in the hospitality industry. Selected participants were invited to complete an online survey where they were asked to rank hospitality course subjects. Participants were given three weeks to complete the survey. The goal of the study was to provide information to university hospitality programs that can be used in the assessment and improvement of their curricula.

A quantitative statistical analysis using SPSS was conducted on the Likert-type scale used by the participants in the survey to answer Survey Questions 6-8 to determine the course rankings by students. These rankings were then compared to the rankings presented by Min, Swanger, and Gursoy (2016) to identify similarities and differences between the course rankings by students and hospitality leaders. Analysis of Survey Questions 7-9 provided additional information for consideration by curriculum developers.

### **Demographic Characteristics**

Participants for this research were hospitality graduates from Stockton University and Widener University who graduated between the years of 2016 – 2018. An email invitation was sent to 163 graduates via the email addresses provided by each university. Thirty-six participants responded, yielding an initial response rate of 22%. The participants consisted of 16 male and 20 female graduates, of whom seven work in a



hotel/motel operation, seven work in a restaurant, three work in a destination resort and nineteen work in other business (Appendix E). Of the 36 respondents, 21 submitted fully completed and useable surveys. These 21 respondents represent 58% of the total respondents and 12.8% of the total sample population. It is the results of these 21 respondents that were used in the final analysis and discussion. 11 of the 21 respondents indicated that they worked in either a hotel/motel, restaurant, or destination resort. Ten of the 21 respondents selected the “Other” type of business. Within this group of 10 respondents, seven indicated that they work in other hospitality related fields, such as a country club, a salon, an airport, a sports and entertainment venue and in beverage sales, one respondent currently works in retail, and two respondents stated that they do not currently work in the hospitality industry.

### **Data Analysis**

The results provided in Table F1 are presented in a narrative format for Research Questions 1 and 3. The answers to Research Question 2 are supported by data in Table G1 and includes a comparison of the results of this research to the results of the research conducted by Min et al. (2016).

**Research Question 1.** How did students rank courses as effective or ineffective in preparing them for an entry-level managerial position in the hospitality industry? Participants were provided with a list of 36 courses and asked to rank each one using a 5-point Likert-style scale (*1=not important at all; 5=extremely important*). The mean of each course rating was calculated and a ranking was assigned based upon the result. The results are presented in Table F1. The mean scores ranged from 4.71 for Internships/industry experience to 2.29 for Senior living management. The seven highest

ranked courses as *Moderately Important* with means ranging from 4.71 to 4.00 include *internships/industry experience, leadership, preparation for industry employment, ethics, human resource management, service management and diversity management*. Twenty-five courses were identified as *Important* with means ranging from 3.95 to 3.00. The lowest ranked courses are *international tourism* ( $M = 2.86$ ), *lodging operations* ( $M = 2.81$ ), *real estate/property development* ( $M = 2.67$ ) and *senior living management* ( $M = 2.29$ )

**Research Question 2.** What gaps continue to exist between HTM course programs and industry expectations? After identifying the course rankings by participants, the means were compared to the mean results of the 2016 study conducted by Min et al. Independent sample *t*-tests were processed to compare the means. Using a two-sample *t*-test calculator, a *t*-value, degree of freedom and statistical significance were determined. The results presented in Table G1 assumed unequal variances between the samples and are described in this section.

The three courses ranked highest in importance by graduates were the same as those ranked by industry leaders, however, the order varied slightly. Graduates and industry leaders both ranked *internships/industry experience* as the most important course, and both groups ranked *ethics* as the fourth important course. *Leadership* occupied the second most important course for graduates, but it was ranked third by industry leaders. *Preparation for industry employment* ranked third by graduates and was ranked second by industry leaders. HTM graduates identified *ethics* as the fourth most important course, while industry leaders ranked *ethics* as fifth in importance. Although ranked slightly differently, this indicates that both groups place strong importance on

*ethics*. Industry leaders ranked *hospitality management and organization* as the fourth most important course, but HTM graduates ranked that course in eighth place. The greatest difference in the top 5 courses was in the course identified as the fifth most important. Graduates ranked *human resource management* in fifth place, while it was ranked seventeenth by industry leaders. *Overview of the hospitality industry* and *ethics* were tied for fifth by industry leaders. HTM graduates ranked *overview of the hospitality industry* as thirteenth in importance. The results are not statistically significant for the top four ranked courses ( $p > 0.05$ ), however, the results for the fifth ranked course, *human resource management*, were statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that there is a consensus between HTMS graduates and industry leaders that *internship/industry experience*, *leadership*, *preparation for industry* and *ethics* are all courses that are very important for successful career preparation and should be included in a hospitality curriculum. The difference between the course subject rankings of *hospitality management and organization*, *overview of the hospitality industry* and *human resources management* by both groups indicates a gap in expectations by industry leaders and HTMS student needs.

