

## Entrepreneurial Education and Training: Perceptions of Hospitality Management Alumni at a University of Technology

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### Abstract

The purpose of this article is to determine the attitude and perceptions of Hospitality Management Alumni regarding entrepreneurial training in their courses. This study followed a quantitative descriptive survey design. The sample chosen for this study comprised Hospitality Management Alumni from a university of technology who had completed their studies between 2010 – 2017. While ninety per cent of respondents were eager to become entrepreneurs, only a small percentage is currently running their own businesses. It follows that more attention should be placed on practical simulation and business start-ups during students' courses. If alumni have negative perceptions about their training this will impact the future of entrepreneurs negatively. The study reflects on positive as well as negative aspects of entrepreneurial training.

**Keywords:** Alumni, education; entrepreneurship; entrepreneurial training; hospitality alumni; unemployment; University of Technology

### Introduction

Entrepreneurial intention is seen as a state of mind where an individual expresses the wish to create a new organisation or a new value driver inside an existing organisation (Wu & Wu, 2008). In order to improve entrepreneurial intention the development of education programmes to enhance entrepreneurship should be encouraged. Entrepreneurial training has a direct effect on entrepreneurial intention and attitude towards entrepreneurship (Barba-Sanchez et al., 2022). Universities play a crucial role in enabling and supporting the development of entrepreneurial orientation (Alvarez-Torres et al., 2019) in order to create new skills to react in an entrepreneurial way to local and global changes (Bikse et al., 2016).

The South African government has long recognised the contribution of entrepreneurship to the economic development and social upliftment (Van Aardt et al., 2018). The development of entrepreneurial orientation is critical in emerging economies (Alvarez-Torres et al., 2019) as it supports employability, socio-economic growth and innovation interaction in diverse sectors (Alexander & Evgeniy, 2012). The reason for this is that entrepreneurship deals with creativity, innovation, competitiveness, productivity, wealth generation and job creation (Fu et al., 2019).

Globally tourism and hospitality have been seen as one of the fastest growing industries that contribute towards job creation and linking businesses in various destinations. In the current economic climate, entrepreneurs are striving to create opportunities in industry by providing more employment (Matsiliza, 2017). According to Bukola (2011) serious attention should be paid to entrepreneurial education and training in tertiary institutions as it could contribute to the economic development of a country (Ndou et al., 2019). The tourism and hospitality industries are influenced by entrepreneurship, that comprises innovation, job creation and competitiveness (Fu et al., 2018). Therefore, it is important for potential hospitality entrepreneurs to acquire those skills, ideas and management abilities that will assist them to be successful in their ventures.

## **Literature review**

### ***Impact of past and present pandemics and crises on unemployment in the hospitality industry***

Although the graduate labour force in South Africa is expanding, the rate of graduate unemployment is rising with the overall unemployment rate in the country (Mbabdlwa & Shez, 2020). This is not only a South African problem. A study done by Rahim and Mukhtar (2021) indicates that during the first semester of 2019, Malaysia recorded a total of 516 000 unemployed people of whom 238 286 were graduates. Due to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, the loss of lives and jobs (Ezra et al., 2021), as well as the collapse in general activities, such as tourist operations and a decline in numbers visiting tourist attraction sites has a negative effect on unemployment nationally and internationally (Dube, 2021; Mensah, 2020).

Throughout history, the tourism and hospitality industries have always been hardest hit by pandemics or crises. Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) (2002-2004), H1N1 Swine Flu (2009-2010) and Ebola (2014-2016) are only a few examples of pandemics that have had a major impact on the sustainability and survival of the tourism and hospitality industries (Maphanga & Henama, 2019). The swine flu pandemic led to the Mexican tourism and hospitality industries losing almost a million overseas tourists over a five-month period. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, 50 million travel and tourism jobs could be at risk due the COVID-19 pandemic. The road to recovery for large hospitality organisations, such as major hotel chains and restaurants is going to be a long and hard road (Mensah, 2020). Many large organisations in various industries in South Africa have restructured or downsized their businesses to small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs). These organisations play a major role in the development and growth of a country's economy, as smaller ventures foster diversification by developing new and unsaturated sectors of the economy (Rotar et al., 2019).

### ***The importance of entrepreneurship in the hospitality industry***

The ability for an individual to think creatively or generate innovative ideas and then to have the capacity to turn these ideas into tangible products, contributes to a sustainable competitive advantage in a country's economy, organisations and individuals. The development of new products and services will lead not only to profit for the individual and hospitality organisations, but rather improve the quality of life of all individuals. It could also spawn further economic opportunities (Van Aardt, et al., 2018). A survey done by the Seed Academy (2018) regarding the current status of entrepreneurship in South Africa indicates that this is not a thriving environment. The report identifies challenges for entrepreneurs in terms of raising funds, a lack of mentorship, slow sales, irregularity of business conditions and low survival rates of new and upcoming ventures. According to the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation (2019), only 15% of new ventures progress beyond the start-up phase. A possible reason could be that

there is a wide gap between the skills required by the entrepreneur and sustainable ideas for a new venture.

