



The Effectiveness of the Tourism Master Plan (TMP 2013-2020) – Perceptions of Myanmar’s Tourism Stakeholder

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Keywords:

Effectiveness;
Quality of tourism education and training;
Tourism Stakeholder;
Tourism Master Plan (TMP).

Abstract.

This paper is a work-in-progress that aims to assess the evaluation of the 2013-2020 Myanmar Hotel and Tourism Ministry (MHT) Tourism Master Plan (TMP 2013-2020) from the perceptions of the country's tourism stakeholders. The TMP aims to improve tourism outcomes through sustainable practices such as more practical education and training of industry staff as opposed to traditional rote learning methods which was a major concern discussed by during the Australia-Myanmar Institute (AMI) conferences in Yangon and Mandalay in January 2020. Currently, much of Myanmar's tourism infrastructure, namely accommodation, is limited to the Mandalay-Naypyidaw-Yangon corridor. A further challenge to the TMP will be the Covid-19 epidemic which has inhibited tourism activity. The research assessed the perceptions of Myanmar tourism stakeholders, including peripheral communities and international tour operators, using the extracted data to suggest calls-to-action in order to improve professional practice and lead to more sustainable tourism outcomes for Myanmar including its various remote and indigenous ethnicities.

Kata Kunci:

Efektivitas;
Kualitas pendidikan dan pelatihan pariwisata;
Pemangku Kepentingan Pariwisata;
Master Plan Pariwisata.

Abstrak.

Makalah ini merupakan work-in-progress yang bertujuan untuk menilai evaluasi Master Plan Pariwisata (TMP 2013-2020), Kementerian Hotel dan Pariwisata Myanmar (MHT) 2013-2020 dari persepsi para pemangku kepentingan pariwisata di negara tersebut. TMP bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pariwisata melalui praktik berkelanjutan seperti pendidikan yang lebih praktis dan pelatihan staf industri dibandingkan dengan metode pembelajaran hafalan tradisional menjadi perhatian utama yang dibahas selama konferensi Australia-Myanmar Institute (AMI) di Yangon dan Mandalay pada bulan Januari 2020. Saat ini, banyak infrastruktur pariwisata Myanmar, yaitu akomodasi, terbatas pada koridor Mandalay-Naypyidaw-Yangon. Tantangan lebih lanjut adalah epidemi Covid-19 yang telah menghambat aktivitas pariwisata. Penelitian ini menilai persepsi pemangku kepentingan pariwisata Myanmar, termasuk masyarakat sekitar dan operator perjalanan internasional, dengan menggunakan data yang diekstrak untuk menyarankan calls-to-action untuk meningkatkan praktik profesional dan mengarah pada hasil pariwisata yang lebih berkelanjutan untuk Myanmar termasuk berbagai daerah terpencil dan terpencil. etnis pribumi.

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1. Introduction

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar (formerly *Burma*; hereinafter referred to as *Myanmar*) since its independence in 1948 has applied rote learning as its primary means of education in its colleges and universities. Under this method students were required to learn “by-heart”. While effective at the time, academics and industry practitioners today have realised the importance of implementing more practical methods of learning as Myanmar opens with the outside world. Moreover, quality education for developing nations is a major objective of the United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP) sustainable development goals (SDG’s). Tourism is no exception to this.

This paper investigates the measures being implemented by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (MHT) in the Tourism Master Plan 2013-2020 (TMP – MHT 2020). It will also identify any challenges being experienced by tourism stakeholders in training and educating their staff (and in the case of colleges and universities, their students and trainees).

Furthermore, this paper came to development after the researcher of this immediate paper conducted in-depth discussions with tourism stakeholders and academics across multiple academic and vocational disciplines at the recent AMI (Australia-Myanmar Institute) conferences at the University of Yangon (24-25 January 2020) and the University of Mandalay (28-29 January 2020). Delegates involved in education and training including lecturers and teachers expressed concerns with the lack of effective practical (tourism and otherwise) education and training, despite the TMP. A major theme which surfaced during many plenary presentations was the topic of ongoing rote education.

