

Employability Pathways among Tourism Management Graduates: A Tracer Study

Catherine Magboo-Campo

Mindoro State University-Bongabong Campus

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ABSTRACT.

The university's obligation to deliver quality education and assistance extends beyond graduation. Just like any Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines, Mindoro State University-Bongabong Campus is offering Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (BSTM) program. As the tourism industry evolves into a major contributor to the economies of many countries, it needs workers who are skilled and can adapt. To maintain the quality of course offering, conducting tracer study is mandated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) through the CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) # 46, s. 2012. This research employed a descriptive research design and quantitative data derived from a tracer study of Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (BSTM) graduates from the academic years 2010-2024. This study demonstrated that they had diversified work titles while expressing thanks for the training and academic assistance received during their studies. The findings also underscore the importance of aligning academic initiatives in real-world contexts as well as continuous curriculum review to meet the requirements of the tourism industry workforce. Results also showed a significant low account of graduates securing international employment which posed a challenge to enhance internship programs as well as teaching methodologies to prepare graduates in the global arena. The digital proficiency of graduates shall also be improved, emphasizing its significance in their career hunt. While there is a notable satisfaction rate regarding the university's job placement services, it is advisable to implement dedicated employment aid for BSTM graduates to enhance their chances of securing desired positions in the dynamic tourism industry.

Keywords: Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management; Employability; Higher Education Institution; Job placement; Tracer study.

INTRODUCTION

Becoming an alumni signifies the commencement of students' endeavors in seeking employment (Imawaty Daiki, 2025). Graduates have a dual sense of exhilaration and anxiety as they conclude their scholastic journey and confront the realities of the workforce. However, the university's obligation to deliver quality education and assistance extends beyond graduation. It will consistently center on the wellbeing of students—from admission through graduation to securing their ideal employment. The tourism industry is a major contribution to the economies of many countries, and it needs workers who are skilled and can adapt. In the Philippines, employment in tourism-related industries was estimated at 5.0 million in 2015, reflecting a 3.4 percent increase from 4.8 million in the preceding year (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2016; Punsalan et al., 2024). With this continued growth of the industry needs, quality, adaptability and competence of the workforce should be given priority.

Higher education institutions (HEIs), such as universities and colleges, serve as hubs for knowledge generation and dissemination through innovation, while also equipping students for the future workforce (Magboo-Campo, 2024). It may sound cliché but it is in the school that the students start to be the best version of themselves and HEIs should be the primary driver for this endeavor. Just like any HEIs in the Philippines, Mindoro State University-Bongabong Campus is offering Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (BSTM) program. This is in support to the provincial goal of developing Oriental Mindoro, Philippines (the province where the university is situated) to maximize both natural and human resources in service to the Mindoreño brand of

tourism excellence. BSTM is accredited Level III by the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines, Inc. (AACCUP) (Magboo-Campo, 2024). It started offering the course last academic year 2010. Currently, it has produced three hundred sixty one (361) graduates.

The objective of performing a tracer study is not solely to track the whereabouts of graduates, needless to say, it is a mandate from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) through the CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) # 46, s. 2012 (Commission on Higher Education, 2012). Institutionally, it will also bridge the disparity between industry requirements and academic strategies. Various institutions, including the Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas, Laguna State Polytechnic University-Los Baños Campus, and the University of Santo Tomas, have published studies on the job situation of Tourism management graduates in various local and international journals (Punsalan et al., 2024).

This paper specifically tries to ascertain the employability status of BSTM graduates. It seeks to determine the kind of employment these graduates hold and the fields in which they are employed. It also examines the alignment between the occupations of BSTM alumni and their field of study. The study evaluates graduates' perspectives regarding areas for enhancement in the BSTM program for future development. This study will contribute to the foundation for curriculum evaluation and the enhancement of teaching methodologies for the BSTM program.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research employed a descriptive research design and quantitative data derived from a tracer study of Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (BSTM) graduates from the academic years 2010-2024.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The study covered 282 BSTM graduates who completed their degrees between 2010 and 2024 and opted to participate in the tracer study. The researcher employed purposive sampling to identify accessible graduates who were willing to complete the online questionnaire.

