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Marketing Tourism and Hotel Management Schools in the Context of Higher Education Globalization and Student Mobility Through Improved Curriculum and Industrial Training Offerings

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Abstract

Recent research from international statistics indicate an important flow of student mobility all over the world, creating a need to provide comprehensive information regarding educational institutions involved in the process. This study examines and compares tourism and hotel management (THM) programs at different levels, including the nature of programs offered, their curriculum, and internship components. A particular focus was given to the industrial training requirement as a core component of THM programs. Results showed both similarities and differences worldwide within the framework of the institutions compared. The findings may help all stakeholders in the education systems, including professionals, educators, students, and decision-makers alike.

Keywords: syllabus, tourism school, sector training, tourism education

Introduction

The most important debate of whether to globalize and internationalize has been one of the hottest issues in higher education within all programs and courses throughout the continents, countries, and cities and even on the same university campuses. World War II stands as one of the cornerstones of this debate because two essential changes were observed in higher education in the post-World War II period (Shin & Teichler, 2014): (a) University Education was transformed from elite education to mass education, and (b) High student enrollment experienced in 1960s and 1970s created more diversity across countries. These changes, in turn, led to the emergence of four phenomena in

contemporary higher education: (a) a connection between education and the business world, (b) the importance of research, (c) services in postmodern universities, and (d) competition between and internationalization of higher education institutions.

Sheldon et al. (2011) stated, “tourism is a hallmark activity of the postmodern world” (p. 3). The number of tourism programs and tourism courses has grown rapidly across all seven continents. However, it is confusing for stakeholders, students, employers, educational professionals, and government officials to understand what comprises a tourism program, curriculum, and degree and how they came to be different from other service sector programs (Middleton & Ladkin, 1996).

Studies in Higher Education have compared curricula focusing on stakeholders’ perception not what is offered on the websites. This study addressed this gap through the comparison of Tourism and Hotel Management (THM) programs worldwide by reviewing the data provided on the official websites of the programs. Research and design specialists regularly obtain product knowledge by using netnography to identify solutions for the innovative process of product development (Dhiraj, 2011). The findings of this study may help stakeholders of education systems such as professionals, educators, students, and decision-makers.

Literature Review

Recent research from international statistical reports show a noticeable flow of student mobility all over the world. This has created a sense of competition between nations and their higher education institutions who all want an opportunity to offer more affordable and relevant programs to these students.

According to Montoya (2018), approximately five million international students were observed globally in 2016. In 2017, that number rose to over 5.3 million students, more than doubling the figures from the year 2000 when the enrollment increased only 10% annually (International Consultants for Education and Fairs Monitor, 2014; Migration Data Portal, 2020). Moreover, projections indicate international student enrollment will reach 8 million international students annually by 2025 (Tremblay et al., 2012). Though the 2008 global financial crisis caused a slowdown in international student mobility, historically, the United States and the United Kingdom have always been the most popular host countries (Ortiz et al., 2015). According to Montoya (2018), the first five host countries for inbound international students are still the United States (19% of total mobile students), the United Kingdom (10%), Australia (6%), France (6%), and Germany (5%). However, the United Kingdom has experienced a decline since 2012 due mainly to the introduction of more stringent visa policies. On a different scale, most mobile students have always been mainly from Asia (53% of all students studying abroad), particularly from China, India, and South Korea. Lastly, a recent trend indicates more students want to stay closer to home while studying due to the lower travel costs and cultural familiarity. As a result, new regional hubs have arisen in booming destinations such as the Russian Federation (3%), Japan (3%), Canada (3%), China (2%), and Italy (2%) (OECD, 2014).

