

A Research into Career Considerations of Students Enrolled In Tourism Degree Programs

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Abstract

This study is aimed at investigating career expectations of students who continue their education in the field of tourism. A total of 315 students from Ataturk University Tourism Faculty participated in the study. Questions related to students' career expectations and the relationship between demographic characteristics and career expectations were subject to analysis. Remarkably, as a result, students do not find tourism business interesting; moreover, they consider choosing tourism as their career a mistake.

Keywords: Tourism Education, Career Preference, Expectations

1. Introduction

Tourism sector is very important for Turkey in terms of its real and economic impact. While Turkey was below the top twenty countries in terms of revenues from tourism in 1990s, now it is among the top ten. Therefore, tourism has a very important place in Turkey's development strategy. In the Eighth Plan, the unpolluted Mediterranean and Aegean coasts were prominent advantages of Turkey in the international tourism market whereas in the Ninth Plan prepared for 2007-2013, development of one of the country's competitive advantages, namely health services tourism, is highlighted (Selcuk, 2011: 113). Due to the importance of this sector, tourism is constantly supported and encouraged. However, there are a number of structural barriers before the development of tourism at desirable levels. The most important of all these barriers is the qualified workforce. The fact that tourism is a labor-intensive sector makes it difficult to thoroughly resolve this problem. Countries that are aware of this fact, including Turkey, open a large number of vocational and undergraduate programs in order to train the workforce needed by the tourism sector. Despite all these, studies continue to show that employment-related problems prevail. A number of research studies in Turkey indicate the fact that the tourism industry has a high rate of labor turnover, low employee job satisfaction, long working hours, and insufficient wages. In order to estimate the reflections of these resulting issues on training of students in the tourism sector, scientific research studies are conducted to understand the expectations of students. In addition to this, tourism businesses need to know career expectations of their staff in order to reach higher efficiencies. Career consists of all the work done during the working life of an employee (Ozgen et al., 2002).

Another definition is about work related roles undertaken by an individual throughout his / her life. These roles constitute a process covering all positive and negative aspects of an individual's life such as personal development, self-transcendence, unemployment period, failure, internship, studentship, or volunteer work. Taking correct steps in one's career by deciding on these steps in a specific process, making decisions in terms of the things to do and the timing of them is defined as career planning. Personal planning with regard to the career to be achieved in the future and working for this purpose is referred to as career planning (Kok & Halis, 2007). Career expectations of people begin to take shape during studentship. Therefore, the training received in educational institutions is expected to guide career expectations of students.

Thus, students' receiving services which will inform them of jobs where they can develop their skills and of sectors where they may wish to work using their knowledge and skills depends on the provision of career planning services at universities. Hence, it will be possible for a person to self-recognize themselves and make plans for the future based on their personality traits (Unguren & Ehtiyar, 2009: 2093-2127).

2. Literature Review

The choice of a profession is the most important turning point in the lives of young people. The extent of a degree program's ability to respond to a student's expectations for the right and well-directed decisions towards determining an individual's lifestyle in the future has been the subject of many studies.

- Casado (1992) determined that although Hospitality Management students had quite realistic expectations before graduation and expressed that they hoped to be successful in recruitment, the employee turnover in hospitality organizations was high.
- Kusluvan (2000) determined as a result of his research that most of the students chose tourism unconsciously and any experience directly related to the industry had caused negative attitudes.
- Jenkins (2001) found in his research that students were more willing to work at certain departments and chain hotels, they hoped to be a general manager or department manager ten years after the start of the study, but the longer this period took the more their perceptions of this sector deteriorated.
- Aksu & Koksal (2005) found in their research that students had a negative attitude towards the sector in general. In addition to the students who had mostly negative attitudes and opinions, there were also students who expressed positive views. It was indicated that these students preferred a degree in tourism within their top three choices in the university entrance exam, they chose the program willingly, and they completed their internships abroad.
- Roney (2007) determined that students' negative internship experiences resulted in development of a less favorable perception of tourism.
- Kim (2008), in his research, concluded that the majority of the students wanted to work in the tourism industry after graduation.
- Richardson and Butler (2009) determined as a result of their study on career expectations of tourism students that the students did not believe tourism would present significant opportunities with regard to their career in the future.
- Sibson (2011) determined that an interesting and fun job and a pleasant working environment had a positive effect on the career choice.
- Zengin (2011) determined in a study carried out for the students' career expectations that gender was an important factor in making career plans, females preferred to work in the human resources department more than males and males preferred security department more than females.
- Baltaci (2012) concluded in his field survey for measuring satisfaction from education that the students preferred tourism department unconsciously, senior students' concerns for the future increased, and their satisfaction from education decreased.

