

The Perception and Career Intention of Hospitality Students Towards a Career in the Industry

การรับรู้และความตั้งใจในอาชีพของนักศึกษาสาขาการบริการ
ต่อการประกอบอาชีพในอุตสาหกรรม

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Piyanuch Limapan¹

ปิยนุช ลิมะพันธุ์

Abstract

Thailand is one of the most popular destinations in Southeast Asia. The growing tourism industry in Thailand creates a variety of job opportunities. Despite the popularity of Thailand's tourist destinations, the country faces a human capital challenge in providing competent hospitality and tourism resources. Obtaining a comprehensive awareness of the perspectives of undergraduate students in hospitality management would significantly impact educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and policymakers in comprehending this situation. Using questionnaires, this survey-based research investigated students' perception of their career intentions in the hotel business. The descriptive statistics were used, including mean, percentage, and standard deviations. The inferential statistics of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) indicated four factors, including Factor 1: compensation, benefit, and promotion opportunity; Factor 2: social factor; Factor 3: career path and personal development; and Factor 4: nature of work. Multiple regression was performed using the Enter Method to investigate the relationship between student perception and their intentions to pursue a career in the hotel industry. The findings revealed that social factors ($\beta = 0.512$, $p < 0.001$) had the strongest influence on career intention followed by compensation, benefit, and promotion opportunity ($\beta=0.344$, $p<0.01$), career path and personal development ($\beta=0.293$, $p<0.01$), and nature of work ($\beta = 0.135$, $p = 0.15$) to an intention to pursue a career in the hospitality industry. The model was explained by 59% of the variance in career intention ($R^2 = 0.589$). The study's recommendations include prioritizing practical training over traditional classroom-based studies to enhance industry experience and perceptions, providing career guidance and counseling services that emphasize clear

¹ **Affiliation:** Faculty Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Thailand

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Corresponding Author: Piyanuch Limapan

E-mail: piyanuch.l@rmutsv.ac.th

career paths, and adapting the working environment to meet the needs of the new generation of workers. Additionally, the establishment should ensure work-life balance and job security.

Keywords: Student Perception, Career Intention, Hospitality Industry

บทคัดย่อ

ประเทศไทยเป็นหนึ่งในจุดหมายปลายทางยอดนิยมในเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ อุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวที่กำลังเติบโตในประเทศไทยสร้างโอกาสในการทำงานที่หลากหลาย แม้ว่าสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวของประเทศไทยจะได้รับความนิยม แต่ประเทศก็เผชิญกับความท้าทายด้านทุนมนุษย์ในการจัดหาทรัพยากรการบริการและการท่องเที่ยวที่มีความสามารถ การได้รับความตระหนักรู้ที่ครอบคลุมเกี่ยวกับมุมมองของนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรีในด้านการจัดการการบริการจะมีผลกระทบอย่างมีนัยสำคัญต่อสถาบันการศึกษา ผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียในอุตสาหกรรม และผู้กำหนดนโยบายในการรับมือกับสถานการณ์เฉพาะนี้ งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการรับรู้ของนักศึกษาต่อความตั้งใจในการประกอบอาชีพในธุรกิจโรงแรม การวิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงสำรวจโดยใช้แบบสอบถามในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล สถิติที่ใช้เป็นสถิติเชิงพรรณนา ได้แก่ ค่าเฉลี่ย ร้อยละ และค่าเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน สถิติเชิงอนุมานของการวิเคราะห์ปัจจัยเชิงสำรวจ (EFA) ระบุถึงปัจจัย 4 ประการ ได้แก่ ปัจจัย 1: ค่าตอบแทน สวัสดิการ และโอกาสในการเลื่อนตำแหน่ง ปัจจัย 2: ปัจจัยทางสังคม ปัจจัย 3: เส้นทางอาชีพและการพัฒนาตนเอง และปัจจัย 4: ลักษณะของงาน รวมทั้ง การวิเคราะห์ถดถอยเชิงพหุคูณดำเนินการโดยใช้วิธี Enter เพื่อตรวจสอบความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างการรับรู้ของนักศึกษาและความตั้งใจที่จะประกอบอาชีพในอุตสาหกรรมโรงแรม ผลการศึกษาพบว่าปัจจัยทางสังคม ($\beta = 0.512, p < 0.001$) มีอิทธิพลต่อความตั้งใจที่จะประกอบอาชีพมากที่สุด รองลงมาคือ ค่าตอบแทน สวัสดิการ และโอกาสในการเลื่อนตำแหน่ง ($\beta = 0.344, p < 0.01$) เส้นทางอาชีพและการพัฒนาตนเอง ($\beta = 0.293, p < 0.01$) และลักษณะงาน ($\beta = 0.135, p = 0.15$) ต่อความตั้งใจที่จะประกอบอาชีพในอุตสาหกรรมการบริการแบบจำลองนี้อธิบายได้ 59% ของความแปรปรวนในความตั้งใจในอาชีพ ($R^2 = 0.589$) ข้อเสนอแนะของการศึกษาวิจัยนี้ได้แก่ การจัดลำดับความสำคัญของการฝึกอบรมภาคปฏิบัติมากกว่าการศึกษาในห้องเรียนแบบเดิม เพื่อเพิ่มประสบการณ์และการรับรู้ในอุตสาหกรรม การให้คำแนะนำด้านอาชีพและบริการให้คำปรึกษาที่เน้นเส้นทางอาชีพที่ชัดเจน และการปรับสภาพแวดล้อมการทำงานให้ตรงกับความต้องการของคนทำงานรุ่นใหม่ นอกจากนี้ สถานประกอบการควรสร้างความสมดุลระหว่างชีวิตการทำงานและความมั่นคงในการทำงาน

