

## **Truths and Myths: Perceptions of Undergraduates about Specialization Areas in the Faculty of Management, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka**

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It is widely recognized that many secondary school students enter university without a clear understanding of specialization areas due to limited public exposure and awareness. As per many studies, specialization choices are highly influenced by perceptions of diverse parties about each specialization area. Perception is the process by which people select, organize, and interpret information to form a meaningful picture of the world. Hence, it is very important to explore and identify the perceptions of students timely to properly position and publicize the real nature of the specialization areas. Accordingly, this study (under qualitative interpretive methodology, specifically case study strategy) was contextually undertaken in the Faculty of Management, University of Peradeniya, with two objectives: to uncover students' perceptions of specialization areas and to address the existence of truths and myths concerning them. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 24 students in the second and third years from different ethnicities and genders, where the data were analyzed using content analysis investigating two different paradigms, namely the perception on the own-specialization areas and the perception on the other-specialization areas. Study found that the students are holding several perceptions relating to each specialization from several paradigms like easiness level (58%), theoretical and calculation-based comparison (83%), job prospects (66.7%), social recognition and popularity (25%), stress level (33.3%), work-life balance (25%), fit with personal characteristics (58%), gender roles (25%), religious and ethical considerations (16.7%), lecturers involved (33.3%), and institutional practices (41.6%). Furthermore, the study recognizes the potential presence of false beliefs within certain perceptions (myths), and it suggests further research to debunk the myths. This study also underscores the need for universities to proactively address these perceptions, ultimately dispelling myths and fostering informed decisions. Continual investigation into evolving perceptions must be also undertaken to enhance the understanding and positioning of each specialization.

**Keywords:** Choice of specialization, Choice of career, Management undergraduates, University of Peradeniya, Perceptions

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