

Internship Exposure and Other Key Factors Shaping Career Choices in the Tourism Industry

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Abstract

This study investigates the factors influencing the career choices of fourth-year Tourism students at Laguna University for the academic year 2024-2025. It focuses on key determinants such as personal interest, environmental influences, internship exposure, and financial stability, examining how these factors shape students' career decisions within the tourism industry. The research employs a descriptive-correlational design, surveying 71 students to assess demographic characteristics, influencing factors, and levels of interest in various tourism career sectors including transportation, accommodation, cruise, travel agencies, events management, and government offices.

Findings reveal that internship exposure significantly impact career choices, while personal interest, financial stability, and environmental influences also play important roles. The study identifies a meaningful relationship between these influencing factors and students' career interests, highlighting the need for enhanced career guidance programs and internship opportunities. The research underscores the importance of aligning educational curricula with industry demands to better prepare students for successful careers in tourism.

Recommendations include developing targeted career support initiatives, strengthening university-industry partnerships, and improving internship frameworks to facilitate smoother transitions from academic to professional environments. This study contributes valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and industry stakeholders aiming to support tourism students in making informed career decisions and fostering a competent, sustainable workforce.

Key Words: Career choices, Tourism students, Personal interest, Environmental influence, Internship exposure, financial stability, Career guidance, Tourism industry

1.1 Background of the Study

Tourism has long been recognized as one of the world's most dynamic industries, shaping economies, cultures, and communities across continents. Globally, it is not merely about leisure and travel, it is a driver of employment, innovation, and cultural exchange and in the Philippines, tourism has become a cornerstone of national development (Rocamora, 2025). According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, tourism contributed 8.9% to the country's GDP in 2024, employing nearly 6.75 million Filipinos, which accounts for 13.8% of the nation's workforce (Newsdesk, 2025). These figures highlight how tourism is not only an economic engine but also a livelihood lifeline for millions of families.

Yet behind these impressive numbers lies a more personal story, the journey of students preparing to enter this vast and competitive industry. Career choices in tourism are not made in isolation; they are shaped

by a complex interplay of personal interests, family expectations, financial realities, and environmental influences. Research shows that students' motivations and perceptions about tourism careers are deeply tied to their identities, aspirations, and the opportunities available to them (J. P. A. Santos et al., 2025). For instance, a study titled "Motivation Factor and Career Perception of Undergraduate Tourism Students in Quirino State University, Philippines" by M.B. Barroga et al. in 2024 emphasize that personal interest often serves as the strongest motivator, while family guidance and financial stability can either empower or limit students' decisions.

One factor that has emerged as particularly transformative is internship exposure. Internships act as a bridge between classroom learning and real-world practice, allowing students to test their skills, discover their passions, and confront the realities of professional life. Scholars argue that internships provide clarity in career decision-making, helping students align their academic preparation with industry demands (N. I. Afifah, 2017). Without such exposure, many graduates risk entering the workforce without fully understanding job expectations or workplace dynamics.

At Laguna University, these global and national narratives converge into the lived experiences of fourth-year Tourism students. As they stand at the threshold of graduation, their career choices carry both personal and societal weight. For them, deciding whether to pursue paths in hospitality, travel agencies, events management, cruises, transportation, or government tourism offices is more than a matter of preference—it is a decision that will shape their futures and contribute to the sustainability of the tourism workforce. Their stories reflect the broader challenges and opportunities of the Philippine tourism sector, but also reveal the unique influences of local contexts, such as family income, peer networks, and the quality of internship programs offered by the university.

This study, therefore, situates itself at the intersection of the macro and micro: from the booming Philippine tourism economy to the individual aspirations of Laguna University students. By exploring the factors influencing their career choices—personal interest, environmental influence, internship exposure, and financial stability—the research seeks to illuminate how young professionals navigate the complexities of career decision-making. Ultimately, it aims to provide insights that will strengthen career guidance programs, enhance internship frameworks, and foster partnerships between universities and industry stakeholders, ensuring that students are not only prepared for employment but empowered to thrive in the tourism sector.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to identify the factors influencing the career choices of 4th Year Tourism students at Laguna University for the academic year 2024-2025.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the factors influencing the career choices of 4th year tourism students from Laguna University in terms of:
 - 1.1. personal interest;
 - 1.2. environmental influence;
 - 1.3. internship exposure; and
 - 1.4. financial stability?
2. What is the respondent's level of interest in pursuing careers in:
 - 2.1. transportation industry;
 - 2.2. accommodation industry;
 - 2.3. cruise industry;

- 2.4. travel agencies;
- 2.5. events management; and
- 2.6. government offices?

3. Is there a significant relationship between the factors influencing the career choices and the level of interest in pursuing the career of 4th year Tourism students from Laguna University?
4. Based on the findings of the study, what action plan can be recommended?

