The Consortium Journal of Hospitality and Tourism

ISSN: 1535-0568 (print) ISSN: 2329-9479 (online)

Articles

Volume 21, Number 1, Fall-Spring 2017-18

A Publication of the HBCU Consortium

The Consortium Journal of Hospitality & Tourism

Editors and Review Board

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HBCU Alumni Perception of Industry Relevance of their Hospitality Management Program Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

This study applied gap analysis to assess the satisfaction of hospitality management alumni of a historically black college/university (HBCU) in the Southeast United States with their curriculum, in terms of preparing them for their careers. The study results suggest that there are aspects of the HBCU's hospitality management curriculum that are either overemphasized or underemphasized relative to their career value, as perceived by alumni. As generalizable knowledge, the study demonstrates how gap analysis might be used by hospitality management program administrators to assure that the curriculum remains relevant in a changing industry and job market.

KEYWORDS: Gap analysis, HBCU alumni satisfaction, career preparation.

INTRODUCTION

Students and employers clearly have a stake in the quality of university curriculum, and are well-represented in the assessment of learning outcomes; however, the stakeholder group that is often overlooked, is program alumni (Saunders Smits & de Graaff, 2012). Hospitality management students are trained to assume roles within a specialized industry sector. Upper-level hospitality management courses are designed to impart knowledge and skills necessary to be successful at managing foodservice, lodging and tourism operations. The degree to which alumni believe their education prepared them for their careers is an indicator of curriculum quality. It is perhaps the most significant influence on their satisfaction with their education, and their willingness to support the program and recommend it to other prospective students (Saunders-Smits & de Graaff, 2012). This might be particularly important for HBCUs, which have struggled historically in their attempt to solicit financial gifts from its alumni (Cohen, 2006). The impetus to prepare "industry-ready" graduates is not limited to hospitality management programs. Other undergraduate academic disciplines are designed to prepare graduates for specific professional sectors. Accounting and nursing are examples of these disciplines; however, their graduates are required to pass state licensure exams to practice their professions.

Hospitality management graduates might not be able to gauge the adequacy of their preparation until hired into positions of significant responsibility.

This issue is not only important to the success of alumni but to the success of the program, as well. Goodman and Sprague (1991) note that in a competitive academic market with a proliferation of hospitality management degree programs, university administrators and faculty are interested in how well a program curriculum contributes to students' career preparation. If successful, such efforts could enhance the reputation of the program with prospective employers, who want to be sure that college recruits have the requisite KSAs to fill professional and managerial jobs (Goodman & Sprague, 1991).

In turn, this could enhance internship and career placement opportunities for students and graduates. Saunders-Smits and de Graaff, (2012) noted, if a university program, in any field, is not emphasizing what are important knowledge or skills to succeed, one might also expect that it would be reflected in employment statistics. Alumni assessment of curricula might also guide program administrators in the allocation of resources to maximize the program's value to students who are seeking successful careers in the field. This might be particularly important at the state-funded HBCU where the research was conducted, which operates with a relatively austere budget.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Need for Ongoing Assessment of the Hospitality Curriculum

Gursoy and Swanger (2004) note that hospitality and tourism administration programs have been scrutinized for both industry relevance and quality, and propose that hospitality management programs have a responsibility to prioritize subject areas in their curriculum according to perceived importance by industry practitioners. This prioritization needs to be an up-to-date reflection of the ever-changing needs of the industry (Gursoy & Swanger, 2004).

Kay and Moncarz, (2004) proposed that research of appropriate KSAs for hospitality management success represents a valuable resource to professionals and the lodging industry. Kay and Moncarz, (2004) also noted research methodologies used to identify job requisites that have been opinion-based only, and most opinions have been conflicting. As a result, conclusions from the studies provide limited empirical evidence for the prediction of management success and may not represent accurate assumptions (Kay & Moncarz, 2004).

Horng, Tenn, and Baum (2009) note that rapid growth of hospitality and tourism education programs have raised concerns over program quality, not only in the United States but internationally. The proliferation of schools and departments targeting segments of the hospitality industry is well recognized, as well as its introduction of significant competition, not only between HADM-specific programs but also general management programs that offer hospitality and service management courses and concentrations (Goodman & Sprague, 1991). As of 2016, there were 65 institutions in the U.S. accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality Administration, alone (ACPHA, 2016).

Many people, not only alumni, have a stake in the relevance of the hospitality management curriculum. The student and his or her family often have a keen interest in access to rewarding careers, the opportunities for advanced study, and an enriched quality of life associated with degree completion (Self, 2005). Universities would want to gauge this level of satisfaction, as it affects the program's industry reputation, enrollment, and alumni financial support. One would expect that satisfied alumni will promote enrollment and are more inclined to provide financial support to their alma maters (Davis, Misra, & Van Auken, 2002). Regardless of which type of accreditation agency is involved, accreditation studies require that faculty and administrators document the effectiveness with data (Davidson-Shivers, Inpornjivit & Sellers, 2004).

Prospective employers are also critical stakeholders in hospitality curriculum emphasis, and researchers have studied the gaps between industry expectations and graduates' academic preparation (Gursoy & Swanger, 2004). Hospitality program administrators traditionally develop a curriculum that covers the fundamental theories and principles of hospitality operation and management with the understanding that industry will teach specific applications. Some hiring businesses, however, have a more short-term outlook on the hospitality business management curriculum (Gursoy & Swanger, 2004). Such businesses want to be able to place graduates in positions of responsibility with minimal need for additional training (Gursoy & Swanger, 2004). Teaching to currently required skills helps students secure their first jobs upon graduation while teaching higher-order concepts helps them obtain subsequent jobs and/or promotions (Gursoy & Swanger, 2004).

Self (2005) proposes that four years of college preparation should prepare hospitality graduates for satisfying entry-level positions that will be the beginning of an equally satisfying career. This is often not the case as evidenced by some graduates' lack of obtaining their desired jobs after graduation. This job dissatisfaction often leads to turnover which is costly to both the company and the graduate (Self, 2005).

The Value of Alumni Assessment of Hospitality Curriculum

Given the broad variety of interests in college graduate outcomes, it is not surprising that alumni surveys are commonly used to determine postgraduate outcomes (Self, 2005). Regarding curriculum quality, however, the stakeholder group that is often overlooked is program alumni (SaundersSmits & de Graaff, 2012).

McDearmon (2012) noted that universities probably know little about their alumni and presume opinions, as well as their beliefs, and preferences, yet more scientific research is needed, related to this matter. Since this time, an increase in research of college and university alumni has been conducted, yet most have focused solely on factors related to an individual's willingness to make donations (McDearmon, 2012).

University alumni are in the unique position to evaluate the effectiveness of their study in their professional lives. They will be confronted with the strengths and weaknesses of their preparation in terms of job performance and advancement (SaundersSmits & de Graaff, 2012). Alumni are able both to indicate the shortcomings they experience during their time at the university and identify the current skills and knowledge they will need to succeed in their professional careers (Saunders-Smits & de Graaff, 2012). Alumni surveys can be leveraged along with other survey and assessment instruments to help support the development of learning outcomes and performance objective statements (Borden, 2005).

Alumni data segmented by respondents' years in the profession might help hospitality programs project what skills their graduates will need at various phases in their careers. Kay & Moncarz (2004) propose that industry experience and level influence perceived the importance of KSAs. Mid-level lodging industry managers placed the highest importance on human resources management and ranked financial management second in importance for success (Kay & Moncarz, 2004). Upper-level executives, however, reported being more competent in financial management than their subordinate counterparts, suggesting that hospitality executives' perception of the importance of knowledge, skills, and abilities vary by management level (Kay & Moncarz, 2004).

Alumni curriculum assessment can help administrators determine whether "soft" and "technical" skills are appropriately emphasized. Particularly due to a high level of service interaction with the public, well-developed soft skills are necessary to excel in hospitality management; however, they pose challenges to educators because they are not well-captured by measures of cognition (Heckman & Kautz, 2011). Alumni perception of their career readiness in these areas could be a useful gauge in program effectiveness in this area and others.

Alumni research also promises to correct a program's assumptions about what skills are currently required in the field, as industry structure and technology are continually changing. Studies of alumni of other academic disciplines have challenged previously held and perhaps outdated notions about what KSAs are critical to career success. For example, in their gap analysis study of perceived divergence between curriculum preparation and career importance among marketing program alumni, Davis, Misra, and Van Auken (2002) noted that respondents indicated under preparation in several technical KSAs, including "ability to use software such as spreadsheets, statistical packages, and database packages in a marketing context".

In a study of European aerospace engineering programs, alumni identified "oral communication" as a skill that was underemphasized in their curriculum relative to its importance in their careers (Saunders Smits & de Graaff, 2012).

Other key stakeholders of this research are accreditation organizations which assess the effectiveness of higher education programs. The accreditation processes often require self-study of individual programs, as well as the institution in and of itself. (Davidson-Shivers, Inpornjivit & Sellers, 2004). Part of this self-assessment is based on information about the students and those who have graduated from the program (Davidson-Shivers, Inpornjivit & Sellers, 2004). In this regard, a more robust assessment of alumni might be useful in determining if a school is meeting its mission and goals, at least in terms of producing industry-ready graduates.

In terms of alumni giving, the degree to which alumni believe their education prepared them for their careers is an indicator of curriculum quality, in terms of their satisfaction with their education, which can influence alumni support for their alma maters (Davis, Misra, & Van Auken, 2002). In terms of HBCU alumni giving to their alma maters, "low givers' attitudes" have appeared positive about if the alma mater is "worthy" to receive a financial contribution (Cohen, 2006).

Despite the benefits of alumni research, Brennan, Williams, and Woodley (2005) propose that one of the risks of such an assessment is reputational damage if unfavorable data enters the public domain. Particularly with increased competition for recruitment and alumni/industry support, and the scrutiny of accreditation organizations to determine program vitality, the pressure on institutions to "tell a good story" is great (Brennan, Williams, & Woodley, 2005). This might explain, at least in part, why program alumni are overlooked in assessing curriculum quality, as proposed by Saunders Smits and & de Graaff (2012).

Gap Analysis as a Method of Alumni Assessment of Curriculum

The concept of gap analysis emerged in 1985, as an objective measure of customer satisfaction with a good or service, by quantifying the divergence between a customer's expectations and the customer's experience (Davis, Misra, & Van Auken, 2002). The concept was introduced in the service marketing literature by Parasuramam, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985). Gap analysis is also among the methods used to assess alumni satisfaction of curriculum, by determining the divergence between a graduate's competency and the level of competence demanded by the field in which he or she will work (Fater, 2013).

Davis, Misra, and Van Auken (2002) propose that gap analysis lends itself particularly well to the measurement of alumni attitudes and perceptions. The strengths of gap analysis applied in this manner include its potential to produce more actionable results than student retention surveys, job placements, or student perceptions of faculty and exit examinations (Davis, Misra, & Van Auken, 2002). In addition, it might provide deeper insights than mere student satisfaction surveys (Davis, Misra, & Van Auken, 2002).

Gap analysis has been used to help faculty highlight areas of strength and identify deficiencies in competency development (Fater, 2013). Among the strengths of gap analysis assessment identified by Davis, Misra, and Van Auken (2002, pp. 218-219**),** i.e. "the variables for analysis can be arrived at through a faculty consensus, thus creating more of a faculty 'buy-in' or acceptance of the results."

Davis, Misra, and Van Auken (2002) also propose that gap analysis creates a basis for comparison or improvement, prompts a systemic process of evaluation versus ad-hoc analysis, provides for plotting of longitudinal trends and a quantitative basis for analysis, thus it is scientific in its approach. In this regard, however, investigators need to consider that gap analysis may be time dependent**.** Davis, Misra, and Van Auken (2002) propose that KSAs are subject to change as industry structure and technology change in the various sectors. Some variables under scrutiny may become obsolete and new variables may appear, thus disrupting longitudinal analysis.

Investigators also need to be mindful that gap analysis assessment of alumni satisfaction at a university might not be generalizable to other institutions, due to faculty, student and employer differences (Davis, Misra, & Van Auken, 2002).

Gap analysis, however, has limitations as an alumni satisfaction assessment technique. Gap analysis is quantitative research, and for its results to provide useful guidance, it requires a sufficient sample size to be adequately powered. Davis, Misra, and Van Auken (2002) note that surveys may be subject to sampling issues, such as nonresponse bias and inadequate sample size, discussed below in more detail. For that reason, smaller schools might find qualitative research, such as structured interviews, preferable to collecting alumni data and create hypotheses that can later be tested via quantitative survey methods (Atieno, 2009).

Moreover, gap analysis is not the only means to assess relevance and quality of the curriculum. Davis, Misra, and Van Auken (2002) recognize there are many qualitative and quantitative approaches to assess program curriculum, including "recruiter and employer perceptions of graduates; exit examinations; the nature and number of job placements; student retention rates; students' perceptions of curriculum, instructional techniques, and faculty; and alumni perceptions of value."

METHODS

The primary objective of this study was to apply "gap analysis" to identify the divergence between what hospitality management program alumni consider important to their careers, in terms of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs), and their perception of the quality of career preparation through their curriculum. In other words, the study aimed to assess if there is any gap between "what is" and "what should be", in terms of alumni perception of their curriculum's career preparation (Fater, 2003). All study subjects and respondents are graduates of the same four-year undergraduate hospitality and tourism administration (HADM) program at a historically black college/university (HBCU) in the Southeast United States.

