



**Students' Perceptions towards Careers in the  
Hospitality Industry.**

by

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## DECLARATION

I, Nelisiwe Rejoice Mlotshwa, declare that the work submitted is my own work and has not been submitted to any publication and/or university; contains work that has been previously published expect in cases where references has been made. All the sources have been cited and shown in the reference list.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The hospitality industry, a sector within the tourism industry, contributes to the economy of the country and the livelihoods of the South African population. This research explored the perceptions of third-year hospitality students towards careers in the industry. These undergraduates are envisioned to be future employees of the hospitality industry; therefore, understanding their thoughts and intentions of joining the industry was paramount. However, research on findings of the perceptions of students towards this industry in South Africa, especially in Durban is limited.

The perceptions of these students mainly relate to their understanding of careers in the hospitality industry. This report records the findings of student's perceptions towards the hospitality industry in Durban, South Africa. The researcher used a mixed-method approach involving questionnaires and focus groups. The participants were drawn from the Department of Hospitality and Tourism at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) which is the only university of technology in KwaZulu-Natal that offers a national diploma in hospitality management. The research data was analysed using the SPSS version 27 and qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis.

The findings suggest that the students' perceptions toward the industry are positive. This was observed through a high percentage of students indicating their willingness to join the industry after graduating. However, the majority of the students in this research indicated their interest in starting their own businesses and travelling as the main reason for pursuing this qualification. Also discovered in the study was the influence of work-integrated learning (WIL) on students' perceptions of the industry.

The dissertation concludes by providing recommendations to the academic department and the industry that may retain this trend. Recommendations involved advising the university to ensure an element of entrepreneurship is

evident to the curriculum, and the industry to improve their working conditions to entice students to join the industry after graduating.

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# **CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter introduces the reader to the entire study and gives a general background of the study. Students in higher education (HE) are usually anxious about their future after studies and students studying hospitality management are no exception. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the perceptions of hospitality management students towards working in the hospitality industry. In this introductory chapter, a background to the study is first presented; followed by the statement of the problem, the aim and objectives of the study, the research questions and the rationale of the study. A brief introduction to the research methodology undertaken in the study, as well as the limitations of the study follows. The chapter also presents the research methodology design in brief and it concludes with a presentation of what to expect in each chapter.

### **1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Many higher education institutions and vocational training schools in hospitality and tourism consistently produce an alumnus of hospitality graduates every year to meet the needs of the industry. Families expect that once students obtain a qualification, they can get employment, as well as be able to have a career in their chosen field. Students who are well educated and trained, who are also highly skilled tend to be the most desirable choice of talent in today's hospitality job market (Lee, Lee and Dopson 2019: 74; Goh and King 2020: 266). However, research in Cyprus has shown that not all hospitality students will pursue careers in the hospitality industry after graduation (Farmaki 2018: 55). Additionally, a study by Tan *et al.* (2016: 418) in Malaysia alluded that 62.9% of the participants had no plan to work in the hospitality industry after graduation. Little is known regarding students' studying hospitality in Durban, South Africa.

Studies by Sibanyoni, Kleynhans and Vibetti (2015: 14); Le, Klieve and McDonald (2018: 24) conducted on students' perceptions show that the number of students graduating with a qualification in hospitality is high; however, the number of students entering industry do not match the graduation rate (Tan *et al.* 2016: 42).

As a result, academics and industry players have significant roles to play in enticing prospective hospitality graduates to follow careers in the hospitality industry. As the focus shifts to attracting fresh graduates and retaining the employed in this industry, growth witnessed in this sector globally over the last decade can be sustained (Paramati, Alam and Chen 2017: 712).

Tourism and hospitality are interrelated, but they are two different branches of the industry. While tourism entails the movement of people to places outside their usual environment, hospitality concerns the service of provisioning comfort and wellbeing for guests at a variety of events and establishments. As a matter of fact, both industries (hospitality and tourism) are closely connected but they are distinct from each other. For instance, a tourist embarking on a visit to a particular destination would require a place to stay and food to eat, therefore, hotels and restaurants may be contracted to provide accommodation and food-related services to the tourist. This illustration perfectly reveals the interconnection that exists between the hospitality and tourism industries. However, suggest that authors (Langvinienė and Daunoravičiūtė 2015: 906) usually separate them into two industries while ignoring the fact that tourism without hospitality is practically impossible. Previous researches conducted studies to investigate students' perceptions towards careers in the hospitality industry have often combined hospitality and tourism into one industry (Wan, Wong and Kong 2014; Robinson, Ruhanen and Breakey 2016; Tan *et al.* 2016). For the purpose of this study, the tourism and hospitality industries will be considered as one. It is difficult to separate the two industries because there is an element of the other sector within the two sectors within courses that are offered by various higher institutions. This

leads to employment opportunities that are components of tourism and hospitality. The hospitality industry is a contributor to the economy of many countries globally, (Albattat, Som and Helalat 2013: 64) and South Africa is no exception. Hospitality, being a human-based sector, relies on individuals as a component of the product, which cannot be separated from the service process. Employee satisfaction and retention are critical to the sector's performance, and sadly, labour turnover issues have emerged internationally in the face of many organisations, including the hotel industry (AlBattat, Som, Helalat 2013: 64). This is no different in South Africa and the tourism industry in particular (Naidoo 2004 as cited by (Pienaar and Willemse 2008: 1053). Furthermore, Visser (2016: 432) advocates that there has been considerable growth in South African tourism research over the past decade; however, little attention is given to understanding the perceptions of hospitality students towards careers in this industry. Furthermore, he suggests that education providers and the industry need to work together to inform graduates of their future careers within the hospitality industry. This requires a greater understanding of the contribution that is made by these graduates called generation Y or millennials. Brown, Thomas and Bosselman (2015: 130) suggest that generation Y is now a major driving factor not only in the hospitality industry but in other industries as well.

The hospitality industry in South Africa and the surrounding areas is growing despite challenges such as escalating crime (Maharaj, Sucheran and Pillay 2006: 268), increased unemployment and a dire need for adequately qualified personnel (Vettori 2018: 9; Vingerling, Hewson and Mabaso 2020: 2020). Crime does not only discourage potential tourists but also undermines the confidence of investors who want to develop tourism infrastructure (Maharaj, Sucheran and Pillay 2006: 276).

South Africa is admired for its natural beauty, rich culture, and relative distinctiveness as an international tourism destination, according to Ngwira and Kankhuni (2018: 10). Since 1994, the South African government and



commercial businesses have increasingly recognised tourism as a vital economic growth industry.

However, a study conducted by Rogerson (2015) claims that service in South Africa is not up to standard when compared with other competitor tourism destinations, more especially in the quality of customer service in South Africa. Therefore, Rogerson (2015) suggests that for South Africa to be competitive in the tourism field it needs to consider what has been done in other countries like Germany.

According to (Stefano *et al.* 2015: 437; Pizam, Shapoval and Ellis 2016: 3), good quality service leads to happy customers, which leads to a competitive advantage over other service providers. Moreover, Yusof *et al.* (2014: 7) suggest that service providers should try to provide tourists with the paramount level of quality service that is beyond guests' perceived expectations. Subsequently, if the guests are pleased and overwhelmed by the quality of the perceived service which creates a "wow" experience among them, customers will return. Therefore, to gain a competitive advantage, the hospitality industry is dependent on a passionate workforce. This is also important to a South African context which is the reason for this study.

Globally, there is a common view that the hospitality sector offers low pay, very little training and prospects, limited scope for promotion, and unsociable working hours, which collectively has generated a negative image of the industry for employment (Santhanam *et al.* 2018: 11). This has probed the interest of the researcher to find out whether such views are also shared by the undergraduates of this industry in South Africa specifically in Durban. A thorough understanding of this research study necessitates a background to the study, a statement of the problem along with the main aim of the study, and the research objectives and research questions.

## **1.2 STATEMENT TO THE PROBLEM**

The limited knowledge regarding student's perception towards careers has provided a rationale for the choice of this research. However, the success of any hospitality operation is dependent on its personnel providing excellent service. This study is concerned with hospitality students' perceptions of a career in the hospitality industry. Lee *et al.* (2016: 782) suggest that an employee's commitment to any industry is determined by their perception towards working in the industry. Studies regarding hospitality students' perceptions towards careers in the industry are rare and most studies are conducted outside of the African continent (Robinson, Ruhanen and Breakey 2016; Tan *et al.* 2016; Zopiatis, Theocharous and Constanti 2016). Studies that look into the perceptions of hospitality students from a South African perspective, more specifically, final-year students are limited. This study, therefore, focuses on the perceptions of final-year students towards careers in the hospitality industry in Durban, South Africa.

## **1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

### **1.3.1 AIM OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the research is to examine the perceptions of the Durban University of Technology's hospitality students towards working in the hospitality industry in Durban, South Africa.

### **1.3.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The following objectives have been identified within this study:

- To determine the reasons, students choose hospitality as a career.
- To ascertain students' views of the different elements that make up hospitality employment.
- To examine the influence work experience has on these perceptions.

- Determine current hospitality students' commitment to a career in the industry.

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

To meet the mentioned objectives of investigating students' perceptions of hospitality undergraduates towards careers in the industry, the following research questions were devised:

- What are students' perceptions towards careers in industry?
- What are important elements students consider when choosing a career in the hospitality industry?
- Has the informal and formal work experience influenced students' perception of the hospitality industry?
- What are perceptions of final year undergraduates towards a career in hospitality?

## **1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH STUDY**

The importance of employees for the success of any hospitality operation and limited knowledge regarding student's perception towards such careers has provided a rationale for the choice of this research. The need to manage student's expectations during the course of their studies and to encourage students to stay within the industry is of concern and is the motivation for this study. Several complex factors influence students' perceptions of careers in the hospitality industry such as pay, status and working conditions. These factors influence their decision to pursue or not to pursue a career in the field. A recent study by Lee, Lee and Dopson (2019: 83) revealed that students are sometimes influenced by their parents, faculty members and exposure to the industry in considering careers prospects in the hospitality industry. While this is the case, Yang, Cheung and Song (2016: 93) posit that experiential learning

plays a certain role in making a more effective decision towards this career. It has been observed that experiential learning provides both positive and negative factors of experiences and to a large extent their behavioural intentions of starting their careers after completion of their work placement program.

The review of the relevant literature of perceptions of students towards careers in the industry has presented several gaps. First, despite several studies (El-Houshy 2018; Le, Klieve and McDonald 2018; Amissah *et al.* 2020a) on students' perceptions undertaken, very few have been conducted at a university of technology in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa; thus, the need for carrying out of the study. Further research is necessary because the findings might lead to a better understanding of the elements that influence students' perspectives from the moment they pick a course until the time they graduate.

Secondly, findings may be helpful to the industry partners and academia in the development of careers for current and prospective employees of the industry.

Lastly, it is highly critical to carry a study of this nature in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. This will provide room to compare the hospitality landscape with other related studies. As such, the knowledge gained could help inform academia and industrial partners on the progress of the hospitality industry in South Africa. The consequence of the research findings could lead to the creation of programs that would encourage students to pursue careers in the sector.

In South Africa, research in the hospitality industry is very limited (Ezeuduji, Chibe and Nyathela 2017), thus this study sought to fill the gap by exploring various ways of preparing and retaining hospitality undergraduates within the industry. Many hospitality graduates are entering the sector without a thorough grasp of the industry, which may be the reason for their departure. Therefore, it is important to determine where gaps exist so that academia and the industry can work together to make a difference.

The current study helps to fill that gap, as well as provide information and supplement research on students' perceptions. The findings of this study may be exploited by academic and industry stakeholders, implying the need to collaborate to assist hospitality students, who represent the sector's future.

## **1.5 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology describes how the actual study is designed. It centres on numerous issues of the research type, namely data collection, sampling and sample size, population, validity and reliability. For the purpose of this study, a mixed-method research approach in which both quantitative and qualitative methods will feature. Most studies in this field are quantitative-based (Brown, Thomas and Bosselman 2015; Grobelna and Marciszewska 2016; Tan *et al.* 2016), hence, this study seeks to expand this by using a qualitative method in addition to a quantitative method to gain rich information. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004: 17) define the mixed-method approach as “research in which the inquirer or investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in a single study or a program of study”. Additionally, according to McCusker and Gunaydin (2015: 541), mixed-method designs can give reasonable benefits when determining complex research issues. The qualitative data will provide for a deeper understanding of survey replies, while statistical analysis will allow for a more comprehensive evaluation of response patterns. To better comprehend research challenges, it utilises techniques that entail gathering data either concurrently or sequentially. Thus, the quantitative and qualitative aspects will complement each other and provide a fuller understanding of students' perceptions of a career in the hospitality industry.

The target population of this study are third-year students registered for their final semester. The study focused on students who had done at least one semester of experiential learning to ensure that the respondents had an

accurate perspective of the industry. A sample size of 80 respondents was drawn from the Durban University of Technology register.

Convenience sampling was used to select respondents. Plowright (2011: 43) suggests that convenience sampling allows access to participants who are conveniently located and available; therefore, the researcher chose available participants from the hospitality department at DUT. The collected information was captured and individual themes were identified and analysed. The major data preparation techniques included data-capturing, data-editing and data-coding.

## **1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study focus is on final-year students of the Durban University of Technology because it is the only institution that offers a National Diploma in Hospitality Management in Kwa-Zulu Natal (Durban). However, the results of this study will be useful as it may help them make decisions about future careers and employment in the industry. Furthermore, only students of the Durban University of Technology will be participants, which will not allow for generalisation of the results to other South African undergraduate's students who are completing their studies in hospitality management.

## **1.7 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY**

This study consists of five chapters:

**Chapter 1** presents a brief introduction to the study. The subsections outlining the statement of the problem, aim and objectives of the study, research questions, the significance of the study, the scope and limitations of the study, as well as the organisation of the research were elaborated. This chapter provides a platform for the study.

**Chapter 2** will review various works of literature on the perceptions of students towards careers in the industry globally.

**Chapter 3** presents the research methodology and research design undertaken. It explores the study area, as well as the population and the sampling techniques used in the research. Furthermore, this chapter unveils the data collection procedures, research instruments, research design and data analysis.

**Chapter 4** presents the findings of the research. The quantitative data is presented in tabular and graphic form. The qualitative research findings will be presented with themes that have emerged. In this chapter, an attempt is made to relate findings from the literature to the actual findings obtained from the field.

**Chapter 5** will draw a conclusion of the thesis from the research findings ; it will also include a discussion on the limitations of the research and make recommendations for further study. These discussions help to draw conclusions for the study and recommend possible solutions to the shortcomings unearthed by the research. Directions for future research will also be outlined at the end of this chapter.

This chapter provided a logical orientation to the study. It also provided a brief review of the theoretical framework in which the study is contextualised. Furthermore, this chapter includes the research aims, research objectives, research questions, research methodology and design, as well as the expected theoretical and practical value of the study. The next chapter provides the literature review of the reasons why students choose hospitality as a career and the impact of curriculum and work experience on their choice of hospitality as a career.

## **CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will present a comprehensive review of the literature pertinent to the study. It seeks to review the importance of understanding and analysing some of the literature that presently exists on perceptions of students that enter the hospitality industry. The overview of the tourism and hospitality industry, a background on higher education, the impact experiential learning has on students' perceptions towards the industry, educator's role, why students choose hospitality as a career, some significant factors students consider when selecting a career in hospitality and students' commitment to the industry will be discussed. The chapter concludes by identifying existing gaps relating to students' perceptions of the industry in South Africa.

### **2.1 THE OVERVIEW OF THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

The hospitality sector stands as one of the leading drivers of the tourism sector (Salihoğlu and Gezici 2018: 42). As the hospitality sector is the main sector of the tourism industry, it will be referred to as the industry. However, it is important to note that although hospitality is an industry with sub-sectors on its own, the hospitality industry is still a field of tourism (Hermann and Du Plessis 2016: 10). Within the service business, the hospitality industry encompasses a wide range of professions. Hotels, motels, guest houses, bed and breakfasts, Airbnb, restaurants, quick food establishments, caterers, nightclubs, pubs, and timeshare are just a few examples. The hotel business is a service-oriented industry that relies on the availability of free time and disposable cash (Sorokina, Wang and Cobos 2018: 158). Camilleri (2018: 12) further proposes that hotels are the most important and widely recognised service providers of overnight accommodation for tourists and business travellers. Within such diversity, it includes a wide range of services related to food, accommodation,



entertainment, and recreation. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the tourism industry within the context of this study.

### **2.1.1 TOURISM INDUSTRY**

According to Bahcelderli and Sucuoglu (2015: 1130) tourism is now the world's largest industry with its wide range of component sub-sectors. It is a labour-intensive industry as it provides work for many people. Nowadays, the world tourism industry is becoming a major attraction to people as a source of employment. Tourism and employment are inextricably linked since it has long-term socio-economic consequences for the host economy and society. Furthermore, Jurigova (2016: 305) defines tourism as an industry that includes hotels and restaurants, transportation, storage, communication, and activities supported by travel agents and tour operators, all of which contribute significantly to the country's economy.

Employees in the tourism sector are responsible for delivering the core of the visitor experience (Wu *et al.* 2015: 224). However, due to usually insufficient training and development, career advancement, and poor remunerations, the sector struggles to recruit and retain excellent individuals of all skill levels. The tourism industry is also seen as an umbrella incorporating several industries such as the hospitality industry (Camilleri 2018: 30). In order to underscore the importance of the sector, some studies find that the tourism industry impacts positively on the economy (Alam and Paramati 2016: 124) and contributes to the gross domestic product (GDP) of most countries (Salihoğlu and Gezici 2018: 50).

### **2.1.2 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY TO THE ECONOMY**

According to World Travel & Tourism Council (2018: 2), the travel and tourism business has grown into a worldwide economic sector having both direct and indirect effects on global economic growth. The international hospitality and tourism industry creates more than 292 million jobs worldwide, which is 1 in 10

of all jobs in the world (Osterlon 2017: 1) and supports 9.1 % of global gross domestic product (GDP) (Fuller 2015). This implies that the business activities conducted by hotels, airlines, tour operators, resort developments, casinos, cruise ships, contract and event catering and visitor attractions (Goffi, Cucculelli and Masiero 2019) impact significantly on the local, regional and global economy. Osterlon (2017: 2) claims that one-quarter of all jobs generated in the next decade will be supported by travel and tourism. Tourism assists policymakers in supplying foreign exchange that can be used to finance foreign/domestic debts, creating regional employment opportunities that are critical in coping with unemployment, and promoting the accommodation and food and beverage sectors, which, in turn, foster economic growth by adding value (Sintayehu, Kassegn and Sewent 2016: 1). This is also the case in South Africa, the country in which the researcher intends to conduct the study.

Tourism is one of the largest and rapidly growing industries in South Africa (South Africa 2017a: 13). The tourism product is multifaceted; it encompasses everything visitors buy, see, do, and feel from the moment they leave home until they return. To put it another way, it is the totality of all services, including transportation, lodging, attractions and activities, financial services, tourist publications, and tour guides, among others (Camilleri 2018: 30). Goffi, Cucculelli and Masiero (2019: 110) add that countries are likely to benefit if there is a well-established tourist attraction that fosters long-term economic growth. This is the case with the tourism industry in South Africa.

Furthermore, according to South Africa (2017a: 9), tourism is an important sector in South Africa because it not only contributes to the country's economy by creating jobs, but it also showcases the country's various historical, natural, and cultural attractions to both domestic and international tourists. South Africa's key strategic documents have recognised the tourism sector's probability to bring about economic growth and employment creation in the country (South Africa 2017a: 9). Furthermore, it has been reported that the number of foreign visitors in South Africa has entirely recovered from its 2015

decrease, increasing by 12.8% to a new high of 10 million arrivals in 2016. This implies that 1.1 million extra tourists picked South Africa over other places (South Africa 2017b: 34). However, domestic travellers did not travel a lot citing reasons such as unaffordability and no income as a barrier according to the Domestic Survey (2016 cited in South Africa (2017b: 39). Due to the recession, South African consumers faced economic pressures that brought about job losses in the entire country (Rossouw 2017). South Africans tend to stay closer to home during difficult economic times. They have not been taking domestic trips because they cannot afford to travel anymore (South Africa 2017a: 58).

KwaZulu-Natal is considered a desirable tourist holiday destination site by local, regional and international tourists (KwaZulu Natal 2017: 27). As the province's main city, Durban, is a sophisticated, cosmopolitan port city and popular beach vacation destination. It distinguishes itself for its beautiful beaches, world-class water sports and diverse cultural blends, which combine the best of eastern, western, and African influences. According to Rajgopaul (2018: 1), Durban tourism has a vital impact on the economy, whether it is through foreign income or employment, everyone ultimately benefits. This opportunity may translate into job opportunities for the people of Durban and in return contribute to the city's economy. Similarly (Bahcelerli and Sucuoglu 2015; Moodley and Ntumbu 2015: 1) suggest

*Durban has witnessed what is arguably the most successful year for tourism, with an increase of 12.8 % from 2013, seeing 7.4 million visitors to our shores, with a total direct spend of R19.2 billion and job creation of 95 396 jobs created and sustained over the one year period. Durban had 1.45 million visitors with a total direct spend of R3.1 billion and 15 492 jobs that were created and some sustained over the December and mid-January 2015 period.*

Furthermore, it is necessary to find a definition of hospitality to understand how it fits in the economy of any country.

