

## INTENTION TO ENROLL IN A MASTER DEGREE OF TOURISM AT OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING UNIVERSITY IN INDONESIA

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to examine the the students' intention to enroll in a master degree of tourism at Open and Distance Learning University in Indonesia. We use four motives that possibly detremine their intention, namely: personal development, social support, career enhancement, and academic fit. Using a convinience sampling method, we collected 332 respondents which 197 of them are active-senior college students, 94 of them are finished their bachelor's degree, and 41 of them are finished their master's degree. The results show that personal development, social support, career enhancement, and academic fit are positively effect their intention to enroll in a master degree of tourism for all the group of respondents. As for the group of senior-college students and bachelors, the results show that social support, career enhancement, and academic fit important consideration factors, instead of personal development. These results have implication that the college students and bachelors do not yet pursue a higher level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, namely self-actualization when considering enrolling in the magister program of tourism. The main factors of motivations are to pursue safety (academic support), belonging (social support), and esteem (career enhancement). It means that the university may consider these factors when designing master program curriculum if he positions the college students and bachelors to become their key customers.

Keywords: Open and distance learning, personal development, social support, career enhancement, academic fit, behavioural intention

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

In Indonesia, tourism industry has grown and developed dramatically since 1960s. This sector has a very large impact in the economic, political, social and cultural fields (Ayu et al., 2020). Tourism has been considered as an industry that is capable of giving prosperity and bliss for many people (Setiawan & Wiweka, 2017). The industries employ more than ten million Indonesians. These factors have led the Indonesian government to increasingly focus on the development of the tourism sector (Yusuf, Samsura, & Yuwono, 2018). However, the development in the practical sphere has not yet balanced with the growth of human resources qualities in the tourism sector. Improvements in human resources and bureaucracy have not been strongly voiced. There is a fairly prominent impression that our attention is mainly focused on quantitative aspects, such as foreign exchange, job opportunities, tourist visits and so on. While qualitative aspects, which include positive changes in the quality of human resources, tend to be ignored (Kusworo & Damanik, 2002; Anugrah & Sudarmayasa, 2017). Cyntara (2019) explained that many business doers or human resources come from non-tourism formal background.

According to a report from the Central Statistics Agency, in 2019, most of the tourism labor (57.3%) attained low levels of education (elementary and junior high schools) (Bachrun, 2020). The number of tourism workers who complete higher education (diploma and undergraduate programs) was only 7.07%. Therefore, in Indonesia, the current number of tourism labor who graduated from higher education is still scarce. Previous studies suggest that many graduates from tourism institutions chose to leave tourism careers (Ahmad, Rashid, & Shariff, 2014; AlBattat & Som, 2013) or even failed to enter the tourism-related industry. This phenomenon happens due to the perception of low satisfaction of profession, poor work environment and wage, and the turnover amongst staff that are too frequent (Anandhwanlert & Wattanasan, 2017; Sibanyoni, Kleynhans & Vibetti, 2015; AlBattat, Som, & Helalat, 2014). This phenomenon happens due to the tourism industry's image as an "escape plan" by those who do not have qualified skills in other sectors (Brien, 2004). Consequently, the tourism sector is often inadequate to fit human capitals' best supply within the nation. Meanwhile, the inadequate and unqualified human capital leads to the poor image of tourism industry (Pitso, 2018). This dilemma is a challenge for tourism policymakers in guaranteeing candidates' appropriateness with the required level, especially for preparing Indonesia to compete at the international stage and achieve the targeted aspirations (Rosyidi, 2021).

Therefore, to support the growing tourism activities and to fulfil the increasing needs for human resources in the tourism industry, a number of schools have been established at higher education levels, by both the public and private sectors. Back in the day, tourism in Indonesia is a new science and has been recognized by the Indonesian Ministry of National Education in 2008 (Setiawan & Wiweka, 2017). Pitana (2012) stated that the formal recognition of tourism as an independent science in Indonesia is a result of all tourism interest functionaries. Several universities have opened undergraduate and graduate programs in tourism. Although such bachelor's degree programs in tourism are intended to offer academic degrees, many of them remain mostly based on vocational purposes (Yusuf, Samsura, & Yuwono, 2018).

However, Master Degree Programme of Tourism in Indonesia is still lack. According to BANPT (2021), Indonesia only has 11 (eleven) master degree programme of tourism. This is not comparable to the human resource needs in the tourism sector in Indonesia. The level of higher education is the key to improving the quality of existing human resources. The higher the level of education possessed, it is hoped that the quality of human resources will also be better. But in reality today there are still many Indonesians who have low education, it can be proven that in a

small scope there are still few undergraduates who continue their studies to the Master and PhD levels (Pramana et al., 2021).

