



# THE DESIRED PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN NUEVA VIZCAYA

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## ABSTRACT

*The hospitality industry covers an extensive range of occupations, including those related to food service and lodging which require continuous innovations and improvement. This study determined the level of desired professional competencies in the hospitality industry in Nueva Vizcaya. Descriptive correlational method was employed to discover the relationships that exist between variables and to elicit data from hospitality professionals and educators from business establishments accredited by the Department of Tourism and higher education institutions in Nueva Vizcaya who participated in this study. A modified questionnaire, frequency counts and percentage, mean and correlational procedure were used to analyze and interpret data. Findings of the study showed that the desired professional competencies of respondents along personal effectiveness competencies, workplace competencies, and specific industry-sector competencies particularly on Lodging Management and Food and Beverage Management were very high. Likewise, respondent's intellectual competencies, industry wide competencies, and specific industry sector competencies particularly along Beverage Service; Culinary Arts; Front Office Procedure; Destination Marketing and Management; Tour Operations and Travel Management; Recreation, Amusement and Attractions; and Meetings, Events, and Exhibitions Management were high. It was found also that age and civil status significantly correlates with specific industry sector competencies particularly Beverage Service. However, the most crucial scenario to address is how to increase the understanding of certain managerial competencies and leadership styles to converge industry needs more accurately, to be more effective and successful managers or entrepreneurs. In this context, the researcher opted to propose for the enhancement of the curriculum of the Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management program to hospitality educators in Nueva Vizcaya.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Competencies, Professional Competencies, Hospitality Industry*

## INTRODUCTION

If there is one industry that have touched our lives by some means or other, it is no other than the hospitality industry, no matter where we are and what industry we belong. Although the hospitality industry is constantly changing in all aspects due to the changing demands, and needs of consumers including external forces like economy, politics, culture, and the like, the industry continues to influence and affect peoples' lives from all corners of the world. Conforming to the disclosure of World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2014) on contribution to employment, travel and tourism generated 105,408,000 jobs directly in 2014 (3.6% of total employment) and this is forecast to grow by 2.0% in 2015. Thus, this also includes job by hotels, travels representatives, airlines and other means of transportation services, restaurant or food and beverage services as well as convenience and recreation industries sustain by tourists. Aside from this, the tourism and hospitality employers anticipate the graduates to possess transferable standard competencies particularly in the areas of leadership, communication, strategic thinking and decision-making related to customer relations, computer skills, marketing media, security and safety.

Essential competencies in the hospitality industry have been recognized globally as well as

recommended to provide organizational focus as building blocks for human resource systems and as a method for certifying attainment of job skills. The level of skills, abilities, values and knowledge have by workers will basically determine their professional competence. Thus, hospitality education produces graduates who are equipped with necessary competencies to guarantee excellent and quality of services (Valachis, 2003).

In a similar manner, the study by Tesone, et al. (2010) found out that both managers and workers reported the same rankings of responses concerning the perceived importance of attributes that constitute both knowledge, and skills and competencies for entry-level lodging and food service workers. Side by side, Shariff, et al. (2014) affirmed that the industry perceives the ability to work in teamwork as a vital competency even when it stands as a second competency the industry expected the graduates to possess. Wilks, et al. (2011) in their collaborative research likewise concluded that priority should be given to soft competencies, that educating students to manage hospitality units represents a formidable challenge. Moreover, students need to acquire knowledge of economics, management, and other sciences in addition to vocational subjects aside from the need of competencies to perform well. Furthermore, the study concluded that hospitality



management is increasingly becoming an academic subject on its own right.

In the Philippine setting, a discrepancy in terms of competence in the job-worker matching was revealed by Peren (2012) in her published thesis on Reengineering of Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management Curriculum to harmonize with K-12 program as basis for curriculum development at HRM. Furthermore, graduates were noted to be undercompetent because their competence levels were below those required in their jobs. Significant gaps intervening competence and the required competencies entailed to perform their jobs at the hotel were recognized specifically, on the following employability characteristics and skills: initiative, team work, adaptability/flexibility, customer relations, dependability, written communication, responsibility, verbal communication, accounting and financial management, computer usage, and sales and promotion.

