

# Hospitality Management Students' Entrepreneurial Intentions and Perceived Challenges: A Case Study of Takoradi Technical University, Ghana

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## Abstract

One of the most noteworthy issues in Ghana is unemployment in almost all sectors including the hospitality sector. It has gotten to the point that university graduates typically must wait a long time before finding employment. Entrepreneurship has been identified as a potential solution to address unemployment and promote economic development. The study evaluated the factors that influence hospitality management students' intentions to set up hospitality businesses, as well as their perceived challenges in setting up hospitality businesses after school considering the aforementioned. The findings of this study are significant for educational institutions, policymakers, and industry stakeholders in developing strategies to foster entrepreneurship among graduating students. The study adopted a descriptive survey method. A simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of two hundred (200) final year students from the Department of Hospitality Management in Takoradi Technical University for the study. The data was collected by means of questionnaires and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26. Among the key findings was that students plan to set up their own businesses after school, because they believe it would make them financially independent. They also perceived the challenge of accessing the necessary loans to start a business in Ghana. The study concludes that Hospitality Management students of Takoradi Technical University generally have entrepreneurial intentions and recommends that there should be start up programs and more entrepreneurship course training and extracurricular activities. These create a supportive context for entrepreneurship thereby enhancing students' motivation and capabilities for starting their own hospitality businesses after school.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial intentions, unemployment, students' perceptions, financial independence, hospitality education

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## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is the ability to create, recognize, and seize business opportunities in order to add value and make a profit (Ohanu & Ogbuanya, 2018). An entrepreneur is defined as a person who builds or starts a business or enterprise and manages it, according to Dickel & Eckardt (2021) and Ohanu & Ogbuanya (2018). As a result, the entrepreneur is viewed as a starter, a driver, accountable, and responsible (Mensah et al., 2021). People who engage in or turn into entrepreneurs are motivated by the desire to gain wealth, create job opportunities, make a living, and other such goals (Ohanu & Ogbuanya, 2018). As observed by Mensah et al. (2021), because entrepreneurship plays a key role in sustaining and advancing economic and social development, as well as in establishing and retooling new and existing jobs, innovation, and productivity; governments, legislators, and business practitioners have given it a lot of attention. Thus, entrepreneurship is regarded as a crucial economic

force and a catalyst for the growth and vitality of the global economy (Gieure et al., 2020; Guo et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2013; Tleuberdinova et al., 2021). It is regarded as a new, widespread technique that can be relied upon to lower unemployment and promote socio-economic development (Acs & Audretsch, 2006; Coulibaly et al., 2018; Gieure et al., 2020). Any country's level of economic development might be related to the type of entrepreneurship present there (Chukwu et al., 2019; Morris et al., 2013).

The improvement of entrepreneurial competencies, the lowering of entrepreneurial hurdles, and the alteration of entrepreneurial aspirations all contribute to the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in universities (Liu et al., 2021). Entrepreneurship education has had an impact on students' entrepreneurial skills (Beynon, et al., 2016). Studies conducted by Kuttim, et al. (2014) and KimSoon, et al. (2016) confirmed that entrepreneurship education influenced students' entrepreneurial intention. Similarly, other studies (e.g. Hagg & Kurczewska, 2016; Hattab, 2015; Hussain & Norashidah, 2015; Ibrahim et al., 2015; Robinson et al., 2016) all established a significant relationship between entrepreneurship and intention. Entrepreneurship education is a critical and vital component of creating and developing entrepreneurial attitudes/intentions (Thompson & Kwong, 2016). According to Ratten and Usmanij (2020), entrepreneurship education involves interactive learning that is linked to business and community approach to ensure experience-based learning methods. The ultimate objective of entrepreneurial education is to ensure the change of students' 'mindset when it comes to innovation and risks taking in business ventures (Jones et al., 2014). The appropriate entrepreneurship education should not only teach students how to start a business but as indicated by Nowiński et al. (2019), it should rather focus on enabling students to identify and recognize entrepreneurial opportunities and how to develop digital business. One of the ways to develop the entrepreneurial mindset of students is to provide them with quality entrepreneurship education, which will result in the highest tendency to start their own businesses. The significant impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention has further been demonstrated by previous studies (Hussain & Norashidah, 2015; Iwu et al., 2019; Li & Wu, 2019).

