



CAPE BRETON UNIVERSITY STUDENT EMPLOYMENT PLANS SURVEY

Bachelor of Hospitality and Tourism Management

Abstract

This survey is intended to assist decision-makers and policy makers address tourism workforce issues by identifying motivating factors that lead students studying in the Bachelor of Tourism and Hospitality Management (BHTM) program at Cape Breton University to either stay and work in Cape Breton or leave for another location. This survey was conducted by the World Tourism Institute at CBU. 186 BHTM students participated in this survey which focused on identifying factors that would influence student decision making regarding their post-degree employment and residency plans. The survey results show that the majority of BHTM students would consider staying in Cape Breton to live and work. The most important determining factors for staying are good-paying, year-around jobs, that fulfill the requirements to attain permanent residency status.

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Introduction

Cape Breton Island's Tourism Training Network (CBITTN) is a strategic, co-ordinated, partnership-based research and training response for post-Covid 19 recovery. The CBITTN is a three-year, government supported project within Cape Breton University's World Tourism Institute (WTI). Using a collaborative model, the CBITTN addresses specific workforce needs in support of economic recovery for tourism and related sectors including arts and culture. An area of focus for the CBITTN is on identifying potential solutions to the labour shortage in the Cape Breton Island tourism industry. One potential source of tourism labour for Cape Breton Island are the students enrolled in Cape Breton University's Bachelor of Hospitality and Tourism Management (BHTM) program.

To gauge the potential of BHTM students to address the Cape Breton Island tourism labour shortage, a survey was developed to identify factors in the decision-making process related to future employment and residency. The research questions we addressed included:

- How attracted are BHTM students to residing and working on Cape Breton Island after graduation?
- What factors have the largest influence on BHTM students' decision of where to live and work after graduation?
- What can industry operators, Nova Scotia legislators, Municipalities, Cape Breton University administration and faculty, or economic development organizations do to increase the number of BHTM students choosing to reside and work on Cape Breton Island after graduation?

Methodology

A survey was developed to address the research questions. The initial draft of the survey was shown to BHTM instructors for feedback on the overarching goals of the survey, specific question formation, and survey delivery strategies. Instructor feedback was incorporated into both the final version of the survey and the survey distribution strategy.

The final version of the survey was paper-based and consisted of 12 questions (Appendix 1). The final question in the survey consisted of a list of 14 different factors and asked the respondents to rate the importance of each in influencing their decision on employment and residency. The survey was given to BHTM students by one of their instructors during class. The completed surveys were then collected, and each survey response was entered into digital survey platform for analysis. At a confidence level of 95%, the margin of error for this survey is $\pm 3\%$.

Participants

This survey was completed by 186 students enrolled in the BHTM program at CBU during the winter 2023 semester. The total population of BHTM students at CBU during this period was 230. This is a response rate of 80.87%. Survey participants represented 12 different nationalities (Figure 1). The largest two groups of students were from India with 72 participants and China with 57 participants. All 10 Canadian participants were from Nova Scotia.

What is your home country?

