

Higher Education in Tourism and the Real Needs of the Labour Market: the Case of the City of Guadalajara, Mexico

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The purpose of this research is to determine whether there is a gap between higher education in tourism training, and real labour market needs in the tourism sector, specifically applied to the city of Guadalajara, Mexico. After reviewing some literature on the subject in consideration, a primary exploratory and qualitative research was conducted. The results of this research demonstrated that the institutions of higher education in tourism, the tourism industry and the governments are responsible for the lack of qualified professionals in the industry, that due to its generation of income and employment, contribute to sustainable growth in the country.

At last, the article gives some recommendations for each of the main identified entities, and provides the continuity of a quantitative research that allows the generalization of the results found to this day, not only in the city of Guadalajara, but across all Mexico.

KEYWORDS: *tourism, education, Mexico, training*

INTRODUCTION

This article analyses the existing relationship between higher education and the real labour market needs applied to the tourism sector. Before starting the research, the authors wondered if the universities in the city of Guadalajara took into consideration the views of the public and private entities of the tourism sector in the development of their programs and curriculum. In other words: To what extent do these entities participate in the professional development of tourism students whom they will employ later on in the future.

This paper begins with the review of the literature of the most important researches made on the topic. Unfortunately the results were not as expected, although there is relevant research on higher education and tourism

management, as well as in personal research and Baum's, there is none on the combination of both topics, that is, on higher education in tourism. Subsequently, using the methodology of structure, the theoretical framework was created, in which relations were established between the three relevant entities that were identified in the process of collecting secondary data: The tourism industry, the government and the institutions of higher education in tourism. As shown below, the interaction and decisions that these entities make on higher education in tourism will create professionals who will meet the expectations of their employers in the sector.

The results of the review of the literature identified the qualitative methodology applied for the collection of primary data. Being an exploratory study, which sought expert opinions from the entities identified in the theoretical framework, the method of semi-structured in-

depth interviews with 20 experts on education in tourism, tourism management and government administration of the sector were conducted. The selection of the city which hosted the research was due to the rapid growth that Guadalajara's metropolitan area has shown – in the year 2010, it hosted 1.5 million international tourists and 8.5 million domestic visitors, out of the 20 million international tourists hosted by the Country of Mexico, and out of the 160 million domestic visitors who travel around the Mexican territory; the international appreciation of the City –it hosted the Pan-American Olympics in the year 2011, and because the tourism sector plays an important role in the economic development of the country, as a generator of income and jobs.

It is worth remembering that the growth of the tourism sector reflected in the number of tourists and income levels that the latter bring to the destination, must be accompanied by improvements in infrastructure, hotel facilities and services in general, health, connectivity, skilled human resources, and others. These human resources must meet the requirements and behaviour of their current tourists that come from all over the World, who may not speak Spanish, who may be over-informed, who market tourism products through the Internet and, for example, look for sustainable destinations.

After obtaining the results of the research, the article at last presents the main conclusions and recommendations for the creation of better human resources in the tourism sector, as well as the conduction of future researches that can be performed to confirm the hypotheses drawn from the current research work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The tourism industry, according to the World Tourism Organization, despite the economic crisis has grown Worldwide from 3% to 4%. In the Americas, the industry's growth is even higher than the global one, thus creating more business opportunities and jobs. However, public and private institutions have not found qualified human resources to support this growth. Another finding is that institutions of higher education in tourism educate professionals different than the requirements of the tourism industry, and later have difficulties hiring their own newly graduates; so much so, that many of them work in another sector or change sectors in the short term, because they are underemployed and the positions offered are not meeting their expectations.

In order to understand the reality of the topic, different contexts have been analysed worldwide:

In the case of Canada, MacLaurin (2005) notes that education in tourism has existed since the 1960's, and that it has been evolving in accordance with the requirements. From Ontario's experience, the author affirms that even today it is discussed whether the influence of tourism organizations, the impact of legislation on tourism, and hospitality education promote the development of future leaders of the industry, who will be capable of maintaining and enhancing the tourism industry in Canada. Also, it is noted that Canadian colleges saw the need to develop a common base of the curricula, and thus preserved the credibility of the quality of the programs. So, they created what is now called INDECORE – Industry Developed Core Curriculum (Cooper & MacLaurin, 1986), which was created based on the DACUM System, which is a synonym of "Developing a Curricula", a process of curricula development that has been both effective as well as efficient. DACUM has served as the approach to occupational analysis in terms of duties, tasks, knowledge, skills, traits and attitudes.