Technical universities in Ghana have included Entrepreneurship as a course in their curricula as a step toward stimulating active and creative entrepreneurial mind set among students, in a bid to help mitigate the problem of unemployment in Ghana. In addition, technical universities offer hands-on practical training to students in various fields of study with the aim of helping them get hands-on practical experience which will propel them to have the ambition of starting up businesses after school. The practical education offered by the technical universities is therefore expected to equip students to become self-sufficient in starting up businesses. The Hospitality Management programme offered by Takoradi Technical University is crafted from a syllabus that has a practical component and entrepreneurship as core areas. The problem that arises however is that, do students intend to use this practical knowledge gained over the years on campus, coupled with their entrepreneurial training to start up hospitality businesses after school? Based on the above premise, the study sought to 1) examine the factors that influence hospitality management students' intentions to set up hospitality businesses after school; and 2) assess hospitality management students' perceived challenges in setting up hospitality businesses after school.

Entrepreneurial intention has been defined by Nabi et al. (2010) as the awareness that an individual intends to establish a new business in the future. Additionally, it indicates a person's desire to pursue business (Mohamad et al., 2015; Souitaris et al., 2007). A similar definition of entrepreneurial intention was provided by Syed et al. (2020), who described it as a person's intention to engage in activities and programmes that promote the creation of new business ventures. The development of entrepreneurial ambitions is a critical first step in becoming an entrepreneur and in starting and growing new businesses (Baron & Hmieleski, 2018; Biraglia & Kadile, 2017; Jeraj, 2014; Van Stel et al., 2005). Therefore, one crucial step in developing strategies to foster an entrepreneurial spirit in students is to ascertain their intentions with regard to starting a new business or participating in any other entrepreneurial activity. It has been reported that each student's decision to pursue entrepreneurship as a career is a key factor in how they will act or want to act in this area once they graduate from school (Verheul et al., 2012; Wibowo, 2017).

Hu et al. (2018) observed that understanding the reasons that influence an entrepreneur to start a business can not only speed up the growth of the entrepreneurial process but also, and more crucially, shape each person's entrepreneurial intention in both theory and practice. In a similar vein, Carsrud and Brännback (2011) asserted that in order to encourage entrepreneurial initiatives, it is crucial to understand how entrepreneurial intention is formed. Even if their education is not specifically in entrepreneurship, research has also shown that well-educated entrepreneurs are more likely to succeed (O'Connor, 2013). Findings from other studies have indicated that social groups and a student's academic environment are likely to have a substantial impact on how they view entrepreneurship as a career, because these factors can shape how students perceive entrepreneurship as a career option (Bosma, Wennekers & Amoros 2012).

Otache et al (2021) have investigated how different categories of entrepreneurship education initiatives influence students' entrepreneurial intentions and the mechanisms through which this impact occurs. In their study on entrepreneurship education, curriculum and lecturer-competency as antecedents of student entrepreneurial intention, Iwu et al. (2019) found out that other elements that can affect how students view entrepreneurship could be the availability of business possibilities, their capacity to manage a firm, the degree of risk involved, and their fear of failing to launch and maintain a business. Ayeh et al. (2022) in their recent study applying the Theory of Planned Behaviour to predict students' response to entrepreneurship in hospitality and tourism education, found entrepreneurial intention of students to be influenced by their perceived behavioural control. They further observed that when individuals believe that they possess the ability to perform an activity that will lead to an expected outcome, they embrace it. This result supports findings from Nowiski & Haddoud's (2019) study on the role of inspiring role models in enhancing entrepreneurial intention. When students feel they have the capacity and skills to do so, they may be inspired to take decisive action and launch their own hospitality/tourism businesses (Ayeh et al., 2022). Anthony et al. (2021) investigated factors that affect undergraduate hospitality students' decision to pursue a career in the industry and discovered that the desire to run one's own business, interest in the field, personality compatibility with the field, and peer pressure were the best indicators of students' career choices.

## 2. Methods

The study utilized a cross-sectional descriptive survey design with a mixed methods approach to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The target population comprised all final year Higher National Diploma (HND) Hospitality Management students at Takoradi Technical University for the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 academic years. This group was purposively selected because they had adequate exposure to practical training and entrepreneurship courses to provide insights on the research objectives.

A sample size of 200 respondents was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for a finite population of 400 students. To select the actual sample, simple random sampling was employed to give every eligible respondent an equal chance of participation. This enhanced the representativeness of the findings. Data was gathered through self-administered structured questionnaires consisting predominantly of closed-ended 5-point Likert scale questions. Statements measuring students' entrepreneurial intentions and perceived challenges had response options ranging from 1= Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

The questionnaire was pretested on 20 hospitality management students with similar characteristics as the target respondents to assess clarity of instructions, question wording, sequence, completion time among others. Minor revisions were made based on the feedback received. The revised instrument was then distributed to the sample of 200 students and collected on the same day by hand delivery and collection by the researchers. This yielded a 100% response rate.