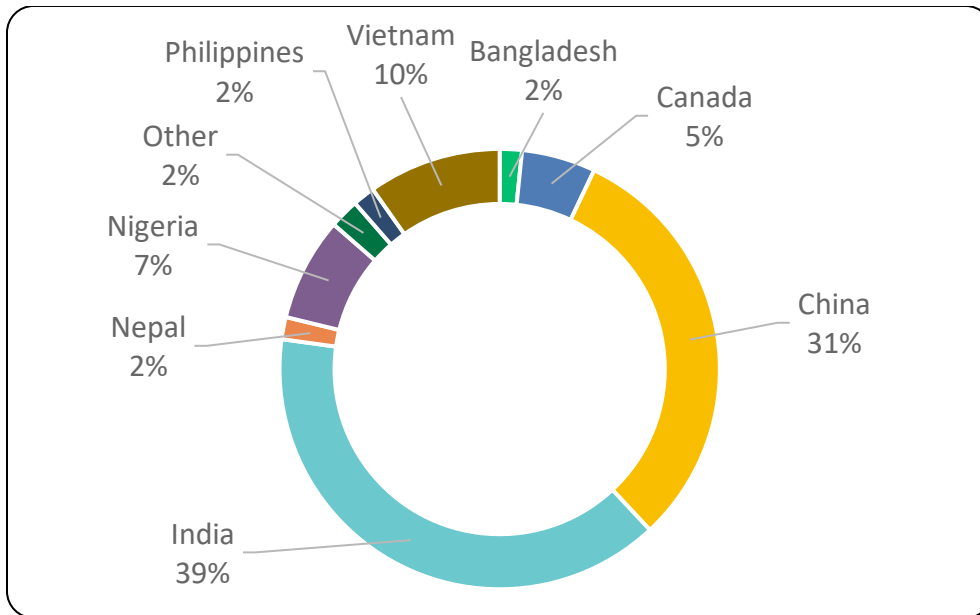


Figure 1

The participating BHTM students represented different cohorts. For the purposes of this survey, we asked them to identify when they began the BHTM program and provided them with four choices, *Before 2020*, *Between 2020 and 2021*, *Between 2021 and 2022*, and *After 2022*. Just over 15% entered the BHTM program before 2020 and just over 16% entered between 2020 and 2021. Approximately 35% began the BHTM program between 2021 and 2022 and one third began after 2022. This broad mix of program intake groups suggests diversity in the amount of time survey participants have spent within Cape Breton Island.

Results and Discussion

Of the 186 survey participants, only ten were from Canada. All ten Canadians were from Nova Scotia. Of those ten, three were from Cape Breton Island. When asked if they wanted to stay in Cape Breton after graduation, only two of the ten (20%) responded that they did want to stay in Cape Breton Island (Figure 2). Of the remaining eight, four (40%) did not want to stay in Cape Breton Island and four (40%) indicated that they were not yet sure.

Do you want to stay in Cape Breton after you graduate? (Nova Scotians)

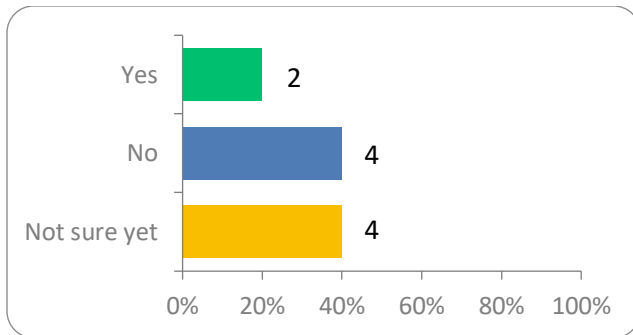


Figure 2

While the number of Nova Scotians participating in this survey did not consist of a representative sample, the results are suggestive that there is not a great desire by local Canadians to live and work on Cape Breton Island. It is therefore likely that tourism operators on Cape Breton Island will need to look elsewhere for additional labour. This is an area where additional research could help develop a predictive model for Cape Breton labour trends.

Compared to Nova Scotian BHTM students, international BHTM students were more likely to indicate that they wanted to stay in Cape Breton (35.6%) or were unsure yet if they wanted to stay in Cape Breton (53.45%). Only 11.49% of non-Canadian respondents indicated that they did not want to stay in Cape Breton after graduation (Figure 3) compared with 40% of Nova Scotians (Figure 2).

Do you want to stay in Cape Breton after you graduate? (International Students)

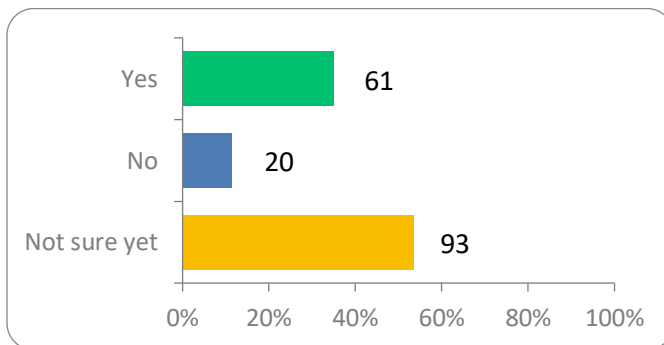


Figure 3

International BHTM students represent a significant group of potential labour for the Cape Breton Island tourism industry. Over one third of this group would like to stay and work in Cape Breton Island after graduation and over half report that they are unsure yet if they want to stay and work in Cape Breton after they graduate. This indicates that over 88% of international BHTM students are at least considering living and working in the Cape Breton Island tourism industry.

Of the 176 international students who participated in this survey, the two largest groups were from China (56) and India (72) as can be seen in Figure 1. Indian students were more than twice as likely to indicate a desire to stay in Cape Breton (47.22%) compared with Chinese students (21.05%). Chinese

students were more likely to be unsure about wanting to stay in Cape Breton after graduation (63.16%) compared to Indian students (44.44%).

In comparing the responses to this question between students who entered the BHTM program after 2022 with those who entered into the BHTM program before 2022, the more experienced students (who most likely have spent more time in Cape Breton) were more likely to want to stay in Cape Breton. 39.66% of the pre-2022 group responded that they wanted to stay in Cape Breton after graduation while 22.58% of the post-2022 group indicated that they wanted to stay. The post-2022 group were more likely to answer that they were either unsure or that they did not want to stay. This suggests that BHTM students who have spent more time in Cape Breton are more likely to want to remain after graduation.

