

Interests and motivations towards tourism studies: Case of Tusbab Secondary School, Madang, PNG

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Abstract

This paper provides an analysis of students' interests and motivations towards tourism studies in Tusbab Secondary School in Madang, Papua New Guinea (PNG). The study employed a quantitative research method and used convenience sampling. The data were collected through survey questionnaires and the findings were analysed using Excel spreadsheet and Statistical Package for Social Sciences software. The study found that the majority of the respondents have great interests and motivations to study tourism in secondary schools in PNG due to the positive impacts of tourism. This study's findings add to the literature by offering a better understanding of tourism studies in secondary schools in PNG.

Keywords: Divine Word University, education, hospitality, interests, Madang, motivations, Papua New Guinea, secondary school, tourism, tourism and hospitality management, tourism studies, Tusbab Secondary School.

Introduction

Tourism education is seen as very important to governments, industry operators and educators who realise the positive contributions of tourism to their nation, economy and resources (Ashley et al. 2007; Imbal, 2005). Several studies have been conducted on tourism education in Papua New Guinea (PNG) such as Murki (2014) identified a lack of skilled personnel and training packages, and recommended that tourism stakeholders redesign and redevelop tourism training packages for tourism

teachers. Another study by Imbal (2005) identified a need for the inclusion of tourism syllabus in the upper secondary schools in PNG. Further Manolakis (2002), who found that students who came from secondary schools have little or no knowledge about tourism when they were enrolled at a university and take foundation studies in the first year, all these papers have different topics but one thing in common is tourism education in PNG.

Imbal (2005) did the study for upper secondary schools but the research respondents were too broad, which included tourism business operators, parents of students, students and teachers. This research only included students and teachers at the Tusbab Secondary School. The study aimed at investigating the interests of secondary students and teachers towards the inclusion of tourism studies in the secondary school curriculum. The main focus of this study is: Are students and teachers interested in tourism studies? Why tourism studies is important? Does tourism studies provide a pathway to university studies?

It is expected that the research would contribute to the body of knowledge related to tourism studies in secondary curriculum and particular emphasis on interest, motivation, importance and career path in tourism studies in PNG.

Literature review

The literature reviewed in this section focuses on previous studies conducted on secondary students' interests, motivations, perceptions and career path to university studies.

With the introduction of tourism studies in the secondary curriculum in PNG, understanding the effectiveness of the curriculum and its influence on the interests of students in further studies and working in the tourism and hospitality industry is of great importance. Imbal (2005) investigated the attitudes and perceptions towards the inclusion of tourism and hospitality as a

subject in the secondary school curriculum in PNG. This study collected data from 60 respondents to identify their study interests, motivations, expectations, perceptions and preferences concerning the curriculum. Results indicated that students chose tourism studies because of their interest in the field of tourism and in pursuing a career in the industry. Most respondents felt that offering tourism in the secondary curriculum would provide employment opportunities in the informal sector and make students productive citizens (Imbal, 2005), generating income for the informal sector.

Every year, students who do not perform well in grade 10 or 12 examinations return to the villages without any jobs (Rena, 2011; PNG NDoE, 2019). This is due to limited spaces at tertiary institutions (PNG NDoE, 2019). However, not all failed students return to their villages but some go to towns and cities such as Port Moresby, Lae and Mt. Hagen hoping to find employment (Sumb, 2017). If tourism is offered in secondary schools, students will learn the basics of tourism and hospitality and enable them to find a job within the hospitality and tourism industry (Imbal, 2005). For instance, if a student is dropped out of secondary school he or she might find employment with a hotel company as a housekeeper, bar attendant, tour guide or other related jobs, which usually need little or no formal training. In this way, the drop-out can become productive with their basic tourism and hospitality skills (Imbal, 2005). This could alleviate poverty and minimize law and order problems as most of the social problems are caused by young people who have no jobs (Sumb, 2020; Sumb, 2019, Sumb, 2017; Imbal, 2005).

Most respondents also agreed that the tourism curriculum could be taught in secondary education due to its relationship with the environment (Imbal, 2005). The tourism syllabus usually includes topics on the environment and tourism because both are interrelated. Students would be able to understand the importance

of tourism and the environment and can engage productively with community initiatives such as wildlife conservation, preservation and promotion of culture and other traditional activities. Students could start small-scale community-based businesses such as farming, healthy living concepts and arts and crafts (Imbal, 2005). Further, students could develop new skills and produce local products and sell them. Inclusion of tourism studies could enable students to have basic knowledge when they continue their university or college studies (Manolakis, 2002). A similar study by Ross (1994) and (Lu & Adler, 2009) examined the interests of students in tourism career and found a high level of interest regarding employment and careers in the tourism and hospitality industry.