Zabala, et al. (2014) in their study on Students' Evaluation of the BSHRM Program: A Basis for Future Curriculum Revision at Mindanao State University revealed that the BSHRM program as evaluated by the students has to be revised in terms of the time allotted to each course if it is sufficient, excessive or inadequate. Also, tools, equipment, and textbooks that are relevant in the field should be provided for the program instruction in order for the students to enhance properly their knowledge and develop their abilities, talents, and skills subject to the actual work. To such a degree, balancing the different competencies between theory and practice is required from the hospitality management education and the hospitality industry.

Currently, the Hospitality and Tourism program in the province of Nueva Vizcaya is being offered by public and private colleges and universities including various technical or vocational schools offering the program in the diploma level. The Hospitality and Tourism Program must level up in order to successfully respond to the increasing challenges of the province, which has a lot of historical and natural attractions, religious and man-made tourists' attractions, festivals and special interest tours. Nueva Vizcaya stands strong and is proudly transforming into a fast-developing province with its fifteen municipalities. Each of these sites has its own promising land features, unique products, tourism attractions and services.

## OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to determine the required desired professional competencies perceived as priority in the hospitality industry within the province of Nueva Vizcaya as bases for enhancing the BSHRM curriculum to the different hospitality educators that will ensure graduates to possess the desired skills set for the job market and also to enable the graduates to manage the rapidly changing demands in today's hospitality industry, addressing increased competition, changing consumer attitudes, trends and employer demands.

## METHODOLOGY

The descriptive correlation method was utilized in the study to relate the desired professional competencies as perceived by industry professionals or practitioners and educators on the present and existing conditions of hospitality industries in Nueva Vizcaya. The participants were the hospitality professionals and educators from the fifteen municipalities of the province of Nueva Vizcaya particularly in areas where there are Hospitality and Tourism Industries accredited by the Department of Tourism-Region 02 were included. The study made use of a modified questionnaire from the Employment and Training Administration (ETA). The instrument includes two major competencies: the foundational competencies and the industry-specific competencies. Foremost of the instrument is the profile of respondents and the second part is the level of desired professional competencies along personal effectiveness, intellectual, workplace, industry-wide, and specific industry sector competencies. Data were processed using the frequency counts and percentage, weighted mean and correlational procedure.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of the 103 hospitality professionals and educators, forty-six percent are within the age bracket of 20-29, sixty-four percent were dominated by female entrepreneurs and practitioners. Liaman (2014) contends that most hotel managers are around 30-39 years old, thus it is a common-sense wisdom that respondents want to work for more years with the same employer. On the contrary, findings conducted by Nanayakkara (2015) in Sri Lanka on human resources particularly women's employment in hotel industry remains very low-less than 8 percent for the leading hotel chains in the country.

Most of the respondents were married (58%) before employment which implies that most have chosen to have a family of their own but a good number remain single. Thus, most of the respondents finished a college degree (43%) which also conforms in the findings of Liaman (2014) that that managers running hotels and hostels are bachelor's degree holders and tourism and hospitality managers had bachelor's or master's degree degrees.

Most graduates of hospitality management courses practice their profession in the field as shown in the result of industry-based (79%) in terms of position classification. Furthermore, both in the Lodging and Food Services (47%), belong to the rank and file positions (57%), regular or permanent (89%), and new in the workplace (58%). This finding confirms what Celis et al. (2014) discovered in their study that majority of HRM graduates are productively employed and secured a job from one to two years after graduation; that most of the respondents are on contractual arrangement and are working in the Philippines; and majority are professionals working as personnel in HRM establishments. Similar findings, Liaman (2014) asserts that employees with a degree in tourism and hospitality and with the necessary experience are more competent and qualified workers rather than their colleagues with non-hospitality educational background.



