

**TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY EDUCATION IN
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH (UMS)¹**

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ABSTRACT:

This paper deals with the development of Tourism and hospitality Education in Universiti Malaysia Sabah since the inception of School of Business and Economics in 1995. Tourism industry has been the forefront of Sabah's booming economy and it is the second biggest income generator for the state. The establishment of tourism and hospitality Education in UMS was parallel to the growing importance of the industry, where it has expanded quite rapidly from the beginning of the 1990s. 11 years later, the School of Business and Economics has produced all-rounded quality graduates in Tourism and hospitality and contributed to the need for professional human capital not just in Sabah but the rest of Malaysia, and overseas. The content of the Tourism and hospitality Education in UMS probe further in this paper to look real essence of this field including the academic work (research, consultation, publications) and try to rationalise the holistic integration between academic work and output i.e. graduates.

KEYWORDS. *Tourism, Hospitality, Education, Human Capital*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is a labor-intensive service industry dependent for survival (and at best, competitive advantage) on availability of good personnel to deliver, operate and manage the tourism product. The interaction between the tourist and tourism industry personnel is an integral part of the total tourist experience (Amoah and Baum, 1997).

At national and international level, tourism and hospitality education has evolved in a heterogeneous and ad hoc manner with limited linkages to the real or perceived needs of tourism industry (Khoo, 2003).

2. TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY EDUCATION

Goeldner (1988) in Cooper et. al. (1994) comments that tourism is still an emergent subject and that tourism and hospitality education has grown significantly during the last 50 years, but its knowledge is still fragmented. Cooper et. al. (1994) cited in Knowles et. al. (2003) explains three ways by which the study of tourism has developed as an academic subject. First, it was through specific training related to the travel sector, afterwards courses in the business area, and later on the study of tourism was approached along with traditional subjects such as Geography, Sociology and Linguistics.

According Echner (1995a), the development of tourism education is not an easy task because of the segmented nature of the subject, being inter- and multi-disciplinary, which generates conflicts and makes its understanding difficult.

Students are attracted to undergraduate or graduate in Tourism and Hospitality Management programs because the industry provides benefits through its contribution to cultural enrichment and economic growth (Bushell et. al. 2001). Although industry people consider that the hardware contexts of hotels, restaurants, airports and transportation facilities have generally attained international standards, the software contexts in terms of employees' service attitude, skill levels, and language ability still fall short of those expected by international travelers.

3. TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

Tourism and hospitality education in Malaysia is a relatively new subject, as well as being recognized as a vital growth industry for the country's economy. Many countries have suffered from an acute shortage of skilled staff. The rapid expansion of industry in developing countries has exaggerated the demand at all levels of employment for competent people. Some countries, for example Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong and Singapore saw the recruitment of foreign nationals as a solution to the problem since local educational institutions were unable to meet the demand (Alistair & Mohd Salehuddin, 1994).

Training in the tourism industry in Malaysia is carried out by public and private agencies. Historically the Government played a much more active role in training personnel. More recently, the private sector has increased its participation through specialist colleges and training units. The early beginnings of hospitality and tourism education took the form of vocational and skills training - focus on entry-level employment. Formal hospitality training began in 1967 when the Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Hotel and Catering Management was introduced at the MARA Institute of Technology (now known as Universiti Teknologi MARA). In 1975 the institution offered three programs, such as the Diploma in Chef Training, the Diploma in Tourism Administration and the Diploma in Institutional and Catering Management.

According to Khoo (2003), hospitality programs gained momentum in the mid-1980s when rapid expansion hotel industry created a demand for skilled hotel staff. Private colleges began to offer tourism & hospitality program in collaboration with reputable institutions in France, Switzerland, Australia, Britain and the United States e.g. Stamford College (1980), Kolej Damansara Utara and School of Hospitality and Tourism, Taylor's College (1986).

There are three basic approaches (Figure 1.0) in Tourism & Hospitality education program in Malaysia (Khoo, 2003), which are:

- i. Academic approach - public universities follow this approach which a generally three or four year degree program with strong academic and theoretical foundations.

- ii. Vocational cum academic approach - largely offered by private education institutions.
- iii. Vocational approach- training centre and some private colleges focused on practical training and to a lesser degree on academic content.

