

# South African hospitality graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify hospitality graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry in South Africa and to determine why these perceptions affect their chances of being employed and retained in the industry. Ninety-four hospitality management graduates from Tshwane University of Technology in South Africa completed a questionnaire in which the characteristics influencing their employment and retention in the hospitality industry were rated. Certain characteristics deemed to be the cause of the negative perceptions that led to hospitality graduates not being attracted to and retained in the industry. These results reveal that graduates have unrealistic expectations of employment in the hospitality industry.

**Keywords:** Hospitality graduates; perceptions; employment conditions; job satisfaction; hospitality industry



Source: <http://www.hospitality-school.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/how-hospitality-students-get-jobs-hotel-restaurant.jpg>

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Hospitality management graduates are rejecting employment opportunities in the hospitality industry in South Africa, because of perceived poor working conditions and a negative image of the hospitality industry (Moyle, 2008; Kraak,

2010). As a result, the hospitality industry is confronted with challenges relating to recruitment and retention of hospitality graduates (Calldo, 2008; Walsh, Sturman & Longstreet, 2010). Moyle's (2008) study indicates that more than 30% of the total management workforce in the hospitality industry is not in possession of a tertiary

qualification. Improved recruitment and retention strategies are needed to accommodate the rapid growth in the hospitality industry and the restructuring that occurred when the FIFA Soccer World Cup was hosted in 2010.

To date a few characteristics have been identified in the hospitality industry. These could influence perceptions of those hospitality graduates who have to be recruited and retained in the industry (Baum, 2006; Richardson, 2008). These characteristics include a young workforce, low levels of remuneration and a lack of formal qualifications, a majority of females, students, part-time and casual workers, a high proportion of low-skilled jobs, a considerable number of hours worked outside normal business hours, a negative image of the industry among potential employees, a large proportion of migrant staff, under utilisation of student labour and high staff turnover (Richardson, 2008). Hospitality graduates cite these characteristics as reasons for not seeking employment in the hospitality industry.

The hospitality industry acknowledges the importance of hospitality graduates if services are to be delivered efficiently (Hedley, 2013). As most services rendered in hospitality and tourism entail human interaction and quality service delivery they are produced and consumed simultaneously in face-to-face exchange situations (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000). This implies that employees and customers have the capacity to influence each other (physically and psychologically) through their experience of the service (Richardson, 2008). These aspects of the service delivery process make employee perceptions a key determinant of attraction and retention when striving to provide good service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000).

Employees' positive attitude towards their work increases the possibility of an organisation achieving customer satisfaction and loyalty (Richardson,

2008). This is evident as increasing international competition between industries and between locations has led to organisations using their employees to gain the competitive edge over rivals (Pfeffer, 2005; Richardson, 2008). Hospitality graduates play a key role in an organisation's ability to gain a competitive advantage, with their commitment to the industry determining whether the company is able to sustain this competitive edge (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000). An employee's commitment to any industry is influenced by his or her perceptions of their working environment, as well the types of jobs available in the industry.

To ascertain graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry, a questionnaire was designed, data collected to establish common characteristics that influence perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry among hospitality graduates.

### **1.1 Significance of the study**

For most university students at the time of graduation, finding employment is foremost in their minds. A sound education should give students better career opportunities and prepare them to make a significant contribution to the industry. Furthermore, it is imperative that students are prepared to enter the workplace, having been given appropriate career-related assistance and guidance (Chuang, Walker & Caine-Bish, 2009). In the hospitality management courses at TUT, students are equipped with the knowledge and skills required by the industry. The course includes skills associated with specific areas (such as food service or lodging) or functional areas (such as marketing or management). Several factors may influence graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry. For the purpose of this study, working conditions in the hospitality industry were specifically selected to evaluate the graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, working conditions were

chosen because a number of studies indicate that hospitality and tourism students have limited knowledge about careers and working conditions in the hospitality industry (Richardson, 2008; Blomme, Van Rheede & Tromp, 2009; Brown, Arendt & Bosselman, 2014). A number of studies have been conducted elsewhere, but none in South Africa. Identification of the factors that influence employment of hospitality management graduates would fill gaps in the knowledge base that need to be investigated. In addition, this study aimed to investigate hospitality graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry in South Africa.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review covers research conducted on working conditions of the hospitality industry that could predispose graduates to a particular perception of employment in the industry.

