



Student profile and perceptions of Hospitality Management education: Universities in South Africa

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Abstract

This study utilized student respondents from two universities in South Africa and analysed their perceptions of their hospitality management education, and then established relationships between their profiles and responses. A structured questionnaire survey of 184 hospitality management students provided the data for analyses. A greater number of students surveyed did not select hospitality as their first-choice study programme. However many of them tended to be satisfied with their study, and wished to recommend hospitality management education to their friends and relatives, and planned to remain and work in the hospitality sector over the long-term. This study also ascertained that students' who have positive attitudes towards hospitality management and the sector, are mostly those that selected hospitality management as their first-choice study and then females were also in the majority. Students are generally concerned that their study curriculum is somewhat inadequate to address their study needs, and they need more time to be allocated to the core hospitality courses. This paper also calls on institutions of higher learning who admit students into hospitality management courses, to place preference on those students who originally preferred to study hospitality management as they will clearly be more dedicated to their preferred career option. Greater emphasis should also be placed on female students' education and more support should be provided for them, as the hospitality sector continues to be dominated by female employees.

Keywords: Hospitality education, hospitality management students, perceptions, South Africa, sub-Saharan Africa.

Introduction

Higher education students who are about to complete their studies are mostly anxious about obtaining suitable and decent employment soon after they graduate. Hospitality Management students are no exception. Hospitality education is generally perceived to be expensive and costs incurred while studying, will need to be quickly covered through gainful employment. It is pertinent to note that hospitality education is not always the students' first choice (Lu & Adler, 2009). Research has portrayed the hospitality sector as being highly dynamic and one that requires increased mobility of employees (Dredge, Airey, & Gross, 2014; Major & Evans, 2008; Robinson, Ruhanen & Breakey, 2016). Many recent studies with a focus on hospitality (and tourism) students' perceptions of their studies and how they impact on their career intentions and aspirations were mostly conducted outside the shores of the African continent, and on students who are doing, or have done their internship in the sector (such as Aggett & Busby, 2011; Farmaki, 2016; Kim & Park, 2013; Kim, McCleary, & Kaufman, 2010; Richardson, 2008; Robinson, Ruhanen & Breakey, 2016).

This study, using respondents from two universities in South Africa, analysed students' perceptions of their hospitality education. The universities were from two provinces of South



Africa. The study sought to evaluate how Hospitality Management students at the penultimate and ultimate levels of their studies (before, during, or after internship experience) perceive hospitality education and the support they obtained while studying. The study also sought to assess their perceptions of their hospitality education's relevance in the current labour market, and their long-term intention to work in the sector after graduation. The study finally aimed to establish if there were any relationships between students' profile and their particular responses to questions posed.

Literature review

Kim (2014) and Teng (2013) posit that the hospitality sector endeavours to attract young and dynamic graduates who possess knowledge, skills and competencies that match sector trends and needs. It is therefore a challenge for higher education institutions to train a diverse and quality workforce who are prepared for the dynamism and increased mobility that characterise this sector (Robinson, Ruhanen & Breakey, 2016). The hospitality sector also demands higher order skills such as communication (van't Klooster, van Wijk, Go, & van Rekom, 2008) as a critical necessary skill required by employers from their employees to fit-into this sector, which is heavily impacted by external environmental turbulence, globalisation, regulation and deregulation, and rapid market shifts (López-Bonilla & López-Bonilla, 2014). It becomes imperative for university educators to develop critical and reflective thinkers who will manage the dynamic environment of the hospitality sector (Dredge, Airey, & Gross, 2014; Major & Evans, 2008). Richardson (2008) argues that it is important for the higher education sector to equip students of Hospitality Management with a comprehensive and real world view of the actual working conditions in the sector so that they can be informed of 'real work' situations and conditions.

