THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Perception of Graduate Tourism Employees and Tourism Employers on Relevance of Tourism Education Attributes to Effective Tourism Work Performance in Kenya

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Abstract:
Continued sustenance of tourism industry requires human capital with the right skills, knowledge and competency. Kenya has a number of tertiary tourism education institutions that graduates potential employees for the tourism industry annually. Despite this, there is a need to link the tourism education training to the needs of the tourism industry so as to meet the needs and expectations of the industry. Many studies have investigated on this topical area of interest but have not exploited on the perception of tourism graduate employees and the tourism employers with regard to the relevancy of tourism education attributes. This study aimed at identifying perception of graduate tourism employees and tourism employers on relevance of tourism education attributes to effective tourism work performance in Kenya. A cross sectional survey research design was employed to collect data from 385 tertiary tourism graduate employees and 385 tourism employers in Kenya using multi-stage sampling. Data was collected using self-administered questionnaires. An independent-sample t-test was conducted in SPSS to determine if there were significant mean difference in perceived relevance of 17 tourism education attributes to effective work performance between graduate tourism employees and tourism employers in the Kenya. The results indicate that all the 17 tourism education attributes were perceived to be relevant by the two groups. The results also, largely, indicate that relevancy perception of tourism education attributes was high among the tertiary tourism graduate employees than among tourism employers. 'Teaching methodology' for instance was perceived to be the most relevant tourism education attributes among the tertiary tourism graduate employees (M = 4.41, SD = .89) than tourism employers (M = 3.41, SD = 1.09), a statistically significant mean difference, M = 1.00, 95% CI [.86, 1.14], t(736.15) = 13.91, p < .01. The study provides insights to tertiary tourism education program developers and the training institutions on the relevancy of tourism education and considerations of industry practitioners in the design and evaluation of tourism curriculum.

Keywords: Relevance of tourism education, graduate tourism employees, tourism employers, tourism work performance, Kenya

1. Introduction

Tourism has been considered as a primary vehicle for job creation, economic regeneration and sustainable development (Christie et al, 2013; Worldbank, 2011; World Travel and Tourism Council, 2016). While its thought to provide millions of job opportunities, the tourism industry requires skilled and qualified workforce (Mei, 2017) to determine its overall quality of services (Perman & Mikinac, 2014). Addressing the knowledge gaps and training needs of the tourism industry through quality tertiary tourism education is therefore important. In view of this, various authors (LeBlanc, 2013; Klein-Collins, 2013; Johnstone & Soares,2014; Mendenhall, 2012)have investigated on the need for skills and competency development in the education sector with an aim of meeting the needs of the industry. According to LeBlanc (2013), the focus of education should be on learning rather than time spent to ensure that the right competencies are developed. Klein-Collins (2013) asserts that learning should focus on the students in terms of flexibility and personalisation. The implication is that learning should be personalised as each student learn at different pace (Johnstone & Soares, 2014). Johnstone and Soares (2014) further asserts that for learning to take place in a manner that equip students with the right skills and competencies, effective learning resources should be availed, and learners should be supported. This should be coupled with valid reliable assessment (Mendenhall, 2012) implying that assessment and feedback forms a valuable aspects of tertiary tourism education.

By the foregoing, tourism education institutions strive to provide quality tourism education with an aim of meeting the needs of the tourism industry. While this is the case, the growth and development of tourism education