The course rankings of the 5 least important courses also showed some variances between the two groups. The 36th and 35th ranked courses were the same for both groups, *Senior living management* and *real estate/property development*. The 34th ranked course by graduates was *lodging operations*, but industry leaders ranked *nutrition and healthy living* at that level. *Lodging operations* was ranked as the ninth most important course by industry leaders. Graduates ranked *nutrition and healthy living* as the 23rd most important course. This difference in rankings indicates a gap in expectations and

needs between the two groups. *International tourism* was ranked 33rd by graduates, while industry leaders ranked *foreign language* as such. *International tourism* was ranked 31st by industry leaders, and graduates ranked *foreign language* as the 20th most important course. It should be noted that industry leaders ranked *international tourism*, *study abroad* and *foreign language* closely together as less important, while HTMS graduates ranked *foreign language* (20) significantly more important than *international tourism* and *study abroad*. The ranking result of *foreign language* is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) and warrants further exploration. The course ranked as 32nd by graduates was *innovation and product development*, however industry leaders ranked *study abroad* as 32nd. *Innovation and product development* was ranked at number thirty by industry leaders. *Study abroad* was ranked 29th by graduates. There were more differences between the group rankings of the least important courses than there were in the rankings of the most important courses. It cannot be concluded that a significant statistical difference exists for the results of the rankings of any of the lowest 5 courses ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Research Question 3.** What are the three most important course subjects identified by graduates of HTM programs? The top 3 courses ranked by participants were *internships/industry experience*, *leadership* and *preparation for industry employment* (Table F1). As previously discussed, these are the same courses ranked as the 3 highest by industry leaders, with only the order of the rankings differing (Table G1). There is no statistical significance determined between the rankings of the two groups for each course subject ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Table G1).

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### Introduction

Chapter 5 of this quantitative study includes a discussion of the findings, the implications of the findings and opportunities for further research. The purpose of this research was to determine if postsecondary institutions are effectively preparing hospitality and tourism (HTM) graduates with the necessary skillsets to obtain an entry-level managerial position in the hospitality industry. The results of a cross-sectional study completed by recent graduates of HTM programs were analyzed and compared to the results of a similar study completed by industry leaders in 2014 (Min, Swanger & Gursoy, 2016). In each study, participants were asked to rank 36 course subjects in order of importance based upon a 5-point Likert rating scale (*1 = not important at all; 5 = extremely important*). The results of the research in Chapter 4 are discussed in a detailed narrative in this chapter.

### Interpretation of Findings

For this study, an online survey was sent to 163 HTM program alumni from two local universities in the Mid-Atlantic region who graduated between 2016 – 2018. Thirty-six participants responded and yielded 21 useable results.

**Research Question 1.** How did students rank courses as effective or ineffective in preparing them for an entry-level managerial position in the hospitality industry? The HTM graduates in this study identified *internships/industry experience, leadership, preparation for industry employment, ethics, human resource management, service management* and *diversity management* as the courses that are Moderately to Extremely Important for career preparation. Internships provide students with the opportunity to

learn leadership skills and other competencies that cannot be gained in the classroom (Stansbie, Nash, & Chang, 2016). This positively corresponds to other research regarding skillsets required for entry-level managerial positions. Jiang and Alexakis (2017) found that students ranked communication, time management and teamwork as the top three essential skillsets. Students identified *leadership* as one of the most important classes needed to effectively prepare them for an entry-level managerial position in the hospitality industry (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017). Industry leaders have expressed a strong need for graduates to be better skilled in problem-solving and decision-making (Trajanoska & Kostovski, 2016). The seven courses ranked as Moderately or Extremely Important all contain aspects that will prepare students with the expected skillsets deemed important by industry leaders.

The four courses ranked by HTM graduates as Somewhat to Not Important at all, include *international tourism*, *lodging operations*, *real estate/property development* and *senior living management*. Industry leaders also ranked *senior living management* and *real estate/property development* as the two least important course subjects. *International tourism* was ranked 33rd by HTM graduates and 31st by industry leaders. However, the greatest difference is in the ranking of *lodging operations*. HTM graduates placed this in 34th place while industry leaders ranked it as ninth in importance. Although this disparity warrants further exploration beyond the scope of this study, a possible explanation may be that the high ranking of *internships/industry experience* by HTM students is seen as a replacement for the *lodging operations* course.

