

## Tourism business workers: motivations and expectations of future employees.

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**Abstract:** This research had three objectives: to know professional expectations of first-year students on the Bachelor's degree in tourism, their main reasons for choosing the studies and what kind of job they were interested in. Data was collected in a class assignment on the course of organizational behavior. Results suggest that students show few differences in either expectations or motivations. The vast majority of students consider hotel and travel agencies as their main outlet jobs after their studies. In addition, most of them chose their studies to speak foreign languages, travel and meet other people and cultures. When looking for a job, their motivations mainly include self-fulfilment, but also money and recognition. The implications of the study for tourism firms are discussed and future lines of research are highlighted.

**Keywords:** Tourism firms; Tourism employees; Major tourism motivations; Tourism job expectations; Professional motivations.

### Trabajadores de empresas turísticas: motivaciones y expectativas de futuros empleados.

**Resumen:** Esta investigación tiene tres objetivos: conocer las expectativas profesionales de los estudiantes del primer curso del grado en turismo, sus principales motivaciones para elegir los estudios y sus motivaciones para encontrar un trabajo. Los datos fueron recabados a través de una actividad en una clase de comportamiento organizacional. La mayoría de los estudiantes consideraron los hoteles y las agencias de viajes como trabajos principales después de sus estudios. Además, la mayoría eligieron sus estudios para hablar idiomas extranjeros, viajar y conocer otras personas y culturas. Cuando buscan un trabajo, sus principales motivaciones son la autorrealización, pero también el dinero y el reconocimiento. Se argumentan implicaciones para las empresas turísticas y se resaltan futuras líneas de investigación.

**Palabras Clave:** Empresas turísticas; Empleados de turismo; Motivaciones estudiantes de turismo; Expectativas laborales turismo; Motivaciones profesionales.

### 1. Introduction

This research provides evidence on the homogeneity of tourism students' opinions concerning both their motivations and expectations when pursuing their studies and finding a job in tourism firms. Thorough this article, the authors reflect over the main aspects influencing labor expectations as well as learning motivations.

It is widely acknowledged in the tourism and hospitality literature that employees are the key drivers of business performance as well as customer satisfaction and loyalty (Kusluvan, Kusluvan, Ilhan, & Buyruk, 2010). However, and despite the critical role of tourism employees for organizational performance,

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tourism employment is associated with negative issues such as low salaries, low opportunities for training as well as low intrinsic quality of jobs (Baum, 2015; Ladkin, 2011). In this context, it is important to analyze motivations and expectations of future employees of the tourism industry so that tourism firms can adapt to their requirements in order to increase job satisfaction. For example, we can imagine that future workers of tourism entered their bachelor's degree in tourism to have the opportunity to speak foreign languages and meet new cultures. Tourism firms could use this information to create job offers emphasizing the opportunities for travelling derived from a given position. In contrast, it may be the case that future workers' expectations are more related with extrinsic rewards such as high salaries. In this sense, tourism firms would be in need of emphasizing the salary and other incentives derived from the positions offered.

The concept of motivation and the related theory has suffered a great change over the years. In the university context this is also influenced by the irruption of the term "competence" and also by the need of incorporating active methods and bearing in mind learning style diversity of students (Honey & Mumford, 1986).

Most of research in the motivation field highlights the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Alonso-Tapia, 1995; Bacon, 1993; Braten & Olaussen, 1998; Deci & Ryan, 1985; García & Pintrich, 1996; Huertas, 1997; Lepper, 1988; Limón & Baquero, 1999; Pintrich & García, 1993; Reeve, 1994; Schiefele, 1991; Schunk, 1997; Rianudo, Chiecer, & Donolo, 2003). All of the mentioned authors agree on the one hand that intrinsic motivation is linked to actions performed because of the mere interest on the activity in which the person is involved, considering it as an end and not as a mean of reaching other objectives. In other words, intrinsic motivation refers to the inspiration to act or do something because of the mere fact of enjoying it due to the interesting nature for the person who performs. On the other hand, authors relate extrinsic motivation with the students' interest on performing a given activity as a mean of achieving other goals (i.e., academic results, recognition, or even getting a job position). That is, extrinsic motivation refers to the fact of acting or doing something due to external and separable outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It is obvious that students' motivation is related with the way they think, and also with the way they deal with learning tasks. For example, a person can do a job that they dislike only because of the received salary at the end of the month (i.e., extrinsic motivation), or they can volunteer in an NGO because of the satisfaction it implies without being paid (i.e., intrinsic motivation).