This work-in-progress paper explores some of the major challenges being experienced by Myanmar’s tourism industries which may be associated with a lack of practical education and training of tourism staff at all levels and a selection of industries within tourism (e.g. Tour Operations, Universities and Colleges and Hotels). It further discusses the potential for the improvement of Myanmar’s tourism industries through enhanced practical education and training programs for its stakeholders; a topic which is intended to be expanded into a research project. More practical education and training it is envisaged would lead to not only improved tourism services but also more experiential tourism for travellers and cooperation with the tourism eco-system.

It is however acknowledged tourism is a group of stakeholder industries (e.g. airlines, hotels, restaurants, coach operators etc.) and not one rigid industry but rather a conglomeration of industries forming tourism (Ayoub 2014; Leiper 2008). Tourism includes services such as hotels, transport operators, tours, guiding services and ancillary products (such as – but not limited to) retail luggage and travel goods outlets, currency exchange bureaux, souvenir shops and telecommunications providers. This implies such a conglomeration of systems may add complexities to the education and training requirements for Myanmar tourism.

The Coronavirus (COVID19) outbreak has had an effect on tourism to Myanmar as with most countries and is prevalent as at the date of writing. The researcher of this immediate paper asserts the importance of Myanmar’s tourism stakeholders preparing for a tourism recovery and improvement of services for post COVID-19 operations.

2. Background Literature

This section discusses some of the main topics pertinent to the research topic at hand. Namely, these include an overview of tourism to and within Myanmar, its economic benefits, the challenges Myanmar tourism faces and the state of education and training among the labour force of the tourism industries in Myanmar. Additionally, the topic of rote learning which has been used in Myanmar since its independence is explored. The literature includes the ‘*Tourism Master Plan, 2013-2020*’ issued by the (Myanmar) Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (MHT 2013) as well as international reports and academic and professional literature.

2.1. Tourism to Myanmar

According to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (MHT 2020), Myanmar received 4 364 101 international tourists during the 2019 calendar year, a rise of 812 673 persons (or 23%) in comparison to the 3 551 428 arrivals in 2018. See figure 1. Additionally, the OECD (2018) establishes the growing importance of domestic tourism within Myanmar, in which there were 2.5 million domestic tourists spending an estimated (Myanmar Kyats) MMK733.2 billion on hotels and guest houses in 2015. According to Exchange-Rates.Org, that equated to an estimated \$AUD769.15 million/\$USD559.20 million as at 31 DEC 2015.

Subject	2018 December	2019 December	Increase	Percentage
Arrival by Air	1335714	1792353	456639	(+) 23%
Arrival by Cruise	9370	8701	-669	(-) 7%
Arrival at border gates	53014	129371	76357	(+) 144%
Visitor with VISA	1398098	1930425	532327	(+) 38%
Visitors entering to the border area	2153330	2433676	280346	(+) 13%
Total	3551428	4364101	812673	(+) 23%

Figure 1. Tourism Arrivals to Myanmar 2019
Source: Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (2020)

Moreover, according to Trading Economics (2020) international tourism to Myanmar has increased noticeably from 2008 to 2018. Tourism arrivals peaked during 2015 to 4.681 million tourists. In further comparison, tourist arrivals in 1995 were approximately 194 000 persons according to the OECD (2018). The OECD (2018) further reported tourism's peak in 2015 contributed \$USD2.3 billion to the Myanmar economy, representing 16.4% of the nation's exports. The actual tourism arrivals leading up to YE DEC 2018 and YE DEC 2019, being 3.551 million and 4.364 million persons respectively (as per figure 1) proved higher results than the MHT (2013) anticipated conservative forecasts as depicted in Figure 3.

