



# Antecedents of Norwegian Adolescents' Choice of Educational Pathway in Hospitality and Tourism<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the extent to which Norwegian adolescents (age 15–16 years) choose vocational foundation classes for high school related to the hospitality industry and intend to complete their certificate of apprenticeship in this field. Departing from the concepts of beliefs, behavioral intentions, and background factors, the study explores pupils' beliefs about work in the hospitality industry and the ways in which beliefs and social and informational background factors predict their choices. Data were collected in 2002 ( $n = 1863$ ) and 2011 ( $n = 1839$ ) using questionnaires, allowing to explore differences between the two measurements. The results showed a decrease in the number of pupils choosing these vocational courses between 2002 and 2011. Yet, pupils' beliefs about work in the industry were positive, with no major change between the two measures. These beliefs and their own experiences from encounters with the industry emerged as the most significant predictors of the pupils' choices.

## KEY WORDS

Adolescents / beliefs / social influence / hospitality industry / vocational education

## Introduction

The tourism and hospitality industry is labor intensive, yet has it problems in attracting, recruiting, and retaining a sufficient and competent workforce (Hom & Kinicki, 2001; Im, 2011; Richardson, 2010). The industry is characterized by a shortage of skilled workers, extensive use of part-time work and unskilled labor force, modest or low pay, and high turnover rates (DAMVAD, 2014; Lam et al., 2003; Mykletun & Furunes, 2012). Shortage of skilled workforce is further emphasized by the Norwegian federation of hospitality industry owners (NHO). About 58% of the companies within the tourism and hospitality industries report great or some degree of shortage of skilled workforce (Rørstad et al., 2017). Hence, it is of uttermost importance for the industry to attract more and better educated employees. For the industry to attain this

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goal, information on the factors that govern the educational choices of young pupils is needed. In the case of Norway, the basic career choices are made as early as at the end of compulsory school at the age of 15, when pupils make their choices regarding their educational track in high school. Hence, it would be timely for the industry 'to know more about what potential recruits think about it, in order to provide a basis for attracting the best possible workforce' (Airey & Frontistis, 1997, p. 157).

Yet, previous research (e.g., Getz, 1994; Jenkins, 2001; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Richardson, 2009, 2010; Richardson & Butler, 2012; Richardson & Thomas, 2012; Ross, 1991) on the perceptions and attitudes of young people toward work in the industry has mainly been carried out among high school students and even more frequently among undergraduates already enrolled in an educational program within the field. Consequently, these studies may only answer the call in relation to students who are already enrolled in hospitality courses. Furthermore, at these stages of the educational path, important differences may exist between countries, making comparisons and generalizations between studies difficult. Hence, we need information on the factors that govern the choices of 15–16 years old at the time they select their foundation classes in high school. A range of contextual and personal factors, such as the social class of parents and family, are likely to influence such choices (Hegna & Smette, 2016), which may change over time as the social and economic conditions change. For instance, Norway has seen important changes in the labor market over the last decades, with increasing shortages of workforce in general. This was also reflected in the unemployment rate (OECD-norm) of males aged 15–19 years, which was 17.3% in 2003 and 13.2% and 13.3% in 2008 and 2013, respectively, with little lower percentages for females (Albæk et al., 2015). These numbers included pupils and students having school or studies as their main activity but who had been applying for jobs within the last 4 weeks. Leaving out this group, an unemployment rate of youth 15–19 years was below 5% out of the total population in 2003 and barely 3% and around 2% in 2008 and 2013, respectively.

At this young age, one may expect family and parental influences to be strong, even more so in some social classes than in others. Yet, in many contemporary western countries, such as in Norway, a strong normative value connected to young people's autonomy is embedded both in the educational system and in the greater culture, seemingly overshadowing social class and status (Gullestad, 1996; Hegna & Smette, 2016). In the light of this information, it is concerning that few studies, if any, have addressed younger pupils' beliefs and perceptions of work in the tourism and hospitality industry, for example, at a time when they are about to choose foundation classes for further training, and the ways in which these factors may influence their actual choices of further education.

The Norwegian mandatory school system is comprehensive, which implies that the pupils choose their educational pathways later in their school careers as compared to, for instance, the UK and the Netherlands. Further, despite shared challenges, similarities in society, and a standardization of vocational education within the high school system in each of the Nordic countries, structural differences in the vocational educations between the countries persist. Denmark, Iceland, and Norway have considerable systems of apprenticeship, while the education in Sweden and Finland is more school oriented (Høst, 2012). In Norway, two main pathways are optional at this stage, university or college-oriented foundation classes, which delay the orientation toward specific

industries and professions, or vocational foundation classes. Choosing vocational foundation classes related to hospitality and tourism at this level in Norway opens the possibility for a four-year educational pathway, two years of theoretical training in high school (vocational foundation classes) followed by two years of apprenticeship in the tourism and hospitality industry. After the first year in high school, pupils choose a specialization within the field, and completing the apprenticeship will then give them the certificate of apprenticeship within the chosen profession, be it as cook/chef, receptionist, waiter, travel agent, bartender, or baker.

The first research question driving this study was therefore: To what extent do the 15–16 years old pupils choose foundation classes within hospitality and tourism subjects when entering high school? The second research question was whether they intend to finish their certificate of apprenticeship in this industry. Employing the data collected in 2002 and 2011, the study further explored differences between these two time points in pupils' choices of basic vocational training for this industry.

