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A Comparative Analysis on the Career Perceptions of Tourism Management Students Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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**ABSTRACT**

The serious impact of the COVID-19 pandemic also affected educational institutions offering tourism programs and students’ perceptions of their future career in the industry. The study determined and compared the career perceptions of Tourism Management students in Far Eastern University Manila, Philippines before and during the COVID-19 pandemic with the end view of providing significant inputs to the development of programs for the tourism students in relation to their career opportunities. Using the mixed methods approach and the simple random and purposive sampling techniques, 196 third year tourism management students enrolled in AY 2020–2021 in a private Institution in Manila, Philippines completed the researcher-made survey questionnaire to gather quantitative data. On the other hand, focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted on six pre-selected student-participants to collect qualitative data. The use of a paired sample T-Test proved that there is a significant difference in the student career perception before and during the pandemic. The qualitative findings revealed that: 1) the Tourism Industry as a major business sector was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; 2) the students perceive their career opportunities in the Tourism Industry during this pandemic as full of uncertainties; 3) implementing a relevant and timely program that will address the students’ wants and needs must be put into action to help the students adapt to the current situation. Accordingly, Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) are encouraged to provide the students a more comprehensive student career opportunity program that will address the changes in student career perceptions and uncertainties on their future career opportunities in the Tourism Industry.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has indeed impacted the lives of individuals globally in different ways. It changed most of the usual things people use to do before the outbreak occurred here in the Philippines and worldwide. As a result, the breakout has caused turmoil in tourism and other connected sectors nationally and globally (Jamal & Budke, 2020). Because of the unpredictable conditions, the pandemic resulted in an underestimated effect on the Tourism and Hotel Industry, not only in the Philippines but worldwide. Due to the pandemic, the global economy was slowed down (Haleem & Vaishya, 2020). A recent study by the World Travel & Tourism Council (2020) showed that the COVID-19 crisis affects 75 million people at risk in their workplace, and 1 million workers lost their jobs.

The Tourism Industry is among the most profitable sectors to experience career growth due to its impact on the business sector. The

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quality of employees is an essential factor in determining services in the Tourism Sector as a service industry. Thus, tourism employees who acquire education in tourism and gain professional competency play a vital position in enhancing service quality for the industry’s advancement and volume (Ince & Kendir, 2016). On the other hand, the Tourism Industry needs to have its employees dedicated to their jobs and ensure that their chosen profession is the right path. Given all these aspects, orientation and application in building a career and improving employment in the industry are of great importance to every employee. The Tourism Industry needs to recognize and respond to skilled and trained employees’ characteristics to enhance their career paths, enhance their positive view of their professions, and their firm commitment to the industry.

Over 2.1 trillion US Dollars were lost in the Travel and Tourism Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2020, the approximate amount released (Skare et al., 2020). Indeed, the industry will face a challenge in the long run brought by the pandemic. Furthermore, according to the 2020 survey conducted by PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC), 78% of tourism-related businesses had temporarily stopped offering products/services, 61% of tourism-related companies stopped because of a lack of demand, 44% lowered their operations level, and reduced the headcount of employees by 43% to save on costs. Given the circumstances, several other tourism-related establishments filed bankruptcy, laid-off employees, and did not continue hiring numerous industry workers, showing how affected it is.

Discussing the impact of the pandemic on the tourism sector indicates that whatever happens in the tourism industry also affects the educational system of a country. Kunwar (2018) stated that tourism education is considered a foundation of industry support and indicates current activity. A recent study by Dodds (2019) recorded the effect of COVID-19 in academics on lower academic research efficiency and student recruitment. Furthermore, academic studies and news media examined and addressed the impact of the COVID-19 on the Tourism Industry. The least is known, however, regarding the effects on tourism education brought by the novel coronavirus. When tourism is influenced by important external factors, including over-tourism, literature (whether academic or news media) focuses primarily on business, ignoring the fact that tourism is a field of study (Seraphin & Yallop, 2020). While the world transformed caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, many changes such as a transition in teaching styles, industry expectations, and skill requirements are anticipated in the present time (Seraphin et al., 2020).

Career perception is of utmost significance in an individual’s life, especially for college students aspiring to enter an industry-aligned to their programs. Ambiguous career paths may cause dissatisfaction and loss of individual resources. Choosing a career is often complicated, and their long-term results are not immediately apparent to individuals (Nyamwange & Masai Mara University, 2016). Good career planning leads to life fulfillment; however, different factors can affect these perceptions. One’s career is a significant concern in youth developmental life. It is associated with either negative or positive psychological, physical and socio-economic variations which exist beyond a young age in the adult stage (Twumasi et al., 2018).

Educational institutions also play a vital role in preparing the students for their career in their chosen field. They develop the knowledge and skills needed in the industry and form students’ perceptions towards their future careers. The Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (ITHM) of the Far Eastern University (FEU) also plays these significant roles with its students. The students who enroll in BS Tourism Management and BS Hotel and Restaurant Management programs have their own reasons and motivations for choosing these degree programs. Both programs’ curricula are designed to prepare graduates to be highly competent and competitive practitioners both inside and outside the institution. The increasing need for more sustainability in the tourism sector has led to the creation of new curricula and learning environments (Ali et al., 2017; Camargo & Gretzel, 2017; Hales & Jennings, 2017). Due to the sheer nature of tourism and hospitality education, some practical courses may require the use of professional equipment available in industrial environments. As a result, tourism and hospitality educators should explore modifying traditional teaching methods to ensure that online courses are of the same quality as offline courses (Ye, I. & Law, R., 2021).

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020), over 80 percent of the total student population is affected by these worldwide restrictions. Also, several countries have implemented localized closures affecting millions of other learners and students. COVID-19 placed several demands on the system of education all over the globe. It raised the need to adopt innovative ways and actions to have a better education system at all levels brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, teaching in tourism and hospitality education and other business education has already shifted.