### **2.1 Previous research findings regarding graduates perceptions**

There seems to be a lack of research conducted in South Africa on hospitality graduates' perceptions of the employment in the hospitality industry although it appears that numerous studies have been conducted abroad. Kusluvan and Kusluvan's (2000) study concludes that realistic expectations could lead to graduates being retained in the hospitality industry. When considering which career to choose, Richardson (2009) reports that expectations of hospitality and tourism graduates are important. Chuang *et al.* (2007) support the findings of Kusluvan and Kusluvan that experience, in addition to education is cardinal. Therefore if graduates know and understand employment conditions prevailing in the hospitality industry, they will have realistic expectations of what work entails. Various researchers, among them Wash & Taylor, 2007; Richardson, 2009; Blomme, Van Rheede & Tromp, 2009; Brown, Arendt & Bosselman, 2014 have done studies on

hospitality management graduates within the hospitality industry. Most of the research reveals that those hospitality graduates who enter the industry without fully understanding the industry, are more likely to leave the industry, while those graduates who have not been employed, will seek employment opportunities elsewhere because of negative perceptions.

On the other hand, Roney and Öztin (2007) argue that when students have gained work experience in the industry, their perceptions of the industry are negatively affected by factors such as working hours, lack of job security, low remuneration and a lack of development opportunities, while 32% intend to leave the hospitality industry (Lu & Adler, 2008). Richardson (2008) supported by Roney and Öztin reports that 46% of hospitality and tourism students with work experience claim they will not work in the hospitality industry after they have graduated because of the negative experiences in the industry. These negative experiences relate to job content, development opportunities, work-family balance, salary, performance-related remuneration and career opportunities (Blomme, Van Rheede & Tromp, 2009).

However, Walsh and Taylor's (2007) study reveals that poor compensation, burnout and work-life balance are not the main predictors of high turnover among young managers in the hospitality industry. Absence of opportunities is more often cited as the leading cause of high turnover. Young managers want to continue learning and growing while being able to plot their own career paths. Gender, current employment status, career-decision self-efficacy and career outcome expectations are some of the strongest predictors of retention in the industry (Blomme, 2006). A combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators (namely interesting work, generous benefits and good working conditions) have been found by Kim *et al.*, (2009) to be the most highly

valued factors in the hospitality and tourism industry.

## **2.2 Hospitality graduates' education and career expectations**

Vocational degree or diploma programmes, including those in hotel and hospitality management, are intended to satisfy the industry's growing demand for skilled employees. As a result, there exists a need to ensure that the academic curriculum meets not only educational expectations, but also those of industry and students, regarding the skill-sets required in the workplace (Raybould & Wilkins, 2005). Students enrolling for degree programmes in hotel or hospitality management are motivated by anticipated vocational and career outcomes (O'Mahony *et al.*, 2001). Graduates' expectations of higher education programmes have always been high as justification for easier integration into the labour market. At the same time, employers set their own requirements for graduates from higher education institutions. Ideally, industry's requirements in terms of abilities and skills of graduates should coincide with the abilities and skills developed by individuals who have successfully completed higher education programmes. The reality is, however, different because of a gap between graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry and the hospitality industry's requirements and employment conditions. Walsh and Taylor (2007) cite intellectual challenges to be an important factor in the retention of employees.

## **2.3 Graduates' expectations and perceptions regarding employers**

An employee and an organisation should be committed to each other throughout the working-life of the employee (Smith & Kruger, 2005). Lifelong career commitment implies guaranteed job security as long as the employee is technically qualified and performs satisfactorily. Career and educational

expectations of graduates include being presented with a variety of career opportunities; having a long-term career plan; possessing a qualification that is relevant to the job and receiving consistent guidance and mentoring. Graduates joining an organisation have certain expectations of what they should be provided with by the hospitality industry and of the skills they have to offer the employer (Blomme, Van Rheede & Tromp, 2009). Among the expectations of a graduate of an employer is a meaningful and challenging job; recognition; compensation and promotion; openness and honesty; support from management; office space; induction training; team spirit; and information on organisational policies and regulations (Smith & Kruger, 2005). Expectations that an individual (graduate) offers to meet an employer, include the ability and skills to execute tasks; pleasant social interaction; conforming to organisational values and goals; and projecting a good public image of the organisation.

