Skills Competition as Perceived by the Tourism and Hospitality Management Students

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Abstract - *This study aimed to identify the different skills competition that have been joined by the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management (CITHM) students, its implications in terms of university branding and students' placement opportunities in the industry. It is also intended to seek the perceived suggested impacts of skills competition to the students and to analyze if there is significant relationship between implication of skills competition to branding and opportunities. The study made use of descriptive method and utilized a self-made questionnaire. It was concluded that out of the total population of the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management, most of the respondents have joined CITHM Exposition.*

The researchers found out that the implications of skills competition in terms of university branding enhances students' competency with other universities and students' placement opportunities in the industry improves the quality of work of the students. The study also showed that the respondents gained self-confidence and improved their intra/interpersonal skills. The result of the study showed that there are significant relationship between branding and opportunities, if branding is eminent, and that student placement opportunity in the industry also heightens.

Keywords – *Skills Competition, Tourism Industry, university branding*

I. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality and tourism industry is the largest and fastest-growing industries in the world. One of the most exciting aspects of this industry is that it is made up of so many different professions. The possibilities are many and varied, ranging, from positions in restaurant, resorts, air and cruise lines, theme parks, and casinos, to name a few of the several sectors of the hospitality and tourist industries.

Tourism and Hospitality University programs aim to meet the demands of a volatile and changing world. Many attempt to prepare students by developing and enhancing the management competencies and skills which are needed to operate successfully. About 54.1% of Philippines workforce is employed in the service sectors of which many are part of the various sectors of the hospitality industry (NSO) and yet there is lack of appropriately skilled human resources. Tourism and hospitality employers have concerns regarding the scarcity of qualified and competent staff.

As one of the universities offering Tourism and Hospitality education in the Philippines, Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas, College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management (CITHM) delivers Bachelor of Science in International Travel and Tourism Management, Hotel and Restaurant Administration, Cruise Line Management and Culinary Arts. These degree programs which involve semesters of on-campus study covering a range of disciplines aimed at preparing students for management careers in tourism and hospitality. Additionally students are required to take 1,000 hours compulsory internship in an industry setting as a component of their degree.

The college is recognized as the Philippines' First Center of Excellence in the HRM education, Philippines' First Center of Development in Tourism education by the CHED. The College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management of Lyceum of the Philippines University Batangas, was also acknowledged as the first and only heritor of the Full International Accreditation for HRM and Tourism Education. The International Center of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education (THE ICE) is an independent accreditation body that specializes in tourism, hospitality, culinary arts and events education.

The college has also joined different nationwide competitions like Grand Culinary Challenge, National Food Showdown, Council of Hotel and Restaurant Educators of the Philippines Skills Olympics and Chefs on Parade. These competitions continue to raise the standards of culinary excellence and put skills and knowledge to the test in a competitive format for culinary arts and hotel and restaurant administration students. While League of Tourism Skills Competition Skills Competition and Union of Filipino Tourism Educators National Skills Olympic are some of the competitions were tourism students participated with. The college has proven to be on the top of its field as it is multi awarded in many skills competitions; it has achieved 31 national awards and 9 international awards.

In this context, the researchers conducted this study to assess the competency of CITHM students through skills competition relating to the industry. The researchers also believed that it correlates the skills competition, the popularity of the school and its identity to the Hospitality industry. Furthermore, it proves the distinction of the CITHM-LPU to other universities with hospitality program.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is focused on the implication of the skills competition of College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management students. Specifically, the study aimed to identify the different skills that have been joined by the CITHM students; to determine the implications of skills competition in terms of university branding and students' placement opportunity to industry; to verify perceived impact of skills competition; and to analyze if there is significant relationship between the implications of skills competition; and lastly, to propose a plan for improvement that will help improve the competency of the students in skills competition.

III. METHOD

Research Design

This study made use of a descriptive method of research. "The descriptive research design enables researchers to describe or present the picture of a phenomenon or phenomena under investigation ". It is the opposite of another form of research methodology called "analytical". According to Calderon, cited by Agtay et. al., (2013).

Participants

The participants of the study were College of International Tourism and Hospitality students of Lyceum of the Philippines University Batangas who joined different skills competition inside and outside the university. A total of 100 respondents were selected through stratified proportional sampling from the 2083 CITHM population: 33 from 1st year, 27 from 2nd year, 18 from 3rd year and 22 from 4th year levels.

Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a self – constructed questionnaire. The first part contains the profile of the respondents: gender, course and year level. The second part's purpose was to determine if they have joined or not any skills competition, and if so, the type of skills competition they participated in. The third part was used to determine the implication of skills competition in terms of university branding and students' placement to industry, and the identified suggested impacts of joining skills competition to CITHM students.

