

# A Study to Determine the Various Factors that Influence Students to Enroll in Undergraduate Hospitality and Tourism Programs

Subhashish Mishra – Research Scholar, PIHM, Pacific University, Udaipur - Rajasthan

## Abstract

Education plays an integral role in shaping the mind of students towards choosing the career path in their respective field of interest, however to choose the right course is not easy as various factors determine the decision to choose the graduate level course. Tourism education has its own uniqueness which attracts the students to pursue hospitality & tourism course. This study identifies the various factors that influence the students for studying the hospitality & tourism bachelor degree course. This study based on primary data collected from 150 students of three institutions. Literature was reviewed for this study, which reveals various factors that influences the students for studying the tourism bachelor degree course. The significance of various factors in choosing the course reviewed from literature like personal factors, field attractiveness, ease of study, job opportunities, family background, entrepreneurial opportunities, and admission score/criteria and so on were considered.

**Keywords:** Hospitality & Tourism education, under graduate students, Course selection, Study factors, Retention

## Introduction

India is the 7<sup>th</sup> largest nation and 2<sup>nd</sup> most populated nation of the world. India is known for its cultural diversity and renowned tourist places of the world. India has 38 UNESCO world heritage sites. India is known for its diversity (Kumar, 2020). Indian education system is the third largest education system in the world after USA and China. In India tourism education is not an old phenomenon; diploma course in tourism started in 1970's. Later on many universities started various courses in hospitality & tourism. Government of India under tourism ministry established Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM) & Institute of Hotel Management (IHM). Hospitality & Tourism education in India delivered through regular and distance mode both. Student's interest towards a particular course depends upon certain factors & these factors contribute towards dedication during study & choosing future career path. If the student information needs & decision making process to join course understood properly by the academia then they can develop a meaningful information strategy in education (Briggs, 2006). Student oriented curriculum leads to students satisfaction and superior learning outcome (Lee, Kim and Lo, 2008). Student's preferences and motivations to join course plays an integral role for creating interest to get deep insight of the course, which will ultimately help students to get job of their interest.

Since the continuous prosperity of hospitality & tourism development, depends upon the passionate, skilled manpower and their passion for work in tourism industry. Student's choice to join a course influences the superior learning outcome. Weak choice can lead to student's dissatisfaction and can impact negatively on academic success (Ozga and Sukhmandan, 1998). Thus there is a need for understanding that why students join bachelor degree course in tourism. Literature review is very helpful to identify various factors influence students to join undergraduate tourism degree course.

## Literature Review

There are many factors which influence students to pursue undergraduate hospitality & tourism course, there are various previous studies which also revealed certain factors influence student to choose a course. Research suggests, self actualization, field attractiveness, job opportunities, scholastic achievement & ease of study are various influential factors on tourism course choice (Lee, Kim and Lo, 2008). Geographic location, class size, faculty, facilities, and reputation of the institute influence students (Dodds and Muchnick, 2008). There is immense variations in terms of number of factors identified by the researchers in previous studies. One study identifies, economic factors (job opportunity & salary), social factors (influences of peers & family friends, word of mouth, mass media), university environment & other factors (university reputation, environment & personal interest) (Janine and Anne, 2015). (Lei and Chuang, 2010) Identified that interested students consider many factors in to account to decide which program or institutions to attend. They consider programs factors like overall program size, class size and departmental ranking, faculty factors like faculty reputations, faculty research work and publications, Institutional factors like library collection and campus facilities and personal factors like location and accommodation facilities. (Kallio, 1995) Concluded many factors based on various literature review namely geographical location, student's individual characteristics like achievement and academic ability, academic reputation, program duration and quality, financial cost, cost/price and contact with faculty. Other studies found that why students enrolled in graduation course like (Malaney, 1987) opined factors like improved job prospects, personal satisfaction, desire to learn more about particular field and degree needed for advancement within a particular field. Similar kind of factors covered by (Gagnon and Cocolas, 1988) in their studies.

It is clear that there exists a well defined factors influence student's choice for pursuing a particular course further this study will demonstrate the significance of students choice decision and extent to which choice is shaped by providing relevant and adequate information about bachelor degree tourism course. It has also been observed from the literature review that maximum students do not choose tourism course as first choice, they keep it as second, third or fourth choice, hence it becomes necessary to identify various factors which influence students to choose undergraduate tourism course which will further help the students to retain in the course as well as in the hospitality & tourism industry. The hospitality & tourism education is more vocational in nature and to make students employable is the ultimate target.

## Objective and Methodology of the Study

The study objective is to determine various factors influence students to pursue hospitality & tourism bachelor degree course in two institutions of district Ahmedabad in the state of Gujarat. Across 150 students of undergraduate bachelor degree course were approached. Quantitative approach with self administrative questionnaires used to cast new approach on the matter of student choice that had influenced immediately in the decision making process to pursue tourism bachelor degree course. After literature review twelve factors that students find suitable for pursuing tourism bachelor degree course are field attractiveness, international exposure, ease of study, institution reputation, geographic location, institution campus, library facilities, reputation of faculty, admission process & policies, job opportunities, influenced from peer & family friends, and personal desire. A five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used to identify the factors influence students to join tourism bachelor degree course. For the group of twelve factors those students find suitable for pursuing bachelor degree course the total scale reliability for the coefficient of internal consistency was calculated as

.71.As per (Sekaran and Boujje, 2016) coefficient over .80 good, .70 range acceptable, & coefficient less than .60 are considered to be poor.

### Findings of the survey

As it can be seen in table 1 that there were an equal number of students taken for the purpose of study from Institute of Hotel Management , International Institute of Hotel Management , Asia Pacific Group of Colleges, Ahmedabad, hence maintaining the equal distribution of respondents among three institutions with a total of 150 respondents.