Student mobility opens a debate about the strong need for improved coordination between the countries attempting to attract these students, the policymakers in different government bodies, educators, and even local entities. Various reports and studies (OECD Innovation Policy Platform,

2010; Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007) have provided examples of the coordination and alignment required between (a) higher education policy and particular dimensions of immigration policy (student and faculty visas and conditions of stay after studying), (b) trade policy (coherence of commitments on education services in the context of bilateral and multilateral agreements), (c) developmental policy (consistency of aid development policy in higher education), and (d) labor market policy (coordination between professional bodies and higher education institutions, notably for regulated professions). Those concerns are the same for each field of study in higher education and affect the choices of student mobility when deciding which country to study in and which higher education institution to attend. Furthermore, complex issues exist related to the structure of each institution, and the institutional requirements and globally competitive offerings available.

Tourism degree programs can be dated to the early 1930s (Jafari, 1990) and the 1940s (Majò, 2004). However, a few pioneering universities in Europe started the real boom in the 1960s and 1970s. This expanded to the United States, Canada, and then Australia and New Zealand (Jenkins, 1997). This historical evolution has led to differences between countries and even between institutions within the same country. Besides, the worldwide mobility of students and faculty will never cease to exist.

Several university programs have been designed for those hoping to have a career in the tourism and hospitality field. The goal of these programs is to attract students for full time or shorter exchange courses. The recent body of research shows that hospitality courses become more popular since the exchange student market increases (Hjalager, 2003; Richards, 2001) since there is a noticeable need for qualified staff in the sector (International Labor Organization, 2001; Leslie, 1993; Lillo-Bañuls & Casado-Díaz, 2010; Zehrer & Mössenlechner, 2009). The antecedents of THM research focused mostly on curricula comparison based on the stakeholders' perception, but not on what the programs provided on their websites, and similarly, what is happening in real-life settings (Felisitas & Clotildah, 2012; Gross & Manoharan, 2016; Gursoy et al., 2012; Teng et al., 2013). Sheldon et al. (2008) proposed, "the world is experiencing seismic changes. Society and tourism are being shaken by these external shocks and need to adjust to the impacts and prepare to act, think, and plan differently" (p. 62). Given this uncertain tourism environment, newly employed graduates need different skills, aptitudes, and knowledge compared to the earlier times, which calls for an urgent change in educational systems to meet this need (Wallis & Steptoe, 2006) by implementing new approaches (Fidgeon, 2010) and also by taking into consideration the advances in information technologies (Buhalis & Law, 2008).

The twenty-first century has been marked by the proliferation of international systems shaping today's society. Termed *globalization*, this process has both pros and cons concerning the cultivation of knowledge and the benefits provided. As in other fields of business, a global marketplace also exists for higher education, which obliges higher education institutions to create competitive advantages to cater better to students and the THM professionals alike, in a very challenging business world. Higher education marketing can be one of these competitive advantages. There are opportunities, especially for universities, to capitalize on honing their offerings to promote themselves better to the outside world.

Methods

The purpose of this study is to provide insights for this gap through the comparison of information provided by THM programs about the following areas: (a) the nature of the institutions, (b) the nature of offered curricula, (c) the nature of their industrial training and hands-on experience offerings. Moreover, interview data and observational notes were combined to give a more detailed picture specifically for the *industrial training* component of the programs.

To analyze and compare the THM programs worldwide, the Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (CHRIE), an organization with a large member base comprising THM schools from around the world, was chosen as best option for the school sampling. The goal of the study is to provide a clear picture of the current state in terms of student mobility and to show where the field of THM stands regarding education and training. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative research strategies. A combination of analysis and descriptive analysis was followed, with the former was used to analyze the data obtained from the websites. The latter was conducted to analyze the data obtained from the students. Frequency tables were then used to show the results.

The Case

CHRIE was formed in 1946 as a non-profit organization by a group of hospitality professionals. One group member, Howard Bagnall Meek, is considered the father of hospitality education (Hotel Business, 2009). At first, there were only twenty bachelor degree programs classified under home economics programs. All had hotel and restaurant classes with a nutrition perspective. Since then, numerous educational institutions have introduced their own specific hotel and restaurant programs.

