

Full Length Research Paper

An inventory of marketing skills essential for tourism entrepreneurs: A 3-domain approach

N. de Klerk*, A. L. Bevan-Dye and A. Garnett

Economic Sciences, North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus, P O Box 1174, Vanderbijlpark 1900, Gauteng, South Africa.

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This article postulates that specific marketing skills contribute to the success of a tourism entrepreneur. The purpose of the research was first, to identify the marketing skills that are critical to the success of tourism entrepreneurs, and secondly, to present findings and recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of skills development in tourism management higher educational programmes for the benefit of both tourism entrepreneurs and academics in the field of tourism, entrepreneurship and marketing. Based on previous theoretical discussions regarding marketing skills, an empirical study was conducted to identify the most important skills, using multiple item indicators from previous studies. A descriptive research design was employed, whereby a questionnaire survey was conducted into skills development for tourism entrepreneurs. The findings of the study provide important insights into the marketing skills that tourism entrepreneurs require in order to be successful in the current economic climate, based on a comprehensive empirical investigation of the perceptions of tourism entrepreneurs, tourism management academics and tourism management students.

Key words: Marketing skills, tourism marketing, entrepreneurship.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing is more important to the tourism industry than ever before because of the more volatile, fragmented and sophisticated nature of the contemporary market (Bennett, 1995; Morrison, 2002). A variety of factors has resulted in the increased importance of tourism marketing and, as such, marketers of tourism offerings need to adopt the principles of marketing (Lumsdon, 1999). Greater competition, increased market fragmentation and complexity, and consumers who are more experienced, have created a greater emphasis on marketing in the tourism industry. Therefore, tourism marketing has become more professional and aggressive (Morrison, 2002).

Entrepreneurs require relevant marketing knowledge and skills for subsequent business and career success (Sexton and Kasarda, 1992), and tourism entrepreneurs

are no different. The question arises as to which marketing skills are required, specifically by tourism entrepreneurs, in order to start, manage and grow a successful business.

Within the South African tourism industry, there is a dire need to recognise the importance of entrepreneurship (North, 2002; Mensah and Benedict, 2010). The current state of the South African economy is of concern for the future adults of the country. Young people face socio-economic challenges such as crime, corruption, health, mismanagement, poor living conditions and unemployment (North, 2002; North-West Youth Commission, 1999).

Tourism is heralded as being potentially one of the leading driving forces for economic expansion worldwide (Alteljevic, 2009) and this is especially true in post-apartheid South Africa, where economic expansion is sorely needed (Visser and Barker, 2004). Van Dijk (2004) reiterates this notion by indicating that opportunities for new South African entrepreneurs to succeed abound, especially in tourism.

*Corresponding author. E-mail: Natasha.deKlerk@nwu.ac.za.
Tel: (016) 910 3364.

Worryingly though, there is a lack of people armed with the required orientation and skills to create new businesses (Kroon et al., 2003; Kroon and Meyer, 2001).

A major problem facing emerging entrepreneurs is the marketing of their tourism enterprises (Rogerson, 2004). Owing to the unique characteristics of tourism offerings, the marketing of tourism offerings is more challenging when contrasted to the marketing of physical entities (Lamb et al., 2004).

Various authors (Gilmore and Carson, 1996; Bennett and Strydom, 2001; Weaver and Lawton, 2006) concur with this, stating that marketing products is fundamentally different from marketing services such as tourism, owing to the unique characteristics associated with this sector. Therefore, the marketing mix elements for tourism offerings need to be expanded to meet the distinctive needs created by these characteristics (Lamb et al., 2004). According to Lumsdon (1999), tourism is classified as a service industry, ranking alongside finance, retailing, commercial and professional services.

De Beer et al. (2002) point out that the small business entrepreneurs often become so caught up with day-to-day management activities that they devote insufficient time to marketing their enterprises. This is problematic, as Rogerson (2004) denotes that small business entrepreneurs need to address a variety of issues for the successful establishment and growth of their enterprise - marketing being one of the most significant of these issues.