A study published by David Birch in 1979, shows that new and growing smaller organisations created 81,5 per cent of the net new jobs in the USA from 1969 – 1976. From 1993 – 1996, 8 000 000 jobs were created and 77% of these jobs occurred in small businesses. The reason for the explosion of job creation, has been directly linked to the promotion of entrepreneurship in the United States (Ndedi, 2009). According to Rotar et al. (2019) small and medium enterprises play an important role in the creation of job opportunities. Liedtke (2019) confirms that SMMEs contribute significantly to national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as these create jobs. During 2019, the President of the Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) reported that SMMEs employed 47% of the South African workforce which contribute more than 20% to the country's GDP.

In a country such as South Africa with a high unemployment rate poverty abounds and with poverty comes crime (Kritikos, 2014). Adding to the challenges that the hospitality industry currently faces the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic – job losses, staying sustainable and competitive, etc. these organisations need to find innovative survival strategies such as implementing cost-cutting and ensuring orderliness. Cost-cutting means that hospitality management will need to shed non-essential services to minimise or eliminate losses. Orderliness will have an impact on the quality of service, as the emphasis is placed on sanitation, health and safety and efficient operational procedures (Mensah, 2020).

To ensure sustainable tourism and hospitality in a country, it is imperative for hospitality organisations to take into consideration the current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, as well as the needs of visitors, industry, environment and host communities (Deale, 2015). Hospitality entrepreneurs, who are able to establish their own ventures successfully are becoming vital to South Africa's economic continued well-being. Entrepreneurship is seen as the core of all development. Niewenhuizen (2017) opines that the majority of entrepreneurial activity can be rested in micro- or small ventures which are owned by one person. This person is recognised as an entrepreneur. However, it is very important for an entrepreneur to understand the entrepreneurial process and the details of in the process (Van Aardt, et al., 2018). While large hospitality organisations, such as hotel chains operate where profit margins are maximized, small and medium-sized ventures (SMEs) are rooted in the local and regional economy. The reason for this is that these SMEs usually attract capital from the region in which they operate and focus on employing family members and people from the local community. These so-called life-style entrepreneurs are often found in the hospitality industry. They focus on balancing their quality of life and management of their businesses. The entrepreneurial competencies typically range from conceptual and analytical skills to certain personality traits, such as the need for autonomy. They also tend to focus on functional areas, such as product development (Peters et al., 2018).

### ***Entrepreneurial education and training***

We live in a fast-changing world and subsequent to the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is changing at an even faster pace than ever before. Challenges and the competitive environment of the hospitality industry foster those people that will be able to adapt to and cope with issues such as globalisation, migration for economic prospects and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, that drive creativity and innovation in organisations (Van Aardt, et al., 2018). Defining an entrepreneur can be challenging, as research indicates that academics and researchers do not agree on a specific definition (Nieuwenhuizen, 2017). This can be a reason for the existing gaps in entrepreneurial training/teaching at tertiary institutions (Allahar, 2021). Education and training of potential entrepreneurs involve the acquisition of those skills, ideas and

management abilities needed to start and operate a sustainable venture (Maina, 2014). Kozubikova et al. (2017) state that an entrepreneur should have specific characteristics, skills, abilities, talents and qualities. An openness to lifelong learning and change, recognition of opportunities, honesty, persistent adherence to principles and social skills are a fear of these (Van Aardt, et al., 2018). One of the key characteristics of entrepreneurship is creativity as it reflects the ability to generate new ideas and create new things (Zhang et al., 2020). Creative problem solving is a key driver for entrepreneurship (Servoss et al., 2018).

The question to ask – Are South African tertiary institutions addressing the issue of promoting entrepreneurship during their students’ studies? One of the factors that contribute to unemployment of graduates is the attitude of students. The majority of students aim to find a job and work as employees after graduation. This attitude, unfortunately, contributes to the increased unemployment rate of a country. Graduates tend to be job seekers rather than job creators (Rahim & Mukhtar, 2021). The need for entrepreneurship education and training in tertiary institutions became evident during the mid-1980s. Previously unemployment and poverty were of paramount concern as is the case today (Bukola, 2011).

For a country like South Africa to ensure economic growth, education needs to be acknowledged as the most important investment people can make (Wu & Wu, 2008). Education has always been considered as means to prepare the young adult for a straightforward transition into the labour market (Herman & Stefanescu, 2017). Tertiary education provides the individual with the potential to develop, which not only includes changes in attitudes and values, but also enhancing the individual’s managerial ability (Wu & Wu, 2008). Unfortunately due to global economic crises and technological advances, graduates are no longer guaranteed employment (Ertuna & Gurel, 2011).

