

Examining Entrepreneurship Characteristics of Hospitality and Tourism Management Students

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Abstract

Entrepreneurs are an important factor that contributes to the development and growth rate of countries. Considering the tourism as a driver of economy, it is important to train potential entrepreneurs who can establish and manage businesses. The purpose of this research is to measure the entrepreneur characteristics of students majoring in Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM). For this purpose, the scale developed by Koh (1996) was used. The scale originally contained 36 statements and was adopted to Turkish by Bozkurt (2005). The data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Out of 400 questionnaire distributed, a total of 280 were considered usable for further analysis. The results of this study show that there is no significant differences between the demographic variables and entrepreneurship characteristic of the HTM students. Moreover, findings indicate that students have moderate level of tolerance of ambiguity, need for achievement, propensity to take risk, locus of control, innovativeness and self-confidence.

Key Words: Entrepreneur, Entrepreneur Characteristics, HTM Students.

Introduction

Entrepreneurs have pivotal role in developing national economies through “raising productivity, creating employment, restructuring and diversifying the economy, reducing market inefficiencies by making the market place more dynamic and competitive; improving the social welfare of a country by previously overlooked talent, commercializing innovative products and services, and creating new markets (Ray, 1988: 1-2; Echtner, 1995: 123). However, low development, small private sector and inexperienced entrepreneurs are among the main problems facing development of national economies. Tourism and hospitality industry has an important role in the employment rates in the global industry and has significant economic profit opportunities to many related sectors (Pinar, 2015: 76). Tourism education and entrepreneurial development are essential for setting up an indigenous tourism sector and to gain knowledge and skills needed for tourism sector (Jenkins, 1980: 239; Echtner, 1995: 123-124).

Entrepreneurship is a prominent factor in the transition from industrial society to information society. Recognizing the importance of entrepreneurship, it led to an increasing number of entrepreneurs that help a faster growth of countries’ economy. Therefore, it is obvious that the educational institutions have an important impact on development of a country by providing students with teaching entrepreneurship-related knowledge and skills (Balaban & Ozdemir, 2008: 133; Yilmaz & Sunbul, 2009: 196; Solmaz, Aksoy, Sengul, & Sarısk, 2014). According to Echtner (1995), either professional education or vocational education is related with creating human resources to “work for others”. Yet, developing entrepreneurs would

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help countries to have skilled and knowledge-armed human resources to “work oneself”. With the tourism education, the potential human resources which is necessary for national development can be used by supporting and encouraging local entrepreneurs (Echtner, 1995; Gurel, Altinay, & Daniele, 2010: 647).

Tourism is one of the most important and fast growing industries in countries’ economies. Entrepreneurs help economic development of countries by creating businesses and providing employment. Therefore, it is important to provide entrepreneurship-related knowledge to HTM students to improve the potential entrepreneur’s vision. It is therefore important to examine the entrepreneurial characteristics of the students majoring in HTM-related programs. In this paper, an attempt was made to understand characteristics of Turkey’s tourism and hospitality future entrepreneurs.

Literature Review

According to Oxford English dictionary, entrepreneur is “a person who attempts to profit by risk and initiative (Morrison, Rimmington, & Williams, 20006: 28).” As stated by Zimmerer and Scarborough (2005: 3) entrepreneur is defined as (Ross & Lashley, 2009: 3): “one who creates a new business in the face of risk and uncertainty for the purpose of achieving profit and growth by identifying significant opportunities and assembling necessary resources to capitalize on them.”

The concept of entrepreneurship differs from entrepreneur concept in one point, entrepreneurship is a process; entrepreneur is the leading role in this process (Yumuk, 2013: 100). Entrepreneurship can be defined as (Erdurur, 2012: 3): “Making opportunities by establishing a new business process with committed and courageous manner.” According to Mueller and Thomas (2000), entrepreneurship is sensing opportunities and taking the opportunity for creating an organizational activity (Yilmaz & Sunbul, 2009: 196). Entrepreneurship can also be defined as “doing things that are not generally done in the ordinary course of business routine (Schumpeter, 1951: 255; Cromie, 2000: 8).” As can be noticed from abovementioned definitions, there are common agreement that entrepreneurship consists mainly in creating opportunities and initiating new businesses. The motivations that push someone to entrepreneurship also shows similarities. This common points with the motivations and entrepreneurship characteristics are the need for achievement, locus of control, propensity to take risk, tolerance of ambiguity, self-confidence and innovativeness (Çetinkaya Bozkurt & Alparlan, 2013: 9).