The proportion of ethnic non-Norwegian workforce in the industry increased from 22% in 2003 to 47% in 2013, as compared to from 6% to 14% on average in private sector (DAMVAD, 2014). According to Røed and Schøne (2016), ethnic Norwegian pupils might avoid vocational programs leading to jobs in occupations with increasing number of ethnic non-Norwegian workforce. Moreover, hospitality and tourism industries offer low salaries and unsocial working hours. This study assumes that such *contextual* factors may have influenced the pupils' interest in and beliefs about the tourism and hospitality industry. Hence, this study further explored a possible effect of this time span on the interest of the pupils by comparing the data collected from national random samples of 15–16 years old pupils in 2002 and 2011.

The *choice* of foundation classes implies intentions to act in a certain way. These intentions may again be based on various influences, which are, in this study, treated as antecedents of pupils' choices. One major individual factor is the pupils' beliefs about work in tourism and hospitality. Applying the concepts of *beliefs* and *behavioral intentions*, as proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) in their theory 'The reasoned action approach', this study explored pupils' *beliefs* about work in the hospitality industries and the ways in which these beliefs may *predict* their choice of foundation classes within hospitality and tourism as well as the intended accomplishment of the apprenticeship. In addition, the study explored the role of gender and social influences from parents and peers on the choice of foundation classes within this industry. Thus, the third research question aimed to explore the predictive power of these antecedents.

The main aim of the study was to understand young peoples' orientation toward this line in education and training to future work in the hospitality industry. The study addresses an important stage of their school careers *and* in a context where the industries need more insights into how to attract more skilled workforce and reduce the amount of unskilled workforce.

## Conceptual framework and literature review

The present study examined pupils' *intentions* to become involved in certain career pathways in the hospitality industry, operationalized by their choices of foundation classes. The concept of intentions can be described as a behavioral disposition (Ajzen,



2005, p. 97) or as an indication of one's readiness to perform a given behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010, p. 39). Research provides evidence for behavioral intentions as important predictors of actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991; 2005; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Previous research has focused on *intentions* to work in hospitality or used this as a dependent variable only to a limited extent. Three previous studies have, however, shown that most undergraduate students within hospitality and tourism (college- or university level) were either uncertain about further career in the industry after graduation (Barron et al., 2007) or were looking for a professional career in other industries, with only round 36% planning for a further professional career within hospitality and tourism industries (Richardson, 2008, 2010). A Norwegian study conducted among high school pupils in a vocational program relevant to the hospitality industry showed that around 90% of the pupils intend to pursue a future career within the industry during the first two years, while only 45% proceeded into apprenticeship (Høst et al., 2013). Hence, some students at a later stage give up the chosen path of education or are unsure about their continuation of the planned future career within the industry, which may indicate disappointment with the content of the education or the work.

According to the *Reasoned Action Approach* (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010), behavior always comprises an *action* that is performed (here the choice of foundation classes), a *target* at which the action is directed (here the choice of further educational pathways), a *context* in which the action is performed (here the labor market options for young workers, their family, the schools system, etc.), and a *time* of this action (during the spring-term of the final year in the comprehensive school in 2002 and 2011, respectively). While *action* and *target* of choosing foundation classes that would lead to possibility of work in hospitality and tourism industries remained the same in 2002 and 2011, the *time* and *context* were somewhat different in 2011 compared to 2002 in that the Norwegian labor market changed from the turn of the millennium in terms of increased shortage of labor, making a wide range of jobs available for pupils leaving high schools. Since more options for better-paid jobs were available in 2011 compared to 2002, one could expect that fewer pupils would chose the foundation classes for the hospitality and tourism industries in 2011 as compared to 2002.

A wide range of factors may influence behavioral intentions, among which beliefs and background factors were perceived to be the most relevant for the present research. *Beliefs* may be defined as 'subjective probabilities ... [they] involve the subjective probability that performing a behavior leads to a certain outcome' (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010, p. 221). Beliefs may be based on direct observation, external information, and inference processes. Although they may be inaccurate and based on irrational processes, they constitute the information regarding a certain behavior, and they are often acted upon as if they were valid.

Previous research on students' beliefs (often named perceptions or attitudes), about work in the industry, has been conducted with older students who are already pursuing their professional educational training careers, while this study focused on younger pupils who were in the process of choosing their educational pathways. The previous studies found that students are primarily positive in the early stages of their education (Airey & Frontistis, 1997; Dagsland, 2002; Getz, 1994; Persson, 1998; Ross, 1991, 1992, 1994). These positive perceptions at the beginning of their studies changed, however, into more negative perceptions after a few years of studies, and especially after returning from periods of internship or placement in the industry (Aksu & Köksal,

2005; Barron & Maxwell, 1993; Charles, 1992; Jenkins, 2001; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Richardson, 2008, 2009, 2010). This finding seems to be consistent across countries and educational systems.

Richardson (2009) investigated factors that Australian hospitality students evaluated as important in choosing a career. He found that the students did not believe that the tourism and hospitality industry could offer them these factors, the five most important being 'A job that I will find enjoyable'; 'Pleasant working environment'; 'A secure job'; 'Colleagues that I can get along with'; and 'High earnings over a length of time'. Two other studies on tourism and hospitality students' perceptions of a career in the industry showed the same results, indicating that the students did not believe that the industry will offer them what they find important when choosing a career (Richardson & Butler, 2012; Richardson & Thomas, 2012).

Dagsland et al. (2011) studied apprentices' expectations of and experiences in their encounter with the hospitality industry. The study showed that the apprentices had high expectations of their work, especially regarding the learning and developmental aspects of the apprenticeship and being respected and included in the group at collegial and interpersonal levels. Their encounter with the industry as apprentices did however not meet these expectations.