Unemployment has become a major challenge in South Africa. With additional challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the sustainability of the hospitality industry, self-employment by the younger generation entering the labour market is becoming the only viable option (Jackson, 2015). As large organisations employ fewer workers, there is an increased demand for entrepreneurial graduates (Ertuna & Gurel, 2011). The link between general education and education specifically for entrepreneurship has unfortunately only been acknowledged recently (Wu & Wu, 2008). A good example of this is the restructuring of the education system in Turkey. Since 1995, after having restructured their tertiary education system, universities in Turkey began offering elective courses in the training of entrepreneurship. A number of universities went one step further by making it compulsory for students to take an entrepreneurship course in a four-year degree or in the MBA programme (Ertuna & Gurel, 2011).

Herman and Stefanescu (2017) state that entrepreneurial education could have positive effects on job creation as it is the driving force behind sustainable economic development, that will certainly improve the individual’s standard of living. The authors go on to say that young adults who have been exposed to an entrepreneurship programme as part of their training will develop entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions. Emotional intelligence in a person is determined by contextual factors and personal background. According to Linan et al. (2014), a contextual factor is an important instrument in the development of entrepreneurial attitudes of a potential as well as a growing entrepreneur. Therefore entrepreneurial education and emotional intelligence are linked by the efficacy of various types of entrepreneurial programmes and fields of study (Herman & Stefanescu, 2017).

### ***Alumni attitudes and perceptions of entrepreneurial education and training in a tertiary institution***

Entrepreneurship is seen as a career choice. Personal skills, experience and confidence in one's own ability play a role in this choice. Demographic factors such as education, age and wealth, as well as economic factors such as the employment possibilities in a country are important drivers when it comes to entrepreneurial behaviour (Trang et al., 2019). Education and training in entrepreneurship have an important role to play in the development of potential entrepreneurs in the hospitality industry (Zhan et al., 2020). A student's attitude towards entrepreneurship can be influenced by the education and training he/she is exposed to. If the education and training programmes provide sufficient information, resources and knowledge for the student to develop an entrepreneurial mindset, this will enable him/her to become creative and innovative (Wei et al., 2019). Entrepreneurship education will develop a person's ability to contribute to economic growth and to open job opportunities (Nian et al., 2014).

A study done in the late 1990s highlighted that although a number of tertiary institutions did provide a general form of entrepreneurial training, alumni perceived certain shortcomings when trying to set up a new venture. These were identified as an inability to generate a viable idea and most importantly a lack of finance and experience. They felt that entrepreneurial education programmes should provide a practical foundation in financial management and in business communication skills. Furthermore tertiary institutions should play an important role in providing alumni with formal post-qualification training and social support networks that will encourage entrepreneurship (Carter & Collinson, 1999).

### **Methods**

This article focuses on entrepreneurial education and training of graduates in the hospitality industry. A quantitative descriptive survey approach was followed in this specific study. Using a quantitative approach the researcher is able to produce specific and generalised statistical outcomes (Rubin & Babbie, 2017), to convey facts, and to identify patterns (Defranzo, 2011). The researcher will then be able to offer significant interpretations based on the statistics. Using a descriptive research design, the researcher is provided with an opportunity to "try and understand the way things are" (Welman et al., 2005). A population refers to the main group from which the researcher selects the sample (Babbie, 2016). The population in this study comprised alumni students from the Department of Hospitality Management at a university of technology who graduated between 2010 – 2017 (N=622). Each one had completed a three-year National Diploma (ND), a four-year Baccalaureus of Technologiae (B-Tech) degree or a Master's degree in Hospitality Management. A sample represents a selection of a population (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014) and for this specific study a non-probability sampling technique was followed, namely a snowball sampling method. The researcher initially contacted a few members of the target population and then requested the current participants to provide contact information to engage more members (Babbie, 2010). The sample target was 300 hospitality alumni, but unfortunately while collecting the data, the researcher realised that that target could not be reached. The main reason for not reaching the initial sample size is that the university has a strict policy of not providing personal details of graduates (POPI ACT, 2021), therefore the snowball method had to be followed in this study. Unfortunately only 98 participants of a possible 300 completed the questionnaire.

Following a survey research approach data were collected using a questionnaire that was distributed to large groups of people to determine their attitudes, opinions, impressions and levels of satisfaction (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). A questionnaire is seen as the main instrument to collect data when adopting a survey approach to research. Questionnaires provide the researcher with quantitative findings that are clear and consistent when analysed

(Roopa & Rani, 2017). The use of questionnaires assists researchers in collecting information from a large sample group, which, in return, enables the researcher to generalise the findings to a bigger population (Leavy, 2017). However, there are disadvantages to a self-administrated survey questionnaire approach, one of which is a low response rate (Blumenberg & Barros, 2018). This was experienced by the researcher during the data-collection process. Another disadvantage when following this process is the prospect of incomplete information. Participants do not always answer all the listed questions (Dalati & Gomez, 2018).

