

The Gap Analysis of Employability Competency in 4 to 5 Star Hotels, Bangkok from the Perspective of Hospitality Industry Stakeholders

การวิเคราะห์ช่องว่างของทักษะที่จำเป็นในการทำงานในโรงแรมระดับ 4 ถึง 5 ดาว
ในเขตกรุงเทพมหานคร จากมุมมองของผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียในอุตสาหกรรมโรงแรม

♦ Kulrisa Srisangkaew

Lecturer, Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Martin De Tours School of
Management and Economics, Assumption University, E-mail: kulrisasri@msme.au.edu

กุลริสา ศรีแสงแก้ว

อาจารย์ประจำภาควิชาการจัดการการท่องเที่ยวและการบริการ คณะบริหารธุรกิจ
มหาวิทยาลัยอัสสัมชัญ

Abstract

The research is a part of for this dissertation, aims to identify gaps between the “Three Primary Stakeholders”, consisting of the hospitality managers, hospitality educators, and hospitality internship students. The research set out to identify gaps by examining the perceived level of importance of the competencies needed in the hospitality industry by the Three Primary Stakeholders; examine the level of performance of the three stakeholder groups as to whether these competencies are being met; and, then identify the gaps between the importance and performance levels of competencies needed in the hospitality industry as perceived by the stakeholders. Finally, as an outcome of the objectives, strategies were proposed to reduce the gaps in order to improve the curriculum to better meet industry needs. A competency model framework for the hotel and lodging industry, developed by the American Hotel & Lodging Association (Ennis, 2008), was adopted and was a key instrument in informing the research.

A quantitative survey using importance/performance analysis were used to identify perceived discrepancies between the hospitality education and industry needs with the overall expectations of students’ performance. The skill rating of each group was compared in order to develop a form of expectation-perception “gap analysis” to evaluate whether the students’ expectations and perceptions differ to the industry’s expectations and perceptions,

and how well tertiary education prepares graduates from both industry and educational perspectives.

The researcher found that all three stakeholders had mutual agree that the **“Communication”** and **“Willingness to learn”** are the most important competencies which are needed for working in the hospitality industry, while the **“Adaptability & Flexibility”** and **“Customer Service & Cultural Sensitivity”** are among the highest performance as perceived by the three stakeholders. A pair sample t test was employed to test to determine whether there are the significant differences between importance and performance of employability competencies perceived by all stakeholders. The highest gaps between the importance and performance is the **“Quality Assurance & Quality Control”**, **“Professionalism and Willingness to Learn”**, and **“Law & Regulation”**. The discussion revealed how to narrow down those gaps. The results of this research contributes to the hospitality industry by identifying competency needs. Educational institutes can provide an industry informed curriculum based on the understanding of gaps of importance-perception analysis. Moreover, other researchers who are interested in this research area can further build this field of knowledge by applying the results to investigate related issues.

Keywords: Hospitality Competency, Employability Competency, Gap, Hospitality Education, Hospitality Industry

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยสำหรับวิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อระบุช่องว่างระหว่าง “ผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียสามราย” ซึ่งประกอบด้วยผู้จัดการโรงแรม อาจารย์ และนักศึกษาด้านการโรงแรม การวิจัยครั้งนี้จัดทำขึ้นเพื่อระบุทักษะเพิ่มเติมและความต้องการที่จำเป็นสำหรับอุตสาหกรรมบริการในประเทศไทย โดยการตรวจสอบระดับความสำคัญของความสามารถที่จำเป็นในอุตสาหกรรมบริการ โดยผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียทั้งสามกลุ่มตรวจสอบระดับความพึงพอใจของกลุ่มผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียสามกลุ่มว่า ความสามารถเหล่านี้มีอยู่หรือไม่ จากนั้นระบุช่องว่างระหว่างความสำคัญและระดับความพึงพอใจของความสามารถที่จำเป็นในอุตสาหกรรมบริการโรงแรมตามที่มีผู้มีส่วนได้เสียเห็น สุดท้ายนี้เป็นผลจากเป้าหมายที่จะนำเสนอกลยุทธ์เพื่อลดช่องว่างเพื่อปรับปรุงหลักสูตรเพื่อตอบสนองความต้องการของอุตสาหกรรมได้ดียิ่งขึ้น กรอบรูปแบบสมรรถนะสำหรับอุตสาหกรรมโรงแรมและที่พักซึ่งพัฒนาขึ้นโดยชาวอเมริกัน สมาคมโรงแรมและที่พัก (Ennis, 2008) ได้รับการยอมรับและเป็นเครื่องมือสำคัญในการแจ้งการวิจัยมีการใช้วิธีการวิเคราะห์เชิงปริมาณ เพื่อหาลักษณะเฉพาะของผู้มีส่วนได้เสียหลักสามกลุ่ม

