

Influence of Age and Education Level on the Choice of Higher Tourism Education at Moi University, Kenya

Judy Jepchirchir Rop¹ Patrick Kwoba Olubulyera²

1. School of Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management, Moi University, P.O. Box 3900-30100, Eldoret, Kenya.

2. School of Business and Human Resource Development, Rongo University College, P.O. Box 103-40404, Rongo, Kenya.

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to determine how age and education level influenced the choice of higher education in tourism by students of Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya. The objectives were: i) To determine how age affects the choice of higher education in tourism by students of Moi University and ii) to establish how education level affects the choice of higher education in tourism by students. Stratified sampling technique was used to sample 142 respondents for the study who were the students. Descriptive statistic was used to address the research objectives. From the study results on age, a majority of the respondents (95.1%) were of age bracket 18-25 years and this varied between the respondents ($\chi^2=243.817$, $df=2$, $p<0.001$). On education level, 73.2% of the respondents had bachelors level of education and this varied between the respondents ($\chi^2=111.268$, $df=2$, $p<0.001$). On choosing higher tourism education, 84.5% of the respondents said that they choose higher tourism education, while 15.5% would not ($\chi^2=67.634$, $df=1$, $p<0.001$). On whether gender influenced the choice of education, 51.4% said it did not ($\chi^2=113$, $d=1$, $p<0.737$). 59.2% of the respondents mentioned that age influenced the choice of education and this varied between the respondents ($\chi^2=4.761$, $d=1$, $p<0.029$). On whether education level influenced the choice of tourism education, 83.8% of the respondents mentioned that education level influenced the choice of tourism education and this varied between the respondents ($\chi^2=64.901$, $d=1$, $p<0.001$). The first hypothesis that stated that 'Age of the students does not influence the choice of higher tourism education' was accepted ($F=0.045$, $p<0.832$). The second hypothesis that stated that 'Education level of the students does not influence the choice of higher tourism education' was accepted ($F=0.649$, $p<0.007$).

Keywords: Age, education level, tourism education, choice.

Introduction

Current studies have shown beyond any reasonable doubt that tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in not only developed countries, but also the developing ones (Asmelash, 2015; Leslie, 2015; Xie, 2015). The robust growth and development of tourism has been propelled by the increase in discretionary income and leisure time (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012; Scheyvens, 2015; Weiler & Black, 2015). Furthermore, with rising disposal incomes and economic growth, tourists now demand better experiences, faster service, social responsibility, greater satisfaction and multiple choices (Yeoman, 2008; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012; Weiler & Black, 2015). Therefore, there is an urgent need for professional and proficient tourism education in order to ensure that these tourists are served in a better manner.

Tourism education is an ancient phenomenon (Airey, Dredge, & Gross, 2015). Medlik clarifies that some early tourism programs have existed, for instance at the University of Rome in 1925, the University of Vienna in 1936, and at the universities of St Gallen and Berne in Switzerland from 1941 (Medlik, 1965; Airey, Dredge, & Gross, 2015). Although, Airey reiterated that the study of tourism as distinct and may have commenced 40 years ago (Tribe, 2005). In the 1980s, the upsurge of tourism as an international economic activity triggered calls from industry to possess proficient professionals (Fidgeon, 2010; Airey, Dredge, & Gross, 2015).

Tourism and hospitality university degree programs across the globe were born from utilitarian and pragmatic concerns that stressed a need to address gaps in workforce skills and opportunities for economic growth and development (Airey, Dredge, & Gross, 2015). This study was conducted at Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya. The research two objectives were (i) To determine whether age influences the choice of higher education and (ii) To establish whether education level influences the choice of higher education. The study sought to test the following research hypotheses were:

H₀₁: Age of the students does not influence the choice of higher tourism education.

H₀₂: Education level of the students does not influence the choice of higher tourism education.

