

Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Tourism and Hospitality Career Education in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to 'explore' students' perceptions of tourism and hospitality career education in three universities that run undergraduate programmes in Ghana, namely: the University of Cape Coast (UCC), University of Energy and Natural Resources (UENR) and the University for Development Studies (UDS). Final year students totaling 128 students were contacted through questionnaire administration and results obtained analyzed employing SPSS version 16. The study revealed that 45% of respondents from the UCC did not want to work in the industry after graduation. A greater number of respondents, (85%) in UCC, (90%) in UENR and (92%) in UDS believed a decision to invest in tourism and hospitality education career was worthwhile. Contrarily, above 50% of all respondents surveyed in the three institutions did not believe one could make good income whilst working in the industry. It is suggested that career counselling sessions be organized in the universities by industry players in the tourism and hospitality sector to woo students' interest to working in the sector.

Keywords: Students, tourism, hospitality education career, perceptions

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is regarded worldwide as the industry with the highest growth rate and the greatest job creation potentials (Business Day, 2004 as cited in Shaw, Saayman & Saayman, 2012). Indeed, it is a driver of job growth and economic prosperity, accounting for 1 in 10 jobs worldwide and delivering 1 in 5 of all new jobs created in 2017 (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2018). A principal argument made for encouraging the development of tourism and hospitality is that the industry produces a considerable number of jobs, both directly in the sectors in which tourist expenditure occurs and more widely via inter-industry linkages (Diaz, 2001; Roney & Öztin, 2007). Therefore, the availability of skilled and trained manpower is a crucial element in the success of any tourism and hospitality development plan

or agenda, and so employees are regarded as sine qua non of the industry (Aynalem, Birhanu, & Tesefay, 2016).

Historically, records have it that the *École Hôtelière de Lausanne* [EHL] (Lausanne Hotel School) which is a Swiss hospitality school founded in 1893 was the first trade-school to focus on tourism and hospitality education and since the late 20th century offered university level degrees. The school, located in Lausanne, Switzerland, has been a pioneer in education that has inspired the world of hospitality and created a unique professional community of 25,000 global industry executives who share the same values based on EHL's distinctive heritage (Mad Monkey Hotels, 2014). *Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne* (EHL) has been ranked at the top position in the 2019 Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University ranking for Hospitality and Leisure Management Universities, after celebrating its 125th anniversary and earning the extremely sought-after Michelin star. Once more, QS rankings confirm Switzerland's central role in shaping the hospitality industry, and EHL's position as the world's leading institution (EHL, 2019).

Cornell University, School of Hotel Administration, founded in 1922, is also known to host one of the world's best hospitality education programmes. The school provided the world's first undergraduate hospitality management degree and is equally accredited with offering the only Ivy League business-management programmes focused on hospitality (The Best Schools, 2019). Equally important and worth mentioning are other leading institutions in the world that are involved in tourism and hospitality education namely; Michigan State University (School of Hospitality Business), University of Nevada at Las Vegas (William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration) and Fairleigh Dickinson University (International School of Hospitality and Tourism Management).

In Africa, there are a couple of tourism and hospitality related schools that also offer students the opportunity to train and work in the industry. Kenya Utalii College which is an affiliate member of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is Africa's leading hospitality and tourism training institution established far back as 1975. The college has trained over 60,000 graduates from around the world, majority of whom have served in the local and international hospitality and tourism industries. The college was established under the Hotels and Restaurants Act, (Cap. 494, Laws of Kenya) which has since been replaced by the Tourism Act, 2011 (Kenya Utalii College, 2019). Mention can also be made of the School of Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management of the Moi University also based in Kenya as one of the largest in the East African sub-region with three degree and five postgraduate programmes to their credit. Other notable institutions include; University of Johannesburg (School of Tourism and Hospitality) and Makerere University's, Department of Forestry, Biodiversity and Tourism in Uganda.