Research Instrument

This study uses a researcher-developed questionnaire to analyze graduates' experiences in job searching, employment, and their feedback regarding the program's employability, job placement assistance and academic initiatives. This consists of both open-ended questions and multiple-choice statements.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data were collected through an online survey using Google Forms from January to May 2025. This provided graduates with the liberty and convenient access to complete the questionnaire at their own pace. The researcher acknowledges the working hours of the graduates, who are situated in various locations both domestically and internationally.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data gathered were tabulated for analysis. Descriptive statistics summarized the graduates' demographics, employment status (including duration of employment, job search duration, and current position, etc.), the relevance of their job to their degree, and their perceived readiness for employment after college. This encompasses evaluating the graduate's job satisfaction and prevalent job search methods among others. It also encompasses examining the impacts of on-the-job training and internships, as well as their satisfaction with the university's job placement services.

Ethical Considerations

The survey questionnaire distributed via Google Forms includes an introductory notice about the disclosure and

safeguarding of respondents' information, in accordance with the confidentiality provisions specified by the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The researcher maintained the integrity of the tabulated data, imposing strict restrictions on its dissemination to individuals-both inside and outside the university. Graduates who did not complete the forms were accorded respect, as participation in the questionnaire is entirely voluntary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Graduates

Table 1 present the distribution of respondents in terms of *gender*.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents in terms of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	58	20.60
Female	204	72.50
LGBTQI+	17	5.90
Prefer Not to Say	3	1.00
Total	282	100.00

Table 2 present the distribution of respondents in terms of *age*.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents in terms of age

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
19-23	87	30.39
24-28	161	56.86
29-33	28	9.801
34-38	3	1.00
39 above	3	1.00
Total	282	100.00

Table 1 & 2 show the distribution of respondents in terms of age and gender.

Category	Job Titles
Food & Beverage Service	F&B Attendant, F&B Staff, F&B Supervisor, Bartender, Barista, Steward, Waitress, Waiter, Food beverage
Transport Services	Ground Handling Agent, Gate Supervisor, Vessel Steward
Lodging & Accommodation	Hotel Staff, Front Office Manager, Front Desk, Receptionist, Room Attendant, Housekeeping, Executive Housekeeper
Guest Relations & Service	Guest Service Officer, Guest Service
Sales & Retail	Online Seller, Sales lady, Sales Associate, Sales
Administrative Support	Administrative Assistant, Executive Assistant, Office Staff, Staff, Clerk, Secretary, Data Entry
Finance & Accounting	Account officer, Cashier
Public Service	Public Servant (MDRRMO), Tourism Officers,
Education	Teacher, College Instructor
Security Services	Guard
Creative & Digital	Content creator, multimedia creator

Figure 1. Common Job Titles of BSTM Graduates

Figure 1 shows that graduates with a lot of different job titles. Seeing chances in different fields, even ones that don't seem to be connected, helps them to develop important skills like communication and problem-solving. This experience also helps graduates learn about the different job options open to them, which gives them the freedom to follow paths that match their skills and interests. A lot of these professions, especially in hospitality and tourism which focused on customer service, help graduates get better at critical skills that may be used in other industries and become more professional. Graduates also possess the requisite skills to assume leadership positions, demonstrating their competitive engagement within the sector.

Table 3. Employment Type of Graduates

Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Employed (Local)	107	38%
Employed by a private company	93	33%
Unemployed (Job Seeking)	44	16%
Government Official	11	4%
Self-employed (e.g., business owner)	11	4%
Employed (Overseas)	8	3%
Pursuing Graduate Studies	3	1%
Freelancer	3	1%
NGO	1	0.4%
Licensing Consultants	1	0.4%
Total	282	100.00

Table 3 shows that based on the survey results from respondents, the most prevalent career status is local employment, accounting for 38%, closely followed by employment in a private company at 33%. A significant portion, 16%, are currently unemployed and actively seeking jobs. The modest number of graduates attaining a low percentage of work overseas may be disheartening for the program's internal stakeholders; yet this could serve as a catalyst to enhance students' foreign exposure during their studies. This is supported by the study of Matulin (2024) who stated that graduates who undertook internships internationally were inclined to obtain employment overseas, whereas those with domestic internships were more prone to work within the nation.

