



**UNDERLYING DETERMINANTS OF CAREER DECISION MAKING OF  
HOSPITALITY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN UNIVERSITIES  
WITHIN NAIROBI METROPOLIS, KENYA**

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**Abstract**

*In Kenya, the hospitality industry is in shortage of thirty thousand skilled and professional employees as document in vision 2030. However, there has been a proliferation of Universities offering hospitality undergraduate management course. Hospitality students are seen as the needed workforce that would address this shortage. Therefore, this study sought to fill this gap by specifically investigate the effects of demographic factors (gender and age), individual background factors, and career outcome expectations on career decision making of hospitality undergraduate students. Findings revealed that majority of participants (69%) were females and many (71.9%) had joined hospitality career with secondary school qualifications. Captivatingly, majority (85.4%) were intending to seek a career in the hospitality industry following graduation. Multiple regression results revealed that, among the significant predictors (gender, individual background factors and career outcome expectations), career outcome expectations was the most significant predictor. Thus, the study concluded that career outcome expectations influence students' career decision making in the hospitality industry. The study recommends hospitality practitioners to provide more opportunities such as through field trips, internships and part-time jobs for students to directly experience a real industry job. By so doing, students will develop a clear image of what to expect from the industry or what awaits them following graduation. This would help towards better alignment of their career outcome expectations and thus encourage them to join the industry.*

**Keywords:** Career outcome expectations, career decision making, hospitality undergraduate student, individual background factors

**Background of the Study**

The tourism industry is one of the fastest growing compared to other sectors of the global economy and account for more than one third of the total global services trade (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2014). International tourism grew

by 1,138 million international arrivals in 2014 which was an increase by nearly 4.7% over the previous year (UNWTO, 2014). Since 1990, international tourism arrivals across the regions have increased by 4.3% annually and UNWTO expects them to rise by 4% per annum over the next 20 years. By region, growth of

international tourism arrivals is expected to increase by 2% to 5% in Africa alone (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2012). Given this rapid growth of tourism, there is need for skilled workers at all levels of the industry. One of the most important sectors of the tourism industry is the hospitality industry.

The industry is important for both international and domestic economies. On the international outlook, Lewis and Airey (2001) acknowledged that the industry is one of the fastest growing sectors and the largest globally. Go and Pine (1995) have posited that hospitality sector is very important for the development and success of the tourism industry as well as contributing to the economic and social well-being of a country. According to International Labor Organization [ILO] (2012) hospitality and tourism industry accounts for more than one-third of the total global services trade, and is viewed as a worldwide source of employment opportunities. Indeed, the industry represented an estimated 3% of the world's total labor force in 1999 which increased rapidly to about 8% generating more than 235 million jobs worldwide by 2010 (ILO, 2014).

Additionally, the industry is viewed as among the sectors that requires varying degrees of skills that allow for quick entry into the workforce by youth (ILO, 2014). According to UNWTO (2014) the industry is expected to create in excess of 296 million jobs by 2019 representing 9.2% of all global jobs (WTTC, 2010). Given these international and regional figures, it is quite clear that the hospitality industry is very imperative for the growth and development of economies and as a source of employment opportunities.

In Kenya, the hospitality industry generates massive employment opportunities and engenders a considerable number of economic

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activities. It is a backbone for economy of many countries, Kenya not being an exception (WTTC, 2013). In this respect, the hospitality and tourism industry is at the heart of the Kenyan economy and is known for its high job creation (Government of Kenya [GoK], 2008). The Ministry for Devolution and Planning (MDP) (2012) has reported that hotels and restaurants accounted for 34% of tourism earnings in the country which underlines the importance of this sector of the Kenyan hospitality industry. According to Kenya Vision 2030 that was documented in 2007, the hospitality industry is in shortage of 30,000 skilled and professional employees. Demand for skilled employees currently exceeds supply and this is likely to continue.