คำสำคัญ: การรับรู้ของนักศึกษา ความตั้งใจในการทำงาน อุตสาหกรรมการบริการ

Introduction

Thailand, located in Southeast Asia, is a diverse tourism destination that offers a combination of abundant natural resources, rich cultural heritage, and welcoming hospitality through its multicultural society. Thailand's hospitality and tourism sectors have significantly strengthened the country's GDP, serving as key drivers for its economy. It has been observed that the number of tourists visiting Thailand has reached 315 million individuals, generating a total revenue of 2 trillion baht in 2023. This represents a 100% increase compared to the figures recorded in 2022 (TAT Intelligence Centre, 2024). While the hospitality and tourism sectors are expected to play a crucial role in the country's economic recovery in 2024 (World Bank Group, 2023), Thailand presents a diverse array of attractions across the country, including the vibrant capital of Bangkok, the culturally rich region of Chiang Mai in the north, the scenic Andaman Sea of Phuket in the south, the Gulf of Thailand, and gateways to Southeast Asia in Songkhla. Songkhla's proximity to Malaysia has contributed to making it an increasingly popular choice for weekend and holiday excursions, given that Malaysian tourists are a significant contributor to economic expansion in the lower southern region of Thailand. The TAT Intelligence Centre (2024) projects that the tourism and hospitality industries in Songkhla generated around 35 billion baht in revenue in 2023, reflecting a 126% growth compared to the previous year.

Despite the popularity of the country's tourism destinations, Thailand's tourist industry is facing a challenge of human capital. The study revealed that the Thai hotel business is currently experiencing a labour deficit as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The excessive workload and the requirement for employees to do various duties mostly contribute to this shortage. Despite offering a better wage, the industry still struggles to attract sufficient workers (Sakemsuk, 2023). The competitive operation and successful completion of the hospitality and tourism industry's goals depend on its human resource management. As the industry heavily relies on human resources to create memorable experiences for guests. Yin et al. (2022) conducted a study that investigated the impact of COVID-19 on the intention of hotel employees to leave their jobs. The findings revealed that hotel employees experienced feelings of job insecurity and stress because of the experience of losing their jobs during the pandemic, which also resulted in a decrease in hotel operations. The pandemic has revealed hotel employees with a fresh opportunity to pursue alternative careers, including engaging in online e-commerce ventures and exploring other job opportunities. In addition to alternate lifestyles, such as entrepreneurship, remote employment provides increased autonomy and independence in one's chosen career.

Gaining insight into the perceptions of undergraduate students in hospitality management can significantly influence educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and policymakers in understanding this context. Research on career perceptions and intentions in hospitality has predominantly taken place in Western or developed countries. Different cultures, education systems, and labor market conditions exist in these countries. Researchers have not conducted any study in southern Thailand. The resulting insights could contribute to improving the association between academic preparation and the expectations of the labor market. Undergraduate students

in hospitality management would reflect on their perceptions towards an intention to pursue a career in the future.

Objective

To investigate students' perceptions towards their intentions to pursue a career in the hotel industry.

Research Hypothesis

The perception of compensation, benefits, and promotion opportunities significantly influences career intention in the hospitality industry.

Literature Review

1. Theoretical Review

In common terms, the Cambridge Dictionary (2023) defines "perception" as an individual's cognitive and emotional evaluation of a business, product, service, or similar entity. According to the Oxford Dictionary (2023), perception is the capacity to apprehend something visually, audibly, or cognitively through the senses. An individual's perspective may differ based on their personal experiences and senses. Individual perceptions, it could be argued, influence how people behave. Perception, in the fields of psychology, philosophy, and cognitive neuroscience, refers to the cognitive process through which an individual acquires understanding or interpretation of sensory information (Qiong, 2017). The term "perception" originates from Latin and describes the acts of acquiring, obtaining, taking ownership, and apprehending through the mind or senses.