In Ghana, the School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management (SHORT MGT) Trade Fair, La, Accra was the first professional hospitality training institute in the country established in November 1997 initially enrolling only thirteen (13) students and has distinguished itself as the oldest Hospitality Training School in Ghana. The School was granted authorization certificate in September 2011 by the National Accreditation Board (NAB) to operate as a tertiary institute. It is also affiliated to Stratford University [USA] (School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management, 2012). Ten (10) accredited public universities existed in the country

as at 2013 out of which five offered degree programmes related to tourism and hospitality (NCTE, 2013). This was a strategy to strengthen tourism and hospitality career education in the country and the institutions include; University of Cape Coast (UCC), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) University for Development Studies (UDS), and quite recently the University of Energy and Natural Resources (UENR). In 2016, eight (8) polytechnics were upgraded to the status of Technical Universities in the country, and these same institutions hitherto had run various degree related programmes in tourism and hospitality (Bachelors and Higher National Diploma degrees). All these aforementioned tertiary institutions provide opportunities for students to enroll for a career in tourism and hospitality education and thereafter, seek work in the industry.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The tourism and hospitality sector is a fast growing one in Ghana and this therefore requires the supply of a formidable workforce. The relationship between human resources and tourism can be said to be indispensable. Notable is the fact that, tourism and hospitality can only flourish if the industry can employ an adequate supply of a sustainable quality staff/workforce (Aynalem et. al., 2016). This therefore requires training institutions must rise up to the task and tertiary educational institutions in Ghana realizing this deficit decided to tap into it. Although there is substantial literature on tourism and hospitality employment in the world, there is limited research conducted to highlight the perceptions of students towards their careers in the tourism/hospitality industry in Ghana. A recent research done in the UCC found out that students perception towards hospitality and tourism were unfavourable and thus recommended career counselling, guidance and orientation of students towards careers in the industry (Amissah, Opoku-Mensah, Mensah & Gamor, 2019). This study therefore will to contribute to knowledge with regard to exploring the implications of academia's inability to research into the perceptions of "their own product's" pertaining to the world of work they are being trained for and to evaluate the status of hospitality and tourism jobs with regard to the human resource planning process for the sector since negative attitudes may result in the industry's failure to capture and retain the most qualified tourism/hospitality graduands and losing them to other sectors of the economy.

Roney and Öztin, (2007) have noted that it is important to provide students studying tourism and hospitality with a positive attitude towards work in the larger tourism industry. Indeed, Ozukan (2009) as cited in Shaw, Saayman and Saayman (2012) also opined that it is not easy to provide human resources for the tourism industry generally because, even though unemployment is at peak levels, the industry largely has also been unable to find qualified people for the service-intensive tourism and hospitality businesses. The lack of qualified staff is thus seen to be limiting the growth of the tourism and hospitality industry while studies have also brought to the fore the fact that this twin industry generates employment. The sector is always too often also criticized as generating mainly low-skilled and low-paying jobs that offer little job satisfaction (Anandhwanlert & Wattanasan, 2016). Based on this assertion it is possible that many students after a BSc degree study in tourism and hospitality usually seek employment in other fields either than where they have been trained to fit. This therefore calls for the the need to explore the mindset of university students to ascertain their perceptions on career prospects and their intentions to work in the industry or otherwise after completion for it is stated that if today's students of tourism and hospitality are to become the effective

practitioners of tomorrow, it is fundamental to understand their perceptions of the opportunities that tourism and hospitality related employment have to offer (Elhoushy, 2014).

Several researchers have studied the perceptions of undergraduate tourism and hospitality management students in the world but Jenkins (2001) has shown that, as they progress in their studies, students' perceptions of the industry tended to deteriorate. Birdir (2002) surveyed junior and senior tourism and hospitality education students at the University of Mersin in Turkey in order to find out the reasons why some students were not eager to work in the industry after graduation. The main reason stated was the lack of quality education in the subject matter to enable them become successful in the sector. A survey by Roney and Öztin (2007) has proffered the general notion that tourism employment appears to be neither positive nor negative and even if new students started with a more optimistic view of the industry, after the internship period and (for some students) part-time work experience, they tended to develop a less favourable perception.

Since the industry also relies heavily on people to deliver a service, this could result in a negative impact on service quality and consumer satisfaction, which might then hinder the competitiveness of the sector (Roney & Oztin, 2007), hence necessitating calls for a study to be conducted on student's perception on the tourism/hospitality career education in the selected universities in Ghana. The main thrust of this article therefore was to explore students' perceptions of career prospects of the sector in the country and to study final year undergraduate students' intentions to work in the industry after graduation.

