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CAREER INTENTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL MASTER STUDENTS IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT

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CAREER INTENTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL MASTER STUDENTS IN

HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT

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感谢为我的梦想提供无偿投资的爸妈

献给普渡 2011 届 HTM 最可爱的乡亲们

纪念我们投身学术的花样年华

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ABSTRACT

Li, Wenjun. M.S., Purdue University, May 2014. Career Intentions of International Master Students in Hospitality and Tourism Management. Major Professor: Howard Adler.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate career intentions of international master's students in hospitality and tourism management (HTM) in the United States. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of 19 participants at two different U.S. institutions. Interview questions were designed to better understand students' career intentions upon graduation and the determinants behind the plans. Results indicated that student's career intention should include measures of career decision self-efficacy, academic and career outcome expectations, and career exploration intentions. Unique personal background (e.g., gender and marital status, length of time in the U.S.), industrial working experience (e.g., internships), and multiple external factors (e.g., school counselors, the booming tourism industry in developing countries) increase the diversity of career intentions of the target population

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Open Doors report published by the Institute of International

Education (IIE, 2011), the number of international students at colleges and

universities in the United States reached 723,277 by 2011, the fifth consecutive year

of increase. At the graduate level, international students increased by 9% in 2011 and

made up over 18% of the entire graduate-student body (IIE, 2012). In 2012, the

number of international students pursuing higher education in the United States hit a

new high, in which the United States remained the primary study destination in the

world (IIE, 2012). American higher education pursues a declared policy of

internationalizing its curricula and experiences, thus, students from overseas,

especially those at the graduate level, look forward to seeking higher education in the

United States (Anderson, 2005).

For decades, international students have dedicated themselves to strengthening the

American culture, economy, science and technology, and education (ACE, 2006; IIE,

2012). The National Science Foundation (2004) indicated that among master's degree

recipients working in the United States, more than 50% of the engineers and 45% of

the math, computer and life scientists, and physicists are foreign-born. During the

2011-2012 academic year, international students and their dependents contributed

approximately 22 billion to the American economy (Table 1.1), which did not even

account for a "multiplier effect" (IIE, 2013). It is in America's interests that as many

international students as feasible study at institutions, travel around the country, and make their contribution to American society (Anderson, 2005).

Table 1.1

Net Contribution to the American Economy by Foreign Students (2011-12)

Contribution from Tuition and Fees:	$15,812,000,000
Contribution from Living Expenses:	$13,997,000,000
Total Contribution by Foreign Students:	$29,809,000,000
Less U.S. Support of 28.2%	- $8,399,000,000
Plus Dependents' Living Expenses:	+ $397,000,000
Net Contribution to American Economy by Foreign Students and their Families:	$21,807,000,000

America is always looked upon as a magic land where dreams can come true, so students believe that opportunities and possibilities exist anywhere around this ideal country (ACE, 2006). A majority of international students, especially Asian students, believe that a better education leads to a better job (Lu & Adler, 2011). According to previous studies (Anderson, 2005; Chuang & Jenkins, 2010), the majority of international students have their career intentions in mind when they are pursuing higher education in the United States. Career intention is defined as the degree to which a person has formulated conscious career plans to perform some future behavior that matches with his/her career beliefs and interests (Chuang & Jenkins, 2010). Regrettably, international students' career intentions and aspirations are not met in many major universities (Shen & Herr, 2004; Chuang & Jenkins, 2010; Singaravelu et al., 2011).

A great deal of research has focused on issues about international students in the United States: the motivation of international students in American higher education institutions (IIE, 2011; IIE, 2012), international students and American policy

(Anderson, 2005; Congressional Research Service, 2008; CRS, 2005), and the future of international students (ACE, 2006; Work Education and Reviews, 2007; IIE, 2011). In contrast, relatively few researchers have focused on career intentions and behavior of international students (Shen & Herr, 2004; Yang, Wong, & Hwang, 2002) and even less on international students majoring in Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) programs (Zhou, Frey, & Bang, 2011; Shin & Lee, 2011). Regarding the factors that influence international students' career intentions, some of the limited references have discussed how gender (Gati & Samuel, 1995), work authorization (Anderson, 2005), family, and environment (Kim, Chun, & Petrick, 2009) have impacted international students. Despite these previous studies, research on factors influencing career intentions of international HTM students is lacking (Lu & Adler, 2011), not to mention that of international HTM master's students. Hence, studies of career intentions of international HTM students at the master's level need more exploration.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate career intentions of international HTM master's students (the target group) while studying in the United States. This study conducted semi-structured interviews with a sample of 19 international HTM master's students from two major universities. The three main study objectives are: 1) to explore motivations for students to choose HTM as a major, 2) to investigate students' career-related plans upon graduation, and 3) to determine factors that affect students' career-related decisions. The intent of the study is to help administrators and educators of HTM programs attract international candidates by becoming aware of the candidates career goals and demands discussed in the study. Furthermore, hospitality firms, especially those with global development programs, will be able to identify the

unique advantages of the target group to apply to the success of localization (Chuang & Jenkins, 2010). Finally, results of this study provide a reference for international applicants who would like to pursue a master's degree in HTM in the United States in terms of possible career choices, pragmatic considerations, and objective advice.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

International students in the United States have very different backgrounds and characteristics from their peers attending colleges and universities in their home countries. Based on previous research about issues related to international students and their careers, the literature review for the present study has been summarized into four sections: 1) international graduate students in the United States, 2) career intentions and Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), 3) determinants of career intentions in general, and 4) specific factors influencing career intentions of international students.

2.1 International Graduate Students in the United States

Studies about international students' motivation to study overseas have indicated that some top reasons international students seek higher education in a foreign country are to seek new and exciting experiences, improve job prospects, and seek a better education (Yang, Hwang, & Heppner, 2002; Singaravelu et al., 2011). When considering study overseas, international students prefer to choose a country with a great value for the price. Regarding a specific institution, the overall reputation of certain programs and the financial return of investment seem to be essential (Lu & Adler, 2011). As a result of their quality, diversity, affordability, and flexibility, American higher institutions have been ideal for international students (IIE, 2011). Although students around the world are starting to study in a more diverse range of

destinations, the United States continues to host far more international students than any other top study destination. The United States hosts approximately 20% of the entire international student body worldwide. The Institute of International Education (IIE) revealed that about 75% of the respondents worldwide considered the United States as their first choice, followed by the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia (Chow, 2011; Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Preferred Study Destination of Prospective International Students

Study Destination	Total (%)
United States	74.9%
United Kingdom	8.4%
Canada	5.0%
Australia	3.0%
France	1.4%
Germany	1.0%
Spain	1.0%
Japan	1.0%
New Zealand	0.7%
Sweden	0.4%
Italy	0.3%
Singapore	0.3%
China	0.3%
Other European Destinations	1.2%
Other Asian Destinations	0.5%
Latin America	0.4%
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.1%
Middle East and North Africa	0.1%
TOTAL (N=9,330)	100%

Note: The majority of respondents worldwide (55 %) were female, while 45 % were male. Resource: "What International Students Think About U.S. Higher Education: Attitude and Perceptions of Prospective Students in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America" by Chow, 2011.

The number of international students enrolled in colleges and universities in the United States increased by 5% during the 2010/11 academic-year, the fifth year that

maintained a strong increase (IIE, 2011). In particular, 48.1% of the institutions offering master's degree programs showed an increase compared with the previous year's 47.4% (Table 2.2). Since 2004, the enrollment of international graduate students has been higher than that of undergraduate international students (IIE, 2012; Table 2.3). Between 2010 and 2011, international graduate applications increased 11% and constituted nearly half of all international students (CGS, 2011, Table 2.4). The leading countries from which international students come are China, India, and South Korea, which together make up 44% of the total international graduate enrollment in American higher education (CGS, 2011; Table, 2.5). From 2007 to 2011, 62% of all international graduate students in the United States were enrolled in engineering, physical and earth sciences, or business (CGS, 2011, Table 2.5).

Historically, international students have made great contributions to American society in many aspects. During the 2011-2012 academic year, international students and their dependents contributed approximately 22 billion to the American economy (Table 1.1), which did not even account for a "multiplier effect" (IIE, 2013). The National Science Foundation (2004) indicated that among master's degree recipients working in the United States, more than 50% of the engineers and 45% of math, computer and life scientists, and physicists are foreign-born. International graduate students not only impact the academic and economic in institutions of the United States, but they also foster global and cultural knowledge and affect American leadership, competitiveness, and security (Anderson, 2005).

2.1.1 Hospitality and Tourism Management Programs

The history of Hospitality and Tourism Management education dates back almost one hundred years. The hundreds of HTM programs worldwide prepare students with unique skills for the industry (Blomme, Rheede, & Tromp, 2009). The courses offered in hospitality management are similar to those in schools of business (e.g., accounting, finance, marketing, human resources), while specific courses in operation and service (e.g., hotels, restaurants, cruise ships, destination marketing) also add to the curricula (Clayton & Rober, 1999; RSS, 2011). Although HTM programs share the same management concept, programs may vary from each other. For instance, some programs concentrate on graduating people to work in the hotel industry; their courses emphasize the various operating aspects of hotels. Other schools come from a tradition of food service education; they offer students the opportunity to learn how food is prepared and served (Kerry, 2007).

While hospitality and tourism education is regularly questioned about its merit and place in higher education, Tews and Hoof (2011) argued that it offers higher-level managerial components involved in operating hospitality enterprises and managing and motivating entry-level workers. Hands-on experience is certainly a valuable component of management education, but "hospitality-management education provides future managers with a solid additional layer of knowledge that makes them better managers" (Tews & Hoof, 2011, p. 123).

The two universities in the present study have high quality HTM programs. Although major American magazines conduct no rankings for HTM programs, as they do for other disciplines, the two universities have maintained a consistent ranking as top

hospitality management schools in industry journals and have won international

recognition.