However, Aksu and Koksal (2005) identified negative perceptions and attitudes toward tourism studies. Only a few showed positive perceptions and attitudes towards tourism studies. Positive perceptions were mainly expressed by students who had chosen the tourism studies within their first three choices to study at a university and had some job training in the industry. Getz (1994) also examined the attitudes of high school students and discovered that attitudes towards a potential career in the tourism and hospitality industry had become unattractive over 14 years. Similarly, Pavesic and Brymer (1990) studied the post-education perceptions of tourism and hospitality graduates with a degree and found that a significant number of graduates quit tourism jobs. This is due to low job satisfaction, poor working conditions and a lack of motivating factors. Furthermore, Ross (1997) studied travel agency employment perceptions and preferences among secondary college leavers and found that travel agency employment was chosen among potential tourism and hospitality industry employees, particularly among female respondents.

Methodology

A survey questionnaire was developed to collect data from students and teachers. The first part of the questionnaire collected data to produce a profile of the respondents. The second part included statements about the interest of tourism studies, where a 5-point Likert Scale (strongly agree = 5; agree = 4; neither agree nor disagree = 3; disagree = 2; strongly disagree = 1) was used to measure the respondents' degree of agreement or disagreement with various statements given, to assess relevant interests in tourism studies. In examining the interests of tourism studies in secondary schools, the Tusbab Secondary School was selected and surveyed due to convenience and cost. Convenience sampling was used to select the participants. A total of 100 questionnaires were personally distributed and 79 completed questionnaires were collected on the same day. From the completed questionnaires, 64 were students and 15 were teachers. The data were entered and analyzed using Excel and Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), which are now presented in the next section.

Results

This section presents the findings of the study.

Demographic profile of respondents

Of the 79 respondents, 41% were male and 59% were female, indicating a minimal difference. Most of them (81%) were students (Table 1) and aged between 15-18 years old (Table 2) and (19%) were teachers (Table 1).

Table 1: Occupation of respondents

<i>Occupation</i>	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Teacher</i>	15	19
<i>Student</i>	64	81
<i>Total</i>	79	100

Table 2: Age of respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
15-18	55	70
19-24	11	14
25-34	10	13
35-44	2	3
45-54	1	1
55-64	0	
65 & older	0	
Total	79	100

Are you interested to study tourism if it is offered in the secondary school curriculum?

The majority of the respondents (93.7%) indicated a strong interest to study tourism if tourism is included as a subject in the secondary school curriculum.

Table 3: Interested to study tourism in secondary school

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	53	67.1	67.1
Agree	21	26.6	93.7
Disagree	4	5.1	98.7
Strongly disagree	1	1.3	100.0
Total	79	100.0	

How important is tourism studies to you?

About eighty-seven percent (87%) of the respondents indicated that tourism studies is important to them.

Table 4: Importance of tourism studies

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Extremely important	19	24.1	24.1
Very important	42	53.2	77.2
Somewhat important	8	10.1	87.3
Not so important	4	5.1	92.4
Not at all important	1	1.3	93.7
Not sure	5	6.3	100.0
Total	79	100.0	

Would you recommend others to study tourism and hospitality management at a university or college?

Almost all (96%) the respondents stated that they would recommend other students to study tourism.

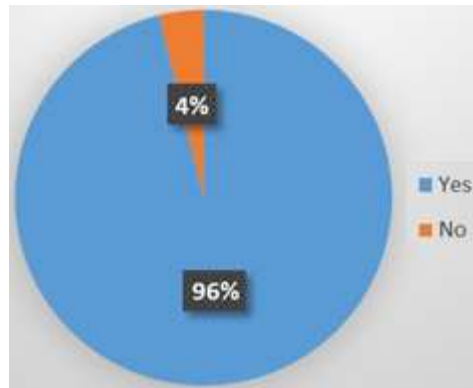


Figure 1: Recommend other students to study tourism

Do you think tourism studies will help future students who wish to study tourism and hospitality management at a university after completing grade 12?

Almost all respondents (99%) agreed that studying tourism in secondary school will help them in their university study.

Do you think tourism studies will help students find employment after completing grade 10 or 12?