Concerning the COVID-19 impacts on the students’ career perception, some students studying in universities may be unsure of their career path even after graduation. In the study of Aristovnik et al. (2020) about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education students, the results showed that during the lockdown on the global level, there are 42.6% of students worrying about their professional careers in the future. Every individual has different discernment in choosing a job, depending on what fits their skills, opportunities coming, interests, and course alignment. Also, global literature is abundant in analytical evidence on aspects that affect career decision-making, including the influence of family, ability, passion, self-efficacy, possible challenges, beliefs, gender, race, and sense of belonging (Rainey et al., 2018 & 2019). Increased concerns due to the pandemic may result in a more complicated decision-making process for students deciding their preferred career path. Because of the current situation, the researchers want to know how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the students’ career perceptions and understand the students’ plan for their career opportunities in the Tourism Industry during this pandemic.

The Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (ITHM) of the Far Eastern University, an academic institution known for producing quality tourism management graduates, also struggles with the current situation. It may be essential to note the decrease in the number of enrollees under the Tourism Management Program during the pandemic. With a focus on 2019 and 2020, before and during the pandemic, the number of enrollees decreased from 1334 to 1227 or 8.02%. This data may imply the students’ uncertainties or indecisiveness to continue in tourism education due to the impact of the pandemic in the Tourism Industry.

The study aimed to determine and compare the career perceptions of Tourism Management students before and during the COVID-19 pandemic with the end view of providing significant inputs to the development of programs for the tourism students in relation to their career opportunities. Specifically, this study examined the following research questions:
1. How do the students perceive the status of the Tourism Industry during this pandemic?

2. What is the career perception of the students before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of the following indicators:
   a. Availability of Career Opportunities
   b. Working Environment
   c. Pay and Benefits
   d. Skills and Competencies
   e. Professional Growth and Personal Development

3. Is there a significant difference in the career perception of the students before and during the pandemic?

4. How do the students perceive their career opportunities in the Tourism Industry during this pandemic?

5. What do the students propose to help them pursue their career in the Tourism Industry?

Hypothesis

Based on the given research objectives, the researchers have formulated the following null hypothesis:

H1. There is no significant difference in the career perceptions before and during the COVID-19 pandemic of the Tourism Management Students in Far Eastern University Manila, Philippines.

2. Literature review

2.1. The tourism industry before and during the COVID-19 pandemic

From a global perspective, the industry of Tourism and Hospitality is one of the major industries that became significant in the economic growth of each country. Sofronov (2018) stated that tourism and hospitality could change people’s lives for the better by providing sufficient livelihood that can minimize poverty and peace through intercultural understanding. Theron et al. (2018) also noted that the two industries are recognized as primary employment sources in society. Furthermore, this industry consists of millions of companies and employers, from the most extensive global travel and hotel brands to the minor tour operators or hostel owners (Sofronov, 2018). Meanwhile, the industry of Tourism and Hospitality is one of the most significant contributors to the Philippine economy, putting the industry in the 75th position globally as the sector contributes to the country’s growth and competitiveness (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019). Furthermore, in terms of employment, the tourism and hospitality sector alone add 319 million workers to global employment, accounting for 10% of all current jobs (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry in the Philippines was one of the highest contributors to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country. The tourism industry contributed a much higher percentage to the country’s GDP and employment rate in 2019 compared to the previous years. However, the pandemic slowed down the travel and tourism industry as countries, including the Philippines, imposed travel bans, closed borders, and implemented quarantine protocols (Gossling et al., 2020). To prevent the spread of the virus, governments worldwide have acted by closing the entire nation of the most impacted cities and banning entry from its borders, which significantly affects the global tourism industry. Likewise, the current crisis could adversely affect the other sectors interacting with the tourism industry. Skare et al. (2020) measure the effect of COVID-19 on the global travel and tourism industry as a result of the outbreak of the pandemic during 2020–2021, which shows that the tourism sector will fall on average from −2.93% points to −7.82 of the total GDP contribution while employment from the industry will decline by −2.44% to −6.55%. Consequently, the Tourism Industry will be forced to cast aside product development and formulate efforts to bring consumer experience by growing tourist confidence and reducing perceived risks of traveling.

2.2. Career perception

Career perception is the aspiration of an individual about the career to pursue or to be achieved. It is the goal for someone to set for themselves to achieve either their desired profession or current profession. Moreover, it is an individual’s perceived path that he wants to follow (Menon & Santha 2017). The concept of perception refers to being aware, having comprehension, and understanding of something. This concept also refers to a process whereby the students will organize, select, and interpret their interests to develop a meaningful career choice in the future (Bordean & Sonea, 2018). Several articles were written based on the studies made by different authors; the researchers agreed that when you say career perception, it is about being aware of the interests and skills that an individual wants to pursue in the future. As the concept of career perceptions is associated with the decision-making of a human being, the study of Njoroge et al. (2015) shows that the majority of the undergraduate respondents want to work for an airline company, even though they have experienced working in a hotel.

Furthermore, students who have experience working for the travel sector would still want to pursue their airline company careers. Also, a positive perception of the students stated that they are happy to choose a tourism career path and planning to work in the industry after graduation was presented in the paper of Mannaa & Abou-Shouk (2020). Moreover, Teerati & Wattanasan (2016) disclosed that most students chose tourism and hospitality as significant fields to share their knowledge and expertise.

Thetsane et al. (2020) further revealed that there are three factors that the students considered in choosing a career related to the tourism industry: (1) the fascinating experience when meeting new people; (2) good source of investment; and (3) possibility of earning more money. Different studies presented that some of the students have a positive outlook in pursuing their career in the Tourism Industry. One of the studies that could support this statement was the study of Reichenberger, I., & Raymond, E. M. (2021).
The authors claimed that COVID-19 generates substantial disruption and issues for international student recruitment while raising concerns about tourism professions’ future desirability. They conducted 24 interviews with students currently enrolled in a tertiary Tourism Management degree at two New Zealand institutions. They also analyzed the study using the theory of planned behavior to see if, how, and why perceptions of tourism education and jobs have transformed. As a conclusion of their research, students had a generally positive attitude toward future tourism professions and evaluated a possible higher future worth of a tertiary tourism degree.

However, as the COVID-19 pandemic had emerged, the students were forced to reconsider their plans that had been made given the current situation, which caused them uncertainties towards their career perception (Samuel et al., 2020). Given that the Tourism Industry slowed down during the pandemic, India’s tourism and hospitality students believed that it would bounce back eventually in the future. It was also found that the industry’s image had impacted the decisions of prospective employees concerning their careers (Shah al., 2021). Similarly, Rosyidi (2021) study revealed that a high percentage of tourism and hospitality students in Indonesia still craved to pursue jobs in the tourism industry amid the COVID-19 pandemic. However, one of the conclusions in the study showed that some students are also hesitant to work in the industry relating to their health and wellness, but the number was insignificant.