According to The Directorate General of Population and Civil Registration of the Ministry of Home Affairs noted that only 822.47 thousand people or 0.3% of Indonesia's population had education up to the master's level in June 2021. This case is in line with students who want to enroll in Master of Tourism degree. Murniati (2012) explained that the tourism and hospitality institution failed to equip the students with the required knowledge, skills, and competencies as most of tourism-related programs are not relevant to the industry's requirements. Therefore, tourism and hospitality educators need to facilitate their students with the curriculum program which suits to industry expectation. Lakhal, Khechine, and Mukamurera (2021) also added in order to attain academic and professional goals, distance learning in higher education is the right choice. In addition, online learning is as effective as conventional learning (Cavanaugh and Jacquemin 2015; Kumar et al. 2019). At any particular time, student would have more or less of an intention to continue toward an online learning postgraduate programme including in master of tourism field (Jepsen & Neuman, 2010). Thus, there are many factors may influence students to make decision to go further study (Chong et al., 2014).

Lee (2017) stated that students choose distance learning higher education because they meet flexible schedules and the program provides better access for students who cannot attend face-to-face classes because of personal or professional responsibilities. More broadly, the factors of student persistence in online courses in higher education have been studied by several authors (Gazza and Hunker 2014; Laurie et al. 2020; Lee and Choi 2011; Muljana and Luo 2019; Xavier and Meneses 2020). Elango, Vongura, and Srifah (2018) explained that distance education is likely to have the power to change the educational landscape. Hence, their study determined the factors influencing intention to study via online education and showed the result that social influence have a positive significant impact on usage intention of online education.

Various studies learned about factors influencing student intention enrollment in distance learning higher education (Mulatya, 2012; Dadigamuwa & Senanayake, 2018; Baki, Birgiren, Aktepe, 2021; Lakhal, Khechine, & Mukamurera, 2021; Guat, 2022; Sakka, 2022). However, there are still very rare research about open and distance learning study in tourism. Especially, research in open and distance learning of master in tourism study program is none. Therefore, this study take a step at addressing the lack of research on the factors which influence student intention to enroll

in master degree programme in Indonesia. This study investigates of what factors influence students' intention to enroll in Tourism Master Degree.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Survey design**

This study took a survey to investigate behavioral intention to enroll in a master's degree of tourism programs. The survey items were developed were on the motivations of prospect students to enroll the program at an open and distance university in Indonesia, as the project was conducted for use in a particular context that considering the development of postgraduate of tourism programs. The survey was composed of closed-ended items, including aspects of behavioral intention and student's motivations, namely: personal development, social support, career enhancement, and academic fit. The items were rated using a 4-point Likert scale with values that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Some questions were used to garner further insights into respondents' views about their willingness to pay, learning delivery, and the student service office location. The latter part of the survey was composed of demographic items.

### **2.2 Data collection and data analysis**

Once the survey was developed, to check face validity, a pilot study was performed with a select group of respondents from the field of tourism that included 10 students and 5 faculty members and then sent the valid e-questioners by blasting email to the active undergraduate students and alumni. The e-questioners are also sent to our networks.

## **3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1 Demographic profile and academic preferences of the respondent**

This study reached he number of male respondents is higher than females. They are categorized into five age groups. The highest proportion are respondents in the below 25 age group, followed by those aged 25-30, which shows that more young people as respondents. As for education level, most respondent senior college students and bachelor, which accounts for 87.65%. Most of the respondents earned approximately Rp 1.000.000 – Rp 3.000.000 per month. It may be said that most of their earnings are low compared to the general national income level. This is partly because 20.48% of respondents are government employees, 30.72% of their age below 25 years, and 59.34% of respondents are senior college students. The profile is relatively matched with the characteristics of students at Open and Distance Learning University in Indonesia.

Other than that, in the academic preference of the respondent, Table 1 shows that the top three study fields that most like by respondents are tourism destination, tourism industries, and tourism plans. Most of respondents prefer online learning that enhance with job training. Their preferences are reasonable for students at Open and Distance Learning University. Job training will enhance their tutorial sessions which mostly are delivered using online and distance learning.