The general purpose of CHRIE is to improve education, training, and research in the hotel and restaurant industry (Bosselman, 1996) through the exchange of information among educational institutions and the hotel and restaurant industry. Membership is open to everyone, namely from the industry, educational institutions, and associations interested in making an impact on the future of the hospitality and tourism industry.

CHRIE has almost 1,500 members from about 60 countries which have been grouped into six geographic regions and federations: (a) the Federation for Europe (EuroCHRIE), (b) the Pacific Rim (APAC CHRIE), and four federations for the Americas—(c) Northeast North America, (d) Southeast Central and South America, (e) Central, and (f) West.

Data Sources and Sampling

CHRIE has information about 344 institutions on its website (at the time of this research) which is known as Guide to College Programs (<https://www.guidetocollegeprograms.com>). Listed alphabetically under six federations the size of the list and resource constraints required the implementation of a systematic sampling process according to the alphabetical ordering scheme. A random start was chosen from each federation list and then continued with the selection of every other institution, resulting in a sample of 257 institutions for comparison.

Research Instrument

A checklist was developed for the desk research by examining both a literature review and website documents of various educational consultancy companies within the scope of the comparison. There are several academic studies on topics such as *How to choose a college or a university*, *Factors behind university students choosing an international higher education institution*, and *Factors on choosing a THM program in particular* (Drewes & Michael, 2006; Lee et al., 2013; O'Mahony et al., 2001; Pyvis & Chapman, 2007; Riley et al., 2002; Tribe, 2005a; Tribe, 2005b; Wang et al., 2010). Pyvis and Chapman (2007) found out that some of the factors triggering the choice of one program over others included cost, personal interest, program resources, reputation of the university, and comparisons made on the syllabi. Drewes and Michael (2006) showed that applicants favored universities closer to their homes and which tended to spend more on scholarship and teaching along with having more satisfactory non-academic student services. The choice factors seem to be no different when it comes to THM. O'Mahony et al. (2008) emphasized the *industrial training requirement* as a leading choice factor for a hospitality program at a higher education institution as it provides valuable work experience, followed by the reputation of the university's teaching staff and the recognition of hospitality courses previously taken on both national and international scales.

There have also been numerous websites with application guidelines showing the prospective students how to choose a university program by suggesting the primary factors to impact their decision-making process. Most of the suggested factors impacting the decision making support the available body of research such as admission rate, graduation rate, student to faculty ratio, school size, curriculum, quality of professors, quality of department to study, study abroad options, location, accreditation, course of study, extracurricular activities, cost, financial aid qualifications, application fees and so on (Slide, 2014).

Therefore, the research instrument included most factors gathered from the review of literature. As for the curriculum comparison of the THM programs, different studies used different categories (Lee, 2013; Wang et al., 2010). For example, Wang et al. (2010) compared Australian and Chinese undergraduate courses in tourism management by using six categories: Accounting/Finance/Economics, Business Management, Marketing, Tourism Theory, Tourism Management, and Others. In this study, the information about the curriculum of the sample schools was collected through this developed checklist.

To provide a detailed insight into the industrial training component, one higher education institution from each of the five countries as a case (Spain, Germany, Netherlands, Turkey, and the UK) was chosen through convenience sampling. The reasons for choosing convenience sampling were that European countries were easy to reach and researches had opportunity to visit tourism and hotel management higher education institutes in those counties. First, the industrial training documents from those schools ($n = 75$) were reviewed. Second, randomly selected students ($n = 25$) and faculty staff responsible for the industrial training ($n = 15$) were interviewed. Lastly, a *casual observation* was conducted at two institutions to observe the interns and the process. The data were analyzed using quantitative (frequency) and qualitative (descriptive) data analysis methods.

Findings

The results of the data gathered through document analysis, interview, and observation suggest that although a certain degree of progress has been achieved towards having up to date THM programs, much progress can still be made as the THM programs create organizational and personal challenges for graduates. The title of this paper mentions two primary marketing channels: the official website of any given higher education institution and the industrial training component. The official websites serve as primary marketing tools, displaying the curriculum for both the prospective students and the industry; while the industrial training provides the students with opportunities to see the real world. In return, the ability and skills of the students and graduates alike become visible to the industry through the industrial training.