Table 2.2

International Master's Students Enrollment Fall 2011 vs. Fall 2010

Newly Enrolled Int'l Students Fall 2011 vs Fall 2010
Master's Institutions

Category	Percentage
Substantial increase	14.6%
Some increase	13.0%
Slight increase	20.5%
About the same as last year	23.8%
Slight decline	15.1%
Some decline	10.8%
Substantial decline	2.2%
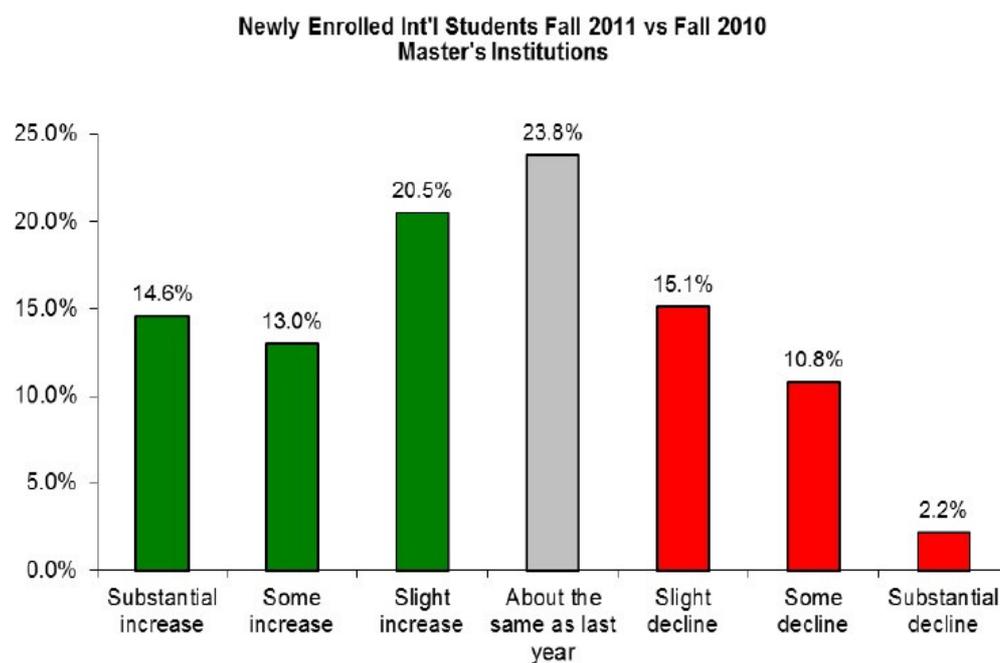
Source: "Fall 2011 International Student Enrollment Survey," by IIE, 2011.

Table 2.3

New International Student Enrollment, 2004/05-2011/12

	2004/06	2006/08	2008/10	2010/12	Change (%)
Undergraduate	61,342	63,749	82,136	84,543	7.5
Graduate	61,350	72,726	84,828	89,505	3.0
Total	131,946	173,121	202,970	228,467	6.5

Source: "New International Student Enrollment", by IIE, 2012.

Table 2.4

Year-to-Year Percent Change in Applications to American Graduate Schools from

Prospective International Students, 2003 to 2004 through 2010 to 2011
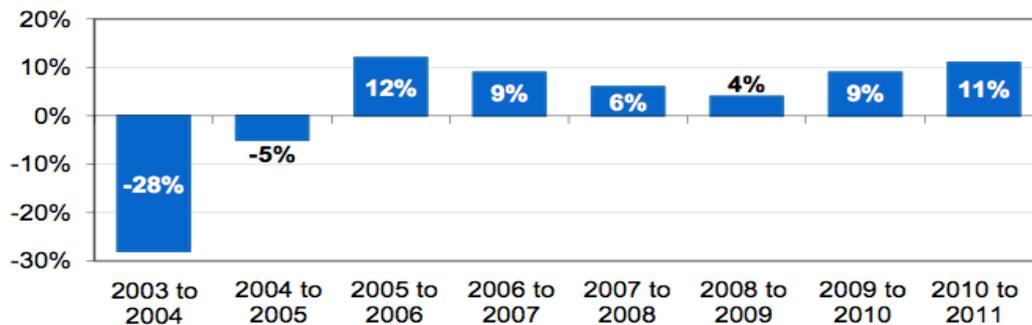
Source: "International Graduate Admissions Survey," by CGS, 2011.

Table 2.5

Change in International Graduate Applications, 2007 to 2008 through 2010 to 2011

	Final Number of Applications, 2007 to 2008	Final Number of Applications, 2008 to 2009	Final Number of Applications, 2009 to 2010	Final Number of Applications, 2010 to 2011
International Total	6%	4%	9%	11%
Country/Region of Origin				
China	11%	14%	20%	21%
India	2%	-12%	1%	8%
South Korea	2%	-9%	0%	2%
Middle East & Turkey *	14%	22%	20%	16%
Field of Study				
Arts & Humanities	7%	5%	9%	8%
Business	10%	7%	11%	11%
Education	-1%	8%	8%	13%
Engineering	4%	3%	8%	14%
Life Sciences	3%	0%	2%	8%
Physical & Earth Sciences	7%	2%	10%	15%
Social Sciences & Psychology	9%	6%	11%	5%
Other Fields **	--	11%	13%	10%

Source: "International Graduate Admissions Survey," by CGS, 2011.

2.2 Career Intentions and the Social Cognitive Career Theory

Career intention is defined as the degree to which a person has formulated conscious career plans to perform some specified future behavior (Chuang & Jenkins, 2010). Many previous studies in career-related behavior and intention used Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) to indicate a complex interplay among career intentions, academic major and career choice, career interest and belief, personal goal, and career persistence and certainty (Shen & Herr, 2004; Lu & Adler 2011; Singaravelu et al., 2011). Major variables such as gender, culture, family and friends, school counselors, and social and economic conditions were explored to find students' career intentions (Brown, 2002; Chuang & Jenkins 2010; Singaravelu et al., 2011).

SCCT provides a conceptual frame for this study. It incorporates three central variables: 1) self-efficacy, 2) outcome expectations, and 3) goals (Brown, 2002). In the present study, the three central variables of SCCT were applied to help identify determinants behind students' career intentions as well as to construct the relationship among those determinants.

2.2.1 Self-efficacy, Outcome Expectation, and Goals

People's self-efficacy in vocation was defined as the concept of self-perceived attributes and what an individual considers relevant to the work role (Brown, 2002). It is believed that people who have vague self-efficacy have difficulty picturing themselves in any occupational role (Betz & Taylor, 1994). Similarly, people with weak self-efficacy may avoid making career choices and remain uncertain (Betz & Taylor, 1994). Research confirmed that self-efficacy is predictive of career-related exploratory behavior (Ochs & Roessler, 2004; Chuang & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2010).

As with career intentions, SCCT pointed out that self-efficacy has direct influence on an individual's intention to engage in career exploratory behaviors to achieve career maturity (Lent et al., 1994; Bandura, 1997).

Given previous findings such as these, Brown (2002) stressed the role of family, neighborhood, and school in providing students self-ideas to form career intentions and to make career decisions. Nevertheless, gender was also considered as a factor in academic and career self-efficacy that could cause difference in occupational consideration (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Betz & Taylor, 1994).

Outcome expectations are acquired through learning experiences (Brown, 2002). In a career development context, they "refer to beliefs regarding the long-term consequences of success in specific educational or career decision-making behaviors" (Betz & Taylor, 1994, p. 181). For instance, outcome expectations regarding a career in the hospitality and tourism industry may derive from students' rewards received from their previous work experience. Ochs and Roessler (2004) believed that academic outcome expectations involved a linkage between academic performance and future career life achievement. For instance, students may hope that a master's degree in HTM will lead them to more career options and a better future life.

Outcome expectations were recognized as a major determinant in motivating behavior (Singaravelu, et al., 2011). Previous studies have reported a significant correlation between career outcome expectations and career intentions in both male and female students (Betz & Taylor, 1994; Ochs & Roessler, 2004). Nevertheless, SCCT pointed out that self-efficacy may influence intentions through outcome expectations (Lent et al., 1994). That means outcome expectations performed as a mediator between self-

efficacy and intentions. For instance, students would like to experience the hospitality world first before they design their career paths in the field.

Career goals also can be interpreted as "career intentions or plans to pursue a particular career path" (Brown, 2002, p. 273). A main function of personal goals in a particular career activity is to organize, guide, and sustain individual's behavior (Lent et al., 1994). Anderson's (2005) research about international students and American policy demonstrated that one reason that international students have sought to study in the United States is for the potential work opportunities after graduation. International students who pay high physical and emotional costs to pursue their ambitions and dreams through overseas study have their own career aspirations as an ultimate goal (Shen & Herr, 2004).

In SCCT, intentions were mainly influenced by two factors: self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Lent et al., 1994). As demonstrated earlier, SCCT indicated an interrelationship among self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals (Brown, 2002). In particular, self-efficacy and outcome expectations affect the goals, while personal goals, in turn, influence the development of self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Lent et al., 2004). For instance, students will form an enduring interest in the hospitality and tourism industry when they view themselves as competent at it and when they anticipate their work will produce promotions or other valued outcomes. Conversely, students may lose interest in developing careers in the industry when they develop negative expectations.

2.3 Determinants of Career Intentions in General

SCCT indicated that self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals were main variables that were assumed to affect an individual's career development process (Brown, 2002). In the present study, the researcher examined how the three components interrelated with the following selected variables (e.g., gender and race, environment factors, work/internship experience, and societal and economic shifts) affected students' career intention.

An individual's career intention is not formed quickly; it involves a long-term process of factor analysis, which turns out to reflect an individual's decision to achieve a desired outcome (Bandura, 1997). Eventually, differences in importance results in differences in career choices (Gati, et al., 1995; Gati, Shenhav, & Givon, 1993). Thus, exploring and evaluating factors that produce career intentions may help students set proper career goals.

2.3.1 Interests

SCCT postulates that interests (formed by self-efficacy and outcome expectations) typically are related to an individual's career intentions and actions one would take to implement a specific career goal (Brown, 2002). Previous research suggested that students' intentions to choose an occupation associated with their majors can be predicted if their career beliefs and interests match (Lau, et al., 2004). Additionally, studies in HTM indicated that students had strong interest in potential hospitality careers and had a positive attitude and expectations toward the industry (Blomme, Rheede, & Tromp, 2009; Walsh & Taylor, 2007). Studies in other majors also found that interests attracted students to select a certain major or career choice (Chuang &

Jenkins; Lu & Adler, 2011; Singaravelu et al., 2011). However, in real-world circumstances, people need to compromise their interests in selecting a vocational path. Thus, more factors should be taken into account (Lent et al., 1994). For example, economic need, educational limitations, lack of family support, or various other considerations may inhibit the pursuit of one's primary interests or preferred career goals (Brown, 2002).

2.3.2 Demographic Factors

SCCT considers demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, and race) from a social constructive position to focus on the social, cultural, and economic conditions to which individuals are exposed (Brown, 2002). The existing research also indicated that certain demographic factors (e.g., gender and age) influence career exploratory intentions (Brown, 2002; Ochs & Roessler, 2004; Chuang & Jenkins, 2012). Demographics always have been a main concern in career-related studies. For instance, studies of academic success and retention among college students reported lower success rates for ethnic minority students (Fuertes & Sedlacek, 195; Sedlacek, 1998). In many cases, high ability does not lead to high achievement among ethnic minorities. This phenomenon has been referred to as the "ability-attainment gap." Its cause has been linked to barriers and differential opportunities for these groups (McWhirter, 1997). Findings regarding demographics' role in career behavior have been inconsistent (Jones, 1995; Shen & Herr, 2004; Donahue, 2006; Lu & Adler, 2011; Shin & Lee, 2011).

2.3.3 Environment Factors

Based on culturally shaped expectations, parents and teachers tend to treat females and males differently, which influences an individual's self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Lent et al., 1994). Additionally, environment factors, such as family, teachers, and peers have been found to influence students' career development behavior (Singaravelu et al., 2011; Yang, Hwang, & Heppner, 2002). Moreover, studies about factors influencing students' career choice and intention among ethnic minorities determined that family and friends had the most influence on non-American international students (Lu & Adler, 2011; Chuang & Jenkins, 2012).