Literature review

The discipline of tourism education is of increasing importance that has attracted many researches (Tribe, 2005; Heitmann, Robinson, & Povey, 2011). Back in 1981, Ritchie edited a special issue of Annals of Tourism

Research that was entirely devoted to tourism education (Ritchie, Carr, & Cooper, 2003; Tribe, 2005). Consequently, Jafari and Ritchie (1981) indicated some crucial issues, where they deliberated on the pertinent issue of tourism knowledge and made a provision of a framework for understanding this. They clarified on the necessity to cultivate a body of knowledge in tourism and made some important observations about the perceived weaknesses in tourism education (Tribe, 2005).

Tourism education should not only begin at the college and university level but should start all the way from high school and it would have an added advantage of increasing general public awareness, especially of its benefits and impacts and the role of the host community in the inbound tourism systems (Mayaka, 2005). This would also increase the prospects of students developing early interest in tourism as a field of study (Airey, Dredge, & Gross, 2015). The end result may be the attraction of the best brains into this field of study and, therefore, the enhancement of research and scholarship in tourism and hospitality (Tribe, 2005).

The study was founded on the Social Learning Theory of Career Selection. This theory explains how educational preferences and skills are attained and how courses selections and fields of work are made (Krumboltz, 1975). This theory is relevant to the study because the study focuses on two factors namely age and educational level as issues that can influence the students on their choice of higher tourism education.

Methodology

The study utilized explanatory research design which is applicable when the problem is known and descriptions of the problem are with the researcher, but the causes or reasons or the description of the described findings is yet to be known (Kothari, 2004; Sahu, 2013). In the research, 142 respondents were sampled using stratified random sampling, which is a sampling technique where the population is divided into homogeneous, mutually exclusive groups called 'strata' and independent samples are then selected from each stratum (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008; Passer, 2014).

Moreover, the data was collected using questionnaires which are set of questions to be asked from respondents, with instructions that are appropriate showing which questions are supposed to be asked, and in what order (Sreejesh, Mohapatra, & Anusree, 2014). The study used descriptive statistics, which was intended to illuminate the data, so that their core characteristic was revealed (Bowers, 2008). F-test was used to test the hypothesis and is usually used to check if the two samples used in the study were from the same population that is normal from two populations that are normal with equal variances or with variance that are equal (Kothari, 2004; Field, 2009).

Data analysis

The study had an analysis of the various variables in the study namely age, educational level, choosing higher tourism education. The research also assessed on whether age and educational level influencing the choice of higher tourism education, where frequencies, percentages and descriptive statistics were used.

Table 1: Age, Educational level and advancing higher education

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Descriptive statistics
Age			
18-25 years	135	95.1	$\chi^2 = 243.817$, df = 2, p<0.001 n = 142
26-30 years	6	4.2	
31-35 years	1	0.7	
Education level			
Diploma	34	23.9	$\chi^2 = 111.268$, df = 2, p<0.001 n = 142
Bachelors	104	73.2	
Masters	4	2.8	
Choosing higher tourism education			
Yes	120	84.5	$\chi^2 = 67.634$, df = 1, p<0.001 n = 142
No	22	15.5	
Age influencing choice of higher tourism education			
Yes	84	59.2	$\chi^2 = 4.761$, df = 1, p<0.029 n = 142
No	58	40.8	
Education level influencing choice of higher tourism education			
Yes	119	83.8	$\chi^2 = 64.901$, df = 1, p<0.001 n = 142
No	23	16.2	

As shown in Table 1 concerning age, 18-25 years had 95.1%, 26-30 years had 4.2% and 31-35 years had 0.7% and this varied between the respondents ($\chi^2=243.817$, $df=2$, $p<0.001$). This meant that most respondents in the study were 18-25 years of age. On education level, those who had diplomas were 23.9%, those with bachelors were 73.2% and masters were 2.8% and this varied between the respondents ($\chi^2=111.268$, $df=2$, $p<0.001$). This meant that according to most respondents a majority of the respondent were in the bachelors level of education. This is because most students in Kenyan universities join the university at this level of education.

