

Report of Study Tour Abroad (Category of Study Tour Abroad: Inspection)

Presenting Thesis Framework at ICRTTH 2025 Conference

Service Organization: ICRTTH

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Countries Dispatched to: Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This report overviews my participation in the ICRTTH 2025 conference at Cavite, Philippines. Two primary purposes behind my conference participation are introduced in this report. A brief process progression before and during the conference is then presented. Finally, an experience and suggestions section concludes the report. The first half of the section talks about beneficial activities I had at the conference. The section's second half then features a significant suggestion relating to university reimbursement policy; *I strongly request that this suggestion be acknowledged, reviewed, and considered.*

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PURPOSE OF CONFERENCE

There were two primary purposes for my conference attendance. I needed to firstly attend this conference in order to fulfill requirements for my master's program, the International Master's Program of Tourism and Hospitality. The program has a system that assigns varying points amounts to given academic events, with students requiring 6 points in the system to graduate. Attending and presenting at the ICRTTH conference provided me therefore provided the last 4 points I needed to fulfill this program requisite. Secondly, I presented at this conference to gather feedback on my initial thesis structuring and formatting. I wanted to hear from conference attendees and see what the weakest points of my thesis plans were, so I would know where my thesis needed to be most fortified over the coming summer.

PROCESS OF CONFERENCE

My conference experience began on the morning of June 15, 2025, when I and my fellow conference attendees living in the NKUHT dorms had to request special permission to leave the dorm 10 minutes early. This was necessary because of the limited reimbursement-eligible flights we were able to purchase, since only 1 reimbursement-eligible airline was flying to Manila and this particular airline only offered 1 flight to the city on the day we needed to leave. After being let out of the dorms by a student dormitory manager, my fellow attendees and I used our 10-minute gap to arrange an Uber to the airport. We checked in to the airport and flew to Manila without any issues. The next day, we attended the conference's opening keynote speakers and speaker presentations. The second day saw us attend additional speaker presentations in the morning, with further industry professionals presenting in the afternoon. My final conference involvement was the networking dinner on the conference's second day; I needed to return to

Kaohsiung to prepare for an upcoming flight to my home country, and to complete reimbursement paperwork prior to that flight.

EXPERIENCE AND SUGGESTION

I found my ICRTTH experience to be quite enlightening and helpful. Although I got minimal audience feedback after my own presentation, listening to fellow attendees' presentations helped me realize just how little (if any) practice-based connections I had in my initial thesis plan. I was able to see how other presenters visualized their theoretical applications with respect to real-world problems in the tourism and hospitality industries, and those visualizations helped me identify means by which I could connect theory to industry practices and outreach in my future research efforts. I also connected with several academic and industry figures across tourism and hospitality focuses while at ICRTTH, such as the editor-in-chief of a prominent tourism journal who knew the thesis advisor I had at my previous university (considering I am from Mississippi, a US state that many people are usually unfamiliar with, I was surprised by the occurrence of this meeting). Finally, I enjoyed being able to support my fellow classmates who were presenting at ICRTTH. We had four students win awards at the conference; I felt very happy to see their efforts being recognized and to see their contributions to the tourism field.

Switching to suggestions now, I would like to request that NKUHT adjust their flight reimbursement policies for future students looking to be reimbursed. As mentioned previously, we were highly restricted in terms of reimbursement-eligible flights. The flights we could choose were also more than double the price of other budget competitors, meaning that our flight restrictions actively cost the university more than double the price it could have paid out for reimbursement. I also think that a lack of reimbursement support for housing when students are

specifically representing and benefitting the university's image (especially when considering that some of my classmates won awards, which actively raised perceptions of NKUHT) comes off as being exploitative, with the university seeming to profit at the expense of its students. I would suggest that the reimbursement policy be overhauled, with more options for flight selections and at least some level of support for accommodation being provided. The current reimbursement policies feel as if the university is actively making reimbursement difficult to discourage students from seeking reimbursement funding. For international students – especially those like myself who already spend significant amounts of money on flights in order to study at NKUHT, and/or are ineligible for most forms of financial support available to other students due to our passports – this leaves a very poor taste in our mouths, and it does not feel like the university supports us.