However, it can be disturbing for the hospitality sector if students become less interested in pursuing a career in hospitality management, as their first career choice, especially after gaining some work experience in the sector as interns (Kim & Park, 2013; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Richardson, 2009). It goes without saying that students' exposure to the hospitality sector and their experience as interns, while still studying, can project a positive or a negative job outlook in this sector. In as much as positive experiences will support a positive career outlook, negative experiences and unfulfilled expectations can adversely impact on students' decisions to work in the sector after their graduation (Busby, 2005; Ko, 2008; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005; Richardson, 2008; Teng, 2008). Much literature has uncovered that the sector's appealing employment prospects are viewed as key drivers for studying tourism and hospitality (such as Kim and Park, 2013; Wan Yim King & Kong Weng Hang, 2011). Farmaki (2016) states that international students in Cyprus, choose to study tourism and hospitality either because tourism is an emerging sector in their home countries, or because they wish obtain a more gainful employment abroad, especially in more developed countries such as France and Italy.

As earlier noted, hospitality education is not always the students' first choice (Lu & Adler, 2009). Some researchers posit that hospitality internships do play a role in providing students with future employment prospects (Chen & Shen, 2012; Kim & Park, 2013; Lee & Chao, 2013; Zopiatis & Theocharous, 2013), and insight into opportunities that do exist in a hospitality career (Chen & Shen, 2012; Kim & Park, 2013; Lee & Chao, 2013; Richardson, 2012; Zopiatis & Theocharous, 2013). Some positive experiences, as reported by researchers, that have been gained by hospitality students during internship programme include practical engagement and knowledge exchange (Breakey, Robinson, & Beesley, 2008; Ruhanen, Breakey, & Robinson, 2012); better familiarity with professional practice and adaptability (Kim & Park, 2013; Robinson, Barron, & Solnet, 2008); increased self-confidence and maturity (Dickerson, 2009; Ko, 2008); and improved labour market value (Kim & Park, 2013).

Much evidence supports the idea that the internship experiences influence students' career intentions (Farmaki, 2016). The findings of Farmaki (2016) that some interns were not satisfied during their internship programmes, particularly due to unequal treatment in relation



to their gender and nationality, need to however, be emphasised. Farmaki (2016) stated that international Asian students and international European male students did experience discriminatory treatment in Cyprus; and female local students expressed unequal treatment based on the tasks assigned during the internship. Her study highlights the associated relationship of gender and nationality and how workers are poorly treated, as well as an exploitative side of the sector that emanates largely from the seasonal nature of the Cyprus tourism sector.

Other studies, however have shown the preferences of hospitality and tourism students, without focusing on internship programmes. Kim et al (2010), in the United States, found that among the sector segments, students mostly preferred accommodation, while food and beverage was the least preferred operational area. The authors (Kim et al) further reported that students particularly decided their future career based on received first-hand information (such as work and personal experiences), and extrinsic factors (such as career advancement and job security). In Australia, Richardson (2008), has detailed that tourism and hospitality students have fears with respect to career pathways, future relationship with managers, salary, promotion opportunities, and work conditions in the sector. Richardson further found that more than 50% of students of tourism and hospitality are thinking of choosing careers outside the sector, and about 44% of the students with work experience, have stated that they will work outside the tourism and hospitality sector after their graduation, with about 96% of the respondents citing work experience in the sector as the major reason they arrived at this important decision.

In Malaysia, Richardson and Butler (2012), reported that students did not believe that a career in tourism and hospitality will provide them with things they do find important in selecting a career. In China, Lu and Adler (2009), have however stated that the majority of surveyed students indicate interest in pursuing a career in tourism and hospitality and expressed a desire for a postgraduate degree in the field. These students reported that the important courses for their careers include English, Introduction to Tourism, Economics, Management, Marketing, Tourism Psychology, Sector Practices, Customer Service, and Communication. They also reported that important goals they will pursue after their studies include personal development and obtaining high salaries. In the United States, Chuang, Goh, Stout, and Dellmann-Jenkins (2007) found that hospitality students who are more committed to their chosen career in hospitality, believe they have compatible competence skills needed by the sector and relevant work experience.

