

Reviews of Flight Attendants Towards the Tourism Program of the Lyceum of the Philippines University

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Abstract

A constant thorough review of a curriculum is important. In this light, this study looked into the recommendations and views of Filipino flight attendants on the importance of the courses, their training experiences, and recommendations in order to improve the tourism program. This descriptive study utilized a post-hoc analysis of version 2.0 with 72 respondents currently or formerly employed as flight attendants. They constitute 50% of the population proportion of 140 identified Filipino flight attendants from different airlines, both international and local, having 11.50% precision at a .05 significance level. A purposive type of sampling method mixed with the snowball technique was utilized. The study reveals that minor courses were rated as "highly important" specifically in communication subjects while major courses were rated "very highly important". Among the 29 listed major courses, Risk Management as Applied to Safety, Security, and Sanitation ranked first, followed by Global Culture and Tourism Geography, followed by Professional Development and Applied Ethics. Moreover, most of the respondents faced challenges over inadequate knowledge of aircraft equipment and emergency procedures. It is highly recommended to enhance and/or add courses/activities related to Basic Life Support, Personality Development, Communication Skills Development, Customer Service, and Aircraft-related courses.

Keywords

flight attendant; tourism program; curriculum reviews

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since there are professionals and an increasing number of students who are aspiring to become a part of a cabin crew, it's important to acquire the needed edge to land to the job. In 2020, there are 102,500 flight attendants as revealed in the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. According to Karatepe and Eslamlou (2017), flight attendants' jobs are marked by high workloads, physical and emotional labor, and irregular and long working hours. They are susceptible to jet lag, role stress, long night shifts, dysfunctional passenger attitudes, and/or burnout, which are all frequent issues for them. Despite this, it is regarded as one of the most glamorous jobs in the world. Bantguan et al. (2020) also mentioned that, in the past, their glamorous image was being wealthy and famous enough to afford to fly. Their challenges are acquired from in-flight and post-training exercises. Moreover, in the study of Chang (2009), being attentive at work, maintain performance standards and increasing work motivation will expose a high level of commitment among flight attendants.

For the last several decades, the aviation industry, a sector under the tourism umbrella has experienced and faced a dramatic transition that has recently been intensified. Furthermore, with the exponential demands of this phenomenon, innovations, standards, and expectations from the industry have prevailed and have become complicated and intimidating (Pels, 2008, as cited in Castiglioni et al., 2018). Graduating successfully means having a career as a manager with a competitive salary (Jameson and Holden, 2000 as cited in Petrova & Mason, (2004). Occupations in travel and the tourism industry were tied up with the goal of making travelling a wonderful, delightful, and enhancing experience for all individuals by guaranteeing ideal quality services and satisfaction. Qualities of being in this industry demand to have practical knowledge in times of emergencies, ability to communicate clearly and confidently with strangers while remaining relaxed in stressful situations. Considering that the tourism education curriculum promotes critical thought and awareness of conceptual problems, tourism training was also expected to include practical information, techniques, and skills to further improve the competitiveness and efficiency of graduates in the tourism industry (Department of Labor and Employment, n.d.). According to Sanchez (2019), there were about a total of 41.2 million employed individuals in the tourism sector here in the country. The business figures in the travel industry have consistently expanded all through the most recent seven years. With the continued growth of the international travel market, data has revealed that the movement and the travel industry's company workforce open doors for airline stewards which has predicted growth from around 17% in 2019-29 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.).

Flight attendants, often known as cabin crew or air stewards, are members of a designated flight crew on either a commercial or military flight. According to Federal Aviation Administration (2004), as of their Flight Attendant Certificate of Demonstrated Proficiency – “The Act defines a flight attendant as an individual who works in the cabin of an aircraft that has 20 or more seats and is used by a part 121 or part 135 air carrier to provide air transportation”. A flight attendant is defined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021) as someone that guarantees the safety and comfort of airline passengers, flight attendants offer routine services and respond to emergencies. Moreover, to work as a flight attendant, one usually need to have a high school diploma. Some airlines may prefer to recruit individuals who have completed substantial degree program. It should be noted that in this research, commercial flight attendants from international and local scene are understudied.