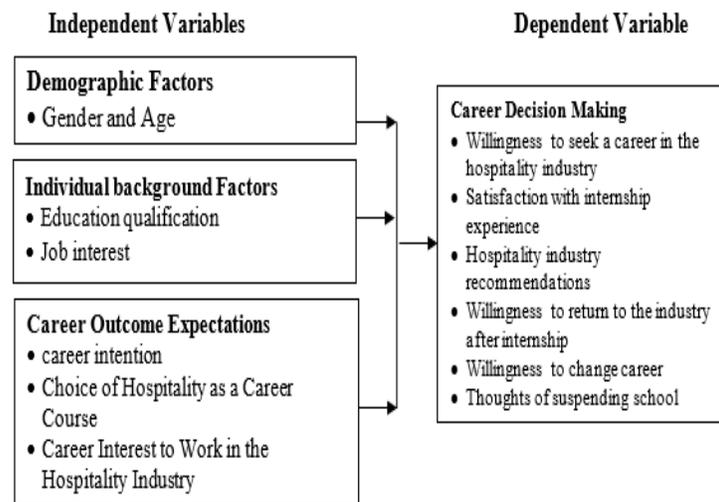
In line with the tremendous growth of world and local tourism industry, there has been a rise to many challenges, specifically associated with human resources issues related to unskilled workforce. For the sake of gaining a competitive advantage in an environment characterized by stiff competition, the hospitality industry has a need to attract and recruit large numbers of professional personnel. The hospitality undergraduate students are among the people of high competence that the industry should be attracting. In line with this need, the issue of career decision making in the hospitality industry is not new. According to Kerka (2000) career decision making and hence choice, is influenced by a number of factors. These factors may include demographics (gender and age), career outcome expectations, and individual background factors. Early empirical studies in United Kingdom addressing Human Resource Management in the hospitality industry revealed that even with high demand for employees, the hospitality industry has for long been facing difficulties in

attracting and retaining employees (Boella & Goss-Turner, 2005). Studies in Australia by Jenkins (2001) and Rudall, Deery and Stewart (1996) exploring hospitality careers among hospitality students revealed that a high proportion of students expressed little interest in pursuing a career in the industry after graduation. Although, hospitality students are naturally regarded as potential employees when they are in campus, they unfortunately show unwillingness to work in the industry upon graduation. Thus, the hospitality industry practitioners and academia have sought to understand what determinants drive career decision making in the industry (Jiang & Tribe, 2009; Richardson, 2009). It is on this background that the study sought to establish the underlying determinants of career decision making from the hospitality undergraduate students' perspective.

The main purpose of the study was to establish the underlying determinants of career decision making of hospitality undergraduate students enrolled in universities within Nairobi metropolis of Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to establish the effects of demographic factors (gender and age), individual background factors and career outcome expectations on career decision making of hospitality undergraduate students.

### Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework showing the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable (career decision making).



### Literature review

#### *Understanding the concept of career decision making*

The process of career decision making is meaningful in identifying and understanding the factors that are involved in an individual's career choices. The broader definitions of a career draw attention to the concept of career development which Brown and Brooks (1990, as cited in Patton & McMahan, 2014) described as being "for most people a lifelong process of getting ready to choose, choosing, and typically continuing to make choices from among the many occupations available in our society".

Career decision making is not a one-off activity, rather a process which may be involved throughout an individuals' life. There are many careers an individual is likely to make throughout his/her life, and these may include: 1) choosing a course of study after leaving school; 2) deciding on post-graduate studies; 3) deciding on a job offer; 4) making a change in career field; 5) choosing to specialize in a specific area within your chosen field; and 6) deciding whether to start an individual own business.

Frank Parsons initially introduced the notion of career decision making in 1909 (Patton & MacMahon, 2014). He discussed his ideas about the way careers are selected in his book 'Choosing a Vocation'. Parson suggested that vocational choices are premised on three broad factors: 1) an explicit understanding of an individual abilities, interests, ambitions, resources, shortcomings and knowledge of their causes; 2) knowledge of the requirements, success situations, pros and cons, compensation, and prospects in different lines of work; and 3) true reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts (Jones, 1994). Although Parsons' views of vocational choice were introduced in 1909, the concept of career decisions and the term career decision making were not properly acknowledged until the 1950s (Patton & McMahan, 2014).