The survey instrument used in this study was adapted from a gap analysis study of a marketing curriculum conducted by Davis, Misra, and Van Auken (2002). Subjects were asked to rate both their perceived level of preparation they received in various subject matter areas emphasized in their hospitality management curriculum ("knowledge") and their perception of the value of this education and training in their careers ("importance"). Based on data from alumni subjects' and survey responses, the study sought to identify statistically significant "gaps" between the subjects' perceived value of various aspects (the variables) of the curriculum and their relative importance to their career success.

Likert-scale satisfaction surveys allow respondents to rate their perceived knowledge and career importance of specific KSAs imparted in their curriculum. Gap analysis can illuminate significant disparity between the mean responses.

For example, favorable, but not identical, mean ratings of an aspect of the curriculum, both in terms of knowledge and importance, might suggest appropriate instructional emphasis in that area. Gap analysis can be applied to determine if the disparity between a mean rating of "5" in "importance" and a mean rating of "4" in "knowledge" is statistically significant. In this case, this can prompt investigation whether the aspect of the curriculum is, indeed, sufficiently emphasized.

The Survey Instrument

The study's survey instrument required respondents to rate, on a 1-7 semantic scale (1 = low, 7 = high), their perceived importance of 17 KSA categories or "variables", in relation to their professional careers, and their perceived level of preparation of those variables in their curriculum.

The variables were developed to reflect both general and hospitality management KSAs. Eleven of the KSA variables were adapted directly from Davis, Misra, and Auken (2002); while, the remaining 6 variables reflected KSAs specific to the learning outcomes of the HADM program curriculum. (The variables and responses are shown in "Table 3: A Gap Analysis of Alumni's Perception of Skills and Knowledge Importance Contrasted with Perceived Preparation provided by The Hospitality and Tourism Administration Program"). The survey also elicited demographic data.

The study was guided by the following research question: Is the perceived importance to one's career different from the perceived level of preparation received from HADM program on major knowledge sets and skills?

Subjects and Sample of Respondents

The survey instrument was made available online, as well as via mailed paper questionnaires to the 197 alumni who had graduated from the program, as of fall 2015, since the HADM program's founding in 1998. Twenty-nine subjects completed questionnaires, resulting in a 14.7% rate of response. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of these respondents reported they were currently employed in the hospitality industry.

The respondents included twenty (20) females (69%) and nine (9) males (31%). Sixty-two percent (62%) of the respondents were between the ages of 21 and 40, twenty-eight percent (28%) were between the ages of 41 and 60, and seven percent (7%) were age 61 or older. One respondent (3%) did not report his/her age. With respect to annual income, fifty-five percent (55%) of respondents reported earning less than $50,000, thirty-five percent (35%) reported annual income from $50,001 to $80,000, and seven percent (7%) reported annual income from $80,001 to $100,000. One respondent (3%) did not report his/her salary.

The Research Question and Hypotheses

Research Question: Is the perceived importance to one's career different from the perceived level of preparation received from HADM program on major knowledge sets and skills?

The following hypotheses were tested for each set of importance/preparation items. The null hypothesis is there are no statistically significant gaps between the study respondents' perception of the level of knowledge and skill preparation provided by their hospitality management program and the importance of those areas in their careers. The alternative hypothesis is that there are perceived gaps between the preparation and importance in those knowledge and skill areas.

H_o: $\mu_{Importance} = \mu_{Preparation}$ H_1: $\mu_{Importance} \neq \mu_{Preparation}$

In conjunction with applying gap analysis to the data, the investigators compared the respondents' mean responses, ranked in order of both importance (see "Table 1**:** Ranking of Respondents' Perception of the *Importance* of Knowledge, Skills and Abilities in Their Curriculum") and preparation (see "Table 2**:** Ranking of Respondents' Perception of Level of *Preparation* of Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities in Their Curriculum").

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of Hypotheses

As suggested by p values expressed in Table 3, the null hypothesis (H_o: $\mu_{Importance} = \mu_{Preparation}$) that there is no difference between importance and preparation was accepted for 12 KSAs and rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis of difference between importance and preparation (H_1: $\mu_{Importance} \neq \mu_{Preparation}$) for 5 KSAs. Specifically, the null hypothesis was rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis for the following KSAs: (1) Ability to analyze the relationship between hospitality management variables, (2) Ability to build professional relationships, (3) Ability to communicate effectively using the language of hospitality management, (4) Ability to develop workable solutions to hospitality management problems, (5) Ability to identify a hospitality management problem, (6) Ability to resolve conflict in the workplace, (7) Ability to work effectively in teams, (8) Quantitative skills (9) Technical preparation, (10) Understanding hospitality management concepts, (11) Understanding how hospitality management relates to other functional areas in business, and (12) Written communication skills.

The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis for the following KSAs: (1) Ability to handle ethical issues, (2) Industry certification, (3) Internship experience, (4) Leadership skills, and (5) Oral communication skills.

Interpretation of Results

Among the observations that emerged from their mean responses (presented in Tables 1 and 2), respondents rated "oral communication skills" as the most important area with respect to their careers, but eighth in perceived level of preparation. Also, noteworthy, the respondents ranked "industry certification" second to the bottom in perceived importance, but fifth in perceived level of preparation in their curriculum.

The gap analysis of the responses indicates a statistically significant divergence between respondents perceived important and preparation in five of the 17 KSAs variables. This is presented in "Table 3: A Gap Analysis of Alumni's Perception of Skills and Knowledge Importance Contrasted with Perceived Preparation Provided by The Hospitality and Tourism Administration Program."

In the KSAs categories, "ability to handle ethical issues", "leadership skills", and "oral communication skills", gap analysis indicates that respondents rated their perceived importance significantly *higher* than the perceived level of preparation received ($p < .05$). In the KSA categories, "industry certification" and "internship experience", gap analysis indicates that respondents rated their perceived importance significantly *lower* than the perceived level of preparation received ($p < .05$).

Before proceeding further into the discussion of the findings, worth noting is the relatively small sample of respondents in this study. Due to this limitation, program administrators and faculty would be well-advised to be cautious in operationalizing its results without further inquiry. The limitations of the study sample size are addressed further in the section "Limitations and Future Research".

The gap analysis of the subject responses in this study might prompt the program's administration and faculty to review the five KSAs categories in which the study indicates a statistically significant divergence between respondents' perceived importance to their careers and perceived preparation in their curriculum.

Where Respondents Indicated "Importance" Exceeded "Preparation"

As noted in section "Findings/Results", the gap analysis indicates that respondents rated the perceived importance of the KSA categories "ability to handle ethical issues", "leadership skills", and "oral communication skills" significantly *higher* than the perceived level of preparation they received in the program ($p < .05$).

One way to interpret this data is that respondents perceived they were "underprepared" in these areas, which might be deemed "soft skills". Particularly noteworthy is the gap in "oral communications". The importance of this skill in the context of hospitality management would seem clear, in that soft skills are equally, if not more, important than technical business skills in fields that require serving the public.

Moreover, based on the literature, alumni perception of inadequate curriculum emphasis on oral communication skills is evident in disciplines other than hospitality management programs. One explanation noted in the literature, is oral communication skills pose challenges to educators because they are not well-captured by measures of cognition. Nevertheless, the results of this study might prompt the program administrators to more vigorously seek opportunities to help students develop oral communication skills across the curriculum.

Conversely, the study revealed no statistically significant gaps between importance and preparation in what might be deemed "technical skills". This suggests that the curriculum is sufficient in these areas, at least according to alumni perception. This is encouraging, at least in the context of a prior study that indicated knowledge in financial management, marketing, and information technology, in addition to human resources management, constituted a desirable attribute for management success.

Where Respondents Indicated "Preparation" Exceeded "Importance"

This gap analysis study also indicates that respondents rated the importance of the KSA categories, "industry certification" and "internship experience", significantly *lower* than their perceived level of preparation received in the program ($p < .05$). These gaps suggest that the program emphasized certain areas beyond the practical value in the workplace.

One way to interpret this data is that respondents indicated they are "overprepared" in these areas. The program employs several industry certifications offered by the National Restaurant Association and American Hotel & Lodging Association. The value of these certifications includes, but is not limited to, access to standardized course materials and exams. The results of the gap analysis might prompt administrators and faculty to ascertain if specific certifications are being used most effectively. It might also prompt them to review both the content of various certifications and determine the value placed on them by hospitality industry employers that seek graduates of four-year university management programs.

The results might also prompt administrators and faculty to review the program's requirement for a total 1,000 hours of internship and credited work study. One might ask if this requirement is excessive and/or a valuable use of the students' time. This might be particularly relevant at the HBCU program where the study was conducted. Anecdotally, many of those students hold jobs to pay for schooling and living expenses and face certain challenges regarding time and resources specific to this student population.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Limitations

Gap analysis is not the only means to assess relevance and quality of the curriculum. Davis, Misra, and Van Auken (2002) recognized there are many qualitative and quantitative approaches to assess program curriculum, including "recruiter and employer perceptions of graduates; exit examinations; the nature and number of job placements; student retention rates; students' perceptions of curriculum, instructional techniques, and faculty; and alumni perceptions of value." Surveys may be subject to sampling issues, such as nonresponse bias and inadequate sample size, discussed below in more detail.

Another limitation of a gap analysis is the results may be time dependent. That is, recent graduates might have different perceptions of curriculum value than graduates who have advanced in their career to more senior management positions. For example, early-career alumni might not appreciate the value of program KSAs that are more important as they advance in career responsibilities. Segmenting response by graduation time frames and perhaps current positions might underscore important differences between the perceptions of various alumni.

This time dependency is also an issue regarding changes, as industry structure and technology change in the various sectors. Some KSA variables under scrutiny may become obsolete and new variable may appear, thus disrupting longitudinal analysis. As examples, consider the changes in social media marketing and consumer preferences between 2000 and 2016, prior to Twitter or Airbnb.

In addition, the study would have more value if the program's entire faculty had been included in choosing the variables for analysis. This would be important if only to ensure that there was sufficient acceptance by faculty, necessary to facilitate any recommended changes to the curriculum.

As indicated throughout this paper, a significant limitation of this study is its low response rate (29 alumni). The relatively low response rate impedes segmented analysis. As Davis, Misra, and Van Auken (2002) noted in their study, a larger sample size would allow for segmentation of respondents, not only regarding the sectors in which they are working, but demographics as well, such as age, ethnicity, and sex, as distribution of these variables might change over the years.

Future Research Specific to the Study Site

To boost response rate, future surveys like this study might leverage alumni affinity and employee incentives to increase the rate of response, perhaps in the form of a *de minimus* gift, such as a university affinity business card holder or gift certificate. Given the challenges related to sampling, in general, schools with larger enrollment might benefit more from a quantitative gap analysis approach to alumni assessment of curriculum, versus schools with lower enrollment and graduation rates. HBCU hospitality management programs tend to have relatively low enrollment as compared to non-HBCU programs. As an example, the HBCU in this study reports an average enrollment of 100 HADM students, compared to largest non-HBCU hospitality management program in the same state, with an average enrollment of 600 students in its hospitality management program. Smaller schools might find qualitative research, such as structured interviews, preferable to collecting quantitative survey alumni data. Such interviews might provide the opportunity to explore nuances in alumni responses and provide an additional hypothesis that might be tested later.

If the future quantitative research using gap analysis could overcome sample size limitations, respondent segmentation by hospitality sector, industry experience and level of management would appear to yield interesting data. The divergence between knowledge and importance of KSAs might differ based both on whether respondents are working in food service, lodging, tourism or other sectors, and their positions in the industry.

Another segment that might warrant further explanation is alumni who are employed in non-hospitality industry sectors. These alumni comprised a notable percentage of respondents in this study. Interesting questions for additional study might include both why these alumni are not working in the hospitality industry and what should hospitality management education be able to provide to graduates who choose to pursue non-hospitality careers. Future studies might attempt to determine if this group of alumni chose to pursue another field upon graduation, or originally worked in hospitality, but decided to change their career paths. In both cases, it might be valuable to know why.

The study indicated that alumni perceived their knowledge in oral communication skills underemphasized in relation to its career importance. This finding might prompt further inquiry into the adequacy of communication skills training in this program. This is particularly noteworthy given previous alumni curriculum satisfaction studies that all cite "oral communication" as underemphasized in the university curriculum.

Conversely, the study indicated that alumni perceived their knowledge via industry certifications were overemphasized in relation to their career importance. This is also notable, given that the HBCU in this study incorporates many industry certifications in the curriculum. The study might prompt investigation into the perceived value of these certifications among industry employers that hire their graduates. As a related matter, it would be noteworthy to find out if the certification course content has kept pace with the demand for specific KSAs in the current hospitality management employment market.

The study results also indicated that alumni perceived their knowledge via internships were overemphasized in relation to their career importance, future research might compare hospitality industry career readiness between graduates of programs with internship requirements of varying hours. This might include a useful survey of hospitality management program internships, in terms of expectations and requirement. It might also include a study that compares alumni perception of the value of internships in terms of gaining experience and forging industry relationships that might lead to satisfactory employment. Benefits of such research efforts might include stronger alumni support for the hospitality industry.

Future Research Benefitting HBCU Programs as a Group

Particularly given the limitations of sample size encountered in this study, a future quantitative gap analysis study, like this, might provide useful data by surveying the combined alumni of the HBCU Consortium, a group of 12-member HBCU hospitality management programs. Such a study might yield considerably greater response, and, perhaps, determine if there are any common threads regarding HBCU alumni perception of their career preparation. One of the limitations of gap analysis identified in the literature is the results at a university might not be generalizable to other institutions due to faculty, student, and employer differences. If common threads between HBCU programs could be validated, a Consortium-wide study might illuminate alumni satisfaction issues generalizable to HBCU hospitality management programs and help advance their quality and value to graduates as a group.

