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Abstract

A number of researches investigating on tourism students' career choices and course of study selection have been widely documented. However, few studies have been carried out focusing on the process and context in which the Kenyan students make decisions about their careers. The study sought to establish the types of tourism careers sectors preferred by most tourism students, especially for formal employment, informal employment and entrepreneurship. Cognitive Motivational Theory and Attribution Theory which identifies the impact of internal and external factors affecting student career decisions were adopted. This was a descriptive and comparative study that utilized qualitative and quantitative research methodology. From the total population of 660 persons, 192 student respondents were chosen for the study using stratified simple random sampling based on their year of study, and 5 lecturers with over five years experience in teaching were chosen purposively from Moi University (MU) and Kenya Utalii College (KUC). Questionnaires were administered to tourism students and semi-structured interviews to tourism lecturers. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The results revealed that a large proportion of students at the diploma level opt to pursue entrepreneurship as compared to the undergraduates who opt for formal employment. This study can be academic and also relevant for policy making in developing countries through unmasking the complexities in designing tourism policies within different socio-economic settings. This research adds to the existing literature, moreso, on sustainability-driven employment and entrepreneurship as perceived by tourism students and developers on their roadmap to achieving Kenya's Vision 2030.

Key words: *Career choice, Challenge, Motivation, Perception, Personality*

Introduction

Perception refers to awareness, comprehension or understanding of something (Janssen & Wagner, 2013). In this study, it refers to the process by which students select, organize, and interpret information to create a

meaningful picture of their career choices. Besides, career choice refers to the broad opportunities that exist for lifelong vocations as set out in a framework of strategies moving towards personal goals (Murray & Minor, 2013). It also refers to

the fields of vocational, academic, and sociological endeavors explored for the purpose of satisfying personal, economic, and intellectual goals. It may be considered to pertain to remunerative and non-remunerative work and also interest to pursue formal education.

A strong, steady economy has fuelled the growth of the hospitality and tourism industry in Kenya. According to a report by Ambetsa (2012), tourism earnings, which are a key source of foreign exchange earnings, rose by 32.8 percent from KSh 73.7 billion in 2010 to KSh 97.9 billion in 2011. In total, 74.2 thousand new jobs were created in the modern sector in 2011 compared to 61.3 thousand in 2010, contributing 14.3 per cent of total jobs created. Majority of the jobs created were in energy, tourism, transport, communication and financial services. Consequently, the demand for hospitality and tourism professionals has augmented rapidly. In response to this escalating demand, many Kenyan universities and middle level colleges are striving to strengthen and expand their hospitality and tourism curricula.

The significance of tourism in Kenya calls for attention to tourism education in general and training in particular (Tubey, 2009). Indeed, for developing a practical curriculum, a good understanding of why students desire a career in the tourism industry becomes critical. This led to the establishment of Kenya Utalii College (KUC) in 1973, which provides from among other courses, a three-year diploma course in tourism management, including a four-year undergraduate and two year master's degree course offered in collaboration with the University of Nairobi. Moi University (MU) Department of Tourism Management was founded in 1991 and offers a two-year diploma, four year undergraduate, two-year master's and three year doctor of philosophy degree course in tourism management.

Three decades of rapid expansion of tourism courses has resulted in lack of uniformity and standardization of these courses (Airey & Johnson, 1999), which has contributed to confusion among employers about what is on offer (Evans, 2003). The common belief that undergraduate students are perceived as 'managers' whereas the diploma students are perceived as 'operative' personnel has increased the obstacles facing tourism graduates in the labour market. As a result, graduate follow up studies have revealed a substantial proportion of the new entrants to the labour market feel over qualified and under-rewarded for the jobs they are employed for.

Chellen and Nunkoo (2010) point out that the tourism industry can be divided into five career areas: accommodation, food and beverage services, recreation and entertainment, transportation and travel services. The careers range from operational positions to management and executive-level responsibilities. When graduates at both undergraduate and diploma level cannot secure a traditional graduate formal employment jobs, they are forced to accept jobs that do not offer the fast-track opportunities of a management-training scheme, or opt to pursue informal employment and entrepreneurship. Similarly, Nwachuku (2007) indicates that the decision making process concerning one's career is not so much a function of the information amassed to the individual, but more the process of maturity and planning. For some, it takes years of experience and exposure to different careers to find the best fit.