In the Philippines, Tourism and Hospitality education is one the fastest developing fields of study. The expansion of the tourism and hospitality programs may be attributed to this variable. There is a stable and strong market, which boosted the demand for high quality hospitality establishments to satisfy and to accommodate services, both for domestic and international consumers. Furthermore, Verdadero et al. (2020) highlighted that this pushes colleges and institutions to implement and to deliver programs that will equip and empower students with education on the principle of “quality service” and “product innovation”.

This study would be deemed functional to students and educational institutions as its goal was to get the responses of currently and formerly employed Filipino flight attendants in terms of reviewing the existing program offering. This ought to look into the existing variables and how it contributes to the whole molding, meeting requirements and qualification on becoming an effective flight attendant with the continuous demands on global competitiveness.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study has utilized the descriptive analysis approach using purposive type of sampling mixed with snowball technique. A mixed methods approach was used to provide better understanding on the reviews of program offerings from bachelor’s degree holders who are currently or were formerly employed as flight attendants. The design integrates the transfer of evidence across the quantitative analysis of research problems on respondents’ profiles, challenges, and the level of importance of each course offering, along with explanatory descriptions from qualitative remarks on the recommendations made by the participants.

A post-hoc analysis of sample gathered using the sample size calculator version 2.0 by Arifin, W.N. (2017) revealed that 72 respondents constitute the 50% of population proportion, as the safest percentage of proportion for unknown population (Kaur, S. 2016), with 11.50% precision at .05 significance level. The subjects of this study were set towards bachelor’s degree holders who are currently and were formerly employed Filipino flight attendants from different airlines, international and local. They are bona fide Filipino citizen and a four-year college graduate from academic years 2010 to 2019, and that they have gathered enough expertise in their years of experience. Therefore, their perspectives and skills will be the vital source of information concerning the feedback on the demands from their workplace.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
45 years & above	0	0%
39 - 44	3	4%
33 - 38	6	8%
27 - 32	25	35%
21 - 26	38	53%
Years Active		
10 and above	4	6%
7 - 9	3	4%
4 - 6	41	57%
3 and below	24	33%
Year Graduated		
2016 - 2019	31	43%
2013 - 2015	23	32%
2010 - 2012	18	25%
Airline		
Local Airline A	31	43%
Local Airline B	9	13%
Local Airline C	18	25%
International Airline A	6	8%
International Airline B	2	3%
Local Airline D	3	4%
International Airline C	1	1%
International Airline D	1	1%
International Airline E	1	1%

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of respondents in terms of age, length of service, year of graduation, and the airline they are employed in. In terms of age, a frequency of 38 or 53 percent of the respondents are 21 to 26 years old. With regard to the length of service, respondents with 4 to 6 years of experience dominated the number of respondents with a frequency of 41 or 57 percent. From the data gathered, 31 or 43 percent of the respondents graduated from the years 2016 to 2019.

Based on the results, most of the respondents came from Airline A, a very well known local airline in the Philippines, with a frequency of 31 or 43 percent, followed by Airline C with 18 or 25 percent, and airline B. The study shows that the majority of the respondents, with a frequency of 44, or 61 percent in total, are employed by a Philippine-based airline. According to the blog of WCC (2020), the Philippines has a booming airline industry and more than 500 thousand tourists visited the Philippines, with most of the tourists coming from Asia as revealed by the Department of Tourism (2016). These tourists primarily come through airports in Manila, Cebu, Kalibo, Clark, and Davao.

Table 2. Minor Courses

Minor Courses	Md	SD	Rank	Interpretation
1. Physical Education	3	0.951	4	Highly Important
2. Literature	3	0.967	6	Highly Important
3. Law	3	0.799	3	Highly Important
4. Business and Economics	3	0.781	5	Highly Important
5. Science and Math	3	0.860	7	Highly Important
6. Philosophy	3	0.761	2	Highly Important
7. Communication	4	0.200	1	Very Highly Important
8. National Service Training Program	3	1.014	8	Highly Important

Table 2 presents the respondents' assessment on the interpretation of minor courses. Among the courses indicated, respondents considered Communication subjects as very highly important, with the median of four (4) because the respondents viewed this as highly valuable. To ensure the quality of service and safety inside the aircraft, a flight attendant must communicate effectively to its crew and passengers. Bhaduri (2021) highlighted that the most important in the job is to relay instructions to passengers and to ensure that their needs are met. Great communication with crew members is required to accomplish tasks for take off and landing. Singh (2021) also mentioned

that there is a need to check the communication skills of the applicants as requested by stakeholders such as clients, passengers and employers.

