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Understanding Chinese Hospitality Management Master's Students' Satisfaction With Their Education

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For the degree of   Master of Science

Is approved by the final examining committee:

ANNMARIE NICELY

Chair

HOWARD ADLER

HUGO TANG

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Approved by: BARBARA ALMANZA   12/04/2013

Head of the Graduate Program   Date

UNDERSTANDING CHINESE HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT MASTER'S

STUDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH THEIR EDUCATION

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Purdue University

by

Yanbin Li

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

of

Master of Science

December 2013

Purdue University

West Lafayette, Indiana

献给我的家人

和你

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I would never have been able to finish my thesis without the guidance of my committee members and the support of my family and friends.

First, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my committee chairs, Dr. Annmarie Nicely and Dr. Howard Adler, for their inspiring assistance and valuable guidance. Their intelligent and fresh insights inspired me the most when I struggled in the middle of the research, their patience and care also allowed me to overcome many life difficulties. They helped me throughout the research and writing process.

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The Chinese Master's students who were my subjects also deserve my appreciation. Thanks to the Chinese Master's students in my research for their participation. Without their input, this thesis would not have been possible. Their cooperation and participation assured the quality of the thesis and motivated me to complete the present research.

Second, love from my family is my motivation to set and achieve high goals in my life. Mostly importantly, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to my Mom, who makes all my success happen. She works diligently to support me spiritually and financially, I owe my happiness to her. In addition, my Aunt, Grandmother, and my Father are my

sources of love to me. Their encouragement and unconditional support drive me this far; I am extremely grateful to them.

Finally, I cannot express enough my appreciation to my friends at Purdue and in China for their support, encouragement, and care. They offered me endless emotional and financial support.

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ABSTRACT

Li, Yanbin. M.S., Purdue University, December 2013. Understanding Chinese Hospitality Management Master's Students' Satisfaction with Their Education. Major Professors: Annmarie Nicely and Howard Adler.

The purpose of the present research was to understand Chinese students' expectations and experiences with their Master's education in hospitality-related programs in the U.S. Three groups of persons could potentially benefit from the results of the study: university administrators, professors, and graduate students of hospitality management programs (both current and future students). In-depth interviews were conducted with twenty-one Chinese Master's students in a Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) program at a Midwest research university. Content analysis was performed to identify themes regarding students' expectations, experiences and satisfaction with their graduate programs.

When comparing Chinese hospitality management Master's students' expectations and actual experiences, the researcher found both similarities and differences. The participants mentioned actual experiences that were in line with their expectation. Some of the most representative aspects were as follows. The program was research-based and students could get systematic training in academic theories and research methodologies.

Students had much interaction with professors and they felt free to exchange ideas with them. The professors were willing to help students and exchange ideas with them. The university also provided students with opportunities for career preparation, such as mock interviews and résumé development workshops.

However, the researcher also found some differences between Chinese Master's students' actual experiences and their expectations prior to commencing the program. Some differences in the academic aspects were as follows. Students expected to receive knowledge that was updated and connected to the hospitality industry, some thought that what they actually learned was overly academic and not adequately applicable to the industry. The students also reported that the actual academic workload was much higher than expected and they were too busy with academic tasks to explore their personal interests. Participants expected to work with professors on real business projects while in reality students only worked with professors on course-related assignments. Students expected the career center to help them find jobs, instead, they felt the assistance they received was not adequate.

Non-academically, students expected to make friends with students from other countries and experience the U.S. culture. However, they thought that in reality they were less motivated to participate in local activities and they ended up only making friends with Chinese students because of the large number of Chinese students in the program.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 <u>Introduction</u>

As the host country to 18% of all the international students in the world, the United

States has the world's largest international student population (Chau, 2011;

O'Shaughnessy, 2012). The number of international students pursuing their education in

the U.S., increased by 7% in the 2011/12 academic year from 766,023 to 819,644 in

2012/13 (Institute of International Education, 2013a). Among those international

students, 28.7% are Chinese students, making them the largest international student group

in America (Institute of International Education, 2013a). The number of Chinese students

increased by 24.1% from 194,029 in the academic year of 2011/12 to 235,597 in the

2012/13 academic year (Institute of International Education, 2013d). A survey of 39,896

Chinese students conducted by "6student.cn" (a Chinese website) in August 2010 found

that 36.4% of them chose the U.S. as their first choice of studying abroad, making it the

most popular country for that group (Bennett, 2012; Lu & Adler, 2009; L. Zhang, Lu, Hu,

& Adler, 2009).

Among the international students, 38% of them studied in the U.S. at the graduate

level. The total number of international graduate students increased from 300,430 in

2011/2012 to 311,204 in 2012/2013, taking up 42.9% of all the graduate students in the

U.S. Among the 311,204 international graduate students, 65,978 are Master's students

(Institute of International Education, 2013c). More Chinese students study in the U.S. universities at the graduate level, the number of which in the 2012/13 academic year is 103,505, than in the undergraduate level, the number being 93,789 in 2012/13 (Institute of International Education, 2013b).

The hospitality programs in the U.S. are popular among international students. Even though the hospitality industry in the U.S. is mature, it continues to grow at a fast pace (Blomme, Rheede, & Tromp, 2009). The U.S. is also the home-base of a number of prominent international hotel chains such as Marriott, Hyatt, and Hilton. This creates industry experience opportunities and makes pursuing studies in the field attractive amongst international students based in the U.S. (Bhandari, 2011).

The rapidly growing Chinese hospitality industry has created a strong need for a highly trained and educated labor force and it is attracting an increasing number of Chinese students to the hospitality field (Thayer Lodging Group, 2010). By the end of 2012, there were 12,807 star-rated hotels in China with altogether 1,497,200 rooms (Travel China Guide, 2013). The revenue generated by the Chinese domestic tourism industry is projected to have an average growth rate of 18% between 2011 and 2014 (L. Wood, 2012). More Chinese students are choosing to pursue hospitality majors to equip themselves with greater competency in the industry (Horwath HTL, 2011). The Chinese government has initiatives to support its tourism, regarding it as one of the strategic accelerator of their country's economic growth (Research Industry Solutions, 2009).

The growth of the Chinese hospitality and tourism industry is significant in recent years. China, in 2012, witnessed significant investment in its hotel industry by foreign multinational luxury hospitality chains (Hardingham, 2012). An increasing number of

multinational hotel groups are expanding in the Chinese market, which developed from 137 properties in 1978 to 14,237 properties in 2009 (H. Zhang, Guillet, & Gao, 2012). Revenues doubled from 2002 to 2008 for Chinese tourism, for both inbound and domestic travels (Thayer Lodging Group, 2010). Mr. Jonas Ogren, Area Director of Smith Travel Research Global (STR Global), stated at the 2011 China Hotel Development and Financing Conference held in Beijing, that within the next three to four years, more than 330,000 hotels would be in the pipeline in Asia, 56% of which will be in China (Little, 2011). Average Daily Rate (ADR) levels in China are recovering and the Chinese hotel room inventory is anticipated to increase by approximately 16% over the same three to four year period (Horwath HTL, 2011; Little, 2011). Predicted by the China Tourism Industry Report in 2012, the revenue of Chinese domestic tourism industry would have an average growth rate of 18% between 2011 to 2014 (L. Wood, 2012).

Due to such developments, the industry is demanding more qualified candidates and more persons have developed an interest in studying hospitality business. This has resulted in more international students attending universities in the U.S. and greater diversity in college classrooms. Educators in the U.S., therefore need to become more aware of how to best teach students from different cultures (Lee & Rice, 2007).

Master's programs and doctoral programs are the two major types of graduate programs. Most Chinese students attending U.S. universities are enrolled in graduate programs (Tislerova & Zambochova, 2011). Several studies have addressed Chinese students of undergraduate or doctoral programs in hospitality. Limited research, however, focused on Chinese Master's students, especially those pursuing hospitality programs. As the largest international student group (Chau, 2011; O'Shaughnessy, 2012), Chinese

students are very different from students from other countries due to their unique Confucian culture (Tislerova & Zambochova, 2011). Therefore, general conclusions drawn about international students may not apply to Chinese students.

The implementation of China's One-child Policy starting from 1979 has resulted in some negative psychological consequences on these children without siblings (Information Office of the State Council Of the People's Republic of China, 1995; W. Wang, Du, Liu, Liu, & Wang, 2002). Researchers have conducted several studies on the effects of growing up as only children on development and personality. As the country with the One-child Policy, Chinese children at university age have been raised in a different parental experience with students from other countries. Children without siblings are more egocentric, more maladjusted and less cooperative than students with siblings (W. Wang et al., 2002). Compared with patterns of rearing in other cultures, parents of Chinese children and adolescents are restrictive, overly protective and emotionally unexpressive (Leung, Heimberg, Holt, & Bruch, 1994).These factors noted above resulted in the unique characteristics of Chinese students and special expectations for education (W. Wang et al., 2002).

Other unique characteristics about Chinese students compared to students from other countries make the general conclusions for international students not applicable to Chinese students. They are the typical Confucian heritage learners that treasure education. They believe higher education to be the route to higher social status and material success, and promotes harmony based on morality and hierarchy (Starr, 2012). The Chinese education system could best be described as an examination system. Chinese students are trained in this system, which includes "teacher-centered and whole

class teaching, very large classes, apparent passivity on the part of learners with low levels of active learner anticipation, and much use of teacher-led chanting, rote-learning and mimetic methods" (Starr, 2012). Compared to international students from other countries, when Chinese students study abroad, they tend to more regard themselves as representatives of their whole culture, and may feel more pressure to avoid bringing shame on their country (Elkins, 1994; Toomey et al., 1991). Chinese students, compared to other international students, were more familiar with a "one-way, directive communication style between teacher and student", and less familiar with involving themselves in discussions (Beaver & Tuck, 1998). Similarly, they were surprised by the dialogic nature of communication in Western classrooms (Holmes, 2004; Watkins, 2001).

Two levels of hospitality education are available in the United States, undergraduate and graduate. Within the graduate level, there are two levels of diploma one could earn: Master's and Doctoral degrees (Zehrer & Lichtmannegger, 2008). U.S. graduate education requires extensive research work in addition to coursework. Coursework at graduate level is also more profound and specific than in undergraduate study. Many research universities are offering hospitality-related programs. Research universities are doctorate-granting institutions that award at least 20 doctorate degrees per academic year. The "research university" categorization is also based on the entity's level of research activity. For example, "research expenditures, number of research doctorates awarded, number of research-focused faculty, and other factors" (The Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching, 2005) are critical.

1.2   Purpose and Objective of the Study

The purpose of the present research was to study the satisfaction of Chinese Master's students pursuing a Master's degree in HTM at a research university by identifying their expectations and their actual experiences of the program. First, the study aimed to understand why Chinese students would choose to pursue their graduate level education in hospitality at research universities in the United States. Second, the study examined the expectations of Chinese Master's students about their education and how reality differed from their expectations. Third, by analyzing Chinese Master's students' satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their education, the present research attempted to assist administrators' understanding of those students' needs and improve the quality of the programs.

1.3   Significance of the Study

The present research has important theoretical significance. Future research on topics such as Chinese Master's students' learning experiences and preferences in English-speaking countries, classes in the U.S. with large international student population (especially Chinese students), and hospitality graduate programs (curriculum designs, student satisfaction and dissatisfaction, etc.) could be guided by the findings of this study.

The present research also has practical significance. For educators and administrators of hospitality-related Master's programs at research universities in the U.S., in particular those with large Chinese student enrollments, they could benefit from the study as it identified intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence these unique international students pursuing their hospitality management Master's degrees at these U.S. institutions as well

as their expectations and the factors that influence their satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the programs. Both current and future students could also benefit from the study's findings.

