



Assessing Program Outcomes and Employability of Hospitality Management Graduates for Global Competitiveness

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Abstract

This tracer study assessed the program outcomes and employability of Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management (BSHM) graduates of West Visayas State University–Calinog Campus from 2016 to 2019. A descriptive–evaluative design was used, and 193 graduates were traced through purposive sampling, representing approximately 70% of the total graduate population. Data were gathered using a survey instrument adapted from Commission on Higher Education (CHED) guidelines and analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, t-tests, and ANOVA. Results showed that the majority of graduates were 21–24 years old with more females than males, and many were employed outside the hospitality sector. Despite this employment mismatch, respondents rated their attainment of program goals highly “much more than expected”. Significant differences were found by year of graduation and age, while sex, employment type, and job alignment showed no significant differences. Notably, the 2019 cohort reported lower attainment compared with earlier batches, reflecting the disruptions in experiential learning at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings highlight the effectiveness of the program in meeting curricular objectives, yet emphasize the need for strengthened industry linkages, career adaptability initiatives, and continuous tracer studies to enhance graduate employability and global competitiveness.

Keywords: Hospitality Management, Graduate Employability, Program Outcomes, Tracer Study, Curriculum Alignment, Global Competitiveness

1. Introduction

Additional schooling is vital to preparing graduates for the challenges presented by a more competitive, global, and fast-paced labor market. Hospitality and tourism, on an international level, is among the largest sectors, generating high-quantity job opportunities, as well as high-value contribution to the country's, as well as the regional economies (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2023). Hospitality management programs, then, must equip graduates both with specialist technical skills, as well as generic skills that allow flexibility, resilience, and employability across diverse labor markets.



In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) offers policy guidance to align the curriculum to industry demands. Issuance of the CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 30 (2006) followed by CMO No. 62 (2017) strengthened the need to align degree programs in hospitality and tourism management with the country's development priorities and international best practices. These guidelines reflect wider regional plans like the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangements for Tourism Professionals, stressing the mobility and competitiveness of graduates beyond borders. Despite these guidelines, tracer studies conducted within the Philippine setting identify gaps remaining in the aligning of the curriculum to industry requirements as well as the lack of strong demonstration about the linking of program outcomes to employability (De Castro, 2017; Buama, 2018).

Internationally, current research maintains that employability results are no longer secured through the mere attainment of a degree, but rather, the deliberate integration of transferable skills, industry exposure, as well as digital competence (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2020; Verma & Singh, 2022). Even the post-COVID-19 pandemic period further fortified this perception, where internship, mobility, as well as hands-on practice disruptions, reshaped the links between study and working careers within the field of hospitality studies. Research indicated that graduates who developed adaptability, technological, as well as career resilience, stood a high chance of coping with post-pandemic shifts within the labor market (Lopes et al., 2023; Ngoepe & Wakelin-Theron, 2023). This implies that the curriculum framework must integrate employability skills, as opposed to technical instruction, to stress preparedness within the working place. In the Philippine context, curriculum design continues to face challenges in addressing competency gaps, particularly in linking academic preparation with workplace demands (Balida & Alhabsi, 2024).

Despite rising global literature, there are gaps within localized evidence, particularly among the state universities here. Relatively few tracer studies provide graduate employability rates without much insight regarding alignment of competencies to country- or ASEAN-level standards. In addition, there are very few that align program outcomes to employer expectations, so there is little leverage for the potential of tracer data to contribute to actionable improvements to the curriculum (Pranić et al., 2021). It begets, then, the need for evidence-based measures that indicate both graduate outcomes as well as perceived attainment of program goals.

This research fills this gap through the analysis of employability and competency outcomes among Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management graduates of the West Visayas State University–Calinog Campus. It specifically analyzes graduate outcomes, trends in employment, and perceived attainment of program objectives between the years 2016 to 2019. Results of this research shall be used to inform the review of the curriculum, fortify industry connections, as well as the wider debate on the preparation of hospitality graduates for global competence.