The first thing that comes to ones’ mind when hearing the word entrepreneur is employer or company owner. However, the main characteristic of an entrepreneur is to make innovation. Nevertheless, an entrepreneur has to take risk and seek opportunities. Therefore, incorporation process is one of the subject of entrepreneurship (Foss & Klein, 2002: 52). One who establishes a company should take risk, take responsibility and have innovative personality. The person who does not have these characteristics can be an employer but not an entrepreneur (Bircek, 2008: 4). Thus, a great deal of innovative person’s desire is to be an entrepreneur; however, he or she may not be successful because of the lack of the skills and ability to become an entrepreneur (Ray, 1988: 122).

The entrepreneurship process is in the heart of the economic development task and it consists of the motivations of people and their willing to reach their personal goals (Fass & Scothorne, 1990; Morrison, Rimmington, & Williams, 20006: 3). These motivations can be considered as the characteristics that every entrepreneur should have. With the expansion of entrepreneurship education, the factors that direct individuals to entrepreneurs have become more important. These factors could be psychological and demographic characteristics of an individual (Koh, 1995; Yilmaz & Gunel, 2011: 2). As stated by Koh (1996) these psychological characteristics

are needed for achievement, locus of control, propensity to take risk, tolerance of ambiguity, self-confidence, innovativeness. On the other hand, for being successful entrepreneur not only these characteristics also one need to have to do mental efforts; in this regard, one should be self-starter; should set goals clearly; should be resilient when things go wrong; also should be confident, receptive to new ideas, eager to learn and comfort with power (Wickham, 2006: 97-99).

Literature related to entrepreneurship indicates a number of common characteristics that are necessary for entrepreneur. These characteristics are briefly explained as follows:

- Need for Achievement: As McClelland (1961) argued, the need for achievement is a theory that influences human actions. It is a psychological driven force of one's entrepreneurship. People with high need for achievement acts more like an entrepreneur and have more ambition to be successful (Koh, 1996: 14).
- Locus of control: is the perception of person's ability that can affect his/her attitudes toward specific events in ones' life. There are two types of locus of control. The first one is internal locus of control and the second one is external locus of control. People with internal locus of control believe that they can control their own life. On the other hand, individuals with external locus of control believe that the reason of incidents in their life are causes by external sources (Lee & Tsang, 2001: 586-587).
- Propensity to take risk: according to the classic economic theory, risk-takers are entrepreneurs. Due to their jobs, roles and their nature, entrepreneurs are less likely to avoid the risk. Rather than all risks, entrepreneurs are likely to take calculated risks (Kirby, 2004: 511).
- Tolerance of ambiguity: is defined as "the tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as neutral or even desirable, and intolerance of ambiguity as the tendency to perceive such situations as threatening (Budner, 1962; Wagener, Gorgievski, & Rijdsijk, 2010: 1516)."
- Self-confidence: is basically the individual perception of having skills to start a business and deal with the responsibility on their jobs (Bowman, 1999; Erdurur, 2012: 47).
- Innovativeness: As Schumpeter (1990) argued, all entrepreneurs are innovators. As it can be observed from the definitions of entrepreneurship, nearly all definitions refer that entrepreneurship as a process that entails innovativeness and creative processes (Gurel, Altinay, & Daniele, 2010: 651; Wagener, Gorgievski, & Rijdsijk, 2010: 1517).

When compared with other industries, tourism industry's entrepreneurship processes have more challenging processes. In the context of tourism industry; the employers should be well-educated, well-trained, skilled, enthusiastic and committed (Kuslivan & Kuslivan, 2000; Pirnar & Bulut, 2012). Therefore tourism entrepreneurs should have some characteristic such as risk taking, innovativeness, strategic vision, customer orientation and financial independency tendency (Marchant & Mottiar, 2011; Pirnar, 2015: 80). In their study, Gurel, Altinay and Daniele (2010) found that there was a significant relationship between innovativeness, tendency to take risk, entrepreneurial family and entrepreneurial intention. A study on the effect of entrepreneurial characteristics on entrepreneurial tendency of undergraduate HTM students by Bozkurt and Erdurur (2013) found that there was strong and positive correlation between need for achievement, locus of control, propensity to take risk, tolerance of ambiguity. The study also indicated that there was positive and weak correlation between self-confidence and innovativeness. A significant correlation between entrepreneurial

tendency and entrepreneurial characteristics was also suggested. Solmaz et al. (2014) claimed that and bachelor's degree HTM students had a significant difference in entrepreneurial characteristic. They also found that there was a significant positive difference between students' gender and dimensions of determination and innovativeness. The study suggested that female students have more entrepreneurial characteristics than male students.