In 1977, the Ontario Hospitality Institute (OHI) was established by the hospitality industry leaders who were concerned about the shortage of well trained and educated professionals of the industry. The development of this institute and the growth of skill in hospitality was the direct result of the participation of the government, the industry and the educators. As stated by MacLaurin, the OHI is the result of the partnership between governments, colleges, and the hospitality industry.

The report of the National Manpower Strategy of 1983 outlined the agreement of the personnel requirements of both the government and the industry that would be necessary to meet the needs of the ever increasing work industry in Canada. Among the statistics that were developed in 1983 as a part of the report of this strategy, it was learned that out of the 571,000 employed workers of the hospitality industry in Canada and the food service of the tourism sector, 88% had never received a training related to their job, and 63% had no experience in their jobs. They also informed that it was expected that tourism employment would increase from 571,000 employees to 2'109,000 by the year 2000. In brief, it appears that in Canada, for the past four decades, there has been analysis on how to develop education in tourism with regards to the growth of the industry, and how the Government and the tourism industry work together to develop education in tourism.

In the case of the British Isles, Baum (2005) notes that tourism education in the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) is very ample and well established both in the professional / technical training centres, as well as in the higher education / university (Cooper et al., 1994, taken from Baum, 2005). They offer beginner's vocational training programs at the level of learning, graduate and undergraduate programs, as well as masters and doctorates. This educational service is offered full time, part-time and in distance education modes, with significant commitments from the industry at all levels.

Thus, it is observed that in the British Isles, there is a direct involvement of the tourism industry in the training of professionals. Likewise, the tourism education system in the UK is designed to be flexible and progressive; it offers students and industry employees the opportunity to progress through the five levels of the initial training stage, as well as to continue with their professional development (CPD).

In the case of Israel, Reichel (2005) notes that one of the main problems that the various programs in hospitality and tourism management have in the Ben-Gurion University (BGU), is the lack of pre-professional experience in the industry. To resolve this inconvenience, academic courses are offered on campus, and students are required to spend 1200 hours in supervised practical training or internships. Also, the Food and Hotel Management Resources of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Rehovot, initially did not require their students to practice internships in the industry; however, students and graduates of this program insisted that their position in the labour market was lower than those who performed internships. As a result of this, The University added 600 hours of internship options in their program.

In the case of Turkey, Okumus & Yagci (2005), it is indicated that there were serious criticisms of the curriculum established in undergraduate programs. For example, there were radical differences between the tourism and hotel management curricula, and it was often disputed that they had made the mistake of failing to develop in their students the skills, knowledge, capacities, and attitude required by the tourism industry.

According to the Ministry of Tourism of Turkey (1994, taken from Okumus & Yagci, 2005), the representatives of the tourism industry often complain of the graduates of tourism programs, saying that they have no basic practical skills, knowledge of languages nor a positive attitude. Finally, these authors conclude that the main challenges facing tourism programs include: lack of

qualified academic staff, poorly designed curricula, limited opportunities for practical training for students, and the challenge of keeping qualified graduates in the tourism industry.

In the case of China, over the past 26 years, higher education in tourism has accumulated both successful experiences as well as opportunities for improvement. In general, the development of higher education in tourism has been relegated by the rapid growth of China's tourism industry (Zhang & Xixia, 2005). This means that China has undergone a rapid expansion, but with low efficiency and limited improvement in the educational quality (Du, 2003, Liu & Bi, 2001, Wang & Wang, 2001; Yu, 2003 taken from Zhang & Xixia, 2005). Also, with the rapid growth of China's tourism industry, the developments in the higher education of tourism does not only lie in the alignment with the usual practices in the world, but also in the establishment of a mechanism for the development of talent and training adapted to the national conditions and the market demand. This development will provide the supply of suitable talent for the growth of the tourism industry in quantity and quality, installation, distribution and strong support of human resources, so China can become "a great tourist country in the world" (Zhang & Xixia, 2005: 134).

At this point, it can be concluded that several developed and developing countries have found a gap between what is taught in higher education in tourism and the work that is demanded in the tourism industry. In other words, neither the tourism industry is satisfied with the labour market, nor the higher education in tourism is satisfied with the placement of its graduates in the industry. This finding justifies the need for investigation in Latin America as well. Regalado Pezua & Ore (2009) have conducted a literature review in some countries of the region, such as: Panama, Ecuador, Chile and Costa Rica.