Much research has been conducted to define the term "career." The growing sequence of a person's job experiences is initially argued by Arthur et al. (1989). It can be clarified by recognizing that a career is a rising employment opportunity. The term "career" can be interpreted in two fundamentally distinct ways, which are subjective career and objective career. Stebbins (1970) states that the subjective career shows an individual's opinion of his or her employment and its advancement. The second is that objective careers are the degree of publicly visible positions, circumstances, and status 'that serve as markers for assessing a person's mobility through the social environment' (Barley, 1989). Moreover, Riley and Ladkin (1994), as well as Cappellen and Janssens (2005), defined a career as a set of job assignments that occur throughout time. Furthermore, a career is further described by the Cambridge Dictionary (2023) as a job or position where you are expected to obtain training along with an opportunity to advance throughout your employment, leading to an increase in responsibility and financial compensation.

"Career perception" refers to an individual's ambition or desire to pursue or attain a specific career (Benaraba et al., 2022). An individual's professional perspective is influenced by their motivation to pursue or attain their preferred career after completing several years of study, according to how students perceive different career options. A student can systematically arrange, determine, and construct their areas of interest to formulate a purposeful professional

decision for the future (Bordean & Sonea, 2018). Likewise, a student's perception of a career involves their thoughts and emotions towards the job they intend to pursue upon graduation.

"Career intention" represents an individual's decision-making and motivation to follow a specific professional pathway (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Richardson, 2008;). The ambition to pursue a career choice in a certain industry after graduation may reflect the student's career intentions. Numerous studies have identified factors that influence a career intention such as job satisfaction, compensation, career advancement, job stability, and family life (Anthony et al., 2021; Amissah et al., 2021; El-Houshy, 2018; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Maxwell et al., 2010; Nair et al., 2017; Omar, 2014; Richardson, 2008; Richardson & Butler, 2012; Rosyidi, 2021; Wen et al., 2018; Shah et al., 2021).

2. Student Perception of Careers in the Hospitality Industry

Several studies have been undertaken to uncover student perceptions towards employment in the hotel business. According to a survey conducted by Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000), it was determined that 67.5% of Turkish undergraduate students in the field of tourism and hotel management chose to study tourism and hospitality despite their lack of adequate knowledge. The study findings indicate that students tend to hold an unfavorable perspective following their practical work experience. This perception is influenced by various factors, such as the physically demanding nature of the jobs, the disruption of family life, the long and exhausting hours, the instability of seasonal employment, the low social status associated with tourism jobs, the dissatisfaction with unfair promotions, the inadequate compensation and benefits, the presence of unqualified managers, the negative attitudes and behaviors of managers towards employees, the lack of competence among coworkers, and inadequate physical working conditions. Richardson (2008) performed a survey including more than 86 undergraduate students and hospitality students. The study revealed that 46% of respondents who had prior job experience expressed no intention of pursuing a career in the business after graduation. Students obtaining a degree in tourism and hospitality have concerns about several areas of the industry's job environment, including pay circumstances, prospects for professional growth, and relationships with supervisors. Also, the individual characteristics of the generation impacts their degree of engagement in pursuing a career. The study revealed that individuals belonging to Generation Y, characterized by a tendency towards self-centeredness and high demands, show an intense preference towards prioritizing success, attaining upward career advancement, and fulfilling individual goals such as obtaining an attractive wage to pursuing opportunities within the hospitality industry. The study also found that students who have had early exposure to the hospitality business are less likely to pursue a career in the field after finishing their education (Maxwell et al., 2010).

The research conducted by Richardson and Butler (2012) examined the perspectives of 229 Malaysian tourism and hospitality students regarding a career in the tourism and hospitality field. The findings revealed that the industry fails to provide the aforementioned elements, which the students consider essential, including a competitive salary, flexible scheduling to balance work and personal life, and positive employee-manager relations. Omar's (2014) study, conducted with 460 Egyptian undergraduate students specializing in tourism and hotel management, revealed that 78.7% of students have a negative attitude