A structured survey questionnaire was developed, using closed-and open-ended questions. The instrument was intended to measure the key variables of the research using a 6-point Likert scale. The focus was on gauging the participants' attitudes and perceptions regarding entrepreneurial education and training offered by the Department of Hospitality Management at a university of technology. A Likert scale is considered to be more reliable when collecting data about a person's attitudes and perceptions (Maree, 2014).

The questionnaire was tested through a pilot study in order to improve the questionnaire in terms of content, wording and problems with the questionnaire which could lead to biased answers. The purpose of the pilot study was to improve the validity of the study. The pilot study was conducted on a sample of 6 graduates who were not part of the study. The feedback from the pilot study helped the researcher in finding and amending mistakes in the sequencing of questions and wording used. To ensure validity of the instrument the questionnaire was based on past studies.

The questionnaire was initially distributed electronically via email, where the participants followed a Survey Monkey link to answer the survey questionnaire. The use of Survey Monkey allowed the researcher to get responses from respondents who were geographically dispersed (Leavy, 2017). Apart from that, the survey is quicker to conduct and arrange, and aids with evading interviewer bias and distortion (Roopa & Rani, 2012). Additionally, hard copy questionnaires were also distributed by the researcher in person.

During the execution of a research project it is imperative to ensure that the study conforms to all ethical guidelines. This study was approved by the ethical committee of the university. An informed consent letter accompanied the questionnaire to inform the participant about the purpose, nature and benefits of the study. The identity of all the participants remained anonymous. All participants were treated with dignity and respect.

The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Descriptive analysis was used to present frequencies to gain more insight into the data.

## Results

### *Attitudes and perceptions towards entrepreneurship*

Responses to 16 statements in the questionnaire assisted participants to determine their attitudes towards and perceptions of entrepreneurship. These findings may be useful to discover the participants' interpretation of entrepreneurship as a possible choice of profession. To the statement 'I want to start my own business within the hospitality industry', 43.30% of participants indicate that they strongly agree, while 30.93% agree with the statement. In response to 'I seriously consider entrepreneurship as a career option', 95.08% of participants are in agreement (Table 1). These findings indicate that participants do have entrepreneurial intentions and the results reinforce their eagerness to become entrepreneurs. As attitude towards entrepreneurial activities is intrinsic to each individual it could be encouraged through external activities such as the involvement of entrepreneurial alumni (Barba-Sanchez et al., 2022). Education can positively influence the formation of entrepreneurial intention. This is specifically true for the hospitality industry which has a strong practicality and therefore

acquires empirical training to increase students' ability to identify business opportunities (Zhan et al., 2020).

**Table 1: Attitudes towards and perceptions of entrepreneurship**

Attitudes towards entrepreneurship		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
I want to start my own business within the hospitality industry.	N	4	5	4	12	30	42	97
	%	4.12	5.15	4.12	12.37	30.93	43.30	100
Entrepreneurs are always investors.	N	3	4	11	23	37	19	97
	%	3.09	4.12	11.34	23.71	38.14	19.59	100
Buying a business is not entrepreneurship.	N	25	20	18	18	10	7	98
	%	25.51	20.41	18.37	18.37	10.20	7.14	100
Owning a franchise is not entrepreneurship.	N	28	27	14	14	6	7	96
	%	28.13	28.13	14.58	14.58	6.25	7.29	100
Entrepreneurs will do anything for profit.	N	3	6	13	17	26	33	98
	%	3.06	6.12	13.27	17.35	26.53	33.67	100
Entrepreneurs are largely responsible for innovations, technologies and new products.	n	2	3	4	9	38	42	98
	%	2.04	3.06	4.08	9.18	38.78	42.86	100
I can earn more money working for someone else.	N	35	27	13	16	6	1	98
	%	35.71	27.55	13.27	16.33	6.12	1.02	100
I seriously consider entrepreneurship as a career option.	N	2	0	3	17	32	44	98
	%	2.04	0.00	3.06	17.53	32.65	44.90	100
Tshwane University of Technology should encourage students to consider entrepreneurship in the hospitality industry.	N	6	5	2	8	19	59	98
	%	6.12	5.10	2.04	8.16	19.39	59.18	100
I am/was too busy with classes at TUT to consider starting my own business.	N	13	12	7	17	25	24	98
	%	13.27	12.24	7.14	17.35	25.51	24.49	100
It is too risky to start my own business in the hospitality industry.	N	16	15	17	22	15	13	98
	%	16.33	15.31	17.35	22.45	15.31	13.27	100
I am a risk-taker.	n	2	3	7	15	32	38	97
	%	2.06	3.09	7.22	15.46	32.99	39.18	100
Entrepreneurship is a good way to make money.	N	0	1	2	15	39	39	96
	%	0.00	1.04	2.08	15.63	40.63	40.63	100
Entrepreneurship is an honourable profession.	N	0	0	4	17	41	35	97
	%	0.00	0.00	4.12	17.53	42.27	36.08	100
A tertiary education in the Department of Hospitality Management is not necessary to become an entrepreneur.	N	17	17	19	18	14	12	97
	%	17.53	17.53	19.59	18.56	14.43	12.37	100
I prefer to work for a large company, to ensure better career prospects.	N	10	13	15	18	19	23	98
	%	10.20	13.27	15.31	18.37	19.39	23.47	100
<b>Total overall percentage</b>		<b>10.58</b>	<b>10.07</b>	<b>9.81</b>	<b>16.43</b>	<b>24.97</b>	<b>28.03</b>	<b>100</b>