1.4   Scope of the Study

The research focused on the Chinese students pursuing a Master's program in the U.S. without any previous education experience in the U.S. and whose sole purpose of coming to institutions in the U.S. was to pursue Master's education. The current study only studied Master's students and excluded Doctoral students.

CHAPTER 2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Considering international students as a whole group, scholars have conducted

previous research examining why they chose to study in the United States, their studying

preferences, learning experiences and challenges, and expectations for their education

and career (C. Chen, Lee, S., & Stevenson H.W., 1996; R. Huang, 2005). Chinese

international students, as the largest international group in the United States., have been

studied in previous research as well (Chau, 2011; O'Shaughnessy, 2012). Previous studies

include what lodging managers expect from hospitality Master's students (Ricci, 2010),

international students' learning experiences, career, and educational expectations,

academic and daily challenges, study preferences (Robertson, Line, S., & Thomas, 2010),

preferences of international students in the U.S. and internationalization situations about

hospitality higher education (Lu & Adler, 2011).

Most literature, however, addressed undergraduate students instead of graduate

students, or, more specifically, Master's students (Lu & Adler, 2009). Barren and

Arcodia (2002) linked learning style preferences and ethnicity in her previous research

and studied international students of HTM in Australia. International undergraduate

students, since they are younger and their programs longer in the universities than

Master's students, they may not be representative of all the international students.

Chinese Master's students in the U.S. are very different from those from other countries

because of cultural differences (Tislerova & Zambochova, 2011). Therefore, general conclusions concerning international students may not apply to Chinese students.

Satisfaction level with the program is a good aspect to understand Chinese Master's students' motivation, expectations, and actual experiences. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction are the results of comparing expectations and experiences (Bhatti & Qureshi, 2007). Some studies aimed at understanding students' expectations towards education to help institutions better serve students, considering students are the customers of institutions (Kara & DeShields, 2004b). In regular industry, satisfied employees are found to be more productive, creative, and committed to their employers. Similar principles can be applied to satisfied students (Bhatti & Qureshi, 2007). Students' satisfaction levels with the programs has positive correlation with their involvement in their education (Schings, 2013).

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2.1   Chinese Master's Students' Motivations to Choose the Program

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2.2   Chinese Master's Students' Expectations for the Program

Previous research revealed that English deficiency was the major trouble Chinese Master's students faced when they studied at American universities (Yan & Berliner, 2009). Chinese Master's students expected the academic workload would be heavy and that the language barrier caused by English deficiency would make classes harder (Barg, 2013).

Differences and sometimes gaps exist among the expectations of students, graduates and hospitality workers (Blomme, Rheede, & Tromp, 2009). In terms of determinants of a foreign student's attitudes toward the U.S. includes but not limited to "the national status of his home country, the degree of his contact with Americans, the frustration he encounters during his stay, and the length of time he has been in the United States. Results of a study of 250 students indicate that Chinese student attitudes toward the U.S. are positively associated with contact with Americans (Chang, 1973).

2.3   Differences between Expectations and Reality

When Chinese Master's students first go to the United States, they face a series of difficulties and challenges (Gunlu & Usta, 2009). Academic stress is only part of the total

stress for international students studying in the United States. Life stress, social support, and reactions to stressors are essential factors as well (Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003). Students were surprised at the differences between Chinese classes and American classes, which was comparatively more informal, flexible and active (Yuan, 2011).

Many students report that life stress is the biggest challenge they encounter other than academic hardships (Huang & Klinger, 2006). An increasing number of scholars are paying attention to campus lives. Stress, depression, frustration, fear, and pessimism has been addressed in previous studies and evidence werepay provided by Lu and Adler (2009).

Research regarding learning challenges of Chinese Master's students at North American universities and their coping strategies has been conducted (Huang & Klinger, 2006). For example, responding strategies for the following seven major difficulties were reported and discussed in previous research (Huang & Klinger, 2006): financial hardship, utilization of academic English, impediments to get the green card, obstacles to fit in the classroom learning environment, high requirements of critical thinking abilities, cultural adaption issues and social fear.

Language is also reported by many students as another major challenge in the U.S. for international students in the U.S. (Huang, 2004; J. Huang, 2005). Even though the English language ability of most international students is adequate for everyday communication, when they go to the United States, they continue to have difficulty in adapting to mainstream culture (Huang, 2006). To adapt to the trend of increasing number of international students, many universities and programs are exploring and developing innovative ways of teaching (Smith, 2008).

Research has been conducted to explore if non-English speaking students respond differently to critical thinking assessment from students whose first language is English. They were asked whether they regard it as disadvantage when innovative class approaches are implemented (Zhang et al., 2009). Students agree to the perspective that they have advantages and disadvantages but most of them are likely to adopt preferences for learning styles which are similar to students of the host country (Zhang et al., 2009).

In terms of learning styles, hospitality Master's students with different educational backgrounds have different cognitive and linguistic patterns, a potential barrier to successful participation in American classrooms (Barron, 2004). R. Huang (2005) stated that when arriving at Western universities for the first time and facing learning styles and approaches that are alien to them, Chinese international students feel uncomfortable with Western-style learning environments (R. Huang, 2005).

University professors and administrators need to look further into the background experiences of international students. For instance, in a study of first-year students, Burns (1991) found that overseas students had comparatively higher stress levels than local students. They felt "more pressure from their families to succeed, less competent with academic skills, and misunderstood by academic staff." (Burns, 1991) Similar problems have been reported in subsequent studies (Choi, 1997; Mullins, Quintrell & Hancock, 1995; Ramsey, Barker & Jones, 1999; Yanhong Li & Kaye, 1998). University officials have realized the necessity to pay attention and adjust challenges international students face and are implementing support services to deal with them (Andrade, 2006)

One stereotype educators hold about Chinese Master's students is that they were not willing to participate in classes (Burns, 1991). Some researchers thought the reason why

international students are less willing to participate in classes was simply because of culture differences and, at times, language barriers. Burns (1991) stated that maybe the deficiency in their English language made the difference instead of culture, while teachers hold the belief that the cause was cultural differences. However, after interviewing students about the reasons, they reported English inadequacy as the major obstacle preventing them from active class participation (Kirby, Woodhouse, & Ma, 1999).

2.4   Satisfaction with Education

Expectations on the perspective of customers have been investigated in a variety of research settings (Oliver & Winer, 1987; Winer, 1985). However, most of them were thoroughly discussed in literatures about customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1993). Most research in the field of satisfaction agreed that expectations were the predictions customers made about what was mostly likely to happen during an impending transaction or service process (Miller, 1977; Prakash, 1984; Swan & Trawik, 1980).

Satisfaction is the evaluation and comparison between prior expectations and the actual performance of the product after it was consumed (Day, 1984; Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2002; John, 2003; Mittal & Frennea, 2010). To which extent the expectation is disconfirmed depends on the comparison standard: in this case, the pre-experience expectation (Ban, 2012; Diener et al., 2002). Expectations, fulfillment of expectations (disconfirmation), and satisfaction/dissatisfaction were discussed in previous research.

Students' expectations and satisfaction levels should be addressed as they are the customers of universities because according to the concept of customers developed by previous research, recipients of the service of service providers are the customers of the service providers (Kendall, 2007; Reizenstein, 2004a, 2004b). With this understanding, since students are receiving education (products and services) from universities (service providers). Student satisfaction is a sub-category of general satisfaction (Gruber, 2010).

The role of satisfaction and customer orientation can be envisioned in educational institutions with students as customers (Kara & DeShields, 2004b). Students' satisfaction with the program usually lead to their positive overall college experience and their willingness to stay at the college (Kara & DeShields, 2004b). Faculty and advising staff performance and classes experience would influence students' satisfaction (Health & Clair, 2011).

Students' satisfaction levels with the programs can predict their involvement with their education (Schings, 2013). Reviewing previous literature about education and marketing, the role of satisfaction and customer orientation can be envisioned in educational institutions with students as customers (Health & Clair, 2011; Kara & DeShields, 2004b). Students' satisfaction with the programs usually lead to their positive overall college experience and their willingness to involve in the education (Kara & DeShields, 2004b). Curriculum structures and content, teaching methods, analytical skill requirements, communication skills, social skills, and students' personal growth are the six dimensions reported in 2001 that shape current students' educational experience (BC College & Institute Student Outcomes, 2003). As long as the institution cares about retention, it should pay more attention to satisfying admitted students because dissatisfied

students may "cut back on the number of courses or even drop out of college completely" (Kara & DeShields, 2004a). Research has been conducted to examine the learning experiences of international students in American graduate schools (Lin, 2002).

Chinese students have unique points of view resulting from typical Chinese culture, Lockette (2006) found that Chinese students preferred to learn "practical knowledge" in an "organized environment". Eighty-six percent of Chinese students in his study preferred the "organized" learning style, referring to them sitting in orderly classrooms and following a set routine and firm standards of behavior. Six out of ten Chinese students preferred a "practical" learning style, using material that has real-world applications, learning by experience and seeking hard facts (Lockette, 2006).

Based on a review of previous literature, the present research will examine Chinese Master's students' satisfaction levels from the following three aspects: motivations for going to an American graduate hospitality program at a research university, their expectations prior to arrival, and how their experiences differed from their expectations. The above literature laid the foundation of studying the motivations for Chinese Master's students' decision-making process when deciding to attend an American hospitality program.

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program.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The present research is an exploratory study examining Chinese Master's students'

motivations majoring in HTM at research universities in the U.S., their expectations for

the program before enrollment, their actual experiences, and their satisfaction with the

program.

3.1 Design of Semi-structured Interviews

The researcher used semi-structured interviews and not questionnaires or focus

groups to collect data for the study. With individual interviews the researcher was able to

garner more in-depth responses to each question (Marshall, 1996). Since the interviewees

were not restricted within the options provided by questionnaires or influenced by other

participants in focus groups, they were able to express their ideas more candidly.

Multiple interview questions were developed based on the previous literature to

encourage the interviewees to provide further details under each of the three research

objectives. Intrinsic and extrinsic reasons were the two dimensions the interviewees were

asked about that influenced their selection of the program. The two dimensions

examining the interviewees' expectations and experiences in detail were academic and

non-academic. Interviewees were asked about their actual experiences and how they

differed from the expectations. Interview questions are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Interview Question List

Theme 1. Chinese students' motivations for pursuing a Master's degree in HTM in the United States.
Why did you decide to pursue a Master's degree in HTM?   Why did you choose to come to study in the U.S.?   Why did you choose the current program?
Theme 2. Chinese students' expectations prior to joining the Master's program.
Theme 3. Differences between expectations and actual experiences.
Describe your expectations for each of the following aspects before joining the program.   Describe what you actually witnessed and experienced in the following aspects.   A. Academic Aspects   Knowledge gained from academic courses   Teaching style in the U.S.   Workload   Working with course professors outside the classrooms   Assistance from other students, staff and support units associated with the programs (e.g. HTM career center)   B. Non-academic Aspects   Do you have any other contents that you want to add regarding the HTM program here?

3.1.1   Population and Sample

The study's population for the present research was Chinese students attending

research-based Master's programs in HTM in the United States. The participants could

not be American students of Chinese decent and/or have previous U.S. educational

background prior to entering the program. The participants should have completed their

undergraduate program in a learning institution outside of the U.S. and their sole purpose

for joining the Master's program was to pursue hospitality education at the graduate level

in the United States. Those Chinese students who had previous education experience in

the U.S. were excluded as this experience may influence their original perceptions of their current Master's program.