Aim

To assess the program outcomes and employability of Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management graduates in relation to global competitiveness.

Research Questions

1. What is the demographic and employment profile of the graduates in terms of year graduated, age, sex, current employment, position held, and awards received?
2. To what extent do the graduates perceive themselves as having attained the hospitality program's goals and objectives?
3. Are there significant differences in the attainment of program goals and objectives when graduates are grouped according to year graduated, age, sex, current employment, and position held?
4. What insights can be drawn from the tracer study findings to inform curriculum enhancement and strengthen industry linkages?

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Hypothesis

(H₀): There is no significant difference in the attainment of program goals and objectives when graduates are grouped according to year graduated, age, sex, current employment, and position held.

Conceptual Framework

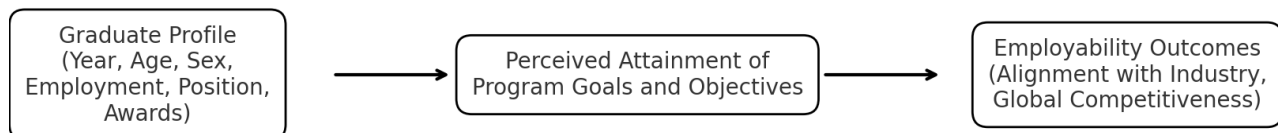


Figure 1. Diagram of Conceptual Framework

The framework illustrates the flow of the tracer study variables. Graduate profiles (year graduated, age, sex, employment status, position held, awards received) serve as the baseline characteristics. These influence the perceived attainment of program goals and objectives, which reflect how well the hospitality management curriculum met its intended outcomes. Together, these perceptions shape the employability outcomes, particularly the alignment of graduate competencies with industry expectations and their readiness for global competitiveness. This model emphasizes that employability is not solely determined by demographic profiles but by how graduates evaluate their learning experiences in relation to industry and global standards.



2. Literature Review

The issue of whether higher education really prepares graduates for the job market has been the subject of academic debate as well as of policy debate for many years. Recent literature insists that employability cannot be taken as a natural product of the possession of a degree but is the product of a curriculum designed to combine technical instruction, transferable skills, and industry collaboration (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2020). In hospitality and tourism, this combination is important especially because the graduates will be required to provide services in rapidly changing situations that require professional expertise as well as interpersonal skills.

Another common thread throughout the literature is the convergence of the curriculum to industry demands. In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has come out openly with explicit competencies required in hospitality programs in memoranda, but the results of the tracer studies still indicate mismatches. De Castro (2017) also found that the majority of hospitality graduates self-reported that they were skilled, even if their skills on the ground did not align with their formal schooling. Corresponding results were also presented by Buama (2018), who noted that although the results of the survey included the employability of the graduates of the survey, many were employed outside their specialization. These results indicate the same problem elsewhere where the skills they learn on the job don't meet the needs (Pranić, Marić, & Cetinić, 2021).

Another line of research highlights the significance of soft skills as much as technical skills. Employers never lose their high regard for adaptability, communication, working collaboratively as part of a team, and problem-solving as they do for formal qualifications. Ngoepe and Wakelin-Theron (2023) note that hotel recruiters in the digital age place ever-growing importance on graduates who are capable of managing the customer experience as much as quickly adapting to technological change. Similarly, Verma and Singh (2022) indicated that digital literacies, time discipline, and resilience now denote competencies at the core of a post-pandemic labour market. Such remarks suggest programmes need to go beyond the teaching of students the aspects of task execution and deliberately foster wider career competencies that support long-term employability.

The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped the employability landscape by disrupting internships, placements, and other forms of experiential learning that are vital in hospitality education. Lopes, Faria, and Costa (2023) showed that pandemic-era graduates faced greater anxiety about employment prospects and had fewer opportunities to practice hands-on skills. Despite this, the crisis also accelerated innovation in digital learning and underscored the importance of preparing students to be flexible and career resilient. These lessons remain highly relevant as hospitality programs redesign their curricula to equip graduates for both stability and disruption. Graduate competencies in hospitality also contribute to tourism development, where lived experiences of travelers shape industry expectations and workforce readiness (Balida, 2023).