On the other hand, the study of Aristovnik et al. (2020) stated that most of the students were worrying about their professional careers in the future during the lockdown. Given the threats that the COVID-19 had caused, the student’s mental health and career planning became critical. Meanwhile, Masdonati et al. (2017) revealed the five distinct reasons for a career change are the following: (1) dealing with health problems; (2) reducing dissatisfaction; (3) attaining attractive working conditions; (4) pursuing a vocation; and (5) growing personally. On the other hand, the study of Mahmud et al. (2020) pointed out that fear with the COVID-19 impacts students’ career decisions through mental health issues. It was also stated that young adults are more likely worried about their careers and that anxiety impacts future career plans. Individuals may be affected by the environmental factors in building their jobs, and interacting with ecological factors like restrictions and opportunities may affect the behavior of realizing one’s career. Yilmaz (2020) noted the career shock that the COVID-19 had caused. It is when an individual encounters a unique environment they are not expecting. This career shock caused by COVID-19 became obstacle to students planning their future careers and opportunities in their chosen industry.

2.3. Career opportunities in the tourism industry during the pandemic

Rasheed et al. (2020) claimed that career opportunities are the workers’ expectations of the extent of what work responsibilities and job prospects are related to their professional preferences and priorities in the current organization. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry was known to have the immense contribution in employment globally, with a total gross contribution to the global workforce of 10.4 percent in 2019 (Skare et al., 2020). The tourism industry offers a decent job prospect that triggers the expectations of others outside the sector, which results in switching one’s ambitions to seek career opportunities in the tourism industry. However, Sheng (2020) mentioned a substantial impact on the tourism industry’s career opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several tourism-related establishments filed bankruptcy, laid-off employees, and did not continue hiring numerous industry workers. According to the 2020 report of the International Labour Organization, passenger sales for the airline industry were approximately US$ 88 billion less than in 2019. Many countries have imposed travel restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, which has harmed the tourism industry (Riadil, 2020). Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic and future scenarios show the interrelationship between the person and the context that influences their career perception (Akkermans et al., 2020).

Consequently, the Department of Tourism (2020) in the Philippines thinks of saving the laid-off employees. They made 10,000 jobs available in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Industry for the staff in the tourism industry who have been laid off around the country outlining their career opportunities during the pandemic, which include Human Resources and Recruitment, Finance, Information Technology, Marketing, Customer Service, Technical Support, Technicians, Supervisors, Trainers, and Managers. This somehow showed that DOT cared about the displaced employees in the tourism industry, but the students’ opportunities to join the workforce remain unclear.

2.4. Student career opportunity program

Colleges and universities usually provide career guidance to their students to prepare them after they graduate. Most institutions have established stable and embedded career programs for the students that offer a wide range of activities and opportunities (Nightingale et al., 2020). The career guidance program aims to achieve long-term outcomes that are measurable when the students leave the school. The same study indicated that the engagement of the schools with the local employer for the success of the career programs is typically challenging in terms of building a good relationship with them. It is further stated that the development of such programs plays a huge role in preparing the students in their lives, particularly in choosing a career path after graduation. This also includes developing students’ ability to choose the right direction for career opportunities based on their core skills that will suit the corporate world they will be facing in the future. Thus, such programs are significant and necessary for the students, especially at this pandemic, to somehow relieve their worry for their future careers in the tourism industry.

In consideration of all the mentioned related literature, it is believed that this study will address the gap in the literature, especially in determining and comparing the students’ career perceptions before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study can provide valuable inputs, especially on how the HEIs can provide the most appropriate assistance for the students who are currently full of uncertainties and indecisiveness with their future careers in the tourism industry. The students need specific career opportunity programs that are timely and relevant, which remain underdetermined with the gathered review of related literature.
3. Methodology

As for the research design of this study, a mixed-methods approach was used. With the use of a mixed-methods approach, the researchers were able to gather quantifiable data from the participants using the quantitative method. On the other hand, utilizing the qualitative method enabled the researchers to collect different views and deeper perspectives to answer the questions of the study. Hence, the approach provided the researchers an even-handed, subjective, and objective findings.

For the quantitative part, the researchers used the simple random sampling technique drawn from the total population of 388 third-year tourism management students enrolled during the second semester of Academic Year 2020–2021. Following the sample size table of Krejcie & Morgan (1970), the researchers came up with a sample size of 196 respondents. On the other hand, the purposive sampling technique was used on the qualitative part of the study, specifically on selecting six (6) third-year tourism management students as participants in the focus group discussion (FGD). Only six (6) students were chosen to be part of the FGD. According to Nyumba et al. (2017), it is widely agreed that six to eight participants are adequate, and some studies have recorded as few as four as many as fifteen participants for the FGD.

The respondents’ profile on the quantitative component is shown in Table 1A. The researchers gathered 196 responses from the target population of 388 Third Year Tourism Management Students enrolled in the Second Semester of Academic Year 2020–2021 at Far Eastern University. With regard to the gender, there were identified 34 (17%) male students, 159 (81%) female students, 1 (1%) non-binary, and 2 (1%) prefer not to say. The table also shows that the most significant number of respondents, which is 128 (65%), were aged 21 years old, 55 (28%) aged from 20 years old, 12 (6%) aged 22 years old, and 1 percent of the respondents aged 23 years old. Furthermore, the Research Course is divided into eight (8) sections. The majority of the respondents came from Section 2 (16%), and the least number of respondents was from Section 6 (9%).

On the other hand, Table 1B shows the respondents’ profiles for the qualitative part of this study. As shown in Table 1B, the participants of FGD were six (6) selected Third Year Tourism Management Students from Far Eastern University. All of them are student leaders, students who actively participate in different competitions, and students with good standing in academic performance. The participants were chosen to be part of the study as the researchers believed they could provide a deeper perspective to answer its objectives. They were also known as students who openly expressed their views and opinions towards specific issues.

