

Factors motivating students to pursue hospitality education: A case of University of Eldoret, Kenya

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Abstract

This study sought to find out the factors that motivate students to pursue hospitality education. The objectives of the study were to establish intrinsic factors that motivate students to pursue Hospitality Education, to determine extrinsic factors that motivate students to pursue Hospitality Education and to establish strategies to motivate students to pursue hospitality education. Vroom expectancy theory (1964) and self-determination theory (1980s) by Ryan and Deci respectively were adopted. Study participants included 109 undergraduate students selected using the stratified random sampling technique. The survey research design was used and questionnaires were used to solicit this information. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Data was presented using tables and graphs. Results showed that students are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to pursue Hospitality Education and suggested several strategies that would motivate students to pursue hospitality education.

Keywords: hospitality education, motivation, factors that motivate, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation

1. Introduction

Education is part of life and learning continues all over the world. What differs is the degree of learning across the globe as influenced by different factors. Hospitality Education is one of the modern majors in institutions of higher learning. Many universities strive to increase the number of hospitality programs (Kim *et al*, 2008) ^[6, 8]. Most universities in the world that offer hospitality programs have an interest to increase the number of students both locally and globally (Barron, 2002b) ^[2]. The reason behind this is related to the rapid growth of the hospitality sector.

Education is very important for the hospitality sector because it provides support for undergraduates to be more knowledgeable and experienced in the field (Chao & Kang, 2005). According to Knutsen (2011) ^[7], one of the most important concepts in education is motivation. Motivation is a highly complex concept that is influenced by a number of factors summarized generally as intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic are internal factors in an individual while extrinsic are external factors. Motivation gives the drive to direct actions and behavior towards the achievement of a goal. Students' decision to pursue a particular career is motivated by various factors from within the person and from the outside.

The issue of students' motivation has been a subject in a number of investigations which attempt to develop an understanding of what motivates students. Pursuing a college degree is both time consuming and expensive but the long term benefits far exceed the initial investment cost (Dohm & Wyatt, 2002). Most decisions involve some analysis of cost and benefits that an individual weighs to decide if the benefit is worth.

According to Liu (2010) the factors that motivate students to pursue education can be divided into intrinsic, extrinsic and career related. Furthermore from the demand perspective there are many reasons that lead students to pursue hospitality education because they will be able to get more knowledge and increase their chance to get job opportunities by learning international languages (Kim *et al*,

(2008) ^[6, 8]. According to Stefanescu (2012) the type of motivation may influence how well a student learns and how well they perform. Existing literature suggest that intrinsic motivation is more desirable as it is more likely to lead to higher level of engagement and deeper approaches to learning (Stefanescu, 2012). Most students make a decision to attend university before selecting their educational preference, so those who are unsuccessful in gaining entry to programs such as Law might default to hospitality programs because of a less stringent entry criterion (Stefanescu, 2012).

According to McKay (2015) reports show educators can fortify the non-instructional side of students' success in three ways; encouraging positive behavior by offering reward and emphasizing the value of students work, improving their academic mindset and enhancing their sense of connectedness with their teacher and their peers. According to Kaylene and Williams (2011) at the very least educators will need to be compassionate and even supportive of personal life conditions of their students that surface in the process of education. As such support in personal life situation from educators to students will help to motivate students to pursue Hospitality Education.

The body of literature on motivation is vast and continually expanding, however there are very few studies related to motivation of students to pursue Hospitality Education (Kim *et al*, 2007) ^[5]. This study addressed this gap. In the first academic year a number of students may drop from studying Hospitality Education while some pursue Hospitality Education. Furthermore studying Hospitality Education is interesting to both local and international students, stakeholders, researchers and universities are asking questions relating to students motivation and the main reasons that drive them to pursue Hospitality Education (Kim *et al*, 2008) ^[6, 8]. Due to this situation this study was specifically designed to establish both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivate students to pursue Hospitality Education and strategies that can be used to motivate students to pursue Hospitality Education.