When graduates enter the industry, they have certain expectations about issues including inter alia, working conditions, promotion, salaries, status and challenges presented. They have individual perceptions of their skills and their ability to manage time. On the other hand the industry also has certain expectations that these graduates have to fulfil (Smith & Kruger, 2005). It is important to determine the gaps that may exist so that graduates are better prepared for a career in a challenging industry.

## **2.4 Hospitality industry's perceptions of and experiences relating to hospitality graduates**

Tourism plays a major role in the global economy and in South Africa, in particular, as it contributes more than 8% to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GCIS 2010). It has also been identified as one of the top six priority areas in the New Growth Path for the promotion of economic development and job creation in

South Africa. There is growing concern in the public sector about the increased reliance on imported labour to fill skilled local positions. Not only does this contribute to revenue loss for South Africa, but it has also resulted in a sector that is rife with low-paying job opportunities (Reynard, 2013).

The hospitality sector, as part of the tourism industry plays a vital role in the food and beverage, accommodation, entertainment and leisure sector which in turn, forms an integral part of the national strategy (StatsSA, 2004). The hospitality industry is a service industry that is labour intensive therefore, management of employees in the industry is a crucial function (Grobler & Diedericks, 2009). For these reasons, relevant hospitality education programmes are essential for the ultimate success of this industry (Kay & Russette, 2000). The quality of the human resources depends on having an educated, well-trained, skilled and committed work-force. However, Moyle's (2008) research reveals that more than 30% of the total management workforce in hospitality and tourism are not in possession of a tertiary qualification in the hospitality or tourism industries.

The hospitality industry employs graduates at entry level as supervisors or at front-office level while operations staff come up through the ranks. Representatives of the industry argue that graduates are not willing to start at the bottom, because they believe that their qualifications should give them immediate access to middle management. Conversely, those in the hospitality industry are of the opinion that new recruits need to learn the culture and the practice of the industry by spending time being trained on the job (Moyle, 2008).

A survey of 20 of South Africa's top companies reveals that graduates are not always able to meet their companies' skills requirements because *"graduates have the qualifications but not always the practical skills and experience; the wrong*

*types of graduates are being produced: there are too few technical graduates; frequently graduates are not suited to fill shortages at management level; skilled staff are often poached by other companies or emigrate; graduates are not always of high enough quality"* (Pauw, Oosthuizen & Van der Westhuizen, 2008). The critical shortage of these practical skills and experience as revealed, may suggest that the educators do not impart them to students during training in higher education institutions. An implication could be that graduates lack competencies since they do not have the requisite skills. These deficiencies will definitely cost the industry dearly as there will be poor quality service. As the result the government has to intervene to address issues affecting hospitality training.

## **2.5 Turnover of hospitality management graduates**

Employee turnover entails the rotation of workers within the labour market; movements between firms, jobs and occupations, as well as between the industry segments of employment and unemployment (Abassi & Hollman, 2000). Throughout the world, the hospitality industry is known for its high turnover rate (Blomme, Van Rheede, & Tromp, 2009). Retaining the services of highly trained staff presents a major challenge to the hospitality industry (Enz, 2009). Gender, current employment status, career-decision self-efficacy, and career-outcome expectations are strong predictors of retention in the industry. Those students with relevant work experience are more likely to remain committed to their career choice (Chuang *et al.*, 2007). To obviate the creation of unrealistic expectations and perceptions among hospitality graduates, educators and hospitality employers need to reach agreement on course content and spell out expectations, thereby reducing the level of disappointment and disillusionment on both sides (Moyle, 2008).