In a review of the overall rankings, it is clear that the course subjects ranked high in importance by HTM graduates will meet the skillset needs as expressed by industry

leaders. Students have expressed that internships and other experiential learning opportunities allow them to develop skills outside of the classroom (Stansbie et al., 2016). As the hospitality industry grows internationally, the desire for students to focus on courses such as *ethics*, *human resource management* and *diversity management* will provide them with a more well-rounded education (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017). These courses also support a desire by industry to promote the global citizenship values of stewardship, ethics, knowledge, mutuality, and professionalism (Hsu, Xiao & Chen, 2017).

**Research Question 2.** What gaps continue to exist between HTM course programs and industry expectations? It has been identified that differences exist between the course rankings by HTM graduates and industry leaders. It has also been discussed that industry leaders believe that students are not being prepared with the workplace skillsets needed to be successful in the hospitality industry. Gaps have been identified between student rankings and industry rankings. This section will present an analysis of select course ranking differences and offer possible explanations for those variances.

The course subject with the largest ranking difference is *lodging operations*. HTM graduates ranked this as one of the least important courses at 34, but industry leaders ranked it ninth. This is a variance of 25. A contributing factor to this may be the very high mean result of *internships/industry experience* by HTM students ( $M = 4.71$ ). With an increased focus on authentic learning experiences, this may have influenced the students' perceptions of the content of a *lodging operations* course versus actual field experience (Stansbie et al., 2016). Simulations, such as Hotel Operations Tactics and Strategy (HOTS), have also been shown to effectively teach operational skills, as well as

problem-solving and critical analysis skills (Pratt & Hahn, 2016). Although not found to be statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ), additional research on the course content of *lodging operations* classes should be reviewed to identify whether the class is being taught effectively.

*Diversity management* was ranked as the seventh most important course by HTM graduates versus a ranking of 26 by industry leaders. This difference can be attributed the generational difference between participants. The HTM graduate participants obtained their degrees less than three years ago, meaning that most are likely in their early to mid-twenties and members of the Millennial generation. This contrasts with the database used by Min et al. (2016) who contacted the same hospitality professionals in 2014 that had also completed the original survey in 2004. Those participants had been out of school and working for at least 10 years, placing their likely age range between 30-35 years old. Millennials are exposed to a globalization of the industry, significant growth in technology and the expanse of cultural diversity, all of which have become critical factors in the hospitality industry that may not have been as strong previously (Sisson & Adams, 2013). The statistically significant result of the *diversity management* ranking ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicates that this course subject and its content warrant further scrutiny to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are being met.

*Hospitality operations analysis* and *finance* rankings by each group resulted in a fourteen point difference for both course subjects. *Hospitality operations analysis* was ranked 21st by HTM graduates and as seventh most important by industry leaders. *Finance* earned a ranking of 30 by HTM graduates while industry leaders ranked it number 16. It is interesting that both of these course subjects are financial in nature and



both had ranking differences of 14 points. The results of the rankings of each course indicate that there is not a statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ). In the review of other finance-related course subject rankings, both groups rated them the same or similar. *Foodservice operations and controls* ranked as ninth most important by HTM graduates, and eighth by industry leaders. *Strategic management* was ranked by HTM graduates as 11th most important and tenth by industry leaders. *Revenue/asset management* was tied for tenth by industry leaders and ranked 14th by HTM students. The gap between industry expectations and HTM graduate responses for *hospitality operations analysis* and *finance* and similar rankings by other finance courses may indicate that there is overlap across the courses may be redundant. However, the desired workplace skills as expressed by industry leaders, such as critical-thinking and problem-solving, are likely better learned in classes involving analysis, which explains the higher rankings by industry leaders.

**Research Question 3.** What are the three most important course subjects identified by graduates of HTM programs? The same three course subjects were identified by both HTM graduates and industry leaders, *internships/industry experience*, *leadership* and *preparation for industry employment*. Industry continues to express dissatisfaction with the lack of development of critical-thinking skill sets, soft skills and communication (D'Souza & Vernekar, 2017). Fortunately, there is a consensus among all stakeholders that leadership and managerial skills are necessary in order to produce more effective and efficient graduates (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017). The focus on experiential learning highlights the pedagogical shift from simple mastery of content to mastery of process (Pratt & Hahn, 2016).

