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THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN TOURISM

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Abstract	<p><i>As tourism is an industry that is highly based on human capital, there is a very high interest in being able to develop the right-skilled human resources needed to help it grow. The current paper aims to explore the evolution of the higher education offer for tourism specializations in Romania during the last 6 years (2011 – 2016). The research is done by consolidating the information regarding all tourism specializations and the Universities that have them included in their offers, and analyzing the evolution of the available number of places during the same period of time. The paper reflects the fact that although the tourism higher education offer is homogenous, it has been evolving during the analyzed timeframe in order to adapt to the market conditions.</i></p>	Key words:	Higher education; Human Resources; Tourism; Specialization; Development.
		JEL Codes:	I21, L83, O15

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past half a century, tourism has continuously experienced diversification and expansion, becoming one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Its contribution to the creation of jobs, new enterprises, revenue and infrastructure development have turned tourism into one of the main drivers of socio-economic growth globally. Proving itself a strong and resilient sector, tourism has shown continuous growth, with the figures of international tourist arrivals going from 25 million globally in 1950 to 278 million in 1980, 674 million in 2000, reaching 1186 million in 2015 and with a forecast of 1800 million for 2030 (UNWTO, 2016).

Other key figures provided by UNWTO show that tourism accounts for 10% of the world's Gross Domestic Product (including direct, indirect and induced impact), for 1 in 11 jobs globally and 7% of the world's exports. The fact that human resources are amongst the most valuable resources of an organization is widely known, especially when it comes to

organizations from the services sector which is a highly labour intensive one, such as tourism. Being such a fast growing and ever developing industry, tourism needs to have appropriate human capital available in order to continuously increase its level of quality and competitiveness. Although in need of both qualified and unqualified personnel, tourism's demand for highly skilled human resources is increasing as well, which means that educational systems must adapt their offers to the market's requirements.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of Richardson and Thomas (2012) shows that 44.5% of tourism students are considering careers in a different industry other than tourism and 41.9% of them will only go for a career in this domain if they are sure they will be able to secure a high-paying job. The main reasons why most tourism and hospitality management graduates will not pursue a career in the industry or even fail to enter the industry on graduation are: poor employment conditions, low job satisfaction and absence of

motivating factors. This is also supported by Wang (2008), who states that despite of its large diversity, a number of characteristics of jobs in the tourism industry have been identified, although most of them may induce a negative perception of tourism employment and that it has been identified that tourism sector suffers from a poor image as an employer and thus, the rate of turnover in this sector is significantly high.

In order to avoid losing these highly skilled and trained employees, the tourism industry should address two main issues: firstly, in order to minimize the gap between their expectations and their perceptions, all potential students should be given an extensive overview of careers available and working conditions offered, and secondly, organizations in the tourism industry should focus on improving the working conditions that are currently contributing to the negative image of tourism as an employer (Richardson, 2009). Also, students must learn to have more reasonable expectations of their future jobs in the tourism industry in order to help enhance job satisfaction and lower turnover rate (Wan *et al*, 2014).

Being a multidisciplinary field, tourism is characterized by a diverse and fragmented nature, which makes it significantly complex to estimate the category of employment and number of people employed in the tourism industry. In other words, it is difficult to define tourism employment (Wang, 2008). In order to promote the professionalization of tourism as an activity and to ensure the relevance of the education for a tourism career to employers in the sector, tourism education providers should bridge the gap and work closely together with the industry. The result would be a market-based curriculum, developed by having in mind the industry's needs rather than government policy or the judgments of tourism educators (Wang *et al*, 2009).

The four stakeholders involved in the design, development and implementation of education

and training programs are enterprises, students, educational and governmental institutions. Because of perceived job security, the relatively high probability of acquiring a position and also because they perceive it as a glamorous industry with opportunities for adventure, students have been proved to prefer tourism vocational education instead of graduate courses (Zagonari, 2009).

A major point of concern is that a lack of adequate personnel will undermine the industry's ability to meet the expectations of service quality that tourist have. The importance of education has been significantly increasing and thus, education programs have emerged in response to the following needs for human resource development in such a challenging environment (Wang, 2008): Keeping the industry abreast with the latest technology and trends; The availability of qualified replacement staff at all times; Raising the image of careers in tourism; Staffing new and growing tourist industries; Employment regulation; Reduction of foreign labour; Responding to increasingly demanding service and communications requirements of customers.

It is considered that the tourism higher education system is crucial for achieving customer satisfaction and improving competitiveness of the tourism industry. Currently, the European tourism higher education system is undergoing a process of change and adaptation to the new demands of a global environment characterized by significant changes in the labour market, an increasing global competition, changes in demand patterns (students aiming for high probabilities of employability and employers aiming for employees with a high level of adequate training) and also continuous technological advances (Bustelo *et al*, 2010). Although there is rapid growth in the tourism industry and subsequent increase in the number of both jobs and educational courses, the pursue of further education and the development of these jobs into careers is

relatively new. Even if the tourism industry produces a wide variety of employment opportunities, the growth of tourism suffers from the lack of adequately trained personnel, which is seen as one major determinant of diminishing the economic benefits of tourism in a country's economy (Wang, 2008).

Besides the need to direct specific efforts at training and education, it is also very important to match the curriculum design as well as the contents of the teaching programs to demand, as they must address the needs of the employers, the recipients of education as well as the providers of education (Ayikoru, 2004).

