
Understanding Employment Aspirations of Future Tourism and Hospitality Workforce: The Critical Role of Cultural Participation and Study Engagement

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Abstract:

Purpose: The aim of the study was to identify selected antecedents of Tourism and Hospitality (T&H) students' participation in culture and to investigate its impact on the youth's involvement in their studies and their future employment aspirations in T&H.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The questionnaire was used to collect data from T&H students from a Higher Educational Institution of Northern Poland. The relationships between study constructs were tested using the structural equation modeling.

Findings: The main results showed that T&H students high in culture participation are also much more engaged in their studies, which is reflected by their deeper absorption and dedication towards them. However, only students' dedication exerted a significant and positive impact on their employment aspiration in T&H after graduation.

Practical Implications: This study provides several actions that are recommended to encourage students to participate in culture, develop their cultural competences, and facilitate academic youth's access to culture. These activities such as introducing a permanent offer for students at preferential prices, developing and implementing mobile applications informing about discounts on cultural events and others interesting solutions are provided in this study and could be undertaken both by universities and by other organizations (the state, cultural institutions, private entrepreneurs).

Originality/Value: To the best of Authors' knowledge, there are no empirical studies that distinctively measure the effects of culture participation on students' engagement and their employment aspirations in T&H.

Keywords: Cultural participation, study engagement, employment aspiration, tourism and hospitality students.

JEL codes: I23, J20, J24, Z39.

Paper type: Research article.

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1. Introduction

In the practice of social sciences, it is assumed that youth is not only a time to gain education, but also a time to enter culture. The period of studies is actually the last moment to gain cultural competences. Lack of contact with art and culture may result in dormant cultural needs or satisfaction with participation in popular culture later in life (Zaniewska, 2003). Meanwhile, cultural activity plays an important role in human life; it speaks of one's aesthetic sensitivity and mental horizons. Through culture, people can talk about their feelings, interpret the world, survive difficult times, or express themselves (Hoły, 2001). For example, just by reading, man develops his intellect and imagination, learns abstract and symbolic thinking, or criticism (Zaniewska, 2003). Culture is a tool for transgenerational and comprehensive education, social integration, building local identity, activating citizens, and even resocialization.

In its cultural statistics handbook, UNESCO (2012) defines cultural participation as *“participation in any activity that, for individuals, represents a way of increasing their own cultural and informational capacity and capital, which helps define their identity, and/or allows for personal expression”*. Anheier *et al.* (2016) emphasize that such activities may take many forms – both active, such as creating art or even volunteering for a cultural organization, and 2 passive, such as watching a movie – and may occur through a variety of formal or informal channels, including the Internet.

Complex and multi-threaded research conducted by Thiel (2015) on the impact of participation in culture on health proved that people participating in cultural events at least once a month were in a much better mood than those who visited cultural institutions less frequently. Above all, participation in culture is a chance for young people for comprehensive personal development and is a reflection of broader phenomena occurring in society, as it shows attitudes, interests and values important to people (Hurysz *et al.*, 2018). Young people are believed to shape the present day, discover and popularize ways of spending free time.

Unfortunately, negative scenarios appear more and more often, according to which leisure time spent by young people and the whole society will be characterized by increasing individualization and infantilization (Zaniewska, 2003). In addition, the continuous increase in the prices of most cultural services causes a decline in academic youth's interest in cultural participation, as more and more frequently, they devote their free time to additional paid work during their studies. For example, based on findings of Grobelna and Tokarz-Kocik (2018), T&H students pointed to a variety of reasons for undertaking work while studying. They indicated a necessity to earn money in order to cover living expenses during the study time, to get practical experience and to broaden knowledge and increase practical skills, and, the most interestingly given the subject of this study, answers of 43.8% of the students were related to earning money to have a social and cultural life.

However, despite the fact that culture shapes man, his personality, attitudes and behaviors in various spheres of life, including professional ones, and plays this special role especially among young people, there is still little interest in this topic in literature, especially in the context of students of tourism and hospitality, whose attitudes and behaviors shaped during the studies will play a special role in their future work in T&H (Gobelna and Dolot, 2019), where the human element is critical (Kusluvan, 2003), and well-educated, enthusiastic and committed workforce is of particular importance (Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000).

However, although T&H industry is one of the largest and the fastest growing (Uludag and Yaratana, 2010; Hsu, 2013) and is perceived as a major source of employment (Lu and Adler, 2009; Roney and Oztin, 2007), it still suffers from high employee turnover (Kusluvan *et al.*, 2010; Richardson and Butler, 2012; Sibanyoni *et al.*, 2015; Wan *et al.*, 2014). Given this fact, it is surprising that so far there have been relatively few studies on the emerging problem of why so many young people do not feel strong commitment to their careers in the T&H industry (Teng, 2008; Richardson, 2009) perceiving tourism jobs as “short-lived professions” (Jiang and Tribe, 2009). In this light, it is also important to gain knowledge on what significantly influences students’ decision to pursue a career in the T&H industry after graduation.