Contrary to several of the studies cited above, Josiam et al. (2008, 2009) found largely positive attitudes toward work among American and British students in hospitality management and no decline in the work attitudes due to work experience among students born in the 1980s and early 1990s. Overall, these studies, although conducted among older students already attending education within the field, provide information on the dimensions that are relevant for the present study that aimed to explore the pupils' beliefs about work in the hospitality and tourism industries. Furthermore, one should expect pupils to hold both positive and negative beliefs about work in the hospitality and tourism industries, and these contrasting beliefs were included as indicators in the questionnaire. The positive beliefs were expected to predict choice of foundation classes in hospitality and tourism, while the opposite effect was expected for the negative beliefs.

A wide range of *background factors* may influence intentions as well as beliefs (Ajzen, 2005; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010), and among these, personal, social, and informational background factors should be included in the analyses, as one may expect them to be relevant to the outcome of the study. Hence, this research has focused on one *personal background factor*, specifically gender, which often relates to intentions and choices (Ajzen, 2005; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). In a study on gender and work-related attributes among seniors graduating from a hospitality program in the USA, Vest and Murrmann (1992) found that, compared to males, females placed a stronger emphasis on growth (career, job security, and training); control (job content, control over own work); and constraints (time and place, relocation, work schedule). A study by Chuang and Dellmann-Jenkins (2010) on undergraduate hospitality students' career intentions in the hospitality industry showed that gender and work experience were associated with career intentions in the industry, with females having stronger career intentions than males. The hotel and restaurant industry is a gendered labor market in Norway. Women outnumber males at a 60/40 ratio and tend to occupy the front-stage and backstage lower positions, while males tend to work in managerial positions (DAMWAD, 2014; Mykletun & Furunes, 2012; Onsøyen et al., 2009). Consequently,



gender is expected to influence the behavioral intentions of the young respondents in this study in that more female pupils will be expected to choose the foundation classes in hospitality and tourism compared to males.

The second category of background factors are *social* factors, which are likely to influence intentions through *perceived norms* (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010) or *subjective norms* (Ajzen, 1991, 2005). These norms are connected to the persons' perception of social pressure to perform or not a given behavior and the beliefs about the likelihood of important individuals or groups to approve or disapprove performing or engaging in the behavior. The social background factor included in the present study was the pupils' perception of parents/superiors' and of friends' influence on choice of foundation classes. Parents and friends are most often 'significant others' to the pupils, that is, persons in an adolescent's social relations with whom there is a perceived attachment and/or social influence relationship (Blyth et al., 1982; Hegna & Smette, 2016).

Norwegian studies on the factors influencing pupils' choice of educational programs in high school, either university-preparatory or vocational foundation classes, have also underlined the importance of social background factors, such as family structures, parents' level of education, parental support, attitudes, norms, and values connected to education and work. For instance, both parents and teachers are significant others and act as models who make choices about an occupation familiar to the pupil, and 'help define themselves through conversations and support, thus being definers' (Sjaastad, 2011, p. 1615). Pupils brought up by parents in traditional manual occupations, with lower levels of education and negative attitudes towards academic studies, were more likely to choose vocational foundation classes (Sandberg & Markussen, 2009). Reviewing the existing research on the influence of family on career development, Whiston and Keller (2004) concluded that family structures and family processes influence the individuals' career development. Family members have more influence on career decisions compared to peers, even in adolescence, and young people perceive parents as influencing their career choices. In their study on parental influence on career choice among undergraduates in hospitality and tourism management in China, Wong and Liu (2010) identified three factors as salient predictors of the students' career choice intentions: perceived parental support of hospitality and tourism industries; perceived parental career concerns about welfare and prestige; and perceived parental barriers to career choice. Kwan's (2005) study on factors influencing the perception of work in the industry conducted among undergraduates in hospitality and tourism education in China indicated that younger students were influenced more by their parents than older ones who were more influenced by supervised work experience during their studies.

Applying a social cognitive theory framework to study career and academic interest, choice, and performance, Lent et al. (1994) suggested that young people who do not expect their parents to support their studies in their chosen career field will avoid choosing this career field. Cultural differences may also be noted. Hardin et al. (2001), based on their study of Asian American and European-American college students in the USA, reported a difference in parental influence between students from a collectivistic and an individualistic culture. Although Norwegian culture can be characterized as 'individualistic', underlining the autonomous choice as a norm (Døving, 2007; Gullestad, 1996; Hegna & Smette, 2016), the pupils were young at the time of choosing the courses and it was hence expected that parents/superiors indeed would influence their choice of vocational foundation classes. In a Norwegian context, Hegna and Smette (2016) found that

strong and negative opinions from parents during the pupils' process of course selection may complicate the process, and they may be experienced as something that threatens their sense of autonomy in the choice.

The third category of background factors are *informational*, which may include information provided by various sources, including one's own experiences and observations, those of other people, TV, internet, newspapers, books, and others (Ajzen, 2005; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). In a study on hospitality and tourism students' career preferences, sources of influence, and career choice factors conducted among American students, Beom Cheol et al. (2010) found that personal experiences and work experiences (first-hand information sources) had much greater influence on career decisions than any other sources. The pupils' experiences with the industry are therefore expected to influence the pupils' choices of foundation classes. Moreover, people personally known to the pupils and who work in hospitality and tourism industries is an additional informational background factor. It was hence expected that personally knowing people who work in the industry might influence the pupils' choices of vocational foundation classes and their interest to work in the industry.