According to the results of their study for measuring the opinions and career expectations of undergraduate students in tourism degrees, Korkmaz et al. (2012) indicated that students perceived working conditions in the sector as negative. However, most of the students would like to pursue a career in the sector. One of the remarkable results of this study is the finding that senior students' desire to work in the sector has decreased.

3. Methods

The purpose of this study is to measure the perceptions of undergraduate students in tourism degrees with regard to the tourism sector in general and to analyze the relationships between demographic characteristics of the students and their career expectations. A questionnaire developed by Kusluvan&Kusluvan (2000) was used to measure the expectations and attitudes of the students. The questionnaire consists of 48 questions. Sixteen questions were used to measure demographic characteristics and 32 questions were used to measure career expectations. Thirty two questions that measure expectations were designed according to a Likert scale (1: totally disagree, 5: completely agree).

The population of the study was determined to be 650 students enrolled in Ataturk University, School of Tourism whereas the sample was comprised of 315 students that made up 48% of the population and were selected according to the Simple Random Sampling Method. 350 questionnaires were distributed to the students and all of them were returned. However, 35 questionnaires were excluded from the evaluation due to missing values. The remaining 315 questionnaires were analyzed using Social Science SPSS 20.0 for Windows package program. Demographic characteristics of the students' and averages of their responses to career expectations were compared. For this purpose, the *Independent Groups t-test* was used to analyze demographic characteristics with two alternatives and *One Way Anova* test was used to analyze multiple choice demographic characteristics. As a result of the reliability test of this study Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.799. This figure indicates that the study is "highly reliable".

Results

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents participated in the survey. 41.9% of the participants were female students and the remaining 58.1% were male students. 61.2% of these students are studying at the Department of Hospitality Management and 38.8% are studying at the Department of Food and Beverage Management. When we analyze at the distribution of respondents, we observe that freshmen, similar to their share in the total number of students of the school, constituted one-thirds of the sample. Distributions of the other grades in the sample are close to each other. The majority of students (59.9%) willingly chose a degree in the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management. Nearly half of the students (47.4%) preferred the tourism school as one of their top three choices.

Table 1. Demographic Information

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Department</i>		
Accommodation	193	61,2
Food-Beverage	119	38,8
<i>Sex</i>		
Female	130	41,9
Male	180	58,1
<i>Grade</i>		
Freshman	111	35,4
Sophomore	72	22,9
Junior	64	20,4
Senior	67	21,3
<i>Did you willingly choose the School of Tourism&Hotel Management?</i>		
Yes	187	59,9
No	85	27,3
Indecisive	40	12,8
<i>Did you consciously choose the School of Tourism&Hotel Management?</i>		
Yes	193	62,3
No	86	27,7
Indecisive	31	10,0
<i>On what number choice is the School of Tourism&Hotel Management ?</i>		
Between 1-3	143	47,4
4 and over	159	52,6
<i>Ranking of your school among other?</i>		
Between 1-3	169	54,9
4 and over	139	45,1
<i>Did you intent to work in the tourism industry at your first grade?:</i>		
Yes	161	52,3
No	112	36,4
Indecisive	35	11,3
<i>Did you really want to work in the tourism industry?</i>		
evet	128	42,2
hayır	111	36,6
karasızım	64	21,2
<i>Do you have relatives in the sector?</i>		
Yes	133	43,3
No	174	56,7
<i>Are you graduate of tourism high school?</i>		
Yes	96	31,2
No	212	68,8

Table 2 shows the percentages and medians of the students with regards to career expectations

Table 2. Collapsed percentages and medians of attitudes of tourism students towards dimensions of working in the tourism industry

