

To Engage or Not? Leading Scholar Memberships and Involvement in Hospitality and Tourism Associations

Abstract

Participating in associations can benefit professional development. Nevertheless, hospitality and tourism (H&T) researchers have focused on understanding conference attendance, neglecting the role and functions of the associations organizing such conferences. This study investigated membership and involvement in professional associations by H&T academics, specifically the world's leading scholars, and the factors motivating and inhibiting their participation. A questionnaire was designed and distributed amongst "leading scholars," defined as the most prolific H&T scholars since 2000 and the chief editors of H&T journals. Findings revealed ICHRIE, TTRA, APTA, and CAUTHE as the most popular professional associations. Some notable cases of past, current, and future membership patterns were observed. Leading academics' motivations to join associations included: personal growth, diverse opportunities, skill enhancement, and future industry development. The constraining factors of association participation were also identified. For the "most important" association for their professional development, respondents were its member for an average of 16.6 years, performing various roles and utilizing association services. By identifying the reasons for leading scholars to continue/discontinue their memberships, this study helps professional associations understand member needs. Moreover, graduate students and junior faculty members can learn how leading academics engage with H&T associations for networking and developmental purposes.

Keywords: professional associations, membership, involvement, professional development

Introduction

Many potential benefits arise from joining professional associations and attending large-scale conferences. These extend to professional development, such as advancing knowledge, enhancing skills, networking, connecting with colleagues, identifying employment opportunities, gaining financial resources, and developing professional identities (Chernow, Cooper, & Winston, 2003; Chioneso & Brookins, 2015; Cottrell, Girvan, & McKenzie, 2012; Escoffery, Kenzig, & Hyden, 2015; Harrison, 2010; Mata, Latham, & Ransome, 2010; Thomas, Inniss-Richter, Mata, Cottrell, 2013). A number of tourism and hospitality studies have examined the phenomenon of conference participation, with a particular focus on attendee motivations and decision-making, and have noted key purposes such as education, networking, career enhancement, and pursuing travel opportunities (e.g., Mair, 2010; Mair & Thompson, 2009; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Ramirez, Laing, & Mair, 2013; Severt, Wang, Chen, & Breiter, 2007; Yoo & Chon, 2008; Zhang, Leung, & Qu, 2007). Other studies have examined the factors that inhibit conference attendance, such as time constraints, travel distance and costs, and health and safety concerns (e.g., Rittichainuwat, Beck, & Lalopa, 2001; Severt, Fjelstul, & Breiter, 2009; Tanford, Montgomery, & Nelson, 2012; Zhang, Leung, & Qu, 2007).

Motivations to join professional associations have been examined in various disciplines, including nursing (Alotaibi, 2007; DeLeskey, 2003; Esmacili, Dehghan-Nayeri, & Negarandeh, 2013; White & Olson, 2004), engineering (Hager, 2014), counseling (Bauman, 2008), pharmacy (Fusco, Prescott, & Prescott Jr, 2015; Taylor et al., 2018) and librarian studies (Kamm, 1997). However, within the tourism field, the growth of convention business has placed the emphasis on conference attendance rather than association membership (Yoo & Weber, 2005). Relatively less attention has been given to the role of professional associations and their role in shaping hospitality

and tourism knowledge creation, dissemination, and faculty development in higher education. Professional associations often play a key role in organizing major conferences. Scholars have identified involvement with such associations as an important determinant of conference participation (Oppermann, 1998; Oppermann & Chon, 1997). While some studies have focused on conference participation by association members (Fjelstul, Severt, & Breiter, 2010; Lee & Back, 2007; 2008), few researchers have examined how professional associations are perceived within the hospitality and tourism community, and the motivations and/or constraining factors which shape membership of such associations.

According to Walsh and Daddario (2015), decisions to join professional associations are often made early or mid-career. Numerous studies on association membership decisions and factors have focused on students and recent graduates (Fusco, Prescott, & Prescott Jr, 2015; Schneider & Virden, 2000; Slack & Murphy, 1995; Taylor et al., 2018; Vieregge, Robinson, & Drago, 2013). As young professionals enter the workforce, the key motivations to join associations have been identified as career development, networking opportunities, and opportunities to advance in their chosen careers. But what happens after they have secured a good job and embark on a successful career? For more experienced professionals who have in some cases become leaders in the relevant industry, do they continue to join professional associations? Learning and development are a career-long process, especially for university faculty members engaged in knowledge creation, dissemination, and educating future generations of industry professionals. What do hospitality and tourism educators seek when joining professional associations? Are patterns and/or changes in association memberships evident as careers develop? Which types of associations have higher levels of participation and involvement amongst leading academics?

Professional associations provide an important platform for knowledge development, engagement, collaboration, community-building, and a sense of professional identity. Leading scholars are often role models for junior faculty members and aspiring academics. Their active involvement and participation in associations can inspire more engagement in scholarly communities. With the growing number of professional associations and conferences worldwide, many are challenged to increase their membership, including through retention (Knoke, 1981; 1986; Solebello, Tschirhart, & Leiter, 2015). It is therefore important to understand changing participation and involvement in professional associations, with a view to enhance member commitment and reduce the prospects of detachment. The present study investigates membership and involvement in professional associations by hospitality and tourism academics, specifically in the case of the world's leading scholars. The objectives are proposed as follows:

- 1) To describe the patterns of past, current, and future memberships (i.e., intentions) of professional research-oriented associations amongst hospitality and tourism academics;
- 2) To identify why hospitality and tourism academics alternatively join, do not join, and leave professional associations; and
- 3) To examine the identifications of hospitality and tourism academics with professional associations and the nature of their institutional involvements.