To summarize, the study explored the extent to which pupils aged 15–16 years choose foundation classes within hospitality and tourism, and whether such choices were less frequent in 2011 compared to 2002. Furthermore, the study explored the beliefs held by the pupils about work in the industry. The study hypothesized that the choices of foundation classes in hospitality and tourism and the intentions to achieve the certificate of apprenticeship will be associated with the beliefs about the industries, social norms in the sense of influences from parents and friends, information derived from people they know who are working in the industries, as well as their own experiences from encounters with the industries. Finally, we hypothesized a possible effect of gender in that girls will be more prone to choose such classes and seek an apprenticeship in the industry.

## Method

The results presented in this study were based on two identical surveys administered in 2002 and 2011.

## Samples

Both samples were 15–16 years old students in their last year of junior high school at the time they chose foundation classes in high school. These choices would influence their further education and work careers. The official bureau of statistical and demographical analysis in Norway, Statistics Norway, drew a random sample of schools and classes in 2002 from the entire population stratified by geographical areas and representative at a national level for this specific age group in Norway. The schools participating in 2011 were the same as the ones used in the 2002 survey. First, school classes were sampled, and subsequently, the principals of these schools were contacted by telephone and then by letter inviting them to take part in the survey. Together with the questionnaires was an informative letter describing the purpose of the survey, instructions, and



envelopes with prepaid postage for returning the questionnaires. Reminders were given twice. Pupils completed the questionnaires in the classroom during school hours with their teacher present in the classroom. The response rate in 2002 was 65% amounting to 1863 completed questionnaires (51% boys, 49% girls), and 67% in 2011, amounting to 1839 completed questionnaires (47% boys, 53% girls).

## The questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed in 2002 and addressed the key issues probing the students' choices and beliefs about work in hospitality and tourism industries. The items that were used to describe the beliefs about work in the hospitality and tourism industries were developed based on a multi-dimensional and multi-item attitude scale applied by Kuslivan and Kuslivan (2000) and a focus group study. In addition, the questionnaire was discussed and refined based on the interviews with representatives from the industry. Five focus groups were established from the same population comprising pupils from schools who were not included in the study to discuss their thoughts and beliefs about hospitality and tourism industries and work within this industry.

Two dependent variables were used in the study. The first dependent variable was the pupils' choices of foundation classes in their study program. A question on *choice of foundation classes in higher secondary* was answered with first, second, and third priority. The responses were recoded into one dummy variable: hospitality and tourism as first, second, or third priority were assigned value = 1. All other responses were given value = 0. The second dependent variable was the pupils' intentions about *planned completion of the certificate of apprenticeship*, with possible responses Yes = 1, No = 2, and Don't know = 3. These responses were recoded into a dummy variable, with response Yes given the value = 1, and No and Don't know were given value 0. These dummy variables were used as dependent variables in multiple logistic regression analyses.

*Beliefs about work within the hospitality and tourism industry* were assessed with 16 items formulated as statements, for example, 'interesting work', 'challenging and varied work', 'stressful work', 'work with good possibilities for development', and 'disorderly work conditions', measured on a Likert-type scale ranging from one to five, where higher values referred to a positive belief about the industry. A Likert-type of scale ranging from one to four was used to respond on the questions on social influence, *influence from their parents* and from *their friends*, labeled 4 = Very important; 3 = Important; 2 = Less important; 1 = Not important, and from one to five on influence from *own experiences from encounters with the industry* (5 = Very important; 4 = Important, 3 = Neither/nor; 2 = Less important; 1 = Not important). Concerning the second question on influential information, the pupils were asked whether they *knew people working in the industry* in person, with response alternatives being Yes = 2 and No = 1. Gender was coded as Female = 1 and Male = 2.

The questionnaire was pretested on a small group (10 persons) from the same population to which the survey was addressed but from schools that were not participating in the study. The pretest results indicated that the wording and format of the survey were feasible for this age group; thus, no further changes were required.



### Data analyses

The data from the questionnaires were entered into SPSS (v. 21) for the analysis. Exploratory factor analysis was used to analyze the *Beliefs about work in the hospitality and tourism industry* separately for 2002 and 2011, with the aim to reduce the data to reveal underlying factors, that is, the patterns that best explain the variation in the observed variables. Overall, 16 items relevant to the present research problem were included in the factor analyses. Maximum likelihood with Varimax rotation was used as extraction method, revealing three concurrent factors for both 2002 and 2011, *Sound work*, *Stressful work*, and *Orderly work*, accounting for 45.79% (2002) and 49.34% (2011) of the variance (Tables I, II). The *Sound work* factor contained items reflecting status, possibilities for personal growth and development, reasonable pay, and interesting work in a reliable, exiting, and future-oriented context. The *Stressful work* factor, on the contrary, included beliefs that work in this industry is stressful, hectic, and routine, involving long working hours. The *Orderly work* factor contained items on social working environment being

**Table I** Factor structure matrix showing the loadings  $\geq 0.40$  on items of *Beliefs about work in the hospitality and tourism industry*, 2002 (n = 1678–1785)

Item	Factor			Mean	St.dev.
	1: Sound	2: Stress	3: Orderly		
Giving status in society	0.71			3.03	1.117
Good possibilities for development	0.69			3.61	1.058
Giving status amongst young people	0.69			3.00	1.124
Interesting work	0.68			3.81	1.021
Work for the future	0.68			3.41	1.174
Good money	0.66			3.53	1.097
Exciting work environment	0.65			3.91	.972
Reliable workplace	0.57			3.38	1.074
Stressful work		0.85		2.35	1.149
Hectic work environment		0.78		2.19	1.066
Long workdays		0.66		2.40	1.129
Routine work		0.45		2.10	1.008
Poor care of employees			0.64	3.18	1.009
Disorderly conditions of employment			0.62	3.42	1.130
Disorderly working conditions			0.60	3.05	1.117
Drinking and partying			0.45	3.29	1.202
Cronbach's alpha	0.86	0.79	0.69		
Mean (St.dev.)	3.45 (0.77212)	2.26 (0.85042)	3.24 (0.79573)		
Variance explained by factor	22.64%	12.84%	10.31%		
Total variance explained	45.79%				

Extraction Method: Maximum likelihood.  
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization.