In the quantitative part of the study, the researchers used a researcher-made survey questionnaire as the main instrument to gather the needed information. Hence, it occurred first. The survey was used to collect data that were relevant to the study and its objectives. The questionnaire consisted of two (2) parts. The first part contains the demographic profile of the respondents that include: (1) Gender, (2) Age, and (3) Section, as the Research course is divided into eight (8) sections. The second part is presented using a 5-point Likert scale with a verbal interpretation of: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, and 1 = Strongly Disagree, where respondents were provided with indicators and statements to determine their career perception before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also included were two open-ended questions related to career perceptions used to validate some results of the study.

| Table 1A |
|----------|
| Profile of the respondents (Quantitative). |

| GENDER | N | %  |
|--------|---|----|
| MALE   | 34| 17 |
| FEMALE | 159| 81 |
| NON-BINARY | 1 | 1 |
| PREFER NOT TO SAY | 2 | 1 |
| TOTAL  | 196| 100 |

| AGE | N | %  |
|-----|---|----|
| 20 YEARS OLD | 15 | 28 |
| 21 YEARS OLD | 128 | 65 |
| 22 YEARS OLD | 12 | 6 |
| 23 YEARS OLD | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 196| 100 |

| SECTION | N | %  |
|---------|---|----|
| 1       | 29 | 15 |
| 2       | 31 | 16 |
| 3       | 22 | 11 |
| 4       | 26 | 13 |
| 5       | 26 | 13 |
| 6       | 18 | 9  |
| 7       | 21 | 11 |
| 8       | 23 | 12 |
| TOTAL   | 196| 100 |
After validation by research experts, the researcher-made survey questionnaire was pre-tested to twenty (20) third-year Tourism Management students enrolled in second semester Academic Year 2020–2021. The Cronbach’s alpha was used to determine the instrument’s reliability, which a licensed statistician conducted. The Cronbach’s alpha result shows that the survey questionnaire has excellent reliability since alpha is greater than 0.9. The reliability degree was solved using the SPSS version 23, resulting in a 0.950 Cronbach alpha that revealed a high level of internal consistency. With this result, it can be said that the researcher-made questionnaire to determine the career perceptions of the Third Year Tourism Management students before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic was considered a reliable instrument and a source of data to support the objectives of this study.

In addressing the qualitative questions, a semi-structured interview guide, also validated by experts, was used on FGD to answer the other research questions such as: 1) students’ perceptions on the status of the Tourism Industry during the pandemic, 2) students’ perceptions of their career opportunities in the Tourism Industry during the pandemic, and 3) students’ proposals to help them pursue their career in the Tourism Industry.

In the quantitative part of the study, the researchers distributed survey questionnaires to 196 sample respondents from the Institute of Tourism & Hotel Management of Far Eastern University. The survey questionnaires were intended to be answered by the Third Year Tourism Management students currently enrolled in the academic year 2020–2021. On the other hand, data for qualitative questions were gathered by the researchers through the process of a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with six (6) pre-selected students as participants. They are student leaders and academic achievers who openly express their views and opinions towards specific issues.

To get preliminary information or data, the researchers first gathered the quantitative part of the study before collecting the necessary information in the FGD. It will validate the results of quantitative data and compile a deeper perspective and understanding of the remaining research objectives.

The responses to the quantitative data were statistically analyzed with the study’s data requirements. Descriptive and comparative inferential analysis was applied from the results of the career perceptions indicated in the 5-point Likert scale and the outcome from the T-test to determine whether the null hypothesis is accepted or rejected. On the other hand, a thematic analysis was made based on the responses of the participants to the FGD conducted that aimed to know the students’ perceptions on the status of the Tourism Industry during the pandemic, students’ perceptions of their career opportunities in the Tourism Industry during the pandemic, and students’ proposals to help them pursue their career in the Tourism Industry. The data from the FGD were coded and analyzed to produce themes

Table 2
Students’ perceptions on the status of the tourism industry during the COVID-19 pandemic.

| PARTICIPANT | FACTUAL CODING | AXIAL CODING | THEME |
|-------------|----------------|--------------|-------|
| 1           | Dahil sa COVID, parang halos lahat ng mga businesses is nag-cancel sa operations kasi hindi pwede na mag-open silica since yung capacity dapat limited. | The COVID-19 have caused the closure of businesses and canceling of operations. | Closure of Businesses |
| 2           | For me ang present situation ng Tourism Industry specifically sa travelling, last year kasi nag-start na yung bubble tourism. Example sa Boracay, yung local communities, sila lang yung pwedeng mag-travel doon. | The increase of COVID-19 cases leads to several lockdowns that restrict people from traveling from one place to another. | Travel Restrictions |
| 3           | For me, as a tourism student, as a future tourism professional, medyo frustrating din … kasi hindi ko alam kung in the future he will there be jobs open for me, for us. | Given the situation brought by the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Tourism Industry, it causes future Career Anxieties in the world of the Tourism Industry. | Future Career Anxieties |
| 4           | For me, the situation is very devastating especially to those who lost their jobs and yung business nila. | Unemployment increases, so the closure of tourism-related businesses are just some of the negative impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic. | Increase of Unemployment Rates |
| 5           | Because nagyayari, marumi ng nagkaroon ng massive retrenchment, not just the airlines, for sure sa cruises. | One of the realities in terms of the negative impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Tourism Industry is the massive retrenchment of some Tourism-Related establishments. | Massive Retrenchment |
| 6           | I guess, medyo matatagalan din kasi yung recovery period ng industry provided na majority ng operation na nagayari sa industry is operations with other people. | The recovery period of the Tourism Industry will take a long time, given how devastating the impact of COVID-19 is. | Prolonged Recovery Period |
4. Results and discussion

4.1. Perceived status of the tourism industry during the pandemic

With the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the tourism industry, understanding the student perception of the current situation served as initial data to support the primary aim of this study. Reflected in Table 2 are the results of the FGD to answer SOP1. Table 2 shows the participants’ actual responses (Factual Coding) and the themes (Axial Coding). The participants’ perceived status of the tourism industry during the pandemic pertains to the closure of businesses, travel restrictions, future career anxieties, increase in the unemployment rate, massive retrenchment, prolonged recovery period. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced governments worldwide to implement restrictions, lockdowns, and mandates to extend businesses’ closure (Yu et al., 2020). In the Philippines, a survey in 2020 revealed that around 90,000 businesses remained closed as the pandemic continued, which negatively impacted the economy (Department of Trade and Industry). Further, according to the Department of Tourism, travel controls and other initiatives were implemented in other countries, and it negatively affected the international tourist arrivals in the Philippines. In addition, domestic visitors stopped their future travel for fear of getting the COVID-19 virus.

