



Will parental influences affect career choice?

Evidence from hospitality and tourism management students in China

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to examine how the perceptions of hospitality and tourism management (HTM) undergraduates about their parental influences predict their career choice intention with regard to the hospitality and tourism (H&T) industry in China.

Design/methodology/approach – A self-administered questionnaire containing 22 parental influence attributes was given to both junior and senior students studying HTM programmes. Primary research on students' perceptions of parental influences on career choice has been undertaken in ten universities across five cities in China, with 566 valid samples acquired as a result.

Findings – Three out of six parental influential factors derived from 22 attributes are determined as being the salient predictors for students' H&T career choice intention. Those three factors are “perceived parental supports of the H&T industry”, “perceived parental career concerns about welfare and prestige”, and “perceived parental barriers to career choice”. Demographic differences in parental influential factors are also revealed in the study.

Research limitations/implications – The findings need to be confirmed by further evidence from other countries with different cultures. Future research should investigate students studying different majors, or at various educational levels. The variables of internship experience and colleges or universities being attended also deserve more attention. Another interesting topic would be to study parental influences on career choice from the parents' perspectives.

Originality/value – The knowledge obtained from the study will increase the very limited understanding of the effects of perceived parental influences on career choice, which might then lead to more attraction and recruitment of students to the H&T industry in China.

Keywords Parents, Family roles, Career guidance, Hospitality services, Tourism, China

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Since the “open door” policy was promulgated in 1978, China has been increasingly recognized as a dominant and essential component of global tourism (World Tourism Organisation, 2002). According to China National Tourism Bureau (China National Tourism Bureau (CNTB), 2005), since 1999 China has been ranked among the top five tourist destinations around the world by the World Tourism Organization. It is anticipated that China will become the top tourist destination in the world by 2020, with arrival numbers predicted at more than 173 million a year by then (Recruit, 2006).

Despite a great number of growth opportunities for the hospitality and tourism (H&T) industry in China, the extensive increase in tourism also gives rise to many challenges, particularly the human resources problems in relation to the shortfall in the



workforce. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2006), the development of tourism in China implies that about 17.4 million workers are required in direct H&T industry jobs, with a further growth of 3.1 million jobs expected by 2016, by which time the figure would represent 2.5 per cent of China's total employment. For the sake of gaining competitive advantage, the H&T industry has an urgent need to attract and recruit large numbers of qualified people who are capable of creating sustainable profits for their organizations. Hospitality and tourism management (HTM) undergraduate students are among these people of high calibre that the H&T industry should be attracting. However, although they are naturally regarded as potential H&T employees when they enrol in the HTM programme, these students unfortunately show an unwillingness to work in the H&T industry after graduation. It has been reported that only 10 to 20 per cent of HTM graduate students work in the professional field for which they have been trained. Over 20 per cent of this number will then leave for other industries only a few years later (Xu, 2005).

Chinese parents play a very important role in all aspects of a young person's life, including those critical decision-making points such as choosing a career. However, there is a scarcity of research on how parental influences are associated with a young person's career choice. With this in mind, the purpose of this study is to examine how the perceptions of HTM undergraduate students about parental influential factors on them predict their career choice intention with regard to the H&T industry. In other words, this study aims to investigate whether aspects of perceived parental influences have meaningful effects on the career choice intention of HTM undergraduate students in China, and how important these effects can be on their likelihood of selecting an H&T career for themselves. More specifically, the objectives are:

- To identify the major perceived parental influential factors that would affect students' H&T career choice intention.
- To examine the differences in perceived parental influential factors in terms of demographic profiles.
- To make recommendations to the hospitality industry and hospitality educators.

Literature review

According to Baker (2003), theories that pertain to the general area of vocational behaviour and development might be embodied in three broad categories:

- (1) non-psychological theories of vocational choice;
- (2) psychological theories of vocational choice; and
- (3) developmental theories of vocational choice.

According to non-psychological theories of vocational choice, people enter an occupation solely because of the operation of environmental factors (Crites, 1969). Three types of factors determine people's course of action: chance factors, the laws of supply and demand, and the folkways or institutions of society. Accident theory, economic theory, sociological theory, and social cognitive career theory are the theories that deal with the effects of each factor on choice. By contrast, psychological theories of vocational choice emphasize the characteristics of individuals as being more crucial in the process of vocational decision making. There are three major types of

psychological theories of vocational choice: trait-and-factor, psychoanalytic, and decision. The developmental theories of vocational choice are sometimes incorporated under the heading of psychological theories; however, they represent different streams of theories due to the non-psychological nature of variables used in developmental theories. The developmental theories of vocational choice mainly include Ginzberg's theory, Super's theory, Gottfredson's theory, the career stages traversing the life span theory, Tiedeman's theory, Holland's theory, and Krumboltz's social learning theory.