Literature Review

Professional associations have played an important role in the growth of both members and of the wider field of hospitality and tourism. According to Nuss (2000, p. 496), the functions of professional associations include:

- conducting research;
- publishing and disseminating research, information, and opinion;
- providing educational training and professional development programs;
- advocating on behalf of public policy or broad professional issues affecting members;
- assisting members with career development issues;
- promulgating standards for professional preparation and practice; and
- creating opportunities for professional peers to interact.

For individuals, joining an association can provide new perspectives, enhance professional and leadership skills, and build networks and relationships (Chernow, Cooper, & Winston, 2003). At a broader industry and disciplinary level, professional associations can disseminate knowledge and drive change, bringing transformations and paradigm shifts to a field of study, and influencing future professional directions (Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002; Swan & Newell, 1995).

Motivations to Join Professional Associations

Researchers have observed that it is the perceived benefits for current or potential members that are key motivations for joining professional associations, regardless of industry type. In his global study of librarians, Kamm (1997) found that two of the three most important factors for joining an association amongst survey participants were benefit-driven and related to networking opportunities and the capacity of association events to influence their career development positively. DeLeskey (2003) examined nurses in the USA and observed that improvement of oneself, increase in professionalism and job description, education, and gaining knowledge about trends on industry standards from others facilitated their interest to join the association. Similarly, Bauman (2008) identified the importance of networking and an avenue to develop new ideas, while

Hager (2014) highlighted that licensing and certification were key considerations for engineering professionals to be committed to associations.

In addition, research on students from various higher education institutions showed that career development, networking opportunity, and opportunity to advance in their chosen career were key participant motivations (Schneider & Virden, 2000; Walsh & Daddario, 2015; Fusco, Prescott & Prescott Jr, 2015; Taylor et al., 2018). Vieregge, Robinson, and Drago's (2013) study on Swiss hospitality school graduates also revealed that "information about recruitment" was perceived to be the most important in their expectations of alumni associations. This demonstrates that benefits are considered, regardless of whether members or potential members are students or already established as professionals in their respective fields. Nevertheless, Slack and Murphy (1995) contradict this view by asserting that self-efficacy is paramount when intending members decide to join an association; their research explored factors that influence US students to become members of professional associations.

A variety of other factors encourage students to identify with an association: endorsement from other professionals, familiarity with current members, the reputation of the association, a person's area of interest, updates on association's activities, the fun of participating in association's events, and student programming (Fusco, Prescott, & Prescott Jr, 2015; Taylor et al., 2018; Walsh & Daddario, 2015). But these factors feature more prominently in studies related to student's motivation to join a professional association, while research on those already working in their respective industries showed different results. These have included: contributing to the profession, the political ideologies of an association, an opportunity to influence regulations regarding their profession, and the experience acquired from the experience of leading an association (Kamm,

1997; Bauman, 2008; Hager, 2014). There is, however, a similarity across diverse industries and expertise level—seeking opportunities to network.

Barriers of Joining Professional Associations

Despite the perceived benefits and importance of membership, previous studies have noted that professionals do not consistently proceed to join associations in their respective professions (Esmaeili, Dehghan-Nayeri, & Negarandeh, 2013; Walton, 2017). Hence, researchers have examined what deterred people from joining professional associations or has made them discontinue their membership. The key factors identified were financial and time constraints, perceived lack of membership benefits, and incompetent association management. Financial constraints were reflected in the high cost of dues and membership registrations, seminar fees, and the overall cost of attending an association's activities (DeLeskey, 2003; Bauman, 2008; Walsh & Daddario, 2015; Taylor et al., 2018; Fusco, Prescott, & Prescott Jr, 2015; White & Olson, 2004). Similarly, low salaries and a lack of financial support from employees were other deterrents (Esmaeili et al., 2013; Kamm, 1997). However, Walsh and Daddario (2015) argued that even in situations where employers offered financial aid, and dues were less than \$100 per annum, there was still a low response to association membership.

Professionals have also reported receiving insufficient benefits; especially when compared to the cost of memberships, thus, they have been discouraged from joining (Fusco et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2018). This is corroborated by Esmaeili et al., (2013), with non-member respondents in their research reporting no differences between them and members of professional associations in terms of professionalism and career development. Alotaibi (2007) and Walton (2017) equally observed that participants in their studies dropped their membership because of the minimal

benefits offered by their association or lack of the assumed advantages they were to receive from the organization. Furthermore, professionals who have changed their specialty also discontinued their membership as they had minimal career benefit from being part of such an association (DeLeskey, 2003).

Furthermore, professionals have regarded time limitations as preventing them from joining associations (Schneider & Virden, 2000; DeLeskey, 2003; Fusco et al., 2015). This may relate to required overtime at work or the need to take care of family responsibilities in which case professionals do not have time to join an association. Again, previous members emphasized that the activities of the association were too time-consuming, prompting them to discontinue their memberships (White & Olson, 2004). This is refuted by Walsh and Daddario (2015), as only a tenth of their respondents participated in the semi-annual events of their association, yet they are still part of the association. However, they may choose to discontinue membership in the future, since they are unable to participate and fully benefit from association events.