Moreover, one of the realities that the student-participants mentioned was the massive retrenchment of some tourism-related workers.

Table 3
Recall of career perceptions before the COVID-19 pandemic and current career perceptions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

| INDICATORS | BEFORE COVID-19 | AFTER COVID-19 |
|------------|----------------|---------------|
|            | MEAN | STD | VI | MEAN | STD | VI |
| AVAILABILITY OF CAREER OPPORTUNITIES | | | | | | |
| 1. There are many opportunities in the airline industry. | 4.47 | 0.740 | SA | 3.32 | 1.326 | N |
| 2. There are vast opportunities in the cruise industry. | 4.44 | 0.710 | SA | 3.30 | 1.334 | N |
| 3. There are many opportunities in travel agencies. | 4.41 | 0.749 | SA | 3.32 | 1.270 | N |
| 4. There are a lot of opportunities working on the events industry. | 4.50 | 0.683 | SA | 3.40 | 1.267 | N |
| 5. There are greater opportunities working in the government sector. | 4.29 | 0.746 | SA | 3.45 | 1.204 | N |
| WEIGHTED MEAN | 4.42 | 0.613 | SA | 3.36 | 1.190 | N |
| WORKING ENVIRONMENT | | | | | | |
| 1. The welfare of the employees is a primary concern of the management. | 4.18 | 0.755 | A | 4.04 | 0.981 | A |
| 2. Policies, including those related to workers’ welfare, are clearly understood, and properly implemented. | 4.13 | 0.730 | A | 4.02 | 0.942 | A |
| 3. All workers are competent and work professionally. | 4.29 | 0.725 | SA | 3.92 | 0.947 | A |
| 4. The physical environment is safe & healthy for the workers. | 4.08 | 0.822 | A | 3.22 | 1.309 | N |
| 5. There is harmonious working relationship between management and employees on one hand, and among all employees on the other. | 4.15 | 0.747 | A | 3.70 | 0.898 | A |
| WEIGHTED MEAN | 4.16 | 0.618 | A | 3.78 | 0.854 | A |
| PAY AND BENEFITS | | | | | | |
| 1. The tourism industry offers higher salary package compared to other industries. | 4.01 | 0.791 | A | 3.51 | 1.000 | A |
| 2. There are additional monetary benefits aside from the basic salary such as allowances, bonus, etc. | 4.34 | 0.686 | SA | 3.69 | 0.966 | A |
| 3. There are also non-monetary benefits, aside from those provided by law, like transportation service, health insurance, free travel, etc. | 4.18 | 0.756 | A | 3.70 | 0.897 | A |
| 4. The tourism industry can improve the quality of life of its workers because higher pay & many benefits. | 4.31 | 0.723 | SA | 3.70 | 0.923 | A |
| 5. There are a lot of good benefits in tourism industry, which other industries do not have. | 4.35 | 0.753 | SA | 3.69 | 0.982 | A |
| WEIGHTED MEAN | 4.24 | 0.596 | SA | 3.66 | 0.846 | A |
| SKILLS & COMPETENCIES | | | | | | |
| 1. I believe that I possess the necessary skills that would fit to the demands of the industry. | 4.44 | 0.626 | SA | 4.14 | 0.851 | A |
| 2. I can use my abilities and skills to do my jobs effectively in the tourism industry. | 4.52 | 0.594 | SA | 4.21 | 0.826 | SA |
| 3. My personal values and character traits are suitable in the tourism industry. | 4.51 | 0.636 | SA | 4.22 | 0.804 | SA |
| 4. I know I have advantage in the tourism industry with my skills and competencies. | 4.40 | 0.652 | SA | 4.12 | 0.832 | A |
| 5. I know the industry will provide opportunities to further enhance my skills and competencies. | 4.57 | 0.564 | SA | 4.23 | 0.843 | SA |
| WEIGHTED MEAN | 4.49 | 0.518 | SA | 4.19 | 0.757 | A |
| PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT | | | | | | |
| 1. The tourism industry provides various training programs for professional growth of its workers. | 4.59 | 0.579 | SA | 3.97 | 1.022 | A |
| 2. The tourism industry provides more opportunities for career advancement. | 4.51 | 0.620 | SA | 3.83 | 1.061 | A |
| 3. There is a career path strictly followed by the tourism industry. | 4.29 | 0.805 | SA | 3.86 | 0.997 | A |
| 4. The industry helps develop confidence to attain expertise on chosen field. | 4.57 | 0.608 | SA | 4.05 | 0.932 | A |
| 5. The tourism industry helps develop its workers professionally and personally. | 4.63 | 0.563 | SA | 4.10 | 0.931 | A |
| WEIGHTED MEAN | 4.52 | 0.511 | SA | 3.96 | 0.895 | A |
establishments. According to the Department of Labor and Employment, in the most recent job displacement survey, 4,220 micro, small, medium, and large companies closed, retrenched some of their staff, and shortened employee working days. There were a total of 133,315 workers who were displaced. The report is compiled from employer notices of shutdown and retrenchment sent to the labor department’s regional offices (Pazzibugan, 2021).

The perceptions somehow connect with Skare et al. (2020) report, where the Tourism Industry’s total GDP contribution dropped from 2.93% to 7.82%, and jobs from the tourism sector declined 2.44% to 6.55%. The participants also discussed how the unemployment rate increases as the closure of tourism-related businesses are just some of the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In supporting these statements, Lim (2020) stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Philippines’ unemployment rate would rise to 17.7 percent in 2020, affecting approximately 7.25 million jobs, up from 5.1 percent in 2019 and affecting 2.267 million workers. Relatively, the pandemic has significantly impacted every sector of the Travel and Tourism Industry, leading to a domino effect in the entire tourism supply chain, affecting livelihoods in agriculture, fisheries, creative industries, and other services (Twining Ward and McComb, 2020).