The quantitative data was analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistical tools including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to establish response patterns. Thematic content analysis was employed for qualitative insights from the open-ended questionnaire items and interview data. Triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative findings enhanced the depth of understanding and corroboration of the results. Ethical considerations regarding voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality and privacy were appropriately addressed.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Factors that Influence Students to Set-Up Hospitality Businesses after School

Table 1 shows the results of analysis of the factors influencing hospitality management students' entrepreneurial intentions. Five (5) items were used. The item "I would put in much effort to start and run my own business after graduating" had the highest mean (3.84) score and was ranked first. This was followed by the items "I have planned to set up my own business after graduation" and my professional goal is to become an entrepreneur", both obtaining a mean value of 3.62 and ranked second. Respondents also agreed (mean score = 3.60) that they would prefer to be entrepreneurs rather than be employees in a company. On the issue of being advised and guided by their colleagues to start their own business, respondents were mostly neutral (mean score = 3.24).

**Table 1: Percentages, Mean and Ranking of Students' Intentions of Setting up Hospitality Businesses after School**

Item	SD 1	D 2	N 3	A 4	SA 5	Mean	Rank
	%	%	%	%	%		
<b>I have planned to set up my own hospitality business after graduation.</b>	10	10	20	28	32	3.62	2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>My professional goal is to become an entrepreneur.</b>	14	4	22	26	34	3.62	2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>I prefer to be an entrepreneur rather than to be an employee in a company.</b>	12	8	20	28	32	3.60	3 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>I will put in every effort to start and run my own business after graduating.</b>	16	10	8	36	30	3.84	1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>My colleagues advise and guide me to start my own business.</b>	12	20	20	28	20	3.24	4 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Scale: 1 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree, 1.5 – 2.49 = Disagree, 2.5 – 3.49 = Neutral, 3.5 – 4.49 = Agree, 4.5- 5.0 = Strongly Agree

Table 2 presents data on motivators for entrepreneurial venture after school. Six (6) items were used. Respondents agreed (mean score = 4.00) that the Entrepreneurship courses at the university prepare them well for an entrepreneurial career. This motivator received the highest mean score ranking.

**Table 2: Mean Score Ranking of Motivators for Setting up a Hospitality Business after School**

Item	Mean	Std. Dev	Rank
<b>In my university, people are actively encouraged to pursue their own ideas/entrepreneurial plans.</b>	3.68	0.93	5 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Entrepreneurship courses at my university prepare me well for an entrepreneurial career.</b>	4.00	0.78	1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Starting my hospitality business after graduation will make me financially independent.</b>	3.69	0.91	4 <sup>th</sup>
<b>I will get full support of my family if I decide to become an entrepreneur.</b>	3.54	0.99	6 <sup>th</sup>
<b>I know many people in my university who have successfully started up their own business.</b>	3.72	0.86	3 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>I have the skills and capabilities required to succeed as an entrepreneur.</b>	3.84	0.87	2 <sup>nd</sup>

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Scale: 1 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree, 1.5 – 2.49 = Disagree, 2.5 – 3.49 = Neutral, 3.5 – 4.49 = Agree, 4.5- 5.0 = Strongly Agree

Respondents also agreed (mean score = 3.84) to the item “I have the skills and capabilities required to succeed as an entrepreneur” which was ranked second. The majority of the respondents believed that the courses they take at the university adequately prepares them to be entrepreneurs. This result concurs with Mason (2018) who stated that higher education must equip future business owners for a better understanding of risk and a more effective blend of confidence and experience. The least ranked among the six items was “I will get full support of my family if I decide to become an entrepreneur” (mean score = 3.54). Generally, respondents believed that they have been adequately prepared with the needed skills and capabilities to succeed as entrepreneurs. According to the analysis, the study shows that a few variables drive students to launch a business by encouraging them to open up their own hospitality businesses after school. With a mean value of 3.69 of

respondents agreed that opening their own hospitality businesses would enable them to become financially independent.

### 3.2 Students' Perceived Challenges in Setting up a Hospitality Business after School

Seven (7) items were used for this measure and results are presented in Table 3. The major challenge perceived by students with regard to setting up a hospitality business after school is that there is no clear-cut path in starting their own entrepreneurial businesses (mean score = 3.86). This was followed by the item 'I do not have enough confidence in the system to run my own successful hospitality business' (mean score = 3.76). Another key challenge perceived by students has to do with the fear of not getting help from family if they decide to start their own hospitality business, ranking third with a mean score of 3.68. Interestingly, from Table 2, the least ranked motivator for starting a hospitality business has to do with getting the full support of family. This implies that students anticipate family support to be key to a successful entrepreneurial venture. The least perceived challenge relates to the ease of accessing business loans in Ghana. This may be a result of recent government initiatives in Ghana to support young business start-ups through the establishment of business incubators and start-up packages. According to the study, the majority of students believed that starting and operating one's own hospitality enterprises required a professional education. Even if their education is not strictly in the subject of entrepreneurship, research has shown that well-educated entrepreneurs are more likely to succeed (Conner, 2013).