#### *Demographic Factors and Career Decision Making*

Seeking and pursuing a career in the hospitality industry may entirely depend on a variety of factors. The individual factors can largely act as fuel or bar to students in their career decision making and include gender, age and other personal attributes.

Gender plays a significant role in assessing career options amongst students in the hospitality industry. For instance, in the hotel sector males are perceived to be better placed to get a better employment than females (Anafarta & Cizel, 2003). The hospitality industry also seems to have stereotypical standpoints regarding types of work that males and females should take. Men are viewed as suiting food and beverage jobs whereas women are seen as fitting housekeeping, sales and marketing (Wood, 1997) and administration (Hjalager & Anderson, 2001). In addition, men are viewed to advance in managerial positions whereas

women are inclined to family matters than those of the organization. Li and Leung (2001) have argued that the pressure amongst female employees of balancing work and family responsibilities may influence their career prospects and satisfaction.

Majority of managerial positions in the hospitality industry are viewed as male dominated as revealed by Harper, Brown and Irvine (2005) study which indicated that 85% of general managers in Scotland hotel sector were males. All the same, people are shifting from the norm that managers are male job positions. This is evidenced by a study that investigated career paths of hotel managers in China land which found one third of total number of managers in hotels were women (Li *et al.*, 2007).

Another demographic factor that may have an influence on how students make career choices is age. Findings of a study carried out in the United Kingdom (UK) by Janta (2011) investigating employment in the hospitality industry revealed that 80% of employees were between 18-29 years. Students' personal attributes are by far considered to have an influence into the way they make decisions regarding careers to take. For example, an empirical study by Akrivos, Ladkin and Reklitis (2007) revealed that individuals with particular personal attributes are better placed to have a remarkable career progression in the hospitality industry than those without them. These traits may include being flexible in work, enthusiasm, good communication abilities and ability to handle changes and fit in the organization characterized by personnel from all walks of cultures. In addition, Harkinson, Poulston, and Kim (2011) suggested the ability to remain calm in harder and trying times as an attribute

that makes an individual fit for hospitality industry.

Apart from individual and environmental factors, there are other factors that heavily influence the way hospitality students make career decision making. These include the family background, socioeconomic background, and the opportunity to undertake work experience. Family background plays an essential role in students' career decision making as revealed by an empirical study conducted by Mau, Ellsworth and Hawley (2008) on graduate teachers pursuing a career in teaching. The findings revealed that many graduate students in teaching as a course, who showed high satisfaction with teaching as a career, 7% had fathers and 16% had mothers who were teachers. It is also important to investigate whether hospitality students' decision making process is influenced by their family backgrounds on whether a mother or father works in the hospitality industry or not.

#### *Individual Background Factors, Career Outcome Expectations and Career Decision Making*

Previous research has looked into students' career decision making from two faces; (1) why students choose a particular course, and (2) what makes the students choose a particular job following graduation. Empirical research based on the first face suggested that students chose to enroll in particular courses based on various reasons. For instance, a study by Maringe (2006) investigating the factors that young and youthful college students found imperative while selecting career courses revealed that they selected a course based on interest in the subject, employment opportunities and career prospects after graduation. Structure of the course, tuition fee and other costs related to the course were also found to contribute heavily on

how decisions pertaining to career learning were made.

Another study, conducted among the library and information students revealed that majority did not chose a course because it was their first choice, but based on the possibility of university entry and positive job opportunity following graduation (Moniarou-Papaconstantinou, Tsatsaroni, & Koulaidis, 2010). These factors contribute significantly to why students join a particular university. The findings are consistent with O'Mahony, Whitelaw and McWilliams (2008) study on the reasons why Australian hospitality and tourism students selected the course. This study found that many students made decisions based on the choice of a university rather than the course into which they would be accepted. In addition, some students' decision to select a course was fundamentally based on other perspectives including opportunities for job in the related industry, perceived image of the industry and previous internship experience. Thus, it is likely from these studies that students make career decisions and choices based on job opportunities in the industry, family support and influence, and economic background, rather than specific career interests (Ghuangpeng, 2011). These studies irradiated on the factors that affect the process of career decision making and it would be very imperative to investigate whether the situation is the same in Kenya being a developing country.