Morrison et al. (2001) emphasise that the tourism entrepreneur should provide customers with what they want and need. In order to do so successfully, necessitates that the entrepreneur stay abreast of major trends and developments in the market (Van Aardt et al., 2000) as the business environment has changed dramatically over the past few decades, and it may be expected to change even more rapidly in the years to come (Van Dijk, 2004).

According to Morrison et al. (2001), entrepreneurs are people who follow marketing principles, where the application of these principles and theories play a vital role in the success and sustenance of a business. Therefore, marketing is vital to the entrepreneurial process. A business generates an income from marketing its offerings and, as such, the marketing function is pivotal to any small business entrepreneur (De Beer et al., 2002).

Cant et al. (2006) emphasises that marketing is directed at satisfying needs and wants through exchange processes and states that the ultimate goal of all marketing activity is to facilitate mutually satisfying exchanges between parties. Marketing helps enterprises to achieve their objectives, which include survival, profitability and growth (Lumsdon, 1999).

There are few direct references, in the literature, pertaining to the marketing skills necessary to operate a small enterprise successfully (Hill, 2001), although, very limited in the South African tourism market context.

South Africa offers significant potential for tourism entrepreneurs owing to the country's diverse tourism offerings namely, accessible wildlife sanctuaries, unspoilt landscapes, wilderness areas and indigenous forests, diverse cultures, and generally sunny and mild-to-hot climate and a well-developed infrastructure attracting local and foreign visitors to all parts of the country (Ntuli and Potgieter, 2001).

The post-2010 FIFA world cup has resulted in an oversupply of tourism offerings, thereby increasing the level of competitiveness in the market. Effective marketing is required in order to stimulate demand. In the next section, relevant literature pertaining to marketing skills is reviewed followed by the objective of the study. The research methodology is then discussed, findings are presented and implications are discussed.

Marketing skills

Wickham (1998) defines skills as knowledge that is demonstrated by action; that is, an ability to perform in a certain way. Synonymous with the word skills are the words competencies or abilities. According to Middleton and Long (1990), marketing skills are those skills that focus on facilitating, enabling and optimising the marketing process. There are distinctive marketing skills that distinguish the behaviour of the trained marketer from someone who is not trained. Marketers have to carry out a variety of tasks that require different marketing skills.

A broad search of the literature on essential marketing skills unearths a considerable number of different skills that are all potentially important for future entrepreneurs. It is not the purpose of this article to provide in-depth information on each essential marketing skill but simply to provide a brief understanding of the essential marketing skills required by entrepreneurs.

For the purpose of this article, the marketing skills required by entrepreneurs are classified into five main constructs, namely personal characteristics, functional skills, general marketing skills, marketing mix strategy skills and general management skills.

Table 1 presents a list of 38 skills and the supporting studies suggesting their potential importance for future entrepreneurs. For the purpose of this article, the marketing skills required by tourism entrepreneurs are classified into five main constructs.

Table 1 presents the personal characteristics, functional skills, general marketing skills, marketing mix

Table 1. Matrix of essential marketing skills for the tourism entrepreneur, as derived from the literature.