1.3 Hypothesis of the Study

Ha. There is a significant relationship between the factors influencing the career choices and the level of interest in pursuing careers in various sectors in the Tourism industry among 4th year Tourism students at Laguna University

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), published in 2002 and developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett, serves as the theoretical framework for understanding factors influencing career choices among Laguna University 4th year Tourism students. SCCT emphasizes the role of self-efficacy, personal goals, and environmental influences, including parental guidance, peer encouragement, and societal views on career choices. It also highlights the importance of experiential learning, demonstrating how internship exposure shapes outcome expectations and enhances students' confidence in their career goals. By examining the interaction between personal interest, environmental influence, and internship exposure, SCCT provides a comprehensive approach to analyzing students' decision-making processes and their interest in various industries.

This framework guides the study's methodology and interpretation, offering valuable insights into the factors shaping tourism students' career paths. Furthermore, SCCT is highly applicable to various sectors within the tourism industry such as accommodation, transportation, travel agencies, cruise ships, events management, and government offices. In these fields, the theory's focus on self-efficacy and outcome expectations directly relates to how students build confidence and clarify career goals through internships and real-world experiences. The dynamic and diverse nature of these tourism sectors requires adaptability and motivation, which are supported by environmental influences and personal goals emphasized in SCCT. Government offices within tourism also reflect societal expectations and external factors that shape career decisions, demonstrating the comprehensive relevance of SCCT to the tourism industry and its career development processes.

Another theory we used as a framework is Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Development (SLTCD), developed by John D. Krumboltz. It was first introduced in 1974 as part of a broader analysis of career decision-making. It emphasizes that career choices are shaped by learning experiences, environmental influences, personal traits, and unexpected events. Krumboltz argues that individuals should remain open to new opportunities and adapt to changes rather than follow a fixed career path. His concept of "planned happenstance" highlights the importance of embracing unexpected experiences that can lead to career growth.

This theory is highly relevant to the factors influencing career choices of tourism students, as it aligns with key variables such as personal interest, environmental influence, internship exposure, and financial stability. Krumboltz's framework supports the idea that students' career choices are shaped by their academic experiences, social environment, and industry exposure. Specifically, the theory's emphasis on learning experiences connects to the role of internships, which provide students with real-world insights that influence their career paths. Additionally, the theory's recognition of environmental factors aligns with the study's exploration of family influence and societal expectations in shaping career preferences.

Moreover, Krumboltz's theory closely relates to the tourism industry because this sector is dynamic and influenced by many external factors, making adaptability crucial. In areas like accommodation, transportation, travel agencies, cruise ships, events management, and government tourism offices, career paths are shaped by diverse learning experiences, environmental influences, and unexpected opportunities. For instance, internships in accommodation and hospitality expose students to real-world challenges and customer diversity, shaping their career decisions. In transportation and travel agencies, fast-paced environments and market fluctuations emphasize the need to remain open to change, reflecting Krumboltz's concept of planned happenstance. Cruise ship careers offer unplanned opportunities to develop a wide range of skills, while events management demands flexibility due to ever-changing client needs and networking opportunities. Government tourism offices also require adaptation to policy shifts and economic changes. Overall, tourism students' career choices in these sectors evolve through practical experience, social environment, and the ability to embrace unforeseen events, illustrating the core principles of Krumboltz's theory within the fluid and varied tourism industry.

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized is a quantitative descriptive-correlational design. This design is used to describe the factors influencing the career choices of 4th year Tourism students at Laguna University and to explore the relationships between these factors and their interest in different career paths within the tourism industry. The descriptive part focuses on identifying key factors like personal interest, environmental influence, and internship exposure, while the correlational aspect examines the connection between these factors and the students' level of interest in pursuing careers in areas such as accommodation, transportation, cruise industry, travel agencies, events management, and government offices. Through surveys and questionnaires, this research collects numerical data to provide a clear and organized presentation of these influences and relationships.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted at Laguna University, located in Santa Cruz, Laguna, Philippines. Established on February 15, 2006, Laguna University was founded through Provincial Ordinance No. 1 S. 2006 under the leadership of Hon. Teresita S. Lazaro, the former Governor of Laguna. The university was created to provide accessible and quality education to the people of Laguna, especially to talented but less privileged students. Over the years, it has grown into a reputable institution offering a range of programs and services.

The university vision is to be a socially responsive educational institution of choice, producing holistically developed individuals in the Asia-Pacific region. Its mission is to provide academically prepared

and technically skilled graduates who are socially and morally upright. This aligns with its commitment to delivering quality education and contributing to the development of the community it serves.

2.3 Population and Sampling

The respondents of this study consisted of fourth-year tourism students at Laguna University enrolled in the academic year 2024-2025. These students were selected as they are in their final year, making them the most relevant group for assessing career-influencing factors and their level of interest in various career paths within the tourism industry. Given the total population of 71 students, the researchers used Total enumeration in this research because the population size is relatively small and accessible. In this study, all eligible students will be surveyed to ensure comprehensive coverage, minimal sampling bias, and enhanced reliability of the findings. This approach justifies the descriptive-correlational design, wherein the researchers can obtain complete data on the factors influencing career choices and their relationships with students' interests in various tourism sectors.