Researches based on the second face have investigated what makes the students choose a particular job following graduation. These studies have suggested that students' career decision making is premised on a variety of career outcome expectations. Sharf (2006) has defined career outcome expectations as a person's estimate of the likelihood of a

particular outcome. For example, Schwarz, Wdowiak, Almer-Jarz and Breiteneker (2009) study investigating the association between gender and students' decisions to pursue an entrepreneurship career suggested that male students showed a high desire to own their individual business than do female students. Similar gender disparities have also been found among students doing accounting courses (Danziger & Eden, 2007), with male students being more interested in having their own business than do female students. Moreover, previous research has suggested that hospitality students have had unreasonable opinions of the jobs in the industry (Raybould & Wilkins, 2005).

## **Methodology**

### *Research Design*

The study used descriptive survey design while addressing the set research objectives. This design was useful while establishing the determinants of career decision making on the students' career choices following graduation and to enable generalization of results. The use of descriptive survey design saves time, expenses and the amount of information generated is valid while the respondents' bias is reduced because they complete identically worded self-reported measures without interference.

### *Sampling, procedures and data collection*

The study used purposeful, stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used in two stages, (1) to select private and public universities offering hospitality degree course, and (2) to select undergraduate hospitality students in their fourth academic year. This allowed the selection of information rich cases for in-depth  
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analysis related to the study problem statement under investigation. The type of the University – whether public or private formed the basis for using stratified sampling technique. Simple random sampling technique was utilized while selecting student participants in class during the time of research for inclusion in the study sample.

A self-completed questionnaire was chosen as the most useful means of obtaining information from the student participants because they could be targeted in a cost-effective way.

## **Results**

### *Demographic Profiles of the respondents*

#### *Gender*

The sample comprised 69% (n=66) female and 31% (n=30) male participants. This distribution was consistent with Richardson's (2009) where 66% of surveyed hospitality students were females, as well as Kim, McCleary and Kaufman's (2010) study findings in United State of America universities where 59.8% of participants from hospitality program were females. A crosstabulation between gender and participants' career intention following graduation revealed that both male (n=27, 90.0%) and female (n=55, 83.3%) intended to seek a career in the hospitality industry. Overall, the total number of participants who indicated intention to seek a career in the hospitality industry following graduation were 82 (85.4%) and only 14 (14.6%) had no career intention in the industry as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1 Respondents' Career Decisions Associated with Gender**

		Intention to seek a career in the industry after Graduation			
		Yes		No	
		n	%	n	%
Gender	Male	27	90.0%	3	10.0%
	Female	55	83.3%	11	16.7%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>85.4%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14.6%</b>

### Age

The age of majority participants ranged from 21-30 years (n=80, 83.3%) followed by 17-20 years (n=12, 12.5%) and few (n=4, 4.2%) were between 31-40 years. A cross tabulation of the relationship between participants' age and career intention in the hospitality industry following graduation indicated that majority (n=82) in each age bracket expressed intention to seek a career in the hospitality industry following graduation as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 Respondents' Career Intention Associated with Age**

		Intention to seek a career in the industry after Graduation			
		Yes		No	
		n	%	n	%
Participants' Age	17-20 years	12	14.6%	0	0%
	21-30 years	66	80.5%	14	100%
	31-40 years	4	4.9%	0	0%
	>40 years	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>82</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100%</b>

These findings hold resonance with studies conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) and Scotland by Martin and Gardiner (2007) and Magd (2003) respectively whose findings suggested that the hospitality industry was perceived as a youthful workplace. The findings of this study are consistent with these studies and reveals that the hospitality industry is perceived as fitting young people. Going with

the quantitative data on participants' age, majority (n=66, 80.5%) who expressed intention to seek a career in the hospitality industry following graduation were between 21-30 years followed by 17-20 years (n=12, 14.6%). It is quite clear that most participants were youthful.