Among the different categories of vocational choice theories, social cognitive career theory (SCCT) (Lent *et al.*, 1994) is the most important theory relevant to the current study, and has been recognized as a complex and extensively studied theory of career choice. It puts an emphasis on the cognitive-person variables (e.g. self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals), and on how these variables interact with other aspects of people and their environment or context (e.g. gender, ethnicity, social supports, and barriers) to help shape the course of career development. Lent *et al.* (1994) partition SCCT into two complementary levels of theoretical analysis. The first level presents cognitive-person variables that enable people to exercise personal control within their own career development. The second level of analysis discusses the paths through which several additional sets of variables, such as features of the environment (context), physical attributes and particular learning experiences affect career-related interests and choice behaviour, and finally influence career choice.

Specifically, contextual cognitive influential factors play an important role in the career choice process. Lent *et al.* (1994) divide them into two subgroups, based on their relative proximity to career choice points:

- (1) more distal, background influences that precede and help shape interests and self-cognitions; and
- (2) proximal influences that come into play at critical choice junctures.

The initial interest of Lent *et al.* (1994) is to identify contextual supports and barriers to career-related choice behaviour among college students. As contextual cognitive factors, these can be categorized into either distal supports and barriers or proximal supports and barriers to career choices. Further work by Lent *et al.* (2000) articulates the role of career-related supports and barriers in the SCCT model, and stresses their importance in the career development process. In particular, they establish that support systems include financial, emotional and instrumental support, whereas barriers comprise discrimination and also disapproval from the important people.

Lent *et al.* (1998) describe how a college student facing a career choice can be imagined as being in an innermost circle, surrounded by his or her immediate environment influencing this choice, comprising friendships, financial situation, and most importantly, the parental influence. Parental influences, which comprise the main family influence, are both distal and proximal contextual cognitive factors, and exert a salient effect on their offspring's career choice intention. According to Lent and Brown (1996), parental influences are powerful contextual determinants that mediate the relationship between interests and goals, between goals and actions, and between actions and accomplishments.

Although SCCT has yielded a steady stream of research and practical applications, relatively little integrated and systemized work has been undertaken to examine parental influences on career choice intention. Whiston and Keller (2004) identified 77

high-quality studies published between 1980 and 2002 across 29 different journals, which all relate to the impact of family of origin on career development and occupational choice. Given this, Whiston and Keller are surprised to find that few studies have examined parental influences on the career development of their adult children. Research by Kellaghan *et al.* (1993) summarizes and divides parental influences through two macro perspectives, the “who parents are” perspective and the “what parents do” perspective. However, Taylor *et al.* (2004) state that while a growing number of research studies combine features of each perspective, much of the extant literature focuses on only one perspective or the other.

In fact, many studies have stressed the importance of parental influences on a young person’s career development. For example, Ferreira *et al.* (2006) establish that parental influence is one of the multiple developmental contexts that have a bearing on the vocational behaviour of adolescents. Stambler (1998) suggests that when young people have to choose their occupation, parents are clearly influential in their career choice. Biggart *et al.* (2004), in an analysis of the Scottish School Leavers Survey (SLS) data, report that parents are the most commonly reported “catalyst” for initiating the choice process. About 21 per cent of students claim that their choice is made collaboratively with their parents and, perhaps surprisingly, around 2 per cent of respondents state that their parents are the main drivers behind their actual decisions. Whiston and Keller (2004) confirm that many studies have documented that young people perceive parents as influencing their career choices.

As a distal contextual career-influencing factor, the parents’ socioeconomic status (SES) sets a stage for experience that influences many dimensions of their children’s lives (Liu, 2002; Liu *et al.*, 2004; Maher and Kroska, 2002), including the educational and occupational opportunities available to that individual and the attainments that he or she achieves (Brown, 2002; Fouad and Brown, 2000; Gilbert and Kahl, 1993; Turner and Lapan, 2003). Parents’ SES variables usually interact with their proximal variables to influence the development of their children’s career interests, the selection of their career goals, and their career behaviours (Ali *et al.*, 2005). Parental education variables, as Eccles (1993) suggests, have an impact on the beliefs and behaviours of the parents, indirectly leading to positive career outcomes for the young people concerned. However, despite its pervasive influence, the affect of parents’ SES on young people’s career development has been largely ignored in the career development literature (Fitzgerald and Betz, 1994).

Categories of both supportive and hindering parental influences can often have a bearing on a young person’s choice behaviour (Lent *et al.*, 1998). An absence of parental support can be viewed as a hindering factor from parents, forming parental barriers to particular career choices. Conversely, an increase of support from parents might decrease students’ perceptions of barriers, as Ali *et al.* (2005) suggest in their research. Hence, although much work has studied parental support in terms of the impact of parents on a person’s behaviour, this has usually been from a positive perspective, but it could also shed light on parental barriers. According to SCCT (Lent *et al.*, 1994), the proximal contextual variables of perceived support from parents directly influence the prestige of career choices and career aspirations. Constantine *et al.*’s (2005) research examines the extent to which perceived parental support is predictive of both career certainty and career decision in a sample of African-American adolescents. The results confirm the importance of considering perceived parental supports in the career

decision-making process. Additionally, Whiston and Keller (2004) assert that children who perceive their families as supportive and as having high expectations tend to have higher occupational aspirations than others. Rush (2002) also notes that having a supportive family environment is associated with the successful negotiation of career development.