Similarly, learning orientation can also be extrinsic and intrinsic. In this sense, intrinsic learning motivation would mean that students simply enjoy the challenge of learning while extrinsic motivation is more related to the fact of getting good scores or simply getting a certificate because of its instrumental value. To this concern, learning about motivation of students of hospitality and tourism majors is of value because it may allow instructors to know their students and prepare teaching strategies accordingly. However, relatively few hospitality and tourism education studies have explored students' preferences for majoring programs (Cothran & Combrink, 1999; O'Mahony, McWilliams, & Whitelaw, 2001; Kim et al., 2007; Ma, Kim, & Lee, 2007). Kim and colleagues (2007) suggest that motivations to major studies in tourism at undergraduate and master level include job opportunities, interest in practical aspects, and interest in foreign countries among others. Therefore, it is interesting to see that both extrinsic and intrinsic factors motivate students of this field.

In the context of higher education, it is possible to observe that one of the main objectives of university instructors is enhancing their students' motivation. To do so, it is important to know students' baseline level of motivation, the objective to be reached, and their expectations concerning the course as well as their own professional careers. Learning cannot take place incidentally, but it must have an explicit objective.

However, this is not new given the fact that authors such as Abarca (1995) already pointed out the importance of the above rationalities using terms such as "needs", "interests" and "motives". As this study is build based on those concepts, they are briefly explained thorough this section.

Abarca (1995: p.8) defined "need" *as the strength driving students to act and find the means to satisfy their demands*. Therefore, it is important for students to experiment the need to discover. Currently, in the bachelor's degree of tourism, this can be achieved by linking theory and practice and placing activities in a hypothetical future real professional context (Merseth, 1991; March, 2006; Cagle & Baucus, 2006). Besides, although job expectations is a main motivation to pursue studies in tourism (Juaneda, Herranz, Montaña, 2017; Lee, Kim, Lo, 2008) studies suggest that many of the students enrolled in the bachelor's degree in tourism do not know about their future professional paths apart from the most

widely known (i.e., travel agencies and hotels) (Dachary, Arnaiz, 2016; Hernández, Martín, Jiménez, Domínguez, & Bermúdez, 2010; Dorta-Afonso, 2018).

The reasoning before is related with the second of the terms defined by Abarca, “interest”, which refers to the inherent desire to know and learn about a theoretical discipline or about how to develop a professional career. According to Abarca (1995: p.21), these interests can be differentiated concerning the academic content, the objective pursued by the student, the quantity of the knowledge to be acquired and individual differences of students (e.g., gender, way of learning, etc.). These aspects must be considered by the university instructor in order to design activities and choose the best method in class.

Lastly, “motives” are highly related to students’ needs and are defined as part of the personal circumstances, as well as social and historical aspects that influence the learning process in a given point of time and are determined by students’ perceptions.

The defined terms are related to a great extent with the concept of “competence”. The European Higher Education Area suggests the need of incorporating a change in the evaluation, design and method employed in class. Students must learn to learn, learn to do, and learn to be while they are at university. Instructors must focus their teaching methods based on those three pillars to favor the development of specific and transversal competences (Álvarez, 2004; García, 2008; March, 2010; Rico, 2008).

Working with competences involves a change in the organization of the curriculum as well as in the teaching method, as it changes from teacher-centered to be focus on students, looking to contextualized learning situations in which to solve real problems. University studies are more than mere transmission of information. In this sense, studying is not only accumulating information. Learning through competences implies an application of what is learnt, and it involves not only knowing but also understanding and using properly (De La Cruz, 2005).

In order to satisfy what is being proposed by the European Higher Education System, it is absolutely necessary to incorporate active methodologies (Minguéz-Palermo, 2005). The incorporation of active methodologies at university levels allows working, directly and in a transversal way, aspects that influence motivation and learning outcomes. Such active methods implicitly encourage students’ active participation in their own learning and place them in key positions of the learning process. Active methods encourage flexibility when learning and propose learning as a constructive process (March, 2006).

In the particular case of students of the bachelor’s degree in tourism, there are some specific aspects to bear in mind such as the place in which the bachelor was chosen, job motivations, social recognition, groups’ influences, status in the labor market, etc. Paying attention to this diversity may be challenging to teachers, as it is not possible to be prepared for all kind of situations. Nevertheless, these limitations could be overcome by using active methods in more courses of the bachelor.