Researchers have previously observed that potential members were discouraged from joining professional associations due to a lack of information about how to be involved (Schneider & Virden, 2000; White & Olson, 2004) and a perceived lack of value of an association on the part of employers (Bauman, 2008). Recent studies have also shown that professionals have discontinued their association memberships because of a perceived failure to provide relevant information about performance, a lack of publicity, and an emphasis on commercial gains rather than professional topics (Esmaili et al., 2013). Fusco et al. (2015) also found that members dropped out because the association stopped aligning with their interests and lacked avenues for them to be involved. Alotaibi (2007) pointed out that location may also play a role in whether or not to join a professional association. The respondents in this research were previously members

of the Kuwait Nursing Association (KNA) and withdrew because the location of the association was inconvenient. To date, no further research has been conducted to support these two propositions or to determine their influence on joining decisions.

Professional Associations and Career Development

Some studies have examined the relationship between professional associations and career development. Mata, Latham, and Ransome (2010) characterized joining professional associations and attending conferences as an evolutionary process. The process begins when a professional joins local or national chapters, and then presents at conferences. This subsequently leads to greater involvement in networking and service provision to the association, culminating in advocacy to promote new programs and initiatives. Chernow, Cooper, and Winston (2003) also discussed how involvement in professional associations shifts in focus over the various stages of career development. Initially, professionals join associations for networking and obtaining entry-level positions. Secondly, they continue to attend conferences but concentrate more on their work rather than becoming involved in the association. During the third stage, middle-level professionals become leaders in associations and contribute more to journals and conference programs. Finally, senior-level professionals take responsibility for association leadership roles and in journal editorial positions. In theory, one might expect professionals to assume more important association roles as their careers advance. On the other hand, the empirical data collected by Chernow, Cooper, and Winston (2003) demonstrated that compared to more junior professionals, senior-level professionals are less likely to read association journals and newsletters, to attend non-conference workshops, and to serve in an elected/appointed office. This suggests that involvement in associations “decreased as the level of the professional’s position increased” (p. 43).

In addition to examining levels of involvement, some studies have considered other aspects of professional associations. Twale and Shannon (1996) examined whether any gender-related differences are evident in participating and in satisfaction with professional association activities. They found that female faculty participated in more and different types of professional association activities than their male counterparts. Moreover, male and female faculty served on different types of committees. For example, women reported “serving on nominating, membership, awards, graduate student, and steering committees while men reported sitting on leadership, policy, and assessment committees” (pp. 120-121). Another study by King, Breen, and Whitelaw (2014) found some differences in the industry engagement of small and medium-sized tourism enterprises. Specifically, those who had a stronger business-orientation were more involved in business organizations, such as Chambers of Commerce, whereas the more lifestyle-oriented were more involved in tourism industry associations. The scale and nature of associations vary, as is the case with the characteristics of those who participate. Thomas et al. (2013) argued that while national-level associations are generally more prestigious and influential, local chapters of national associations may have some unique benefits that cannot be obtained from national/international associations. These include greater opportunities to conduct community-based research and local consulting projects. As such, local chapters and local/regional associations can also play important roles in professional career development.

A review of the literature has revealed the role and benefits of professional associations at an aggregate level. In the case of tourism and hospitality literature, more attention has been paid to conference participation and decision-making. There is relatively little research on membership and engagement with professional associations, despite their diversity. It is not surprising that professional associations vary in their nature and scale across hospitality and tourism, given the

diversity of entities that spans the public, private and voluntary sectors, and small, medium and large scale enterprises. Within the sector, there are international associations (e.g., ICHRIE) as well as regional chapters (e.g., EuroCHRIE, APacCHRIE). Some associations focus on hospitality/tourism (e.g., TTRA), while others are interdisciplinary, connecting tourism with a related domain such as technology (e.g., IFITT). In addition to such differences in focus, previous studies in other fields have suggested that there may be differences in association involvement according to the applicable stage of career development. In the present study, the authors investigate the professional association engagement of hospitality and tourism scholars, including the factors that motivate and inhibit their association memberships, their levels of involvement in different types of association, and their participation patterns - past, current, and future.

Methodology

To investigate the professional association membership and involvement of hospitality and tourism academics, the authors developed a questionnaire for distribution amongst the world's leading tourism and hospitality scholars. They made use of their networks to reach the target audience on the basis that the more experienced and esteemed in their field could offer potentially rich insights into patterns that they had observed over extended careers.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was designed to investigate memberships and involvement in professional associations amongst hospitality and tourism academics. The instrument consisted of four main sections: 1) membership of professional associations, 2) motivations and inhibiting factors, 3) levels of involvement, and 4) respondent background information.

Association memberships were divided into three sub-sections: current, previous, and future. Respondents were provided with a list of international tourism and hospitality-related associations, and were then asked to indicate their current, past, and future memberships. For their previous memberships, respondents were asked to indicate the associations that they belonged to in the past, but no longer. For future memberships, respondents were asked to indicate the association memberships to which they aspire. The authors compiled a list of international tourism and hospitality-related associations. Major international associations and their local/regional chapters were listed separately in the questionnaire. Acknowledging the difficulty of assembling an exhaustive listing of relevant associations, respondents were also provided with two open-ended questions to allow them to list other associations relevant to their current, previous, and future membership intentions. One question asked about “other hospitality and tourism associations” and the other inquired about “non-hospitality and tourism associations” (e.g., sociology, education, business, technology, geography).”

The identification and development of factors motivating association memberships were drawn from prior literature about the reasons for joining and their benefits (Chernow, Cooper, & Winston, 2003; Dillon, 2010; Mata, Latham, & Ransome, 2010). Respondents were asked to rate each item on a five-point agreement scale. For researchers, it is more difficult to identify why people do not join or discontinue their association memberships because this topic has been less investigated. The current researchers have modified and/or adopted the factors inhibiting conference attendance that were identified in previous studies (Fjelstul, Severt, & Breiter, 2010; Rittichainuwat, Beck & Lalopa, 2001).