Procedure

The following steps were undertaken in gathering the data. The researchers constructed a questionnaire using different theses and online links to gather necessary information. After that, statistician helped the researchers to formulate the questionnaire. It was submitted to their thesis adviser for approval and validation of the topic. As it was approved by the adviser, it was submitted to the grammarian for correction and then the researchers submitted the questionnaire to the panelist for further correction. After it was validated, distribution of questionnaires to four different year levels was done right away. The purpose of the study was stated and well explained to the respondents before they answer the questionnaire. It was retrieved after the respondents finished answering the questionnaire. A tally report was submitted to the statistician and when the researchers got the result, they made their conclusion and recommendation.

Data Analysis

The study used different statistical tools to interpret the results. Frequency and percentage distribution was used to determine the demographic profile of the CITHM students and the different skills competition being joined by the students. Weighted mean and ranking was used to know the implications of skills competition in terms of university branding and students' placement to industry, as well as in to determine the identified suggested impacts of joining skills competition to CITHM students.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Profile of Respondents (n = 100)

Gender	f	%
Female	58	58.0
Male	42	42.0
Year Level		
1st Year	33	33.0
2nd Year	27	27.0
3rd Year	18	18.0
4th Year	22	22.0
Program		
ITTM	23	23.0
HRA	30	30.0
CLOCA	29	29.0
CLOHS	9	9.0
CA	9	9.0

Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents. Most of the respondents or 58 percent are females while 42 percent are males. In terms of year level, 33 percent of the participants are first year students followed by 27 percent of second year students, 18 percent of third year. With regards to the program of study, 30 percent of them were HRA students and 29 percent of CLOCA participants, 23 percent of ITTM while only 9 percent of CLOHS and CA students as respondents.

Table 2. Skills Competition of CITHM Students

Skills Competition	f	%	Rank
National Food Showdown	6	6	3
Grand Culinary Competition	2	2	6
CITHM Exposition	47	47	1
COHREP	2	2	6
LTSP	9	9	2
Chefs on Parade	5	5	4
Goldilocks Inter Collegiate Cake Décor	0	0	11
UFTE	3	3	5
UMAMI	2	2	6
TESDA Regional Skills	0	0	11
Kaldereta Challenge	1	1	10
Provincial Skills Competition	2	2	6
International Skills Competition	0	0	11
Total	**79**	**79**	

Table 2 shows the skills competition of the CITHM students. It can be viewed that most of the respondents had joined different skills competition. As listed in the table, the skills competition can be off or in campus, local, provincial or national level. Most of the respondents had joined the CITHM Exposition (47%), followed by League Tourism Students of the Philippines (LTSP) with 9 percent. The third in rank was the National Food Showdown skills competition with only 6 percentages of the respondents. Goldilocks Inter Collegiate Cake Decorating, TESDA Regional Skills, and International Skills Competition were among the skills competition that were not participated by the surveyed respondents.

The study shows that the researchers were not able to find respondents who participated in Goldilocks Inter Collegiate Cake Décor, TESDA Regional Skills and International Skills Competition, thus ranking them at the 11th place. It was hard to find students who participated in these competitions as some of them were in their on-the-job training as part of their curriculum program and some of them had already graduated from the university. On the other hand, the most participated skills competition was the CITHM Exposition with 47 % of the respondents. It was a competition held inside the university as part of the CITHM College days. It showcased the different skills of the students being perceived while they undergo training with their professors. It also showcased the intense competition of the four different programs: BSITTM, BS CLM, BS HRA and BS CAKO, who were competing with one another in the different categories like tour guiding, tour package proposal, bartending, fruit carving, napkin folding, cooking and etc. to claim the best program in terms of skills competition.

The LTSP or League of Tourism Students of the Philippines National Skills Competition ranked second as the most participated competition being joined by the students. In this competition, CITHM tourism students competed with different universities offering Tourism programs. According to Dinglasan, Department Chair of Tourism of LPU Batangas, "It was the chance for all tourism students to showcase their skills in various competitions that will enhance students' competitive behavior while building good camaraderie with fellow students." The competition also had the most numbered of participants (chorale competition and cultural).

The researchers were able to find respondents who participated in the National Skills Competition who ranked third in the study with 6 percent of the percentage. Most of the respondents were culinary arts students who were busy in the kitchen laboratory, preparing for their function.

