

# The Effect of Undergraduates' Perception on Career Selection in Tourism and Hospitality Industry

Bandara.WMAH<sup>1</sup> and Gangananda.AMNM<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Lecturer (Temporary), Department of Tourism Studies, Uva Wellassa University, SRI LANKA

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer (Temporary), Department of Tourism Studies, Uva Wellassa University, SRI LANKA

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: [asankahemantha825@gmail.com](mailto:asankahemantha825@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

The tourism and hospitality industry is struggling with the issue of attracting and retaining quality educated employees. It has led to a shortage of skilled personnel to staff the growing tourism and hospitality businesses, after the COVID 19 Pandemic. The job turnover rate in the tourism and hospitality sector rose due to the contemporary situation in the world. Especially, the promogulated lockdown and travel ban adversely affected the job security of the employees in the tourism and hospitality sector. Thus, the objective of this study is to identify the effect of undergraduates' perception on career selection in tourism and hospitality industry. A total of 120 undergraduates representing three state universities were selected using stratified sampling method for this study. Primary data was collected via structured questionnaire. Quantitative data analysis methods along with the descriptive, correlation and multiple regressions were utilized to analyze the data using SPSS. Results confirmed that personal factors, educational factors and industrial factors impact on the willingness of career selection in tourism and hospitality industry. Moreover, personal factors are most influential to the career selection of undergraduates. Thus, Universities must enhance the opportunities for practical exposures, attitude development, sign memorandum of understanding, updating curriculum to shape the undergraduate perceptions.

**Keywords**— Perception, Career Selection, Tourism, Hospitality

## I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has grown as one of the largest industries and sources of income generation in recent years among the countries in Asia. The tourism and hospitality industry was one of the fastest-growing industries and major foreign exchange-earners (Ranasinghe and Nawarathna, 2018). Meanwhile, it generated many direct and indirect job opportunities to Sri Lankans within the country and around the worldwide. According to World Travel & Tourism Councils' economic impact report (2019), direct contribution to world gross domestic product (GDP) by tourism and hospitality industry was US\$8.9 trillion and 330 million jobs respectively.

Taking wider impacts of tourism and hospitality into account, Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) measured the contribution to the Sri Lankan economy in 2019. It was Rs.646,342.3 million (US\$ 3,606.9 million). Further, in 2019, tourism industry was the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest income generator of the Sri Lanka even after "The Easter Attack". Tourism industry recorded 13.7% as per share of total foreign exchange earnings. 173,592 direct jobs (229,015 indirect jobs) were generated directly in the tourism sector in 2019, when compared to 169,003 in 2018. Further, there was an increase of 4,589 (2.7%). It was a substantial increase in all categories of tourism establishments even under a terrible situation in the country.

Further, SLTDA (2019) states that, from the total of direct employment, 80% were employed in hotels and restaurants. Travel agency and tour operator account for 7% of the total, airline 5%, guides 3%, state sector 2%, Tourist shops 1%, recreational facility agencies 1% and national tour organizations 0.5. When considering occupational categories, 14.8% were from managerial and professional grades. 51.5% represented technical, clerical and supervisory grades. 33.7 accounted for manual operative grades.

According to Tourism development strategy 2017-2020, Sri Lankan travel and tourism industry require highly skilled workforce to utilize as a strategic human resource. Moreover, Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (2019) states that they aim to attract "right people for the right job" to make Sri Lanka as "high value destination". Hence they target three groups such as public sector, private sector and communities. In this, Undergraduates of state universities have high potential to join and retain in the industry as educated, well skilled and professional workers.

And also, tourism and hospitality industry has been confronted with the problem of attracting and retaining quality employees that has led to a shortage of skilled personnel to staff the ever-growing number of tourism and hospitality businesses and the turnover rate in the hospitality sector rose due to several factors, including

higher proportions of teenagers, students and part-year employees in the industry workforce (Nawarathna, 2017).

Further, the existing situation in the country (COVID 19) may have made some changes in mindsets of undergraduates on travel and tourism industry. In this regard, understand the perceptions of undergraduates of state universities on travel and tourism industry careers are significant for decision making on travel and tourism industry. Hence, this study aim to investigate,

**“What is the effect of undergraduates’ perception on career selection in tourism and hospitality industry?”**

Based on the research problem, question which aimed to be addressed have been designed as follows.