2. Materials and Methods

This study adopted a survey research design. The design was appropriate for the study because it enabled the researchers collect data from a large number of students regarding factors that influence their decisions to pursue Hospitality Education. The study was conducted at the University of Eldoret, in Eldoret Kenya, specifically at the main campus. The target population of this study was undergraduate hospitality students at university of Eldoret, Kenya. The accessible target population for this study was bachelors' students at university of Eldoret main campus. A total of 150 students from the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th year levels of study were used to select the study sample. From the accessible target population, the sample size was 109 bachelors' students obtained using the Yamane formula. Stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation of all subgroups in the population is reproduced. The dependent variable of the study was Hospitality Education. This was measured through the rating of ten developed elements of Hospitality Education by the respondents. A 3 point Likert scale was used to solicit this information. The independent variable was motivational factors which were intrinsic factors, extrinsic factors and strategies for motivation. A list of 10 intrinsic and 10 extrinsic motivation factors was developed. The respondents were therefore required to rate this factors against a 3 point Likert scale of (D) disagree, (N) neutral and (A) agree. Strategies for motivation were measured through determining the frequency and percentage of specific strategies suggested by the respondents in the questionnaires. Self-administered questionnaires were used to solicit information from respondents comprising of both closed ended and open ended items. The closed ended questions had two sections; section (I) captured personal details of the respondents and section (II) with 3 subsections captured questions used to determine the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivate students to pursue Hospitality Education and items that measured the various elements of Hospitality Education as offered at University of Eldoret. The open ended question was used to establish the strategies that can motivate students to pursue Hospitality Education. The questionnaires were reviewed by experts from the department to establish construct validity of the items.

Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics. For quantitative analysis Microsoft EXCEL was used for coding. For qualitative analysis basic coding was done by organizing data into themes according to the open ended question. Results were presented using tables and graphs.

3. Results and Discussion

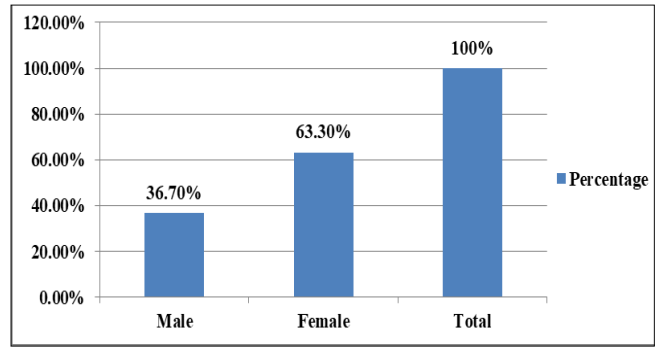
3.1 Gender of respondents

A total of 109 students participated in this study. Sixty nine (63.30%) of them were female and 40 (36.70%) were male. The dominance of females in Hospitality Education indicates the popularity of this study area among females. According to Aitchson (2003) motivation to study tourism hospitality programs is different between gender and culture.

Table 1: Gender distribution of respondents

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Male | 40 | 36.70% |
| Female | 69 | 63.30% |
| Total | 109 | 100% |

As shown in figure 1, the respondents were represented by a majority of female 63.30% students compared to the male students 36.70%.



Source: survey data (2018)

Fig 1: Gender of respondents

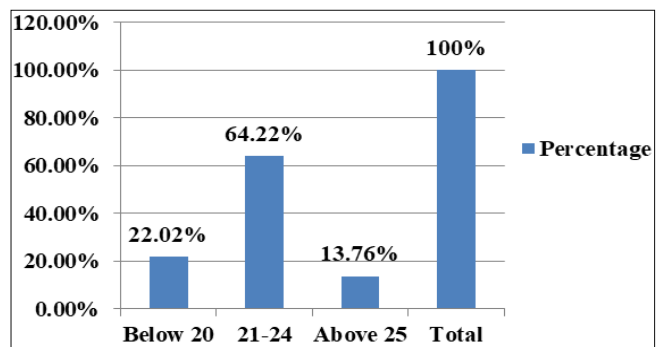
3.2 Age of respondents.

Seventy (64.22%) of the respondents were aged between 21 and 24; 24 (22.02%) were aged 20 years and below and 15(13.76%) were aged 25 years and above. This finding in age distribution of the respondents may be due the fact that all the respondents were undergraduate students who join university education at least by 19 years of age.

Table 2: Age distribution of respondents

| Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Below 20 | 24 | 22.02% |
| 21-24 | 70 | 64.22% |
| Above 25 | 15 | 13.76% |
| Total | 109 | 100% |

As shown in figure 2, the majority of the respondents were aged between 21 and 24 (64.22%), followed by below 20 (22.02%) and the least 25 year and above (13.76%).