Delving into the literature also reveals that several researchers have studied the perceptions of undergraduate tourism and hospitality management students. Casado's (1992) survey on student expectations of hospitality jobs revealed for instance that, although students tended to be fairly realistic before their graduation, the likelihood of these students to switch over to other jobs seemed to be on the higher side. Barron and Maxwell (1993) examined the perceptions of new and continuing students at Scottish higher education institutions where they found that in general the new students had 'positive mental images' of the industry, whereas those students with supervised work experience tended to be less positive in their views. Purcell and Quinn (1995) surveyed 704 former tourism students and discovered that graduates complained of having little opportunity to develop their managerial skills.

A relativity study, conducted by Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000), of four-year tourism and hotel management students, in seven different schools also in Turkey, reported negative perceptions towards different dimensions of working in tourism. Kozak and Kızıllırmak (2001) after a similar survey in three different vocational schools also in Turkey bemoaned the attitude of undergraduate students of tourism and hospitality towards jobs in the sector similar to Barron and Maxwell (1993) study, which brought to the limelight that students' work experience as trainees in the industry affected their perceptions in a negative way. In his comparative study of hospitality students' future perceptions at two different universities in the UK and the Netherlands, Jenkins (2001) also revealed that, as they progressed in their degree, the students' perception and intention of working in the tourism and hospitality industry tended to deteriorate.

Birdir (2002) surveyed the junior and senior tourism students at the University of Mersin in Turkey in order to find out the reasons why some students were not eager to work in the industry after graduation. The main reason cited was the lack of quality education in tourism to enable them become successful in the sector. Irregular working hours in tourism was the second major reason. The findings of the survey conducted by Gökdeniz, Çeken and Erdem (2002), at 4 and 5-star rated hotels in Ankara, showed that one of the reasons for the enduring poor image of the industry is the managers' attitudes towards the trainees. Most of the managers used the trainees because they were "cheap labour" and put these students into work in any department where staffs were needed. Another study, conducted among the tourism students examined what tourism and hospitality internship students expected from working in the industry and the results showed that interns gave high priority to good and fair wages, opportunities for career development, tactful and professional management and personal growth (Yüksel, Yüksel, & Hançer, 2003).

It has also been noted in the literature that for the higher education sector to make a valid contribution to society, educators must have a sound understanding of current issues, business drivers and economic policies to facilitate employability and enrich the hospitality sector in particular (Ali, Murphy & Nadkarni, 2017). Hospitality for instance is an applied subject area, and for any curricula to be tailor-made towards the needs of the sector, then the curricula must develop meaningfully towards improved employability, industry relationships and inputs which are deemed critical. Higher educational institutions therefore have a responsibility to prepare graduates for the world of work, i.e. employability (Wang & Tsai, 2014 as cited in Ali, et.al, 2017). In a survey conducted by Aksu and Köksal (2005) at the Akdeniz University School of Tourism and Hotel Management in Antalya, which investigated the main expectations of students from the tourism industry, the results revealed that generally they had low expectations. Richardson and Butler (2009) determined as a result of their study on career expectations of tourism students that the students did not believe tourism would present significant opportunities with regard to their career in the future.

It has again also been revealed in the literature by Selçuk, Erdogan and Güllüce, (2013) that a greater percentage of the students who participated in their research on students' perceptions of tourism and hospitality businesses indicated they did not find the business interesting with about 83% of the participants stating that working hours in the tourism sector were not appropriate for a regular life with 69% of them revealing tourism and hospitality businesses were unstable due to its seasonality and many other factors. Approximately 50% of the respondents believed they had made a mistake in their career goal by selecting tourism and hospitality. Students responded negatively in terms of working in the tourism industry after graduation (44%) and again negatively with respect to "I would work in the tourism sector on the condition that I become a manager" indicated by approximately 70% of student respondents. Student evaluation and assessment of tourism courses in higher education can take place at various levels: at the level of individual teachers, course units, programmes of study, departments and institution and as Richardson (2005) has pointed out: at one extreme, one could envisage a teacher seeking feedback on a particular lecture; at the other extreme, one might envisage obtaining feedback on a national system of higher education. Clearly, the level at which one should collect feedback is dependent on the purpose of the investigation.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

The study was conducted in three public universities in Ghana namely, the University of Cape Coast [UCC] located in the southern coast of the country (Central Region), the University of Energy and Natural Resources [UENR] in Sunyani located in the middle belt of the country (Bono Region) and the University for Development Studies [UDS] (Nyankpala Campus) located in the Northern Region of Ghana (See figure 1).