Skills	Author(s)
Construct 1: Personal characteristics:	
Willingness to learn	Kelly and Gaedeke (1990), Gilmore and Carson (1996), Meldrum (1996), Gray et al. (2007)
Teamwork skills	Middleton and Long (1990), Phillips and Zuber-Skerrit (1993), Neelankavil (1994), Gilmore and Carson (1996), Davis et al. (2002), Taylor (2003), Dacko (2006), Gray et al. (2007)
Leadership skills	Kelly and Gaedeke (1990), Middleton and Long (1990), Neelankavil (1994), O'Brien and Deans (1995), Gilmore and Carson (1996), Meldrum (1996), Hill et al. (1998), Duke (2002), Dacko (2006), Gray et al. (2007)
Interpersonal skills	Thomas (1983), Kelly and Gaedeke (1990), Phillips and Zuber-Skerrit (1993), Floyd and Gordon (1998), Kretovics (1999), Duke (2002), Dacko (2006), Gray et al. (2007)
Ability to work under pressure	Gilmore and Carson (1996), Gray et al. (2007)
Self-confidence	Middleton and Long (1990), Boldly et al. (1993), Gray et al. (2007)
Construct 2: Functional skills:	
Verbal communication skills	Kelly and Gaedeke (1990), Middleton and Long (1990), Phillips and Zuber-Skerrit (1993), Neelankavil (1994), O'Brien and Deans (1995), Gilmore and Carson (1996), Lundstrom and White (1997), 12, 15, Davis et al. (2002), Duke (2002), Taylor (2003), Dacko (2006), Gray et al. (2007)
Written communication skills	Kelly and Gaedeke (1990), Middleton and Long (1990), Phillips and Zuber-Skerrit (1993), Neelankavil (1994), O'Brien and Deans (1995), Gilmore and Carson (1996), Lundstrom and White (1997), Floyd and Gordon (1998), Sneed and Morgan (1999), Davis et al. (2002), Duke (2002), Dacko (2006), Gray et al. (2007)
Problem solving skills	Kelly and Gaedeke (1990), O'Brien and Deans (1995), Floyd and Gordon (1998), Sneed and Morgan (1999), Taylor (2003), Gray et al. (2007)
Change management skills	Thomas (1983), Gilmore and Carson (1996), Meldrum (1996), Gray et al. (2007)
Analytical skills	Thomas (1983), O'Brien and Deans (1995), Gilmore and Carson (1996), Lundstrom and White (1997), Duke (2002), Taylor (2003), Dacko (2006), Gray et al. (2007)
Numerical skills	Middleton and Long (1990), O'Brien and Deans (1995)
Strategic thinking skills	Thomas (1983), Middleton and Long (1990), Gilmore and Carson (1996), Palmer (2002), Gray et al. (2007)
Construct 3: General marketing skills:	
Customer relationship management skills	Middleton and Long (1990), Gilmore and Carson (1996), Meldrum (1996), Hwang and Lockwood (2006), Gray et al. (2007)
Selling skills	Middleton and Long (1990), Gray et al. (2007)
International marketing skills	Middleton and Long (1990), Meldrum (1996), Gray et al. (2007)
Business-to-business marketing skills	Gray et al. (2007)
Business-to-consumer marketing skills	Middleton and Long (1990), Gray et al. (2007)
Consumer behaviour analysis skills	Thomas (1983), Middleton and Long (1990)
Marketing research skills	Thomas (1983), Middleton and Long (1990), Gray et al. (2007)
Market analysis skills	Middleton and Long (1990), Gray et al. (2007)

Table 1. Continued.

Societal marketing skills	Phillips and Zuber-Skerrit (1993), Duke (2002), Dacko (2006), Gray et al. (2007)
Analysing physical evidence skills	Rafiq and Amed (1995), Radder and Wang (2006)
Marketing process analysis skills	Thomas (1983), Rafiq and Amed (1995), Radder and Wang (2006)
Construct 4: Marketing mix strategies skills:	
Strategic marketing skills	Middleton and Long (1990), Gray et al. (2007)
Product management skills	Middleton and Long (1990), Gilmore and Carson (1996), Gray et al. (2007)
Brand management skills	Middleton and Long (1990), Gray et al. (2007)
Pricing skills	Middleton and Long (1990), O'Brien and Deans (1995), Gilmore and Carson (1996), Gray et al. (2007)
Product development skills	Thomas (1983), Gilmore and Carson (1996), Gray et al. (2007)
Distribution skills	Middleton and Long (1990), Gray et al. (2007)
Marketing communication skills	Thomas (1983), Middleton and Long (1990), Gilmore and Carson (1996), Hill et al. (1998), Gray et al. (2007)
Retail management skills	Middleton and Long (1990), Gray et al. (2007)
Direct marketing skills	Middleton and Long (1990), Gray et al. (2007)
E-marketing skills	Duke (2002), Elliott and Boshoff (2005), Gray et al. (2007)
Marketing mix optimisation skills	Thomas (1983), Middleton and Long (1990), Gray et al. (2007)
Construct 5: Managerial skills:	
Organisational skills	Thomas (1983), Middleton and Long (1990), Meldrum (1996), Hill et al. (1998), Gray et al. (2007)
Negotiation skills	Middleton and Long (1990), Boldly et al. (1993), Dacko (2006), Gray et al. (2007)
Time management skills	Middleton and Long (1990), Dacko (2006), Gray et al. (2007)
People management skills	O'Brien and Deans (1995), Gilmore and Carson (1996), Lundstrom and White (1997), Gray et al. (2007)