Source: Survey data (2018)

Fig 2: Age distribution of respondents

3.3 Summary of gender verse choice to study Hospitality Education

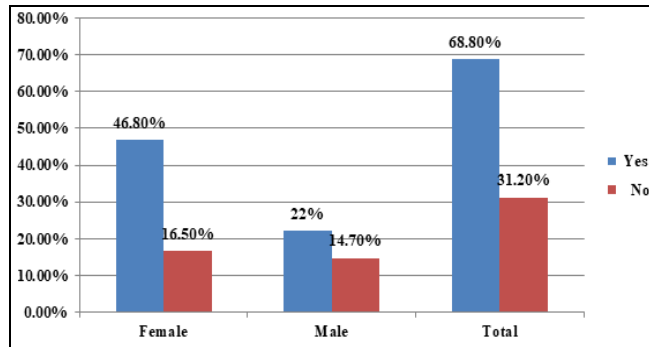
According to results showed in table 3, fifty one (46.8%) of the females studying hospitality agreed that it was their own choice while 18 (16.5%) were influenced by other factors. On the other hand 24 (22%) of the male students studying hospitality made their own choice while 16(14.7%) attested that it was not their own choice. Therefore, a majority of respondents (68.8%) agreed that studying hospitality was their own choice with the highest percentage being female followed by the male. The dominance of students who made the choice to study hospitality by themselves indicates that the students had a goal for choosing to study hospitality; these goals could be the factors that drive them to pursue Hospitality Education. This finding agreed with previous literature, O Mahony, MC Williams and Whitelaw (2011) indicate that students had been influenced by positive perception of the hospitality industry. These perceptions

resulted from personal observation such as media reports on the projected rate of growth in the hospitality sector and from discussion with other referent groups.

Table 3: Summary of gender verse choice to study hospitality

| Gender | Yes | Percentage | No | Percentage |
|--------|-----|------------|----|------------|
| Female | 51 | 46.8% | 18 | 16.5% |
| Male | 24 | 22% | 16 | 14.7% |
| Total | 75 | 68.8% | 34 | 31.2% |

As shown in figure 3, a majority of the respondents 68.80% studying hospitality was their own choice while 31.20% studying hospitality was not their own choice.



Source: survey data (2018).

Fig 3: Gender verse choice to study hospitality education.

3.4 Intrinsic motivation factors

As shown in table 4, most of the respondents agreed on

Table 4: Ratings on intrinsic motivation factors

| Intrinsic factors | % Distribution of responses. | | | |
|--|------------------------------|--------|--------|----------|
| | D | N | A | Total |
| 1. This major is my interest | 14-13% | 22-20% | 73-67% | 109-100% |
| 2. This major fulfills my dreams. | 18-17 | 19-17% | 72-66% | 109-100% |
| 3. I would like to get more knowledge in this field. | 12-11% | 15-14% | 82-75% | 109-100% |
| 4. I would like to make relationship with foreign friends. | 8-7% | 17-16% | 84-77% | 109-100% |
| 5. I want to show my social status. | 28-26% | 28-26% | 53-49% | 109-100% |
| 6. I would like to gain self-actualization. | 15-14% | 13-12% | 81-74% | 109-100% |
| 7. I would like to learn foreign language. | 13-12% | 16-15% | 80-73% | 109-100% |
| 8. This field fits my aptitude. | 13-12% | 22-20% | 74-68% | 109-100% |
| 9. Relates to my personal values | 14-13% | 22-20% | 73-67% | 109-100% |
| 10. Relates to my personal competences | 13-12% | 20-18% | 76-70% | 109-100% |

D- Disagree; N- Neutral; A- Agree.

Source: Survey data (2018).

3.5 Extrinsic motivations factors

According to table 5 below, respondents ratings on the identified extrinsic motivation factors were as follows; a total of 25% of the respondents agreed that opinion of others such as parents motivates students to pursue Hospitality Education, on the contrary 58% of the respondents disagreed with this attribute. This indicates that students are more aware of their desired area of professionalism in their pursuit of Hospitality Education. Despite the fact that other persons may still be influential the level of influence is particularly low. A good number of the respondents 55% agreed on practical nature of the field as a motivating factor. In addition 64% agreed on field attractiveness and another 62% agreed on opportunity to work with people as an influencing attribute on their choice to pursue Hospitality