1. What is the effect of personal factors of undergraduates on career selection in tourism and hospitality industry?
2. What is the effect of educational factors of undergraduates on career selection in tourism and hospitality industry?
3. What is the effect of industry factors of undergraduates on career selection in tourism and hospitality industry?

Further this study aims to identify following objectives;

- to identify the effect of personal factors of undergraduates on career selection in tourism and hospitality industry
- to identify the effect of educational factors of undergraduates on career selection in tourism and hospitality industry
- to identify the effect of industrial factors of undergraduates on career selection in tourism and hospitality industry

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Tourism and Travel Employment*

The scope of tourism and hospitality industry is wide. It comprises key areas including food and beverage, conferences and recreation (Nawarathna, 2017). Airey and Frontistis (1997) argued that, it was important to see the job roles from the point of view of the individual rather than from the macro industrial perspective to understand the diversity of job roles within the tourism and hospitality line. People around the world consider tourism to be an important economic activity due to its direct economic impact as well as its significant indirect and induced impacts (Deyshappriya and Nawarathna, 2020).

### *Personal Factors*

The self is both separate from and connected to others fundamentally. Yet while everyone can think of the self as separate or as connected, cross-cultural and racial-ethnic (Oyserman & Markus, 1990) research point to between group differences in whether the self is typically construed as related to or separate from others. Terming

this difference agency–communion (Bakan, 1966), individualism–collectivism (Gaines et al, 1997) or independence–interdependence (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), each of these literatures posits chronic stable differences between groups (gender, race, or cultural) in chronically available self-knowledge.

According to M.A. Kiffly (2010) another reason why students are disinclined to join the hotel trade is due to the perceptions of the education for the positions in the tourism trade. Recruitment advertisements featured in the Singapore local newspapers for entry-level positions for the hospitality and tourism grade always peg diploma graduates with GCE ‘O’ level school leavers. By doing so, diploma holders are unable to leverage on their educational qualifications earned and are seen to be competing with students who are from a lower educational stratum.

### *Educational Factors*

Concerning educative factors, there are numerous factors that can shift a student’s career choice. As cited by Litvin (2000), hospitality teachers’ knowledge, perception and outlook of the industry can be a motivational factor in joining the tourism and hospitality industry. Curriculum does also play an important role. Curriculum can be further subdivided into academic (classroom-based, guest speakers) or field based (i.e. site inspections, field trips). Tas & Dopson (2004) mentioned that the development of curriculum should be pegged to industrial standards and reviewed through competencies grids as well as analysis. The curriculum must also enhance greater interest as the student progress through the years. Many polytechnics have adopted different pedagogies of teaching ranging from lectures, tutorials, discussions, problem-based learning, online games, etc. This is similar to programs that are offered in Hong Kong hospitality institutions (Kivela & Kivela, 2005).

### *Industrial Factors*

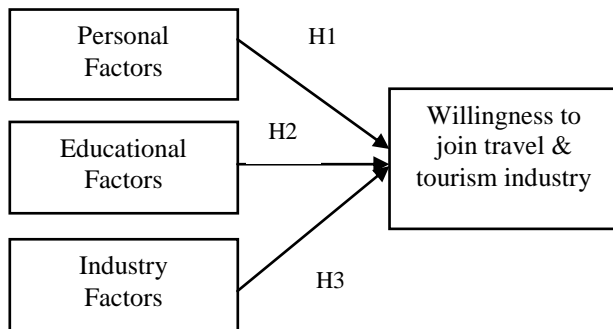
Since many hospitality students upon graduation enter the operations divisions in hospitality and tourism industry, they are subjected to the needs of operations which are carried out throughout the day (shift work), including weekends and public holidays. Coupled with the stressful nature of the work, dealing with irate guest and the fast pace nature of the line, students are disinclined to work in the industry (Kang & Gould, 2002) after joining the trade.

### *Attitude of Tourism Students*

There have been quite a few researchers who have studied the attitudes of hospitality students who are seeking careers in the hospitality and tourism line. According to Kusluvan (2003), it was crucial to understand the attitudes of students to gain an insight to the reasons why many students are disinclined to join the line or choose to leave the industry after having stayed in the

trade for a relatively short period. As way to see why, Kusluvan (2003) mentioned that it was important to see the perspectives of students who are currently pursuing a hospitality curriculum and those that have graduated.