**Table II** Factor structure matrix showing the loadings  $\geq 0.40$  on items of *Beliefs about work in the hospitality and tourism industry, 2011* (n = 1658–1756)

Item	Factor			Mean	St.dev.
	1: Sound	2: Stress	3: Orderly		
Interesting work	0.71			3.71	1.053
Good money	0.70			3.54	1.085
Work for the future	0.69			3.42	1.088
Good possibilities for development	0.68			3.54	0.942
Exciting work environment	0.67			3.79	1.021
Giving status in society	0.67			3.05	1.010
Giving status among young people	0.64			2.98	1.022
Reliable workplace	0.57			3.49	0.961
Stressful work		0.87		2.49	1.170
Hectic work environment		0.80		2.31	1.041
Long workdays		0.67		2.45	1.080
Routine work		0.52		2.03	0.971
Poor care of employees			0.75	3.29	0.954
Disorderly conditions of employment			0.69	3.49	1.057
Disorderly working conditions			0.65	3.15	1.076
Drinking and partying			0.49	3.36	1.101
Cronbach's alpha	0.86	0.82	0.76		
Mean (St.dev.)	3.43 (0.72959)	2.32 (0.86191)	3.32 (0.79381)		
Variance explained by factor	22.55%	13.90%	12.89%		
Total variance explained	49.34%				

Extraction Method: Maximum likelihood.  
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization.

low on respect and consideration, disorderly contracts and poor working conditions, and on drinking and partying as a part of the work culture. Sum-scores were created based on the factor structures and alpha coefficients, as indicators of reliability. The Cronbach's alpha for the sum-scores are summarized in Tables I and II. These sum-scores were used as independent variables in multiple logistic regression analyses.

Multiple logistic regression was conducted to analyze the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The coefficients are presented as odds ratios that show approximations of the ratio of expected changes in the dependent variables per unit change in each of the independent variables (Buis, 2010), [Exp(B) in Tables III and IV]. Exp(B) above 1 indicates an increase in the dependent variables per unit change in the independent variables, and Exp(B) below 1 indicates a similar decrease. Significance level of 0.05 was used.

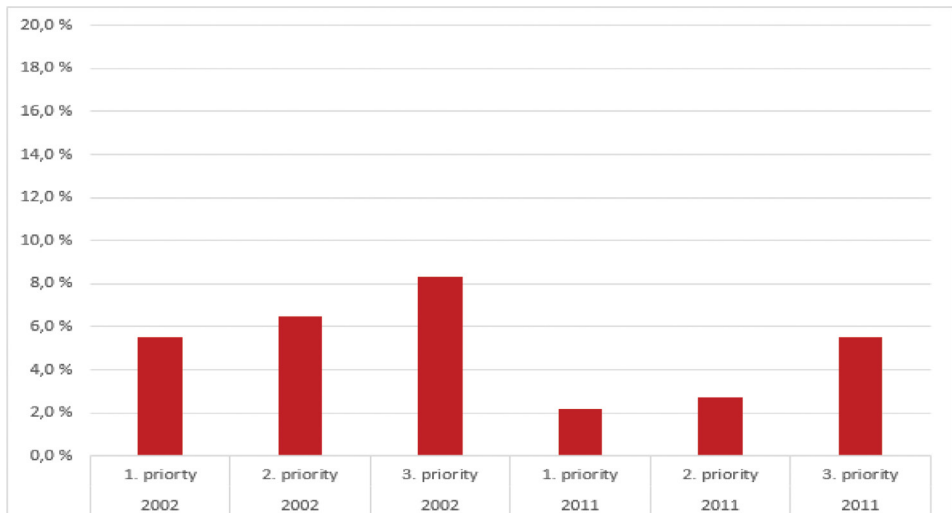


## Results

In the 2002 sample, 5.2% chose foundation classes within hospitality and tourism as their first priority, while 6.5% and 8.3% chose these classes as the second and third priority, respectively (Fig. 1). Out of the total group of pupils, 20% choose foundation classes within hospitality and tourism as their first, second, or third priority. In 2011, 2.2% chose foundation classes within hospitality and tourism as their first priority, while 2.7% and 5.5% chose the classes as their second and third priorities, respectively, amounting to 10.4% of the total group of pupils. Concerning gender, 25.4% of the total group of girls and 14.6% of the total group of boys in 2002 chose foundation classes as the first, second, or third priority. For 2011, the numbers were 12.1% and 8.8%, respectively.

Among those who chose the foundation classes as their first priority in 2002, 58.3% answered that they intended to complete the certificate of apprenticeship. For the second and third priority, the percentages were 22.3 and 21.4, respectively, amounting to 31.3% of the group of pupils choosing foundation classes within hospitality and tourism as the first, second, or third priority. In 2011, the percentages were 58.5, 26, and 14.7, respectively, amounting to 27% of the group. Hence, relatively few of those choosing foundation classes in this field considered also an apprenticeship at this early stage.