Two major types of institutions offer advanced academic education in the U.S.: graduate schools and professional schools. Graduate schools award qualified students with Master's and doctoral degrees and require applicants to have earned a previous undergraduate (Bachelor's) degree. Professional schools refer to those offering advanced degrees in specialized fields such as "medicine, business, engineering, ministry or law." The sample for the present research was Chinese students pursuing a hospitality-related Master's degree on the main campus of an internationally renowned university with a large population of international students in the Midwest, U.S.A.. The university is categorized as "4-year or more" research university (O'Shaughnessy, 2012). The basic categorization of the university is RU/VH: Research Universities (very high research activity) (The Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching, 2005). The graduate education of the institution is under the category of "CompDoc/MedVet: Comprehensive doctoral with medical/veterinary", meaning the university awards "research doctorate degrees in the humanities, social sciences, and STEM (Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields, as well as in medicine, dentistry, and/or veterinary medicine. It also offers professional education in other health professions or in fields such as business, education, engineering, law, public policy, or social work" (The Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching, 2005).

The purposive sampling method was adopted to choose the sample within the group of people who the researcher deemed had all the research identifications and characters (Lucas, 2012). Since such judgmental sampling is a type of nonrandom sampling, which

is selected based on the opinion of the researcher, the results of the study are of limited

value and could be generalized only within the specific group of people (Marshall, 1996).

3.1.2 Reliability and Validity

Prior to the official interview process, the semi-structured interview questions were

reviewed by professors at that program and then pilot tests were conducted on two

Chinese Master's students to ensure the questions were appropriate and representative for

the study. Each of the two pilot test interviewees was asked if they would approve the

recording of the interviews. They were informed that all the documents, including the

digital audio recordings, transcripts, and the other related materials would be stored in

password-protected computers and kept confidential. After correcting the instruments

according to the professors' suggestions and the results of the pilot tests, the researcher

applied for approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the university.

After the approval to conduct the research was received from the IRB, the researcher

assigned two interview facilitators, both of whom were Doctoral students. They were not

Chinese. This was to ensure their neutrality during the interview process. The researcher

then trained the interviewers to ensure that they understood the purpose and objectives of

the study as well as the interview questions. After the facilitators were trained, one was

asked to conduct ten interviews and the other eleven interviews. The facilitators were

given recorders to audio record the interviews. The recorders were collected by the

researcher immediately after the interviews.

Interviews were conducted over a four-night period in October, 2012 in a private

room on campus and not in the program's building. This allowed the interviewees to

candidly express their ideas with little or no pressure. To ensure the study's participants' privacy each interviewee was not informed of the others being interviewed for the study.

Previous research findings revealed that to assure reliability and validity, results of the content categorization should be coded more than one time (Krippendorff, 1980). To ensure generalizability, consistency, and precision, the transcripts of the study were coded twice by the researcher to assess the variance. The transcripts were coded for the first time directly after the researcher finished creating all the transcripts. The researcher recoded the transcripts to ensure the two versions of coding results were independent from each other seven months later. As Davidson (2009) indicated, transcription and coding were continual processes of revision. The consistent codes were accepted and those that were inconsistent were recoded for a third time. Of all the 107 codes from the first coding process, 16 were changed after being recoded. The convergence rate was 85.05%, indicating the codes were stable and accurate.

3.2   Participant Recruitment

The graduate secretary for the hospitality program of the participants sent out the interviewer recruitment email to a total of 30 Doctoral students that were eligible as interviewers and the interviewee recruitment email was sent to a total of 71 Master's students in the program. To recruit the interviewers, the researcher stated in the interviewer recruitment email that two interviewers were needed and each of them would conduct approximately five interviews each day for a total of two days. The interview length would be 30-35 minutes each and the interview location would be in a study room at one the university's library. The researcher chose the first two Doctoral students who

replied to the interviewer recruitment email as the final interviewers. In the follow-up

emails, the researcher and the interviewers agreed on the interview dates and times. They

also set the training session time for the study by the researcher.

In the interviewee recruitment email, the researcher explained that the interviews

would be about Chinese students' satisfaction about their Master's education by studying

their motivations for choosing the current program, their expectations and experience of

the Master's program. The researcher also explained that students who would volunteer

30 to 35 minutes of their time could participate in the study if they met the requirements

for the research. The researcher chose the first 20 students eligible for the research who

replied to the interviewee recruitment email. One student replied later to the recruitment

email after the 20 interviewees were selected expressed to the researcher his strong

interest in the study and willingness to participate as an interviewee. The researcher

decided to include him in the research sample, making the total number of interviewees

twenty-one. The researcher and the interviewees agreed on the specific interview time in

the follow-up email communications.

3.3   Data Collection

The interviews were conducted over four days. All names of the interviewees were

replaced by identifiers, which reflected the day they attended the interview and the order

with which they were interviewed. For example, the interviewee was identified as

"Interviewee 1A" because he/she attended the interview on the first day and he/she was

the first interviewee that day. As same principles apply, identifier "Interview 4E" refers

to the interviewee who attended the interview on the fourth day and he/she was the fifth

interviewees that day.

The interviewers asked the interviewees the semi-structured questions based on the

three major objectives of the research and took notes of interviewees' major comments at

the interviews and the researcher was absent from the interviews. During the interviews,

participants could express their own feelings as thoroughly as possible during the

interviews without worrying about the interviewer missing any of their comments.

Retrospective verbalization followed the interviews by the researcher with the assistance

of the minutes of the interviews to develop transcripts as recommended by previous

researcher Gardial, Clemons, Woodruff, Schumann, and Burns. (1994).

3.4   Data Analysis

To systematically analyze the patterns of Chinese Master's students' satisfaction, the

researcher adopted the content analysis data analysis method (Markley & Rossman,

1995). When analyzing the data, the researcher focused on the top three most frequent

mentions as significant themes and studied them in priority.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 21 semi-structured interviews were conducted to Chinese Master's students in HTM at a major American university in the Midwest. Four interviewees (19.05% of all the interviewees) were male, while the other seventeen (80.95% of all the interviewees) were female. Eight of the interviews lasted for 15 to 20 minutes, nine for 21 to 30 minutes, and five for more than 30 minutes.

4.1   Demographics of the Interviewees

Ten of the interviewees were in their first year and eleven of them were in their second year. Their average age was 24. Table 2 shows their demographic information. Individual data were recorded and presented though the research was not focused on personal issues. Such a method was decided necessary according to previous research by Lucas (2012) .

Table 2

Interviewee Demographic Information

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Home City	Year at the program
1A	Female	25	Guangzhou, Guangdong	2nd
1B	Female	25	Dandong, Liaoning	2nd
1C	Female	25	Guiyang, Guizhou	2nd
1D	Female	25	Guangzhou, Guangdong	2nd
1E	Female	24	Chongqing	2nd
2A	Female	25	Shijiazhuang, Hebei	2nd
2B	Female	24	Shanghai	2nd
2C	Female	25	Shanghai	2nd
2D	Female	24	Shanghai	2nd
2E	Male	24	Shanghai	2nd
3A	Male	24	Chongqing	1st
3B	Female	24	Suzhou, Jiangsu	1st
3C	Female	24	Wuhan, Hubei	1st
3D	Female	24	Guilin, Guangxi	1st
3E	Female	22	Chengdu, Sichuan	1st
4A	Female	24	Zhuhai, Guangdong	1st
4B	Female	24	Huaian, Jiangsu	1st
4C	Female	24	Hangzhou, Zhejiang	1st
4D	Female	24	Wuhan, Hubei	1st
4E	Male	24	Zhangjiakou, Hebei	1st
4F	Male	24	Jiaxing, Zhejiang	1st

4.2   Summary of Chinese Graduate Students' Backgrounds

Interviewee 1A

Interviewee 1A was from Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, one of the first-tier cities in China. Her undergraduate degree major was Hospitality Management so that was her most important reason for choosing HTM for her Master's degree. She decided to pursue a Master's degree because she thought a hospitality undergraduate education in China was

not connected to the industry and she wanted to improve herself academically to work in the hospitality industry.

Interviewee 1B

   Interviewee 1B was from Dandong, Liaoning Province. She majored in Tourism Management when she was an undergraduate. She was interested in the field and wanted to gain more professional knowledge by pursuing a Master's degree. Additionally, she thought that a Bachelor's degree in China was not sufficiently competitive for the job market. Hence, she decided to pursue a Master's degree in HTM.

Interviewee 1C

   Interview 1C was from Guiyang, Guizhou Province. Her Bachelor's degree was in Food Science and she decided to extend her skills in management. Getting a Master's degree, according to her, could equip her with the abilities to operate a restaurant of her own.

Interviewee 1D

   Interviewee 1D was from Guangzhou, Guangdong Province. One of her major reasons to pursue a Master's degree was that she was not ready to enter the industry; she wanted to get more educational experience. Her parents and college professors expected her to pursue a Master's degree, too.

Interviewee 1E

   Interviewee 1E was from Chongqing. She thought that a Master's degree would be very helpful in China. She also said that the high reputation of their university and the HTM Master's program of the university was among her main reasons to choose the specific program.

Interviewee 2A

Interviewee 2A was from Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province. She majored in hospitality for her Bachelor's degree. Wanting to get more intensive and theoretical training in the hospitality industry was her motivation for pursuing a Master's degree in HTM. She was very interested careers in the service industry and confident that she would be very good at them.

Interviewee 2B

Interviewee 2B was from Shanghai. The reason for choosing her current program was that she wanted to continue learning more about her undergraduate major in hospitality. She chose the U.S. for study since she thought that other countries were not as challenging as the U.S. and diplomas were not as widely accepted as those from the American programs.

Interviewee 2C

Interviewee 2C came from Shanghai, also majoring in hospitality for her Bachelor's degree. She liked the major so much that she wanted to pursue more in-depth learning about it. She thought that the Master's degree would quicker promotion in her future career.

Interviewee 2D

Interviewee 2D was from Shanghai. She chose to pursue English as her undergraduate major, but she did not want to pursue a language-related career. She thought that English was not a sufficient major and she was interested in lodging; she decided to study hospitality for a Master's degree.

Interviewee 2E

Interviewee 2E was from Shanghai. He thought highly of the American education system, believing it to be "the best in the world". He thought an American degree would help him find a better job. Since the Chinese hospitality industry has just emerged and begun development, he thought it a very promising career for him to pursue.

Interviewee 3A

Interviewee 3A was from Chongqing. As a first-time student at the program, he believed that hospitality was "more concentrated and profession-oriented" than other business majors. According to him, a Master's degree would give him a faster track in his career.

Interviewee 3B

Interviewee 3B was from Suzhou, Jiangsu Province. She did not want to go directly into the industry after graduating from college and wanted to stay in school longer. Her willingness to relocate to a foreign country to meet new people and learn more became reasons why she decided to study abroad. She expected to be better prepared to find a job in an international hotel chain, such as Marriott, with the credential of a Master's degree.

Interviewee 3C

Interviewee 3C was from Wuhan, Hubei Province, majoring in Finance for her undergraduate education. She was an interest-oriented person, and felt she did not want an office job. She changed her career path, developing interest in HTM and came to the U.S. to pursue a Master's degree in the area.

Interviewee 3D

Interviewee 3D was from Guilin, Guangxi Province. She majored in international trade for her Bachelor's degree. During her undergraduate study, she interned at a hotel, where she developed her interest in hotel management. She thought she was more service-oriented.

Interviewee 3E

Interviewee 3E was from Chengdu, Sichuan Province. She had a relative who worked at a hotel who recommended that she work in that industry. During her summer vacation, she interned at a hotel and found it interesting. Therefore, she decided to pursue a Master's degree in hospitality to expand her knowledge of it.

Interviewee 4A

Interviewee 4A was from Zhuhai, Guangdong Province. She earned her HTM Bachelor's degree and had the long-term goal to pursue a Master's degree, she chose to continue studying hospitality. Both her family and her like the country of the United States, so she decided to study there.

Interviewee 4B

Interviewee 4B was from Huai'an, Jiangsu Province. She thought that the hospitality and tourism industry was unique and attracting interest in China. Many of her friends recommended her to pursue future education in this field. She thought that a Master's degree would be helpful for her future career so she chose one in HTM.