Apart from parental supports and barriers, other parental influence terms such as parental involvement, parental encouragement, parental expectation, parental role modelling, parenting practice, and so on, have been utilized in the extant literature. According to Reynolds (1992), parental involvement is a critically important component in the development of career outcomes. Parental involvement can manifest itself in behaviour such as parent-child discussions, the monitoring of educational support strategies (McNeal, 1999), parents acting as vocational advisors, and in terms of them providing social capital, such as passing on knowledge of opportunities and making introductions for their children (Sorensen, 2007). Role-modelling, expectations and encouragement are indicators of parental involvement (Ferry *et al.*, 2000). Otto and Haller (1979) declare that parental effects may occur through two general processes, exemplification and expectation. Parental encouragement, although it could be defined as a behaviour or set of behaviours, is used by parents in an attempt to realize their own expectations (Stambler, 1998). Ferry *et al.*'s (2000) research emphasizes the important influential role that parents' verbal suggestions and domain-specific encouragement play in their children's academic and career development. Young *et al.* (1991) state that parental encouragement; direction and communication are major factors in the vocational development of children.

Specific gender role influences of mothers and fathers on their male and female children might also be taken into consideration. In Kirkwood's (2007) study, two key gender differences are noted with regard to parental influences. One is related to how the participants are influenced differently by their mothers and fathers, and the other is the difference between how the male and female participants describe the ways they are influenced by their parents. Campbell and Uto (1994) claim that highly-educated fathers give boys more support than girls. However, highly-educated mothers have a positive effect on boys' grade point averages but a negative effect on those of girls. Otto (2000) reports that African-American adolescents are more likely to discuss career concerns with their mothers than with their fathers. In McWhirter *et al.*'s (1998) survey, only the perceived support from fathers is found to relate to the educational plans and career expectations of Mexican-American high school girls. Ibrahim *et al.* (1994) report that parental expectation, consistent with familial and cultural expectation, has a major effect on most women's perceived career choice.

As Goodnow (1985) suggests that parental practices are guided by cultural information, in order to further understand the role of parents in the lives and careers of young people we should also consider the cultural differences in parental influential variables (Taylor *et al.*, 2004). Cultural differences in parental influential variables tend to be especially significant between countries with an individualistic culture and those with a collectivistic culture. Individualistic cultures emphasize autonomy and individuation from parents (Hardin *et al.*, 2001), thus parents are likely to have relatively little impact on an individual's career choice. For example, American culture naturally views career choice as a means of self-actualization, and fundamentally as an individual choice (Tang *et al.*, 1999). However, in the context of a

collectivistic culture, the salience of parental influences on a young person's career choice is frequently described in the extant literature in terms of the importance of interdependence, deference paid to authority and older people, family accord, and conformity with social norms (Moy, 1992). Similarly, Lee (1991) suggests that collectivistic cultural values often manifest in a strong respect for and obedience to one's parents and to the traditions of the family or group. According to Leong and Chou (1994), career choice and career advancement might be seen more in terms of providing for an Asian person's own family and meeting one's responsibility to care for one's parents in their old age, rather than in terms of implementing self-actualization. Kagitcibasi (1994) points out that Chinese culture places a high value on parental control and on children's obedience in a hierarchical family context. In a study of Asian-Americans' career choices, Tang *et al.* (1999) suggest that Asian-Americans might choose a job that is acceptable to their parents, rather than one based on their own interests. Therefore, Tang *et al.* suggest it is crucial to examine information about family background and parental expectations when studying the career choices of Asian-Americans.

Although very limited research has systematically explored the relationship between parental influences and career choice, a synthesis of the relevant literature helps to lay a strong theoretical foundation for this study. With their importance in career development being stressed by many scholars, and on the basis of social cognitive career theory (SCCT), parental influences are identified as both distal and proximal contextual cognitive factors that exert a salient effect on their offspring's career choice intention. Two major proximal parental variables, parental supports and parental barriers, are clearly documented to have a bearing on a young person's choice behaviour. Apart from parental supports and barriers, other parental influence terms such as parental involvement, parental encouragement, parental expectation, parental role modelling, parenting practice, and so on, have all been utilized in the extant literature. The distal contextual career-influencing factors, such as parents' social economic status (SES) variables, usually interact with parental proximal variables to influence the young people's selection of career goals. In addition, the gender and cultural differences in parental career-influencing variables have also been addressed by some researchers.

Methodology

To overcome the limitation of population homogeneity, the targeted population should include all the HTM undergraduate students in China in order to comply with the objectives of this study; however, it is obviously difficult in practical terms to conduct sampling in a country with a large number of people and across a huge area. This limitation about bias is acknowledged and will be carefully noted in the data analysis process. In order to reduce the influence of this bias, a quota sampling method in accordance with the distribution of population by the variable of university location was adopted for its efficiency in terms of both time and money. It was thus decided that the actual surveys would be conducted in five major cities in China – Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Guangzhou and Nanjing – all of which rank among the top ten cities in China in terms of the number of tourist arrivals (China National Tourism Bureau (CNTB), 2005). Their reputations as popular tourist destinations mean that local universities with HTM programmes play a prominent role in the H&T industry of

these cities, which in turn may well help to attract more students to study on these HTM programmes. Although it is possible that, by only surveying the HTM students at the universities of these five major cities, this may not completely represent the population of HTM undergraduate students in China. However, it is believed that responses from these groups of participants can provide accurate and representative findings for this research studying the effects of perceived parental influences on HTM undergraduate students' career choice intention. The research was carried out across 10 universities with HTM degree programmes, randomly selected from among these five cities.