continues to receive scant attention (Fidgeon, 2010), particularly in the evaluation of tourism teaching and education (Stergiou, Airey, & Riley, 2008). Perman and Mikinac (2014), asserts that educated personnel in the hospitality and tourism industry enables development of new technologies, innovative products and services that gives the tourism company or destination a competitive edge. A number of studies (Akareem & Hossain, 2012; Ashraf et al., 2009; Atef, 2018;Olelewe et al., 2014; Perman &Mikinac, 2014; Li & Li, 2013; Tsinidou et al., 2010; Mayaka & King, 2002; Mei, 2017)have looked into relevancy of tourism education to tourism industry. According to Mayaka and King (2002) and Mei (2017) tourism education is relevant to improve the skills and knowledge as well as the competency base of the tourism workforce and to maintain a viable industry. Atef (2018) comments that tourism and hospitality education is focused on providing the industry with well educated, adequately trained, and committed workforce. There is therefore a need to provide tourism education which the industry considers relevant (Perman &Mikinac, 2014). In order for the tourism education institution to achieve this, there is a need to obtain the views of the industry practitioners regarding tourism education and its relevancy to the tourism industry. This would provide a sound basis for developing tourism education programs. According to Li and Li (2013), development of tourism curriculum from academic viewpoint without factoring in perspectives from the industry dynamic environment would result in disagreement between industry affiliates and academics on subjects taught to students. At the same time, tourism and hospitality programs at tertiary and university levels are faced with academic competences in a bid to match other related programs while at the same time considering the industry needs as they prepare future employees and managers (Dawson, 2014). As a result, most tourism programs have been designed haphazardly in a bid to compete with other related programs. The trend has been a copy paste scenario, rather than focusing on the relevancy of the programs to the industry and the quality of graduates produced for the industry. There is thus a need to link tourism education and training to the needs of the tourism industry (Perman &Mikinac, 2014) by focusing on the views of the practitioners in the industry. The practitioners in this regard include the tourism employers and their employees. Based on the work experience the employees are in a good position to tell what aspects of the tourism education are really relevant for their work performance as they are the ones who perform the work directly. Tourism managers and the supervisors on the other hand are better placed to know what it is they look for in an employee and how best the education or training employees are given proves relevant to effective performance of their work. Tourism in Kenya has grown tremendously and is considered a key driver of the Kenyan economy and among the top foreign exchange earner for decades. According to Government of Kenya (2018), tourism contributes about 11% to Kenya's GDP and about 12% to employment in Kenya. Given the relevance of tourism in Kenya, it's important to invest in quality personnel by providing tourism education programs that meet the needs of the tourism market. This, according to Akareem and Hossain (2016), would sustain the tourism industry and the market in which the tourism education institutions operate. Although a number of tertiary tourism education institutions from which the industry source its workforce from exist in Kenya, it's not clear as to whether the kind of training or education offered meet the needs of the industry practitioners. This study therefore sought to identify if there was perceived difference between tourism graduate employees and tourism managers and supervisors (employers) on relevance of tourism education attributes to effective work performance.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design and Study Population

The study adopted a cross sectional survey research design in which data was collected and analysed quantitatively. The study was conducted in Kenya targeting both tertiary tourism graduate employees and supervisors and managers (employers) in the tourism industry. Tourism organisations, companies and enterprises considered included tour operations, travel agencies, museums and national parks and reserves in Kenya. There is a total of 538 registered tourism institutions in Kenya as depicted by Table 1.

2.2. Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

Targeted Institutions/Organisations	Number in Kenya
KATO Members (Tour Companies)	314
Museums in Kenya	21
KATA Members (Travel Agencies)	166
KWS (Parks and Reserves)	37
Total	538

Table 1: Number of Registered Tourism Institutions

Cochran (1977) formula was used to draw 385 tourism graduate employees and 385 tourism managers and supervisors as shown:

$n_0 = Z^2 \times p \times q/e^2$

Where:

n_O = Sample Size
Z= Z value which is 1.96 (for 95% level of confidence)
p = estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population which is 0.5
q= 1-p

e = desired level of precision (Confidence interval) which in this case will be 0.05

$n_0 = 1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5/0.05e^2$

$n_0 = 384.16$

Multistage sampling consisting of stratification, proportionate and simple random sampling was used to draw the sample for the study. Stratification was based on the type of tourism institution and combined stratification and proportionate sampling resulted in sample increase from 385 to 387 as shown in the Table 2. Simple random sampling was then used to draw the sample resulting to 387 tertiary graduate employees and 387 tourism managers and supervisors.