When the international BHTM students were asked if they thought they would *be able to stay* in Cape Breton after graduation (Figure 4) only 9.83% did not think they would be able to stay. The majority were either unsure (48.55%) or believed that they would be able to stay (41.62%).

Do you think you will be able to stay in Cape Breton after you graduate? (International Students)

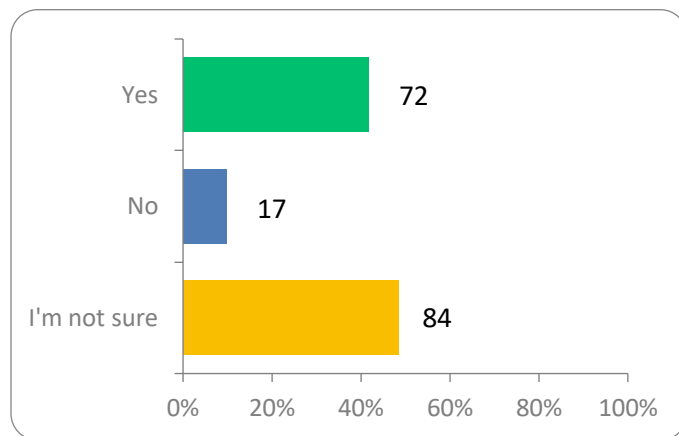


Figure 4

This indicates that most international BHTM students believe that there is a path to either permanent residency or at least to a long-term worker's visa. However, almost half are unclear or uncertain of exactly if or how that process would work for them. This suggests that improving the clarity and support for immigration and visa procedures would be beneficial to remove the uncertainty around living and working in Canada for foreign workers. This would be most beneficial at an early stage in international BHTM students' programs, to encourage them to explore potential tourism related employment opportunities while engaged in their studies.

Students who entered the BHTM program after 2022 were more unsure if they would be able to stay (53.23%) when compared to students who entered the program before 2022 (42.11%). Almost half (47.37%) of the pre-2022 BHTM students believed they would be able to stay in Cape Breton after graduation while less than one-third (32.26) of the post-2022 students felt that way. Students who have been in the BHTM program for longer, and most likely have been in CBU and Canada for longer, are more confident in being able to remain in Cape Breton after graduation than the newer BHTM students. This suggests that as students spend time at CBU they become more familiar with the Canadian immigration and work visa rules and procedures and more confident of their ability to remain in Cape

Breton to live and work after graduation. It is unclear if this increased confidence is a result of communication between international students, information provided by CBU, or information provided by other organizations. This is an area where additional research could be conducted to identify the origin, accuracy, and permeation of immigration information for CBU students.

When asked about the likelihood of returning to their home country to live and work after graduation, international students were relatively evenly split (Figure 5). The largest response (41.04%) indicated that they were unsure if they would return to their home country to live and work. Respondents who indicated that they were either unlikely or very unlikely to return to their home countries to live or work made up 32.95% of responses while those who answered that they were either likely or very likely to return to their home country made up 26.01% of the responses.

**After you graduate, how likely are you to return to your home country or region to work and live?
(International Students)**

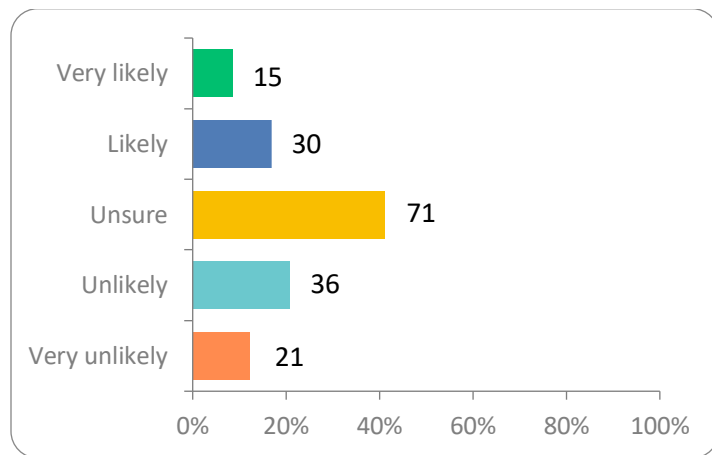


Figure 5

This question (Figure 5) addresses the perceived likelihood of a student returning to their home country rather than their desire to return home. This can be affected by external factors such as immigration requirements or the availability of worthwhile employment and it could also be affected by personal factors such as family expectations or personal relationships. For example, a respondent may want to live and work in Cape Breton but the existence of a sick or elderly relative may necessitate their return home for a period of time. The survey results were distributed in a typical bell pattern indicating a balanced distribution for BHTM students in their expectation of returning to their home countries.