A final perspective within recent literature points up global competitiveness. As travel throughout ASEAN countries and global regions becomes increasingly easy, the hotel workforce becomes increasingly international in character. This requires recognition of competencies and skills beyond borders more than ever before. ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangements endeavor to standardize qualifications, yet local programs must be confident that graduates are qualified as well as competitive across the broad spectrum of labor markets. Tracer studies that determine the extent to which graduates themselves perceive they are prepared as workers as opposed to the expectations that employers hold are therefore critical. They provide input assistance to institutions to redesign



programs as needed and improve their contribution to the production of human resources that accrue both domestic as well as international demand.

Generally, the literature suggests three imperatives for hospitality education: achieving effective industry-linked curricula, including transferable skills in program designs, and preparing graduates to excel in rapid change. Neglected, to date, are localized tracer studies that contrasted outcomes vis-à-vis the Philippines' CHED national standards, as well as the ASEAN-level guidelines. Our study bridges the gap, as the employability outcomes as well as the program experiences among the hospitality management graduates serve as bases for insights on the improvement of the curriculum as well as industry linkage.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents (N = 193)

Category	f	%
Year Graduated		
2016	45	23.32
2017	45	23.32
2018	47	24.35
2019	56	29.02
Age		
21–24 years old	159	82.38
25 years old & over	34	17.62
Sex		
Male	95	49.22
Female	98	50.78
Current Employment		
Hospitality industry	86	44.56
Non-hospitality	107	55.44
Position Held		
Hospitality-related jobs	88	45.60
Other jobs	105	54.40

Most graduates in table 1 were aged between 21–24 years old and almost equally divided along gender lines. Interesting to note, more than half worked outside the hotel sector, where 54% held unrelated jobs. This supports past Philippine tracer studies that also point to the likelihood that graduates would find employment outside their specialization even where competence is believed (Celis, Festijo, & Cueto, 2013; Buama, 2018). Similar patterns also come up among international findings where employability is dependent on both technical instruction as well as broader adaptability as well as transferable skills (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2020).

**Table 2. Respondents' Attainment of Hospitality Program Goals and Objectives**

Category	Mean	Description	SD
Entire Group	4.70	Much more than expected	0.36
Year Graduated			
2016	4.85	Much more than expected	0.19
2017	4.92	Much more than expected	0.12
2018	4.75	Much more than expected	0.31
2019	4.35	More than expected	0.40
Age			
21–24 years old	4.67	Much more than expected	0.38
25 years old & over	4.81	Much more than expected	0.22
Sex			
Male	4.69	Much more than expected	0.37
Female	4.71	Much more than expected	0.36
Current Employment			
Hospitality industry	4.72	Much more than expected	0.35
Non-hospitality	4.68	Much more than expected	0.37
Position Held			
Hospitality-related jobs	4.70	Much more than expected	0.36
Other jobs	4.70	Much more than expected	0.37

Graduate averages on table 2 reported achieving "much more than expected" program outcomes, with minimal variation across batches. Batch 2019 graduates rated their attainment lowest among the previous batches, possibly a result of the disruption- oriented learning scenario during the pandemic period (Lopes et al., 2023). In the category of sex, age, and employment, attainment scores were high across the board, which supports the claim of the CHED that competence among diverse groups of students is improved by curricular standards (CHED, 2018).