## **2.8 Literature review conclusions**

Previous researchers show the importance of graduates having realistic expectations of the hospitality industry, as unrealistic expectations inevitably lead to negative perceptions of the industry (Brown, Arendt & Bosselman, 2014; Lu & Adler, 2008). Employment benefits and good working conditions are the most highly valued prerequisites for prospective hospitality employees (Kim, Hallab & Lee, 2009). If graduates are not satisfied with their working conditions, chances of their staying in the hospitality industry diminish drastically. On the contrary, while gaining experience in the hospitality industry could advantage graduates, some hospitality graduates' early exposure to the hospitality industry tends to reduce the likelihood of their embarking on a career in the hospitality industry (Lu & Adler, 2008; Roney & Öztin, 2007; Richardson, 2008). This could be due to the fact that students, who opt for hospitality programmes without knowing how the industry operates, once exposed to the industry, change their career choice. The image of and prospects in the industry should attract and foster retention of employees in the industry. Attraction and retention levels could be increased if the hospitality industry were to offer career developmental working conditions. In addition, employees have high career expectations which, if unmet, could lead to serious dissatisfaction and high staff turnover.

## **3 RESEARCH METHODS**

This study seeks to analyse hospitality graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry. The perceptions of the graduates are determined by employment conditions in the hospitality industry. The results of this are based on a questionnaire designed to collect data on employment conditions that contribute to the perceptions of the hospitality industry by hospitality management graduates.

## **3.1 Sample and data collection**

The survey to ascertain hospitality graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry was carried out between March and July 2012. Participants were hospitality graduates from 2004-2008 who had studied at the Department of Hospitality Management, Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa. A list of 435 hospitality graduates was retrieved from the university database. A modified questionnaire was used in a pilot test involving 10 hospitality graduates of 2009 to iron out problems regarding comprehensibility and wording of the questions as recommended by Dillman (2007). After analysis of the pilot test data, a few minor modifications were made to the format of the questionnaire before it was e-mailed to all participants. Completed questionnaires numbered 94 (response rate 22%) which was deemed to be valid for research purposes.

## **3.2 Questionnaire design**

A self-administered questionnaire was used for the survey. The questionnaire was in English as all the respondents had completed their studies in English. The first section of the questionnaire consisted of a demographics section. The questionnaire contained thirty-seven items to rate the level of job satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Six were yes/no (closed) questions and seven were open-ended questions. Answers to eighteen questions used in the questionnaire had responses which were rated on the 5-point Likert scale. In the survey participants were asked to rank the most common reason/s for hospitality graduates' leaving or remaining in the hospitality industry on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 - 2 being most important, 3 important and 4-5 being least important. Questions relating to job satisfaction in the current position of participants were rated on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very satisfied, 2 satisfied, 3 dissatisfied and 4 being very dissatisfied.

### 3.3 Data analysis

The SPSS version 20.0 was used for all analyses. Response percentages in each category were calculated and presented in tabular form. Descriptive statistics and content analysis were used to analyse the data. Regression analysis was used to verify the factors that determine employment in the hospitality industry such as gender, age, language, job position, compatibility with family/life, hours per week and good management.

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The hospitality graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry are presented as follows:

### 4.1 Profile of graduates respondents

The gender distribution of the respondents was 52.1% females and 47.9% males. Most respondents (38.3%) were between

the ages of 24 and 27, with 37.2% of respondents aged between 28 and 31, 13.8% aged between 32 and 35 and 6.4% aged between 20 and 23. The majority of the respondents (68.1%) were in possession of a National Diploma and 31.9% had a B-Tech degree.

### 4.2 Factors that contribute to graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry are as follows:

#### 4.2.1 Employment status of hospitality graduates

Eighty-three per cent of respondents obtained work in the hospitality industry after graduation, which fact presents a positive view of the industry. However this changed as graduates realised what the real world of work in the hospitality industry entailed with some leaving the industry.

**Table 1: Graduates' current employment**

Employment	Number of graduates	Percentage
Hospitality industry	56	59.6
Outside the Hospitality industry	17	18.1
Looking for a job	7	7.4
Studying and not working	4	4.3
Studying while employed in the hospitality industry	5	5.3
Studying while employed outside the hospitality industry	4	4.3
Entrepreneur	1	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>