Thirty-five point seven one per cent of the participants strongly disagree and 27.55% disagree with the statement 'I can earn more money working for someone else'. The feedback indicates that participants do recognise the potential of earning a better income from being an entrepreneur in the hospitality industry than working as an employee in the industry. A total of 81.26% of the participants strongly agree and agree (40.63% and 40.63%) respectively regarding the statement 'Entrepreneurship is a good way to make money'. This proves that entrepreneurship is recognised as an economic opportunity (Pant, 2015). Participants see the potential of generating wealth by starting their own venture in the hospitality industry.

According to 12.37% of participants that strongly agree, 19.59% of the participants slightly disagree, 'Tertiary education in a department of hospitality management is not really necessary to become an entrepreneur'. This diverse picture is a source of concern as participants do not appreciate the importance of tertiary education when it comes to developing an entrepreneurial mindset. Bowmarker-Falconer and Herrington (2020) confirm that tertiary education lays the groundwork for students and graduates to develop skills necessary to become creative and innovative in starting a venture and prospering as an entrepreneur. Positive

attitudes can be seen as a stepping stone to entrepreneurial intentions, therefore it is essential that tertiary institutions encourage optimistic attitudes towards entrepreneurship. This can only be done if tertiary institutions invest resources and develop programmes that will direct students to view an entrepreneurial route as a career choice in the hospitality industry (Ebewo et al., 2017). The importance of mentoring should not be overlooked, especially in the hospitality industry (Horn et al., 2021) as the contact with a mentor can help individuals to learn firsthand about the industry (Morgan & Pritchard, 2019). Professional experienced mentors can help students to get a sense of the industry (Rauch & Hulsink, 2015) and play a critical role in achievement and calculated risk taking (Horn et al., 2021)

The responses from the participants show that 53% (22.45% slightly agree, 15.31% agree and 13.27% strongly agree) with the statement: ‘It is too risky to start my own business in the hospitality industry’. Participants further indicate that they strongly agree (23.47%), agree (19.39%) and slightly agree (18.37%) with the statement – ‘I prefer to work for a large company, for better career prospects’. Participants identify a number of reasons or barriers that will influence them when they consider starting a new business in the hospitality industry. However, this is contradictory if one refers to the two previous responses where participants indicate that they will consider starting their own business and consider entrepreneurship as a career option. According to Asongu and Odhiambo (2019) a reason could lie in the challenges that entrepreneurs need to face, such as the cost of business start-ups, scarcity of energy and electricity, limited funds and high taxes. Kahrizi et al. (2020) state that the main barriers to starting a new venture can be infrastructural and governmental as well as being related to rules and regulations.

### ***Entrepreneurial environment within a university of technology***

Eleven statements in the questionnaire focus on the entrepreneurial environment within a university of technology (see Table 2). Hofer et al. (2010) state that a tertiary institution is able to create a protected environment for education, training and development of emerging entrepreneurs. This can be done by motivating students and researchers to seek new and innovative ventures in the hospitality industry. According to Wyness et al. (2015) educators play a vital role as facilitators. They are the ones that influence the student through their teaching and stating the importance and benefits of entrepreneurship in the hospitality industry. The results indicate that 74.74% (27.37% slightly agree, 31.58% agree and 15.79% strongly agree) with the statement ‘The Hospitality Department encourages students to pursue entrepreneurship ventures’. Participants (81.05%) are also in agreement that during their studies entrepreneurship was cited an option as a career path in the hospitality industry when referring to the statement ‘My lecturer mentioned entrepreneurship as a career option’, (25.26% slightly agree, 31.58% agree and 24.21% strongly agree).

According to 78.72% (21.28% slightly agree, 37.23% agree and 20.21% strongly agree) of participants entrepreneurial or business-related examples were mentioned in their studies. On the statement ‘Having an entrepreneurship mentor in the hospitality department will encourage entrepreneurship’ (see Table 2), 84.04% are in agreement that (31.91% participants agree and 52.13% participants strongly agree) students will become more open to the idea of starting their own venture. Bolduereanu et al. (2020) confirm that involving mentors from the hospitality industry in entrepreneurial training provides students with the opportunity to gain knowledge regarding the entrepreneurial process and entrepreneurship. Mentorship will also expose students to new, innovative and feasible ideas to start new ventures in the industry.