From the foregoing, this study conducted in South Africa, will contribute to academic literature and thus fill a knowledge gap, by reporting South African students' general perceptions of hospitality education and their future career, but also show some relationships between these perceptions and students profiles.

Research design and methods

To address this study's aims, individual and quantified answers were required from the respondents, thus making a questionnaire survey the ideal instrument to gather such information (Veal, 2011). Respondent-completed but structured questionnaires (Bateman & Crant, 1993) were used by the researchers to obtain information from 200 students (initially) who were studying Hospitality Management at two South African universities. These universities are situated in two provinces of South Africa, where one university's geographical situation can be described as 'rural' and the other situation described as 'urban'. Students who are at the penultimate and ultimate levels of their studies were surveyed. The researchers selected respondents amongst students in the classrooms using a simple random sampling technique. Two hundred questionnaires were initially administered, but for data analyses, 184 completed questionnaires were deemed to be usable.

Questionnaire variables included student profile, their general level of satisfaction with hospitality management study programmes, their perceptions of hospitality education,



curriculum and course contents' relevance and adequacy, and their perceived competence of the hospitality lecturing staff. Questionnaire items consisted of categorical (students' profile) and ranked variables (perceptions), where the latter were set on a 5-point Likert scale (where 1 denotes 'highly satisfied / strongly agree', and 5 denotes 'highly dissatisfied / strongly disagree').

IBM's SPSS version 24 software (IBM Corporation, 2016) was used for statistical analyses (descriptive, bivariate and multivariate statistical methods). All statistical tests in the study were conducted at a 95% confidence interval. Descriptive analysis was used to derive percentage frequencies of responses; and bivariate analysis (Pearson Chi-Square tests) to test for relationships between categorical and ordinal variables (Veal, 2011). Multivariate analysis (Reliability test – Cronbach's Alpha) was subsequently used to check for internal consistencies among the variables used in measuring or explaining particular perception factors. These variables emanated from the extensive literature study.

Gliem and Gliem (2003) posit that Cronbach Alpha's reliability coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, nonetheless, the benchmark score used in determining adequate internal consistency among variables explaining a particular factor has attracted much debate among academics (George & Mallery, 2003; Gliem & Gliem, 2003; Nunally, 1978). George and Mallery (2003) state that using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient between 0.5 and 0.7 is acceptable in explaining adequate consistency of variables. Tavakol and Dennick (2011) however posit that obtaining low Cronbach's Alpha score may occur when a low number of variables are being used to explain a factor, or when there is a weak interrelationship among variables used in the analysis. For this study, we accepted a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.7 and above to explain internal consistency.

Ethical considerations

This study was conducted after ethical consent was obtained from the hospitality management departments of the two universities in which this research was conducted. The researchers met with the heads of department and one of the department's senior academic staff members to discuss the research objectives, design and methods of data collection. The heads of Department through the Universities' ethics committee issued the respective ethical clearances.

The researchers selected student respondents' in the classrooms using a simple random sampling technique. However, only respondents willing to complete the questionnaire were recruited for the study. Respondents were assured of the anonymity of their responses, and that all information collected will be used for statistical purposes only. No incentives of any sort were provided and neither was anyone paid to participate.

Results and discussion

Results in Table 1 reveal that most of the students surveyed were in their third or fourth year of study, making them more prepared to respond to the questionnaire variables. About 57% of them did not choose hospitality management as their first choice programme of study, supporting Lu and Adler's (2009) finding that hospitality education is not always the students' first choice. However many of them (about 88%) were moderately to highly satisfied with their study and about 79% of them reported they would recommend hospitality management study to their friends and relatives. Female students seem to have more interest than male students in the study of hospitality management as they (females) dominate the research sample. The good news for the hospitality sector is that about 78% of the students surveyed have a long-term plan to remain and work in hospitality sector. This result disagrees with the finding of Richardson (2008) that more than 50% of students of tourism and hospitality students generally think of choosing careers outside the sector.