In addition, the role of school counselors in influencing students' career decision-making processes has been widely recognized (Yang et al., 2002; Shen & Herr, 2004; Martin, 2007). The changing composition of college campuses and the workforce requires career counselors and recruiters to increase their understanding of racial, ethnic, and cultural factors that influence career development (Allen, 1992; Leong & Brown, 1995). Furthermore, the increased number of international students in the United States generates the needs to develop career services designed for this group of students (Yang et al., 2002). International students come from countries with different cultural backgrounds; therefore, career services in many universities are designed to meet their specific career needs (Yang et al., 2002; Singaravelu et al., 2011).

2.3.4 Societal and Economic Shifts

SCCT differs from the majority of existing career theories in its dynamic nature. The inherent influence of the social and economic contexts is addressed (Lent et al., 1994). When a society shifts from an early stage of economic development to an

industrialized-based economy, the range of occupational opportunities will increase (Cahill, 1995). The resulting increase in career options has the potential to increase career confusion and uncertainty in career choices. SCCT can facilitate career development in changing economic times; consequently, SCCT provides a useful template for career development across generations and despite economic shifts (Brown, 2002).

2.3.5 Work and Internship Experience

While expectations focus on intentions prior to organizational entry, experience pays much more attention to expectations after a period of work. Empirical studies have shown that related work experiences have a continuing influence on one's career path (Walsh & Taylor, 2007). Students who had industrial experience, part-time/full-time jobs, or internships in the hospitality industry agreed to some extent that previous job satisfaction would have a strong influence on their career intentions (Blomme, et al., 2009). International students' work experience during or after their study was an advantage when they looked for jobs and developed careers in their own countries (Shin & Lee, 2011).

2.4 Specific Factors Influencing Career Intentions of International HTM Students

Career choices are not made under "optimal conditions." Economic need, educational limitations, lack of family support, or various other considerations may inhibit the pursuit of one's primary interests or preferred career goals (Brown, 2002). In the present study, work authorization, language and communication skills, and growth in the hospitality and tourism industry were considered factors that affect students' career intention and behavior.

2.4.1 Work Authorization

Many international students have the intent to work in the United States after graduation (Lu & Adler, 2011). Ironically, however, one primary requirement for international students to apply for an America visa is that they should prove they intend to return to their home country after graduation (Anderson, 2005). American consular officers are required to deny visas to individuals who they believe may stay in the United States after completing their education even though it may be beneficial for the country if such an individual, in fact, would remain to work. Thus, to some extent, American policy blocks the entry of international students who plan to work after finishing their education in the United States (Anderson, 2005).

International students who are not permanent workers have limited visa options for working and internships: practical training (F-1 students), academic training (J-1 students), and H1-B (Association of International Educators, 2000). Many employers think that the process of hiring an international student is challenging, risky, and expensive (Bain, Dao, & Madeleine, 2006). The School of Hotel Administration of Cornell University (2012) listed work authorization as a disadvantage for international students. The school informs international students that in order to sponsor international students for permanent residency, companies must prove that they are unable to find suitable American citizens to fill the positions and few firms are willing to go through the paperwork unless there is a good chance of success at hiring the international applicant (Cornell University, 2012).

In another ironic twist, there is a perception gap between international students and employers. While many American companies are not willing to or cannot hire

international students, international students seem to believe that employers would appreciate the qualifications of foreign students (Trice, 2003).

2.4.2 Language and Communication Skills

Although international students at the graduate level contribute to the United States academically and economically, the students still perceive that significant differences exist between international students and domestic students when seeking jobs. Furthermore, they doubt that the master's or higher degrees bring them unique benefits or challenges in the job market (Anderson, 2005; Trice, 2003).

In research discussing the benefits and challenges for graduate international students, Trice (2003) discovered obstacles that international students faced compared with American students, for instance, language difficulties and segregation, culture adjustment, and financial concerns. Yet, considering the positive aspects, international students provided an important international perspective for the real world of work where they would interact with people from many cultures (Trice, 2003).

2.4.3 Growth in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry and Need for Talent

Over the last decade, the hospitality and tourism industry has become one of the world's leading industries that contributes to the global economy, creates jobs, generates exports, boosts taxes, and stimulates capital investment (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2013). In 2013, Travel & Tourism total contribution to GDP was expected to grow at 2.9% according to WTTC'S estimates (Table of 2.6). Long term growth forecasts of 4.2% per annum growth over the ten years to 2023 are retained as demand from and within emerging markets will continue to rise in significance.

Travel & Tourism will continue to grow, outpace growth of the wider economy, and remain a leading generator of jobs. More significantly, the tourism industry will become more important to the global economy over the next ten years (WTTC, 2013). As the industry continues to grow, it must improve its quality. Thus, HTM graduates who are highly skilled and well trained are desirable in today's hospitality and tourism job market (Lu & Adler, 2009).

The hospitality and tourism industry is highly dependent on people who deliver intangible service, experience, and value to distinguished guests (Tews & Hoof, 2011). Some of the most flexible employment and work practices are provided by this industry. The industry also plays an important role in facilitating international work opportunities, offering a wide range of jobs for young people and first-time job seekers (WTTC, 2013). Historically, the industry has had difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified employees because careers in this field are often stereotyped as low-wage and entry-level with little opportunity for advancement. A shortage of labor exists because finding people with the right skills, nice personality, and positive attitude is a persistent problem, which not only adds to business costs but also affects service levels and the industry's productivity (Service Skills Australia, 2009).

TripAdvisor, the world's largest travel site, provided the 2012 global survey of the industry's top trends. Incorporating responses from more than 9,000 accommodation owners and managers worldwide, the industry index found that 58% of global respondents predicted their business would be more profitable in 2012; by contrast, 12% stated less profitable. To maintain the projected growth of the hospitality industry, finding and keeping highly skilled and educated employees is a priority (Lv & Xu, 2012; Blomme, Rheede, & Tromp, 2009).

Companies have been aware of the demand for talent. Many forward-looking hotel groups (e.g., Marriott, Hilton, Starwood, Hyatt, Fairmont) have established talent-training programs to attract and develop talent. Applicants with Hospitality and Tourism Management degrees are preferred because they have been educated in managing the guest experience (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). Generally, the diverse range of activities of this industry provides excellent job opportunities for graduates.

Table 2.6

Estimates and Forecasts of Travel & Tourism's Global Economic Contribution

Word	2013 USDbn[1]	2013 % of total	2014 Growth[2]
Travel & Tourism's direct contribution to GDP	2,155.4	2.9	4.3
Travel & Tourism's total contribution to GDP	6,990.3	9.5	4.3
Travel & Tourism's direct contribution to employment	100,894	3.4	2.2
Travel & Tourism's total contribution to employment	265,855	8.9	2.5
Capital investment	754.6	4.4	5.8
Visitor exports	1,295.9	5.4	4.8

Source: WTTC/ Oxford Economic, 2013.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) was applied in the literature review to help identify determinants (e.g., interest, abilities, values, and environmental factors) behind students' career intentions and to construct the relationship among those main factors. It explains how career and academic interests mature, how career choices are developed, and how these choices are turned into action. This is achieved through a focus of three primary tenets: self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals. Barriers such as those related to gender, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, or family constraints were discussed to create negative outcome expectations on one's career intentions (Blomme, et al., 2009; Lent et al., 2004). For the purpose of uncovering factors that affect students' career intentions and gain new insights into it, a qualitative approach has been used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis with 19 students from two campuses. This chapter is organized into 5 sections: 1) a qualitative study, 2) participants, 3) question design, 4) data collection, and 5) interpreting data.

3.1 A Qualitative Study

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research allows the authentic voice of the study's researchers and participants to be represented (Lee, Mitchell, & Sablynski, 1997). It is a holistic approach that involves discovery. Questions that begin with "how" and "what" allow the researcher to obtain new perspectives and to gain

additional information from the data, which is difficult to convey by the quantitative method (Hoepfl, 1997). Since studies on career intentions of international HTM students at the masters' level are still lacking, using a qualitative method helped to explore new findings to fill up this research gap. Additionally, a qualitative study tries to understand a process or how people make sense or meaning of their experience (Daniel, 2010). Therefore, it is appropriate to apply a qualitative method to better understand the career decision-making process of students and how their career intentions are formed. The results of the study allow students' voices and thoughts to be known.

3.1.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Although a variety of methods can be applied in collecting data in qualitative research, interviews and focus groups have been used most frequently (Gill, Steward, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). In the present study, interviews were chosen to collect data. There are three fundamental types of research interviews: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Unlike structured interviews with no scope for follow-up questions and unstructured interviews with little or no organization, semi-structured, in-depth interviews consist of several key questions that help define the areas to be explored. They also allow the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail (Gill, etc., 2008). Thus, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 19 participants from two major universities. During the interview process, participants were not limited to any pre-constructed alternative answers prepared in advance by the researcher. Rather, participants responded from their own perceptions and experiences. The participants' original insights helped to explore the deep-rooted as well as neglected perspectives of the topic. This qualitative method

helped to analyze participants' thoughts so that the topic could be viewed

comprehensively.

3.2 Participants

The target participants of the study were defined as "international HTM master's

students from countries other than the United States with temporary student visas (i.e.,

F-1 visas in the present study)," so one of the selection criteria was to select

participants from different countries of origin besides the United States. Wanting

participants with diverse cultural characteristics, the researcher attempted to select

participants from various regions of the world who majored in HTM at the two major

universities. Reasons for choosing the two major universities were: 1) the researcher

attended HTM programs at both universities and gained the basic information about

HTM, 2) it was convenient to solicit referrals through friends, classmates, and faculty,

3) it helped to obtain participants with diverse culture, and 4) both HTM programs

have maintained a consistent ranking as top hospitality management schools in

industry journals and have won international recognition.

First, the researcher conducted interviews with 10 participants of one HTM program,

the majority of whom were from China. The non-Chinese participants were from

Thailand and from Russia. Considering the fact that the HTM master's program

consisted mainly of Asian students, especially Chinese students, the researcher then

decided to look at another HTM program for suitable candidates from other regions

where students were more diverse in race. Nine respondents from the second HTM

program went for the interviews. Of the 9, 4 were from China, 2 from South Korea,

and the remaining 3 from the Bahamas, Jamaica and India. In all, 19 respondents

participated in the study. The demographic information of the participants attending the two different universities will be further explained later in this chapter and also in Chapter 4. Additionally, the same methodology for recruitment and data collection, analysis, and interpretation was followed with participants from both universities. As one of the most common sampling strategies, purposive sampling seeks to identify participants based on selected criteria (Patton, 2002). Given that the interviewees were selected by nationality and referred by members of the target population (HTM master's students); this research combined two purposive sampling techniques: convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Both sampling techniques were used with participants from both universities. More details about the sampling will be disclosed later in this chapter.