ผลการวิจัยพบว่าทั้ง 3 กลุ่มเห็นตรงกันว่า “การสื่อสาร” และ “ความเต็มใจในการเรียนรู้” เป็นสมรรถนะที่สำคัญที่สุดที่จำเป็นสำหรับการทำงานในอุตสาหกรรมบริการขณะที่ “ความสามารถในการปรับตัวและความยืดหยุ่น” และ “การบริการลูกค้าและความใส่ใจต่อวัฒนธรรม” เป็นหนึ่งในทักษะที่นักศึกษาที่มีประสิทธิภาพสูงสุด ช่องว่างที่มากที่สุดระหว่างความสำคัญและประสิทธิภาพของนักศึกษา คือ “การประกันคุณภาพและการควบคุมคุณภาพ” “มีอาชีพและความเต็มใจ” และ “กฎหมายและระเบียบข้อบังคับ” การอภิปรายแสดงให้เห็นถึงวิธีการ จำกัด ปรับปรุงช่องว่างเหล่านั้นให้แคบลง ผลการวิจัยครั้งนี้จะนำไปสู่อุตสาหกรรมบริการ ด้วยการพัฒนาความต้องการด้านสมรรถนะ สถาบันการศึกษาสามารถจัดเตรียมหลักสูตรที่ได้รับการยอมรับจากภาคอุตสาหกรรมโดยอาศัยความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับช่องว่างของการวิเคราะห์ความพึงพอใจที่สำคัญ สุดท้ายนี้ นักวิจัยคนอื่น ๆ ที่สนใจในพื้นที่การวิจัยนี้สามารถสร้างความรู้ได้โดยการใช้ผลลัพธ์เพื่อตรวจสอบประเด็นที่เกี่ยวข้องได้ต่อไป

คำสำคัญ : ความสามารถด้านการโรงแรม ช่องว่าง การศึกษาด้านการโรงแรม อุตสาหกรรมบริการ

Introduction

According to the top ten issues facing the hospitality industry, as identified by “The International Society of Hospitality Consultants (2007)”, the growing shortage of qualified and skilled workers is the major issue. Since the hospitality and tourism industry has intense competition nowadays, recruiters have high expectations about the qualifications and skill level of employees. Graduates who have both core skills and key competencies are critical to the labor markets. Continual and changing consumer trends will push the curriculum planners at universities to adapt in order to ensure that graduates have all the desired skill sets before they enter the industry. These highly educated staff must be well prepared to hit the ground running.

Thailand, as a famous global tourist destination, has increasing needs for highly competent human resources in the hospitality and tourism sector (Tejavanija, 2002). The growing demand for skilled professionals in this industry has pushed the hospitality and tourism study programs in Thailand to expand significantly during the past decade. Twenty universities have opened and extended their curricula to support the growing demand. Unfortunately, Tejavanija (2002) pointed out that most educators lack professional skills and actual working experience in this field. Most of them progressed directly from college/university to academic posts but have no direct practical experience in the industry. In addition, she noted that most curricula seem to be out of date, without qualified and capable people to meet the requirements and expectations of the industry. Hence, there is a

pressing need for the creation of outstanding and relevant curricula for hospitality and tourism management, which is appropriated for both local and international markets. To address the aforementioned issues, this study will, under the framework of employability competency-based education to serve the workforce, take a quantitative approach. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to determine the discrepancies, if any, in the perceived importance and performance by three primary stakeholders, and provide the strategies to merge those gaps in order to benefit the future curriculum development.