Table 3. t-Test Results for Differences in Attainment of Program Goals

Category	Mean	Mean Difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Age					
21–24 years old	4.67	-0.14	-2.04	191	0.04*
25 years old & over	4.81				
Sex					
Male	4.69	-0.02	-0.40	191	0.69
Female	4.71				
Employment					
Hospitality	4.72	0.04	0.75	191	0.46

Category	Mean	Mean Difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Non-hospitality	4.68				
Position Held					
Hospitality-related	4.70	-0.00	-0.00	191	0.99
Other jobs	4.70				

*p < .05 significant

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One significant table 3 contrast was between age categories, where the older graduates showed slightly greater attainment of program outcomes. It may reflect being more mature, having more experience of professional practice, or being a more honest self-assessment. No contrasts on the basis of sex, employment type, or job alignment were shown. These findings signify that the program prepares the learners adequately equally among the diverse groups, although career maturity influences the manner the learners see their readiness (Ngopepe & Wakelin-Theron, 2023).

Table 4. ANOVA Results for Differences in Attainment by Year Graduated

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	Sig. (2-tailed)
Between groups	9.86	3	3.30	39.85	0.000*
Within groups	15.63	189	0.83		

*p < .05 significant

Table 4 also shows the output of the one-way analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) used to establish if there were significant gaps in the attainment of the program objectives and goals based on the division of the graduates into the year they graduated. Analysis indicated there was a statistically significant difference between the four groups ($F(3,189) = 39.85$, $p < .001$). It implies that the year of graduation determined the degree to which the respondents indicated achieving the objectives and goals of the hospitality program.

The significant F-ratio indicates that not all cohorts reported the same level of attainment. Graduates from earlier batches (2016–2018) rated their attainment as “much more than expected,” while Batch 2019 graduates had relatively lower ratings. This difference is noteworthy because it coincides with the period when academic and industry practices were increasingly disrupted by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Literature suggests that students who graduated during this transition faced reduced access to internships, hands-on training, and workplace immersion, which may explain their lower perception of program outcomes (Lopes, Faria, & Costa, 2023).

Therefore, the results of the ANOVA highlight that although the curriculum as a whole achieved its outcomes, contextual influences including the year of graduation and the outside-of-classroom environment acted to determine graduates' perceived achievements. It highlights the need to include pragmatic coping strategies within hospitality programs to equip students to deal with the unpredictability of the international job market (Verma & Singh, 2022).

Table 4.1. Post-hoc Test (Bartlett's Multiple Comparisons)

Comparison	p
2019 vs 2016	0.00*
2019 vs 2017	0.00*
2019 vs 2018	0.00*
2018 vs 2017	0.04*
2017 vs 2016	0.61
2018 vs 2016	0.53

*p < .05 significant

Table 4.1 ANOVA output shows significant variation between cohorts, where Batch 2019 graduates persistently reported lower attainment than the preceding groups. This mirrors international literature on pandemic-related disruption, which limited practice-based training and eroded the confidence of job market entrants during a period of crises (Lopes et al., 2023). Inter-batch variation between the preceding batches (2016-2018) was modest, suggesting consistency in the pre-pandemic curriculum. These findings reinforce the need to develop resilience-building as well as adaptable learning paradigms as part of hospitality programs (Verma & Singh, 2022).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This tracer survey measured the program outcomes and employability of Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management graduates of the West Visayas State University-Calinog Campus from the years 2016 up to the year 2019. It was found that most graduates were young, evenly distributed between the sexes, and that the majority were working outside the hotel industry. Even so, graduates across the years gave their attainment of program objectives and outcomes a rating of "much more than expected," showing that the program was effective in imparting them competencies that they themselves valued.

The study also highlighted notable variations across graduating cohorts. Earlier batches, particularly those from 2016 to 2018, reported higher levels of attainment, while the 2019 cohort showed relatively lower ratings. This divergence coincided with the transition into the pandemic period, when disruptions in training, internships, and practical exposure limited opportunities to fully develop industry-relevant skills. The inferential analyses confirmed that age and year of graduation significantly influenced perceived attainment, while sex, type of employment, and job alignment did not. These results suggest that the program was broadly equitable across demographic categories, yet external factors such as labor market disruptions and educational delivery modes shaped graduate outcomes.