The majority of international BHTM students (61.08%) responded that they are either likely or very likely to move to a country or region because of a job offer (Figure 6). Only 11.63% of respondent indicated that a job offer was not the motivating factor determining the country or region they would move to.

**After you graduate, how likely are you to move to a country or region because of a job offer?
(International Students)**

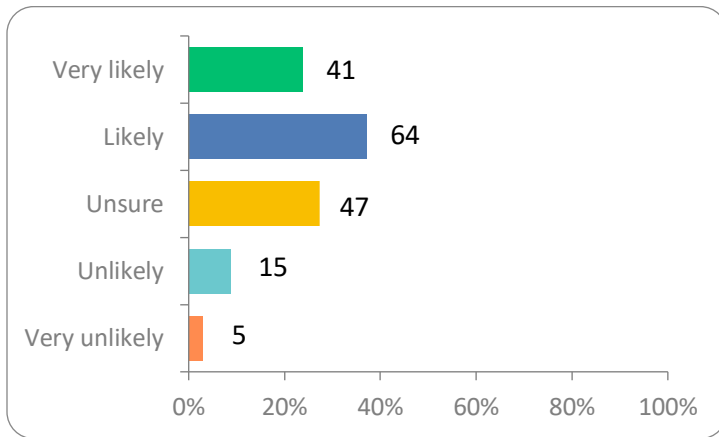


Figure 6

The majority of international BHTM students are motivated in their choice of where to live and work by the presence of a job offer. Over 60% would move to a location because of a job offer. Over a quarter of respondents are unsure if a job offer would be sufficient to entice them to relocate. This indicates that for those respondents, other factors would also influence their decision.

When the participants from Nova Scotia were asked about the likelihood of staying in Cape Breton if they received a full-time, non-seasonal job offer from a hotel or tourist operator on Cape Breton Island, they showed a fairly even split of responses (Figure 7).

If you receive a competitive, full-time, and year-round, job offer from a hotel or tourist operator on Cape Breton Island, how likely would you be to stay? (Nova Scotians)

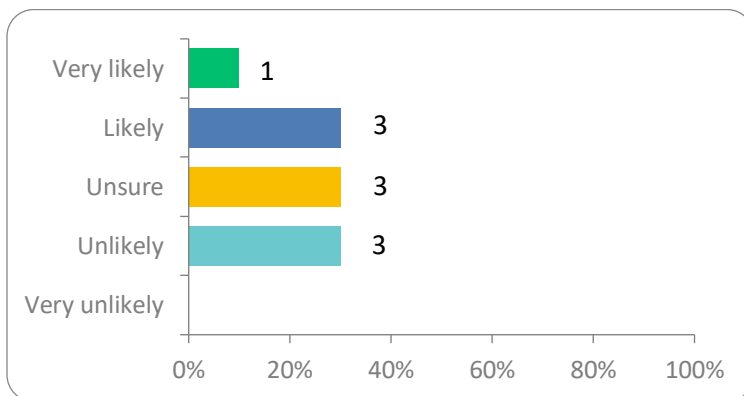


Figure 7

Due to the small sample size, this group is not a reliable indicator of the attitudes of the larger Nova Scotia population. However, this does imply a degree of ambivalence towards living and working in Cape Breton Island for residents of Nova Scotia. This suggests that Nova Scotia residences may not be a reliable source of labour for Cape Breton Island and that other labour pools may need to be cultivated. Further research on the attitudes of Nova Scotia residents toward living and working in Cape Breton is suggested.

Compared to respondents from Nova Scotia, international BHTM students showed a much greater likelihood of staying in Cape Breton if offered a competitive, full-time, and year-around job by a tourist operator (Figure 8). 81.51% of international BHTM students indicated that they were either very likely or likely to stay in Cape Breton under those circumstances. Only 5.2% of non-Canadian BHTM students indicated that they were either unlikely or very unlikely to remain in Cape Breton if offered a competitive, full-time, year-around job.

If you receive a competitive, full-time, and year-round, job offer from a hotel or tourist operator on Cape Breton Island, how likely would you be to stay? (International Students)

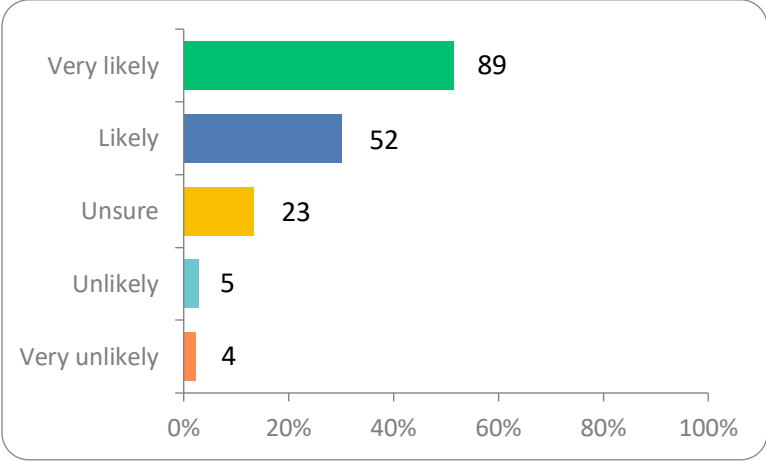


Figure 8

The results of this survey indicate that international BHTM students are very likely to choose to live and work in Cape Breton if offered appropriate employment.