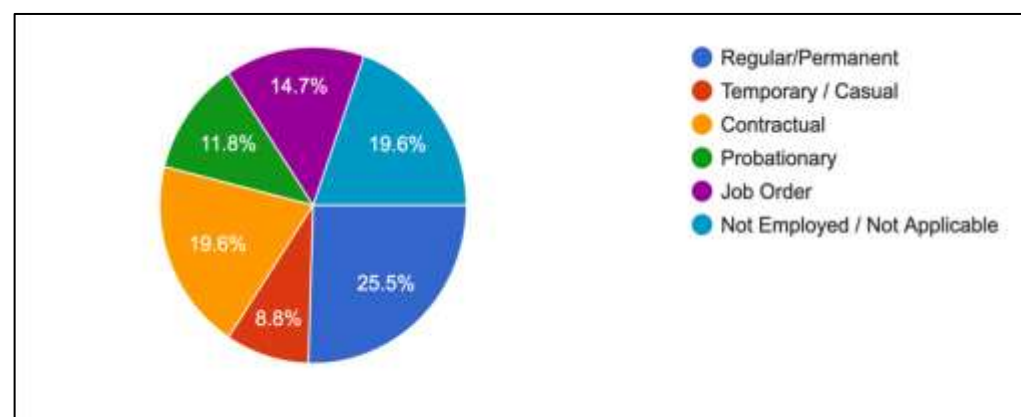


Figure 2. Tenure Status of BSTM Graduates

Figure 3 illustrates that Regular/Permanent is the predominant status, comprising 25.5% of all statuses. The Contractual status constitutes a significant portion at 19.6% as well as those holding unemployed status. Those holding unemployed are those belonging to Freelancers such content and multimedia creators which became the trend nowadays. Furthermore, a notable 14.7% of employed individuals are classified under Job Order status,

while 11.8% are on probation. 8.8% of them occupy temporary or casual positions, constituting a minor segment.

Table 4. Job Seeking Duration

Duration	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 3 months	160	56.9%
3-6 months	53	18.6%
6-12 months	19	6.9%
More than 12 months	50	17.6%
Total	282	100.00

Table 4 indicates that the majority (56.9%) secured their initial employment within three months post-graduation. Another 18.6% secured their initial employment within three to six months of commencing their job search. A smaller percentage (6.9%) required six to twelve months to secure employment. It is noteworthy that 17.6% of respondents sought employment for over a year post-graduation. This indicate that the tourism and hospitality industry and other related industries constituted high employment needs, and its hiring process might be continuous.

Table 5. Perception of Graduates in the alignment of their current job/career to the BSTM program

Perception	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	102	36.3%
No	66	23.5%
Partially	85	30.4%
Not At all	24	8.8%
N/A	2	1%
Total	282	100.00

Table 5 indicates that the largest proportion, 36.3%, of respondents reported that their employment or career is associated with their course. 30.4% of respondents indicated that their employment or profession is somewhat pertinent to their area of study. 23.5% indicated that their current employment or profession is unrelated to their field of study. 8.8% of respondents indicated that there was no correlation whatsoever between their current occupation and their academic interests. Each of the categories "N/A" and "." received a response of 1%, indicating that the question may have been irrelevant or that the data was atypical. It can be assumed that most of the respondents has positive perception on the alignment of their current job to their course.

Table 6. Perception of Graduates on how the program help them prepare for their job

Perception	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Well	116	41.2%
Moderately	116	41.2%
Slightly	44	15.7%
Not At all	6	2.0%
Total	282	100.00

Table 6 reveals that 41.2% of the people who answered thought their academic degrees prepared them well for their careers, while 41.2% thought they did so somewhat. 15.7% of individuals reported being only marginally prepared for their job due to the help and assistance from the program, whereas merely 2% indicated they were entirely unprepared.

Table 7. Skills Acquired Relevant to their Job

Skills	Percentage (%)
Commucication Skills	80.4%
Leadership Skills	39.2%
Management Skills	52.0%
Marketing Skills	40.2%
Tourism-related skills	30%
Social Skills	61%
Administrative Skills	1%
Customer Service	1%
Total	100.00

The essential degree competencies are shown in Table 7. Communication skills are without a doubt the most important, since they are mentioned 80.4% of the time. Additionally important are managerial competencies (52%) and social skills (61%). Then, 40.2 percent goes to marketing. It is also important for the graduates to explore digital marketing skills as noted by the study of Daiki (2025) who states that graduates lacking comprehension of digital marketing tactics would find it challenging to compete in the tourism sector. 39.2 % goes to leadership abilities while 30% percent have talents that are useful in the tourism industry. Only 2% of respondents said they had other talents, surprisingly customer service or administrative capabilities which might somehow intertwined with the other skills mentioned.