2.4 Data Collection Procedures

To ensure the accuracy and validity of the questionnaire, five faculty members from the College of Business Administration and Accountancy (CBAA) at Laguna University reviewed the instrument. They assessed its clarity, coherence, and alignment with the study's objectives, providing feedback on question structure, response scales, and item relevance. Based on their recommendations, revisions were made to improve the overall quality and reliability of the questionnaire before distribution. The survey was conducted starting June 18, 2025, with ethical considerations observed throughout the process. Respondents were provided with a consent form to ensure informed participation, completed the survey independently to avoid bias, and no personal identifiers were collected to protect privacy.

2.5 Research Instruments

The researchers prepared a self-made survey questionnaire that served as the main research instrument, aimed at collecting the necessary data from participants. The questionnaire, which utilized a 4-point Likert scale, was employed to gather data on the factors influencing career choices of fourth-year tourism students from Laguna University: AY 2024-2025. It consists of three parts;

- **Factors Influencing Career Choices:** Gathered Information on how these influencing factors shape the decision of tourism students in choosing their career. This section is categorized into key areas such as personal interest, environmental influence, and internship exposure. The respondents were asked to rate each statement using a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1)) for evaluation.
- **Careers in Tourism Industry:** We explored the career in tourism industry that the respondents may pursue, which include the transportation industry, the accommodation industry, the cruise industry, travel agencies, events management, and government offices. This section also used the 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1)) for evaluation.

2.6 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the following methods:

1. Factors Influencing Career Choices:

- Weighted Mean and Standard Deviations: Used to determine which factor influences the career choices of the respondents.

2. Careers in Tourism Industry:

- Weighted Mean and Standard Deviations: Used to determine the level of interest in career choices in the tourism industry of the respondents.

3. Significant Relationship:

- Pearson R Correlation: Used to test the significant relationship between the factors influencing career choices and student's level of interest in each career in the tourism industry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Factors Influencing Career Choices of 4th Year Tourism Students of Laguna University

Table 1. Mean Level of Factors Influencing the Career Choices of 4th Year Tourism Students of Laguna University in terms of Personal Interest

Indicative Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Descriptive Interpretation
1. The potential for career advancement in the tourism industry motivates me to pursue this field.	3.68	0.47	Strongly Agree
2. My hobbies and passions influence my choice of a tourism career.	3.46	0.56	Strongly Agree
3. My confidence in my ability to provide excellent service in a certain career influences my decision to work in tourism.	3.51	0.53	Strongly Agree
4. My long-term career goals align with the opportunities available in the tourism sector.	3.61	0.49	Strongly Agree
Composite	3.56	0.37	Strongly Agree

Table 1 indicates that personal interest factors strongly influence tourism students' career choices. All four indicative statements received a "Strongly Agree" interpretation. Specifically, the potential for career advancement in tourism received the highest mean score of 3.68, suggesting it is a significant motivator. Students also strongly agree that their hobbies and passions (3.46), confidence in their ability to provide excellent service (3.51), and alignment of long-term career goals with tourism opportunities (3.61) are influential. The composite mean for personal interest factors is 3.56, reinforcing a strong agreement among students. This aligns with Holland's theory of "Career Typology," which suggests individuals choose career environments that best fit their personality and interests. A study by Nawawi et al. (2022) also highlights the importance of interest factors in influencing career choices of final-year hospitality students, further supporting the idea that personal interest is a key driver in career choices. Additionally, Babagay-Llacer (2021) found that personal interests significantly influenced the career choices of graduating students in Ligao City, Philippines, with tourism and culinary arts being a primary area of interest.

In relation to this, the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) complements these findings by emphasizing self-efficacy and personal goals as central to career decision-making. SCCT explains that students' confidence in their abilities and the alignment of their interests with career opportunities enhance their motivation and outcome expectations, which strongly influence their career choices. Thus, the strong personal interest factors observed in the results can be understood through SCCT's framework, which highlights how individuals' beliefs in their capabilities and clear career goals, supported by positive learning

experiences, drive their commitment to pursue careers in tourism.

Table 2. Mean Level of Factors Influencing the Career Choices of Tourism Students of Laguna University in terms of Environmental Influence

Indicative Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Descriptive Interpretation
1. Media and online content about tourism careers have influenced my perception of the industry and my career choices.	3.52	0.58	Strongly Agree
2. The reputation and success of professionals in the tourism industry have motivated me to pursue a similar career path.	3.59	0.55	Strongly Agree
3. I consider my peers' career goals when deciding my own career path.	3.14	0.83	Agree
4. My family's expectations and opinions have influenced my decision to pursue a career in tourism.	3.11	0.75	Agree
Composite	3.34	0.49	Strongly Agree

Table 2 highlights the strong influence of environmental factors on tourism students' career choices, with media and online content about tourism careers (3.52) and the reputation of professionals in the industry (3.59) rated highly. Although peers' career goals (3.14) and family expectations (3.11) have a slightly lesser impact, they still contribute meaningfully. Overall, the composite mean of 3.34 confirms that environmental influences play a significant role in shaping students' career decisions in tourism.