**Figure 1:** Pupils' intended choices of vocational foundation classes in hospitality and tourism (n 2002 = 1863; n 2011 = 1839).



### Factor structures and calculation of sum-scores for beliefs about work in the hospitality and tourism industry

The highest mean values were found for the factor Sound work in both samples, indicating that the pupils have mainly positive beliefs about the industry. The mean values



of the factors Stressful work and Orderly work indicated that the pupils have realistic beliefs about the industry as rather stressful and hectic, and at the same time to be rather orderly as opposed to chaotic and disorderly.

The differences in the mean values between the three sum-scores in each sample, 2002 and 2011, were examined using *paired samples t-tests*. They were all significant at  $p = 0.000$ . Differences in the mean values between the two samples on the similar belief sum-scores were examined using *independent samples t-tests*. The differences between 2002 and 2011 in the sum-scores Stressful work and Orderly work were significant though small at  $p < 0.027$  and  $p < 0.001$ , respectively, showing that the pupils in 2011 had slightly more positive beliefs than in 2002. The difference between 2002 and 2011 sum-scores in Sound work was, however, not significant,  $p = 0.460$ , indicating no difference between two time periods in the pupils' beliefs about the industry on this matter.

### Predicting pupils' choice of foundation classes in hospitality and tourism as first, second, or third priority

Multiple logistic regression analyses were conducted for both years, 2002 and 2011, to explore effects of the given independent variables on the dependent dummy variable, that is, choice of foundation classes in hospitality and tourism (Table III).

**Table III** Predicting pupils' Choice of foundation classes – Hospitality (hotel & food) as first, second, and third priority for 2002 and 2011: Multiple logistic regression

Items	2002			2011		
	Exp(B)	S.E.	Sign	Exp(B)	S.E.	Sign
Gender	0.75	0.144	0.05	0.99	0.080	0.87
Personally knowing people in the industry	1.08	0.147	0.59	1.69	0.187	0.01
Influence from own experiences in encounter with the industry	1.23	0.058	0.00	1.25	0.073	0.00
Influence from parents/superiors	0.89	0.088	0.18	0.84	0.109	0.12
Influence from friends	0.84	0.096	0.06	0.85	0.116	0.15
Sound work	2.37	0.111	0.00	1.56	0.142	0.00
Stressful work	0.91	0.087	0.30	0.97	0.115	0.79
Orderly work	1.26	0.095	0.02	1.06	0.122	0.66
Nagelkerke R square	0.143			0.057		

Baseline odds: 2002: 259/1084 = 0.239; 2011: 139/1242 = 0.112.

In the 2002 sample, *Gender*, *Influenced by own experiences in encounters with the industry*, and the belief sum-scores on *Sound work* and *Orderly work* predicted choice of foundation classes in hospitality and tourism. This implies that girls were more likely to choose these foundation classes, as does being influenced by one's own encounters with the industry, and the beliefs that the work is sound and orderly. Hence, it might be expected

that one’s own positive experiences and positive beliefs about work in these industries increased the likelihood of choosing hospitality and tourism as foundation classes.

In the 2011 sample, *personally knowing people working in the industry*, *one’s own experiences in encounter with the industry*, and the belief sum-score *Sound work*, predicted the selection of foundation classes. That is, personally knowing others working in the industry, having positive experiences, and finally believing that this type of work was ‘sound’ increased the likelihood of choosing hospitality and tourism foundation classes. The explained variance was 14.1% for 2002 and 5.7% for 2011.

### Predicting pupils’ intentions to obtain the certificate of apprenticeship

Multiple logistic regression analyses were conducted to explore the effect of the given independent variables on the *intentions of achieving the certificate of apprenticeship*, as the dependent variable (Table IV).

**Table IV** Predicting pupils’ *Intentions to achieve the certificate of apprenticeship* for 2002 and 2011: Multiple logistic regression

Items	2002			2011		
	Exp(B)	S.E.	Sign	Exp(B)	S.E.	Sign
Gender	0.95	0.235	0.83	1.02	0.078	0.76
Personally knowing people in the industry	1.44	0.254	0.15	2.35	0.375	0.02
Influence from own experiences in encounter with the industry	1.42	0.102	0.00	1.37	0.145	0.03
Influence from parents/superiors	0.78	0.144	0.08	0.81	0.206	0.30
Influence from friends	0.58	0.165	0.00	0.57	0.226	0.01
Sound work	3.79	0.195	0.00	1.79	0.276	0.04
Stressful work	0.75	0.140	0.04	0.75	0.223	0.19
Orderly work	1.33	0.148	0.05	1.16	0.230	0.52
<i>Nagelkerke R square</i>		0.213			0.093	

Baseline odds: 2002: 87/172 = 0.506; 2011: 35/104 = 0.337.

In the 2002 sample, the independent variables *Influence from own experiences in encounter with the industry*, *influence from friends*, and *the three sum-scores on beliefs* were all significant predictors of the pupils’ intentions to complete the certificate of apprenticeship. This implies that own positive experiences with the industry, positive beliefs about the industry as sound work, orderly work, and realistic beliefs about work in the industry as being stressful increased the intention to achieve the certificate of apprenticeship, while friends’ influence decreased this intention.

In the 2011 sample, the significant predictors of intentions to complete the certificate of apprenticeship were *personally knowing people in the industry*, *one’s own experiences in encounter with the industry*, *influence from friends*, and the *belief sum-score*



*sound work*. These variables, except *influence from friends*, increased the intentions to obtain the certificate of apprenticeship. The explained variance was 20.8% for 2002 and 9.2% for 2011.

