

A Correlation Study between Student Performance on Travel and Tour Operations Course with CRS and Internship Performance on Travel Agency

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Abstract

A professional career in Tourism is enticing to many who have heard the claims echoed by a range of stakeholders that the tourism industry is growing fast and creating a universe of career opportunities to those who will to become suitably qualified. In a tourism labor intense industry, it is important for the tourism industry to attract highly qualified workers with the skills necessary to meet the requirements of employers in the tourism sector. This study aimed to assess the relationship between the performance of the students on Travel and Tour Operations Course with Computer Reservation System (CRS) and their internship performance in Travel Agencies in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude and personality. Based on the result, majority of the interns has satisfactory performance in the Course Travel and Tour Operations with CRS but they obtained the highest very good performance evaluation rating in attitude followed by personality, knowledge and skills. The study shows that there is no significant relationship between the academic performance and training performance of interns in Travel Agency. Academic performance of the students in the Course Travel and Tour Operations with CRS were only satisfactory but the training performance were rated as very good.

Keywords: Travel and Tour Operation Course, Internship Performance

Introduction

A professional career in Tourism is enticing to many who have heard the claims echoed by a range of stakeholders that the tourism industry is growing fast and creating a universe of career opportunities to those who will to become suitably qualified (Department of Industry, Tourism & Resources, 2002). However for those interested in seeking out a professional career in the industry, it is not simply a matter of walking out of the university and stepping unto a career path that is stable and clear.

One of the debates regarding the preparation of tourism professionals focus on what sort of skills are deemed necessary and appropriate for this workers. Such skills can be categorized technical, conceptual and human (Edginton & Hanson, 2002).

Despite of the rapid growth of the Tourism industry employment in recent years, it is insufficient to meet the increasing demand for skilled personnel as tourism employers are facing workforce challenges created by lack of labor. In a tourism labor intense industry, it is important for the tourism industry to attract highly qualified workers with the skill necessary to meet the requirements of employers in the tourism sector.

In response to the academic challenges of national and international significance, higher education system needs to focus on systemic reform to strengthen and make more competitive their output and services. In accordance with the pertinent provisions of RA 7722, otherwise known as the "Higher Education act of 1994", and the Commission en banc Resolution No. 148, dated April 19, 2009, the guidelines for Student Internship Program in the Philippines for all programs with practicum subject were adopted for the information, guidance and compliance of all concerned.

Lyceum of the Philippines University ranking among the best in the world in terms of productivity, career, attitude and technical skills educates and trains students to be competitive by providing them with applied learning opportunities that require talented workers. The College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management provides quality education based on international curriculum with its tie-up to Dusit Thani International. As part of the curriculum, CITHM provides training to the students through the memorandum of agreement with different travel agencies. During this training, students can apply their knowledge and skills in Travel Agency Operations.

Before the students of Bachelor of Science in Travel and Tourism Management can be deployed for internship they have to pass the different professional courses required for the program. Such courses are Principles of Tourism 1 & 2 (Tour 1 & 2), Philippine Tourism (Tour 3), Travel and Tour Operations (Tour 4), World Tourism (Tour 5) and Tour Guiding Services (Tour 6). Tour 4 is the course integrated Amadeus, the known Computer Reservation System used by Travel Agencies worldwide. As part of this course (Tour 4), students have to pass the examination or certification given by AMADEUS, the technology partner of College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management of Lyceum of the Philippines University Batangas.

The trend nowadays in terms of Tourism education is to provide or equipped students with necessary skills or knowledge in Computer Reservation System (CRS). All the members of Lyceum University system had a tie-up with Amadeus Corporate University which provides the students with necessary training when it comes to CRS. Students must be equipped with the knowledge to administer customer file and identify booking requirements; request services, record request and confirmation; update and finalize bookings; perform sales and service tasks; issue tickets, Multi-Purpose Documents(MPD) and other related documents and complete billing and settlement of reports and payments. These knowledge and skills are required the interns to perform their assigned duties in the travel agencies.

This study attempted to measure the performance of the students of Bachelor of Science in Travel and Tourism Management in the course/subject Travel and Tour Operations (Tour 4) with the integration of Computer Reservation System called AMADEUS in relation with their performance on their on the Job Training in Travel Agency during the 2nd semester of their second year level. This focuses in the course/subject Tour 4 to be able to determine the

effectiveness of the curriculum as the students apply the learning gained in the program to their internship in travel agency.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to assess the relationship between the performance of the students on Travel and Tour Operations Course/subject with the integration of Computer Reservation System (CRS) and their internship performance in Travel Agencies.