The respondents were asked about the chances of finding employment after they complete their grade 12 studies. The majority (97%) of the respondents indicated that basic tourism knowledge would help them to find employment.

Discussion

The interest in tourism studies seems very positive based on the survey. Most respondents expressed an interest in tourism studies to be taught in secondary schools. Such an interest is supported by the literature, which shows that students generally have a positive attitude towards tourism education (Rayel, Kua & Manhar, 2014;

Imbal, 2005; Ross, 1994). These positive attitudes could also be attributed to the indirect and direct benefits of tourism development and awareness provided by the Divine Word University every year in organising open days and expos such as Liklik Diwai Tourism (Zoriry, 2018).

Most respondents indicated that studying tourism at secondary school can help them to understand the basics of tourism, which could create a career pathway for them if they wish to study tourism at a tertiary institution. Since students are interested in tourism studies it would be beneficial to include tourism studies at the secondary schools.

Studying tourism at secondary schools is similar to doing foundation studies at a university (Manolakis, 2002). For instance, DWU is offering foundation units for year one students because they have little or no knowledge about tourism and hospitality management (THM) from their secondary studies (Imbal, 2005; Manolakis, 2002). Including the tourism curriculum in secondary schools could help students who wish to further their studies in the THM program at a university or college, creating a good pathway for students.

The first university that offered the THM program in PNG is DWU. It started offering a Diploma in THM in 1998 and eventually offered a Bachelor's Degree since 2006. It has been offering foundation units for first-year students. The other tertiary institutions that offer tourism and hospitality include the University of PNG, which offers a Bachelor's Degree in Tourism and Hospitality Management in 2005 and the University of Goroka in 2011 (Murki, 2014). Some colleges also offer tourism and hospitality courses including the National Polytechnic Institute in Lae, Kokopo Business College and Port Moresby Business College (Murki, 2014; Imbal, 2005; Manolakis, 2002). So far, no universities offer masters or doctoral degree programs

in tourism and hospitality in PNG. It seems necessary to include tourism studies in secondary schools, creating a pathway for students to enter into the institutions. The PNG NDoE needs to update their syllabus and provide necessary resources for tourism studies. This is lacking in almost all the schools in PNG (Murki, 2014; Imbal, 2005; Manolakis, 2002). Also, the government needs to train highly qualified teachers to deliver the subject in secondary schools (Murki, 2014).

Tourism studies is not like other subjects such as English, Maths, Science and Social Science. It needs trained, qualified and industry experienced teachers to deliver the subject. In this way, students are taught not only to continue their studies at tertiary institutions but to find employment. They could also establish their own businesses and promote small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and become productive citizens. This might help address some of the social problems in the country caused by the majority of the students who are dropping out of secondary schools (PNG NDoE, 2019).

Also, almost all the respondents agreed that studying tourism at secondary schools can help them to find employment. Most tourism and hospitality jobs require basic formal training or no training as most tourism and hospitality businesses provide in-house training for their staff (Imbal, 2005; Manolakis, 2002). This is similar to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's report which stated that tourism is the key to social-economic development for developing countries (UNWTO, 2016). Such developments provide employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled labour (Rayel; Kua & Manoha, 2014). The PNG national government has recognized the tourism industry as one of the key players in the economic development and included in the Medium Term Development Strategy (MTDS) to grow the economic base and increase foreign exchange earnings. Consequently, it improves living standards for its people (MTDS,

2010). This was also highlighted in the PNG Governments' Vision 2050 to reduce poverty by making Papua New Guineans happy, healthy and smart by 2050 (Vision 2050, 2009).

Conclusion

Governments, industry operators and educators realise the importance of tourism studies as it positively contributes to their nation's socio-economic development.

This paper examined the interest, motivation and importance of tourism studies in secondary schools. The findings indicated that there is a great interest in tourism studies. The students have expressed their interest to study tourism in secondary schools to acquire basic tourism knowledge and skills which may become important to their future studies. Secondly, such knowledge and skills could be very useful if one is not pursuing further studies and enables him or her to find employment or engage in the SME sector. This might help address some of the social issues resulting from unemployment.

The findings of this study are limited to only one secondary school in PNG which might not be adequate to generalise the findings and a future study can include different secondary schools.

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Future Paper

This paper can be extended by including other aspects, which are not discussed here. It can also include other schools not covered

in this study and employ qualitative methods to gain more insights.

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