Furthermore, the participants also believed that this has also caused future career anxieties. Aristovnik et al. (2020) revealed the threats that COVID-19 has caused on students’ mental health and career planning. Similarly, the career shock caused by COVID-19 became an obstacle to individuals planning for their careers (Yilmaz, 2020). It was also worth mentioning that students believed that the recovery period of the Philippines’ tourism industry would be prolonged due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.2. Career perceptions before and during the COVID-19 pandemic

Determining student career perceptions before and during the COVID-19 was the primary aim of this study. The researchers identified five (5) major indicators presented in Table 3 with specific statements that correspond to each career perception indicator, such as the availability of career opportunities, the working environment, pay and benefits, skills and competencies, and professional growth and personal development. The basis of the indicators came from different literature about career perceptions that have been modified and constructed by the researchers based on personal ideas and knowledge as tourism management students.

4.2.1. Availability of Career Opportunities

Table 3 shows that before the COVID-19 pandemic, the students “strongly agree” on the availability of career opportunities in the tourism industry with an overall weighted mean of 4.42. This means that the travel and tourism sector has a massive effect on job levels. In fact, in 2019, the total gross contribution to the global workforce was 10.4 percent (Skare et al., 2020). As indicated in the study of Mannaa & Abou-Shouk (2020), students were pleased with their decision to pursue a tourism profession, aim to work in the industry after graduation, and do everything possible to obtain a job in the tourism industry. The study of Teerati & Wattanasan (2016) also indicated that the students chose tourism and hospitality as a significant field to pursue. The result also validates the statement of the participants in the FGD that taking a Tourism Management course can take them to various job opportunities. This was also mentioned by Aynalem et al. (2016), that direct and indirect employment opportunities are present in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry. Further, it can be noted that the results on all the statements under this indicator have a verbal interpretation of “strongly agree” which means that students perceived their career opportunities in the tourism industry positively. Statement 4 has the highest mean of 4.50, which corresponds to many opportunities in the events industry. According to Buathong & Lai (2017), there is a high chance to get into the events industry since lodging, food and beverage, catering, conference facilities, convention center rentals, transportation, tourism, shopping, and entertainment are all part of the events industry. Nonetheless, students still perceived many opportunities in the different sectors of the tourism industry.

On the other hand, the student perception of this indicator during the COVID-19 pandemic showed a drastic change with an average weighted mean of 3.36, receiving a descriptive equivalent of “neutral”. This means that the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed about the Availability of Career Opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic. It can also be noted that the results of all the statements under this indicator have a verbal interpretation of “neutral”. This proved the uncertainties being felt by the students on their career opportunities in the tourism industry at this time of the pandemic. Of the five (5) statements under this indicator, opportunities in the government sector got the highest mean of 3.45. This somehow validates the statement of the participants in the FGD that working in the government sector is one of their alternative career opportunities.

4.2.2. Working Environment

A safe and healthy working environment has been one of the usual considerations of the students in choosing their careers. This indicator got an overall weighted mean of 4.16 with a verbal interpretation of “agree.” Azic (2017) expressed that a good working environment in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry is the primary motivator for workers to engage in good actions. The result supports the study of Nur’ain Achim et al. (2019), in which it discusses that having a good working environment can lead to making good decisions while in the organization. Furthermore, a good working environment is considered to motivate employees to give the best performance and enjoy their careers. It can be noted that Statement 3 got the highest weighted mean of 4.29 with a verbal interpretation of “strongly agree”. This can be attributed to the development of highly competitive individuals by the HEIs and stakeholders (Valdez et al., 2015). The Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED) also released a Memorandum Order in 2006, helping the tourism industry meets its workforce needs by identifying to the HEIs the skills and competencies that should be developed with the students that include the basic skills, thinking skills, interpersonal skills, knowledge on systems and technology, and personal qualities. Thus, students perceive the workers as competent and can work professionally in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry. While Statement 4 got the lowest mean of 4.08, it is still showing a positive perception from the students with its verbal
On the other hand, during the pandemic, this indicator also received a descriptive equivalent of “agree” with an average weighted mean of 3.78. The significant change in perception was observed in Statement 4, “The physical environment is safe & healthy for the workers,” with a mean of 3.22 interpreted as “neutral”. This implies that the current working environment seems unsafe due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ren et al. (2020) mentioned that people tend to feel uncomfortable and hazardous once the world changes due to infectious disease outbreaks.

4.2.3. Pay and Benefits

Most literature in human resources regards to pay and benefits as part of employee motivation. This is also one factor that students usually look into in their future career in the tourism industry. Table 2 shows that before the pandemic, the students “strongly agree” with their perceptions of the tourism industry’s pay and benefits, resulting in an average weighted mean of 4.24. Nyamwange and Masai Mara University (2016) claimed that some individuals were influenced by career offers such as salary, allowances, and holidays. Moreover, Njoroge et al. (2015) have stated that there are common motivations such as pay, promotion, and working conditions when choosing the right career for the students. Of the five (5) statements under this indicator, Statement 5 got the highest mean of 4.35, which shows students’ positive perception of the benefits being provided in the tourism industry compared to other sectors. Based on the survey conducted by Glassdoor (2016) about employee satisfaction, it is shown that 60% are attracted to the benefits offered by the companies. Also, Stalmašeková et al. (2017) emphasized that employee benefits are factors in work motivation. These benefits include salary, bonuses, fees, commissions, medical insurance, and non-monetary benefits, including various social services and benefits.

While during the pandemic, it can be observed the difference in the students’ perception with a weighted average mean of 3.66, receiving a descriptive equivalent of “agree.” This can somehow be attributed to the current situation of the industry, where income was greatly affected. WTTC reported 50 million joblessness in the tourism and hospitality sectors (WTTC, 2020). Moreover, airlines have already taken drastic steps in response to this crisis, including sending employees on paid or unpaid absences, imposing pay cuts, and laying off employees. While the result may still imply a positive perception, the difference still needs to be considered by the industry in terms of competitiveness in compensation at this time of the pandemic. It may be important to note that the Department of Tourism (DOT) and its attached agencies aided the industry and its workforce with incentives by providing comprehensive assistance to the entire sector of travel and hospitality. However, problems on job availability and opportunity in the tourism industry still bring anxieties both to the present manpower and students who expect to join the industry but are halted by the pandemic.