Interviewee 4C

Interviewee 4C was from Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province. One of the reasons why she decided to pursue a Master's degree was that she did not want to get into the industry

immediately. She thought she had not learned sufficient practical knowledge in her undergraduate education and the U.S. was a great country for the hospitality industry. Her parents wanted her to earn a Master's degree, too. Thus she became motivated to come to the U.S. to pursue a Master's degree in HTM.

Interviewee 4D

Interviewee 4D was from Wuhan, Hubei Province. Partly of the reasons why she decided to pursue a Master's degree in HTM due to her parents' suggestions. She wanted to experience a new, independent life and get advanced education. Coming to study in the U.S. was affordable for her family so she decided to attend an American program.

Interviewee 4E

Interviewee 4E was from Zhangjiakou, Hebei Province. He attended an American exchange program while he was in college and he liked the U.S. There were some similar courses at his undergraduate education with the curriculum of the graduate program at his current university so he thought it would be easier for him to adjust to education in the U.S. His professor in college suggested that he pursue a Master's degree. Therefore, he decided to go to the U.S. for a Master's degree.

Interviewee 4F

Interviewee 4F was from Jiaxing, Zhejiang Province. He majored in HTM for his Bachelor's degree, but he felt the need to get more experience by studying abroad. According to him, his Bachelor's experience did not create many hands-on work opportunities. He thought he needed more experience in the industry and he decided to pursue a Master's degree. Because of his HTM Bachelor's degree background, it was

difficult for him to apply for other majors; therefore he decided to major in hospitality at the graduate level.

4.3   Findings and Discussion

Table 3 shows that when asked about why they wanted to pursue a Master's degree in HTM in the United States, interviewees responded to improve their individual competitiveness in the Chinese hospitality and tourism industry was their most significant motivation. That is consistent with the previous finding that education had become one of the best approaches to provide individuals with skills and knowledge to a specific labor market (Barron et al., 2007). They noted that since Master's degrees in China were increasingly common, Bachelor's degrees were no longer sufficiently competitive in the Chinese labor market. The finding is consistent with the previous research revealed by Thayer Lodging Group (2010) that the hospitality industry needed large number of highly trained and educated workers and that an increasing number of Chinese students and families were considering pursuit of higher degrees in hospitality overseas (Little, 2011).

Interest was students' second most important motivation to pursue a Master's degree in the hospitality industry, noted by eight interviewees (38.10% of all the interviewees). Another eight of them noted that they wanted to learn more about the hospitality industry to accommodate future requirements of the industry.

Getting recommendations to attend the program from students' families, friends or professors was noted by seven interviewees (33.33% of all the interviewees) as a motivation to enroll in HTM programs for a Master's degree. Seven interviewees (33.33% of all the interviewees) interviewees mentioned that they chose this specific major because

they received their Bachelor's degrees in similar fields. Four interviewees (19.05% of all

the interviewees) noted that they were not ready for a job in the industry and their

willingness to change their professional field were motivations to attend an advanced

hospitality program.

Table 3

Motivations for Attending Master's Programs in hospitality management

Motivations	Mentions	Mentions Frequency	% of the Sample
Improve individual's competitiveness in the Chinese hospitality and tourism industry	1C,2A,2C,2D, 2E,3C,3D,3E,4 B,4E	10	47.62
Learn more about the hospitality industry	1A,1C,2A,2B, 2C,3C,3D,4F	8	38.10
Interest in the hospitality and tourism industry	1B,1E,2C,2E,3 A,3B,3C,4B	8	38.10
Pursued HTM at the undergraduate level	1A,1B,2A,2B, 2C,4A,4F	7	33.33
Recommendations of others' (parents, friends, previous teachers, etc.)	1D,3E,4B,4C, 4D,4E,4F	7	33.33
Not ready for a job in the industry	1D,1E,3B,4C	4	19.05
Willing to change professional field	1C,2D,3C	3	14.29

4.3.1   Motivations for Choosing the Current Program

4.3.1.1   Motivations for Studying in the United States

The good reputation of U.S. education was noted by eleven (52.38% of all the

interviewees) interviewees as the most important motivation to study at U.S. universities.

They thought U.S. degrees were widely accepted and respected by many companies in

China. Such a finding is consistent with previous research revealing the results that the

increasing popularity of U.S. hospitality programs had attracted an increasing number of

Chinese students (Horwath HTL, 2011). Willingness to experience U.S. culture, noted by seven interviewees (33.33% of all the interviewees), was the second most important reason to go to the United States. That finding is consistent with previous research by Bennett (2012). According to Table 4, other reasons such as getting many recommendations to go to the United States, and the diverse U.S. population were also major motivations to go to the United States, noted respectively by six interviewees (28.57% of all the interviewees) and five interviewees (23.81% of all the interviewees). Three interviewees (14.29% of all the interviewees) mentioned that the U.S. was a great place for traveling; while studying, they could visit many tourism attractions to enrich their university life. That finding enhanced previous research by Bennett (2012) that U.S. institutions had been so popular and reputable in China that Chinese families and students were increasingly interested in attending U.S. schools.

Some interviewees mentioned that they went to the U.S. because it had the largest number of international hotel chain headquarters, making the country even more attractive. That finding is consistent with the content published on the website of "International Student & Study Abroad Resource Center" contending that the U.S. is a popular country for international students to pursue hospitality-related degrees. Especially since international hotel chains such as Marriott, Hyatt, and Hilton were headquartered in the U.S, they tend to create many industry opportunities for international students from related majors (Bhandari, 2011). That may also attract large number of international students to study hospitality-related majors in the United States.

Table 4

Motivations for Studying in the United States

Motivations for Going	Mentions	Mentions Frequency	% of the Sample
American education has good reputation in China	1B,1C,1E,2B,3A,3 D,3E,4B,4D,4E,4F	11	52.38
Want to experience American culture	1B,3C,3D,3E,4A,4 D,4F	7	33.33
Recommended by others (professors, parents, and friends)	1D,3B,3E,4B,4E,4 F	6	28.57
U.S. has a diverse population	1A,2C,2E,3D,4C	5	23.81
U.S. is a good place for travelling	2E,3E,2C	3	14.29
U.S. universities have lower tuitions	1A,4C	2	9.52
Most good HTM programs are in the U.S.	1D,3E	2	9.52
U.S. has the most famous global companies	2E,4C	2	9.52
U.S. has a large hospitality and tourism market	1A	1	4.76
Like the teaching style in the U.S.	2A	1	4.76
Ideal university is in the U.S.	2A	1	4.76
Want to stay with relatives or friends	2D	1	4.76
U.S. has free choice of religion	3A	1	4.76

4.3.1.2   Motivations for Choosing the Current Program

For the question about why students chose their current program, "The great reputation of the university itself" and "The great population of the hospitality graduate program" were the most significant reasons for Chinese Master's students, noted respectively twelve (57.14% of all the interviewees) and eleven (52.38% of all the interviewees), as referred to in Table 5. That finding was consistent with previous research by Lu and Adler (2009) that an increasing number of Chinese students go to the U.S. to earn higher degrees. Other common reasons included "The location of the university (college towns in the Mid-west were safe, quiet, good for concentrating on

academics, and reasonable living expenses)" noted by five interviewees (23.81% of all

the interviewees) and "The offer from this university or this program is the best among

all the offers they have received" by four. There were also other motivations for choosing

the program, such as "The tuition fee of this program is reasonable compared to other

programs", "The location of this program is close to relatives and former friends", and

"The offer from this program was the first offer they received". Each of the above was

noted by two interviewees.

Table 5

Motivations for Choosing the Current Program

	Motivations	Mentions	Mentions Frequency	% of the Sample
1	Great reputation of the University	1A,1B,1C,1D,1E,2B,2C,3A,4A,4B,4C,4D	12.00	57.14
2	Great reputation of the hospitality program at this university	1A,1B,1C,1D,2A,2B,2C,4A,4B,4C,4D	11.00	52.38
3	Location of the university (college towns in the Mid-west are safe, quiet, good for concentrating on academics, and reasonable living expenses	2A,3A,4A,4C,4D	5.00	23.81
4	Best offer among all admissions	1C,2D,2E,4C	4.00	19.05
5	Tuition of this program is reasonable	1A,2D	2.00	9.52
6	Location of the university is close to relatives and former friends	1B, 2D	2.00	9.52
7	First offer among all admissions	3A,4B	2.00	9.52

4.3.2   Expectations for the Master's Program

4.3.2.1   Academic Expectations

The most significant expectation of learning from the program noted by ten (47.62% of all the interviewees) was to gain up-to-date industry knowledge. That is consistent with the findings of previous research that more students were thinking about earning further hospitality education overseas to gain the most up-to-date theoretical knowledge (Szelenyi, 2006). They preferred courses involving multiple case studies and projects, noted by ten (47.62% of all the interviewees), making it the most common expectation for learning from the Master's education. Getting systematic training about academic theories and research methods in a strong academic atmosphere, noted by five interviewees (23.81% of all the interviewees), was the second most commonly noted expectation for knowledge.

Students expected the teaching style in the U.S. to be very different from that of China. Nine (42.86% of all the interviewees) mentioned that the most important expectation for the teaching style in the U.S. was that they could freely ask questions and exchange ideas with professors. Sixteen interviewees (76.19% of all the interviewees) expected the academic workload to be at a medium level, needing to spend much time on academic tasks but still have time to pursue other interests. When asked about expectations of working with professors, eight interviewees (38.10% of all the interviewees) mentioned that they wanted to be able to communicate with professors on many different topics; seven interviewees (33.33% of all the interviewees) of them expected to work with professors only on academic issues. In terms of assistance from

faculty, students, and other support units, the most significant expectation interviewees reported was that the career center could be very helpful to find jobs. Other than the most important expectations from each academic aspect, the interviewees mentioned many other expectations as well. Major ones include the following:

4.3.2.1.1 Expectations for learning from the program

The present research studied students' expectations and their experiences in terms of curriculum design, which had not been studied thoroughly by previous research (J. Wang et al., 2010). As shown in Table 6, three interviewees (14.29% of all the interviewees) expected the curriculum of the program to cover wider business principles in hospitality, such as human resources and revenue management. Some of the interviewees mentioned that they expected to learn more than one field of the hospitality industry, including tourism, lodging and restaurants.

Table 6

Expectations for Learning

	Expectations	Mentions	Counts	% of the sample
1	Knowledge updated and connected to industry (case studies, projects)	1A,1E,2D,2E,3B,3D,3E,4A,4D,4F	10	47.62
2	Systematic training about theories and doing research, strong academic atmosphere	2C,2E,3A,4B,4C	5	23.81
3	Wider business principles covered (i.e. human resources, revenue management)	1A,1D,2D	3	14.29
4	Learn more than one fields among hospitality, tourism and restaurants.	2A,2B	2	9.52
5	Knowledge gained from internship or hands-on experiences	1A,3E	2	9.52

4.3.2.1.2 Expectations for the teaching style in the U.S.

In terms of the teaching style in the U.S., as shown in Table 7, nine (42.86% of all the interviewees) mentioned that they expected much interaction with professors; they expected to ask questions and express their ideas freely in and after class. Eight interviewees (38.10% of all the interviewees) expected the courses to be practical with many industry lectures, seminars, discussions, and projects.

Four expected small class sizes with no more than twenty students. Four interviewees (19.05% of all the interviewees) expected the professors to have unique teaching methods and styles. That expectation was consistent with the findings revealed by previous researcher Casado (2009) that hospitality educators were urged to develop teaching strategies beyond traditional ones to both encourage new and beneficial ideas and meet different needs. Three interviewees (14.29% of all the interviewees) hoped to not only learn academic knowledge but also Master abilities to learn new concepts. Two

interviewees (9.52% of all the interviewees) expected that professors would have rich

professional and practical industry experience.

Table 7

Expectations for the Teaching Style in the U.S.