Table 1: Hospitality students' profile (N=184)

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
1.1 Current year of study	Second year	27.2
	Third year	51.1
	Fourth year	21.7
1.2 Hospitality - First choice of study	Yes	42.9
	No	57.1
1.3 Level of satisfaction with study	Highly satisfied	17.8
	Mostly satisfied	30.0
	Moderately satisfied	40.0
	Mostly dissatisfied	4.4
	Highly dissatisfied	7.8
1.4 Recommend study to friends or relatives	Yes	79.3
	No	20.7
1.5 South African	Yes	96.7
	No	3.3
1.6 Gender	Male	30.4
	Female	69.6
1.7 Age group	Less than 20	14.1
	21 – 25	67.4
	26 – 30	13.0
	31 – 35	4.3
	Above 35	1.2
1.8 Cultural group	Black	89.0
	Indian/Asian	3.3
	Coloured	3.3
	White	4.4
1.9 Long-term plan to remain and work in Hospitality sector	Yes	78.3
	No	21.7

Table 2 results also have some good news for the higher learning institutions in South Africa offering hospitality management and the hospitality sector at large. Student respondents generally perceive their study positively, especially reporting that hospitality management study promotes self-employment, self-reliance, creative and innovative ideas, and equips students with business creation skills. They are not of the opinion that the study is very difficult as such, or that it is meant only for certain people with a particular personality and/or skills.

Students' general perceptions of hospitality management study were compared with some student profile variables. Results showed that in general, students who selected hospitality management as their first-choice study and female students, have more positive attitudes towards hospitality management as a study programme. These students would also recommend their studies to their friends and relatives, and would work in the hospitality sector on a long-term basis. A reliability test that was conducted revealed that the variables used in the questionnaire to explain 'perception of hospitality education' are suitable (altogether yielding a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of 0.78).

Table 2: Student perceptions of hospitality education compared with student profile^{a, b}

	Mean Score	Compared with relevant student profile
Perception of hospitality education		
2.1 Hospitality education is suitable for every nationality	1.76	***Second year students agree most; ***Those who will recommend the study agree more; *Those who will remain in sector agree more.
2.2 Hospitality education is a discipline that can promote self-reliance	1.68	**Third year students agree most; *Those who will remain in sector agree more.
2.3 Hospitality education promotes self-employment among people	1.67	**Third year students agree most; *First choice students agree more; ***Females agree more; *Age group Less than 20 agree most.



2.4 Hospitality education decreases unemployment among the youth	2.07	**Third year students agree most; **First choice students agree more; ***Those who will recommend the study agree more; *Females agree more; ***Those who will remain in sector agree more.
2.5 Hospitality education enhances creative and innovative ideas	1.80	***Third year students agree most; ***Age group 21-25 agree most.
2.6 Hospitality education can facilitate the development of businesses in rural communities	2.03	*First choice students agree more; *Those who will recommend the study agree more; *Females agree more.
2.7 Hospitality education helps in reducing numbers of failed hospitality businesses	2.09	***Second year students agree most; **First choice students agree more; *Age group 21-25 agree most.
2.8 Hospitality education equips graduates with business creation skills	1.92	***Third year students agree most; ***Those who will recommend the study agree more.
2.9 Hospitality education helps in harnessing local resources to start businesses	2.23	***Third year students agree most; **First choice students agree more; *Those who will recommend the study agree more; **Females agree more.
2.10 Hospitality education is meant only for special people with particular personality and skills	3.47	*Fourth year students agree most; ***Those who will recommend the study agree more.
2.11 Hospitality education is very difficult	3.33	** Fourth year students agree most; *First choice students agree more; ***Those who will not recommend the study agree more; **Females agree more; ***Age group 21-25 agree most.
2.12 Hospitality education is closely related to tourism education	2.02	**Second year students agree most; *Second choice students agree more; ***Those who will recommend the study agree more; **Those who will remain in sector agree more.
Reliability Statistics (hospitality education), Cronbach's Alpha = .781, N of Items = 12, Valid cases = 180 (97.8%), Excluded cases = 4 (2.2%), Total = 184		

^a Pearson Chi-Square test significance. *, p < 0.05; **, p < 0.01; ***, p < 0.000.