Therefore, with those conditions, there should be a study of employability skills and hospitality competencies research as well as to conduct gaps survey among the primary stakeholders regarding with the qualification of competencies need for working in the hospitality industry. Along with the need to conduct survey on performance level of those competencies, it can provide the strategies to merge gaps exists in sustainable ways. Moreover, the need to survey the self-perception of students towards achievement of competencies need in hospitality during internship period was also necessary. As the previous research mostly showed the comparison of stakeholders' point of view toward competency need, there need more research to investigate of how each stakeholder perceived the relationship between hospitality industry and education. Also, there is need to study hospitality curriculum which must be revised to match the skills expected by industry and demand over the coming decades. Enhancing graduate employability skills is considered as an important task within the hospitality industry.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the level of importance of employability competency as perceived by three primary stakeholder groups
2. To investigate the level of performance of employability competency as perceived by three primary stakeholder groups
- 3 To identify gaps between the importance and performance of employability competency within three primary stakeholder groups

Limitations

This research focuses on the importance/performance ratings regarding to the employability competencies needed. It must be emphasized that the convenience sample

and the purposive sample were used, and it is limited to four to five star international hotels in Bangkok and Bangkok based hospitality major study in four institutes of higher education.

Literature Reviews

Previous studies about hospitality stakeholders mainly focused on the relationship between general perceptions toward competency need between hospitality managers and students (Raybould & Wilkins, 2005). They found that managers rated skills associated with interpersonal, problem solving, and self-management as the most important, while students appeared to have realistic perceptions of the skills that managers value when recruiting hospitality graduates. Some others studies included both hospitality educators and industry professionals working in lodging management and the food and beverage industry (Millar, Mao & Moreo, 2008; Tsai, Goh, Huffman & Kenny, 2006). They found that there are small gaps between hospitality educators and professionals who need open communication, together with faculty internships, industry forums, and interaction with students to have mutual understanding. Wood (2003) surveyed hospitality recruiters and found that specific skills are best learned in the workplace (Leadership, employee relations, problem resolutions, staffing, employee training, and guest services) but a smaller skill set was needed from hospitality education (Research skills, hospitality law, tourism promotion, computer applications, and strategic planning).

Previous studies in the hospitality industry have investigated the relationship between the industry and education from various aspects. For instance, Kamau and Waudo (2012) investigated the expectations of employers on the employees' competences. Similarly, Raybould and Wilkins (2005) surveyed managers' perceptions toward graduates' skills and compared these expectations with students' perceptions of what manager values. Lu (1999) identified the competencies expected for entry level positions in international tourist hotels in Taiwan based on human resource manager and student perceptions. To conclude, closer relationships between the academic world and industry are deemed necessary for the future success of hospitality and tourism education (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2007). Hospitality and tourism hospitality educators should understand the industry objectives of the programs in order to ensure the industry's success. There is the need to recognize the reality of the industry and adapt their curricula to this fast changing context.

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There are significant differences between the importance and the performance of employability competency for each primary stakeholder group.

H1a1: There are significant differences between the importance and the performance of employability competency as perceived by the hospitality educators.

H1a2: There are significant differences between the importance and the performance of employability competency as perceived by the hospitality managers.

H1a3: There are significant differences between the importance and the performance of employability competency as perceived by the hospitality undergraduate intern students.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the conceptual framework, the important competencies from the top-level of the competency model consist of 5 main groups, which are personal effectiveness, academic competencies, workplace competencies, industry-wide technical competencies and industry-sector competencies (Ennis, 2008). The responses will be compared and contrasted within and between the different stakeholder groups. The study of hospitality industry-education relationship can provide the solution of how to merge the gaps exit by using importance-performance analysis to invent the crucial strategies and make sure that all hospitality stakeholders are aware of the situation which can create mutual benefit among stakeholders in the future.