Looking at the responses of Indian and Chinese BHTM students, there is a stronger intention of staying for survey participants from India. 91.66% of Indian participants responded that they were either likely or very likely to remain in Cape Breton if they received a full-time, year-around job offer from a tourist operator (Figure 9). In comparison, 64.23% of Chinese respondents indicated that they would be likely or very likely to stay (Figure 10).

If you receive a competitive, full-time, and year-round, job offer from a hotel or tourist operator on Cape Breton Island, how likely would you be to stay? (Indian)

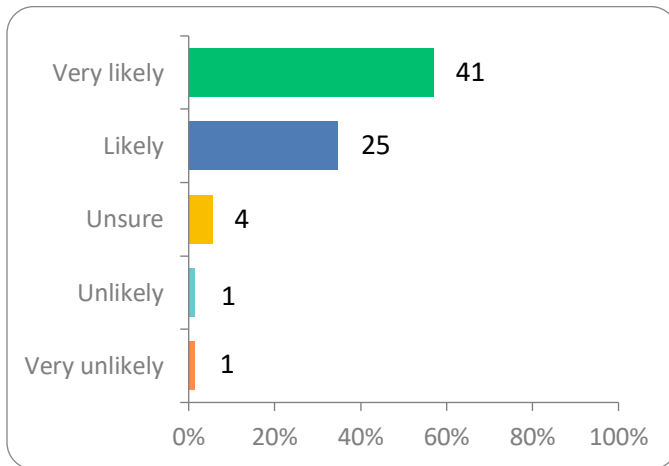


Figure 9

If you receive a competitive, full-time, and year-round, job offer from a hotel or tourist operator on Cape Breton Island, how likely would you be to stay? (Chinese)

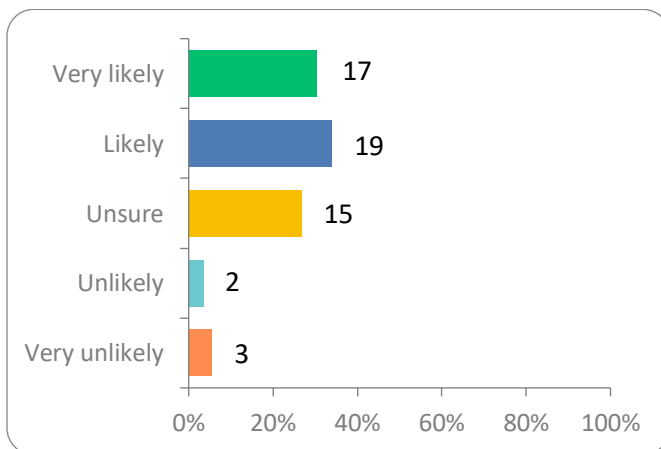


Figure 10

Responses from Chinese and Indian BHTM students indicate a greater willingness and desire on the part of Indian students to immigrate to Cape Breton. This may be the result of both an attraction to Cape Breton itself, as indicated in the difference in responses to being asked if they wanted to stay in Cape Breton after graduation (as discussed with Figure 3), as well as the difference in the value placed on a potential job offer by the two groups as indicated in figures 12 and 13 below.

Participants were asked to rate the importance of a variety of factors in their decision of where to live and work after graduation (Figure 11). By far the most important factor for deciding where to go was a good job offer. This was followed by having a year-around job and the quality of the local economy. Of moderate importance are having a network of friends, opportunities for socializing, being near family, and opportunities for education. Of low importance was the level of familiarity with a location, places

where their native language is spoken, familiarity of the culture, existence of a romantic relationship, and the local history or culture.