The employment status of graduates shown in Table 1 indicates that 59.6% of respondents were employed in the hospitality industry while 5.3% were studying while employed in the hospitality industry. These findings reveal a positive

response from graduates as the majority (64.9%) of respondents were employed in the hospitality industry at the time of the survey. These results are similar to those in Lu and Adler's study (2008) that found 68% of respondents were considering

careers in the hospitality industry. Some graduates (18.1%) were employed outside the industry, while 4.3% were employed while studying. This constitutes a total of 22.4% of graduates employed elsewhere (outside hospitality industry). Additionally, 7.4% were unemployed and job hunting, while 4.3% were studying and unemployed. A further 11.7% of respondents had been unemployed since graduation and 1.1% was self-employed as an entrepreneur. The results of this study are in contrast to the results obtained by Richardson (2008) who reported that over 50% of respondents were considering careers outside the hospitality industry. Thirty-three per cent of respondents claimed they would not work in the hospitality industry once they had graduated. In addition, while 46% of students with work experience claimed they would not work in the hospitality industry after they had graduated, and 96% of these individuals stated that this decision was based on work experience in the industry. Of the students who had not worked in the industry, none claimed they would not work in the hospitality industry once they had graduated.

#### **4.2.2 Employment position of hospitality graduates**

About 78% of the graduates working in the hospitality industry were employed as front office assistants (10.6%), receptionists (5.3%), food service aids (7.4%), waiters (5.3%), supervisors (21.3%), managers (25.5%) and one as an executive chef (2.1%). As most of the hospitality graduates obtained work as managers and supervisors after graduation, this is a positive sign for hospitality education, the graduates and the hospitality industry.

Data on remuneration received by graduates in hospitality and those outside the industry indicate that 23.4% of those working in the hospitality industry earned between R10 000 and R14 999 per month. While 20.2% of respondents received between R8 000 and R9 999, 17% of respondents were paid between R5 000

and R7 999 and 7.4% respondents being paid less than R2 999 per month. A small number of respondents (2.1%) received between R15 000 and R19 999 but only 1% of respondents was paid R30000 per month. Remuneration offered by the hospitality industry to graduates reflected their level of achievement. Some 30% of respondents earned between R10 000 and R14 999 per month working in the hospitality industry versus 26.3% of respondents working outside the hospitality industry who earned between R10 000 and R14 999.

#### **4.2.3 Hours worked by hospitality graduates**

In South Africa, the official work week is 40 hours, but the legal limit for working hours is sometimes not adhered to by employers in the hospitality industry due to the unpredictability of a service industry and the long hours of operation. Of graduates employed in the hospitality industry, 36.2% worked 40-44 hours per week, while 21.3% worked 45-49 hours per week. Graduates working inside the hospitality industry worked significantly longer (45-49 hours) than their counterparts outside the industry. Furthermore, respondents working outside the hospitality industry were paid overtime, whereas employees in the hospitality sector did not receive overtime pay. Most (75%) of the hospitality graduates worked 40 and more hours per week. Of those employed outside the hospitality industry, 44% reported working 40 and more hours per week and some of them reported being paid overtime.

#### **4.2.4 Graduates' work experience as a predictor of employment outcomes**

Of the 83% of graduates who reported being in the industry after graduation, 35.1% had worked in the hospitality industry prior to embarking on university studies and/or during their studies. Graduates who had gained experience before going to university were also less likely to have a skewed perception of the industry years after graduation, than other



graduates because they had a better understanding of how the hospitality industry operates.

#### 4.2.5 Time taken for graduates to quit the industry

About 24.5% quit the hospitality industry, with 3.2% of respondents leaving straight after graduating, 7.4% leaving the industry within the first six months of employment, 9.6% leaving the industry between 7 and

24 months and 4.3% leaving after 25 months of being employed. Most respondents left between 7 and 24 months after having been employed in the hospitality industry. However, the majority (75.5%) of respondents were employed in the hospitality industry during their study period, which is a positive indication of the industry, the educational institution and the graduates.

**Table 2 Level of satisfaction of graduates employed in the hospitality industry (HI)**

Graduates employed in the HI	Level of satisfaction				Graduates employed outside the HI
	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	
Employment benefits	1.1%	8.5%	37.2%	33%	20.2%
Opportunities for advancement	0%	18%	36%	25%	21%

The results in Table 2 were obtained from graduates who had started work in the hospitality industry after graduation. The results reveal that 1% were very satisfied, 37.2% were dissatisfied, 33% were very dissatisfied and 20.2% had never entered/ worked in the hospitality industry. The majority of respondents (about 36%) indicated clearly that opportunities for advancement were not satisfactory. A lack of progression within the hospitality industry reduced retention rates. Moyle's (2008) study indicates that the tenure-based approach to advancement favoured by larger companies offered slow progression. Those in the hospitality industry should have a fairly clear career path. However, progression is generally slow and largely dependent on the good offices of employees' line manager, rather than on increased levels of skills or

qualifications. It generally takes 5 years for a junior to reach supervisory level, and another 12 years to reach management level (Moyle 2008).