The results of the study conducted on the relationship between entrepreneurial tendencies and entrepreneurial characteristics by Uygun, Mete and Guner (2012) concluded that there was a significant relationship between young entrepreneur candidates' entrepreneurship tendencies and personality and resume factors. In their study, only self-confidence and propensity to take risk dimensions were correlated with entrepreneurial intentions. Kılıç, Keklik, and Çalış (2012) stated that there was a significant difference between gender and innovativeness dimension. Male students had more innovativeness than female students. A study conducted by Çetinkaya Bozkurt and Alparslan (2013) aimed to examine the characteristics of entrepreneurs and the education that should be given in university students. They found that self-confidence, honesty, propensity to take risk and innovativeness were the characteristics that an entrepreneur should have. A study conducted on entrepreneurship tendency of undergraduate students by Çatır, Şimşek and Ölekli (2015) showed that there was no significant relation between entrepreneurship tendencies with gender or education type but there was a significant relation between age and entrepreneurship tendency.

Research Methodology

The main objective of this study is to examine the entrepreneur characteristics of undergraduate HTM students. Convenience sampling method was used in collecting data. The data were collected from a sample of the students of Tourism Management department at Istanbul University. Tourism management students were selected as they differ from the other universities' students in tourism departments because the tourism department is currently a part of the faculty of economics and therefore students mainly follow economically-oriented courses during the first two years. Approximately 400 students are currently registered in this department. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to students in spring semester of the academic year 2015-2016. Only 285 were returned and 5 questionnaires were excluded for the massive missing data. A total of 280 questionnaires were usable and considered for further analysis (response rate of 70 percent).

In order to examine the entrepreneurial characteristics of HTM students a questionnaire was prepared in Turkish including 45 items. The questionnaire comprises two sections. The first section included demographical questions. The second section aimed to determine entrepreneurial characteristic of surveyed students, the scale included 36 items developed by Koh (1996). In the current research, the Turkish questionnaire adopted by Bozkurt was used. The statements were measured using a 5-Point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1), and "strongly agree" (5). The scale originally has six dimensions, namely; locus of control (seven items), propensity to take risk (six items), need for achievement (nine items), tolerance of ambiguity (six items), self-confidence (six items), and innovativeness (five items).

The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was calculated as 0,78. The results of the reliability test was highly reliable (Çoruhlu & Demirli, 2014: 100). The data were analysed using SPSS 21. In analysing data, a series of tests were used. "Pearson" Correlation analysis were used to designate relationship between variables. "ANOVA" and T-test were used to determine any significant difference between groups.

Findings

Table 1. Demographical Variables

Demographic	Category	Frequencies (n)	Percentages (%)
Age	18-20	105	37,5
	21-23	132	47,1
	24 and +	43	15,4
	Total	280	100
Gender	Female	147	52,5
	Male	133	47,5
	Total	280	100
Marital Status	Married	2	0,7
	Single	278	99,3
	Total	280	100
Year	First year	108	38,6
	Second year	47	16,8
	Third year	58	20,7
	Fourth year	67	23,9
	Total	280	100
Grade-point Average	1.00-1.50	1	0,4
	1.51-2.00	10	3,6
	2.01-2.50	41	14,6
	2.51-3.00	106	37,9
	3.00 +	122	43,6
	Total	280	100
In which sector would you like to work after graduation?	Public Sector	36	12,9
	Private Sector	182	65
	Family-run Business	7	2,5
	My Own Business	55	19,6
	Total	280	100
Would you like to establish a company after graduation?	Yes	223	79,6
	No	57	20,4
	Total	280	100
Did you do an internship?	Yes	114	40,7
	No	166	59,3
	Total	280	100
Did you work before?	Yes	226	80,7
	No	54	19,3
	Total	280	100

The profile of students is presented in Table 1. Unsurprisingly, the overwhelming majority (about 84 percent) the students were 23 years old or younger. Almost half of the students (%52,5) were female. Only 2 of the students were married and the rest of them were single.

Most of the students were at their first year with %38,6. Almost half of the students' (%43,6) grade-point average was 3.00 or above. 182 students (65 percent) stated that they are willing to work in the private sector. 55 students (about 19.5 percent) expressed their intention to start their own businesses. Most of the students stated that they are willing to establish a company. About 40.7 percent of the students stated to have been engaged in an internship. Most of the students were found to have had a work experience.