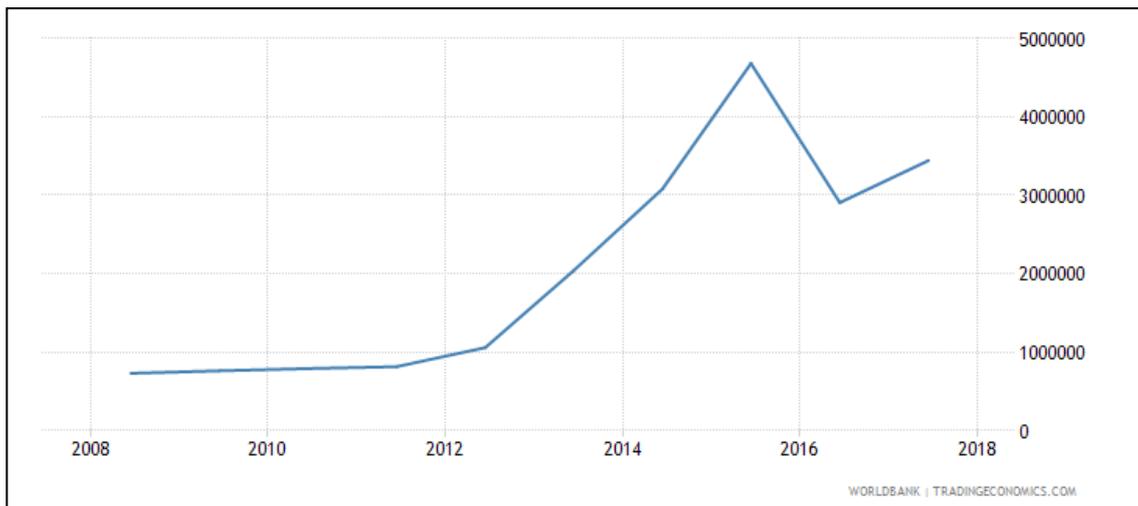


Figure 2. Myanmar – International Tourism, Number of Arrivals, 2010-2018
 Source: Trading Economics 2020

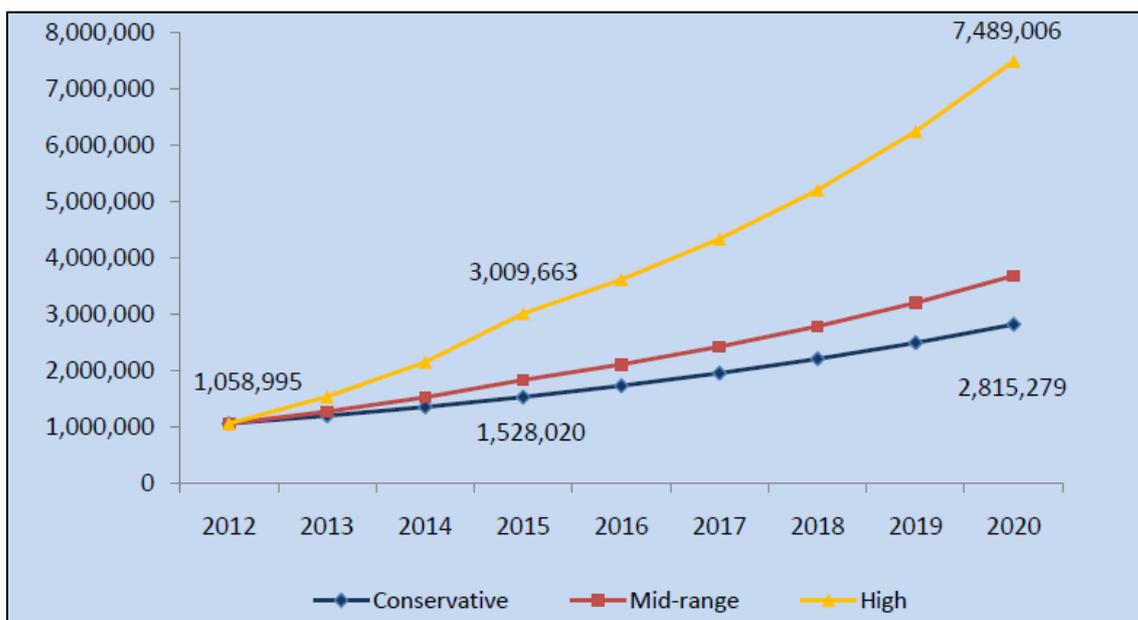


Figure 3. Projected tourism arrivals to Myanmar 2012-2020
 Source: Ministry of Hotels & Tourism (2013)

2.2. Challenges for Myanmar’s tourism industries

While tourism has been increasing to and domestically within Myanmar, this has not been without its challenges. For example, the OECD (2018) presents four main pressing challenges for Myanmar’s tourism industries, namely:

- The ability of tourism stakeholders to improve the business environment;
- Prioritisation of policies for the tourism sector;
- Encouraging increased flows into the sector; and
- Promoting geographic diversification in tourist destinations.