### **HTM Graduate Course Recommendations**

The final question of the survey asked HTM graduates to provide up to three course subjects they would suggest being added or included to HTM programs. Two HTM graduates suggested marketing or social media marketing. While most programs do offer marketing courses, it is often a general business course and not focused specifically on hospitality marketing. Social media marketing is a growing trend and is more likely a course offered within a non-hospitality program. However, both courses may present students with valuable skillsets for those seeking to be a business owner or general manager. Human resources and “management of people” were also suggested. Like the marketing courses, most hospitality programs include a human resources course, but it is often a generic course designed for students in a variety of disciplines. HTM graduates may be seeking a human resource class that focuses on challenges and/or legal issues specific to the hospitality industry.

### **Limitations of Study**

Internal validity “relates to the validity of inferences drawn about the cause-and-effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables” (Creswell, 2015, p. 304). Potential threats to internal validity may include the sample group, history of events from the beginning to ending of the study, maturation of the sample group, or attrition (Fink, 2017). An inherent potential threat of internal validity of this study was the restriction of selecting student participants from two specific universities. A threat of internal validity was confirmed because of the twenty-one participants who completed the survey, three indicated that they currently do not work in the hospitality industry. The attrition rate of response of participants also impacted the internal validity as the request

for participation was sent to 163 HTM graduates, of which 36 responded. The 36 responses yielded 21 useable results.

Threats to external validity are often problems that impact the researcher's ability to apply the conclusions drawn from the study to other groups or settings (Creswell, 2015). The most common threat to external validity is how respondents are selected (Fink, 2017). This was not a factor because of the specificity of the study. External validity may also be threatened if inaccurate inferences are drawn from the data (Creswell, 2015). Because the sample population was from two specific universities, the findings may not be applicable to hospitality programs at other universities in different locations.

### **Future Research**

This study correlated the results of course rankings by recent HTM graduates with those expressed by industry leaders. As noted by Jiang and Alexakis (2017), there are few published research articles that have compared and contrasted student and industry expectations. It has been documented throughout this dissertation the expressed needs and dissatisfaction by hospitality industry leaders for improvements be made to HTM curricula. This study sampled HTM graduates from two universities and is not fully representative of the hundreds of programs nationally or internationally. Additional research should be conducted in a similar format but with a larger sample in order to obtain results that better reflect the HTM graduate population. Individual universities should also be encouraged to conduct similar research to compare the results of their HTM graduates with local hospitality business leaders. This would help strengthen the communication and support by all stakeholders. Future research should focus on the

blending of vocational and theoretical course subjects to strive for a better balanced curriculum (Hsu et al., 2017). While the results of this study found similarities in the course subject rankings by each group, differences were also identified. Curriculum developers should use this information as a benchmark for curriculum changes supported by future similar research to continue to identify and match workplace trends with sound pedagogy.

### **Recommendations for Local Practice**

After a review of the results of this study, the course programs for each of the two local universities in the Mid-Atlantic region were reviewed and compared to the results. The recommendations presented focus on only six course subjects, four of the top ranked subjects and the two with the greatest ranking variances. These subjects were selected for their importance to each group and potential impact on future students.

Both programs require an internship or co-op experience, which supports the high rating this subject received by both HTM graduates and industry leaders. *Leadership* is specifically required by one university in the form of 15 credits of leadership seminars, leadership skills assessment and applied leadership development. As one of the top three course subjects as rated by both HTM graduates and industry leaders, it is recommended that leadership courses be incorporated into the program where it is lacking. Only one program specifically requires a course to address *preparation for industry employment*. It is recommended that this type of course be added to the necessary program. The topic of *ethics* is not specifically addressed by either program. The topic may be included in each program's version of human resources or business law, but due to the high ranking this

subject earned by both groups, it is strongly suggested that both programs invest in the development of an ethics course.

The course subject *lodging operations* had the greatest ranking variance, 34th by HTM graduates and ninth by industry leaders. Both programs require a form of a lodging operations course, however, as previously suggested, the content of these courses should be examined to determine why students do not believe that this course is important to their career. Additionally, further investigation on what lodging operations may mean to industry leaders should occur. These inquiries may provide each program with insight on how to improve this course and make it more relevant to the industry. *Diversity management* had the second largest variance in ranking between the two groups. Although one program suggests an international/multicultural course as a possible elective, neither program specifically includes a course in this topic. As the industry becomes more globalized, both programs are strongly encouraged to incorporate a diversity management course into their curriculum. While industry leaders did not rank it highly in importance, it is clearly important to HTM graduates, which may indicate that it will also be important to potential students.