Dimensions	Strongly agree and agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Strongly disagree and disagree (%)	Mean	StandartDevition
I found jobs in tourism interesting	31,0	5,9	63,1	3,48	1,33
It is nice to communicate with foreigners within tourism sector	4,8	2,3	92,9	4,51	,83
Working hours are not convenient for regular life style(R)	83,0	6,8	10,2	1,77	1,03
It is hard to find stable jobs with tourism sector due to its sessional character(R)	69,0	8,4	22,6	2,25	1,21
. Working within tourism sector is accepted as a respectable job in Turkish Society	59,8	18,3	21,9	2,52	1,14
It is a common belief to be a waiter who works in tourism sector in Turkish Society(R)	81,4	6,2	12,4	1,80	1,12
My family is proud of job in the tourism sector	28,8	31,2	40,0	3,12	1,19
I am proud of telling my job to my friends and relatives.	26,9	9,3	63,8	3,56	1,30
I have pleasure to work in tourism sector	21,9	9,4	68,7	3,72	1,29
I hate serving people when someone are having holidays(R)	41,4	11,4	47,2	3,01	1,34
I can use my skills in tourism sector	11,0	8,1	80,9	4,06	1,03
I feel my self as a servant in the tourism sector(R)	33,7	16,3	50,0	3,17	1,35
Risk of job accidents are high in tourism sector(R)	42,2	18,8	39,0	2,91	1,22
Staff rest room fare in good condition in most of tourism facilities.	36,8	27,4	35,8	2,96	1,24
Staff dining lounge are in good condition in most of tourism facilities.	39,5	24,8	35,7	2,92	1,22
Wages are satisfactory in the tourism sector	47,0	19,2	33,8	2,80	1,27
Wages are unsatisfactory taking into consideration the work load and hours (R)	67,8	17,6	14,6	2,10	1,16
Bonus(holidays, meals etc) is enough in tourism sector.	45,3	27,7	27,0	2,72	1,22
Seniority and experience are important in promotion	14,5	22,6	62,9	3,68	1,11
Promotion opportunities are satisfactory in tourism sector.	31,4	28,8	39,8	3,14	1,13
It is hard to promote if you do not have friend at court(R)	50,5	26,2	23,3	2,58	1,22
Staff who are not university graduate are jealous of university graduates.	18,8	36,7	44,5	3,39	1,09
People trained in tourism sector were working in tourism sector in the past	25,7	28,0	46,3	3,26	1,06
People working in tourism sector are willing about their job.	32,5	29,5	38,0	3,11	1,13
Managers in tourism sector appreciate the employers	33,9	31,0	35,1	3,01	1,11
Managers in the tourism sector do not care organizational commitment of the employers(R)	34,7	42,1	23,2	2,78	,99
Managers give occupational trainings when needed.	14,2	22,0	63,8	3,63	,97
Managers in tourism sector do not have tourism trainings(R)	41,3	27,9	30,8	2,82	1,21
I am happy to be involved in tourism as a career preference.	33,5	16,5	50,0	3,23	1,31
It is certain for me not to work in tourism sector after graduation(R)	26,9	28,9	44,2	3,19	1,30
After graduation, I can only work as manager or department director	15,8	14,5	69,7	3,87	1,15
It is a big mistake to be involved in tourism as a career preference	52,4	20,3	27,3	2,66	1,39

With regards to the interestingness of the job and the beauty of communicating with foreign people which have a very important role in a young person's preference for an occupation, it could be suggested that these two situations do not have an effect on the career-oriented motivation at all. That is because 63.1% of the participants did not find the tourism business interesting whereas 92.9% also indicated that the opportunity to communicate with foreigners did not appeal to them. 83% of the participants stated that working hours in the tourism sector were not appropriate for a regular life whereas 69% thought that tourism business was unstable due to its seasonality. While 59.8% of the students had the view that tourism was a respected profession, 81.4% percent agreed to the idea that the society believed that a person working in tourism industry would be a waiter or a waitress. This is a surprising and striking result. That is because while the students considered tourism a respected profession from their point of view, they did not estimate a positive point of view of the society. The fact that 63.8% of the students who participated in the survey indicated that they were proud of their profession and 40% of them indicated that they thought their families were proud of their profession suggests that the prestige of the sector have increased in comparison to the previous years. At the same time the students declared that they enjoyed working in tourism (68.7%). With regard to the questions on disliking serving people on vacation and considering oneself as a servant, half of the students agreed to these ideas. This finding can be considered normal within the realm of the services sector.

