TOURISM EDUCATION IN THAILAND: THE PERSPECTIVES OF INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS ON THE TOURISM PROGRAMS IN RAJAMANGALA UNIVERSITIES OF TECHNOLOGY AND OTHER PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Somboon Sammatchani

ABSTRACT

The industry professionals’ perspectives influence significantly on development of tourism program for the educators to provide tourism education meeting the needs of tourism industry. The objectives were to identify the industry professionals’ satisfaction and need for future development in these major involvements: the output (student) quality of tourism program, the relationship between education and the industry, and government roles on tourism education. There questionnaire was responded by 200 industry professionals from governmental and private tourism organizations. Appropriate statistical analyses such as frequencies, descriptive analysis, independent t-test, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used according to the respective objectives and descriptions. The results of this study showed overall current satisfaction and view of importance for future development on tourism programs.

The result revealed that there were only two levels of the satisfaction: moderate satisfied and much satisfied. The tourism industry professionals were much satisfied with the output (student) quality of tourism program - Graduate’s characteristics and behavior ($x = 3.5717$) as the highest value of satisfaction. In the overview on importance level of tourism education development in the future, the results showed that there were only two levels of importance: important and very important. The output (student) quality of tourism program - fundamental knowledge influencing work ($x = 4.3699$) what was very important was viewed as the highest value of importance.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Education, Tourism program, Perspectives, industry professionals
INTRODUCTION

Tourism in Thailand plays an important role as a service trade which has potential for job creation, income distribution and profit making from foreign currencies. There was an increase on the number of international tourists traveling to Thailand as many as 20 million or an income from tourism of at least 700 billion baht. At the end of 2006, international tourist arrivals were 13.8 million, implying a steady growth of 7 percent (TAT, 2007). A total revenue of 481,000 million baht was generated, while Thais were stimulated to travel more domestically, or 84.36 million tourist/trips, with an improved income distribution of 368,600 million baht. However, there was an increase of international tourist arrivals 4.05% in 2007, compared with 2006 from 1,262,500 to 1,313,677 (TAT).

Thailand – one of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region has experienced tourism growth since the first Thai tourism plan was set up in 1976 at the end of the third National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP) (1972-1976). Thai government’s tourism policy established by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports during 2003 – 2006 was to develop Thailand to be Tourism Capital of Asia. In 2008, Thailand has been voted “The Best Destination for Leisure — Short Haul” by Chinese readers of TravelWeekly China Magazine. Globally, the 2008 Travel and Tourism Economic Research shows that Travel and Tourism currently employs nearly 240 million people and creates 10% of the world GDP. The contribution of the Travel and Tourism economy to employment in Thailand is expected to rise from 3,911,000 jobs in 2008, 10.6% of total employment or 1 in every 9.4 jobs to 4,856,000 jobs, 11.9% of total employment or 1 in every 8.4 jobs by 2018 (WTTC, 2008).

The shape of tourism developed as a field of study started off with a clear vocational shape which attracted students and universities which in turn provided opportunities for academics to offer a range of related courses. The boom in tourism education came decades after the birth of mass tourism and the rapidly increasing demand for workers in the tourism industry during the decades following the Second World War (Fayos-Solá, 1997). The same expansion in tourism education can also be seen at an international level (Stergiou, et al., 2003). During the last three decades, there has been a steady increase in the number of universities offering tourism and/or hospitality degree programs, especially after the 1980s (Jafari, 1997; Tribe, 2006). Many countries offered higher education degrees in tourism at both undergraduate and graduate levels; and master-level degrees and doctoral programs in other disciplines have expanded to include tourism as an area of study (Jafari, 1990).

Craig-Smith (1994) indicates how the tourism industry and other stakeholders like the WTO and International Labour Organisation (ILO) argue that the prevailing education (in Asia pacific) leaves a gap between student output and industry needs. Moreover it is said that there is apparent incompatibility between the skilled labour supply from training organisations and the demand from the industry. However, the provision of tourism education poses a very fundamental challenge to the educators in that the different stakeholders have specific tourism education needs they deem appropriate for their own purposes. Lewis (2002) has noted that in consideration of social phenomenon,
the tourism programs are generally limited to elucidating those human resource factors that contribute to maintaining a stable workforce.

