

HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM U.S.A. SUMMER WORK AND TRAVEL PROGRAM EXPERIENCES: LCUP STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the degree of satisfaction with the USA Work and Travel Program from the point of view of participants who attended the program from 2012-2016. The researchers utilized the descriptive qualitative design and quantitative design to examine the satisfaction with the USA Work and Travel Program. The population of this research were Hospitality and Tourism students who participated in USA Work and Travel Program SY 2012-2016. The sample size of 30 participants was determined and considered sufficient to represent the total sampling population wherein 56% of the total participants were still studying and at the final stage of their college year at the university and 44% were already working in their respective industry. The study revealed that before the program, participants expected to experience different things in life, to learn more of American culture, to build friendship with American co-workers and other foreigners. However, their experience during the stay in the USA did not match the general expectations. Results also showed that during their stay some students did not enjoy USA Travel due to time constraints. It was also revealed that there is no significant difference before and after the program which means that student expectations about the program were met.

Keywords: Hospitality, Tourism, Summer Work and Travel Program.

Introduction

Internationalization of higher education includes several dimensions such as: students, faculty, curriculum, research, organizational support, and international networking. On the student dimension, O'Neill (2010) stated that study abroad programs help students directly engage with other societies. Similarly, Schwald (2012) and Liu & Dai (2012) believed that this program is an important component of internationalization of education. According to Labros (2014), another way for internationalization of education is the use lifelong-learning concept which could be concretized through the USA Summer Work and Travel Program (SWTP).

The U.S. Department of State administered the Exchange Visitor Program under the provisions of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended. One popular program of which was the USA Summer Work and Travel Program. Its purpose was to enable the government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between its people and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange. It could also strengthen the ties which United Nations by demonstrating their educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements and the contributions made towards a peaceful and more fruitful life for people throughout the world. Other reasons were to promote international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement and to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and the other

countries of the world. Thus, the Department of State authorized a number of U.S. organizations known as "Sponsors" to be in-charge of organizing the Summer Work Travel Program. Sponsors were required to provide pre-arranged and fully-vetted employment to all participants who were not from a visa waiver country, to ensure that participants entering the United States without pre-arranged employment had sufficient financial resources to support themselves during their search for employment, must undertake reasonable efforts to secure suitable employment for participants unable to find jobs on their own after one week, must inform program participants of Federal Minimum Wage requirements and ensure that, at a minimum, participants were compensated at the prevailing local wage which must meet the higher of either the applicable state or the Federal minimum wage requirement, including payment for overtime in accordance with state-specific employment and must maintain, at a minimum, a monthly schedule of personal contact with the program participants (in-person, by telephone or via-electronic mail), document such contact, and ensure that issues affecting the health, safety and welfare of participants are addressed immediately.

Moreover, participating Host Employers were required to provide participants the number of hours of paid employment per week as identified on the job offer and agreed to when the sponsor vetted the jobs, pay those participants eligible for overtime worked in accordance with applicable state or federal law, notify sponsors promptly when participants arrive at the work site and begins their programs; when there are any changes or

deviations in the job placements during the participants' programs; when participants were not meeting the requirements of job placements; or when participants leave their position ahead of their planned departure and contact sponsors immediately in the event of any emergency involving participants or any situation that impacts the health, safety or welfare of participants.

Furthermore, Summer Work Travel Student Participants must be sufficiently proficient in English to successfully interact in an English speaking environment, post-secondary school students enrolled in and actively pursuing a degree or other full-time course of study at an accredited classroom based, post-secondary educational institution outside the United States, have successfully completed at least one semester or equivalent of post-secondary academic study and pre-placed in a job prior to entry unless from a visa waiver country. The Summer Work Travel Program provides the participants with an opportunity to live and work in the United States during their summer vacation. Students interact with other participants from various culture as well as U.S. citizens through their work placements, and after employment for three months and allowed to travel for the final month to experience and to be exposed to the people and way of life in the United States.

Reardon (2015) stated that USA Summer and Work Travel Program provided a variety of opportunities for students to gain experience related to cultural exchange. The program increased student awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity, personal growth, and develop skills and attitudes that will allow them to function successfully in an interdependent world. In addition, exchange programs helped participants to acquire foreign language skills, and an understanding of different people and cultures. After that experience, students changed in terms of their expectation and satisfaction levels. As Özdem (2013) stated, comparing home and host universities and making suggestions to apply good examples learned abroad to their home university were notable impacts on students as they had the chance to compare different aspects of their education and daily life. Because of the presence of the Local Representatives of the Department of States for their SWTP in the country, the College of International and Hospitality Management of a private university internationalized the quality of education and service through collaborative partnership with a privately-owned corporation that offers International Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs in the United States. HRI was founded in 2008 in Manila, Philippines and became a partner in providing a lifelong learning

experience to our students for almost 4 years already. HRI stated that Work and Travel in U.S.A., without doubt, is one of the best ways to discover the US which had many different places and things to see. It was also a great way for students to discover more than just great memories and photos. They will have international work experience and improve their English language skills while making new friends from the U.S. or other countries. Also, perhaps most importantly, they will learn how to survive in a new and challenging environment, developing skills which they cannot get in a classroom or reading a book. Skills such as interpersonal skills, negotiating skills, and survival skills will prove invaluable in the students' future.