The study by Giray and Quianzon (2023) supports these findings by identifying a variety of environmental factors that affect adolescents' career decision-making, including parents, teachers, peer groups, and labor market demand. Notably, their research emphasizes the influential role of educators and counselors and suggests that these factors are critical to consider in career guidance programs. This provides a useful lens to examine how similar environmental elements impact tourism students' career aspirations at Laguna University. Furthermore, Pesigan et al. (2019) found that environmental factors were the most influential in maritime students' choice of degree programs, particularly the opportunity for employment abroad. Their study demonstrates how perceptions of job market opportunities and work environment conditions strongly guide students' educational decisions, thereby reinforcing the importance of environmental context in career choice.

Table 3. Mean Level of Factors Influencing the Career Choices of Tourism Students of Laguna University in terms of Internship Exposure

Indicative Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Descriptive Interpretation
1. My internship experience has helped me identify the specific tourism career I want to pursue.	3.72	0.45	Strongly Agree
2. The practical training I received during my internship clarified the skills needed for my preferred tourism career.	3.59	0.50	Strongly Agree
3. The guidance and mentorship I received during my internship have positively impacted my career choices.	3.59	0.50	Strongly Agree
4. Exposure to real-world work environments through internships has shaped my career decision.	3.75	0.44	Strongly Agree
Composite	3.66	0.36	Strongly Agree

Table 3 shows that internship exposure significantly influences the career choices of Tourism students at Laguna University, with an overall mean of 3.66 interpreted as Strongly Agree. The highest-rated factor was exposure to real-world work environments, with a mean of 3.75, followed closely by identifying a specific tourism career through internship experience at 3.72. Practical training and mentorship also scored highly at 3.59, indicating strong agreement that internships provide essential real-world exposure, skill development, and guidance. These results emphasize the high value students place on internships as a key factor shaping their career decisions.

These findings align with Šimiević and Štetić (2017), who stress the growing demand in tourism for well-educated and skilled labor, making internship programs crucial in bridging theoretical learning with real industry experience. Internships allow students to develop problem-solving skills, flexibility, and professional networks that influence their career paths. Liu et al. (2022) further support this by noting that students with positive internship experiences are more likely to pursue careers in tourism, while those facing difficult conditions may reconsider their choices. This underscores the importance of effective internship programs in tourism education to prepare competent graduates ready to meet industry standards and demands.

These results strongly relate to Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Development, which emphasizes that career choices are shaped by learning experiences and environmental influences. Internships provide critical learning environments where students acquire practical skills, observe industry dynamics, and gain confidence—all key elements in shaping career decisions according to the theory. Additionally, the theory's concept of "planned happenstance" underscores how unexpected opportunities encountered during internships can lead to new career directions, reinforcing the importance of remaining open and adaptable. Therefore, the significant impact of internships on tourism students' career choices exemplifies how experiential learning and environmental factors interact within career development processes outlined by Social Learning Theory.

Table 4. Mean Level of Factors Influencing the Career Choices of Tourism Students of Laguna University in terms of Financial Stability

Indicative Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Descriptive Interpretation
1. The cost of education and career preparation influences my career choices.	3.39	0.52	Strongly Agree
2. My financial background has shaped my expectations for my future job prospects.	3.45	0.60	Strongly Agree
3. I prefer tourism jobs that offer competitive salaries and strong benefits.	3.61	0.55	Strongly Agree
4. I am more likely to pursue a tourism career if it guarantees long-term financial security.	3.66	0.48	Strongly Agree
Composite	3.53	0.42	Strongly Agree

Table 4 reveals that financial stability is a key factor influencing the career choices of tourism students at Laguna University, with all related statements receiving a "Strongly Agree" rating and an overall mean score of 3.53. Students expressed that education costs, personal financial background, preference for high salaries, and long-term financial security play significant roles in shaping their decisions. Particularly, the highest mean score of 3.66 for long-term financial security highlights students' strong desire for careers that provide stable and lasting income, underscoring how financial considerations dominate their career planning.

These findings correspond with Almario's (2021) study explains that students from lower-income families are more likely to prioritize job stability over passion-driven careers, which aligns with our finding that financial constraints may lead tourism students to choose more secure but potentially less preferred career paths. On the other hand, Sawitri (2020) focuses on how financial strain increases stress and career indecision among young adults, reducing their confidence in obtaining employment. This study complements our results by showing that financial difficulties can limit access to essential experiences like internships and networking, which are important for career development in tourism. Together, these studies emphasize the need for support systems to help students overcome financial barriers and pursue career paths aligned with their true interests.