### **Summary**

It was the purpose of this study to compare the course subject rankings by HTM graduates with those provided by industry leaders and present university hospitality program developers with suggestions for improvement based on sound quantitative research. The research indicates that both similarities and differences exist between student expectations and industry desires. When comparing the results with the course programs of two local Mid-Atlantic universities, similar results were identified. However,

it is evident that a disconnect between student expectations, industry desires and hospitality course program curricula still exists. As measurable competencies continue to emerge and evolve in academia, studies such as this that include multiple stakeholders will become more important to curricular development (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017). This research study combined objective results from two of three stakeholders within the hospitality curriculum environment. Studies such as this provide academia with empirical data from which they can then assess and evaluate their individual programs. It is important for the success of hospitality programs to work with the different stakeholders to ensure the relevance and longevity of their programs (Hsu et al., 2017). The data and suggestions provided here offer hospitality program developers with a starting point to evaluate and revise their curricula.

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## Appendix A

### Permission to Adapt Survey Instrument



## RE: Request to use research instrument



Hyounae Min &lt;min@cpp.edu&gt;

Tue 7/10, 12:28 PM

Jennifer Aarons



Reply all



You forwarded this message on 7/11/2018 11:13 PM

Hi Jennifer,

Thanks for your interest in my paper. I am happy to have you to use the materials that I used. As long as you cite it appropriately, there won't be any issue.

If you need any questions, please let me know.

Good luck for your dissertation!

Hyounae

---

**From:** Jennifer Aarons [mailto:ja1749@mynsu.nova.edu]

**Sent:** Monday, July 9, 2018 7:19 PM

**To:** Hyounae Min <min@cpp.edu>

**Subject:** Request to use research instrument

Hello Dr. Min,

My name is Jennifer Aarons. I am an EDD student at NOVA Southeastern University. The topic of my dissertation is to ascertain the preparedness of hospitality graduates for entry-level management positions in the industry. The longitudinal research that you published in 2016 with N. Swanger and D. Gursoy is what has directed me on this topic. Through the ResearchGate website I was able to locate your current employment at California State Polytechnic University.

I am pursuing this topic as I am currently an Adjunct Professor at Stockton University in New Jersey teaching a spa management class as part of their hospitality program. Additionally, I am currently employed by a casino/hotel in Atlantic City, New Jersey as the Director of Spa Operations. My goal is to obtain a full-time professor position teaching hospitality courses.

For my research, I would like to identify the importance of various courses to hospitality students. To do so, I would like permission to use and modify the survey instrument that you used in 2016 for student use.

Your support in my educational endeavor would be greatly appreciated and properly noted in my dissertation.

Regards,

Jennifer Aarons; N01666675

EDD student, Curriculum &amp; Teaching Concentration

## Appendix B

### 2004 Gurs0y & Swanger Survey Results Table 1

Table 1

**Subject Matter Areas Ranked According to  
Importance for Success by All Respondents (N=328)**

Rank	Subject Matter	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Ethics	3.39	0.80
2	Leadership	3.39	0.73
3	Preparation for Industry Employment	3.27	0.81
4	Internships/industry experience	3.24	0.92
5	Hospitality Management and Organization	3.16	0.78
6	Operations Analysis	3.13	0.78
7	Overview of the Hospitality Industry	3.08	0.90
8	Foodservice Operations and Controls	2.98	0.81
9	Computer/Information Technology	2.91	0.86
10	Service Management	2.87	0.82
11	Strategic Management	2.87	0.88
12	Principles of Marketing	2.86	0.88
13	Human Resource Management	2.85	0.85
14	Hospitality Marketing Strategy	2.84	0.90
15	Sales/Sales Management	2.75	0.93
16	Food Safety and Sanitation	2.69	1.03
17	Accounting	2.68	0.86
18	Finance	2.66	0.88
19	Lodging Operations	2.65	0.87
20	Revenue/Asset Management	2.65	0.88
21	Economics for Decision Making	2.47	0.86
22	Entrepreneurship	2.47	0.97
23	Beverage Management	2.29	0.91
24	Introduction to Management Theory	2.27	0.86
25	Dining Room Service Management	2.25	0.96
26	Meeting Planning/Convention Management	2.21	0.88
27	Statistics for Management Decision Making	2.20	0.94
28	Business Law	2.19	0.83
29	Innovation and Product Development	2.09	0.97
30	Wine and Specialty Beverage Service / Production	2.06	0.93
31	Tourism	2.05	0.93
32	Distribution Channels	2.00	0.97
33	Fundamentals of Cooking	1.90	0.89
34	Foreign Language	1.73	0.98
35	Destination Management	1.63	0.88
36	Math (calculus)	1.56	0.97
37	Secondary Revenue Management (spas, gift shops, recreation, etc.)	1.53	0.86
38	Real Estate/Property Development	1.49	0.88
39	Gaming/Casino Operations	1.24	0.86
40	Study Abroad	1.12	0.96

