

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

# WHY DO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS CHOOSE TOURISM DEGREES? INTERESTS ANALYSIS AND EMPLOYMENT EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS FROM UNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA

*María Caballer-Tarazona*

Universitat de València

maria.caballer@uv.es,

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9242-0464>

*Rubén José Cuñat Giménez*

Universitat de València

ruben.cunat@uv.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4424-1932>

*Rosario Martínez Verdú*

Universitat de València

rosario.martinez@uv.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9971-3531>

*Cristina Pardo-García*

Universitat de València

cristina.pardo-garcia@uv

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8068-3256>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism sector in Spain is a very important one, since it represents 11.2% of the GDP and 13% of the employed people, being the third country in tourists received, only after France and the US. Such an important sector requires motivated and well-trained professionals, although the analysis of formation needs is complex, since it involves many different subsectors (accommodation, restaurants, travel agencies, transport sector, leisure activities...).

Motivation of Tourism students to choose this particular degree can be influenced by personal and background factors. However, the university should be open to hear the students' expectations. The general objective of this paper is to identify the expectations or interests that drive the students to choose Tourism university degree. For this purpose, the following specific objectives are considered:

- Synthesize the different expectations to choose the Tourism degree in homogeneous groups or factor and rank them.

- Identify the differences between the expectations of students in first year of Tourism degree and students in first year of double degree in Tourism and Business in Universitat de València.
- Identify the job expectations of students regarding the main positions related to the Tourism degree.

Orientation based on students' expectations is a scarcely studied approach, as well as research focused on motivation to study specifically Tourism university degree. Therefore, our contribution helps in improving knowledge on these topics and at the same time can be a base for decision-making in study plans.

## 2. TOURISM UNIVERSITY STUDIES IN SPAIN

At the Universitat de València the Tourism degree was set up in the 2010-2011 academic year. The current degree is distributed in 240 ECTS credits and its aim is to provide a training that meets the needs of the sectors related with tourism management businesses, planning of tourism destinations and activities related to events on leisure and recreation.

Although in this work we consider both the Tourism degree and the double degree of TADE, our analysis is focused on the Tourism studies, taking into account that TADE degree is actually the union of two degrees (Tourism and Business). The two degrees share a large part of the subjects related to the area of Tourism.

Relating the study plans with the reality in the labor market helps the employability of the Tourism students in their future jobs in the Tourism sector. The multiple subsectors included in the Tourism sector makes the degree be focused on general competences, leaving the postgraduate studies for specialization (ANECA, 2004).

## 3. FACTORS INVOLVED IN THE CHOICE OF A UNIVERSITY DEGREE

The correct choice of university degree has effects over the fit between the labor market supply and demand. Several approach in the literature address this issue, some of them are focused on the person abilities, others in demographic, economic, social or personality aspects. However, all the approaches consider motivation plays a very important role in the choice of university degree. Santrock (2002) presents three different perspectives regarding motivation: behavioral, humanist and cognitive motivation. While the first perspective is based on the extrinsic motivation, the second and third ones are based on intrinsic motivation (Gamez and Marrero (2003); Morris and Maisto (2001); McClelland (1989)). Some studies state that people follow professional stereotypes (Holland, 1985) or choose undesired degrees (Alonso and Lobato, 2004). Other authors explain the choice with psychological and no-psychological aspects (López and Norzagary (2016); Chacón (2004) or Lofquist and Dawis (1969)). Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994) differentiate between personal, contextual and experiential factors which influence the choice of university degree, while Guàrdia et al. (2012) identify social and individual factors, complemented by background factors. Ford (1992) focuses on personal goals of students.

In empirical works from the UK, Briggs (2006) find that academic reputation, distance from home and location are the most important factors while Skatova and Ferguson (2014) state that there are differences by areas, being the Arts and Humanities most influencing factors the interest in the area itself, the low concern about future professional career and the easy option to get higher education studies. In Spain, Ariño et al. (2008) surveyed students in 4 universities, defining two main reasons to choose degree: vocation (minority option) and obligation (or which degree is better to choose), both influenced by students' family. Perú et al. (2015) analyze data from students in 8 different Spanish universities and consider factors such as the university, perceived utility, social impact, vocational aspects, background influence and geographical location.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted to all students of the Universitat de València enrolled in the first course of the Tourism Degree and the Double Degree in Tourism and Business (TADE) in the 2017-2018 academic year. The sample is therefore non-probabilistic, and it is focused on first-year students because for them, motivations for choosing the degree are more recent and less conditioned by the academic experience.

The questionnaire is composed by 15 questions and was conducted online through the free LimeSurvey software between November 12th and 21th, 2017. It was conducted anonymously and 170 responses were obtained from a total of 201 students enrolled. The questionnaire was validated with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of 0.752 and 0.925 for each item section.

With the information collected through the survey we identify that significant differences between Tourism and TADE students' motivations to choose their degree. Second, we cluster the different motivations in factors through a factorial analysis. This factors are composed according to the students' score to the different motivations and allow us to identify these groups of interest that are more determinant in the election of Tourism studies. Finally, the future professions within the touristic field were ranked according with expectations declared by students.

#### 5. RESULTS

The factorial analysis is tested with the sample adequacy Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test, with a value 0.756, thus higher than 0.5. The Bartlett's sphericity test is also conducted and it turns out to be significative. Both tests give acceptable values to consider appropriate the factorial analysis. The results give 6 different factors of general interests types that have driven the students to choose the degree in Tourism:

- Internationalization. Opportunity of developing activities abroad, being in touch with other cultures, people and languages.
- Job expectations in the sector. Interests related to the job market, offer of jobs or the salaries in the sector.
- Entrepreneurship and self-employment. Entrepreneur view of students.
- Importance of Tourism sector in the Spanish economy. The weight of sector in the GDP and perspectives regarding the future of the sector.

- Degree. Preference of the student for Tourism degree, whether it was his/her first option or not and the vocational level regarding Tourism.
- Other interests. Includes a residual variable.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Tourism is one of the basic sectors of the Spanish economy, both for its contribution to GDP and to the employment. However, despite its importance, it remains a sector where the value of the human factor is not properly recognized. In this context, universities have an important challenge that includes training professionals capable to contribute to professionalize the sector by endowing them with the suitable skills.

This paper analyses the reasons that drive the election of a degree. This is a subject of great interest, not only for universities but also for policy makers that must implement public policies aimed at the resources distribution.

In this work our main objective is to know the expectations that lead newly enrolled students in tourism-related degrees (Tourism and TADE) to pursue these studies at the Universitat de València. On the other hand, we want to know what their expectations are regarding the jobs they consider more appealing.

The factors identified according to the students' motivation to choose tourism studies were: Internationalization, Employment expectations, Entrepreneurship, Importance of the sector and Interest for the degree. With regard to their expectations about potential jobs at the end of their studies, both the tourism and TADE students declare preferences for positions with a more direct connection to the touristic sector; although we can find differences between degrees, since the students of TADE have a greater preference towards positions related to Administration and Management, with expectations more addressed to direction positions.