Targeted Institutions/Organisations	Number in Kenya	Graduate Employees	Managers/Supervisors
KATO Members (Tour Companies)	314	225	225
Museums in Kenya	21	16	16
KATA Members (Travel Agencies)	166	119	119
KWS (Parks and Reserves)	37	27	27
Total	538	387	387

Table 2: Sample Distribution for the Study

2.3. Data Collection

After pretesting the questionnaire with an additional 10% of the sample size the final versions of the questionnaires were distributed to the targeted respondents to fill. The respondents were required to provide demographic information about themselves. They were then required to rate on a five-point Likert scale relevance of 17 tertiary tourism education attributes to the success of the tourism industry. The continuum ranged from 1 – very irrelevant to 5 -very relevant. Scores above three were considered relevant while scores below three were considered irrelevant. Data collection was conducted for a period of six months. A total of 387 questionnaires were collected back from the tourism graduate employees out of which two were incomplete hence were excluded from the analysis. On a similar note, 385 complete questionnaires were collected back from the tourism managers and supervisors. Attempts to get the remaining two did not yield any fruits hence were excluded from the analysis.

2.4. Data Analysis

Once the data were entered into SPSS, the data was examined for any missing values and outliers by generating frequencies and boxplots respectively. The reliability of the measures was established by testing for consistency and stability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha. The data were then analysed using both descriptive and multivariate analysis methods. First, frequencies and means generated in SPSS to describe the distribution of data as well as the demographic composition of the study sample. To compare responses between the two groups, mean responses were ranked to identify which tourism education attributes were relevant for every group. An independent sample t-test in SPSS was then conducted to determine if there were perceived difference in relevancy of tertiary tourism education attributes to effective work performance between graduate employees and employers (managers) in the tourism industry. Independent variable was the group (tertiary tourism graduate employees and tourism managers and supervisors) while the dependent variables were the 17 tourism education attributes. Prior to conducting the sample t-test, the data set were evaluated to determine if they met the assumptions for conducting sample t-test. Preliminary data evaluations were done by assessing the normality of distribution and homogeneity of variance (Field, 2017).Normality of distribution were assessed using skewness and kurtosis in SPSS. This study used skewness and kurtosis threshold values of -2 and +2 to prove normality of distribution (George & Mallery, 2010; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2014). Homogeneity of variance was tested using Levene's test for equality of variance (Field, 2009). Homogeneity of variance is assumed when the Levene's test for equality of variance is not significant (i.e. $p > 0.05$), otherwise the variances are considered significantly different in different groups (Field, 2009). In situations where homogeneity of variance is violated ($p < 0.05$) the violation can be corrected using separate variances and the Welch-Satterthwaite corrections (Hayes & Cai, 2007; Ruxton, 2006).

3. Results

The reliability results show that all the 17 items were reliable in measuring their respective construct given that the Cronbach's alpha for the construct was >.7. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients registered in the pre-test study and in the main survey were $\alpha = .97$ and $\alpha = .95$ respectively. No cases of missing data or outliers were also detected.

3.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

3.1.1. Tourism Graduate Employee

The demographic characteristics of tourism graduate employees are summarized in Table 3. The table shows that majority, 68.1%, of the tourism graduate employees were male participants. Majority of the respondents (41.6%) were between aged between 18 and 25 years with those above 40 years making only 8.8% of the sample. 51.2% of the sample comprised of certificate holders with 8.8% having advanced diploma. Most of the respondents (40.3%) had three years or less since their graduation time while only 9.9% had more than 15 years since their graduation from college. Majority (35.3%) had spent less than a year in their current job position.

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Variables	Frequency	Percent
Age			Current job position		
18-25 Years	160	41.6	Travel Agent	90	23.4
25-30 Years	99	25.7	Tour Operator	69	17.9
30-35 Years	47	12.2	Tour Manager	35	9.1
35-40 Years	45	11.7	Excursion Agent	32	8.3
Above 40 Years	34	8.8	Tour Escort	28	7.3
Total	385	100.0	Tour Guide	44	11.4
			Marketing Officer	8	2.1
Area of study			Tour Reservationist	25	6.5
Travel Operation	128	33.2	Receptionist	13	3.4
Tour Operation	70	18.2	Customer Relations	13	3.4
Tourism Management	50	13.0	Driver	20	5.2
Travel & Tour Operation	39	10.1	Others	8	2.1
Driver Guide	74	19.2	Total	385	100.0
Language Translator	24	6.2			
Total	385	100.0	Years in current post		
			Less than 1 year	136	35.3
Academic qualification			1-5 years	112	29.1
Certificate	197	51.2	6-10 years	58	15.1
Advance Certificate	72	18.7	11-15 years	41	10.6
Diploma	82	21.3	16-20 years	37	9.6
Advance Diploma	34	8.8	Above 20 years	1	0.3
Total	385	100.0	Total	385	100.0
Years since graduation			Gender		
0-3 Years	155	40.3	Male	262	68.1
3-6 Years	98	25.5	Female	123	31.9
6-10 Years	50	13.0	Total	385	100.0
10-15 Years	44	11.4			
Above 15 Years	38	9.9			
Total	385	100.0			