strategy skills and managerial skills essential to the tourism marketer as derived from relevant prior research. Personal characteristics (Construct 1) refer to those behaviours that are the most natural, instinctive and habitual to an individual.

Research conducted by Middleton and Long (1990) showed that the marketer's personal characteristics are very important to their marketing skills and are good predictors of performance. Functional skills (Construct 2) refer to the ability to use the tools, procedures and techniques of a specialised field. Functional skills are crucial to tourism marketers and relate to the operational facets of the tactical aspects of services marketing activity (Gilmore and Carson, 1996).

Marketers require general marketing skills (Construct 3) to apply specific marketing knowledge in order to ensure

the future profitability of the enterprise, as well as to achieve greater consumer satisfaction and stronger competitive positioning (Dacko, 2006).

In order to meet the needs of the consumers, marketers require general marketing skills (Lagrosen, 2005). Marketers require marketing mix strategy skills (Construct 4) because tourism marketers are constantly engaged in decision making about all aspects of marketing activity, for example product development, pricing, communication and distribution. These decision-making areas of services marketing provide insight into the essential skills required by tourism marketers (Gilmore and Carson, 1996).

General management skills (Construct 5) refer to the tendency for effective marketing managers to be good at interacting, allocating, monitoring and organising.

Managerial skills are defined as skills which do not require specific knowledge of marketing to be used effectively, therefore referring to a whole set of non-marketing specific skills which are essential for the practice of marketing (Meldrum, 1996). Managerial skills for the tourism marketer are specific to the roles and issues important to services marketing management decision making, and it is important that marketers possess these skills (Gilmore and Carson, 1996).

Gray (2007) states that limited research has been done comparing marketing practitioners, educators and students and it is therefore unclear whether these three groups differ in their perceptions of the skills and knowledge that are most useful for future marketing managers, and to what extent. Despite the importance of skills required by marketers, only limited research has been undertaken on developing an inventory of marketing skills essential to the tourism entrepreneur.

Objectives of the study

The primary aim of the study reported in this article was to develop an inventory of marketing skills essential to tourism entrepreneurs. These skills will assist in ensuring that entrepreneurs are better equipped with the necessary marketing skills in order to become self-employed in the tourism industry and successfully run their own tourism enterprises.

We address the following research questions in the article: (1) Which marketing skills are essential for the tourism entrepreneur? (2) Are there significant differences between the perceptions of tourism management students, tourism management academics and tourism entrepreneurs regarding the essential marketing skills necessary to becoming a successful tourism entrepreneur?

METHODOLOGY

Sampling method

For the purpose of this article, a consensus was required on the inventory of marketing skills collected from the literature. The relevant stakeholders identified for this purpose were tourism enterprise owners, tourism management academics and tourism management students. Tourism enterprise owners were defined as owners of small tourism accommodation enterprises in the Vaal Triangle region in the Gauteng province (the demarcated area for the study).

A list of all the small tourism enterprises, obtained from information centres in the Vaal Triangle, constituted the sampling frame of 97 for the first group of respondents. The manageable size of the sampling frame guided the decision to conduct a census of these respondents in which 52 respondents participated.

Tourism management academics were defined as academics lecturing tourism management related subjects in the tourism departments at two higher education institutions. A combined list of lecturers lecturing in the tourism management departments of two higher education institutions, constituted the sampling frame of 27 for the second group of respondents. The manageable size of the sampling frame guided the decision to conduct a census of these respondents of which 22 respondents participated.