3.2.1 Convenience Sampling and Snowball Sampling

Convenience samples are participants that are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Patton, 2002). Such sampling saves time, energy, and money in selecting data. With few drawbacks, it remains a way to gather data from a subset of the population (Kus, 2003). In the early stages of the formation of the study topic, the researcher generated concerns and worries about career plans of international students upon graduation by exchanging ideas with students with the same status (international master's students in HTM) and professors from the two HTM programs. Subsequently, the researcher studied the importance of the topic. Knowing that students of the target population have great interest in the topic, the researcher determined to conduct the research and invited some students in the same program to be a convenience sample.

To obtain participants for this study, the researcher received referrals from classmates and program professors. Specifically, after interviews with the 8 participants of the convenience sample from the two universities, the researcher asked if they knew any people who met the selection criteria (international master's students holding F-1 visas at the two HTM programs). This strategy leads to snowball sampling in which participants use their social networks to refer the researcher to other people who meet the criteria, especially those who are not easily accessible to the researcher (Mwaura, 2008). A total number of 16 students from both universities were referred as potential candidates.

Among all the participants, 8 out of 19 were considered the convenience sample. Another 8 participants were referred by those convenience sample participants, and program professors recommended the remaining 3. In an effort to gain interview opportunities, the researcher made initial contact with the 8 convenience sample participants via telephone. The researcher also followed up with potential snowball sample participants via telephone. The purpose of the initial telephone contact was to "conduct a screening interview, utilizing an informal conversational approach, to determine if the individual met the inclusion criteria" (Mwaura, 2008). After this initial contact, all participants were willing to participate in the interviews and showed interest in the topic. After the first round of interviews, the researcher asked participants to refer students meeting selection criteria. The convenience sample participants then contacted and asked the students to be referred if they would like to receive an email invitation from the researcher. If the referred students agreed to receive the email, the researcher sent an email inviting students to participate in interviews. Referred students retained the right to accept or reject the interview

requests. Once participants (for both convenience sampling and snowball sampling) agreed to be interviewed, thereafter the researcher sent each participant a written explanation of the study. The next contact with the participants was to establish a mutually agreeable interview time and to mention that the interview would last approximately 90 minutes. Eleven out of 16 referrals were selected as interviewees. The other 5 referrals were unable to participant in the interview due to time conflicts and personal reasons.

3.2.2 Sample Size

The importance of the sample size refers to its representativeness of the entire population (Turner, 2003). In purposive sampling, such as the convenience and snowball techniques in the present study, the sample size might not be fixed. It can be determined on the basis of resources and time available as well as the target population (Kus, 2003). In a similar study, Mwaura (2008) stopped sampling when she thought there was no new information that could be generated from the sample units. Lincoln and Guba (1985) utilized the same strategy and described this as "redundancy," that is, to determine the number of participants by waiting for data saturation.

The researcher of the present study terminated interviewing participants when nothing new could be added to the data. After interviewing 17 participants, the data reached saturation. To ensure the accuracy of the judgment, 2 more participants were interviewed later. The total number of participants was 19.

3.3 Question Design

Interview questions were developed based on the literature review of SCCT and studies on determinants of career intentions (Lent et al., 1994; Bandura, 1997; Brown, 2002; Lu & Adler, 2009; Chuang & Jenkins, 2012). Designing effective research questions is a crucial component in data collection. Researchers should be careful that each of the questions allows the examiner to dig deep into the experiences and knowledge of the participants to gain maximum data information (Daniel & Turne, 2009).

The guiding principle of all the interview questions was to answer the initial study objectives. All the interview questions focused on five areas based on the previous literature review: 1) demographic information, such as age, gender, marital status, nationality, and native language; 2) personal interests, such as "Why did you select HTM to pursue a master's degree?" and "What's your career plan upon graduation?" 3) environment factors, such as "How do your family and friends influence you?" and "What do you think of the career service on campus?" 4) societal and economic shifts, such as "What do you think about the economy in the U.S. and in your own country?" and 5) work experiences, such as, "How do you like your previous work?" and "What are your expectations for your current job?" Students were also encouraged to talk about the determinants and motivations for their decisions. For instance, "What are your major concerns when you plan your career?"

Basically, the majority of the interview questions were open-ended so that the respondents could freely discuss their concerns about career intentions. At the same time, there was no fixed order for the questions. For instance, environmental factors

(e.g. friends, family) were placed toward the end according to the researcher's interview plan; however, a student might refer to a friend's recommendation when answering why he/she chose the United States as a study destination. In such a case, the researcher would set aside the sequence of questions in her initial plan and ask how friends and family have influenced his/her career intention before addressing other questions.

3.4 Data Collection

Preparation is always essential in an effective interview. It can alleviate problems that could occur during the process as well as maintain an unambiguous focus to benefit the study (Gill et al., 2008). Before the interview started, an overview of the research purpose, topic, and intended uses for the interview were briefly explained to the participants; further concerns and questions were answered by the researcher. All the information, including recoding and transcripts were to be kept secure and confidential. Also, participants were informed that they could contact the researcher later with any concerns or questions related to the research. The approval of the interviews by the Institutional Review Board was mentioned to participants as well. Each participant read the consent form as the researcher read it aloud prior to the participant signing the copy. Included in the consent form was the participant's consent for the interview to be taped using an audio recording device.

The style of the interviews was casual rather than formal, so, in order to create a relaxed atmosphere, coffee shops near the two universities were selected as interview sites. Drinks were offered to each interviewee after a small introductory chat. An audio recorder was used for taping the interviews; meanwhile, the interviewer also

took notes during the interview to make sure the conversations remained on the right track. Each interview took up to one hour and the average time was 45 minutes. The researcher had been previously made aware of and cautioned to avoid data bias, such as avoiding personal influence on the participants and adding a one-sided view to the interview procedure. Consequently, the researcher attempted to respond objectively and not evaluatively to participants' comments. Finally, to protect the privacy of participants, they were represented by a number within the content of the study.

3.5 Interpreting Data

Data analysis involves a form of searching and arranging interview transcripts (Patton, 2002). Through this process, the researcher should gather together all the pieces of information, analyze statements and interpret them, categorize the answers, break them into meaningful units, search for themes, and make sense of the data (Gill et al., 2008). For this study, transcribing was conducted simultaneously with the interview sessions in order to examine the efficacy of interviewing procedures as well as to evaluate the relevance of interview questions. The data reduction and analysis began after transcription of each interview was completed. The researcher interpreted data by attaching significance to categories observed.

The first step of data analysis was to complete a transcription of each interview. To promote reliability, the researcher listened to each recorded interview twice with attention to details. Specifically, the researcher transcribed the content of answers from the participants and clustered meaningful units into categories. During this process, the researcher was very careful and sensitive to her own personal biases and preconceptions as she refrained from imposing personal views on the data. Using this

method as a template, the researcher repeated the same process of carefully analyzing the verbatim transcript of each of the participants.

The researcher generated a template with categories after coding 4 interview transcripts. In the study, factors that were found to have an influence on career intentions were coded into categories mentioned in the previous sections: personal interests, environment factors, societal and economic shifts, and work experiences. For instance, when students were asked about their motivations to choose HTM as a major, they answered, "I would like to work in the industry," and "My personality is suitable for this major." According to the SCCT, these statements were summarized as "interests." Some statements, however, that could not be summarized into a certain category were marked for later reviewing. The same procedure was applied to each answer from each transcript. Meanwhile, alternative categorizes were also considered by looking for differences in responses recorded in data collection.

Seventeen interviews had been conducted when the data appeared saturated. Therefore, the researcher reviewed the categories again to eliminate repetition and similar codes. Two more interviews were arranged after 17 interviews for the purpose of finding interconnections between categories and research questions. In order to make the interpretation more credible and to enhance in the ensuing finding, each taped interview was independently interpreted twice. After interpreting, the research crosschecked the information to produce accurate results for certainty in data collection. Also, this study engaged multiple method, interviews and recordings, to have more valid and reliable data. Any transcription from that could not match the other was removed. As Campbell (1996) claimed, "the consistency of data will be achieved when the steps of the research are verified through examination of such

items as raw data, data reduction products, and process notes". The researcher kept

the consistency of the data by controlling bias and examining evidence from the

interviews and using it to build a coherent justification for themes.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

The main purpose of Chapter 4 is to discuss research results in relation to the initial study objectives. The researcher conducted interviews with 19 international master's students in HTM programs at two major universities in an effort to explore motivations and determinants to engage in career exploratory behaviors. This chapter starts with demographic information about the participants. The unique cultural background of each participant contributed to the diversity and richness of the findings. The remaining parts of this chapter focus on presenting main findings.

Study objectives for this research include the following:

1) To explore motivations for students to choose HTM as a major;

2) To investigate students' career-related plans upon graduation; and

3) To determine factors that affect students' career-related decisions

4.1 Demographic Information

The demographic characteristics of participants from the HTM programs of two institutions are presented in Table 4.1. All information is shown in terms of country of origin, length of time in the United States, gender, expected graduation time, marital status, and native language.

Among the 19 participants, the largest number was from China (n=11), followed by South Korea and the Bahamas (n=2). Thailand, India, Russia, and Jamaica each had 1 participant (Table 4.2). Only the 2 Bahamians were native speakers of English. The geographic origins of the participants closely reflected the percentages of students from the HTM majors in those two programs' data set. In other words, research participants constituted a geographically representative sample.

Thirteen of the 19 participants were female, while 6 were male. Regarding marital status, 5 students were married, while 14 were single. The expected graduation date for 11 participants was December 2012, and for the other 8 students, it was May 2013 (Table 4.2).

The length of time that participants had been in the United States was diverse (Table 4.3). More than half of the participants had been in America for a maximum of 3 years. Four students had one and half years of living in the United States while 3 students had lived here for 2 years.