Besides, there is a relatively growing research stream that has characterized students of hospitality and tourism as activist learners (Lashley, 1999; Wong, Pine, & Tsang, 2000; Barron & Arcodia, 2002; Dorta-Afonso, 2019). Students grouped under the category of activist learners are those who “learn through experience in concrete situations” –Lashley & Barron, 2006: p.555). Indeed, although these studies tend to proliferate, this research line still remains in its infancy when it comes to characterize students of hospitality and tourism. However, it may be useful for instructors to bear in mind students learning styles so that they can choose the best methodology to be applied in their courses. In particular, this research argues that the case study method, consisting in providing students with real life situations presenting dilemmas to be solved seems a good tool to motivate students of tourism in the classroom (Falkenberg & Woiceshyn, 2008). Concretely, the use of such active learning approaches has been supported in the literature before (La Lopa, Elsayed, & Wray, 2018). Therefore, this study considers the design of a case study to be carried out in class that can be used to find out for students’ motivations and expectations and to work content related to concepts of the course of Psychology of Groups and Organizations of the bachelor’s degree in tourism.

This manuscript presents the results of a study carried out in a major university of Spain with two groups of students enrolled in the first year of the bachelor of tourism, in the specific course of Psychology of Groups and Organizations (i.e., organizational behavior). This study is part of a larger research project which is focused on applying the case study method through an intervention to increase students’ satisfaction with the course (Dorta-Afonso, 2019), which is a topic that have caught researchers’ attention (Green, Tanford, & Swift, 2018). In particular, this paper presents the first case study class assignment, which was designed to work concepts related to motivation. In doing so, this study presents results showing that, students’ motivations when enrolling in the bachelor of tourism, future job expectations as well as motivations when finding a job are very homogeneous. This introduction characterizes the context in which this research was carried out by briefly reviewing

students' motivations to major hospitality and tourism studies as well as labor expectations. Next, the use of the case study method is justified in class by characterizing the learning styles of students of the bachelor's degree in tourism. Additionally, the context of the course of Psychology of Groups and Organizations is provided.

The course of "Psychology of Groups and Organizations" is a 6-ECTS course that belongs to the first year of the bachelor of tourism. Thorough the course students gain knowledge on main organizational behavior topics such as leadership, communication, conflicts, decision-making and motivation. As for the evaluation system, 70% corresponds to the theoretical exam whereas 30% corresponds to the applied case study intervention consisting in six class assignments. During the academic year in which this research was carried out, 92 students were enrolled corresponding to morning and evening shift taking this particular course together.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Participants**

The population of this study was under-graduate students enrolled in the course of Psychology of Groups and Organizations during the academic year 2017. The sample of this study consisted of 64 students (45 females and 19 males) enrolled in the first year of the bachelor's degree of tourism in a major university of Spain aged between 18 and 38 years old ( $M = 20.08$ ;  $SD = 4.11$ ). These students were part of two different classes that would take together several courses during the first year. The sample represented 70% of all the students enrolled in the course, which is a higher response rate than similar research conducted in the field (e.g., Pariar, Ma, Kensbock, & Cox, 2017). Students were arranged in groups according to their own preferences resulting in three 6-person groups, four 4-person groups and six 5-person groups.

### **2.2. Procedure**

This study was part of a bigger research project that aimed to design a case study method intervention to be used by instructors when teaching in the bachelor's degree of tourism. The first day of the course, authors identified through informal conversation with students that they were somehow not satisfied with several aspects of their studies. The main reason that emerged along the discussion was that they felt that what they learnt was not related to their studies and was not in accordance with their expectations and with their motivations. Consequently, this present study was designed as a case study assignment to be carried out during the first session of the case study method intervention with three objectives. The main objective of the assignment was to work concepts related to motivation by adopting the role of a human resources selection worker who had to design a job offer. The second purpose of the assignment was to find out about students' expectations of the course and the instructors. The third objective of the assignment is the main objective of this study, which was to find out about the main motivations of students to choose their studies and their future professional expectations as well as motivations when finding a job.

Questions were first posed in the big group to encourage open discussion among all the students and after some public discussion students were given some minutes to work in groups and complete their answers as part of their assignments. The session lasted for 90 minutes and at the end of the session students were told specific format requirements and the deadline to complete their assignment. A power point presentation was used as support for the class in which the questions and other relevant information for the session would appear. After the end of the session, students were given one week to complete their assignments and send it online to the instructor. Two groups failed to answer two of the questions concerning motivations when finding a job and when enrolling in the bachelor and therefore they were not taken into consideration for the presented results.

### **2.3. Case Study Assignment**

The case study assignment was designed so that students could work concepts related to workers' motivations (i.e., which is part of the content in the course of organizational behavior) and therefore, adopt the role of a human resources recruiter to select a candidate to join the team of a tourism company. Questions were designed so that students could discuss with their classmates their motivations to enroll in the bachelor of tourism and their main job expectations as well as

motivations when finding a job. In addition, students had to scan different websites to look for job offers. The main assignment was to design a job offer by adopting the role of a human resources worker and also to analyze their own profile to see their strength and weaknesses to get into the labor market.