	Expectations	Mentions	Counts	% of the Sample
1	Much interaction between professors and students. Students are free to ask questions and express their ideas	1A,1D,2C,3A,3 C,3D,3E,4A,4B, 4C,4F	9	42.86
2	Courses to be practical (Many lectures and presentations by industry professionals and seminars, many discussions and projects)	1A,1C,1E,2D,3 C,4A,4E,4F	8	38.10
3	Small class size (10-20)	1A,3C,3D,4E	4	19.05
4	Professors have their own style of teaching: flexible, and freestyle	1B,1E,3C,3D	4	19.05
5	Professors will not only teach knowledge, but also teach the way to learn new things	1C,3D,4F	3	14.29
6	Professors knowledgeable and came from the industry	1D,2A	2	9.52

4.3.2.1.3 Expectations for the academic workload

   According to Table 8, three interviewees (14.29% of all the interviewees) expected

the course load to be light and they could have time to explore other interests. Two

interviewees (9.52% of all the interviewees) expected the course load to be very light and

spend most of their time on individual interests.

Table 8

Expectations for the Academic Workload

	Expectations	Mentions	Counts	% of the sample
1	Medium level, have time to explore their interests	1A,1C,1D,1E,2A ,2B,2C,3A,3B,3 D,3E,4A,4C,4D, 4E,4F	16	76.19
2	Light, have time for non-academic tasks	2D,2E,3C	3	14.29
3	Very light, spend most time on non-academic tasks	4A	2	9.52

4.3.2.1.4 Expectations for working with professors

As shown in Table 9, six interviewees (28.57% of all the interviewees) expected professors to get students involved in real company projects, such as marketing strategic planning and evaluation. Two interviewees (9.52% of all the interviewees) expected the program to have a high professor-student ratio; students would have more resources and professors would have more time for students.

Table 9

Expectations of Working with Professors

	Expectations	Mentions	Counts	% of the sample
1	Communicate with professors on many topics, both daily and academic	1B,1E,2C,2D,3 D,4B,4E,4F	8	38.10
2	Almost only work with professors on academic topics (i.e. thesis)	1A,2A,2B,3A,4 A,4C,4D	7	33.33
3	Professors will get students involved in real company projects (i.e. marketing, evaluation of marketing strategies, etc.)	1A,1C,1D,2E,3 B,3E	6	28.57
4	High professor-student ratio	1C,3D	2	9.52

4.3.2.1.5 Expectations for assistance from students, faculty, or other support units

According to Table 10, three interviewees (14.29% of all the interviewees) expected to

get career preparation training, including career path guidance, résumé development, mock

interviews, and practical skill training workshops.

Table 10

Expectations of Assistance from Students, Faculty, or Other Support Units

	Expectations	Mentions	Counts	% of the sample
1	Program career center should be helpful to find jobs	1A,2D,2E,3A, 4A,4F	6	28.57
2	Career guidance (i.e. mock interviews, résumé writing workshops)	1A, 2E,4A	3	14.29
3	Program administrators are willing to hear students' suggestions	2E	1	4.76
4	Master's students have access to physical supporting facilities (e.g. computer labs, printing equipment's, study rooms, etc.)	2E	1	4.76

4.3.2.2 Non-academic Expectations

Concerning non-academic aspects, making friends with people from other countries

participants' most significant expectation, as noted by six interviewees (28.57% of all the

interviewees), referring to Table 11. Other major expectations included experiencing

original American culture and lifestyle, gaining internship experience before graduation,

and enjoying many kinds of entertainment. Each of these three expectations were noted by

three interviewees (14.29% of all the interviewees).

Table 11

Non-academic Expectations

	Expectations	Mentions	Counts	% of the sample
1	Make friends from people from other countries than China and experience American culture	1A, 1B, 1C, 2C, 2D, 2E, 3E,4B, 4E	9	42.85
2	internship experience before graduation	1A, 2B,2E	3	14.29
3	Many sources of entertainment	1B,2E,4C	3	14.29
4	Improve English	1B	1	4.76

4.3.3   Experiences from the Master's Program

Consistent with previous findings revealed by Gunlu and Usta (2009), Chinese

Master's students had a series of difficulties and challenges when they first arrived to the

United States. Academic stress was faced while studying in the United States. Life

adaptation stress and social confusions were also essential stressors (Misra et al., 2003).

The current study revealed that Chinese students were used to being in organized learning

environments and learning practical knowledge about real-world applications. That finding

is consistent with previous findings by Lockette (2006).

Inconsistent findings with previous research were revealed from the present study, too.

Previous researchers found English was one of the major issues when international

students were studying in North American universities, especially concerning academic

aspects (Huang, 2004; J. Huang, 2005; Huang, 2006; Kirby et al., 1999). However, in the

present study, when asked about negative experiences about academic and non-academic

aspects, none of the interviewees mentioned English as their second language as a major

issue in school. The only time they noted that the use of English caused inconvenience was

when they were asked about suggestions for future studies. They noted that since their English was not as proficient as Chinese, they were sometimes not able to express themselves sufficiently about their ideas to the interview questions.

Another inconsistent finding of the present study was that the major challenge for international students studying in the U.S. was life stress as mentioned by previous researchers (Huang, 2006). The present study, the research found students' largest challenge was the lack of motivation to actively meet and make friends with people from other countries than China.

4.3.3.1 Academic Experiences

The interviewees mentioned many positive experiences from the program. Typical accomplishments include the following: fourteen (66.67% of all the interviewees) of them noted that they received much assistance and support from fellow Chinese classmates. Eight interviewees (38.10% of all the interviewees) thought some of the courses were practical with some lectures and presentations by industry professionals and professors organized many seminars, discussions, and case projects. Eight interviewees (38.10% of all the interviewees) noted that professors were open to students and willing to help them as much as possible. Six interviewees (28.57% of all the interviewees) reported they had many interactions with professors and other students. That is consistent with previous findings that the college classroom itself was a culturally diverse group, where different points of views meet and mix with each other (Casado, 2009). Students felt free to ask questions and express their ideas. Another six interviewees (28.57% of all the

interviewees) thought that most professors were experts in their own academic areas with rich industry experiences applied to classes to make them very interesting. Five interviewees (23.81% of all the interviewees) mentioned that the program had been very academically-oriented and they had learned much from the courses to prepare for their future path. Other positive experiences included that professors managed to deliver the classes in flexible methods. They noted that the university career center and the secretary had been very informative and helpful. Each of the above aspects were noted by four interviewees (19.05% of all the interviewees).

Yet there were a variety of negative experiences reported by the interviewees. The major ones included the following: Fifteen interviewees (71.43% of all the interviewees) thought that as Master's students and international students, they were not helped by the program's career center. Six interviewees (28.57% of all the interviewees) thought the program had set the curriculum much too academically-oriented so students could not learn as much practical knowledge or accumulate sufficient professional experience while attending the program. Four interviewees (19.05% of all the interviewees) thought that classes were very much like those at Chinese universities and were not as active as they expected. Apart from the major positive and negative experiences discussed above, some other comments and opinions are worth of discussion as well. Categorized according to sections in the interviews, they are shown as follows:

4.3.3.1.1 Experiences of learning from the program

Five of the interviewees mentioned that they were very satisfied with the program in that it was very academically-oriented; they were able to gain significant academic knowledge and rigorous research methods. Three interviewees (14.29% of all the interviewees) noted that they were glad to have learned fundamental hospitality management principles and skills that would be beneficial for their future careers. That is consistent with the previous finding that an integral component of the mission of higher education hospitality programs was to serve the needs of the industry (J. Wang et al., 2010). All the above positive experiences lead to their satisfaction with the program (as shown in Table 12).

Table 12

Positive Experiences of Learning

	Positive Experiences	Mentions	Counts	% of the Sample
1	Learned many academic-oriented theories	1A,1B,2D,3C,4B	5	23.81
2	Learned many management principles and skills about hospitality Management, good for future career.	2A,4A,4D	3	14.29
3	Learned practical knowledge applicable to real work	4A	1	4.76

However, as shown in Table 13, interviewees also noted sources of dissatisfaction. Five interviewees (23.81% of all the interviewees) thought course designs in the program were overly concentrated on lodging instead of restaurant or tourism (three suggested putting more tourism courses in course selection pool and two of them suggested restaurant

courses so that students in those major concentrations could have more choices). Three interviewees (14.29% of all the interviewees) suggested more practical courses in the curriculum; i.e., real company case studies and lectures by industry professionals. Two interviewees (9.52% of all the interviewees) said that they were dissatisfied because much of the knowledge learned in the program had already been taught at the undergraduate level.

Table 13

Negative Experiences of Learning

	Negative Experiences	Mentions	Counts	% of the Sample
1	Over academically-oriented and needs to be more industry-oriented (i.e. internship opportunities, professional training)	1A,2A,2B,3E, 4E,4F	6	28.57
2	Needs more practical courses (i.e. real-world cases, industry lectures)	1B, 1C,1D	3	14.29
3	Needs more courses on tourism	2A,2B,4E	3	14.29
4	Knowledge repeated with what learned in Bachelor's degree.	2C,3E,4F	3	14.29
5	Needs to be more updated	1A,2D	2	9.52
6	Needs more courses for restaurant and tourism management	2A,2B	2	9.52

4.3.3.1.2 Experiences of the teaching style in the U.S.

Table 14 shows that three interviewees (14.29% of all the interviewees) reported that they were very appreciative that professors not only taught specific knowledge, but also equipped them with the abilities to Master new skills. Another three interviewees (14.29% of all the interviewees) indicated that teaching methods and class types were similar to the Chinese teaching styles so it was very easy for them to adapt. Two interviewees (9.52% of

all the interviewees) also noted that some of their courses used similar teaching methods, but professors managed to diversify course content.

Table 14

Positive Experiences of the teaching style in the U.S.

	Positive Experiences	Mentions	Counts	% of the Sample
1	Much interaction between professors and students. Students are free to ask questions and express their ideas	1D,2B,2C,2E,3E,4A	6	28.57
2	Professors are very knowledgeable in academics and industry experiences and have made the courses very interesting	1D,2E,3E,4A,4C,4F	6	28.57
3	Professors will not only teach knowledge but also teach how to learn new things	1C,2E,4C	3	14.29
4	Same as Chinese teaching style, easy to adapt to	2B,3A,3D	3	14.29
5	Different courses have similar styles	1B,2E	2	9.52

Even though the positive experiences outweigh the negative ones, the latter were worth addressing. As shown in Table 15, apart from the major negative experiences about the overwhelming population of Chinese noted above, other opinions needed to be considered. Four interviewees (19.05% of all the interviewees) found the classes not very active. That is consistent with the previous research finding that obstacles to fit in the classroom learning environment was one of the major issues students had while studying in North American universities (Huang, 2006). Two interviewees (9.52% of all the interviewees) mentioned that they did not have much interaction with professors after class. Other negative responses included large class sizes, lack of industry professional presentations, too many exams, and too few field opportunities.

Table 15

Negative Experiences of the Teaching Style in the U.S.

	Negative Experiences	Mentions	Counts	% of the Sample
1	Students do not participate actively so classes are not very interactive	3A,3D,4E,1A	4	19.05
2	Not enough interactions between professors and students after class	1A,3C	2	9.52
3	Class sizes too large	1A	1	4.76
4	Not enough industry presentations	2B	1	4.76
5	Too many exams	3B	1	4.76
6	Not enough field experience	3B	1	4.76

4.3.3.1.3 Experiences of the academic workload

The interviewees were asked about their expectations and actual experiences with the

academic workload. In terms of their actual experiences, Table 16, seventeen (80.95% of

all the interviewees) of the twenty-one interviewees reported they had too much workload

in that they barely had any leisure time. Four interviewees (19.05% of all the interviewees)

thought that the actual academic workload was lighter than expected and they still had time

to explore their interests (Table 16).