Below is a list of factors that might influence your decision on where to go after you graduate. Please indicate how important you feel each factor is on your decision of where to go after you graduate. (International Students)

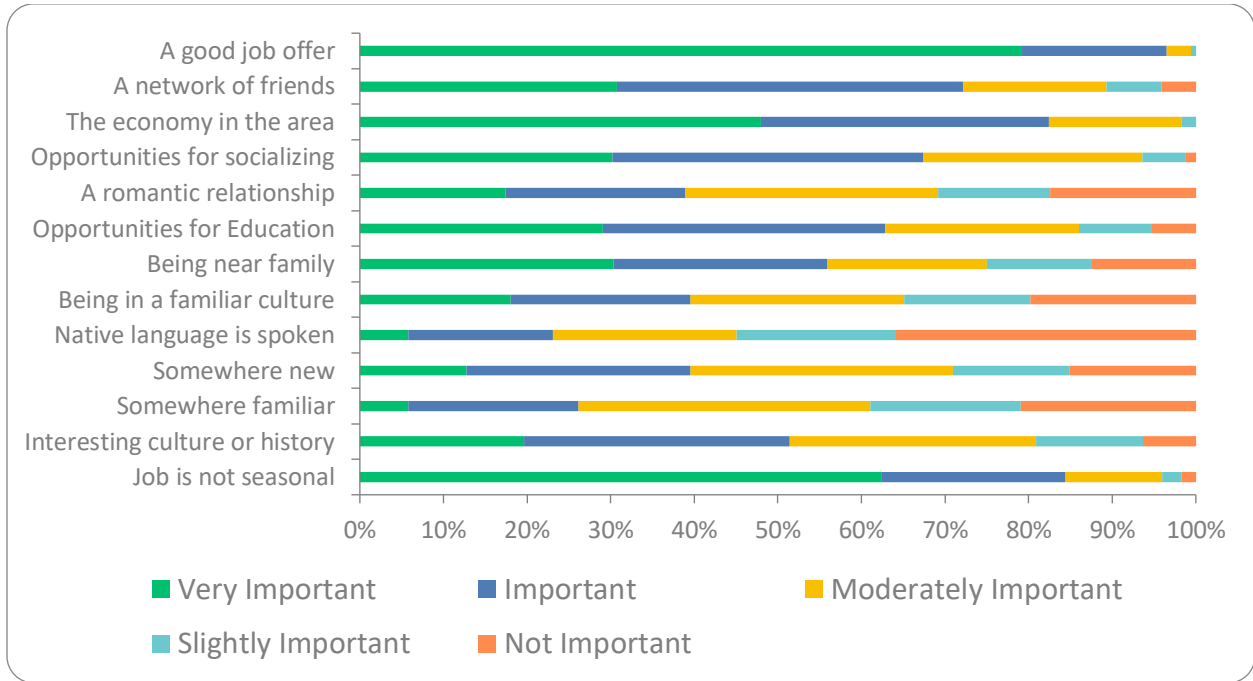


Figure 11

Figure 11 shows the results for all 173 international BHTM student respondents. Comparing the responses of the two largest groups of non-Canadians (Indian and Chinese) highlights some differences in values which could influence strategies for attracting labour from each of these groups. These differences may also be the reason for Indian BHTM students to indicate a greater willingness to immigrate to Cape Breton if offered desirable employment (Figures 9 & 10). Figure 12 shows the responses from the 72 Indian respondents and Figure 13 shows the responses from the 57 Chinese respondents.