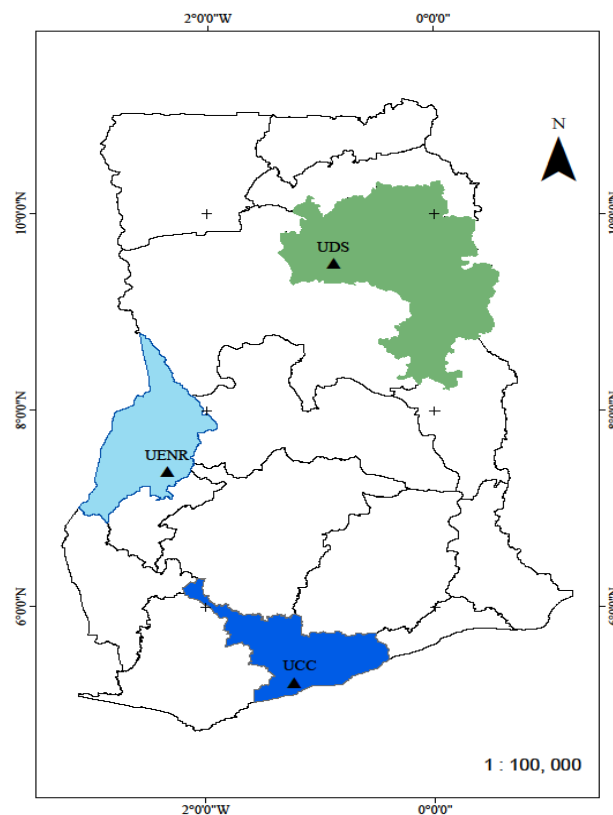


Figure 1: Map showing location of the three universities in Ghana
Source: GIS unit, Dept. of Forestry and Forest Resources Management [UDS] (2019)

At the UCC, a hospitality and tourism department was carved out of the then Department of Geography and Tourism in 2008 after tourism had run concurrently with geography and population studies in the same department since the early 1990s. At the University for Development Studies (Nyankpala Campus) tourism and hospitality related education started after the Faculty of Natural Resources and Environment was also carved out of the Faculty of Agriculture in 2009. The Department of Ecotourism and Environmental Management is tasked with running a BSc degree in tourism and hospitality management on this campus and staff herein also oversee the teaching of tourism related courses in two other faculties of the same campus. The University of Energy and Natural Resources in Sunyani begun a BSc programme in Ecotourism, Recreation and Hospitality in 2012 and by 2016, the institution had passed out its first batch of graduands into the working world.

Sampling

Both stratified and purposive sampling techniques were employed in the three institutions to select level 400 students reading a 4-year BSc degree programme in tourism and hospitality in their respective schools. In UCC, level 400 students who were sampled and studied BSc in tourism were 30 while those who read hospitality were 55. UENR offered a composite degree, which is BSc in Ecotourism, Recreation and Hospitality and had a total of 20 final year students enrolled. A total of 23 students had been enrolled in the UDS to read a composite degree in Ecotourism and Hospitality Management. Table 1 gives a summary of the sampling done in the three institutions.

Table 1: Sampling

Institution	No. of Students	(%)
UCC	85	66.4
UENR	20	15.6
UDS	23	18.0
Total	128	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2018.

In all, a total of 128 final year candidates were sampled in the three institutions for the study. An analysis of the sample revealed that in all three institutions, females were the majority (see Table 2) in each study programme. There seems to be a great affinity for the hospitality component in particular by females, hence the reason why they dominated. In the UCC for instance which run both BSc Hospitality Management and BSc Tourism Management programmes separately, it was observed that majority of the respondents sampled for the BSc hospitality were female and it was noted that the hospitality bid attracted them.

Table 2: Enrolment by gender in study institutions

Gender	UCC	UENR	UDS
Male	30 (29.4)	9 (43.4)	10 (45)
Female	55 (70.6)	11 (56.6)	13 (55)
Total	85 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	23 (100.0)

Source: Field Data, 2018.