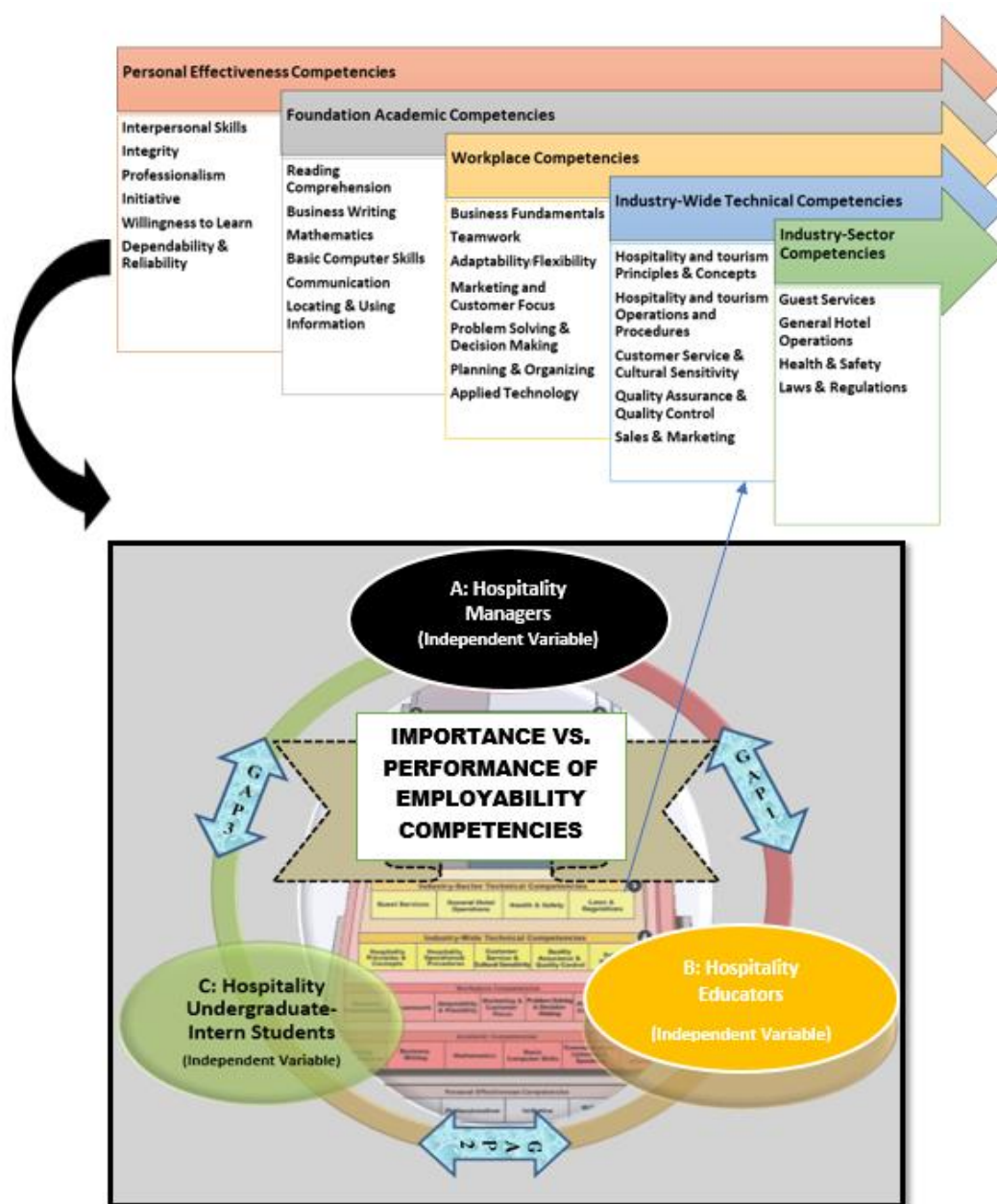


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Developed for this study

To synthesize each theory from the literature review, it can be seen from the above figure that there are gaps within and among the three primary stakeholders. The main research hypothesis is that there are differences in importance and performance of employability competencies between the three primary stakeholder groups. From the conceptual framework, the dependent variables are 28 competencies and the independent variables are the three primary stakeholders. The dependent variables based on the above figure are the five competencies groups that will be assessed by total of Three Primary

Stakeholders. The interval 5 point Likert Scale is used as the measurement level. After there were hypothesis testing, the results were identified how much gaps within and among the three primary stakeholders exists. Finally, as an outcome of the above objectives, strategies will be proposed to bridge those gaps in order to improve the curriculum which meet industry needs.