Three main challenges emerged from the study: (1) confusing information regarding the nature of the higher education institutions, (2) non-standardized curriculum offerings on institutional websites, and (3) an unclear industrial training component.

Challenge 1: Confusing Information Regarding the Nature of the Institutions

The analysis showed variety regarding (a) affiliation, (b) program name, (c) duration, and (d) total credit hours, which are the first piece of information prospective students and sector representatives consider for school choice and employment. THM programs were housed in different schools and faculties—Business/Management (38.3%), Humanities (13.7%), Economics (8.6%), and Agriculture (4.6%), respectively. The combined schools of Public Health, Professional Studies, Resource Engineering, Education, Environmental Sciences, and even Law housed 15.2% of the THM programs at different institutions. The only affiliation related to the field of THM was Tourism/Hospitality, with only 19.8%.

As for the program names, only 17.5 % of the programs were named *Tourism and Hotel Management (THM)*, whereas the rest had multiple combinations coming from the field (45 %) or different names such as Consumer & Family Sciences and Human Ecology & Science (23 %) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Various Titles of the Tourism and Hotel Management (THM) Programs

| Program Name | <i>n</i> | % |
|--|----------|------|
| Tourism & Hotel Management | 45 | 17.5 |
| Multiple Combination of Restaurant, Hotel, Tourism, Travel and Leisure Fields | 116 | 45.0 |
| Restaurant, Hotel, Tourism (Travel) Management/Administration | | |
| Hospitality Management | | |
| Tourism & Hospitality Management | | |
| Tourism & Leisure Management | | |
| Hotel Management | | |
| International Tourism | | |
| Tourism Management | | |
| Management Studies | 37 | 14.5 |
| Other Combinations | 59 | 23.0 |
| Consumer & Family Sciences | | |
| Human Ecology & Science | | |
| Nutrition & Food Etc. | | |
| Total | 257 | 100 |

As for the duration of the programs, 19.2% did not provide any information on their websites. The programs that did provide this information indicated a duration of up to three years (33%) and three to four years (47.8%). Similarly, total credit hours required for graduation were not standardized; 43.9% required 121-135 credits. Of the sample studied, 31.9% required fewer credits and 17.8% required more.

Challenge 2: Non-Standardized Curriculum Offerings on Institutional Websites

As for the analysis of the curriculum comparison, the results showed 2016 courses offered by the 261 sample institutions based upon the names on the websites. Table 2 shows the results of the analysis regarding the course names, frequencies, and percentages. Second, similar courses were put into 97 subject groups. Third, the courses were narrowed down to 12 categories of study areas: Introduction (6.9%), Hotel (4.5%), Restaurant (11.1%), Travel (3.6%), THM (12.6%), General Management/Business (9.0%), Finance/Cost/Accounting (7.4%), Marketing/Sales (8%), Law (8.0%), Analytical (14.8%), work-related courses (6.9%), and others (7.1%).

Lastly, the result of the descriptive analysis was presented in five broad categories: (a) tourism/hospitality/travel related courses (47.5%), (b) management/business related courses (34.4%), (c) research related courses (4%), (d) industrial training related courses (6.9%), and (e) others such as second language courses, literature and history courses, and so on (11.2%).