Questions students had to answer were: 1) what are the main professional opportunities when studying tourism? 2) Go to the job advertising websites of a chain of hotels, destination management organization, online travel agency and hotel bed banks and find out about the main profiles tourism organizations are looking for 3) what are your main motivations to choose the bachelor's degree of tourism? 4) What are your motivations when finding a job? 5) Adopt the role of a human resources selection worker and design a job offer based on the typical profiles organizations look for bearing in mind main motivations of people that study tourism 6) Analyze your profile and think what you lack and what you already have to get into the real labor market.

All the questions posed were open so that students could openly express their ideas with no restrictions. However, answers were coded to extract the relevant information to be obtained according to the study objectives. For example, the following answer from students "One of the things that most motivated us to study tourism was the idea of being able to travel and know different places, new cultures and new people. We also want to work in contact with customers. Also, we want to learn languages so that we can work all over the world" was coded to "travel, know-cultures, meet-people, deal-clients, speak-languages, work-abroad".

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. What are the main professional opportunities when studying tourism?

When this question was first formulated in the big group the answers given in the first place were 'receptionist' and 'travel agent'. After a small pause, students were encouraged to keep thinking and they mentioned 'other positions in hotels' and 'tourist guide'. Next, students were encouraged to think about their own holidays so that they could think on other options and they added 'museum' and 'tourism information'. Students were encouraged to work together and answer the question as part of the class assignment and as can be seen in Figure 1, the answers repeat what emerged on the big group discussion with some exceptions highlighted by some groups (e.g., DMO, research).

Figure 1: Students' opinions on main professional opportunities



As can be seen in table 1, travel agencies (100%) and hotels (77%) were pointed out as the main professional paths in tourism. However, it is interesting to highlight that many of the other jobs mentioned by students were directly related with hotels (e.g., hotel receptionist, hotel director). This means that, the vast majority of students of the bachelor's degree in tourism consider travel agencies and hotels as the main places in which to develop their own professional career.

**Table 1: Students' opinions about the main professional opportunities when studying the bachelor's degree in tourism: number of groups (N) and % of the sample who answered the same (% sample)**

Professional Opportunities	N	% Sample	Professional Opportunities	N	% Sample
Travel-agency	13	100%	Transport	2	15%
Hotels	10	77%	Sport	2	15%
Tourist-guide	8	62%	Marketing	2	15%
Event-planner	6	46%	TTOO	2	15%
Accommodation	5	38%	Tourism-consultancy	2	15%
DMO	5	38%	Adventures	2	15%
Hotel-director	4	31%	Freelance	1	8%
Museum	4	31%	Cruise-ship	1	8%
Teaching	4	31%	UNESCO	1	8%
Research	4	31%	Webs	1	8%
Hotel-receptionist	3	23%	Theme-park	1	8%
Tourism-entertainer	3	23%	Tourist-information	1	8%
Ski-station	3	23%	Airport	1	8%
Public-sector	3	23%	Community-manager	1	8%
National-park	3	23%	Flight-attendant	1	8%
Mountain-resort	2	15%	Handling	1	8%
Restaurant	2	15%	Camping	1	8%
Tourism-politician	2	15%	Geography	1	8%
N = 13 groups					

### 3.2. What are the main motivations for students to choose the bachelor's degree in tourism?

When this question was posed in the big group, students unanimously mentioned traveling and working abroad as the main reasons to enroll in the bachelor's degree in tourism. When students were encouraged to keep thinking, the answers that emerged were related with what was previously mentioned (e.g., to know cultures of other countries, to live abroad). As can be seen in Figure 2, the answers provided almost repeat what emerged on the general discussion.

**Figure 2: Students' motivations to enroll in the bachelor's degree in tourism**



As can be seen in table 2, speaking languages (91%) and traveling (82%) were the main motivations to enroll in the bachelor's degree in tourism. Therefore, we can infer that most of students share the same motivations when considering majoring a bachelor's degree in tourism.