Study Design

The multiple case study research approach based on similarity between cases was adopted. The research by Hughes et.al. (2011) as cited in Bryman (2016) which concerned three Northern Ireland neighbourhoods in which they had broadly similar proportion of Protestants and Catholic residents although they differed in terms of multiple deprivation with one community considered less deprived than the other two. In this scenario though the three institutions are located in three different geographical destinations but the similarity laid in the fact that these had developed and run programmes that were tourism and hospitality related and so this design was opted for in order to assess if there were any similarities and differences in the way

students of the three tertiary institutions perceived tourism and hospitality career opportunities in country.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Intention to work in the industry after graduation

Table 3 shows some level of affirmation of students on working in the industry after completion of their various courses of study. The findings indicate about 45% of final year students in UCC suggesting they will work in the industry, with 65% in UENR indicating same and that of UDS being 70%. Reasons assigned by a few respondents in UCC indicated they had undertaken internship programmes with some hotels and managements of these facilities assured them of placements after completion of their courses of study.

Table 3: Decisions on working in the tourism/hospitality industry

Decision	UCC: N=85	UENR: N=20	UDS: N=23
YES	45%	65%	70%
NO	40%	30%	20%
UNDECIDED	15%	5%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Field Data, 2018

In the UDS, the respondents expressed enthusiasm in working in these accommodation facilities in the northern sector citing the absence of employment opportunities in the public sector in the country in recent times. They noted that the private sector was fast expanding with many of the middle class natives venturing some investments in accommodation related businesses in the north and to them the future looked bright. Explanations advanced by respondents from UENR included opportunities relating to them being on their own in the industry utilizing skills acquired in school to establish bakeries or eatery facilities in case the formal sector failed to absorb them. This desire by student interns in UCC to work in the sector after graduation portrays a positive image about working in the industry and the finding seems to exemplify that of Aksu and Köksal (2005) at the Akdeniz University School of Tourism and Hotel Management in Antalya where their study indicated positive perceptions were found among respondents who carried out practical work experience outside of Turkey.

A number of respondents also indicated they will not work in the industry and this came to light from 40% of respondents from UCC, 30% from UENR, with 20% from the UDS. They hinted on seeking employment opportunities in other sectors of the economy namely; the insurance sector, the banking/commerce sector with a few others indicating they will compete for the limited job opportunities in the civil service (district/municipal/metro assemblies and regional coordinating councils) in the case of UCC. All respondents in the three institutions expressed interest in seeking jobs from the security agencies/services namely; the Ghana Armed Forces, the Ghana Prison Service and the Ghana Immigration Service, National Security and the Bureau of National Investigation (BNI). A few also expressed interest in taking up appointments with the Ghana Revenue Service (GRA). Explanations given were that a BSc degree is the basis to the "working world" in Ghana and so their view was that any employer who hired them will re-train them to suit the intended job description.

Respondents again had low expectations from the sector noting that because most tourism and hospitality businesses in the country were largely private sector driven businesses, the pay structure was not encouraging, hence their decision not to work in the sector. This finding bears semblance to the opinion that low-paying jobs were offered by the hospitality and tourism sector which offered little job satisfaction as noted by Anandhwanlert and Wattanasan, (2016). A few of the respondents at UCC (15%), UENR (5%) and UDS (10%) were however not sure of their intentions (undecided) to work in the industry and where to get themselves fixed after completion but were optimistic after their mandatory national service scheme, some opportunities will open up for them.

Students' perceptions of the tourism and hospitality industry in Ghana

The study also sought to explore respondents' extend of agreement with or otherwise in terms of their perceptions of the tourism and hospitality career prospects in the country and the results are shown in table 5. In general, the respondents believed their decision to invest in tourism and hospitality education was a good initiative as noted in the results from the three institutions ie 85% for UCC, 90% for UENR and 92% for UDS. All respondents expressed similar sentiments believing that "to study a tourism and hospitality related course at the university level is a good investment in career development" and further to this, in the event of a decision to further their studies in tourism after completion, they envisaged occupying higher-level managerial positions in the industry after postgraduate studies. This finding seems to be in agreement with Selçuk, et. al (2013) whose study in Turkey revealed that over 70% of respondents indicated they would only work in the sector on the condition that they became manager of the tourism/hospitality facility that hired them.