Tourism management students were defined as full-time third- and fourth-year tourism management students enrolled at two higher education institutions. Students studying tourism management are considered potential tourism entrepreneurs. Only third- and fourth-year tourism management students were included as, in comparison to first- and second-year students they are more likely to have the knowledge necessary to complete the questionnaire.

A non-probability judgement sample constituted the sampling frame of 252 for the third group of respondents. The sampling frame comprised 192 tourism management students from a traditional university and 60 from a university of technology of which 168 respondents participated.

The tourism management academics and tourism management students were drawn from two higher education institutions situated in the Gauteng province of South Africa. Both higher education institutions were deemed suitable for inclusion in the study given their geographical proximity to the Vaal Triangle based tourism entrepreneur who made up the first group of respondents in the study.

Research instrument and data collection

A survey was conducted using a self-administered structured questionnaire. In Section A of the questionnaire, respondents were requested to supply relevant demographic information. In Section B of the questionnaire, they were asked to express their perceptions about the importance of the 38 marketing skills (Table 1) for the tourism entrepreneur on a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from extremely essential (5) to extremely unessential (1). These 38 items were divided into five constructs, each representing a marketing skill. All three groups of respondents were requested to complete the same questionnaire. An odd, rather than even, rating scale was selected in order to avoid a forced response.

In addition, respondents were asked to indicate whether any other skills, not included in Section B, should be included. The questionnaire was evaluated by two experienced researchers to probe for any obvious mistakes and potential problems followed by a protocol-based interview conducted with an owner of a tourism enterprise, a tourism management academic and a tourism management student. The questionnaire was then pilot tested on 32 respondents and returned an acceptable Cronbach Alpha of 0.850.

The sample for the pilot test included six academics and 26 students. No other skills were reported for inclusion in Section B; therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the scale exhibited content validity, thereby substantiating what was established in the pre-test.

The questionnaires were hand-delivered to respondents and the completed questionnaires then subsequently collected. This data-collection method was selected due to the advantages it offers in terms of screening potential respondents (Hair et al., 2003). This choice of data collection method necessitated first soliciting permission to deliver the questionnaire to potential respondents. The telephonic contact method was selected for this purpose.

Table 2. Description of samples.

Parameter		Enterprise owners (%)	Academics (%)	Students (%)
		Sample size		
		52	22	168
Institution	Traditional university	-	54.5	88.1
	University of technology	-	45.5	11.9
Academic function	Junior lecturer	-	13.6	
	Lecturer	-	50.0	
	Senior lecturer	-	27.3	
	Part-time lecturer	-	9.1	
	Other	-	0	
Years of ownership	0-5 years	59.6	-	
	6-10 years	19.2	-	
	11-20 years	19.2	-	
	More than 20 years	1.9	-	
Highest qualification	Diploma/Degree	53.8	0	
	B.Tech/Honours	9.6	27.3	
	Masters degree	3.8	50.0	
	Doctorate	1.9	22.7	
	Other	19.2	0	
	Missing	11.5	0	
Years of experience in tourism industry	No practical experience	0	50.0	
	0-5 years	17.3	31.8	
	6-10 years	7.7	13.6	
	More than 10 years	5.7	4.6	
	Missing	69.2	0	
Year of study	3 rd year			77.4
	4 th year			22.6

RESULTS

Sample characteristics

From the sample of 316 respondents, 242 complete questionnaires were received, which translates into a response rate of 76.6%. Thus, the final sample for this study consisted of 52 tourism enterprise owners, 22 tourism management academics and 168 tourism management students. A description of the three samples is provided in Table 2.

FINDINGS

The Cronbach alphas of the three sample groups were 0.935, 0.861 and 0.911, which all surpassed the

recommended level of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978; Peterson, 1994). Means above 4 were returned on all five constructs indicating that the combined sample of enterprise owners, academics and students perceived the skills in all five constructs to be extremely essential for tourism entrepreneurs.