Thailand’s Ministry of Education comprises National Council for Education (NCE), Commission on Basic Education (CBE), Commission on Vocational Education (CBE), and Commission on Higher Education (CHE). The CHE has the mandate and authority to manage and to promote higher education with respect to the degree granting institutions’ academic freedom and excellence. The CHE comprised about 78 public universities (21 public universities, 40 Rajabhat universities, 9 Rajamangala universities, 4 autonomous universities, 2 open admission universities, 2 Buddhist universities), 10 community colleges and 67 private universities, during 2006 (Anon, 2007). There are more than 3,000 programs of study in various areas of specialization, from undergraduate up to the doctoral degrees, out of which about 350 programs are offered with English as a medium of instruction (Kanjananiyot and Nilphan, 2007). There were about 0.072 million students enrolled in less than Bachelor degree, about 1.75 million in Bachelors, and about 0.26 million in post graduate degree courses. Alone during 2006, about 1,700 curriculum were either newly approved, modified or updated (Kritakorn, 2007).

The total number of all institutions offering hospitality and tourism programs increased from 42 in 1996 to 51 in 1999 and to 78 in 2003. Hospitality and Tourism Programs in Thailand’s higher education can be divided into two types of Baccalaureate Degree (BA and BBA) with eight majors of study (Chaisawat, 2005). The situation of the universities/institutions offering programs in hospitality and tourism education has changed with many quantity improvements in terms of number of institutions, teacher and students.

Tourism Higher Education (THE) in Thailand commenced in 1955, with the creation of the country’s first tourism program – major in “travel Management” offered by the faculty of Commerce and Accountancy, Chulalongkorn University under the Bachelor of Commerce Degree. Prince of Songkla University (PSU) offered a 2-year diploma program in Hotel and Tourism Management under Phuket Community College in 1977 and offered an international 4-year degree program, a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) in Hotel Management under the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management at the Phuket Campus in 1994 (Chaisawat, 2005). Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep (RMUTK) - one of nine Rajamangala Universities of Technology has offered the tourism program since 1969 as a short course of tourism diploma when it was the first technical institution of Thailand known as Bangkok Technical College where was founded on 14 July, 1952 by co-operation and support between Thai government and USA government. To respond to the need of personnel development in national and international level of tourism field, the university has still offered the Bachelor of Arts in Tourism and Hospitality in English program and Thai programs - the Bachelor of Arts in Tourism and the Bachelor of Arts in Hotel in the faculty of Liberal Arts to produce the personnel who can work for labor marketing’s need in information technology (IT) society.
In new model of world economic development, Porter (2005) cites that economic development is a collaborative process involving government at multiple levels, companies, teaching and research institutions and institutions for collaboration. In the tourism cluster, many private sector associations exist for the different industries in the cluster, but none that stretches across. The coordination among institutions within a cluster, and with relevant government agencies, is limited.

Source: Tourism Policy of Thailand, Policy and Planning Department

There is a lack of a comprehensive national tourism education and training strategy to satisfy manpower needs through systematic planning. Educational institutions produce graduates who do not meet the requirements of the industry. Government budgets for education and training in tourism are inadequate to meet the rapid demand for graduates in this sector. According to Esichaikul and Baum (1998), the majority of interviewed public educators stated that 80% of the TAT's budget goes to marketing and promotion; only a small amount is allocated to develop human resources and the TAT just aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals, but pays little attention to the quality of the personnel who provide services to those tourists. Chaisawat (2005) recommends some essential situations and problems specifically regarding quality tourism. First, government has to allocate resources to quality hospitality and tourism education and standardize the hospitality and tourism programs at all levels of study. Second, teaching staff for colleges and universities must have a chance to development themselves continuously to increase their skills and experiences. Next, hospitality and tourism education must be co-operated and supported from related businesses in the hospitality and tourism industry. Finally, academic association among hospitality and tourism educators must be set up in the country to be a center of co-operation and linkage among tourism sectors.

