

## Studying Tourism – From a Student’s Perspective

The subject of tourism is characterized by its multi-disciplinary nature, and the idea that it cannot be studied without recognizing the numerous subjects that lie underneath the tourism ‘umbrella’. Such diversity in the wide breadth of disciplines that are studied within tourism subsequently makes the subject an interesting and exciting one to study.

Through the tourism management programme, students are encouraged to critically analyse industrial issues and understand the diverse nature of the industry – being taught by and gaining an insight into the specialist knowledge of academically and industrially experienced teaching staff. The previously mentioned themes occupy only a very small minority of what the overall programme aims to achieve, however, a number of different perspectives must also be explored, such as: anthropology, sociology and psychology, amongst many others, once again tying in with the multi-disciplinary nature of tourism.

The amount in which the academic department and indeed wider institution engages within industry can positively influence the type of learning experience available to tourism students. For example, institutions that operate within industry can form affiliations with external organizations and offer work-placements to students, whilst also encouraging students to engage in consultancy work for such organizations. Additionally, through engaging in industry, it continues to ensure that the respective academic team are up to date and well versed in current industrial occurrences.

A key industrial characteristic of tourism is that it is incredibly susceptible to changes within the external environment, which subsequently places a huge importance on students keeping up to date with occurrences within the industry and constantly monitoring these changes. Due to the volatile nature of the industry, it also places an even higher level of importance on industrial experience. Some higher education institutions are recognizing the requirement for such experience and industry-specific skills, and are offering work placements as a core part of their programmes of study. This is also epitomized by specific modules incorporating the theoretical elements of study and practical work, such as arranging events, for example.

Similarly, in order to understand how certain factors can influence and determine how visitor attractions and destinations are managed within the industry, a key part of the tourism management programme requires students to visit a variety of destinations and attractions. This is particularly important, as it provides the student with a number of different perspectives within the holistic overview of tourism management overall, as each destination and venue will have different management challenges to another.

Although current trends within graduate employment seems to suggest that securing work in the degree-specified field is somewhat difficult, the combination of both the theoretical and practical elements of studying tourism at higher education aims to provide students with a suitable academic basis and an insight into the different aspects and challenges that must be managed within tourism, in addition to obtaining work experience and the required industrial knowledge.

Extended Case Study provided by Sam Royston