### 2.1.3 DEFINITION OF HOSPITALITY

Among one of the oldest occupations, hospitality is considered to be a significant economic activity that influences many elements of human existence (Srinivasan and Karmakar 2014: 102). Ottenbacher, Harrington and Parsa (2009: 265) define 'hospitality' as the comprehensive field that incorporates lodging, food service, leisure, conventions, travel, and attraction. Crick and Spencer (2011: 464) also mention that it may also be used descriptively to explain how one person behaves to another. When most people think of the hospitality industry, they generally think of hotels and restaurants (Barrows, Powers and Reynolds 2012: 4). In its most simplistic sense, hospitality can be defined as an industry about food, beverage and accommodation (Kandampully *et al.* 2014: 289). However, finding a well-accepted definition of hospitality is generally challenging. To be 'hospitable' is to give welcome or entertainment to guests or strangers. According to Lashley (2015a: 1), the term 'hospitality' evolved as a catch-all term for all of these enterprises and their services. This chapter examines some of the definitions of hospitality and offers the perspectives of a variety of scholars in response to the lack of clarity in the field's definition or concept.

The obvious lack of consensus on the boundaries of the hospitality profession has been a stumbling block in moving forward with the discipline's research agenda and teaching techniques (Ottenbacher, Harrington and Parsa 2009: 264). Ottenbacher, Harrington and Parsa (2009: 264) moot that the term hospitality is a broad term or a concept, comprising a diverse group of industries. This situation creates substantial issues in terms of the external validity of empirical studies in the hospitality literature and raises the question of whether unique and identifiable dimensions of hospitality exist that separates it as an independent field of study from the other social sciences. According to Lashley (2015:4), providing food, drink and lodging is an act of friendship because it generates symbolic links that connect individuals and form alliances, connecting those who participate in offering hospitality.

It can be argued that the absence of a definitional agreement on the term hospitality significantly damages the art of imparting knowledge and skill, as well as the capacity to develop a new and rising hospitality discipline. A theoretical categorisation of the term hospitality is proposed in the current work. According to the preceding definitions of hospitality, it is concerned with kindness and the joy of offering food, drink, or lodging to others in exchange for personal gain.

#### **2.1.4 HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AS A SECTOR**

The hospitality service industry has a great potential for stimulating the growth of an economy, increasing the number of new jobs created and enhancement of the social environment. The rapid growth of the hospitality industry globally and locally has resulted in a highly competitive market in recent years (Assaf *et al.* 2017: 271), which has resulted in the demand for highly qualified and skilled personnel within the industry. The hospitality service industry has a lot of promise for boosting an economy's growth, increasing the number of new employment generated and improving the social environment. Hospitality is frequently acknowledged as a component of tourism or as one of the forms of tourism (Langvinienė and Daunoravičiūtė 2015: 905).

“South Africa offers visitors many attractive destinations, including beautiful beaches, luxury game lodges, world-class casinos and resorts, shopping malls and extensive sports and recreational facilities” (Naude, Kruger and Saayman 2013: 331). Nevertheless, other problems faced by the country, on the other hand, may have a detrimental influence on international tourists' opinions and experiences. Crime and rising energy prices are two of these issues (Naude, Kruger and Saayman 2013: 331).

To work in the hospitality sector, one must be naturally passionate and hospitable, have excellent communication skills, and be ready to serve others while pursuing service excellence. Furthermore, to be lucrative and

competitive, the hotel sector needs individuals who are excited about the profession (Naude, Kruger and Saayman 2013: 338). Thus, hospitality organisations need to have a clear understanding of the different careers it offers to prospective students that will encourage a closer look at the employment opportunities and the role that it plays in the industry.

However, other studies have presented some negative aspects of the industry (Lin, Wong and Ho 2013; Zhao and Ghiselli 2016; Chan 2017). These studies highlighted issues relating to working hours, lack of social life and low wages. Julia (2018: 1) suggests that the jobs in the industry are mentally and physically challenging. Furthermore, Julia (2018: 44) posits that employees are faced with different types of people with different needs. Chan (2017: 40) revealed that 80.7% indicated the salaries and benefits were not attractive. Another study in Ghana also revealed that the hospitality industry has unfavourable working conditions with 62.1% indicated that the industry is stressful and 56.3% suggested that the nature of the work affects social life. It has been suggested by Le, Klieve and McDonald (2018: 24) that the unfavourable working conditions as indicated by students may mean that money and time spent on higher education may have been wasted, which translates to inadequate higher education systems.

### **2.1.5 EMPLOYMENT IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

Hospitality and tourism undoubtedly create direct and indirect employment in the economy. According to Yeboah and Jayne (2018: 803) and Vasquez (2014: 11), those who have a stable source of employment tend to engage in more productive activities. Hence, and resonating with other scholars, one could infer that the more economic activity employees participate in, the more income a country can generate to increase its GDP (Vasquez 2014: 11). Hotel firms' main product is services. Consumers' subjective personal responses and outlooks when consuming or utilising a service are referred to as a service experience (Manhas and Tukamushaba 2015: 77). Despite the intangibility of

services, hotel frontline staff “produce tangible services” via direct interaction with clients. As a result, workers are essential components of service quality. Hotel companies should be aware of the attitudes and beliefs that their staff should have in order to provide better service to their clients. Employees who were engaged or happy at high-performing tourism-related businesses were described as such in a previous study (Suhartanto *et al.* 2018: 135). Engaged staff, according to Kandampully *et al.* (2014: 398), deliver better service, which can lead to increased customer loyalty.

Furthermore, Sabbagha (2016: 53) said that high levels of job participation are regarded as a benefit to an organisation and that maintaining high levels of employee motivation and job satisfaction is always beneficial to a corporation since engaged people are more productive. Frontline personnel that are happy can sustain high performance and provide high-quality services (Wu *et al.* 2015: 228). This logically has an influence on employment within the industry. However, another concomitant vital factor is employee turnover.

## **2.2 EMPLOYEE TURNOVER**

The attainment and retention of high-performing employees are critical for organisational success. The hiring of new employees may cost the company as employees with experience are lost to potential competitors. Recruiting and keeping staff with the proper combination of talents is critical in the hotel industry (Naude, Kruger and Saayman 2013: 338). Unmotivated personnel, high rates of job-hopping, and high turnover rates pose a danger to the hotel business. Furthermore, it is difficult for the hotel to adjust its recruitment and retention tactics to meet the work ideals of different generations, particularly Generation Y employees (Buang, Hemdi and Hanafiah 2016).

Despite the lack of a precise description for each generation, scholars (Campbell *et al.* 2015: 325; Campbell, Twenge and Campbell 2017: 131) have agreed on some characteristics. While learning from the failures and triumphs

of past generations, a generation can impact business practices and trends. According to the available literature, there is a strong notion that each generation is distinct from the last. The precise name of these generations, as well as the particular start and end dates of each generational cohort, varies. Academics and practitioners appear to have reached a consensus on the following generations: Baby Boomers (born 1950-1969), Generation X (born 1970-1989), and Generation Y (born 1990 - 2000) (Jonck, van Der Walt and Sobayeni 2017: 7). On the other hand Brown, Thomas and Bosselman (2015: 131) typified the generations as follows: Baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) make up the majority of the workforce, with generation X (those born between 1965 and 1980) and Generation Y filling the gaps (born 1981 to 2000). This study focuses on Generation Y which encompasses most of the workforce in the hospitality industry.

High turnover in the hotel industry is an ongoing and important issue for the hotel industry (Afsar, Shahjehan and Shah 2018: 1437). Purohit (2016: 47) defines employee turnover as the rate at which an employer gains and loses its staff. When a firm has a high turnover rate, it usually implies that its employees have a shorter tenure than employees at other companies in the same sector. When workers leave, vital information is lost, and departing employees may be followed by guests. It takes time and money to hire a replacement employee who can perform at the same level as the one who departed. Hoteliers that look for new methods to keep their workers earn a long-term competitive edge (Vasquez 2014: 12). Afsar, Shahjehan and Shah (2018) suggest that high turnover has implications for the organisation. Furthermore, Emiroğlu, Akova and Tanrıverdi (2015: 368) suggest employee turnover has both positive and negative features. From an employee, perspective turnover is regarded as a positive factor because it can lead to a better job for the employee. However, from the employer perspective turnover can incur huge losses (Afsar, Shahjehan and Shah 2018: 1436). While some employee turnover is essential and beneficial for an institution, significant staff turnover can result in exorbitant expenses. (Vasquez 2014: 12; Zhao and



Ghiselli 2016: 319), therefore, propose that the goal should be to preserve as many employees as possible.

The study by Lu *et al.* (2016) emphasises that there is a difference between young and older employees leaving their jobs. The study further suggests that older employees are reluctant to progress towards the higher position and in turn choose to stay in lower positions within the ranks of the hotel. The study also advocates the employees in lower positions are happy with their jobs more than their supervisors. Lu *et al.* (2016: 754) suggest that hotel managers may use the opportunity to provide mentorship to help younger employees to develop an interest in workplace-specific responsibilities.

Furthermore, Brown, Thomas and Bosselman (2015: 131) in their study of the Generation Y turnover issues suggest that this generation values their personal life and are willing to move if the current positions do not satisfy their needs; therefore, they claim that this generation, when compared to other generations, is hard to retain in the workplace. In addition to the above (Emiroğlu, Akova and Tanrıverdi 2015: 393) in their study on the relationship between turnover intention and demographic factors in hotel businesses at five-star hotels in Istanbul observed that employees with high education levels demonstrated high turnover intention compared with those with low education levels.

As a result, the turnover rate must be closely managed to maintain service stability, improve and retain customer happiness, and reap the economic benefits of improved competitiveness, which is fuelled in part by brand constancy and the loyalty that results. The tourism industry has grown to require a higher degree of professionalism within the industry. This has been seen by other countries developing professional bodies that introduce their own training and vocational education; these courses are either offered on a full time or part-time basis. In some instances, they work with local colleges or higher education institutions (Camilleri 2018: 19). Moreover, this can be

achieved through the education system that equips employees with qualifications and skills to work in the industry.

## **2.3 HIGHER EDUCATION**

Many institutions around the world are progressively producing undergraduate alumni in the tourism industry (Jaswal 2020: 2975). They possess a variety of qualifications including certificates, diplomas, degrees and postgraduate degrees. The education system in South Africa is constructed on the idea that qualifications must be supported by the Department of Education (DoE) and accredited by the Centre of Higher Education (CHE) however, they must acquire the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) registration. CHE will recommend to SAQA the registration of programs that have been accredited (Centre Higher education: 2008). This system acts as a reference for the construction of competencies for South African qualifications.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) of South Africa recognises three broad bands of education. This includes General Education and Training (GET), Further Education and Training (FET), and Higher Education and Training (HET). The program in hospitality management falls under the (HET). Furthermore, the South African public higher education system is ranked in a way where universities occupying the uppermost level focus mainly on research-based activities and universities of technology (UoTs) focus on specialised practical work (Leibowitz 2015: 17). Therefore, most hospitality programs are offered at the universities of technology.

### **2.3.1 HOSPITALITY EDUCATION**

The education providers and government offer wider programs at different levels which has led to an increase in the need for highly skilled and qualified personnel in the workplace (Rahimi and Akgunduz 2017: 227). According to Barrows, Powers and Reynolds (2012: 5) hospitality education has been around since the inception of the very first inns and taverns. Hospitality is

intended to provide welfare to guests revolving around food, drinks, lodging and entertainment (Stierand and Zizka 2015: 354). The term welfare suggests that hospitality managers not only require academic knowledge and technical skills but also need to be acquainted with social skills to be able to deal with the guests. When analysing the history of a diploma program in hotel management, it is important to understand the larger aim of university education. Hospitality management programs in higher education originated from "a vocational foundation [and] the traditional approach to hospitality education was based on a combination of craft, ritual and inherited practices" (Nailon 1982 cited in Airey and Tribe 2000: 277) and offers a distinctive product (Lashley 2015b). A hospitality management qualification offers courses in a specific subject area designed to promote and resource a vibrant and dynamic sector by producing graduates who are ideally liberal-minded and forward-thinking (Lashley 2018: 79). The institutions are aware of the importance of ongoing relevant training in order to provide some level of operational training in the professional practices necessary in the hospitality industry (Lashley 2015b). This may, however, be part of a more balanced curriculum that allows students to improve their abilities on practical and theoretical levels.

The hospitality program is perceived as a vocational qualification (Lashley 2018: 79), which has contributed to issues in hospitality management education. Some of the present difficulties in hotel management education may be traced back to the historically vocational focus of hospitality degree programs. Tribe (1999 cited in Airey and Tribe 2000: 285) wonders if (in the context of tourist education) "the curriculum that was established is an education that serves us well," and if it lacks "a philosophical viewpoint." Similarly, Morrison and O'Mahony (2003: 38) urge for a balance "with that of the liberal and reflective" in hotel management education. They believe that vocational and action-based learning may lead to graduates who are unable to prosper in this field. According to Johnston, Khattab and Manley (2015: 215), economic theories suggest that there is a mismatch between qualifications and occupations and the subsequent income. They defined the term educational

mismatch as individuals with too much education or insufficient education for their current positions. Individuals with inadequate education for their current position instead had more experience to make up for the lack of education and vice versa. This is more recently supported by a study by Nachmias, Walmsley and Orphanidou (2017: 139) that found having a university degree is not required to accomplish professional objectives and develop in the hotel industry. Together these studies provide important insights into the views of whether a qualification is a requirement within the industry.

According to Wang, Chiang and Lee (2014: 133), the hospitality industry requires basic capabilities with regards to work attitude and personality traits which they suggest that hospitality education should highlight, rather than just focusing on learning skills needed to pass hospitality examinations. Another study conducted by Wilson-Wünsch *et al.* (2015) found that schools give a certificate to learn rather than a certificate to act in research that looked at the nature of hospitality managers' expertise while tackling specific hospitality management challenges. This indicates that students in hospitality management educational institutions are better practice learners than specialists.

This then provides a mismatch between students and industry thus resulting in students losing interest in their academic qualifications (Nachmias, Walmsley and Orphanidou 2017: 141). Therefore, the need to investigate the curriculum of hospitality education arises.

### **2.3.2 HOSPITALITY CURRICULUM**

The hospitality higher education curriculum aims to fulfil the needs of students, businesses, and government funding authorities, but no agreement exists on how to do so effectively. In almost every nation, hotel management courses are an essential component of student growth and education (Kukreti, Dani and Rakesh 2020: 1872). While hospitality training has traditionally been a source of revenue for tertiary institutions, many universities and technical

institutes now offer a variety of hospitality-related degrees at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels (Thompson, Poulston and Neill 2017: 110). However, the focus of the debates has tended to be on the appearance rather than the substance of curriculum design. Better connection between hospitality education providers and the hospitality industry is necessary to ensure that education for a hospitality profession is relevant to employers within the sector (Anjum 2020: 8).

According to the Durban University of Technology's Hospitality and Tourism handbook (2019: 21), courses in the undergraduate hospitality management program can be categorised into these categories of the industry: food and beverage operations and accommodation. Food and beverage operations which include restaurants and food and beverage enterprises are studied in depth. The accommodation research looks at hotels, motels, resorts, and other types of lodging. In addition, additional classes cover topics like finance, management, law, cookery, and other aspects of the hospitality industry.

Hospitality management is a course that looks at the hospitality industry as a whole, with an emphasis on individual areas. In the first year, this study divided undergraduate hospitality core courses into topics such as hospitality management fundamentals, hospitality law, hospitality financial management, culinary studies and nutrition, food and beverage service, hospitality health and safety, hospitality events, hospitality information systems, and service excellence.

Hospitality management fundamentals courses discuss management concepts, theories, principles, human resources, sales and marketing; hospitality law are law-related courses; hospitality financial management are math-related courses including accounting, finance, cost control, and revenue management; culinary studies and nutrition are food preparation and nutrition; food and beverage service focus on the daily operations of the food and beverage business, including banqueting and restaurant operations;

hospitality health and safety focus on various food safety laws and regulations within the hospitality industry; hospitality events focus on various events in the broader context from planning to execution of an event; hospitality information systems courses involve technology, the internet, computer applications and software used in industry; service excellence covers overall services provided in the operation and hospitality communications are there to develop important communication skills and soft skills required. Then in the second year of study students may choose between food and beverage operations and accommodation.

Further to the curriculum, students are expected to spend twelve months in the industry. Over this period students are exposed to various roles that they would be involved in after they graduate. This phase assists students in connecting classroom theory to real-world practice as employees and managers (Thompson, Poulston and Neill 2017: 110). Students should be exposed to work-integrated learning (WIL) or experiential learning in light of this practical orientation, which is mainly driven by industry.

## **2.4 EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

Industry experience such as work-integrated learning (WIL) is part of hospitality and tourism programs worldwide. Schoffstall and Arendt (2016: 209) suggest as part of the requirement to fulfil a qualification in hospitality and tourism students are required to undergo work experience in order to graduate. When students are involved in any form of experiential learning they are expected to develop and apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to a real-life setting. Hospitality programs require their students to finish industry experience before graduating (Kim and Jeong 2018: 120). The Department of Education (DoE) of South Africa, report 151 (2004 cited by (Nicolaidis 2015: 7) states that the National Diploma in Hospitality Management in South Africa must include at least six months of experiential

learning for it to be formally documented by the South African Qualifications Authority as having any credibility. When students go through experiential learning it involves the students, employer and academic institution where the students will get the opportunity to gain experience (Nicolaidis 2015: 2). Work experience, practical skills and educational qualifications are observed as major requirements to be successful in the industry (Nachmias, Walmsley and Orphanidou 2017: 142). This can result in some commitment and satisfaction from prospective employees.

#### **2.4.1 A DEFINITION OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

Work-integrated learning (WIL), also known as internships, co-operative learning, industrial placements, experiential learning, and action learning, has a long history in the educational system at both the university and vocational levels (Jones 2018: 77). Regardless of the term used, common terms such as student internship, supervised work practice, experiential learning, academic credit, work-integrated learning, and so on can be found across most of the current research. The internship experience, according to Pusiran *et al.* (2020: 157), is a short-term period of practical work experience in which students get training and obtain job experience in a certain subject or potential vocation of their interest. Students may or may not get paid for their efforts, depending on the circumstances.

Experiential learning is intended to close the gap between theory and actual theory; therefore, such experience allows the student to apply different concepts that were learned in the classroom with real-life work. Various authors have assigned terms such as cooperative education, work placement, fieldwork practicum and practical work experience to experiential learning (Stansbie, Nash and Chang (2016); Nicolaidis (2015); Cheong *et al.* (2014). Thus, it is important to look at the impact this has on students choosing careers within the industry.

#### **2.4.2 IMPACT OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

Industry experience, such as experiential learning, is an important element of the hospitality and tourism curricula across the world (Kim and Jeong 2018: 120). As a result, many academic qualifications now include mandatory student work experience to supplement traditional classroom learning, also known as student work experience, placements, internships, cooperative education, experiential education, or work-integrated learning (WIL). The practice is thought to assist students in gaining hands-on experience, as well as put textbook theories into action, and reflect on their future careers (Lin *et al.* 2017: 79).

Pusiran *et al.* (2020: 157) posit that when the course is designed to ensure graduates will be industry ready, it may lead to a smooth transition of graduates into the workplace. Furthermore, (Stansbie, Nash and Chang 2016: 19) agree that work-integrated learning (WIL) provides students with skills that will enable them to function in the work environment and make them employable. McLeod (2017) highlights the following (Figure 2.1) as the learning process students attain from experiential learning.