The determination of the level of desired professional competencies, the highest perceived competencies were: Personal Effectiveness Competencies (4.30) and Workplace Competencies (4.23) followed by Industry-Wide Competencies (4.17) and Intellectual Competencies (4.03). This means that the desired professional competencies are indeed priorities by academic institutions in the formation of students and for a successful hospitality industry. The finding confirmed what Wilks and Hemsworth (2011) revealed in their study that hospitality employers tend to see personal qualities and interpersonal competencies as very relevant and most important in the field. In the same way, Jaykumar et al. (2014), found out that hotel managers indicated personality as the most important factor an employee in the hotel industry must possess. Research findings also in agreement with Koenigsfeld's (2011) finding when he revealed that leadership and interpersonal competencies are the most important and most frequently used managerial competencies.

This coincides with the finding of Millar et al. (2008) that educators and professionals are in agreement in terms of competencies in the conceptual domain where critical thinking, analytical, and decision making skills are related with problem solving skills.

Moreover, result in workplace competencies was related to what Nurhazani Mohd Shariff's (2014) finding that tourism and hospitality graduate students must consider major competencies in their preparation before entering the industry such as ability to work in team, ability to inform, learning skills, customer service skill, and ability to support staff, which are considered as important by industry professionals. This finding is supported by Grau et al. (2006) who suggested that all sets of competencies are required for effective management. Further, Silicka (2015) pointed out that the concluded components of the professional competence include professional knowledge obtained during the study process, working attitude, skills and abilities developed during the process of practical activities and social maturity in professional activities such as immersion or internship activities.

In the Specific Industry Sector, the highest proficiencies were the Lodging Management and the Food and Beverage Management (4.22). Meaning that the respondents consider the skills in managing accommodation and skills in managing food and beverage service to be very vital in the industry. Similarly, Resenberg (2004), as cited by Peren (2015) states that in a world progressively based on information technology capacities, coupled with communication competencies for some researchers (Cho 2002), acclaim the most important competencies to be acquired by hospitality students.

Moreover, competencies along Front Office Procedure (4.10); Culinary Arts (4.08); Meetings, Events and Exhibitions Management (4.06); Tour Operations and Travel Management (4.05); Destination Marketing and Management (4.03); Recreation, Amusement and Attractions (3.99); Beverage Service (3.92) were rated high. The result also suggests that all the identified competencies are indeed necessary for practitioners to acquire and develop, while in the industry and more so, for academic institutions, to cultivate such competencies among their students. This

confirms the finding of Rutelione (2009) that hotel employees must have well rounded competencies and must be multi – skilled. On the other hand, findings in the studies of Rusette (2000), Johanson (2008), Baum (2006), Wilkins (2006), and Peren (2015), showed that the required competencies identified recognizing customer problems, showing enthusiasm, maintaining professional and ethical standards, cultivating a climate of trust, adapting creatively to change, coping with emotional demands, empathizing with customers, and developing self-management skills.

The results also revealed the correlation between the desired level of professional competencies and the profile of the respondents was significant in the components of Specific Industry Sector Competencies the Beverage Service with the age (0.2132) and civil status (0.2063). It implies that the younger and single respondents in the beverage service were more likely to have higher level of desired professional competencies than the older and married respondents. This finding confirms what Alice Mueni Nzioka (2013) revealed and contended in her study that age and person's marital status influences the way he or she perceives issues. In her study, she found out that perception of the hotel general managers on job related factors varied considerably depending on their age. However, the present finding contradicts what Hagan (2015) revealed in her study that no significant relationship was established between the overall perception of service quality and the age of hotel guests.

On the type of industry sector with the desired level of professional competencies showed a very significant relationship particularly on specific industry sector competencies along Food and Beverage Management (0.2935), Beverage Services (0.2745), Culinary Arts (0.2744). Moreover, it has significant relationship with Personal Effectiveness Competencies (0.2159), Intellectual Competencies (0.2379), Workplace Competencies (0.2059). Furthermore, the same variable is significantly correlated with the specific industry sector competencies along Front Office Procedure (0.2096), Destination Marketing and Management (0.2309), Tour Operations and Travel Management (0.2391). All these could mean further that their level of desired competencies may be dependent on their area of operation whether in the lodging, food and beverage or both. However, those who operate both may have higher expectations than those who are focused on one. This is expected since each industry sector requires skills and competencies specific to that industry sector. This confirms the finding of Kamau and Waudu (2012) that there is a significant relationship between the skills expected by the hospitality industry employers' and the hotels' classification.