Table 2. Mean Rank of the Dimensions

Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation
Tolerance of Ambiguity	3,2889	,55269
Need for Achievement	3,3008	,56507
Propensity to Take Risk	3,2638	,73515
Locus of Control	3,3920	1,03789
Innovativeness	3,2500	,95467
Self-confidence	2,7804	,69559

The mean ranks of the dimensions are shown in the Table 2. The Locus of Control dimension appears to have the highest mean rank ($3,3920 \pm 1,037$). Second dimension was Need for Achievement with $3,3008 \pm 0,565$ mean rank. Tolerance of Ambiguity was the third with mean rank of $3,2889 \pm 0,552$. The fourth dimension was Propensity to Take Risk with $3,2638 \pm 0,735$ mean rank. Innovativeness was the fifth with mean rank $3,2500 \pm 0,954$. Self-confidence scored the lowest mean rank with $2,7804 \pm 0,695$.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis

		1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Tolerance of Ambiguity	r	-					
	p						
2 Need for Achievement	r	,678**	-				
	p	,000					
3 Propensity to Take Risk	r	,539**	,535**	-			
	p	,000	,000				
4 Locus of Control	r	,361**	,421**	,320**	-		
	p	,000	,000	,000			
5 Innovativeness	r	,407**	,501**	,440**	,316**	-	
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000		
6 Self-confidence	r	,307**	,083	,152*	,034	,026	-
	p	,000	,164	,011	,571	,661	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation of dimensions are illustrated in Table 3. A moderate linear relation was observed between Tolerance of Ambiguity, Need for Achievement ($r=0,678^{**}$ $p<.01$; $p=0,000$) and Propensity to Take Risk ($r=0,539^{**}$ $p<.01$; $p=0,000$). A weak linear relation was observed between Tolerance of Ambiguity, Locus of Control ($r=0,361^{**}$ $p<.01$; $p=0,000$), Innovativeness ($r=0,407^{**}$ $p<.01$; $p=0,000$) and Self-Confidence ($r=0,307^{**}$ $p<.01$; $p=0,000$). A moderate linear relation was observed between Need for Achievement, Propensity to Take Risk ($r=0,535^{**}$ $p<.01$; $p=0,000$) and Innovativeness ($r=0,501^{**}$ $p<.01$;

p=0,000). A weak linear relation was observed between Propensity to Take Risk, Locus of Control ($r=0,320^{**}$ $p<.01$; $p=0,000$), Innovativeness ($r=0,440^{**}$ $p<.01$; $p=0,000$), and Self-Confidence ($r=0,152^*$ $p<.01$; $p=0,000$). Moreover, there was a weak linear relationship observed between Locus of Control and Innovativeness ($r=0,316^{**}$ $p<.01$; $p=0,000$).

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship has a great importance on countries' economic development. With new entrepreneurs, new employment opportunities can be provided in the tourism industry as well as other great economic contribution. Especially, labor-intens industries like tourism can help maximize the benefit of a country's national economy by providing knowledge to new entrepreneurs and determining the entrepreneurship characteristics of future's potential entrepreneurs. The purpose of this study was to examine the entrepreneur characteristics of the HTM students.

The results indicated that the students have moderate level of tolerance of ambiguity, need for achievement, propensity to take risk, locus of control, innovativeness and self-confidence. The results also showed that the age, marital status, gender, class groups, grade-point average do not play a significant role in entrepreneur characteristics. Most of the students are apparently willing to create their own business. However, most of them want to work in private sector after their graduation. It can be suggested that students have an intention to create a company but before that, they wish to make carrier in private sector. These results corroborate similar findings by Solmaz et al (2014) study. As stated by Çetinkaya Bozkurt and Alparslan (2013) an entrepreneur should have self-confidence, propensity to take risks and innovativeness. In the current research, students' innovativeness, propensity to take risks, self-confidence mean ranks were found as moderate level. In this regard, the findings of Çetinkaya Bozkurt and Alparslan (2013) are supported. Findings of the current study contradicts Kılıç, Keklik, and Çalış (2012) study, specifically, analysis showed that there was no relationship between gender and propensity to take risk and innovativeness. This study is also similar to Bozkurt and Erdurur (2013) in correlation between the need for achievement, locus of control, propensity to take risk, tolerance of ambiguity but differ from correlation of self-confidence and innovativeness. However, in the current study there was no relation between self-confidence and innovativeness.

For further research could be conducted to identify additional factors that influence the entrepreneurship characteristics. Further research could also be conducted larger sample. Also the research could ensure information about HTM students entrepreneurial characteristics. With this data the educational program of HTM students could be rearranged. This paper has a number of limitations. First of all, the data were collected using a convenience sampling method. The sample of included only tourism management students in Istanbul University. Therefore, the results of this study could not be generalized without conducting similar research on larger sample including various universities students. Another major limitation is related to the scale adopted. The scale measured only the six factors of entrepreneurial characteristics. There might be additional factors influencing the characteristics of an entrepreneur.

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