Table 8. Satisfaction of Graduates with their Current Employment

Level of Satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly Satisfied	111	39.2%
Satisfied	86	30.4%
Neutral	63	22.5%
Dissatisfied	14	4.9%
Highly Dissatisfied	8	3%
Total	282	100.00

Table 8 shows the levels of satisfaction on a scale from 1 to 5. The biggest group, 39.2%, said they had a 5-highly satisfied. This is in contrast with the study of Tapfuma et al. (2021) who stated that graduates are dissatisfied with their current employment. This proportion comprises graduates employed in the tourism and hospitality sector. They ascribed this to many factors, including insufficient opportunities for advancement within their organizations, suboptimal working conditions, and inadequate compensation. Furthermore, a large number, 30.4%, gave their job a score of satisfied. Almost 22.5% of people who answered had a neutral satisfaction score of 3. 7.9% of the participants said they were highly dissatisfied and dissatisfied respectively.

Table 9. Graduates' Perception on their Career Growth with their current organization

Perception	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	227	80.4%
No	55	19.6%
Total	282	100.00

The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that their present employment provided prospects for career advancement based on Table 9. Specifically, 80.4% of respondents affirmed positively, signifying optimism and a perception of possible progress inside their organizations. Conversely, 19.6% of respondents indicated "No," implying that a significant minority perceives their opportunities for professional advancement as constrained. This study indicates that employees predominantly hold a favorable view of career advancement.

Table 10. Job Search Pathways

Pathways	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Through Job Fairs	30	10.8%
Online Job Portals	59	20.8%
Traditional Networking	0	0.0%
University Career Service	3	1.0%
Social Media	83	29%
Relative or Friend Recommendation	99	35%
Unsolicited Job Application	3	1%
Personal	3	1%
Through Mayor's Office	3	1%
Total	282	100.00

Table 10 shows that 35% got their jobs through family or friends. This shows how important personal interactions are in job hunting. 29% of respondents found jobs through Facebook, or similar platforms, making social media the second most popular method. Online job portals via LinkedIn, Indeed.com, Jobstreet.com, signified 20.8%, suggesting that graduates should be familiar with these platforms. Job fairs and university career services only helped 10.8% and 1% of graduates to get their jobs. The remaining 3% came from informal employability pathways that the graduates acquire such as recommendation from local executives, personal and unsolicited job application. No participant reported finding work through traditional networking events, suggesting a shift to digital networking. It is crucial to provide graduates with digital application tools to facilitate their employment across many sectors that can be intervened by the university job placement services. Although traditional setups are beneficial for instruction, acquiring comprehensive knowledge of web-based application platforms is essential, since they will remain relevant for the foreseeable future.

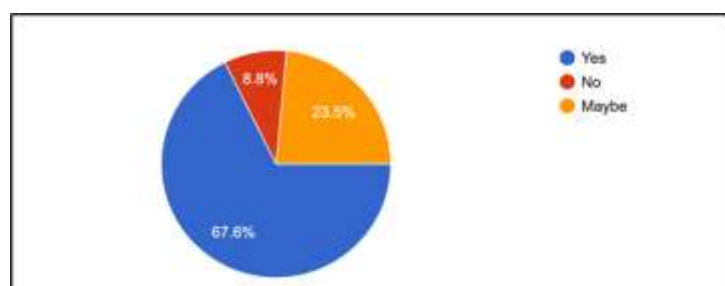


Figure 3. Perception of Graduates on the help of Trainings provided by the BSTM Program in securing their job

Figure 3 shows that most graduates got their current job through the help of trainings and internships provided by the university. A strong 67.6% said "Yes." About 23.5% replied "No" when asked if their education and internships helped them get their current employment. 8.8% of people replied "Maybe," which suggests that their education and work may not be closely related. Training that imparts skills inside the academic context is essential, as it equips students with knowledge applicable in the professional realm. This is the same findings from the study of Punsalan et al., (2024) who stated that all skills acquired from the trainings provided by the university is helpful on their current job roles.