The study is intended to explore the perspectives that influence the development of tourism program matching the industry needs. The scope of the study focuses only on tourism industry professionals who are tourism stakeholders and directly demanding the quality of tourism graduates as human resource in tourism industry from tourism programs offered by the system of nine Rajamangala Universities of Technology and other public universities.
MATERIALS AND METHODS

The objective of this research was to study the tourism industry professionals’ perspectives on development of tourism programs offered by the system of nine Rajamangala Universities of Technology and other public universities. To complete this research, information of stakeholders’ perspective or need and factors were identified by previous studies. This study applied the quantitative research method by using a survey as the specific method for gathering data.

Population and Sample Size of the Study

200 tourism industry professionals who are running their business in or working for Hospitality and Tourism industry such as hotels and tour companies/agents in Bangkok, were perceptive respondents to fill out the questionnaire. A convenience sampling method was employed to obtain the required data (Trochim, 2006).

Research Instrument

The survey questionnaire was used as the main data collection method to identify perceptions and opinions (Cooper, 2002). The instrument used in this research is the structured, self-administered questionnaire to find out the overall perspectives of the sample group. The data collection instrument consisted of two parts as follows:

Part 1: Demographic Profiles

The first part of the questionnaire was about demographic profiles of tourism educators and industry professionals. It showed that perspectives vary over different segments due to socio-demographic variables, so that focusing on clear target group may increase the validity and the reliability of measurement research. Thus, this part covered the issues of gender, age, education and year of work experience through the close-ended question in the pattern of checklist.

Part 2: The perspective of tourism industry professionals

The questionnaire survey required participants to respond to a set statement on certain issues in the present and the future in the development of tourism education. To identify stakeholders’ roles, they were asked to respond items about Current satisfaction and view of tourism education development in the future, the role of the tourism industry in tourism education, and the role of the hospitality and tourism educators in tourism industry. Respondents were asked to check which they satisfied or viewed with each item in terms of a five-point scale measured on a 5-point Likert scale (McDougall and Munro, 1994).

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of current satisfaction and need for developing on tourism education program in the following major topics:-

1. The output (student) quality of tourism program
2. Relationship of Tourism education and the Industry
3. The government roles on tourism education

The research instrument must be tested for reliability and validity of this study. The translations of level ranking were analyzed follow criteria of current satisfaction and need for future development of
tourism education program designed by Best (1977, p. 174). The questionnaire was pre-tested with a convenient sampling of 20 tourism industry professionals in the second week of January 2009. Cronbach’s alpha was used to verify the reliability of the questionnaire. After the researcher received the feedback from the experts’ commendation and the pre-test, the questionnaire was modified to final format. In addition, the reliability statistics were Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.980.

**Data Analysis**

Two key variables used in the study (current satisfaction and view for developing on tourism education program between tourism educators and industry professionals) were analyzed for functional and psychological image dimensions. After the researcher collected data from the questionnaire survey, the data were coded, stored, and analyzed using Statistical Program for the Social (SPSS) computer based software located in the library.

The descriptive statistics were performed to determine mean and standard deviation of each attribute of current satisfaction and need for developing on tourism education program of tourism industry professionals. A frequency analysis was run to determine the distribution of current satisfaction and needs for developing on tourism education program between tourism educators and industry professionals and their demographic profiles. The researcher used One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine the mean differences in the perspectives of tourism industry professionals with different demographic profiles. A post hoc test was performed to identify the mean differences after the statistical tests for main effects.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Current Satisfaction of the tourism programs**

The mean value, standard deviation, and current satisfaction level of tourism industry professionals on the tourism programs in the system of nine Rajamangala Universities of Technology and other public universities are shown in Table 1.
Table 1 Mean Value, Standard Deviation of Respondents’ Satisfaction Level with Tourism Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspectives on tourism program</th>
<th>Professionals</th>
<th>Satisfaction Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The output (student) quality of tourism program - Graduate’s characteristics and behavior</td>
<td>3.5717 .69088</td>
<td>much satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The output (student) quality of tourism program - Professional ethics</td>
<td>3.5692 .68566</td>
<td>much satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The output (student) quality of tourism program - Fundamental knowledge influencing work</td>
<td>3.4731 .65354</td>
<td>much satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The output (student) quality of tourism program - Professional knowledge</td>
<td>3.3900 .52660</td>
<td>moderately satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship of Tourism education and Industry</td>
<td>3.2367 .70302</td>
<td>moderately satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The government roles on tourism education</td>
<td>3.1683 .75851</td>
<td>moderately satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regards to the respondents’ satisfaction level, Table 1 shows that the satisfaction levels of the respondents were much satisfied and moderate. The highest mean of much satisfied level was the output (student) quality of tourism program - Graduate’s characteristics and behavior (\( \bar{x} = 3.5717 \)) and the lowest mean of much satisfied level was the output (student) quality of tourism program - Fundamental knowledge influencing work (\( \bar{x} = 3.4731 \)). The output (student) quality of tourism program - Professional ethics was also much satisfied (\( \bar{x} = 3.5692 \)). The respondents were moderately satisfied with the output (student) quality of tourism program - Professional knowledge (\( \bar{x} = 3.3900 \)), relationship of Tourism education and Industry (\( \bar{x} = 3.2367 \)) and the government roles on tourism education (\( \bar{x} = 3.1683 \)) respectively.

