

Examination of Tourism Undergraduates' Industry Commitment, in the Context of China

Suosheng Wang

Abstract

Grounded in the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), this study developed a comprehensive research framework that encapsulated both personal and contextual factors in terms of tourism undergraduates' commitment to career choice in the context of China's social and vocational contexts. Applying structural equation modeling (SEM) to the data collected from 446 undergraduate students studying tourism in China, this study shows that 'self-interest,' 'others' support,' 'social status,' 'outcome expectation' and 'nature of work' exert significant effects on student' Commitment to Career Choice. Implications of the findings include suggested interventions in attracting tourism students to persist in their career path.

Keywords: tourism education; undergraduate students; industry commitment; China

Introduction

The scope of tourism education has expanded rapidly in terms of offerings of education and training programs, therefore, the importance of discerning students' perceptions and attitudes towards work and careers in the tourism industry should not be renounced. By learning the actual circumstances of the tourism industry, students could prevent a drastic flux in their career perceptions and/or discouragement from a future tourism career. The tourism programs and industry organizations may lose some highly motivated students and highly skilled employees if they do not try to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of the current students enrolled in tourism educational programs.

This is the author's manuscript of the article published in final edited form as:

Wang, S. (2016). Examination of tourism undergraduates' industry commitment, in the context of China. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 16(2), 101–115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15313220.2015.1120170>

Previous career literature in tourism focused on exploring students' general attitudes toward the industry, career prospects, and intention to enter the industry upon graduation (e.g., Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Lu & Adler, 2009; Wang & Huang, 2014); in addition, literature showed how different variables such as gender, work experience, year of study might affect students' perceptions of and attitudes toward the industry. Lacking is a nomological network that explores the effects of different factors which lay significant influence on student's career choice (Wan, Wong, & Kong, 2014, p.2). While the social cognitive career theory (SCCT, Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994) has been typically applied in assessing students' perceptions of their industry commitment in the field of tourism industry (e.g., Wan et al., 2014), it is noted that this theory is developed in the USA, conceptually and empirically anchored in the country's social and occupational contexts. International researchers and practitioners should be careful not to transport the theory to their own contexts without cultural adaptation and modifications (Leung, 1995).

Given the importance of understanding students' perceptions and attitudes toward their career commitment, yet rare studies have ever been conducted in this regard in China's social and vocational contexts, this study is designed to explore and identify the influential career-related factors grounded in SCCT theory, in terms of their effects on Chinese tourism students' commitments to career choices, in an effort to increase an understanding in this area, and to recommend interventions aiming to help encourage Chinese students to make career plans more effectively and efficiently.

Literature Review

Past research has defined career choices “as choosing one profession over another” (Orndorff & Herr, 1996). According to Blustein, Ellis and Devenis (1989), commitment to career choice can be explained as the ability of an individual to determine his or her job preferences, as well as to have a strong affiliation with specific occupational goals. SCCT, introduced by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994), is derived from the self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986) which defines the factors that influence an individual’s career options. SCCT focuses on the inter-relationships among various personal, contextual and behavioral variables, which are assumed to impact performance outcome, career interests and choices. According to Choo, Norsiah and Tan (2012), there are a few advantages of SCCT: first, social cultural factors were being considered in the SCCT; second, SCCT includes the cognitive elements that focus on self-efficacy and outcome expectation; third, it covers the contextual variables such as ethnic identity, family environment, learning experiences and others. Because of its extensiveness and complexness of the theory, SCCT has been viewed as the most important career theory (Choo et al., 2012).

In terms of personal factors, one salient SCCT factor impacting one’s career choice is self-efficacy. Bandura (1986) defines self-efficacy as an individual’s ability to judge his or her capabilities to perform specific actions or designated functions through their beliefs about their capabilities. According to Lent and Brown (1994), individuals who had a higher self-efficacy and anticipated positive outcomes would support higher goals. Applying self-efficacy theory, SCCT posits that individuals are more likely to pursue and be successful in occupations for which they had a high self-efficacy (Lent et al., 1994). The second factor is outcome expectation, which, in response to vocational behavior, helps to determine career goals and interests (Gore & Leuwerke, 2000). Bandura (1986) describes outcome expectation as one’s beliefs concerning the probable outcomes of particular actions. Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2002) define outcome

expectations as an individual's beliefs concerning the consequence or outcome of completing a specific action. According to Lent and Brown (1994), an individual who has a higher self-efficacy and anticipates positive outcomes would support higher goals.

In addition, a large body of research using the SCCT indicates that self-interest has a large impact on career choices (Bandura, 1986; Lent et al., 1994). Sibson (2011, p.56) observed that the two influential factors with the highest mean score were 'enjoyable work' and 'interesting work,' indicating that individual interest in the choice of a career was of paramount importance, and strongly related to the notion of interest were perceptions of enjoyment. Further, outcome expectation strongly influences self-interest in the area of motivation (Bandura, 1986; Fouad & Smith, 1996). It is inferred that students' personal interests play an important role on student's commitment to career choice.