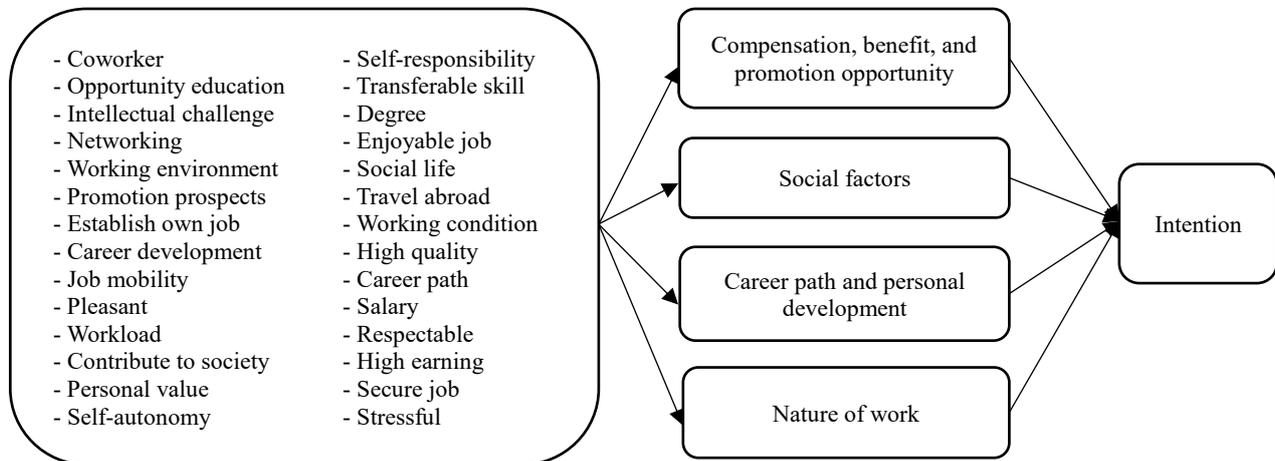
towards pursuing careers in the tourism and hotel industries based on concerns regarding compensation and benefits, working hours, job stability and security, opportunities for career advancement, and the behaviors of managers. The study conducted by Nair et al. (2017) in Qatar involved 75 participants. It revealed that factors such as interpersonal friendliness, working conditions, pay scale and benefits, career advancement, and industry dedication have a significant impact on a graduate student's tendency to enter the hospitality business. Interestingly, the study found that more than 56.8% of the participants were not willing to pursue a career in this industry. The study examining the perception of hospitality students in Egypt revealed that 70.6% of participants expressed their intention to pursue a career in the hospitality industry upon graduation. Nevertheless, they acknowledged that employment opportunities in the industry are perceived as stressful, with excessive workloads and low salaries (El-Houshy, 2018). The research conducted by Wen et al. (2018) on the attitudes and perceptions of undergraduate students towards hospitality careers in China, involving 614 respondents, revealed that Chinese undergraduate students decide hardly to pursue a career in hospitality and tourism due to the inadequate compensation, benefits, and prospects for advancement in the industry, which fails to meet their expectations. A total of 441 students were surveyed by Amissah et al. (2021) to assess their perceptions of careers in Ghana's hospitality and tourism industries. The findings revealed that more than 67% of respondents agreed that a career in these industries is highly unfavorable. However, they also expressed a desire for a career that would allow them to provide care for others, create their job opportunities, acquire transferable skills, pursue further education, build professional networks, and work with high-quality equipment, which the hospitality and tourism industries in Ghana are unable to offer.

Furthermore, an investigation conducted in Indonesia, a renowned tourism destination, examined the perspectives of undergraduate students in the fields of tourism and hospitality. The survey revealed that compensation and opportunities for career progression were the primary factors influencing their decision to pursue a career in the business. Consequently, a significant number of undergraduate students studying tourism and hospitality in Indonesia have a strong desire to pursue employment opportunities overseas, primarily driven by the prospect of greater compensation. Additionally, these students perceive the tourism and hospitality business as providing an enjoyable and attractive work atmosphere (Rosyidi, 2021). A survey conducted on 1,670 participants in Ghana investigated the perspectives on hospitality among undergraduate students. The findings revealed that 68% of respondents considered a career in the industry to be appealing and a chance to socialize with new people. Conversely, 61.60% agreed that careers in this industry can be challenging and lead to anxiety (Anthony et al., 2021). The study investigated the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hospitality and tourism industries in India. Students' assessments of employment opportunities and prospects suggest that the perceived reputation of a particular industry has an impact on the career choices of potential employees. Despite the industry's slowdown caused by the epidemic, students nevertheless express a preference for working in the industry. Regarding the pandemic, students anticipated a

decrease in job opportunities, decreased job stability, increased likelihood of being fired during the probationary period, and limited chances for career advancement (Shah et al., 2021).