Table 11. Challenges in securing employment

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of Experience	158	55.9%
Competition	82	29.0%
Lack of Job Opportunities in the Field of Study	14	5.0%
Job Mismatch	17	6.0%
Does not have related skills for the job	11	4%
Total	282	100.00

Table 11 shows that most of the respondents (55.9%) cited inexperience, followed by competition (29%). Other major difficulties included job role misalignment (6%), lack of industry opportunities (5%), skills (4%). More than half of respondents said "lack of experience" was a major job barrier. This suggests the need for more accessible entry-level roles, internships, or clearer avenues for recent graduates and industry newcomers to get experience.

Table 12. Satisfaction of graduates on the institution's Job Placement services

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly Satisfied	100	35.3%
Satisfied	80	28.4%
Neutral	63	22.5%
Dissatisfied	17	5.9%
Highly Dissatisfied	22	8%
Total	282	100.00

Table 12 shows most respondents (63.7%) evaluated their satisfaction as 4 or 5, signifying that most graduates were either happy or very satisfied with the employability support services provided by their university. This is supported by the study conducted by Albert & Davia (2022) who mentioned that university career services markedly enhance the quality of initial work placements for graduates. On the other hand, a minor segment (13.7%) indicated discontent (ratings 1 and 2), implying potential for enhancement. 22.5% assigned a neutral score (3), signifying a moderate degree of satisfaction or potentially ambivalent experiences. University support specifically on job placement is vital. This is in accordance with the study of Hong et al. (2023) who stated that there is a beneficial influence of campus support on student satisfaction with their hospitality and tourism management major, suggesting that university-level assistance can enhance students' contentment with their major in an unexpected educational context. However, according to Albert & Davia (2022) noted that when institutional support is lacking during the job search and placement, graduates typically experience greater difficulty securing their initial employment, especially in the context of temporary employment agencies.

Limitations of the Study

Notwithstanding its merits, the study encounters multiple limitations. The limited proportion of graduates employed internationally underscores an area for improvement in equipping students for the global labor market. Certain percentage of respondents expressed discontent with the institution's employment and placement services and career assistance. The study's dependence on online questionnaires may have marginalized graduates lacking digital access. Moreover, the findings indicate that numerous graduates encounter obstacles such as insufficient experience and intense competition, highlighting opportunities for enhancement in practical and hands-on training. Ultimately, the study's scope is confined to a single university campus, so diminishing its generalizability to other locations and institutions.

CONCLUSION

The majority of BSTM graduates from Mindoro State University-Bongabong Campus have secured employment, predominantly in fields pertinent to their academic discipline; yet, it also noted the diversity of engagements of graduates from varied fields apart from the traditional employment pathways. They have experienced a short job search, and expressed satisfaction with their current roles. This indicates that the university is effectively educating graduates on essential industry knowledge. However, challenges such as insufficient experience, lack of suitability for a position, lack of international employment, and excessive competition continue to hinder employment opportunities. These difficulties illustrate the necessity to enhance internship programs, collaborate with more industry partners, and continually improve the curriculum.

Most graduates recognize the significance of their academic pursuits and internships; nonetheless, some remain uncertain about the immediate impact of their education on securing employment. This indicates a deficiency that requires the enhancement of individualized and program focused career assistance services. Therefore, it is recommended that a strong career assistance may be enforced by the university to elevate the professional advancement of graduates especially on their first job search. This calls for a specified job placement services/program for BSTM graduates. The study also revealed that apart from interpersonal relationships among graduates, online networks and social media are excellent avenues for employment opportunities. This implies that the university's career development activities might formalize these networks. This tracer study provides a data-driven approach to enhance the curriculum, ensuring that tourism graduates are not only proficient students but also adequately equipped to meet the demands of an ever-evolving and increasingly competitive and digital labor market.

This study highly recommend the academic unit to enhance its international industry-based exposure to enhance the readiness of graduates in the global arena. This is emphasized by the study of Love et al. (2025) who stated the importance of enhancing industry connections to generate employment prospects for graduates.

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