Table 5. Summary of the Mean Level of Factors Influencing the Career Choices of Tourism Students of Laguna University

Factors Influencing the Career Choices	Mean	Std. Dev.	Descriptive Interpretation
1. Personal Interest	3.56	0.37	Strongly Agree
2. Environmental Influence	3.34	0.49	Strongly Agree
3. Internship Exposure	3.66	0.36	Strongly Agree
4. Financial Stability	3.53	0.42	Strongly Agree
Overall	3.52	0.32	Strongly Agree

Table 5 summarizes the mean levels of influence across four key factors affecting the career choices of tourism students at Laguna University. The highest mean score of 3.66 was observed in Internship Exposure, interpreted as "Strongly Agree," indicating that practical training, mentorship, and real-world experiences play the most significant role in shaping students' career choices. Personal Interest with a mean of 3.56 and Financial Stability with a mean of 3.53 also received strong agreement, showing that students are motivated by their passions, long-term goals, and financial considerations such as job security and competitive salaries. Environmental Influence obtained the lowest mean score of 3.34, interpreted as "Strongly Agree," suggesting that peers, family expectations, and media content exert a notable though lesser impact. The overall mean score of 3.52 reflects that students strongly agree that all four factors influence their career choices, with experiential and personal motivations playing the most vital role.

These results are supported by the study of Šimiević and Štetić (2017), which emphasized that internship programs in the tourism and hospitality industry are important in providing students with real-world experience, professional networking, and employability skills. Their findings show that internships serve as a bridge between academic learning and industry practice. Similarly, Nawawi et al. (2022) highlighted that personal interests play a critical role in influencing students' career choices, as they drive them to pursue paths that match their passions and personalities despite the challenges of a competitive job market. Moreover, Almario (2021) explains that a student's financial background significantly affects their career choices, noting that students from lower-income families tend to prioritize job stability over passion-driven careers. This connects directly to the current study, highlighting how financial factors may lead some tourism students to choose more secure jobs outside their field of interest, potentially limiting their pursuit of careers aligned with their academic training. Additionally, Ahmed et al. (2017) emphasize the impact of social expectations, detailing how parental opinions, peer influences, and industry trends shape career decisions. Educators and social networks also play essential roles, sometimes exerting stronger influence than the students' own preferences, underscoring the importance of environmental factors in career choice.

Level of Interest in Pursuing Careers in Tourism Industry

Table 6. Mean Level of Interest in Pursuing Career in Transportation Industry

Indicative Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Descriptive Interpretation
1. I am interested in working as an airline operations specialist or in airport ground services to ensure smooth travel experiences.	3.41	0.60	Strongly Agree
2. A career in aviation management appeals to me due to its dynamic work environment and global opportunities.	3.37	0.62	Strongly Agree
3. I find the role of a travel logistics coordinator or transportation planner in tourism an exciting career path.	3.39	0.60	Strongly Agree
Composite	3.39	0.52	Strongly Agree

Table 6 presents the mean level of interest in pursuing a career across the transportation industry, the result shows that students demonstrate a strong interest in this field, with all indicators rated as “Strongly Agree.” The highest mean score of 3.41 pertains to airline operations and airport ground services, suggesting that students are most attracted to roles that ensure smooth and efficient travel experiences. Aviation management, with a mean of 3.37, reflects their attraction to globally oriented and dynamic career paths, while logistics coordinator and transportation planner 3.39 emphasize their interest in organizing and managing travel systems. The composite mean of 3.39 confirms that careers in transportation are seen as both appealing and professionally meaningful.

Ledda and Fernandez (2015) explained that transportation and logistics are crucial drivers of the Philippine economy, not only enabling the movement of people and goods but also strengthening tourism by providing efficient access to destinations. This aligns with students’ strong interest in careers such as airline operations, aviation management, and logistics planning, as these roles directly contribute to travel efficiency and economic growth. Additionally, Acosta et al. (2023) emphasized that industry standards and qualifications impact aviation aspirants’ career choices, demonstrating that external demands for professionalism and specialized abilities frequently coincide with interest in transportation-related careers. When taken as a whole, these studies support the idea that students view jobs in the transportation industry as reliable, fulfilling, and in line with both domestic and international business standards.

Table 7. Mean Level of Interest in Pursuing Career in Accommodation Industry

Indicative Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Descriptive Interpretation
1. I aspire to work as a hotel manager, overseeing operations and ensuring guest satisfaction.	3.55	0.58	Strongly Agree
2. A career as a front desk associate, housekeeping supervisor, or food and beverage manager interests me.	3.46	0.65	Strongly Agree
3. Providing excellent service in the hospitality sector, such as working as a guest relations officer, is a fulfilling career choice.	3.61	0.55	Strongly Agree
Composite	3.54	0.47	Strongly Agree

Table 7 reveals a strong interest among respondents in pursuing careers within the accommodation industry, with mean scores ranging from 3.46 to 3.61, all interpreted as “Strongly Agree.” The highest level of interest is in roles that involve providing excellent service, such as guest relations officers, highlighting the

respondents' recognition of the personal fulfillment and professional growth opportunities this sector offers. Careers like hotel management and supervisory positions in front desk, housekeeping, or food and beverage services also garnered high interest, reflecting the students' enthusiasm for various functional areas within hospitality.