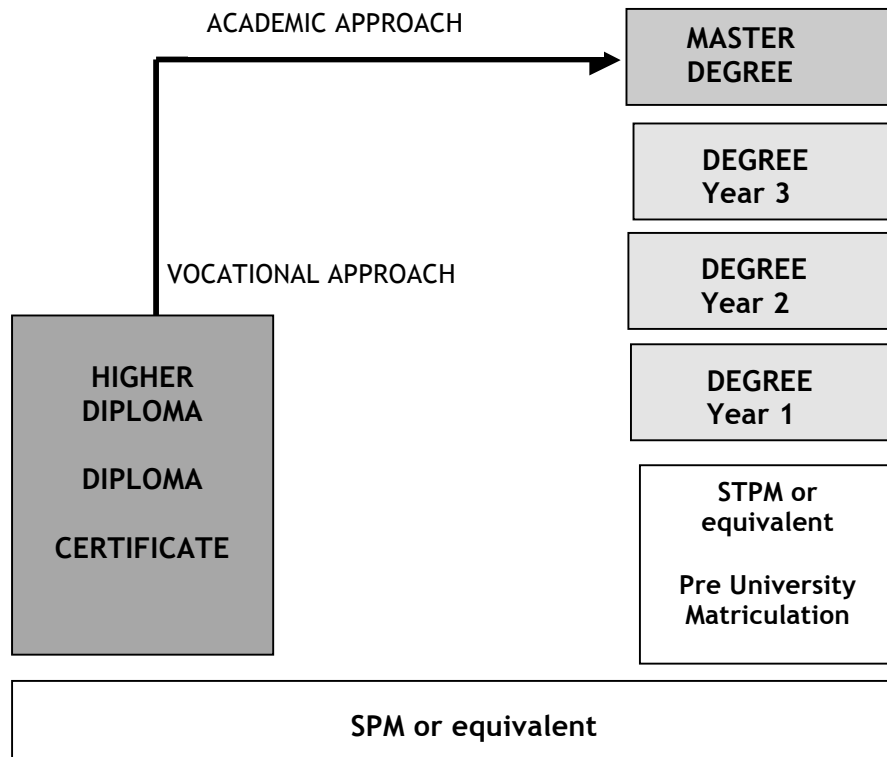


Figure 1.0: Academic and Vocational Approach in Public and Private Institutions
 (Adapted from Khoo, 2003)

Undergraduate and Post-Graduate tourism and hospitality education in Public Higher Education institutions in Malaysia are shown at the following Table 1.0.

INSTITUTION	YEAR COMMENCED	PROGRAM
UiTM	1996 2004	B. Sc Hotel Management B. Sc Food Service Management B. Sc. Tourism Management M. Sc. Hotel Management
Universiti Utara Malaysia	1999 2003	B. Sc. Tourism Management M. Sc. Tourism MBA (Tourism & Hospitality Management) PhD. (Tourism)
Universiti Putra Malaysia	2002	Elective courses in Hospitality & tourism under the Faculty of Business Administration & Economics) B. Management (hospitality, Tourism & Recreation)
Universiti Malaya	1996/97 2002	2 elective courses in Hotel & Tourism Management under the Faculty of Business & Accountancy B. Business (Hotel & Tourism Management)
Universiti Sains Malaysia	1975 2004	Elective course for the B. Sc. in Housing, Building and Planning under the Faculty of Housing, Building & Planning M. Sc. in Tourism Development
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	1989 1997 1998	Elective course in Tourism Planning for the Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning Building and Planning under the Faculty of Built Environment M. Sc. in Tourism Planning PhD. in Tourism Planning
Universiti Malaysia Sabah	1997 1997 2006	B. Sc. Food Science (Food Science & Nutrition) B. Sc. Food Science (Technology & Bio-Processing) Bachelor of Business (Hotel Management) Bachelor of Business (Tourism Management)

Source: Adapted from Khoo, 2003

Table 1.0: Undergraduate and Post-Graduate Tourism And Hospitality Education In Public Higher Education Institutions

4. UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH'S SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS BACKGROUND

The School of Business and Economics was established in 1995 with the intention of fulfilling the country's need for managers and entrepreneurs in various areas of business. Currently, the school offers 10 areas of study in the field of business and economics at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, which are:

1. Entrepreneurship
2. Financial Management and Banking

3. International Business
4. Marketing
5. **Hotel Management**
6. **Tourism Management**
7. Accounting
8. Economic Planning and Development
9. Financial Economics
10. Human Resource Economics

Essentially, UMS is the first university in Malaysia to offer academic program of Business Management that focused on the field of Tourism Management.

5. TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY EDUCATION IN UMS

5.1 Bachelor of Business (Hotel Management)

Currently, this program is being offered under School of Business and Economics and only available on full-time basis. It would take three years to fulfilling 117 credit hours. Students will undergo their training in established four to five star hotels and resort for 3 months after their final semester exam.

The aim of this program is to produce skilled manpower in the hotel industry where it is concerned on developing knowledgeable and versatile human capital that posses specialized skills in hotel management. This program also provides graduates with a solid business background in combination with a solid business background in combination with a through understanding of hotel operations and management. Student in this program are trained in decision making and critical thinking through their coursework in-group and as individuals.

To instill hand-on skills about hotel operation, this program are equipped with facilities which include Micros PMS installed in the computer lab, Food and Beverage Simulation Room and Housekeeping Simulation Room. Training on these facilities is incorporated in the courses taught within the program.

5.1.1 Course Structure

This structure of program cover hotel’s main departments through core program courses (front office, housekeeping, food and beverage). This is supplemented by concentrations option between management (Front Office Management, Hotel Operation System, and Supervision in Hospitality, Service Management for Hotel Industry and Entrepreneurship in Hospitality Industry) and operation concentration (Hospitality Marketing, Service Management for Hotel Industry, Special Event Operation and Financial Management for Hospitality Industry).

YEAR 1 -SEMESTER 1	CREDIT HOUR	YEAR 1- SEMESTER 2	CREDIT HOUR
University Core (PPIB)	8	University Core (PPIB)	5
Foreign Language	2	Foreign Language	2
Principles of Marketing	3	Co-Curriculum	3
Management Principles & Practices	3	Microeconomics	3
Business Mathematics	3	Principles of Accounting	3
		Principles of Financial Management	3
TOTAL CREDIT HOUR	19	TOTAL CREDIT HOUR	19
YEAR 2 -SEMESTER 1	CREDIT HOUR	YEAR 2- SEMESTER 2	CREDIT HOUR
University Core (PPIB)	3	University Core (PPIB)	3
Foreign Language	2	Foreign Language	3
Introduction to Information System	3	Research Methodology	3
Principles of Entrepreneurship	3	Commercial Laws	3
Macroeconomics	3	Accommodation Management	3
Organizational Behavior	3	Elective 1	3
Introduction to Hospitality Industry	3	Minor I	3
TOTAL CREDIT HOUR	20	TOTAL CREDIT HOUR	21
YEAR 3 -SEMESTER 1	CREDIT HOUR	YEAR 3- SEMESTER 2	CREDIT HOUR
University Core (PPIB)	2	Strategic Management	3
Operations Management	3	Strategic Management for Hotel	3
Food and Beverage Management	3	Special Interest Tourism Management	3
Elective 2	3	Practical Training OR Thesis	6
Minor 2	3	Elective 3	3
Minor 3	3	Minor 4	3
		Minor 5	3
TOTAL CREDIT HOUR	20	TOTAL CREDIT HOUR	24

Table 2.0: Bachelor of Business Administration (Hotel Management) - Course Structure

5.2 Bachelor of Business (Tourism Management)

The aim for the Tourism Management program is provide skilled and knowledgable candidates theoretically and technically. Thus, students are able to apply the knowledge and skills that is

needed by the tourism industry in the private or public sector. In addition, this program objective is to recruit and produce individuals equipped with personal, technical and conceptual skills; which those elements is very significant for tourism that practices service oriented and globally trait. The program itself will form cultured graduates with creativity, being innovative and able to lead in the tourism industry. Graduates will become business specialists that are geared up with strong knowledge in theory, principles, structure, planning, managing and operation of tourism industry. This program also provide substantial insights into contemporary tourism and give students the competitive business and employment edge.

The objectives of this program are:

- To offer the program which in line with country's aspiration and the needs of tourism industry.
- To supply the job market with professionals in the tourism industry both in public & private sector.
- To uphold tourism as an important career in the country.
- To impart quality knowledge in producing skilled & trained tourism personnel with personal, technical and conceptual for careers in tourism industry.
- To assess and evaluate the theory and principles of tourism management and its relation to world economy.
- To improve professionalism and innovation by enhancing skills, training and motivation.
- To developed positive attitudes as a tourism professional.