Methodology

A quantitative method was employed by questionnaire distribution to hospitality educators, managers, and undergraduate intern students. The population included all three main hospitality stakeholders. According to the Thai Hotel Association (THA), there are all together 44 hotels (4 to 5 star hotels) in Bangkok, where were targeted to 50 human resource managers in each. For the hospitality educators, the population included 52 lecturers from four accredited international universities with hospitality and tourism program. Lastly, 317 hospitality undergraduate intern students were selected from those who were training in those hotels for 400 hours. The employability competency framework (Ennis, 2008; Kay & Russette, 2000; Sandwith, 1993; Nolan, Conway, Farrell, & Monks, 2010) was applied as the basis for developing the five Point-Likert scale questionnaire. Strategies for determining sample size for this research can applied by using a sample size of a similar study by Zopiatis and Constanti (2007), who investigate the relationship between hospitality education and the industry of Cyprus as it relates to students' internship practices 402 hospitality students, 150 hospitality managers, and 10 hospitality educators.

Participants were asked to rate their importance/performance with 28 descriptions, which are indicators of the 5 dimensions of competency areas. The descriptions (indicators) within each of the five parts were developed from the American Hotel & Lodging Association, which are standardized. The draft survey instrument was refined with a small pilot study using a convenience sample of all groups, which consists of three versions for hospitality educators, managers, undergraduate intern students as the following.

- **Hospitality Educators**

“For each of the following skills and competencies, please indicate (1) how important you believe each is for recent undergraduate intern students to possess and (2) how satisfied you are that the recent internship students from your institution have these employability competencies”

- **Hospitality Managers**

“ For each of the following skills and competencies, please indicate (1) how important you believe these are for recent internship students to possess and (2) how satisfied you are that the recent internship students have these employability competencies”

- **Hospitality Undergraduate Intern Students**

“Please imagine that you are in an interview panel involved in recruiting a university graduate. For each of the following employability competencies, please indicate (1) how important it is to hospitality managers that internship students possess these employability competencies and (2) how satisfied you are that you personally possess these employability competencies”

The Likert scale ranges consist of 5 choices for each constructs value and request the respondents to rate the scale of 1 to 5 by mark “X” in a five-point Likert-type scale with the following response choices were used in this part of the instrument: 1 = Not Important at all, 2 = Not very Important, 3 = Neither important nor unimportant, 4 = Important, 5 = Very Important, 1 = Very Unsatisfied, 2 = Unsatisfied, 3 = Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4 = Satisfied, 5 = Very Satisfied. Part two consists of Demographic and Personal Information, such as Gender, Age group, education, major area of study, internship period, and addition information.

Research Instrument

In order to test the research instrument, there were validity test, pilot test, and reliability test as the following discussion. The questionnaire for quantitative analysis has undertaken the IOC (Index of item – Objective Congruence) test of content validity by conducting online test utilizing a free online survey design facilitated by Google Docs. Five experts were asked to provided constructive feedback regarding the quality of the questionnaire in terms of clarity of the content and the wording used in each question. The results from IOC test is ranging beyond 0.6, hence all items in the questionnaire can be selected to be instrumentation.

Reliability Test

Performing validity analysis is also essential. As stated by Neuman (2006), this analysis aims to ensure that all items or empirical indicators measure the same concepts that are intended to be measured in the instrument. Findings of reliability analysis revealed that items

and scales developed to measure five key constructs, both importance of competencies group and performance of competencies group are good to very good in terms of validity. The constructs measurement consists of personal effectiveness competencies, foundation academic competencies, workplace competencies, industry-wide technical competencies, industry-sector competencies, were all considered moderately reliable as established by alpha scores of greater than 0.70. Hence, the questionnaire can be used in this research.

Tools for Quantitative Analysis

Collected data were processed by means of quantitative research methods. Prior to data analysis, pre-analysis data screening was performed to ensure the accuracy of the data and to deal with missing and incomplete data. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 for Windows, a product of SPSS, Inc. Descriptive statistics were applied to compute the frequencies and measures of central tendencies. The mean comparison was used to explain the descriptive statistic. Pair sampled t test was then employed to find the difference between importance and performance within each stakeholder groups, using ANOVA to compare the differences between groups.