### Conceptual Framework



**Table 1 : Reliability Analysis**

| Variable            | Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---------------------|-------|------------------|
| Personal Factors    | 6     | 0.850            |
| Educational Factors | 6     | 0.910            |
| Industrial Factors  | 5     | 0.914            |
| Career Selection    | 6     | 0.955            |

Source: Justin Matthew Pang (2010)

**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework

### Hypothesis

**H1:** There is an effect of personal factors of undergraduates on career selection in tourism and hospitality industry

**H2:** There is an effect of educational factors of undergraduates on career selection in tourism and hospitality industry

**H3:** There is an effect of industrial factors of undergraduates' on career selection in tourism and hospitality industry

## III. METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve objectives of the research, the researchers used quantitative techniques. Quantitative data were obtained via a structured questionnaire with a 5 point likert scale. The quantitative data were analyzed by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. In the descriptive analysis, mean and standard deviation were utilized to describe basic features data. Pearson's correlation was utilized to measure the relationship between undergraduates' perception and career selection in the tourism and hospitality industry. Further, multiple regression analysis

was used to measure the impact of undergraduates' perception on career selection in the tourism and hospitality industry. Hypotheses were tested via multiple regression analysis.

Based on the research objectives, this research gathered data only from 120 tourism and hospitality undergraduates, from three national universities as Sabaragamuwa University (SUSL), Uva Wellassa University (UWU), and Rajarata University (RUSL) using a stratified sampling technique.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Reliability Analysis

Reliability is a measure is an indication of the and consistency with which the instrument measures the concept and helps to access the goodness of the measure. Cronbach's Alfa is a reliability coefficient that indicates how well the items in a set are positively correlated to one another. Cronbach's Alfa should be greater than a minimum value of 0.700. It is considered as those questions as accepted. According to following table, reliability of this study can be tested.

According to above table, Cronbach's alpha value for personal factors, educational factors, industrial factor and career selection in the tourism and hospitality industry were more than 0.700. According to that all dependent variables and dependent variable can be accepted.

### Background Information

The general information of the undergraduates from three national universities is discussed as below. Concerning on this research study, primary data were collected from 120 tourism and hospitality undergraduates, from three national universities.

**Table 2: Background Information**

|               |                      |    |
|---------------|----------------------|----|
| Gender        | Male                 | 42 |
|               | Female               | 78 |
| University    | UWU                  | 70 |
|               | SUSL                 | 25 |
|               | RUSL                 | 25 |
| Academic Year | 3 <sup>rd</sup> year | 48 |
|               | 4 <sup>th</sup> year | 72 |

According to above research findings, majority of undergraduates were Female. As a percentage it is 65 percent. Furthermore, it presented that, 60 percent of undergraduates were in 4th year.

### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics describe basic features of data in the study. Further, it provides a summary of sample and the measures. Below table describe the descriptive statistics of the variables.

**Table 3 : Descriptive Statistics**

| Variable            | Mean   | Std Deviation |
|---------------------|--------|---------------|
| Personal Factors    | 3.9360 | 0.68210       |
| Educational Factors | 4.2754 | 0.65675       |
| Industrial Factors  | 4.2942 | 0.65164       |
| Career Selection    | 3.8756 | 0.84722       |

According to above table, Personal factors had 3.9360 mean value and 0.68210 standard deviation. Education factors had 4.2754 mean value and 0.65675 standard deviation. In addition to that, industrial factors had 4.2942 mean value and 0.65164. Willingness to join to the industry had 3.8756 mean value and 0.84722 standard deviation value. However, industrial factors had highest mean value among variables. It means that, educational factors have highest level of agreement to the career selection than other variables.

#### Correlation Analysis

Pearson Correlation is used to identify the strength of the relationships between independent variable and dependent variables. Following table describe the correlation analysis of this study.

**Table 4: Correlation Analysis**

| Dimension           | Pearson Correlation | P- Value |
|---------------------|---------------------|----------|
| Personal Factors    | 0.608               | 0.000    |
| Educational Factors | 0.643               | 0.000    |
| Industrial Factors  | 0.651               | 0.000    |

Above Table 4 illustrates the correlation between Independent Variables and Dependable variable. For the personal factors, it denotes a 0.608 value of correlation with the career selection tourism and hospitality industry. Results suggested that there was moderate positive relationship between independent variable and dependent variable. Moreover, there was a significant association at 0.00 significant levels between these two variables for the reason that P-value was less than 0.05.