*Table 1. Academic Preferences*

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Field of Study</b>	Tourism Destination	138	21.50%
	Tourism Industries	123	19.16%
	Tourism Plans	101	15.73%
	Tourism & Hospitality Entrepreneurship	92	14.33%
	Hospitality & MICE	60	9.35%
	Sustainability Tourism	49	7.63%
	Tourism Policy Studies	44	6.85%
	Gastronomy	21	3.27%
	Others	14	2.18%
	<b>Learning Delivery Mode</b>	Offline	43
Online		243	73.19%
Hybrid		46	13.86%
<b>Learning Activity</b>	<i>Job Training</i>	175	25.11%
	<i>Field Trip</i>	120	17.22%
	Project	82	11.76%
	Assignment	96	13.77%
	Tutorial	172	24.68%
	Take Home Exam	48	6.89%
	Others	4	0.57%

Table 2 shows that 83.73% of respondents are willing to pay for regular program at price Rp5.000.000,00-Rp9.000.000,00 per semester. However, 73.2% of respondents are willing to pay for regular program at price Rp1.000.000,00 - Rp20.000.000,00 per semester for extra programs. It may be said that their sensitivity to price is relative to the benefit of the program, especially for a master program.

Table 2. Willingness to Pay

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percent
<b>Willingness to pay at Rp 5.000.000 - Rp 9.000.000/semester for regular programs</b>	Yes	278	83.73%
	No	54	16.31%
<b>Willingness to pay at Rp 5.000.000 - Rp 9.000.000/semester for additional programs, such as certification, student exchange, etc.</b>	Yes	243	73.20%
	No	89	26.80%

### 3.2 Validity and Reliability

The validity of each construct was examined by comparing the correlations of each item of questionnaire to the total score of the items. Table 3 shows that each item of questionnaire for the construct of personal development, social support, career enhancement, academic fit, and behavioral intention are valid.

Table 3. Correlation Validity of Instruments

Constructs	Items of Instruments	Correlation value	Conclusion
<b>Personal Development</b>	PD1-To gain more respect from others.	0.787**	Valid
	PD2-To gain more self-confidence.	0.800**	Valid
	PD3-To achieve my educational goal.	0.778**	Valid
	PD4-To improve my English skill.	0.730**	Valid
<b>Social Support</b>	SS1- To gain more respect from family	0.830**	Valid
	SS2-To fulfill family's expectation	0.858**	Valid
	SS3- To support full from family.	0.740**	Valid
	SS4-To act in accordance to social values.	0.703**	Valid
<b>Carrer Enhancement</b>	CE1-To get promoted to a higher position.	0.883**	Valid
	CE2-To remain competitive and professional in the business field.	0.904**	Valid
	CE3-To earn higher compensation.	0.872**	Valid
	CE4-To provide opportunity for more challenging work	0.899**	Valid
	CE5-To establish a wider connection	0.791**	Valid
<b>Academic Fit</b>	AF1-The program has a high grade of accreditation	0.809**	Valid
	AF2- The program has a good image and reputation program	0.839**	Valid

	AF3- The program has a good social environment	0.866**	Valid
	AF4-The curriculum contains of student international exchange program	0.828**	Valid
	AF5- The curriculum contains of relevant certifications	0.870**	Valid
	AF6- The curriculum contains of destination stewardship skills	0.844**	Valid
	AF7- The curriculum contains of political and ethical skills	0.799**	Valid
	AF8- The curriculum contains of human resource skills	0.831**	Valid
	AF9- The curriculum contains of dynamic business skills	0.819**	Valid
<b>Behavioral Intention</b>	BI-I am highly motivated to enroll the postgraduate program of tourism	0.879**	Valid
	BI2- I may change my study even after enroll the postgraduate program of tourism.	0.783**	Valid
	BI3- Any subject related to tourism for post graduate program is interesting.	0.813**	Valid
	BI4-I may have joyful experience by enrolling the postgraduate program of tourism.	0.853**	Valid
	BI5-I am highly interested to enroll the postgraduate program of tourism at The Open and Distance University.	0.875**	Valid

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

Table 4 presents the value of Cronbach Alpha of the behavioral intention, personal development, social support, career enhancement, and academic fit are above 0.70. That means the instruments are reliable.

*Table 4. Reliability of Instruments*

Constructs	No items	Cronbach's Alpha	Conclusion
Personal Development	4	0.767	Reliable
Social Support	4	0.785	Reliable
Carrer Enhancement	5	0.920	Reliable
Academic Fit	9	0.945	Reliable
Behavioral Intention	5	0.893	Reliable

### 3.3 Result and Discussion

Table 5 presents the result of hypotheses testing of motivational factors to enroll in the postgraduate program of tourism. We estimate the model using 2 different groups of respondents. The Column (1) of the Table 5 presents the results for the group of senior-college students and bachelor's degree, meanwhile the column (2) of the Table 5 presents the results for the group of all respondents, including senior-college students, bachelor's degree, and master's degree.