The component of involvement in professional associations was undertaken in two parts. First, an open-ended question asked respondents to identify the three associations that have been

“most important” in their scholarly career development. Any association named by the respondent (e.g., international or local chapters, tourism or hospitality focused or based in other disciplines) was considered in this section of the study. Next, when considering their three nominated associations, respondents were asked about the longevity of their membership and how many associated conferences they had attended. Respondents were also asked to indicate their level of involvement by selecting any relevant roles and services that they had performed. The ultimate list of association roles and services was based on the works of Chernow, Cooper, and Winston (2003) and of Chioneso and Brookins (2015).

The last section of the questionnaire included respondents’ demographic information, as well as their professional academic histories, such as academic position and area of expertise. The survey instrument was pilot tested amongst the editorial board members of a representative tourism journal. Feedback from pilot test respondents was incorporated into the final questionnaire, such as additions to the list of international tourism and hospitality-related associations.

Sampling and Data Collection

The target population consists of the world’s leading hospitality and tourism scholars. Purposive sampling was used in order to compare progressive changes in their association memberships and involvement through the course of their academic careers. The category of “leading scholars” is defined as follows:

- 1) The most prolific hospitality and tourism scholars, based on the number of articles published in top-tier hospitality and tourism journals since 2000
- 2) The chief editors and co-editors of hospitality and tourism journals

In advancing the investigation, two searches were conducted in the Scopus database to

identify the journals with either “travel OR tourism” or “hotel OR hospitality” in the journal title. After limiting the publication date to the period 2000-2017 and document type to “articles,” the Scopus website was able to display two lists of the top 160 authors by the number of publications in travel/tourism journals and hotel/hospitality journals. Second, a list of 77 hospitality and tourism journals was compiled based on the works of Cheng et al. (2011), Gursoy and Sandstrom (2016), Hall (2011), and McKercher and colleagues (2006; 2007; 2015). A thorough search of these journal websites generated a list of 123 chief editors and co-editors of hospitality and tourism-related journals.

There are overlapping names in the three following lists: 1) the most prolific authors in tourism journals, 2) the most prolific authors in hospitality journals, and 3) the chief editors of the journals. This prompted cross-checking across the three lists. Ultimately, 345 individual leading hospitality and tourism scholars were identified as potential study respondents. The contact information of each potential respondent was obtained by checking his or her affiliations in journal articles and then cross-checking the university or company website. Finally, an email was sent out to 345 potential respondents on February 9, 2018, inviting completion of the online questionnaire using Qualtrics. A reminder email was dispatched on March 1 and data collection concluded on March 14, 2018. A total of 173 responses were received. Following a checking process for completed responses, the final sample size was 117 and a response rate of 33.9% was achieved.

Low response rates have been a persistent weakness of online surveys (Evans & Mathur, 2018). A meta-analysis by David and Ware (2014) identified the range of response rates for electronic health surveys as 2.83% to 76.58% (depending on levels of incentive), and the median response rate was 15.85%. For online panel surveys, with individuals signing up as panelists voluntarily and receiving incentives for completion, the typical response rate is still relatively low

at 15–20% (Pedersen & Nielsen, 2016). In the absence of incentives in the current study, a response rate of 33.9% was considered to be acceptable.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics for data analysis purposes were used to show the respondent profiles, their past, current and future association memberships, and involvement in their “most important” associations. To identify the motivation to join associations and any constraints, the authors deployed Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and used the statistical program SPSS to identify the underlying structure of motivational and inhibiting factors. Manual compilation, coding and sorting was used for answers to any open-ended questions, such as “other associations,” “non-hospitality and tourism associations,” and the top three “most important” associations

Results

Respondent Profile

As shown in Table 1, approximately 74% of the respondents were male, and 65% were between the ages of 46 to 65. As expected, an overwhelming proportion (98%) of the respondents possessed doctoral degrees and 71% were Professors or Emeritus Professors. Table 1 also reveals that slightly over half of the respondents specialize in tourism (53.1%), while the specialization of the other half is hospitality, food services, and other fields.

[Table 1]

Association Memberships

The most popular professional associations for membership amongst leading hospitality and

tourism scholars were ICHRIE (International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education), TTRA (Travel and Tourism Research Association), and APTA (Asia Pacific Tourism Association) (see Table 2). However, it should be noted that TTRA and APTA have more previous members (i.e., members who discontinued their membership) than current membership. A similar case is ISTTE (International Society of Travel and Tourism Educators), which was ranked high in past membership, but significantly lower in current and future memberships. On the other hand, for CAUTHE (Council for Australasian Tourism and Hospitality Education), APacCHRIE (Asia Pacific Council on Hotel, Restaurant, & Institutional Education), and UNWTO (World Tourism Organization), the pattern is quite healthy with higher current and future memberships. Another noteworthy case is IAST (International Academy for the Study of Tourism), with 0 past membership and high current and future membership intentions. As scholars have to be nominated and pass the voting process to become a Fellow of IAST, elected Fellows generally do not terminate their membership. This is also why IAST is ranked high as a future aspiration for hospitality and tourism scholars.

[Table 2]

Motivations and Constraints

Tables 3 and 4 present the reasons why respondents join and do not join professional associations. Among the 17 motivation items, the top reasons for respondents to join are: Network with other educators (M=4.37), Develop collegial relationships (M=4.26), Gain new perspectives (M=3.92), and Grow professionally (M=3.90). Among the 17 constraint items, the top reasons for not joining or for discontinuing professional association memberships are: High membership fees (M=3.88), I do not have time (M=3.82), I have other obligations (M=3.77), and These association

activities do not appeal to me (M=3.51).