## Discussion

The present study investigated the antecedents of pupils' choice of further education within the hospitality industry and the number of pupils who decided to pursue such career in 2002 in comparison to 2011. The proportion of pupils choosing foundation classes within hospitality and tourism as the first, second, or third priority in higher secondary school was low both in the 2002 and 2011 samples and dropped by almost 50% from 2002 to 2011. Sandberg and Markussen (2009) reported a drop for the first priority choice among Norwegian pupils from 5% to 3% for the 1994–2006 period. The statistics from the Norwegian Directorate of Education (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017) reported a similar trend for the number of pupils attending vocational foundation classes within this field from 2006 to 2016, supporting our findings. Consequently, the drop of interest observed here seems to reflect a prolongation of decline that started about 2002. In the group planning to choose the foundation classes as the first priority, no decline was observed from 2002 to 2011 in the percentage of those who intended to complete the certificate of apprenticeship. For the second and third priority, some differences between the samples emerged, with a small increase for the second priority and a pronounced decrease for the third priority in 2011.

Different reasons may explain the observed decline. Since no major changes in the pupils' beliefs about the industry have been observed for this period, other explanations are needed. The drop of interest may therefore reflect changes in the Norwegian labor market from 2000 and onwards. In a 'tight' labor market with great options for well-paid jobs, it might be easier to choose other occupations or postpone the decisions about education and future work career than in the periods of slack labor market. Moreover, Sandberg and Markussen (2009) found a general trend among Norwegian youth to choose university oriented programs in secondary school and disregard vocational classes and apprenticeship. The Norwegian Directorate of Education (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017) and Høst (2012) confirmed this trend not only in Norway but also in other Nordic and European countries. The underlying reasons for this trend are still not clear.

The pupils in our study held generally positive beliefs about the industry as providing a 'sound work', meaning that they thought of it as interesting and exciting, providing status and possibilities for personal growth and development. They moreover saw the work as reasonably paid, reliable, exciting, future-oriented, and orderly as opposed to chaotic or disorderly. This corresponds with earlier research both on young students' perceptions of work in the industry (Airey & Frontistis, 1997) and on perceptions among undergraduates in the beginning of their studies (Getz, 1994; Persson, 1998; Ross, 1991, 1992, 1994). An expectation of being reasonably paid is a relevant expectation for a skilled workforce and managers, paid by tariff agreement, while unskilled workforce may receive lower salaries (DAMVAD, 2014). Perceiving the industry as orderly is, however, in contrast to the image of the industry as disorderly, which is how it is portrayed by the media (e.g., Adresseavisen, 2011; Aftenposten, 2011; Bergens Tidende, 2011), and occasionally in conflict with basic laws and regulations (DAMVAD, 2014). Moreover,

the pupils had a realistic view of the industry as stressful and hectic. Consequently, the pupils' perceptions are not in line with the media-made image of the industry and only partly reflect research-based knowledge.

The variables included in the multiple logistic regression analysis explained a significant proportion of variance in pupils' choices of foundation classes in hospitality and tourism and their intentions to complete the certificate of apprenticeship. The strongest predictor of both choice of foundation classes and intentions to complete the certificate of apprenticeship was *the pupils' beliefs about work in the industry as 'sound'*. Having beliefs about the industry as 'orderly work' and as 'stressful work' predicted intentions to complete the certificate in the 2002 sample only.

*One's own experiences in the encounter with the industry* was a significant predictor of the choices of foundation classes and intentions to complete the certificate of apprenticeship, thus, own working experiences and experiences as customer and traveler does matter. This finding may appear to contradict the conclusions from previous research, stating that students develop more negative attitudes toward a career in the industry as they gain more knowledge and experience (Aksu & Köksal, 2005; Barron & Maxwell, 1993; Barron et al., 2007; Charles, 1992; Jenkins, 2001; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Kwan, 2005; Richardson, 2008, 2009, 2010). Yet, the participants in the present study were still young and their own experiences with the work in the industry are most likely from short periods of work on the weekends and holidays and possibly from informal work or work without great responsibility. Nevertheless, positive experiences in encounters with the industry might result in positive intentions to pursue educational pathways in the future, potentially leading to work in this industry.

*Influence from parents/superiors* and *influence from friends* can, as expected from Fishbein and Ajzen's (2010) theory, be categorized as normative beliefs or perceived norms, reflecting the social influence and beliefs about whether special individuals or groups approve or disapprove of performing the intended behavior. Contradictory to previous findings on the influence of parental support and parental barriers (Kwan, 2005; Lent et al., 1994; Sandberg & Markussen, 2009; Whiston & Keller, 2004; Wong & Liu, 2010), these variables were not significant predictors of choices of foundation classes in hospitality and tourism. This finding might be understood in the light of Hardin et al.'s (2001) observations of parental influence on career choices in collective and individualistic cultures. A collectivistic culture is characterized more by interdependence; thus, parents are likely to have a greater effect on the young person's career choice compared to an individualistic culture that emphasizes autonomy and individualism. Norwegian culture may be seen as individualistic (Døvingen, 2007; Gullestad, 1996; Hegna & Smette, 2016), which may explain why this variable did not emerge as a predictor despite the young age and the early stage in the educational pathway of these pupils. This finding is also in line with the recent study of Hegna and Smette (2016) who found that only one in five students of majority background in Norway felt that their parents had a strong influence on their educational choice, while half of minority students admitted such parental influence. Influence from friends, however, predicted pupils' intentions to complete the certificate of apprenticeship, yet negatively.