In view of the above, the purpose of this study is to identify selected antecedents of students’ participation in culture and investigate its impact on young people’s engagement in their studies and future employment aspirations, taking the case of students of Tourism and Hospitality from Northern Poland. The research problem is to find an answer to the following questions: 1) what factors may be significant precursors of students’ participation in culture? and to what extent may students’ participation in culture affect their dedication and involvement in the undertaken studies and their aspirations for working in T&H?

Based on the above, the results of this study should have implications for both theory and practice (including educators and industry), extending the management literature by applying the culture and engagement theory into the context of T&H education. The added value of this study may result from the fact that to the best of Authors’ knowledge, this is the first study to investigate the issue of students’ participation in culture and its relationships with their engagement in the studies and their employment aspirations, extending the study results to a new cultural context of T&H education in East-Central Europe.

2. Theoretical Background

Leisure time, as an important category describing the functioning of a given community, appeared in industrialized societies in the second half of the 19th century. The concept of leisure time has evolved, but almost always it has contrasted with the concept of work. According to the definition of the French sociologist

Dumazedier (1974), leisure time is any activity that a person can engage in voluntarily either for rest, entertainment, learning new knowledge or one's education, or for voluntary participation in social life, after fulfilling professional, family, or social duties. The author also adds that only the time that meets the following conditions can be called leisure time: voluntary choice of activities, hedonism, personal nature of activities, no utilitarian benefits. Dąbrowski (1966) notes that the forms of spending leisure time largely depend on individual needs, living conditions, or accepted customs. Elderly people, tired of work, most often spend their free time on rest. On the other hand, young people more often use their free time for entertainment, developing their own passions and interests.

Culture is one of the areas of spending leisure time. American adolescents aged 15–19 participating in the American Time Use Survey (Allard, 2008) participated in culture to a limited extent. Watching television dominated among the main leisure activities (approx. 80% of respondents practiced this activity on an average day), while reading was placed last (10%, respectively).

Participation in culture can be both passive and active. Academic youth create culture by organizing cultural events at the university, singing in university choirs, dancing in student song and dance ensembles, etc. Students' passive involvement in culture is manifested, among others, by participating in cultural events and using cultural goods. The picture of the participation of Polish students in culture can be found in research (Hurysz *et al.*, 2018) conducted on a nationwide sample of 602 subjects, where 95% of the respondents declared participation in cultural events. The surveyed students participated in cinema screenings (99% of the respondents, with 32% of this group going to the cinema once a month or more often), music concerts (90% of the respondents, with 57% going to concerts up to 3 times a year), theater performances (82% of the respondents; this group was dominated by people who went to the theater once a year – about 40%), philharmonic or opera events (52% people who go to the opera or the concert hall once a year dominate this group). The respondents pointed to the opportunities to participate in culture provided by organizations operating within the university structures, e.g., libraries, choirs, student clubs, cinemas, art groups, concerts, student festivals.

Talking about culture in the context of academic youth's participation in it, one should take into account the types of culture with respect to its level – mass culture, otherwise known as popular, and high culture, otherwise elitist (Gajda, 2003). Mass culture can be defined as the entirety of cultural content disseminated by means of mass media, such as the press, radio, television, computer games, audiovisual media or the Internet. It is characterized by standardization of the content, a large number of recipients, and it is less ambitious and easier to understand (Pacholski and Słaboń, 2001). On the other hand, the elite culture is addressed to the audience through theatrical performances, belles-lettres or art exhibitions. Research indicates the changing scale and manner of society's participation in culture in recent years. Roose and Daenekindt (2015), analyzing the data for the Netherlands from 1970,

observe that the interest in high culture remains relatively stable, while the consumption of popular culture is increasing. Among high culture, the popularity of classical music concerts is fairly stable, while book readership is losing popularity, and, in turn, the interest in visiting museums is growing. However, the popularity of high culture is decreasing among people under 45. At the same time, regardless of age, there is a noticeable increase in interest in popular culture, e.g. cinema or popular music concerts. The authors emphasize that more and more people who focused on high culture in the past now consume both high and popular culture; they are omnivorous in a way. Changes in the consumption patterns result, among others, from the development of the entertainment industry and easy access to popular culture thanks to the development of the Internet.

It is worth noting that the boundaries between elite and mass culture are blurring (Schaeffer, 1992). More and more often, theater performances, ambitious literature or the offer of museums reach a mass audience via the Internet. The perception of high culture in society is changing – the hitherto position and prestige of high culture are questioned, by both educated people and artists themselves. This overlaps with changes in the educational system, in which works of high culture are supplemented by products of popular culture (Verboord and Van Rees, 2008).

Šebová and Révészová (2020), analyzing cultural participation in Slovakia, distinguished four clusters defined by age and education, which relate to the person's economic status: 1) occasional visitors to historical sites and libraries, 2) inactive persons, 3) cultural omnivores, and 4) persons focused on popular forms of culture. The first two clusters are characterized by lower cultural participation and the other two clusters by higher participation. In the past, it was assumed that the level of participation in culture depends on the level of education (DiMaggio, 1996).