[Table 3]

[Table 4]

The next step of the data analysis involved identifying the underlying structure of the motivations to join professional associations. Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation was conducted and the factor loading of .50 was used for item inclusion and exclusion. The EFA results yielded a 4-factor structure with 72.4% of the variance explained (Table 5). Three items were excluded because of high cross-loading values (i.e., Obtain more information, Acquire inspiring new ideas, and Enhance professional skills). Four factors were identified: “Personal Growth” (Cronbach’s Alpha=0.856; Variance explained: 46.91%), “Diverse Opportunities” (Cronbach’s Alpha=0.807; Variance explained: 10.34%), “Future Industry Development” (Cronbach’s Alpha=0.817; Variance explained: 8.01%), and “Skill Enhancement” (Cronbach’s Alpha=0.735; Variance explained: 7.16%).

[Table 5]

Principal Component Analysis was also conducted to identify the dimensions which underpin the constraints to joining professional associations. Three items were excluded because of high cross-loading values (i.e., High membership fees, These associations provide little access to professional or academic papers, and The workload from being involved in these associations is heavy). The results yielded a 5-factor structure with 76.3% of the variance explained (Table 6). Factor I describes the negative perceptions and lack of appeal of some associations, and was named “Negative Perceptions” (Cronbach’s Alpha=0.792; Variance explained: 33.52%). Factor II is the

“Location and Timing” of association events (Cronbach’s Alpha=0.895; Variance explained: 14.34%). Factor III is related to the websites and “Online Activities” of these associations (Cronbach’s Alpha=0.781; Variance explained: 11.25%). Factor IV is the “Lack of Time,” due to other obligations (Cronbach’s Alpha=0.787; Variance explained: 9.90%). Factor V is the lack of “Employer’s Support” (Cronbach’s Alpha=0.560; Variance explained: 7.29%).

[Table 6]

Association Involvement

Lastly, respondents were presented with an open-ended question asking them to indicate three associations that were the “most important” to their academic career development. The associations most frequently mentioned were ICHRIE (n=32), CAUTHE (n=14), TTRA (n=13), IAST (n=13), and IFITT (n=12) (Table 7), which are similar to the results of Table 2. Besides these popular hospitality and tourism associations, many respondents indicated “non-hospitality and tourism” associations as their “most important” associations (Table 8). These associations originate from other disciplines, such as management, marketing, psychology, geography, and sociology. Specifically, geography-related associations emerged as the most frequently mentioned “non-hospitality and tourism” associations.

[Table 7]

[Table 8]

For each of their top three associations, respondents were asked to indicate their level of involvement, including length of membership, number of conferences attended, and the roles and services in the association that they have performed or used (Table 9). For their most important

association (i.e. “Association A”), on average, respondents have been a member for 16.6 years and have attended 10.8 conferences organized by Association A. The main types of services and/or roles that respondents have used/performed in Association A include: Attending and presenting at conferences, Paying annual membership dues, Reading the association’s newsletters and journals, and Serving on a committee/task force.

[Table 9]

Discussion

This study has explored memberships and involvement in international professional associations by leading scholars in hospitality and tourism. Amongst the various associations considered in this study, ICHRIE (International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, & Institutional Education) stood out in both membership and level of involvement. It had the highest frequency in current memberships (n=45) and received the most mentions (n=32) in being amongst the top 3 associations that were important to the academic career development of leading scholars in hospitality and tourism. ICHRIE is more hospitality-oriented. In terms of tourism, TTRA (Travel & Tourism Research Association) and APTA (Asia Pacific Tourism Association) were found to be the most popular associations. As TTRA is North America based, albeit with sub-divisions in Europe and Asia, and APTA is Asia-based, the two groupings have somewhat different geographic markets. This may account for why TTRA and APTA have high “past memberships.” As academics move from North America to the Asia Pacific, or vice versa, their membership may switch from one association to the other. TTRA Asia Pacific was established in 2013, which also indicates an increasing competition between TTRA and APTA.

Due to the unique nature of its membership structure and requirements, IAST (International

Academy for the Study of Tourism) ranked high in current and future memberships, with no past members in the current study who have discontinued their memberships. As IAST is a prestigious association with high entrance requirements and a limited number of fellowships, elected fellows would usually maintain their membership status permanently, and when ceasing to be active, move to emeritus status. By observing the patterns of past, current, and future association memberships, the case of ISTTE (International Society of Travel and Tourism Educators) should also be noted. ISTTE was ranked very high in past memberships, but had significantly lower current members. While ICHRIE is the biggest hospitality education association in North America, ISTTE is also based in North America, with a focus on tourism education. Possible reasons why ISTTE has fewer current members may be that there are more competing associations in North America, and ISTTE falls under the shadow of bigger associations such as ICHRIE and TTRA.

This study also examined the motivations and constraints of association memberships. Five constraining factors were identified: Negative perceptions, Location and timing, Online activities, Lack of time, and Employer's support. However, based on the mean scores, time and financial constraints are the top reasons for respondents to not join or discontinue their association memberships. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Bauman, 2008; DeLeskey, 2003; Fusco et al., 2015; Schneider & Virden, 2000; Taylor et al., 2018; Walsh & Daddario, 2015; White & Olson, 2004). A study by Deale and Lee (2019) also found that hospitality and tourism faculty members spent an average of one hour a week on workshops and conferences, although it did not include the time spent on other association-related activities. In terms of time, the leading scholars in this study felt that overall they lacked time and were busy with other obligations, while a mismatching between association events and their own schedules was concerning, though not the main problem. Moreover, within the factor Negative Perceptions, the main issue was that the

association activities did not appeal and the association theme was irrelevant to their research. The two other items on negative experiences and hearing negative things had low mean values (i.e., 2.3~2.4 on a five-point scale of agreement), which showed that respondents did not necessarily have bad experiences with the prior associations.