Employment status of respondents affects very significant relationship the perceived level of desired professional competencies with specific industry sector competencies along Destination Marketing and Management with a correlation coefficient of 0.3110 and *p*-value of 0.0014; Tour Operations and Travel Management with a correlation coefficient of 0.2562 and a *p*-value of 0.0089; Recreation, Amusement and Attractions with a correlation coefficient of 0.1902 and a *p*-value of 0.0013. Likewise, it has significant relationship with Intellectual Competencies with a



correlation coefficient of 0.2215 and a  $p$ -value of 0.0245. It implies that respondents who are regular or permanent are more likely to have higher expectations of the desired professional competencies than those who are on contractual basis.

## CONCLUSIONS

The respondents are in their early adulthood; generally female, married, bachelor's degree holders, industry-based and working in both Lodging and Food Services, holding rank and file positions, regular or permanent, and new in the workplace.

The respondents manifest a very high level of desired professional competencies along Personal Effectiveness Competencies, Workplace Competencies, and Specific Industry Sector Competencies particularly on Lodging Management and Food and Beverage Management.

The respondents also have a high level of desired professional competencies along Intellectual Competencies, Industry Wide Competencies, and Specific Industry Sector Competencies particularly along Beverage Service; Culinary Arts; Front Office Procedure; Destination Marketing and Management; Tour Operations and Travel Management; Recreation, Amusement and Attractions; and Meetings, Events, and Exhibitions Management.

The hospitality professionals and educators' desired professional competencies along age and civil status is significantly correlated with specific industry sector competencies particularly Beverage Service. The type of industry sector is very significantly correlated with specific industry sector competencies particularly Food and Beverage Management, Beverage Service, and Culinary Arts. Same variable is also significantly correlated with Personal Effectiveness Competencies, Intellectual Competencies, Workplace Competencies, and specific industry sector competencies particularly on Front Office Procedure, Destination Marketing and Management, and Tour Operations and Travel Management.

The respondents' level of desired professional competencies along employment status is very significantly correlated with specific industry sector competencies particularly along Destination Marketing and Management; Tour Operations and Travel

Management; Recreation, Amusement and Attractions. It is also significantly correlated with Intellectual Competencies.

Finally, the following desired professional competencies of hospitality professionals and hospitality educators in Nueva Vizcaya: Personal Effectiveness Competencies, Workplace Competencies, Intellectual Competencies and Specific Industry-Sector Competencies particularly on Lodging Management and on Food and Beverage Management, Beverage Service; Culinary Arts; Front Office Procedure; Destination Marketing and Management; Tour Operations and Travel Management; Recreation, Amusement and Attractions; and Meetings, Events, and Exhibitions Management.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The industry based practitioners and even those in the academe may consider pursuing advanced education to enhance their Intellectual Competencies. They are also encouraged to acquire National Certification qualifications to keep abreast with the latest trends and current best practices.

More opportunities may be provided by administrators for hospitality management educators to attend industry trainings, regular seminars, immersion programs and scholarship grants. This will enable them to communicate openly about research projects and networking. They could also incorporate required competencies into job descriptions to strengthen the over-all learning experience of the students. Some of these desired professional competencies comprise problem solving skills, communication skills, critical thinking skills, team work, and interpersonal skills.

It is highly suggested that balance be made between applied and theoretical approaches, technical competencies and academic curriculum in addition to developing a complex of competencies relevant for service work.

Similar studies be conducted to find out the industry professionals and educators expectations to hospitality graduates comparing various job pairing skills and differences among competencies required in their jobs can be made.