In summary, the study established that the WVSU-Calinog hospitality management program has been adequate in meeting the curricular aspirations, but industry linkage needs to be improved. That most graduates are working elsewhere beyond the hospitality industry validates the need to enhance the employability channels as well as

improve the curricula-industry links. It is vital that these issues be addressed so that graduates become competitive both locally as well as globally.

Recommendations

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Based on the findings, some recommendations are introduced to improve the linkage between graduate employability and academic preparation. As a first recommendation, the College of Business and Management must further improve cooperation with the hospitality and tourism industries. By forming stronger networks, the wider opportunities for internship, practice, and subsequent employability would be opened so that the graduates would directly enter careers that correspond to their specialization.

Secondly, the faculty must enhance technical and employability support to learners. In addition to the teaching of functional skills, pedagogic approaches should include, as a matter of intention, transferable skills like versatility, problem-solving, and ICT skills. This would be commensurate with the global evidence that highlights the critical role that soft skills as well as technological preparedness exert in long-term occupational outcomes (Pranić et al., 2021; Ngoepe & Wakelin-Theron, 2023).

Third, the Guidance and Alumni Offices, in collaboration with the College, should organize regular job fairs, career workshops, and employer engagement activities. Such initiatives will not only improve graduate placement rates in the hospitality sector but also provide feedback loops to ensure that curricular offerings remain relevant to industry expectations.

Ultimately, it would be desirable to carry out tracer studies on a recurrent basis. Ongoing tracking of graduate outcomes will enable the institution to act preemptively to changes occurring in the labor market, verify the value of curricular change, and maintain its dedication to quality assurance. Additional research employing the mixed-methods approach, including employer viewpoints as well as longitudinal tracking, will also shed additional light on the conversion of program outcomes into career patterns as well as global competitiveness.

5. Implications for Policy and Practice

Findings of this tracer survey hold significant meaning for higher education policy, curriculum building, as well as industry practice. In the first place, the discovery that over half the graduates worked outside the hotel industry points up the age-old problem of skills–job mismatch. Policymakers, especially the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), would do well to review current curricular standards to place more emphasis on stronger integration of employability-related competencies. Subsequent CHED memoranda may place additional stress on versatile sets of skills, informatics literacy, as well as global versatility to ready graduates for various careers. The importance of aligning education with broader workplace expectations, including safety and health standards, has been emphasized in international research (Abdelrahim, Otitolaiye, Omer, Abdelbasit, & Balida, 2023).

Second, the significant variation in program outcomes by cohort, especially the lower attainment reported by the 2019 graduates, points to the vulnerability of practice-oriented disciplines to external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. For institutional leaders, this emphasizes the importance of embedding resilience into curriculum design. Universities should adopt contingency measures, such as hybrid internships, simulation-based training, and



digital practice laboratories, to safeguard the continuity of skill development when traditional modalities are disrupted.

Third, the research underlines the value of long-term partnerships with higher education institutions as industry players. Industry employers, as we again and again see, value very highly soft skills, flexibility, and customer-oriented skills. Strengthening collaboration through formalized internship programs, co-designed modules, and mutually designed research projects will enable graduate skills to stay up to date with the nature of the workplace. It will also empower institutions to build a mechanism that provides them with the opportunity to continually respond to industry trends in their academic offerings.

Lastly, on the institutional front, the results affirm the value of tracer studies as an instrument for quality assurance and accreditation. Institutional tracking of graduates on a routine basis allows schools to present the evidence base of program effectiveness, determine improvement sites, as well as improve responsiveness to local and international labor markets. This resonates with the larger international protocols, including the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangements, where graduates that are technically proficient, as well as competitive beyond borders, are required.

Overall, the research offers actionable findings that inform curriculum redesign, policy refinement, as well as industry collaboration. Bridging the gaps that this research has identified will not only enhance graduate employability but also fortify the contribution of higher education institutions to the creation of a globally competitive workforce.

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