Table 4.1

Profile of Participants

#	Expected Graduation Date	Gender	Marital Status	Visa Type	Native LNG	Yrs in the U.S.	Nationality
1	Dec.12, 12	Female	Single	F-1	Chinese	2.5	China
2	Dec.12, 12	Female	Single	F-1	Indian	10	India
3	Dec.12, 12	Male	Single	F-1	Korean	3.5	South Korea
4	May 5, 13	Female	Single	F-1	Chinese	1.5	China
5	May 5, 13	Female	Single	F-1	Chinese	2	China
6	May 5, 13	Male	Single	F-1	Chinese	2	China
7	Dec.12, 12	Female	Single	F-1	Chinese	2	China
8	May 5, 13	Female	Single	F-1	Thai	4	Thailand
9	May 5, 13	Female	Married	F-1	Chinese	3	China
10	Dec.12, 12	Female	Single	F-1	English	7	Bahamas
11	May 5, 13	Female	Married	F-1	Chinese	1.5	China
12	May 5, 13	Female	Married	F-1	Chinese	1.5	China
13	May 5, 13	Female	Single	F-1	Chinese	2.5	China
14	May 5, 13	Female	Single	F-1	Russian	4	Russia
15	Dec.12, 12	Male	Married	F-1	Korean	8	South Korea
16	Dec.12, 12	Female	Married	F-1	English	10	Bahamas
17	May 5, 13	Male	Single	F-1	Chinese	1.5	China
18	Dec.12, 12	Male	Single	F-1	English	6	Jamaica
19	Dec.12, 12	Male	Single	F-1	Chinese	3	China

Table 4.2

Participants' Information by Demographic Categories

Category	Gender		Native LNG		Graduation Time		Marital Status	
Sub-category	Male	Female	ENG	Non-ENG	Dec. 2012	May. 2013	Married	Single
No. Students	6	13	2	17	11	8	5	14
Total No.	19		19		19		19	

Table 4.3

Participants' Length of Time in America

Length of Time in American (years)									
Year(s)	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	6	8	7	10
People	4	3	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2
Cumulative People	4	7	9	11	12	14	15	16	17	19
Cumulative Percent (%)	21	36	47	57	63	73	78	84	89	100

4.2 Motivations for Students to Choose HTM as a Major

All 19 students mentioned that they chose their current HTM program mainly for its reputation. They believed that the majority of programs provided by American institutions, including the HTM programs, have a better quality of education than those programs in their home countries. When they were asked the reasons that motivated them to pursue their master's degree in HTM, 6 mentioned "previous or current work experiences" as a main influence factor. These participants maintained their work experiences made them feel good:

My first work experience was in the United States and I was a server in a Japanese restaurant. I got tips from the customers, but I was not working just for tips. I could know how customers were satisfied with my service by their smile, their attitude, and their tips… It's an easy and direct response. I learned how to care for people and how to meet their needs. And I earned what I deserved. That made me feel good. So, when I finished my bachelor's degree in nursing, I decided to choose the HTM program for my graduate education (8).

I was working at the front desk in a five star resort when I was doing my internship... People working at hotels are very friendly and hospitable. We took care of customers and we also took care of co-workers… I liked the work environment at hotels. The experience was great. After the internship, I realized hospitality is the area I would like to explore further (2).

Despite "previous or current work experience," "a bachelor's degree in HTM" was also considered a great motivator for students' academic choices and was mentioned by 5 students. While work experience and a bachelor's degree were emphasized as experiential factors in SCCT, they give rise to an individual's interest in an academic major (Brown, 2002). In this case, both "previous or current work experience" and "a bachelor's degree in HTM" traced the role of academic major interest in helping to motivate students to choose HTM programs for further study. Unlike the participants, above, who shared that emotions about their work experiences motivated them to plan careers in HTM, students motivated by their HTM studies had made their decisions from a more logical perspective. They stated:

I got my bachelor's degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management. During the past four years, my undergraduate studies led me to the world of the hospitality industry… I am not only interested by the theories I learned but also hope to make a contribution (to this industry) (6).

I was majoring in HTM for my bachelor's degree. I decided to pursue the same major for my master's degree because I realized my interests, my experience, and career goals matched with the program… I have confidence to fulfill the degree requirements (for a HTM master program) since my undergraduate studies helped me lay a solid foundation for future graduate studies (7).

The booming hospitality and tourism industry in participants' own country was another consideration for 4 students when they selected their majors. Especially in some developing countries, the diverse and growing industry will provide employment opportunities in the coming years, and many employers will be hiring qualified candidates. Thus, some participants, expecting to pursue their careers in the industry to gain a good position, decided to study HTM for the purpose of applying their knowledge to the industry. Students commented:

Majors related to tourism are popular in my country. More and more people are willing to spend their money on travel and vacations… people realize the importance

of enjoying life and maintaining health…of course, they have more extra money that can be used on entertainment (7).

In the next five years, thousands of hotels will be built in my country…the tourism industry in developed countries is mature. Developing countries, such as China and India, are the places where international firms are going to expand their businesses. With a master's degree in HTM and study abroad experience, I will have some advantages when I seek a job back home (9).

Another interesting motivator affecting students' major choice was an international

cooperative HTM program. As a result of American programs' high reputation and

advanced curriculum system, one of the two major universities has established a

cooperative HTM program in collaboration with a Chinese university. Chinese

students in the joint program can transfer to the American university for further

education when they meet certain standards. Therefore, the 4 students in this situation

were more likely to choose the United States as a study destination and HTM for their

master's degree. The responses below relate to this situation:

I didn't consider another major to pursue my master's degree. It just happened smoothly. I went to the joint program, which offered me the opportunity to come to the United States for a master's degree in HTM. And I accepted it… In China, a master's degree is an advantage if you want to get a good job (1).

My undergraduate HTM program is a cooperative program. It's easier if we choose that university to pursue our master's degrees…I knew I would come to Miami, so I didn't consider other universities …The good weather and potential employment opportunities here really attract me anyway (19).

4.3 Career Plans Upon Graduation

SCCT defines career intentions as a part of career plans that help to pursue a

particular career path (Brown, 2002). Previous studies about career-related behaviors

of international students have been mainly focused on students' career placement and

career plans upon graduation (Shen & Herr, 2004; Chuang & Jenkins, 2010; Lu &

Adler, 2011). Based on extant literature, participants of this study were asked, "Where

would you like to work?", "What kind of career plans do you have?", and "How did you come up with the idea behind your intentions?" The continued growth of the hospitality industry has resulted in an increased need for entry level and professional employees. Notwithstanding present economic conditions, participants forecasted that there would be substantial growth for entry level and leadership roles in this field after their graduation. Both internal and external factors, such as work restrictions, promotion opportunities, family ties, culture conflicts, and social acceptance, contributed to participants' career intentions.

Regarding career placement, most of the participants (13 out of 19) expressed their willingness to return home immediately or after a period of time. The students' rationales for their decisions included cultural alienation, lack of sponsorship, and homesickness. Only one student had made up his mind to stay in the United States permanently, which was not a personal choice but a family decision. In observation and communication with this student, the researcher found that he considered many external factors, especially research opportunities, rather than internal factors during the decision-making process. As participants mentioned:

Eventually, I will go back to my own country to open my own business. I have a limitation in development here. I am not a native speaker and I have a different skin color. Most important, I don't feel myself integrating with the culture (9).

It's easy to say, but it is difficult to find sponsorship. We have career fairs on campus each semester, but very few international students can get offers. And when you compete with undergraduates, you will forget the meaning for your master's degree. I mean…what are the advantages of a master's degree (12)?

I came here for education and experience, which will help me to take over the family business... By the way, I am homesick. So I may not apply for the OPT after graduation and just travel around before going back to my country (6).

In my country, if you can live and work in the United States, it means something. I decided to go for the Ph.D. program… and to be a professor later. In an effort to apply

for the Ph.D. program, I have already taken the GMAT (Graduate Management Admissions Test) exam twice… The (research) environment here is better than my country, so I can focus on research (3).

Meanwhile, 6 students were uncertain about the location of their future jobs. They thought to head to other foreign countries for good opportunities or apply for professional training programs in the headquarters of the company. The dominant reason that caused their uncertainty was their jobs prospects. Factors such as language barriers, work restrictions, culture conflicts, and promotion opportunity reduced their confidence in finding a promising job in the United States. When they would search for opportunity on a global scale, according to their understanding, they would be more likely to find a desired job. As participants demonstrated:

It depends on the opportunity. I am willing to sacrifice location for a good position. Actually, I have applied for jobs in Singapore, Hong Kong, Macao, and China… Corporate culture and career prospects are prerequisites for now (1).

I don't know about others, but I will choose a job with potential promotion opportunity. With an American master's degree, I can go anywhere around the world to find a job in the hospitality field… I don't mind go to another foreign country since it's really difficult to find a sponsor; but I do care about where I will be after years (15)

When participants were asked to picture what they would like to do in the near future, participants considered opening their own business, engaging in research, and working for an industry. The hospitality and tourism industry covers a wide range of organizations. Consequently, there are considerable varieties of career opportunities for students and 10 participants would like to go into one of several areas of specialization. Their reasons for their decisions include lack of work experience, a love of food service, and later-life benefits. As some participants said:

Well, I don't have much working experience… I would like to apply jobs on a cruise ship because of the great experience. And it's an emerging industry in my country. I saw the potential (6).

I found a love of food service when I was working at Starbucks… I am thinking of applying to a management position at Starbucks… or other food chains. Maybe someday I will own and operate my own food stores. Who knows (13)?

Personally, I have interest in hotels. My goal is to become a manager in one of the multi-national hotel companies… When I get old…I hope my husband can run a B&B (Bed and Breakfast hotel) with me (17).

Three participants found their interest in research and teaching. They prepared

themselves for further education, such as MBA and Ph.D. programs. Further

discussion indicated that their inclinations toward research and teaching resulted from

a variety of factors, including the concern for marital status, social status, and lifestyle.

Here are some examples:

I need a job that can balance family and career…. I would like to say, a professor would be an ideal choice… When I have children, I can teach them by myself… I may also consider working for consulting companies (3).

A university professor is a career that has high social status (in my country). People think you are smart, serious, and hard working. We admire people with a high education background… Also, the job is stable with holidays and private time...so that I can have more time for my family and personal hobbies (12).

Two participants stated that they would like to open their own business right after

gradation; they all had family businesses back home. Financial support from the

family, interest in the hospitality industry, and management knowledge as well as

overseas experiences made them optimistic about their entrepreneurship. Meanwhile,

12 participants also had the idea to run their own business as a long-term goal. For

some of these participants, family business contributed significantly to their career

plans. They mentioned:

I have the responsibility to take over the family business… my parents are getting old and I am not coming to the U.S. just for fun. I am traveling, doing internships, working at hotels, and making friends… I keep on developing my abilities to think, to work, to manage, and to communicate… I collected some good business ideas after I came here and I would like to give them a try after I go back… I am excited about this (6).

I grew up in the restaurant my family ran… I have loved serving people since I was very young… I chose this major because of my family, but also for myself. I will help to run the family chain restaurants when I go back, and I am also thinking about a franchise of an American (restaurant) brand… I appreciate the overseas experience. I have gained a lot from it (5).

In the present study, none of the participants talked about planning careers in fields other than hospitality and tourism.

4.4 Determinants of Career Intentions

The applications of SCCT indicated that factors such as academic major, gender, career aspirations, work experience, and environmental factors could diversify an individual's career intentions (Lent et al., 1994; Chuang & Jenkins, 2004; Singaravelu et al., 2011). Based on SCCT, demographic factors, influence of work experience, and influence of environment factors and societal and economic shifts are mainly discussed here.

4.4.1 Demographic Factors

In the previous section of Chapter 4, 6 demographic factors were introduced: country of origin, the length of time in the U.S., gender, expected graduation time, marital status, and native language. The following results regarding individual's career intentions are limited to those factors.