This study identifies two motivational theories; attribution theory and cognitive evaluation theory. Cognitive Evaluation Theory advanced by (Deci, 1975) suggests that there are actually two motivation systems: intrinsic and extrinsic. Common external motivations are rewards like good grades, pay, promotion, feedback, coercion and

working conditions (Jiang, Klein, & Balloun, 2000). Sharma (2007) found out that parents have significant influence on student's career choice than students' counselors, teachers, friends and other relatives. The belief is that the presence of powerful external motivators can actually reduce a person's internal motivation, particularly if the external motivators are perceived by the person to be controlled by people. The study analyzed three extrinsic motivators, which included; family members, social groups, and education and learning. Extrinsic motivators refer to things that come from a person's environment or can be controlled by others.

Salami (2002) points out that internal motivation refers to motivation that is driven by an interest or enjoyment in the task itself, and exists within the individual rather than relying on any external pressure. Sharma (2007) stated that it is important for students to have a good understanding of themselves, their personality, if they are to make intelligent career plans. This study was carried out on three intrinsic motivators, which included; challenge, personality and recognition. It refers to the internal interest of the individual tourism student to work that can be controlled by self. Alternatively, Attribution theory (Weiner, 2005) incorporates behavior modification in the sense that it emphasizes the idea that learners are strongly motivated by the pleasant outcome of being able to feel good about themselves. Through the emphasis that learners' current self-perceptions will strongly influence the ways in which they will interpret the success or failure of their current efforts, it reflects hence their future tendency to perform these same behaviors.

Recent studies show that one in three college graduates could not find employment requiring a college degree (Toth, 2008). Consequently, many graduates end up being employed outside the tourism industry or venture into

entrepreneurship. According to Mayo (2003), individual's career choice development is influenced by their work value. Despite the above trend, little has been done to explore the differences and similarities in perceptions and expectations of students at various levels of learning towards career choice in the tourism industry in Kenya. This study can be academic and relevant for policy making in developing countries through unmasking the complexities in designing tourism policies within different socio-economic settings. Such knowledge is also important in order to build a good image of the country and is integral as tourism is among the six key sectors described and given priority in acting as key growth drivers in the journey to Kenya's Vision 2030.

The study objectives included to:

1. Establish the types of tourism careers sectors preferred by most tourism students and,
2. Determine career preference of tourism students for formal employment, informal employment and entrepreneurship.

The study hypothesized that there was no statistical significant relationship between motivations and the choice of tourism career among tourism students.

Methodology

This study utilized the descriptive and comparative research design in order to provide insights and familiarity into areas requiring further investigation. Kenya Utalii College and Moi University were selected using judgmental sampling due to familiarity and prior knowledge by the researchers about the characteristics of the institutions to offer tourism courses. Kaufman & Kaufman, (2005) noted that the chance that a particular sampling unit

was selected depends on the judgment of the researcher.

Kathuri and Pals (1993) noted that larger sample sizes were necessary when groups were to be broken into subgroups. In the present day, a 30% sample size of the respondents is chosen from each of the strata (Tubey, 2009). From a total of 660 persons, the survey targeted the 192 student respondents using stratified random sampling and 5 lecturers within the tourism departments. 123 student respondents were from Moi University while 79 were from Kenya Utalii College. Class representatives were used in identifying the student respondents and comprised of three strata for Kenya Utalii College diploma students and four strata for Moi University Department of Tourism Management undergraduate students. Three lecturers from Moi University Department of Tourism Management and two lecturers from Kenya Utalii College were selected purposively and interviewed for further insights into the students' perceptions towards careers in tourism industry.