Table 16

Experiences of with Academic Workload

	Experiences	Mentions	Counts	% of the Sample
1	Too much workload and little leisure time	1A, 1B, 1C, 1E, 1D, 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E, 3B, 3C, 3E, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4E	17	80.95
2	Lower than expectation and they still had time to explore interests	3A,3D,4D,4F	4	19.05

4.3.3.1.4 Experiences of working with professors

As shown in Table 17, eight interviewees (38.10% of all the interviewees) of the

interviewees were very satisfied because the professors were open to students and willing

to help as much as possible. Three interviewees (14.29% of all the interviewees) said that

they had many interactions with professors about different topics.

Table 17

Positive Experiences of Working with Professors

	Positive Experiences	Mentions	Counts	% of the Sample
1	Professors very nice and open to students, always willing to help.	2A,2B,2C,2D,3A,4A,4E,4F	8	38.10
2	Much interaction with professors about different topics	2D,3A,4E	3	14.29

On the other hand, as shown in Table 18, negative experiences need to be addressed.

Most of the time students only worked with professors on academic topics noted by five

interviewees (23.81% of all the interviewees). Four interviewees (19.05% of all the

interviewees) mentioned that professors were so busy that they had limited time to talk

with students. Students hardly had any interaction with professors apart from the

graduation thesis, as mentioned by three interviewees (14.29% of all the interviewees).

Students also mentioned that more professors would be helpful to improve the research

capabilities of the program.

Table 18

Negative Experiences of Working with Professors

	Negative Experiences	Mentions	Counts	% of the Sample
1	Only work on academic topics	1A,2A,3B,2C, 4C	5	23.81
2	Professors are so busy that time is limited to talk with them	3E,4B,4C,4D	4	19.05
3	Hardly any interaction with professors other than graduation thesis	1C,2E,3D	3	14.29
4	Professor-student ratio is too low (not enough professors)	1C,1D,3D	3	14.29

4.3.3.1.5 Experiences of assistance from students, faculty, or other support units

Getting much assistance from fellow Chinese Master's students was the most commonly noted positive experience interviewees reported due to the fact that the majority of students in their classes were Chinese. Five interviewees (23.81% of all the interviewees) thought highly of the university career center because they had organized many speeches, conducted workshops for improving résumé writing and interview skills, and arranged mock interviews for secretary had been many majors. Four interviewees (19.05% of all the interviewees) mentioned that the program graduate very helpful. Career fairs and the wrting lab of the English department were noted each by two interviewees (9.52% of all the interviewees) as very informative and helpful for improving students' skills and preparing students for career opportunities (Table 19).

Table 19

Positive Experiences with Support from Others

	Positive Experiences	Mentions	Counts	% of the Sample
1	Much help and support from fellow Chinese students since the majority of students are Chinese.	1B,1C,2C,2D, 3E,4B	6	28.57
2	Center of Career Opportunities (CCO) is helpful (help students prepare interviews, improve résumés and hold other workshops)	1A,2A,2D,3C, 3E	5	23.81
3	Graduate secretary is very informative and helpful	1D,2B,3C,4D	4	19.05
4	Career fairs are very informative and useful	1A,3C	2	9.52
5	Writing lab from English department is very helpful in improving writing skills	1D,2B	2	9.52

In terms of negative responses about assistance from faculty, other students, and supporting units, sixteen (76.19% of all the interviewees) interviewees reported that the career center of the program was not helping them to find jobs as international Master's students (Table 20). They noted that the program career center aimed at helping undergraduate students and Doctoral students in that the staff sent more emails about career opportunities for undergraduate and Doctoral students than for Master's students. Interviewee 1A said, "They do hold career fairs, but they are looking more for undergraduate students and native students". Interviewee 1B also said, "The Doctoral students have more chance to get information about jobs because the career center focuses on helping them, but the Master's students are not helped as much." Two interviewees thought that since the majority of student body were international, program administrators should have designed courses flexibly and differently to meet the needs of

international students as suggested by previous researchers Gibbs and Simpson (2004);

greater diversity of students' educational backgrounds and living experiences called for

more improved guidance on how to achieve their goals. However, they did not design

them as they expected to meet their needs. Two interviewees (9.52% of all the

interviewees) mentioned that since the hospitality industry had three main fields of

lodging, tourism and restaurants, the curriculum of the hospitality program should have

been designed according to students' different academic interests. However, that was not

what they experienced. Another two interviewees (9.52% of all the interviewees) noted

they did not have much opportunity to get to know students at different academic levels

or from different countries. One interviewee noted that pubic computers and printers

were available in the program office, but only Doctoral students had access to them.

Table 20

Negative Experiences with Support from Others

	Negative Experiences	Mentions	Counts	% of the Sample
1	Program career center not sufficiently helping Master's students	1A,1C,2A,2B,2C ,2D,2E,3A,3D,4 C,4F	11	52.38
2	Program career center not sufficiently helping international students	1A,1C,2B,2D,4E	5	23.81
3	Curriculum is not flexible for students with different academic interests	2E,3D	2	9.52
4	Administrators do not adjust the course designs as the majority of students are international	2E,3D	2	9.52
5	Do not have much chance to know students at different academic levels or from different countries	1A, 2C	2	9.52
6	Do not have physical facilities, such as computers or printers	2E	1	4.76

4.3.3.2 Non-academic Experiences

When asked about experiences concerning non-academic aspects, interviewees mentioned various kinds of satisfactory experiences with the program. As shown in Table 21, they thought most professors were very knowledgeable and helpful in class and after class and that they were willing to help students. That was the most frequently noted positive experience concerning the non-academics; it was discussed by six interviewees (28.57% of all the interviewees). Other positive experiences concerning the non-academic aspect include the following. The university was very resourceful for life in general, the location of the university was quiet, safe and ideal for concentrating on research, and Chinese Master's students were willing to help each other with daily problems. Each of these were noted by two interviewees (9.52% of all the interviewees). Other positive experiences about the program were also noted. For example, churches were very informative and helpful for new students since they provided much guidance about university life. The location of the university in a small town eliminated many distractions.

Table 21

Non-academic Positive Experiences

	Positive Experiences	Mentions	Counts	% of the Sample
1	Most professors are very knowledgeable and helpful in class and after class, willing to help students	1A,3A,3B, 4C,4E,4F	6	28.57
2	College town is quiet and safe	3D,4B	2	9.52
3	College town is good place for concentrating in conducting research	2E,4B	2	9.52
4	University has many resources, both for academics and non-academic life.	1C,4A	2	9.52
5	Living expenses are reasonable (lower than expected)	2C	1	4.76
6	Church provided much help when students first arrived	2C	1	4.76
7	Chinese students help each other with various kinds of problems, both academic and non-academic	2C	1	4.76

The most significant negative response noted by fourteen (66.67% of all the interviewees) of the interviews was the large number of Chinese students in the program. Though they could help each other with both academic and life hardships, they were much less motivated to meet and make new friends from other countries or get involved with local activities. That was inconsistent with the previous research findings that life stress was the major challenge for students studying in the U.S. revealed by Huang (2006). Inconvenient public transportation in town was raised as the second most significant non-academic disappointment. Interviewee 2B noted if one does not have his/her own vehicle, it was very difficult to get around in a timely manner. Even for those students who had their own vehicles, limited parking spaces made it really difficult for them to drive around town as well.

Other negative experiences were also worth noting. Three interviewees (14.29% of all the interviewees) mentioned that since there were very few hotels, restaurants, and tourism attractions in the college town, internship opportunities were limited. Other dissatisfying points noted by some interviewees included difficulty to get involved with the American culture, cold weather, and the lack of flexibility with curriculum design.

Table 22

Non-academic Negative Experiences

	Negative Reality	Mentions	Counts	% of the Sample
1	Because of the large amount of Chinese students, I'm less motivated to meet and make new friends from other countries (or get involved in the native society)	1A, 1B, 1C,1D, 2A,2E,3A,3E,4 A,4B,4C,4D,4E, 4F	14	66.67
2	Public transportation in the college town is very inconvenient and social activities are limited because of this	1A,1C,1D,2B,3 D,3E,4A,4C,4D ,4F	10	47.62
3	Since there are very few hotels, restaurants, or tourism attractions, internship opportunities are limited	1A,2E,3D	3	14.29
4	Course designs are not sufficiently flexible	2B,4E	2	9.52
5	Difficult to get involved in the American culture	2C,3B	2	9.52
6	Weather is too cold	2E,4A	2	9.52
7	Entertainment in a small town is limited	2B	1	4.76

4.3.4   Comparison of expectations and experiences

When comparing Chinese hospitality management Master's students' expectations and actual experiences, the researcher found both similarities and differences existed that were worth discussion.

4.3.4.1   Similarities between experiences and expectations

Five interviewees (23.81% of all the interviewees) said they received systematic training in academic theories and research methodologies and the program had a very strong academic atmosphere and these all matched their expectations. Six (28.57% of all the interviewees) mentioned that the following matched their expectations: they had much interaction with professors, and they felt free to exchange ideas with professors. Eight (38.1% of all the interviewees) spoke highly of the professors, thinking they were always willing to help students and exchange ideas with students and this was consistent with their previous expectations, as well. Another similarity between experiences and expectations that was mentioned by four interviewees (19.05% of all the interviewees) was that the university offered students opportunities for career preparation such as mock interviews and résumé development workshops.

4.3.4.2   Differences between experiences and expectations

Academically, students' experiences differed from their expectations in the following areas: knowledge gained from the program, academic workload, working with professors and assistance from others. In the case of knowledge gained from the program, ten interviewees (47.62% of all the interviewees) expected to gain knowledge that was updated and directly applicable to the industry. However, six of them (28.57% of all the interviewees) mentioned that the knowledge they learned was overly academic. The advantage of it was that they learned many theories and ways to conduct research and writing academic papers. However, they thought they did not get much industry-related knowledge, nor did they use many industry-related materials such as case studies and

industrial reports. In terms of workload, 16 interviewees (76.19% of all the interviewees) stated that they expected it to be medium level, meaning besides academic tasks they would still have time for their personal interests and activities. However, seventeen (80.95% of all the interviewees) reported that the academic workload was so heavy that they spent most of their time on academic tasks and did not have any time to explore their personal interests. When asked about expectations and experiences of working with professors, six (28.57% of all the interviewees) expected to work with professors on real business projects while five (23.81% of all the interviewees) reported that in reality students only worked with professors on course-related projects. As to assistance from others (such as faculty, fellow students and university or program support units), six (28.57% of all the interviewees) expected the career center to be helpful for students to find jobs, however, eleven (52.38% of all the interviewees) felt that they were not adequately helped by the career center.

Non-academically, nine (42.86% of all the interviewees) expected to make friends with students from other countries and experience American culture. However, fourteen of them (66.67% of all the interviewees) thought that in reality they were less motivated to participate in local activities and they ended up only making friends with Chinese students because of the large number of them in the program.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings of the present research, conclusions on the research objectives are drawn, and implications and recommendations to both university administrators and students are discussed in Chapter Five.

5.1   Conclusions

5.1.1   Motivations for choosing the program

Based on the first research objective, which was Chinese Master's students' motivations for choosing the program in HTM, the findings show that Chinese students are more extrinsically motivated than intrinsically motivated when selecting the program. The top three most frequently mentioned motivations for choosing the Master's program were the good reputation of the American educational system, the specific university and/or the HTM program, the increased competency with a Master's degree, and the promising career development stimulated by the developing Chinese hospitality industry.