**The Output (Student) Quality of Tourism Program**

In term of **Professional Knowledge**, the respondents much satisfied with six items of professional knowledge and moderately satisfied with five items of professional knowledge. The highest professional knowledge was capability in instrument/equipment use at work (\( \bar{x} = 3.55 \) and S.D. = .769) and the lowest was Capability in job management and control (\( \bar{x} = 3.26 \) and S.D. = .821).

In term of **Fundamental knowledge influencing work**, the respondents much satisfied with four items of fundamental knowledge influencing work and moderately satisfied with four items of fundamental knowledge influencing work. The highest satisfaction was capability in Thai conversation.
In term of Professional ethics, the respondents much satisfied with almost all items of professional ethics and moderately satisfied with only one item of professional ethics. The highest satisfaction was working without corruption (\( \bar{x} = 3.75 \) and S.D. = .972) and the lowest was devoting time for the organization (\( \bar{x} = 3.34 \) and S.D. = .766).

In term of Graduate’s characteristics and behavior, the respondents much satisfied with almost all items of graduate’s characteristics and behavior and moderately satisfied with only one item of graduate’s characteristics and behavior. The highest satisfaction was good human relationship (\( \bar{x} = 3.77 \) and S.D. = .855) and the lowest was being scrupulous in performing work (\( \bar{x} = 3.40 \) and S.D. = .987).

The Relationship of Tourism education and Industry

The respondents’ satisfaction level of the relationship of tourism education and industry was only moderate in all the items. The respondents were moderately satisfied with the highest mean \( \bar{x} = 3.31 \) in more opportunities to participate in tourism courses or training to retain a well-trained employee (S.D. = .876). However, they were moderately satisfied with the lowest mean \( \bar{x} = 3.16 \) in the topic of the industry allocating fund for research to improve the quality of tourism industry (S.D. = .932).

The Government Roles on Tourism Education

The respondents’ satisfaction level of the government roles on tourism education was only moderate in all the items. The respondents were moderate satisfied with the highest mean \( \bar{x} = 3.31 \) in the topic of having more qualified tourism educators with tourism educational background in order to enhance the quality of education (S.D. = .778) and with the lowest mean \( \bar{x} = 2.95 \) in the government allocating more scholarship for tourism education and training to adequately develop the tourism industry (S.D. = 1.038).

The Results on the Respondents’ view for future development of the tourism programs

The mean value, standard deviation, and importance level for future development of tourism program in the system of nine Rajamangala Universities of Technology and other public universities are shown in Table 2.
Table 2  Mean Value, Standard Deviation of Respondents’ view of Importance Level for Future Development of Tourism Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspectives on tourism program</th>
<th>Professionals</th>
<th>Importance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The output (student) quality of tourism program - Fundamental knowledge influencing work</td>
<td>$\bar{x} = 4.3699$</td>
<td>S.D. $= 1.09896$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The output (student) quality of tourism program - Graduate’s characteristics and behavior</td>
<td>$\bar{x} = 4.2733$</td>
<td>S.D. $= 0.57183$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The output (student) quality of tourism program - Professional ethics</td>
<td>$\bar{x} = 4.2704$</td>
<td>S.D. $= 0.61172$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Relationship of Tourism education and Industry</td>
<td>$\bar{x} = 4.2567$</td>
<td>S.D. $= 0.64145$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The government roles on tourism education</td>
<td>$\bar{x} = 4.2406$</td>
<td>S.D. $= 0.71730$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The output (student) quality of tourism program - Professional knowledge</td>
<td>$\bar{x} = 4.1250$</td>
<td>S.D. $= 0.67904$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regards to the importance level for future development of the tourism program between tourism educators and industry professionals, Table 2 shows that all topics were at very important level. Fundamental knowledge influencing work from the part of the output (student) quality of tourism program was very important at the highest mean $\bar{x} = 4.3699$ and S.D. $= 1.09896$. The lowest mean $\bar{x} = 4.1250$ was professional knowledge in the part of the output (student) quality of tourism program (S.D. $= 0.67904$).