This might benefit HBCU hospitality management academic community not only in program quality and enrollment but through the financial and other support of alumni. Black business leaders have called to action to support HBCUs, which have produced as many as 25% of all black college graduates (Graves, 2013). Gauging alumni level satisfaction with the relevance of their education and training via gap analysis and other methodologies might be a vital component in the sustainability and growth of HBCU hospitality management education Programs at HBCU’s, and help to overcome Historic hurdles in soliciting alumni gifts.

Table 1: Ranking of Respondents' Perception of the *Importance* of Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities in Their Curriculum

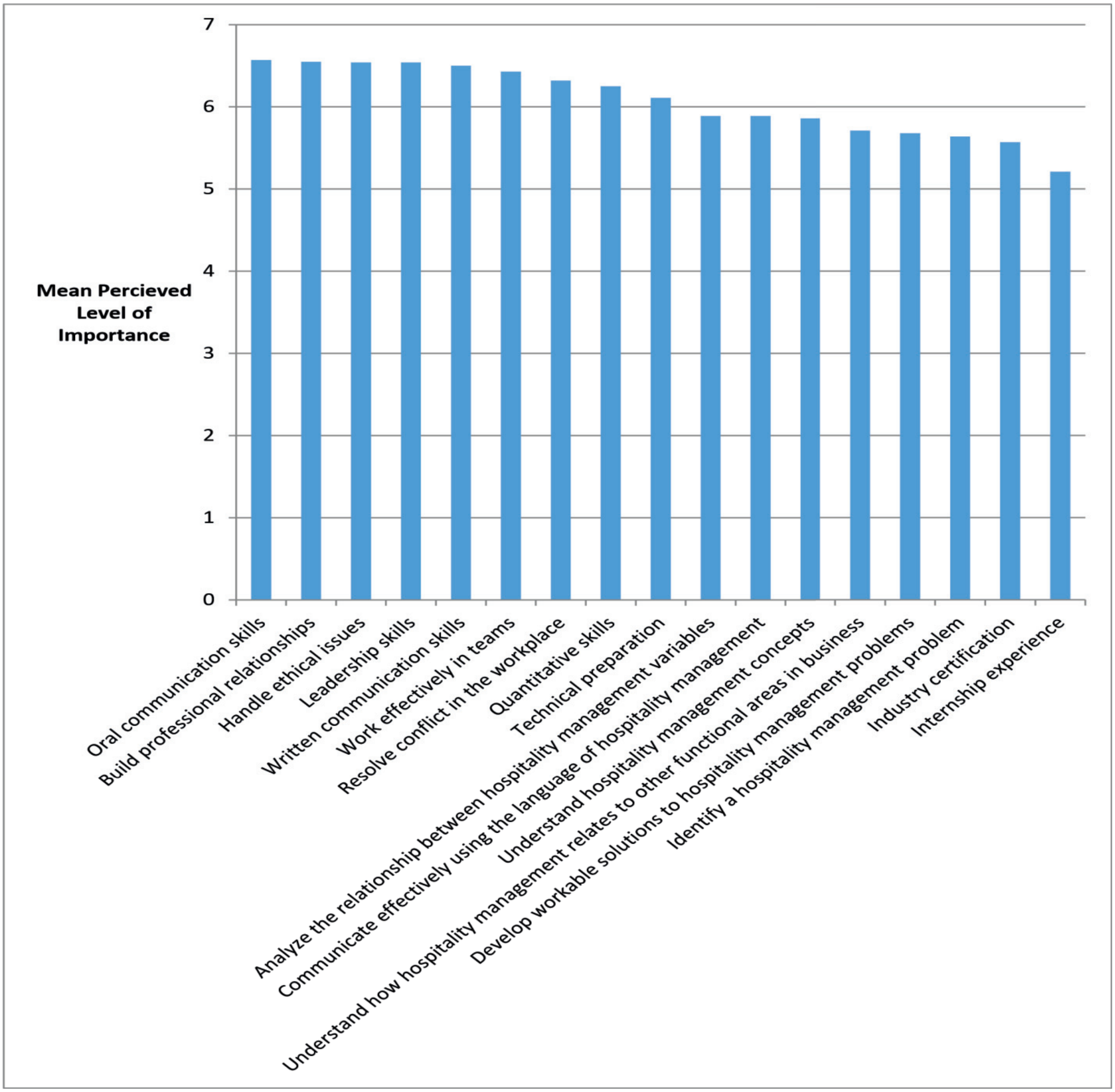
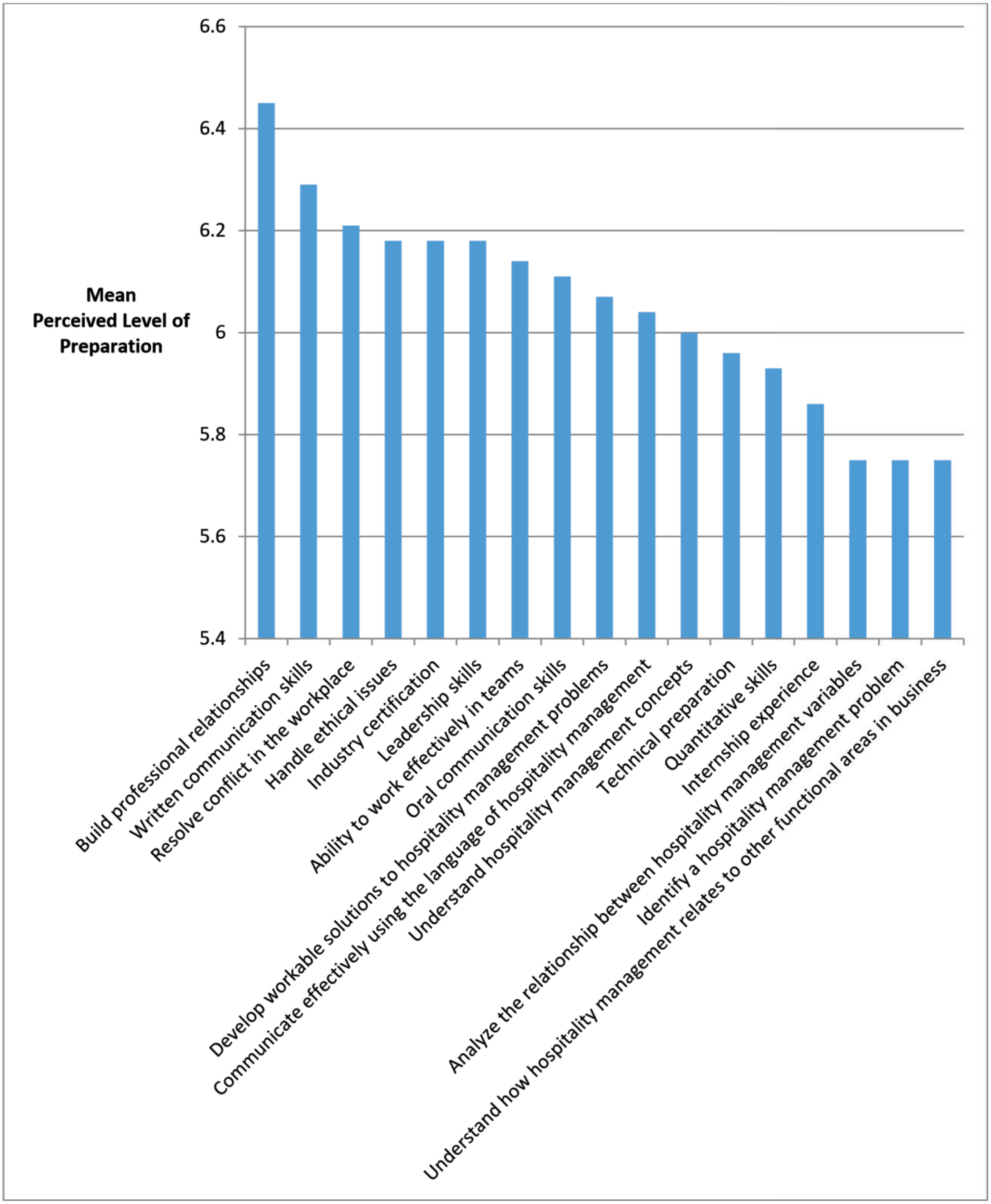


Table 2: Ranking of Respondents' Perception of Level of *Preparation* of Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities in Their Curriculum (N=29)



NOTE: 1 = *low*, 7 = *high* on the semantic differential scale. *p ≤ .05, **p ≤ .01

Table 3: A Gap Analysis of Alumni's Perception of Skills and Knowledge Importance Contrasted with Perceived Preparation Provided by The Hospitality and Tourism Administration Program (N=29

Knowledge and Skill Means				
Variable	*Importance*	*Preparation*	*t-Value*	*Probability*
Ability to analyze the relationship between hospitality management variables	5.89	5.75	.411	.684
Ability to build professional relationships	6.55	6.45	.682	.501
Ability to communicate effectively using the language of hospitality management	5.89	6.04	-.406	.688
Ability to develop workable solutions to hospitality management problems	5.68	6.07	-1.218	.234
Ability to handle ethical issues	6.54	6.18	2.585	.015*
Ability to identify a hospitality management problem	5.64	5.75	-.422	.676
Ability to resolve conflict in the workplace	6.32	6.21	.769	.449
Ability to work effectively in teams	6.43	6.14	1.188	.245
Industry certification	5.57	6.18	-2.258	.032*
Internship experience	5.21	5.86	-3.104	.004**
Leadership skills	6.54	6.18	3.041	.005**
Oral communication skills	6.57	6.11	3.099	.004**
Quantitative skills *(ability to work with numerical data)*	6.25	5.93	1.362	.184
Technical preparation *(ability to use software such as PowerPoint, spreadsheets, specialized software, in a hospitality management context)*	6.11	5.96	.660	.515
Understanding hospitality management concepts	5.86	6.00	-.642	.526
Understanding how hospitality management relates to other functional areas in business	5.71	5.75	-.115	.909
Written communication skills	6.50	6.29	1.536	.136

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Tourism in Urban America: Freddie Gray and the African American Tourist Experience

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ABSTRACT

This article presents an empirical phenomenological study of African American dark tourism at the site of Freddie Gray's arrest in Baltimore, MD. The purpose of this study was to fill a gap in the literature regarding the lived experience of African American tourism consumers and the benefits they receive from dark tourism in their community. This project was significant because it better explained an under-represented aspect of dark tourism by addressing the African American experience including the benefits of partaking in this form of tourism for this group. A qualitative empirical phenomenological method was employed utilizing multiple in-depth interviews and theme analysis. The results of the study suggested that African Americans who partake in dark tourism at sites with relevance to the community would walk away with feelings of increased connection, vigilance, and understanding. These findings have relevance to business and government entities looking for ways to better develop dark tourism sites related to the African American experience.

***KEYWORDS*:** Freddie Gray, Dark Tourism, Thanatourism, Baltimore Riots, African American Tourism, Black Lives Matter

INTRODUCTION A recent development in the tourism industry is the phenomenon of "dark tourism", first designated and labeled as such by Lennon and Foley in 1996. Alternatively, this type of tourism may also be called "than tourism" (Stone, 2013). In contrast to more typical types of tourism, which can be viewed more "positively"— in that the appeal of tourism to a given place lies in the presence of "positive" factors such as beauty, exotic cuisine, relaxation, and other "positive" experiences—the phenomena of dark tourism typically are **based** on the presentation and consumption by visitors of sites where death, suffering, and tragedy has famously occurred (Lennon & Foley, 1996). Tourism can be deemed "dark" through the consumption and performance of danger (Buda & MacIntosh, 2013). It is in this sense that Stone (2011) has classified dark tourism as a kind of tourism that treats death, suffering, and tragedy as commodities.

While this phenomenon raises questions regarding ethical treatment, especially for those who have suffered or died in a specific place, it has been argued this phenomenon is unavoidable, given that historical significance, whether positive or negative, has been found to elicit interest from tourists (Seaton, 2000). This indicates that tourists do not view the negative connotations of traumatic events-such as war-as overriding factors in their desire to visit a place. An instance of this is found in Bigley, Lee, Chon, and Yoon (2010), who maintained that tragedies, like war, could manifest as factors that might help increase tourism in specific regions.

The arrest site of Freddie Gray in West Baltimore provides an interesting backdrop for the study of this phenomenon. At the corner of Mount and Presbury streets in a derelict section of Baltimore known as Sandtown, Freddie Gray was arrested on April 12, 2015. While in police custody that day, Gray suffered mysterious injuries to his spinal cord that resulted in his death and led to violent riots that rocked the city and grabbed national headlines during the summer of 2015. Freddie Gray's actual arrest site has since been commemorated with a graffiti style wall mural in addition to two other large painted wall murals that have sprung up on the streets surrounding the site of the arrest itself. It is in this unusual location that a new contemporary dark tourism site has emerged with interest to the African American community.

The focus of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of African American tourists who visited Freddie Gray's arrest site at the corner of Mount and Presbury Streets in Baltimore, MD. The benefits these tourists perceived from their visit were examined to fill a gap in the literature regarding empirical studies on the lived experiences and perceptions of African American tourists when visiting places set apart from others by the events of death and suffering that occurred there (Isaac & Çakmak, 2014).