Start-up capital (finance) is seen as one of the main challenges confronting an entrepreneur (Katundu & Gabagambi, 2016). Eighty-six point three one per cent of (86.31% - 33.68% agree and 52.63% strongly agree) participants are in agreement with the statement ‘A



small seed grant (start-up fund) from the hospitality industry will encourage entrepreneurship’. Two of the most prevalent barriers to successful entrepreneurship (Austin et al, 2006) are lack of financial capital (Carter et al., 2015) and poor human capital (Bates, 2011). Students and young entrepreneurs don’t have the resources to start their own business and banks are not willing to trust young entrepreneurs to avail financial capital (Hornsby, 2019).

**Table 2: Entrepreneurial environment within a university of technology**

Entrepreneurial environment within the a university of technology		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
The hospitality department encourage students to pursue entrepreneurship ventures.	N	7	13	4	26	30	15	95
	%	7.37	13.68	4.21	27.37	31.58	15.79	100
My lecturer mentioned entrepreneurship as a career option.	N	3	8	7	24	30	23	95
	%	3.16	8.42	7.37	25.26	31.58	24.21	100
Examples of how technology is key to business are/were included in class examples.	N	2	6	12	19	42	13	94
	%	2.13	6.38	12.77	20.21	44.68	13.83	100
Entrepreneurial or business related examples are/were included in the hospitality management classes.	N	1	4	15	20	35	19	94
	%	1.06	4.26	15.96	21.28	37.23	20.21	100
Having an entrepreneurship mentor in the hospitality department will help encourage entrepreneurship.	N	1	2	3	9	30	49	94
	%	1.06	2.13	3.19	9.57	31.91	52.13	100
A small seed grant (start-up fund) from the hospitality department will encourage entrepreneurship.	n	1	1	3	8	32	50	96
	%	1.05	1.05	3.16	8.42	33.68	52.63	100
More business-sector interaction in the hospitality industry within the university will encourage entrepreneurship.	N	0	1	6	10	36	42	95
	%	0.00	1.05	6.32	10.53	37.89	44.21	100
A programme exempting student entrepreneurs from repayment of student loans will encourage more students to pursue a business venture after graduation.	N	1	2	4	16	33	39	95
	%	1.05	2.11	4.21	16.84	34.47	41.05	100
Entrepreneurial projects are/were focal points in the hospitality management course.	N	5	8	12	25	27	18	95
	%	5.26	8.42	12.63	26.32	28.42	18.95	100
Entrepreneurial projects were part of my Hospitality Management III module.	N	4	10	6	28	21	26	95
	%	4.21	10.53	6.32	29.47	22.11	27.37	100
I am aware of programmes the university provides to their students to help them start a business.	N	24	21	11	17	11	11	95
	%	25.26	22.11	11.58	17.89	11.58	11.58	100
<b>Total overall percentage</b>	%	<b>4.69</b>	<b>7.26</b>	<b>7.97</b>	<b>19.38</b>	<b>31.38</b>	<b>29.27</b>	<b>100</b>

Referring to the above-mentioned finding, a university of technology should build relationships with the hospitality industry to create opportunities and encourage graduates to choose entrepreneurship as a career path. One example of this is Jason Kang, a chief executive officer and co-founder of Kinno in New York. In 2014 when Columbia University had a design challenge, Jason Kang was offered a sponsored workspace and an opportunity using a grant provided by student and alumni venture competitors (White & Burg, 2019). According to the authors the importance of networking within education and industry is an essential mechanism to assist potential entrepreneurs with capital resources, angel funding and small business innovation as research funding is becoming vital to promoting entrepreneurship among graduates (White & Burg, 2019) .

As start-up capital is seen as a major challenge when trying to start a venture, 92.36% (16.84% slightly agree, 34.47% agree and 41.05% strongly agree) of participants agree with the statement ‘A programme exempting student entrepreneurs from loan repayments will encourage more students to pursue a business venture after graduation’. This is a clear indication that there is a need for venture capital assistance. Results further indicate that 73.69% (26.32% slightly agree, 28.42% agree and 18.95% strongly agree) of participants agree that entrepreneurial projects are a focus point in a hospitality management course. Although



entrepreneurial training is part of the course, there is room for improvement. Entrepreneurship education has a positive impact on entrepreneurial potential (Horn et al., 2021)

According to 92.68% of participants (10.53% slightly agree, 37.89% agree and 44.21% strongly agree) there should be more business sector interaction between the hospitality industry and the university, as this will encourage entrepreneurship among students. Hofer et al. (2010) support these findings as the success of any tertiary entrepreneurship support lies in private-sector collaboration. However, collaboration between tertiary institutions and the private sector may bring its own challenges and difficulties, therefore it is important to have policies and procedures in place that will guide the entrepreneurial process.