**Table 2: Students' motivations to study tourism: number of groups (N) and % of the sample who answered the same (% sample)**

Motivation Study Tourism	N	% Sample
Speak-Languages	10	91%
Travel	9	82%
Know-cultures	7	64%
Work-abroad	5	45%
Meet-people	3	27%
Deal-clients	3	27%
Good-Salary	2	18%
Socialize	2	18%
Long-term-objectives	1	9%
Promotion	1	9%
Economical-independency	1	9%
Dynamism	1	9%
New-Experiences	1	9%
Learning	1	9%
Entrepreneurship	1	9%
Stability	1	9%
N = 11 groups		

### 3.3. What are the main motivations when finding a job of students of the bachelor's degree in tourism?

When this question was posed in the big group, students' opinion differed more than concerning previous questions. Students' highlighted several motivations from earning a good salary to reaching high positions and working in a comfortable atmosphere. As can be seen in figure 3, answers were somehow varied.

Figure 3: Students' motivations to find a job



As can be seen in table 3, self-fulfillment (55%) and money (36%) were the main motivations pointed out in the assignments. Therefore, it is not possible to claim that motivations of students of the bachelor's degree in tourism are completely homogeneous.

**Table 3: Students' motivations to find a future job: number of groups (N) and % of the sample who answered the same (% sample)**

Motivation Find Job	N	% Sample
Self-Fulfillment	6	55%
Money	4	36%
Desired-Job	3	27%
Recognition	3	27%
Economic-Independency	3	27%
Good-Salary	2	18%
Good-Conditions	2	18%
Socialize	2	18%
Good-Shifts	1	9%
Enjoyable-Job	1	9%
Fix-Position	1	9%
Basic-needs	1	9%
Meet-people	1	9%
Social-Status	1	9%
Increase-Knowledge	1	9%
Location	1	9%
Work-environment	1	9%
Learn	1	9%
Experience	1	9%
N = 11 groups		

#### 4. Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to know students' motivations when majoring a bachelor's degree in tourism. Additionally, the focus was placed on main expectations for students when entering the labor market as well as their own motivations when looking for a job. Results suggest that students' point of view of the labor market is very limited to travel agencies and hotels. Additionally, students' motivations tended to be homogeneous as most of the stated reasons for choosing a bachelor's degree in tourism had to do with the opportunities to travel and work abroad as well as to speak foreign languages and get to know new cultures. However, motivations to find a job were dissimilar, as both self-fulfillment but also economic motivations were highlighted. Results from this study first validate the class assignment as a useful tool so that students can discover that the labor market is not as limited as they initially expected given the wide range of job offers students identified thorough their search. In particular this class assignment used a real situation from which students had to work which is consistent with their preference as activist learners (Lashley, 1999; Barron & Arcodia, 2002; Lashley & Barron, 2006).



This research achieves what is proposed in the European Higher Education System, that is, driving a change in the way evaluation, teaching materials design and teaching method. These results are useful for tourism instructors and practitioners as well. As highlighted in the literature, knowing students' motivations when entering a course may be crucial for instructors in order to adapt their teaching methods to best suit students' requirements (e.g., Schoffstall & Brown, 2018). In this sense, a course about dealing with clients may emphasize different cultures of tourists depending on their nationality and therefore emphasize the need of adapting the way people should deal with them. As a result, students' learning outcomes as well as satisfaction regarding a course would improve to a great extent given the fact that the instructor is relating the content of the course with topics in which students are interested about.

The findings here may very well be useful for tourism organizations aiming to attract talent into their teams. In this sense, job offers could emphasize possibilities of promotion or travelling or even relocation opportunities as a way of attracting the best candidates compared to offering higher salaries. Besides, these results can be useful for prospective students that consider majoring a bachelor's degree in tourism as it allows them to know the professional field in which they will develop their careers. Tourism firms (especially those not included in the accommodation and travel agencies sectors) may find the reported findings here very useful (e.g., car rentals, complementary activities, destination management organizations). Concretely, if they are in need of attracting the best talent into their firms, they could also emphasize extrinsic and intrinsic rewards highlighted by students here in their job offers. Additionally, we encourage these kinds of firms to actively organize events to get in touch with students so that they can be better positioned in the mind of future workers of the tourism sector. Besides, this information may be useful for instructors in charge of tourism courses so that they can contextualize their activities in other sectors different from accommodation and travel agencies.

Although the findings reported in this study have important implications for the field, there are some limitations deserving attention that also open interesting venues for future inquiries. First, although the data was collected through a 90-minute session it was carried out with first-year students of one university. Although this design may not be appropriate to collect data to a larger scale, future research should consider online surveys or self-administered questionnaires with specific items in order to collect data from more universities that would make the findings reported here generalizable to the whole population of study.

Overall, this study provides evidence that helps to know motivations and expectations of students who decide to pursue a major in tourism. Authors of this study hope that instructors and practitioners find the evidence reported here useful to advance the existing knowledge on tourism students' motivations and expectations concerning their studies and that it further stimulates more research on the topic.

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