Besides the personal factors, the nature of work is considered a critical, contextual factor influencing students' career commitment. Wan et al.'s (2014) study indicates that the nature of work contributes significantly to the perceived social status of work. However, in Wan et al.'s study, the construct of 'nature of work – job interest' seems to contain two different meanings – one is nature of work and the other is self-interest, which may require further investigation by breaking up this factor into two separate parts. In a study on Chinese tourism students, Wang and Huang (2014) observed that the students' perceived 'nature of work and social status of work' have a significant impact on their career perceptions of the industry. The nature of work in tourism such as low pay and unsociable working hours, may exert a negative influence on the job expectation and satisfaction, and force them to leave the industry (Parsons & Care, 1991). While an individual's career prospects often depend on one's perceptions of the job and the industry

(Richardson, 2008), social status could be evaluated by whether an individual had pride in his/her career, if their family members were proud of the job, and if the job was perceived as a respected and an important occupation in society (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000). Social status could introduce contextual pressures, supports, and barriers related to career expectations (Rice, 1999).

In addition, it is assumed that the support and understanding of the important others of a student (e.g. parents, teachers, and friends) may significantly impact his or her career interest and expectations. The importance of the others' support can be explained with the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985). One of TPB's core determinants is 'subjective norm, which refers to the perceived social pressure from important others to perform or not to perform a behavior; people are more likely to perform a behavior when they get support from their referents than when they do not (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Previous studies found that the perceptions and expectations of parents, friends and teachers regarding their students' abilities in academic major's influenced the child's self-interest and career expectation (e.g. Bleeker & Jacobs, 2004; Jacobs, Finken, Griffin, & Wright, 1998; Speering & Rennie (1996).

China's early tourism education studies discussed both the overall situation of China's higher education in tourism as well as the major problems facing China's tourism education (Chen, 1990; Zhao, 1991; Lew & Yu, 1995; Xiao, 2000). In recent years, more research was conducted in an attempt to understand what factors influenced Chinese tourism students' career perceptions and attitudes (Gu, Kayanaugh & Cong, 2007; Jiang & Tribe, 2009; Lu & Adler, 2009; Wong & Liu, 2010). For instance, Wong and Liu (2010) examined the perceptions of tourism undergraduates regarding their parental influences and how they predicted the career choice intentions with regard to the tourism industry. It is noted, however, few researchers have

ever attempted to examine the interactive effects of the factors when determining students' career choice or industry commitment.

Based on the conceptual model proposed by Wan et al. (2014), a comprehensive framework is developed to encapsulate the above discussed factors, i.e. working conditions, others' support, and social status (which are contextual variables), and self-efficacy, outcome expectation, and self-interest (which are personal variables). The main purpose of this study is to identify important contextual and personal factors and their interrelationships in impacting students' Commitment to Career Choice in the context of China's tourism industry and education.

While the model focuses on the functions of the contextual and personal factors on student's Commitment to Career Choice, the roles of some categorical variables such as gender, year of study, and work experience are not included as part of the discussion, which does not mean the moderating roles of these variables are not important in the process of student's career choice (Chuang et al., 2009). Internships, for instance, which can be supported by proper career and placement services, enable college students to gain industry-related experience, improve their networking skills in the industry, and increase the rate of job placement upon graduation (Chi & Gursoy, 2009). Kim and Park (2013) examined the impact that undergraduate students' internships have on their perceptions of careers in the hospitality and tourism industry, and observed that desirable social experiences during students' internship periods can ultimately lead to a change in students' perceptions, thereby decreasing negative perceptions regarding various factors relating to a career in the hospitality and tourism industry. Students who experienced internships before they began their formal careers were found to have stronger career goals for

the industry than those who did not (Chuang & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2010). Positive perception of the industry as an intern can reinforce a student's aspiration to and prospects for a future career in the industry, whereas negative perception is likely to adversely affect aspirations (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2007).

The conceptualization of the interrelationships among the predicting and outcome factors are proposed and outlined in Figure 1.

<insert Fig. 1 here>

Setting, Sample and Data Analysis

A survey was administered at a university in South China, which data were used to test the conceptual framework and hypothetical relations. The questionnaire contains items designed to measure the proposed constructs, i.e. perceived nature of work, significant others' support, social status, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, self-interest, and commitment to career choice. The items used to measure each construct are gleaned from the previous literature (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Taylor & Bentz, 1983; Wang & Huang, 2014). Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000) employed a multi-dimensional attitude scale in their study of Turkish tourism students that addressed factors such as nature of work, social status, outcome expectations, and commitment to the industry. The measurement scale of 'self-efficacy' and 'self-interest' are based on the studies of Taylor and Bentz (1983) and Wang and Huang (2014), respectively.

The first part of the survey addresses students' profile information including gender, year of study, major, and work experience; also included in this part is the single-item variable used to measure students' commitment to career choice ('Do you intend to work in the tourism industry after graduation?'), based on a 7-point scale (1=definitely no to 7=definitely yes). The second

part of the questionnaire measures student's self-efficacy items with a 7-point scale (1=not confident at all to 7=completely confident); the remaining questionnaire items measure the constructs of outcome expectations, perceived self-interest, social recognition, significant others' support and nature of work, all utilizing a 7-point scale from 1=extremely disagree to 7=extremely agree.