Figure 1

Conceptual framework



Research Methodology

1. Population and Sampling

The target group for this study comprises students pursuing a degree in hospitality management at Rajamangala University of Technology, Songkhla. The academic office statistical record indicates a total of 270 students enrolled in the hospitality management major program (Rajamangla University of Technology Srivijaya, 2023). The study sample size was determined using the Yamane Taro calculation method (Tepping, 1968). The findings indicate that a sample size of 161 would be appropriate for this investigation with a confidence interval of 5%. Hence, the utilization of the 176 sets of questionnaires was implemented as a precautionary measure against potential errors.

2. Data Collection

This study was carried out by a quantitative approach. Three experts reviewed the questionnaires for content validity, achieving an index of consistency (IOC) of 0.83 (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1977). This study conducted a pilot test with 30 participants and found that a Cronbach's alpha of 0.927 was acceptable (Hair et al., 2013). The researcher collected the data using a technique known as purposive sampling.

3. Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study was self-administered questionnaires to collect data from the sample population, which were then input into SPSS version 29. There were a total of three sections in the questionnaires. The initial part of the survey included general information about the respondents and their experience in the hotel industry. The second section focused on the

perspective of hospitality students towards their careers in the industry. In the last section, there was an open-ended question regarding careers in the industry. The design of the self-administered questionnaires included closed-ended questions with checklists and Likert scale responses (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral/ undecided, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). The previous study's questionnaires on student attitude were employed in this study, utilizing five Likert scales. The statements were designed to make respondents read through each question by incorporating positive and negative statements. The set of questionnaires was developed from studies of Kuslivan and Kuslivan (2000), Richardson (2008), Maxwell et al. (2010), Richardson and Butler (2012), Omar (2014), Nair et al. (2017), El-Houshy (2018), Wen et al. (2018), Amissah et al. (2021), Rosyidi (2021), Anthony et al. (2021), Shah et al. (2021). Furthermore, this study was approved for human research ethics by the Thaksin University Ethics Committee on Human Research.

4. Data Analysis

This study applied both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics involves calculating measures such as the mean, percentage, and standard deviations towards respondent characteristics, experience, and student perception in the hotel industry. The inferential statistics of factor analysis used a VARIMAX rotation. Multiple regression was performed using the Enter Method to investigate the relationship between student perception and their intentions to pursue a career in the hotel industry.

Findings and Discussion

1. Demographic Characteristics of Students

Table 1 reveals that the survey results indicated there was a majority of female respondents (83 percent). The largest proportion of students, comprising 39.2 percent, were in Year 3. This was followed by Year 4, which accounted for 25 percent of the student population. Year 1 and Year 2 made up 23.9 percent and 11.9 percent, respectively. According to the university's mode of entry, 53.45 percent of students had a high school background, while 46.6 percent had diplomas. Upon investigation, it was discovered that 41.5 percent of individuals had twice the number of years of experience. Also, 28.4 percent had three times the amount of internship experience, 15.9 percent had only one instance of internship experience, and 14.2 percent had no internship experience at all. Among the surveyed students, the majority (73.9%) had interned in a hotel, while 14.2 percent had no internship experience. Internships in restaurants and cafes were evenly represented at 4.5 percent, and internships in government entities accounted for 1.7 percent.

Furthermore, the dependent variable pertained to career intentions, specifically addressing the possibility of pursuing a career path. The information for this dependent variable came from student responses to questionnaires, categorizing students into three distinct groups. Certain (1): This category comprised students who were confident and had made a clear decision about their career intentions in the hospitality industry. Not decided (2): This category included students who were either undecided or had not yet formed a definitive opinion about their career intentions. Uncertain (3): This category included students without interest in

pursuing a career in the hospitality industry. The measurement of career intention categorized students into three levels: certain indicates a high intention, no decision indicates a neutral intention, and uncertain indicates a low intention. The result indicated that 62.5 percent expressed a firm intention of seeking a career, 34.7 percent were undecided, and 2.8 percent were not interested in a career in the industry.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender			Mode of entry		
Male	30	17.0%	High school	94	53.4%
Female	146	83.0%	Diploma	82	46.6%
Year of education			Number of experiences		
Year 1	42	23.9%	No experience	25	14.2%
Year 2	21	11.9%	One time	28	15.9%
Year 3	69	39.2%	Two times	73	41.5%
Year 4	44	25.0%	Three times	50	28.4%
Internship experience			Possibility to pursue a career		
No experience	25	14.2%	Certain (1)	110	62.5%
Hotel business	130	73.9%	No decided (2)	61	34.7%
Tourism business	2	1.1%	Uncertain (3)	5	2.8%
Restaurant business	8	4.5%			
Café / coffee shop	8	4.5%			
Government	3	1.7%			

2. Student Perception toward a Career

Student career perception by mean was found to be the fifth highest perception, including "a job that gives you the opportunity to meet many types of coworkers (x_1)" ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.605$), "A job that gives me responsibility (x_2)" ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.594$), "Gain transferable skills (x_3)" ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.593$), "Opportunities for further training/education (x_4)" ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.636$), and "A career that provides intellectual challenge (x_5)" ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.616$). While a least perception, including "High-stress job (x_{30})" ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.932$), "High independence and self-autonomy (x_{29})" ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.742$), "A secure job (x_{28})" ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.787$), "A job that does not conflict with my personal values (x_{27})" ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.679$), and "High earnings over the length of career (x_{26})" ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.723$).