However, empirical studies conducted in recent years do not confirm this relationship. An increase in the average level of education in Western European and North American societies did not lead to an increase in participation in high culture (Roose and Daenekindt, 2015). Research conducted in Latvia among high school students who participated in extracurricular activities related to culture (learning to play instruments in music schools, singing in a choir, attending dancing classes, etc.) showed that these activities had been present in their lives since early childhood (Romanovska, 2020). They participated in them thanks to the initiative and commitment of their families. Moreover, they appreciated the possibility of participating in this type of cultural activities, because they believed that the experience gained in this way (apart from acquiring the so-called cultural competences) would help them improve skills that would be useful to them in the future (e.g. the so-called soft skills, coping with stress, or time management).

On the other hand, Bukodi (2007) notes that in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, "cultural participation" is more influenced by the level of income than in Western Europe. DiMaggio (1982) noticed that it is possible to gain cultural capital

throughout one's lifetime and that "cultural participation" might be a dynamic phenomenon.

Summarizing the above considerations, it is commonly believed that culture influences the way people think and shapes people's behaviors in many areas of life. This is manifested by a series of studies on the role and effects of participation in culture. Blessi *et al.* (2016) analyzed the impact of consumption of cultural activities and goods on individual well-being. Anheier *et al.* (2016) explored a link between cultural participation of the European Union population and the commonly identified characteristics of an open, inclusive society, such as tolerance and trust. The relationship between culture and lifestyle was emphasized by Bartkiewicz (2009).

Therefore, it can be assumed that participation in culture may affect young people's attitudes and behaviors in various fields of their lives, including their education, and more precisely, their involvement in the studies they undertake, and thus also their professional aspirations. Schaufeli *et al.* (2002) define the involvement of academic youth in studies as a permanent and all-embracing state of mind that is not focused on any specific object, event, person or behavior and can be characterized by three dimensions, i.e., vigor, dedication, and preoccupation and absorption.

- Vigor is associated with a high level of energy and concentration on the performed tasks as well as with mental resilience and the willingness to make additional effort and a lack of discouragement by difficulties arising from studying.
- Sacrifice is a sense of pride and importance associated with the performed activity, treating entrusted tasks as a challenge; it is also a sense of meaning and purposefulness of what is being done. Characteristic features of dedication involve a sense of importance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge.
- Preoccupation can be characterized as being absorbed by the process of studying, losing the sense of the passing time, or even difficulty in detaching oneself from the performed activities. With absorption, one is fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's study, owing to which the time passes quickly and one feels carried away. However, it is worth underlining that being fully absorbed goes beyond mere efficiency and is close to what is called a flow – a state of optimal experience (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002).

Based on the theoretical background and the rationale of previous empirical findings, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The lack of funds for culture (H1a), the frequency (H1b) and the need for participating in cultural events (H1c) positively relate to T&H students' participation in culture.

H2: T&H students' participation in culture positively relates to students' absorption (H2a) and students' dedication (H2b) towards the undertaken studies.

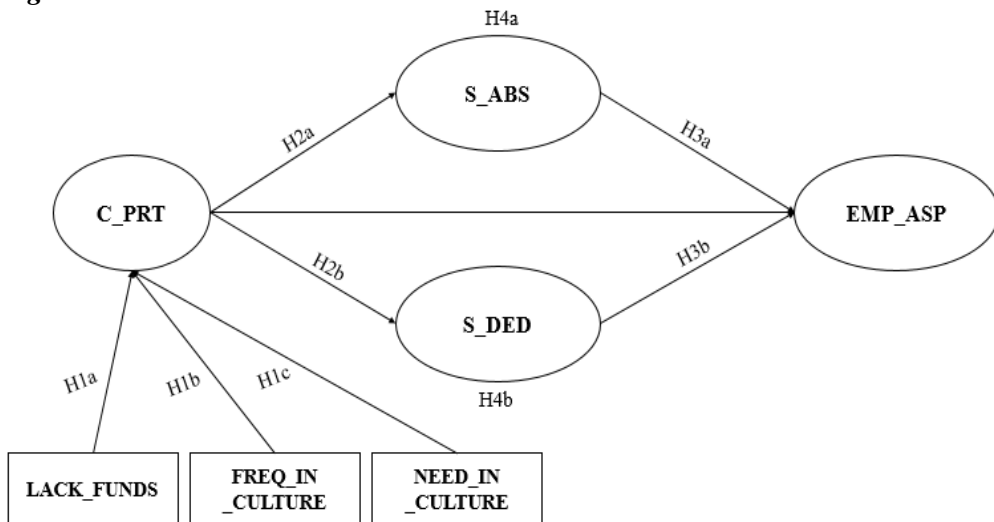
H3: T&H students' absorption (H3a) and dedication (H3b) towards the undertaken studies positively relate to their employment aspiration in the field within which they are currently studying.

H4: T&H students' participation in culture indirectly relates, via both students' absorption (H4a) and dedication (H4b), to their employment aspiration.