**Table 3: Percentages, Mean Score and Ranking of the Perceived Challenges of Starting an Entrepreneurial Venture**

	SD	D	N	A	SA	MEAN	RANK
	1	2	3	4	5		
Perceptions	%	%	%	%	%		
<b>It is not easy to get the necessary loans to start a business in Ghana.</b>	18	28	32	10	10	2.60	7 <sup>th</sup>
<b>My family might not help me in starting and running my hospitality business.</b>	2	8	30	40	20	3.68	3 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>I do not have enough confidence in the system to run my own successful hospitality business.</b>	6	8	20	32	32	3.76	2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>I do not have the necessary financial resources to market my services.</b>	4	10	28	38	20	3.60	5 <sup>th</sup>
<b>I do not have enough information about how to start a hospitality business.</b>	2	14	30	26	28	3.64	4 <sup>th</sup>
<b>I do not have the ability to organize and access financial support.</b>	2	6	36	34	20	3.58	6 <sup>th</sup>
<b>There is no clear-cut path in starting my own entrepreneurial business.</b>	2	6	30	28	34	3.86	1 <sup>st</sup>

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Scale: 1 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree, 1.5 – 2.49 = Disagree, 2.5 – 3.49 = Neutral, 3.5 – 4.49 = Agree, 4.5- 5.0 = Strongly Agree.

### 3. Discussion

The first objective sought to examine factors that influence students' intentions to set up hospitality businesses after school. Given the favorable circumstances, it is evident from the results that students have entrepreneurial dreams, and this is due to the fact that they are determined to launch a hospitality venture. The study also showed that the students intend to launch their own firms after they finish school. This will aid in lowering Ghana's graduate unemployment rate, making it a step in the right direction. According to research by Acs & Audretsch (2006), Coulibaly et al. (2018), and Gieure et al. (2020), entrepreneurship is a rising global practise that can be relied upon to lower unemployment while promoting social development and economic prosperity. This observation is supported by Gieure et al., 2020; Guo et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2013; Tleuberdinova et al., 2021 who purported that entrepreneurship is seen as an essential economic force and catalyst in the development and vigor of the world economy. The study further revealed that students preferred being their own bosses to working for an organization or firm, which supports their desire to become entrepreneurs professionally. The students felt

that the University's courses had given them the necessary preparation for starting their own businesses. They hinted that they had acquired the necessary knowledge and abilities via their years of school to flourish as business owners. This outcome is in line with Audretsch's (2014) claim that the university's entrepreneurial society should offer thinking, leadership, and engagement to develop entrepreneurship capital. Audretsch contends further that an increasing number of colleges and other educational institutions work to give their students the knowledge and abilities needed to launch a business or engage in other entrepreneurial activities. The fact that several of their seniors they know have successfully launched their own businesses and are succeeding served as a source of motivation for them. This finding corroborates with Fadzil et al. (2022) who observed that hospitality operators that have established enterprises are considered successful entrepreneurs.

The second objective sought to assess students' perceived challenges in setting up a hospitality business after school. Though students have high hopes of starting hospitality businesses and succeeding, they identified some challenges that they anticipate will equally hinder their progress. Notable among the challenges they anticipate is there is no clear-cut path in starting their own entrepreneurial businesses. This probably is because of the bureaucratic nature of the process of starting a business in Ghana. Students also alluded to the fact that the Ghanaian setting does not promote confidence in entrepreneurial ventures. This could be due to the high cost of initial setup, taxes, levies and the required human resources and a suitable location for start-ups. Strangely, a large number of the respondents indicated that they do not expect financial support from their family members when they decide to set up their own businesses. This could be due to the fact that generally, most people would not want to associate with ventures that are risky.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Takoradi Technical University students studying hospitality management typically have entrepreneurial inclinations given the opportunities and a favorable business climate. Many of the students intend to launch their own hospitality companies following graduation. They are motivated by pull factors including wanting to create their own business rather than working for someone else, making every attempt to do so, having financial independence, and being inspired by successful entrepreneurs. The students believe that they have the skills and capabilities required to succeed as an entrepreneur. Students still favor starting their own businesses to working for someone else, despite the apparent difficulties involved. They anticipate difficulties such as the ability to organize and source financial support, getting family support, not having enough confidence in the business environment, no clear-cut path in starting an entrepreneurship business among others.