5.2.1 Study Outcome

This program is designed to offer or provide the following outcome to the graduates.

- Skills - This program adopts a hands-on approach to assist student develop professional skills in the area of *communication, presentation, and technology use (soft skills)*
- Knowledge - This program is designed to impart theory, principles and practical knowledge on tourism industry and through industrial placement.

- Career Path - This program has been designed to prepare graduates for entry to the following areas such as *Government & public services, Hotel & resort management, tour operation, tourism research & consulting and tourism related operations*
- Postgraduate - This program will provide the opportunities (career) for education and research at the post graduate level.

5.2.2 Course Structure

This program is a three year bachelor degree with a focus on strong business skills and knowledge as well subject areas such as tourism marketing, tourism planning and development, culture in tourism and special interest tourism. The course structure for this program is shown in Table 3.0 below.

YEAR 1 -SEMESTER 1	CREDIT HOUR	YEAR 1- SEMESTER 2	CREDIT HOUR
University Core (PPIB)	8	University Core (PPIB)	5
Foreign Language	2	Foreign Language	2
Principles of Marketing	3	Co-Curriculum	3
Management Principles & Practices	3	Microeconomics	3
Business Mathematics	3	Principles of Accounting	3
		Principles of Financial Management	3
TOTAL CREDIT HOUR	19	TOTAL CREDIT HOUR	19
YEAR 2 -SEMESTER 1	CREDIT HOUR	YEAR 2- SEMESTER 2	CREDIT HOUR
University Core (PPIB)	3	University Core (PPIB)	3
Foreign Language	2	Foreign Language	3
Introduction to Information System	3	Research Methodology	3
Principles of Entrepreneurship	3	Commercial Laws	3
Macroeconomics	3	Organizational Behavior	3
Principles of Tourism	3	Tourism Intermediaries	3
Understanding Culture in Tourism	3	Practical Training I	4
		Minor 1	3
TOTAL CREDIT HOUR	20	TOTAL CREDIT HOUR	25
YEAR 3 -SEMESTER 1	CREDIT HOUR	YEAR 3- SEMESTER 2	CREDIT HOUR
University Core (PPIB)	2	Strategic Management	3
Operations Management	3	E-Tourism Management	3
Tourism Marketing	3	Special Interest Tourism Management	3
Tourism Planning & Development	3	Practical Training II	4
Tourist Behavior	3	Minor 4	3
Minor 2	3	Minor 5	3
Minor 3	3		
TOTAL CREDIT HOUR	20	TOTAL CREDIT HOUR	19

Table 3.0: Bachelor of Business Administration (Tourism Management) - Course Structure

5.3 STUDENT ENROLMENT

5.3.1 Undergraduate Program

PROGRAM	1997/ 1998	1998/ 1999	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008
HOTEL MANAGEMENT	13	9	22	28	32	51	37	40	64	54	44
TOURISM MANAGEMENT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	55	32
TOTAL	13	9	22	28	32	51	37	40	64	109	76

Table 4.0: Student Enrolment

5.3.2 Post-Graduate Program

Presently, there are more than 150 local and international postgraduate candidates undertaking their study in School of Business and Economics. The School offers:

- A) Master Program By Coursework
 - a) Master of Business Administration (MBA)
 - b) Master of Human Capital Management (MHCM)

- B) Postgraduate Degree by Research
 - SBE offers 26 study areas which included:
 - 1. Tourism Management
 - 2. Hotel Management
 - 3. Hospitality Management

The programs provide expert supervision and have created an attractive and vibrant research community for postgraduates and PhD students.

6. RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION

6.1 Research and Consultation in SBE

Tourism and entrepreneurship are research focus/pillar for SBE. This has put the importance of tourism and hospitality field in the school. Tourism and hospitality management has also been proposed by the Research and Innovation Centre of Universiti Malaysia Sabah to promote specialization of expertise area. This has led to the development of research niche group for tourism.