Importance of Decision-making Factors - Indian Respondents

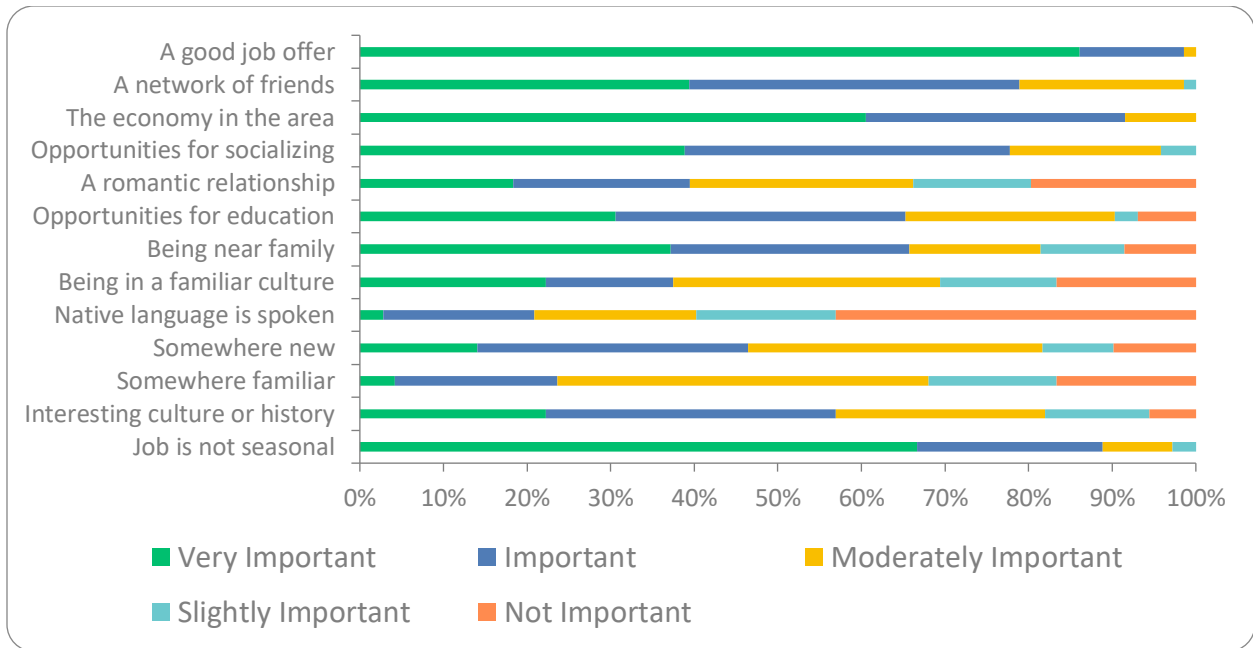


Figure 12

Importance of Decision-making Factors - Chinese Respondents

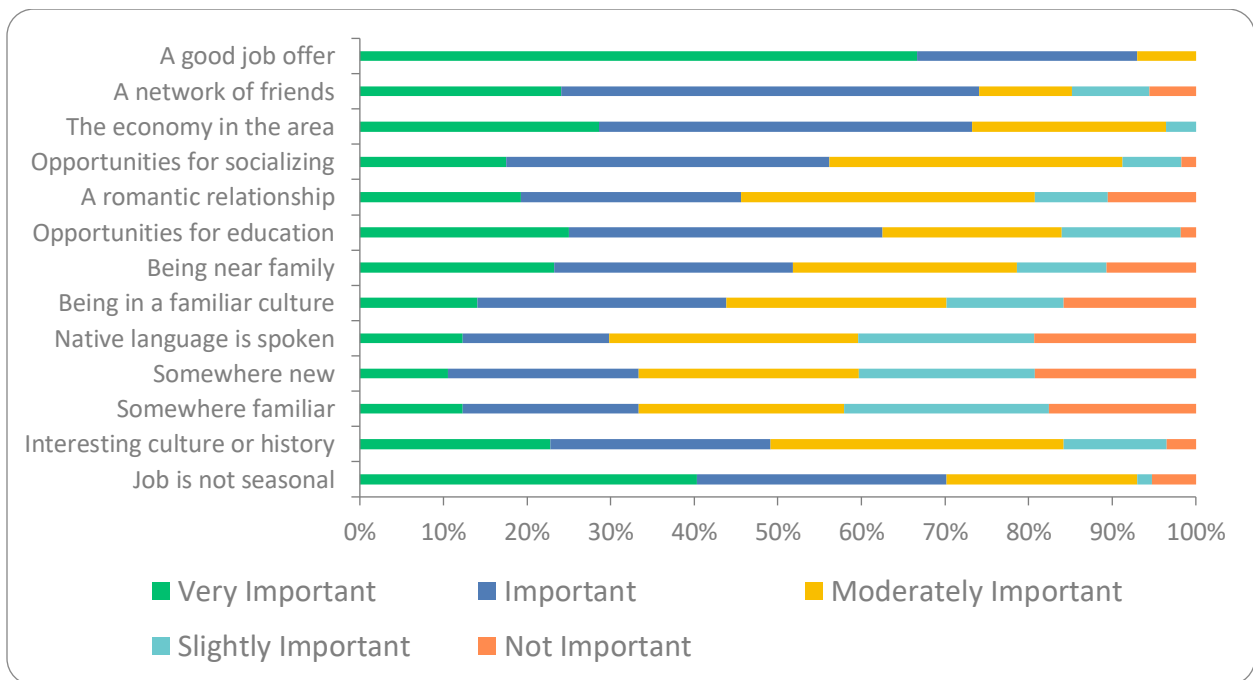


Figure 13

Of note is the increased value placed on a good job offer by Indian BHTM students. While both groups see the offer of a good job as being an important factor in post-graduation decision making, 86.11% of Indian students rate it as being very important compared with 66.67% of Chinese BHTM students. The

economy in the area and a non-seasonal job were also rated as being very important at higher rate by Indian BHTM students than Chinese. This suggests that financial considerations are extremely important to BHTM students from India.