**The Output (Student) Quality of Tourism Program**

The results of mean value, standard deviation, and the respondents’ Importance level for future development of tourism program with the output (Student) quality of tourism program were shown in Table 9.

In the terms of the Graduate’s Professional Knowledge, very important levels were Skill for applying and learning new things ($\bar{x} = 4.26$ and S.D. $= 0.846$), Applying tourism theories in work ($\bar{x} = 4.23$ and S.D. $= 0.792$), Capability in information technology Use ($\bar{x} = 4.21$ and S.D. $= 0.828$).
Those others were at important level. The lowest mean value was $\bar{x} = 3.99$ (Capability in reasonable academic analysis) and its S.D. = .851.

In the terms of the Graduate’s Fundamental knowledge influencing work, all of them were at very important level accept Capability in Thai writing which has the lowest mean $\bar{x} = 4.17$ and its S.D. = .827. Capability in English conversation was the highest mean value $\bar{x} = 4.89$ and its S.D. = 5.044.

In the terms of the Graduate’s Professional ethics, there was only three topics being at important level with $\bar{x} = 4.20$ (Being as a role model, S.D. = .814), $\bar{x} = 4.17$ (Concerning for safety at work, S.D. = .769), and $\bar{x} = 4.07$ (Devoting time for the organization, S.D. = .854). Others were at very important level with the highest mean $\bar{x} = 4.49$ (Having work responsibility S.D. = .737) and the lowest mean $\bar{x} = 4.21$ (Being generous to colleagues S.D. = .828).

In the terms of the Graduate’s Characteristics and Behavior, all of them were at very important level except Dressing was at important level with the mean $\bar{x} = 4.17$ and S.D. = .710. The highest mean value was $\bar{x} = 4.35$ (Good human relationship, S.D. = .762) and the lowest one was $\bar{x} = 4.21$ (Being self-confident and greathearted in expression, S.D. = .697).

**Relationship of Tourism Education and Industry**

The respondents’ Importance level for future development of tourism program with the relationship between tourism education and tourism industry was at only two levels: important and very important. There was only one topic being at important level (Tourism industry members being invited to be either a guest lecturer or part-time lecturer in educational institutes, $\bar{x} = 4.18$ and S.D. = .779). Others were at very important level with the highest mean $\bar{x} = 4.32$ (The industry allocating fund for research to improve the quality of tourism industry, S.D. = .836) and the lowest mean $\bar{x} = 4.21$ (The curriculum for undergraduate degree being consistent with the tourism industry’s demand, S.D. = .818).

**The Government Roles on Tourism Education**

The respondents’ importance level for future development of tourism program with the government roles on tourism education showed that there were only two levels of tourism program importance for future development: important and very important. At the important levels, the highest mean was $\bar{x} = 4.19$ (The curriculum of undergraduate degree meeting the government’s needs, S.D. = .899) and the lowest was $\bar{x} = 4.17$ (Having more qualified tourism educators with tourism educational background in order to enhance the quality of education, S.D. = .837). At the very important levels, the highest mean was $\bar{x} = 4.33$ (The contents of undergraduate curriculum fostering an understanding of the impacts of tourism development in social, cultural, economic, and environmental aspects, S.D. = .832) and the lowest was $\bar{x} = 4.23$ (Providing special courses to improve the quality of human resource in the industry, S.D. = .878).
CONCLUSION

In the terms of the output (student) quality of tourism program, Morrison (1994) stated that the expansion of university tourism courses reflects a demand among students for a degree rather than the needs of industry enterprises and university graduates require further training, and have unrealistic expectations about the level at which they will be employed. Stuart-Hoyle (2003, p. 62) also suggested the “key purpose of the majority of undergraduate tourism programs is claimed to be the preparation of graduates for a career in the tourism industry”. According to the result of overall satisfaction with the output (student) quality of tourism program, industry professionals were much satisfied with professional ethics, graduate’s characteristics and behavior, and fundamental knowledge influencing work while they were only moderately satisfied with professional knowledge such as tourism theories, information technology use, making opinion, solving problems and reasonable academic analysis.