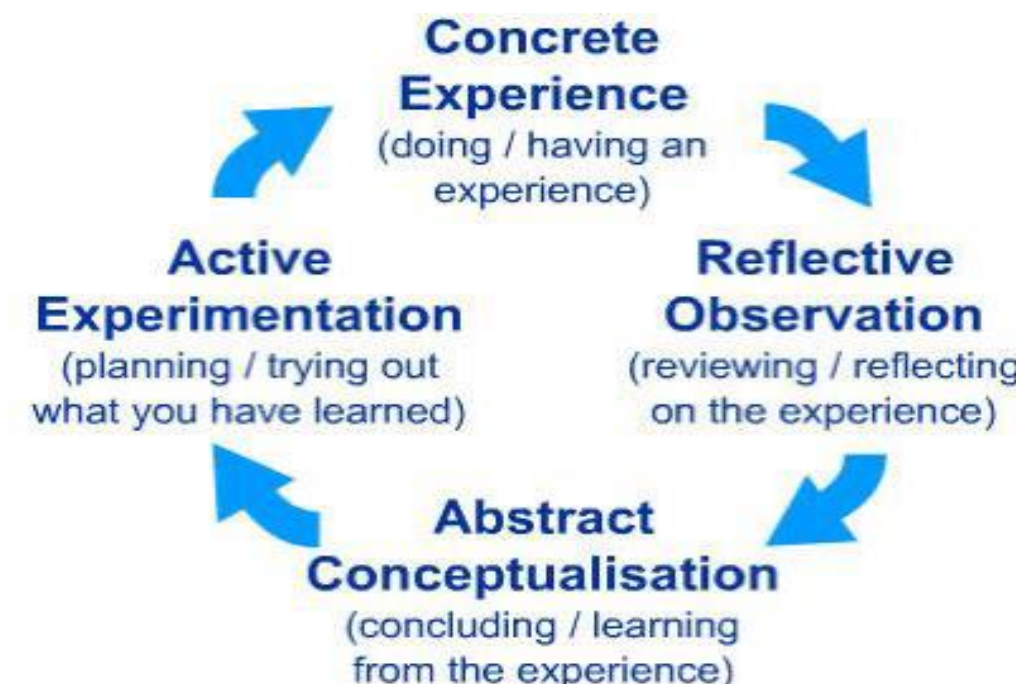


Figure 2. 1 The experiential learning cycle ( McLeod 2017)

Effective learning occurs when a person goes through a cycle of four stages: (a) experiencing a real experience, (b) observing and reflecting on that experience, and (c) forming abstract notions and generalisations (conclusions) that are then applied to other situations. (d) utilised to test ideas in hypothetical scenarios in the future, resulting in new experiences. However, according to Abdullah *et al.* (2015: 1), experiential learning is viewed as a component to pass in order to receive academic credit rather than experienced learning that leads to a profession as a result of the experiences students have while participating in experiential learning.

Experiential learning is often defined as any type of learning that encourages students to apply their knowledge and conceptual understanding to real-world issues or situations, with the teacher guiding and assisting them. However,

when students are given opportunities to learn in real-world settings on campus or in the community, such as via work-integrated learning, field placements, clinical experiences, research, and service-learning initiatives, learning becomes more potent (Stansbie, Nash and Chang 2016: 19). The simulation has a positive value for students and contributes both to their engagement in the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) program and to their knowledge, according to an investigation into the impact of experiential learning on managers' strategic competencies and decision style of Masters of Business Administration (MBA) students. However, it emphasises that the simulation has little effect on decision-making styles, except for the analytical component, which is reinforced (Torres and Augusto 2017: 14).

It has been advanced that to attract as many graduated students as possible to start any career, both the school and industry should collaborate closely to develop a well-organised quality work-integrated learning program (An and Mauhay 2016: 74). It can only be developed, however, if both parties can answer the following questions: What internship are you referring to? How satisfied are you with your internship overall? What's the link between the gap between expectations and perceptions and overall satisfaction? Although numerous studies in the literature highlight student internship experiences, not many of them focus on internships in the hospitality industry?

Students who engage in work-integrated programs can have a solid feel of what it is like to work for companies in the sector by gaining practical skills via hands-on experience and developing contacts in the workplace (Kim and Park (2013: 70). The need for satisfied hospitality students to pursue work in the industry relies on the benefit obtained from a well-structured program (Appietu, Asimah and Mensah 2019: 118). Depending on their experiences and performance during the program, students may have a favourable or negative view of a job in the industry. Work-integrated learning can provide participants with the chance to learn what the industry has to offer, which may be entirely different from what they study in the classroom and can have a good or bad

impact on a student's career decision. The findings of Kim and Park (2013: 75) show that students who have experienced the genuineness of the hospitality and tourism sector during their work placements may have negative opinions of the profession. However Wang, Chiang and Lee (2014: 91) offer that internship anxiety of hospitality students decreased slightly after the experiential learning, indicating that interns develop some form of future employment concern.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the impact of internships on career decisions. Rothman and Sisman (2016: 1009); Self, Adler and Sydnor (2016: 495); Jackson and Wilton (2017: 565) suggest that students either have a willingness or unwillingness to join the hospitality industry. According to a study by (Robinson, Ruhanen and Breakey 2016: 524), findings suggest that students after exposure to real-life and student work experience, become considerably less motivated in selecting hospitality as their first career choice. On the contrary, in a study of students in Nairobi, Kenya, 85.4 % indicated their willingness to seek employment after graduation. Although in the same study about 14.6% of the participants were not sure of their intentions of careers in the industry (Gitau 2016: 53). Another study, published in 2013, looked at the influence of social experience in undergraduates' job perspectives through internships and found that as the degree program progressed, students' perceptions of the sector deteriorated. According to the survey, many hospitality students become less interested in choosing hospitality as their first career option as a result of their exposure to the topic and student work experience (Kim and Park 2013: 77). They argued that additional studies be done to better understand students' unfavourable impressions of the hospitality sector after completing supervised work experience. Furthermore, students with more work placement experience have a better fit between their talents and the work placements (Meijers, Kuijpers and Gundy 2013: 58).

According to Schoffstall (2013: 109), students' abilities and general experiences gained while working in industry-based positions while pursuing their degrees have the potential to significantly influence students' job progression expectations, as well as their perceptions of career plans, when they begin interviewing for entry-level management positions following graduation. Early industrial experiences, according to Schoffstall and Arendt (2016: 225), may have a detrimental impact if they are neither good nor useful. Students progressing into successful entry-level managers who, based on their experiences, choose to stay in the hospitality industry throughout their employment career, becoming the next positive contributors to the success of a new generation of students, have a significant role to play in the advancement of industry and academic stakeholders.

Similarly, Dhevabanchachai and Wattanacharoensil (2017) who performed research in Thailand on students' expectations, experiences, and career orientation following in-house internships, found that a higher percentage of students felt their expectations were satisfied after participating in an internship. Although students have just three weeks to learn from each department within the same course, which is deemed insufficient. Some interns still did not feel capable in their operational jobs, and a few of them expressed concern about their future careers as a result of operational inefficacy (Dhevabanchachai and Wattanacharoensil 2017: 126).

Koc *et al.* (2014) reported on findings from a study conducted in Turkey. They concluded that many students do not want to work in the hotel business. They claim that the major factor motivating students to look for jobs outside of the hospitality industry is the wide gap between their expectations and satisfaction with their internship experiences (Koc *et al.* 2014: 138). Nonetheless, their research, however, found some discrepancy in the number of students put in internship experiences at city hotels since some of them wished to leave compared to students placed in internship experiences at beach hotels.

In contrast to the findings by (Koc *et al.* 2014) on views of job selection variables in the hotel and tourism industries, the instance of Korean university students shows that students with internship experience are more likely to have positive opinions toward the sector (Park, Kim and Lee 2017: 438). Internships are a great way for students in hospitality and tourism degrees to build a better connection between the business and their professional skills. Furthermore, because internships are likely to substitute for favourable career selections, they might be a valuable strategy for encouraging future employee career decisions (Park, Kim and Lee 2017: 438).

Internships, on the other hand, involve the participation of three stakeholders: students, industry employers, and educators, to debate the advantages and disadvantages of industrial internships from all three viewpoints (Kim and Jeong 2018: 120). Kim and Park (2013: 70) argue that students who participate in work-integrated learning may have a solid feel of what it is like to work for industrial establishments by gaining practical skills via hands-on experience and developing relationships at work. Kim and Park (2013: 72) also believe that experiential learning will help students prepare for their future professions and will be important in deciding whether or not to work in the sector after graduation.

Along similar lines, Robinson, Ruhanen and Breakey (2016: 523) and Rothman and Sisman (2016: 1009) argue that when expectations are met during an internship experience, student participants have more positive attitudes toward entering and developing a career in the industry. Additionally, their study further claimed that participants' career ambitions did change after the internship experience, acknowledging how a student's internship experience may impact his or her perceptions of and choices regarding the sector.

The idea that the internship experience enhanced participants' determination to pursue a profession in tourism or hospitality is gaining traction. Internships

served as a compelling job preview for some students, according to exploratory research on hospitality internships undertaken in the United States of America, with many students choosing to pursue a career in the hospitality industry (Self, Adler and Sydnor 2016: 495). Furthermore, Self, Adler, and Sydnor (2016: 495) suggest that around 40% of students do wish to return to places where they completed their work experience. Those who stated that they would rather work in another field provided the following reasons for leaving: a lack of love for the profession, a dislike of working during the evenings, weekends, and holidays, and poor pay. This indicates that educators have a responsibility to play in ensuring that students are aware of the industry's benefits and drawbacks.

## **2.5 EDUCATOR'S ROLE**

Educators, according to Schoffstall and Arendt (2016: 226), have a direct impact on students' perceptions of life in the hospitality industry and the various experiences they may have; if this does not happen on a regular basis in the classroom, students may not be prepared for a career after graduation. Educators have a vital role in helping students in the development of realistic goals and career objectives, in addition to providing them with the essential information and skills to be successful.

The importance of having a career conversation with educators and experts about the workplace has been demonstrated (Meijers, Kuijpers and Gundy 2013: 50). The constructivist learning theory proposes that meaning is formed when individuals engage in dialogue with themselves and others, which clarifies the importance of dialogue in the development of career skills Bruner (1990 cited in Meijers, Kuijpers and Gundy 2013: 50).

Walsh, Chang and Tse (2015: 10) in a study done in Hong Kong and the United States conclude that understanding hospitality students' desire to join the profession is essential for both educators and practitioners. They provided a

model that shows how emotional intelligence and service orientation improve students' career plans by increasing industry satisfaction. Furthermore, (Koc and Boz 2020: 132) findings suggest that instructors might benefit from fostering emotional intelligence and service orientation in their pupils. While developing these characteristics and related skills may increase the desire of hospitality school graduates to pursue careers in the industry, it may also lead to other desirable outcomes, such as improved service delivery, team-based skills, and supervisory skills, all of which are essential to the success of any hospitality-based business.

According to Ramakrishnan and Macaveiu (2019: 46), if education is to keep up with the dynamism of industry and technology, a shift in attitudes and approaches is necessary for tourist education to survive. A study on motivations to study tourism and hospitality suggests that students chose tourism and hospitality because of their low marks, which did not allow them to choose other majors (Jamnia and Pan 2017: 38). However, other motivations to study Tourism and Hospitality are the ease to study, high remuneration, exposure to foreign languages/cultures, practical-based learning, recommendation by others, ease of acquiring the qualification and a good looking job with nice outlooks.

Harkison, Poulston and Kim (2011: 382) argue that in order to minimise dissatisfaction and disappointment on both sides, educators and hospitality employers must agree on course content and expectations. A degree education is costly; students who invest time and money in their study hope to advance quickly to senior management, but this is unlikely to happen for a variety of reasons. However, other researches show that due to their industry expertise, untrained managers may advance quickly into management roles (Nachmias, Walmsley and Orphanidou 2017: 136). Overall, the industry tends to favour experience more than a hotel management degree, and graduates have high expectations of rapid advancement to management based on their credentials. According to Brown, Thomas and Bosselman (2015: 136),

hospitality educators should make sure that they are educating students about the reality of working in the sector. One approach to do this is to promote and even reward teachers who utilise current and valid classroom examples that accurately reflect what students will encounter in their own professions, rather than focusing only on what was done 10, 20, or even 30 years ago. Thus it is essential to understand the reason students choose hospitality as a career of choice.

## **2.6 REASONS STUDENTS CHOOSE TO STUDY HOSPITALITY**

Learners must make a long-term decision on their careers when they are very young. They first have to enrol in a course that might lead them to their careers. Clearly, a student's perception of their prospects of landing a job has an impact on their contentment and confidence in their career choices (Erdogan *et al.* 2018: 242). Students who thought their work experience, personal characteristics, and talents were in demand in the labour market, as well as having access to a network that may lead to new job possibilities, reported higher career satisfaction. As a result, colleges must not only create the disciplinary expertise and non-technical skills that the industry seeks, but also communicate them to students and equip them with the capacity to express their abilities to future employers (Jackson and Wilton 2017: 564). According to Harren (1979:119 cited in (Nachmias and Walmsley 2015: 51), career decision-making can be termed as the psychological practice in which “*one organizes information, deliberates among alternatives, and makes a commitment to a course of actions*”.

In many recent years, there has been an increasing interest in careers in the hospitality industry (Srinivasan and Karmarkar 2014: 101). Careers in the hospitality industry are extraordinary; growth-oriented and offers rewarding opportunities for hardworking individuals who enjoy entertaining guests (Srinivasan and Karmarkar 2014: 102). However, results from a study by



Chang and Tse (2015: 67) show that a few graduates are willing to take up hospitality as their careers due to low pay; they further suggest that employers should consider other ways to attract talent and retain these young graduates.

Students made their decisions based primarily on their perceptions of the admission process, faculty interaction, living conditions, the reputation of the program and its faculty members, and the program's location, according to a study in Chinese Korea that focused on how hospitality graduate students chose their current universities and programs of study (Van Hoof, Wu and Zhang 2014: 75). The study uncovered five variables that hospitality students think about while deciding which university and program to attend for their graduate degrees. Admissions, faculty engagement, living conditions, program and faculty reputes, and location are among them.

In contrast to the earlier findings, however, no evidence of the above factors is established in a study of first-year students at the European University of Tirana. Their study was on what are influences their choices when applying to institutions of higher learning. The findings reveal that not only parents and school teachers' recommendations are strong influences in the process of students selecting a course. The tendency to imitate others in many cases forces them to abandon their initial preferences (Lami and Mele 2014: 4751).

According to research conducted in Macau by Fok and Yeung (2016: 930), Generation Y has both positive and negative opinions regarding employment. Even if they lack essential characteristics that potential employees should possess, such as a hardworking attitude, passion for their job, dedication, desire to learn, inventiveness and involvement provide management with fresh and constructive ideas. However, organisational culture and external environment related to Macau's hospitality industry in terms of the societal, political and technological components do influence Generation Y's work attitudes and service performance. Similarly, Robinson *et al.* (2014: 106) found contrary to expectations, that only the influence of 'organisational sacrifice' on

organisational commitment was important. Alternatively, work embeddedness was not shown to be a major predictor of turnover, while 'community ties were found to be positively associated with turnover intentions, which was surprising.

The conventional hierarchy of hospitality in hotels does not assist with maintaining a positive work attitude, according to the survey, which found that Generation Y preferred a better work-life balance, the advantage of vacations, and job flexibility. They are more likely to leave a job for a better title, income, or perk because of generational characteristics like self-centeredness (Fok and Yeung 2016:94). Dimitriou and Blum (2015b: 82) found that a significant characteristic of Greek millennials working in the hotel sector is their desire to be surrounded by sympathetic managers and leaders who would show compassion and empathy for them rather than a set of harsh, formal rules and procedures that they must obey. Another important result that was predicted and justified was the importance that millennials place on the hotel's prospects for growth (Dimitriou and Blum 2015a: 84).

On the other hand, Robinson, Ruhanen and Breakey's (2016: 519) results suggest that about 20% of the participants claimed to have no professional objectives or aspirations prior to beginning a tourism and hospitality degree. This aligns with Heo and Lee (2016: 78) findings, which imply that tourism and hospitality programs must deliver personalised educational services to their students or risk losing them to alternative programs. It is fascinating to learn about the variables that students evaluate before deciding on a profession in hospitality.

## **2.7 INFLUENTIAL FACTORS IN CHOOSING A CAREER IN HOSPITALITY**

### **2.7.1 STUDENTS REASONS**

Students' career landscapes are vague when they initially matriculate and advance to higher institutions (Lindstrom *et al.* 2020: 9), and often pick future careers out of curiosity. People in their immediate environment, such as parents, other students, instructors, and friends, are the most critical factors of future job choice. As students advance through their courses and into the second year of their chosen job, they will have several opportunities to be exposed to a real-world hospitality setting. They grow more career-mature and career-adaptable as they continue to struggle to explore potential job options (Qiu, Dooley and Palkar 2017: 1105). As a result, students majoring in hospitality choose diverse career choices.

According to Qiu, Dooley and Palkar (2017: 1104), there is a difference in what influences students to choose hospitality as a career. It emerged that first-year students were mostly influenced by teachers and counsellors whereas senior students were influenced by the hospitality industry. Given that second-year students were more exposed to the hospitality sector; this may seem reasonable. Senior students, who had more industry experience, were more likely to seek their industry counterparts for help rather than their instructors (Qiu, Dooley and Palkar 2017: 1104). They also talked to their peers about their career options and read professional literature to learn more about themselves and the hospitality industry (Qiu, Dooley and Palkar 2017: 1107).

Nevertheless, a comparative study between three- and four-year qualifications in China revealed that influence was based on other people whom students viewed as important such as parents and previous exposure to industry (Wena *et al.* 2018: 78). It is evident that most students are influenced by different factors into careers in the industry. A recent study by Lee, Lee and Dopson

(2019: 82) further suggests that faculty members have a role in how they communicate with the prospective graduate. Therefore, they need to be well informed on current trends and activities in order to guide accordingly. The focus in this study will be on Generation Y. They encompass most of the workforce in the hospitality industry; therefore understanding them is essential.

## **2.8 UNDERSTANDING THE YOUNG STUDENT**

It is evident that hospitality work is physically challenging and involves mental stress and, at times, an uncompetitive remuneration package (Dhevabanchachai and Muangasame 2013: 27). In recent years, this has resulted in a high rate of staff turnover. Staff retention is often a concern, particularly for employees belonging to Generation Y (those born between 1981 and 2000), commonly known as millennials. (Twenge and Campbell 2012: 3) also suggest using phrases such as “more recent generation” and “younger generations” which refer to the direct, solid trends that appear in much of the records. The situation in South Africa is not different, especially with respect to Generation Y.

According to Costanza and Finkelstein (2015: 311) and Campbell *et al.* (2015: 325), there is no clear idea of the generation theory. Various factors such as wars, discoveries, politics, religion, and popular culture have all shaped and defined generations over time. Characteristics of an age-bound group are frequently reflections of events taking place in the world around them. As a result, it is critical to figure out what these generations have in common, as well as how they vary.

### **2.8.1 A CLOSER LOOK INTO GENERATION Y/MILLENNIALS**

Members of Generation Y in the workforce might have been born during a two-decade span, which is a significant length of time when considering the hospitality industry's innovation. Three decades ago, hotel executives were primarily concerned with the needs of Generation X and Baby Boomers.

Existing employees were Baby Boomers, and Generation X was joining the workforce and rising up the organisational ladder. This is changing now that Baby Boomers are starting to exit the workforce, Generation X is moving into middle and senior leadership positions, and Generation Y is filling the new line-level and entry-level leadership positions.

*Millennials belong to the third category. They are the first generation to come of age in the new millennium. 'Y' was chosen as a popular label as they are successors of the Generation X, but there are many synonyms such as Generation Why, Generation Search, Generation Next, Net Generation, the digital natives, the dot.com generation, Einstein generation, Echo Boomers, etc (Van den Bergh and Behrer 2011: 7).*

Sheahan (2005 cited in Dhevabanchachai and Muangasame 2013: 29) and (Puspanathan *et al.* 2017: 24) remark that Generation Y is very informed when it comes to new technology; thus, Generation Y is used to fast results and outcomes. This has resulted in a personality that lacks endurance and patience. This suggests that they do not spend a long time developing their career but rather, they want fast promotion and recognition. Stierand and Zizka (2015: 353) also argue that this generation is unenthusiastic to wait for career prospects to occur. Furthermore, Dhevabanchachai and Muangasame (2013: 30) suggest that Generation Y will move on if they are not satisfied with their pay or working conditions. Therefore, this attitude creates a problem for management when they do not respond to instructions. As a result, managers find them unmanageable because they do not like to be told what to do, rather they prefer managers who allow them to be accessible, capable, ethical and fair. They display traits of being confident, educated and socially/politically conscious team members (Brown, Arendt and Bosselman 2014: 131). They have a strong work ethic, but they also want a balanced life and lots of leisure time as well (Van den Bergh and Behrer 2011: 38). This demonstrates that they value their spare time for leisure and vacation. On the other hand, they enjoy work that is going to challenge them, however, they lose the value of the

job easily. Therefore, employees who are happy with their job will be more committed to any organisation or career, which will create higher levels of job performance (Park and Gursoy 2012 cited in Brown, Thomas, Bosselman 2015: 131).

In a study conducted by Brown, Arendt and Bosselman (2014) on why Generation Y students would stay or leave the hospitality industry. It was evident that those who stayed in the industry is due to them enjoying the industry. However, those who chose to leave left because of work-family conflicts and unsociable working conditions such as long hours, low compensation and difficult customers. In addition, those who stayed specified that they enjoyed working with people.

Another research on the preferred work paradigm for generation Y in the hotel sector (Dhevabanchachai and Muangasame 2013) suggests the following to academics or hotel industry practitioners.

- a) To attract Generation Y, the management of an establishment should establish a market rate monetary rewards strategy. For Generation Y to consider joining the organisation, this will be the first step. Other perks, such as a flexible work roster or schedule, regular get-together meetings or parties, clear career-path planning, and additional days off per week, are also important to create a pleasant work-life balance for Generation Y. The company should make its brand stand out by implementing strong benefits packages to attract and hire Generation Y, as well as publicising and emphasising these benefits. This is one approach to building Generation Y pride and brand loyalty since Generation Y will feel properly cared for and valued as an asset within the organisation.
- b) If Generation Y is in a good work environment, they will be productive and effective: this is a non-monetary incentive. The company should

have a welcoming, accommodating, and communicative culture. If Generation Y is pushed to work in an overly tight and demanding environment, they will not be able to contribute to the fullest extent possible. Relationships are a crucial aspect that will boost Generation Y's productivity. Therefore, management should aim for excellence in establishing a team spirit. In some projects, a collective incentive system may be the best way to maintain high morale among Generation Ys. Management should guarantee that the company's culture and policies prohibit discrimination in any form, as well as bias and preference. They should value Generation Y employees as assets; this should be an important cultural and policy practice while dealing with Generation Ys. Finally, the work environment is a significant non-financial advantage, and balancing the work environment to meet the needs of Generation Y is critical.