Table 2
Student Perceptions

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD.</i>
Opportunity to meet many types of coworkers (x ₁)	4.48	0.61
A job that gives me responsibility (x ₂)	4.47	0.59
Gain transferable skills (x ₃)	4.45	0.59
Opportunities for further training/education (x ₄)	4.42	0.64
A career that provides intellectual challenge (x ₅)	4.40	0.62
Seeking a position that aligns with my university education (x ₆)	4.39	0.64
Opportunity for networking (x ₇)	4.34	0.62
Enjoyable job (x ₈)	4.32	0.62
Clean working environment (x ₉)	4.30	0.67
A job where I can care for others (x ₁₀)	4.27	0.63
A job that improves my social life (x ₁₁)	4.27	0.62
Good promotion prospects (x ₁₂)	4.26	0.71
Opportunity to travel abroad (x ₁₃)	4.25	0.67
Opportunity to establish my own job (x ₁₄)	4.24	0.65
Good working conditions in the industry (x ₁₅)	4.23	0.64
Guarantees career development and progression (x ₁₆)	4.21	0.67
A job with high-quality and resourceful equipment (x ₁₇)	4.20	0.68
Job mobility and easy-to-find work (x ₁₈)	4.20	0.71
Opportunity for another career path (x ₁₉)	4.20	0.66
Pleasant working environment (x ₂₀)	4.20	0.66
Suitable for my natural career path (x ₂₁)	4.19	0.69
Good starting salary (x ₂₂)	4.19	0.67
Reasonable workload (x ₂₃)	4.19	0.65
Respectable job (x ₂₄)	4.18	0.70
A job where I can contribute to society (x ₂₅)	4.15	0.74
High earnings over the length of career (x ₂₆)	4.14	0.72
A job that does not conflict with my personal values (x ₂₇)	4.14	0.68
A secure job (x ₂₈)	4.06	0.79
High independence and self-autonomy (x ₂₉)	4.06	0.74
High-stress job (x ₃₀)	3.98	0.93

3. Exploration of Student Perceptions

A factor analysis was conducted to explore an essential characteristic of career perceptions. This study applied the Hair et al. (2013) criteria for factor analysis. The KMO test yielded a value of 0.950, and Bartlett's test resulted in a value of 3,822.584 at a significance level of <0.001, indicating that exploratory factor analysis and correlation between variables are appropriate for this study. In a VARIMAX rotation, all variables had a communality

greater than 0.5. A decision of the number was retained in each factor based on eigenvalue greater than 1 and factor loading greater than or equal to 0.4 as defined in Table 3.

Table 3

Factor Analysis

N=176

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Factors loading</i>	<i>Eigenvalue</i>	<i>Explained variance (%)</i>	<i>Loading cumulative %</i>	<i>R²</i>
<i>Factor 1: Compensation, benefit, and promotion opportunity</i>		15.319	51.063	51.063	0.92
▪ A secure job (x ₂₈)	0.802				
▪ Pleasant working environment (x ₂₀)	0.734				
▪ High earnings over the length of career (x ₂₆)	0.661				
▪ High independence and self-autonomy (x ₂₉)	0.636				
▪ Good starting salary (x ₂₂)	0.615				
▪ Job mobility and easy-to-find work (x ₁₈).	0.615				
▪ Reasonable workload (x ₂₃)	0.592				
▪ Good promotion prospects (x ₁₂)	0.592				
▪ Respectable job (x ₂₄)	0.521				
▪ Opportunity to travel abroad (x ₁₃)	0.484				
<i>Factor 2: Social factor</i>		1.754	5.846	56.909	0.92
▪ Opportunity to meet many types of coworkers (x ₁)	0.753				
▪ Good working conditions in the industry (x ₁₅)	0.712				
▪ Clean working environment (x ₉)	0.717				
▪ A job that does not conflict with my personal values (x ₂₇)	0.635				
▪ Opportunity for networking (x ₇)	0.603				
▪ A job where I can care for others (x ₁₀)	0.586				
▪ A job that improves my social life (x ₁₁)	0.563				
▪ A job where I can contribute to society (x ₂₅)	0.503				
▪ A job with high-quality and resourceful equipment (x ₁₇)	0.480				