Moreover, the *World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitive Index Report 2015*, quoted in the OECD (2018, p. 213), ranked Myanmar's sustainable development of tourism at 134 of the 141 the economies reported. Additionally, the report asserted much of Myanmar's tourism activities are geographically concentrated in limited locations which in itself potentially acts as a constraint to future growth, especially considering the lack of hotels in remote and regional areas of the country which could potentially be better developed to receive tourists. For example, over 70% of the nation's hotels were spread as per Figure 4:



Figure 4. Hotel locations discussed in OECD (2018)

Source: Image from nationsonline.org.

Note: Labels are in accordance to Google Maps depicting estimate locations where not located on the Nations Online source.

Noticeably, over half the hotels as at 2018 were located within the metropolises of the former capital Yangon, the current capital Naypyidaw and the former imperial capital Mandalay. Furthermore, the OECD (2018) report resolves as tourism develops, protections may be required to manage increasing visitor numbers at sensitive historical, cultural and environmental sites. Additionally, attracting visitors to more newer destinations would not only reduce strains on accommodations but also better distribute economic benefits gained from tourism, e.g. to remote and indigenous communities. Finally, this OECD resolution aligns with the policies of the Myanmar government by which the MHT works to promote tourism to remote locations (Walsh & Khin 2019), which is supported by an article in the *Foreign Policy* journal, in which Myanmar’s former tourism minister U Htay Aung was quoted: “we want tourism to travel to the remote areas to see more of the country” (Anon. 2014, p. 14).

2.3. Economic contribution of tourism to the Myanmar economy

According to the TMP (MHT 2013), international tourism to Myanmar injected \$USD534 million into the national economy in 2012 and is projected to reach \$USD10.18 billion by 2020, a nineteen-fold increase. Concomitantly the tourism labour force is estimated to increase from 293 700 persons to up to approximately 1.49 million persons for the same period. In contrast, the OECD (2018) estimates there were 804 000 persons employed in tourism-related roles as at 2016 (or 2.7% of the Myanmar labour force) and estimates this figure reached 1.296 million persons by 2017.

Having recognised the economic potential of tourism to the national economy, the MHT launched the TMP (2013), in which six strategic programmes aimed at maximising tourism’s contribution to employment and income generation were established. Discussing each of the strategies and their associated programs in depth is beyond the scope this immediate research.

1. Strengthen the Institutional Environment	2. Build Human Resource Capacity and Promote Service Quality	3. Strengthen Safeguards and Procedures for Destination Planning and Management	4. Develop Quality Products and Services	5. Improve Connectivity and Tourism-related Infrastructure	6. Build the Image, Position and Brand of Tourism Myanmar
1.1 Establish a Tourism Executive Coordination Board chaired at the vice President Level	2.1 Design a human resources development and capacity building strategy	3.1 Develop innovative, integrated and participatory approaches to destination planning and management	4.1 Design tourism product development strategies	5.1 Promote complementary expansion of the aviation and tourism industries	6.1 Determine the supply, demand and gap characteristics of Myanmar’s travel and tourism system
1.2 Develop a tourism planning framework to support the Tourism Executive Coordination Board	2.2 Establish programs and action plans to implement the national HRD policy	3.2 Strengthen tourism-related social and environmental safeguards	4.2 Develop an ecotourism management strategy for protected areas	5.2 ensure tourism is included as a key element of the national transportation strategy	6.2 Create a strategic marketing map for Myanmar
1.3 Strengthen tourism information systems and metrics	2.3 Develop a multi-stakeholder framework and policies to improve service quality	3.3 Improve zoning in tourism destinations	4.3 Strengthen tourism-related supply chains	5.3 Improve tourism-related infrastructure to promote balance and inclusive growth	6.3 Raise internal awareness of responsible tourism
1.4 Develop systems to promote victory safety and consumer protection		3.4 Develop adaption frameworks and strategies on tourism and climate change		5.4 Progressively ease barriers to visitor entry and internal travel	6.4 Effectively manage the image, position and brand of the destination in the collective mind of the international marketplace
1.5 Strengthen tourism’s legal and regulatory environment		3.5 Promote innovative and green technologies in tourism			
		3.6 Strengthen community involvement in tourism			