3. Material and Methods

This study develops and tests a research model (Figure 1) investigating the effect of cultural participation (C_PRT) on Tourism and Hospitality (T&H) students' absorption (S_ABS) and dedication (S_DED) towards the undertaken studies and their consequences for students' employment aspirations (EMP_ASP) in T&H (Fig.1). Additionally, the relationships between a lack of funds for culture (LACK_FUNDS), the frequency of participating in cultural events (FREQ_IN_CULTURE) and the need for participating in cultural events (NEED_IN_CULTURE) with students' C_PRT were also analyzed.

Figure 1. The research model



Note: Lack of funds for culture (LACK_FUNDS); the frequency of attending in cultural events (FREQ_IN_CULTURE); the need for attending in cultural events (NEED_IN_CULTURE); cultural participation (C_PRT); students' absorption (S_ABS); students' dedication (S_DED); employment aspiration (EMP_ASP)

Source: Own work.

The study used IBM SPSS Statistics 24 for descriptive statistical analysis. To assess the predictive model properties, the PLS structural equations modeling was conducted in WarpPLS 6.0 software (Garson, 2016; Kock, 2017; Vinzi, Trinchera, and Amato, 2010).

3.1 Data Collection Procedure and the Respondents' Profile

Three higher education institutions (HEI), both public and private, were identified as the target group for this study. The selection criteria were connected with the availability of tourism and/or hospitality educational programs in their educational offer, location in the Tricity destination and cooperation/familiarity between researchers and these HEI. It is worth noticing that Tricity is a very attractive coastal tourist destination of Northern Poland and a big academic and business center of the Pomerania Region (Wrona, 2018; Grobelna and Marciszewska, 2016). Tricity plays two important functions in the development of tourism. On the one hand, it educates future employees for the needs and requirements of the tourism industry; on the other hand, as a big economic center, it dynamically creates a growing number of jobs and new offers in tourism and the connected branches (Wrona, 2018; Grobelna and Marciszewska, 2016b).

The research was conducted between March and June 2019. Data were collected using a questionnaire survey with a total number of 155 distributed questionnaires. Respondents were requested to fill in paper-based, self-administrated questionnaires during the formal teaching time previously agreed with the lecturers of the participating HEI. Students were informed about their voluntary and anonymous participation in this research and were assured of confidentiality of their answers. They also received information that their participation does not constitute a formal part of their obligatory study program (Barron *et al.*, 2007).

It is worth noticing that thanks to applying self-administrated questionnaires, some advantages occurred (Gray *et al.*, 2007). There was no pressure on the study respondents to answer the questions at once, thus they had enough time to consider all the survey questions carefully avoiding some embarrassment (when compared to an interview) when sensitive questions occurred (e.g., connected with students' attitudes towards the undertaken studies). The above aspects, including the controlled nature of distributing the questionnaires during the classes and under the researcher's supervision, contributed to gaining the maximum response (Barron, 2007). A total of 110 valid questionnaires were finally retrieved and analyzed in this study, yielding a response rate of 70.97%.

3.2 Measures

The scale items applied in this study were taken from different sources in the relevant literature except for cultural participation, as this scale items were developed and operationalized by authors. To measure students' cultural participation (C_PRT), two items were identified through a careful literature review (Hurysz, 2018; Urbanek, 2002; Bonna, 2011) and individual in-depth interviews with T&H students, supported by consultation with academics from the tourism and hospitality fields. These two statements reflect both attitudinal and behavioral aspects of cultural involvement, and they are as follows:

1. I like participating in cultural events.
2. I participate in various cultural events.

To measure students' absorption (S_ABS) and dedication (S_DED), four items were used, respectively for each dimension, from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale for Students (UWES-S) (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002). Students' employment aspiration (EMP_ASP) was assessed via four items adequately borrowed from Teng (2008), who measured hospitality employment aspirations of post-internship undergraduate hospitality seniors in Taiwan. However, because the study participants derived from different T&H specializations, employment aspiration variable in this study refers to students' attitude in terms of their commitment to the field within which they are currently studying and will qualify after graduation. Therefore, the scale items were reworded accordingly. Potential antecedents of C_PRT were measured via three questions referring to the following aspects:

1. having intrinsic need to participate in cultural events (NEED_IN_CULTURE);
2. frequency of participating in cultural events (FREQ_IN_CULTURE);
3. financial obstacles to participating in culture (lack of adequate funds; LACK_FUNDS).

All items were measured on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, except for NEED_IN_CULTURE and LACK_FUNDS, which were binary coded, whereas FREQ_IN_CULTURE was measured on an ordinal scale. The survey instrument was originally prepared in English and then translated into Polish via the back-translation method to ensure the translation quality and to guarantee equivalence. The feedback from a pilot test confirmed good understanding of the scale items. 110 questionnaires were analyzed in this study. They were mostly filled in by females (75.5%) and students within the age range of 18–21 years (62.7%). Most of the respondents were in the first year of their study (86.4%) and in the second semester (84.5%). They were studying a variety of specializations such as tourism and recreation (35.5%), tourism and hospitality (19.1%), gastronomy and dietetics (14.5%), Spa and Wellness (12.7%), air traffic service (9.1%), hospitality and gastronomy (7.3%), and others (1.8%).