- c) Managers in Generation Y should be well-versed in people management. Managers must not be secretive and should not employ a hierarchical management style to encourage Generation Y. Managers, on the other hand, should be real friends, as well as leaders, with more experience and expertise than their Generation Y employees. He or she should possess exceptional social, communication, and persuasion abilities, as well as a warm and approachable demeanour. When it comes to managing Generation Y employees, participatory and flexible management approaches are required.
- d) Managers must also be open and honest when it comes to giving respect and complimenting Generation Y employees. When working with Generation Y personnel, supervisors must be both reasonable and forceful. To assist and encourage each staff member's success, a Generation Y manager must love people and enjoy dealing with differences in each human person. The aforementioned method would aid in the retention of Generation Y employees and ensure that they

stay with the company for a longer period. Crucial questions include: How much investment will be required to guarantee that managers are compatible with Generation Y's demands and desires? Will Generation X and baby-boomer managers, on the other hand, see the need to adapt to Generation Y? Will the investment in training and development ensure the intended outcome?

Furthermore, academics and practitioners should apply the recommended suggestions to Generation Y, who are potential employees. This will enable them to attract, and retain the Generation Ys.

Operational managers must continue to enhance their understanding of what drives their employees to avoid the negative repercussions of poor service delivery and attrition because of the transformation in the labour force structure.

## **2.9 FACTORS STUDENTS CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A CAREER**

Making a career choice is a defining phase in every students' life. According to Kazi and Akhlaq (2017: 187), students have to consider several factors before arriving at a decision to pursue a career. Sharif, Ahmad and Sarwar (2019: 34) point out that when students choose a study program; they indirectly predict the future career they want to pursue. Nonetheless, Ahmed, Sharif and Ahmad (2017: 11) propose that career choice influences differ from country to country; in certain countries, career choices are influenced by socioeconomic, geopolitical and demographic factors. The study further highlights that "interest in the subject" demonstrates a positive and noteworthy interest in the career choice of students (Ahmed, Sharif and Ahmad 2017: 12). However, (Kaneez and Medha 2018: 38) in a study conducted on secondary school learners, 41.5 % sighted parents as the influencing factor, followed by 35,25% learners own interest, 7% family and 7% friends. Furthermore, this study further suggests



that a small number of learners were influenced by pay. El-Dief and El-Dief (2019: 109) suggest that a person's year of study influences their decision to pursue a profession in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, they claim that as students have been exposed to the industry they are positively influenced into pursuing a career in the industry.

## **2.10 STUDENTS PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS HOSPITALITY**

Perceptions are the way people use various senses to form a certain view about an issue. Anthony (2020: 31) asserts perceptions may change when people are faced with a real situation. Therefore, students wanting to pursue a career in hospitality have certain perceptions of the industry due to what they might have been exposed to. Organisations have realised that recruiting and retaining skills can only be achieved through employee commitment and creating a high level of job satisfaction (Fyre *et al.* 2020: 5).

The high attrition of employees has resulted in employers suffering and being faced with difficulty in employee recruitment and retention (Pathak and Srivastava 2017 181). Employees' professional enthusiasm, type of work, social and family life were all investigated and analysed in research conducted in India to see if they had any influence on their intention to leave their current employment. It was discovered that employees' intentions to resign are influenced by their level of job satisfaction in terms of organisational loyalty, supervisory relationships, job security, wages, and additional perks (Mohsin, Lengler and Kumar 2013: 55). This might imply that people prioritise their job and profession above their social and family lives. Another research in Tibet, South-West China, found that students are interested in working in the hospitality and tourist industries in the future 5 to 10 years. More than 20% of respondents said they were very interested in working in the hotel and tourist sector, and 50% said they were enthusiastic about working in the field (Wu 2013: 51).

When asked if they planned to work in the hospitality/tourism industry, over 76% of Korean and Taiwanese students said yes, whereas only 58.7% of Hong Kong students said yes. They anticipated to attain employment five years after graduation, 49.6% of Korean and Hong Kong respondents expected to reach a management position, while 56.4 % of Taiwanese students intended to reach a supervisory post (Kim, Jung and Wang 2016: 73). The Hong Kong respondents showed a greater degree of intention to work in the hotel and tourist sector than the other categories, which is consistent with past research that has shown strong career possibilities in the hospitality/tourism industry in Hong Kong. However, a study of ethnic minority students who specialise in hotel management and have prior job experience in the business found that ethnic minority students perceive higher career hurdles than white students (Wen and Madera 2013: 165).

Due to the fact that the Taiwanese students stated that they want to start their careers in low-level positions, they are more likely to be satisfied than the other two groups. As a large number of Korean students chose higher management-level roles as their goal, there was a lot of difference between their ideal and practical working positions after graduation. When it came to the size of their desired employer, Korean and Hong Kong students expressed a stronger desire to work for larger corporations than Taiwanese students. Many worldwide hospitality and tourism companies are located in Hong Kong and Korea, but the Taiwanese hospitality and tourism industry is just now flourishing because of an increase in mainland Chinese travel (Kim, Jung and Wang 2016: 81). While a trend toward a higher number of students pursuing a qualification in hospitality exists, the percentage of students willing to pursue a career in hospitality, and tourism in South Africa is unclear creating a gap in the literature.

## **2.11 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

This chapter commenced by reviewing the tourism industry in order to see how the hospitality industry fits within the tourism industry, followed by elaborating on other authors definitions of the hospitality industry. Higher education was also evaluated as it may have some impact on how students perceive the hospitality industry. Additionally, experiential learning and its impact on students choosing a career in the industry or not and the role that is formed by the educators in forming either negative or positive perceptions of the industry was explored. The major drawback the researcher faced was the limited literature on students' perceptions towards careers in the industry in South Africa. Information obtained about students' perceptions in other countries, excluding South Africa helped to clarify what the situation could be with regards to students' perceptions of careers in industry in South Africa. Several authors have contributed significant information, which helped the researcher to have a clearer insight into the study. Furthermore, it highlighted why students chose hospitality as a career, what influences their decision and, factors to consider when choosing a hospitality career, and students' commitments to the industry.

As demonstrated, there exists significant literature on the student's perceptions towards careers in the industry, globally but studies in South Africa are limited, hence the necessity to understand the perceptions of students studying hospitality in Durban, South Africa to determine if students intend to enter the industry upon graduation. This would lead to the development of programs that are more suited to the current setting. This study sought to fill this gap by exploring various ways of preparing and retaining hospitality undergraduates within the industry.

The next chapter elucidates the methodology of this study. Although it is a broad chapter, an effort will be made to clarify the research design adopted, the approach employed and the subjects (the population) under study are

introduced. A discussion of the chosen research instruments, the questionnaire, interviews and observations, will be undertaken.

## **CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter reviewed the relevant literature on students' perceptions towards careers in the hospitality industry. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology used to collect and analyse the data required to address the research questions. The chapter begins with a description of the research design adopted to achieve the research objectives, as well as the definition of the target population. The data collection instruments, pilot-testing initiatives used, data analysis and interpretation and the ethical considerations are also presented. The chapter concludes with a summary.

### **3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research design is a plan of how the study is to be conducted (Punch 2009: 42; Sekaran and Bougie 2016: 94; Creswell and Clark 2018: 51) with the intention of answering the research questions. According to (Sekaran and Bourie 2016: 95), the research design is an outline of how a researcher intends to conduct the research focusing mainly on data collection and analysis. Moreover, Van Rensburg, Pellissier and Stack (2017: 10) suggests that a research design is a framework that specifies the processes for obtaining the essential information to answer the research problem by detailing the type of information to be gathered. As a result, the mixed-method approach was used in this investigation. Figure 3.1 demonstrates how the research design will be undertaken.

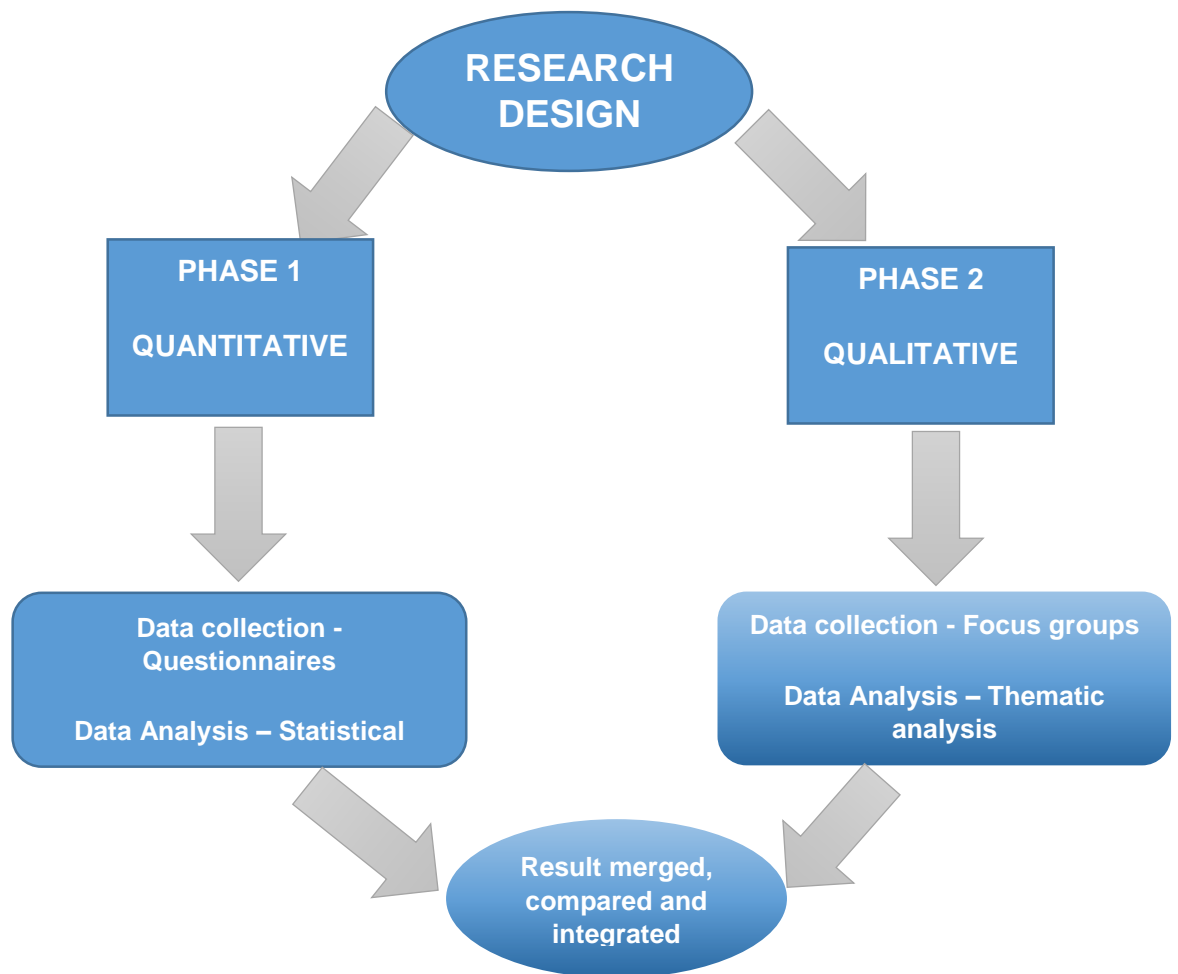


Figure 3. 1 Research Design (Author)

According to Sekaran and Bourie (2016: 107), the mixed-method research approach involves the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from a single study. The mixed-method approach, chosen as the method to answer the research question, enabled the data to be collected using quantitative and qualitative methods. The researcher collects both forms of data, keeps the data analysis independent, then combines the results during the overall interpretation and looks for discrepancies or relationships between these two sources of data (Bazeley 2018: 22).

The convergent design was found suitable for this study as the researcher wishes to confirm or disconfirm the findings of both methods. Creswell and Clark (2018: 68) describes the convergent design as a method where a researcher collects and analyses quantitative and qualitative data separately and thereafter combines the two databases to confirm or disconfirm the results of either. This study seeks to create awareness to academia and industry partners concerning students' perceptions towards choosing hospitality as a career; in addition, it seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions towards their career choice within the hospitality industry.

### **3.2 TARGET POPULATION**

A target population, according to Sekaran and Bougie (2016: 240), is the complete group of people or objects from whom a researcher intends to take a sample. The study was administered to only registered students in their final year. Based on the subject hospitality financial management which is one of the major subjects the number of students registered is eighty one. Sampling is defined by Plowright (2011: 36) as a process of selecting a portion of a target population that is considered to be normally representative of the entire population. According to Saunders and Lewis (2018: 139), a sample is a group of people with a common defining characteristic which a researcher can identify and study. Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012: 88) identified the two sampling techniques for selecting the research participants, namely probability sampling method and non-probability sampling method. Creswell and Clark (2018: 176) define probability sampling as a sampling method where the intent is to select a large number of individuals who are representatives of the population, whereas non-probability sampling refers to any kind of sampling that involves selecting individuals who are available and can be studied.

Consequently, the non-probability sampling chosen as the most appropriate sampling method for this study, because the data collected is not be defined by the statistical principle of randomness but rather by their ability to provide

the necessary and applicable information. Therefore, this method enabled the research questions to be answered with in-depth information from the sample selected. Additionally, Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012: 92) point out that using this method is co-effective and convenient because the participants are predetermined prior to the commencement of data collection.

A purposive sampling method utilised to get participants for this study as they possess the necessary information regarding careers in the industry. Saunders and Lewis (2018: 145) defines purposive sampling as a non-probability method where the researcher uses his/her judgement to select participants who are able to answer the research questions. Therefore, students in the final year of study in the program chosen as they had already been exposed to the curriculum and the industry. It is administered to all third-year undergraduate students registered for a national diploma in hospitality management; the sample is not representative of the entire population of the department but a sample of students with predefined characteristics. Therefore, the findings of the study do not speak for the entire population of the department.

The sample size for the focus group determined by data saturation; because the main reason of the qualitative analysis is to seek out the themes and not measure responses. However, the intention was to have a minimum of three groups irrespective of the data saturation to ensure that the sample size could yield results that could be a representation of the phenomena being studied. For this study, four focus group meetings were held.

### **3.2.1 CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

The participants in this study were students registered for national diploma in hospitality management. These participants are students in their final year of study who have done at least one semester of work-integrated learning (WIL). Participants in the sample are perceived to have greater levels of knowledge about their career choice because they might have begun to consider their career choice. Therefore, investigating their perceptions towards careers in the



industry has a greater likelihood of yielding stronger results. The criteria for inclusion in the study are students who are registered in the hospitality program in 2020, and the criteria for exclusion are students who have not participated in one of the experiential learning components of the program.

Classes were arranged for the administering of the survey with the support of the subject lecturer. The researcher discussed the data collection method with the prospective participants. Thereafter, participants were issued with the information letter and consent form ( Appendix A). The participants were clearly informed that participation is voluntary.

Furthermore, the participants who were willing to take part in the focus groups gave verbal consent. The date, time and venue of the focus group interviews were discussed and scheduled. The participants were advised that although they had given verbal consent, they were still required to sign a consent form which they could do before the start of data collection. The participants that were undecided on whether to participate or not in the study were given some time to think about it and email their responses to the researcher when they have decided. In addition, the researcher offered to meet with them face-to-face to give more clarity regarding the study and to iron out any concerns.

The survey commenced in November 2020 with ethics approval granted by the Durban University of Technology (Appendix B). The next section addresses the use of questionnaires and focus groups to collect data.

### **3.3 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

The instruments used are questionnaires and focus groups, which are deemed appropriate for this study. A questionnaire is a research instrument that consists of a set of close ended questions to collect information from respondents (Saunders and Lewis 2018: 148). Focus groups are defined as interviews held with a group of people where the topic is clearly defined and

the researcher acts as facilitator or moderator among the participants (Sekaran and Bougie 2016: 121).

These two methods of data collection complement each other. As indicated, the questionnaire only allows participants to select from predetermined choices, limiting them from providing explanations or clarity in their choices. A detailed explanation is then collected in the focus group interviews. A questionnaire, according to Clough and Nutbrown (2007: 144), allows a researcher to survey a group with minimal human interaction and gain a more comprehensive picture of their experiences or perspectives. Furthermore, a questionnaire cannot adequately capture the respondents' emotional responses or sentiments. Though, focus groups interviews allowed for some explanations to be given for the choices that are included in the questionnaire. Nonetheless, focus group interviews have some limitations such as the smaller number of participants which is not a full representation of the participants under study.

### **3.3.1 QUESTIONNAIRE**

Questionnaires are the primary data collection tool and distributed to final-year students in order to determine their perception of the hospitality industry as a career choice. The researcher developed a questionnaire adapted from previous studies Bamford (2012: 146); Gitau (2016: 94); Chan (2017: 78). Saunders and Lewis (2018: 36) recommend that the practice of adapting questions from other questionnaires is acceptable. The questionnaire (Appendix C) in this study comprise mostly closed-ended questions; the respondents were asked to select an answer from a list of provided answers (Creswell and Clark 2018: 179). The first section of the questionnaire included questions to ascertain the biographical information of the respondents. Thereafter, questions pertaining to the curriculum, industrial work, students' perceptions of hospitality as a career and general information were posed to the participants in the questionnaire. The questionnaires were personally administered to participants.

### **3.3.2 PILOTING TESTING OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Pilot testing enables the researcher to obtain some assessment of the questions' validity and reliability of the data collected. Van Rensburg, Pellissier and Stack (2017: 151) propose that before commencing with actual data collection, it is imperative that the data gathered meets an acceptable level of validity and to some extent reliability. Before commencing with the data collection, a pilot test was administered to six academic staff within the department of hospitality and tourism to review the instrument. This allowed them to review the questions and identify if any information could be misunderstood by the participants.

Thereafter, a pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted on five fourth level students who did not form part of the main study. If pilot testing was not carried out, the chances of the questionnaire being misunderstood and having inadequate, unreliable responses and errors may be very high. Pilot testing was done, and ambiguity or errors in the questionnaire were identified and obviated before the commencement of data collection.

### **3.3.3 FOCUS GROUPS**

Focus groups were also used as a data-gathering strategy in this study. A focus group is a group interview with a difference (Creswell and Clark 2018: 42). To elicit data, the focus group interviewing method employs a variety of approaches and strategies. Focus groups provide several advantages, including the ability to gather precise information about individual and group feelings, perceptions and attitudes, they save time and money when compared to individual interviews and they yield a wider range of data (Van Rensburg, Pellissier and Stack 2017: 116).

In addition, focus groups permit interaction between the groups' participants so they can build their views upon the contributions made by others as if they were brainstorming a topic together. However, some disadvantages of the

focus group may be observed such as certain individuals may dominate the thinking of the group.

The researcher adopted to use the focus group technique in order to obtain in-depth information from participants. Furthermore, this method also allowed participants to build on each other's ideas and comments. This approach also provided an opportunity to probe and solicit other opinions. In addition, it allows the researcher to elaborate on questions which the respondents might not have understood.

The sample for the focus groups was selected from the third-year students. Creswell and Clark (2018: 188) mention that it is not necessary to use different populations for the two methods. They suggest that if the main aim of the study relate to two sets of findings on the same topic, the same participants can be used. They further recommend that the individuals who participated in the quantitative sample should be the same for the qualitative sample.

However, it is noted that the sample size for the focus group is smaller than the quantitative sample; because the main aim of the focus group is to confirm or refute the findings of the quantitative results and get in-depth information regarding students' perceptions of the final year towards careers in the industry.

Another important consideration is the number of respondents invited to participate in the focus group discussion. The number of participants ranged between four to six. Creswell *et al.* (2012: 91) suggest that five to twelve participants are sufficient for focus group discussions as the main aim is not to measure quantity but to get the feelings of the participants. It must be noted that those who were initially recruited did not avail themselves on the day the meeting was scheduled. This resulted in the researcher contacting them telephonically to check if they were still available to participate voluntarily. This method was effective as many of the participants contacted responded and attended the focus groups as planned. Nyumba *et al.* (2018: 23) warn that

having more than twelve members in the group may become difficult to manage and may be split into two or three small groups, each having their own independent discussion. In addition, (Van Rensburg, Pellissier and Stack 2017: 115) mention that there is a need for more than one group to accommodate different people. Therefore, for this study, four focus groups were conducted. Intense planning of the focus group ensured that the objectives were achieved.