A total of 29 items are generated to measure these constructs. Among them, the 'self-efficacy' items are: how is your self-efficacy in self-appraising your ability, interest and values; how is your self-efficacy in looking for occupational information; how is your self-efficacy in terms of goal selection; how is your self-efficacy in career planning; and how is your self-efficacy in problem solving. The 'outcome expectation' items include: promotion opportunities are satisfactory; one can make good money by working in tourism industry; one can make more money in tourism than in other sectors; it is hard to find tourism jobs; it is hard to find desired jobs. The perceived 'self-interest' contains such items: tourism jobs are interesting to me; working in tourism industry is enjoyable to me; working in tourism industry has long been my dream; I feel enthusiastic about starting my first job in tourism industry following graduation. Social recognition items are: I talk to my relatives/friends about my major with proudness; my family is proud of my profession in tourism; working in tourism industry is not valued in society; People working in tourism industry are not respected by other people. 'Others' support' items include: my parents are supportive to my career goal in tourism industry; my teachers encourage me to choose a tourism career; my friends/classmates are supportive to my career. And the 'nature of work' items include: there are no regular working hours; work pressure is too high; need to start with lowest position; working hours are too long; relationship between managers and staff is poor; most tourism jobs are low skilled; The working environment is pleasant.

The survey instrument was initially written in English and was translated into Chinese, by the researchers who are fluent in both English and Chinese. A pilot survey was conducted prior to implementing the formal survey. Using a systematic random sampling approach, thirty students from a pre-selected class were selected and asked to fill out the survey and make comments on the survey questions, to make sure all the questions were easily understandable. The questionnaire was distributed in November, 2014, to all the tourism freshmen, sophomores and juniors studying at the selected Chinese university. The background information and the purpose of the survey were provided to the students beforehand to ensure they were well-informed when providing their responses to the questions. Students were assured that participation in this survey was entirely voluntary and confidential, with no coercion or pressure of any kind to participate; students' names and identifiers were not recorded and the survey was anonymous. To secure a high response rate and accurate sampling without bias, the questionnaire was self-administered and hand-delivered by student coordinators to each class.

To conduct the formal survey, this study employed a convenience sampling technique, in a hope to include all the three years students. Classes were selected to make sure all the tourism students (from freshmen to juniors) were covered, and in each class one student coordinator was assigned to administer the survey. The reason for choosing to conduct the survey in each class is that, in China's colleges, each student is assigned to with one unique class till graduation, and it is very convenient and efficient to survey all the students through each such class. A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed and 446 usable surveys were collected, representing a response rate of 74.3%. The respondents were comprised of the following student rankings: 33.8% freshmen, 42.1% sophomores and 24.1% juniors. Female respondents represented the majority of the participants in the study (69.9% female students versus 30.1% male students).

The Cronbach's reliability test was performed to measure the internal consistency of each of the scales used in this study. Based on the reliability test, two items were removed due to their negative contribution to the scale's overall reliability score. Additionally, values of two 'nature of work' items and 'social status' items were recoded, ensuring the values were consistent with the other items' values for consequent data analyses. In essence, all the 27 items were scaled in the same manner, with "1" representing extremely negative and "7" representing extremely positive.

The data was screened for any violations of underlying assumptions by conducting descriptive statistics analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 20, 2013). All the cases were retained for further analysis. Statistical analytic software was used in implementing structural equation modeling (SEM). The data was analyzed according to Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach, involving a preliminary step of confirmatory factory analysis (CFA) to test whether the measured variables reliably reflect the hypothesized latent variables using LISREL (8.80). Construct reliability and validity (of the construct measurements) were tested, as well as the overall goodness of fit of the measurement model based on the construct reliabilities, average variance extracted (AVE), and correlations among the constructs. The structural model was then tested to investigate the relationships among the constructs. The goodness of fit indicators demonstrated a good fit for the structural model. They were inspected based on the indices of χ^2/df , p-value, comparative fit index (CFI), normative fit index (NFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA).

Results

The summated mean scores of the constructs, from the highest to the lowest, are 4.85 (Self-efficacy or SE in short), 4.25 (Outcome Expectation or OE), 4.25 (Commitment to Career Choice or CCC), 4.03 (Self-interest or SI), 3.95 (Others' Support or OS), 3.92 (Social Status or SS), and 3.56 (Nature of Work or NW) (see Table 1). All the constructs' summated means range from 3 to 5 which are considered moderate. The construct with the highest mean is SE and the one receiving the lowest mean is NW.

<insert Table 1 here>

Measurement Model

A CFA for the proposed model of seven constructs - SE, NW, OE, CCC, SI, OS and SS - was conducted, and the model showed an acceptable level of fit indices, $\chi^2(304) = 1261.34$, $p = .01$; NFI = 0.91; CFI = 0.93; RMSEA = .08, which indicated an acceptable fit (MacCallum, Brown, & Sugawara, 1996). Overall, the measurement model showed an acceptable fit for the data. Convergent validity was assessed by the significant loadings between the observed variables and each latent variable. All the observed variables were loaded and indicated at least .40 on their delegated latent variables and were statistically significant ($p < .01$). The composite reliabilities of all the constructs exceeded the cutoff value of .70 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998), ranging from .735 to .883. Thus, the multiple item scales were acceptable for measuring each of the constructs.