In relation to the physical structure of tourism enterprises (staff canteens, staff, showers and toilets, etc.), it can be suggested that neither a positive nor a negative thought is prevalent for students. The responses are very close to each other, which do not allow further interpretation. Although nearly half of the students found wages in the sector adequate, when they considered the payments together with the workload they regarded them insufficient (67.8%). With respect to promotion in the sector, the proportion of students who did not trust in the sector in terms of the effectiveness of seniority and experience on getting a promotion is considerably high (62.9%). This is consistent with the outcome of 50% agreeing to the view that if you do not have a friend at court you cannot get a promotion. It could be suggested that such a situation may lead to a rather negative perception about the career.

63.8% of the students had negative perceptions on the view that managers would provide professional training when necessary. This can be interpreted as they do not believe they would receive support from the managers. 50% of the respondents believed that they had made a mistake in their career goal by selecting tourism. Students responded negatively in terms of working in the tourism industry after graduation (44.2%) and again negatively with respect to "I would work in the tourism sector on the condition that I become a manager" (69.7%). This finding can be interpreted as students have a negative perception about career expectations in the tourism sector.

Comparison of Career Expectations

Table 3. Comparison of career expectations with respect to the degree they are studying

Department of Accommodation (n=193)	Department of Food&Beverage (n=119)	t value	Sig. (2-tailed)
3.07	3.02	1.01	0.317

According to Table 3, it could be suggested that there is no difference between career expectations of students with respect to the degree they are studying. In other words, it could be concluded that the degree program has no effect in terms of the career perceptions.

Table 4. Comparison of career expectations with respect to gender.

Female (n=130)	Male (n=180)	t value	Sig. (2-tailed)
3.08	3.05	0.635	0.530

As can be seen in Table 4, there is no difference in students' career expectations with respect to gender. In other words, there is no significant difference between females and males in terms of career expectations.

Table 5. Comparison of Order of Preference with Career Expectations

1 - 3 (n=143)	4 - upper (n=159)	t value	Sig. (2-tailed)
3.15	2.98	3.61	0.000

Table 5 suggests a significant difference between group averages of students who preferred tourism school within their top three alternatives and students who preferred tourism school as their 4th or above alternative. Accordingly, career expectations of students who choose a career in tourism within their first three preferences are more positive than others.

Table 6. Comparison of Order of Preference with the faculty that are enrolled and other tourism schools with career expectation

1 - 3 (n=169)	4 - upper (n=139)	t value	Sig. (2-tailed)
3.12	2.97	3.07	0.02

Table 6 presents the order of preference of the school where the student is studying within other tourism schools at the time of university entrance exam and what type of a statistical relationship this situation has with career expectations of the students. Accordingly, there is a statistically significant difference between the averages of responses of the students who preferred tourism school within their top three choices and the students who preferred the profession as a 4th or above ranked choice (sig. 2 tailed = 0.02 < 0.05). Career expectations of those who chose tourism school as one of their top three preferences are more positive than those who ranked the profession 4th or above in the university entrance exam.

Table 7. Comparison of having Relatives in tourism sector with Career Expectations

Yes (n=133)	No (n=174)	t value	Sig. (2-tailed)
3.06	3.04	0.483	0.629

According to Table 7, it could be suggested that there is no difference between students' career expectations depending on whether they have any relatives working in the tourism industry.

Table 8. Being a Graduate of Tourism Vocational High School with Career Expectations

Yes (n=96)	No (n=212)	t value	Sig. (2-tailed)
3.03	3.07	-0.837	0.403

According to Table 8, it could be suggested that there is no difference between career expectations of students depending on whether they were graduated from a tourism vocational high school or not.

Table 9. Comparison of Students' Grade Levels with Career Expectations

Freshman (n=111)	Sophomore (n=72)	Junior (n=64)	Senior (n=67)	F value	Sig.
3.18	3.05	2.97	2.95	31.84	0.000

According to the One Way Anova test results, Table 9 indicates a significant difference between students' grade levels and their career expectations. The average of career expectations of first-year students is higher than other grades. In other words, freshmen are more positive in their career expectations. Career expectations decrease with increasing grade level. In the Post-hoc multiple comparison tests, according to Tukey's HSD test, the average of career expectations of sophomores is not different from other grades, however, there are differences between other grades that are significant at the 5% significance level.