### **3.4 DATA COLLECTION**

This study employed a self-administered questionnaire and conducted focus group interviews to collect data. The questionnaire comprised of closed-ended questions with predetermined answers. The focus group were conducted by the researcher and were guided by a focus group guide (Appendix D) to ensure uniformity and consistency. The researcher requested permission to audio record the focus group interviews for future reference and data analysis. In the following section, the methods for analysing the quantitative and qualitative data obtained are explained.

### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **3.5.1 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

Cresswell and Clark ( 2018: 210) suggest that the researchers go through a set of steps to analyse data which involves preparing the data for analysis, exploring the data and representing the analysis. The researcher starts by transforming the raw data into usable data, which entails assigning numerical values to each response and cleansing the database of data entry mistakes. The data analysis procedure was then carried out using computerised statistical software (SPSS software version 27). The empirical data from the questionnaires was analysed by the researcher with the assistance of a professional statistician.

Descriptive and inferential statistics are the two most common forms of statistical quantitative data analysis. Descriptive statistics, according to Fisher and Marshall (2009: 95) is a method of organising, summarising, and presenting data in an instructive manner. Inferential statistics, according to Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012: 203), allow researchers to draw inferences about real population differences based on sample data. The descriptive data provided in the form of bar charts and frequency tables to make them easy to understand. In this study, frequency distribution analysis is crucial for data analysis since it may determine demographics and students' opinions of professions in the hospitality sector.

### **3.5.2 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

Focus groups' data information was transcribed from the voice recording into text for analysis. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the research findings to enable the researcher to come up with themes from the data. Since it is descriptive, this technique of analysis is excellent for analysing qualitative data because it allows for the identification, analysis and reporting of patterns that emerge from the data. "*Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data*", according to (Maguire and Delahunt 2017: 3352) exemplifying that it organises and describes the researcher's data in rich detail.

Sutton and Austin (2015: 227) add that the most important part of the analysis and management of qualitative data is to be true to the participants. Each transcript was checked for accuracy against the audio recording. The qualitative analysis involves three stages. The first step is to code. Coding can be explained as the categorisation of data (Sekaran and Bourie 2016: 273). A 'code' is a word or a brief phrase that expresses a concept or topic. All codes must be given meaningful names. The data is summarised after the second stage of finding themes, patterns, and correlations. The study findings are related to the research goals at this stage.

### **3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

The participants gaining entry into the research setting is the initial step before conducting research. Ethical consideration is also important. Ethics, according to Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012: 63), is an endeavor to develop norms and principles for researchers' moral behaviour. Therefore, a request for approval to participate in the study was sought from the participants' heads of department and approval was received . With the approval of the heads of the departments, the researcher proceeded with the gatekeeper request from the university's Institutional Research and Innovation Committee (IRIC) ethics committee. Permission from IRIC was given (Appendix E).

Final ethics approval was granted by the IREC in November 2020 (Ref. 039/20). After obtaining the ethics approval the researcher began the process of collecting the data from the relevant participants. The researcher distributed the information sheets to all the participants prior to the distribution of the survey(Appendix A). According to (Wagner, Kawulich and Garner 2012: 68), the information and content letter clearly indicates that individual respondents' output/perspectives will remain anonymous, they can withdraw from the research at any given time and their participation in this study voluntary. I declared my position to the respondents during the data recruitment process, thereby eliminating any feelings of intimidation and coercion. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants was guaranteed to ensure that there was no harm to participants in the study.

All terms and conditions relating to the completion of the surveys were explained to respondents. Except when otherwise specified, the researcher declared that these research results/findings are for her own independent work. Other sources are explicitly acknowledged and appropriately referenced.

## **CHAPTER 4 - PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter presented the research methodology undertaken to collect and analyse the data. It also described how data was collected using questionnaires and focus groups. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the results, as well as discuss the findings from the analysis of data collected from the questionnaires and focus groups.

The quantitative data collected from the responses was analysed with SPSS version 27 and qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis in relation to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1.

#### **4.1 QUANTITATIVE RESULTS**

This section first describes the response rate of the quantitative research instrument. Thereafter, provide results together with a discussion on socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, the impact of the curriculum on students' perception, the impact of working in the industry and finally the perception of students towards careers in the industry.

#### **4.2 RESPONSE**

Data was collected from respondents using questionnaires. A total of 81 surveys were delivered in the classroom during November 2020. Participation was entirely optional. When all of the questionnaires were returned, 75 were judged to be legitimate and acceptable for analysis, with no missing values or inconsistent replies. The poll was performed in a classroom context, therefore, 75 valid questionnaires indicate a high response rate of 93%.



## 4.3 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

### 4.3.1 GENDER

The survey firstly gathered descriptive data about the participants' demographics. As shown in the Table 4.1, the majority of the respondents (73.3%) were females while males constituted only 26.7%. These results are in line with other studies in countries like in the United States where females represented 66.7% (Schoffstall 2013: 77); Vietnam 61.9% (Le, Klieve and McDonald 2018: 11); Ghana 58.4% (Amissah *et al.* 2020a: 7) and South Africa 69.7% (Ezeuduji, Chibe and Nyathela 2017: 317).

Table 4.1: Respondents gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	55	73.3
Male	20	26.7
Total	75	100

These findings may suggest that females are interested in the hospitality program more than males which may translate to them pursuing careers within the hospitality industry. The demographic characteristics were checked against the official records of the Department Hospitality and Tourism at DUT, which pointed out that the profile of the sample matched the official records. Moreover, (Morgan and Pritchard 2019: 40) posit that in underdeveloped economies women take up more responsibility in the working environment. Nonetheless, the latest figures showed in the report that tourism representation is made up of 62.41% females, while males only constitute 37.59% (South Africa 2019: 117). A contrary study by El-Houshy (2018: 806) shows that the response from males was 67.1% compared to the female

students whose response was 32.9%. These findings may conclude that in most countries females have a higher interest in hospitality as a career choice.

#### 4.3.2 AGE GROUP

The age group of the participants in this study ranges between 18 and 34 years drawn from the Department of Hospitality and Tourism. More than half of the respondents (57.3%) were within the 22-24 age range, 24% within the 25-28 age range, and 13.3% within the 18-21 age range, while those within the age group 29-34 and 35 years old and above were 2.7% each. The table 4.2 below show the age distribution of respondents

Table 4.2: Age group distribution of respondents

Age group	Frequency	Percent
18 – 21 years	10	13.3
22 - 24 years	43	57.3
25 – 28 years	18	24.0
29 – 34 years	2	2.7
35+	2	2.7
Total	75	100.00

The respondents' ages are comparable to a study in Asia (Kim, Jung and Wang 2016: 71) and Ghana (Amissah *et al.* 2020a: 6) . Similarly, a study in Ghana that looked into factors influencing the choice of hospitality careers suggests 66.5% of students admitted into the program were between 20- 29 years (Anthony 2020: 81). This proposes that young students consider hospitality after they finished their school period as a career choice.

#### 4.3.3 CHOICE TO STUDY HOSPITALITY

As part of the selection for admission into the national diploma program in hospitality management at DUT, preference is given to applicants who took hospitality studies in Grade 12 National Senior Certificate (NSC)/Matric and chose hospitality management as their first or second choice of study. In order to understand the participants' choice of study; they were asked if they had undertaken hospitality studies whilst in high school and students were also asked if hospitality was their first choice when they were selecting their course of study. Table 4.3 below shows the results.

Table 4.3 Respondents preference and choice to study hospitality management

Question	Yes		No		Total
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	
Was hospitality studies one of your subjects in your NSC/Matric?	24	32%	51	68%	75
Was the National Diploma in Hospitality Management your first preference to study?	48	64%	27	36%	75

The results revealed that a large percentage of respondents indicated 'no' (68%) and only (32%) as one of their subjects in NSC/matric. Although 24 (32%) of respondents indicated that hospitality studies was one of the subjects they participated in at school; a good number of the respondents (n= 48) had National Diploma in Hospitality Management as their first preference as indicated in the table above. These findings are in line with an earlier study by (Deen and Learnard 2015: 237) with 57% and later (Deen and Tichaawa 2016: 4) with 70% of students choosing hospitality as their first choice. Although the current study shows a similar number of respondents chose hospitality as their first choice, (Ezeuduji, Chibe and Nyathela 2017: 217) study showed that only 42% of the students chose hospitality as their first choice.

In addition, hospitality, like any other profession, recruits candidates for undergraduate studies who have a slight understanding of the program. In South Africa, learners apply for the choice of universities and courses in their grade 12 level. Among the 27 respondents who answered 'no' to the question "*Was the national diploma in hospitality management your first preference to study?*" 25 of the participants provided answers to their first choice as indicated in (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Respondents' first choice other than hospitality management

	Frequency (n=25)	Per cent
Accounting	1	4
Auditing / Financial Management	1	4
BA Correctional Studies	1	4
Bachelor of Education	1	4
Catering Management	1	4
Chartered Accountant ( CA)	1	4
Consumer ( Food and Nutrition)	1	4
Cost and Management Accounting	1	4
Drama studies	1	4
Dramatic Arts	2	8
Education	1	4
Food Technology	1	4
Human Resources	1	4
Law ( LLB )	2	8
Logistic Management	1	4
Media Studies	1	4
Other	1	4
Shipment and logistic	1	4
Social Worker	1	4
Teaching	2	8
Tourism Management	2	8

It was also uncovered that teaching, Law, Dramatic Arts and Tourism Management were the most common first choices of the respondents. These results may indicate that if students are not accepted in their preferred choices; respondents choose any course with admission requirements that match their results, which was the case with hospitality. Interestingly, similar findings were observed by (Deen and Learnard 2015: 238). This finding may suggest that the department needs to engage in rigorous marketing strategies to make prospective students aware of careers in the industry.

#### 4.3.4 AREA OF SPECIALISATION

Within the hospitality program at DUT, students are required to choose an area of specialisation in their second year of study. The different specialisations are between accommodation management which covers most areas of lodging services and food and beverage operation which covers the areas of restaurant services and its associated services. Figure 4.1 depicts the respondents' area of specialisation in hospitality management at DUT.

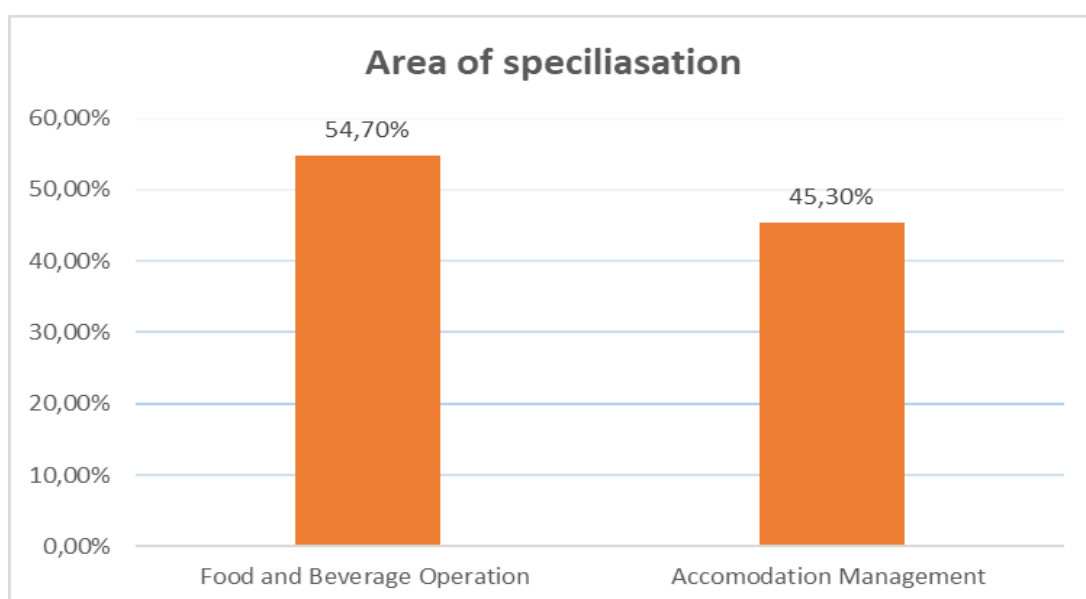


Figure 4. 1 Area of specialisation at DUT

More than half (54.7%) of the participants specialised in food and beverage operations while 45.3% specialised in accommodation management. These

findings are similar to a study by (Lin, Chiang and Wu 2018a: 234) in which 54.5% respondents preferred to work in the food and beverage department followed by 33.9% in the front office. This means the respondents might have identified that the food and beverage department offers more job opportunities.

#### 4.3.5 MOTIVATING FACTORS FOR THE CHOOSING HOSPITALITY

This section directly speaks to the second objective of the study - to ascertain student's perceptions of the different factors that make up hospitality employment. Certain factors interact to impact an employee's level of satisfaction. The study's findings indicated that respondents have a negative perception of the hotel industry as a whole and that this uncertainty may lead to greater labour turnover and a decrease in the likelihood of holding a higher qualification. Table 4.5 below shows that gaining knowledge to start a personal business, and the opportunity to travel abroad is the most common motivating factors.

Table 4.5 Factors motivating the choice of specialisation

	Factors that motivated the choice of specialisation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Social Status	19	25.3
2	Working hours	3	40
3	Meeting new people	39	52
4	Promotion prospects	9	12
5	Good starting salary	8	10.7
6	<b>Opportunity to travel abroad</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>72</b>
7	<b>Gaining knowledge to start my own business</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>72</b>
8	To have a professional qualification	35	46.7
9	Other (Please specify)	5	6.7

A total of 54 participants in the study indicated their motives to study hospitality was to gain an 'opportunity to travel abroad' and 'gaining knowledge to start their own businesses' respectively. This study has generated some novel findings related to the factors that motivate students to study hospitality, it is

paramount that academic departments offer a curriculum that meets these needs. Furthermore, these findings are in line with Smith, Clement and Pitts (2018: 119) who suggest that students who graduate with hospitality leave within the first two years post-graduation to pursue entrepreneurial desires. Other interesting findings are that students were motivated to pursue a course in hospitality to acquire practical skills rather than intellectual skills (Kim, Jung and Wang 2016: 17). This means students are keen to gain practical knowledge. In addition to just obtaining a qualification that will lead them to employment, they would rather create employment within their country. Littlewood and Holt (2018: 526) suggest that this may be the case to address the complex issues faced by South African youth with no opportunity for employment. Moreover, Table 4.6 below further highlights the other factors motivating the students in choosing their specialisation.

The actual reality of the working conditions and the unsophisticated practices may have an impact upon the respondents' perceptions of the industry and careers in the industry, leading them to either choosing or not choosing careers in the sector.

Table 4.6 Other factors motivating the choice of specialisation

		Frequency	Per cent
Other	Already have a Diploma in Cooking	1	1.3
	Intrigued by the subject	1	1.3
	Networking	1	1.3
	Passion driven	1	1.3
	Switchboard	1	1.3
	Total	5	100.0

It is worth noting that 1.3 % the of respondents in this research are unenthusiastic about the sector, which might discourage students from choosing a career in it. However, 1.3 % of the respondents had a prior certification before enrolling in the institution for the hospitality diploma. As it is

a small percentage, it suggests that this particular respondent has a passion for the industry, as a result studying other qualifications with a cookery qualification already obtained.

#### 4.4 CURRICULUM AND CAREER IN HOSPITALITY

A well-designed curriculum plays a critical role in addressing the needs of the industry. When asked if the respondents think that the curriculum at the DUT would prepare them adequately for a career in the hospitality industry, an overwhelming majority (80.3%) indicated 'yes' while only four (5.6%) answered 'no' as indicated in Table 4.7. The curriculum at DUT includes theory and practical modules. Theory modules include teaching underpinning knowledge of the facets of the industry and practical modules engage students in practical activities like culinary and food and beverage subjects.

Table 4.7 Respondents' views on the relationship of the DUT's curriculum on their career in hospitality

		Frequency (n=71)	Per cent
Do you think that the curriculum at DUT would prepare you adequately for a career in Hospitality Industry?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>80.3</b>
	No	4	5.6
	Unsure	10	14.1

These results are not surprising as another study by Askren and James (2020: 121) suggest that respondents recounted in agreement that they were educated in a professional setting by proficient instructors. This may mean that academics teaching the various subjects are able to make the students fully aware of what industry entails. This set them up for the industry in a manner that makes them value what has been learned from the university.



#### 4.4.1 ASPECTS OF THE CURRICULUM MOST LIKED BY THE STUDENTS

Given the perceived importance of the curriculum in a career in hospitality, it was important to distinguish what aspects of the curriculum was the respondent's favourite. Table 4.8 clearly identifies the percentage of what students enjoy within the curriculum.

Table 4.8 Aspects of the curriculum that is respondents favourite

		Frequency (n=71)	Per cent
What aspects of the curriculum was your favourite?	Restaurant practical	11	15.5
	Kitchen practical	20	28.2
	Theory	12	16.9
	<b>All</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>33.8</b>
	None	4	5.6

The results indicates that majority of students found that kitchen and restaurant practical combined (33.8% ) were found to be students favourite.; These findings are in line with findings by (Min, Swanger and Gursoy 2016: 16) that suggest that curricula should be designed in a manner that ensures they match industry needs, as well as the ever-changing demands of the industry. Moreover, they also suggest that programs should be structured in a way that is specific to what the industry students anticipate entering upon completion of their studies.

The current study findings contradict (Alexakis and Jiang 2019: 216) who state that students should possess skills other than industry-specific skills. They suggest students should possess other competencies such as communication and the ability to have critical skills. Moreover, Gross and Manoharan (2016: 53) suggest curriculum should prepare students not only to enter into a career in hospitality but also higher-level positions in the future. They further suggest students should be able to see a balance between what is taught in theory and practice. These can only be learned from the theoretical modules that students

have shown to have less interest in. This offers a mismatch from what the program is anticipated to be than what it is. Moreover, such findings are in line with findings of a study conducted in the United States which stated similar findings (Stansbie, Nash and Chang 2016: 27). Furthermore, it was observed in the focus group interviews where participants indicated less interest in theoretical subjects.

## 4.5 WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY

The third objective seeks to find out whether any work experience influences students' perceptions towards careers in the industry. The DUT curricula are designed to provide students with not only specialised classroom training but also work-integrated learning (WIL) to prepare students for practical proficiency in their chosen fields. The following results outline what students think of the industry after exposure to the industry. The respondents were asked a variety of questions regarding their experiences in the industry during their tenure in the industry. The respondents were, therefore, asked the following question *“Besides work-integrated learning, have you been employed at any given time during your studies?”* Table 4.9 below shows 54.7% of the respondents answered ‘no’ while 45.3% indicated ‘yes’ they have been employed in the industry besides their WIL.

Table 4.9 Respondents employed outside WIL

		Frequency	Per cent
Employment outside work-integrated learning	Yes	34	45.3
	<b>No</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>54.7</b>
	Total	75	100.0

Students have been shown to have sought additional employment outside the formal WIL. Students should be encouraged to seek employment outside to make an informed decision regarding their feelings about the industry. This will also help them to understand the industry prior to exposure to the industry.

#### 4.5.1 DEPARTMENT WORKED THE LONGEST

Students were asked in which department within the hotel have they stayed in the longest. Table 4.10 details the department the respondents had worked the longest.

Table 4.10 Departments respondents had worked the longest

	Department in the hospitality industry have you worked in the longest	Frequency	Percentage
<b>1</b>	<b>Front of house</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>42.7</b>
2	Housekeeping	12	16
<b>3</b>	<b>Restaurant/ Bar</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>42.7</b>
4	Banqueting	10	13.3
5	Other (Please indicate)	3	4

It was uncovered that front of house and restaurant/bar were the departments many of the respondents (n=32; 42.7%) indicated to have worked in the longest. These findings concur with findings of the study about tertiary students perceptions towards careers in Vietnam (Le, Klieve and McDonald 2018: 12). In their study students were asked to indicate the department in which they had the longest work experience; from their results it showed that students spent more time in food and beverage department with more than 50% students indicating so. Another department that students indicated as the place where most of their internship was spent is in the front of house. Therefore, this means that tertiary students have an interest in the food and beverage department.

Among the respondents (n=3) who indicated other, 66.7% was noted to have worked at the switchboard while 33.3% worked in the maintenance department the longest (Figure 4.2).