These results align with the findings of Rohoza and Stolyarchuk (2022), who emphasize that despite global challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic and economic fluctuations, the accommodation industry remains resilient and offers evolving career opportunities driven by technological advancements and sustainability practices. Their study underlines the importance of adaptability and technical skills, which correspond to the need for tourism students to stay updated with industry trends to maximize their employability. Additionally, Delas Alas and Limos-Galay (2023) highlight that exceptional customer service and quality accommodations significantly boost career growth prospects in the hospitality sector. They also note ongoing challenges such as gender inequality and mentorship gaps, which, if addressed through stronger training and support systems, could further enhance opportunities for tourism graduates. Together, these studies reinforce the importance of quality education, industry collaboration, and professional development in preparing students for successful careers in accommodation.

Table 8. Mean Level of Interest in Pursuing Career in Cruise Industry

Indicative Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Descriptive Interpretation
1. I am interested in working aboard a cruise ship as a hospitality crew member or tour coordinator.	3.49	0.63	Strongly Agree
2. A career as a cruise director, organizing onboard activities, excites me.	3.48	0.67	Strongly Agree
3. I believe working as a travel concierge or entertainment specialist in the cruise industry offers rewarding experiences.	3.51	0.63	Strongly Agree
Composite	3.49	0.58	Strongly Agree

Table 8 presents the mean level of interest in pursuing a career in the cruise industry. The results show that all three indicators received mean scores ranging from 3.48 to 3.51, all interpreted as Strongly Agree. Among the indicators, the highest mean was recorded in the statement "I believe working as a travel concierge or entertainment specialist in the cruise industry offers rewarding experiences" with a mean of 3.51, showing that students perceive this role as highly fulfilling and rewarding. The other statements, which concern working as a hospitality crew member or tour coordinator and cruise director, also receive high mean scores of 3.49 and 3.48, which are interpreted as Strongly Agree. This indicates that respondents express a consistently high level of interest in different career roles within the cruise industry. The composite mean of 3.49 further confirms that respondents strongly agree in their overall interest in pursuing careers in the cruise industry. This finding suggests that students generally perceive cruise ship employment as an attractive and viable career option.

These results are aligned with the study of Chua et al. (2017), which emphasized that employment prospects on cruise ships are highly advantageous for individuals in the hospitality industry due to the international exposure and career growth they provide. Similarly, Huang et al. (2019) noted that job fit theory highlights the importance of aligning students' skills and interests with the requirements of cruise ship careers, which explains the strong interest reflected in the findings. Finally, Hui et al. (2021) noted that self-efficacy significantly influences career motivation and success, which further explains why students are inclined to see cruise ship employment as both rewarding and desirable.

Table 9. Mean Level of Interest in Pursuing Career in Travel Agency

Indicative Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Descriptive Interpretation
1. I am interested in becoming a travel consultant, assisting clients with vacation planning	3.23	0.64	Agree
2. Working as a tour package coordinator or destination specialist for a travel agency is an appealing career path.	3.30	0.60	Strongly Agree
3. I am motivated to pursue a role as a corporate travel planner, designing business travel experiences for clients.	3.34	0.61	Strongly Agree
Composite	3.39	0.55	Strongly Agree

Table 9 presents the mean level of interest in pursuing a career in travel agencies. Each indicative statement has a mean score ranging from 3.23 to 3.34, resulting in a composite mean of 3.39, which categorizes it under Strongly Agree. This indicates that students generally show a significant interest in careers associated with travel services. The highest mean score, 3.34, relates to corporate travel planning, suggesting that students are most attracted to roles that involve designing business travel experiences. Working as a tour package coordinator or destination specialist follows closely with a mean of 3.30, reflecting significant interest in creating and managing travel packages. Meanwhile, the role of travel consultant received the lowest mean score of 3.23 (Agree), indicating a slightly lower preference for consultancy positions compared to more specialized roles. These findings confirm that careers in travel agencies remain appealing to students, particularly in areas emphasizing coordination, specialization, and professional travel planning.

These results align with existing literature of Harun et al. (2024) observed that technological advancements have reshaped independent travel, creating both challenges and opportunities for travel agencies. The students' strong inclination towards specialized roles like corporate travel planners and destination specialists aligns with Harun's findings, that agencies must evolve by providing expertise and personalized services that are hard to replicate online. Finally, Aguado (2019) highlighted the significance of practical skills such as booking systems, itinerary development, and professionalism—skills that align with the students' preference for roles centered on planning and coordination. The results confirm that students view travel agency careers as both skill-driven and career-driven opportunities in the tourism industry

Table 10. Mean Level of Interest in Pursuing Career in Events Management

Indicative Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Descriptive Interpretation
1. I am passionate about working as an event planner, specializing in corporate conferences, festivals, and weddings.	3.31	0.69	Strongly Agree
2. A career as an event coordinator, managing logistics for large-scale tourism events, interests me.	3.31	0.71	Strongly Agree
3. I am drawn to working as a venue manager, ensuring seamless event execution within the tourism industry.	3.28	0.66	Strongly Agree
Composite	3.30	0.62	Strongly Agree

Table 10 shows that students have a strong interest in pursuing careers in events management, with mean scores ranging from 3.28 to 3.31, all interpreted as “Strongly Agree.” The highest interest lies in roles such as event planner and event coordinator, which involve organizing and managing large-scale tourism events like conferences, festivals, and weddings. Although the role of venue manager received the lowest mean score of 3.28, it still reflects a strong appeal. These results indicate that tourism students are particularly drawn to the creative and logistical challenges within event management, seeing it as a promising and engaging career path.