Based on the study of Mannadee (2010), Thai students who participated in the US Summer Work and Travel Program showed high level of program expectations which is consistent with the level of satisfaction with what they have gained from the program. Participants had a very high level of expectation and satisfaction on experiencing different things in life, improving their self-reliability and self-responsibility and learning how to work in an American environment. The participants were satisfied with the assistance from the program staff in documentation and pre-orientation arrangement. They were also highly satisfied with working and very highly satisfied with travelling in the United States. Meanwhile, improvements on specific areas were pointed out, specifically housing provision and staff assistance during the program participation. The study of Zerman (2014) revealed that tourism major students considered study abroad programs and international experiences as vital for their major. According to participants, after the program, they became more open-minded and tolerant. They stated that these characteristics were important for the tourism field to accommodate people from diverse backgrounds. For that reason students believed that institutions should provide more international opportunities to exchange cultures and experience different education and learning styles. A program evaluation was conducted by McLaughlin (2013) on the effectiveness of the organization in order to find the degree of satisfaction with AFS inter-cultural year program and any areas of the program and the operations which need improvement. It was found that the AFS participants in the program were satisfied with the program in all areas: the preparatory sessions, the support from AFS, environment of the host nation and the accomplishments the program provided. Furthermore, in an intercultural exchange program, good preparation is one of the most important elements for Thai students to get a head start with their program when travelling abroad.

The program's staff needed to provide the necessary and helpful information to the participants in order to minimize any difficulties. According to the survey result of Kommunikáció Szak (2008), from Hungarian point of view, USA Summer Work and Travel programs were challenging but also highly rewarding. They took effort, hard work and enthusiasm. The US is an enormous country with a cultural diversity that offers great opportunities for international students who want to improve their English language skills, gain international work experience, meet fun-loving people from all around the world and spend their summer in a culturally-rich environment. Over-all students were satisfied with their summer and think they made a good decision in choosing America as their working holiday destination.

To provide useful knowledge for new participants, this study aimed to investigate the degree of satisfaction with the USA Work and Travel Program from the point of view of former participants who attended the program from 2012-2016. The participants held different job position in the different states across the United States. Besides, it helped the new participants to prepare themselves by identifying real problems and by sharing recommendations from former participants.

Statement of The Problem

This study aimed to investigate the degree of satisfaction with the USA Work and Travel

Program from the point of view of former participants who attended the program from 2012-2016. The main concern of the study was to determine the degree of satisfaction with the USA Work and Travel Program in view of former participants who attended the program from 2012-2016.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What did the participants expect to gain from the USA Work and Travel Program?
2. What is the degree of satisfaction with the program management and preparation provided by the USA work and Travel Program staff before going abroad?
3. What is the degree of satisfaction in terms of program participation in the following areas: staff assistance, housing, working conditions and traveling?
4. What are the significant differences between the participants' expectations (before partaking in the program) and the degree of satisfaction with which the participants have gained?

Hypothesis of The Study

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the satisfaction rating of students before, during, and after the summer work and travel program.

Conceptual Framework

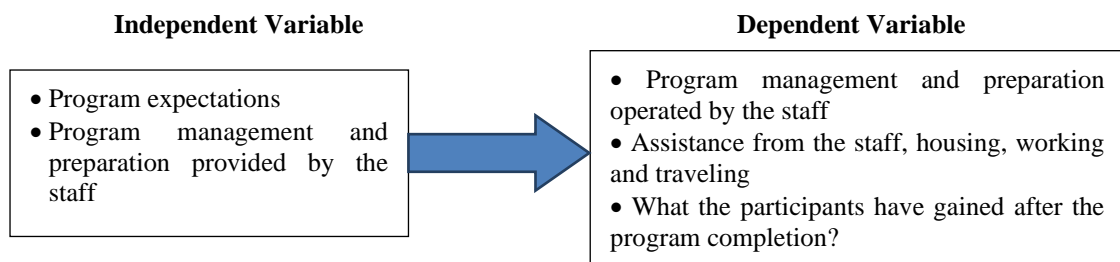


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of The Study

The study illustrates the comparison of the degree of the program expectation and the degree of satisfaction with what the participants have gained. It aimed to identify the areas in which required improvements can be pointed out. It also intended to provide future participants with useful information with regard to problems they may encounter and offer suggestions so that they will be able to better prepare themselves for working and living in the US.

Methodology of The Study

Research Design

The researchers utilized the descriptive qualitative design and quantitative design of the study to

examine the satisfaction with the USA Work and Travel Program. The method was developed to measure the benefits of the USA Work and Travel Program and identify problems from participants from 2012-2016.