Primary surveys were conducted in-class or out-of-class from the middle to the end of September 2007. To ensure a high response rate and accurate sampling without bias, the questionnaires were self-administered and hand delivered to junior or senior students who would be graduating in the near future. The reason for choosing these respondents was that they might have already started looking for jobs, or at least have seriously considered their career choice; hence, assessing these students' career choices and the indicators around these choices was likely to produce stronger predictive relations. A total of 700 questionnaires was distributed, with 566 valid questionnaires being returned, representing a response rate of 81 per cent.

To develop the survey instrument, the domain for each research construct should be mainly specified on the basis of the literature (Churchill, 1979). As mentioned in the previous section, there is little research particularly related to parental influences on their children's career choice. Thus parental career influential attributes in this study can only be generated from several relevant studies undertaken by the previous scholars, namely, the research of Gibson's (2006), Silbereisen *et al.*'s (1997), Lent *et al.*'s (2002), and Hsieh's (2005). The generation of attributes was then validated and supplemented by 17 telephone interviews with relevant groups of people, including four HTM undergraduate students, four parents, four university teachers (including one professor, an associate professor, and two lecturers), five people from the H&T industry (including two hotel human resources managers, two hotel managers working in other departments, and one hotel junior staff). All respondents were asked to give their opinions about whether the existing attributes were relevant to the real situation or not, and most importantly, what else they thought could be added to this parental influence measurement. Afterwards, a pilot study was conducted in universities from three cities to purify the measures with 222 valid samples.

As a result, the data-collecting instrument finally consisted of a three-part self-administered questionnaire in a bilingual version. The first part of the questionnaire comprised 22 perceived parental influential items. Multiple-item measurements using a five-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree") were adopted. The second part of the questionnaire only included one statement with regard to this issue, "After graduation, I prefer to choose a career in the H&T industry". The scale also ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Eight demographic variables – gender, age, year of study, university's location, parents' monthly income, father's education, mother's education and parents' H&T work experience – were included in the third section of the instrument.

Statistical analyses, such as factor analysis, reliability analysis, multiple regressions, an independent samples *t*-test and a one-way ANOVA, were all used in this study according to the respective objectives.

Findings and discussion

Demographic profile of respondents

The demographic profile of respondents is presented in Table I. Males and females constitute 38.7 per cent and 61.3 per cent respectively. With regard to the parents' monthly income, about 38.9 per cent of the parents earn below RMB 3,000 per month. With the regard to the parents' educational background, approximately 37.8 per cent of the fathers and 38.2 per cent of the mothers graduated from senior high school.

Factor analysis on perceived parental influences

The factor analysis, using the 22 items indicating parental influential factors on career choice, identified six underlying domains where eigenvalues were greater than 1.0 (Table II). These factors accounted for 56.73 per cent of the total explained variance and are labelled: "perceived parental supports of the H&T career", "perceived parental involvement in career preparation", "perceived parental encouragement to self-direction in career choice", "perceived parental barriers to career choice", "perceived parental career concerns about welfare and prestige" and "perceived transmission of parental views and values regarding career". All 22 items had factor loadings over 0.5. The reliability alphas, which are designed to check the internal consistency of items within each dimension, ranged from 0.52 to 0.84.

Variables	Categories	Respondents ^a (%)	Frequency
Gender	Male	38.7	219
	Female	61.3	347
Age	20 or under	19.4	110
	21	43.8	248
	22 or older	36.7	208
Year of study	Year 3	59.4	336
	Year 4	40.6	230
University's location	Beijing	18.7	106
	Shanghai	18.4	104
	Hangzhou	19.3	109
	Guangzhou	20.5	116
	Nanjing	23.1	131
Parents' monthly income	Below RMB 3,001	38.9	220
	RMB 3,001 to RMB 6,000	37.1	210
	Above RMB 6,000	24.0	136
Father's educational level	Less than high school	24.9	141
	Senior high school	37.8	214
	College/University or above	37.3	211
Mother's educational level	Less than high school	36.7	208
	Senior high school	38.2	216
	College/University or above	25.1	142
Parents work in H&T industry?	Yes	9.9	56
	No	90.1	510

Note: ^a $n = 566$

Table I.
Demographic profile of respondents

Table II.
Factor analysis on
perceived parental
influences on H&T career
choice intention