Figure 4. Six strategic programmes of the MHT TMP (2013)
 Source: Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (2013)

2.4. Rote learning versus practical learning: Kirton’s Cognitive Continuum

Ross (2003) doesn’t discuss Myanmar tourism education and training specifically, however when applying rote verses practical learning, the researcher posits the importance of understanding Kirton’s

Cognitive Continuum, i.e. High Adaptation (Learned from rote learning) versus high innovation (leading from practical learning). Borrowing on Kirton's research, Ross (2003) resolves adaptive staff rely on structured policies and procedures while innovative staff assume risks to develop more innovative practices. Ross (2003) concludes innovative staff "... pursue completely new solutions, often outside the boundaries of conventionality" (p. 119) in which an organisation's rules may be reframed.

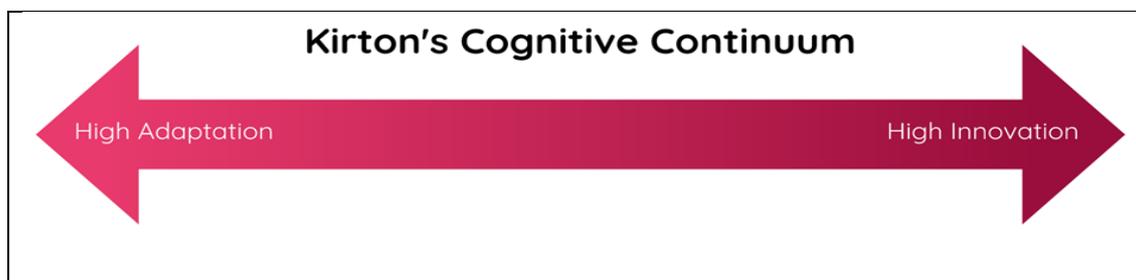


Figure 5. Kirton's Cognitive Continuum
 Source: Business Balls (2020)

Application of Kirton's Cognitive Continuum with regards to Myanmar Tourism in the corpus of academic and professional literature is scant. However, the writer of this immediate paper postulates, Myanmar's tourism staff for the most part are at the high adaptation side of Kirton's Cognitive Continuum. This will be further discussed in section 4 of this immediate paper. Additionally, discussion of rote learning in Myanmar will be conducted in section 2.6.1.

2.5. Education and vocational training in Myanmar

The UNESCO promotes education as a tool for nations to improve social cohesion and economic development (Hughes 2008). Furthermore, quality education is a major objective of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in its Sustainably Development Goals (SDGs) (UNDP 2015). As at independence after British rule, the UNSECO (2006, quoted in Fraser et al., 2019, p. 2) reported Myanmar (formerly Burma) in 1948 had an education system which "... was superior to those in other neighbouring countries especially its high literacy rate". However, since the Tatmadaw (Military) coup of 1962, education standards in Myanmar have declined relative to its ASEAN neighbours. This is further implied by Anon (2017) who establishes current education in Myanmar doesn't extend the practical skills required in the workplace. Additionally, education in recent years has served as a global base for international knowledge sharing, however Myanmar (among other nations in the region) lacks Doctoral-qualified academics in which international connections are required (Khalid et al., 2019). Moreover, the Delors (UNESCO 1996) report '*Learning: The Treasure Within*' recommends four mutually supportive '*pillars of learning*' as the cornerstone of education for the 21st century. The four pillars of learning are:

- learning to know;
- learning to do;
- learning to live together; and
- learning to be.

2.6. Tourism education and vocational training in Myanmar

While the MHT does have a training department, the academic literature regarding the presence and effectiveness of tourism industry traineeship programs in Myanmar is scant, suggesting tourism education through practicums and traineeships is (relatively) in infancy. Moreover, while establishing over 96 000 students were enrolled in tourism programs at 42 post-secondary vocational colleges, the

MHT (2013) conceded “... data on the number of students enrolled in tourism-related training is unavailable, the high labor intensity of the tourism industry suggests significant additional capacity is required” (p. 18).