Literature Review

Foley and Lennon (1996) first used the term 'dark tourism', although the phenomenon, the term described has existed for hundreds of years. Foley and Lennon (1996) coined the term "dark tourism" to describe the kind of tourism that involved visiting sites of death, suffering, and tragedy, for the purposes of remembrance, education, and entertainment. Stone (2013) maintained that despite the newness of the term "dark tourism", visiting places associated with death has occurred if people have been able to travel. What is now called dark tourism can easily be traced from tourism that involved visiting sites of war. In fact, Smith (1998) claimed that visit sites associated with war were likely to be the most numerous in the categories of tourist attractions in the world.

Seaton (1996) argued that dark tourism is simply traditional travel that evolved through the passage of time. As history evolves, it is made in more places. Isaac and Çakmak (2014) have identified this creation of more places that hold historical significance as one motivator for dark tourism consumers. Specifically, in cases of visits to places of war, dark tourism consumers have been viewed as making a secular pilgrimage, akin to the early Christians with their own holy places (Hyde & Harman, 2011). Dunkley, Morgan, and Westwood (2011) to offer tourists the chance for pilgrimage, collective and personal remembrance, and event validation, especially for participants who had battlefield experience, have also found battlefield tours. This phenomenon can be seen in Seaton (1996), who described tourists in the Middle Ages making long pilgrimages to sites they considered holy, as they were linked to the death of Christ and other prophets.

Stone and Sharpley (2008) claimed that the reason for the increased popularity of dark tourism in modern society is because of a natural human emphasis on the possession of ontological security (i.e. a stable mental state derived from continuity of life) in which the threats to our existence as individuals are often hidden away by society to maintain a sense of order and safety in our lives. However, this state of mind tends to be undermined by experiences of angst borne from disorder or chaos (Stone & Sharpley, 2008). Thus, despite every individual knowing that death is unavoidable, it is very rare for someone to think about their own death; leaving them uncertain and more fearful once death becomes possible in their own minds (Stone & Sharpley, 2008). The absence of death from honest discourse and its omnipresence in actual life may lead some individuals to desire more information about the death, and through dark tourism, Stone and Sharpley (2008) argued that dark tourism consumers are bringing death back into their consciousness and readying themselves for their own mortality.

While illuminating, these studies all concentrated more on the supplier of dark tourism, rather on the tourists. As a result, although scholars have established that dark tourism consumers show their desires to experience dark tourism, there is little discussion of the perceptions of tourists who consume these experiences. Furthermore, even less focus is placed on African American dark tourism consumers and their experiences. This has led to a lot of discussion on commercialized dark tourism sites and the perceptions of those that manage these sites but has neglected a thorough conception of the overall experience, including benefits received, in the eyes of the consumer.

Although not focused on the African American dark tourist specifically, the call to examine the lived experiences of dark tourism consumers from the same background was taken up by a study by Cheal and Griffin (2013) on the experiences of Australian tourists at Gallipoli, a battlefield site. Cheal and Griffin paid specific attention to the role that interpretation played in the shaping of the tourists' experiences, and emphasized that, given the variety of circumstances and ways of engaging with the tourist experience in Gallipoli, it would be prudent to use an empirical design that would best capture the different perceptions of these tourists (Cheal & Griffin, 2013). The authors found that Australians visited Gallipoli for many different reasons, including national sentiment and personal connections, both of which are highly personal and vary from individual to individual (Cheal & Griffin, 2013). The study by Cheal and Griffin (2013) has provided empirical evidence on how tourists engage with battlefield tourism sites and lend credence to the large role that interpretation plays in shaping the overall experience. An implication of this would be that more research is needed on other groups, to better understand the dark tourism experience on their end. This is especially true in the African American context, as no literature exists on the dark tourism experiences of this group at a contemporary site.

Despite the expansion of understanding with regards to the tourist experiences of dark tourism, there remains an overall lack of insight regarding the feelings that surround the dark tourism experience from the perspective of consumers. As Biran (2011) noted, the current literature on dark tourism rarely strays from a supply perspective and has so far failed to give a comprehensive account of the tourist experience.

RESEARCH and METHODS

Overview

The main purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate the lived experiences and perceptions of African American tourists who have visited the arrest site of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, MD. This study involved the use of in-depth interviews with an exclusively African American sample population. The research question that guided this study in its purpose was as follows:

RQ1. What are the lived experiences and perceptions of dark tourism consumers regarding the benefits they feel that they receive from visiting the Freddie Gray's arrest site in Baltimore, MD?

Research Design

The research employed a qualitative phenomenological research design, as it was the most appropriate design for a study that sought to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of African American dark tourism consumers as related to their perceived benefit for visiting Freddie Gray's arrest site in Baltimore, MD. This method was most appropriate given the fact that revealing these benefits necessitates the gathering of new data that involves detailed examinations of a participant's life experiences to illustrate the full essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Smith & Osborn, 2010). According to Salmon (2012), phenomenological designs are most appropriate when attempting to examine human experiences as they relate to a specific phenomenon, and how these experiences then create meaning in the participants. Furthermore, the phenomenological design has also been deemed most appropriate in research that attempts to get as close as possible to the experience of the participants, allowing others the clearest possible glimpse into phenomena that they may not have experienced (Sanders, 1982).

More specifically, an empirical phenomenological method was chosen, as it allows the researcher more room to examine the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants by using their own words to gain an understanding of their overall context (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010; Silverman, 2011). Cheal and Griffin (2013) revealed that the engagement of dark tourism consumers in Gallipoli were composed of highly personal connections to the place, indicating that a research design that could accurately capture those highly personal connections should be chosen.

Data Collection

The data for this qualitative empirical phenomenological study was collected through interviews with 10 African American dark tourism consumers who visited the arrest site of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, MD. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to further this study.

Semi-structured interviews balance preplanned questions typical of a structured approach with the spontaneity and flexibility of unstructured interviews (Salmons, 2012). To this end, the researcher created a list of prepared questions and discussion topics in advance then generated follow-up questions for subsequent interviews with the same participant based upon responses during the interview process itself (Appendix A). The use of semi-structured interviews was consistent with the phenomenological research design's goal of understanding the experiences of participants by giving them enough flexibility and openness to express themselves without being constrained by leading or closed-ended questions.

The predetermined interview questions and topics were formulated based on the possible benefits and underlying motivations for dark tourism offered by scholars, such as Biran (2011), Dann (1998), Russell (2010), Stone and Sharpley (2008), Tarlow (2005), and Zhou, Wildschut, Sedikides, Chen, and Vingerhoets. (2012). The interview questions probed the possible motivations and benefits offered by previous scholars. There was also a specific space in the interview for participants to provide any information they felt was important to share that was not addressed during the initial interview process itself. This was done to elicit a fuller expression of each participant's experience, giving subjects another chance to communicate without closed-ended or possibly leading lines of inquiry.

Approximately 50 potential candidates were initially approached for inclusion in the study. To ensure a solid African American subject pool emerged, direct recruiting was made on campus at an HBCU located in the city of Baltimore. Recruiting efforts included personal recruitment and the posting of recruitment flyers on campus and in the neighborhood surrounding the site. This method of recruitment helped ensure that participants (a) were self-identified, as African American (b) were willing to let other people know they had visited the site. After the initial introduction of the project through the means discussed above, potential participants were contacted again to gain consent with the reassurance that they may opt out at any point in the research, and that any questions or concerns would be addressed promptly. From this pool of initial contacts, 10 participants were eventually chosen for in-depth interviews. Participation was open to anyone so long as they were over the age of 18 and self-identified as African American, and no other exclusive criterion was used.

The use of small samples is justified in this research method, given that a comprehensive picture of the context is preserved (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Chapman & Smith, 2002). This is in line with the number of participants prescribed by Creswell (1998, p. 64), five to 25 participants, and Morse (1994, p. 225), at least six participants. Englander (2012) made the point that the question of how many participants are needed for a qualitative study is irrelevant, given that the research is not quantitative, and if it accomplishes its goal—namely, to be able to "identify the essential structure of a phenomenon" (Englander, 2012, p. 23)—the number of participants can be malleable. As stated by Mason (2010), 10 interviews may be able to elicit richer data than 50 interviews if the interviewer establishes rapport with the participants and conducts a thorough interview.

Data Analysis

A qualitative phenomenological approach was used to analyze the data, specifically the modified van Kaam method outlined by Moustakas (1994). An empirical phenomenological method was utilized to examine the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants regarding their experiences visiting the Freddie Gray arrest site in Baltimore, MD. As emphasized by Moustakas (1994) study, phenomenological research methods focus on the wholeness of experience, instead of on specific parts. Therefore, meanings and essences are given primary importance, rather than measurements and explanations (Moustakas, 1994).

In the modified van Kaam method of analysis by Moustakas (1994, p. 121), the following seven steps were used to analyze the interview data:

1. Listing and preliminary grouping of every relevant experience.
2. Reduction and elimination of extraneous data to capture essential constituents of the phenomenon
3. Clustering and thermalizing the Invariant Constituents to identify core themes of the experience.
4. Final identification and verification against the complete record of the research participant
5. to ensure explicit relevancy and compatibility.
6. Construct for each co-researcher an individualized textural description of the experience based upon the verbatim transcripts using relevant and valid invariant constituents and themes.
7. Construct for each co-researcher and an individual structural description of the experience based upon the individual textural description and imaginative variation.
8. Construct for each participant a textural-structural description of the meaning and essence of the experiences.

RESULTS

Demographic Information

The sample for this study consisted of 10 participants, five men, and five women. All participants were between 20 and 39 years old and were college students at an HBCU located in Baltimore, MD. None of the participants lived in Sandtown - the neighborhood where the arrest site is located. One participant's permanent address was as far away as Oakland, CA. Three participants lived in Baltimore City, four others lived in Baltimore County, and two others lived in Prince George's county – a Maryland county that borders Washington DC.

Table 1
Demographic Information of Participants

Demographic Information	N	%
Gender		
Male	5	50
Female	5	50
Age		
to 24	8	80
to 29	1	10
to 34	0	0
to 39	1	10
Occupation		
Student	10	100
Place of Permanent Residence		
Baltimore City	3	30
Baltimore County	4	40
Oakland, CA	1	10
Prince George's County	2	20

Note. n=10

Results by Theme

Cluster and themes were developed by grouping together invariant constituents that were thematically related. These clusters represented a broad set of ideas, subsumed by smaller interrelated units of meaning. The invariant constituents that received the most number of coded data became the theme for each cluster. Based on the analysis performed, several clusters and themes were developed, central to understanding the experience of the participants regarding the research question asked by this study. The thematic clusters identified that are relevant to the perceived benefits of visiting the Freddie Gray arrest site were as follows: (a) connection, (b) sharing, and (c) understanding.

Following is a more detailed explanation of each theme along with ultimate conclusions drawn from the full data analysis process outlined in the modified van Kaam method of analysis by Moustakas (1994, p. 121). The presentation of the results is aided by direct quotes from the participants to provide support and further illustration.

Connection. The first cluster was labeled connection, pertaining to the experience of participants feeling a greater connection to something beyond themselves. The main theme that emerged from the data was that the Freddie Gray arrest site influenced participants by making them feel more connected to the greater black community (80% of participants). Other significant connections felt by participants were to an event of perceived great historical significance (60% of participants) and to the Black Lives Matter movement (40% of participants).

The feeling of connection to something greater than oneself was the primary benefit expressed by participants for visiting the

Freddie Gray arrest site. The specific connection felt by most participants was to the larger African American community. Participants were universally adamant in saying they could only relate to Gray as a young black person, not as a criminal or person with a checkered past.

However, the connection felt with the larger African American community, including those parts of the community from tougher walks of life, was the primary benefit cited. A secondary benefit was feeling connected to history. Participants universally felt that the Freddie Gray arrest and subsequent riots were major events in history and that coming to the site where the incident first began helped connect them to this history.

I had a lot of thoughts about life, death, and politics while visiting the mural, I feel like as black people in America we must start off by cutting down on the violence in our communities and stop ruining each other's homes with gun violence and drugs. We must create peace and love with each other first before we could make major differences outside our community, and our race. (Participant 3, M, 21)

Vigilance. The next cluster was labeled vigilance, pertaining to the participants increased desire to be vigilant. The main theme that emerged from the data was that participants felt reminded to stay strong in the fight for racial equality (80% of participants). Participants also reported increased vigilance in being reminded that the civil rights movement is not only something of the past but also a contemporary concern (50% of participants). Several participants also expressed feeling hopeful that positive change would come because of the increased vigilance inspired by the Freddie Gray arrest site (40% of participants).

Being inspired to vigilance was a primary positive outcome for most participants. This perceived benefit led all participants to declare the arrest site as a very important place that more people should see (100% of participants) with several participants saying they planned to return to the site with friends and family members so they could also partake in this benefit. *I loved how Freddie Gray's murals stood out in that area and how it created awareness of The Black Lives Matter Movement. I felt very empowered and encouraged to be a part of making a positive difference in the world. (Participant 4, F, 20)*

Understanding. The final cluster was labeled understanding, pertaining to the participants' ability to make sense of reality. The main theme that emerged from the data was that participants could better understand the outrage in the community after Freddie Gray's arrest (60% of participants).

Participants also felt a greater understanding of the conditions that led to the lifestyle Freddie Gray was living at the time of his arrest (50% of participants). Most participants who reported greater understanding had interactions with residents of the Sandtown neighborhood. In these instances, a member of the community approached the visitor and shared personal knowledge about Freddie Gray and life in the community (60% of participants interacted with residents of Sandtown).

Gaining a better understanding of Freddie Gray, the neighborhood that he was a product of, and the outrage expressed after his arrest was an important benefit for most. As a new dark tourism site without any official management, it is interesting to note that residents in the community frequently provided insight with great impact on visitors at the Freddie Gray arrest site.