## Appendix C

2012 Gursoy, Rahman & Swanger Survey Results Table 2

**Table 2**

**Current Ranking of Subject Areas According to Importance for Success by  
Hospitality Professionals (N=369)**

Rank	Subject Matter	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Leadership	4.31	1.04
2	Internships/Industry experience	4.30	1.05
3	Preparation for Industry Employment	4.23	1.06
4	Ethics	4.01	1.09
5	Overview of the Hospitality Industry	3.99	1.08
6	Revenue/Asset Management	3.95	1.08
7	Hospitality Management and Organization	3.93	1.01
8	Hospitality Operations Analysis	3.92	1.00
9	Foodservice Operations and Controls	3.89	0.99
10	Computer/Information Technology	3.85	1.07
11	Food and Beverage Management	3.75	1.02
12	Food Safety and Sanitation	3.72	1.52
13	Finance	3.70	1.06
14	Strategic Management	3.69	1.05
15	Human Resource Management	3.66	1.07
16	Lodging Operations	3.66	1.04
17	Sales/Sales Management	3.63	1.00
18	Service Management	3.62	1.01
19	Principles of Marketing	3.61	1.87
20	Hospitality Marketing Strategy	3.61	1.00
21	Public Relations	3.37	1.91
22	Entrepreneurship	3.33	1.13
23	Meeting Planning/Convention Management	3.22	0.96
24	Statistics for Management Decision Making	3.15	1.04
25	Introduction to Management Theory	3.13	1.11
26	Convention and Meeting Planning	3.10	0.95
27	Business Law	3.09	1.03
28	Wine and Specialty Beverage Service / Production	2.99	1.00
29	International Tourism	2.92	1.89
30	Innovation and Product Development	2.88	1.01
31	Foreign Language	2.75	1.08
32	Real Estate/Property Development	2.61	1.04
33	Study Abroad	2.50	1.15

Appendix D  
Survey Instrument

Dissertation Survey Instrument									
Demographic Information									
<p>* 1. Please select your gender</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Male</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Female</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to disclose</p>									
<p>* 2. Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.)</p> <table border="0"><tr><td><input type="radio"/> American Indian or Alaskan Native</td><td><input type="radio"/> Hispanic</td></tr><tr><td><input type="radio"/> Asian / Pacific Islander</td><td><input type="radio"/> White / Caucasian</td></tr><tr><td><input type="radio"/> Black or African American</td><td></td></tr><tr><td><input type="radio"/> Multiple ethnicity / Other (please specify)</td><td></td></tr></table>		<input type="radio"/> American Indian or Alaskan Native	<input type="radio"/> Hispanic	<input type="radio"/> Asian / Pacific Islander	<input type="radio"/> White / Caucasian	<input type="radio"/> Black or African American		<input type="radio"/> Multiple ethnicity / Other (please specify)	
<input type="radio"/> American Indian or Alaskan Native	<input type="radio"/> Hispanic								
<input type="radio"/> Asian / Pacific Islander	<input type="radio"/> White / Caucasian								
<input type="radio"/> Black or African American									
<input type="radio"/> Multiple ethnicity / Other (please specify)									
<p>* 3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?</p> <p><input type="text"/></p>									
<p>* 4. Select the best description of the property where you currently work</p> <p><input type="text"/></p> <p><input type="text"/></p>									
<p>* 5. Please select the type of ownership of the property where you currently work</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Company owned</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Independently owned</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Franchised</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Other (please specify)</p> <p><input type="text"/></p>									

Dissertation Survey Instrument					
Course Subject Rankings					
* 6. Rank each course subject area below according to its importance for career preparation					
	Not important at all	Somewhat important	Important	Moderately important	Extremely important
Internships/industry experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Preparation for industry employment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hospitality management and organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ethics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overview of the hospitality industry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hospitality operations analysis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foodservice operations and controls	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lodging operations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strategic management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food and beverage management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Revenue/asset management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Service management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sales/sales management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Computer/information technology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Finance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Human resource management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hospitality marketing strategy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Principles of marketing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social media management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



	Not important at all	Somewhat important	Important	Moderately important	Extremely important
Food safety and sanitation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Beverage management- production, sales, service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Statistics for management decision making	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Entrepreneurship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Convention and meeting planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Diversity management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public relations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Introduction to management theory	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business law	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Innovation and product development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
International tourism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Study abroad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foreign language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nutrition and healthy living	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Real estate/property development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Senior living management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
* 7. Select three courses that were most relevant to your career preparation					
	1	2	3		
Introduction to Hospitality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
Introduction to Microeconomics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
Basics of Business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
Food Principles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
Introduction to Hospitality Information Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		