Analyzing the frequency of students' participation in culture, most of them (78.2%) participate in different cultural events relatively infrequently (once a month or less often 46.4% or twice a month 31.8%). The remaining groups of students declared more frequent participation in culture, such as three–four times a month (17.3%) or even more frequently (4.5%). However, only one in ten students attended cultural events because of having an internal need to do so (9.1%). By contrast, 41.8% of the students pointed to a lack of funds as one of the main barriers to participating in culture. Analyzing students' participation in a variety of cultural events, the most answers were connected with going to the cinema (87.3%), to concerts (54.5%), to the theater (20%) or visiting galleries (10%). Young people do it out of different

motives including willingness to break away from daily responsibilities (78.2% of answers), having interests in culture (36.4% of answers) or to meet new people (22.7% of answers). Interestingly, nearly 40% of the students (39.1%) affirmatively answered the question whether participation in culture supports students in studying in T&H. Unfortunately, answering the question whether the undertaken studies create an opportunity to participate in culture, only 11.8% answered positively, whereas the remaining ones (88.2%) did not see such an opportunity at all.

3.3 Methods

In this study, the structural equations modeling by partial least squares (SEM-PLS) modeling technique was conducted. SEM-PLS is a statistical analysis whose main purpose is variation maximizing of dependent variables by a series of predictors. This technique uses the partial least squares algorithm and involves two steps. In the first step the measurement model is formulated (Kock and Mayfield, 2015). In this step, the confirmatory factor analysis is conducted, and the result is a measurement model structure with a series of latent variables. In this way, variables are ready to build a multivariate path analysis in the next step. The convergence relation of the empirical measurement data with the theoretical measurement model formed previously by the researcher is the assessment criterion of the measurement model.

In the second step of the SEM-PLS analysis, a series of a multivariate regression models are calculated in an iterative manner. They are designed to explain the maximum variance portion of the dependent variables. This second step is a stage where the researcher's theoretical model is verified by the empirical model emerging from the data. This empirical model is a path structure where relationships between variables are expressed by the researcher's theory. The empirical model contains information about the level of significance of particular predictors with dependent variables. The most important criterion in the path model assessment is a generalized predictive power of the variables tested in the model. In the following analysis, the PTH1 algorithm is used. It uses the information about the measurement error of the variables. Based on the assumption about measurement errors, the model is calculated with better predictive power, and the standard errors are estimated more accurately (Kock, 2017; Kock and Mayfield, 2015). In the conducted SEM-PLS analysis, standard errors and statistical significance were estimated by the Stable3 method (exponential smoothing). This method is often perceived as a better one in estimating standard errors and statistical significance than the well-known bootstrap (draw with replacement) method (Kock, 2011; 2014; 2018; Rodríguez-Entrena, Schubert, and Gelhard, 2016). In the path model, linear relationships were predicted.

4. Results

In this study, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using partial least squares (PLS) (Kock and Mayfield, 2015). As shown in Table 1, analysis of the

quality model coefficients (AVIF and AFVIF) showed that there was no explicit collinearity in the measurement, path and full model (measurement and path model) (Kock, 2015; Kock and Lynn, 2012; Kock and Mayfield, 2015). The fit coefficients (SRMR and SMAR) showed that the empirical data were well aligned to the theoretical measurement model, and it was also confirmed that the observed variables were significantly and accordingly related with the latent variables (χ^2 ; p-value) (Kock, 2010). The general predictive power of the model (GoF) was high (Kock, 2017; Pearl, 2009). Analysis of Simpson’s Paradox (SPR) and the Statistical Suppression (SSR) coefficient showed that the signs and correlations strength between independent pairs of the variables were similar to the path coefficients (Kock and Gaskins, 2016; Pearl, 2009).

Table 1. *Statistics of data fit to the measurement and the path SEM-PLS model*

Model	Fit coefficients	Value
Path model	AVIF	1.90
	AFVIF	2.36
	GoF	.50
	TOT	.88
	SEK	1.00
Measurement model	SRMR	.13
	GREASE	.10
	χ^2	10.673 ***

Note: AFVIF (Average Full Variance Inflation Factor); AVIF (Average Variance Inflation Factor); GoF (Goodness of Fit); SPR Simpson’s Paradox Ratio; SSR (Statistical Suppression Ratio); SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual); SMAR (Standardized Mean Absolute Residual); χ^2 = Chi Square; *** $p < .001$

Source: Own study.

It is worth adding that inferences from SEM models are highly risky because a common method bias may appear (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff, 2003), but researchers agree that the SEM-PLS model is free from the common method bias when the AFVIF coefficient is < 5 (Kock, 2015). In the light of CFA (Table 2), the magnitudes of the loadings ranged from 0.64 to 0.88, and all t-values were significant.