Specifically, this paper has the following objectives: (1) to determine the performance of the students in the course/subject Travel and Tour Operations with CRS (2) determine to internship performance in Travel Agency in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude and personality (3) to test the relationship between the performance in Travel and Tour Operations course with CRS and the performance of the interns in Travel Agency and (4) to propose an action plan that may be deemed necessary based on the results of the study.

Literature Review

An internship gives students the opportunity to examine career possibilities in a realistic and 'real world' environment and to explore a possible fit with a particular agency. It is an excellent opportunity to acquire transferable skills and the specific detailed knowledge necessary in today's workplace. The internship "is an opportunity to have an intensive, work-based exposure to a broad range of operations within a company. In addition, internships afford student training under both academic and practitioner supervision. This supervision allows students to gain interpersonal skills with industry workers and to potentially earn money while learning. However, in order to ensure that the internship experience meets the needs of both the practitioner and the student intern, it is important to understand how each views the internship as well as the expected outcomes (Beggs, et. al., 2008).

A particularly successful short-term experiential learning approach was used at a private university in southern California that is focused on the specific international business context of the international cruise industry within travel and tourism. The approach has significant merit to be included as a viable option for helping students develop important international business competencies required to compete in an increasingly global marketplace. With its specific focus on the international cruise industry and experiential travel agency operational design, this approach provides not only the opportunity to learn about general culture and business environments in the areas of travel, but also allows the practical application of many international and domestic business concepts and skills within a specific global industry context (Vance et al., 2008).

The curriculum for tourism higher education aims to meet the needs of students, employers and government funding bodies, but there is no agreement on how best to do this (Morgan 2004). In the academic literature, the debates about tourism higher education curriculum were centred on issues of standardization of diversification.

The tourism industry starts to see the need of a more sophisticated approach to human resource management and this is reflected in a new approach to education and training of the workforce. Education has become increasingly important, as a valuable starting point for the development of human capital (Ladkin, 2005). Tourism degree is as important as Airey and

Tribe (2005) stated that it does much more that reflects the immediate needs of the work place of the immediate demands of the entry of employment positions. Tourism higher education aiming to provide new insights to the management of tourism activity that will make itself relevant for the future. A improved understanding of how best to educate would bring benefits of both individual who wish to develop human career in tourism and the tourism industry as a whole (Ladkin, 2005).

The issue of relevant education has been growing concern in higher education for at least the past two decades. Numerous countries produced governmental documents outlining workplace necessary skills as guidelines for education and training. A growing awareness by employers that students were graduating from college without the necessary skills to begin full-time professional work without inordinate and expensive additional training that employer were at that time providing. This assertion was that educational institutions should be more accountable technical for this skill development (Dressler, 2011).

The need for higher education institutions to ensure that students are learning relevant skills to become work ready and engage citizen in that is currently in the news and has been for a number of decades. National report regarding College Learning for the New Global Century (2007) outlined for categories of essential outcomes including integrative learning, knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, intellectual and practical skills and personal and social responsibility (Hart, 2006).

Despite the diversity of tourism employment, a number of characteristics of jobs in the industry can be identified, which include seasonal, part time, migrant and existing in informal economy (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2004). The academic community investigated a variety of different areas related to tourism employment. Few studies about education needs for the tourism industry reported in the literature and little information is available to those who are involved in human resource management in tourism industry (Ayres, 2006).

Methods

Research Design

The researcher utilized the descriptive design of the study to determine the relationship between performance of the students in the course Travel and Tour Operations with CRS and the performance of the Interns of LPU - Batangas in CITHM. The method was used to determine the performance of the interns in terms of interns' knowledge, skills and attitude and personality.

Participants

The participants of the study are the 73 BSITTM students or 50 percent of those enrolled in Tour 10A - Travel Agency Practicum of second semester school year 2012-2013. They were evaluated by the managers or supervisor of the establishment where they have undergone their training.

Instrument

Researchers used the performance evaluation tool to measure and obtain the necessary information that pertained to the evaluation of the work performance of the interns of BSITTM students. This instrument is a standard performance evaluation tool provided by the

internship office to evaluate the performance of the interns. This is divided into four areas: knowledge, skills, attitudes and personality. The performance evaluation sheet score is divided into five (5) scoring grades where 1 is the lowest and rated as very poor, 2 is poor, 3 is fair, 4 is good and the highest is 5 rated as very good.