Findings

The three main stakeholders' perception of importance and performance of the employability competency will be shown in various dimensions to answer the research questions. In the first part, there will be quantitative results analysis showing the descriptive analysis of demographic profiles. Then, there will be the comparison of mean from the importance and performance perceived by the hospitality educators, managers, and undergraduate intern students. The gaps within the groups will be revealed. This section presents and discusses the quantitative findings that were generated from the questionnaire-based survey which was distributed to the three primary stakeholders. The survey aimed to examine the perceived level of importance of competencies needed in the hospitality industry and examines the level of performance of the undergraduate intern students toward those competencies as perceived by the three main stakeholders. The results answer research questions 1 and 2 by showing mean comparison and standard deviation as follows:

❖ **Findings Associated with the Objective 1: What are the importance levels of each hospitality employability competency as perceived by the three primary stakeholder groups?**

The result from descriptive analysis found that the most important competencies as perceived by the hospitality educators consists of the **“Communication”** (M=4.80, SD=0.45), which is the highest mean. the second is the **“Willingness to learn”** (M=4.78, SD=0.47), followed by the **“Professionalism”** (M=4.76, SD=0.48), then **“Guest Services”** (M=4.72, SD=0.54), and the last top five is the **“Dependability & Reliability”** (M=4.68, SD=0.51). Next, the descriptive result show that the hospitality managers perceived that the top five most important competencies consist of the **“Teamwork”** (M=4.62, SD=0.66), followed by the **“Customer Service & Cultural Sensitivity”** (M=4.60, SD=0.60), then the **“Initiative”** (M=4.58, SD=0.61), followed by the **“Willingness to learn”** (M=4.54, SD=0.61), the next heist importance is the **“Communication”** (M=4.52, SD=0.58). Lastly, based on the result from table above, it was found that the highest mean of importance of competencies as perceived by the hospitality undergraduate intern students consists of the **“Teamwork”** (M=4.53, SD=0.65), then **“Communication”** (M=4.48, SD=0.65), followed by **“Interpersonal skills”** (M=4.45, SD=0.64), then the **“Dependability & Reliability”** (M=4.44, SD=0.64), and the last top five is the **“Willingness to learn”** (M=4.43, SD=0.67).

❖ **Findings Associated with the Objective 2: What are the performance of each hospitality employability competency as perceived by the three primary stakeholder groups?**

It was found that the highest performance of competencies as perceived by the hospitality educators consists of the **“Communication”** (M=4.58, SD=0.61), which is the highest mean. The second is the **“Professionalism”** (M=4.52, SD=0.61), followed by the **“Dependability & Reliability”** (M=4.42, SD=0.67), then the **“Integrity”** (M=4.40, SD=0.57), and the fifth is the **“General Hotel Operations”** (M=4.36, SD=0.60). Next, the descriptive result show that the hospitality managers perceived that the highest performance of competencies consist of the **“Teamwork”** (M=4.35, SD=0.76), followed by the **“Adaptability & Flexibility”** (M=4.19, SD=0.72), then the **“Initiative”** (M=4.17, SD=0.86), followed by the **“Communication”** (M=4.15, SD=0.75), then the fifth is the **“Customer Service & Cultural Sensitivity”** (M=4.08, SD=0.76). Lastly, based on the result from table above, it was found that the highest mean of the performance of competencies as perceived by the hospitality undergraduate intern students consists of the **“Willingness to Learn”** (M=4.14, SD=0.71), then the **“Teamwork”** (M=4.09, SD=0.81), followed by the **“Dependability & Reliability”**

($M=4.42$, $SD=0.67$), then the “**Initiative**” ($M=4.03$, $SD=0.77$), and the last top five is the “**Communication**” ($M=4.03$, $SD=0.79$).

Result of Hypothesis Testing (Pair t test)

❖ Findings Associated with the Objective 3: How much gaps exist between the importance and the performance of employability competency levels within the three primary stakeholder groups?

It was found that all employability competencies performance is less than the expectation. The highest gaps between the importance and performance is the “**Quality Assurance & Quality Control**” (-0.52). The hospitality educators expected that the undergraduate intern students should possess the skill higher ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 0.60$), than did the undergraduate intern students’ performance ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.75$). It can be seen that the expectation by the educators are higher than the actual performance by students.

Next, a pair sample t test was employed to test to determine whether there are the significant differences between importance and performance of employability competencies perceived by the hospitality managers. The highest gaps between the importance and performance is the “**Professionalism and Willingness to Learn**” (-0.58). In terms of the “**Professionalism**”, the hospitality managers expected that the undergraduate intern students should get higher ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.68$) than the actual performance by undergraduate intern students ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.86$). In terms of the “**Willingness to Learn**”, the hospitality managers expected that the undergraduate intern students should perform higher ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 0.61$), than did the undergraduate intern students’ performance ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.82$).