5.1.2   Expectations before commencing the program

Based on the second research objective, which was Chinese Master's students' expectations for the graduate program prior to commencing the program, the findings

show that it is beneficial for university administrators to understand students'

expectations for the program, so that they can make adjustments if needed to improve

students' satisfaction level. For administrators of higher educational programs in

hospitality-related fields with a large percentage of Chinese population in the student

body, they can better understand the motivations for these groups of Chinese Master's

students to choose their current programs. Administrators can get a better idea of what

these students expect to gain from the programs, what life difficulties they face both

academically and non-academically, and why they have those particular needs. By

understanding their professional interest directions, administrators can improve

curriculum design accordingly by knowing what students' expectations of the program.

Willingness to have job opportunities was mentioned by some interviewees. They

expressed dissatisfaction with the program for not providing internship opportunities

while they were in school. However, they should not assume eligibility for all job

opportunities in the U.S. as international students. It was the restriction by the U.S.

Citizenship and Immigration Services that international students are not eligible for off-

campus jobs, while they are still in school except under Curricular Practical Training

(CPT), Optional Practical Training (OPT) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and

Mathematics (STEM) Optional Practical Training Extension (OPT) guidelines.

Specifically, the statement reads as follows:

"F-1 students may not work off-campus during the first academic year, but may
accept on-campus employment subject to certain conditions and restrictions. There are
various programs available for F-1 students to seek off-campus employment, after the
first academic year. F-1 students may engage in three types of off-campus employment,
after they have been studying for one academic year. These three types of employment
are: Curricular Practical Training (CPT), Optional Practical Training (OPT) (pre-
completion or post-completion) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

(STEM) Optional Practical Training Extension (OPT)" (U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services)

5.1.3　Experiences while studying in the program

Based on the third research objective, which was about Chinese Master's students' actual experiences while studying at the program, the findings show the opposite idea that previous research held that life stress was a major challenge for international students, the research found that life stress does not cause major hardship for Chinese Master's students. Participants mentioned that due to the large number of Chinese students in class, they were able to assist and support each other on life difficulties so that life stress was largely reduced. The major challenge revealed from the present research was the lack of motivation to get involved in local activities and make friends with people from different countries and this also partially resulted from the large number of Chinese students because they felt less motivated to be surrounded by Chinese classmates and friends to reach out and meet people from other countries.

5.2　Implications and Recommendations

5.2.1　For Universities

5.2.1.1　Motivations for choosing the program

Based on the first research objective, which was Chinese Master's students' motivations for choosing the program in HTM, recommendations for university administrators include that they should try to maximize the functionality of their official

websites by efficiently designing the information layout on the user interface. Important information relating to international students should be boldly presented in ways that students can easily find answers to their questions on their education experiences. For example, the type and the location of the university, the curriculum design of different majors, and common lifestyle of the local neighborhood should be displayed in areas where students can get easy access to. Universities in small college towns should introduce on their websites about the advantages and disadvantages of their locations compared to those universities located in metropolitan areas. Designing the university or the program official websites to increase the efficiency of information communication will maximize the functionality of those websites and increase the satisfaction level of both current and future students.

Research universities should emphasize their academic-based nature and the high academic requirements for students clearly. Universities should remind their future students about the large commitment of time and energy will be required while studying in the program.

In order to diversify the student body in the program, university admissions and recruitment should take deliberate strategies to applicants from different countries. Marketing the programs by organizing information sessions, seminars, or conferences in more countries other than China would be very helpful to diversify the student backgrounds. Program administrators should establish strategic alliances and partnerships with more diverse international institutions and provide more scholarship and funding opportunities for talented students from these institutions.

5.2.1.2 <u>Expectations before commencing the program</u>

Based on the second research objective, which was Chinese Master's students'

expectations for the graduate program prior to commencing the program,

recommendations to the university administrators include that they should redesign and

expand the scope of the career center to maximize its functions. Departments should be

established to exclusively serve students at the graduate level. Currently, the career center

mainly serve the undergraduate students, which was not suitable for graduate students.

New thinking and implementation of the career center have been needed and staff must

take charge of graduate students specifically. Graduate students and undergraduate

students have different career goals, aiming at different levels of positions and different

companies. Companies for them may even have different résumé requirements and

expectations. Companies currently attending the career fairs focus on recruiting

undergraduate students; separate career fairs exclusively for graduate students should be

organized. In addition, résumé development assistance and related workshops should be

offered to graduate students as well. Therefore, it is advisable for administrators both

program-wide and university-wide to consider establishing a career center for graduate

students.

Concerning the inflexibility of the curriculum design, university administrators

should consider allowing more flexible plans of study for students with different interests

in various professional fields within hospitality. Lowering the percentage of required

courses and encouraging students to choose from a wider range of courses, for example,

those from School of Business, are recommended.

American administrators at both the university and the program levels should organize more cultural communication and collaboration programs/activities. That would encourage international students to participate in multi-cultural environments, and communicate/cooperate with people from diverse settings.

Concerning the lack of options on choosing program types, program administrators should consider implementing a new type of Master's degree, which is not academic-oriented to allow students whose ultimate goal was to get profound professional training experience instead of academic experience to fulfill their needs and expectations for the program. It is also a response for the emerging call from industry as well. Since the hospitality industry in China is growing so rapidly, Master's degrees will be needed not only in academia but also in the industry.

5.2.1.3 Experiences while studying in the program

Based on the third research objective, which was about Chinese Master's students' actual experiences while studying at the program, recommendations for university administrators include that they should review the current curriculum design and find ways to improve practical industry-related components of hospitality programs, such as more practical course content assessment measures. For example, professors should be encouraged to apply more practical teaching methods, such as getting students involved in field work, and utilizing some industry materials, such as industry reports, conference papers, actual company projects, and corporate strategy evaluation.

Professors should apply more interactive teaching methods to classes, such as case studies, class discussions, student presentations, group discussions, and online resources. As Chinese students, unlike American students, are less active in classes and reluctant to raise questions. Professors should organize more interactive activities to inspire them to actively take part in classes and discussions. If there is a large portion of Chinese students in the class, American educators should be aware of the behaviors of Chinese Master's students and prepare to adjust their teaching styles to accommodate students' needs. In Chinese classes, there was less equality between students and teachers; the latter are regarded as authorities and supervisors. Teachers are usually more serious and focus more on lecturing content. Understanding this, educators should pay more attention to adjust their teaching styles if there is large portion of Chinese in their classes. For instance, instead of expecting the Chinese Master's students to be actively participating in class interactions, educators should step forward to encourage them to express their ideas and respond to professors.

5.2.2   For Students

5.2.2.1   Motivations for choosing the program

Based on the first research objective, which was Chinese Master's students' motivations for choosing the program in HTM, recommendations for students include that it is wise to research thoroughly the Master's programs before commencement. Getting themselves familiar with the options of programs and each of their requirements

for the students will help them make wiser choices in selecting programs but also shaping more realistic expectations of the program. Locations of the universities play an important role in influencing students' experiences and satisfaction levels. Both advantages and disadvantages exist for any location of the university. By studying the neighborhoods of the universities, students are able to draw a general picture about their life in the area so that they can adjust their expectations of the programs accordingly.

Students' unfamiliarity of the learning objectives of the Master's education was the core cause of their dissatisfaction. Students expecting hands-on job training opportunities and lectures by industry professionals were actually expecting more of an extension of the Bachelor's degree. Before making the decision to embark on graduate pursuit, it would be wise to research thoroughly the graduate programs and the potential universities in advance and start discovering all of the options that await as soon as possible and allowing one to prepare for the new challenges.

If potential Master's students have any questions regarding the program, they can search for answers on the official website, email the graduate secretary, or directly call the graduate secretary's office. In this way, students will avoid much confusion and get the most information about the program. Students should also research the curriculum and professors of the program. For example, three interviewees (14.29% of all the interviewees) expected the program to provide internship opportunities during their enrollment. However, since it was a research-oriented program and it was at the Master's level, internships are not part of the curriculum unless they relate to their research. A thorough understanding of the program prior to starting graduate education will help students make more informed decisions concerning course selection and study plans.

As consumers of the educational programs, Chinese students should research thoroughly on graduate programs Graduate education requires a substantial commitment of time and money. For programs at research universities, they are usually academic and research-oriented. Attending graduate school is not an alternative way to avoid job competition after graduating from college. It may not be a guarantee for higher competency after graduation. That finding was revealed by previous researcher Kuther (2013a) in that trying to avoid the fierce competition in the job market was not a good reason for attending the graduate school and taking advanced degrees may not essentially improve job applicants' competency (Kuther, 2013b).

5.2.2.2   Expectations before commencing the program

Based on the second research objective, which was Chinese Master's students' expectations for the graduate program prior to commencing the program, recommendations for students include that they should more actively discover job opportunities themselves instead of solely relying on the career center. The career center serves as liaison between hospitality company representatives and the department, providing services for HTM undergraduates, graduate students, and alumni. It assists students by coordinating interviewing schedules between students and companies that are recruiting. However, employment decisions are made by employers based on their demand and immigration laws of the United States. The career center can only provide general career information for students, but presently limited assistance with individual and advanced career searches.

Different selective course options are offered by the program. Students should research thoroughly about the courses in various academic concentrations of hospitality. After a complete review of the curriculum design and teaching objectives, students will be better able to choose the courses that best match their interests and academic endeavors.

In order to meet the expectation of making friends with people from other countries, students should actively look for opportunities to stretch their comfort zone and actively find ways to get involved themselves in the local culture instead of passively expecting more classmates from other countries. Instead of waiting people from other countries to interact with them, Chinese students should actively interact with others. To experience the American local culture, students should actively reach out and meet new people and take part in the local activities. Working on campus, joining student organizations, and participating in social voluntary activities are all efficient ways to experience the local culture as well as improving their language skills. The increasing Chinese student enrollments was not manipulated by the program administrators but by the increasing number and percentage of qualified Chinese applicants of the program. Students, therefore, should be aware that having many Chinese classmates may be part of their experiences in American universities.

Students should explore different courses and different activities to enrich their learning experiences other than studying for required classes. They used to take full advantage of their spare time to explore their interests and become immersed in the American culture.

5.2.2.3   Experiences while studying in the program

Based on the third research objective, which was about Chinese Master's students' actual experiences while studying at the program, recommendations for students include that they should know that the American classes are more open than their previous Chinese classes. Finally, students and educators need to develop an active relationship with each other to get "mutually desirable outcome" as suggested by Biggs (1999) to start developing appropriate teaching and learning environments and take intercultural differences into consideration.

5.3   Future Research

The present research offers some recommendations for future studies in similar settings. Future researchers who are looking at Chinese students' learning experiences and preferences in English-speaking countries, American classes with large international student populations (especially Chinese students), and hospitality graduate programs (i.e. curriculum designs, student satisfaction and dissatisfaction) can get a general idea about topics from the present research. Future research is needed to study on factors that shape students' expectations and influence their motivating forces.

In terms of Chinese students' learning experiences and preferences, future research possibilities are extensive. Students' learning preferences for graduate programs, Chinese Master's students studying in Western countries, experiences of hospitality-related major students, and Chinese students' learning patterns have been studied by many researchers. However, Chinese Master's students in hospitality-related graduate programs in the United States-especially at research universities-have not been studied thoroughly. For

instance, topics could include "different learning behaviors Chinese Master's students show when they are in China and Western countries", or "Are Chinese Master's students really passive and inactive learners as they are regarded by some Western educators?" Additionally, their living experiences (such as adaptation issues, issues caused by the English language or culture differences, misunderstanding among students), social activities, transportation preferences and options are potential future research choices.

Future research is needed for more rigorous conclusions. Participants for the present research were limited to a convenience sample of twenty-one Chinese international students studying in the hospitality graduate program at a major American university. Future research needs a larger sample size to assess the generalizability of the results. The present research was only intended for Chinese international students in the United States; it may not reliably reflect the situation for international students from other countries or Chinese Master's students studying in other countries.

Recommendations for future researchers about designing and conducting interviews include but are not limited to followings recommendations. For research like the present studying students in other countries, interviews could be conducted in their first language. For instance, in this case, one of the limitations resulted from the situation in that all the interviews were conducted in English.