Table 2. Analysis of Courses Offered

| Areas of Study | Main Subject Areas | Courses Offered | <i>n</i> | % |
|----------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| 1 | 1 | Introduction | 139 | 6.9 |
| | | Introduction to Tourism | 46 | |
| | | Introduction to Travel & Tourism | 44 | |
| | | Introduction to Hospitality | 27 | |
| | | Introduction to Management | 17 | |
| 2 | 2 | Introduction to Casino Industry | 5 | |
| | | Hotel | 90 | 4.5 |
| | | Front Office | 25 | |
| | | Housekeeping | 22 | |
| | | Laundry | 16 | |
| | | Hotel Gaming Industry | 13 | |
| | | Facilities Maintenance & Systems | 5 | |
| | | Facility Operations | 4 | |
| 3 | 3 | Rooms Division | 3 | |
| | | Hotel Gaming Operations | 2 | |
| | | Restaurant | 223 | 11.1 |
| | | Nutrition & Sanitation | 42 | |
| | | Health & Gastronome | 42 | |
| | | Food Production | 36 | |
| | | Food & Beverage | 36 | |
| 4 | 4 | Wine Related | 35 | |
| | | Catering | 32 | |
| | | Travel | 72 | 3.6 |
| | | Tourist Attraction | 17 | |
| | | Cruise & Entertainment Operations | 13 | |
| | | Event Industry Operations | 12 | |
| | | Event Sponsorship & Fund Raising | 12 | |
| | | World Geography | 9 | |
| | | Tour Guiding | 6 | |
| | | Ecotourism & Heritage Tourism | 3 | |

| Areas of Study | Main Subject Areas | Courses Offered | n | % |
|----------------|--|---|------------|-------------|
| 5 | | Tourism & Hospitality Management | 254 | 12.6 |
| | 27 | Hotel Management | 39 | |
| | 28 | Tourism & Hospitality Management | 39 | |
| | 29 | Event Management | 27 | |
| | 30 | Rooms Division Management | 22 | |
| | 31 | Beverage Management | 19 | |
| | 32 | Front Office and House Keeping Management | 14 | |
| | 33 | Leadership in Hospitality Management | 14 | |
| | 34 | Tourism Policy, Planning & Development | 13 | |
| | 35 | Travel Management | 13 | |
| | 36 | Service Management | 11 | |
| | 37 | Tourism Entrepreneurship | 9 | |
| | 38 | Meeting & Convention Management | 8 | |
| | 39 | Management of Engineering Systems in the Hospitality Industries | 7 | |
| 6 | 40 | Club Management | 6 | |
| | 41 | Equipment for Restaurants Hotels & Institutions | 5 | |
| | 42 | Hospitality & Facility Management | 5 | |
| | 43 | Layout & Design | 3 | |
| | | General Management/Business | 181 | 9.0 |
| | 44 | Human Resources | 22 | |
| | 45 | Organizational Behavior | 19 | |
| | 46 | Business Communication | 18 | |
| | 47 | Social Sciences | 17 | |
| | 48 | Applied Management | 17 | |
| | 49 | Managerial Skills & Communication | 15 | |
| | 50 | Professional Development | 15 | |
| | 51 | Strategic Management | 15 | |
| | 52 | Organizational Design & Effectiveness | 14 | |
| 53 | Risk Management & Insurance | 9 | | |
| 54 | Loss Prevention Management | 9 | | |
| 55 | Real Estate | 4 | | |
| 56 | Human Relations & Occupational Professionalism | 4 | | |
| 7 | 56 | Multinational Business Operations | 3 | |
| | | Finance/Cost/Accounting | 150 | 7.4 |
| | 57 | Financial Accounting | 27 | |
| | 58 | Hospitality Industry Managerial Accounting | 27 | |
| | 59 | Finance | 26 | |
| | 60 | Hospitality Finance | 25 | |
| | 61 | Cost Control | 24 | |
| 62 | Hospitality Financial Management | 21 | | |
| 8 | | Marketing/Sales | 166 | 8.2 |
| | 63 | Marketing Principles | 32 | |
| | 64 | Hospitality Marketing | 27 | |
| | 65 | Market Analysis | 25 | |
| | 66 | Marketing Strategies in Hospitality Industry | 21 | |
| | 67 | Entrepreneur & Business Growth | 19 | |
| | 68 | Consumer Behaviors | 17 | |
| | 69 | Service Sector Marketing | 12 | |
| | 70 | Professional Selling | 9 | |
| | 71 | Front Office Psychology & Sales | 4 | |
| 9 | | Law | 161 | 8.0 |
| | 72 | Tourism & Hospitality Law | 32 | |
| | 73 | Business Law | 28 | |
| | 74 | Employment Law | 26 | |
| | 75 | Global Legal Issues | 23 | |
| | 76 | Consumer Law | 22 | |
| | 77 | Law for Managers | 18 | |
| | 78 | Ethics | 12 | |