The young man who approached the group became our unofficial tour guide and gave us a lot of insight on the area and what it is like living there. He talked about how the city does not care about them and how they are forced to sell drugs for survival. He talked about the abandoned buildings and how the police are constantly patrolling and harassing those who live there. He really broke down what it was like to live there. He never told us his name but I am glad I met him because he gave me a better understanding of what it is like to live in West Baltimore as a young, poor, black person. (Participant 10, F, 22)

Conclusions and Practical Applications of Research Findings

The ultimate research question asked by this study was "What are the lived experiences and perceptions of African American dark tourism consumers regarding the benefits they feel that they receive from visiting the Freddie Gray arrest site in Baltimore, MD? The simple answer to this question is increased connection, vigilance, and understanding. These findings are somewhat consistent with Cheal and Griffin (2013) in that individual interpretation is a key part of the experience; however, the interpretation of the experience as increasing connection, vigilance, and understanding is more cohesive amongst the subjects in this study than the prior study found. This implies that, perhaps, African Americans are a more cohesive group in terms of what they take away from dark tourism sites with special importance to their own community.

This is particularly interesting because, despite a shared history and an ongoing sense of communal struggle, African Americans are an increasingly diverse group in terms of socio-economic standing. For the participants in this study, the benefits of increased connection, vigilance, and understanding were particularly important to show integration and solidarity with other less fortunate factions within the African American community. As a population that continues to see advancement politically, socially, and economically, dark tourism experiences have the potential to help African Americans stay connected and find inspiration to be vigilant regarding the rights of the greater community.

This is consistent with the findings of Dunkley, Morgan, and Westwood (2011) who found dark tourism visitation at battlefields offered a similar chance for event validation and collective remembrance for those from the shared background of having battlefield experience.

In terms of practical implications for dark tourism site operators, African Americans are a group that shows interest in visiting dark tourism sites. Sites that may appeal most to African Americans are ones that inspire feelings of understanding, community, and vigilance. The creation and management of these sites need not be limited to merely historical sites from the larger history of the civil rights movement, the period of slavery, and the diaspora.

Instead, contemporary sites should also be developed to allow today's African Americans to feel that they are part of a much larger story and context that extends to present day. By focusing solely on the development of historical sites from prior eras, operators miss the chance to tap into a market hungry for a broader sense of connection not just to the past but also to one another today.

Many of today's gravest inequalities in the African American community are easy to see in the poorest urban African American neighborhoods in the country. Armed with few local businesses and employment opportunities, these urban communities could see added benefit from the development of dark tourism sites within their borders.

In the Sandtown neighborhood in Baltimore, the community has already benefited from the beautification of new murals surrounding the Freddie Gray arrest site and the opportunity for residents to tell their story. Despite a lack of professional management or official oversight by the city, residents of Sandtown are seeing increased interest and visitation in their neighborhood. With more formal support from local government or private enterprise, it may be possible for the community to revitalize itself through dark tourism or at the very least bring more awareness to the need for assistance.

Despite these practical implications, the current study does have limitations. One limitation of the current study is that the sample population measured was made up primarily of millennials. It is possible that consumer desires for connection to something greater than oneself is particularly relevant for this young group. To see if this phenomenon is universal amongst all African American dark tourists, a larger quantitative study inclusive of a wider age range is recommended to produce more generalizable results regarding this dimension of the African American dark tourist experience.

Another possible limitation of this study is the lack of participation of Sandtown residents themselves. One of the interesting discoveries in the current study was the way Sandtown residents use Freddie Gray's arrest site as an opportunity to engage dark tourists to discuss the life of Freddie Gray and the conditions in their neighborhood. This organic use of a non- professionally managed dark tourism site that is absent government supervision is an interesting phenomenon in and of itself. A final recommendation for future research is a call for additional qualitative studies to understand the scope of these activities and the motivations and benefits that fuel them in hopes of provided an even fuller understanding of the African American dark tourist experience.

Survey: Contact the author for a copy of the survey used for the research.

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Engagement in Learning:

Perspectives of Online Tools and Strategies to Promote Learning

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ABSTRACT

Online course tools determine whether the students' will become active participants or dread accessing online courses because they are confusing or unclear. This study was designed to assess course online tools that provided the necessary information for students to complete the assignments and stay focused to pass the course. The purpose of this study was to evaluate students' perception of online navigation tools used to keep them actively involved in learning and completing assignments with high-quality performance. Data were collected over a two-year period for students enrolled in business courses. The results of the study indicated that students stay focused in fulfilling online course requirements when: course learning outcomes are clear; there are detailed assignments, frequent interactions with the professor via audio or through emails and there is immediate feedback from the professor after assignments due date have ended.

KEYWORDS: Online tools; face-to-face learning, active interaction, social Interaction, individual Interaction

INTRODUCTION

Online education has become one of the norms in higher education as more and more, institutions of higher learning are finding ways to compete, but more importantly, engage students more effectively in the learning process. One major challenge posed by some institutions is how can courses be designed to keep students engaged and solidly prepared for the ever-changing workforce? Employers believe that higher education graduates are not prepared for the workplace mainly due to the lack of dated curriculum and lack of engaging activities that promote learning (Clarke, 2013).

Employers expect students graduating from college to be work ready (Clarke, 2013; York & Harvey, 2005). According to Barrie (2006) and Kember and Leung (2005), employers believe that college graduates are not working ready and have appealed to universities to produce graduates who possess requisite soft and critical-thinking skills.

One fallacy identified by the lack of preparation is passive teaching techniques that do not actively involve students to become motivated in learning all that is necessary. Presenting information in an online format provides educators, administrators, and employers with the idea that active learning is not possible, but the real issue is to determine that engaging students face to face is different from planning online teaching (Wray, M, et. Al, 2008). Students who are actively involved are engaged and motivated to complete assignments independently as required. This also means that they are actively engaged in teaching strategies designed to keep them involved in the learning process to include group assignments, project development, case analysis, discussion boards, PowerPoint/Prezi presentations and other forms of involvement.

It is however important for educators to keep students engaged (Mayo, 2014). The challenge becomes more complicated when students are heavily dependent on technology and there is little interaction between the student and the teacher. That is when the teacher puts the assignments online that do not engage the students with their classmates or the teacher (Parker, Lenhart, & Moore, 2011). Participating in stagnant education that is termed "boring" is not engaging. Therefore, the key question is what can be done, given the all-day interactions students have with technology to assure that students are engaged and focused to learn, perform and think critically to meet the demands of employers through online education.

Numerous strategies/techniques have been developed and used, mostly for face-to-face classes to enhance students' preparedness, both academically and for the work world. Some examples of strategies include the development of concept maps, problem-solving exercises categorization grid, simulation-based pedagogy, and others. Online education engagement strategies can be similar, but without a classroom setting to receive immediate feedback (Witkowski & Cornell, 2015). Engaging students in learning is playing a crucial role in students' academic performance and in their personal and professional development. As a result, students develop their academic competency levels, develop their personal and professional capabilities, and are prepared to compete globally.

REVIEW of LITERATURE Student Engagement

Johnson, Crosnoe, and Elder (2001) indicated that students who engage academically, tend to learn more, earn higher grades, and pursue higher education. While Shin and Harman (2009) noted that, in a global and competitive environment, employers are more willing to recruit college graduates who have been exposed to diverse ways of engaging in learning. Likewise, Cham (2011) believed that students must be exposed to diverse ways of learning, including job experiences to enhance their employability options in addition to their personal and professional development. Engaging in learning refers to "the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education" (Great Schools Partnership, 2014). According to Bomia et al. (1997, p. 294), engagement in learning also refers to a "student's willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the learning process promoting higher level thinking for enduring understanding".

The activity/process, engagement of students in learning, has stimulated much interest as it is considered a creative way to address many of the current and potential challenges students face. As indicated by Gilboy, Heinerichs, and Pazzaglia (2015), engaging students in creative and different learning techniques are seen more and more as an indicator of successful classroom instruction. Taylor and Parsons (2011) noted that it has shown to be a necessary attribute in universities, yet, educators and students have little in agreement as to its most suitable definition. Furthermore, Zhao and Kuh (2004) indicated that even though extensive literature within the United States show student's engagement to be a key factor in problem-solving, communication, and interpersonal skills, there is considerable disagreement on their specific types.

The increase in the different ways used to engage students in learning is phenomenal. The different ways are purported to gain or enhance students' engagement in learning. In addition, the new standards in higher education have seen a positive shift for most educational institutions, from merely allowing certain learning principles to valuing them. For example, the increase in online education (Robinson & Hullinger, 2008), collaborated learning (Hein, 2012), and blended learning – a combination of face-to-face and on-line learning experiences (Poon, 2012) among others are emerging as best ways to keep students engaged. The observed features that are used to engage students in learning are strategic moves and valuable indicators of educational quality (Robinson & Hullinger, 2008), and the perception that they improve the experience and enhance engagement (Poon, 2012).

Students enrolling in colleges and universities each semester are diverse in terms of their characteristics such as education level, experiences, demographics, and cultural backgrounds. In addition, the educational environment keeps getting bigger and more competitive and the job market continues to change. In that, employers tend to hire graduates who demonstrate the aptitude to think critically and make profitable decisions on behalf of the company.

As a result, it is crucial for institutions of higher learning to engage students using various methods and situations, and at all levels, if true engagement and learning are to occur. However, the idea of engaging students in learning has become a mammoth task, especially when students are coming from diverse backgrounds, are acquainted with different learning styles, and learn at a pace that may present challenges, notwithstanding the fact that each brings to the classroom a whole different set of experience, knowledge, and enthusiasm to learn. Despite all this, professors are always concerned about improving students' engagement and learning (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). Newmann (1992) however, asserted, "the most immediate and persisting issue for students and teachers are not a low achievement, but students' disengagement" (p. 2), as they move through the educational system (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004).

Goals of Engagement

Student engagement as it relates to learning has become a critical issue for the 21st century. It is due in part with the use of technology that individuals use daily. Based on reviewed literature (Shin & Harman, 2009; Gilbor, Heinerichs, & Pazzaglia, 2015), the goal of engagement in learning is not only to empower students to critically examine arguments and to analyze their own, but also to be more productive as well as to solve problems, communicate well, possess interpersonal skills, and become active lifelong learners.

The entire goal is to train and develop the student's mind, to find the logical connections between ideas that seem different and to determine and understand the reasons for a fact (Schott & Sutherland, 2008). What this is suggesting is that the approaches used to engage students in learning should be diverse in such a way that they include students' involvement, rather than providing purely didactic information.

Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites are termed key to marketing and engaging students. A study conducted by Tucker and Clarke (2013) using Twitter for student engagement and skill learning in a hospitality human resources management course, suggested that they can employ the use of social media as one way to keep students involved in learning. Students are constantly engaged many hours of the day, therefore passive teaching (lecturing) is no longer a motivator for learning.

The common questions after a lecture are; "Are there any questions," and "What do you think about what was taught"? These are no longer keys in engaging students. Wieman and Perking (2005) assessed the relationship between traditional instruction and student learning and concluded that better approaches to teaching were needed. The authors termed the traditional methods of teaching as cognitive overload, with little indication of learning (2005). Other researchers, such as Beran and Violato (2009), David (2004), and Freeman, Anderman, and Jenson (2007) all examined factors of evaluation related to classroom atmosphere and interactions that influence student engagement. They all determined that active participation of students "engaged in doing something" was the key to improved learning (Mayo, 2014).

Online Teaching Course Development

Teaching online requires more than having academic credentials. For face-to-face teaching, professors are normally hired, based on educational credentials, rather than the ability to impart knowledge. There is no certification required to become a professor teaching in higher education. Online teaching, on the other hand, requires persons to complete training and certification requirements to develop and offer online courses. Colleges and universities offering online instruction require and provide training for teaching and delivering online courses. The development and certification of online education began with the development of a research-based, peer-reviewed, continuous learning, and nonprofit organization.

Quality Matters (QM) for example, is a program that was developed by the Maryland Online (MOL) Consortium formed to leverage the efforts of colleges and universities administrators to assist in the expansion of online education. "It is a nationally recognized, faculty-centered, peer review process designed to certify the quality of online course design and online components. The QM Rubric is used in course reviews and serves to help professors to make continuous improvements in course design and implementation (www.qualitymatters.org). The reason for its development was to assist faculty in increasing the engagement of student learning and provide a satisfactory experience in online courses by implementing better course designs. Rubrics are used based on eight broad standards (www.qualitymatters.org). Specific and succinct details are provided using a point system to evaluate courses. Of the eight standards provided, standard number five specifically addresses the need to design courses where course tools promote learner engagement and active learning and learner interaction.