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Communalities	Item means
Perceived parental influences on students' H&T career choice intention								
<i>Perceived parental supports to the H&T career</i>								
I perceive my parents support me to choose a career in the hospitality and tourism industry, no matter what position I hold	0.81						0.67	3.00
I perceive my parents have a positive attitude towards the hospitality and tourism industry	0.80						0.69	3.28
I perceive my parents believe that I can be successful working in the hospitality and tourism industry	0.67						0.57	3.39
I perceive my parents think it is good for me to find a job which is related to what I am learning now	0.67						0.56	3.46
My parents often discuss with me about a career in the hospitality and tourism industry	0.63						0.65	2.53
I think my parents have got some accurate information about a career in the hospitality and tourism industry	0.62						0.61	2.82
I perceive my parents can refer me to work in the hospitality and tourism industry	0.51						0.56	2.61
Factor mean								3.01
<i>Perceived parental involvement in career preparation</i>								
I was encouraged by my parents to participate in some career-related education or training		0.67					0.51	3.59
My parents try their best to facilitate my pursuing my favourite career		0.64					0.47	3.61
My parents would like me to select a job with a group of highly qualified colleagues		0.61					0.57	4.05
My parents encourage me to work in a company where I could receive specialized training and develop working skills		0.57					0.48	3.52
Factor mean								3.69

(continued)

Perceived parental influences on students' H&T career choice intention	Factor loadings						Communalities	Item means
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
<i>Perceived parental encouragement to self-direction in career choice</i>								
My parents encourage me to choose a job in which I am interested in			0.78				0.66	4.00
I think my parents will let me choose a career myself			0.76				0.61	4.06
My parents encourage me to do a job using the best of my capabilities			0.71				0.60	3.00
Factor mean								3.99
<i>Perceived parental barriers to career choice</i>								
I will never take a job with heavy workloads that causes my parents to worry about me				0.78			0.63	2.92
I will never take a shift duty job that causes my parents to worry about me				0.78			0.63	3.02
I will consider the company location when selecting a job because my parents do not want me to stay far away from them				0.60			0.46	3.15
Factor mean								3.03
<i>Perceived parental career concerns about welfare and prestige</i>								
I prefer to choose a job that can ensure my parents a good quality of life when they are growing older					0.76		0.62	4.26
I prefer to select a job that makes my parents feel proud in front of other relatives and friends					0.62		0.43	3.82
My parents encourage me to pursue a stable career					0.60		0.50	4.09
Factor mean								4.06
<i>Perceived transmission of parental values and views regarding career</i>								
I consider my parents' opinion when selecting my career choice						0.75	0.70	3.82
I think my parents' work values will influence mine						0.74	0.61	3.19
Factor mean								3.51
Eigenvalue	5.08	2.76	2.12	1.30	1.27	1.10		
Variance explained	15.32	9.61	8.57	8.46	8.38	6.38		
Cronbach's alpha	0.84	0.65	0.70	0.64	0.60	0.52		

Table II.

Comparison of means of perceived parental influential factors

Table III shows that, in general, the means for these six factors were all above 3.00, which indicates a high level of agreement of respondents to perceived parental influential items. Respondents placed the highest value (mean of 4.06) on “perceived parental career concerns about welfare and prestige”, which might reflect the current situation in China, a developing country despite its enormous progress in economic development. It is easy for people to feel economically insecure, partly because of the immature social welfare system. Also, there is a trend for more people to get married in their late 20s or even in their 30s, implying that they will be older and less healthy than previous generation as their children grow up. In addition, China’s one-child policy leads possibly to a heavier burden on the younger generation, for this single child then needs to take care of two parents into their old age. Under these circumstances, Chinese parents naturally hope that their children’s job will generate substantial income and benefits, stable enough to cover necessary life expenses and to free them (the parents) of worries about medical care, housing and other basic human needs. Analysis of this same factor revealed that parental concerns about prestige also exert a great influence on students’ career choice. Youngsters in China prefer a job that can make their parents feel proud of them in front of other relatives and friends, demonstrating their abilities to bring “honour” (translated as “prestige” in the career domain) to their families.

“Perceived parental supports to the H&T career” had the lowest mean (3.01), which might reveal most parents’ negative attitude toward their children’s entry into the H&T industry. Thus, parents are likely to be less supportive. For example, although their children are studying HTM courses, parents frequently do not discuss H&T careers, they are not eager to acquire information about the H&T career, they do not believe in their children’s success in the H&T field, and so on. As suggested by Lent *et al.* (1994), young people will choose to avoid a career field if they anticipate no support from their parents. Hence, the unwillingness of HTM students to enter into the Chinese H&T industry nowadays can partly be explained by the low score found in this research for the factor “perceived parental supports of the H&T career”.

The means for the factor valuations for “perceived parental encouragement to self-direction in career choice”, “perceived parental involvement in career preparation”

Factor	Factor name	Factor mean ^a	Ranking
Factor 5	Perceived parental career concerns about welfare and prestige	4.06	1
Factor 3	Perceived parental encouragement to self-direction in career choice	3.99	2
Factor 2	Perceived parental involvement in career preparation	3.69	3
Factor 6	Perceived transmission of parental views and values regarding career	3.51	4
Factor 4	Perceived parental barriers to career choice	3.03	5
Factor 1	Perceived parental supports to the H&T career	3.01	6

Notes: ^a Factor mean value on a five-point Likert scale was used, where 1 indicated “Strongly disagree” and 5 indicated “Strongly agree”

Table III.
Comparison of means of
perceived parental
influential factors

and “perceived transmission of parental view and values regarding career” ranked from second to fourth among the six parental influential factors. This result is consistent with past research (Ferry *et al.*, 2000; Aldrich and Kim, 2007), and shows that parental encouragement, parental involvement and parental value transmission are all significantly related to a young person’s career development.