The highest mean responses were obtained for Constructs 1 (personal characteristics) and Construct 5 (general management skills), generating means of 4.46 and 4.40, respectively. The largest standard deviation obtained was 0.449 for Construct 4 (marketing mix strategies). The standard deviation obtained for all of the constructs was below 1.00, indicating that the sample was homogenous and thus the mean gave a satisfactory indication of the responses.

In order to determine whether the returned means are significant, a one-tailed z-test was performed, with the

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the total sample.

Construct	Valid N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	Z-values	P-values
C1	242	4.461	0.364	0.023399	19.70186	0.000*
C2	242	4.229	0.367	0.023592	9.706823	0.000*
C3	242	4.355	0.416	0.026741	13.27525	0.000*
C4	242	4.275	0.449	0.028863	9.527831	0.000*
C5	242	4.407	0.423	0.027191	14.96793	0.000*

*Significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4. Construct correlations – whole sample.

Construct	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5
1	1.00	0.53*	0.30	0.33	0.58*
2		1.00	0.53*	0.53*	0.52*
3			1.00	0.80*	0.34
4				1.00	0.32
5					1.00

* Correlation significant at 0.05 level.

expected mean set at mean > 4 and the significance level at the conventional 0.05 level. Table 3 provides the calculated z-values and related p-values.

As indicated in Table 3, p-values of $p < 0.05$ were recorded for all five constructs signalling each to be statistically significant. This suggests that the combined sample of respondents considered the variables representing those dimensions as essential skills for tourism entrepreneurs.

Pearson's correlation coefficient was computed to determine whether there was a relationship between constructs for the purpose of content development of course modules. The correlations for the whole sample group are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4 shows significant positive correlations between most of the constructs. This relationship is an indication that the constructs may be grouped together and that they are relevant to the tourism entrepreneur.

The strongest correlations were computed between Construct 3 (general marketing skills) and Construct 4 (marketing mix strategies skills), with a value of 0.80. This indicates a potentially strong relationship between these two constructs and, therefore, that the two should be grouped together.

ANOVA tests were then conducted to assess whether any of the differences between the mean ratings of skills by each group were statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. The results are reported on in Table 5.

As indicated in Table 5, there was no significant difference between the samples' opinions at the $p < 0.05$ level regarding the relevance of the skills in Constructs 1, 2 and 5 to tourism entrepreneurs. For these constructs,

there appears to be a convergence of opinion. However, a significant difference was computed for Construct 3 ($F = 22.005$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) and Construct 4 ($F = 26.723$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). For these two constructs, there is a divergence in opinion as to the relevance of these skills to tourism entrepreneurs.

In order to calculate the effect size of for the ANOVA results computed for Constructs 3 and 4, the eta squared was calculated. An eta-squared value of 0.156 was computed for Construct 3 and an eta-squared value of 0.183 for Construct 4, thereby indicating a large effect size on both constructs.

Tukey's tests were carried out to determine where the specific differences lay for Constructs 3 and 4. Table 6 reports on the post-hoc Tukey HSD test results.

As can be seen from Table 6, at the 0.05 level, the tourism management students account for the majority of the variance in Construct 3 and 4.

This may be attributed to students not fully understanding the content and suggests more time should be spend on explaining these skills during lectures.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study provide an inventory of marketing skills deemed essential to the tourism entrepreneur. Results in this study are useful for current and future tourism entrepreneurs and for tourism academics as they provide insights into the marketing skills that an entrepreneur of a small tourism enterprise

Table 5. Analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Construct		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-ratio	Sig
1	Between groups	0.547	2	0.273	2.082	0.127
	Within groups	31.386	239	0.131		
	Total	31.933	241			
2	Between groups	0.159	2	0.079	0.588	0.557
	Within groups	32.276	239	0.135		
	Total	32.434	241			
3	Between groups	6.490	2	3.245	22.005	0.000*
	Within groups	35.244	239	0.147		
	Total	41.734	241			
4	Between groups	8.888	2	4.444	26.723	0.000*
	Within groups	39.747	239	0.166		
	Total	48.636	241			
5	Between groups	0.112	2	0.056	0.311	0.733
	Within groups	43.046	239	0.180		
	Total	43.158	241			

*Significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 6. Tukey HSD.