The response to from the statement ‘I am aware of programmes the university of technology provides to their students to help them start businesses’ is a little concerning, as 58.95% (11.58% slightly disagree, 22.11% disagree and 25.26% strongly disagree) of participants indicate that they disagree with the statement. Only 23.16% (11.58% agree and 11.58% strongly agree) agree with the above mentioned statement, which implies that the university should do more to create awareness of entrepreneurship. Globally, the field of entrepreneurship has rapidly evolved at university level with more entrepreneurship centres, programmes, involvement of entrepreneurial alumni and business involvement encouraging entrepreneurial work (Barba-Sanchez et al., 2022)

### *Participants’ perception of entrepreneurial training at a university of technology*

The results in Table 3 indicate the perception of the exposure of participants to entrepreneurial training during their studies.

**Table 3: Perception of entrepreneurial training at a university of technology**

The university of technology training taught me:		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
to write a business plan;	n	0	7	6	16	24	41	94
	%	0.00	7.45	6.38	17.02	25.53	43.62	100
to implement a business plan;	n	2	9	12	20	20	31	94
	%	2.13	9.57	12.77	21.28	21.28	32.98	100
to produce a product or offer a service.	n	1	5	10	12	33	33	94
	%	1.06	5.32	10.64	12.77	35.11	35.11	100
to do basic accounting and finance.	n	0	2	2	10	38	41	93
	%	0.00	2.15	2.15	10.75	40.86	44.09	100
to understand the importance of planning.	n	0	1	3	13	34	43	94
	%	0.00	1.06	3.19	13.83	36.17	45.74	100
to understand the importance of marketing needs.	n	1	2	9	15	33	34	94
	%	1.06	2.13	9.57	15.96	35.11	36.17	100
to prioritise customer service.	n	0	2	5	11	33	43	94
	%	0.00	2.13	5.32	11.70	35.11	45.74	100
to prioritise delegation and time management.	n	0	2	2	20	28	41	93
	%	0.00	2.15	2.15	21.51	30.11	44.09	100
to handle hiring and HR issues.	n	1	4	7	25	28	27	92
	%	1.08	4.35	7.61	27.17	30.11	29.35	100
to keep records.	n	1	6	4	19	31	32	93
	%	1.08	6.45	4.30	20.43	33.33	34.41	100
to assess entrepreneurship projects; and	n	9	6	11	31	25	12	94
	%	9.57	6.38	11.70	32.98	26.60	12.77	100
to provide feedback on business skills.	n	14	17	14	23	21	5	94
	%	14.79	18.09	14.79	24.47	22.34	5.26	100
<b>Total overall percentage</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2.57</b>	<b>5.60</b>	<b>7.56</b>	<b>19.16</b>	<b>30.97</b>	<b>34.16</b>	<b>100</b>

Responses to the statements: “to write a business plan and to implement a business plan’ indicate that 86.17% of participants (17.02% slightly agree, 25.53% agree and 43.62% strongly

agree) indicated that students were taught how to write a business plan for a new venture and 75.54% (21.28% slightly agree, 21.28% agree and 32.98% strongly agree) that they were taught how to implement the business plan. The writing of a business plan is an essential component in entrepreneurship education. Not only is a business plan used as a tool for strategic thinking and planning, but it is also an instrument that communicates important information, such as allowing a business to leverage existing knowledge and competence of management and employees, to show potential investors the direction the business and how management will lead and manage people and resources to ensure the best chance of success (Nunn & McGuire, 2010).

According to 82.99% (12.77 slightly agree, 35.11% agree and 35.11% strongly agree) of the participants, they were trained to produce a product or to offer a service. Isaacs et al. (2007) state that more emphasis should be placed on entrepreneurship education and training, rather than on teaching business education. It will therefore be beneficial to have more practical activities as part of the curriculum to enable students gain first-hand experience of the entrepreneurial process.

Participants are in agreement regarding the importance of the following statements: ‘To do basic accounting and finance (95.7%); to understand the importance of planning (95.74%); to understand the importance of marketing needs (87.24%); to prioritise customer service (95.55%); to prioritise delegation and time management (95.71%); to handle hiring and human resources issues (86.63%);and to keep records (88.17%)’. The importance of educating students on marketing aspects should be emphasised as entrepreneurial initiatives such as marketing support is related to business performance (Zin & Ibrahim, 2020).

### ***Recommended topics to be added to the current curriculum***

Table 4 provides a breakdown of the participants’ recommendations on the top five topics that should be included in the hospitality management curriculum. Eighteen per cent (18%) suggest the inclusion of ways to enter the business world, 18% indicate the importance of project management and planning, while 17% suggest that business communication should be part of the curriculum. Another 12% of participants indicate the inclusion of supply chain management and small business management (12%). Nine per cent (9%) of participants suggest the inclusion of costing and estimating. According to Nieuwenhuizen (2016) practical assignments should form a large part of entrepreneurial teaching.