In a study by Richardson (2008) it is revealed that approximately 53.5% of respondents believe that promotions are not handled fairly. Some 45.4% believed opportunities to be promoted to a management position were limited while 40% claimed there were no clear career paths mapped out in the industry. These findings indicate that there is certain level of negativity among graduates with regard to promotion opportunities and the paths they need to take to build a career in the industry. The industry needs to address the issue of promotions and career paths in a more energetic and innovative way.

**Table 3 Overall satisfaction ratings of graduates working in the hospitality industry**

Satisfaction ratings	Number of graduates	percentage
Poor	16	17
Fair	45	47.9
Good	31	33
Excellent	2	2.1

**Total** **94** **100**

The overall level of satisfaction of respondents working in the hospitality industry is shown in Table 3. The majority of respondents (47.9%) rated their level of satisfaction as fair with working in the hospitality industry, followed by 33%

respondents that rated it as good. Seventeen per cent (17%) of respondents rated the level of satisfaction working in the industry as poor.

#### **4.2.7 Graduates' perceptions of the hospitality industry as a career choice**

**Table 4: Perceptions of the hospitality industry as a career choice**

<b>Career choice ratings</b>	<b>Number of graduates</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Improved	28	29.8
Remained the same	31	33
Decreased	35	37.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>

There is a gradual decrease in respondents' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry (Table 4). Table 4 shows that the 37% of respondents indicated that the graduates' perceptions of choosing a hospitality management profession as a career of choice had decreased. About 30% of respondents indicated that their perceptions had improved, while the perceptions of the other 33% had remained the same.

#### **4.3 Factors that contribute to graduates' leaving or not entering the hospitality industry**

Reasons for leaving the hospitality industry varied as shown in Figure 1.

But the predominant one was for better employment benefits. Respondents indicated that the factors that contributed to their leaving or not entering the hospitality industry included better opportunities elsewhere (23.5%); low remuneration (17.6%); limited opportunities for advancement (14.7%); incompatibility with family life or social life (11.8%); long hours (11.8%) and management issues. This finding indicated that for the hospitality industry to attract and retain graduates in the industry, attention should be paid to the factors that influence graduates to leave or not to enter the industry. Kim, Hallab and Lee's (2009) study found interesting work, many employment opportunities and good working conditions to be the most highly valued factors.



Hospitality graduates' perceptions of employment				Pearson Chi-square test	
Variables	Employed in the hospitality industry (%)	Employed outside the hospitality industry (%)	Looking for a job (%)	df	Sig.
<b>Gender (n =94)</b>					
Male (n =45)	30.9	12.7	4.2	1	.606
Female (n = 49)	35.2	9.5	7.4		
<b>Hospitality qualification (n = 94)</b>					
Diploma (n = 64)	43.6	18.1	7.5	1	.250
Degree (n=30)	24.4	4.3	4.3		
<b>Work experience in the hospitality industry before studying (n = 94)</b>					
Yes (n = 33)	26.6	3.2	5.3	1	.138
No = (n = 61)					
<b>Work experience in the hospitality industry during studies (n = 94)</b>					
Yes (n = 33)	25.5	5.4	4.3	1	<b>.025</b>
No = (n = 61)					
<b>Graduates who entered the hospitality industry after graduation (n= 94)</b>					
Yes (n =78)	62.7	17	3.3	1	<b>.000</b>
No (n = 16)					
<b>Position occupied (n = 83)</b>					
Front Office Assistant (n =7)	2.4	6		1	<b>.000</b>
Chef (n=3)	3.6	0			
Receptionist (n =11)	7.2	6			
Supervisor (n =26)	25.3	6			
Manager (n =35)	33.7	7.2			
Owner (n =1)	1.2	0			
<b>Hours worked (n = 83)</b>					
30-34 hours (n =1)	0	1.2		1	<b>.000</b>