Table 2. *Measurement of the study constructs*

Measure	Indicator	Factor loadings	t-values
C_PRT	I like various cultural events.	.87	11.41
	I participate in different cultural events.	.86	11.33
S_ABS	Time flies when I’m studying.	.75	9.48
	When I am studying, I forget everything else around me.	.80	10.27
	I feel happy when I am studying intensively.	.79	10.19
S_DED	I can get carried away by my studies.	.79	10.16

	My studies inspire me.	.84	10.90
	I am enthusiastic about my studies.	.80	10.39
	I am proud of my studies.	.81	10.55
	I find my studies challenging.	.69	8.71
	I would like to work in the field within which I am currently studying.	.81	10.54
EMP_ASP	I believe I can advance my career in the field within which I am currently studying.	.88	11.53
	I would recommend the field within which I am currently studying to my friends and relatives.	.73	9.22
	It would be a wrong decision to choose the field within which I am currently studying as a career path.	.64	7.98

Note: All loadings are significant at the level of $p < 0.001$ cultural participation (C_PRT); students' absorption (S_ABS); students' dedication (S_DED); employment aspiration (EMP_ASP)

Source: Own study.

The average variance extracted (AVE) for each factor was higher than 0.5 (Chiang and Hsieh, 2012) (Table 3). Cronbach's alpha for each study construct was above the cut-off value of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). Additionally, composite reliability (CR) highly recommended when the PTH1 algorithm is chosen (Kock, 2017) achieved values between 0.85–0.87 and showed that the reliability of the study constructs was high.

Table 3. The measurement validation and the explained variability of the study constructs

Measure	R ²	ΔR ²	CR	α	AVE
C_PRT	.36	.34	.86	.70	.75
S_ABS	.15	.14	.86	.80	.61
S_DED	.28	.27	.87	.81	.62
EMP_ASP	.45	.44	.85	.77	.59
LACK_FUNDS	-	-	1.00	1.00	1.00
NEED_IN_CULTURE	-	-	1.00	1.00	1.00
FREQ_IN_CULTURE	-	-	1.00	1.00	1.00

Note: R² (Explained variance); ΔR² (Adjusted R²); CR (Composite Reliability); α (Cronbach's Alpha); AVE (Average Variance Extracted) lack of funds for culture (LACK_FUNDS); the frequency of participating in cultural events (FREQ_IN_CULTURE); the need for participating in cultural events (NEED_IN_CULTURE); cultural participation (C_PRT); students' absorption (S_ABS); students' dedication (S_DED); employment aspiration (EMP_ASP)

Source: Own study.

As shown in Table 4, the (average) cultural participation level of this study participants was 3.93. They also manifested their study absorption and dedication levels at 3.37 and 2.88, respectively. Students participating in this study also manifested their (average) employment aspiration level at 3.62.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1.C_PRT	-	.38***	.53***	.40***	.21*	.27**	.55***
2.S_ABS		-	.82***	.50***	-.11	-.05	.12
3. S_DED			-	.67***	.00	.11	.13
4.EMP_ASP				-	.04	.12	.16
5.LACK_FUNDS					-	.18	.07
6.NEED_IN_CULTURE						-	.14
7.FREQ_IN_CULTURE							-
Mean	3.93	3.37	2.88	3.93	.42	.09	1.80
Standard deviation	.68	.76	.82	.68	.50	.29	.89

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, ***= $p < .001$

Note: lack of funds for culture (LACK_FUNDS); the frequency of participating in cultural events (FREQ_IN_CULTURE); the need for participating in cultural events (NEED_IN_CULTURE); cultural participation (C_PRT); students' absorption (S_ABS); students' dedication (S_DED); employment aspiration (EMP_ASP)

Source: Own study.

The results shown in Figure 2, confirmed that the increased level of the frequency and the need for participating in cultural events were significantly related to the increased level of the students' cultural participation. The lack of funds for culture appeared not to have a significant impact on the students' cultural participation. In this way, H1b and H1c were accepted, whereas H1a was rejected. Both the frequency, the need for participating in culture and the lack of funds jointly explain 34% of the variance in the students' cultural participation.