Today's entrepreneurial interests are crucial for economic development. With the aid of start-ups and the introduction of numerous initiatives, such as the establishment of business incubation hubs in some universities to encourage the growth of entrepreneurship among students, the Ghanaian government and non-governmental organisations are also encouraging young entrepreneurs. Due to low graduate employability, notably in the hospitality industry, Misni et al. (2020) claimed that there is now an insufficient supply of talent and that the demand for jobs does not balance with the supply of talent. Therefore, it is crucial for educational institutions to foster in their students the "entrepreneurial spirit."

#### **5. Recommendations**

**Enhanced Entrepreneurship Course Training and Extracurricular Activities:** The study recommends that educational institutions, particularly technical universities, should prioritize the enhancement of entrepreneurship education. This can be achieved through the development of comprehensive entrepreneurship course training and extracurricular activities that foster an entrepreneurial environment. By providing students with practical skills, knowledge, and experiences related to entrepreneurship, institutions can better prepare them for the challenges of starting and managing their own hospitality businesses after graduation.

**Government Support for Entrepreneurship:** The paper emphasizes the need for government intervention to encourage entrepreneurship among graduating students. It recommends that the government should establish funding, scholarships, and awards specifically aimed at supporting and incentivizing students who intend to start their own businesses. Additionally, the availability of soft loans for students with strong business concepts can help address the perceived difficulties of starting a business. Furthermore, the government should pay more attention to technical universities by providing the necessary resources, tools, equipment, and infrastructure to boost students' entrepreneurial ambitions.

**Future Research and Collaboration:** The study suggests that future research should consider expanding the sample size by including hospitality management students from other technical universities in Ghana. Additionally, it recommends exploring the connection between students' entrepreneurial goals and their demographics, particularly gender. Collaborative research efforts involving multiple institutions and researchers could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing students' intentions and challenges related to entrepreneurship.

**Policy Implications:** The findings of the study have significant policy implications for educational institutions and government agencies. It is recommended that policies be developed to promote entrepreneurship education and provide support for aspiring student entrepreneurs. This could involve the implementation of start-up programs, the integration of entrepreneurship courses into the curriculum, and the establishment of mentorship and support networks for student entrepreneurs.

**Industry Engagement:** Collaboration with the hospitality industry can provide valuable insights and opportunities for students to gain practical experience and mentorship. The paper recommends that educational institutions establish partnerships with industry stakeholders to facilitate internships, mentorship programs, and networking opportunities for students interested in entrepreneurship.

## **6. Practical implications**

The study's findings suggest several practical implications:

**Educational Institutions:** The paper highlights the need for educational institutions, particularly technical universities, to enhance entrepreneurship education by providing more entrepreneurship course training, extracurricular activities, and start-up programs. This would create a supportive context for entrepreneurship, thereby enhancing students' motivation and capabilities for starting their own hospitality businesses after school. Additionally, the practical education offered by technical universities should focus on equipping students with the necessary skills and mindset for entrepreneurial ventures.

**Government Policies:** The study recommends that the government should play a more active role in encouraging entrepreneurship by establishing funding, scholarships, and awards to support graduating students. Furthermore, the availability of soft loans for students with strong business concepts can help address the perceived difficulties of starting a business. The government should also pay more attention to technical universities by providing the necessary resources, tools, equipment, and infrastructure to boost students' entrepreneurial ambitions.

**Hospitality Industry:** The findings have implications for the hospitality industry in Ghana, as they indicate a potential pool of future entrepreneurs among hospitality management students. The industry could benefit from the emergence of new hospitality businesses started by these students, contributing to economic development and job creation.

## **7. Future Research Directions**

Future research directions should aim to broaden the scope, depth, and applicability of the findings, ultimately contributing to a better understanding of how to foster and support entrepreneurship among hospitality management students. The paper suggests the following future research directions:

1. Expand the sample size by including hospitality management students from other technical universities in Ghana to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.
2. Explore the connection between students' entrepreneurial goals and their demographics, particularly gender, to investigate potential differences or patterns.
4. Investigate the role of specific interventions, such as entrepreneurship education programs, mentorship initiatives, or business incubators, in fostering entrepreneurial intentions and addressing perceived challenges among hospitality management students.
5. Conduct longitudinal studies to track the entrepreneurial journey of hospitality management students after graduation, examining how their intentions translate into actual entrepreneurial activities and the challenges they face in the real-world business environment.

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