*Personally knowing people working in the industry* predicted both the choice of foundation classes and the intention to complete the certificate of apprenticeship only for the 2011 sample, underlining the effect of informational background factors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). A similar result was observed for apprentices in the same industry



(Dagsland et al., 2011), and in a Norwegian study on pupils' selection of academic foundation classes in science (Sjaastad, 2012). In the 2011 sample, this variable had a stronger predictive value compared to one's own experiences with the industry, emphasizing the importance of knowing people with work experiences within the field. The results might be related to changes in the curriculum for the pupils. In 1997, a mandatory week requiring all pupils to undergo workplace practice during the last years of comprehensive school was changed into being optional. The pupils who wanted to undergo workplace practice thus had to find the connections and make agreements with the workplace themselves. This was most likely facilitated by the established networks between schools and workplaces. As time passed, these networks might have gradually disappeared.

*Gender*, as a predictor, was significant only for the 2002 sample and for the choice of foundation classes within hospitality and tourism. This may imply a move toward a less gender-segregated workforce in the hospitality industry in the future and/or reflect a growing trend toward more girls choosing higher-level education rather than the vocational training options.

*The great decline* of interest in choosing vocational foundation classes in hospitality and tourism from 2002 to 2011 is a dramatic change, which may constitute a challenge for the industry and actually threaten the industry's sustainability. Moreover, the access to young workforce is reduced in this period due to smaller cohorts born between 1970 and 2000, resulting in a general shortage of young workforce. This might maintain the present praxis within the industry, relying on part-time and temporary workforce comprising a great number of young people, usually during their education and working part-time. This praxis brings about a constant wear and tear and constant training of new people, probably lowering the service quality. To counteract the effect of these changes, the industry may establish corporate internal educational and training programs.

The observed decline in the choice the foundation classes may contribute to the continued increase in shortage of skilled workers in the hospitality and tourism industries, as these classes are the main gateway to apprenticeships in several of the main jobs in the hospitality and tourism industries. Pupils may, however, postpone their final choice and choose a bachelor and master level education within this field after high school. Moreover, some may find jobs in these industries as unskilled workers.

A small decline was observed in the percentage of pupils who intended to obtain the certificate of apprenticeship between 2002 and 2011. Whether their intentions will result in the completion of the education and employment in the industry depends on many factors, hereunder the experiences they will obtain in the future education program. Behavioral intention are likely to lead to the actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991, 2005; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010), but 'literal inconsistencies', referring to gaps between the intention and the resulting behavior, may occur. Intentions can change over time, and unforeseen events, new information, developmental changes in pupils' lives as well as disruption or change in the positive beliefs about work in the industry may influence and change their plans and intentions and result in noncompletion of school or dropout (Frøseth et al., 2010; Høst et al., 2013).

## Strengths and limitations

This study was based on the data collected in 2002 and 2011 from a large representative sample of Norwegian 15 and 16 years old students, hence making comparisons over



time possible, and provides data on a group of potential future workers in the industry rarely researched before. However, the results of the multiple logistic regression analyses revealed low amount of explained variance, which might indicate that the pupils are not fully able to answer questions connected to influential factors and future career at this age or that the choice of such classes are somewhat arbitrary (Birkemo, 2007). This was further indicated by change in intentions to complete the certificate at the time for attending the apprenticeship, as shown by Høst et al. (2013). Consequently, their answers to the different questions might be somewhat inaccurate. Furthermore, as different countries have different educational systems, generalization may be more or less feasible. Yet, our findings should be of interest to those countries where these choices are made at such an early age or at an even earlier age.

## Conclusions and implications

The Norwegian hospitality industry seems to face important challenges in attracting future workers, as indicated by a strong decline in the choices of vocational foundation classes within hospitality and tourism between 2002 and 2011. Yet, the pupils' beliefs about work in the industry are stable over the years and quite positive overall. The industry is believed to offer 'sound work' that is future oriented, interesting, and exciting, as well as possibilities for future personal development. Such beliefs along with pupils' experiences from encounters with these industries are important predictors of choosing the relevant vocational foundation classes and intentions to obtain the certificate of apprenticeship. Moreover, personally knowing people who work in the industry further affects these variables, at least in later years, just as friends do.

Yet, more research should be conducted to investigate this falling trend of interest in the years to come. The industry should strive to appear more attractive as a workplace to pupils choosing their future careers and perhaps change or improve its recruitment policies. By inviting the pupils to visit local businesses and meet people who work there, providing relevant information about different work positions, situations, and possible vocational careers, and giving opportunities for shorter or longer periods of internship, one should be able to gain some positive experiences with the industry. This could also strengthen the beliefs about the industries as 'sound' workplaces and the positive intentions, increasing the number of pupils who would express a desire to pursue a future career within the industry. A closer contact between school and industry, including more exchange of information about the work and career possibilities in the industry and the content of the different vocational classes, will further ensure that both parties obtain relevant knowledge. Considering the shortage of skilled workforce in the industry, it would be advantageous to demonstrate the importance of education in their recruitment policies and prioritize applicants with a certificate of apprenticeship when appointing employees.

In conclusion, many questions remain about the reasons for the observed strong decline of interest in choosing an educational pathway in the hospitality industry, and additional research is needed on the predictors of interests in a future career in this industry. Apart from the pupils' family background (Sandberg & Markussen, 2009), previous research has given few indications of the predictors of these specific choices.



Interestingly, we did not find parents to be important influencers in the present study. Hence, there may be a need for a qualitative approach to increase our understanding of the processes leading to these choices.

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