Data Collection Procedure

Documentary analysis of the evaluation forms provided to the students by the internship office were accomplished or rated by the managers or immediate supervisor of the establishments where the interns were deployed. The evaluation form was used to determine the performance of the CITHM interns.

The researcher asked permission from the dean to access the data of the interns' evaluation form of second semester 2012-2013. Data were presented to the statistician through the center for data encoding.

Data Analysis

All data were encoded, tallied and interpreted using different statistical tools. This includes frequency distribution and ranking in order to identify the performance of students.

Weighted mean was used to assess the internship performance in Travel Agency in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude and personality. Pearson-Product Moment Correlation (Pearson-r) was used to determine the significant relationship between the internship performance in travel agency and Travel and Tour Operation course with CRS. To further analyze the result, the data were treated using SPSS software with 0.05 alpha level.

Results and Discussion

Table 1

Student Performance in Travel & Tour Operations Course w/ CRS (N= 73)

Academic Grades	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	1	1.37
Very Satisfactory	9	12.33
Satisfactory	44	60.27
Fair	17	23.29
Poor	2	2.74

Legend: 1.00 – 1.25 = Excellent; 1.26 – 1.74 = Very Satisfactory; 1.75 – 2.24 = Satisfactory; 2.25 – 2.74 = Fair; 2.75 – 3.00 = Poor

Based on the table, most of the interns or 60.27 percent of them have satisfactory performance level in the course Travel & Tour Operations Course w/ CRS or Amadeus System, 9 interns or 12.33 percent obtained very satisfactory performance rating and only 1 student or 1.37 percent has excellent performance level. There are 17 students or 23.29 have fair performance while 2 or 2.74 percent have poor performance.

The basis of this performance was the first semester of 2012-2013 grades where Travel & Tour Operations Course w/ CRS or Amadeus System was enrolled which is the prerequisite course before internship in Travel Agency.

The result implies that the teaching strategies, methods and procedures used by the professors are not sufficient to let all the students understand all the information they need to learn in the course. The assessment tools used by the professor to evaluate the students were not suitable to their learning capacity.

Table 2

Performance of the Interns in terms of Knowledge (N = 73)

Knowledge	WM	VI	Rank
1. Comprehends/follows instructions easily	4.29	Very Good	4.5
2. Understands the operating procedures and Techniques	4.44	Very Good	1
3. Proves competitive enough to his/her job assignment	4.33	Very Good	2
4. Able to organize work and analyze it	4.29	Very Good	4.5
5. Has the command of relevant general information and technology	4.30	Very Good	3
Composite Mean	4.33	Very Good	

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 = Excellent; 3.50 – 4.49 = Very Good; 2.50 – 3.49 = Good; 1.50 – 2.49 = Fair; 1.00 – 1.49 = Poor

In terms of knowledge, interns' performance is very good with the composite mean of 4.33. The item that interns can understand the operating procedures and techniques got the highest mean of 4.44, followed by that the interns prove that they are competitive enough to do the job with the weighted mean of 4.33. The next in rank is that interns have the good command of relevant general information and technology which got the weighted mean of 4.30 while the lowest is that interns can comprehend/follow instruction easily and interns were able to organize work and analyze it with both weighted mean of 4.29. In all areas, interns were rated as very good.

This only shows that they have enough knowledge on the courses that they obtained from the school. They were able to apply what they have learned from the professional courses Travel and Tour Operations course with CRS or Amadeus System.

The result implies that students are ready to have their internship in Travel Agency. They possess the common competencies they need to handle the job as trainee and soon to become a good employee or maybe a future entrepreneur.

Based from TESDA Training Regulations, students must have the different competencies to execute the job in travel agency. Common competencies include development and updating of industry knowledge, observing workplace hygiene procedures, perform computer operations, perform workplace and safety and providing effective customer service while the core competencies involve booking travel-related reservation, administer billing and settlement plan and Issue air sea land tickets and multi-purpose documents (www.tesda.gov.ph).

Table 3

Performance of the Interns in terms of Skills (N = 73)

Skills	WM	VI	Rank
1. Can administer customer file and identify booking requirements	4.37	Very Good	1
2. Can request services, record request and confirmation update and finalize booking	4.19	Very Good	5
3. Perform sales and service tasks.	4.21	Very Good	4
4. Can issue tickets, Multi Purpose Documents (MPD) and other related documents	4.27	Very Good	1.5
5. Can complete billing and settlement reports and payments	4.27	Very Good	1.5
Composite Mean	4.26	Very Good	

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 = Excellent; 3.50 – 4.49 = Very Good; 2.50 – 3.49 = Good; 1.50 – 2.49 = Fair; 1.00 – 1.49 = Poor

Table shows that in terms of skills, interns' performance falls within the range of very good with the composite mean of 4.26. The item that interns can administer customer file and identify booking requirements got the highest mean of 4.37 followed by that interns can complete billing and settle reports and payment and can issue tickets, MPD and other related documents both got a weighted mean of 4.27. Interns can perform sales and service tasks got a weighted mean of 4.21 while interns can request services, record request and confirmation update and finalize booking has the lowest mean of 4.19.