| Areas of Study | Main Subject Areas | Courses Offered | n | % |
|----------------|--------------------|---|-------------|-------------|
| 10 | | <i>Analytical</i> | 298 | 14.8 |
| | 79 | Computer Applications | 41 | |
| | 80 | Computer Science Management / Information Systems | 34 | |
| | 81 | Economy | 34 | |
| | 82 | Statistics | 32 | |
| | 83 | Business Mathematics & Calculus | 29 | |
| | 84 | Tourism Industry Data Analysis | 29 | |
| | 85 | Information Technology | 29 | |
| | 86 | Computerized Reservation Systems | 25 | |
| | 87 | Operational Research | 21 | |
| 11 | | <i>Work-related courses</i> | 139 | 6.9 |
| | 91 | Seminars | 57 | |
| | 92 | Senior Projects | 43 | |
| | 93 | Internship | 39 | |
| 12 | | <i>Others</i> | 143 | 7.1 |
| | 94 | Languages | 57 | |
| | 95 | American Thoughts & Languages | 43 | |
| | 96 | History | 28 | |
| 97 | Others | 15 | | |
| Total | 97 | | 2016 | 100 |

Challenge 3: Unclear Industrial Training Component

The official websites of 261 universities were reviewed and the findings showed different applications of industrial training experiences in terms of (a) the name given to industrial training component, (b) whether or not it is compulsory, (c) frequency, (d) whether or not it is accredited, (e) location, (f) duration, and (g) assessment procedure.

The results showed that the industrial training component was given 21 different names such as Apprenticeship, Co-Op Operations, Cooperative Education Internship, Co-Up Management, Field Studies, Hospitality Internship, Hotel Internship, Industrial Experience, Industrial Internship, Industrial Training, Industry-Based Training, Internship, Practicum and Infield Training, Sandwich Mode, Sandwich Placement, Summer Training, Supervised Field Training, Undergo Internship, Work Experience, and Work Field. It is either the students or universities responsibility to find or provide internship institutions.

Also, 94.5% of the institutions stated industrial training component as compulsory. The detailed information about the frequency of the industrial training experiences showed that during their entire program, most of the institutions (75%) offered at least one industrial training experience. At the same time, 12% required it twice a year. The rest offered industrial training more often. Among the reviewed institutions, only one institution offered industrial training experience five times during their entire program. The duration of the industrial training experiences was given in different time periods such as hours, weeks, months, semesters, and years. Although they were designated for differing durations. The comparison showed that the minimum requirement was 100 hours, and the maximum was 30 weeks. To be more precise, 29.7% of the surveyed institutions offered six months of industrial training experience, followed by 300-600 hours (14.2%), 700-1000 hours (13%), 2 to 6 months (10.7%), and 100-300 hours (9.5%), with the remaining 9.5% offering 16-30 weeks of industrial training experience. The results showed that most institutions (64.2%) preferred to credit

the industrial training experience. Concerning location of the industrial training experience, a very small number of institutions (3.8%) did not accept the industrial training experience if it was completed out of the country.

Finally, the assessment system used to evaluate the industrial training experience was reviewed. Results showed 4.7% of the institutions provided limited information on their websites as to whether it is the internship coordinator or the instructor of the course who is directly in charge of organizing the industrial training. Hence, interviews were conducted with students, faculty members, and the professionals to obtain detailed information. The analysis of institutional websites showed insufficient and irrelevant information regarding how the assessment will be made and how the grade distribution will be, though industrial training is counted as a core module as per the curriculum. The most detailed information provided in this sense was that industrial training assessment would be done by an industrial training coordinator or assigned instructor. Interviews with students and faculty showed that each institution had its own set of regulations, forms, and procedures to assess the success of their interns regarding (a) who will evaluate and (b) how they will be evaluated.