On choosing higher tourism education, 84.5% of the respondents said that they will advance their education, while 15.5% would not and this varied between the respondents ($\chi^2 = 67.634$, $df=1$, $p<0.001$). This meant that a majority of the respondents reiterated that they will advance their higher tourism education. On whether age influenced the choice of education, 59.2% of the respondents mentioned that it did and 40.8% said it did not and this varied between the respondents ($\chi^2 = 4.761$, $d = 1$, $p<0.029$). This meant that a slight majority of the respondents in the study were of the opinion that age influenced the choice of higher tourism education of respondents. On whether education level influenced the choice of tourism education, 83.8% of the respondents mentioned that it did and 16.2% said it did not and this varied between the respondents ($\chi^2 = 64.901$, $d = 1$, $p<0.001$). This meant that a majority of the respondents in the study were of the opinion that education level influenced the choice of higher tourism education of respondents.

Table 2 : Age of students by educational level cross-tabulation

		Education level			Total	
		Diploma	Bachelors	Masters		
Age of students	18-25 years	Count	32	102	1	135
		% within Age of students	23.7%	75.6%	0.7%	100.0%
	26-30 years	Count	1	2	3	6
		% within Age of students	16.7%	33.3%	50.0%	100.0%
	31-35 years	Count	1	0	0	1
		% within Age of students	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	34	104	4	142	
	% within Age of students	23.9%	73.2%	2.8%	100.0%	

Furthermore, the variables of gender and choice of higher education were cross tabulated (Table 3). Findings showed that from the male respondent, 80.3% of them intended to advance in tourism education, while 19.7% did not. Concerning the female respondents, 87.7% of them intended to advance in tourism education, while 12.3% did not. From this finding, slightly more female compared to male intended to choose higher tourism education (7.4%), while also slightly less female did not intended to choose higher tourism education compared to male (7.4%).

Table 5 : ANOVA^a of advancing higher tourism education and age of students

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	0.006	1	0.006	0.045	0.832 ^b
	Residual	18.586	140	0.133		
	Total	18.592	141			

a. Dependent Variable: Advancing higher education

b. Predictors: (Constant), Age of students

On the Analysis of Variance, the independent variable is age and the dependent variable is advancing higher tourism education as depicted in Table 4. F distribution test results were $F(1, 140) = 0.045$, $p < 0.832$. The calculated value of F is more than the table value of 2.21, and therefore the hypothesis (H_01) that stated that 'Age of the students does not influence the choice of higher tourism education' was accepted. This meant that age was a variable that did not affect or influence the choice of higher tourism education as such. From the findings, age did not significantly influence the choice of higher tourism education in the sense that most people have come to underscore the importance of education.

Table 5 : ANOVA^a of advancing higher tourism education and the level of education level

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	0.086	1	0.086	0.649	0.007 ^b
	Residual	18.506	140	0.132		
	Total	18.592	141			

a. Dependent Variable: Advancing higher education

b. Predictors: (Constant), Education level

Table 5 shows the Analysis of Variance between education level as the independent variable and advancing

higher tourism education as the dependent variable. F distribution test results were $F(1, 140) = 0.649$, $p < 0.007$. The calculated value of F is less than the table value of 2.21, and therefore the hypothesis (Ho2) that stated that 'Education level of the students does not influence the choice of higher tourism education' was accepted. The findings realized that the level of education did not influence the choice of higher tourism education.

Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, a majority of the respondents reiterated that they choose to advance their tourism education. Advancing education is essential in the wake of the need to be more professional in the tourism industry. In the wake of globalization and the need for employees who are qualified and proficient, the respondents saw the need to advance their tourism education. On educational level, a majority of the respondents were in the bachelors level of education. This is the level of education that most students join when they enroll in Kenyan universities. Moreover, respondents in the study were of the opinion that age influenced the choice of higher tourism education of respondents. Age is an important variable in the case of advancing in education the vibrancy towards education usually decreases as age increases. A majority of the respondents in the study were of the opinion that education level influenced the choice of higher tourism education of respondents. The level one is at that particular moment will determine whether he or she will advance in their tourism education. The study recommends measures that will be tailor-made to accommodate these variables of age and education level that have an effect on advancing in tourism education. For instance, the introduction of Open and Distance Learning (ODEL) which has helped and greatly assisted students who are advanced in age to attain higher levels of education.

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