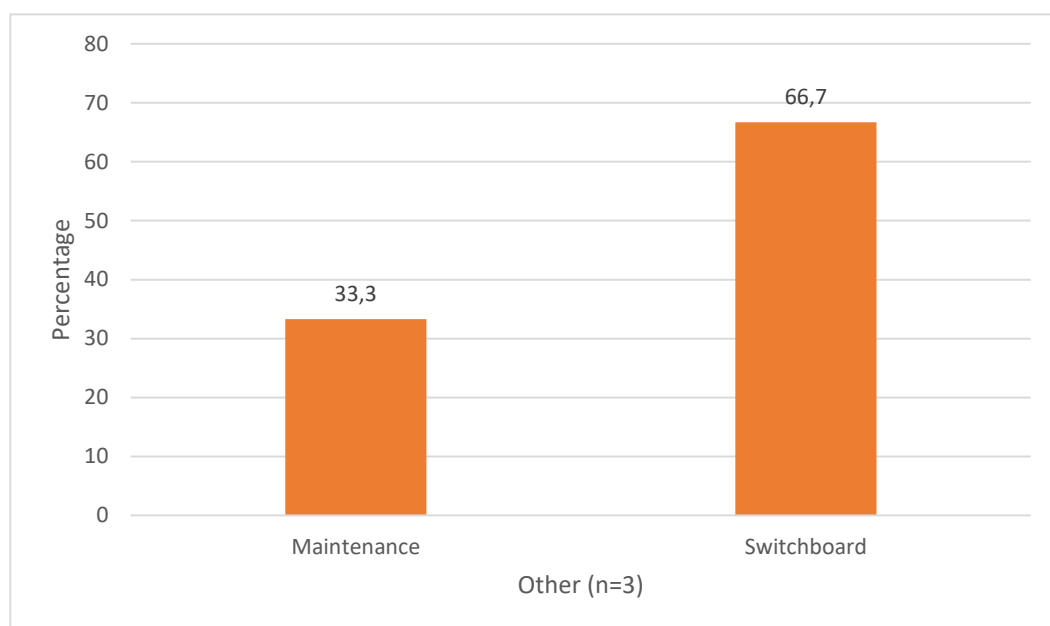


Figure 4. 2 Other departments respondents worked the longest

#### 4.5.2 INFLUENCE OF WORK IN HOSPITALITY AND CHOICE OF CAREER IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

The study found that there is a clear link between exposure to the sector, or rather working in it, and participants' career selections, as they are likely to consider the industry as a career destination after graduation. This is shown in Table 4.11 and Table 4.12

Table 4.11 Influence of work in hospitality and respondents choice of a career in the hospitality industry

Has your experience been the main factor that influenced your decision of pursuing a career in hospitality?		Frequency (n=74)	Per cent
	Yes	58	78.4
	No	15	20.3
	Unsure	1	1.4

Table 4.12 Respondents views on how working in hospitality had influenced their career decision in the industry

How has working in the hospitality industry influenced your decision about pursuing a career?		Frequency (n=74)	Per cent
	<b>Positively</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>73.0</b>
	Negatively	14	18.9
	Neither	6	8.1

Students' attitudes toward industrial jobs might be favourable, negative, or neutral. Therefore, students' perceptions of the hospitality industry either negative or positive may affect students' choice of a career in the industry (Anthony, Mensah and Amissah 2021: 101). When asked the following question, "How has working in the hospitality industry influenced your decision about pursuing a career?" The majority of the respondents (73%) indicated working in the hospitality industry had a positive influence on their career decision (Table 4.12). The current study reveals a different result from another study that showed that after participants were exposed to industry their willingness to join the industry changed (Nachmias, Walmsley and Orphanidou 2017:142). In another study by (Lee, Lee and Dopson 2019: 83), students revealed that support from their parents contributed to them pursuing careers in the industry. This finding suggests that parents need to also be involved when students consider a career in the industry.

#### 4.5.3 EXPERIENCE OF WORKING IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

The students were further asked if their time in the industry has any influence on their decision to seek employment after graduation. Table 4.13 indicates that the majority (66.2%) of the respondents who responded to the question consider 'yes' their experience of working in the hospitality industry as the main factor in their decision about pursuing a career in the hospitality industry.

Table 4.13 The respondents' experience of working in the industry is the main factor for their career decision in the hospitality industry

		Frequency (n=74)	Per cent
Has your industry experience you're your major factor in your decision about pursuing a career in hospitality?	Yes	49	66.2
	No	12	16.2
	Unsure	13	17.6

The current study findings are contrary to findings from Farmaki (2018: 53) where a small number of participants indicated that they were willing to take up work within the hospitality industry.

#### 4.5.4 RESPONDENTS AWARENESS OF THE NATURE OF THE INDUSTRY

Students studying hospitality management are required to do work-integrated learning as part of the qualification. Students are required to adjust themselves according to the industry they intend to enter upon graduation. Anjum (2020: 1) states that "*change of life stages from student to a professional is not always very simple*". Consequently, Table 4.14 investigates whether students are aware of the nature of the industry before embarking on a career in the hospitality industry.

Table 4.14 Respondent awareness of the nature of work before commencing work-integrated learning

		Frequency	Per cent
Awareness of the nature of work before commencing work-integrated learning	<b>Yes</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>61.3</b>
	No	29	38.7
	Total	75	100.0

When asked if the respondents were aware of the nature of work before commencing work-integrated learning, 61.3% of the respondents answered 'yes' while 38.7% answered 'no'. This suggests that the department has given the students the true reality of the industry prior to them going into the industry.

Current study findings concur with a study in Malaysia that suggests the nature of work does not influence students' commitment to the industry (Tan *et al.* 2016: 419).

#### 4.6 INFERENTIAL STATISTICS AND RELIABILITY TEST

Before the inferential analysis, this section focused on the reliability of the instrument. In this study, several measurements on the same items were used to determine the study instrument's reliability. The Cronbach's Alpha statistical test is used to do this. The precision of the measurement of how the participants answered the questions, in the same way, is referred to as reliability (Warmbrod 2014: 35). According to George and Mallery (2011), a reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 or higher is judged 'acceptable'.

As shown in Table 4.15, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the 9 items measuring the perception of students towards hospitality as a career.

Table 4.25: Reliability of the survey instrument

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.771	9

This suggests that there is a degree of consistency in the respondents' answering the questions measuring the perception of students towards hospitality as a career.

#### **4.7 PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS TOWARDS HOSPITALITY AS A CAREER**

This section sought to address the research objective that aimed to identify students' perceptions towards careers in the hospitality industry. The respondents' responses for each of the items that constitute the section were ranked from 1-9 based on the level of the respondents' agreement or disagreement with the statement. The Chi-Square test was computed to measure if the scoring pattern of the respondents per options (strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree and strongly disagree) were statistically different. The Chi-square test was used to compare categorical variables. Chi-square testing was used to detect if there were positive or negative perceptions of students towards hospitality as a career. In this study, the author wanted to discover if there are discrepancies between the expected results and the results that were obtained.



Table 4.16 Respondents perception towards hospitality as a career

	Rank	Mean $\pm$ SD	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	P value
I see a professional future in the industry	5	2.24 $\pm$ 1.1	18(24.3%)	33(44.6%)	14(18.9%)	5(6.8%)	4(5.4%)	0.000
I would be willing to occupy any job in the industry	6	2.41 $\pm$ 1.1	15(20.3%)	31(41.9%)	16(21.6%)	7(9.5%)	5(6.8%)	0.000
Nothing can change my mind about working in the hospitality industry	7	2.50 $\pm$ 1.1	17(23%)	20(27%)	20(27%)	17(23%)	0(0%)	0.922
My gender has influenced my career	9	3.20 $\pm$ 1.4	9(12.2%)	17(23%)	15(20.3%)	16(21.6%)	17(23%)	0.553
Working in the hospitality industry is a respected career in South Africa society.	8	2.78 $\pm$ 1.2	12(16.2%)	21(28.4%)	20(27%)	13(17.6%)	8(10.8%)	0.081
I talk to my relatives and friends with pride about my career in the hospitality industry.	2	2.01 $\pm$ 1.1	28(37.8%)	29(39.2%)	7(9.5%)	8(10.8%)	2(2.7%)	0.000
Potential to travel the world working abroad	1	1.70 $\pm$ 0.9	38 (51.4%)	24 (32.4%)	10 (13.5%)	0	2 (2.7%)	0.000

As highlighted in Table 4.16, many of the respondents 68.9% believed (strongly agree=24.3%; agree=44.6%) they see a professional future in the industry. Similarly, many of the respondents (62.2%) believed (strongly agree=20.3%; agree=41.9%) that they are willing to occupy any job in the industry.

In terms of the statement, “Nothing can change my mind about working in the hospitality industry”, half of the respondents (50%) were in agreement (strongly agree=23%; agree=27%), while 27% were unsure and 23% disagreed. However, 44.6% were in disagreement (disagree=21.6%; strongly disagree=23%) that their gender had influenced their career while 20.3% were unsure, and 35.2% others believed their gender did influence their career (strongly agree=12.2%; agree=23%).

Regarding the statement, “Working in the hospitality industry is a respected career in South African society”, 44.6% of the respondents were in agreement (strongly agree=16.2%; agree=28.4%), 27% were unsure while 28.4% others were in disagreement with the statement (disagree=17.6%; strongly disagree=10.8%).

On the other hand, the majority of the respondents (77%) affirmed (strongly agree=37.8%; agree, 39.2%) that they talked to their relatives and friends with pride about their career in the hospitality industry. Further to this, the majority (71.6%) of the respondents affirmed (strongly agree=28.4%; agree=43.2%) that they are very pleased to have chosen hospitality as a career path.

Added to the above, many of the respondents 68.9% were in agreement with the statement “I will work in the hospitality industry after graduation provided that I become a manager or department head” (strongly agree=35.1%; agree=33.8%). These results may be unrealistic in view of the current state of the hospitality industry. This agrees with (El-Houshy 2018: 813) who found that most graduates believed once they qualify they will be in a managerial position within their first three years after graduation. As a result, students need to fully

understand the reality of the working environment so they can create realistic views of positions they may hold after graduating. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority (83.8%) of the respondents noted that the potential to travel the world working in the hospitality industry (strongly agree=51.4%; agree=32.4%).

From the above narratives, it is reasonable to assume that many of the respondents had a favourable perception of hospitality as a career. The mean value measures indicate that the states with the most support from the highest level of agreement to the lowest are given as follows:

Ranked 1: Potential to travel the world working abroad (Mean=1.70±0.9).

Ranked 2: I talk to my relatives and friends with pride about my career in the hospitality industry (M=2.01±1.1).

Ranked 3: I am very pleased to have chosen hospitality as a career path (Mean=2.14±1.0).

Ranked 4: I will work in the hospitality industry after graduation provided that I become a manager or department head (M=.2.15±1.1).

Ranked 5: I see a professional future in the industry (M=2.24±1.1).

Ranked 6: I would be willing to occupy any job in the industry (M=2.41±1.1)

Ranked 7: Nothing can change my mind about working in the hospitality industry (M=2.50±1.1).

Ranked 8: Working in the hospitality industry is a respected career in South Africa society (M=2.78±1.2).

Ranked 9: My gender has influenced my career (M=3.20±1.4).

Overall, and based on the level of significance, the Chi-Square test indicates that 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> were statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ ) while there was no difference in the scoring pattern for the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> statement.

#### 4.7.1 ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS HOSPITALITY AS A CAREER.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA), mean, and standard deviation of various socio-demographic variables (gender, age group, working in the hospitality industry, and area of specialisation) and respondents' perception towards hospitality as a career are given in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17 Association between socio-demographic variables and perceptions towards hospitality as a career

Socio-demographic characteristics		N (74)	Mean	Std. Deviation	P value
Gender	Female	55	2.4182	.70369	0.125*
	Male	19	2.1462	.50247	
Age group	18-21 years	10	3.0444	.75577	0.003***
	22-24 years	43	2.2713	.60728	
	25-28 years	17	2.0915	.54182	
	29-34 years	2	2.7778	.31427	
	35+	2	2.2778	.54997	
Working in hospitality industry	Yes	58	2.2500	.60743	0.000***
	No	15	2.1839	.58519	
Area of specialisation	Food and beverage Operations	40	2.9778	.61464	0.225*
	Accommodation Management	34	2.4444	.63151	
P* >5%					
P** <5%					

The ANOVA value measured for gender and area of specialisation indicates that there was no statistically significant difference among the respondents in terms of the perceptions each of them have towards hospitality as a career ( $P>0.05$ ).

On the contrary, the ANOVA value suggests that age groups were statistically significantly different in their perception of hospitality as a career ( $P<0.05$ ). The mean value measures for the respondents within 25-28 year range ( $M=2.09\pm0.5$ ) were the lowest while the mean value measures for respondents within 18-21 year range ( $M=3.04\pm0.8$ ) were the highest. This suggests that more respondents within 25-28 year range had a favourable perception of hospitality as a career when compared to those within 18-21 year range.

Similarly, the ANOVA values measured for the statement working in the hospitality industry were statistically significantly different ( $P<0.05$ ). The mean value measures for those who answered yes were the lowest ( $M=2.18\pm0.6$ ). This indicates that respondents who worked in the hospitality industry had favourable perceptions of hospitality as a career.

#### **4.7.2 ASSOCIATION BETWEEN CURRICULUM AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS HOSPITALITY AS A CAREER**

Part of the inquiry of this study was to examine how formal curriculum impacted the students' perception of the hospitality industry. The ANOVA value in Table 4.18 indicates that there was no statistically significant difference in responses of the respondents on the questions addressing curriculum and their perceptions towards hospitality as a career ( $P>0.05$ ). This suggests that regardless of the respondent's views on the curriculum, their perceptions towards hospitality as a career are more or less the same.

Table 4.18 Association between curriculum and perceptions towards hospitality as a career

Curriculum		N (74)	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value
The curriculum at DUT would prepare you adequately for the career in Hospitality Industry	Yes	56	2.3095	.63164	0.645*
What aspects of the curriculum was your favourite?	Restaurant practical	11	2.5859	.48455	0.605*
	Kitchen practical	20	2.3167	.44630	
	Theory	11	2.3535	.67553	
	All	24	2.2176	.85408	
	None	4	2.5556	.70856	
What aspects of the curriculum was your least favourite?	Restaurant practical	7	2.3333	.43979	0.908*
	Kitchen practical	18	2.4012	.64128	
	Theory	26	2.3761	.68065	
	None	19	2.2515	.75345	
P* >5%					
P** <5%					

#### 4.7.3 ASSOCIATION BETWEEN WORKING EXPERIENCE AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS HOSPITALITY AS A CAREER

Part of the objective of this study was to examine the impact of informal and formal work experience on the students' perception of the hospitality industry.

Table 4.19 Association between working experience and perceptions towards hospitality as a career

Experience working		N (74)	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value
Has your experience of working in the industry being the main factor in your decision about pursuing a career in hospitality?	Yes	49	2.2381	.66357	0.102*
	No	12	2.4630	.55014	
	Unsure	12	2.6759	.72700	
Employment outside work-integrated learning	Yes	33	2.2492	.62794	0.253*
	No	41	2.4282	.69147	
P* >5%					
P** <5%					

The ANOVA value in Table 4.19 indicates that there were no significant differences in the responses on the questions addressing working experience and their perceptions towards hospitality as a career ( $P > 0.05$ ). This suggests that regardless of the respondents' work experience, their perceptions towards hospitality as a career are more or less the same.

## 4.8 GENERAL QUESTION

This section explores several questions relating to the hospitality industry. It aimed to gauge the respondents' perceptions on the career opportunities, career prospects in five years and future endeavours in the industry. When people encounter various situations they create a certain level of acceptability

to what has been received, therefore, (Anthony 2020: 91) suggests that expectations play a pivotal role in the acceptance of reality.

Table 4.20 Respondents thought on hospitality career and opportunities

		Frequency	Per cent
Do you think that the hospitality industry is a growing industry with many career opportunities?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>81.3</b>
	No	7	9.3
	Unsure	7	9.3
	Total	75	100.0

As shown in Table 4.20, the majority of the respondents (81.3%) think that the hospitality industry is a growing industry with many career opportunities. These findings concurred with other research findings which suggest that the hospitality industry is a multi-disciplinary industry; therefore, there is a variety of job opportunities within the industry (Farmaki 2018: 51).

Table 4.21 Prospects of the respondents in five years

		Frequency (n=74)	Per cent
From hospitality career aspects, where do you see yourself five years from now?	Employed at the managerial level in the hospitality industry	21	28.4
	Employed at the supervisory level in the hospitality industry	9	12.2
	Employed in a different industry	12	16.2
	Owner (co-owner ) of a hospitality business	29	39.2
	Not employed	1	1.4
	Other	2	2.7

Table 4.21 detailed where the respondents envisaged seeing themselves five years from the date of data collection. Most of the respondents (39.2%) noted owning or co-owning a hospitality business, 28.4% noted that they will be



employed at a managerial level in the hospitality industry, 16.2% noted that they will be employed in a different industry, and 12.2% noted that they will be employed at the supervisory level in the hospitality industry. Moreover, only one of the respondents (1.4%) sees him/herself unemployed.

The idea of students holding higher-level positions was questioned to ascertain where students see themselves after they acquire their qualification in hospitality management. Table 4.23 shows responses to the question how many years following graduation the respondents believed they would take to achieve the highlighted positions.

Table 4.22 Number of years after graduation to achieve supervisory, manager and executive position

	Less than a year	1-5 years	6-10 years
Supervisor	25(33.3%)	41 (54.7%)	9 (12%)
Manager		44 (58.7%)	31 (41.3%)
Executive	1 (1.3%)	8 (10.7%)	66 (88%)

It emerged that 88% indicated it would take them 6-10 years to achieve an executive position. In terms of the manager post, 58.7% noted it would take 1-5 years while 41.3% noted it would take 6-10 years. This finding is in line with (Nachmias, Walmsley and Orphanidou 2017: 136) study where students believed their qualification will assist them in reaching higher positions quickly. For supervisor positions, 54.7% noted it would take 1-5 years, while 33.3% noted it would take them less than a year to reach such positions. Only 12% of the respondents acknowledged it will take 6-10 years to achieve a supervisory position.

Table 4.23 Likelihood of respondents working in the hospitality industry after graduation

		Frequency	Per cent
Are you likely to work in the hospitality industry after graduation?	Definitely	28	37.3
	More than likely	14	18.7
	Unsure	20	26.7
	Unlikely	11	14.7
	Definitely not	2	2.7
	Total	75	100.0

When asked how likely the respondents are to work in the hospitality industry after graduation, 37.3% noted that they would definitely work in the industry after graduation, 26.7% were unsure, 18.7% noted more than likely, 14.7% noted unlikely to work, while two (2.7%) of the respondents noted definitely not. Overall, the analysis suggests that more than half (56%) of the respondents are likely to work in the hospitality industry after graduation (definitely=37.3%; more than likely=18.7%). These findings are in line with other studies (Chan 2017:59) where students demonstrate a positive idea towards employment in the industry.

The current study has shown that various factors influence changes in perceptions of students towards careers in the industry. Figure 4.3 depicts the factors the respondents consider influences changes in their perceptions towards a career in the hospitality industry.

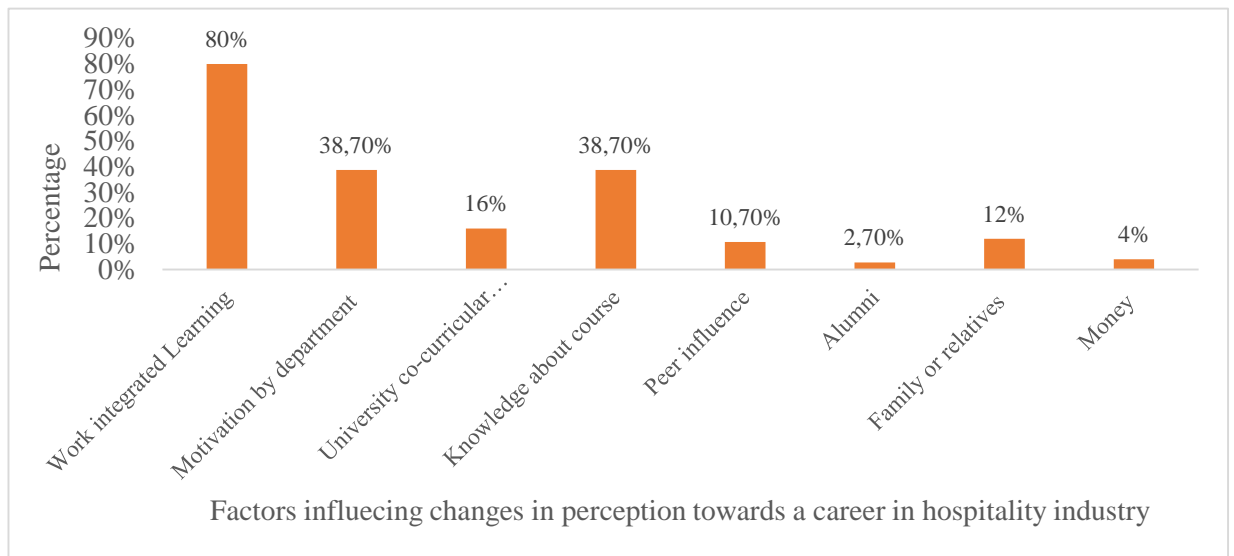


Figure 4. 3 Factors influencing changes in perception towards a career in the hospitality industry?

It was uncovered that work-integrated learning (80%) was the main factor that could influence changes in the respondent's perceptions towards a career in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, the results in this study show that there are other influencing factors in how students perceive the hospitality industry. The most common factor suggested by students is their exposure to the industry. Studies by Robinson *et al.* (2016: 523) and Le, Klieve and McDonald (2018: 19) revealed that after students were exposed to work experience, there was a shift in considering a career within the industry. These studies show a negative shift towards careers in the industry. However, in a study conducted in Egypt, a large percentage of students also showed an interest in pursuing careers in the industry (El-Houshy 2018:811), which is similar to the current study where students were keen to pursue hospitality careers after exposure to the industry. However, in the same study, it was evident that as students are at different levels of their studies their intention is different. Although the students showed an interest in industry, post-graduate students had an opposite view regarding their perception of the industry which was negative. The results suggest that the industry may need to entice new graduates to join

the workforce whilst students are still engaged in work-integrated learning. This will ensure that students consider careers in hospitality after graduating.

