Working in the exciting world of hospitality and tourism

The hospitality and tourism industry is the largest and fastest growing industry in the world. It has grown dramatically in recent years and is today widely regarded as a major creator of jobs. Dr Vikneswaran Nair from Taylor's University College sheds light on the diverse career opportunities available in the industry here in Malaysia and abroad.

AT A GLANCE
The hospitality and tourism industry is growing exponentially and the upwards trend is expected to continue in the years to come. Those who choose to work in this truly globalised industry will no doubt enjoy diverse, rewarding, and successful careers.

As reported by the World Travel and Tourism Council in their 2007 publication, the hospitality and tourism industry has grown by 500 percent in the last 25 years, and it was estimated that up to the year 2007, more than 100 million people worldwide were employed in this truly globalised industry.

Hospitality and tourism is also one of the most interesting career fields in the world. It can be exciting, stimulating, dynamic, challenging, and most importantly - FUN! Hospitality and tourism is a huge business, representing millions of jobs and billions of dollars. The hospitality and tourism industry helps people get to business engagements and make more money, take vacations, see the wonders of the world, go on honeymoons, study abroad, visit spas, or even gamble their money away if they so choose!

‘Hospitality’ is a term derived from the Latin word ‘hospitalis’, meaning to receive a guest. It is a phrase that implies a host is prepared to meet a guest’s basic needs, such as food and lodging, while he or she is away from home. Thus, the hospitality industry comprises businesses that provide the services of food and beverage, accommodation, and recreation to travellers.

‘Tourism’, on the other hand, comprises the activities of people travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for leisure, business, and other purposes. Thus, tourism is the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence. The travel and tourism industry comprises businesses providing primary services to travellers, including the traditional hospitality businesses and others closely linked to them in such fields as entertainment, shopping and retail, sports, event management (this includes organising meetings, incentive travels, conventions and exhibitions), transportation (air, rail, ship, and road transportation) and travel/tour-operations management.
In general, these are four of the most common career clusters in the hospitality and tourism industry:

**Hospitality and tourism industry**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation and housekeeping services</th>
<th>Food production and services</th>
<th>Travel and tourism services</th>
<th>Recreation, gaming, and sports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel/Lodging managers</td>
<td>Chefs, cooks, bakers, pastry chefs, pantry persons, short order cooks, salad preparations, short order, catering, &amp; other food preparations</td>
<td>Travel consultants</td>
<td>Recreation &amp; amusement workers &amp; attendants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front office personnel</td>
<td>Bartenders, mixologists, oenologists</td>
<td>Tour &amp; tourism directors</td>
<td>Recreation directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concierge</td>
<td>Food safety &amp; sanitation inspectors &amp; instructors</td>
<td>Airline reservation specialist</td>
<td>Recreation coaches, trainers &amp; instructors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butlers</td>
<td>Dieticians, nutritionists, institutional food preparation &amp; service managers</td>
<td>Adventure travel specialist</td>
<td>Athletic &amp; event directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive housekeepers</td>
<td>Food technologists</td>
<td>Convention management &amp; services</td>
<td>Club &amp; casino managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housekeepers, sanitorial &amp; cleaning services attendants</td>
<td>F&amp;B managers</td>
<td>Event planner/manager</td>
<td>Dealers &amp; games attendant</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food service - waiters, wine stewards</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Modified from Glencoe, McGraw-Hill, 2007

**Current trends and scenario**

The hospitality and tourism industry is projected to grow at a rate of 4 percent over the next decade. Nowadays, people are travelling abroad more than ever before. Currently, it is estimated that about 900 million people travel overseas annually. In 10 years, the number is expected to rise to one billion international travellers. With the global economic slowdown and higher fuel costs worldwide, the effects on the hospitality and tourism industry have been paramount. Nonetheless, the industry will stay resilient and continue to grow steadily, especially in Asia Pacific and the Middle East, thanks to the growth of low-cost carriers, big investments in tourism-related programmes, and consumers’ rising disposable income.

**Career opportunities**

Such a large, dynamic, and rapidly growing industry offers diverse, exciting, and truly international career opportunities. For example, an executive chef can be working at the Shangri-La Kuala Lumpur one day, find himself at the Club Med resort in Bahamas a year later, and then move on to the kitchens on board the Queen Mary 2.