Lastly, four main factors were identified for joining international professional associations. Consistent with previous literature, the current researchers identified professional growth and networking opportunities as key motivations for joining (Bauman, 2008; Chernow, Cooper, & Winston, 2003; DeLeskey, 2003; Kamm, 1997). Specifically, developing collegial relationships and networking with other educators was perceived as more important than networking with practitioners and individuals from other disciplines. This study is also distinct from the previous literature by focusing on leading scholars. The main reasons for students and recent graduates to join associations are career development, continuing education, and networking opportunities (Taylor et al., 2018; Walsh & Daddario, 2015). An additional motivating factor was identified for scholars who are leading the hospitality and tourism field: future industry development. While current respondents in this study deemed personal growth and networking opportunities to be important, their careers have reached a stage where they are more focused on the development of the wider industry sector. Thus, they are involved in professional associations to advocate for the profession, shape future directions, and promote the industry to the general public. Though skill enhancement was also identified as a fourth factor, the low mean scores indicate that leadership and administrative skills were not the main reasons for joining. Given the extent of their prior work experience, respondents are likely to have already played other leadership and administrative roles and duties.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the literature on professional association membership and involvement in hospitality and tourism and potentially to other disciplines. While other disciplines have recognized the functions of professional associational and their recruitment of new members, prior hospitality and tourism scholarship has focused more on events and conferences, and overlooked the role of associations in both hosting conferences and assembling a global community of researchers, educators, and practitioners. To the best knowledge of the authors, this study is the first to examine the participation and involvement in international associations in hospitality and tourism, and contributes to knowledge about membership trends and the factors influencing membership decisions. Moreover, the previous research undertaken in other disciplines has examined the membership decisions of all professionals or young professionals, such as students and fresh graduates. The current study is unique in considering the perspectives of experienced professionals who are leading the field—established hospitality and tourism scholars—and proposing an addition to associational motivations. The engagement of leading scholars in professional associations may be observed by the duration of their membership, with an average of 16.6 years, 12.8 years, and 12.6 years applicable to the top three associations with greatest importance for career development. Such loyalty and commitment attributes value to professional associations, specifically in hospitality and tourism. This investigation contributes to knowledge by providing insights into the involvement by hospitality and tourism scholars in associations and their professional development.

The preceding study has explored the past, current, and future membership patterns of the most popular hospitality and tourism associations and some notable cases have been observed. By identifying the reasons for leading scholars to continue or discontinue their memberships, the

investigation can inform professional associations about developing an enhanced understanding of member needs and how to increase and retain membership. For example, high membership fees are an issue. Many institutions offer financial support for conference attendance, though not for association memberships. Associations might lower membership fees, or design more categories of membership, offering extended memberships for the same price, and providing different types of membership-conference registration packages. In addition to institutional memberships, it may also be good to negotiate with academic institutions about the provision of financial support for individual association memberships. The appeal of association themes and activities is another issue. Among the list of hospitality and tourism associations in this study, the common themes are: hospitality, tourism, education, and a geographic area. Critical Tourism Studies (CTS) and International Association for Tourism Economics (IATE) stand out as two associations with specific themes. As the industry expands and more associations are established, it might be timely for associations to embrace a more tightly defined focus and differentiate themselves from other associations. A more specific theme may narrow the appeal of an association to a smaller audience, though may cultivate member loyalty over the longer run.

Moreover, it is important for graduate researchers and junior and mid-career academics to understand how leading scholars engage with relevant professional networks, both industry and scholarly. Associations provide numerous benefits to individual members and to the wider professional community. While the extent of hospitality and tourism associations grew over recent years, many now face stagnant or declining memberships. Apart from the search for job opportunities during early career development, can associations offer other benefits for career advancement? Leading scholars who are established in their profession are prospective role models for junior and mid-career academics. Their motivations for joining professional associations and

their involvements may inspire more junior academics to join associations and mid-career academics to become more actively involved. By engaging more members within the community and having a balanced composition of members, associations can grow and sustain a stronger community of hospitality and tourism educators and researchers.

This study has several limitations. First, the response rate of online surveys is generally lower than applies to other delivery modes. Future studies on professional hospitality and tourism associations might be conducted during association events to improve the response rate. Non-response bias should also be considered. Leading academics who are not active in associations may have been less responsive to the survey. Therefore, future studies should explore the views of people who do not join professional associations, specifically to understand the factors that deter their participation. Third, by focusing on leading scholars, the study sample size is relatively small. Future researchers can examine the association involvement of hospitality and tourism faculty members at different career stages, from early and mid-career, to senior and leadership roles. The motivations and participation patterns of different groups can be analyzed to gain a better understanding of how association memberships evolve alongside career development. Fourth, data were collected before the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, “online activities” were included in the survey, but they did not emerge as key respondent concerns. Under current anti-epidemic measures around the world, associations serve as a channel to keep hospitality and tourism scholars active and connected during and after COVID-19. Hence, the online activities of professional associations may play a more important role in decision-making, which can benefit from future exploration. Lastly, this study examined the views of association members. While some of the leading scholars in this study might have been the presidents and board members of various associations, they were not surveyed in their capacity as association leaders. Future researchers

may consider the perspectives of association leaders and directors to understand their views and strategies on membership, commitment, recruitment efforts, and community building.