Other factors influencing students is the motivation by the department (38.7%), knowledge about the course (38.7%) and university curriculum (16%). The findings are consistent with findings from a study by (Lee, Lee and Dopson 2019: 82). Therefore, the university and department should continue to promote possible students' professional growth, as well as provide accurate expectations of the industry. This will ensure that students have a realistic view of the industry. Those who were willing to study hospitality as a first option, showed a much more positive attitude toward the industry than others (El-Houshy 2018: 813). Therefore, the department and the university need to interview and select students based on their willingness to study hospitality as one of the main requirements. Departments need to ensure that they familiarise themselves with current trends within the industry in order to offer better recommendations to prospective graduates about the industry.

In the current study, family and relatives (12%) is also a contributing factor to students' perception of the industry. Input from parents (Lee, Lee and Dopson 2019: 83) and family (Goh, Nguyen and Law 2017: 886) was valued as important in their studies. In addition (Lee, Lee and Dopson 2019: 83) cited that any support from parents is valuable, therefore, parents need to ensure that they fully support students with advice on career decisions.

Remuneration is important for any profession, however, for this study, a small percentage of participants (4%) indicated pay as the contributing factor to choosing a career in the hospitality industry. El-Houshy (2018: 813) claims that hospitality jobs offer low pay especially at the beginning of one's career. Fyre *et al.* (2020: 9) also propose that the majority of Generation Y are young and do not have any responsibility, as a result pay does not become an important factor, nonetheless, they advise employers that as they grow old good pay may be required. The results of the current study may concur with the other findings suggested above.

Another factor suggested by participants is the contribution made by alumni (2.7%) from the hospitality industry. El-Houshy (2018: 815) advises that the industry needs to ensure that they deal very carefully with former graduates as they play an important role in developing future graduates to join the industry. He further highlights the spill over effect that occurs among undergraduate students. Goh, Nguyen and Law (2017: 884) suggest that interaction with alumni and sharing their success stories within the industry may add confidence in students considering careers within the industry. This should be an attempt made by the department to invite former students to provide an insight into their journeys within the industry.

## **4.9 QUALITATIVE RESULTS**

The previous section provided results of quantitative data and this section will therefore present the qualitative findings of this research. Thematic analysis was used as a method of analysing the data, therefore, findings are presented in the format of themes. Thematic analysis in this study has assisted because some of the participants were more comfortable expressing their views in their mother tongue. A deductive approach was adopted as the researcher has preconceived ideas obtained from the quantitative data.

*A deductive approach to data coding and analysis is a 'top-down approach, where the researcher brings to the data a series of concepts, ideas, or topics that they use to code and interpret the data* (Braun and Clarke 2012: 58).

In the previous section informants were referred to as respondents because of the nature of the data they supplied; where students were expected to respond to question that had predetermined responses. In the subsequent section, informants will be referred to respondents due to the nature of the activity they were expected to undertake. As indicated in Chapter 3 the main aim of qualitative data is to provide an account of the responses obtained from the quantitative data. They were part of the 81 respondents who participated in the

quantitative survey. Creswell and Clark (2018: 188) suggests that if the main aim of the study is to narrate the two sets of data, the same people can be used although with the qualitative the number is smaller than quantitative. In this study, the researcher intends to get a further explanation of the initial data obtained from the quantitative data. The focus group was conducted using different sets of the questions when compared to the questionnaire.

#### **4.10 PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS**

In total, 19 participants attended the four focus groups; 14 (73.7%) of these participants were from the food and beverage stream while 5 (26.3%) were from the accommodation stream. Five groups were formed comprising of three groups with five participants and one group with four participants.

This is in line with the results obtained from the quantitative study (Figure 4.1) which showed a higher percentage of students from the food and beverage stream. All of the participants had done a minimum of six months of work-integrated learning at various hospitality organisations. Analysis of the focus group transcripts identified themes relating perceptions of the group towards careers in the industry. The themes are presented are in relation to the research questions in Chapter One.

#### **4.11 WHY STUDENTS CHOSE HOSPITALITY?**

Participants were asked a series of questions regarding their motivations for studying hospitality at the start of the focus group meeting. The participants stated that they chose the program of study for a number of reasons, some of which connected to the program's fit with their future plans and others to their desire to learn more about the business. In the first focus group, Participant B expressed that hospitality chose her rather than choosing the course. She stated in grade 10, *"I performed poorly in economics and I was then moved to do hospitality studies. Once doing hospitality in high school I performed very well which led me to enjoy and looking for courses related to hospitality after I*

*completing grade 12*". These findings are in line with another study where participants studying hospitality stated that choosing hospitality was an unconscious decision as entry requirements into the program were lower than other courses (Farmaki 2018: 54; Jamnia and Pan (2017: 38).

Nonetheless, another study highlighted that hospitality employment is "easy to enter" (Filimonau and Mika 2019 369), this may show that not only is entry into the course easy but it may be easy to enter the industry as well.

Other participants expressed their passion for working with food and wanting to become chefs. This point suggests students do not have a full understanding of the difference between hospitality management and catering management. About three participants mentioned that their choice was based on assumption that the industry offers a large number of employment opportunities. They thought it was a good decision because the hotel sector is expanding. The most prevalent reason given by students for wanting to work in the sector was the abundance of possibilities and prospects for growth (Anthony, Mensah and Amissah 2021: 102). This means that students perceive the hospitality industry offer opportunities and career advancement.

The reasons for choosing a hospitality course of study in the second focus group differed from those in the first. Prior college studies were an influential element for participant G, who stated she loved studying the hotel business. She wanted to work on a cruise ship and thought that the best way to make that dream a reality was to work in the hospitality industry. Participant H stated that she was raised in a hospitality atmosphere, which influenced her decision to pursue this career path. Participant I, like other students, stated "*I loved the people interactions*" implying that working in the sector is more than just an office job because it provides for contacts with a diverse group of individuals. Participant J stated, "*I appreciate the hands-on experience*," while participant K added, "*I don't like office jobs and like to connect with people*." Students believed that hospitality allowed them to interact with people instead of sitting in the office (Askren and James (2020: 119).

The third group differed in their reasons for undertaking to study hospitality. Participant L identified the influence of people around her as the reason for studying a course in hospitality. She stated “*My parents assumed I would be good in hospitality*”, and so many people opined that her personality was well suited to studying hospitality. These findings are in line with findings in quantitative data where students highlighted the influence of family and relatives (Lee, Lee and Dopson 2019: 83) (Goh, Nguyen and Law 2017: 886). Family or other people’s opinions on personality mattered to the participants, which may translate to students considering careers in the hospitality industry. Lee and Lee (2018: 171) findings recommend involving family members in events may assist to devise any career views and development opportunities in the hospitality industry. They further suggest that students with family support perform better academically when their families are involved. As a result, the research backs up earlier results about the parental effect on career choice (Farmarki 2018: 52).

Participants also shared how family and friends thought their personality was suited for the hospitality industry. Moreover, this shows that individual personality also influences the choice of one’s career. Ahmed, Sharif and Ahmad (2017: 4) posit that there is a relationship between personality and career interest of students towards a particular career. Similarly, Anthony (2020: 92) who investigated factors that influence undergraduates into hospitality careers agrees that personality contributes to the nature of the job. Anthony (2020: 92) study revealed that 89.25% of respondents perceive themselves as extroverts. Therefore, this means that hospitality careers require people who can converse with a variety of people, as a result personality becomes essential.

Finally, the opportunity to travel was the most dominant factor that influenced the choice of a career in hospitality. Most participants expressed their desire to travel and [want to] see another country “*preferably in the future I could go work overseas in the hospitality area, that is why I chose it*”. These findings



resonate with (Buzinde *et al.* 2018: 76) who indicate that students are enthusiastic about a qualification in hospitality as it they believe it will provide them with an opportunity to travel. Participants agreed that the sector is an excellent one to go into because of the possibility to travel worldwide. Participant H conveyed the concept that the business is a people industry, saying that in this sector, you have to deal with people every day. This is a common occurrence in the sector. This was also highlighted by participants as a factor in their decision to enroll in the course.

#### **4.12 EFFECTIVENESS OF HOW THE CURRICULUM IS STRUCTURED**

The majority of participants highlighted that some subjects related very well with what was happening in an industry, namely culinary and restaurant studies. These findings are consistent with research performed by (Min, Swanger and Gursoy 2016: 16) on the significance of course subjects in the curriculum, which found that students regarded industry-specific disciplines such as hotel management, food service, and lodging as significant.

Participants who majored in accommodation felt information taught in class did not help them to understand exactly what was needed in the front office department.

They attributed this to the lack of practical exercises in the module whilst still at the university. One participant mentioned that students from “*other institutions intimidated me with the amount of knowledge they had when they went for their work-integrated learning; they knew exactly what needed to be done*”. Although participants in the second group agreed in unison that theory allowed them to attend to more advanced work because of the subjects offered in theory. Lashley (2018: 80) agrees that the hospitality courses are taught by former industry managers who come with specialised knowledge in different fields of hospitality. He further suggests that the curriculum could be guided by research agenda that encourages critical thinking and the aspiration to know

more rather than focusing on the 'how to do'. The result is in line with prior research, which has shown that an effective hospitality curriculum should teach students key operational skills, as well as the abilities and proficiencies required of successful managers (Min, Swanger and Gursoy 2016: 17).

These results in this research highlight that participants were surprised that there was more theory than practical exercises in their course of study. A common view is that the students expected the course to be more practical than theoretical. All of the participants groups indicated the importance of practical learning or interest in employment that offers them an opportunity to learn on the job over theoretical subjects. This fact was reinforced by participant M who relayed how she was overwhelmed by the number of theory modules she took in her second year of study.

However, some other participants differed in that they felt the subjects that were offered met their expectations and beyond. For instance, participant A stated, "*I received more than I anticipated*". This was made evident by the participants who majored in accommodation management in that they felt more practical exercises should be incorporated into the curriculum. This will allow participants to be on the same level as students coming from private colleges.

#### **4.13 ASSESSMENTS OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AFTER WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING (WIL)**

Work-integrated learning has become the most common curricular component in courses that are offered in most qualifications in institutions of higher learning. These experiences should be structured in a way that will allow both the industries and students to engage in WIL (Brown *et al.* 2018: 80). Understanding the feelings of students after work-integrated learning was important to evaluate its impact on their perceptions of the hospitality industry. Most participants felt that the opportunity in the industry strengthened their belief that they will be able to hold any positions in the industry after their

exposure through experiential learning (Askren and James 2020: 122). Consequently, students explained how they valued the time spent in the industry.

Surprisingly participant D mentioned that she believed that their skills might be redundant due to the increase in the use of technology. She further stated that the university may need to look into the curriculum that will keep them up to date with the changes in technology. The finding can be corroborated by Min, Swanger and Gursoy (2016: 18) who said to keep up with ever-changing industry expectations, hospitality programs should continue to advance their curricula by offering course subjects that teach new skills and knowledge that the industry requires and prepare graduates who can meet those needs. Additionally, Bowen and Morosan (2018: 731) propose that by the 2030s the industry will be faced with robots performing various functions within the hospitality industry. Although Participant C mentioned that in the hospitality industry even if technology is used there will always be a need for human interaction between guests and employees.

Another finding from participants is that some employees are uneducated and they were slightly intimidated by them because they came from a university. This previous finding was corroborated by participant E who mentioned that *“qualification in the industry does not matter”*. The current study findings are in line with a study by (Nachmias, Walmsley and Orphanidou 2017: 142) which suggested that qualification does not contribute to the success of a potential employee, rather work experience and practical skills add more value. Although, participants stated that qualification was not valued in the industry; they felt that holding a qualification may have a long-term benefit in that students will be able to secure higher-level positions within the organisation. Going forward, in order to help improve the quality and experience of students during their WIL program, participant J suggested that the establishment’s *“management should be interviewed prior to sending students over”*. Hight, Gajjar and Okumus (2019: 106) suggest that organisations need to assess the

feelings of employees regularly on how they are treated by their managers. This will enable good working conditions between employees and managers. Furthermore, this study advises managers to obtain some training on a continuous basis to enhance their hard or soft skills. Fyre *et al.* (2020: 7) in their findings suggests that employees get frustrated if they feel their managers are not supportive or showing favouritism towards other employees within the organisation. They further suggest that this may lead to employees seeking employment in other industries where they will feel satisfied with the manner in which the managers treat them. Current study findings concur with the above authors in that students choose to not enter the industry after graduation.

Participants in two of the focus groups also raised concerns on the issue of sexual harassment by employees in their WIL establishment. Participant G agreed with this sentiment as she faced several episodes of sexual harassment from other employees. She said, “*they would touch you in the most inappropriate manner*”. Ram (2018: 764) agrees with the current study that students are exposed to sexual harassment from supervisors, guests, as well as colleagues. Furthermore, Morgan and Pritchard (2019: 42) and La Lopa and Gong (2020: 97) propose that female employees working in the hospitality industry such as waiters, cocktail servers and hostesses are more likely to experience verbal sexual harassment from guests and co-workers as well. This may be increased by the fact the industry is full of women who are young and vulnerable. As it can be seen in this study and other studies that the industry has a large number of participants who are females and they are also young. While women are fully incorporated into the labour market the hospitality industry has a responsibility of providing a safe work environment.

After WIL students had mixed reasons regarding them joining the industry with some negatives and positives. However, it was evident that most participants are still considering entering the industry after graduation. While managers were blamed for making work tough to enjoy, participants still find the work in the hospitality industry enjoyable with the opportunity of meeting people,

gaining knowledge and experience while having fun in a fast working environment and travelling. Also, they appreciate the self-assurance and confidence they develop while working under pressure and achieving their WIL employers' expectations

The next question was possibly the most interesting from this section of the report. This question asked respondents about the characteristics of the industry and how it has influenced their decision to join or not join the industry after graduation.

#### **4.14 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

Students can make judgments about where and how they want to continue their careers in the business based on this question. This question was designed to go deeper into some of the questionnaire's emerging findings and to elicit fresh ideas. Participant B made a specific remark about how degrading the hospitality business is, and how it is not valued as highly as other industries in the nation. The second group gave her more information about her feelings. Students believed that there were several job prospects in the business. However, from the students' responses, it was evident that the industry possesses the following characteristics of long unsociable hours, low wages and work-related stress. As a result of those challenges, some participants indicated their unwillingness to enter the industry due to the experiences during WIL.

Participant D stated *"employees have long unsociable working hours. You are unable to attend family gatherings or celebrations"*. In terms of working hours, it was suggested working hours were acceptable on the day shift but not at night. Such working conditions were also noted to be the reason why participants preferred careers in government (Wong, Wan and Gao 2017: 148). Participant G stated, *"sometimes you have to work during the day, which is okay, and afternoon shifts are also fine, but evening and night shifts are really difficult to manage"*. Participant O stated, *"you must work when everyone*

*else is not, such as on weekends and holidays*". Despite the fact that these are all quite negative, not everyone shares them. The finding accentuates the problem already highlighted by (Haldoraia *et al.* 2019: 47) who explain that anti-social and long working hours in the hospitality industry may contribute to the level of stress in employees. As indicated by (Wang, Lee and Wu 2017: 1138) the unsociable working hours affect the employee's family responsibility which may have a negative influence on future employees' perceptions towards careers within the industry.

Students also believe that the sector lacks the respect and attention that it deserves. *"I don't think the industry receives enough recognition given how vital it is to the economy,"* says participant E. She explained why this adage is used in schools, stating that it is treated as though it is unimportant. This is consistent with their answers when asked why they opted to study hospitality management. Participants concluded that hospitality studies are a subject that is scorned in schools and is seen as a fill-in and easy subject. Participant D echoed this sentiment, claiming that hospitality is viewed as a very simple subject. This perception of hospitality as a simple topic is unlikely to be shared by students in other settings, since Participant E, who attended a former Model C school, stated that hospitality courses were treated similarly to sciences and commerce studies. This could then suggest that secondary schools have different ways of influencing students before they leave to pursue further studies in tertiary education.

The majority of participants agreed that personnel in the sector, particularly cleaning staff, are treated with minimal respect. The topic of teamwork and team dynamics was discussed in depth. Students have strong opinions in this area since they have worked in the business via WIL. Some feel that having a good team and competent management is crucial. This was emphasised by participant R, who said, *"If you work with a solid team and there are nice individuals in the team, the employment experience will be great"*. Furthermore, participants think that being on the manager's good side is

critical. You will be able to study and gain enough exposure to the many sectors. As a result, you'll be able to work in the sector.

The importance of personality in pursuing a successful career in the hospitality industry was also discussed by the students. "*Personality as a notable component for significant performance in the industry*," they opined. As this quotation implies, a person's personality is the key to receiving excellent shifts, adequate hours, and the opportunity to advance in their profession. According to (Lin, Chiang and Wu 2018b: 237) "applicants who possess a customer orientation are more suited to the job characteristics of the hotel industry". Chang and Busser (2017 48) and Bowen and Morosan (2018: 728) claim that employees are the most valuable resources in any organisation as they are able to provide services to customers and are brand ambassadors. Furthermore, (Rathi and Lee 2016: 247) results state that employees who are social individuals are less likely to demonstrate dissatisfaction towards their work and also prove to have a greater commitment to the industry. Therefore, a good personality becomes a prerequisite for any person working in the hospitality industry.

Moreover, participants were very opinionated regarding wages. Participants' most common theme was salary/wages, with Participant P stating "*the pay is low*" and Participant A submitting that, "*some employees were being paid the same amount they were paid as trainees*". According to Amissah et al. (2016: 179) employees work for a reasonable salary and want to be content with their jobs, therefore, the results of this study propose that a salary/wage might work well to encourage students to be committed to the hospitality industry. These findings concur with other studies (Wan, Wong and Kong 2018; Albattat, Som, and Helalat 2013). Interestingly a study that looked at the effect of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on work engagement proposes that there is no significant impact of extrinsic motivation on any employee work engagement (Putra, Cho and Liu 2017: 238). Therefore, the current study results reveal students are not motivated by monetary rewards.

In another focus group meeting, the participant's discussed the minimum wage that is stipulated by the government as low considering the job you are required to perform. In short, they felt the pay does not adequately compensate for the treatment they get from customers. "*For the labour that we are performing, as well as the hours we put into our employment in hospitality, we are not properly rewarded; this is unacceptable,*" said Participant R. Employers hold the power in a hostile job market since getting and keeping a job is critical for graduates. Due to an excess of graduates, it is predicted that individuals would take any job, regardless of pay, to guarantee that they have a source of income. Wages were found to have a strong significant relationship with participants' desire to enter the hospitality industry; which indicates it is the main barrier that could influence students to undertaking or not undertaking jobs in the industry. This aspect might be affected by the widespread belief in the community that individuals who study hospitality would work as waiters or service personnel. Furthermore (Angioha *et al.* 2018: 60) agrees with the current study in that there is a mismatch between the amount of work put in and the pay that is received. Therefore, this means any contribution to the economy of any country by employees should be compensated by the way the careers within the industry are respected.

The participants mentioned that there is a variety of jobs within the hospitality industry. One participant stated that "*it is adventurous and [an] expanding industry, with great opportunities for entrepreneurs*". A similar study conducted concluded that 68% of undergraduates' students perceived careers within the hospitality industry to be attractive (Anthony, Mensah and Amissah 2021: 108). It further proposes that the industry will offer them opportunities to meet new people and travel.

The findings uncovered in the thematic analysis are important to be recognised and will be incorporated into the discussion in Chapter 5 to support the quantitative findings.



#### 4.15 CAREER GOALS OF THE THIRD-YEAR STUDENTS

In drawing concluding remarks from the various questions, students were asked to discuss what job they would like to do when they have completed their qualifications and which province they would like to work in. Some expressed a strong desire to study further and maybe later join the industry at higher positions. The interesting point in this study is that the majority of the participants were not in line with the other studies where students did not intend to pursue postgraduate studies after graduation (Jamnia and Pan 2017: 41). Participant H, *"I would be happy to take any job I could get within the industry"*. Participant G wants to work on a cruise ship. Furthermore, participant C expressed that with a hospitality qualification, *"you can pretty do anything within the hospitality industry"*; hospitality qualification allows you to hold a variety of jobs. Additionally, participant S said, *"it is so broad"*, therefore, most students felt their qualification will lead them to some employment within the industry. Participant M noted a very important issue - she thinks that with the qualification they possessed, they should be hired in higher positions but it did not seem so. Participant O alluded that if you have food and beverage as a specialisation, you will probably start at the bottom as a waiter. A very interesting finding here is that students believe that their qualifications will enable them to secure employment within the industry.

The perceptions change as students get closer to graduation. There is a level of agreement among the participants that students are expected to work in the industry. The reasons behind this, however, differed across the various focus group. This relates to the fact that there are several employment prospects in the hospitality sector, which is one of the reasons why individuals choose to study it. The findings of the current study are similar to others (Amissah *et al.* 2020a: 179) where employees are satisfied with the industry, however, not happy with the working conditions such as pay, working hours and fringe benefits.