The rationale of Research Niche Group

1. This research niche will provide an opportunity to explore new current trend and best practices to ensure the competitive advantage of hospitality industry in Malaysia.
2. UMS can play a critical role in hospitality management by offering technical support, knowledge and expertise to benefit hospitality industry.
3. The research niche will promote UMS as a centre of excellence in tourism hospitality research in Malaysia.
4. This research niche group can also use as a catalyst to foster collaboration research in the tourism hospitality industry.
5. The lecturers in SBE (under tourism and hotel management program) and other schools/units/centers in UMS have vast experience in research of tourism and hospitality management.

The objectives of this Research Niche Group are as follows:

1. Research is crucial to minimize the impacts of tourism in natural area and to build technical capabilities that manage and deliver quality tourism especially in Sabah.
2. This will also promote UMS as an excellence centre for research and consultation in tourism.
3. Source and support international network and collaboration in the tourism sector through research and other relevant activities.
4. SBE becomes the catalyst to foster collaboration research in ecotourism with related tourism agencies and tourism industry as well as NGOs.

5. Coordinating the research activities in UMS. This research group also will provide platform to exchange idea, knowledge and expertise among lecturers and researchers in UMS (SBE, SSS, IBTC, SITF and etc.).
6. Establish the baseline data for the tourism industry especially for Sabah.
7. Sourcing funding for more research activities for the tourism industry
8. Establish the niche research group as the advisor and point of reference for the tourism industry.
9. The research niche will promote UMS as a centre of excellence in tourism research and consultancy in Malaysia.
10. Should provide an opportunity to review tourism experiences world-wide, in order to consolidate tools and institutional frameworks that ensure its sustainable development in the future.

The priority areas for this research niche are as follows.

- Ecotourism
- Small Island Tourism
- Tourist/guest behavior (nature tourism experience, satisfaction, service quality)
- Managing Small and Medium accommodation
- Tourism and hospitality marketing (nature /ecotourism)
- Tourism and hospitality human resource planning & development.
- Hospitality Management
- Service quality in hospitality industry

At this moment, the research activities for Tourism and Hospitality management are quite comprehensive with the award of funding ranging from the coveted E-Science Fund to local authorities as in Table 5.0.

NO.	SOURCE OF FUNDING	NUMBER OF PROJECT /RESEARCH
1.	Universiti Malaysia Sabah	12
2.	Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) - FRGS	4
3.	Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) - IRPA & E-Science Fund	3
4.	Industry/NGO - Sabah Tourism Board, Labuan Development Authority, WWF	5
TOTAL		24

Table 5.0: Research Funding

It is also has been proposed that the School of Business and Economics to set up the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East-Asean Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) Tourism Centre (BEAT) to intensify the research activities of tourism and hospitality management and link it with the regional scene. At this moment, SBE has already taking the lead to be the academic secretariat for BIMP-EAGA (Sabah) and has been organizing regional conferences in BIMP-EAGA. The proposed BEAT (waiting Senate approval) can provide a platform to accelerate research activity of tourism and hospitality group.

7. PUBLICATION

School of Business and Economics has also publised several number of publications that are relevant to the field of tourism and hospitality management, as shown in table 6.0.

NO.	PUBLICATIONS	NUMBER OF PUBLICATION
1.	Books/Monograph	2
2.	Journals	4
3.	Proceedings	53
	TOTAL	59

Table 6.0: Number of Publication

8. ACADEMIC STAFF

The Tourism and Hospitality group has for more than ten years developed a reputation for excellence in tourism and hospitality teaching programs at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and for their research activities. Most of them are overseas graduate and come from reputable tourism and hospitality school such as University of Surrey in England, United Kingdom, Hawaii Pacific University in United States of America, Scottish Hotel School in Scotland, United Kingdom and Griffith University in Goldcoast, Australia. Some of the staff had their PhD tutelage under top tourism researcher in the world such as Prof. Douglas Pearce, Prof. John Tribe, Prof. Ralf Buckley and Prof. Tom Baum.

The group consists of 11 dedicated and energetic staff and they represent a cluster of

excellence engaged in critical tourism and hospitality, theoretically applied, action and pedagogic research (Table 7.0).