Respondents of The Study

The population of this research was Hospitality and Tourism students who participated in USA Work and Travel Program. The sample size of 30 participants was determined and considered sufficient to represent the total sampling population wherein 56% of the total participants were still studying and at the final stage of their college year in the university and 44% were already working in their respective industry.

Instruments of the Study

A combination of closed-ended and open ended questions were used in the study. These were divided into four areas: demographic data, before going abroad, during the program participation and after the program completion. The tool is divided into five (5) scale with descriptive rating where 1 is the lowest rated as poor, 2 is fair, 3 is satisfied, 4 is very satisfied and the highest is 5 rated as excellent.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher distributed 30 copies of the questionnaire to Hospitality and Tourism students who participated in the USA Work and Travel Program from 2012-2016. 17 questionnaires were distributed and retrieved from the respondents who

are still studying in the university and 23 were disseminated and collected by e-mail.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the satisfaction rating of students before, during, and after the summer work and travel program.

Findings

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the satisfaction ratings before, during, and after the summer work and travel program at $p=.05$ significance level. There was significant difference in the satisfaction rating of students before, during, and after the work and travel program at the $p<.05$ significance level ($F = 2.87$) = 7.989; $p = .001$).

Anova Rating

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.503	2	1.752	7.989	.001
Within Groups	19.074	87	.219		
Total	22.577	89			

Post hoc comparison was made using Tukey HSD indicated that the mean satisfaction ratings Before the work and travel program ($M = 4.34$, $SD = .36$) are significantly different with During work ($M = 3.9$, $SD = .62$, $p = .003$). However, before work mean score or did not register much difference with the After ($M = 4.36$, $SD = .387$) the work and travel experience ($p = .992$).

During and after work and travel experience indicated a significant difference ($p = .002$).

The results suggested that what were expected by the students who took the summer and travel program are the same as what they actually experienced. However, their experience during the stay in the USA did not match the general expectations.

**Table 1: Post Hoc using Tukey HSD
Multiple Comparisons Rating (Tukey HSD)**

(I) PHASE	(J) PHASE	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
BEFORE	DURING	.4109162*	.1208973	.003	.122639	.699193
	AFTER	-.0148148	.1208973	.992	-.303092	.273462
DURING	BEFORE	-.4109162*	.1208973	.003	-.699193	-.122639
	AFTER	-.4257310*	.1208973	.002	-.714008	-.137454
AFTER	BEFORE	.0148148	.1208973	.992	-.273462	.303092
	DURING	.4257310*	.1208973	.002	.137454	.714008

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Correlations

Before and During

To determine the degree of association or correlation coefficient between the different phases

of the work and travel program the Pearson Correlation was used. The correlation coefficient indicated that there was a high degree of relationship between before going and during the training experience ($r = .835$).

Correlations

		Before Going Abroad	During the Program
Before Going Abroad	Pearson Correlation	1	.835**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
During the Program	Pearson Correlation	.835**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

During and After

The statistics for the correlation coefficient showed that there is a moderately strong positive

relationship ($r = .557$) between the variables During and After.

Correlations

		During the Program	After the Program was completed
During the Program	Pearson Correlation	1	.557**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	30	30
After the Program was completed	Pearson Correlation	.557**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	30	30

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In summary, correlation coefficients for the three phases of training (before-during-after) showed that there is a relative strong positive correlations

(before-during, $r = .835$; during-after, $r = .557$, before-after, $r = .668$).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Program Experience	30	4.0556	5.0000	4.601852	.2510444
Program Management	30	2.5000	5.0000	4.105556	.5527419
Pre Orientation	30	3.0000	5.0000	4.022222	.5867851
Before Going Abroad	30	3.5056	4.9889	4.342037	.3569483
Assistance	1	4.3333	4.3333	4.333333	.
Housing	30	1.8333	5.0000	3.983333	.8636442
Work Condition	30	2.6667	5.0000	3.933333	.5632418
Travelling	30	2.50	5.00	4.0917	.66787
During the Program	30	2.6270	5.0000	3.931926	.6172628
After the Program was completed	30	3.5556	5.0000	4.355556	.3875456
Valid N (listwise)	1				

Conclusion

Before the program, participants/students expected to experience different things in life, to learn more of American culture, to build friendships with American and other foreigners. The participants/students also expected to have an opportunity to earn a living and for travelling

expenses while staying abroad, to develop self-confidence by improving English communication skills, to share Filipino culture with others and to travel and visit some places in the United States. However, their experience during the stay in the USA did not match the general expectations. Results showed also that during their stay some

students did not enjoy USA Travel due to time constraints.

Based on the results there is no significant difference between before and after the program which means that student expectations about the program were met.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for the said program:

- Some students suggested that the agency staff should improve their assistance to their participants in terms of communication and monitoring.
- Students should not expect too much about living a happy life overseas and should bear in mind that everything has a positive and negative side.
- The participants of exchange programs would probably face many difficulties, so the students have to use their own judgment in choosing the appropriate way to deal with any situation.
- The new comers should not expect too much to make a lot of money or to improve grammatical English skills from this program. This program is set up in order for the students to experience life and help them to grow by facing many real life problems.

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