In the case of Panama, the tourism sector is aware that its sustained growth for ten years has required the incorporation of skilled labour, especially in the technical areas, with a combination of skills: from personal skills of each task and language mastery, to an outstanding attitude of service. However, the reality is that the Panamanian industry greatly lacks the aforementioned. (Regalado Pezua & Ore, 2009: 53). These shortcomings have been addressed by the private sector by creating their own training centres and training programs tailored to their requirements. Also, in the case of Panama Condo, Inman & Turner (2001, taken from Regalado Pezua & Ore, 2009:54) show a brief overview of the training for the tourism sector of Panama, and mentioned that the sectors

directly involved in tourism, such as hotels and tourist agencies, have trouble finding trained personnel, which creates the need for them to invest in internal training programs.

In the case of Ecuador, Regalado Pezúa & Oré (2009), report that there have been complaints to the Government by colleges and universities that teach tourism. These entities mentioned that the Government has not conducted any research to find the tourism labour market requirements, so these educational institutions are training professionals and technicians who cannot find a space in the tourism industry later on, or who do not perform their job properly in the areas required. In the case of Chile, tourism education is considered a technical degree, not a professional one, such as the engineering and business administration ones (Regalado & Ore, 2009).

In the case of Costa Rica, a pilot research conducted by the Costa Rican Union of Chambers and Associations of Private Enterprises (UCCAEP), found that the tourism, construction, and food industries are the sectors with the most difficulty finding qualified personnel (Regalado & Ore, 2009). In the case of Mexico, with regards to the tourism development model, Gómez Nieves (2011) makes a powerful statement: "There is evidence that education, science and technology go hand in hand in the path of development. However, the lack of knowledge we have about the phenomenon of tourism in Mexico, as well as the falsity and simulation prevailing in this field due to scientific illiteracy, have been the main reasons why there are still no viable alternatives for the model of prevailing tourist development in the Country." On the other hand, Everitt et al. (2008), notes that the global tourism industry is huge, and the Mexican element is rapidly growing. The field of tourism in Mexico and the study of its impact require even more attention from academics, public agencies and interested citizens.

In this sense, trying to respond to what has been pointed out by Everitt, this research will seek to find out if the city of Guadalajara, Mexico has is the same gap between the demand on the labour market in terms of tourism professionals, and what is offered by educational institutions in the sector being researched.

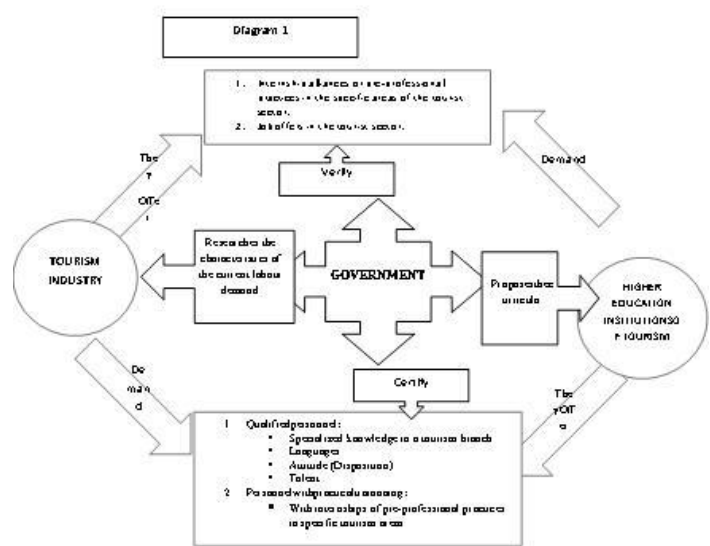
RESEARCH PROBLEM

As reported in the review of the literature, there is an interest from the academic sector, the tourism industry, and the tourism training institutions, in studying both tourism management, as well as development of education

in tourism; however, very little literature can be found that combines both fields of study. Thus, in order to know its relationship and to close the gap that apparently exists between supply and demand of human resources in the industry; the research question of this study is formulated as follows: Is the tourism training covering the real labour market needs of tourism in the City of Guadalajara? In other words, the graduates from the faculties of tourism have the skills and abilities that the public and private tourism sectors need.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

As shown in Diagram No. 1, the theoretical framework has been developed on the basis of the relationship that should exist between the three entities that are directly involved in solving the problem raised: the tourist industry, the tourism institutions of higher education, and the Government.