Table 3: Demographic Profile of the Tourism Graduate Employees

3.1.2. Tourism Employers and Tourism Institutions

The demographic characteristics of tourism employers and the tourism institutions they work are summarized in Table 4. The table shows that majority, (36.9%), of the respondents from the tourism employer were between 25 and 30 years old with the least of the respondents being above 40 years. Majority of the respondents, (62.1%), were also male. Majority of the respondents, (57.9%) were from tour companies, followed by travel agencies (30.9%) and the least (4.2%) being drawn from museums. Most of the respondents (46.8%) were drawn from companies that had been in existence for ten or less years.

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Variables	Frequency	Percent
Respondents Age			Type of institution		
25-30 Years	142	36.9	Tour Companies	223	57.9
30-35 Years	101	26.2	Travel Agencies	119	30.9
35-40 Years	82	21.3	National Parks & Reserves	27	7.0
Above 40 Years	60	15.6	Museums	16	4.2
Total	385	100.0	Total	385	100.0
Company's age			Gender		
0-10 Years	180	46.8	Male	239	62.1
11-20 Years	89	23.1	Female	146	37.9
21-30 Years	51	13.2	Total	385	100.0
31-40 Years	45	11.7			
41-50 Years	7	1.8			
Over 50 Years	13	3.4			
Total	385	100.0			

Table 4: Demographic Profile of the Tourism Employers and Tourism Institutions

3.2. Perceived Relevance of Tourism Education Attributes between Employees and Employers

An independent-sample t-test was conducted in SPSS to determine if there were significant mean difference in perceived tourism education attributes to effective work performance between graduate tourism employees and tourism

employers (managers and supervisors) in the Kenyan tourism industry. There were no outliers in the data as assessed by inspection of box plots. Perception of tourism education attribute scores for the two groups were normally distributed as evidenced by the skewness and kurtosis values of between -2 and +2.Homogeneity of variance was violated for most of the measurement attributes, as assessed by Levene's Test for Equality of Variance (p < .01) with exception of five attributes namely 'Assessment and feedback' (p = .72), 'Subjects taught' (p = .41), 'Program duration/academic calendar' (p = .60), 'Expected learner behavior guidelines' (p = .55) and 'Academic field trips and tours' (p = .22). For the items that violated homogeneity of variance, separate variances and the Welch-Satterthwaite corrections were used. The results are presented in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5 shows that the lowest ranked item among tertiary graduate employees was 'industrial attachment/internship' (M = 3.44, SD = 1.19) while the least ranked item among tourism employers (managers and supervisors) was 'online learning resources' (M = 3.25, SD = 1.03). Generally, the results indicate that all the 17 tourism education attributes were perceived to be relevant by the two groups, tertiary tourism graduate employees and tourism employers (managers and supervisors).The results also, largely, indicate that relevancy perception of tourism education attributes was high among the tertiary tourism graduate employees than among tourism employers (see Table 5 and Table 6). For example, 'Teaching methodology' was perceived to be the most relevant tourism education attributes among the tertiary tourism graduate employees (M = 4.41, SD = .89) than tourism employers (M = 3.41, SD = 1.09), a statistically significant mean difference, M = 1.00, 95% CI [.86, 1.14], t(736.15) = 13.91, p < .01. 'Learning context' was perceived to be the second most relevant tourism education attributes among tertiary tourism graduate employees (M = 4.38, SD = .88) than tourism employers (M = 3.43, SD = 1.10), also a statistically significant mean difference, M =.91, 95% CI [.76, 1.05], t(749.31) = 12.29, p < .01.