Table 3. Major Courses

Major Courses	Md	SD	Rank	Interpretation
1. Tourism in the ASEAN Perspective	4	0.678	7	Very Highly Important
2. Philippine Culture and Tourism Geography	4	0.655	6	Very Highly Important
3. Global Culture and Tourism Geography	4	0.577	2	Very Highly Important
4. Micro Perspective of Tourism and Hospitality	3	0.706	14.5	Highly Important
5. Foreign Language	4	0.599	9	Very Highly Important
6. Macro Perspective of Tourism and Hospitality	3	0.725	14.5	Highly Important
7. Risk Management as Applied to Safety, Security and Sanitation	4	0.430	1	Very Highly Important
8. International Fares and Ticketing	3	0.795	25.5	Highly Important
9. Essentials of Land and Water Transportation	3	0.720	17.5	Highly Important
10. Tourism Policy, Planning and Development	3	0.789	21.5	Highly Important
11. Fundamentals in Food Service Operations	4	0.623	10	Very Highly Important
12. Multicultural Diversity in Workplace for the Tourism Professionals	4	0.627	5	Very Highly Important
13. Sustainable Tourism	3	0.745	12.5	Highly Important
14. Travel Agency Operations and Management	3	0.775	17.5	Highly Important
15. Airline Business	4	0.601	4	Very Highly Important
16. Operations Management	3	0.666	12.5	Highly Important
17. Front Office Operations	3	0.907	17.5	Highly Important
18. Quality Service Management in Tourism and Hospitality	4	0.680	8	Very Highly Important
19. Tour Operations and Management	3	0.829	25.5	Highly Important
20. Tourism and Hospitality Marketing	4	0.667	11	Very Highly Important

Major Courses	Md	SD	Rank	Interpretation
21. Professional Development and Applied Ethics	4	0.512	3	Very Highly Important
22. Tourism Product Development and Destination Management	3	0.763	14.5	Highly Important
23. Tour Guiding	3	0.957	28	Highly Important
24. Heritage Tourism	3	0.837	23	Highly Important
25. Introduction to Meetings, Incentives, Conference, Events management (MICE)	3	0.965	29	Highly Important
26. Human Resource Management and Organizational Behavior	3	0.807	21.5	Highly Important
27. Entrepreneurship in Tourism and Hospitality	3	0.820	27	Highly Important
28. Strategic Management	3	0.799	24	Highly Important
29. Research in Tourism and Hospitality	3	0.876	17.5	Highly Important

Table 3 presents the assessment of the major courses. Among the 29 listed major courses, Risk Management as Applied to Safety, Security, and Sanitation ranked first, followed by Global Culture and Tourism Geography, followed by Professional Development and Applied Ethics.

Majority of the given courses were interpreted as very highly important, and the other courses were evaluated as highly important. Risk Management being the very highly important among the major subjects, is highly prioritized. As mentioned by Gillet (2021), flight attendants' work is tough and identified by the diversity of their temporalities and constantly changing. Sometimes, there are unexpected difficulties and needs to immediately attend to various situations. Berg (2019) also mentioned that cabin crews experience a lot of challenges since the air transport sector offers 24-hours service.

Also, cabin crew is serving in-flight meals to its passengers and ensure their safety inside the aircraft (DOLE, n.d). As indicated by Abdelhakim et. al (n.d), due to unsanitary practices eight out of ten cases of food poisoning were reported (Hatakka, 2000). Sheward, 2001;2006 (as stated by Abdelhakim, 2016), have emphasized that food and safety training to be a standard with several other safety concerns such as medical and emergency training. In addition, in Aviation Food Safety cabin crew's duty was to handle and associate with food and beverages, which were both essential and comprehensive since it may influence their proficiency as food handlers. Handling meals responsibly must

be of high importance as it can prevent incidents that might happen in terms of food-related illness that may risk a crew and passengers' health (Sheward, 2006).