These entities also participate in the development, growth and sustainability of tourist destinations in developed and developing countries, where tourism is presented as a vector of economic growth.

The tourism industry demands trained human resources to perform the various tasks that companies require, according to their specialization in both the public and the private sectors, such as hospitality, restaurants, travel agencies, tourist information offices, and others. Also, the tourism industry participates in the training of students, by offering hospitality and tourism student internships or a dwelling for one or more academic semesters. These programs meet two objectives and satisfy the needs of both parties: it allows students to gain

professional experience, it allows industrial entities to have human resources at a lower operating cost, and it allows the employment of students who have finished their studies after passing a trial period.

On the other hand, the higher education institutions in tourism provide students with the training, skills and abilities that will help them meet the labour market successfully. They also offer job boards, in partnership with the tourism industry, where they publish internships and jobs. It is understood that the curricula should meet the labour needs of the tourism market of the public and private sectors. Finally, these institutions have the responsibility of providing prosperous citizens with values and knowledge that contribute to the development of the Nation.

The Government is part of the outline of the framework, because it should fulfil several roles: the regulator, the supervisor, and the certifier. As the regulator, the Government must receive the tourist industry requirements, process them and establish the needs of the labour market. It should then be responsible for presenting the requirements of the institutions of education in tourism, which in turn should update their curricula based upon the request of the tourism industry. As the supervisor, it must verify that the tourism industry, for example, offers internships and jobs in this sector, as demanded by the tourism educational institutions. As a certifier, it must certify that the institutions of higher education in tourism create qualified professionals with specializations in the tourism degree, with a willingness to work in the tourism sector, which involves more direct contact with customers, knowledge of different languages and have pre professional practical experience that will allow them to enter their jobs with experience.

METHODOLOGY

Like all investigations, it began with the search for secondary information. Due to the limited information found during the stage of the review of literature on both topics together: higher education in tourism, and tourism labour market needs, an exploratory and qualitative research is proposed, based on the interpretive and deconstructionist theories. Thus, we collected different views on the performance of the student population, as well as the roles of the Government, the tourism industry, and the academic sector in the development of proposals that meet the expectations of the current tourist demand.

For this purpose, we determined a sample size of 20 experts from the public, private and academic sectors, to which a semi-addressed interview was performed. Among the public sector experts, the managers from different municipalities of the metropolitan area of Guadalajara, Tonalá, Tlajomulco, Zapopan and Guadalajara itself were interviewed. From the private sector, representatives of hotels, restaurants and travel agencies were interviewed. Finally, from the academic sector, the academic directors of the tourism schools of the University of Guadalajara and the Autonomous University of Guadalajara were interviewed. Other industry experts represented the offices of tourism promotion, of sector associations, all of which were knowledgeable and relevant entities in the development of tourism in the city of Guadalajara.

During the semi-addressed interviews, a script was used, which outlined six topics aimed at answering the research question. They were recorded and transcribed in order to analyze its content afterwards.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

According to data collected within the landscape of higher education in tourism in the city of Guadalajara, the study found ideas or assumptions about what is taught in the career of tourism and how this is seen by those involved. Teachers assume that students study the career vocation, not because they have the vocation for it but for the reason that it is considered one of the simplest degrees and also for the travel activities that this implies. And, in some cases, students assume that the career is of executive level, dismissing its other aspects such as the study of a tourist area.

There are also questions about what is a tourist career, whether it is a social science or a technical career. While some consider tourism within a broad social context, others see it as a technical career to the extent that there is very little support in research and analysis.

On the other hand, there are, on behalf of the universities, some dynamics aimed at improving academic performance with respect to job offers. Among these dynamics there are the certificates issued by the Government to those educational programs that interact with employers and graduates. The Ministry of Tourism of Mexico, as a connector between the Government and universities, distributes training, jobs and tourism promotions for graduates. There is also a participation of private sector representatives in the redesign and enhancement of educational programs through meetings with teachers, in some cases, or through indirect activities

such as forums, seminars and talks for students. However, these dynamics do not have much influence in the management of university curricula, as there is a lack of specific orientation of the curriculum to the real sector activity, which in turn, leads to many students withdrawal from the career. Furthermore, the link with the Ministry of Tourism for the generation of professional practices that contribute to a more comprehensive training is wasted.