Profile	Frequency(Students)	percentage
Name of the Institutions		
IHM Ahmedabad	50	33.33%
IIHM Ahmedabad	50	33.33%
Asia Pacific IHM Ahmedabad	50	33.33%
Gender		
Male	94	62.66
Female	56	37.33
Age		
Below 20	37	24.50%
20 -25	98	65.30%
25-30	15	10.20%
Class of the students		
1 <sup>st</sup> year	51	34.00%
2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	30	20.00%
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	40	26.66%
4 <sup>th</sup> year	29	19.33%
Intentions to work in the hospitality & tourism industry after graduation		
Yes	112	74.66%
No	38	25.33%

**Table 1: Respondents Profile (n=150)**

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the 150 respondents. Among the respondents 94(62.66%) were mail and 56 (37.33) were female. The majority 98 (65.30%) respondents were in the age group of 20-25 years. Among different years 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> year 51, 30, 40 & 29 students responded during survey. Around 112 (74.66%) students showed their interest to work in the tourism industry, which shows that maximum students are willing to work in the tourism industry simultaneously it is also essential to retain tourism students in the tourism industry.

Factors influencing for pursuing tourism undergraduate course

How much do you agree or not agree with each statement	Strongly agree/agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly disagree/disagree	Mean( $\bar{x}$ )	Standard deviation (s)
Hospitality & Tourism field attractiveness is pleasant experience	86.66%	5.33%	8.00%	4.39	4.00
One can get international exposure	73.33%	10.00%	16.66%	4.05	3.77
Ease of the study in hospitality & tourism course	65.33%	14.66%	20.00%	3.91	3.64
Institution campus infrastructure attracted	58.00%	20.66%	21.33%	3.77	3.53
Institution reputation attracted for hospitality & tourism course	72.00%	12.66%	15.33%	4.10	3.79
Geographic location of institution pushed me to join hospitality & tourism course	36.66%	31.33%	32.00%	3.17	2.95
Entrepreneurial opportunities	54.66%	26.66%	18.66%	3.70	3.42
Reputation of the faculty attracted	43.33%	41.33%	15.33%	3.48	3.16
Admission process & policies are easy to join hospitality & tourism graduate course	60.00%	22.00%	18.00%	3.71	3.38
Job opportunities are satisfactory in hospitality & tourism industry	64.66%	32.00%	3.33%	3.93	3.54
Peer, family & friends influenced me to join hospitality & tourism course	33.33%	32.00%	34.66%	3.13	2.85
Personal desire to join tourism course	83.33%	10.00%	6.66%	4.35	3.94

**Table 2: Factors influencing for pursuing tourism undergraduate course (n=150)**

As can be seen in the table that 87% and 83% of the respondents which has a mean value of 4.39 & 4.35 agreed with the factors that tourism field attractiveness is a pleasant experience and personal desire influence to join undergraduate hospitality & tourism course. 73% and 74% respondents with the mean value of 4.05 and 4.10 agreed with the factor that international exposure and institution reputation also influence the students. Job opportunities (3.93( $\bar{x}$ )), ease of study (3.91( $\bar{x}$ )), Institution campus infrastructure (3.77( $\bar{x}$ )), admission process & policy (3.71( $\bar{x}$ )) and entrepreneurial opportunities (3.70( $\bar{x}$ )) have mean value close to 4 mean value means these all factors influence the students to pursue undergraduate tourism bachelor degree course.

It seems that most of the respondents did not believe that reputation of the faculty attracts for admission with 3.48( $\bar{x}$ ), geographic location with 3.17( $\bar{x}$ ), & peer family & friends with 3.13( $\bar{x}$ ) are the factors less considered for admission in hospitality & tourism bachelor degree course as mean value is below 3.

It is also clear from the feedback collected in this study that maximum students are willing to join the tourism industry after the completion of course, which is good but to retain the students in the hospitality & tourism industry for a long career can be achieved by identifying the most relevant factors to meet with their expectations.

## **Conclusion**

This study provides an interesting fact into why students choose to select undergraduate hospitality & tourism course. The feedback collected from students revealed certain factors. The overall mean value of all the twelfth factors is between 3 and 4. However when the factors are considered field attractiveness, personal desire, and international exposure and institution reputation appear so influential among students to join hospitality & tourism undergraduate tourism degree course as the mean value of all these four factors is more than 4. An institution can work in providing the international exposure to students by offering international internship/placement and credit exchange program with international academic institutions & further good job placement will enhance the institution reputation among students. All academic institutions now have to sell their products and marketing is education is being changed from brochure oriented marketing to relationship oriented marketing, where there is need to focus on students choice and expectation from course (Briggs and Wilson, 2007) .This approach will help to attract more students for course and further will help them to retain in the course. Student's decision making process and information provided at the time of counseling will increase student's enrolment in the course and will provide a competitive edge to academic institution.

The study also identified that faculty reputations, geographical location & recommendation by peer, family and friends do not appear to be important to applicants. To ensure that the hospitality & tourism industry remains professionally robust and strong such institutions advised to ensure that they monitor the excellence of their courses by keeping in mind student's influencing factors to join the course, which can help them to retain in the course and the tourism industry.

## **Limitations of the Study**

The limitation of this study was it only took in to consideration the factors influencing students to join undergraduate hospitality & tourism degree course. Study is not focused on satisfaction and experience of learning environment during their study in the undergraduate hospitality & tourism course. Other limitations of this study was only undergraduate hospitality & tourism students included in this study further study can also be conducted on the master level students. The geographical area of the study in only covered the three institutions of Ahmedabad-Gujarat, due to some time constraints, further more study can be expanded to western region of India to know more about factors influences students to join undergraduate hospitality & tourism degree course.

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