## 4.16 CONCLUSION

This chapter had explicitly highlighted the quantitative and qualitative data collected from hospitality students at DUT regarding their perceptions towards a career in the hospitality industry. From the analysis, it emerged that the majority of the respondents were females, within the age group 22-24 years, had hospitality as the first preference in their national diploma, most specialised in the food and beverages operation. The reason for the large number of females in this study was because of the dominant demography of the working population in South Africa towards the hospitality industry being females (South Africa 2019: 117). It also emerged that the choice of their specialisation was motivated by the desire to gain knowledge to start their own business and the opportunities to travel abroad.

Equally, the majority of the respondents in both data methods indicated that the DUT curriculum prepares them adequately for a career in the hospitality industry. It was also found that many of the respondents were favourable to the kitchen and restaurant practicals whereas theory aspects of the curriculum were least liked by students. Furthermore, it was noted that a good number of the respondents had previously worked in the hospitality industry outside of WIL. It was also uncovered that exposure to the industry remains a factor in students pursuing careers in the hospitality industry. Another interesting lesson learnt from this study is that WIL is the main factor the respondents consider could influence changes in their perception towards a career in the hospitality industry. Areas uncovered where the respondents had previously worked the longest was the front of house and restaurant/bar. Many of the respondents also acknowledged that their previous work and the experience of it were the main influences in their decision and choice of a career in the hospitality industry.

It also emerged that respondents had favourable perceptions towards a career in the hospitality industry. The potential to travel the world and work were

ranked by the respondents as the main reason for a career in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, it was found that age group and working in the hospitality industry significantly influenced the respondents' perception towards a career in the industry ( $P < 0.05$ ). No differences were measured for gender and areas of specialisation ( $P > 0.05$ ). Similarly, the curriculum and experience of the respondents in the industry had no difference in the perception of a career in the hospitality industry ( $P > 0.05$ ). Overall, many of the respondents acknowledged that hospitality is a growing field with many opportunities. As such, many see themselves owning or co-owning a hospitality business within five years. The next chapter presents conclusions and recommendations for further studies on students' perceptions towards careers in the industry.

## **CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a summary of findings from the research study with conclusions and recommendations to close the knowledge gap that exists regarding the perceptions of third-year students towards careers in the hospitality industry.

The chapter is dependent on the findings established in Chapter 4 and therefore will summarise the findings of the research objectives outlined in Chapter 1 and establish if the research objective of the study has been met.

### **5.1 SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

**Research objective 1: To determine the reasons students choose hospitality as a career.**

This research objective was to identify students' reasons for choosing hospitality as a career option in the hospitality industry. For students to choose hospitality, they first need to select subjects related to hospitality in high school in order to be selected into the program. Most students involved in the study indicated that hospitality studies was not one of their subjects in high school hence their decision to pursue a national diploma in hospitality management at DUT. The findings of the study have shown that the majority of the participants were positive about pursuing careers within the industry after graduation. This is in line with other studies which showed students were eager to pursue careers in the hospitality industry (Amissah *et al.* 2020b: 9). In contrast, this study is not in line with a study conducted in Vietnam which suggests that as students' progress towards their graduation their perception of hospitality as a career choice diminishes (Le, Klieve and McDonald 2018: 17). Exposure to the industry was highlighted as the main reason they did not wish to enter the industry upon graduation.

Therefore, the study under investigation has shown that students have a positive view of the industry; the university has to ensure what they are currently doing is maintained so that students maintain their positive view as discovered in the study.

**Research Objective 2: To ascertain student's perceptions of the different element that make up hospitality employment.**

In examining the factors that students consider when deciding to pursue a career in hospitality, the opportunity to travel abroad and gain knowledge and experience to start a personal business ranked as the highest factor motivating the decision to pursue a career in the industry. This was followed by other factors such as: to satisfy social status, meet new people and obtain a professional qualification. Knowledge about participants' ideal occupations, as well as their post-career goals, gave further insight into their expectations for the type of work they will do in the hospitality sector. It also aids in the discovery of those elements that are crucial to future hospitality employees (students) while starting a new profession. In the qualitative data, it was also clear that the participants valued the chance to travel and learn new things. In contrast, these results differ from earlier published studies (Brown, Arendt and Bosselman (2014: 62) in which the opportunity to travel was rated the lowest. Their reason was associated with the current economic state and the advancement of technology. The opportunity to travel (Richardson and Butler 2012: 269) was considered one of the important factors that students consider when thinking about hospitality as a career. This is in line with the current study findings. Surprisingly, the current study's findings have shown that students are not pursuing this diploma for monetary gain as one would think. Although students expectations in terms of remunerations were not investigated, it is clear that students might be aware of other factors such as low pay, unsociable working hours and the slow pace for progression in this career.

A possible explanation for this is that students are aware of the challenges in the industry in South Africa and are not pleased with current working

conditions. Therefore, they seek opportunities outside the country where working conditions are favourable and they can progress in their careers.

**Research objective 3: To examine the influence work experience has on these perceptions**

Exposure to any type of work prior to earning a qualification might help in developing positive perceptions towards that industry. Therefore, this objective intends to assess if the time students spent in WIL has yielded negative or positive results in developing positive perceptions towards the industry. It is very clear from the findings that students have positive views of the industry. Numerous factors help to ensure students view the industry as such. The academic department makes explicit what students will encounter when they enter the industry, such as unsociable working hours and low pay, so there are no surprises to how things are carried out in the industry. The university provided a realistic view of the industry. This has made students confident in their intentions of pursuing work in the hospitality industry but not in South Africa.

Furthermore, in the hospitality industry, work-integrated learning was the most important factor in determining career choices. When it comes to choosing a career, current events, personal tastes, and societal awareness all play a role. Some work experience, whether official or informal, is likely to encourage positive career decisions, and it may be a helpful tool for influencing future employee career selections. As a result, the findings of this study show that WIL influences students' perceptions about jobs in the industry.

**Research objective 4: Determine current hospitality students' commitment to a career in the industry.**

Several studies have been conducted to investigate the link between career views and the desire to work in the hotel and tourist industries. However, when it comes to students' intents, the results have been varied. The study's findings revealed that students were eager to work in the hospitality industry after graduation. Interestingly, most students prefer to begin their careers in the food

and beverage department. While students were aware of the working environment, they have negative views about hospitality careers. When asked about working circumstances, the participants stated that they are excellent. These views are in line with data received in the questionnaire (Table 4.13), thereby validating the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

## **5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The key purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions of students towards careers in the hospitality industry. The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data yielded several intriguing findings that require further investigation. The majority of the students polled said that the hospitality management program was their first study choice, but that they were happy with it and told their friends and family about it. They desire to go into the sector for a variety of reasons, the most important of which is to gain skills and expertise in order to create their own enterprises. Although they intend to work in the hospitality industry they do not intend to stay for an extended length of time. Students who have good opinions regarding hospitality management and the industry, in general, are more likely to have chosen hospitality management as their first choice of study, according to the study.

Another significant observation is that the majority of students who participated are females. It was uncovered that female students are more enthusiastic about working in the business than their male counterparts. This might explain why women make up a larger percentage of the workforce.

Students felt that the curriculum prepared them well for the industry, however, students pursuing hospitality management majoring in accommodation were not in agreement with that. Their disagreement was due to the fact they had not done any practical experience prior to engagement in WIL in their respective area of specialisation. Therefore, this implies academics at the university devise strategies towards exposing and engaging students in the industry through work-integrated learning.

## **5.4 CONCLUSION**

This research intended to investigate the perceptions of students currently in their final year of study on careers in the hospitality industry. This has been done in order to assess whether these students will pursue careers within the industry after graduation. It is evident from the current study that although the students were satisfied with the curriculum, they are willing to enter the industry upon graduation but not in South Africa. Most of them would prefer to start private business ventures or travel abroad.

The majority of participants in the study were females, therefore, the industry needs to also develop ways to entice males into studying hospitality which will then create a workforce that comprises both genders. The industry could use this information to ensure both genders with appropriate qualifications and skills are kept within the industry in order to improve the standard and quality of work in the hospitality industry.

The research concludes that students' perceptions are positive towards the industry. However, they have no intention of wanting to enter the industry upon graduating and that should be investigated further.

## **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study revealed several gaps in students' perceptions towards careers in the industry.

This study suggests that industry and schools that offer hospitality studies work together to ensure that potential students have a realistic view of the nature of the industry prior to selecting hospitality as a choice of study. Secondly, a well-structured developed system needs to be in place between industry and institutions of higher learning. This will allow learners to have a realistic view of the potential careers within the hospitality industry. This will also help them to clearly understand what the hospitality industry entails and the role they play



in the larger society. Educational institutions need to make teachers aware of the fact that hospitality is not an easy subject or career it is presumed to be. Thirdly, recruitment should be structured in a way that learners who demonstrate a passion for the industry are interviewed and selected. Fourthly, lecturers at universities should include practical examples in their subjects. This will help students to fully grasp the subjects and appreciate how the taught concepts fit into their future professional careers in the industry.

Finally, some values of entrepreneurship should be introduced to students while they are still at the university so that students can decide whether to join the industry or start their own businesses. In order to complement this, educational institutions may introduce students to various funding opportunities that may assist them with starting their own businesses.

#### **5.3.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE INDUSTRY**

Since the findings revealed that most students are pursuing this course to start their own business, the industry also requires the services of well-educated employees to join the industry to remain competitive. In order for the industry to retain qualified employees who have a positive attitude towards working in the industry, industry practitioners need to improve in the way in which they treat students while they are engaged in work-integrated learning. They also need to look into the elements of the salaries, working hours and working conditions in order to improve and retain the qualified personnel. The hospitality industry could also offer a mentorship program and financial assistance to interested students as an incentive to improve their own and their family's lives. This in turn will ensure a high level of service is executed.

#### **5.3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOSPITALITY EDUCATION**

Faculties of educational institutions offering hospitality-related qualifications need to organise career talks that expose prospective learners to information pertaining to the industry before choosing hospitality studies. The industry may allow opportunities for grade 9 learners to engage in job shadowing before

selecting hospitality studies as a subject. This should not only be limited to learners but also be extended to teachers who are engaged in advising learners when choosing subjects. This will enable them to carefully plan for careers in the industry.

## **5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

The first limitation identified during the research process was the sample size that was too small as one hospitality education provider was involved. Consequently, it is difficult to generalise the findings to the wider South African context. Future research could be expanded to include public and private institutions that offer similar programs and compare findings to identify any cultural differences.

The second limitation identified was that only third-year students participated in the study. In the future, students of all levels should be included to identify where the change in perception is developed. This can be done by implementing a longitudinal study.

Finally, this study has investigated students' perceptions towards careers in the hospitality industry after they graduate. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to the knowledge gap in South Africa, Durban to be specific. Hospitality institutions could use information discovered in this study to select students with a strong passion for the industry.

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## APPENDICES

### ANNEXURE A - LETTER OF INFORMATION



Dear Participant,

I trust that you are well.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. Before you agree to take part, please read this information sheet.

**Title of the Research Study:** Students' perceptions towards careers in the hospitality industry.

**Principal Investigator/s/researcher:** Miss NR Mlotshwa

**Supervisor:** Dr EM Mnguni (D Tech)

**Co-supervisor:** Dr H Adebanjo (PhD)

**Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:** I am a student at DUT doing research for my Master's degree in Management Sciences (Hospitality) currently undertaking a research project that focuses on the students' perceptions towards careers in the hospitality industry, and I require your assistance with the completion of the survey.

**Invitation to the potential participant:** You are being invited to participate in a research study because you are registered students for National Diploma in Hospitality Management

and have been exposed to working within the hospitality industry. Participating in this study is entirely voluntary. This form provides information describing the purpose, procedures, benefits, discomforts, risks if any, and precautions associated with this study.

The hospitality industry has been faced with the problem of enticing and keeping quality employees. If the current undergraduates' students are to become the effective employees of the future, it is important to understand their perceptions of hospitality employment. Therefore, this research aims at investigating the perceptions of hospitality students at the Department of Hospitality and Tourism at Durban University of Technology (DUT) towards the industry as a career choice.

You may ask any questions regarding this study until you fully understand the study to be undertaken. You are also entitled to discuss the study with your family and friends and you are under no obligation to commit at this stage. For this purpose, a copy of the Letter of Information document will be given to you to take home.

**Outline of the Procedures:** You are kindly requested to participate in a survey by responding to all the questions. Consent form is provided, and you are encouraged to read, understand and sign it. The questionnaire will take you approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Thereafter, if you are interested you will be invited to participate in focus group meeting which will convene at the most convenient time to you. The venue will be here at the Durban University of Technology.

**Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:** There is no anticipated risks or discomfort by participating in the study.

**Explain to the participant the reasons he/she may withdraw from the Study:** You may withdraw from the study at any stage without any repercussions. However, should you decide to stop participating in the study; it will be helpful if you inform the researcher about the decision. If you choose to withdraw from the study early, data collected up to that point may have already been used in the analyses. It is unlikely that there will be any risk/harms to you; due to the already collected data, since the data will not contain any information that identifies you personally. None of your information will be linked to any of your academic records.

**Benefits:** Findings would provide insight into the development of strategies that can be scaled up to bridge any gap on careers within the hospitality industry. Publication and conference proceeding.

**Remuneration:** Your participation is voluntary, and no remuneration will be provided.

**Costs of the Study:** You will not bear any costs for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:** You will not be required to disclose any personal identifying details; instead, a code will be used to number questionnaires.

**Results:** The results of this research study will be presented at various conferences, and will be published in journals. Your name will not appear in any presentation or publications. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact myself at [nelisiwem@dut.ac.za](mailto:nelisiwem@dut.ac.za). In particular, if you would like a summary of the results, please let me know by providing your email address or alternate contact information.

**Research-related Injury:** There is no anticipated research-related injury by participating in the study.

**Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings:** All data collected will be stored in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism in a sealed box for a period of five years. The voice recording of the focus group meeting will be transferred to a cd and a password will be created and kept together with quantitative data for five years. The securely stored questionnaires and voice recording will be available only to the supervisors and the researcher during this period of five years. Thereafter, the questionnaires will be shredded and the voice recording will be deleted.

**Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:** Please contact me Nelisiwe Mlotshwa on (073 543 1166), my supervisor Dr EM Mnguni (Tel. no. 031-373 5507) or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L Linganis on 031 373 2577 or [researchdirector@dut.ac.za](mailto:researchdirector@dut.ac.za).



### CONSENT

#### Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, NR Mlotshwa, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: **IREC 039/20**,
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Full Name of Participant  
Thumbprint**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Time**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature / Right**

I, **Nelisiwe R. Mlotshwa** herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Full Name of Researcher**

**Date**

**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Full Name of Witness (If applicable)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

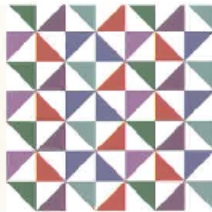
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)**

**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

## **ANNEXURE B- ETHICS LETTER**





Institutional Research Ethics Committee  
Research and Training Support Directorate  
2nd Floor, Tower C  
Gate 1, 2000 Hill Campus  
Durban University of Technology  
P O Box 1334, Durban South Africa 401  
Tel: 031 275 2295  
Email: [research\\_ethics@dut.ac.za](mailto:research_ethics@dut.ac.za)  
[www.dut.ac.za](http://www.dut.ac.za)

3 November 2020

Ms N R Mloshwa  
F2103  
Ntuzuma  
Kwamashu  
4359

Dear Ms Mloshwa

**Students' perceptions towards careers in hospitality industry**  
**Ethical Clearance Number IREC 039/20**

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your final data collection tool for review.

We are pleased to inform you that the data collection tool has been approved. Kindly ensure that participants used for the pilot study are not part of the main study.

In addition, the IREC acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

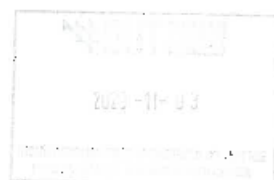
Please note that FULL APPROVAL is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's).

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely,

Professor J K Adam  
Chairperson: IREC



## ANNEXURE C – QUESTIONNAIRE



## Questionnaire

### Student's perceptions towards careers in the hospitality industry.

The study examines the student's perception's towards careers in the hospitality industry. The information provided will be utilised for research purposes and potential publications. The completion of survey is voluntary your name; address or telephone number is not essential. The questionnaire can be completed in approximately 10 minutes.

#### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Please mark with (X) in the appropriate blocks
2. Where explanations are necessary, write these in the lined spaces provided.

### SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION (Please tick the appropriate box. Only one answer is required for each question.

#### 1. Gender

Female	
Male	

#### 2. Age

18 to 21	
22 to 24	
25 to 28	
29 to 34	
35 and above	

#### 3. Was hospitality study one of your subjects in your National Senior Certificate (NSC).

Yes	
No	

#### 4. Was this your first choice of study area?

Yes	
-----	--

No	
----	--

5. If not, what was your first choice

---

6. What is your area of specialisation in Hospitality at DUT?

Accommodation Management	
Food and Beverage Operations	

7. What were the factors that motivated you to choose it? You may select more than one that is/are suitable.

Social Status	
Working hours	
Meeting new people	
Promotion prospects	
Good starting salary	
Opportunity to travel abroad	
Gaining knowledge to start my own business	
To have a professional qualification	
Other (Please specify)	

## SECTION B: CURRICULUM

8. Do you think that the curriculum at DUT prepares you adequately for the hospitality industry?

Yes	
No	

9. What aspects of the curriculum you liked the most?

Theory	
Practical	

10. What aspects of the curriculum you disliked the most?

Theory	
Practical	

## SECTION C: WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY

11. Have you done any work integrated learning in the industry?

Yes	
No	

12. What was the duration of your work integrated learning?

6 months	
12 months	

13. Which department have you worked in the longest? (you can tick more than one box)

Front of house	
Housekeeping	
Restaurant/ Bar	
Banqueting	
Other (Please indicate)	

14. Has working in the industry influenced your choice of pursuing a career in the hospitality industry?

Yes	
No	

15. How has working in the industry influenced your decision about a career in the industry?

Positively	
Negatively	
Neither	

16. Has your experience of working in the industry been the main factor in your decision about pursuing a career in the hospitality?

Yes	
No	

17. Were you aware of the nature of work before commencing experiential learning?

Yes	
No	

## SECTION D: PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS TOWARDS HOSPITALITY AS A CAREER

18. Rate each statement from strongly agree to strongly disagree

	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I see a professional future in the industry					
I would be willing to occupy any job in the industry					
Nothing can change my mind about working in the hospitality industry					
My gender has influenced my career					
Working in the hospitality industry is a respected career in South Africa society.					
I talk to my relatives and friends with pride about my career in the hospitality industry.					
I am very pleased to have chosen hospitality as a career path.					
I will work in the hospitality industry after graduation provided that I become a manager or department head.					

## SECTION E: GENERAL

19. Do you think that the hospitality industry is a growing industry with many career opportunities?

Yes	
No	

20. Are you likely to work in the hospitality industry after graduation?

Definitely	
More than likely	
Unsure	
Unlikely	
Definitely not	

21. What factors influenced changes in your perceptions towards a career in industry? You may select more than one that is/are suitable.

Work integrated Learning	
Motivation by department	
University co-curricular activities	
Knowledge about course	
Peer influence	
Alumni	
Family or relatives	
None	

Thank you for taking your time to complete survey.

## **ANNEXURE D -FOCUS GROUP – QUESTIONS GUIDE**

1. Why did you choose to study hospitality?
2. What aspects of the curriculum did you enjoy and why?
3. What aspects of the curriculum you found challenging and why?
4. Since joining DUT has the subjects offered met your expectations. If so, please elaborate.
5. How did your subjects relate to practice?
6. Since you were engaged in WIL, has your perception of the industry change.
7. What characteristics of the industry have contributed to your perceptions of the industry?
8. Is there any other non-hospitality related work you have done previously that has added benefit?
9. Are there other thoughts you would like to mention/ add?

## ANNEXURE E – GATEKEEPER LETTER



*Directorate for Research and Postgraduate Support  
Durban University of Technology  
Tromso Annex, Steve Biko Campus  
P.O. Box 1334, Durban 4000  
Tel.: 031-3732578/7  
Fax: 031-3732946*

2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020  
Ms Nelisiwe R Mlotshwa  
c/o Department of Hospitality and Tourism  
Management Sciences  
Durban University of Technology

Dear Ms Mlotshwa

### **PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE DUT**

Your email correspondence in respect of the above refers. I am pleased to inform you that the Institutional Research and Innovation Committee (IRIC) has granted **Full Permission** for you to conduct your research "Students' perceptions towards careers in the hospitality industry" at the Durban University of Technology.

The DUT may impose any other condition it deems appropriate in the circumstances having regard to nature and extent of access to and use of information requested.

We would be grateful if a summary of your key research findings would be submitted to the IRIC on completion of your studies.

Kindest regards.  
Yours sincerely

DR LINDA ZIKHONA LINGANISO  
DIRECTOR: RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT DIRECTORATE