The study was done between May and December 2011 using both primary and secondary techniques of data collection. Primary data collection involved use of student questionnaires and lecturers interview schedules. Questionnaires containing closed questions about the demographic situation of students and a multi item perception scale developed and tested by (Kinanee, 2009) were used to facilitate data collection. It was composed of three sections. The first section was comprised of 3 questions designed to elicit the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

The second section contained the influences for career choice and the third section contained a set of 8 statements about motivations for career choice. Open-ended response questions were

also included to allow for self-expression among respondents.

The items in the perceptions scale was Likert-type with five categories (5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3= Neutral, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree). The neutral option was added to prevent forced choices and was not be evaluated during the statistical analyses.

Descriptive analysis was used for demographic characteristics of the respondents and incorporated the use of frequency and percentage distribution tables, and measures of central tendency. Inferential data analyses were used to investigate the motivational reasons and influences of tourism students for career choices in tourism industry. Means were calculated for the external and internal motivations from the likert scale. Content analysis was undertaken for qualitative data from questionnaire open-ended questions and lecturer interview schedules, thus enabling the researcher to quantify the answers.

To test the significant relationships between the career choice and motivation variables, a linear regression analysis was performed on the set of career choice and external and internal motivation variables. A variation was created so that the correlation between the two variables was maximized at 0.05 (95%) significance level.

Validity was enhanced through a pilot study involving questionnaire administration to 8 Moi University and 8 Kenya Utalii College students pursuing tourism management course. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) alluded that pilot testing of questionnaire assists in identifying deviance, finding out how long the questionnaire takes to complete, clarity of the instruction, questions that are unclear and attractive.

Cronbach's reliability coefficients were then calculated to maximize internal consistency among the WVI attributes. A reliability coefficient of 0.7 or higher is

considered acceptable in most social science research situations (UCLA, 2007), where, $\alpha > 0.9$ is Excellent, $\alpha > 0.8$ is Good, $\alpha > 0.7$ is Acceptable, $\alpha > 0.6$ is Questionable, $\alpha > 0.5$ is Poor, and $\alpha < 0.5$ is Unacceptable (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). Alpha reliabilities were 0.763 for demographic characteristics, 0.712 for the career influences and 0.701 for motivations for career choices, meaning that they were all within the acceptable range for social science research.

It was assumed that the student respondents did not unduly influence the opinions of their colleagues during the survey. Furthermore, it was assumed that the interviewed lecturers had adequate time to provide all the required information comprehensively.

Results and Discussions

Students' Demographic Details

The diploma students of Kenya Utalii College (KUC) and undergraduate students of Moi University (MU) formed the research respondents. The tourism students were represented by a majority of the female gender: 73.47% from KUC and 51.05% from MU (see table 1). The male gender respondents were represented by 49.95% for undergraduate and 26.53% for diploma. On the education level, the diploma respondents comprised of 26.5%, 38.8% and 34.7% at the first, second and third year diploma programmes respectively. Undergraduate respondents comprised of 14.3%, 30.8%, 29.0% and 26.2% at the first, second, third and fourth year of undergraduate study respectively. The sample was proportionate of the student enrolments per year of study.

Table 1: Tourism Students' Demographic Details

Item	Response	Percentage	
		MU	KUC
Gender	Male	49.95%	26.53%
	Female	51.05%	73.47%
Education level	1st year	14.3%	26.5%
	2nd year	30.8%	38.8%
	3rd year	29.0%	34.7%
	4th year	26.2%	0

Tourism Sector Career Preference by Tourism Students

Tourism students were asked to identify the tourism career sector they had worked in before graduation and interested to work in after graduation (see table 2). Majority of the undergraduate respondents (41.96%) had work experience in a hotel and would mostly want to work in an airline company (39.16%) after graduation, whereas, the diploma respondents (8.16%) had work experience in a tours and travel sector and would want to pursue a tourism career in an airline company (46.94%) after graduation. The other career sectors from which the students had work experience included communication, and banking and financial institutions.