Table 4. Challenges Faced during Flight Attendant Training

Statement	n	%	Rank
Lack knowledge about the aircraft's specifics	41	57%	1
Lack knowledge about the aircraft capacity	19	26%	6
Lack knowledge about aircraft equipment	32	44%	2
Lack knowledge about safety procedures	30	42%	4
Lack knowledge about emergency procedures	31	43%	3
Lack knowledge about aviation first aid training	20	28%	5
Lack knowledge about food and beverage service on board	15	21%	7
Others	12	17%	8

As presented in Table 4, there are various challenges faced by the flight attendants during training. The "Lack knowledge about the aircraft's specific" ranked first with a frequency of 41 or 57 percent, followed by "Lack knowledge about aircraft equipment." A frequency of 12 or 17 percent answered others which included personal reasons such as *homesickness, pressure among peers, and lack of swimming skills*. This study implies that awareness and understanding about aircraft's specific will be a significant contribution to a successful training.

Ward (2010) stressed that there are "errors" in the aircraft that have been dealt with. Crews need to attend training to avoid mistakes or violations. Understanding about aircraft's specifics will be a significant contribution to mitigate any accident.

Table 5. Recommendations by Filipino flight attendants

Codes	Count	
Basic Life Support	13	Includes safety and emergency handling in land, air, and water
Personality Development	10	Includes grooming, ethics, self-esteem development
Communication skills development	6	Includes public speaking, foreign language familiarization
Customer Service	6	Includes customer-feedback handling, customer care, food and beverage service, travel management
Aircraft related	3	Includes aircraft systems, aviation law, etc.

As depicted in Table 5 above, the Filipino flight attendants recommend that more lessons about basic life support must be included in the curriculum. These include safety and emergency handling in land, air, and water. Tipa (2010) noted in her study that basic life support is an immediate first aid procedure in case of an emergency, focusing on assisting the passenger to sustain life. This being considered in the curriculum will help the students practice techniques to attend to life support emergencies that is essential to a flight attendant.

The second highlighted recommendation by the respondents include adding Personality Development subject. It encompasses grooming, ethics, and self-esteem development. Also, communication skills development is recommended which includes public speaking and foreign language familiarization as it is important to communicate and understand passengers. Flight attendants should also ought to learn how to handle customer feedback, care for the customer, and serve food and beverages. It is essential to have a greater understanding of aviation-related subjects/courses for an aspiring flight attendant. This features aircraft systems and aviation law.

4. CONCLUSION

A curriculum, to be relevant, should be reviewed after being taught and revise to match the needs of the industry. There are competing priorities in schools and universities, but the main priority is how to train the students with the necessary skills, attitude, and knowledge.

In today's dynamic airline transport sector, flight attendants are a critical component in providing excellent passenger service and ensuring passenger satisfaction. Since there is an increasing number of flight attendants' aspirants, program offerings are given considerations. This study proves that curriculum review as a part of systematic approach is important to increase its effectiveness and to ensure a successful student learning experience.

Based on the results of the data gathered, most of the respondents were 21 to 26 years old with an experience in the industry for three (3) years and below. They completed their degree from 2016 to 2019 and are Philippine-based Filipino flight attendants. It seems that most flight attendants are young and it's important to note what are the specific airline requirements before the candidates decide to apply.

In minor subject offerings, it is evident that Communication subject is labeled as "very highly important" as it ranked first. It is probably the most important skills for aspiring flight attendant to ensure the quality of service and safety inside the aircraft, a flight attendant must communicate effectively to its crew and passengers.

In major subjects, Risk Management is tapped as “very highly important” subject. Cabin crews work for 24 hours and experience a lot of challenges. Learning how to manage risk in every flight will make it easier when there are potential threats or risks.

Moreover, during the flight attendants’ training, the challenge faced by majority of the Filipino flight attendants is the “lack of knowledge about aircraft’s specifics, equipment and emergency procedures. The training would be more interesting if the aspiring flight attendants have prior knowledge on these very useful topics. Understanding and knowing these concepts and procedures will be a significant contribution to mitigating any incidents that may happen.

Lastly, flight attendants have recommended courses/activities related to basic life support, personality development, communication skills development, customer service, and aircraft-related courses. This being considered in the curriculum will help the students practice techniques that is essential to a flight attendant.

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