

The Perceptions of Students in Tourism and Hospitality in Relation to the Pursuit of Higher Degrees: A Case of Walter Sisulu University

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Abstract : Higher education institutions (HEIs) are under pressure in producing PhD graduates so that they can position themselves higher in terms of rankings. However, hospitality and tourism higher degree enrolment numbers are very low within South African universities. Furthermore, hospitality and tourism students choose these fields of study because they want to travel, be social, and have fun. Students in higher education are anxious about their future after studies as they are particularly worried about the job conditions in the hospitality and tourism sector, the remuneration, and the status perceptions of many jobs in the sector. Hence, there is a need for a continuous increase in the level of education with the formation of professional aptitudes and personnel quality. In order to understand the reasons for low enrolments, this study aims to explore the perceptions of the final year in tourism and hospitality diploma students towards enrolling for higher degree qualifications after their graduation. This paper utilised a quantitative research method, and data was gathered through questionnaires. In addition, the Linkert scale design was used for questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed to 137 hospitality and tourism students who are on their exit level at Walter Sisulu University. SPSS was used to analyse data. The findings revealed that students do not wish to continue studying for higher degrees as they believe higher degrees are not important for the industry. Furthermore, families already have financial expectations as they think one qualification is enough. In addition, some students mentioned that they would love to study further, but lack of funding is a problem since NSFAS only funds the first qualification. Thus, it is recommended that students are made aware of the benefits and opportunities available after obtaining higher degrees.

Keywords : hospitality and tourism education, higher degrees, higher education, student's perceptions, hospitality and tourism sector

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