Descriptive analysis showed that interns were evaluated by their institutions through a twofold process: first by their assigned instructor and then by the supervisor of the department where they had their internship., both utilizing the required institutional forms and procedures. The interns were visited once or twice by the assigned instructor during their internship. They were graded regularly by the employer during their internship and were required to give a presentation or answer questions in front of a committee upon completing their internship.

Some contradictory remarks were noted among the instructors, students, and supervisors regarding this evaluation system. Interns did not see any benefit in the *instructor's visit to the company for evaluation*. One intern said that "Instructor spent only a very limited time during their visits, and this is not enough to see the real situation both for the intern and the company employees". On the other hand, one instructor said, "When I was at the company, I could not find the intern and the responsible supervisor created an excuse to protect the intern", and added, "later it was discovered that the supervisor was a relative of the intern". The study presents some real-life examples demonstrating how the industrial training rules and regulations should be devised by the higher education institutions to prevent such issues. For example, it was evident in one of the sample institutions as it is prohibited by law in Germany to have an internship in a company owned or managed by a relative, and it was communicated directly to the students to put the liability upon students themselves.

One institution in the study emphasized that they did not provide their students with the opportunity of internship abroad since they did not have any particular system in place to control or inspect neither the company nor the student. One instructor emphasized that it was a matter of finances to send an instructor or supervisor to inspect the company and the interns in another country. Another industrial training coordinator added that "It is more than finances. . . We even have the problem of required visa to send both the interns and the assigned instructor to another country for industrial training".

However, the results show that all interns and assigned instructors had communication regularly through emails. Interns were required to write reports or fill out a standard document on a weekly or monthly basis and send them to the assigned instructor for review and feedback. One student said: “After all, it feels like an artificial process since what has been written in those forms may not show precisely what we face here in the real world”.

Another intern hesitatingly explained:

There was one question in my standard monthly report: Have you observed any weaknesses in the organization? and Have you suggested a solution? . . . I completed the report but could not send it since I was concerned that the content of my emails might have been easily seen by my supervisor, and it may not be suitable for my internship.

The results showed that most interns had enough industrial experience for both their professional and personal development. However, contradictory remarks were noted among interns regarding their professional development. Some interns thought the responsibilities they were assigned were not enough for them to learn the basics of the sector. Another group of interns, on the other hand, happily said they were even offered a job upon their graduation during their internship. One company supervisor explained this dilemma:

As everything, industrial training experience depends on what the intern expects out of that period. Some put their all enthusiasm to learn as much as they could. Some just think that it just stands as the perfect opportunity to be out of the school environment for a certain time.

One instructor’s answer supported this as follows: “Even if interns do not experience all the components of the operation as they are in the work environment, they practically comprehend the subordinate/superordinate relationship which they only read in course books, thus only know on a theoretical basis”.

Various suggestions were provided by the students and instructors regarding a better internship system that all students can benefit from, for their future both professionally and personally. Some of these suggestions include the following:

- Require the companies to cross-train students in different departments.
- If possible, increase the number of inspection visits by the faculty members.
- Have departmental *financial allowance* for industrial training.
- As another alternative to inspection, create an intranet, where the company managers, instructors, and students can all have access and share information without the need for a physical inspection. This network would be secure and access management would be used.
- Create more partnerships with companies abroad for student placement for internship purposes. This will allow them to react globally in today’s highly competitive marketplace.
- Interns should be paid a minimum wage.
- Industrial training needs to move beyond education toward employment.