Respondents make a differentiation between several factors including the Mexican tourism and foreign tourism, where the latter turns out to be superior.

The first factor is the kind of academic education of operators of the tourism area. Thus, it is understood that foreign demand is affected by a weak human resource development in Mexico, supported by companies seeking to lower their costs. Thus, in terms of the tourism career, it is mentioned that, although universities have a close relationship with the Government in order to modify and improve the curriculum according to the needs that is established by the Government, this relationship is closer in other countries, where the connection begins even before the start of the studies. Thus, future students know in advance the actual dynamics of the processes involved in tourist services in a particular socio-historical context. This idea is based on perception, notably present in the interviews, determines that a higher level of approach to the activities or professional practices and the situation of society and present reality should contribute to the improvement of tourism. Is seen also in the last decades that the curriculum has been modified according to the settings, but, nonetheless, it is noted that both the materials and the bibliography do not necessarily correspond to the current context of tourism.

As for teaching, it is noted that there is a disconnect between the experience of the teachers who reach high levels of academic training, and knowledge taught in educational institutions, which is evidenced by the poor training of those in control or those on a high position in business.

The second factor is the emerging role of the Government in the standardization of tourism services in the management of private companies. Thus, private companies do not have uniform standards of tourism services of even more fundamental, such as pool service in the hotels, room service, among others.

The characteristics of the professionals depend on both the teaching of their school, as well as the personal characteristics of students.

On the type of education received, there is heterogeneity in the supply of tourism careers; therefore,

there are careers of different length ranges and of certain approaches that rely on the schools that are offering them.

A first feature of the graduates is that they do not have enough specific knowledge of the activities to be performed, because the career embraces a wide spectrum of activities and almost a scenic approach, and therefore a range of many opportunities for everyday action for professionals.

Employers do value general knowledge but they point out that they also require more practical and basic knowledge corresponding to the type of specialty. Graduates are perceived to focus their interests in the marketing aspect of this sector and have less knowledge about the development of curriculum and other basic skills, including knowledge of languages other than English.

Those interviewed found that this is due largely to the fact that the private companies are not directly involved in the implementation of certain contents in the course of the latest courses of study, which signifies; ultimately, that there is a lack of a period of time for learning and adaptation to the practical application of the career.

For the profile required by the labour demand, general knowledge about the career is widely valued, as well as management skills and daily processes and language proficiency.

It also values the ability to perform strategic planning to expand the existing tourism market and its positioning for the future. It is extremely important, too, to possess the ability to manage new technologies and existing means of communication and the tools in order to constantly adapt to the changes that globalization imposes, so that the practitioner becomes internationally competitive.

This should fit into an entrepreneurial attitude that seeks to investigate and learn in depth the tourist attractions of Mexico and its cultural aspects. You should not forget that tourism lies in the area of services, so it is also necessary for professionals to offer a quality service, and understand both the public and the tourists.

All told, there is a gap between real labour demand and what public policies and institutions of higher education seek to obtain from professionals, tourism services and students of the career. Research suggests four reasons for the existence of this gap.

First, the current situation is that people who have not graduated from the career are employed in the sector, therefore, by their lack of knowledge they leave unmet expectations on tourists.

Second, there is little recurrence of updates to the curriculum of a career that is characterized, paradoxically, by its nature that is of changing and reinventing.

Third, there is a problem of coordination and dialogue among higher education institutions, private sector and the Government. On the one hand, there is a difference between the level of education faculty and professionals of tourism who hinder the dialogue oriented towards the improvement of the curriculum.

On the other hand, mentions that the Government intervenes only as a participatory agent as to professional practices, but has no real influence on the curriculum, which should be comprehensive and provide for a period of practical training and approach to the real context where students should perform in the future.

Fourth, there is a structural defect of public agencies, specifically nepotism; therefore, the critical attitude in the recruitment process is influenced by the existing degree of affinity and consanguinity.

As a result, there are gaps between labour supply and the profile of tourism professionals.

On the one hand, competition for jobs requiring tourism, has created the need for other groups of professionals to acquire specialization in issues related to tourism, however, universities are not able to provide specialties of good standard.

On the other hand, the vast majority of professional workers in the tourism sector come from other unrelated careers such as architecture, veterinary medicine or engineering. Many of the professionals in tourism, due to their limitations in specific basic knowledge, are thus not required, and end up finally with a very limited employment opportunity.