QUALIFICATION	HOTEL MANAGEMENT	TOURISM MANAGEMENT
PhD	1	4
Master	3	3
Bachelor	1	0
TOTAL	5	7

Table 7.0: Number of Academic Staff

All in all, the staff in the group consists of:

- 5 Senior lecturers
- 6 Lecturers
- 1 Tutor

9. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

At this moment, tourism employers are not convinced tourism graduates can meet their requirements, therefore limiting the future career prospects of tourism graduates. There is also lack of awareness among students of some of the main characteristics of working in the tourism industry - low pay and working unsociable hours. The lack of awareness of the realities of employment in the industry and the high expectations of the students is likely to lead to disillusionment about tourism careers

Other challenges are the passiveness of student and the lack of feedback regarding the understanding of lectures. It is difficult to meet the need of:

- i. Students - high likelihood of employability
- ii. Employers - graduates with high-level key, transferable skills & knowledge
- iii. Government - insist on quality assurance & monitor not only course design but also system

The group also recognized that there is a problem of creating synergy between the public &

private sector. There is also the negative image of employment in industry (parent & society) where many people have a limited perception of the tourism industry. They see it as an industry that offers part-time, low paying jobs in hotels or restaurants, jobs that tide people over until they find “real” careers.

The School sees that there is the importance in balancing theory and practices. Tourism students in UMS do not have much hands-on experience and realistic evaluation of actual working experience, therefore tourism graduates may be handicapped by a lack of technical skills & workplace experience. Zhou (1991) states that because of the limited experience of most of the faculty and limited lab facilities, the curriculum in institutes of higher learning generally places more emphasis on classroom instruction and de-emphasizes skill development. Thus students have virtually no laboratory experience prior to entering the industry as an intern.

10. STRENGTHENING TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY EDUCATION IN UMS

School of Business and Economics are attempting to create synergy and building bridge between education and industry by integrating work experience with the academic component of education. SBE also develop course contents or structure through consultation such as consultation with the industry or authorities such as the Tourism Advisory Board.

The intake to the Tourism Management undergraduate program is one of the few selected programs that undertake selection interviews as part of the recruitment process. This procedure is to find the applicants who demonstrate the capacity to develop people skills and competent to become industry player or tourism scholar.

Using the ICT to stimulate real-world situations in a training program (hotel simulation) and visual images has been identified as an effective alternative to instruction to lecture/course study. Visual images are increasingly being used in learning and teaching resources. This is supported by Keegan (2007) where he proposed that ICT and images can be used to promote positive learning experiences.

There are other current programs such as soft skills (e.g. IT skills, communication, team working, and problem solving, motivational skills) literacy) that the UMS thought that it should be provided as a priority. The programs also should consider the inclusion of foreign languages as a compulsory element of the curriculum.

To meet the evolving needs of stakeholders, therefore, it is argued that three domains (theme) should emerge within tourism education (in future) as follows: (as proposed by Dale and Robinson, 2001)

- i. Generic degrees. These programs offer the interdisciplinary skills required for a broad understanding of the tourism industry. Specialist options might be studied but there is no particular area which is given specific attention overall.
- ii. Functional degrees. These programs offer the student the functional expertise in a particular area of tourism. Due to the service-oriented nature of the tourism industry, often specialist skills are required in the areas of IT, marketing, planning and so on.
- iii. Market/product-based degrees. These programs focus on the nature and development of particular niche products and markets which require specialist knowledge and expertise for their effective delivery.

Universities and colleges should use semester/term-time work experience of students as an educational opportunity and bring work-based experiences to enrich student learning. Teaching tourism and hospitality should embrace work-related contexts where possible (high quality case studies which apply general business skills). The learning time can be shortened if students are provided with intensive internship programs in the industry to gain hands-on practical experience. By working closely with government bodies, NGOs and other public/private education institutions, the output of SBE should be at their highest competence.

It is now proposed for SBE to set up a new School in UMS (School of Tourism and Hotel Management) that can offer more program in the field of tourism and hospitality management.

11. CONCLUSION

There are few conclusions that can be drawn from this paper. The tourism and hospitality undergraduate level courses in UMS are very recent and their growth has been extraordinary. The managers of this 'experience tourism' will need additional skills to those developed by tourism and hospitality course in UMS

Curriculum structure are constantly monitored and modified to meet the industry needs through discussion and workshop among industry players (hotel operator, travel agent and government). A new education model should be designed that aims to establish a synergy and linkage between education and training path and career path.

As among prominent for tourism and hospitality research, undertaking studies in UMS can provide substantial insights into contemporary tourism and give students a competitive business, research and employment edge.

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