Conclusions

As a result of the globalization process, more diversity is increasing at each level of higher education, and higher education in tourism is no different. Thus, this globalization should have its fair share in the process of internationalization of higher education institutions. This paper analyzed the programs offered by CHRIE member institutions regarding (a) the nature of the institutions, (b) the nature of the offered curricula, and (c) the nature of their industrial training/hands-on experience offerings by reviewing the information provided on their official websites. Furthermore, the results from the interviews, document analysis, and observations reflected the current state of industrial training experience in the context of six higher education institutions offering THM programs (Findlay et al., 2011; Rumberger, 2003).

Supported by previous research, tourism study programs still do not have homogeneity nor a common orientation (Cooper 2002; Jafari, 1990; 1997; Majò, 2004; Westlake 1997). This may be because (a) statistical sources devoted to employment (Pérez, 1995), (b) differences between the business-oriented or non-business oriented tourism curricula (Tribe, 2006), (c) the confusing list of international qualifications (Cooper, 2002), and (d) the diversity of the tourism industry (Jafari, 1997). Although this diversity may be interpreted as a form of multiplicity in the higher education system, it may also lead to low employability levels in the labor market and a relatively low social image for such degrees, which eventually confuse employers, students, and also the faculty who have to deal with the quality policies and recognition or accreditation (Churchward & Riley, 2002; Fayos-Solá, 1997; Jafari, 1997).

The findings point out important diversity among the institutions in terms of the institutional nature, curriculum offered, and industrial training experiences, and have similarities with its antecedents. First, they have more affiliation with business schools (Lee, 2013; Morrison & O'Mahony, 2003; Rappole, 2000) than non-business ones. Secondly, almost half of the courses are from the tourism, hospitality, or travel fields, followed by analytical courses (14.8%) such as the computer-based courses, statistics, research methodology, and so on. Lastly, the importance of *work-related experience* had been emphasized in most of the earlier studies (Collins, 2002; Fong et al., 2014; Stansbie et al., 2016; Yiu & Law, 2012), and this study shows that almost all THM programs require industrial training to provide students with opportunities to enable experiences in real-life settings before they graduate at different levels and durations.

More data on website and interface designs will increase the need (Kozinets, 2010; Lindars, 2019) to be applied in higher education marketing to facilitate the decision-making process of the prospective students to choose respective institutions. Some questions about higher education marketing remain, such as: Which factors are more important for prospective students for the application? How many students are asking themselves whether attending a higher education institution is the right decision for them? How vital are tuition fees? What are the students' opinions about the provided value? What is the reality compared to expectations?—a question posed by Annandale (2013). Overwhelming evidence indicates a high need exists for universities to position themselves for their specific target audience and to communicate that need clearly and accurately to all the stakeholders involved. This could be achieved through methods such as receiving the help of world university classifications and rankings; and organized informative channels of communication, such as visible and easily identifiable internet sites (Nicolae & Marinescu, 2010).

Although recent studies (Masterson, 2011) showed that university administrators realize the importance of the university websites to develop and increase their global reputation and image, few studies exist on web visibility of universities (Lee & Park, 2012).

This study aimed to provide a comparison of THM programs regarding the nature of the institutions, offered curricula, and industrial experiences by reviewing the information provided on the websites and data gathered from interviews and observational notes. The findings may contribute to the initiatives of university administrators regarding the importance of web visibility of their respective institutions to properly brand, promote, and market themselves among critical stakeholders, such as prospective students and faculty, peer institutions, and funding bodies (Masterson, 2011). The findings of this study also provide some insights and recommendations for the THM Higher Education system.

The implications of this study may include providing incentives for further, more intensive studies to be carried out by the institutions themselves or by CHRIE. Since this study was only conducted on a limited number of institutions, further studies may be conducted with other institutions or a larger number of institutions to collect more data on this issue. CHRIE could also use the results of this and other similar studies, existing or prospective, to improve the programs and increase the compatibility of its member institutions. Further studies could also be conducted to reveal the practical implications of such improvements and their reflections on the tourism sector at large. Thus, not only would the institutions be more compatible, but the sector would also benefit from the studies conducted and their results.

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