Table 3. Implications of Skills Competition to CITHM Students

Branding	WM	VI	Rank
1. Promotes a certain program.	3.63	Strongly Agree	4
2. Places the school/university in higher prestige.	3.67	Strongly Agree	3
3. Attracts and encourages new students to enrol.	3.71	Strongly Agree	2
4. Enhances competency with other universities in terms of skills competition.	3.75	Strongly Agree	1
5. Gives an advantage against other applicants in industry.	3.61	Strongly Agree	5
Composite Mean	**3.67**	**Strongly Agree**	**1**
Students' Placement Opportunity in Industry			
1. Provides experience whether highs/lows relevant to industry.	3.59	Strongly Agree	4
2. Improves the intra/interpersonal skills of the students.	3.63	Strongly Agree	3
3. Improves quality of work of the students.	3.68	Strongly Agree	1.5
4. Gives advantages to employ students/graduates in the industry easily.	3.57	Strongly Agree	5
5. Exposes the students in industry arena.	3.68	Strongly Agree	1.5
Composite Mean	**3.63**	**Strongly Agree**	**2**
Average Composite Mean	**3.65**	**Strongly Agree**	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 – Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 – Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 – Disagree;1.00 – 1.49 – Strongly Disagree

Implication of the skills competition to CITHM students is presented in Table 2. The table showed that respondents had verbally interpreted the implication as strongly agree as it was supported by the average composite mean of 3.65. The greater implication was given in terms of branding and least was given to student placement in the industry. This means that joining different skills competition had in one way or another marked respondents to be well known and be branded on the skills showcased. This concept will further help the respondents to be easily placed in the industry.

The composite mean of 3.67, verbally interpreted as strongly agree, was displayed by the implication of joining the skills competition in terms of branding. All items yield with values of weighted mean ranging from 3.61 to 3.75. It enhances the respondents' competency with other universities in terms of skills competition ranked first (3.75). It was followed by attracting and encouraging new students to enroll (3.71). The last in rank was the giving the advantage against other applicants in industry (3.61).

Students' placement in industry was rated with 3.63 weighted mean, verbally interpreted as strongly agree. Improving the quality of work of the students and exposing the students in industry arena were graded highest with 3.68 weighted mean. The advantage to employ students/graduates in the industry easily was rated least.

Branding has become more relevant in promoting an institution's reputation, as well as generating additional revenue for the institution through the sale of trademarked goods. According to Lamboy (2011) study, "For a college or university, the name and all the symbolism attached to it, either through longevity, reputation, quality, or some other factor, represent its brand. Branding institutions in higher education provide the community, and more importantly, prospective students of an institution, an easier way to identify and distinguish them from other schools."

According to Lavander (2014), some colleges may see competitions as a gimmick to get name in lights, but actually it's not about at all. It's about moving from ordinary to the outstanding or excellent.

As students search for a school, many are drawn to those in which they want to become a member of the community and alumni base affiliated with the institution. The physical elements become intriguing and desirable benefits ultimately attracting students toward a certain "type" of institution. Through the awards being received by CITHM in various skills competition, it created impacts to the mind of aspiring individuals to be part of the institution.

The College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management is competent in terms of skills competitions with other universities. The was proven by the numerous awards being won by the college in different skills competitions like being the Over-all National Champion for 3 consecutive year in the Grand Culinary Challenge from 2011 to 2013. The college also won in the recently concluded National Food Showdown 2013 as Over-all Champion which provides

popularity and good publicity in the hospitality industry. These awards given to the college had established good reputation for the university as it reflects to its image, "being the most awarded hospitality school in the country".

It also created good impacts to students as this kind of competitions improves the quality of work as they were exposed in their chosen field. Through this exposure students were able to experience the "real world" of the hospitality industry.

The trademark possessed by the LPU Batangas also gives advantage to graduates against other applicants as they apply for work but not as much as those who graduated from the four big universities like University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila, De La Salle University and University of Santo Thomas. Employers of different businesses prioritized those graduates from the "Big Four" as these universities already established their trademark ahead of the university.

Table 4. Perceived Impacts of Joining the Skills Competition

	Perceived Impacts	f	%	Rank
a.	Gain self-confidence.	93	93	1
b.	Enhance competitiveness.	85	85	2
c.	Become more competent in various skills like napkin folding, baking / cake decorating, food curving, tour guiding, tour guiding proposal and etc.	76	76	5
d.	Become popular.	55	55	7
e.	Build camaraderie and good relationship with other programs.	69	69	6
f.	Take advantage in finding placement in the industry easily.	79	79	4
g.	Expose in their chosen field.	80	80	3

Table 4 showed the perceived impacts of the skills competition of the CITHM students. It can be viewed that all items were rated with highest percentage. First in rank was the gaining of self-confidence. Second, joining the skills competition enhances competitiveness; third, it exposes students in their chosen field; fourth, it takes advantage in finding placement in the industry easily; fifth, students become more competent in various skills like napkin folding, baking/cake decorating, food curving, tour guiding, tour guiding proposal and others; sixth, it builds camaraderie and good relationship with other programs. The last in rank on the implication of joining the skills competition was becoming popular. This notion implies that joining

different skills competition at varying levels helped improve students in showcasing their talents and abilities to the fullest extent.