^b Questionnaire were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3, Neutral; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.

These positive results for South Africa's hospitality management study, support Lu and Adler's (2009) finding in China, that the majority of the students indicate interest in pursuing a career in tourism and hospitality.

Results in Table 3 show that students are more critical towards the relevance and adequacy of their hospitality management programme curriculum. They are generally concerned that their study curriculum is somewhat inadequate to address their study needs, and they need more time to be allocated for the core hospitality courses. They also fear that they may not get fulfilling jobs after graduation, and submitted that they lack knowledge of public and private funding opportunities for hospitality entrepreneurship activities.

The respondents however clearly admitted that students are encouraged to have practical experience through practical, internships or work-integrated learning during their study, and said that the courses being offered in hospitality education at their universities prepare them to work in the sector, and that hospitality education in their universities covers basic skills required for hospitality entrepreneurship. The reliability test that was conducted also revealed that the variables used in the questionnaire to explain 'perceived relevance and adequacy of curriculum and course content' are suitable (altogether yielding a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of 0.82).

These results clearly support Richardson's (2008) finding that hospitality (and tourism) students do have fears regarding promotion opportunities, career pathways, salary, and work conditions in the sector. Some researchers (such as Kim and Park, 2013; Wan Yim King & Kong Weng Hang, 2011) posit that the hospitality sector's appealing employment prospects are viewed as key drivers for studying tourism and hospitality. However, it is normal for



students (also of hospitality management), to be worried that they may not get a fulfilling job after graduation. Inasmuch as hospitality management may not always be the students' first choice (Lu & Adler, 2009), a period of hospitality study, with its internship or work-integrated programmes will continue to play a role in providing students with future employment prospects (Kim & Park, 2013; Lee & Chao, 2013; Zopiatis & Theocharous, 2013; Chen & Shen, 2012), and insight into opportunities that exist in the career (Kim & Park, 2013; Lee & Chao, 2013; Zopiatis & Theocharous, 2013; Chen & Shen, 2012; Richardson, 2012). Hospitality management study programme leaders also need to include carefully crafted entrepreneurship courses that will help guide the students as to how they can source public or private funding to start-up their own hospitality businesses and decrease their dependence on employers.

A curriculum that provides comprehensive and integrated knowledge of the hospitality sector operations and opportunities, will enable students to be less fearful of obtaining decent employment and performing well in the sector. It will also support graduates to climb the career ladder quickly, and avoid getting stuck at the entry level positions, which they usually deem 'not decent and fulfilling' enough. The idea is that the 'glass ceilings' should also be broken that prevent the upward mobility of women in the industry.

Students' perceptions of the relevance and adequacy of hospitality management curricula were compared with relevant student profile variables. Again, results showed that generally, female students and students who selected hospitality management as their first-choice study have more positive attitudes towards hospitality management curricula. These students are prepared to recommend their studies to their friends and relatives, and would opt to work in the hospitality sector on a long-term basis.