The MHT is making efforts to train tourism students, however, the concern regarding lack of education and training standards among Myanmar’s tourism stakeholders is prevalent. For example, the OECD (2018) established through World Bank research, 22.4% of Restaurants and Hotels considered “... an inadequately educated workforce as the biggest obstacle to their operations” (p. 213). Additionally, Walsh & Khin (2019) stipulate although Myanmar bears a plethora of tourist attractions (many of which are not very well known to visiting tourists), the nation’s tourism industries suffer “... considerably from lack of infrastructure and human resources lacking in education and international experience” (p. 95).

The OECD (2018) findings are further supported by the Mizzima Business Weekly (2016) which in a weblog states “... a human resource shortage is perhaps the single biggest challenge that businesses in Myanmar’s travel and hospitality industry are grappling with. While job opportunities abound, there is a dearth of skilled talent to fill available positions across different areas of hotel operations and management”. Hilton hotels and resorts, the weblog continued, operates its own training facility (The Hilton vocational training centre) in the Myanmar capital, Naypyidaw. However, while education serves to improve economic conditions and social cohesion (Tripney et al., 2013) Hilton’s Naypyidaw training facility is directly focused on the hospitality segment of the tourism industries.

Additionally, Tilak (2002) quoted in Agrawal (2016, p. 17) postulates technical vocational training and education (TVET) in Myanmar is “patchy”, suggesting improvements may be required. This is supported by Bernhardt et al. (2017) who having stated (in relation to Myanmar) the importance of there being “... clear evidence that the limited supply of skilled labour is a major impediment to corporate competitiveness” (p.35) also concluded the importance of Myanmar (in the longer term) enhancing education at all tiers to secure the skills required by “priority sectors” (p. 35)”. In the short term, Bernhardt et al. (2017) continue, government policy could serve to expand government-provided training as well as strengthen and support current private training providers in Myanmar, however no mention is made in specificity to tourism. The writers further assert the importance of the Myanmar government incentivising its firms to invest in the training and development of their workplaces however again, scant mention is made regarding tourism.

2.6.1. Rote learning in Myanmar

As discussed throughout the AMI conference proceedings, education in Myanmar has been based on rote-learning. Given the importance of rote learning as a style of education in Myanmar to date (Hallinger 1998; Rosenberger 1997; Thein 2004) it is worthy of brief discussion. However, the prevalence of rote learning in Myanmar regarding tourism education and training is scant in the corpus of peer reviewed literature.

What many scholars refer to as *rote learning* has its origins in ancient Myanmar and Thailand where were many students were educated in Buddhist monasteries (Johansen & Gopalakrishna 2006; O’Lemmon 2014) and where which a scarcity of writing materials necessitated the memorisation of information (Thein 2004). However, while rote learning leads to memorising of important information (such as facts and figures) by students, a potential inherent danger is students may memorise information they don’t personally understand potentially leading to boredom (Thein 2004).

Rote learning traditionally, is an Asian style of education which in previous years had been “... viewed with envy by educators in the West” (Hallinger 1998, p. 8). Moreover, *rote learning* was used a tool to ensure “... blind obedience to authority” (Rosenberger 1997) especially after the 1962 Tatmadaw coup which declared the “Burmese way to socialism” (Tonkin 2007, p.34) and in which foreign influences in education were abrogated and critical thinking neglected (Kende-Robb 2017). However, changing economic circumstances in Myanmar’s contexts of schooling mean more problem-solving and the creative

generation of ideas are now required, in which “*The business community is demanding that school graduates be able to go beyond simple reproduction of knowledge*” (Hallinger 1998, p. 8).

Finally, Anon (2017) and Ramadani et al. (2017) stress the importance of rote learning being purged in favour of methods which encourage more independent thinking on the part of learners. This position was supported by many of the AMI conference speakers at the event including Myanmar academics.