Structural Model

The structural model was employed to examine the hypothetical relationships. The results showed that the goodness-of-fit indices (goodness-of-fit statistics: $\chi^2(312) = 1287.24$, $p = .01$;

NFI = 0.91; CFI = 0.93; RMSEA = .08.) exceeded the acceptable level, suggesting the model is adequate. The variables of Self-interest, Self-efficacy and Outcome Expectation explained 37% of the variance of the variable of Commitment to Career Choice. As for the other endogenous variables, 61%, 70% and 87% of the variances of Outcome Expectation, Self-interest and Social Status were explained by the indicator variables, respectively.

Table 2 shows the significant paths with standardized coefficients and t values. There are four types of path relationships in this study i.e. the relationships of contextual-contextual, contextual-personal, personal-personal, and personal-commitment variables. All the paths showed to be significant.

<Insert Table 2 here>

Specifically, the relationships between the contextual variables, both the indicator constructs of ‘Others’ support’ and ‘Nature of work’ had significant positive influences on ‘Social Status’ ($\beta_{os\ ss} = 0.88, t = 16.95$; $\beta_{nw\ ss} = 0.16, t = 3.78$): meaning that, if students are assured of strong support from their parents as well as their teachers and friends, and are aware of more positive images about the nature of work, they would perceive the social status of the tourism industry more positively.

The relationships between the contextual and personal variables were examined and it was determined that the construct of ‘Others’ support’ had a positive impact on the construct of ‘Self-interest’ ($\beta_{os\ si} = 0.27, t = 4.13$). As for the construct of ‘Outcome Expectation,’ significant impact was evidenced by the variables of ‘Social Status’ ($\beta_{ss\ oe} = 0.76, t = 10.97$), ‘Self-efficacy’ ($\beta_{se\ oe} = 0.10, t = 2.28$), and ‘Outcome Expectation’ ($\beta_{os\ oe} = 0.62, t = 3.73$).

In terms of the relationships between the personal variables, the variable of ‘Self-
efficacy’ had a significant impact on ‘Outcome expectation’ ($\beta_{se\ oe} = 0.10, t = 2.28$) which in
turn produced a significant impact on ‘Self-interest’ ($\beta_{oe\ si} = 0.62, t = 7.83$).

Regarding the relationships between the personal variables and ‘Commitment to Career
Choice,’ ‘Self-interest’ and ‘Outcome Expectation’ and ‘Self-efficacy’ were found to have
positive effects on the variable of ‘Commitment to Career Choice’ ($\beta_{si\ ccc} = 0.40, t = 4.22; \beta_{oe\ ccc}$
 $= 0.26$).

Direct and Indirect Effects

Predictors’ effects on outcome variables can be either direct, indirect, or both. The direct
effect is the pathway from the exogenous variable to the endogenous variable while controlling
for the mediating variable, hence called direct effect; the indirect effect describes the pathway
from the exogenous variable to the outcome through a mediator, hence called indirect effect.
Table 3 lists the predictor variables which had significant direct effects and indirect effects on
the outcome variables. Among these effects:

- Others’ Support had significant direct effects on Social Status, Self-interest and Outcome
Expectation, and indirect effects on Outcome Expectation and Commitment to Career
Choice;
- Nature of Work had a significant direct effect on Social Status and indirect effects on
Outcome Expectation, Self-interest and Commitment to Career Choice;
- Social Status had a significant direct effect on Outcome Expectation and indirect effects
on Self-interest and Commitment to Career Choice;

- Self-efficacy had significant direct and indirect effects on Outcome Expectation, direct and indirect effects on Commitment to Career Choice. However, interestingly, the total effect of self-efficacy on Commitment to Career Choice was insignificant (standardized total effect value: -0.10; t-value: -1.65). This is because that the direct effect and indirect effect are not consistent: while we generally expect direct and indirect effects to have the same sign, this is not the case in this study - the direct effect is negative and the indirect effect is positive, and the two effects tend to cancel each out. As a result, the total effect is suppressed.
- Outcome Expectation had a significant direct effect on Self-interest, and direct and indirect effects on Commitment to Career Choice;
- Self-interest had a direct effect on Commitment to Career Choice.

<Insert Table 3 here>

The results show that the personal variables of Self-interest and Outcome Expectation had significant direct effects on Commitment to Career Choice; Outcome Expectation additionally exercises a significant indirect effect on Commitment to Career Choice through Self-interest. The contextual variables of Others' Support, Nature of Work and Social Status showed significant indirect effects on Commitment to Career Choice.