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Table 1. Profile of Respondents

Age	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
35 or below	2	1.8
36-45	20	18.0
46-55	41	36.9
56-65	31	27.9
66 or above	17	15.3
Gender		
Male	84	74.3
Female	29	25.7
Highest Educational Qualification		
PhD (or equivalent)	111	98.2
Bachelors' / Masters' degree	2	1.8
Field of Work		
Travel and Tourism	60	53.1
Hotel and Hospitality Management	35	31.0
Food Services	3	2.7
Other	15	13.3
Years of Work Experience	Mean:	23.6 years
Academic Position		
Professor	70	63.6
Associate Professor	20	18.2
Emeritus Professor	8	7.3
Assistant Professor	3	2.7
Other	9	8.2
Location of Current Academic Institute		
USA	37	35.9
UK	14	13.6
Australia	11	10.7
China	9	8.7
Canada	3	2.9
Hong Kong	3	2.9
Israel	3	2.9
South Korea	3	2.9
Denmark	2	1.9
Malaysia	2	1.9
New Zealand	2	1.9
Norway	2	1.9
Turkey	2	1.9
Others (f=1; Austria, Croatia, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, UAE)	10	9.7

Table 2. Past, Current, and Future Memberships

Association	Past (f)	Current (f)	Future (f)
ICHRIE (International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, & Institutional Education)	16	45	13
TTRA (Travel & Tourism Research Association)	22	18	14
CAUTHE (Council for Australasian Tourism & Hospitality Education)	9	18	9
APTA (Asia Pacific Tourism Association)	23	17	12
IAST (International Academy for the Study of Tourism)	0	15	9
APacCHRIE (Asia Pacific Council on Hotel, Restaurant, & Institutional Education)	8	12	13
UNWTO (World Tourism Organization)	3	12	14
IFITT (International Federation for IT & Travel & Tourism)	3	10	5
TTRA Asia Pacific (Travel & Tourism Research Association Asia Pacific Chapter)	1	8	2
CHME (Council for Hospitality Management Education)	6	7	3
EuroCHRIE (European Council on Hotel, Restaurant, & Institutional Education)	5	7	3
ITSA (International Tourism Studies Association)	3	6	6
ATHE (Association for Tourism in Higher Education)	3	5	5
PATA (Pacific Asia Travel Association)	4	5	2
CTS (Critical Tourism Studies)	1	5	3
IATE (International Association for Tourism Economics)	3	5	1
AIEST (International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism)	2	5	1
ISTTE (International Society of Travel & Tourism Educators)	17	3	5
ISA-RC50 (International Sociological Association – Research Committee 50: International Tourism)	2	3	2
TTRA Canada (Travel & Tourism Research Association Canada Chapter)	4	1	1
TTRA Europe (Travel & Tourism Research Association Europe Chapter)	1	1	3
ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites)	2	0	2

Table 3. Motivations

I join professional associations to.....	N	Mean	Std
Network with other educators	113	4.37	0.918
Develop collegial relationships	116	4.26	0.952
Gain new perspectives	115	3.92	1.053
Grow professionally	114	3.90	1.064
Obtain more information	111	3.82	1.046
Acquire inspiring new ideas	113	3.81	1.122
Increase understanding of the field	113	3.80	1.119
Meet individuals from other fields/disciplines	110	3.65	1.145
Enhance critical awareness	112	3.63	1.099
Influence the future direction of the profession	110	3.63	1.091
Advocate for the profession	112	3.54	1.122
Interact with practitioners beyond academia	108	3.44	1.255
Increase awareness of professional opportunities	107	3.36	1.118
Enhance professional skills	112	3.29	1.189
Promote the industry to the general public	108	3.12	1.125
Develop leadership skills	106	2.85	1.085
Enhance administrative skills	103	2.33	1.132

*5-point scale of agreement

Table 4. Constraints

I did not join (or no longer join) some professional associations because (of)	N	Mean	Std
High membership fees.	117	3.88	1.027
I do not have time.	115	3.82	1.048
I have other obligations.	115	3.77	1.035
These association activities do not appeal to me.	113	3.51	1.233
My employer does not offer financial support for association memberships.	109	3.38	1.275
The theme of these associations is not relevant to my research.	114	3.18	1.236
The timing of their events usually does not match my schedule.	114	3.18	1.085
The location of association meetings is inconvenient.	112	3.05	1.184
The location of association conferences is inconvenient.	112	3.03	1.234
These associations provide little access to professional or academic papers.	111	2.87	1.105
The workload from being involved in these associations is heavy.	112	2.66	1.062
My employer does not encourage association memberships.	101	2.65	1.126
Lack of online networking opportunities.	109	2.62	1.208
I have heard negative things about these associations.	109	2.38	1.253
I have had negative experiences in my dealings with these associations.	109	2.36	1.229
Poor website design.	104	2.23	0.937
Lack of social media groups.	107	2.10	0.890