For the educational factors, there was a 0.643 correlation c value with dependent variable, indicating that there was a moderate positive relationship between educational factors and career selection in the tourism and hospitality industry. In addition, p-value of 0.000 indicates that there was a significant association between these two variables at 0.05 level of significant.

The highest correlation coefficient was 0.651, between industrial factors and career selection in tourism and hospitality industry. Furthermore, there was a moderate positive relationship between those industrial factors and career selection in the tourism and hospitality industry. P-value of 0.000 implies that there was a significant relationship between quality of independent variable and dependent variable at 0.05 level of significant.

#### Multiple Regression Analysis

In this study, multiple regression analysis was used to examine the impact of undergraduates' perception on career selection join tourism and hospitality industry.

**Table 5: Model Summery**

| R     | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std Error of the Estimate |
|-------|----------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 0.725 | 0.525    | 0.515             | 0.59010                   |

According to table 5, R value can be identified as 0.725. It means that there is a positive correlation between undergraduates' perception and the career selection tourism and hospitality industry.  $R^2$  value was 0.525. It means that the model was strongly fitted to the data. 52.5% career selection in tourism and hospitality industry was explained by undergraduates' perception.

**Table 6: Regression analysis**

| Predictor           | $\beta$ Coefficients | Standard Error | P     |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|-------|
| Constant            | 0.532                | 0.336          |       |
| Personal Factors    | 0.384                | 0.094          | 0.000 |
| Educational Factors | 0.270                | 0.134          | 0.045 |
| Industrial Factors  | 0.406                | 0.130          | 0.002 |

According to table 6, constant ( $\beta_0$ ) was 0.532 which illustrate that while all independent variables equal to 1, career selection in the tourism and hospitality industry was 0.532. P- Value of constant was 0.000 which statistically significant at 0.05 level of significant. In addition, all the beta coefficient values represent positive values. In that case there was a positive relationship between independent variable and dependent variable.

According to above analysis independent variables were highly significant for the model as its p-values were less than 0.05. Among these three variables willingness to join in hospitality industry was highly impacted by personal factors than the educational factors and industrial factors. Its coefficients are 0.384 and 0.270, 0.406 respectively.

#### Hypotheses Testing

When consider personal factors dimension, the  $\beta$  coefficient of 0.384 indicates that when personal factors was increased by one unit while other variables remain constant, Career selection in tourism and hospitality industry was increased by 0.384 units. Furthermore personal factors contributed significantly to the model since p-value of 0.000 which was less than 0.05 level of significant. Therefore hypothesis H1 was accepted. Hence, there was a significant impact of personal factors on Career selection in tourism and hospitality industry.



When considering Coefficient of educational factors, one unit of increase in educational factors while other variables remain constant, career selection in tourism and hospitality industry was increased by 0.270. Moreover, educational factors were significant as p-value of 0.045 is less than the 0.05 level of significant. Therefore, hypothesis H2 was accepted. Hence, there was a significant impact of and Educational factors on career selection in tourism and hospitality industry.

According to coefficient of industrial factors, one unit of increase in industrial factors while other variables remain constant, career selection in tourism and hospitality industry was increased by 0.406. Furthermore, industrial factors were insignificant as p-value of 0.002 is less than the 0.05 level of significant. Therefore, hypothesis H3 was accepted. Hence, there was a significant impact of industrial factors on the career selection in tourism and hospitality industry.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The objectives of this study were to identify the effect of Personal factors, educational factors and industrial factors on career selection in tourism and hospitality industry. 120 Undergraduates from three states were selected to this study. Researchers found that Personal factors, educational factors, industrial factors have significant impact on career selection in tourism and hospitality industry. According to that, the results of the study lead to confirm the predictions made by the researchers.

At the formation of perceptions of undergraduates on willingness of career selection, universities act the supreme role. Hence, Universities must enhance the practical exposure, arrange training with industry experts, notify the real nature of industry (working hours, remunerations, career development, etc.), arrange attitude development programs, engage Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) with institutions which relate to tourism and hospitality management for career opportunities and further educations of Undergraduates'. Upgrade curriculums with the contemporary requirements of industry to shape the perceptions of undergraduates.

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