Table 5: Students' Perceptions of the Tourism and Hospitality Industry

Students' Perceptions	UCC (N=85) (%agree)	UENR (N=20) (%agree)	UDS (N=23) (%agree)
Attaining a degree in tourism and hospitality is a good investment	85	90	92
One can make good earnings working in tourism/hospitality industry in Ghana	41	39	36
There is low prestige attached to working in the tourism and hospitality industry in Ghana	80	78	88
Irregular working hours is not a disincentive to my intension to work in the industry	40	44	50
Proprietors do not respect views and suggestions of undergraduate hospitality interns attached to their facility	32	40	28
There is a general gender discrimination in favour of women in the industry in Ghana	60	70	74
I will not work in the industry after my graduation	55	35	30
Courses of study being taught in my school are relevant to fix me in the industry after graduation	90	88	85
Meeting new people in the work environment is good motivation for me to work in the industry	42	31	28
Working in the industry does not provide a secure future	95	85	90

Source: Field Data, 2018

The industry's general traditional image of low pay is supported by the findings of this survey as 41% of the respondents in UCC attested to it. This same reason was cited for their uncertainty in working in the industry after graduation as noted by the 55% of the respondents in UCC who indicated they will not work in the industry. Close to 39% in UENR also found low pay structure as a disincentive to working in the industry and for this reason 35% indicated their unwillingness to work in the sector after graduation. Close to 36% in UDS agreed with the statement "one can make good money by working in tourism and hospitality" and by implication, majority (64%) thought payments were poor and so did not fathom this as a source of motivation hence confirming similar opinions that low-paying jobs in tourism and hospitality offered little job satisfaction as noted by Anandhwanlert and Wattanasan (2016). On the contrary and by inference it means that 59%, 61% and 64% of respondents in UCC, UENR and UDS respectively did not think one could earn good money working in the industry after pursuing a related BSc degree. The impression gathered in explanations from respondents were that there is a diversity of tourism/hospitality related jobs in Ghana but the greatest opportunities for employment were in the lower star rated accommodation facilities owned by private entrepreneurs who could easily hire and fire. Proprietress/proprietresses of these hospitality facilities did not seem to respect views of hospitality degree students and often disregarded suggestions put forth especially when they came as interns under their tutelage and this was affirmed by 32% of respondents in UCC hence bearing similarity to Gökdeniz et. al (2002) findings at 4 and 5-star rated hotels in Turkey, which revealed that one of the reasons for the enduring poor image of the industry is the managers' poor attitudes towards the trainees.

As also indicated in table 5, majority of the respondents did not believe tourism and hospitality related careers were prestigious in the country as attested to by (80% in UCC, 78% in UENR and 88% in UDS). Explanations ascribed to this phenomenon were largely linked to the low pay syndrome associated with the industry. Other respondents explained that most graduate employees only sought an opportunity to "hangon" to hospitality and tourism facilities for a job pending when an opportunity for a better paid employment came in handy thus exemplifying the assertion that these hospitality jobs were often seen as low skilled and therefore regarded as demeaning and in spite of the diversity of tourism and hospitality occupations, the poor image held automatically transferred to all tourism-related jobs as noted by Roney and Öztin, (2007). To the group of respondents who thought "tourism related jobs were prestigious" the justification given for their view was that every job is prestigious and the tourism/hospitality related ones are no exception. Prestige to these respondents was only a conception borne in mind and that it was high time everyone in any form of employment "blew his own horn", by making him/herself matter in the society.

A fair bit of respondents (42% in UCC) indicated meeting new people through working in the industry was a "pleasant experience" These respondents noted that the industry is full of events and experiences namely; hosting birthday/wedding ceremonies, beauty pageants, pool parties, conferences and many more and these events consistently happened throughout the year especially in the accommodation sector. This seems to attract the interest of some youth still in school to think of working in the industry. Majority (58%) however did not think this factor was strong enough to attract them to work in the industry.

