

GSB STUDENT'S CONTRIBUTION

HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS OF CHINESE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' MOTIVES AND INSTITUTION CHOICE CRITERIA

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Abstract

The expansion of Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) higher education in China and abroad has increased choices for Chinese students, but also brought along fierce competition among HTM institutions. To achieve sustainable competitive advantages in the global educational market, HTM institutions need to clearly understand the decision-making process of prospective students. A better grasp of the motives for opting for an HTM program and choice criteria considered will facilitate the planning of effective marketing strategies. A vast majority of the previous research on students' decision-making was conducted in the West and it was found that only little of it focused exclusively on HTM students in China. This latter point is precisely what prompted this study. Its purpose is thus (1) to investigate Chinese students' motives for studying HTM after high school, (2) identify the choice criteria Chinese students applied when selecting HTM higher educational institutions, and (3) explore Chinese students' desire to study abroad, their preferred countries as well as the factors influencing this choice. 390 freshly-enrolled Chinese HTM undergraduates at Fujian Normal University, Minjiang University, and Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University were selected as the sample. Based on the findings, managerial suggestions are provided to HTM educational institutions.

Key Words: *Hospitality and tourism management (HTM), higher education, study motives, choice criteria*

Introduction

Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) higher education in China has gone through considerable changes over the last decades. Most prominent among the changes is the increasing number of HTM institutions and students. Between 1999 and 2005, the number of tourism institutions of higher education jumped up from

209 to 574 with the number of students rising from 50,000 to 275,000 (Gu & Hobson, 2008). This substantial increase is in part the result of the policy of massive expansion of university enrolment adopted in China since 1998. The rapid growth of HTM institutions also reflects the significant development of the HTM sector in China and concomitant rise of job opportunities for HTM students (Huyton, 1997).

The popularity of HTM programs among Chinese students is not only evidenced by the proliferation of HTM colleges in China, but also by the number of Chinese studying HTM abroad. Indeed, China is now the largest source of international students for HTM degree programs worldwide (Yao, 2004). At the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, U.S.A., for example, in the fall semester 2003, out a total student population in the HTM program of 1,929, Chinese students

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