**Table 4: Recommended topics to be added to the curriculum**

<b>Topics for recommendation</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Business communication.	17
Entering the business world.	18
Strategic small business management.	12
Project management and planning.	18
Course leader.	3
Supply chain management.	12
Intrapreneurship	6
Costing and estimating	9
Basic decision-making techniques	5
<b>Total overall percentage</b>	<b>100</b>

A number of facilitators (lecturers) tend to use lecture-based methods (theory) to teach entrepreneurial skills. The reason for this is that this method needs less input when compared to more practical approaches. Following a more practical teaching method can become expensive as the process is not always properly linked to the conventional (traditional) teaching methods followed by the tertiary institution. The emphasis in the teaching method should be

on student participation (Ndou et al., 2018) as this would increase the insight into the current industry and predict the future trends in the industry (Zhang et al., 2020).

Teaching entrepreneurship needs a diverse selection of teaching methods to ensure effective education, especially in hospitality programmes as the hospitality industry is a hands-on operation/process that focuses on service (Ahmad et al., 2018). One of the topics which was not mentioned is the development of creativity. This is however not a topic which is as theoretical as the ones mentioned by the participants. Creativity helps to discover new entrepreneurial opportunities (Grabowski & Kittelwagner, 2017) and influence problem solving and conflict handling (Chen et al., 2015).

According to Nieuwenhuizen et al. (2016) entrepreneurship education and training modules for undergraduate students should include a generic module in entrepreneurship which includes concepts such as, introduction to entrepreneurship, venture start-up, creativity and innovation and team building. Another critical skill necessary in entrepreneurial education should be risk taking development. Risk taking creates the ability to make better entrepreneurial decisions and improve their ability to confront difficulties in their entrepreneurial venture (Zhang et al., 2020). The issue of students' realization of social worth and psychological capital are crucial for the formation of entrepreneurial intention (Bonesso, 2018). Creative problem solving training and mentoring should be part of an entrepreneurial curriculum (Servoss et al., 2018). Mentoring can provide the necessary support to make an informed decision regarding career choice (Horn et al., 2021). The curriculum should provide students an internship opportunity in a successful small business as the guidance from hands-on entrepreneurs and successful people from industry would establish a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship. An entrepreneurship curriculum should also include hospitality and tourism trends as it empowers the student to understand the industry better and to prepare the business for the future.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The researcher's focus was on the attitudes towards and perceptions of hospitality management alumni regarding entrepreneurial education and training received during their studies at a university of technology. The literature review reveals the reality of unemployment and the major impact of pandemics on an industry and the country. Currently graduates are even less certain of finding employment, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. A number of small and large hospitality establishments had to down-size or close due to the lengthy period of not being able to operate. Research shows that the development of SMMEs will have the potential to meet a number of socio-economic challenges. However, the immediate challenge lies with the entrepreneurial education and training that students receive during their studies. Developing meaningful interest in entrepreneurship can only be achieved if the foundation for a positive attitude towards new venture start-ups is laid and the necessary skills are acquired by students during their studies.

Findings show that hospitality graduates strongly favour entrepreneurship, namely starting an own business, as a career option. They do see the possibility of earning a better income as an entrepreneur versus working for a hospitality organisation, but they also feel that the university should take the lead in relevant education programmes and training of entrepreneurs. According to the results, graduates report that entrepreneurial education and training did take place during their studies. A limited number of business skills were taught, such as focusing on a business plan and undertaking small projects. The majority of the hospitality management courses offered at tertiary institutions do have a work-integrated learning component which provides the university and the student with insight into the industry and the opportunity to gain practical experience that could be beneficial, not only in developing

an entrepreneurial mindset, but rather to incorporate sufficient practical experience that could supplement entrepreneurial education and training.

Universities of technology need to foster a strong culture of entrepreneurship among their students. The development of valid or related entrepreneurial programmes for hospitality students is imperative. Not only will this create an entrepreneurial environment, in which the graduate will realise that there are more career choices than merely working in a hospitality organization. The programmes should also address the challenges that the hospitality industry faces in terms of unemployment, while staying sustainable and competitive. In general, a re-evaluation of the current curriculum offered should be done to make entrepreneurial education and training more relevant by using practical assessments and most importantly, by creating a stronger entrepreneurial mind-set among the students. This will provide not only the graduate with employment, but the development of SMMEs will definitely contribute the economic growth of a country like South Africa.

### **Limitations and future research**

As the study focused on the perceptions of hospitality management alumni from a university of technology, the results cannot be generalised to any other tertiary institution. Unfortunately, out of 300, only 98 participants completed the questionnaire, therefore the response rate was lower than expected. Future research should be considered and include other tertiary institutions that offer courses in Hospitality Management. Using a questionnaire also has its challenges with one of the main disadvantages being a low response rate. It is suggested that a mixed-method design could have been adopted to obtain richer data.

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