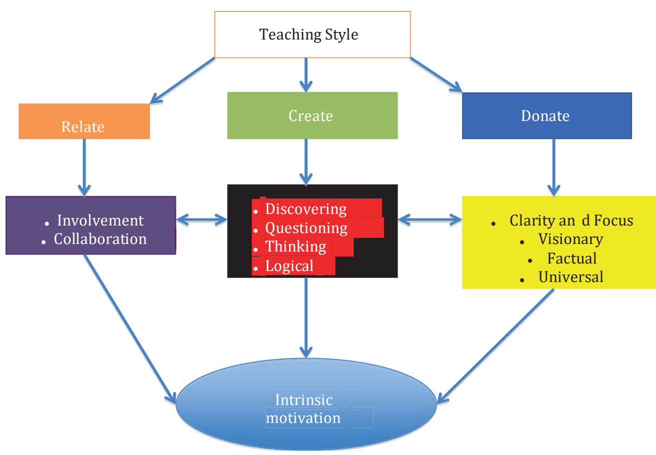
Engagement Theory

The engagement theory (Kearsley & Schneiderman, 1999) (see Figure 1) is a conceptual framework that uses a technology-based teaching and learning approach. The theory's main underlying principle is that students must be profoundly involved in their course of study through interaction with others and meaningful tasks for effective learning to take place. According to Kearsley and Schneiderman (1999), engagement may possibly take place without the use of technology; however, the usage of technology can facilitate engagement in ways, which could not have otherwise been accomplished. The theory suggests three key components that must exist to achieve engagement. These key components are summarized as: "relate", "create", and "denote", which indicates that: 1) teamwork is vital, therefore collaborative learning must be emphasized; 2) assignments should be creative and project-based, and 3) learning activities must have an outside focus: students should have the opportunity to work on a real-life development project structured outside the academic environment (Kearsley & Schneiderman, 1999).

The engagement theory provides a process whereby the student can engage in activities continually with learning and participation at its core. Based on the first principle, relate, the emphasis is placed on collaboration and involvement of the students through communication, planning, management, and social skills. Because of this interaction, students engage by working together, seeking input and clarification from each other, motivating each other as well as learning about each other (Kearsley & Schneiderman, 1999). Create is very project oriented and is the core of "Problem-Based learning" (PBL). The focus is on students learning through the utilization of projects that are designed based on a specific context.

The objective is to increase the learner's level of interest in the activity. Since the assignment is project based and the students have some level of control over their learning, they get to decide the nature of the project (Kearsley & Schneiderman, 1999).

The third principle, denote, stresses the need to actively participate and contribute meaningfully to the wider community while engaged in learning. Hence, a project commissioned by actual clients is ideal. The project should be relevant to the learner area of study, thus increasing motivation and satisfaction. In addition, the engagement theory promotes learning, knowledge, and skills growth of the learner as s/he gets to interact with meaningful projects, become part of a successful, interpersonal, and collaborative team and engage in tasks significant to someone outside the classroom setting (1999).



Source: http://home.sprynet.com/~gkearsley/engage.htm

Engagement Theory Framework

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine which online teaching strategy best-enhanced student participation and engagement in online business classes (hospitality, economics and business classes).

For the study, engaging students in learning is referred to as, involving and engaging students in interactive assignments that they perceive to be engaging. This resulted in the development of the following question: Will online students perceive all eight-course teaching tools as extremely important to unimportant in keeping them engaged to complete assignments?

SIGNIFICANCE of the STUDY

The usage of online delivery methods, via Blackboard, Moodle and others, have been on the rise and have been used as tools to engage students in learning. Gibson (2001); Pitler, Hubbell, and Kuhn (2012); and Welsh, Wanberg, Brown, and Simmering (2003) indicated that integrating technology into the learning environment to enable sound instruction practice has been revealed as a method to increase student motivation and their cognitive complexity based on the task at hand. Baylor and Ritchie (2002) noted that technology used in creative and innovative ways has also been shown to increase student learning. As a result, the study will help to identify and differentiate the instructional delivery methods/techniques that best engage students in learning. Additionally, the findings will increase knowledge and literature based on the students' responses regarding their engagement in learning.

Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

The traditional classroom (stand and deliver) delivery mode, which is most frequently used and commonly referred to as face-to-face instruction, is no longer a viable technique in the 21st century. Student engagement must become the norm, due to the differences in students' learning styles, unequal skills, cultural differences between the instructors and the learners and the daily use of technology to accomplish communications and active tasks (Behnke & Ghiselli, 2004). On the other hand, online learning may be defined as learning with the assistance of the Internet. The term e-learning, or electronic learning, often is used interchangeably with online learning. Even though both delivery methods by themselves have some limitations in how they engage students in learning, combining them could offset the weaknesses found in each method and strengthens the students' overall engagement in learning.

The main goal is to identify ways in which educational settings can best support students' engagement in learning. Poon (2012) noted that a learning setting with both delivery methods (blended) will benefit the students by giving them the flexibility to learn based on their learning style and study pace.

However, the emerging trend is strictly providing online education without face-to-face interactions. It also allows students to meet educational goals while working or taking care of other important matters. The flexibility in online education expands what students can accomplish, thus increasing enrollment of students in universities. Since literature (Zhao & Kuh, 2004) reveals that there is disagreement on the specific types of student engagement activities that contribute to or enhance learning; the researchers believe that for the students to holistically engage in learning, they must oversee some aspects of the learning material, the learning environment, and show ownership of the learning activities. Since online education is rapidly expanding, the overarching research question then is, what are effective methods for enhancing, engaging and improving student learning outcomes in an online setting? The engagement theory provides a framework for understanding this phenomenon.

METHODOLOGY Research Design

Online courses were designed based on the criteria established by each university, using the model of Quality Matters. Standard 5 and Standard 6 include the standard that specifically addresses the use of technology and engagement of the students. Standard 5.4 states that the interaction for the student must be clearly articulated, and standard 6 states that course navigation and technology support engagement and ensure access to course components. (www.qualitymatters.org).

The students were given all the information regarding the courses. The information was easily accessed through the START HERE link found on the course navigation page. Following the announcement of the course, students were instructed to go to the START HERE link where the course material was fully explained and all the components were provided. The survey instrument was included in the last learning unit of each course and students had the option of completing the survey to receive 25 extra credit points. The survey consisted of eight items including items that collected demographic information. The course tools evaluated included: Course Announcements, Information about Assignments (Learning Units/Assignments), Course Materials (PowerPoint Slides, Lecture Notes), Discussion Board Questions, Audio and Visual Interaction with the Professor, Emails from the Professor, Feedback on Assignments/Assessments and Interactive Assignments required by professor and came with the textbook.

Target Population and Sampling The target population for this study were students who enrolled in hospitality and business administration courses in a junior college and two four-year higher education learning institutions located on the east coast of the United States. A convenient sampling method was used to collect the data.

Survey Instrument

The instrument was developed by the researchers based on the engagement theory and items that reflect the three principal components (relate, create, and denote) that must exist to achieve engagement. The questionnaire contained a total of 8 close-ended items to which respondents answered using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from one, meaning, not at all important to five, meaning, extremely important. Students were asked to rank course instructional tools, based on their perception of engagement and involvement in completing course requirements. An open-ended question was provided where students could suggest new strategies or suggest ways to improve the current strategies.

Data Analysis

Data were collected over a two- year period. A total of 240 participants responded to the survey. All the responses were usable. The survey results were evaluated using mean and percentage scoring, provided by the statistical analysis completed by the blackboard. A paired t-test was conducted to compare if any significant differences existed in the percentages for each class (hospitality versus economics and business students). Informed subjects' data were consolidated anonymously and aggregated data analysis was used.

RESULTS Demographics

The 240 participants were online students enrolled in Hospitality and Tourism Management and Business Administration courses at two universities and one junior college. Of the 240 participants, 40% were male and 60% were female. Additional breakdown of the demographics included:

Fifty-five (132) percent of the students were second-year students, 25 % (60) were third-year students and 20 % (48) were seniors. Sixty percent of the students were 21 years old, while 40 % were 25 years or older. Many of the students were non-traditional students. The age ranged from 21 to 45.

Results of the Analysis

Based on the assessment of means and reported percentages, the top course tools that students perceived as engaging and helped them stay engaged were Assignments, Feedback from the Professor, Emails from the Professor, and Course Materials, such as PowerPoint slides and Lecture notes. Students provided additional comments about their experiences of the online classes. The summary statements are included in Table 2.

The research was evaluated using the results of descriptive statistics and the t-test to assess the differences in students' responses based on their major. The t-test results revealed no significant differences existed between sample means of the students. The results, reported in mean and percentages indicated that not all eight of the course instructional tools provided the engagement and involvement in learning. Based on the results reported in Table 2, Hospitality and Tourism Management students ranked in order of predominance as extremely important: Assignments (74.51 %), Audio-Visual Interaction with the Professor (72.44%), Course Announcements (66.33 %), and Feedback from Professor (52.6 %) and Immediate Feedback from Professor on Assignments (43 %) as the top five extremely important components of course tools. The Business Administration students' ranked Professors Feedback (77.11 %), Emails from Professors (71.11 %), Course Assignments (70.90 %) and Course Announcements (51.4 %) as extremely important.

Evaluated and ranked as very important by the Hospitality and Tourism Management students in order of predominance included: Course Materials (33.10 %), Course announcements (29.94 %) and Discussion Boards (24.34 %). Ranked as very important by the Business students were: Course Announcements (36.9 %), Interactive Assignments included with a textbook and assigned by the professor (33.7), Course Materials, (30.8 %), Professor's Feedback (25.5 %) and Emails from Professors (24.3 %). The ranking of interactive course materials was relevant only to the business students, Textbooks were used by McGraw Hill that included *LearnSmart/Connect* codes. The professors assigned activities that were linked to the course tools and required students to submit by a specified date. Immediate feedback was provided for each interactive assignment because they were auto-gradable.

The t-test was conducted to determine if the preferences of Hospitality and Tourism Management students were significantly different from the Business students. Based on the assessment, there was no significant difference between the students. All t-scores were less than 1 for the degrees of freedom.

The test was calculated using an online data assessment tool. Graph Pad Quick Cales, t-test calculator (www.graphpad.com/quickcalcs/ttest1.cfm).

Table 1 Summary of Mean Percentages –Extremely Important Hospitality Students Business Students Total Number of Students =240

Questions	HTM Students No. = 105 Total Points	**Percentage Results Total Points/number of participants**	Business Students No. =135	**Percentage Results**
Q # 1-Course Announcements	199.786	**66.33 %**	664.478	**51.4 %**
Q # 2-Assignments	223.51	**74. 51 %**	921.77	**70.90 %**
Q # 3 Course Materials	154.275	**51.42 %**	540.353	**45.029 %**
Q # 4 Discussion Board	180.207	**60.069 %**	321.799	**29.25 %**
Q # 5 Audio/ visual Introduction by Professor	216.732	**72.244**	379.081	**31.59 %**
Q # 6 Email related to course assignments/feedback	157.846	**52.6 %**	924.452	**71.11 %**
Q # 7 Professor's Feedback	131.398	**43.8 %**	925.00	**77.08**
Q # 8 Internet Challenges or textbook Interactive Assignments	NA	**NA**	447.205	**37.267 %**

Based on the open-ended question that was provided to allow students to suggest new strategic ways to improve the current strategies, the following comments were mentioned as shown in Table 2

Table 2 Table 1: *Open-ended Questions for Improving Engagement*

Student Comments	Number of Students
"Sometimes the homework assignments were hard to understand based on the webpage layout."	7
"I honestly liked the class, because of the variety of assignments. The assignments were never too lengthy."	25
"I would like to see more reflection on assignments submitted using examples of everyday scenarios."	3
"The most important thing for me in an online class is a clear description of all assignments, feedback on grading and responses to emails." "Emails should be responded in a timely manner."	6
"Great class,"	15
"Learn smart/Connect worked very well for me." "I love Connect." "Learn smart/Connect assignments were the most helpful." "Connect really helped me learn.	12
"The book's website needs a bit refining."	2
"Provide a meet and greet session before the classes start."	2
"Discussion Boards are honestly busy work."	5
"The videos in the textbook and PowerPoint slides were very useful."	5
"I would like this class to be instructor-led."	4
"Grading Rubrics are always helpful."	1
"I like how you engage students with the Discussion Board questions."	2
"My involvement and participation were strong in learning course materials."	1
"I really enjoyed having course materials available for the entire semester, with flexibility in completing assignments."	12

Conclusion and Implications The results of this research suggest the importance of studying students' engagement in learning and identifying what instructional methods/techniques tend to engage students in academic tasks based on the course learning outcomes. The study is not suggesting that students' engagement in learning can or should be entirely accomplished only through specific instructional methods. The results reported in this study accentuate the need to infuse instructional strategies that enhance student engagement into classroom practices. The process should consider incorporating a variety of instructional techniques/methods to increase/enhance students' engagement in learning. However, this study revealed the most important instructional methods that facilitate student engagement, as perceived by the students.

Therefore, professors should seek to facilitate all aspects of the learning engagement with students, whether it be through e-mail/feedback, online conferencing, discussion board, and video conferencing/audio among others. This wide variety of instructional tools could allow for designing, planning, problem-solving, making presentations and allowing students to participate, be more creative and complete more sophisticated and multifaceted tasks, as well as, receive prompt feedback on assignments.

Institutions of higher learning may want to ensure that both professors and students are provided with the important tools necessary to engage students. It would be a way to reform and maintain the instructional environment, provide greater interaction and evolution for both professors and students, as well as challenge both parties to become more creative and responsive.

Limitations and Future Research

This study was conducted as an experimental research and has certain limitations. However, the research offers the possibility for future study. The study was designed for students enrolled in hospitality and business classes and was limited to this population and location. In addition, the data were self-reported by the respondents who participated in the study through a survey included on Blackboard. The results reported in the study can be generalized to the universities and colleges used in the survey. It should be replicated by other professors employed at universities and colleges with populations that are more heterogeneous so that greater levels of generalizability can be attained.

Additionally, the student population demographics change yearly and students learning styles vary. Hence, a comparative study using the same students during the senior year may provide a confirmed basis of the instructional tools that engage students. Future studies may also consider other instructional tools that are created by professors, based on the continuous improvement of Quality Matters standards. The entire study could also be replicated in another location to examine the role of location in the educational environment. A larger and more diverse sample could possibly provide more and diverse results.