35-39 (n =4)	0	3.6			
40- 44 hours (n = 41)	37.3	12			
45-49 hours (n =22)	20.5	4.8			
50+ hours (n = 15)	14.4	3.6			
<b>Level of job satisfaction (n = 94)</b>					
Poor (n = 16)	5.4	11.7		1	<b>.000</b>
Fair (n =45)	31.9	8.5	7.5		
Good (n =31)	26.6	2.1	3.2		
Excellent (n =2)	1.1	0	0		
<b>Level of satisfaction with compensation (n =75)</b>					
Yes (n = 4)	2.6	1.3		1	<b>.000</b>
No (n = 71)	78.6	16			
<b>Perceptions of the hospitality industry (n = 94)</b>					
Improved (n = 28)	25.6	4.2	0	1	<b>.005</b>
Remained the same (n =31)	23.4	4.3	5.3		
Diminished (n = 35)	17.1	13.9	6.4		

Sig ≤ 0.05 (p≤0.05)

A Wilks' Lambda value of 0.05 (significant at 1% in Table 5) shows there was a statistically significant difference between graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry. The importance of the effect of graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry was evaluated using the effect-size statistics provided by SPSS.

Respondents held two types of qualifications- a diploma (n=64) and a degree (n=30). Cross tabulation revealed that regardless of the level of the qualification, a large number of graduates holding diplomas and degrees indicated that they had gained employment in the hospitality industry after graduation. The number of graduates holding diplomas and degrees employed in the hospitality industry (43.6%: diploma and 24.4%:

degree) was higher than those employed outside the hospitality industry (18.1%: diploma and 4.3%: degree). The results are shown in Table 5. These results were validated using a Chi-square test which found that a degree does not necessarily give candidates an advantage over a diploma when seeking employment in the hospitality industry (p = 0.250). This contradicts the findings in McCallum's (2009) study that graduates with degrees were preferred by the hospitality industry to those with diplomas.

Table 5 also provides information on qualified people entering the hospitality industry after graduation, positions occupied, hours worked, level of job satisfaction, level of satisfaction with compensation and perceptions of the hospitality industry. The results were

validated using a Chi-square test which revealed that a large number of graduates were employed in the hospitality industry. Their attitudes were more positive than the attitudes held by those employed outside the hospitality industry, as shown in Table 5 ( $p < 0.0005$ ). The results in Table 5 are similar to the findings of McCallum's (2009) study that identified these factors as being important to attract and retain qualified persons.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry. The literature review identified common characteristics that influence graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry. These characteristics are: low remuneration; limited opportunities for advancement; long working hours, lack of benefits, lack of promotion opportunities or slow progression as well as replacement of graduates with people with no formal education. All these characteristics relate to poor working conditions which the hospitality industry should improve to attract and retain the graduates in the industry. This study reports that graduates' perceptions are negatively influenced by poor working conditions in the hospitality industry and it is evident that the biggest part of the industry does not feel it is important to change the working conditions.

Furthermore, graduates have unrealistic expectations of the hospitality industry due to limited exposure to the reality of the industry before commencing their studies, which in turn if not realized, will impact negatively on graduates' experience. In conclusion, for the hospitality industry to be able to compete globally it is important that graduates' perceptions are improved which will in turn attract them and retain them in the industry career choice they have made.

The investigation into the variables that influence Tshwane University of Technology's (TUT) hospitality graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry yields mixed results. Some findings reflect suggestions made by various researchers in the literature review, while others provide new perspectives on graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry. The hospitality industry needs to focus on these factors that prevent graduates from entering or staying in the hospitality industry. Overall this could be attributed to the negative perception graduates have of the hospitality industry.

### 5.2 Limitations of the study

While the intention of this study was to contact all the hospitality graduates from 2004 to 2008, from the Department of Hospitality Management, Tshwane University of Technology, only 94 (22%) graduates responded. This low rate of response means that the results from this study are not generalizable. In addition, the main thrust of the study was to examine graduates' perceptions of employment in the hospitality industry. Additional analysis and discussion were provided on each significant item. Those using this data should realise that as the number of tests increases, the chances for false significant findings increase.

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