*Table 5 result of hypotheses testing*

Variables	The respondents are senior college students and bachelor degree (1)			All respondents (senior college students, bachelor's degree, and master's degree) (2)		
	Coef.	t	Sig.	Coef.	t	Sig.
<b>(Constant)</b>	-1.668	-1.652	.100	-1.544	-1.605	.110
<b>Personal Development</b>	.149	1.487	.138	.165	1.866	.063**
<b>Social Support</b>	.196	2.642	.009***	.170	2.518	.012*
<b>Career Enhancement</b>	.433	5.592	.000***	.458	6.737	.000*
<b>Academic Fit</b>	.168	3.890	.000***	.154	4.006	.000*
<b>R Square</b>			.556			.551
<b>Adj. R Square</b>			.550			.545
<b>F. Stat</b>			89.594			100.258
<b>Sig.</b>			.000			.000
<b>N</b>			290			332

\*\*\*) \*\*) \*) significant at the 0.01 level; 0.05; 0.10.

Table 5 shows that personal development significantly affect their intention to enroll in the master program of tourism for all the group of respondents, but do not significant for the group of senior-college students and bachelors. These results show that social support, career enhancement, and academic fit important consideration factors, instead of personal development for senior college students and bachelor's degree respondents. These results explain that the college students and bachelors do not yet pursue a higher level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, namely self-actualization when considering enrolling in the magister program of tourism. The main factors of motivations are to pursue safety (academic support), belonging (social support), and esteem (career enhancement). Their intentions are driven to enroll in the program by the desire to enhance, attain, or retain the many conditions that support these fundamental satisfactions as well as by a few more intellectual aspirations.



As predicted, social support, especially family support, positively related to their intention to enroll in the master program of tourism. Since the contribution of tourism industry to the gross domestic products in Indonesia is low (4.7% in the year 2019 or before pandemic), this industry has not been become development strategic priority. Becoming a professional or person in this industry has not, yet, become a popular job. Hence, social support increases the intention to enroll in the master program of tourism. Moreover, tourism education, importantly in the higher education sector, is lacking behind due to tourism as an academic field has just been declared on 31 May 2008 in Indonesia (Suwena, 2007).

As for career enhancement that positively related to their intention to enroll in the master program of tourism, this finding suggests that intention to enroll in magister tourism program becomes a way to establish their self-esteem. They develop their self-esteem as they get promoted to a higher position, remain competitive and professional in the business field, earn higher compensation, provide opportunity for more challenging work, and establish a wider connection after having a magister degree of tourism program.

Academic fit is also positively related to their intention to enroll in the master program of tourism to meet the demand for high quality human resources in tourism especially in the time of disruption and uncertainty. Some jobs in tourism will vanish in coming years because of robots and machines, so the curriculum should be relevantly designed, such as containing of student international exchange program, destination stewardship skills, political and ethical skills, human resource skills, and dynamic business skills.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

This study attempts to fill a research gap on the variables influencing Indonesian student desire to enroll in master's degree programs. The purpose of this study is to determine the variables that affect students' decision to pursue a master's degree in tourism. There are two different group used as the respondents: the group of senior-college students and bachelor's degree, meanwhile another group is all respondents, including senior-college students, bachelor's degree, and master's degree. The outcome demonstrates that personal development strongly influences respondents' intentions to enroll in the master's program in tourism across the board, but not significantly for the group of senior-college students and bachelor's degree holders. These findings demonstrate that for respondents with bachelor's degrees and senior college enrollments,

social support, career enhancement, and academic fit are more significant consideration factors than personal development. Their intention to participate in the tourism master's degree was favorably correlated with social support, particularly family support.

This finding implies that the intention to enroll in the master's degree in tourism becomes a strategy to create their self-esteem as it relates to career enhancement that was favorably associated to their intention to do so. To fulfill the demand for top-notch human resources in tourism, particularly in this period of disruption and uncertainty, academic fit is also strongly correlated with their intention to enroll in the master's program in tourism. Their intention to participate in the master's degree in tourism was favorably correlated with social support, particularly family support. Regarding job advancement that was positively connected to their goal to enroll in the master's degree in tourism, this data implies that their ambition to enroll in the program becomes a means of boosting their self-esteem. To fulfill the demand for top-notch human resources in the tourist industry, particularly in this period of upheaval and uncertainty, academic fit is also strongly correlated with their intention to enroll in the master's program in tourism.

Overcoming these limitations may offer suggestions for future research. Only four factors, including academic fit, career enhancement, social support, and personal development, directly influence behavioral intention. Other factors that may have an impact on students' intentions to enroll in tourism master programs were not examined in this study. As a result, additional research utilizing different variables is required, such as personal interest, environmental motivators, career switching, etc. Other than that, there are only students from Open University of Indonesia in this study population. Therefore, research results cannot be generalized outside this population. It is important that comparative studies be replicated at other universities or other non Open and Distance Learning Universities to increase the generalizations. However, this study does not guarantee the same results where different criteria are applied for allocations to different student population groups.

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