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Factors loading</i>	<i>Eigenvalue</i>	<i>Explained variance (%)</i>	<i>Loading cumulative %</i>	<i>R²</i>
<i>Factor 3: Career path and personal development</i>		1.235	4.118	61.027	0.89
▪ Opportunities for further training/education (x ₄)	0.749				
▪ A career that provides intellectual challenge (x ₅)	0.694				
▪ A job which gives me responsibility (X ₂)	0.692				
▪ Guarantees career development and progression (x ₁₆)	0.684				
▪ Enjoyable job (x ₈)	0.678				
▪ Opportunity to establish my own job (x ₁₄)	0.619				
▪ Gain transferable skills (x ₃)	0.619				
▪ Suitable for my natural career path (x ₂₁)	0.561				
▪ Opportunity for another career path (x ₁₉)	0.518				
<i>Factor 4: Nature of work</i>		1.049	3.498	64.525	0.65
▪ High-stress job (x ₃₀)	0.836				
▪ Seeking a position that aligns with my university education (x ₆)	0.513				

Note: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) measure of sampling adequacy: 0.950. Barlett's test of Sphericity: 3,822.584, p: <0.01. Cutoff value: 0.40. a: Scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. b: Cronbach's alpha.

Table 3 shows factor analysis for four factors with a total variance of 64.525% of all variances, while reliability and inter-consistency among variables range from 0.65 to 0.92, which indicates high inter-consistency among variables.

Factor 1 *Compensation, benefit, and promotion opportunity* includes “a secure job (x₂₈),” “pleasant working environment (x₂₀),” “high earnings over length of career,” “high independence and self-autonomy (x₂₉),” “good starting salary (x₂₂),” “job mobility and easy-to-find work (x₁₈),” “reasonable workload (x₂₃),” “good promotion prospects (x₁₂),” “respectable job (x₂₄),” and “opportunity to travel abroad (x₁₃).”

Factor 2 *Social factor* includes “opportunity to meet many types of coworkers (x₁),” “good working conditions in the industry (x₁₅),” “clean working environment (x₉),” “a job that does not conflict with my personal values (x₂₇),” “opportunity for networking (x₇),” “a job where I can care for others (x₁₀),” “a job that improves my social life (x₁₁),”

“a job where I can contribute to society (x₂₅),” and “a job with high-quality and resourceful equipment (x₁₇).”

Factor 3 *Career path and personal development* includes “opportunities for further training/education (x₄),” “a career that provides intellectual challenge (x₅),” “a job that gives me responsibility (x₂),” “guarantees career development and progression (x₁₆),” “enjoyable job (x₈),” “opportunity to establish my own job (x₁₄),” “gain transferable skills (x₃),” “suitable for my natural career path (x₂₁),” and “opportunity for another career path (x₁₉).”

Factor 4 *Nature of work* includes “seeking a position that aligns with my university education (x₆)” and “high-stress job (x₃₀).”

4. Career Perceptions and Intentions of Students in the Industry

A multiple regression analysis (Enter) was performed to determine the impact of student perception toward an intention to pursue a career. The result indicated that four independent variables had a relationship with an intention to pursue a career in the hospitality industry. In Table 3, the adjusted R square value revealed that 48.5 percent of the dependent variable ($R^2 = .589$) was explained by four factors of career perceptions.

Table 4

Results of multiple regression

	<i>b</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p.</i>	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	4.193	0.038		111.009	<0.001**		
Compensation, benefit, and promotion opportunity	0.238	0.038	0.344	6.274	<0.001**	1.000	1.000
Social factor	0.354	0.038	0.512	9.341	<0.001**	1.000	1.000
Career path and personal development	0.202	0.038	0.293	5.343	<0.001**	1.000	1.000
Nature of work	0.093	0.038	0.135	2.467	0.015*	1.000	1.000
<i>R</i>	0.767						
R^2	0.589						
Adjusted R square	0.557						
Standard. deviation from the estimate	0.449						

Note: * indicates statistical significance at 0.05 and ** indicates 0.01 significance.