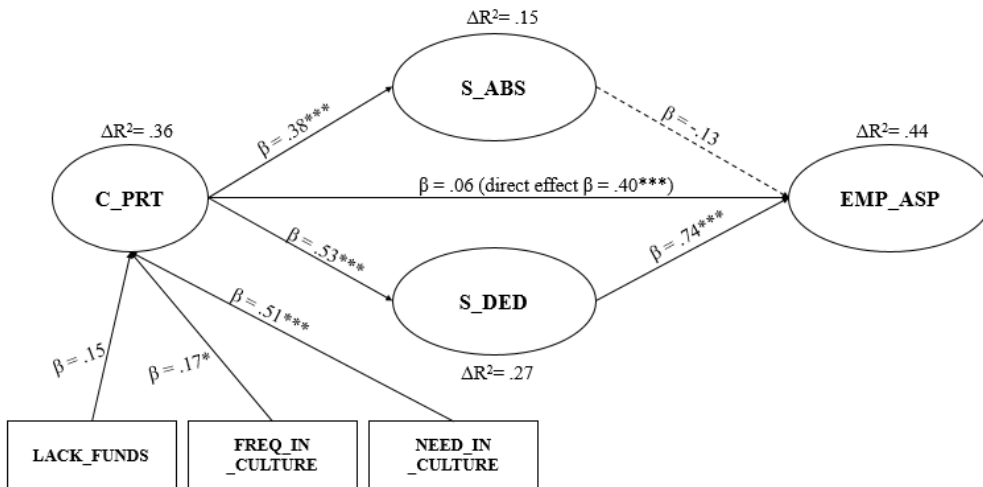
Further analysis showed that the increased level of the students' participation in culture was related with the increased level of students' absorption and dedication providing support for H2a and H2b. It explained respectively 14% and 27% of the variance in students' absorption and dedication. Analysis also showed that the increased level of the students' absorption was not related with their employment aspiration, only students' dedication exerted a significant impact, confirming H3b and rejecting H3a.

Additionally, it was hypothesized that T&H students' cultural participation relates indirectly, via both students' absorption (H4a) and dedication (H4b), to their employment aspiration. The mediation analysis showed that the mediators significantly mediated the relationship between students' cultural participation and employment aspiration ($\beta = .34$; $p < .001$). They reduced the relationship between students' cultural participation and employment aspiration from $\beta = .40$; $p < .001$ to $\beta = .06$; $p > .05$.

However, based on the mediation assumptions (Baron and Kenny, 1986), it seems that only students' dedication has mediation properties (a significant relationship with independent and dependent variables) (Figure 2). Thus, the relationship

between students' cultural participation and employment aspiration is fully mediated by students' dedication. Therefore, H4b has been accepted, whereas H4a has not. Both students' absorption, dedication and their cultural participation jointly explained 44% of the variance in students' employment aspirations towards their future work in tourism and hospitality.

Figure 2. Verified model



* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

-----> hypotheses not supported; -----> hypotheses supported

Note: lack of funds for culture (LACK_FUNDS); the frequency of attending in cultural events (FREQ_IN_CULTURE); the need for attending in cultural events (NEED_IN_CULTURE); cultural participation (C_PRT); students' absorption (S_ABS); students' dedication (S_DED); employment aspiration (EMP_ASP)

Source: Own work.

5. Discussion and Implications

This study developed and tested a research model that investigated the effect of T&H students' cultural participation (C_PRT) on their absorption (S_ABS) and dedication (S_DED) towards the undertaken studies and their consequences for students' employment aspirations (EMP_ASP). The conceptualization also considered the direct effect of students' C_PRT on their EMP_ASP. Additionally, the relationships between the lack of funds for culture (LACK_FUNDS), the frequency of participating in cultural events (FREQ_IN_CULTURE) and the need for participating in culture (NEED_IN_CULTURE) with students' C_PRT were analyzed.

Out of four hypotheses, one received full support from empirical data, two were partially supported and one hypothesis was rejected. More specifically, the results showed that both the frequency and the need for participating in cultural events are significant predictors of T&H students' participation in culture. However, it is worth noticing that the inner need to attend cultural events exerted a greater impact. The findings also revealed that students who are high in cultural participation are also much more engaged in their T&H studies, which is reflected by their deeper absorption and dedication towards them. In other words, T&H students who fully experience cultural participation concentrate more enthusiastically on their studies and focus all their energy on their studies.

However, as pointed by the results of this study, only students' dedication exerts a significant and positive impact on their employment aspiration in T&H and mediates the relationship between students' cultural participation and employment aspiration. In other words, students' participation in culture may provide them with a unique and valuable perspective and particular personal resources increasing their engagement in the studies and allowing T&H students to experience the sense of their significance, enthusiasm or inspiration, which finally may have a huge impact on their commitment to careers in the T&H industry. This result may also receive support from previous findings which showed that "the more students are dedicated towards their current studies, the more optimistic they are towards their future employment in tourism" (Grobelna and Dolot, 2019, p. 224).

However, the results of this study did not show support for the relationship between the lack of funds and students' cultural participation. The plausible explanation for this unexpected finding may result from the fact that many students are consumers of both high culture (which requires more financial resources) and popular culture, where participation is much easier and cheaper. This fact may be caused, among others, by the development of the entertainment industry as well as the development and easy access to the Internet. It can also be assumed that contemporary students are relatively wealthy (apart from studying, they often take a job) and can afford to set aside funds for participation in culture, including high culture. Many needs in terms of participation in culture can also be satisfied at universities that organize various types of cultural events, such as concerts, film screenings, or vernissages in which admission is often free for students. There are also libraries at universities, which give students practically unlimited and free access to literature.