In terms of the selection of interviewers and interview locations, future researchers should try to avoid involving any authority-affiliated components. For example, interviewers in the research were Doctoral students from the same department as the interviewees and the interview locations were in one of the libraries of the university. That would cause discomfort for the interviewees that could have been easily avoided. In

the interviews, participants were asked about the negative aspects of the program, they were unsatisfied with, but since the interviewees knew that the interviewers were from the program, they may not have openly spoken all of their thoughts as to not offend the program authority. Thus, future researchers should select interviewers and interview location unrelated to the program for more reliable and valid responses.

Even though there are more female students than male students in hospitality-related majors, when recruiting interviewees, the researcher should recruit about 50% male interviewees to avoid gender interference. If possible, it is preferred to select interviewees from different universities so that their responses can be more representative of the general population.

In the present research, the researcher chose ten second-year students and eleven first-year students from the same university. More rigorous data and more generalized conclusions can be reached. Future researchers can develop a different strategy. They can either select more participants from the same university and do a comparison between first-years and second-years, or select some participants from different universities and compare the differences between universities.

The present research is only applicable to research universities and programs. However, there are many other major universities and programs that are not research-based. Future researcher could take a more in-depth look at the situation in those programs and compare the results with the current research. Combining the results for both types of programs could draw more accurate conclusions for similar situations.

5.4   <u>Limitations</u>

The present research has several limitations. One of the most important limitations concerns the research method. Since the research was conducted using the judgment sampling method, a type of nonrandom sampling, samples were selected based on the opinion of the researcher. Therefore, results of the study are limited and can be generalized only within the specific group of people: Chinese Master's students attending graduate programs in HTM in the United States. The generalized results obtained from the study are subject to some degree of bias because the population was not identical to different programs in the U.S. (Deming, 1990).

Language barrier was reported by most interviewees as a limitation of the present research. All the interviewees were Chinese; their first language was Mandarin, but the interviews were conducted in English. They reported that they were not proficient in expressing themselves in English. They also said they could have talked in greater detail if the interviews had been conducted in Chinese.

Other limitations also need to be addressed. The sample size of the present research was twenty-one, perhaps insufficient to represent the general situation of this group of students in the United States. Among the twenty-one interviewees, only four interviewees (19.05% of all the interviewees) are male students; this could be another limitation of the research. Even though the small percentage of male students in the whole student body was typical for similar programs, it was not reliable to conclude that these male participants' idea can be the representative of all male students in these programs. Also the twenty-one interviewees were chosen from the same university, limiting the ability to generalize for all American educational institutions. The university and the HTM

program from which the participants were chosen were research-based. Therefore, the

results generalized from the present research may not necessarily be applicable to other

types of universities and/or programs.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Interview Questions

1.   Why did you decide to pursue a Master's degree in HTM?
Why did you choose to come to study in the United States?

2.   Rank your top three reasons why you chose your current program.

3.   I am going to state a number of terms related to the academic program and school
life in general. Describe your expectations of each before joining the program. Then
describe what you actually witnessed and experienced.

4.   What were your expectations towards learning from academic courses and how
has the reality been for you?

5.   What about the teaching style in the U.S.?

6.   How about workload?

7.   When it comes to working with curse professors outside the classrooms?

8.   In terms of the support you got from other students, staff, and support units
associated with the programs (e.g. HTM Career Center)

9.   Let's talk about the non-academic aspects (take your time to think as many
aspects may be possible freely).

10.   Generally, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the program so far? Explain the
reasons in different respects.

11.   Do you have any other comments that you want to add regarding the HTM
program here? You can answer this question in Mandarin.

12.   Do you have any other comments to add?

Appendix B. Informed Consent Form

Instruction for the interviewers: Please read this Informed Consent Form to the interviewee before the interview and give a copy of it to each of them.)

Introduction	
Research Topic	Understanding Chinese Hospitality Management Master's Students' Satisfaction with Their Education
Name of Principal Investigator	Annmarie Nicely
Name of Organization	School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Purdue University
Purpose of the Research	To understand Chinese Master's students' needs for education and better serve those students.
Voluntary Participation	Your participation in the present research is voluntary so you can discontinue this interview at any time. Note, you also have the right not to answer any questions that you consider inappropriate for the study.
Interview Length	30 minutes

Significance of the present study:

- Help future Chinese graduate students shape more realistic expectations for graduate programs, and HTM in particular.

- Assist university administrators in better serving this special group of international students.

- Inspire future researchers with similar topics.

Confidentiality:

- The entire interview will be audio-recorded, but no names will be identified by name in the final transcript.

- All audio files will be stored in a password-protected computer and only the researchers will have access to the password.

Contact Information:

If you have further questions about the present study, please do not hesitate to contact the principal investigator, Annmarie Nicely. For any specific research-related information, please contact one of the co-investigators, Yanbin (Jason) Li via email at li919@purdue.edu or via phone at (305) 582-6508.

If you have concerns about the treatment of research participants, you can contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Purdue University, Ernest C. Young Hall, 10th Floor, Room 1032, 155 S. Grant Street, West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114. The IRB's phone number is (765) 494-5942. The email address is irb@purdue.edu.

Appendix C. Interviewer Recruitment Email

To all of our HTM Doctoral students!!

Please see the email below on behalf of Mr. Yanbin Li. He is seeking your assistance.

Thank you,

Maria D. Campos

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Dear Doctoral students,

My name is Jason Li, and I am working on a new research entitled "Understanding Chinese hospitality management Master's Students' Satisfaction with Their Education". The instrument of the research is individual interview and I am needing two interviewers for it.

This email is to see whether you have any interest in being an interviewer for the research. Detailed information is as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of interviewers needed: | 2 |
| Interviewees | Chinese Master's students in HTM. |
| Interview language: | English |
| Interview time frame: | Five interviews per night and two nights per interviewer |
| Interview length: | 30-35 minutes for each interview |
| Interview places: | Study Room 914, Hicks Underground Library |

Detailed interview schedule will be arranged according to your availability. A presentation will be provided to you for training purposes to familiarize you with the

research and the interview questions. Please contact me via email at liyanbin0416@gmail.com if you are interested in being an interviewer.

Thank you so much.

Yanbin Li

Appendix D. Interviewee Recruitment Email

To all of our HTM Chinese Master's students!!

Please see the email below on behalf of Mr. Yanbin Li. He is seeking your assistance.

Thank you,

Maria D. Campos


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Dear Chinese Master's Students,

Student Researcher Yanbin (Jason) Li is conducting a research on expectations of Chinese students in HTM towards Master's education. He would appreciate it if you would state your feelings about the HTM Master's program.

Individual interviews lasting around 30 minutes will be conducted. You are more than welcome to participate in the interview if you are do not have former American educational background before joining your current program.

Details about the interviews are as follows:

Length of interview:	30-35 minutes
Location:	Room 914 Underground Library
Transportation:	Provided
Refreshments:	Provided

PS: All information will be strictly confidential.

For more information, please contact Jason (Yanbin) Li

Email: liyanbin0416@gmail.com

Appendix E. Interview Confirmation Letter

Dear _____,

    This email is reminding you of your upcoming interview about expectations and experiences of the Master's program. The interview will be held in the Hicks Undergraduate Library, Room 914. Your interview will start at __: __ and it will last for about 30 minutes.

    Please contact me via email at liyanbin0416@gmail.com if you need a ride to the interview location or if you have any question related to the interview.

    Thank you again for your participation! Have a good day!

    Yanbin Li

    Hospitality and Tourism Management

Appendix F. Example of Interview Summary

Motivations	Mentions	Mentions Frequency	% of the Sample
Improve individual's competitiveness in the Chinese hospitality and tourism industry	1C,2A,2C,2D,2E,3C,3D,3E,4B,4E	10	47.62
Learn more about the hospitality industry	1A,1C,2A,2B,2C,3C,3D,4F	8	38.10
Interest in the hospitality and tourism industry	1B,1E,2C,2E,3A,3B,3C,4B	8	38.10
Pursued HTM at the undergraduate level	1A,1B,2A,2B,2C,4A,4F	7	33.33
Recommendations of others' (parents, friends, previous teachers, etc.)	1D,3E,4B,4C,4D,4E,4F	7	33.33
Not ready for a job in the industry	1D,1E,3B,4C	4	19.05
Willing to change professional field	1C,2D,3C	3	14.29

Appendix G. Example of Transcripts

R: Interviewer; E: Interviewee

R: This is interview XX. The purpose of the interview is to gather information about your perceptions and motivations for coming to study at your current the program, your expectations prior to coming, and whether those expectations have been met or not. Let's start with the first question.

E: Sure, go ahead.

R: Why did you choose to pursue a Master degree in HTM?

E: My major was tourism management when I was an undergraduate student. I am interested in this major, and I did want to learn more professional knowledge in the field. Since the fierce competition among young generation in China, a Bachelor's degree is not competitive enough. I wanted to pursue further education after graduation.

R: Why did you choose to come to study in the United States?

E: The U.S. is the most developed country in the world, not only in economy, but also the educational system. I thought that it might open my horizon to experience a different culture and education in United States. Also, hospitality industry tends to be increasingly global. Overseas studying background can provide a better platform to understand the global culture.

R: What were your expectations about life here in the U.S. before you came here?

E: Before coming to America, I expected to experience a totally different kind of life where I would learn professional and advanced knowledge in HTM field, I would connect with professors and expertise in our major, I would improve my English, I would learn to live on my own in a new environment, I would make friends from all over the world, and I would prepare myself for a future job, etc.

R: OK, we now will talk about some of your detailed expectations and the reality in both academic and non-academic aspects. Please separately talk about your expectations and what you have experienced after you have come here in each of the following aspects.

E: No problem.

R: First aspect, let's talk about learning from academic courses.

E: I expected to learn both the theoretical and practical knowledge from the academic courses. The reality, however, is that I think most of the courses did meet my expectations, except some of those courses that are mainly targeting academic study.

R: What about the teaching style in the U.S.?

E: I expected that the teaching style in the U.S. should be freestyle-that every professor has his or her own style to teach and we, as students, would express our ideas a lot. The reality is that we did participate a lot in the class, but most of the teachers follow similar and ordinary styles.

R: What about Workload?

E: I did expect a large amount of workload. What's beyond my expectation is the academic workload. I did not know that our program is so overwhelmed with academic study.

R: And in terms of working with course professors outside the classroom?

E: I expected to work a lot with course professors after class. I think most of the professors are pleased to work with students after class. I can discuss questions or ask for advices on projects outside the classroom, either through email or office hour meetings.

R: What about assistance from other students, staff, and support units?

E: I did not expect to get lots of support from other students, staff, or support units. However, the truth is I did get support from other students. The support was not limited to academic study but also spread over daily life. That is the most important resource I got from my two-year study.

R: What about non-academic aspects?

E: English environment: I expected to improve my English a lot by living in an English speaking country and get involved with the American culture. However, since the majority of students in the program are Chinese, under most of the circumstances, we still do not have enough chances to speak English. In terms of living convenience, I thought the life in America will be colorful with a lot of interesting activities to experience. However, most of the time, life here is boring. I have to struggle with the basic life. It is so not convenient to live at Purdue.

R: Could you tell me about your overall satisfaction?

E: The program is not what I expected before I joined. Frankly speaking, I am not satisfied with the program in many aspects. The program is targeted to academic development. However, my goal is not to prepare for a future academic career. Neither are many of my classmates. Instead, we are more interested in being professional in the practical industry. Also, most of the students here are Chinese students. I did get support from my classmates. However, I came here for an American style education. The program should balance the nationality of the students to ensure its reputation. Anyway, though I am not satisfied with the program, I did enjoy and treasure my experience here.

R: Anything else to want to add or comment on?

E: I do not think so.