According to Cawthorn (2014), external competitions provide opportunities for raising aspirations and for students to meet other students from around the world- which is vital in terms of valuing diversity. Making students realize their potentialities will bring out their willingness to lead (Laguador, Velasquez & Florendo, 2013) and compete.

The researchers found out that the respondents who joined in different skills competition had gained self-confidence and became more competitive. Winning competitions effected their perception about themselves by being confident to face other people, to compete and try new things. They are more focused on developing themselves in their field rather than being popular.

Table 5. Correlation of the Implications of Skills Competition

	r value	p - value	Decision	Interpretation
Branding – Opportunity on Employment	0.257	0.010	Rejected	Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

Table 5 presented the correlation of the Implication of the skills competition of CITHM students. It can be viewed that branding demonstrated weak positive correlation with r value of 0.257. Based from the result, the computed p value was less than the 0.05 level of significance; therefore, the alternative hypothesis of significant relationship between implication of skills competition in terms of branding and students' placement to industry is accepted. Thus, there exists significant relationship between branding and students' placement to industry with regards to joining skills competition. This means that if the extent of the implication of skills competition to branding is eminent then its impact to students' placement to industry is also in height.

Branding is a topic of great significance to different universities. A brand is unique and unlike products, it cannot be imitated by competitors. Successful universities of their program specification take their brand as their weapon and apply their resources to reinforce their brand advantages over their competitors. Thus, placement of students to the industry for work or internship experience is provided easily by the

employers. Branded universities created direct impacts on the employability of the students – whether through their enhanced skills by joining and winning different skills competition or by the trademark of the college or university in their field of specification.

The study shows that placing graduates of branded universities to industry was easy regardless of the knowledge and skills they acquired. The discrimination happening in the industry affects different universities.

The Big Four Universities: University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University, De La Salle University and University of Santo Tomas, which had established trademark and well known to different sectors of the industry are the most prioritized among other universities. Even if the graduates of an unknown university are more qualified than those from the Big Four, the employers will definitely not hire them.

Table 6. Plan for Improvement

Key Area Result	Objective	Strategies/Activities	Person Responsible
• Gives advantages for graduates in the Hospitality Industry	• To provide Lyceans with tools, visions, support and opportunity in the industry • To provide students avenue to showcase their acquired knowledge and skills. • To utilize the full credentials of the students.	• Advance trainings for competency enhancement • Conduct educational tours in different companies	• CITHM Department
• Build camaraderie	• To develop their intra/interpersonal skills • To enable students to reach out their co-students, thus acquiring input form students themselves.	• Seminars on leadership training, youth conferences and behavioral trainings • Team building activities	• Counselling and Testing Center • CITHM Department
• Become more competent	• To create a reliable atmosphere that will expose students	• Internship more focused on the field of specialization • Inclusion of Personality Development course in the curriculum • Training and conduct competency needs assessment	• Internship Office • Counselling and Testing Center • CITHM Department

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Out of the total population of CITHM, 100 students were the participants of the study. Majority of the respondents have joined CITHM Expo with 47 percent. Goldilocks Inter Collegiate Cake Decorating, TESDA Regional Skills and International Skills Competition were among the skills competition that were not participated by the respondents. The participants of the study all agreed that implication of skills competition in terms of university branding enhances students' competency with other universities. The students' placement in industry improves the quality of work of the students as they were exposed in the industry arena.

The respondents gained self-confidence as their intra/interpersonal skills were improved when they experienced the highs and lows relevant to the industry. The implication of university branding to students' placement to industry is significant. If branding is eminent, it heightens the placement of students' to industry. A plan for improvement was proposed that will encourage the students to join in different skills competition.

Implementation of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) is the main thrust of most Higher Education Institutions in the Philippines today to go along with the standards of foreign universities and colleges all over

the world (Laguador & Dotong, 2014). Skills competition is one way of measuring the capability of the students towards OBE. CITHM department may recommend an inter-university competition of the LPU campuses (Manila , Cavite and Laguna) aside from CITHM days to increase the number of students who are participating in various skills competitions that will help them expose or connect to the real world of industry. This will help students from the different campuses to showcase their skills like bartending, fruit curving, tour guiding and etc.

They must learn the real value of competence in achieving excellence while maintaining credibility outside the boundaries of their strengths and weaknesses. They must learn to compete not with others but to compete with themselves. They have to defeat their own fears, worries and anxieties. They need to win the battle between their own doubt and faith. Learning to accept defeat through joining in any form of competition is one good quality of recognizing certain weak points on their capability to stand out. Enhancing these points on how to make it firm would lead to a better learning of self-discovery (Laguador, 2013).

The CITHM students may undergo seminars, regular trainings and even strict implementation of the rules and regulations imposed by the department to develop the students' inter/intra personal skills.

Additional training facilities like mini airport and airline for tourism students may be provided. Future researchers may conduct similar study using different variables.

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