In terms of undergraduate intern students survey, the highest gaps is the “**Law & Regulation**” (-0.54), they perceived that they performed lower ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.90$) than what managers should expect ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.76$). It can be seen that they have lower self-perceptual toward that skill.

Conclusion/Discussion

From the above objectives, methodology, finding, and now it’s time to conclude and discuss what happen and what should be the best implication. The following are the main points of the research finding.

1. Most Importance Competencies

From the research, using descriptive analysis, it was found that all three stakeholders had mutual agreement that the **“Communication”** and **“Willingness to Learn”** are the most important competencies which are needed for working in the hospitality industry. these are consistence with the finding of Baum (1991), Breiter and Clements (1996) that demonstrating effective written and oral communication, and demonstrating listening skills are the most important competencies in the hospitality workforce. also, it is corresponded with Ennis (2008), that the **“Communication”** is one of the most important competency in the foundation academic competencies.

Moreover, the **“Willingness to Learn”** was rated to be the most important competency in the industry, it is understanding the importance of learning from new information for both current and future problem solving and decision making. Besides, it is a branch of the self-help movement dealing with success, goals, and related concepts (Baum, 1991), which is one among the personal effectiveness in the model by Ennis (2008). These skills are the desired characteristics of hospitality undergraduate intern students. However, these can be achieved via training in the hospitality industry, which requires good cooperation between hospitality managers and educators. On the other hand, Raybould and Wilkins (2005), the hospitality managers rated skills associated with the **Interpersonal, Problem Solving, and Self-Management Skill** domains as most important while students appeared to have realistic perceptions of the skills that the hospitality managers value when recruiting the hospitality graduates.

As can be seen from the figure, it was found that the **“Willingness to learn”**, **“Teamwork”**, and **“Communication”** are among the most critical competencies in workplace as perceived by all hospitality stakeholders. In contrast, the results are different from the previous research by Breiter and Clements (1996), in their study of higher education curriculum for hospitality management programs in the 21st Century, indicated that the **“Leadership”** competency is the most critical competency deserving high level of attention in 33 hospitality management curriculums in the future.

2. Best Performance Competencies

From descriptive analysis, results show that the hospitality educators and managers perceived that the hospitality undergraduate intern students obtained the

“Communication” as almost highest performance among top five competencies. besides the hospitality managers and the hospitality undergraduate intern students perceived that they obtained the **“Initiative”** among the highest performance of competencies. while the hospitality educators and the hospitality undergraduate intern students perceived that the **“Dependability & Reliability”** gained the highest performance. however, it was found that the **“Adaptability & Flexibility”** and **“Customer Service & Cultural Sensitivity”** are also among the highest performance as perceived by the three stakeholders. The following figure presents the descriptive statistics of performance of employability competencies by the three stakeholders.

According to the result, it was found that the **“Teamwork”** and **“Communication”** skills were rated as the highest performance as perceived by all three stakeholders, while the least performance of the employability competency is the **“Mathematics”**. however, these results are contrasted with Ogbeide (2006), who conducted the research to describe the students’ self-perceived level of competence at performing the employability skills necessary for careers in the hospitality industry. It showed that the most highly rated competencies were “ability to work independently”, “giving direction and guidance to others”, “gaining new knowledge from everyday experiences” and “maintaining a positive attitude”.

3. Gap Analysis

From pair t test analysis, as perceived by the hospitality educators, it was found that all employability competencies performance is less than the expectation. It was found that 22 employability competencies are statistically significant difference, which are the interpersonal skills integrity, professionalism, initiative, willingness to learn, dependability & reliability, business writing, communication, business fundamentals, teamwork, adaptability/flexibility, marketing and customer focus, problem solving & decision making, planning & organizing, hospitality and tourism principles & concepts, hospitality and tourism operations and procedures, customer service & cultural sensitivity, quality assurance & quality control, sales & marketing, guest services, health & safety, and laws & regulations. The highest gaps between the importance and performance is the **“Quality Assurance & Quality Control”**.