The Sobel test (Sobel, 1986) was utilized to test the significance of the mediating roles of: Social Status to the impacts of Others' Support on Outcome Expectation, and to the impacts of Nature of work on Outcome Expectation; Self-interest to the impacts of Others' Support on Commitment to Career Choice; Outcome Expectation to the impacts of Social Status on Self-interest and Commitment to Career Choice, and to the impacts of Self-efficacy on Commitment

to Career Choice. The results of the Sobel tests, including the Sobel test statistics (STS), and their corresponding two-tailed p-values are listed below:

Others' Support→Social Status→Outcome Expectation, STS = 6.46, p-value = 0.01, significant;
Nature of Work→Social Status→Outcome Expectation, STS = 2.05, p-value = 0.04, significant;
Others' Support→Social Interest→Commitment, STS = 2.89, p-value = 0.01, significant;
Outcome Expectation→Self-interest→Commitment, STS=3.80, p-value = 0.01, significant;
Social Status→Outcome Expectation→Self-interest, STS = 6.31, p-value = 0.01, significant;
Other's Support→Outcome Expectation→Self-interest, STS = 3.21, p-value = 0.01, significant;
Other's Support→Outcome Expectation→Commitment, STS = 2.20, p-value = 0.03, significant;
Social Status→Outcome Expectation→Self-interest, STS = 6.31, p-value = 0.01, significant;
Self-efficacy→Outcome Expectation→Commitment, STS = 1.80, p-value = 0.07, not significant

The Sobel tests show the significant mediating roles of the three variables, i.e., Social Status, Self-interest and Outcome Expectation. As a result, except for Self-efficacy, all the other variables showed significant direct and/or indirect effects on student's Commitment to Career Choice.

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the Social Career Choice Theory and previous studies concerning tourism students' industry commitment, this study examined the roles of personal factors (self-efficacy, outcome expectation and self-interest) and contextual factors (nature of work, significant others' support and social status) on students' commitment to career choice in the context of China's social and occupational context. To recall, self-interest influenced commitment to career choice; outcome expectations influenced self-interest and commitment to career choice; others' support

influenced outcome expectations via social status, then influenced self-interest and Commitment to Career Choice; nature of work influenced social status, and then influenced outcome expectations.

The findings indicate that many tourism students in China may not hold positive perceptions about their future careers in the tourism industry. This has indicated serious implications for students, education providers, and the tourism industry. If potential students were losing interest in tourism education, education providers would find it difficult to recruit students and would lose vigor in designing high quality programs. Ultimately, the tourism industry would find it difficult to seek or keep qualified employees to meet customers' expectations of service and satisfaction. Future research, focused on students who show a strong interest in the tourism industry and other positive underlying reasons toward the industry, would provide further insight into how to encourage positive perceptions among students who lack self-interest in the tourism industry.

Students' perceived nature of work had effects on perceived outcome expectations and self-interest via the variable of perceived social status, which in turn influenced their commitment to career choice. One implication is, in order to enhance students' career commitments to the tourism industry, the industry leaders and educators should improve the image and prospects of the tourism industry as well as its social status. For instance, Litteljohn and Watson (2004) argued that the educators' role of enhancing employability is more than just providing students with a skill base; it is about educating them for "appropriate attitudes and aspirations to guide their career trajectories and industry vision" (p.412). Tourism educators may consider holding more seminars and workshops by inviting successful tourism professionals

and companies to the classroom, sharing their stories with the students. It is believed that a better recognition of the image and nature of tourism work, as well as a better defined tourism career prospect, would positively influence students' career commitments in the tourism industry.

Students in general look for jobs that offer good career prospects and which are promising career prospects that would definitely help increase their intention to enter and commit to the tourism industries (Wan et al., 2014).

Notably, the effects made by self-efficacy occurred at a nuanced level, which is not consistent with the findings of previous studies (Chuang et al., 2009). This may be because that students who perceive high self-efficacy believe they are overqualified for the tourism industry given the lowly perceived nature of work and social status of tourism jobs by Chinese students (Wang & Huang, 2014). This may also have to do with the intervention of an erroneous variable *Guanxi* (network of relationships) which can be attributed as a unique Chinese business culture. If a student in China does not have the right *Guanxi* network working for him or her, the student may not perceive satisfactory outcome expectations or be confident in securing a job even when he or she possesses high confidence in self-efficacy. In the context of Chinese students, future research may consider adding *Guanxi* as a control variable in coping with the confounding issue. Yet, hopefully, this situation may gradually change along with the country adopting mature market economy and the tourism sector encountering fierce competitions.

Educators in China have the highest levels of public respect (Coughlan, 2013); correspondingly, Chinese educators and colleges are deemed to bear high responsibility in taking care of students' campus life, study, and their future careers. That said, what are taught in class about the industry may directly affect the students' perceptions of the factors such as the nature

of work, social status, and career expectations, and Chinese students (and their parents) tend to greatly rely on their teachers and colleges for advising about their future careers. The results of this study indicates that, to make the students committed to career choice in tourism, tourism educators in China should make efforts to foster students' interest and prospects in the career. Tourism educators need to identify students who negatively perceive the nature of the work and the industry's social status; in addition, identify these students who chose the major unwillingly, then formulate methods by which enhance the interest and perceptions of these students based on how their inadvertent decisions affect their future career perceptions.

Tourism undergraduates in China rely on the schools and their advisors/teachers to know and connect with the industry. A successful tourism program should not only teach students how to grasp the required knowledge, skills and competencies, but more importantly, ensure the students and their parents a good career prospect. The schools should be well aware of students' actual perceptions of the nature of work and social status of the industry; whenever necessary, correct any misconceptions held by the students about the industry and convey their major concerns to the industry.