2.6.2. Education and training in the Tourism Master Plan 2013-2020

The Myanmar Ministry of Tourism and Hotels’ *Tourism Master Plan 2013-2020* acknowledges the importance of the training of tourism staff for an industry which has been growing since 2012 and acknowledges the strain which underinvestment in the nation’s education has had on the tourism industries. Moreover, the MHT (2013) acknowledges due to the low numbers of tourists during the last three decades concomitant with underinvestment in the education sector, Myanmar’s tourism workforce is now challenged “... to provide services that meet international expectations” (p. 18). Furthermore, two key issues identified “... are (i) the extent to which the existing workforce can cope with the expansion of the tourism industry and (ii) the rate at which new entrants can be trained and advance to positions that demand more refined skill sets. *Quality assurance, accreditation systems, and qualifications of academic staff also need to be improved*” (p. 18). Additionally, that same report asserts an action plan to train local (Myanmar) communities in understanding the importance of tourism to the country. Moreover, “*conservative forecasts suggest that direct employment in the tourism industry will increase to 424,450 in 2015 and 536,056 by 2020 Thus, there is a pressing need to develop and implement a comprehensive national plan for tourism human resource development*” (p. 18).

Figure 7 is an excerpt from the Tourism master plan and portrays expected growths in tourism employment in Myanmar, in various segments of the tourism industries with an optimistic figure of close to 1.5 million employees by 2020.

Table 1. Estimate direct tourism employment in Myanmar, 2012-2020

Subsector	2012	2015	2020	2015	2020
Accommodation	44,055	63,668	84,458	125,403	224,670
Food and beverage	146,850	212,225	281,528	418,009	748,901
Recreation and entertainment	29,370	42,445	56,306	83,602	149,780
Transportation services	58,740	84,890	112,611	167,204	299,560
Travel services	14,685	21,223	28,153	41,801	74,890
Total	293,700	424,450	563,056	836,018	1,497,801

Source: Ministry of Hotels & Tourism (2013)

The TMP (2013-2020) asserts the nation’s tourism stakeholders acknowledge the importance which education plays in enhancing tourism services and in which the plan itself concedes a major weakness of the Myanmar tourism industries is the “*lack of trained human resources*” (MHT 2013, p. 20). Furthermore, the plan calls for the implementation of education services not only for tourism staff, but also for communities to understand the tourism ecosystem as a whole.

2.6.3. Development aid and tourism education and training

Myanmar did not actively seek foreign direct investment (FDI) prior to 1988 (Hobson & Leung 1997). However, Myanmar has received development aid in recent years. For example, Germany’s Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, BMZ) has been active in providing Myanmar (among other nations) with economic assistance for various programs including vocational education

(Bessey & Palumbarit 2016). The writers make no mention of tourism specifically however they highlight Myanmar's heavy economic dependence on agriculture and fishing. Moreover, Thet & Pholphirul (2016) assert the increasing foreign direct investment (FDI) into Myanmar has been attracting Myanmar migrants abroad to return due to improved economic conditions. Again, no discussion regarding tourism is made.

3. Discussion & knowledge gap

The literature discussed in this immediate paper as well as discussions with tourism education stakeholders at the AMI conferences indicates some major gaps in Myanmar's tourism industries' education and training, as well as gaps in the knowledge of the stakeholders with regards to the TMP. Some of the major points identified include (but are not limited to):

- Reliance on rote-learning across Myanmar regardless of sector or industry is widespread. Tourism is affected according to the literature and AMI conference attendees;
- Concerns by tourism stakeholders as to the potential effects of lack of effective education and training among staff and overall economic outcomes is prevalent;
- Researchers from major Universities such as the University of Yangon experience difficulties conducting tourism research with remote communities;
- Lack of accommodations in areas of Myanmar with tourism potential (e.g. Northern areas where Hilltribes may have much to offer; Rakhine State). Tourism Staff in such locations may potentially miss out on education and training;
- There is a noticeable disparity between the MHT projections of tourism staffing levels as opposed to the projections presented by the OECD (there could be many reasons for this).

Additionally, a knowledge gap has been identified in which there is scant research in to the perceptions of Myanmar tourism stakeholders with regards to the implementation of practical education and training which could enhance the skills of Myanmar's tourism Staff (current and future), improve tourism operations for those Stakeholders and ultimately improve social cohesion between Myanmar's 135 ethnicities. Myanmar's tourism Staff (as per the researcher's determination) are generally well situated as adaptors on Kirton's Cognitive Continuum.