Tourism Education Attributes	Graduate Employee				Employers			
	N	Mean	SD	Rank	N	Mean	SD	Rank
Assessment and feedback	385	4.26	1.03	6	385	3.53	1.02	2
Learning context	385	4.38	0.88	2	385	3.43	1.10	10
Quality of the teacher/lecturer/facilitator	385	4.34	0.94	3	385	3.42	1.09	6
Teaching methodology	385	4.41	0.89	1	385	3.41	1.09	11
Individual assignments	385	4.26	0.82	7	385	3.42	1.09	9
Consultations with lecturers in office	385	4.27	0.80	4	385	3.58	1.01	1
Support/administrative staff	385	4.21	0.77	10	385	3.38	1.09	12
Online learning resources	385	4.27	0.67	5	385	3.25	1.03	17
Physical infrastructure and facilities	385	3.95	0.92	12	385	3.33	1.16	13
External lecturers from the industry	385	4.25	0.68	8	385	3.35	1.07	14
Learning and instructional materials	385	4.21	0.70	11	385	3.34	1.12	15
Psychosocial environment	385	4.22	0.70	9	385	3.35	1.15	16
Subjects taught	385	3.56	1.02	16	385	3.51	1.07	3
Industrial attachment /internships	385	3.44	1.19	17	385	3.48	1.07	5
Program duration/academic calendar	385	3.78	1.04	14	385	3.51	1.06	4
Expected learner behaviour guidelines	385	3.72	1.04	15	385	3.43	1.09	7
Academic field trips and tours	385	3.85	1.05	13	385	3.42	1.09	8

Table 5: Means Ranking of Tertiary Tourism Graduate Employees and Tourism Employers' Responses
Note: SD – Standard Deviation
Scale: 1 = Very Irrelevant, 2 = Irrelevant, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Relevant, 5 = Very Relevant

Although 'subject taught' was perceived to be more relevant among tertiary tourism graduate employees (M = 3.56, SD = 1.02) than tourism employers (M = 3.51, SD = 1.07), it had no statistically significant mean difference, M =.05, 95% CI [-.10, .20], t(768.00) =.65, p = .51. This imply that though relevant aspect of tourism education, both tertiary tourism graduate employees and tourism employers did not differ significantly on the perceived relevancy of tourism subjects to tourism work performance.

On the other hand, 'industrial attachment/internship' was perceived to be less relevant among tertiary tourism graduate employees (M = 3.44, SD = 1.19) compared to tourism employers (M = 3.48, SD = 1.07), but had no statistically significant mean difference, M = -.04, 95% CI [-.20, .12], t(759.69) = -.51, p = .61. This imply that though the tourism employers (managers and supervisors) considered industrial attachment/internship to be more relevant to work performance compared to perceptions of tertiary tourism graduate employees, there was no significant difference in their perceptions.

Attributes of Tourism Education	EV			t-test for Equality of Means					
	F	Sig.		t	df	Sig.	MD	SED	95% CID
Assessment and feedback	.13	.72		10.01	768.00	.00	.74	.07	[.59, .88]
Learning context	EVNA			12.29	749.31	.00	.91	.07	[.76, 1.05]
Quality of the teacher/lecturer/facilitator	EVNA			13.51	735.20	.00	.96	.07	[.82, 1.10]
Teaching methodology	EVNA			13.91	736.15	.00	1.00	.07	[.86, 1.14]
Individual assignments	EVNA			12.20	714.41	.00	.85	.07	[.71, .98]
Consultations with lecturers in office	EVNA			10.50	731.33	.00	.69	.07	[.56, .82]
Support/administrative staff	EVNA			12.25	688.94	.00	.83	.07	[.70, .97]
Online learning resources	EVNA			16.25	661.70	.00	1.02	.06	[.90, 1.14]
Physical infrastructure and facilities	EVNA			8.13	730.74	.00	.62	.08	[.47, .76]
External lecturers from the industry	EVNA			13.86	652.48	.00	.90	.06	[.77, 1.03]
Learning and instructional materials	EVNA			12.92	640.95	.00	.87	.07	[.74, 1.00]
Psychosocial environment	EVNA			12.65	634.71	.00	.86	.07	[.73, 1.00]
Subjects taught	.67	.41		.65	768.00	.51	.05	.08	[-.10, .20]
Industrial attachment /internships	EVNA			-.51	759.69	.61	-.04	.08	[-.20, .12]
Program duration/academic calendar	.27	.60		3.68	768.00	.00	.28	.08	[.13, .43]
Expected learner behavior guidelines	.37	.55		3.79	768.00	.00	.29	.08	[.14, .44]
Academic field trips and tours	1.52	.22		5.60	768.00	.00	.43	.08	[.28, .58]