In the study, comments from participants suggested that gender alone might not have a great influence on career intention. However, when considering gender along with marital status in planning their careers, all 4 female students seemed to be more influenced by marriage than male students. Students also recognized that it is a culture issue. As female participants stated:

Right now, I cannot make any decision. My husband wants to find a job in California, so I may also find a company there… I changed my career plan a little bit after we got married. I was ambitious and cared about career achievement… My career dreams are still there; I am just moving on to a new life stage (11).

My husband is working in Hong Kong and I am going to stay with him after graduation… we want to spend more time together, so I was considering applying for jobs with a regular daily shift… It's also good if we have children in the future. Family time is really important for us and we have been apart too long (12).

The other two married women held the same point of view that women should look after the house while men go out to work. Conversely, married men design their career paths with less family influence. When the researcher asked one male student from South Korea how his wife and other family member impacted his career choice, he described the following:

Well, they are really supportive. It's a kind of tradition that the man bears the main responsibility of the family… And a woman should be family-oriented (15).

These two demographic factors are closely connected with each other. Nineteen participants from three continents and six countries spoke six different languages, among which only the 2 Bahamians were native speakers of English. For all the other participants, English was their second or even third language. Although multi-foreign language ability is preferred for hospitality firms, 14 students were ambivalent when considering this characteristic as an advantage. On the surface, the language barrier is a factor that can cause communication difficulty (Beaudry, 2009; Anderson, 2005). Many students perceived this since it seemed to affect students' confidence in finding jobs, getting sponsorships, and the intent of staying in the United States. Communication skill is a basic requirement for the hospitality industry as well as daily life (Singaravelu et al., 2011). Since students thought that language is an

important part of the culture, some of them indicated that they could never be a real

"citizen" even if they were to get citizenship one day. As participants expressed,

There are opportunities here (in Miami)…It will be to my advantage if I can speak Spanish. However, Chinese is not that useful since there are not that many Chinese tourists here. The situation may be different in other cities, like LA and New York; and that's why I may also look for opportunities there… my native language is not English: people can tell the difference through my accent… maybe I will become a citizen in the future, but it doesn't mean I will be accepted by the community and this is something that cannot be changed by time (7).

For sure, it's a plus if you can speak more than one language. But as foreign students, the second language will be an advantage only when we can speak English as well as native speakers. Good communication skill is one basic requirement for hospitality professionals and language is a tool and carrier of human communication... I have no problem with daily communication, but I have difficulty with the culture behind it… for instance, I don't feel amused by most of the American jokes. I don't watch talk shows because I cannot get it (11).

Length of time in the United States seemed to influence students' career intentions a

great deal. The longer time a participant stays in America, the more likely he/she is to

have the intention of starting a career there after graduation. It is not easy for

international students to adapt to a foreign culture environment. Once they get used to

the environment over time, it is also difficult to change daily habits. Additionally, the

struggle to adapt to the American culture causes some students to feel that their efforts

will have been wasted if they return to their home countries. Thus, while some

students are able to take their suitable place in the American society, others prepare to

leave due to culture conflicts. As two participants expressed:

I had my education, my experience, my friends… everything in the United States. I know how the industries as well as the social system work here. There is no problem to go back (to my own country), but I will try to get my H1B visa from my company… It's a waste to give up those resources and I have to start over in any other place (2).

I lost 10 pounds within the first three months when I came here. It took time to get used to the food, the education, and the language…I know many international students going through the same difficulties…Time is always the best solution, but I cannot fully adapt to the society... I am 24 years old and had formed my own value system before I came here... Sometimes, it's more difficult to change the habits when you are getting older (17).

Students who were approaching graduation (expected to graduate December 2012) were more active in planning their careers than those expecting to graduate in May 2013. This activity may be mainly due to the employment pressure, which enhanced students' sense of urgency. Not all of those graduating candidates had received job offers, but most of them had a preferred choice and possible alternatives in mind. Through the interviews it was found that participants were not lacking in career opportunities; the problem was the conflict between the dream of how to get ideal jobs and start their careers and the reality of needing to work and settling for any job available. As participants described:

I am busy applying for a job and having interviews with different companies… I haven't applied for the OPT card yet, which means I still have time to consider whether to do so. Some companies would like to offer me entry-level jobs… but I have my own expectation… I hope to find an ideal job as soon as possible so that I can decide whether to go back or stay here (14).

I am working as part-time front desk agent right now and my boss said they could not offer me a full-time job after I graduate… I paid my tuition with bank loans and my family borrowed money from their friends. I cannot afford the living expenses if I am out of a job. I will work at my friend's restaurant as a server before I receive a good job offer. The pay is good, and I can get a lot of tips (17).

4.4.2 Influence of Work Experience

The two HTM graduate programs have an industry experience requirement for applicants. Normally, applicants to the HTM master's programs are requested to have a one-year work experience or two completed internships in the hospitality industry or a related area (Purdue, 2013). Some of the specific requirements of one major HTM

program of this study are: 1) 1,000 hours of hospitality-related practical training work

experience completed plus 300 hours for the graduate internship, and 2) a minimum

of 800 hours must be completed while enrolled in the graduate program (Florida

International University, 2013). Based on those requirements, all participants had

previous work and/or intern experience and about half of them were employed in the

industry at the time of the interview. Students found that an enjoyable past or current

internship/work experience was effective in strengthening or supporting students'

persistent behavior in their careers. Students had a better understanding of the

industry with clearer career goals after getting experience in the industry. For some,

their trajectory in the industry changed. Nevertheless, even though the image of

hospitality jobs was stressful with low society status, low pay, and long working

hours (Clayton & Tom, 2008), five students expressed their passion and interest in the

industry. Specific comments indicated:

I knew the industry better after hands-on experience. I knew how to operate the
OPERA system, how to interact with people, how to cooperate with colleagues, and
how to deal with emergencies. And finally, I know whether I am still going to work in
the industry… It's not a bad thing if a person finds out the industry doesn't fit for
him/her. That means we can explore more suitable jobs for ourselves…. (1).

I enjoy working with people. But I am not good at communicating with strangers.
After my internships, I found my interest in accounting and finance. I may think of
working in the back of the house at hotels… (2).

I like to interact with people, whether they are colleagues or customers… I am a good
team player and a service person with a caring heart… I agree that the previous work
experience is really important; many of my classmates didn't work in the industry just
because they were not treated well during their internships or they didn't see the value
of their positions… The truth is many colleagues don't have a high-level education
background. So when we are doing the same tasks in the same position, we may feel
uncomfortable and a little bit disappointed…. But we may get promoted more quickly
and have more opportunities… the future of our careers is promising (9).

With regard to 11 students who were currently employed, their career expectations

were different from the remaining 8 who were not working. Most of the employed

students mentioned that their current jobs helped to prepare them for opportunities after graduation. While some were looking forward to becoming full-time employees, others wanted to be promoted. In their view, with a master's degree and practical work experience, they were more likely to get promoted than colleagues without master's degrees. In contrast, students who were not working preferred jobs with professional training and job rotations, and by doing that they could have an overview of operations. Both employed and unemployed students wanted to prove the value of their master's degree through their first jobs after graduation. As students stated:

I want a promotion after graduation since I have the highest degree among my colleagues and have worked in the position for 2 years (1).

I would like to participant in the management training of an international company and acquire comprehensive knowledge of the operations system… I think that the training program will be the best choice since people can get promoted faster once enrolled into the program… The company also considers people in the program differently. They expect people to grow up…the majority of those programs will guarantee a managerial position after training (4).

As for 3 students who would like to pursue Ph.D.'s and become professors in the hospitality field, the industrial experience would benefit them by providing research ideas. Even for 14 students with entrepreneurial dreams, the industrial experience would be precious. As students demonstrated:

My work experience in the industry helped my research a lot. For example, my thesis is based on my first internship in a casino resort…then I decided to do my thesis in a related topic... My professors say that work experience can really help research and teaching. So they suggested that I work in the industry first before applying for the Ph.D. program (3).

All my professors had industry experience before they engaged in researching and teaching. It means that if I want to be a good professor or researcher in the future, I need to gain some industry experience…how can I discuss a topic without any practical experience as reference? How can I do research on a topic with no practical implications (15)?

This industry is all about people… I learned how to care for customers and offer superior service to them through training, practice, and mistakes… In order to prepare for my own business, I have to learn from others' successes and failures (13).

4.4.3 Influence of Environment Factors and Societal and Economic Shifts

According to SCCT, family, school counselors, teachers, friends, and government have been considered as environment factors that influence the career choices of international students (Brown, 2002).Fifteen out of 19 participants were from developing countries; 3 were from the Caribbean, while the rest were from Asia. Most Asian students in the present study indicated that the economic development in their countries had an impact on their career plans. Furthermore, the booming tourism industry in developing countries has attracted the attention of international hospitality firms. Ironically, the increase in career options has contributed to the uncertainty of career intention. For example, whereas the U.S. used to be considered the prime choice for a career in HTM, students expressed:

I prefer to go back... America experienced the 2008 economic downturn and didn't recovery from it yet… It's a developed country and the industry has reached saturation… if I would like to pursue career development, then I should go back (5).

The industry is developing quickly in my country… With the master's degree in HTM and study abroad experience, I am pretty confident in finding a good job. And…for sure, I am more used to the community where I grew up (8).

China's industry is growing very fast. By 2020, China will be the largest tourist destination and there are thousands of hotels under construction… I know the wages and benefits would be much lower than here, but if we compare our industry with other industries, then we will have opportunities and development space. It's the place we can show our advantages (4).

South Korea is a small country. The hospitality and tourism industry has developed very well… we have our local hotel brands and international hotel brands. I would like to help the international hotels to become localized and help local brands to become globalized (3).

India is an emerging market. It stands for opportunities, development, and improvement. The industry needs talents and I would love to make some contributions. Eventually I will go back (2).

In the study, most the students described that parents were really supportive of their career plans and respected their decisions. Similarly, friends did not seem to have an essential effect on students' career plans. Additionally, 13 participants viewed the role of parents and friends secondary to their personal choices. Overall, because parents and friends deferred to students' choice, they had no strong role in students' career intentions. "Supportive, trustworthy, thoughtful, and understanding" were most frequently used to describe "parents and friends" by participants.

My parents always tell me to be who I am, so I would like to share my ideas with them… Most of the time, they are listeners. They will tell me what they experienced and their opinions, and let me make the final decisions. They don't like my major but they respect my decisions… They don't really know about the industry. But they know how to plan a career and bring me new thoughts (4).

When I first came here, they were worried about me: the language, the culture, the food… anything. And my parents miss me a lot…. Last year they came here to visit me and saw my life here. They feel that I have grown up…. So when I called them to discuss about my career plan, they just asked me to do what I like and follow my heart. Even though some of my ideas are not mature, they would like me to gain the experience (9).

I have a higher education degree than most of my close friends… They have worked for several years and made a good salary…. Sometimes I will feel pressure because I am supposed to get a better job and higher salary than they do… but the reality is that maybe I cannot. They have experiences, but I don't (11).