### Education Qualification Background

Results revealed that majority participants (n=69, 71.9%) enrolled for hospitality management degree course with high school qualifications followed by higher national diploma (n=27, 28.1%). These findings reflect the differences in higher education career pathways into hospitality management course in the Kenyan perspective. This could eventually point to the direction in which individuals makes career decisions whether to seek a career in the hospitality industry or not following graduation.

### Job Interest in the Hospitality Industry

Table 3 demonstrates that most participants (n=24, 25.0%) were highly interested to work in the airline sector followed by food and beverage (n=21, 21.9%), front office (n=20, 20.8%), marketing (n=12, 12.5%), human resource (n=9, 9.4%), banqueting (n=7, 7.3%), and a few in housekeeping (n=3, 3.1%).

**Table 3. Participants' Job Interest in the Hospitality Industry**

Job Interest	Frequency (n)	%
Airline	24	25.0%
Food and Beverage	21	21.9%
Front Office	20	20.8%
Marketing	12	12.5%
Human Resource	9	9.4%
Banqueting	7	7.3%
Housekeeping	3	3.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100%</b>

These findings differ with Ghuangpeng (2011) study findings investigating the factors that influenced career decision making of Australian hospitality and tourism students, which found food and beverage as the most popular career path.

#### *Participants' Career intention in the Hospitality Industry*

Analysis of the participants' career intentions revealed that majority (n=82, 85.4%) planned to seek for a career in the hospitality industry following internship experiences and graduation. Only 14.6% (n=14) had no intention to seek a career in the hospitality industry following internship and graduation as demonstrated in Table 4.

**Table 4 Career Intention in the Hospitality Industry**

Career Intention	Frequency (n)	%
Yes	82	85.4%
No	14	14.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100%</b>

This ratio is high and certainly shows that participants in this study considered a career in the hospitality industry as their favorite following graduation. These findings resonate well with research conducted in New Zealand by Bamford (2012) which investigated undergraduate students' perceptions of a career in the tourism and hospitality industry and found out that majority (69%) of participants were likely seek a career in the industry upon graduation.

#### *Participants' Choice of Hospitality as a Career Course*

Analysis of participants' rating of different factors of choice of hospitality management as a career course is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5 Participants' Choice of Hospitality as a Career Course**

Statements	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Ranking
I had made a personal career choice to enroll in the hospitality industry	4.45	1.09	1
Good opportunities for career advancement	4.31	1.16	2
Availability of jobs in the industry	4.18	1.37	3
The industry's work-placement environment	3.96	1.42	4
The industry profile reported by the media	3.48	1.55	5
Influence by close family members	2.93	1.67	6
I have worked in the industry after high school and enjoyed it	2.82	1.79	7
Choice of the University	2.78	1.86	8
Word of mouth from hospitality students	2.70	1.64	9
Influenced by School teachers or mentors	2.64	1.63	10
Influenced by friends	2.41	1.71	11
I had worked previously in hospitality family business	1.92	1.66	12
My parents are hoteliers (or were hoteliers)	1.90	1.67	13

Notes. n = 96. A five-point Likert scale was used with 1 indicating "Not Important at all" and 5 "Very Important"

From the table, it is clear that participants' rated 'personal career choice to enroll in the industry' ( $\bar{x} = 4.45$ , S.D = 1.09), 'good opportunities for career advancements' ( $\bar{x} = 4.31$ , SD = 1.16), and 'availability of jobs in the industry' ( $\bar{x} = 4.18$ , SD = 1.37) as the most important determinants of choice of hospitality as a course. Participants also regarded 'the industry work-placement environment' ( $\bar{x} = 3.96$ , SD =1.42) and the industry profile reported by the media ( $\bar{x} = 3.48$ , SD =1.55) as important determinants towards the choice of hospitality as a career course. These findings are consistent with Maringe (2006) study which investigated the factors identified as important by youthful college students and found that students chose a particular course based on the job opportunities

and career prospects following internships and graduation.