Education. These factors are more related with goal achievement, Miranda, Carmo and Leal (2012) suggested that extrinsically motivated students perform tasks because they are interested in external reward. A total of 43% of the respondents agreed that ease of getting good grades motivates students to pursue Hospitality Education. About half of the respondents 47% agreed that high level of salary influenced their choice to study Hospitality Education. Further 49% agreed with the attribute high percentage of employment with 19% disapproving the same attribute while 32% were undecided on this attribute. Previous literature by Appaw and Agbotse (2013) suggested that students prefer to enroll in hospitality courses because they believe hospitality degrees lead to respectable careers.

factors on personality traits with the following ratings; 67% agreed on personal interest, 66% agreed on personal dreams, 68% agreed on personal aptitude, 67% on personal values and 70% agreeing on personal competence. The findings on personality traits agreed with previous studies by Akrivos *et al* (2007) who observed that most students at both undergraduate and diploma levels of study were motivated based on their personality traits. Three quarters of the respondents 75% agreed that they study Hospitality Education to get more knowledge in the field of hospitality, 77% of the respondents agreed on personal desires to make relationship with foreign friends, 73% agreed on the desire to learn foreign languages and 74% on desire to gain self-actualization as their intrinsic motivational factors to pursue Hospitality Education. According to Alsaleh and Mohammad (2013) [1] there are many reasons that lead students to pursue Tourism and Hospitality programs, amongst them the possibility of getting more knowledge, learning international languages that will increase their chances to getting job opportunities. The only factor that was agreed upon by less than half of the respondents (49%) is the desire to show off their social status. In summary more than 60% of the respondents agreed with 9 out of 10 intrinsic factors outlined. The findings agreed with findings by Stefanescu (2012) which suggest that intrinsic motivation is more desirable as it is more likely to lead to a higher level of engagement and deeper approaches to learning.

Table 5: Ratings on Extrinsic motivation factors

| Extrinsic factors | % Distribution of responses | | | Total |
|---|-----------------------------|--------|--------|----------|
| | D | N | A | |
| 1. Opinion of others such as parents and guardians. | 63-58% | 19-17% | 27-25% | 109-100% |
| 2. Ease of getting good grades. | 35-32% | 27-25% | 47-43% | 109-100% |
| 3. Ease to study in this field. | 36-33% | 27-25% | 46-42% | 109-100% |
| 4. Opportunity to work with people. | 15-14% | 26-24% | 68-62% | 109-100% |
| 5. High level of salary. | 31-28% | 27-25% | 51-47% | 109-100% |
| 6. Opportunities' to make trips overseas. | 32-29% | 34-31% | 43-39% | 109-100% |
| 7. Practical field | 18-17% | 31-28% | 60-55% | 109-100% |
| 8. High percentage of employment. | 21-19% | 35-32% | 53-49% | 109-100% |
| 9. Variety of job opportunities. | 21-19% | 33-30% | 55-50% | 109-100% |
| 10. Field attractiveness. | 17-16% | 28-26% | 64-59% | 109-100% |

D- Disagree; N- Neutral; A-Agree
 Source: survey data (2018)

3.6 Strategies to motivate students to pursue Hospitality Education

Table 6 shows the strategies suggested by the respondents that can influence students choice to pursue Hospitality Education inform of frequencies and percentages. According to the table, 19% of the respondents suggested improving the quality of teaching and training, 17% establishing connectivity to the industry and 14% suggested field exposure example attachment and trips as key strategies. Basing on these suggestions higher institutions of learning offering hospitality should improve the standards of quality of teaching and training and increase their support to students in other factors in line with the program such as establishing connectivity of students to the industry for internship which will motivate them to pursue Hospitality Education. Factors beyond the quality of teaching were also suggested; 12% of the respondents felt that providing

scholarship opportunities to students would help, while 11% believed that having manageable tuition fee and offering opportunities for further studies (11%) were worthwhile strategies. Donvan (2015) suggest that examining ones environment, support systems and other non-academic factors are also crucial when evaluating motivation, persistence and academic achievement. Factors on roles of educators were also suggested, 9% of the respondents agreed that encouragement from educators and support in personal life conditions (7%) are also key motivation strategies. This result revealed the important role played by educators in students' motivation. According to Kaylene and Williams (2011), at the very least, educators will need to be compassionate and supportive of the personal life condition of their students that surface in the process of education.