These findings are consistent with the studies by Baron and Ali-Knight (2017) and Llarenas and Sanchez (2019). Baron and Ali-Knight highlight a gap between academic preparation and practical skills among event management graduates, emphasizing the importance of hands-on experience to better equip students for long-term careers in the events industry. This insight suggests the need to evaluate whether Laguna University’s tourism program sufficiently prepares students for real-world event management challenges. Meanwhile, Llarenas and Sanchez illustrate how involvement in organizing events enhances students’ understanding of the interconnectedness of tourism suppliers and the role of social media in promoting events. Their work underlines the importance of an industry-responsive curriculum that provides experiential learning to prepare students for the dynamic events sector, mirroring the strong interest seen in our study's respondents.

Table 11. Mean Level of Interest in Pursuing Career in Government Tourism Offices

Indicative Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Descriptive Interpretation
1. I am interested in working as a tourism development officer, promoting travel destinations and sustainability.	3.38	0.66	Strongly Agree
2. A career as a policy analyst in tourism regulatory agencies provides stability and long-term growth.	3.34	0.72	Strongly Agree
3. I aspire to work as a cultural and heritage tourism specialist, advocating for responsible tourism practices.	3.41	0.67	Strongly Agree
Composite	3.38	0.61	Strongly Agree

Table 11 presents the mean scores and descriptive interpretations of students’ interest in pursuing careers within government tourism offices. The highest mean score of 3.41 was recorded for the statement “I aspire to work as a cultural and heritage tourism specialist, advocating for responsible tourism practices,” indicating strong agreement among respondents. This suggests that students are particularly drawn to roles that promote sustainability and heritage conservation. The other two statements, which are about working as a tourism development officer and as a policy analyst also received high mean scores of 3.38 and 3.34 respectively, both interpreted as “Strongly Agree.” These findings imply that students perceive government tourism careers as stable, meaningful, and aligned with their values. The composite mean of 3.38 further supports the overall strong interest in this sector.

These findings align with the study of Impact and Policy Research Institute & Arjun Kumar (2024), which emphasized the growing relevance of government roles in promoting sustainable tourism and inclusive growth. The strong interest in advocacy and policy-related careers also reflects the influence of Krumboltz’s Social Learning Theory, which highlights how learning experiences and environmental exposure such as internships and community engagement—shape career aspirations. Meanwhile, Mseleku and Nyawo (2024) highlight that internships in local government agencies provide important career advancement opportunities, despite concerns about low pay and heavy workloads. This underscores the necessity for ongoing cooperation between Laguna University and government offices to equip students with practical experiences and career

guidance for success in public sector tourism.

Table 12. Summary of the Mean Level of Interest in Pursuing Career of Tourism Students of Laguna University

Interest in Pursuing Career	Mean	Std. Dev.	Descriptive Interpretation
1. Transportation Industry	3.39	0.52	Strongly Agree
2. Accommodation Industry	3.54	0.47	Strongly Agree
3. Cruise Industry	3.49	0.58	Strongly Agree
4. Travel Agency	3.39	0.55	Strongly Agree
5. Events Management	3.30	0.62	Strongly Agree
6. Government Tourism Offices	3.38	0.61	Strongly Agree

Table 12 illustrates the average levels of interest among tourism students at Laguna University in various career paths within the industry. The accommodation sector received the highest average score of 3.54, reflecting a strong preference among students. The cruise industry (3.49), transportation (3.39), and travel agencies (3.39) also attracted considerable interest, while government tourism offices (3.38) and events management (3.30) had slightly lower but still positive ratings within the “Strongly Agree” range. Overall, with a mean score of 3.40, students demonstrate a strong enthusiasm for tourism careers, especially those offering flexibility and opportunities for growth.

These results are supported by research in the respective sectors as Acosta et al. (2023) highlighted that adherence to airline standards enhances confidence and employability for aspiring flight attendants, underscoring the importance of formal qualifications in transportation careers. Rohoza and Stolyarchuk (2022) emphasized the accommodation sector’s evolving nature and the need for adaptable workers, aligning with student interests. Alvero and Masa (2022) pointed out that the cruise industry prioritizes readiness and motivation, which corresponds with the notable student interest in this field. In the travel agency sector, Hitesh (2024) identified multiple career opportunities, including roles such as travel consultants and marketing specialists, indicating a broad range of options for graduates. Regarding events management, Baron and Ali-Knight (2017) found that while graduates feel prepared academically, they often lack sufficient practical experience but remain optimistic about their long-term career prospects. Lastly, Mseleku and Nyawo (2024) reported that internships in government tourism offices, despite challenges like low pay and heavy workloads, support career progression and highlight the importance of partnership between educational institutions and government bodies to better align with industry demands.