Construct	(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	SE	Sig.	95% of confidence interval	
						Lower bound	Upper bound
3	Owners	Academics	-0.084	0.098	0.669	-0.314	0.147
		Students	-0.377*	0.061	0.000	-0.521	-0.234
	Academics	Owners	0.084	0.098	0.669	-0.147	0.314
		Students	-0.294*	0.087	0.002	-0.499	-0.088
	Students	Owners	0.377*	0.061	0.000	-0.234	0.521
		Academics	0.294*	0.087	0.002	-0.088	0.499
4	Owners	Academics	-0.053	0.104	0.865	-0.298	0.191
		Students	-0.431*	0.065	0.000	-0.583	-0.278
	Academics	Owners	0.053	0.104	0.865	-0.191	0.298
		Students	-0.377*	0.093	0.000	-0.596	-0.159
	Students	Owners	0.431*	0.065	0.000	-0.278	0.583
		Academics	0.377*	0.093	0.000	-0.159	0.596

* Significant at 0.05 level of mean difference.

needs in order to start, manage and grow an enterprise successfully.

South African tourism educators should take heed of the findings of this study and focus their tourism management curricula around the development of these skills. Owing to certain skills being duplicated under the various constructs, tourism management academics

should carefully design curricula with this in mind in order to avoid duplication. The research findings further indicate that consideration should be given to offering general marketing and marketing mix strategy skills as a combined module within the tourism management programmes.

At the micro, intermediate and macro level, the

following may be recommended. At the micro level, institutions offering such programmes need to review their curricula in order to ensure that they furnish their students with the skills identified in this study. At the intermediate level, the institutions need to rethink all of their programmes with the view of bringing a more entrepreneurial spirit into their curricula design.

At the macro level, South Africa lacks behind its more developed counterparts on the entrepreneurial front. Higher education institutions and government need to enter into a collaborate relationship to address this problem.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive empirical investigation from the perspective of entrepreneurs, academics and students, of the marketing skills that tourism entrepreneurs require to be successful in a volatile economic climate. Overall, there appears to be significant agreement between tourism entrepreneurs, academics and students regarding the marketing skills that tourism entrepreneurs require to be successful.

The findings contradict earlier studies in other countries, which investigated a range of marketing skills and concluded that there was a divide between the perceptions of academics and practitioners about the importance of theoretical and practical skills (Dacko, 2006). On the other hand, the results of this study support previous studies with respect to the importance of marketing skills for entrepreneurial success (Hill, 2001).

There are significant differences in the perceptions of enterprise owners, academics and students about two of the constructs. This suggests that the refinement of current curricula may be considered for these two constructs. Academics should place more emphasis on general marketing skills and marketing mix strategies skills and devote more lecture time on developing these skills. The key to successful implementation is identifying the right skills for the task, and then providing the right opportunities in entrepreneurship education, where tourism management academics can provide considerable impetus.

This study was descriptive of tourism enterprise owners, tourism management academics and students perceptions of essential marketing skills for the tourism entrepreneur. By comparing the perceptions of three groups – owners, academics and students – the relevance of university education and its effectiveness were assessed. The range of skills tested is broad and therefore increased the likelihood of identifying the essential marketing skills that tourism entrepreneurs require.

Future research should focus on determining how marketing education could make more effective use of interactive hands-on learning approaches. This study concentrated on entrepreneurs, academics and students in the Vaal Triangle region in the Gauteng province. Future research could expand the work to include other regions. Furthermore, the skills identified in this article should be tested internationally. This would test the impact of culture, if any, on small tourism entrepreneurs' marketing skills.

Conclusion

South Africans are discouraged and uncertain regarding their future employment opportunities. Entrepreneurship in South Africa has become more important than ever and an intervention is necessary for young people to move from isolation to full integration into the global economy. Tourism is heralded as being potentially one of the leading driving forces for economic expansion worldwide.

Entrepreneurs require relevant marketing knowledge and skills for subsequent business and career success. Entrepreneurship training can play an important role in developing entrepreneurial people.

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