However, participants demonstrated less importance with the ‘influence of close family members’ ( $\bar{x} = 2.93$ ,  $SD = 1.68$ ), ‘previous work experience after high school’ ( $\bar{x} = 2.82$ ,  $SD = 1.79$ ), ‘choice of university’ ( $\bar{x} = 2.78$ ,  $SD = 1.86$ ) and viewed ‘my parents are hoteliers (were hoteliers)’ ( $\bar{x} = 1.90$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ) as slightly important or not important at all. What participants rated as less important towards choice of hospitality as a career course was seen as the most important in other empirical studies. For example, O’Mahony et al., (2008) study that was conducted in Australia investigating the reasons why hospitality students selected the course. Based on the findings of this study, most students made career decisions based on the university they would be accepted rather than the course itself.

#### *Participants’ Career Interest to Work in the Hospitality Industry*

Table 6 shows that, in general, the means for the determinants of participants’ job interest in the hospitality industry were all above 3.00; indicating a high level of agreement.

Table 6 Career Interests to Work in the Hospitality Industry

Variables	$\bar{x}$	SD	Ranking
Availability of job opportunities	4.38	0.90	1
Job that provides for my financial needs	4.34	0.93	2
Job that fits my educational qualification	4.33	1.08	3
Job that fits my personality and abilities	4.20	1.20	4
Job incentives (e.g. salary, allowances)	4.19	1.08	5
Career prospects	4.15	0.97	6
Organization’s profile (e.g. size, status, image, reputation...)	4.15	1.10	7
Job that fits my lifestyle	4.04	1.22	8
Career status	3.85	1.16	9
Job that is positively viewed by my friends, family and community	3.39	1.55	10
Job that is gender fitting	3.31	1.53	11
Job that’s fits my age	3.28	1.48	12
Family connections	2.82	1.41	13

Notes.  $n = 96$ . A five-point Likert scale was used with 1 indicating “Strongly Disagree” and 5 “Strongly Agree”

In particular, participants placed the highest value ( $\bar{x} = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ) on ‘availability of job opportunities’ which might reflect on the current economic situation in Kenya, a country classified as developing regardless of its massive economic progress. In such a situation, it is not hard for people to feel insecure economically. Based on these results, participants wish that hospitality industry would give them employment that provides for their financial needs ( $\bar{x} = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ), fits their education qualification ( $\bar{x} = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ), fits their personal abilities and personality ( $\bar{x} = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ), pays well ( $\bar{x} = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ), fits their career prospects ( $\bar{x} = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ), offered by a reputed organization ( $\bar{x} = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ), fits their lifestyle ( $\bar{x} = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ), with reputed status ( $\bar{x} = 3.85$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ), that is perceived positively by peers, family and

community ( $\bar{x}$  =3.39, SD=1.55), fits their gender ( $\bar{x}$  =3.31, SD=1.53) and fits their age ( $\bar{x}$  =3.28, SD=1.48). However, participants did not agree or were neutral that family connections would influence their choice to work in the hospitality industry ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.82, SD=1.41). Based on these findings it is most likely that respondents would join the hospitality industry due to availability of job opportunities, jobs that provides for financial needs, career prospects and growth, and the job that would fit their education qualifications, personality and abilities.

### Regression Results

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to assess the main effects of the independent variables (demographic factors (gender and age), individual background factors, and career outcome expectations) on career decision making of hospitality undergraduate students as presented in Table 7.

Table 7 Regression Analysis Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error Change Statistics					
				Estimate	Change	R Square	F Change	df1	df2
1	.787 <sup>a</sup>	.687	.682	6.76923	.687	165.085	6	74	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Gender, Age, Individual Background factors, Career Outcome Expectations

Results in Table 7 indicated that the regression model multiple correlation coefficient  $R$  was (.787) which point to a considerable relationship between the predictor variables and the dependent variable. Moreover, results revealed a determination coefficient  $R^2 = .687$ , demonstrating that about 68.7% of the variance in career decision making of hospitality undergraduate students could be explained by the model significant predictor variables. The overall regression model was significant ( $p < .05$ ). As shown in Table 7, the effects of gender

( $B = -3.85, p = .002$ ), individual background factors ( $B = 1.209, p = .009$ ), and career outcome expectations ( $B = 1.35, p = .027$ ) were all significant at 5% significance level, except for age ( $B = -2.175, p = .236$ ). Thus, hypotheses  $H_{01a}$ ,  $H_{02}$ , and  $H_{03}$  were not supported.