The data proves that the skills taught by their competent professors were properly absorbed by the students. They properly executed their skills during their training. Skills in Travel Agency Operations which were developed through the training provided by their professors using the Amadeus Systems with corresponding certification obtained from Amadeus University Partner. Ninety-five percent (95%) of the students passed the Amadeus Examination and were given certificate. This certificate will be used as one their credentials when they apply for a job in the Travel Agency.

The result implies that interns have the skills applicable to Travel agency such as Amadeus Computer Reservation System. Interns can easily adapt with the tasks in the Travel Agencies such as reservation, booking, billing and other related activities.

Amadeus is an all-in-one system that provides the leading transaction processor and provider of advanced technology solutions for the global travel and tourism industry, recently launched a new online application that would enable travel agencies to accurately locate clients anywhere in the world. Amadeus are used by travel agencies, airlines, travel insurance, car rentals, hotel and other business related companies (www.amadeus.com).

Table 4

Performance of the Interns in terms of Attitude (N = 73)

Attitude	WM	VI	Rank
1. Reports to the office with regular punctuality and finishes the duty as scheduled	4.48	Very Good	3
2. Is reliable and imbues a sense of responsibility in handling the tasks assigned to him/her	4.38	Very Good	5
3. Enjoys comfortable working relationship with his/her superior or peers.	4.53	Excellent	1
4. Applies the virtues of integrity and honesty in all aspects of his/her work	4.52	Excellent	2
5. Has positive attitude towards criticism and towards procedure	4.47	Very Good	4
Composite Mean	4.48	Very Good	

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 = Excellent; 3.50 – 4.49 = Very Good; 2.50 – 3.49 = Good; 1.50 – 2.49 = Fair; 1.00 – 1.49 = Poor

Data show that attitude of the interns is deemed to be very good as denoted by the composite mean of 4.48. Interns were rated as excellent for enjoying comfortable working relationship with superior or peer and apply the virtues of integrity and honesty in all aspects of work as indicated by the weighted mean of 4.53 and 4.52 respectively. It was followed by the item that interns report to the office with regular punctuality and finish their duty as scheduled which got the weighted mean of 4.48 and the next is that interns have the positive attitude towards criticism with a weighted mean of 4.47. The lowest in rank is that interns are reliable and have sense of responsibility in handling the task assigned obtained the least mean score of 4.38 with very good verbal interpretation.

The result implies that attitude is being considered as one of the important factors especially for the trainee or employee work as frontliners. Those who are in-charge in the frontline needs to have a good attitude because they are the first persons facing the client. These frontliners can give positive or negative impression of the company.

Attitude can be defined as a learned tendency to evaluate things in a certain way. This can include evaluations of people, issues, objects or events. Such evaluations are often positive or negative, but they can also be uncertain at times. It is an assumption that people behave in accordance with their attitudes. For example, a person might have mixed feelings about a particular person or issue. Attitudes form directly as a result of experience. They may emerge due to direct personal experience, or they may result from observation (Kendra, 2013).

Table 5

Performance of the Interns in terms of Personality (N = 73)

Personality	WM	VI	Rank
1. Reports to work in proper attire and follows proper personal hygiene	4.51	Excellent	1.5
2. Exercise self confidence and comfortable in airing his/her problems and difficulties with his/her supervisor	4.36	Very Good	5
3. Is flexible in work and in dealing with people	4.44	Very Good	4
4. Accepts miscellaneous jobs and tasks with the proper attitude without complaining	4.55	Excellent	1
5. Shows interest and pride with the task assigned to his/her	4.51	Excellent	1.5
Composite Mean	4.47	Very Good	

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 = Excellent; 3.50 – 4.49 = Very Good; 2.50 – 3.49 = Good; 1.50 – 2.49 = Fair; 1.00 – 1.49 = Poor

Based on the table, interns were rated excellent in accepting miscellaneous jobs and tasks with the proper attitude without complaining with the weighted mean of 4.55 followed by interns' reports to work in proper attire and follow proper personal hygiene and shows interest and pride with the tasks assigned both got weighted mean of 4.51. Interns were rated very good in flexibility in work and in dealing with people with a weighted mean of 4.4 while the lowest in rank is that interns can exercise self confidence and comfortable in airing their problems and difficulties with supervisor got the got a weighted mean of 4.36 but still the verbal interpretation is very good.