*5-point scale of agreement

Table 5. Principal Component Analysis: Motivation

Factors & Items	Mean	Loadings	Communalities
Factor I: Personal Growth			
(Cronbach's Alpha=0.856; Variance explained: 46.91%)			
Develop collegial relationships	4.26	0.846	0.762
Network with other educators	4.37	0.744	0.615
Gain new perspectives	3.92	0.691	0.696
Enhance critical awareness	3.63	0.661	0.688
Grow professionally	3.90	0.617	0.640
Factor II: Diverse Opportunities			
(Cronbach's Alpha=0.807; Variance explained: 10.34%)			
Meet individuals from other fields/disciplines	3.65	0.786	0.694
Interact with practitioners beyond academia	3.44	0.686	0.712
Increase understanding of the field	3.80	0.658	0.760
Increase awareness of professional opportunities	3.36	0.559	0.579
Factor III: Future Industry Development			
(Cronbach's Alpha=0.817; Variance explained: 8.01%)			
Advocate for the profession	3.54	0.848	0.835
Promote the industry to the general public	3.12	0.844	0.806
Influence the future direction of the profession	3.63	0.630	0.711
Factor IV: Skill Enhancement			
(Cronbach's Alpha=0.735; Variance explained: 7.16%)			
Enhance administrative skills	2.33	0.884	0.831
Develop leadership skills	2.85	0.768	0.810
% Variance Explained: 72.42			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling (KMO): 0.837			
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 755.786			
Significance <.001			

Table 6. Principal Component Analysis: Constraints

Factors & Items	Mean	Loadings	Communalities
Factor I: Negative Perceptions (Cronbach's Alpha=0.792; Variance explained: 33.52%)			
I have had negative experiences in my dealings with these associations	2.36	0.863	0.807
I have heard negative things about these associations	2.38	0.824	0.767
These association activities do not appeal to me	3.51	0.793	0.655
The theme of these associations is not relevant to my research	3.18	0.622	0.598
Factor II: Location and Timing (Cronbach's Alpha=0.895; Variance explained: 14.34%)			
The location of association conferences is inconvenient	3.03	0.924	0.934
The location of association meetings is inconvenient	3.05	0.914	0.922
The timing of their events usually does not match my schedule	3.18	0.636	0.694
Factor III: Online Activities (Cronbach's Alpha=0.781; Variance explained: 11.25%)			
Lack of social media groups	2.10	0.856	0.828
Poor website design	2.23	0.829	0.789
Lack of online networking opportunities	2.62	0.739	0.605
Factor IV: Lack of Time (Cronbach's Alpha=0.787; Variance explained: 9.90%)			
I do not have time	3.82	0.909	0.878
I have other obligations	3.77	0.876	0.850
Factor V: Employer's Support (Cronbach's Alpha=0.560; Variance explained: 7.29%)			
My employer does not offer financial support for association memberships	3.38	0.798	0.679
My employer does not encourage association Memberships	2.65	0.792	0.674
% Variance Explained: 76.29			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling (KMO): 0.699			
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 709.200			
Significance <.001			

Table 7. Respondents’ “Most Important” Professional Associations: Hospitality and Tourism.

Association	f	%
International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, & Institutional Education (ICHRIE)	32	27.4
Council for Australasian Tourism & Hospitality Education (CAUTHE)	14	12.0
Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA)	13	11.1
International Academy for the Study of Tourism (IAST)	13	11.1
International Federation for IT and Travel & Tourism (IFITT)	12	10.2
Asia Pacific Tourism Association (APTA)	9	7.7
Asia Pacific Council on Hotel, Restaurant, & Institutional Education (APacCHRIE)	7	6.0
International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism (AIEST)	6	5.1

Table 8. “Most Important” Associations: Non-hospitality and Tourism

Association	f
Academy of Management	3
American Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics	1
American Association of Geographers (AAG)	2
American Finance Association	1
American Marketing Association (AMA; including SERVSIG)	5
American Psychological Association (APA)	1
Appraisal Institute	1
Asia Academy of Management Conference	1
Asia Partnership Conference of Pharmaceutical Associations (APAC)	1
Association of British Professional Conference Organisers (ABPCO)	1
Association for Psychological Science (APS)	1
Canadian Association of Geographers	2
Chartered Association of Building Engineers (CABE)	1
Club Managers Association of America (CMAA)	2
European Marketing Association (EMAC)	1
International Association For Business & Society (IABS)	1
International Geographical Union (IGU)	2
International Institute of Forecasters	1
International Society of Biometeorology: Commission on climate, tourism & recreation	1
International Sociological Association: RC50	4
Marketing Science Institute	1
National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA)	1
National Restaurant Association (NRA)	1
New Zealand Geological Society	1
Resort & Commercial Recreation Association (RCRA)	1
Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) (RGS – IBG)	2
Royal Institution of Surveyors Malaysia (RISM)	1
Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)	1
Society of Consumer Psychology	1
Society for Industrial & Organizational Psychology (SIOP)	1
World Federation of Travel Journalists & Writers (FIJET)	1

Table 9. Level of Involvement

	Association A		Association B		Association C	
Length of membership (year)	16.6		12.8		12.6	
Number of conferences attended	10.8		8.4		7.0	
<i>Association Services & Roles</i>	f	%	f	%	f	%
Attended conferences	84	71.8	58	49.6	35	29.9
Presented at conferences	81	69.2	53	45.3	27	23.1
Paid annual membership dues	79	67.5	55	47.0	30	25.6
Read the association's newsletters	73	62.4	46	39.3	26	22.2
Read the association's journal	66	56.4	38	32.5	21	17.9
Served on a committee/task force	56	47.9	33	28.2	15	12.8
Attended workshops/ programs separate from the conferences	47	40.2	27	23.1	16	13.7
Chaired a committee/task force	44	37.6	26	22.2	7	6.0
Contributed to the association's newsletters	38	32.5	24	20.5	12	10.3
Served an elected/ appointed office other than a committee/task force chair	35	29.2	22	18.8	7	6.0
Subscribed to the listserv/on-line discussion list	31	26.5	17	14.5	11	9.4
Used placement services for recruiting	13	11.1	8	6.8	4	3.4
Used placement services when seeking positions	11	9.4	6	5.1	1	0.9