Table 8 Regression Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	BB	Std. Error			
(Constant)	4.657	.359		12.975	.000*
Gender	-3.850	.050	-.117	-1.067	.002*
Age	-2.175	.059	-.327	-2.954	.236
1 Individual Background factors	1.209	.032	.001	5.012	.009*
Career Outcome Expectations	1.350	.045	.122	1.028	.027*

a. Dependent Variable: Career Decision Making

b. \* $P < 0.05$

Results in Table 8 also indicated that although little differences exists, career outcome expectations was the most significant predictor of career decision making among the three determinants considered in this study, followed by individual background factors, and gender respectively. The overall hypothesized multiple regression model equation was:

$$Y (CDM) = \alpha + B_3COE + B_2IBF - B_1G + e$$

Where;

CMD = career decision making

COE = career outcome expectations

IBF = Individual Background Factors

G = gender

$\alpha$  = intercept term

e = error term

B = regression coefficients based on the significant predictor variables.

Overall regression model equation:

$Y$  (Career Decision Making) = 4.657 + 1.350 Career Outcome Expectations + 1.209 Individual Background Factors – 3.850 Gender + 0.359

**Recapitulation of the research findings, discussions, conclusions, and recommendations**

*Hypotheses based on Demographic Factors*

Two hypotheses were tested on participants' demographic factors comprising of gender and age. Hypothesis  $H_{01a}$  stated that gender would have no relationship with career decision making. Based on multiple regression results (see Table 8), this hypothesis was rejected ( $B = -3.85$ ,  $t = -1.067$ ,  $p = .002$ ) implying that there was a relationship between gender and career decision making for hospitality undergraduate students. Results were consistent with Martin and Gardiner's (2007) study investigating the association between gender and a career in the UK hospitality sector which found that hospitality workforce in the UK was predominantly male dominated (80%). In addition, the study results supported Anafarta and Cizel's (2003) study investigating the relationship between gender and a career in hospitality industry which found out that gender had a major influence on the students' career opportunities specifically in the hotel sector. The study revealed that male employees were perceived as better placed for career opportunities in the industry than females. Hypothesis  $H_{01b}$  which stated that age would have no relationship with career decision making was maintained ( $B = -2.175$ ,  $t = -2.954$ ,  $p = .236$ ). This finding was inconsistent with Magd's (2003) study investigating the hospitality manager's perceived age requirements of the workforce which suggested that they were reluctant to recruit aged employees.

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*Hypothesis based on Individual Background Factors*

$H_{02}$  posited that individual background factors would have no relationship with career decision making. Regression results revealed positive and significant results ( $B = 1.209$ ,  $t = 5.012$ ,  $p = .009$ ), thus the hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that when students' individual background factors are positive, they are more satisfied in their course and would seek a career in the hospitality industry following internship and graduation. The factor was constituted from a variety of items comprising of influence by family members, friends, mentors, media, the hospitality and tourism industry profile, and perception regarding availability of job opportunities.

These results were consistent with Maringe (2006) study investigating the factors that young and youthful college students found imperative while selecting career courses which found out that they selected a course based on interest in the subject, employment opportunities and career prospects after graduation. In addition the findings resonated well with another study, conducted among the library and information students which revealed that majority did not chose a course because it was their first choice, but based on the possibility of university entry and positive job opportunity following graduation (Moniarou-Papaconstantinou *et al.*, 2010).

Moreover, family background plays an essential role in students' career decision making as revealed by an empirical study conducted by Mau, Ellsworth and Hawley (2008) on graduate teachers pursuing a career in teaching. The findings revealed that many graduate students in teaching as a course, who showed high satisfaction with teaching as a career, 7% had fathers and 16% had mothers who were

teachers. Thus, individual background factors plays an important role in students' career decision upon graduation.