In the survey, some of the students offered comments on their career choices, complaining about school's limited information about the industry, few communications with tourism professionals and industry leaders, or little chance to do internship in well-known companies or in a competitive position; some students reported that they are not clear about their future career paths or not confident in their competency in the real workplace. Results of the descriptive statistics analysis also indicate that tourism students may hold a negative or mild image of the industry. Therefore, a successful tourism program should be able to directly address

students' concerns in these regards, for instance, by providing students with good advising services and well-tuned internship opportunities; to strengthen effective communications with the parents, providing them with more positive information about the industry. These efforts will hopefully enhance students' self-interest and outcome expectations, and will in turn, strengthen their career commitments in the tourism industry.

The effects of the nature of work, social status, and the others' support are closely related with the socioeconomic status and actual impacts of the industry. From the industry's perspective, it is highly recommended that the industry share the concern with the tourism educators, by providing up-to-date information about the industry and its positive impacts on the society and economy, well-planned internship opportunities, and job opportunities for the tourism students. Educators need to make efforts to invite the industry leaders and entrepreneurs to the schools, for instance, by serving tourism schools' industry advisory boards, paying regular visits to the schools, making guest lectures and providing internship opportunities to the students. The universities need to take the initiative and be more proactive in public relations, to establish relationships not only with the industry, but with the media as well to enhance the image of tourism major.

This study posited and empirically confirmed that the predicting model of student's commitment to career choice, in the context of China, should include some important factors such as student's self-interest, social status of tourism career, and the others' support. Student's self-interest is a significant predictor of commitment to career choice, which should be measured as a separate predicting variable. In addition to the perceived nature of work, this study identifies social status and others' support as two important contextual variables which should be included

in the predicting model of students' career commitment. It is recommended that future studies on Chinese tourism students' career commitment should incorporate the variables of self-interest, the perceived social status, and others' support. This study presents a theoretical framework that provides a centralizing structure through which one can better understand what and how important factors may significantly affect Chinese tourism students' industry commitment. While the study was conducted in China, it is suggested that future research delve into testing the theoretical framework to further verify the validity of the measurement model as well as the predicting model in different social and vocational contexts, to consolidate the conceptual model and better understand how to assess undergraduate tourism students' overall career commitment worldwide.

This study focused on examining the interactive roles of self-interest, outcome expectation, self-efficacy, nature of work, social status and the others' support on student's industry commitment. However, it is acknowledged that student's career choice is a complicated process, in which other factors may meddle together as well. For instance, work experience has been stressed in tourism literature in terms of their impacts on students' perceptions of the industry. For instance, Kozak and Kizilirmak (2001, cited in Roney and Öztin (2007) observed that Turkish tourism undergraduate students' work experience as a trainee in the industry affected their perceptions in a negative way; Jenkins (2001) noted that, in the UK and the Netherlands, hospitality students' perceptions of the industry tended to deteriorate as they progressed in their studies. It is reasonably assumed that students' status variables, such as work experience, year of study, gender, and work experience, may moderate the relationships between the SCCT variables and students' industry commitment. It is recommended that, to be of more practical significance, future research should further explore the moderating effects of these

variables. One limitation of this study is that the sample of tourism students was collected from a single university in China, caution should be taken when interpreting the results. However, this study is significant as the university is a national tier-one university in China, with students coming from all the different areas of the country.

References

- Ajzen, I. (1985). "From Intentions to Action: A Theory of Planned Behavior" In J. Kuhl and J. Beckman (eds.), *Action Control: From Cognition to Behavior*, Heidelberg, Germany: Springer, pp. 11-39.
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding Attitudes and Predicting Social Behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hill.
- Anderson, J. D., & Gerbing, D. W. (1988). Structural modeling in practice: A review and recommended two-step approach. *Psychological Bulletin*, 103, 411-423.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bleeker, M & Jacobs, J. (2004) Achievement in Math and Science: Do Mothers' Beliefs Matter 12 Years Later? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 96(1), p.97-109.
- Blustein, D. L., Ellis, M. V., & Devenis, L. E. (1989). The development and validation of a two dimensional model of the commitment to career choices process (Monograph). *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 35, 342-378.

- Chen, S. (1990). The outline of higher-level education in tourism in China. *Tourism Review*, 45(4), 24-27.
- Chi, C.G., & Gursoy, D. (2009). How to help your graduates secure better jobs? An industry perspective. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 21(3), 308–322.
- Choo, L. S., Norsiah, M., & Tan, L. I. (2012). What drives the career choice among engineers? A case in Malaysian manufacturing plant. *International Journal of Research Studies in Management*, 1(2), pp.15-24.
- Chuang, N.K., & Dellmann-Jenkins, M. (2010). Career decision making and intention: A study of hospitality undergraduate students. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 34(4), 512–530.
- Chuang, N. K., Walker, K., & Caine-Bish N. (2009). Student Perceptions of Career Choices: The Impact of Academic Major. *Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences Education*, 27(2), 2009.
- Coughlan, S. (2013). Teachers in China given highest level of public respect. Retrieved on 06/20/2015, from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/education-24381946>.
- Fouad, N. A., & Smith, P. L. (1996). A test of a social cognitive model for middle school students: Math and science. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 43(3), 338–346.
- Gore, P. A., & Leuwerke, W. C. (2000). Predicting occupational considerations: A comparison of self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and person-environment congruence. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 8(3), 237-250.
- Gu, H., Kavanaugh, R. R., & Cong, Y. (2007). Empirical studies of tourism education in China. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 7(1), 3–24.