Multiple regression analysis to predict career choice intention in the H&T industry

The results of the multiple regression analysis to predict students’ career choice intention towards the H&T industry are reported in Table IV. Only three of the six parental influential factors were found to be left in the model. The multiple correlation, R, (0.465) showed a substantial correlation between the predictor variables and the dependent variable. The final regression equation revealed an R² of 0.217, demonstrating that about 21.7 per cent of the variance in students’ intention regarding H&T career choice can be explained by the three predictor variables. According to the regression analysis summarized in Table IV, the equation for this multiple predictor model would be:

$$\begin{aligned}
 Y \text{ (Career choice intention in the H\&T industry)} &= 1.123 \\
 &+ 0.660 \text{ (Perceived parental supports to the H\&T career)} \\
 &- 0.131 \text{ (Perceived parental barriers to career choice)} \\
 &+ 0.166 \text{ (Perceived parental career concerns about welfare and prestige)}
 \end{aligned}$$

In line with previous research findings (Lent *et al.*, 1994) that parental support provides proximal contextual factors that may directly influence their children’s career choice intention (or goals); the indication of “parental supports to the H&T career” as the best predictor in this study confirms its strong effect on career choice intention. The factor of “perceived parental career concerns about welfare and prestige” plays an important role in influencing students’ propensity to enter the H&T industry. This might imply that the influence of parents in stressing salary and social status leads these to become the major considerations for students in determining whether to pursue an H&T career. Also consistent with past studies (Lent *et al.*, 1994), perceived parental barriers to career choice were found in this research to be another influence on students’ career choice intention. Due to the directly negative influence of “perceived parental barriers to career choice”, if the students perceive more barriers as a result of parental influence, they would be very likely to reject H&T jobs, reflecting that parental barriers can severely dampen the enthusiasm of students to include H&T jobs in their career choice goals.

Independent variables	B	T-value	ρ-value	R	R ²
Perceived parental supports to the H&T career (Factor 1)	0.660	11.052	0.000	0.465	0.217
Perceived parental barriers to career choice (Factor 4)	-0.131	-2.634	0.009		
Perceived parental career concerns about welfare and prestige (Factor 5)	0.166	2.439	0.015		

Table IV.
Regression analysis for predicting H&T career choice intention

Perceived parental influential factors by demographics

Table V presents the research findings with regard to perceived parental influential factors by demographics. Significant gender differences were found in “perceived transmission of parental views and values regarding career” ($\rho = 0.025 < 0.05$). These findings show that female respondents tended to be more influenced by this factor than male respondents, perhaps partly because within a family, daughters are usually more willing to accept parents’ opinions and follow parents’ ideas than are sons, who are likely to behave more independently.

In terms of parental monthly income, significant differences could be seen in “perceived parental supports to the H&T career” ($\rho = 0.001 < 0.05$), “perceived parental involvement in career preparation” ($\rho = 0.002 < 0.05$), “perceived parental encouragement to self-direction in career choice” ($\rho = 0.024 < 0.05$) and “perceived parental career concerns about welfare and prestige” ($\rho = 0.011 < 0.05$). With respect to the father’s educational level, there were significant differences in the factors of “perceived parental supports to the H&T career” ($\rho = 0.000 < 0.05$), “perceived parental involvement in career preparation” ($\rho = 0.000 < 0.05$) and “perceived transmission of parental views and values regarding career” ($\rho = 0.000 < 0.05$). With respect to the mother’s educational level, the differences were significant in “perceived parental supports to the H&T career” ($\rho = 0.000 < 0.05$), “perceived parental involvement in career preparation” ($\rho = 0.000 < 0.05$) and “perceived transmission of parental views and values regarding career” ($\rho = 0.001 < 0.05$).

The findings regarding the relationships between parental demographic variables and parental influential factors showed a strong consistency with prior studies; for example, Eccles (1993), which showed that parental background influencing variables (e.g. socio-economic status) act as moderators between proximal parental influential factors and children’s career behaviours, that then indirectly affect children’s career outcomes. Specifically, the results of this study imply that students whose parents have lower incomes might be impacted by their parents’ salary levels. Parents tend to put more emphasis on work benefits, which can improve their families’ living standards as well as increase their status within their own social circles, depending on their own efforts. However, students whose parents have higher incomes and better education are likely to gain more physical as well as emotional support from their parents that can facilitate their career development. In turn, they might view parental support and involvement as being more critical in their career choice process.

Additionally, it was found that parents with H&T working experience scored higher than Parents without H&T experience in Factor 1: perceived parental support of H&T career. Nevertheless, parents without H&T experience scored higher than parents with H&T experience in Factor 5: perceived parental career concerns about welfare and prestige. This result indicates that parents with H&T experience understand the industry and support their children to join the field while parents without H&T experience expect more for welfare and prestige out of the children career.