Table 3: Student perceptions of relevance of curriculum compared with student profile^{a, b}

	Mean Score	Compared with relevant student profile
Perceived relevance and adequacy of curriculum and course content		
2.13 The time allocated for the core hospitality courses in the time table is adequate	2.27	**Third year students agree most; ***Those who will recommend the study agree more; ***Those who will remain in sector agree more.
2.14 Courses offered in hospitality education at my university are interrelated	2.16	*Third year students agree most; **First choice students agree more; **Males agree more; **Age group Less than 20 agree most; ***Those who will remain in sector agree more.
2.15 Courses I did at lower levels of study help me to understand courses I do at higher levels of study	1.92	***Second year students agree most; *First choice students agree more; **Those who will recommend the study agree more; ***Those who will remain in sector agree more.
2.16 Courses in hospitality education at my university prepare me to work in the sector	1.62	**Second year students agree most; **Those who will recommend the study agree more.
2.17 It will be easy to get a job with hospitality education	2.28	**Third year students agree most; **First choice students agree more; ***Those who will recommend the study agree more; *Females agree more; **Age group 21-25 agree most; **Those who will remain in sector agree more.
2.18 Students are encouraged to have practical experience through practical work, internships or work-integrated learning	1.40	*Second year students agree most; ***First choice students agree more; *Females agree more; *Those who will remain in sector agree more.
2.19 Hospitality education covers basic skills required for hospitality entrepreneurship	1.69	***Second year students agree most; ***Age group 21-25 agree most.



2.20 The programme covers aspects showing how hospitality business opportunities can be identified	1.91	**Third year students agree most; **Those who will recommend the study agree more;
2.21 The programme encourages students to meet and share hospitality business ideas	1.95	***Those who will recommend the study agree more; ***Females agree more.
2.22 The programme exposes students to relevant sources of funds for hospitality entrepreneurship activities	2.25	**First choice students agree more; ***Those who will recommend the study agree more.
2.23 Jobs in the hospitality sector are decent and fulfilling	2.46	**Third year students agree most; ***Those who will recommend the study agree more; *Age group 21-25 agree most; ***Those who will remain in sector agree more.
Reliability Statistics (hospitality curriculum), Cronbach's Alpha =.822, N of Items = 11, Valid cases = 182 (98.9%), Excluded cases = 2 (1.1%), Total = 184		

^a Pearson Chi-Square test significance. *, p < 0.05; **, p < 0.01; ***, p < 0.000.

^b Questionnaire were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3, Neutral; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.

The Table 4 results assessed the competence of hospitality management lecturing teams (according to students), and compared the items used for this assessment with some student profile variables. Results indicate a general level of satisfaction amongst students with the lecturing team in each institution, especially in the areas of lecturers making the hospitality management courses relevant to the real world, and their interest in teaching the courses and in encouraging students to participate in hospitality entrepreneurship related activities. Also noteworthy was their possession of practical hospitality sector knowledge.

Kim (2014) and Teng (2013) posit that the hospitality sector strives to attract young and dynamic graduates with knowledge, skills and competencies that do match sector trends and demands. It is therefore a challenge for higher education providers to train a quality and diverse hospitality workforce who will be prepared for the constant change and increased mobility that characterise this sector (Robinson et al., 2016).

Dredge et al. (2014) and Major and Evans (2008) also suggest that the university educators develop critical and reflective thinkers to manage the dynamic hospitality sector environment. From these results, the lecturing teams in the selected institutions in South Africa, are doing well regarding their hospitality graduates' professional development. This is good news for the institutions and the hospitality sector in South Africa. Students' perceptions of the lecturing team were also compared with some student profile variables.

Results show that in general terms, third year students (ultimate level of study, mostly 21 – 25 years old), and once again female students and students who selected hospitality management as their first-choice study, have more positive attitudes towards hospitality management curricula. As earlier expressed, these students would recommend hospitality management study to their friends and relatives, and they all intend working in the hospitality sector on a long-term basis.