According to Charlotte’s (1995) “three-pronged” approach to tourism education, tourism graduate’s skills were divided into three types: professional (theoretical concepts), vocational (specific skills on the job tasks), and entrepreneurial (managerial and business capability). As a result of the study, there is a bit difference in comparison of tourism educators and industry professionals’ satisfaction with each skill in the output (student) quality of tourism program i.e. tourism educators were much satisfied with fundamental knowledge influencing work while industry professionals much satisfied with professional knowledge. On the other hand, tourism educators and industry professionals viewed that Fundamental knowledge influencing work, professional ethics, and graduate’s characteristics and behavior are very important but professional knowledge is only in important level. However, tourism educators and industry professionals identified similarly that fundamental knowledge influencing work is very important in the highest value of the importance scale.

Tribe (1999b, p. 103) distinguished tourism knowledge into three different types: “extradisciplinary knowledge” (outside the academic domain - “industry, government, think tanks, interest groups, research institutes and consultancies”), “multidisciplinary knowledge” (a range of disciplines) and “interdisciplinary knowledge” (the genuine new knowledge when one or more disciplines are brought together to address a question). To develop tourism program, it is important to know about both internal and external factors inside and outside the academic domain. In findings of the study, industry professionals were only moderately satisfied with the relationship of tourism education and industry and the government roles on tourism education while they viewed that importance level for future development of tourism program with them was important and very important. This indicates that the relationship between education and tourism industry or government was weak point to develop tourism knowledge in Thailand. At this point of view, someone has suggested that Thai government sections among offices of ministries were separated independently without linkage of knowledge share and cooperation of work.

The tourism industry and other stakeholders like the WTO and International Labour Organisation (ILO) argued that the prevailing education (in Asia pacific) leaves a gap between student
output and industry needs (Likewise Craig-Smith (1994). In the output (student) quality of tourism program, it was found that industry professionals emphasized as the most important value on fundamental knowledge influencing work, graduate’s characteristics and behavior and professional ethics especially, more than professional knowledge. The highest three values of importance in fundamental knowledge influencing work consisted of capability in English conversation, skill of resource use in great value and pending work time with great benefits.

To answer the question “How relevant is university tourism education to the tourism industry?”, Ross, 1991 pointed that university courses involve the study of tourism as a form of human behavior, and business to be undertaken by students expecting to find employment in a tourism-related industry. In the output (student) quality of tourism program, industry professionals emphasized on fundamental knowledge influencing work, professional ethics more than professional knowledge. Krippendorf (1987) described jobs in tourism as mostly unattractive, with hard work, long and irregular hours, compulsory overtime, low earnings, limited career path prospects and a lack of prestige. Universities should be preparing students for employment in an industry with the forms of education most appropriate for those seeking employment in tourism. Therefore, tourism education is directed to preparation for employment in the tourism industry.

Generally, the industry seeks personal skills such as communication, adaptability, and leadership (Martin and McEvoy, 2003) and foreign language ability (Leslie, et al., 2004). In this study, industry professionals were much satisfied with communication as fundamental knowledge influencing work while they were moderately satisfied with graduates’ English conversation. Conversation skills both in Thai and foreign languages were scaled at very important value by tourism industry professionals. So, graduates’ conversation skills are still important and should be provided in high quality and standard of teaching and learning to match industry need.

Cooper, et al., (1992) pointed to the confusing diversity in the content of tourism courses and the low level of industry experience among university tourism educators. In Thai educational system, the content of tourism courses was designed tourism course committee of each university independently under the curriculum quality standard of Office of the Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education. Therefore, the content of tourism course in each university is quietly different and has diversity of course description and subjects. It is hardly difficult to compare tourism educators’ satisfaction with the quality of tourism course among universities because strength and weakness of each university’s tourism course are different. However, the quality of tourism course can display though its output (graduates) who have got qualification and skills matching needs of the industry.