4.2.4. Skills and Competencies

Table 3 displays the students’ career perceptions before the COVID-19 pandemic under the indicator, skills, and competencies. The results show an average weighted mean of 4.49, receiving a descriptive equivalent of “strongly agree.” This result was supported by the study of Bordean and Sonea (2018) that an individual’s career traits and perceived skills are needed for a career in tourism. It can also be noted that all the students strongly agree with all the statements under this indicator which implies the students’ awareness of the importance of possessing the necessary skills and competencies in the tourism industry. Statement 5 has the highest mean of 4.57, proving the study of Theron et al. (2018) that working in various tourism and hospitality sectors requires necessary attributes, making the students versatile in their chosen field. This is also supported by one of the student-participants during the FGD, stating that harnessing skills such as communication skills and learning another language are factors to be qualified for the job they want. Theron et al. (2018) also expressed that to be competent in the corporate world, tourism graduates should develop various skills and reflect the tourism industry’s needs and expectations. However, it was revealed that tertiary education graduates lack adequate soft skill sets, making them unable to enter the workforce and contribute as active employees efficiently. Thus, most new graduates are self-centered, unable to fit into an established team, and expect to be promoted to a senior role without displaying the necessary leadership qualities (Caruana & Mcpherson, 2015, pp. 6–11). The HEIs must look into this and maybe review or revisit their program to address the issues mentioned.

During the pandemic, a difference in the perception was also reflected with an average weighted mean of 4.19, receiving a descriptive equivalent of “agree.” It can be observed the slight difference in the students’ perception as skills and competencies should not suffer even during a pandemic in a service-oriented industry. Students believe that the tourism industry will still provide opportunities to enhance their skills and competencies further. This was reflected in Statement 5, which got the highest mean of 4.23. According to the study of Mzimela & Chikandiwa (2017), training in the tourism industry can be very effective in behavior and attitude towards one’s job and improve job performance. However, Statement 4 got the lowest mean of 4.12. This may be because of the increase in the unemployment rate in the country from 5.1% in 2019 to 17.7% in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Lim, 2020). As a result, some of the student-participants from the FGD seek to find opportunities in another sector to develop their skills.

4.2.5. Professional Growth and Personal Development

On professional growth and personal development, Table 3 presents the results of the students’ perception before and during the pandemic. It can be gleaned from the Table the significant difference in the students’ perception with an average weighted mean of 4.52, receiving a descriptive equivalent of “strongly agree” before the pandemic and an average weighted mean of 3.96 with a descriptive interpretation of “agree” during the pandemic. It can be observed that before the pandemic, students strongly agree with all the statements on how they perceived their professional growth in the tourism industry. In contrast, during the pandemic, all these perceptions have changed. According to Malik, S. & Vivek (2018), training in any company and organization in the tourism industry has become a fundamental part of skill development. Nowadays, the company must implement training programs from time to time to provide satisfactory service to customers from well-trained personnel or staff.
Interestingly, Statement 3 speaks about a career path that got the lowest mean of 4.29. In the study of Batra (2016), it is concluded that the tourism industry should also be involved in the curriculum development of educational institutions so that the course contents and delivery are consistent with the industry expectations of graduates. This action may result in better career pathways for students who want to work in the tourism industry in the future.

On the other hand, students still believe that the tourism industry helps develop its workers professionally and personally during the pandemic. This got the highest weighted mean of 4.10, while opportunities for career advancement got the lowest mean of 3.83. Sheng (2020) stated a substantial impact on the tourism industry’s career opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in significant unemployment and layoffs. Furthermore, this is also supported by one of the student-participants of the FGD stating that premises limit the number of employees resulting in a severe retrenchment and a large percentage of employees being laid off.

As shown in Table 4, a paired sample T-Test was used in comparing the career perception of the 3rd Year Tourism Management Students in the subject University before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The researchers found out that there is a significant difference between the two given periods since it is way beyond the p-value of 0.05, which is 10.708; thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that there are changes in career perceptions that happened between the two periods.

4.3. Student perceptions on career opportunities in the tourism industry during the COVID-19 pandemic

From the perceived status of the participants in the tourism industry during the pandemic and the significant difference in their career perceptions on the tourism industry before and during the pandemic comes their perceptions of their career opportunities in the tourism industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 4 presents the participants’ actual responses (Factual Coding) and the themes (Axial Coding) from the conducted FGD.

As shown in Table 5, the interviewed students see their career opportunities as full of uncertainties and indecisiveness. The study of Aristovnik et al. (2020) stated that most of the students were worrying about their professional careers in the future during the lockdown. The pandemic made the travel and tourism industry slowdown as countries, including the Philippines, impose travel bans, close borders, and implement quarantine protocols (Gosling et al., 2020). Further, several tourism-related establishments filed bankruptcy, laid-off employees, and stopped hiring industry workers. Other students also considered alternative plans and other opportunities like joining the government service, owning a business, and pursuing further study. With regard to the opportunities outside the Tourism Industry, it can be noted the many job opportunities that have been opened from the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Industry which the displaced tourism professionals and even graduates in the field of tourism may consider.

4.4. Suggestions that can help students pursue their career in the tourism industry

With the gathered information on student career perceptions and opportunities in the tourism industry at this time of pandemic, suggestions coming from the students are deemed necessary and valuable to be able to come up with the most appropriate solution to their concerns. Table 5 indicates the actual responses of the students from the conducted FGD.

Table 6 shows the student-participants suggestions that can help them pursue their career in the tourism industry: 1. Provide a list of job sites, 2. Conduct personal counseling about career perception, 3. Have wider partnerships, 4. Enhance learning tools, 5. Present List of Job Opportunities, 6. Expansion of connections with other organizations. In consideration of all the suggested inputs, the students expect that the Institution will create a program that will address their disposition towards their career in the tourism industry.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic had severely affected many people in different ways, and this study showed that the career perceptions of