Table 6: Independent Samples T-Test Results
Note: CID - Confidence Interval of the Difference

4. Discussions

This study was aimed at identifying perceived difference of relevancy of tourism education attributes between tertiary tourism graduate employees and tourism employers (managers and supervisors). The results indicate that on general perspective, tertiary tourism graduate employees perceived tourism education attributes to be more relevant to their work performance than the employers. The perceived difference was statistically significant in all the attributes except on 'subject taught' and 'industrial attachment/internships'. The findings can be attributed to the fact that tertiary graduate employees are the ones that are directly involved in the work performance in the tourism industry. The fact that they have gone through the tertiary tourism education, they are better placed to point out what aspects of the tertiary tourism education is relevant to their work performance. In comparison to perceptions of tourism employers, tertiary tourism graduate employees perceived 'teaching methodology' as the most relevant tourism education attribute. This was followed by 'learning context' and then 'quality of teachers/lecturers/facilitators'. The three attributes form the main component of teaching and learning process which generally have an impact on the knowledge, skills and competency acquisition and development among learners (Akareem & Hossain, 2012; Ashraf et al., 2009; Olelewe et al., 2014; Tsinidou et al., 2010; Mayaka & King, 2002; Mei, 2017). This in turn influences their work performance directly. Teaching methodology would influence the knowledge and skills imparted to learners. However, the process of imparting knowledge and skills should take place in a conducive learning environment and be done by qualified teachers/lecturers/facilitators.

While 'subjects taught' was perceived relevant by both tertiary tourism graduate employees and tourism employers, there was no significant difference in their perceptions. This generally points to how important this tourism education attribute is to both employees and employers with regard to work performance. It's the tourism subjects that forms the basis the theoretical and practical skills and knowledge learners are supposed to have. This supports Mayaka and King (2002) who point to the relevancy of tourismcourse content and subjects to the tourism industry. They comment that tourism training and education should consciously address the needs of the locally based industry by including relevant content and subjects when developing the tourism curriculum.

The results indicated that 'industrial attachment/internship' was perceived to be more relevant by tourism employers than tertiary graduate employees. Industrial attachment/internship would provide learners with the relevant practical work experience. This, tourism employers would believe to provide learners with the first-hand experience on the industry as they are in direct contact with the learners during the attachment period. This notion of providing experience to leaners through industrial attachment/internship is shared by other researchers (Bonderup Dohn, 2011;

Nadelson & Jordan, 2012) who contend that fieldtrips and industrial attachment offer valuable learning experience away from the normal classroom setup. However, in most tourism training institutions, attachment is a one-time activity in comparison to other aspects of tourism education. Learners therefore may not necessarily get the relevant work experience required to adequately perform their work. As such there may be a need to increase the number of industrial attachment tourism learners are subjected to by all tourism training institutions.

5. Conclusions

The study set to identify perceived difference in relevancy of tourism education attributes to work performance between tertiary tourism graduate employees and tourism employers (managers and supervisors) in Kenya. The findings generally point to significant differences in perceptions between the graduate employees and the employers with regard to most of the tourism education attributes. Significant difference in perception was not however registered in 'subjects taught' and 'industrial attachment/internship' attributes, though they were perceived to be relevant by both the groups. The study further suggests that given that graduate employees have gone through the tourism education and that they are working in the tourism industry, they are better placed at providing better inputs when it comes to tourism education program evaluation. However, both the views of the graduate employees and the employers should be taken into consideration for a number of tourism education attributes, particularly when designing and evaluating tourism education programs.

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