Close to 95% of respondents in UCC, 85% in UENR and 90% in UDS believed 'working in the industry did not provide a secure future'. Students in UCC adduced the following; tourism studies in contemporary times reveal that the industry is highly volatile to shocks and cases in point cited to support their arguments included Egypt and Tunisia whose economies were heavily depended on tourism and these same economies witnessed serious difficulties due to the Arab spring. To students of the UDS, the causes of a showdown in the industry may not even originate from your own country but the effects may spill to your homecountry. A case cited was the Ebola scare in 2013 and 2014 in West Africa whereby Ghana which did not even register a single incidence of the disease but suffered alongside the whole of the West African bloc due to the negative perception held by foreign travellers resulting in low visitor influx over the period thus confirming Selcuk and associates (2013) assertion that 69% of respondents surveyed in Turkey viewed tourism businesses to be unstable due to its seasonality and many other factors.

Relating to the issue of tourism and hospitality courses being taught by instructors (lecturers) to their understanding, respondents affirmed that courses taught in their respective schools were relevant enough to equip and fix them in the tourism and hospitality job market. Explaining their assertion further, some of the respondents (90%) who alluded to this in UCC gave reasons as follows: Good teaching, well balanced course content coupled with adequate reference materials made the course a delight to study. To the 88% in UENR, they noted that: Enough field practical experience, good course content, appropriate assessment, which are, quizzes, group presentations and assignments including emphasis on student independence were the reasons cited for their interest in the course as handled by their lecturers. In UDS, the 85% of respondents also indicated adequate course content, appropriate institutions for industrial attachment, clear career goals and standards and appropriate workload in addition to availability of well-resourced lecturers. These findings seem to contradict that of Birdir (2002) who surveyed junior and senior tourism and hospitality education students at the University of Mersin in Turkey trying to find out why they did not want to work in the sector and the response stated was the lack of quality education in the subject matter to enable them become successful after graduation.

Irregular working hours in tourism affected family life negatively and this was affirmed by 60% of the respondents in UCC. It is true that many hospitality and tourism workers worked long hours and also at very unsociable hours when the rest of the population is resting and this supports the views of Birdir (2002) who is purported to have reported of irregular working hours in the tourism industry which made work therein unattractive. The existence of gender related discrimination was another issue of concern raised in this study which was noted by 60% of the respondents in UCC, 70% and 74% in UENR and UDS respectively. The assertion was that most adverts on hospitality and tourism job search portals in Ghana indicated females to be the most preferred probably due to the traditional setting of the local family structure where most women did the cooking, cleaning and laundry.

CONCLUSION

Quite a sizable proportion of respondents, that is, 40% from UCC, 30% from UENR and 20% from the UDS did not intend to work in the industry citing reasons of low pay from employers. Some respondents indicated preference for public sector related jobs that will enable them benefit from a good pension at the end of their working lives. The study also espoused the fact

that students were convinced it was a good investment to pursue a tourism and hospitality career related course but if an individual took up employment in the sector, the person was not prone to earning a good salary. Respondents also noted that pursuing a career in hospitality and tourism was generally not prestigious in Ghana owing to poor pay and remuneration. The industry was also perceived not provide a secure future for employees due to external shocks related to diseases and civil unrest which may not even originate from the destination. In all three institutions, it was believed that their instructors handled the courses of study well and the course content fitted the needs of the industry they were trained for.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study made the following recommendations

- Results from this study reveals that career counselling related programmes are necessary for hospitality and tourism related study programmes run in the universities in order to orient students on the need to work in the industry to bring in quality service delivery. The counselling units of the universities can be tasked to do this.
- Students believed that a career in hospitality and tourism is worthwhile and for that matter, there is need for academic staff to develop sessions that will foster an encounter with players in the industry namely the Ghana Tourism Authority, renowned hoteliers, tour operators and travel agencies. Continuous encounters in seminar sessions with the third and final year students explaining their success stories and the opportunities in the industry will help sustain their interest in working in the sector.
- Hoteliers and tourism related agencies needed to embark on vigorous marketing programmes in conjunction with the Ghana Tourism Authority in order to rake in more revenue so that the facilities can remunerate employees well and attract qualified graduates to work in the industry.
- From the findings it is also recommended that even after a degree in hospitality and tourism, graduands who did not take interest were in working in the industry should be encouraged to get themselves fixed in any sector for many an employee tended to perform better in fields where their interests laid and this will be to the benefit of Ghana.

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