### Table 4

|                                | Mean | S.D. | t-value | p-value | Sig |
|--------------------------------|------|------|---------|---------|-----|
| Availability Of Career Opportunities | BEFORE | 4.42 | 0.613 | 11.676  | p = 0.000 < 0.05 |
|                                  | DURING | 3.36 | 1.190 |         |     |
| Working Environment              | BEFORE | 4.16 | 0.618 | 6.570   | p = 0.000 < 0.05 |
|                                  | DURING | 3.78 | 0.854 |         |     |
| Pay And Benefits                 | BEFORE | 4.24 | 0.596 | 8.862   | p = 0.000 < 0.05 |
|                                  | DURING | 3.66 | 0.846 |         |     |
| Skills & Competencies            | BEFORE | 4.49 | 0.518 | 6.558   | p = 0.000 < 0.05 |
|                                  | DURING | 4.19 | 0.757 |         |     |
| Professional Growth and Personal Development | BEFORE | 4.52 | 0.511 | 8.636   | p = 0.000 < 0.05 |
|                                  | DURING | 3.96 | 0.895 |         |     |
| OVERALL CAREER PERCEPTION        | BEFORE | 4.37 | 0.447 | 10.708  | p = 0.000 < 0.05 |
|                                  | DURING | 3.79 | 0.762 |         |     |
the students could change with the given circumstances. Based on the results of the study, it was found out that the student-participants see the tourism industry as a major business sector severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. They characterized the industry with several business closures, travel restrictions, massive retrenchment, and unemployment. They also expressed that the industry would take a long recovery, which causes future career anxieties for them. On the indicators provided regarding career perceptions, results show a significant difference in the student career perceptions before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, the students perceive their career opportunities in the tourism industry during this pandemic full of uncertainties and indecisiveness. Given the current situation, that leads to uncertainties and worries about future careers. Also, the challenges in the industry that resulted in a downturn and personal anxiety.

### Table 5

| PARTICIPANT | FACTUAL CODING | AXIAL CODING | THEME |
|-------------|----------------|--------------|-------|
| 1           | We are all flexible, so we need to consider other options, such as going to the government or opening our own small business. | Flexible in finding other options, for example, in the government or starting a small business. | Job Opportunities in Government, Engage in Business |
| 2           | So for me, mapping opportunity ko non is siguro labas sa course na kinuha ko kasi nga diba since travel, travel yung mga yang about dito sa tourism or meron din namang mga office works pero very minimal nalang so siguro sa ibang industry yung work na yon, na career. (So for me, the possible opportunity for me is outside the course that I took because since travel, those about tourism travel or there are also office works but it’s very minimal so maybe the work is in other industries as my career.) | Opportunities outside the tourism course or in other industries such as office works but very minimal. | Career Opportunities outside the Tourism Industry |
| 3           | So, dahil dito sa sitwasyon, mas lumala yang worry ko kasi hindi ko na nga alam kung saan pa ako pupunta tapos may ganito pa. Mag, marami pang challenge na maraming jobs sa industry natin yung nagkaroon ng downturn so ayon, parang nagkako-anxiety din ako minsan dahil sa ganitong situation. (So, because of this situation, my worries got worse because I didn’t know where else I was going after this situation. There are many more challenges that many jobs in our industry had a downturn, so I also seem to get anxiety sometimes because of this situation.) | Given the current situation, that leads to uncertainties and worries about future careers. Also, the challenges in the industry that resulted in a downturn and personal anxiety. | Future Career Anxieties |
| 4           | Kasi even if we say na were flexible or pwede tayo sa ibang field is that nakaka-conscious na baka yung credentials ko, yung requirements nila is baka di ko ma-meet to get that job. (Because even if we say that we’re flexible or have chances in other fields, I realize that maybe my credentials or that I won’t be able to meet their requirements to get that job.) | Uncertainties with future career opportunities can lead to anxiety. | Uncertainties |
| 5           | Medyo hindi rin sure pero kung ano yung ibigay na opportunity, kung meron mag-offer then siguro yon yung ita-take ko. (Not quite sure but if there will be an opportunity offered for me, probably I’ll take it.) | Given how devastated the Tourism Industry is, indecisiveness in terms of Career Perceptions arises. | Indecisiveness in Career Opportunities |
| 6           | I am thinking na mag-aral ulit. (I am thinking of studying again.) | Opportunities to study again even after graduation became one of the alternatives. | Further Study as Alternative Plan |

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| PARTICIPANT | FACTUAL CODING | AXIAL CODING | THEME |
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The study also denotes the creation of a plan by the concerned government agencies intended for academic institutions that offer programs related to Tourism Management to provide clear direction to the students, especially on their career opportunities in the industry amidst the pandemic. The feeling of uncertainties in their career needs to be addressed not only by the Institution but also by the government’s clear guidelines or policies.

Further, the Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management of the subject University is suggested to implement relevant and timely career opportunity program/s that would address the current issues that the students are experiencing. This could enable other Institutions or even other universities to adopt such programs for the benefit of the students. A need to revisit and revise the curriculum or course syllabus to look into some alternative plans for the missed experiential learning activities by the students must also be considered. This specifically refers to the internship program and other skill-based courses and field trips or tours to ensure that the students would still be able to acquire the knowledge and skills they felt they have not fully acquired because of the impact of the pandemic in the educational system.

Hence, the study is believed to have significantly contributed to the limited research studies conducted on the topic for which the
unforeseen changes in the career perceptions of tourism management students at this time of pandemic can no longer be ignored. In addition, the study’s findings are highly relevant and can be considered helpful in the development of programs by concerned government agencies and HEIs for students with negative perceptions of their career opportunities in the tourism industry. In this light, the important role of the students as future workforce in the industry must always be regarded as an indispensable catalyst to the growth and development of the tourism industry.

This study includes only one college program in a private University in Manila, Philippines, which is the Tourism Management
Program. This study revolves around determining and comparing the career perceptions of Third-year Tourism Management students before and during the COVID-19 pandemic with the end view of providing significant inputs to the development of programs for the tourism students concerning their career opportunities. Hence, the researchers recommend that future researchers conduct additional explanations and explore other areas of study to further examine the students’ career perception in this time of the pandemic. Given the situation that not only the Tourism Management Students are being affected by the pandemic, but thorough research that can be applied in other areas must also be studied in order to have a broader perspective regarding the career perceptions that will eventually provide significant inputs to the development of programs not only limited under the Tourism Management Department. Furthermore, the results of this study cannot be made as a basis for generalization. This means that further research to include other programs related to the tourism industry should be made to support the findings of this study, particularly on the perceptions of the students and their career in the tourism industry during the pandemic. A similar study may also be conducted on other schools or universities to add valuable information and deeper insights about the topic.

Authorship statement

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