Conclusions and recommendations

In this study, career choice research has been enriched by an examination of the strength of various parental influences among the HTM students in China. Whereas a few studies identified the distal parental variables related to children’s career

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Demographic variables	Perceived parental supports of the H&T career	Perceived parental involvement in career preparation	Perceived parental encouragement to self-direction in career choice	Perceived parental barriers to career choice	Perceived parental career concerns about welfare and prestige	Perceived transmission of parental views and values regarding career
<i>Gender</i> (Male, female)	$t = 1.340$ No significant difference $F = 0.489$	$t = 1.548$ No significant difference $F = 0.690$	$t = 1.282$ No significant difference $F = 6.018^*$ $21 > \geq 22$ (4.08 > 3.86)	$t = 0.600$ No significant difference $F = 1.910$	$t = 0.739$ No significant difference $F = 1.870$	$t = 2.247^*$ Male < female (3.42 < 3.56) $F = 4.274^*$ $\leq 20 > \geq 22$ (3.60 > 3.38)
Age 20 or younger 21 22 or older	No significant difference	No significant difference	$21 > \geq 22$ (4.08 > 3.86)	No significant difference	No significant difference	$21 > \geq 22$ (3.57 > 3.38) $t = 0.872$ No significant difference $F = 3.285$
<i>Year of study</i> (Year 3, Year 4)	$t = 0.713$ No significant difference $F = 17.063^*$	$t = 0.610$ No significant difference $F = 4.924^*$	$t = 1.840$ No significant difference $F = 10.690^*$	$t = 2.546^*$ Year 3 < Year 4 (2.96 < 3.13) $F = 2.391$	$t = 1.485$ No significant difference $F = 8.749^*$	
<i>University's location</i>						
Beijing-BJ	BJ > HZ (3.26 > 2.78)	SH > GZ (3.77 > 3.50)	BJ < SH (3.64 < 4.10)		BJ < HZ (3.80 < 4.11)	
Shanghai-SH	BJ > GZ (3.26 > 2.70)	HZ > GZ (3.75 > 3.50)	BJ < HZ (3.64 < 3.96)	No significant difference	BJ < GZ (3.80 < 4.25)	No significant difference
Hangzhou-HZ	SH > HZ (3.07 > 2.78)	GZ < NJ (3.50 < 3.79)	BJ < GZ (3.64 < 4.17)		SH < GZ (3.97 < 4.25)	
Guangzhou-GZ	SH > GZ (3.07 > 2.70)		BJ < NJ (3.64 < 4.05)		BJ < NJ (3.80 < 4.12)	
Nanjing-NJ	HZ < NJ (2.78 < 3.25) GZ < NJ (2.70 < 3.25)					

(continued)

Table V.
Results of comparing differences in parental influences by demographics ($n = 566$)

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Demographic variables	Perceived parental supports of the H&T career	Perceived parental involvement in career preparation	Perceived parental encouragement to self-direction in career choice	Perceived parental barriers to career choice	Perceived parental career concerns about welfare and prestige	Perceived transmission of parental views and values regarding career
<i>Parental monthly income</i>	$F = 7.589^*$	$F = 6.506^*$	$F = 3.772^*$	$F = 0.529$	$F = 4.563^*$	$F = 1.902$
Below RMB 3,001	\leq RMB 3,000 < \geq RMB 6,001 (2.89 < 3.19)	\leq RMB 3,000 < RMB 3,001-RMB 6,000 (3.58 < 3.75)	\leq RMB 3,000 > \geq RMB 6,001 (4.08 > 3.89)	No significant difference	\leq RMB 3,000 > \geq RMB 6,001 (4.12 > 3.92)	No significant difference
RMB 3,001- RMB 6,000, Above RMB 6,001	$F = 17.245^*$	\leq RMB 3,000 < \geq RMB 6,001 (3.58 < 3.78) $F = 16.359^*$	$F = 0.236$	$F = 2.447$	RMB 3,001- RMB 6,000 > \geq RMB 6,001 (4.08 > 3.92) $F = 1.751$	$F = 13.115^*$
<i>Father's educational level</i>	\leq High school < \geq College	\leq High school < Senior high school	No significant difference	No significant difference	\leq High school < \geq College	(3.31 < 3.70) Senior high school < \geq College (3.44 < 3.70)
Less than high school	(2.80 < 3.22)	(3.47 < 3.70)	No significant difference	No significant difference	No significant difference	
Senior high school	Senior high school < < \geq College	\leq High school < \geq College				
College or above	(2.95 < 3.22)	(3.47 < 3.84) Senior high school < \geq College (3.70 < 3.84)				
College)						

(continued)