## TABLES

Table 1

*Respondents' Level of Desired Professional Competencies*

Components	Weighted Mean	Level
Personal Effectiveness Competencies	4.30	Very High
Intellectual Competencies	4.03	High
Workplace Competencies	4.23	Very High
Industry Wide Competencies	4.17	High
Specific Industry Sector Competencies (SISC) along Lodging Management	4.22	Very High
SISC along Food and Beverage Management	4.22	Very High
SISC along Beverage Service	3.92	High
SISC along Culinary Arts	4.08	High
SISC along Front Office Procedure	4.10	High
SISC along Destination Marketing and Management	4.03	High
SISC along Tour Operations and Travel Management	4.05	High
SISC along Recreation, Amusement and Attractions	3.99	High
SISC along Meetings, Events and Exhibitions Management	4.06	High
Overall Mean	4.11	High

**Table 2**

*Summary of Correlations between the Respondents' Profile in Terms of Age and their Desired Level of Professional Competencies*

Professional Competencies	Correlation Coefficient	p-Value	Remarks
Personal Effectiveness Competencies	0.0113	0.9100	Not Significant
Intellectual Competencies	0.0217	0.8279	Not Significant
Workplace Competencies	0.0069	0.9450	Not Significant
Industry Wide Competencies	0.0828	0.4059	Not Significant
SISC along Lodging Management	0.0965	0.3321	Not Significant
SISC along Food and Beverage Management	0.0136	0.8918	Not Significant
SISC along Beverage Service	0.2132	0.0306	Significant
SISC along Culinary Arts	0.0963	0.3330	Not Significant
SISC along Front Office Procedure	0.1334	0.1792	Not Significant
SISC along Destination Marketing and Management	0.0781	0.4327	Not Significant
SISC along Tour Operations and Travel Management	0.0107	0.9144	Not Significant
SISC along Recreation, Amusement and Attractions	0.1020	0.3051	Not Significant
SISC along Meetings, Events and Exhibitions Management	0.0409	0.6815	Not Significant

**Table 3**

*Summary of Correlations Between the Respondents' Profile in Terms of Type of Industry Sector and their Level of Desired Professional Competencies*

Professional Competencies	Correlation Coefficient	p-Value	Remarks
Personal Effectiveness Competencies	0.2159	0.0284	Significant
Intellectual Competencies	0.2379	0.0155	Significant
Workplace Competencies	0.2059	0.0369	Significant
Industry Wide Competencies	0.1829	0.0643	Not Significant
SISC along Lodging Management	0.1733	0.0800	Not Significant
SISC along Food and Beverage Management	0.2935	0.0026	Very Significant
SISC along Beverage Service	0.2745	0.0050	Very Significant
SISC along Culinary Arts	0.2744	0.0050	Very Significant
SISC along Front Office Procedure	0.2096	0.0336	Significant
SISC along Destination Marketing and Management	0.2309	0.0189	Significant
SISC along Tour Operations and Travel Management	0.2391	0.0149	Significant
SISC along Recreation, Amusement and Attractions	0.1301	0.1901	Not Significant
SISC along Meetings, Events and Exhibitions Management	0.1721	0.0822	Not Significant

**Table 4**

*Summary of Correlations Between the Respondents' Profile in Terms of Employment Status and their Level of Desired Professional Competencies*

Professional Competencies	Correlation Coefficient	p-Value	Remarks
Personal Effectiveness Competencies	0.0650	0.5139	Not Significant
Intellectual Competencies	0.2215	0.0245	Significant
Workplace Competencies	0.1113	0.2629	Not Significant
Industry Wide Competencies	0.1131	0.2555	Not Significant
SISC along Lodging Management	0.0989	0.3202	Not Significant
SISC along Food and Beverage Management	0.1368	0.1683	Not Significant
SISC along Beverage Service	0.1019	0.3054	Not Significant
SISC along Front Office Procedure	0.1510	0.1278	Not Significant
SISC along Destination Marketing and Management	0.3110	0.0014	Very Significant
SISC along Tour Operations and Travel Management	0.2562	0.0089	Very Significant
SISC along Recreation, Amusement and Attractions	0.3125	0.0013	Very Significant
SISC along Meetings, Events and Exhibitions Management	0.1902	0.0543	Not Significant

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