- Hair, J.F., Anderson, R.E., Tatham, R.L., & Black, W.C. (1998). *Multivariate data analysis*. (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Jacobs, J. E., Finken, L. L., Griffin, N. L., & Wright, J. D. (1998). The career plans of science-talented rural adolescent girls. *American Educational Research Journal*, 35, 681–704.
- Jenkins, A. K. (2001). Making a career of it? Hospitality students' future perspective: An Anglo-Dutch study. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 13(1), 13-20.
- Jiang, B. & Tribe, J. (2009), 'Tourism jobs – short lived professions': Student attitudes towards tourism careers in China, *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 8(1), p. 4-19.
- Kim, H. & Park, E. J. (2013). The role of social experience in undergraduates' career perceptions through internships. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 12, pp. 70-78.
- Kusluvan, S., & Kusluvan, Z. (2000). Perceptions and attitudes of undergraduate tourism students towards working in the tourism industry in Turkey. *Tourism Management*, 21, 251-269.
- Lam, T., & Ching, L. (2007). An exploratory study of an internship program: The case of Hong Kong students. *Hospitality Management*, 26(2), 336–351.
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 45(1), p. 79-122.
- Lent, R. & Brown, S. (1994). Social cognitive approach to career development: an overview. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 44(4), p. 310.

Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (2002). Social Cognitive Career Theory. In D. Brown & Associates, *Career choice and development* (4th ed., pp. 255-311), San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Leung, S. A. (1995). Career counseling and development: A multicultural perspective. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (pp. 549–566). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lew, A., & Yu, L. (1995). *Tourism in China: Geographic, political, and economic perspective*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press Inc.

Litteljohn, D. and Watson, S. (2004) Developing Graduate Managers for Hospitality and Tourism. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 16(7), pp91-99.

Lu, T. & Adler, H. (2009). Career Goals and Expectations of Hospitality and Tourism Students in China. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 9:63-80.

MacCallum, R. C., Brown, M. W., & Sugawara, H., M. (1996). Power Analysis and Determination of Sample Size for Covariance Structure Modeling. *Psychological Methods*, 1(2): 130-49.

Orndorff, R. M., & Herr, E. L. (1996). A comparative study of declared and undeclared college students on career uncertainty and involvement in career development activities. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 74, 632-639.

Parsons, D., & Care, P. (1991). *Developing managers for tourism*. London: National Economic Development Office.

Rice, F. P. (1999). *The Adolescent: Development, Relationships, and Culture*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

- Richardson, S. (2008). Undergraduate tourism students' attitudes toward a career in the industry: a preliminary investigation. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 8(1), 23-46.
- Richardson, S. (2009). Undergraduates' perceptions of tourism and hospitality as a career choice. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 28(3), 382–388.
- Roney, S. A., & Öztin, P. (2007). Career perceptions of undergraduate tourism students: A case study in Turkey. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport, & Tourism Education*, 6(1), 4-18.
- Sibson, R. (2011). Career Choice Perceptions of Undergraduate Event, Sport and Recreation Management Students: An Australian Case Study. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 10 (2), pp.50-60.
- Sobel, M. E. (1986). "Some New Results on Indirect Effects and Their Standard Errors in Covariance Structure". *Sociological Methodology*, 16: 159–186.
- Speering, W., & Rennie, L. (1996). Students' perceptions about science: The impact of transition from primary to Secondary school. *Research in Science Education*, 26(3), 283–298.
- SPSS 20 (2013). *Statistical Package for Social Sciences*. Chicago, IL: SPSS, Inc.
- Taylor, K. M., & Betz, N. E. (1983). Applications of self-efficacy theory to the understanding and treatment of career indecision. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 22, 63-81.
- Wan, Y. K. P., Wong, I. A., & Kong W. H. (2014). Student Career Prospect and Industry Commitment: The Roles of Industry Attitude, Perceived Social Status, and Salary Expectations. *Journal of Tourism Management*, 40 (1-14).
- Wang, S., & Huang, X. (2014). College Students' Perceptions of Tourism Careers and Implications for the Industry and Education Providers. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 13(3), 211-233.

Wong, C. K. S., & Liu, J. G. (2010). Will parental influences affect career choice? Evidence from hospitality and tourism management students in China. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 22(1), 82-102.

Xiao, H. (2000). Tourism education in China: past and present, *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 4(2), 68-72.

Zhao, J. L. (1991). A current look at hospitality and tourism education in China's colleges and universities. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 10, 357-67.

Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework for Tourism Students' Industry Commitment

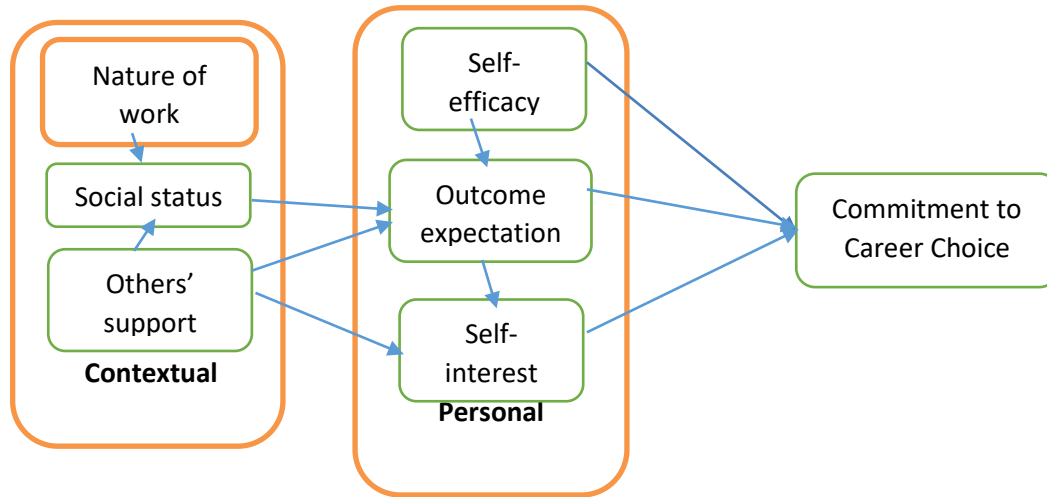


Table 1. Measure Correlations, the Squared Correlations, and Measurement Properties (N = 446)

Correlations between Latent Constructs (Squared)								
Measures	SI	SS	OS	NW	SE	OE	CCC	AVE
SI	1							.66
SS	.73 (.53)	1						.43
OS	.71 (.50)	.92 (.85)	1					.47
NW	.13 (.02)	.23 (.05)	.08 (.01)	1				.37
SE	.18 (.03)	.15 (.02)	.16 (.03)	.03 (.00)	1			.54
OE	.81 (.66)	.77 (.59)	.71 (.50)	.18 (.03)	.22 (.05)	1		.47
CCC	.58 (.34)	.47 (.22)	.44 (.20)	.09 (.01)	.00 (.00)	.55 (.30)	1	
Mean	4.03	3.92	3.95	3.56	4.84	4.25	4.25	
STDV	1.09	0.96	0.97	0.78	0.84	0.78	1.13	

Note: *SI* = Self Interest, *SS* = Social Status, *OS* = Others' Support, *NW* = Nature of Work, *SE* = Self Efficacy, *OE* = Outcome Expectation, *CCC* = Commitment to Career Choice, *AVE* = average variance extracted. *RMSEA* = root mean square error of approximation, *CFI* = comparative fit index, *NFI* = normative fit index. Model measurement fit: $\chi^2 = 1261.34$ ($df = 304$, $p < .01$), *RMSEA* = 0.08, *CFI* = 0.93, *NFI* = 0.91.

Table 2. Standardized Maximum Likelihood Parameter Estimates (N= 446)

Paths			Standardized Coefficients	T Value	Results
OS	→	SS	0.91	17.49*	Supported
NW	→	SS	0.15	3.78*	Supported
OS	→	SI	0.27	4.13*	Supported
OE	→	SI	0.62	7.83*	Supported
SE	→	OE	0.10	2.28**	Supported
SS	→	OE	0.76	10.97	Supported
OS	→	OE	0.62	3.73*	Supported
SI	→	CCC	0.40	4.22*	Supported
SE	→	CCC	-0.13	-2.81*	Supported
OE	→	CCC	0.25	2.61*	Supported

Note: *SI = Self Interest, SS = Social Status, OS = Others' Support, NW = Nature of Work, SE = Self Efficacy, OE = Outcome Expectation, CCC = Commitment to Career Choice, AVE = average variance extracted. RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, CFI = comparative fit index, NFI = normative fit index. Goodness-of-fit statistics: $\chi^2=1357.95$ ($df = 312, p < 0.01$), RMSEA = 0.08, CFI = 0.93, NFI = 0.91, * $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$.*

Table 3. Decomposition of effects with standardized values

	Direct Effect				Indirect Effect				Total Effect			
	SS	SI	OE	CCC	SS	SI	OE	CCC	SS	SI	OE	CCC
OS	.91	.27	.61	-	-	.43	.16	.55	.91	.70	.77	.55
NW	.15	-	-	-	-	.07	.12	.07	.15	.07	.12	.07
SS	-	-	.76	-	-	.47	-	.46	-	.47	.76	.46
SE	-	-	.10	-.16	-	-	-	.06	-	-	.10	-.10*
OE	-	.62	-	.31	-	-	-	.30	-	.62	-	.61
SI	-	-	-	.48	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.48

Note: *SI = Self Interest, SS = Social Status, OS = Others' Support, NW = Nature of Work, SE = Self Efficacy, OE = Outcome Expectation, CCC = Commitment to Career Choice.*
note: Effect with the asterisk () means not significant; all the others are significant.*