Similar findings are achieved in work by Hurysz *et al.* (2018). The survey conducted among students of selected Polish universities proved that the lack of funds was not a significant obstacle to participation in culture. Many students were able to spend more than twice as much money on participation in cultural events than the average Pole (in 2016). Moreover, the cultural offer for students at many Polish universities was really rich; some of them organized up to 15 different cultural events a month, which greatly facilitated students' access to culture.

Contemporary students are described by the authors of the study as active, curious and mobile people who have specific expectations towards cultural goods, i.e. an attractive, modern form, affordable price, dynamics, easy accessibility, exciting and easy-to-consume content. Mass culture responds to these needs. Students who participate in mass culture use the offer of cinemas, watch TV, use VOD platforms, the Internet, and read books willingly.

Additionally, also the relationship between students' absorption and their employment aspiration has not been confirmed. However, the unexpected result may be also due to the suppressor variables. It may be suggested that the inclusion of other constructs into the same research model might have suppressed the effect of students' absorption on their employment aspirations and thus attenuated the relationship between both of these constructs (cf Karatepe and Kilic 2007; Karatepe and Sokmen, 2006), hence the study result may be different from expected. Beside the above explanations, this unexpected finding requires further empirical attention, especially using a qualitative approach, to identify hidden causes of a non-significant relationship between students' absorption and their employment aspirations.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

Culture shapes people, their personality, attitudes and behaviors in various domain of life; however, it seems to play the most important role among young people, who should take the greatest advantages of their participation in culture, especially during their study time. However, there is still little research interest in this topic in the literature, especially in the context of students of Tourism and Hospitality (T&H), whose attitudes and behaviors formed during their higher education will play a special role in their future work in T&H, where the human element is critical.

Therefore, in terms of the theoretical contribution, this research provides several new insights into the research stream of students' cultural participation and their engagement. Firstly, the research value of this study may result from the fact that until nowadays students' engagement has not been widely explored (Grobelna and Dolot, 2019); thus, it adds to the compendium of knowledge in the management literature. Specifically, this study sheds interesting light on the new and previously understudied factors determining students attitudes towards their future employment in T&H, such as cultural participation, also bridging several gaps in the current knowledge regarding students' perceptions of their careers in the T&H industry (Aksu and Koksal, 2005; Grobelna and Marciszewska, 2016a; Roney and Oztin, 2007), particularly in Central Europe (Grobelna and Dolot, 2019). Thus, secondly, to the best of authors' knowledge, this is the first study which, by using data from T&H students in Poland, attempts to examine simultaneously the relationships between the proposed study construct extending the study results into a new cultural context such T&H education in East-Central Europe. Thirdly, as regards the methodological contribution, the new 2-items scale has been developed and proved valid and reliable

to measure students' cultural participation. Thus, this study may serve as a frame of reference for future research which may apply and test this measure in different socio-cultural backgrounds and compare the achieved results with the findings of this study.

5.2 Practical Implications

As to practical recommendations, the results of this study also posit several implications for both T&H educators and industry. At this point, it would be worth considering what actions could be recommended to encourage students to participate (both actively and passively) in culture (especially the elite one), develop their cultural competences, and facilitate academic youth's access to culture. These activities could be undertaken both by universities and by other organizations (the state, cultural institutions, private entrepreneurs). Taking the above into account, the following solutions can be proposed (Hurysz, 2018; Urbanek, 2002; Bonna, 2011):

- introducing a permanent offer for students at preferential prices, as part of a special program bearing a specific brand and visual identification;
- developing and implementing mobile applications informing about discounts on cultural events;
- popularizing the “Accessible Culture” program among academic youth – a subsidy program of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, which aims to support tasks serving to facilitate access to culture for a wide audience and favoring social integration (www.kulturadostepna.pl, 20/09/2020). The program allows for co-financing of projects consisting in free participation of people with difficult access to culture. Thanks to the program, it is possible to provide a cultural offer outside the permanent seat of the institution as well as thematic trips;
- organizing and financing/subsidizing cultural events at the university premises (concerts, performances), including the use of the public-private partnership;
- informing students about cultural events using student organizations promoting culture among students;
- making university students aware of the importance of culture in the development of civilization by introducing subjects related to the knowledge of culture and aesthetic education into the study programs;
- setting up university film discussion clubs, academic choirs, song and dance ensembles, other organizations related to the creation and reception of culture, where students could develop their cultural competences;
- networking cultural institutions, academic centers, the private sector and student organizations interested in promoting culture among students.

As other studies, also this one has some limitations. The research was conducted only among students of three purposefully selected HEI located in Tricity and enrolling students onto tourism and hospitality courses. Therefore, the possibility to

generalize the study results is strongly limited. Future studies with both a larger sample and other HEI from different geographical regions are recommended.

Additionally, because all information was collected in this research at one time and was based on the respondents' self-reports, self-reported bias could be a potential problem of this study (Kim *et al.*, 2009). Although this is not a concern of the present study, it is recommended that future studies collect data in different periods and from multiple sources, if possible and applicable. Finally, testing the external validity of the research model in other socio-cultural setting could also be interesting.

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