The result implies that having a very good personality can give great impression to the person. As interns having very good personality, they are best suited to work in the frontline because it can give positive impression to the company. In this case, more clients will be encouraged to visit or transact business with them.

Self-confidence is an attitude which allows individuals to have positive yet realistic views of themselves and their situations. Self-confident people trust their own abilities, have a general sense of control in their lives, and believe that, within reason, they will be able to do what they wish, plan, and expect. Having self-confidence does not mean that individuals will be able to do everything. Self-confident people have expectations that are realistic. Even when some of their expectations are not met, they continue to be positive and to accept themselves. (www.counselingcenter.illinois.edu)

Table 6

Relationship Between the Students' Performance on Travel & Tour Operations Course w/ CRS and Internship Performance

Internship Performance	r-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Knowledge	-0.043	0.718	Accepted	Not Significant
Skills	-0.039	0.744	Accepted	Not Significant
Attitude	-0.133	0.264	Accepted	Not Significant
Personality	-0.118	0.320	Accepted	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

As seen from the table above, there is no significant relationship between the students' performance and their performance in their internship since the obtained p-values were all greater than 0.05 level of significance. Also, the computed r-values show negligible negative correlation. This only means that the interns' performance does not depend on their academic performance.

Training performance of the interns on the Travel Agency on the area of knowledge, skills, attitude and personality was rated as high very good by the supervisors and managers. Students who obtained either high or low academic performance have the possibility of attaining either high or low internship evaluation.

Academic performance does not have significant relationship or effect on the performance evaluation of the interns because manager or immediate supervisors' basis for the evaluation was the actual output or performance they possess during the duration of training. Supervisors are interested only on the knowledge, skills, attitude and personality on how they work or execute all the tasks that was assigned to them. Doing so, supervisors are able to give high evaluation on the performance of the interns.

Table 7

Plan of Action

Objective	Activities	Duration
Academic Performance To improve the performance of the students in the course Travel and Tour Operations with CRS	Give more lecture hours for Amadeus apart from the online hours they have and give more exercises or practice sets to fully understood the system.	whole semester
Knowledge To be able to organize work and analyze it	A. Intensify the implementation of Outcomes Based Curriculum (OBE) in all courses specially the professional courses such as Tour Guiding Services and Travel and Tours Operations including Front Office Services. B. Communication Skills Seminar	From 1st semester of First year until first semester of Second Year. 5 days
Skills To enhance the students skills in actual job setting	A. Training/ seminar on the specific area to be assigned to each trainee B. NC II Certification from TESDA Travel and Tour Operations	5 days each program 1 day
Attitude To become reliable and imbues a sense of responsibility in handling	Seminar on Improvement of Attitude or Discuss the Ways to Improve Attitude during the Orientation before deployment	2 days

the tasks assigned to
students

Personality

To be able to exercise self
confidence and comfortable
in airing
problems and difficulties
with supervisor

Personality Development Seminar

Or Interpersonal Skills Seminar

2 days

Conclusions

The performance of the interns in the Course Travel and Tour Operations with CRS was satisfactory. The interns obtained the highest very good performance evaluation rating in attitude followed by personality, knowledge and skills. There is no significant relationship between the academic performance and training performance of interns in Travel Agency. Performance of the students in the Course Travel and Tour Operations with CRS were only satisfactory but the training performance was rated as high very good. An action plan is proposed to improve the performance of the student in the course Travel and Tour Operations with CRS and to enhance further performance of the interns in Travel Agency.

Recommendations

The College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management (CITHM) of LPU Batangas may enhance the current program and activities in preparation for the deployment of interns to Travel Agency as Personality Development Seminar, English proficiency Seminar and Pre-Internship Seminar and Orientation. The CITHM may continually update the course syllabus by providing training and seminars for hospitality professors and continuously implement the Outcomes Based Curriculum. The university may continuously upgrade facilities and laboratories to enhance further the knowledge and skills of the students necessary for the future work assignments. The proposed action plan may be implemented to enhance the performance of the students in Travel and Tour Operation course and to intensify the knowledge, skills, attitude and personality of the students to prepare them in more holistic approach to employment. Future studies using other factors & variables may also be conducted to further confirm the results of this study.

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