4. Anticipated findings

Given the proposed research seeks to extract perceptions of interviewees, a qualitative paradigm is required. Accordingly, anticipated findings could be tested against actual findings in order to establish primary data and thus new findings. The anticipated findings in this immediate section are by no means complete nor resolute and variations to these may avail as the literature review is expanded towards the final research.

Given the multifarious nature of the tourism industries which are a conglomeration of industries (i.e. System of systems) interacting to effectuation the phenomenon of tourism, the outcomes of this research are expected to be diverse. Having conducted a review of the literature at hand; having considered the relative novelty of the MHT's TMP (2013) (and acknowledged its benefits) and having discussed the multiplicity of tourism stakeholders involved in this immediate research, the researcher considers the following themes to be probable outcomes of the research at hand:

- the TMP doesn't involve enough stakeholder representation;
- the composition of the tourism training programs offered by the MHT may not be ample for some of the stakeholders involved;
- more practical on-the-job training from frontline staff working with tourists may be required;

- investment in the mainstream tourism staff professional development is lacking across most stakeholder fields of the tourism industries;
- the Myanmar tourism industries don't conduct enough familiarisation trips and programs for their staff;
- current education and training methods in Myanmar's vocational and higher education institutions are skewed towards rote learning which produces adaptive (rather than innovative) staff;
- various tourism colleges/universities could arrange exchange study programs for Myanmar students to gain education and training experience abroad and vice-versa for international students and trainees to gain experience in Myanmar;
- what current practices there are to improve tourism education and training in Myanmar are mostly limited to metrocentric locations in which rural, remote and indigenous locations which potentially may have much to offer in tourism experiences are missing;
- there is a lack of research into tourism education and training in Myanmar in general.

5. Benefits of further research

It is anticipated the findings of this research could suggestively include (but not be limited to):

- increased understanding of the intricate concerns of Myanmar's tourism stakeholders with regards to their education and training requirements;
- supplement literature findings to aid educators in increasing the understanding of tourism practitioners in promoting the mystery of Myanmar as a relatively under-visited destination including remote/indigenous locations (sites of previous internal conflict);
- help Myanmar tourism practitioners understand (in-depth) why tourists visit, what Myanmar has been offering and what it can further offer in terms of unique experiences unavailable in other locations;
- enhance the ability of Myanmar tourism stakeholders to offer genuine traditional hospitality in their tourism services;
- insert the core principle of genuine Myanmar Hospitality in tourism, e.g. dining with locals into itineraries;
- enhance of tourism education and training across Myanmar's colleges and universities including on-the-job training of tourism staff (e.g. more practicums and traineeships);
- increase understanding of education and training requirements of tourism stakeholder systems (e.g. hotel requirements, restaurant requirements etc.);
- increased understanding of the tourism ecosystem by Myanmar's tourism stakeholders in which greater appreciation is reached (e.g. rural communities would gain greater understanding of the effects of timeslot changes at airports on tour operations);
- increased interactions between various stakeholders of the Myanmar tourism industries, industries especially the various ethnic groups (mostly importantly among ethnicities which have been involved in internal conflict and displacement);
- increased confidence of tourism staff, trainees and students leading to improved communication between each other and with international tourists;
- increased ability of Myanmar tourism staff to confront challenging situations in professional manners while not conceding their standards;
- the development of newer forms of tourism in Myanmar.

6. Conclusion

Myanmar is a relatively new tourism destination both as an ASEAN member and a member of the global community. In concomitance with the growth in tourism has been the recognition by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism for the requirement to improve tourism training and education among the nation's tourism professionals; something which is established in the Tourism Master Plan, 2013-2020. However, given the concerns expressed by the OECD and various researchers in the corpus of academic and professional literature, there are yet gaps in the training of tourism staff. The purpose of the proposed research is to assess the perceptions of Myanmar's tourism stakeholders with regards to the TMP's training and education initiatives. These findings extracted from the proposed research having been subjected to qualitative inductive-deductive testing (against anticipated findings established as a result of the literature review) will be categorised, from which conclusions may be drawn as to the Myanmar Tourism industries' needs for tourism education and training, recommendations for future improvement and calls to action.

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