Also, due to the extent to which tourism professionals have no certain knowledge required, the employers spend additional time and resources for the staff training.

Another consequence of this gap is the poor development of tourism in areas such as rural tourism and adventure, which require particular skills that are not being offered.

Finally, there are teachers who are not trained in the practical scope of the profession, and there are management-level managers who could provide these skills to students who without an appropriate academic level could not be part of a faculty. This dichotomy ends up reproducing the poor training of students and unmet demands for a type of professionals of tourism

Study participants raised the reforms needed to reverse this situation, some corresponding to the state level, and others to universities and higher education institutions.

As for the Government, mentions the prioritization and implementation of reforms to improve the development of tourism in the country, referring to changes in regulations regarding the tourism business in areas such as labour rights and human resources in small and medium enterprises. The idea is to achieve a specific regulation that addresses the business practice of tourism activity that not only focuses on large consortia.

Other changes relate to the interaction and communication between the Government and different sectors of tourism representatives nationwide. It proposes the formation of a cabinet that is composed not only by representatives of the Government but also by members of professional bodies and graduates in tourism body for better decision making.

The Government also must be integrated with the universities to implement curricula that are updated in order to form profiles required by the labour market, thus contributing to the training of skilled professionals who can function in the private and public sectors.

The Government must also talk through the Ministry of Tourism of Mexico with the municipalities, and should pay more attention, so, local governments need to know both the new careers and demand in tourism, such as being trained in areas of the municipality related to the strengthening of tourism in local areas.

With regard to reforms in the university, is proposing to amend the college curriculum. A group of respondents consider rescheduling of the subjects widely demanded in three lines: languages, technologies of communication and negotiation skills. Others consider a separation of subjects according to the nature of the course, to obey a concerted process between universities, employers and the Government.

A third group considers it necessary to create specialties in tourism that allows the student to follow a specific line of development which, in turn, meets the diverse demands on the market.

Reforms are proposed in improving the levels of foreign language training, training in field exercises, and quality and commitment and ethics of university teachers.

It is emphasized, finally, the importance of certifying those travel professionals with extensive experience, and in the same vein, enhance dialogue and rapprochement between academic and private sectors, so as to identify weaknesses in each sector and making contributions for training based on the requirements of the work field.

CONCLUSION

From the review of literature we can conclude that, in general, in the design of the curriculum of the tourist, professional requirements of the tourism industry have not been considered. This has been noted by different authors making reference to some European countries, Asia and Latin America. However, cases have been found such as Canada and the United Kingdom where it has developed synergies between educational institutions, Government and the tourism industry, making programs that respond to the labour market sector.

In the case of Guadalajara there is a gap between the tourism training provided by universities and professional requirements of the tourism industry. From the results of research, this gap was caused by four factors: i) The curriculum of institutions of higher education in tourism are not updated regularly, and when they do so, the representatives of the tourism industry are not involved in the process. ii) During the academic development of a professional in tourism there is a problem of coordination between the faculty and the tourism industry. Many teachers have no professional experience and many industry professionals do not have degrees in teaching. iii) The recent graduates lack work experience because the curricula of higher education institutions do not include pre-professional programs. iv) The Government is also not involved in the development of the curricula of universities. As the supervisory body, the Government should promote the inclusion of pre-professional approach to enable the student to move toward the labour world.

In the absence of trained professionals is evident not only that universities are not fulfilling their role as educators in the specialty but it also forces the tourism industry to spend more money and financial training to professionals hired, and often creating internal training centres.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The institutions of higher education in tourism should review their programs and curricula to include pre-professional programs, invite representatives of the tourism industry, unions and government officials to participate in this process, as well as train their staff.

The tourist industry, as major stakeholders should work to enrich the pockets of universities offering pre-professional students, define the profiles of professionals who seek employment and attend to the call of higher education institutions in tourism.

The Government should create a body of integration between the tourist industry and institutions of higher education in tourism. It must ensure that the programs and curricula meet the market needs of each of the regions.

FUTURE RESEARCH.

After performing the literature review and primary data raised using a qualitative methodology for its exploratory nature, it has been concluded that there is a gap between higher education in tourism and real market needs in the city of Guadalajara, Mexico. This gap, as explained in the findings has been produced by four hypotheses that will be tested in future by quantitative research applied to a representative sample of a population of each of the relevant persons identified in this research. Depending on the scope of this work, it may be undertaken in the city of Guadalajara or across the territory of Mexico.

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