Table 2: Preference Sector For A Tourism Career

Sector	Before graduation		After graduation	
	MU	KUC	MU	KUC
Hotel	41.96	0	16.08	30.61
TA/TO	20.98	8.16	34.97	38.78
Airline company	20.98	6.12	39.16	46.94
Restaurant /bar	26.57	6.12	23.08	16.33
Training institution	10.49	4.08	20.98	26.53
NGOs	12.59	0	13.29	22.45
Other	0.7	6.12	2.8	8.16

Preparedness and preferences of Tourism Students towards Tourism Careers

The preparedness of the tourism students for a tourism career was determined by the informed choice of tourism career at admission, practical work experience and intend to pursue tourism career after graduation (see table 3). Majority of the student respondents at both undergraduate (62.24%) and diploma (91.84%) chose the tourism career willingly and informed. Majority of the undergraduate respondents (73.43%) and less of the diploma respondents (14.29%) had had work experiences in the tourism industry. A large proportion of the undergraduate respondents (80.42%) and diploma respondents (91.84%) affirmed that they would work

within the tourism industry after their graduation. The lecturers commented that majority of the students were eager to start their careers and most of them were willing to take up tourism jobs after graduation for personal reasons including economic independence, capital collection, broaden knowledge and to relieve parents' burden.

The tourism students have options of pursuing different professions in tourism and related sectors through formal employment, informal employment, and entrepreneurship among others (see table 3). A large proportion of the undergraduate respondents would opt for formal employment (55.24%), informal employment (12.59%), and entrepreneurship (28.67%) among others (3.50%). On the other hand, the diploma respondents would opt for formal employment (46.94%), informal employment (10.20%) and entrepreneurship (38.78%) among others (4.08%). Whereas those who would be informally employed would want to work with the local and international Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other artistic activities, the findings reveal that more diploma students are interested in entrepreneurship than the undergraduates.

The lecturers commented on other career opportunities for tourism students such as furthering their education either for a bachelor's or master's degree, go for formal employment and later change to entrepreneurship or combine them together to earn additional income.

Table 3: Preparedness and Preferences of Tourism Students

	Moi University		Kenya Utalii College	
	N	Mean	N	Mean
External motivation factors				
Family members	143	2.8671	49	3.551
Social groups	143	2.5524	49	2.4286
Education level	143	3.9021	49	3.0816
Other	143	2.9091	49	2.6939
Internal motivation factors				
Challenge	143	4.4545	49	4.102
Personality	143	3.4859	49	4.6327
Recognition	143	2.7483	49	3.3878
Other	143	3.9371	49	4.2653

Motivation for Career Choice

The means were calculated for career motivation factors (see table 4). The leading external motivation factor for career choice among undergraduate respondents was education level (3.902), whereas, the diploma respondents highly regarded family members as the leading career motivational influence (3.551). Besides, the undergraduate respondents sought for challenge (4.6327) in their career choices, while their diploma counterparts considered personality (4.6327) as their strongest career influence. The lecturers identified some motivations for tourism students' choice of tourism career. These included the perceived nature of an industry as a key factor that determines whether an industry is attractive or not and the students' awareness of the main features of tourism jobs which may force them to leave or stay in the industry. After practical training, students obtained skills

and a better understanding of the tourism industry.

Table 4: Means for External and Internal Motivation for Career Choice

Item	Response	Percentage	
		MU	KUC
Informed choice of tourism career at admission	Yes	62.24%	91.84%
	No	27.97%	8.16%
	Undecided	9.79%	0.00%
Practical work experience	Yes	73.43%	14.29%
	No	26.57%	85.71%
Intent to pursue tourism career after graduation	Yes	80.42%	91.84%
	No	6.29%	0%
	Undecided	13.29%	8.16%
Preferences	Formal employment	55.24%	46.94%
	Informal employment	12.59%	10.20%
	Entrepreneurship	28.67%	38.78%
	Others	3.50%	4.08%