Grade Levels

	(I)Your Grade	(J) Your Grade	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Tukey HSD	Freshman	Sophomore	0,13	0,06	0,157
		Junior	0,23*	0,06	0,002
		Senior	0,21*	0,06	0,005

Table 10. Comparison of Studying Tourism whether willingly or unwillingly with Career Expectations

Yes (n=187)	No (n=85)	No idea (n=40)	F value	Sig.
3.20	2.81	2.94	31.84	0.000

In Table 10 presenting the post-hoc multiple comparison test, according to the results of Tukey HSD test, there are differences between the average responses at the 5% significance level with regard to selecting the tourism school willingly. The average of responses to career expectations is more positive for those students who willingly selected the tourism school than those students who responded to this question as "no" or "undecided".

Table 11. Comparison of Tourism School Whether selected deliberately or not with Career Expectations

Yes (n=193)	No (n=86)	No idea (n=31)	F value	Sig.
3.17	2.84	2.96	21.68	0.000

In Table 11 presenting the post-hoc multiple comparison test, according to Tukey HSD test results, there are statistically significant differences between the averages of responses at 5% significance level depending on whether the tourism school was selected deliberately or not. The average of responses to career expectations is more positive for those students who consciously selected the tourism school than those students who responded to this question as "no" or "undecided".

Table 12. Comparison of Intention with respect to working in the Tourism Sector in the Freshman Year with Career Expectations

Yes (n=161)	No (n=112)	No idea (n=35)	F value	Sig.
3.17	2.87	3.08	19.56	0.000

According to Table 12, it could be suggested that career expectations of those students who aimed at working in the tourism industry in their first year are more positive.

Table 13. Comparison of having any information on tourism prior to the university entrance exam with Career Expectations

Yes (n=128)	No (n=11)	No idea (n=64)	F value	Sig.
3.28	2.77	3.08	59.94	0.000

In Table 13 according to the results of post-hoc multiple comparison Tukey HSD test, there are significant differences between the averages of responses given to the question "whether having any information on tourism prior to the university entrance exam affects working in this sector or not". It can be suggested that career expectations of those who have information about the sector are more positive.

5. Conclusion

This research focused on career expectations of students of the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Erzurum Ataturk University.

63.1% of the students who participated in the research did not find the tourism business interesting whereas 92.9% also indicated that the opportunity to communicate with foreigners did not appeal to them. 83% of the participants stated that working hours in the tourism sector were not appropriate for a regular life whereas 69% thought that tourism business was unstable due to its seasonality. While 59.8% of the students had the view that tourism was a respected profession, 81.4% percent agreed to the idea that the society believed that a person working in tourism industry would be a waiter or a waitress. The fact that 63.8% of the students who participated in the survey indicated that they were proud of their profession and 40% of them indicated that they thought their families were proud of their profession suggests that the prestige of the sector have increased in comparison to the previous years. At the same time, the students declared that they enjoyed working in tourism (68.7%). On the other hand, 67.8% of the students found wages insufficient based on the workload. With respect to promotion in the sector, the proportion of students who did not trust in the sector in terms of the effectiveness of seniority and experience on getting a promotion is considerably high (62.9%). 63.8% of the students have a negative perception of the view that managers would provide professional training when necessary. 50% of the respondents believed that they had made a mistake in their career goal by selecting tourism. Students responded negatively in terms of working in the tourism industry after graduation (44.2%) and again negatively with respect to "I would work in the tourism sector on the condition that I become a manager" (69.7%). Another finding of the study includes results obtained by comparing the students' demographic characteristics and averages of career expectations. According to these results it could be suggested that:

- The degree program of students has no effect on career perceptions,
- There is no difference in students' career expectations with respect to gender,
- Career expectations of students who prefer tourism among their top three choices are more positive than other
- Career expectations of the students who preferred their degree program among the top three choices they made in the university entrance exam are more positive than those who ranked their degree program fourth or above,
- Students' having relatives who work in the tourism industry does not affect their career expectation
- Having graduated from a tourism vocational high school does not affect career expectations of students
- Career expectations decrease with increasing grade level
- Perceptions of career expectations are higher for those who willingly selected the tourism school
- Perceptions of career expectations are higher for those who consciously selected the tourism school
- Perceptions of career expectations are higher for those students who aimed at working in the tourism sector in their first year of education,
- Perceptions of career expectations are higher for those students who had knowledge of tourism prior to the university exam.

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