Table 6: Strategies to motivate students to pursue hospitality education

| Strategies | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| 1. Improving the quality of teaching and training. | 21 | 19% |
| 2. Manageable tuition fee. | 12 | 11% |
| 3. Field exposure example attachment and trips. | 15 | 14% |
| 4. Providing scholarships to students. | 13 | 12% |
| 5. Establishing connectivity to the industry. | 18 | 17% |
| 6. Creating opportunities for further studies. | 12 | 11% |
| 7. Support in personal life condition. | 8 | 7% |
| 8. Encouragement from educators. | 10 | 9% |

Source: Survey data (2018)

3.7 Hospitality Education

Table 7 indicates the respondents' ratings on the various elements of Hospitality Education as offered at University of Eldoret. According to the table, a total of 52% of the respondents agreed that assessment methods used in Hospitality Education are the best. Further 56% agreed that the curriculum is up to date although 18% disagreed with this attribute. Most of the respondents 68% opined that lecturers have good academic qualifications. Further, 32% disagreed that training is of high quality and 39% also disagreed that learning involves adequate practical work. As revealed by the ratings on these elements there is still more that needs to be done to improve these attributes. There is need for improvement on the elements of practical learning in terms of facilities for learning and tuition fee should

match the standards offered. This consequently affects the quality of training offered by the university provided that it was rated in low percentages by the respondents. A good number of the respondents 57% agreed on value for internship with 23% disagreeing on field exposure. A total of 42% of the respondents agreed on room for further studies, further 24% agreed on high chances for scholarship with 44% disagreeing on this. A total of 30% of the respondents agreed on low tuition fee whereas 41% disagreed on this. The ratings on these elements also identified a gap which shows that the university needs to do more in terms of exposing students to the field. Opportunities for further studies should be given to students by for example setting affordable tuition fee for masters programs for those interested.

Table 7: Ratings for measuring hospitality education

| % Distribution of responses | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|----------|
| Elements | D | N | A | Total |
| 1. Best assessment method. | 24-22% | 28-26% | 57-52% | 109-100% |
| 2. Updated curriculum | 20-18% | 28-26% | 61-56% | 109-100% |
| 3. Room for further studies. | 30-28% | 33-30% | 46-42% | 109-100% |
| 4. Lecturers of good academic level. | 11-10% | 24-22% | 74-68% | 109-100% |
| 5. High quality of training. | 35-32 | 35-32% | 39-36% | 109-100% |
| 6. High chances for scholarship. | 48-44% | 35-32% | 26-24% | 109-100% |
| 7. Practical learning. | 42-39% | 36-33% | 31-28% | 109-100% |
| 8. Value for internship. | 18-17% | 29-27% | 62-57% | 109-100% |
| 9. Field exposure. | 25-23% | 37-34% | 47-43% | 109-100% |
| 10. Low tuition fee. | 45-41% | 31-28% | 33-30% | 109-100% |

Source: Survey data (2018)

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study investigated factors that motivate students to pursue Hospitality Education at the University of Eldoret. A majority of students pursuing hospitality education made the choice to study hospitality by themselves. This implies that hospitality students have made a long lasting decision to pursue hospitality careers.

The findings revealed that students are both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to pursue Hospitality Education. Intrinsic motivation factors proved to be more desirable than extrinsic motivation factors. Factors on personality traits of the individual students came out as strong elements in motivation to pursue Hospitality Education. External factors also came out as important factors that influence students' decisions to pursue Hospitality Education. Although the salaries and general condition of work of hospitality industry employers engage the degree and diploma students on equal terms, this suppresses the motivation of students.

On the strategies suggested as possible ways to boost students' motivation to pursue Hospitality Education, Institutions of higher learning should foster both academic and non-academic factors in order to enhance students' motivation. Educators should also take up their roles in motivating students such as providing support to students in real life situation and encouragement.

The analysis of the various elements of hospitality education as offered in University of Eldoret revealed areas that need improvement in order to improve the quality of training. Therefore, higher institutions of learning offering Hospitality Education should work on improving areas of weakness as revealed by the ratings of the various elements of hospitality education in order to improve on overall quality of training offered which in return enhances students' motivation to pursue hospitality education.

Finally the ultimate findings of this study provides vital information to promote and support hospitality education in terms of students' motivations and factors that are crucial in ensuring quality training. It provides necessary information for understanding and enhancing students' motivation to pursue Hospitality Education. The results will also be helpful to colleges and universities to improve their standards of training as far as Hospitality Education is concerned.

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