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The Impact of Crisis Events and Recovery Strategies on International Hotels

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify individual and aggregate baselines of performance for Taiwan Hotels at the time of three major crisis situations with tourist implications, then track their business recovery cycle back to those baselines, thereby establishing longitudinal "Time to Recovery" standards of reference or benchmarks. Fifteen years (1999 – 2014) of performance data, unique to hotels, was examined and "Time to Recovery" calculations was extracted and graphed or tabularized categorically as to hotel location, market served and specific event, then ranked from shortest to longest within each category and overall. It is anticipated that this creative extraction and interpretation of crisis event impact duration from existing data will be valuable to hotel owner/operators and government officials in realistically forecasting time parameters available for strategizing various crisis management activities to include repairing hotel damage, deploying a displaced workforce, conserving operating costs and focusing recovery marketing.

Keywords: Crisis Events, International Hotel, Crisis Management, Business Recovery

INTRODUCTION

The Issue

Tourism has become one of the most prominent economic activities for many countries including Taiwan. As one of the major sources of the economic growth force, the tourism industry depends much on hotels, which not only supply lodging for tourists but also provide sites for social activities, conferences, recreation, commercial information and other 24-hour services. Nevertheless, the occurrences of natural disasters and other crisis events such as earthquakes, terrorism, and disease outbreaks place them among the greatest challenges to the health of the tourism/hospitality industry.

In recent years, Taiwan has experienced the impact of domestic and overseas crisis events. The domestic 9/21 earthquake in 1999, the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003, and the 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001 shocked various industries and caused physical and/or operational damage to the international hotels in Taiwan. Owners and employees worried about the impacts of these crisis events and felt helpless in those situations. Owners lost customers which naturally caused sales and profit reductions. Valued employees were fired or temporarily allowed to continue working without wages or perhaps at half their regular wage rate. Employee trauma was rampant. Senior employees were especially victimized getting no recognition for their long service. However, the owners also were victims, in that operations were not generating significant income to pay salaries and absorb operating expenses. McKercher and Chon (2004) discussed the over-reaction to SARS and the collapse of Asian tourism. When the crisis events happened, tourists canceled their trips for safety reasons. Canceled trips naturally equate to reduced hotel occupancies. (Pratt, 2003).

Unfortunately, no information was available to the government to project either the duration or the impact of the crisis events. In response to that lack of information, this study has adopted a simple business operation impact (BOI) methodology to analyze occupancy rate and average room rate using isolated Z-values to clearly identify hotel industry performance at crisis event beginning. Then, hotel performance was progressively tracked month by month, employing line graph plotting to the point of recovery. From this process, the duration is easily observed and documented. Such information would assist both owners and employees in reducing their worry and helplessness, and with determining strategies for recovery.

Crisis management in the hospitality industry has gone through significant developments in recent years (Aviad, Asad & Bhupesh, 2011). Crisis management literature identifies three types of crises, each of which is determined by an accompanying time restraint (Parsons, 1996) identified as Immediate, Emerging, and Sustained. Immediate crises are those which usually come to mind as they produce little or no warning that they are on the way and are subsequently extremely egregious their destructive impact. Accordingly, we are not capable of clearly projecting immediate crises and undoubtedly cannot have a complete plan organized. Nevertheless, prudence, survival instincts, and just plain business sense dictate that some attempt is made to mitigate the impact on all society and its institutions including hospitality and tourism. This is the ultimate conundrum of “decision-making under uncertainty.” While there is a full set of mathematical probability protocols available for prediction of events, the research approach applied herein is based more so on the dictum holding that “past is prologue.”

Therefore, the issue presented in this paper is that of mining historic longitudinal data relevant to the Taiwan hotel sector, including recovery times following specific immediate crises. The aim of this study is to offer government departments, hotel owners/entrepreneurs, and individual hotel managers benchmarks for post-crisis business recovery, and to assist decision makers with establishing financial, human resource, and marketing parameters for crisis management strategy.

Purpose of Study

The specific purpose of this study was to identify the collective baselines of performance for Taiwan hotel populations at the time of three major crisis situations with global travel implications, then track their business cycle to recovery back to those baselines, thereby establishing longitudinal “time to recovery” standards of reference or benchmarks. Performance is defined as the combination of (a) occupancy rate, and (b) average room rate. The three major crisis situations selected are (a) the 9/21/99 Taiwan Earthquake; (b) the 9/11/2001 USA airborne suicide terrorist attack; and (c) the SARS outbreak, 3/2003. The survey period included fifteen recent years of Taiwan hotel performance data from 1999 to 2014.

LITERATURE REVIEW General Crisis Management

General crisis management comprises activities crucial for handling situations which are dangerous for the (economic) survival of enterprises **(Krummenacher, 1981, p.12).** A crisis management plan in successful performance mode permits an industry to survive an unexpected disaster event. The availability of an effective plan allows a business to react in a systematic and timely manner to resolve the situation. This procedure may simply be a primary caution system for severe incidences that may emanate in the future (Ventolo, 2008). Crisis management always is about developing an organization's competence to respond constructively and make rapid and essential decisions when a crisis occurs (Lockwood, 2005). In discussing crisis management, it is necessary to recognize the crisis classifications which can be useful in determining strategy.

As stated earlier, according to Parsons (1996), there are three types of crises, each of which is determined by an accompanying time constraint. They are 1. Immediate Crises. These rank uppermost in public consciousness. By their generally unprecedented and often traumatic nature, we have little or no warning that they are imminent. As we are not capable of anticipating these crises, there undoubtedly will not be an applicable plan available. 2. Emerging Crises. These may be slow but they may be equally surprising. The complexity here is to recognize the issues and tie together seemingly unrelated clues which, properly interpreted, warn that a crisis, like a long-dormant volcano, is about to erupt. 3. Sustained Crises. These can last for weeks, months, or even years. They are often fueled by gossip and rumor.

Naturally, each classification will require a different approach to crisis management including the time of handling stress, damage intensity, and the degree of threats, etc. This study explored the 9/21 earthquake, the 9/11 terrorist attack, and SARS outbreak from the respective dates of each event was documented as an Immediate Crisis. Recovery time upon initial examination might seem relatively insignificant as a metric for strategizing. If governments and business owners know from the historical record that one category of crisis requires a 3-year cycle from crisis to recovery, yet another category, in the same city, requires a 10-year recovery cycle, then they can use these benchmarks to significantly manage the richness, intensity, and urgency of crisis management planning. Hence the value of this study.

Crisis Management in Hospitality

There are many studies of crisis management in the hospitality industry including various incidents of terror (Pizam and Mansfeld, 1996); the political and financial advantage related to cessation of terror events (Butler & Baum, 1999); categories of violent events related to the industry (Faulkner, 2001); and recommendations for enhancing organizational operations and procedures during or after crisis events (Blackman & Ritchie, 2008). For example, during the operation of Desert Storm, 275 terrorist incidents were recorded. At that time, the perceived dangers of going anywhere near the

Middle East discouraged travel (Abu, 1992). The North American tourism industry experienced serious problems in both inbound and outbound travel (WTO, 1991). Also, in the period of the 9/11 event, air arrivals to Jamaica went down 16%, and tourism from major markets also declined 41%, which affected the number of guests staying in hotels (Pratt Godfrey, 2003. These facts simply serve to further dramatize the economic impact of crisis events.

To date, few articles have explored the three types of crisis events at international hotels. At best, some papers explored only one event or case (Chen, Jang, and Kim, 2007; Kim, Chun, and Lee, 2005; Peters and Pikkemaat, 2006; Smith and Carmichael, 2005; Fall and Massey, 2005). The foregoing revelations further underscore the projected value of this investigation.

Hospitality Industry Crisis Impact Cases

Earthquake Taiwan – 9/21/99

The most serious earthquake in Taiwan in the 20th century struck the central region of the island on September 21, 1999. This earthquake caused terrible human casualties and infrastructure damages. Many buildings and schools were destroyed, and roadway, water, sewage, gas, and power systems were cut. Lai and Kuo (2003) found that the international hotels at five out of six inspected areas underwent significant earthquake impacts to different extents. The international hotels in Hualien areas suffered from the greatest impact.

Chang (2000), director of the travel business association in Taipei, pointed out that the foreign public mistakenly believed that Taiwan had been devastated after the 9/21 earthquake. Hence, 90% of the inbound tours from foreign countries were called off. Domestic travels dropped 70% and 214,000 seats of air-travel booking were canceled. October is usually the month with great sales for the international hotels in Taiwan in the past years. However, because of the earthquake, the occupancy rate of the hotels went down from the historic October baseline of 80-85% to a low of 30-40%, the chain reaction from which caused a lot of canceled reservations of restaurants and banquets. This resulted in huge losses for the tourism industry.

USA Airborne Terrorism – 9/11/2001

On Tuesday morning, September 11, 2001, 19 suicide hijackers took control of four United States commercial airplanes and crashed them, respectively, into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center (WTC) in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and a field in Somerset County, west of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

After the 9/11 terrorist attack, the hotel industry felt the brunt of the tragedy. During the first 3 months or so after the attack, hotel bookings in the USA declined by some 2050% as individuals and groups canceled vacation plans, and firms canceled or postponed conventions, corporate meetings, seminars, and trade shows. This resulted in at least a loss of two billion dollars across the USA within the first month after the tragedy (Goodrich, 2002).

Having a rather small territory and population, Taiwan's tourism industry is almost completely dependent upon the USA. According to the descriptive report of the Tourism Department of Taiwan, the tourist total was reduced by an average of 17.03% between Sept. 12 and Dec. 31, 2001. There was a 22.82% decrease for the tourist total in the month of October after the tragedy, and 7.96 % drop in December 2001. These preliminary descriptive statistics imply that the 9/11 terrorist attack may have had a substantial impact on the international hotels in Taiwan. Clearly, the threat to personal safety is the fastest way to kill international travel (Boger, 2007). Further inspection of this subject is essential and this potential impact shall be carefully examined as well.

SARS Global Outbreak – 3/2003

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which is caused by atypical pneumonia and spreads through close person-to-person contact, has generated panic all over the world since its outbreak in March 2003. Globally, the outbreak of SARS has claimed about 774 lives out of 8096 infected cases from 27 countries/areas, typically in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore (WHO, 2006). The SARS outbreak overwhelmed Asian tourism. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2003) estimated that up to three million people in the industry lost their jobs in the affected jurisdictions of China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Vietnam and that the outbreak cost these four economies over $20 billion in lost GDP. Tourism arrivals also fell by 70% or more across the rest of Asia, even in countries that were largely or totally disease-free. The cause of this broad tourism collapse can be credited more to how governments reacted to the perceived threat of the disease rather than to the real public health danger posed (McKercher and Chon, 2004).

The proprietors complained that because of SARS, the willingness of visiting Taiwan for foreigners dropped and direct business communication was more difficult. Domestic traveling and lodging were minimized as well. The official statistic data of the Tourism Bureau (Tourism Bureau of Taiwan, 2004) show that the total average occupancy rate was 37.44% in April 2003 after the SARS epidemic disaster took place and for the period from March 19 to May 18.

This value is reduced by about 23.47% compared to it April 2002. The average occupancy is getting worse with only 22.64% in the time from May 1 to May 10, 2003. Therefore, the SARS epidemic disaster caused serious financial losses for the hotel industry.

This research examined the impacts of three crisis events of domestic, regional, and global significance with a straightforward figure analysis to understand and project the impact on Taiwan, then suggest recovery strategies for hoteliers, employees, and government.

RESEARCH AND METHOD

Since the three large-scale crisis events central to this study are not replicable in a scientific laboratory, it is necessary to proceed from a creative quantitative standpoint to obtain meaningful recovery time insight that is of value to future crisis managers. Essentially, a simple business operation impact (BOI) analysis with isolated z-values was employed to clearly identify hotel industry performance at crisis event beginning. Then, hotel performance was progressively tracked month by month employing line graph plotting to the point of recovery. From this process, the duration can be easily observed and documented. 180 observations (months) for each of the 82 international hotels in Taiwan, were included from 1999 to 2014. The discussion is also devoted to the specific nature of interruption on the Taiwan hotel industry caused by the three different crisis events.

The Data Set

The monthly data were obtained via the internet from the Ministry of Transportation and Communication Statistics, Tourism Department of Taiwan. The data range from January 1999 to March 2014 and include 180 observations (months) for each hotel group (Tourism Bureau of Taiwan, 2014). Accordingly, those dates analyze the differential from seven areas of 82 international hotels to support hoteliers' decision-making.

The process of Data Extraction and Presentation

Time series analysis refers to the phenomenon of many changes that have occurred, according to a chronological order, revealed over time. Based on the development of this phenomenon, the time series is used to predict the direction and amount of the phenomenon of development. However, to measure the crisis events of business operation impact analysis (BOI) of international tourist hotels in this study it is inappropriate to deal with time series analysis. This study proceeds in a simpler and easy manner, to investigate the duration of business impact of each crisis event on a certain area of the international tourist hotels by investigating monthly performance data. The purpose of this study is to measure the impact of events during the period of Sept 1999 to March 2013.

Research Design

Two key monthly hotel operations performance data categories are examined. They are occupancy rate and average room rate. Monthly performance serves as the unit of measurement.

To eliminate the influence of seasonal factors, the study adopted standardization of data based on previous occupancy rates or average room rate by month in different geographical areas of Taiwan.

If all areas of occupancy or average room rate remain at the same level as the previous month, then the normalized z-values are closer to 0. Similarly, the current month's occupancy rate or the average room rate is compared to the previous month. If the value is lower, then the normalized z-values are negative. Conversely, if the value is higher, then the normalized z-values are positive. If a year is not subject to any major incident, the z-value will not change significantly.