Table 13. Correlation between the Factors Influencing the Career Choices and the Level of Interest in Pursuing the Career of 4th Year Tourism students of Laguna University

	Factors	Interest
Factors	.	
Interest	0.6138**	.

Table 13 shows a significant positive correlation between the factors influencing career choices and students’ level of interest in tourism careers, with $r = 0.6138$ and $p < .001$. Since the p-value is less than .05, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted: There is a significant relationship between the factors influencing career choices and the level of interest in pursuing careers in various sectors in the tourism industry.

This result confirms the theoretical foundation of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which emphasizes the interaction between personal goals, self-efficacy, and environmental influences. It also supports the findings of Nawawi et al. (2022) and Babagay-Llacer (2021), who identified personal interest, family influence, and career opportunities as key drivers of career motivation.

The strong correlation suggests that when students perceive favorable conditions such as supportive internships, financial stability, and alignment with personal interests, they are more likely to pursue careers in tourism. This reinforces the importance of career guidance programs that address these factors and help students make informed choices.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data gathered by the researchers during the time of conducting the study, the researchers have concluded the following:

- The career choices of tourism students are influenced by the internship exposure, personal interest, financial stability, and environmental influences. The most influential is the internship experience, which helps provide a clear understanding of the career path from real-world learning. Personal interest also proves to be strong, reflecting the passion of students in long-term goals. Financial and environmental factors reinforce these further in solidifying their choice.
- The results indicate that students at Laguna University exhibit strong interest in pursuing careers across all major sectors of the tourism industry, particularly in the accommodation and cruise industries. Although the university does not offer accommodation or hotel-related courses for the tourism students, students still show a preference for this sector, which may be attributed to the appeal and opportunities associated with hospitality jobs. This finding suggests that students' career interests are influenced not only by academic offerings but also by prevailing industry trends. Additionally, students demonstrate significant motivation toward careers in transportation, travel agencies, and government tourism.
- The results demonstrate a meaningful connection between the factors influencing career choices and the level of interest students show in pursuing tourism careers. When key elements such as personal interest, environmental influence, internship exposure, and considerations of financial stability are strengthened, students show more interest in tourism-related professions. This underscores the need for academic institutions and industry partners to cultivate these conditions, particularly by ensuring that internship programs remain relevant and aligned with real-world tourism demands.
- As the study concluded, the recommended action plan was needed to address the lowest student interest in the events management and government tourism offices. Laguna University was encouraged to build stronger partnerships with tourism agencies, improving internship programs, and conducting regular career seminars to increase awareness, develop practical skills, and better prepare tourism students for various career opportunities in the industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were developed to enhance the career readiness and professional development of tourism students at Laguna University:

- Offer more internships in government tourism offices since this sector has low student interest. Greater exposure will help students understand the roles and opportunities, encouraging them to consider careers in government tourism.
- The findings of this study can be utilized by the government tourism offices to be a stronger and attractive career option for the tourism students. The result will guide the development of internship programs that align with students' career interests and enhance the overall appeal of government

tourism offices.

- The university should give tourism students more practical experience in event planning by letting them lead campus activities. Since Events Management has the lowest student interest, this exposure will help build their skills and encourage greater involvement.
- Future researchers are encouraged to widen the scope of participants by including other year levels or campuses to compare career interests across different student groups. They may also explore additional variables—such as parental occupation, academic performance, or exposure to tourism agencies—to gain deeper insights into students' career motivations. Using qualitative methods like interviews or focus group discussions is also recommended to further validate and enrich the findings of this study.
- The proposed action plan is recommended to support the implementation of these developmental initiatives, ensuring that tourism students are equipped with the practical skills, professional readiness, and holistic competencies required by the tourism industry.

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APPENDIX A**Table 14. Proposed Action Plan Regarding Comprehensive Career Orientation**

OBJECTIVES	ACTION STEPS	PERSON/S INVOLVED	TIMELINE	MATERIALS NEEDED
To help students understand careers in government tourism offices.	Invite DOT or local tourism officers for a seminar about their roles, career paths, qualifications, and benefits of working in government.	Program Chair, Tourism Faculty, DOT or LGU representative	September - Civil Service Month	Invitation Letter, Certificates
To give students real-world experience in event management.	Collaborate with event companies for student training and exposure.	Program Chair, Tourism Faculty, Partner event Companies	September - October	MOA, Documentation tools, Evaluation Forms.
To provide additional internship opportunities for tourism students by partnering with barangay tourism councils.	Develop community-based Tourism internship tie-ups with Barangay Tourism Council.	Program Chair, internships coordinator, Barangay Tourism Councils	Internship season	MOA, Coordination Letters, Orientation materials, Documentation tools.
To guide first-year tourism students by providing early awareness of various career opportunities in the tourism industry	Hold a career orientation during the general assembly where faculty present tourism career paths and industry skills	Program Chair, Tourism Faculty, Guidance office	August - During General Assembly.	Venue, Presentation slides, Brochures