Recommendations

This research indicates that international BHTM students represent a potential labour pool for the Cape Breton Island tourism industry. To maximize the availability and size of this potential labour group, this research has highlighted several areas where actions taken by CBU administration, the BHTM Faculty, economic development organizations, the Nova Scotian Government, or Municipalities could increase the number of people choosing to live on Cape Breton Island and work in the Cape Breton Island tourism industry. These recommendations include:

- Improve communication regarding immigration and work visa requirements and processes for international BHTM students.
 - CBU could regularly present or host informational sessions on immigration requirements.
 - CBU or an economic development organization could create and distribute an immigration checklist and process flow chart for international students at CBU.
- Encourage the creation of year-around (non-seasonal) tourism jobs in Nova Scotia.
 - The Nova Scotia Government and Municipalities could subsidize the hiring of year-around (non-seasonal) workers for tourism operators who typically only hire seasonal employees.
 - The Nova Scotia Government and Municipalities could encourage the expansion of seasonal operators into year-around operation through financial incentives.
- The Nova Scotia Government and Municipalities could explore the development of a pathway to citizenship that can be pursued using seasonal jobs in the tourism sector.
- CBU and the BHTM faculty could formalize a system to facilitate communication between BHTM students and potential employers on Cape Breton Island.
- BHTM faculty could highlight the Cape Breton tourism economy as growing and stable to BHTM students.
 - BHTM faculty could use case studies of successful Cape Breton tourism operators as in-class resources (currently in development by CBITTN).
- All stakeholders could encourage tourism entrepreneurship and investment from BHTM students.
 - BHTM faculty can highlight for their students areas of tourism growth on Cape Breton Island (ex. adventure tourism) and opportunities for investment or development in new tourism ventures.
 - The BHTM faculty or an economic development organization could create a tourism entrepreneurship and investment flow chart for BHTM students.

This is an incomplete list of potential actions suggested by this research that could be taken to strengthen the Cape Breton Island tourism labour pool. This research can be used to support additional strategies and initiatives for addressing the tourism labour shortage on Cape Breton Island.

Conclusion

This research shows that international BHTM students are very interested in moving to Cape Breton Island and working in the Cape Breton Island tourism industry. They represent a potentially valuable source of labour for existing tourism operators on the island. This research indicates that over 80 of the 230 BHTM students currently at CBU already know that they want to stay in Cape Breton after they graduate. Over 120 additional BHTM students are considering remaining in Cape Breton after they graduate. **If full-time, non-seasonal jobs in the Cape Breton Tourism sector are offered, there are likely over 185 BHTM students who would remain in Cape Breton from the 230 currently enrolled in CBU's BHTM program.** In short, BHTM students are highly attracted to residing and working on Cape Breton Island after graduation.

Economic considerations are the largest factors that affect the decision of BHTM students on where to go after graduation. Chief among these is the existence of a full-time, year-around job in the tourism industry. Friendships, opportunities for socializing, and access to educational opportunities also have some influence on BHTM students post-graduation decision making.

The Cape Breton University administration and faculty, Nova Scotia legislators, industry operators, and economic development organizations can all increase the number of CBU BHTM students who choose to live and work on Cape Breton Island after graduation through the implementation of specific strategies, the adoption of legislation, and the development of materials to support international BHTM students in finding worthwhile employment and navigating the Canadian immigration system.

Appendix 1

Future Plans for Bachelor of Hospitality and Tourism Management Students

1. What is your home country?

2. If you are from Canada, what is your home province?

3. Are you from Cape Breton Island?

- Yes
 No

4. When did you begin the BHTM program at CBU?

- Before 2020
 Between 2020 and 2021
 Between 2021 and 2022
 After 2022

5. Do you want to stay in Cape Breton after you graduate?

- Yes
 No
 Not sure yet

6. Do you think you will be able to stay in Cape Breton after you graduate?

- Yes
 No
 I'm not sure

7. What are the barriers to you being able to stay in Cape Breton? (Check all that apply.)

- Having job in the correct field
 Having a job that is year-round and not seasonal
 Family issues
 Immigration and citizenship requirements
 The amount of money being offered for available jobs
 Local friendships
 Other (please specify)

8. After you graduate, how likely are you to return to your home country or region to work and live?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unsure
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely

9. After you graduate, how likely are you to move to a country or region because of a job offer?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unsure
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely

10. If you receive a competitive, full-time, and year-round, job offer from a hotel or tourist operator on Cape Breton Island, how likely would you be to stay?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unsure
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely

11. What other factors do you feel are important or very important in deciding where you will go after you graduate?

12. Below is a list of factors that might influence your decision on where to go after you graduate. Please indicate how important you feel each factor is on your decision of where to go after you graduate.

	Very Important	Important	Moderately Important	Slightly Important	Not Important
A good job offer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A network of friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The economy in the area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The number of opportunities for socializing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A romantic relationship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opportunities for continuing your education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being near family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being in a familiar culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being somewhere your native language is spoken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Somewhere new that you've never been to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Somewhere familiar that you've been to before	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A place with an interesting culture or history	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A job that gets you into public relations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A job that is year-round and not seasonal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. If you would like to be entered in a drawing to win a \$50 gift card from Boston Pizza, please provide your name and email below.

Name

Email (Print Clearly)