The crisis event impact period and the values of occupancy rate or average room rate, both benchmark the crisis event's impact or contribution to economic disruption.

RESULTS

The results of this study include seven geographical footprint areas and three crisis event periods with room occupancy and average room rate as presented in tabular and graphic formats below.

The impact of seven geographic areas and three crisis events with occupancy rate and average room rate

Original graph data was converted into illustrative tables, which display the impact of seven geographic footprint areas and the three crisis events with corresponding occupancy rate and average room rate (table 1).

Managers can identify the hotel location to reference the impact and know the impact duration as noted below.

Table 1 (below) does not display the actual Occupancy Rates (Zor) or actual Average Room Rates (Zarr) for the hotel areas presented. Rather, it displays the dateline of the Occupancy Rates and Average Room Rates at the onset or start of the crisis event. Then, the dateline at which time the Occupancy Rates and Average Room Rates returned to those levels at the End of or after the crisis event. The decimal following the year represents the month. Ex. (2000.03) represents March of the year 2000. The Total Impact column simply displays the number of months in the recovery period. Recovery is defined by the time required for Zor and Zarr or Occupancy Rate and Average Room Rate to return to the Pre-Crisis Event level. The final column presents the maximum number of months required for either Zor or Zarr to return to the Pre-Crisis Event level. Thereby, the outer limit or maximum parameter expected for recovery is established.

Table 1: The impact on seven areas with three crisis events, including hotel room occupancy rate (Zor) and Average room rate (Arr) baseline dates at the start of crisis event and baseline dates of recovery, defined by a return to those rates.

	Baseline Occupancy Rate (Zor)			Baseline Average Room Rate (Zarr)			
Hotels in the Seven Areas	Start-Impact of Event by Month	End-Impact of Event by Month	Total-Duration of Impact by Month	Start-Impact of Event by Month	End-Impact of Event by Month	Total-Duration of Impact by Month	MAX Zor/Zarr
1.Taipei							**1.Taipei**
921	1999.09	2000.03	7	1999.09	1999.10	2	7
911	2001.09	2001.12	4	2001.09	2002.03	7	7
SARS	2003.03	2003.08	6	2003.03	2003.08	6	6
2.Taichung							**2.Taichung**
921	1999.09	1999.12	4	1999.09	1999.09	1	4
911	2001.09	2002.02	6	2001.09	2001.09	1	6
SARS	2003.03	2003.07	5	2003.03	2003.07	5	5
3. Kaohsiung							**3. Kaohsiung**
921	1999.09	2000.01	5	1999.09	1999.11	3	5
911	2001.09	2002.02	6	2001.09	2001.10	2	6
SARS	2003.03	2003.07	5	2003.03	2003.09	7	7
4. Hualien							**4. Hualien**
921	1999.09	2000.01	5	1999.09	1999.10	2	5
911	2001.09	2001.10	2	2001.09	2001.11	3	3
SARS	2003.03	2003.07	5	2003.03	2003.04	2	5
5.TauHsiuMiao							**5.TauHsiuMiao**
921	1999.09	1999.11	3	1999.09	1999.09	1	3
911	2001.09	2002.01	5	2001.09	2001.09	1	5
SARS	2003.03	2003.09	7	2003.03	2003.03	1	7
6. Scenic Area							**6.Scenic Area**
921	1999.09	2000.01	5	1999.09	1999.09	1	5
911	2001.09	2001.09	1	2001.09	2001.12	4	4
SARS	2003.03	2003.05	3	2003.03	2003.06	4	4
7. Other							**7.Other**
921	1999.09	1999.11	3	1999.09	1999.09	1	3
911	2001.09	2001.11	3	2001.09	2002.01	5	5
SARS	2003.03	2003.06	4	2003.03	2003.10	8	8

The impact of the duration of three crisis events among urban, rural, and sightseeing areas

For those categories, urban locations experienced an average 5.9-month recovery period, vs. 5.2-month and 4.3-month period for rural and sightseeing categories respectively.

Once the duration and length of the recovery period is established, governments, hotel owners/entrepreneurs, and hotel managers can craft strategies to mitigate uncertainty and fear of economic Armageddon due to future crisis events.

Table 2 shows the impact of the duration of three crisis events among urban, rural and sighting seeing areas.

Table 2: The impact of the duration of three crisis events among urban, rural, and sightseeing areas

Areas	Hotels in the different areas	Events	Occupancy rate (total impact of months as Zor)	Average Room Rate (total impact of months as Zarr)	MAX (Zor, Zarr)	Average impact of duration by month
Urban	Taipei Taichung Kaohsiung	921	7 4 5	2 1 3	7 4 5	5.33
Rural	TauHsiuMiao Other	921	3 3	1 1	3 3	3.0
Sightseeing	Hualien Scenic Area	921	5 5	2 1	5 5	5.0
Urban	Taipei Taichung Kaohsiung	911	4 6 6	7 1 2	7 6 6	6.33
Rural	TauHsiuMiao Other	911	5 3	1 5	5 5	5.00
Sightseeing	Hualien Scenic Area	911	2 1	3 4	3 4	3.50
Urban	Taipei Taichung Kaohsiung	SARS	6 5 5	6 5 7	6 5 7	6.00
Rural	TauHsiuMiao Other	SARS	7 4	1 8	7 8	7.50
Sightseeing	Hualien Scenic Area	SARS	5 3	2 4	5 4	4.50

CONCLUSIONS and MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS Crisis Management Conclusions

Considered in this study were three events and their respective impacts on international hotels in Taiwan: the 9/21 earthquake, 9/11 terrorist attack, and SARS. These clearly had adverse impacts domestically, regionally, and globally thereby allowing a broad investigation of the content and importance of crisis management in these situations as presented in this study. The objective was to produce some win-win insights for governments, owner/ entrepreneurs, and hotel managers.

Procedurally, this empirical study analyzed historic Taiwan hotel occupancy room rates and average room rates to create background benchmarks for crisis analysis focused on time from crisis onset to crisis recovery. The result is an opportunity to inspect, understand, and evaluate hotel business impacts and by implication, larger economic impacts of the specific crisis events represented by the 9/21 Taiwan earthquake, the 9/11New York City terrorist attack and SARS on international hotels in Taiwan. The result is enhanced understanding of the various extents of these crisis events and durations. With this benchmark information, usefully segmented and presented in graphic and tabular formats, good management can take actions to mitigate future crisis impact, therefore fostering sustainable development of business enterprises, particularly hotels.

Crisis Management Implications

Decision makers in government departments, hotel owners/entrepreneurs, and individual hotel managers will find postcrisis business time recovery benchmarks of greatest value in establishing financial, human resource, and marketing parameters for crisis management strategy.

Governments Financial

Immediate crisis events, particularly those in this study, are generally of such a large scale that only city, state, and national governments have the financial resources to foster essential recovery activities such as clearing the debris of hotel superstructure destruction, and rebuilding airports, roads, and bridges that provide access to these hotel locations. Moreover, only government agencies have the pre-crisis ability to establish and enforce superstructure and infrastructure construction standards, and therefore the size of investment required for compliance. The systematically derived knowledge of historical hotel business recovery times from this study, therefore, provides vital insight for projecting the length of future recovery times and ultimately, some indication of cash and related financial reserve requirements.

Human Resource

Probably there is no greater responsibility for government in times of crisis than the provision of emergency care for the injured and displaced. This is followed very closely by the requirement for governments to compensate out-of-work employees with lost job supplements in cash or in commodities. While the crisis recovery data presented in this paper is extracted entirely from historic hotel industry performance data, the authors believe that this data can serve somewhat as an informal barometer of Taiwan's economic recovery in general, following crisis situations. Therefore, this data is of some value in considering these recovery times as, at least, informal benchmarks for the length of time governments might need to provide these vital services.

Marketing

Another responsibility of governments is destination marketing. This is defined as organized sets of activities designed to bring buyers and sellers together. In the case of Taiwan hotels, this means to initiate and sustain market research, product development, and outreach programs that result in visitor attraction to, and visitor satisfaction with, the Taiwan Hotel experience. Knowledge of business recovery times following crisis events represents market research, particularly when the data is segmented and categorized in a variety of useful ways, as is in this study. With this data, government officials at all levels have some idea of the time frame available for communicating to customer markets via advertising and publicity when the "all clear" signal might be given and regular visitor traffic can resume in earnest.

On another level, a basic tenet of economics is that hotels are the ultimate economic engines in that they are super sensitive to supply and demand. In times of crisis, the great temptation exists for hotels to charge maximum prices since the supply of lodging accommodations is restricted and the demand, due to public emergency displacement, is high. Pricing is a marketing decision in that it sets the point of exchange. Governments, fortunately, have the power of regulation and can take steps to prevent price gouging in times of crisis. Knowledge of recovery times provides some indication of how long price restrictions might need to be enforced.

Hotel Owner/Entrepreneurs Financial

Hotel owners or entrepreneurs are the sources of capital funds for building and maintaining hotel superstructures as well as their furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FF&E) and therefore have the greatest vulnerability to financial distress in times of immediate crisis. Their single uppermost guiding investment mantra is the "time value" of money. Accordingly, projected post-crisis business recovery times can be translated directly into potential financial resources at risk and therefore influence quantity and quality of monetary contingency reserves available for recovery.

Human Resource

From an owner/entrepreneur standpoint, salaries and wages always represent the most expensive aspect of running any business, especially hotels. Crisis times generally mean reductions in force (RIF) via layoffs, reduced schedules, rotations or complete terminations, at least in the short run. If not properly managed, this could lead to hostile confrontations between workers and managers or their owner/entrepreneurs. This is a lose-lose situation for all concerned, including the destination and potential guests. No one likes to travel to a destination where strife is currently or has recently taken place. In the best of all worlds, contingency funds would be available to allow for the continuation of employment status during recovery, at least on a part-time basis and with possible government subsidy. Historic knowledge of recovery time would impact the size of that fund. Certainly, a 2-month personnel contingency fund would be significantly smaller than an 8-month such fund. In addition, the goodwill, morale, and loyalty of the workforce could be retained over the crisis period and thereby provide a solid motivated workforce for facilitating strong post-crisis growth to recovery.

Marketing

Marketing for owners/entrepreneurs is all about getting "heads in beds" at the best possible rates of occupancy and nightly room rate. As noted in the earlier discussion concerning government implications of this study, owner/entrepreneurs face major temptation to maximize economic potential presented by the crisis in the short term. However, the negative publicity that could result from price hikes during the crisis period could very well backfire and produce long-term resentment that could cripple the hotel's reputation to the point of failure when economic recovery occurs in the region. Knowledge of historical recovery times lets the owner/entrepreneur know how long it might be before the pressure of high demand might be likely to subside as well as government reconstruction likely to be lifted. Long-term "Good Will" could be generated by taking the opposite approach. That is, providing "reduced" rates during the crisis period when times are difficult for all. The loyalty built during that time could be greatly repaid when economic recovery occurs for those customer markets that were serviced during the crisis. Again, knowledge of historic recovery times provides owner/entrepreneurs some idea of how long such loyalty-building special promotions might need to be offered.

Hotel Managers Financial

Individual hotel managers are primarily faced with the responsibilities of cost containment following crises, which will include reducing operational costs. These could include shutting down certain floors or facilities. Historical knowledge of recovery time again helps determine how long hotel managers will possibly need to battle the toxic financial environment of reduced revenue and spiraling expenses associated with recovery and rebuilding. The Taipei area required seven months for post-earthquake recovery.

Human Resource

Crisis situations will require great creativity on the part of hotel managers to keep a credible workforce intact. Historic "Time to Recovery" knowledge is most useful as they source a variety of temporary solutions to normal workforce disruption. Some interim personnel sources might include hospitality training schools and employees from other hotels in the same chain but in rural areas. Once creative human resource exercise for managers would be to perform a property SWOT analysis focused on improving awareness of the hotel's existing ability to handle crisis situations during various recovery time periods.

Marketing

Hotel managers are at the bottom of the policy-making hierarchy in crisis situations, behind governments and their owner/entrepreneurs. Yet, they are at the forefront of direct hotel guest service and property management operations. Their marketing responsibilities are therefore and primarily "in-house." Faced with possible full occupancies, coupled with at least some rudimentary medical service requirements and staff reductions, disrupted supply chains, and possible physical damage to furniture, fixtures, and equipment, the on-site manager must make it all work. Crisis management strategy, in this case, is going to take a far different look if the historic projection is three months as opposed to eight months.

Inspection of the crisis recovery time data provided by this study for hotels and areas in Taiwan clearly provide this most valuable insight for hotel managers. Sometimes, hotel managers can react in specific ways to enrich the guest experience and restore confidence during the crisis. For example, increasing air circulation protocols for air conditioners during a suspected outbreak of SARS in the Taipei area is the kind of activity that can generate extraordinary publicity resulting in enhanced long-term performance.

LIMITATIONS

This study was conducted with source data derived from hotel performances in select areas of Taiwan and in relation to specific crisis events of local and global significance. Future researchers are encouraged to replicate this process with data of different countries and crises for further analysis and comparison. Such expanded investigation should add to the validity and reliability of this line of research, projected to assist governments, owner/entrepreneurs, and managers with the daunting challenges of "decision-making under uncertainty."

Note: other charts reflecting events are available from authors. Please contact Dr. Ernie Boger, University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, MD. eboger@umes.edu

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Volume 21, Number 1, Fall - Spring 2017-18

A Publication of the HBCU Consortium