The research hypothesis postulated that there is no statistical significant relationship between motivations and the student career influences in the tourism industry. Separate means were calculated for external motivations and internal motivations and a regression was carried out against the tourism career choice. Table 5 indicates the P-value, the R squared values, and Regression Coefficient for Career Motivations and R Squared values of both external and internal motivations. The P values for both internal and external motivations were 0.000 (less than 0.05 level of significance). There was a significant statistical relationship between external

and internal motivations and the student career choices in the tourism industry. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there was no statistical significant relationship between motivations and the student career choices in the tourism industry is rejected. The R squared coefficient was 0.269 to mean that external motivations explained 26.9% of the tourism career choices among tourism students. On the other hand, the R squared coefficient for internal motivations was 0.073 signifying that internal motivations explained 7.3%

of the tourism career choices among tourism students. In terms of variance test, $F=70.024$ (external motivations) and $F=14.933$ (internal motivations), when $P=0.000$, and the difference is significant. Therefore, the regression equation is tenable in terms of statistics the regression equation about tourism students perceptions can be achieved (**Y (Tourism Career Choice) = 2.933 + 0.136X₁ + 0.076X₂ + 0.190**).

Table 5: Regression of Motivations means with Tourism Career Choice

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	R	R Square	B	F	Sig.
1 (External)	19.659	1	19.659	0.519 ^a	0.269	0.136	70.024	0.000 ^a
2 (Internal)	3.423	1	3.423	0.270 ^a	0.073	0.076	14.933	0.000 ^a
Constant						2.933		

a. Predictors: (Constant), External Motivations and Internal Motivations

b. Dependent Variable: Tourism Career Choice

Summary

Öztin and Akis (2007) indicated that the tourism students' preferences for working in specific tourism sectors after graduation were similar to their choices as trainees. They indicated that students mostly preferred the accommodation sector, followed by travel agencies/tour operators, and finally food and beverage.

In this study, however, the students' career experiences and preferences after graduation were different and showed attraction to well paying jobs. The undergraduate students would mostly want to work in an airline company yet majority of them had work experience in a hotel, whereas, majority of the diploma students had work experiences in a tour operator or travel agency yet most of them would like to work in an airline company. The other professions that are of interest to the tourism students would include communication, cargo transportation, teaching, military and security service, and banking and finance service.

In order to meet the needs of the tourism human resource market, colleges and universities should increase students' practical training in order to give them more time to experience tourism jobs (Ge & Wu, 2005). In this study, majority of the undergraduate students have been exposed more to the tourism industry as compared to students in the diploma through attachments, voluntary service, internships, apprenticeship and employments.

Souitaris et al. (2007) commented that a career in entrepreneurship offers significant opportunities for individuals to achieve financial independence and benefit the economy by contributing to job creation, innovation, and economic growth. The tourism students have options of pursuing different professions in tourism through formal employment, informal employment, and entrepreneurship. In this study, a large proportion of students at the diploma

would opt to pursue entrepreneurship as compared to the undergraduate students. Equivalent studies on the perception of tourism students towards formal employment, informal employment, and entrepreneurship are worthy of further investigation.

Öztin and Akis (2007) in their study indicated that the willingness of tourism students to study tourism was an important factor influencing perceptions in a positive way. In this study, the leading external factor for career choice among undergraduate and diploma students were education level, and family members respectively. Besides, the highly regarded internal motivation factor for undergraduate and diploma students were challenge, and personality respectively.

The null hypothesis indicating that there was no relationship between motivations and the choice of the tourism career was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted that indeed there is a relationship between motivations and tourism career choices. The study showed a positive relationship between external and internal motivation factors with the choice of the tourism career and is supported by the writings of Deci (1975) and Weiner's (2005) theories that the cause of the success or failure of an individual may be internal or external.

Conclusion

The findings revealed that external motivation factors played more important roles than the internal ones. Although most tourism students would not change their tourism industry careers, other service sectors remain attractive and tourism students may explore more opportunities for formal or informal employment and entrepreneurship. A large proportion of students at the diploma would opt to pursue entrepreneurship as compared to the undergraduates. This study can be academic and also relevant for policy

making, more so, on sustainability-driven employment and entrepreneurship as perceived by tourism students and developers on their roadmap to achieving Kenya's Vision 2030.

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