Eleven students reported services provided by career centers were useful and designed to meet international students' specific needs. However, they also suggested that career services could be even more helpful and could also pay attention to the different needs of both graduate students and undergraduate students. As the following students said:

We have the career service offered by our program, and we even have our career director and professionals helping us solve all kinds of career related questions… They would also organize career fairs and professional presentations each semester to allow students to get closer to the employers and the industry. It would be better if they were to have regular sections each semester to talk about resume writing and interview skills (1).

I went to the career office in our department. They asked about my career plan and helped to analyze the situation… Basically, they helped me based on what I needed. So it's better to have a career plan and goal in mind before asking them for help (2).

I think our campus career service is really good… They also have the online pages for students to learn, which is really thoughtful… I noticed that the career guides they give to students are really general… I would suggest they provide specific services based on a student's major, degree… or maybe cultural background (4).

Chapter 4 discussed research results in relation to the initial study objectives.

Nineteen international master's students in HTM programs at two major universities

were interviewed to explore motivations and determinants in career exploratory

behaviors. The chapter presented demographic information about the participants. The

unique cultural background of each participant contributed to the diversity and

richness of the findings. The remaining parts of the chapter focused on findings which

explored motivations for students to choose HTM as a major, investigated students'

career-related plans upon graduation, and determined factors affecting students'

career-related decisions

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The U.S. hosted far more international students than any other destination. The proportion of international students to overall high education enrollment in the U.S. at the graduate level was higher than that at the undergraduate level (Institution of International Education, 2012). Previous researchers have indicated that students from overseas, especially those at the graduate level, have their career intentions in mind when they look forward to seeking higher education in the United States (Anderson 2005; Chuang & Jenkins, 2010). In order to better investigate career related behavior of the target population (international HTM master students), three study objectives were established to better achieve the goal: 1) to explore motivations for students to choose HTM as a major, 2) to investigate students' career-related plans upon graduation, and 3) to determine factors that affect students' career-related decisions.

SCCT was applied as a framework to help explore factors affecting students' career intentions (Lent et al., 1994). To obtain the opinions of the participants, a qualitative approach was utilized. Nineteen participants from six countries and three continents were selected from two major HTM programs to participate in semi-structured interviews assessing demographic factors, personal interests, environment factors, societal and economic shifts, and work experience. All the interview questions were developed based on a review of previous studies about international students.

5.1 Discussion on Research Objectives

5.1.1 Motivations for Students to Choose HTM as a Major

Motivations for international master's students who chose HTM as their major were mainly influenced by several external factors. These were outsider influences that impacted on students' decision making. The top four most frequently mentioned factors were: previous or current work experience (6 times), a bachelor's degree in HTM (5 times), the booming hospitality and tourism industry (4 times), and international cooperative programs (4 times).

The findings of this study with graduate students matched with Chuang and Jenkins's (2010) study on HTM undergraduate students; both studies recognized previous work experience as a main motivator affecting students' choice of program. All participants with a bachelor's degree in HTM considered their previous educational background as a motivator for them to pursue a master's degree in the same field. Previous studies on graduate students revealed that undergraduate studies helped students lay a solid foundation for their future graduate studies. Therefore, students are more likely to choose the same majors when they apply for graduate programs (Zhou, Frey, & Bang, 2011; Shen& Herr, 2004; IIE, 2012). Another external factor, the booming hospitality and tourism industry in students' home countries, showed students the possibility of having good careers in the field. Lent et al. (1994) reported that societal and economic shifts would be helpful for students gathering occupational information and are related to academic choice. Meanwhile, the influence of international cooperative programs in students' major choice was mentioned but not discussed in previous

studies. This may due to the fact that the international cooperative program is still a minority phenomenon; very few HTM programs have this kind of collaboration.

5.1.2 Career Plans upon Graduation

To investigate students' career-related plans upon graduation, participants were asked where they would like to work, what their career plans were, and the reasons behind their intentions. Results matched with Shen and Herr's (2004) research on career placement of international students at the graduate level. Generally, participants would return to their own home countries, head to other countries, or remain in the United States after graduation as long as there are good opportunities. All these possibilities are influenced by diverse factors, which stimulate various career plans. Among the 19 respondents, 13 students wanted to go back to their countries, 6 out of 13 had not decided, and only 1 student wanted to stay in the United States. While many students were uncertain about their career placement after graduation, this remains consistent with previous studies (Lu & Adler, 2011; IIE, 2012; CRS, 2005).

Concerning career plans, in addition to working at hospitality firms, students also would like to do research at institutions in academic careers. In other careers, such as business, studies have shown that students' intentions to become entrepreneurs were partly influenced by attitude, self-efficacy, prior experiences, and family exposure to business. While 2 students planned to open a business directly after graduation, 12 participants set it as a long-term plan. This was different from studies about career expectations among HTM students, which uncovered that most participants were not planning to work in the industry upon graduation (Lu & Adler, 2009; Bloome et al., 2009). However, the study just cited examined undergraduates. None of the

participants in the present study considered careers in fields other than the hospitality and tourism industry. This may mainly due to the fact that graduate students were more career-oriented when they picked up their academic majors than undergraduate students (Anderson, 2005). Participants exhibited their certainty and intent to persist in careers in the hospitality and tourism industry. This finding was consistent with the study on factors influencing international students' career choice (Singaravele et al., 2011).

5.1.3 Determinants of Career Intentions

Regarding determinants affecting students' career-related decisions, findings were classified into demographic categories, influence of work experience, environment factors, and societal and economic shifts. Among the six demographic factors (i.e., country of origin, length of time in the United States, gender, expected graduation time, marital status, and native language), gender along with marital status, expected graduation time, and the length of time in the United States were reported to have an impact on students' career intentions.

Married female students had greater influence from being married than males and would like to give priority to their families. According to the study on gender difference in career decision-making (Gati et al., 1995), it seems to be a culture issue that women should put family first when there are conflicts between family and career. Participants living longer in the United States were more likely to start careers here after graduation with better adaptation to the society. Additionally, it was not surprising that participants who were graduating soon had more of a sense of urgency to find jobs compared with those graduating in the following semester. Finally,

students were uncertain that their native language, if not English, was an advantage when seeking jobs since multi-language skill was preferred but not necessary.

Regarding the influence of work experiences, participants thought it played an active role in formulating their career plans. Those currently employed held different expectations than those unemployed. Additionally, findings indicate that family, friends, career counselors were considered secondary to students' career choice, which is somewhat different compared with previous research (Yang et al., 2002; Signaravelu et al., 2011). Yang et al. stated that parents have the strongest influence on non-American students' career decision, especially Asian students (Zhou, Frey, & Bang, 2011; Simpson, 2011). In the present study, however, parents' expectation and support are important but not a leading factor in influencing career decisions. Through the communication with participants we found out that their parental influence probably came from parents' education, knowledge, skills, and personal experience. In addition, the findings remain consistent with earlier results that interaction with peers has effect in varying degrees on student development in various aspects. For instance "peer pressure can sometimes limit young people's career aspirations" (Ho, 2006).Participants also thought that career relevant services were helpful since career counselors/advisors could offer resources and guidance and might see talents that parents and students themselves might overlook.

The economic and tourism development in countries from which participants came were also essential in determining career intentions. Rapid economic development in many countries particularly in Asia where there is strong demand for science and engineering, accounts for much of the recent growth. However, because many

countries do not have an adequate higher education infrastructure to support their growing educational needs, they are outsourcing this service (Trice, 2009).

5.2 Conclusions

Career intention is a complex process that is influenced by many factors. Findings of the present study indicate that those factors vary individually. Based on these findings, one could make the assumption that motivation behind one's career choice intentions varies across professions and culture. From a general perspective, career-planning behavior is a result of a combination of and interaction between both personal factors (those originating within the individual) such as demographic factors, and external factors (forces emerging from the social context) such as work authorization and economic and industry environment both local and global. In other words, there is no one factor that can fully explain career intention. Rather, factors intersect with each other to create a unique career intention for each individual. Personal factors include cognitive and mental processes that dictate career decision-making. In particular, self-interest was the main factor that influenced students' choice of the degree program. For example, participants noted that their previous work experiences in HTM made them feel good. On the other hand, external forces from the society may also affect ones career decisions. For instance, sometimes people's decisions to choose a career or not are partly determined by what a particular career offers (e.g., positions, promotion opportunities, and self-development) in terms of career prospects and the working environment. In this study, several participants chose HTM because of the booming hospitality and tourism industry in participants' own countries. Strikingly, external forces coincide with demographic factors when it comes to married women. The pressure exerted by the two together pushes women to abandon their career

dreams in order to either stay at home as a full-time homemaker or to take a lower

status job because they will not have the time or energy to devote to a full-time career.

From another perspective, the factors affecting the students' plans ranged from

individualism (e.g., opportunities for self-development) to collectivism (e.g., needs of

the home country and family expectations), which led to different considerations for

their career related decisions after graduation. As individuals focus on self-

development, there is a tendency to move away from the collectivistic perspective.

This helps to explain the reason why the role of family and friends became secondary

to personal choice. Those students strongly influenced by opportunities for self-

development included three participants who found their interest in research and

teaching. They prepared themselves for further education, such as MBA and Ph.D.

programs. Further discussion indicated that their inclinations toward research and

teaching resulted from a variety of factors, including the concern for marital status,

social status, and lifestyle.

However, this move toward individualism and away from the collectivistic

perspective seemed to be less likely to occur for the women in the study or seemed to

have less of an effect on them. In spite of the years they had devoted to their career,

both working and studying, when it became necessary because of cultural

expectations (the collectivistic perspective), the women chose or would choose those

of the culture. In other words, they planned to put their family first and their career

further down.

Findings also support the relevance of SCCT, the conceptual framework for this study,

in which three central SCCT variable—self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals

(Brown, 2002) were applied to help identify and construct relationship among career behavior intentions and academic and career outcome expectations. Participants divulged that their previous education in HTM was closely related to their career certainty and intention to persist in a career in the hospitality industry. Although some participants chose the HTM major mainly because their previous work experiences and academic background in HTM made them feel good, most participants were more pragmatic, considering the booming industry, family businesses, and familiarity with language and culture. To these participants, those pragmatic factors indicated a promising future.

While many of the above discussed conclusions reflect positive influences on students' career intentions, some participants elaborated on the negative influences which, although not deterring them from following a career in HTM, would, nevertheless, stymie their ultimate expectations. One expectation consistently expressed either explicitly or implicitly was that of remaining in the U.S. and obtaining employment appropriate to their educational status. Thirteen of the participants revealed that they would be willing to return to their home country either immediately after graduation or after a period of time. This willingness did not necessarily stem from knowledge that a "dream" job awaited them at home. Rather, students' rationales for their decisions to return home included cultural alienation, lack of sponsorship, and homesickness. Additionally, still reflecting a negative influence, several students also noted that they would be willing to settle for a less-than-optimal job in the short term because of a lack of work experience.