Popular careers in the hospitality and tourism industry revolve around the core business of servicing tourists. Here are the types of businesses where these careers can be found:

- Hotels and resorts
- Restaurants and commercial food service
- Travel management
- Airlines, cruise ships, and other transportation services
- Meeting and event planning
- Entertainment and retail
- Recreation and sports

With the growing demands of the consumer, the tourism market is also evolving according to the scope and direction away from the traditional 3Ss (sun, sand, and sea) vacation to a wider range of new activities in areas, such as these:

- **Adventure tourism**
  Travelling to remote or exotic locations to experience thrills and the unexpected (eg diving with sharks)

- **Cultural and heritage tourism**
  Travelling with the aim of experiencing places and activities that authentically represent the destination’s people and culture

- **Health and medical tourism**
  Travelling abroad to obtain health services (eg heart or cosmetic surgery); it’s a mushrooming sector in Asia that is projected to generate more than USS46bil by 2012

- **Ecotourism**
  The choice of socially conscious individuals who travel to destinations where nature and culture are the primary attractions (eg wildlife conservation)

- **Education tourism**
  Travelling to another country to discover educational opportunities.

The diversification of the tourism market has created even more types of jobs.
in the industry, and the demand for qualified professionals far outweighs the supply. Furthermore, there are jobs aplenty in secondary areas such as accounts and finance, customer service, human resources, and marketing communications.

Professionals who have gained significant experience in the industry and built a strong base of contacts can move on to become entrepreneurs or set up their own consultancies.

**Conclusion**
The hospitality and tourism industry is an exciting industry that offers excellent career prospects, promising advancement opportunities, and job satisfaction. Clearly, there will continue to be a demand locally and internationally for skilled and qualified young people to manage the growth of the industry. Those who desire to establish a career in this industry should start by enrolling in a recognised undergraduate programme and undergoing relevant industrial training to gain real-world experience.

**Most important point**
If you are passionate about providing excellent service, love to meet people, eager to explore new cultures and thrive in a fast-paced environment, you are an ideal fit for the hospitality and tourism profession. With the right education and training, good interpersonal skills, and a willingness to learn, you are assured of a bright and exciting future in the world's largest industry.

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**Examples of careers in the hospitality & tourism industry**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job type</th>
<th>Job scope</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Places to work</th>
<th>Skills/Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chef</td>
<td>* Food preparation</td>
<td>Diploma/Degree in: * Culinary Arts * Apprenticeship Programme</td>
<td>* Hotels, resorts, and cruise liners, restaurants, independent food outlets, catering companies</td>
<td>* Creativity * Keen sense of taste and smell * High level of personal hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front office manager</td>
<td>* Ensure smooth operation of all front office functions</td>
<td>Diploma/Degree in: * Hospitality management</td>
<td>* Hotels and resorts, banks</td>
<td>* Good communication and language skills * Exceptional customer service * Strong organisational and administrative skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F&amp;B manager</td>
<td>* Manage daily operation of the restaurant * Plan budget and oversee inventory * Resolve customer complaints * Manage human resource</td>
<td>Diploma/Degree in: * Hospitality management * Catering management * Culinary arts and F&amp;B management</td>
<td>* Hotels, resorts, and cruise liners, restaurants, independent food outlets, food service management companies</td>
<td>* Good product knowledge * Knowledge of financial management * Strong communication, customer service and organisational skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event planner/manager</td>
<td>* Plan and coordinate logistics for any event (meetings, festivals, incentive travels, exhibitions, conventions, etc) * Manage budgets</td>
<td>Diploma/Degree in: * Tourism management * Event management</td>
<td>* Hotels and resorts, convention centres, event management companies, theme parks</td>
<td>* Attention to detail * Creative * Strong organisational and presentation skills * Knowledge of business management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel consultants</td>
<td>* Advise clients on travel options and tour packages * Make travel arrangements</td>
<td>Diploma/Degree in: * Tourism management</td>
<td>* Travel and tour related companies</td>
<td>* Strong destination knowledge * Seasoned traveller * Good people, communication and organisational skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation manager</td>
<td>* Plan, organise and direct recreation and sports activities * Train staff to facilitate events</td>
<td>Diploma/Degree in: * Tourism management * Recreation management</td>
<td>* Hotels, resorts, cruise liners, health and fitness centres, theme parks, community centres</td>
<td>* Ability to direct and motivate people * Creative and energetic * Good organisational and communication skills * Trained in safety procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales &amp; marketing manager</td>
<td>* Direct company’s sales programmes * Set targets to achieve * Establish training programmes for staff</td>
<td>Degree in: * Hospitality management * Business administration * Marketing</td>
<td>* Sales and marketing departments in service related companies</td>
<td>* Creative and decisive * Good business sense and judgment * Strong communication and persuasive skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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