### *Hypothesis based on Career Outcome Expectations*

According to Sharf (2006) career outcomes expectations refers to individual's approximation of the likely possibility of an outcome. One hypothesis was tested with regard to this factor.  $H_03$  posited that career outcome expectations would have no relationship with career decision making. The hypothesis was rejected ( $B = 1.350, t = 1.028, p = .027$ ) indicating that perceptions of a job that that would fit education, lifestyle, salary and remuneration expectations, career prospects and career advancements contribute to students' sense of belonging and commitment to the hospitality industry and, ultimately, influences their decision to seek for a prolonged career upon graduation. These findings are consistent with Schein's (1978) Career Anchors Theory which argues that individual's anticipations and abilities related to job acts heavily on career decision making. Besides, the results support the findings based on the mean analysis of items influencing the respondents' career interests to work in the hospitality industry.

However, the study findings were inconsistent with Ghuangpeng's (2011) study in Australia which found that career outcome expectations did not predict career interest among the hospitality students. The difference between Ghuangpeng's (2011) study and the present study results on participants' career interests could be attributed to the whole situation that they were conducted in different countries with different economic developments, and thus different drivers of career interest. It could be argued that career interest of the students in the current study is highly driven by educational

qualifications, personality and ability, provision for financial needs and availability of opportunities in the industry.

### *Conclusions*

On the basis of the outlined study findings the following conclusions were drawn. First, it is likely that hospitality industry remains female dominated. Therefore, it can be concluded that gender is a determinant that drives career decision making of hospitality students. Second, the industry workforce is characterized by youthful workforce. Third, regarding the job interest in the industry, the airline industry seems to be very attractive to the students. Food and beverage and front office jobs remain relatively uninviting to students possibly because of associated challenges such as working for long hours, working during weekends and relatively low salaries. Last but not the least, career outcome expectations, individual background factors and gender are all underlying determinants of career decision making of hospitality undergraduate students. However, career outcome expectations is the most significant and important predictor of career decision making of hospitality undergraduate students.

### *Recommendations for policy and practice*

Taking into considerations the study findings, it is recommended that hospitality academicians to incorporate aspects of job specialization such that students concentrate in one area of hospitality in their third year. These areas include front office, food and beverage, housekeeping to name but a few. By so doing, it would serve a dual purpose of addressing the students dream jobs in the industry and end up giving them more skills in one specific area. With regard to the hospitality industry practitioners, it is important to increase people's

understanding of the industry, to develop appealing internships that address the concerns of the students. This way the student interns will feel encouraged and cultivate their spirit to seek and commit themselves to long-term career in the industry. In addition, hospitality practitioners need to provide more opportunities such as through field trips, internships and part-time jobs for students to directly experience a real industry job. By so doing, students will develop a clear image of what to expect from the industry or what awaits them following graduation. This would help in aligning their career outcome expectations and thus encourage them to join the industry – this factor was found to be the most significant predictor of career decision making. Although individual background factors contributes significantly on the students decision to pursue hospitality management as a career course, study findings suggest that hospitality academicians need to invite more industry representatives to give shared seminars to hospitality management students. Employees who are hospitality management students could be encouraged to lead these, as they will have comparable backgrounds to the current students. Additionally, this thesis recommends increased liaison between the hospitality industry and academia in order to influence the learning outcomes more toward what the industry wants;

#### *Recommendations for future research*

This study has also paved several directions for future research. First, the study was conducted

among fourth year hospitality undergraduate students, and it is recommended that further similar research be carried out among students of different educational levels such as those taking diplomas and certificates as well as first, second and third year hospitality undergraduate students for purposes of comparison. This would provide a wider perspective for forming generalizations regarding career decision making of hospitality students. Second, the current study evaluated the determinants of career decision making within the hospitality students' perspective. Further research need to be conducted using the basis for the current research in evaluating the industry's perceptions of hospitality graduates in Kenya. Third, the study used descriptive survey design to evaluate the determinants of career decision making of hospitality undergraduate students. Therefore, a longitudinal study where hospitality students' perceptions and intentions of the industry would be evaluated when they are enrolled in the universities and follow them through to graduation and even beyond would be of greater value to infer causal associations of career outcome expectations, individual background factors and gender as related to career decision making of hospitality undergraduate students. Last but not the least, there is need for a future research that will look into the effects of internship experiences on career decision making of hospitality undergraduate students.

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