Table 4: Student perceptions of lecturing team's competence compared with student profile ^{a, b}

	Mean Score	Compared with relevant student profile
Perceived competence of lecturing team		
2.24 Hospitality Management lecturers at my university show great interest in teaching the courses	1.66	***Third year students agree most; ***Those who will recommend the study agree more.
2.25 The lecturers at my university encourage students to participate in hospitality entrepreneurship related activities	1.66	***Third year students agree most; **First choice students agree more; **Those who will recommend the study agree more; ***Age group 21-25 agree most.
2.26 Students are encouraged to consider starting their own businesses after graduation	2.05	***Third year students agree most; **First choice students agree more; *Age group 21-25 agree most.
2.27 The lecturers have stimulated my interest in becoming an excellent hospitality professional	1.85	***Third year students agree most; ***First choice students agree more; ***Those who will recommend the study agree more;



		*Females agree more; *Age group 21-25 agree most; *Those who will remain in sector agree more.
2.28 The lecturers make the courses relevant to the real world of work	1.58	***Third year students agree most; *First choice students agree more; *Those who will recommend the study agree more.
2.29 The lecturers address questions I have concerning the hospitality sector	1.87	**Third year students agree most; *First choice students agree more; ***Those who will recommend the study agree more; ***Age group 21-25 agree most.
2.30 The lecturers have practical hospitality sector knowledge	1.66	***Third year students agree most; *First choice students agree more; ***Those who will recommend the study agree more; **Females agree more.
2.31 The lectures use diverse hospitality business cases to help provide much knowledge of the hospitality sector	1.80	***Third year students agree most; *First choice students agree more; **Those who will recommend the study agree more; ***Age group 21-25 agree most.
2.32 The lecturers exude high level of empathy towards students	2.09	***Third year students agree most; *Those who will recommend the study agree more; ***Age group 21-25 agree most.
2.33 I see my lecturers as role-models	2.12	***Third year students agree most; *First choice students agree more; ***Those who will recommend the study agree more; **Females agree more; ***Those who will not remain in sector agree more.
2.34 The lecturers are courteous towards students and have the ability to convey trust and confidence	1.84	***Third year students agree most; **First choice students agree more; ***Those who will recommend the study agree more; **Age group 21-25 agree most.
Reliability Statistics (hospitality lecturers), Cronbach's Alpha = .905, N of Items = 11, Valid cases = 178 (96.7%), Excluded cases = 6 (3.3%), Total = 184		

^a Pearson Chi-Square test significance. *, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.01$; ***, $p < 0.000$.

^b Questionnaire were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3, Neutral; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.

Reliability test that was conducted reveal that the variables used in the questionnaire to explain 'perceived competence of lecturing team' are suitable (altogether yielding a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of 0.90).

Conclusions

This study sought to analyse students' perceptions of their hospitality management education in South Africa, and in addition, to establish relationships between students' profile and their responses as evident in the findings. Results from data analyses revealed some interesting results that need to be addressed. The majority of the students surveyed did not select hospitality management as their first choice study programme, however most of them tended to be satisfied with their study, and wished to recommend hospitality management education to their friends and relatives. They also planned to remain and work in the hospitality sector over a long-term period.

The study further ascertained that students who have positive attitudes towards hospitality management and the sector in general, are mostly those that selected hospitality management as their first-choice of study and these comprised of mainly female students. Students are generally concerned that their study curriculum is somewhat inadequate to address their study needs. They reported needing more time to be allocated for the core hospitality courses, and they fear that they may not get fulfilling jobs after graduation, and stated that they lack knowledge of public and private funding opportunities for hospitality entrepreneurship activities. Hospitality management study programme leaders should be effectively used during the design or re-design of hospitality management curricula, and there should be greater emphasis on allocating adequate time for core hospitality courses on the timetable. Entrepreneurship courses that guide students on how students can source public or private



funds to start-up their own hospitality businesses after graduation, and decrease their dependence on employers, should also be developed and promoted.

This study argues that graduates with a comprehensive and integrated knowledge of the hospitality sector operations and opportunities will not need to fear getting jobs, promotions, and generally performing well in the sector. Institutions of higher learning are called upon to admit suitable students to study hospitality management and to also place preference on those students who originally chose to study hospitality management. Female students have shown more interest in hospitality management programme than male students. Emphasis should therefore be placed on female students' education and support be made available, as the hospitality sector is dominated by female employees'.

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