As perceived by the hospitality managers, it was found that all employability competencies performance is less than the expectation. It was found that 20 employability

competencies are statistically significant difference, comprise of the interpersonal skills, integrity, professionalism, initiative, willingness to learn, dependability & reliability, reading comprehension, business writing, basic computer skills, communication, locating & using information, teamwork, adaptability/flexibility, problem solving & decision making, customer service & cultural sensitivity, quality assurance & quality control, sales & marketing, guest services, health & safety, and laws & regulations. The highest gaps between the importance and performance is the **“Professionalism and Willingness to Learn”**.

As perceived by the hospitality undergraduate intern students, it was found that all employability competencies performance is less than the expectation. There are 28 employability competencies got statistically significant difference. The highest gaps between the importance and performance is the **“Law & Regulation”**. The result indicates that there are significant differences between importance and performance for each stakeholder group in terms of personal effectiveness, foundation academic competencies, workplace competencies, industry-wide technical competencies and industry-sector competencies. This phenomenon implies that trainees’ performance does not meet hospitality managers’ expectations of the employability competency. Hence, there is a mismatch between academic competency and real industry needs. Therefore, the hospitality curriculum should focus on increasing students’ competencies to meet industry needs.

Recommendations

From the discussion, it should be suggested that all stakeholders need to understand the mutual goals of student competency improvement by focusing on the important competencies and by closing the gaps that exist. The results of this research can contribute to the hospital industry by the following recommendation.

1. Curriculum Contents

The hospitality curriculum needs to be adjusted to correspond with industry demand, since the theory of operation in text books is not enough for work in the real world. There should be more communication and cooperation between stakeholders to decide what should be in the curriculum in order to prepare graduates to fit in the real workforce. This corresponds with Miranda (1999), who also found that the industry should play an instrumental role in developing an up-to-date and relevant curriculum. There should be more focus on content and theory regarding with the **‘Quality Assurance & Quality**

Control”, Professional and Willingness, Law & Regulation. It is suggested that education should focus the curricular content to meet the current needs of industry, and industry should support education to develop educational programming that could, in turn, limit training costs and operational costs. Another support is from the finding of Roberts (2009), who confirmed that the quality of tourism and hospitality management education is reliant on three factors: the quality of the curriculum, the quality of the delivery and the perceived value of the qualification by key stakeholders. From manager perspective, there should be emphasis of several competencies, which consist of the interpersonal skills, integrity, professionalism, initiative, willingness to learn, dependability & reliability, reading comprehension, business writing, basic computer skills, communication, locating & using information, teamwork, adaptability & flexibility, problem solving & decision making, customer service & cultural sensitivity, quality assurance & quality control, sales & marketing, guest services, health & safety, and laws & regulations.

2. Cooperation (Industry-Education)

The hospitality managers and educators expressed opinions regarding cooperation. In particular, learning about the different cultures of each customer is another challenge with regard to how to serve them well and meet their demands. Hence, the hospitality industry and education should cooperate to support student careers in order to gain win-win benefits. Cooperation between hospitality professionals and educators should occur frequently to find solutions to any problems that exist during training. This was confirmed by Millar, Mao and Moreo (2008), who found that there are small gaps between professionals and educators in both industries, as well as differences between the two industries. This finding also suggested that lines of communication are not open between educators and professionals. Faculty internships, industry forums, and interaction with graduating students are suggested means to open communication.

3. Training Program

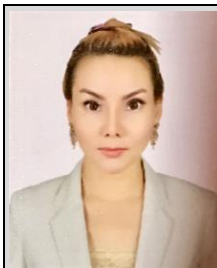
The study found that industry should play an instrumental role in developing an up-to-date and relevant curriculum by providing training programs for graduating students. In the hospitality and catering industry, customer service training is arguably the most vital category of instruction that management and employees ever receive. There must be training programs on languages and guest service details. Although all three primary stakeholders

have different experiences toward training programs, there is mutual agreement that training programs can close the gaps between all stakeholders. This finding is supported by Breen, Walo, and Dimock K, (2004), who stated that tourism and hospitality employers are encouraged to work and train new graduates to improve their strong mentor competencies and to supplement and develop coordinator competencies all the way through job work experience.

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Kulrisa Srisangkaew, PhD. Candidate, Assumption University
Lecturer, Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management,
Martin De Tours School of Management and Economics,
Assumption University.