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Demographic variables	Perceived parental supports of the H&T career	Perceived parental involvement in career preparation	Perceived parental encouragement to self-direction in career choice	Perceived parental barriers to career choice	Perceived parental career concerns about welfare and prestige	Perceived transmission of parental views and values regarding career
<i>Mother's educational level</i>	$F = 17.995^*$	$F = 12.402^*$	$F = 0.065$	$F = 2.026$	$F = 2.491$	$F = 7.700^*$
Less than high school	\leq High school < Senior high school	\leq High school < Senior high school				\leq High school < \geq College
Senior high school	(2.80 < 3.06)	(3.54 < 3.76)	No significant difference	No significant difference	No significant difference	(3.37 < 3.69)
College or above	\leq High school < \geq College	\leq High school < \geq College				
College)	(2.80 < 3.25)	(3.54 < 3.82)				
Parents' work in H&T industry? (Yes, No)	Senior high school < \geq College $t = 5.184^*$	$t = 0.996$	$t = 2.119^*$	$t = 0.687$	$t = 2.876^*$	$t = 0.334$
	Yes > No (3.47 > 2.96)	No significant difference	Yes < No (3.80 < 4.01)	No significant difference	Yes < No (3.83 < 4.08)	No significant difference

Notes: * indicates significance at the $p < 0.05$ level; Mean values in parentheses are represented in italics (from 1 = SD, to 5 = SA)

Table V.

development, and another body of research conducted a limited discussion about the relevancy between the proximal parental influences and career outcomes, much less work has provided a more comprehensive analysis of the effects of parental influences on career choice intention. The present study has sought to address this research gap and achieved some major findings. Most notable are the findings that it has identified six parental influential factors among HTM students in China. Three of these factors have been determined as students' H&T career choice predictors. Specifically, "parental supports of H&T industry" has the most influential powers on the H&T career choice. "Parental career concerns about welfare and prestige" is the second most significant contributor, and "parental barriers to career choice" ranks the third in affecting the H&T career choice. In addition, it has been investigated that there do exist differences in various parental influential factors in terms of gender, parental income and educational level, and parents' work experience.

Based on the research findings, recommendations can be given both to the H&T industry and HTM educators. With regard to the H&T industry, it is imperative for H&T management to increase people's understanding of the industry, to create appealing working environments and to develop effective recruitment strategies that address both the concerns of young people and of their parents. In particular, the H&T industry needs to first build a positive image to improve the perception of it by students and parents. Maximizing the opportunity for students and parents to get accurate industry information could effectively build positive perceptions among students and parents, and might mitigate parental disinclination to support a young person's pursuit of an H&T career. In this regard, it is suggested that the H&T industry:

- provide industry learning seminars or career talks to both students and parents;
- collaborate with HTM educators going into schools for recruitment and selection; and
- provide more opportunities, such as through field trips, internships and part-time jobs, for students to directly "experience" a real H&T job.

Second, given the important role of parental concerns about welfare and prestige in influencing students' intention to choose an H&T career, strategies for providing benefits that are attractive to all family members should be developed for the purpose of recruiting more HTM graduates. It is recommended that the H&T industry conduct regular salary surveys and accordingly develop competitive compensation packages, invest more in staff rewards and recognition as well as offer flexible benefits, a bonus system and fringe benefits like incentive travel.

Third, it is suggested that the H&T industry develop and provide clear career development routes for its potential employees. Detailed career-path structures should be emphasized. Training may have a crucial role to play in facilitating the development of career paths for employees. Communicating and clarifying career paths to students and parents would be another important role for the human resources management of the H&T industry.

As the most direct and reliable medium for parents as well as students to connect with the industry, HTM educators can make their own contributions to the successful recruitment of HTM graduates into the H&T industry. First, it is suggested that they provide students with parent-involved lectures (e.g. "Parents' day" activities) to

increase knowledge about the H&T industry. Furthermore, from a broad perspective of career development, HTM educators could teach some skills essential for career decision-making or those skills critical for achieving success in the workplace. In particular, they could emphasize the importance of communication skills, which might not only enhance the competitiveness of their students at work due to the person-contact characteristics of H&T jobs, but which might also have the interesting side effect of minimizing the gap between the actual opinions of parents and the students' perception of these views, that might then go on to have a critical impact on students' career choice processes. Second, HTM educators might invite more industry representatives to give shared seminars to HTM students and their parents. New H&T employees who are HTM graduates could be encouraged to lead these, as they will have similar backgrounds to current HTM students, and their parents could also be encouraged to attend these seminars in order to express their opinions about an H&T career from both parents' and young people's perspectives. Finally, HTM educators should seek to cooperate with the H&T industry in carrying out applied research that would benefit the whole community in the long term.

This study has sought to determine the effects of perceived parental influences on HTM undergraduate students' H&T career choice intention in China. However, the research has only been conducted among undergraduate students, and it is recommended that further research be carried out among students of different majors, or at different educational levels such as those taking the HTM higher diploma. Some additional variables, such as the colleges or universities being attended, students' internship experience, and so on, need also to be considered when further exploring the relationship between parental influences and career choice. Since the subjects of this study were students in the collectivistic culture of China, it would be valuable to replicate the study in other regions with a collectivistic culture, or in countries with a different, individualistic culture. A comparison of results in the context of different cultures may well extend the knowledge of the relationship between parental influences and career choice intention. Finally, it is suggested that future studies also examine parental influences on the perceptions of parents themselves and actual parental involvement may also affect students' career choices. A comparison between young people's perceptions and parents' perceptions, in terms of parental influences on the career choice intention of young people, might be another interesting topic for future research.

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