	1	2	3
Seminar in Composition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Introduction to Macroeconomics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Executive Presentations & Problem Solving OR Oral Communications in Business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nutrition Concepts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accounting 1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Introduction to Marketing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quantity Food Service Management/Lab	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Introduction to Statistical Methods/Statistics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Principles of Finance/Financial Accounting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organizational Behavior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Human Resources Management in the Hospitality Industry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Property Engineering/Facilities Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Management of Lodging Operations/Hotel Administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managerial Accounting & Finance in the Hospitality Industry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing in the Hospitality Industry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Management of Food & Beverage Operations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Written Communication in Business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Beverage Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Law of Innkeeping/Legal, Social, Ethical Environments of Business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1	2	3
Strategic Hospitality Management/Business Policies & Strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contemporary International Tourism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Economics of Tourism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research Methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
* 8. Select three courses that were least relevant to your career preparation			
	1	2	3
Introduction to Hospitality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Introduction to Microeconomics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Basics of Business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food Principles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Introduction to Hospitality Information Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seminar in Composition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Introduction to Macroeconomics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Executive Presentations & Problem Solving OR Oral Communications in Business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nutrition Concepts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accounting 1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Introduction to Marketing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quantity Food Service Management/Lab	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Introduction to Statistical Methods/Statistics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Principles of Finance/Financial Accounting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organizational Behavior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Human Resources Management in the Hospitality Industry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1	2	3
Property Engineering/Facilities Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Management of Lodging Operations/Hotel Administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managerial Accounting & Finance in the Hospitality Industry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing in the Hospitality Industry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Management of Food & Beverage Operations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Written Communication in Business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Beverage Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Law of Innkeeping/Legal, Social, Ethical Environments of Business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strategic Hospitality Management/Business Policies & Strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contemporary International Tourism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Economics of Tourism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research Methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Please provide up to three course suggestions that would enhance your degree program

## Appendix E

### Type of Business Where Participants Work

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Other (please specify)	19	52.8	52.8	52.8
	Hotel/Motel	7	19.4	19.4	72.2
	Restaurant	7	19.4	19.4	91.7
	Destination Resort	3	8.3	8.3	100.0
	Total	36	100.0	100.0	

## Appendix F

Ranking of Course Subjects in Order of Importance by HTM Graduates

Table F1

Ranking of Course Subjects in Order of Importance by HTM Graduates

HTMS Graduate Rankings ( <i>N</i> = 21)						
Ranking	Course Subject	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
1	Internships/industry experience	4.71	0.72	104.07	20	0.00
2	Leadership	4.29	0.90	-84.88	20	0.00
3	Preparation for industry employment	4.24	0.89	-86.40	20	0.00
4	Ethics	4.14	0.96	-80.17	20	0.00
5	Human resource management	4.14	0.73	106.25	20	0.00
6	Service management	4.10	0.94	-82.09	20	0.00
7	Diversity management	4.00	0.84	-93.11	20	0.00
8	Hospitality management and organization	3.95	0.92	-84.85	20	0.00
9	Foodservice operations and controls	3.95	1.07	-72.93	20	0.00
10	Sales/sales management	3.95	1.16	-67.30	20	0.00
11	Strategic management	3.90	0.83	-94.28	20	0.00
12	Public relations	3.86	0.73	108.05	20	0.00
13	Overview of the hospitality industry	3.81	1.03	-76.45	20	0.00
14	Revenue/asset management	3.81	1.03	-76.45	20	0.00
15	Entrepreneurship	3.62	0.97	-81.82	20	0.00
16	Food and beverage management	3.57	1.03	-77.68	20	0.00
17	Hospitality marketing strategy	3.52	1.17	-68.63	20	0.00
18	Social media management	3.52	0.98	-81.66	20	0.00
19	Business law	3.52	0.60	133.13	20	0.00