University tourism educators with full skill of academic knowledge and industry experience would be a push factor to increase the strength and decrease the weakness of each university’s tourism course. In the result of study, tourism industry members invited to be either a guest lecturer or part-time lecturer in educational institutes were pointed only in important level because they believed that graduates’ quality comes from the quality of university tourism educators who assign and use to the
tourism cause. There was a significant difference in this point of view between tourism educators and industry professionals, i.e. tourism industry members invited to be either a guest lecturer or part-time lecturer in educational institutes has the highest value of importance in tourism educators’ view but has the lowest value in industry professionals’ view in terms of the relationship of tourism education and industry.

Dale and Robinson (2001) suggested a model of education programs consisting of three domains: ‘generic degrees’ (broad understanding of the tourism and interdisciplinary skills); ‘functional degrees’ (particular areas of tourism such as marketing, information systems, or planning); and ‘market/product based degrees’ (the development of a particular product or market, requiring expertise in the area). All three programs claim to provide students with the body of knowledge and skills that enable them to function effectively in the industry. In the result of study, tourism educators viewed that professional knowledge is very important and industry professionals accepted that professional knowledge is important. Furthermore, tourism industry professionals were moderately satisfied with professional knowledge of graduates from the system of nine Rajamangala Universities of Technology and other public universities. Therefore, professional knowledge has to be more provided for the output (student) of tourism program.

Recommendations

According to the results of this study, there were significant differences that showed overall current satisfaction and view of importance for future development on tourism programs of the tourism industry professionals. It is hoped that the result of the study will provide some insights to help tourism program providers develop the tourism programs matching the industry’s needs. The study revealed that there were some significant differences classified by tourism experience of the respondents (3-6 years and 7-9 years), by education level (high school and college’s diploma, high school and bachelor’s degree, and high school and master’s degree) in the current satisfaction with tourism programs of the tourism-stakeholder dyad - tourism educators and industry professionals. The study also revealed that there were some significant differences classified by demographic characteristics: such as tourism experience and education level of the tourism industry professionals. These results of the study should be instrumental for specific studies to receive direct advantage in tourism program development.

The study identified satisfaction attributes in the categories of satisfied and dissatisfied and importance attributes in the categories of important and unimportant. This classification will help educational providers and planners to maintain or enhance the strengths and improve the weaknesses while reforming the tourism program in educational institutes. For instance, the study suggests that most of the tourism industry professionals were much satisfied with the output (student) quality of tourism program - Professional ethics, Graduate’s characteristics and behavior, and Fundamental knowledge influencing work while they were moderately satisfied with professional knowledge, the government roles on tourism education, and relationship of tourism education and industry.
The followings are some useful recommendations for developing tourism education to Thailand in the future:

**Tourism education**

1. **Tourism educators** should be supported to have higher educational qualification of the direct degree in tourism and experience in tourism industry by their own educational institutes, government or private sectors.

2. **Tourism courses** should be related to national educational policy, needs and impacts of tourism industry and HR development strategies of the government. There are also some differences in content of tourism course among universities. This diversity of tourism courses can be both strong and weak point of tourism education development.

3. **Tourism graduates** should have both EQ and IQ about tourism service and management in tourism and other fields because tourism itself relates with and is supported by many elements such as society, politics, economy, and environment.

**Tourism industry**

1. **Thai government:** In the present, government divisions are divided independently and work without linkage of knowledge share and knowledge management among them. For example, Ministry of Education is responsible for administrating tourism education and Ministry of Tourism and Sport- the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is specifically responsible for the promotion of tourism. They should be responsible together for some problems or impacts happened in tourism field and increase more communicative channels among themselves.

2. **Private sectors:** Some industry professionals who have the direct degree in tourism and experience in tourism industry should be invited to be a guest lecturer or part-time lecturer in educational institutes. However, some industry professionals can not be allowed to be a guest lecturer or part-time lecturer in educational institutes from their workplace because their employee thinks that they spend working-time for their own benefit. Tourism employee should understand it and open mind for supporting tourism education what they can do.

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