5.3 Implications

Results indicated that student's career intention should include measures of career decision self-efficacy, academic and career outcome expectations, and career exploration intentions. Unique personal background (e.g., gender and marital status, length of time in the U.S.), industrial working experience (e.g., internships), and multiple external factors (e.g., school counselors, the booming tourism industry in developing countries) increase the diversity of career intentions of the target population.

5.3.1 Implications for Prospective and Current International Students

The implications of the study are broad. First, findings of the study have practical implications for prospective and current international HTM master's students. Choosing a major in college is an important decision and not one to take lightly. International students who have interest in Hospitality and Tourism Management programs for graduate study should have a basic understanding about the HTM major (information about the requirements, work conditions, opportunities, salary, and limitations associated with the intended career), making sure that the HTM major suits the individual and is something one can see oneself doing for years to come. Additionally, students can gain an overview of the industry through personal experience. Previous work experience had a great impact on participants' decisions about their academic major; consequently, future applicants for HTM programs are suggested to have more than the required work or internship experiences before selecting the academic major. For instance, students may do internships at hotels or any hospitality business during long vacations or hold part-time jobs related to food

service during the school year. Furthermore, students discovered that even with a master's degree in HTM, they might still not be qualified for the job of their dreams. Employers want employees with more than just head knowledge. They want employees with extensive work experience. The two major universities of this study provide a partial solution to this concern. They both have requirements for practical training work experience in the Hospitality or Tourism Industry for their candidates and current students, which in turn provides students an opportunity for exploring the industry and making their career intentions clear. Nevertheless, students need to be aware, even before they begin their master's programs, that they will need a variety of work experiences in order to land the management positions they desire in the HTM industry.

In particular, for international students, because they are in the U.S. with the principal purpose of pursuing a full course of study or academic program, the employment options are very limited (Florida International University, 2013; Cornell University, 2012). However, international students seem almost blind to this reality. Their expectation seems to be that because they were accepted into a master's degree program in the U.S., they will defy statistics and land a spectacular job in HTM in the U.S. Students also expect their university to provide a job for them in the U.S. and feel let down by their university when they do not receive expected support. Yet for all that, universities do offer limited support. For example, at the universities of the two main HTM programs, the Office of International Students and Scholars (which provides appropriate services and support to international clientele before program completion) lists types of employment available to international master's students: on-Campus Employment, off-Campus Employment (i.e., CPT), and Optional Practical

Training (OPT). On-campus employment positions for international students do not have special requirements regarding students' major area of study, while CPT and OPT positions do. Thus, for the purpose of applying knowledge gained from class to practice, students may consider working at a campus food service center, being a research/teaching assistant of professors, doing an internship within the industry, or beginning professional jobs in the relevant areas of OPT.

As reported above, many participants in the study indicated that either they did not want to work in the U.S. or they thought they could not get a job in the U.S. For those students who believe they cannot get long-term employment in the U.S., statistics show that the HTM industry is booming in many areas of the world outside the U.S., areas including students' home countries. Students should stop banging their heads against a brick wall and focus on getting a job where they can succeed on a long-term basis. Students prepared in the U.S. can have successful and satisfying careers outside of the U.S.

Findings of the present study also indicate the importance of demographic factors (e.g., gender, marital status and language) for participants in forming career intentions. Participants reported that lack of language fluency could cause stress and insecurity in their work and social lives in the United States. Therefore, the present study implies that students would do well to participate in language courses or communication groups to practice their English as well as communication skills. While lack of language fluency may cause international students to stay segregated with student from their own countries (Lu & Adler, 2011), they should engage in activities with people from different countries. Dialogues and meetings organized by International Students and Scholars (ISS) and other organizations could also help students improve

their language ability and gain confidence in using the language. Students should not wait to work on their English communication skills until they begin to apply for a job in the U.S. They will never have a better opportunity to increase their English language proficiency than while they are at an American university. Furthermore, even if the student's final choice is to return to her home country, if she desires to move up in her chosen field, effective English language communication skills will serve her well.

Another demographic factor with significant implication for students concerns married female students who felt a greater influence from being married than males. Some married female participants expressed concern about family and their significant other when picturing their careers and revealed that, in spite of their many years working and studying for a top position in HTM, they would prefer to give priority to their families. As one participant acknowledged, "I have to maintain balance between work and life roles, especially when I have children in the future." The previously mentioned finding (Gati et al., 1995) that it is a cultural issue that women should put family first when there are conflicts between family and career was supported by this study in which a move away from the collectivistic perspective seemed to be less likely to occur for the women or seemed to have less of an effect on them. The bottom line underscores that gender, marital status, and cultural factors can combine to derail women's career intentions. Women preparing for careers in HTM should be well aware of this possible outcome.

We understand that work and life balance is often more difficult for women. However, "work and life balance" is a general issue for both men and women. It is believed that one's work life will affect every aspect of one's lifestyle--from how one

deals with family and friends, to one's choice of housing, and to the type of leisure activities one can afford (Shin & Lee, 2011). Students can think of the lifestyle they would like to maintain and how their career may affect it. For instance, if one wants to work at a hotel and be free on weekends and national holidays, he/she better not apply for jobs in operations departments (e.g., Front Office and Food and Beverage), which typically have three shifts and a flexible day off. Researchers also suggested that one might take personal inventory to figure out priorities (e.g., personal interest, family, money, and happiness) in life when making a decision. This method allows students to follow their hearts and to discover what they really want and care about regarding career aspirations and life goals (Tews & Hoof, 2011).

Some participants expressed concerns over personal problems they faced, such as the growth of the tourism industry in developing countries (e.g. China, India, and Thailand) and the value of a master's degree in HTM. Analysts expected that within the next few years, Asians would "comprise two out of five international travelers" and that "China will overtake the United States to become the world's largest travel and tourism economy by 2023" (Tripadvisor, 2012). Although the development of the tourism industry can create new employment opportunities, historically, it has difficulty in hiring talents. Thus, graduates could consider seeking jobs in those destinations with more professional options and better career prospects. Due to the massive expansion of hospitality firms in emerging markets, if students are willing to be relocated or be mobile, moving from location to location, they will have a broad development opportunity.

Another concern regarding career plans was the value of a master's degree. While all the students believed that a master's degree would increase employment prospects in

the long-term, they did not think employers would value it as a competitive advantage. "They think we are over educated," one student exclaimed. Nevertheless, studies indicated that students who decided to take a postgraduate course were more career-oriented and know better about their study objectives than undergraduate students (Singaravelu et al., 2011). Thus, during the interviews with recruiters, students should articulate what they have gained from their programs and what they can bring to the workplace. They should be able to provide evidence of the added value that the courses have provided by reflecting on their experience and be able to demonstrate it to the employer.

5.3.2 Implications for HTM Administrators and Educators

The second implication is that HTM administrators and educators who recruit international students for their programs will benefit from the investigation of this study. Factors identified (see below) as important to international students in their selection of HTM programs could be used as a reference for HTM program leaders and university administrators to recruit potential students. In the section addressing motivation for choosing HTM as a major, participants were also asked about why they chose their current programs. "The quality of education" and "program reputation" were most frequently mentioned.

As American institutions look to increase their international student enrollment and differentiate among the global student audience, they need better strategies in providing international students effective career services. HTM administrators and educators may need to provide more assistance and services for international students to better adapt to the new social and learning environment. On the one hand, courses

can be created, specifically for international students or programs can be created in which American students are matched up with international students to help them hone their English skills and also introduce them to campus life. On the other hand, inform students' career knowledge in terms of what their prospective careers offer, limitations, challenges, and even the salary to help them make successful career transitions. Another way in which career services can offer help to international students is to be frank with them about the limited number of jobs available in the U.S. International students should be preparing themselves for work not only in the U.S. but also internationally. This strategy addresses the reality of the job market and may be more effective in helping graduates to acquire their desired employment. As American institutions look to increase their international student enrollment and differentiate among the global student audience, they need better strategies in providing international students effective career services.

As demonstrated earlier, participants had concerns about work restrictions, visa issues, and the language barrier when seeking employment opportunities during school and making career plans upon graduation. Schools and researchers also consider work related regulations a negative factor for international students in finding jobs in the United States (Trice, 2003). It is suggested that universities continue to address issues surrounding the predictable problems of overseas students, such as difficulty in finding sponsors after graduation, restrictions on working hours and working fields, and other social issues. It is believed that these issues, if not addressed, may have a negative effect on the international students' career planning (Lu & Adler, 2011).

HTM career counselors can structure experiences that help international students succeed in pre-career decision-making activities, participate in challenging career-

related activities, and identify and resolve anxiety provoking issues related to making the transition from school to the real career world. This could be done through formal workshops and making information available on a website.

5.3.3 Implications for the Industry

The third implication is that, through the study, the industry may learn about students' career concerns and perceptions. Spending years learning industry knowledge, international master's students with an HTM education background are more loyal to the industry than those with other major backgrounds (Shen & Herr, 2004). The industry should know that with long-term career goals in hospitality, the target population has particular criteria when seeking jobs. Once they get their ideal jobs, they will not give up easily and waste previous effort.

As mentioned earlier, international hospitality firms also could consider hiring international students and training them in the United States with authentic service and management concepts, and then send them back to their own countries. Such a group of students will contribute to the localization of the company with their understanding of foreign cultures through their study abroad experience. In light of this, they could help reduce all kinds of conflicts when foreign companies enter into new markets. Many international companies, such as Marriott, Hilton, and Mandarin Oriental recruit international students for their special management-training programs. These trainees will be sent back to properties in their own countries once they finish training in America. Thus, international students have their own value to add to universities, the industry, and the country. Once their value is recognized and infused into the workplace, employers will benefit from it. For example, in the International College Program of Walt Disney World (WDW), students spend up to a full year

working at the Walt Disney World Resort on a J-1 training visa and take coursework through the Disney College Program and distance learning at their U.S. sponsoring universities. This program, on the one hand, gives students the opportunity to further develop their communication, interpersonal, organizational, and problem solving skills that will make them more qualified and attractive candidates for any employer, and, on the other hand, the program helps to add authenticity to theme parks in order to attract more visitors.

With all the benefits of hiring international workers mentioned above, employers could also consider hiring international students to be responsive to their clients, to draw in a much broader customer base, and to meet the demands of current market . International students with a willingness to work in the U.S. after graduation are eager to put skills and knowledge to work. Human Resources managers could use the information in the study to recruit the well-educated and talented.

5.4 Limitations

As a primary study, the present thesis includes several limitations. First, participants were from only two HTM programs in the United States. And the majority of them came from China. Although reality is that more Chinese students are enrolled in those two programs than students from any other country, HTM programs at other universities may have a different situation. Therefore, findings of the study generalized to other HTM programs need to be applied cautiously. Second, the two major HTM programs have different foci about fostering students. While one aims to cultivate students' academic independent ability, the other one prepares students with practical working skills. Thus, the diversity in career intentions among the

participants may be due to the difference in the curricula. Further studies could discuss the influence of the curriculum on students' career planning. In addition, more statistical analyses and quantitative studies are needed to explore the significance of factors while students are making their career plans.

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