Moreover, Table 4 indicates that this model had no presence of the multicollinearity problem of the data. The assumption was satisfied as the tolerance level of each variable was greater than 0.10 and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value did not exceed the suggested value of 10.00. The model reveals that independent variables including Compensation, Benefit and Promotion Opportunity ($\beta=0.344$, $t=6.274$, $p=<0.01$), Social factor ($\beta=0.512$, $t=9.341$, $p=<0.01$),

Career path and personal development ($\beta=0.293$, $t=5.343$, $p=<0.01$), and Nature of work ($\beta=0.135$, $t=2.467$, $p=0.15$), had a positive relationship with an intention to pursue a career in the hospitality industry. Social factors had the strongest positive relationship, followed by career path and personal development, compensation, benefit, and promotion opportunity and nature of work to an intention to pursue a career in the hospitality industry. The model demonstrated good predictive power, explaining approximately 59% of the variance in career intention ($R^2 = 0.589$) as in the following equation:

$$Y = 4.193 + 0.238^{**}(X_1) + 0.354^{**}(X_2) + 0.202^{**}(X_3) + 0.093^{*}(X_4)$$

$$Y=4.193 + 0.344^{**}(\beta_1) + 0.512^{**}(\beta_2) + 0.293^{**}(\beta_3) + 0.135^{*}(\beta_4)$$

$$R^2 = 0.58$$

Where:

- Y: Possibility to pursue a career (dependent variable).
- 4.193: The constant or intercept, representing the baseline possibility to pursue a career when all factors are zero.
- X₁: Compensation, benefit, and promotion opportunity (independent variable), with a coefficient of 0.238. This means for every one-unit increase in this factor, the intentions to pursue a career increase by 0.238 units.
- X₂: Social factor (independent variable), with a coefficient of 0.354. This indicates that a one-unit increase in the social factor is associated with a 0.354-unit increase in the intentions to pursue a career.
- X₃: Career path and personal development (independent variable), with a coefficient of 0.202. A one-unit increase in this factor increases the intentions to pursue a career by 0.202 units.
- X₄: Nature of work (independent variable), with a coefficient of 0.093. This means that a one-unit increase in the work factor leads to a 0.093-unit increase in the intentions to pursue a career.

Conclusion

Understanding student requirements, needs, and intentions to pursue a career could have a significant influence on educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and policymakers. Regarding the hypothesis that the perception of compensation, benefits, and promotion opportunities significantly influences career intentions in the hospitality industry, the factor analysis has identified four key factors of career perceptions, including compensation, benefit, and promotion opportunity; social factors; career path and personal development; and nature of work. The multiple regression analysis found that all those factors have influenced students' intentions to pursue a career in the industry. The result has indicated that positive career perceptions of compensation, benefits, and promotion opportunities; social factors; career path and personal development; and nature of work can contribute positively to the intentions to pursue a career in the hospitality industry. The result has been

consistent with the study of the outcomes, aligning with Richardson's (2008) research, which revealed that factors such as compensation, opportunities for job advancement, and interactions with supervisors have influenced individuals' level of commitment to completing a career. Richardson and Butler (2012) conducted a study that also investigated the viewpoints of Malaysian students pursuing tourism and hospitality. The findings revealed that these students place importance on several key factors, such as a competitive wage, flexible scheduling to achieve a work-life balance, and positive relationships between employees and managers. Nair et al. (2017) assert that various factors, including interpersonal friendliness, working circumstances, pay scale and perks, career advancement, and industry dedication, exert a substantial influence on the inclination of graduate students to pursue a career in the hospitality industry. Rosyidi (2021) provided strong support for the result by revealing that compensation and opportunities for career progression were the primary factors influencing their decision to pursue a business career, primarily driven by the prospect of greater compensation.

Recommendations

This study's findings could provide several recommendations to educational stakeholders. First, educational institutions in the hospitality business should be provided with a curriculum that prioritizes practical training over traditional classroom-based study. Also, these institutions should have the potential to engage in collaborative partnerships with industry entities to facilitate practical learning opportunities. The institution could potentially implement a premier program that includes three years of coursework and a year of work-integrated learning (WIL) in a professional hospitality business. This program could help students gain professional experience before stepping into the industry and enhancing their employability. Secondly, institutions should offer career guidance and counseling services throughout the study period. When students have a clear connection between their studies and career pathways, they have a higher chance of pursuing a career after graduation. The institution could implement a workshop for early-year students, an advisory system, and career fairs for final-year students to facilitate their engagement with the industry. Additionally, a survey could be undertaken to monitor student perception and adjust support services accordingly, thereby guaranteeing that the program adapts to the needs of students and market trends. Finally, the current generation of students is seeking a job that provides the opportunity to travel abroad, is enjoyable, pays substantial remuneration, offers further education, enables interaction with diverse colleagues, and presents intellectual challenges. Therefore, the establishment should adapt the working environment to meet the needs of this new generation of workers. This can be achieved by providing different opportunities or task forces overseas, and ensuring work-life balance and job security. The limitation of this study is that it was conducted by only one university, making it unable to accurately reflect the results across the nation. The specific cultural, economic, and geographical context of Songkhla, Thailand may also influence the research findings. Therefore, the results may not apply to hospitality students in other countries.

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