Ranking	Course Subject	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
20	Foreign language	3.43	1.08	-74.86	20	0.00
21	Hospitality operations analysis	3.38	0.86	-93.38	20	0.00
22	Principles of marketing	3.38	0.92	-87.70	20	0.00
23	Nutrition and healthy living	3.38	1.12	-72.29	20	0.00
24	Beverage management- production, sales, service	3.33	1.11	-72.90	20	0.00
25	Computer/information technology	3.29	0.90	-89.96	20	0.00
26	Food safety and sanitation	3.29	1.01	-80.60	20	0.00
27	Convention and meeting planning	3.24	0.83	-97.96	20	0.00
28	Statistics for management decision making	3.19	0.98	-83.21	20	0.00
29	Study abroad	3.14	1.06	-77.03	20	0.00
30	Finance	3.05	0.67	-122.96	20	0.00
31	Introduction to management theory	3.00	0.89	-92.22	20	0.00
32	Innovation and product development	3.00	0.32	-260.85	20	0.00
33	International tourism	2.86	0.79	-104.87	20	0.00
34	Lodging operations	2.81	0.68	-122.65	20	0.00
35	Real estate/property development	2.67	0.91	-92.03	20	0.00
36	Senior living management	2.29	0.64	-133.24	20	0.00

## Appendix G

### Comparison of Means Between HTM Graduates and Industry Leaders

Table G1

Comparison of Means Between HTM Graduates and Industry Leaders

Ranking	Course Subject	HTMS Graduate Rankings (N = 21)		2016 Industry Leader Rankings (N = 246)		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
1	Internships/industry experience	4.71	0.72	4.48	0.08	1.463	19.00	0.0799
2	Leadership	4.29	0.90	4.37	0.78	-0.395	22.00	0.6516
3	Preparation for industry employment	4.24	0.89	4.39	0.76	-0.749	22.00	0.7692
4	Ethics	4.14	0.96	4.11	0.93	0.138	22.00	0.4458
5	Human resource management	4.14	0.73	3.75	0.94	2.291	24.00	0.0155
6	Service management	4.10	0.94	3.89	0.86	0.989	22.00	0.1667
7	Diversity management	4.00	0.84	3.40	1.06	3.071	26.00	0.0025
8	Hospitality management and organization	3.95	0.92	4.18	0.82	-1.108	23.00	0.8604
9	Foodservice operations and controls	3.95	1.07	3.95	0.83	0.000	22.00	0.5000
10	Sales/sales management	3.95	1.16	3.85	0.89	0.386	21.00	0.3519
11	Strategic management	3.90	0.83	3.91	0.90	-0.053	24.00	0.5208

Ranking	Course Subject	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
12	Public relations	3.86	0.73	3.36	0.97	2.926	27.00	0.0034
13	Overview of the hospitality industry	3.81	1.03	4.11	0.93	-1.290	22.00	0.8948
14	Revenue/asset management	3.81	1.03	3.91	0.95	-0.430	22.00	0.6642
15	Entrepreneurship	3.62	0.97	3.48	1.03	0.632	23.00	0.2669
16	Food and beverage management	3.57	1.03	3.91	0.78	-1.477	21.00	0.9227
17	Hospitality marketing strategy	3.52	1.17	3.75	0.90	-0.879	22.00	0.8055
18	Social media management	3.52	0.98	3.96	0.95	-1.979	22.00	0.9698
19	Business law	3.52	0.60	3.18	0.97	2.348	27.00	0.0132
20	Foreign language	3.43	1.08	2.95	1.03	1.962	23.00	0.0310
21	Hospitality operations analysis	3.38	0.86	4.10	0.80	-3.702	22.00	0.9994
22	Principles of marketing	3.38	0.92	3.70	0.90	-1.533	23.00	0.9305
23	Nutrition and healthy living	3.38	1.12	2.94	0.97	1.745	22.00	0.0474
24	Beverage management- production, sales, service	3.33	1.11	3.52	0.85	-0.766	22.00	0.7739
25	Computer/information technology	3.29	0.90	3.84	0.97	-2.671	24.00	0.9933

Ranking	Course Subject	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
26	Food safety and sanitation	3.29	1.01	3.67	1.00	-1.657	23.00	0.9444
27	Convention and meeting planning	3.24	0.83	3.47	0.90	-1.211	24.00	0.8811
28	Statistics for management decision making	3.19	0.98	3.49	0.98	-1.347	23.00	0.9044
29	Study abroad	3.14	1.06	3.02	1.21	0.492	24.00	0.3135
30	Finance	3.05	0.67	3.83	0.97	-4.915	26.00	>0.9999
31	Introduction to management theory	3.00	0.89	3.28	1.00	-1.370	23.00	0.9080
32	Innovation and product development	3.00	0.32	3.10	0.96	-1.076	80.00	0.8575
33	International tourism	2.86	0.79	3.05	0.98	-1.036	24.00	0.8447
34	Lodging operations	2.81	0.68	3.93	0.83	-7.111	24.00	>.9999
35	Real estate/property development	2.67	0.91	2.76	1.04	-0.430	24.00	0.6644
36	Senior living management	2.29	0.64	2.76	1.01	-3.056	31.00	0.9977