Like any form of vocationally orientated education, tourism education must balance three imperatives: the need to promote individual development, the need to advance knowledge and the need to be practical and relevant to industry (Wang, 2008). As the tourism industry strongly relies on the quality of its staff to develop the quality of the tourism product; it must also be mentioned that tourism education plays a significant role in meeting the levels of knowledge required by the industry to develop human capital. If on one hand tourism vocational education focuses on the specific skills needed by employers, on the other hand, higher education highlights innovation (Wang, 2008).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research included in this paper is based on secondary data analysis. Secondary data is data that was originally obtained for another purpose than the one of the research that is currently using it, and, as a consequence, they are to be found already organised in a certain form. There are various steps to be taken when using secondary data for research: firstly, the need of data must be identified; secondly, data sources must be searched; thirdly, data must be collected; fourthly, the need of additional data must be identified (Cătoiu et al., 2009).

Secondary data can be either internal (created, registered or generated inside a particular organisation that can use them for own research purposes) or external (mostly statistical data obtained from public or academic institutions and specialised press). This paper has its research based on external secondary data obtained from the Nomenclatures of domains and specializations/university programs and the structure of higher education institutions for years 2011 to 2016.

The information used for the purpose of this paper consists of data (for the 2011-2016 period) regarding the type of higher education tourism related specializations that are available in Romania, the types of study programs for each of them included in the Romanian Universities' offer and also the number of available seats for each University and specific program. After consolidating the data from the 6 Nomenclatures, the evolution of these indicators is analyzed for the 2011-2016 period of time with the help of statistical and data visualization methods.

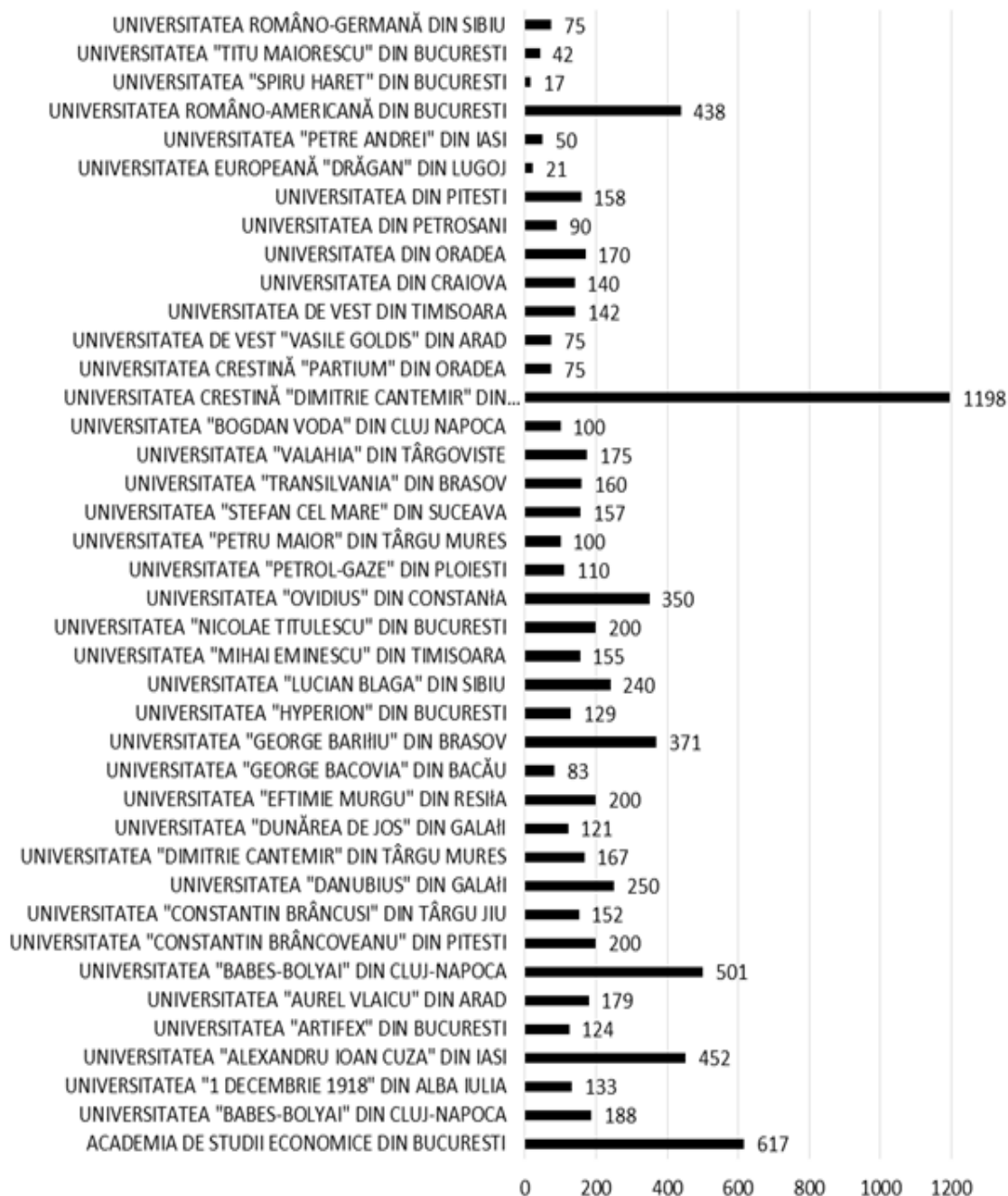
4. RESULTS

For the purpose of this paper the data from the Nomenclatures of domains and specializations/university programs and the structure of higher education institutions for years 2011 to 2016 was consolidated and analyzed. Firstly, there were found four main degree specializations that involve tourism in Romanian Universities' offer. These 4 specializations are: business administration in tourism (the name of the degrees vary around Economy Of Commerce, Tourism And Services, Economy Of Commerce, Tourism, Services And Quality Management, Business Administration In Hospitality Services, Business Administration In Commerce, Tourism, Services, Merceology And Quality Management), geography (the name of the degree being Tourism Geography), tourism engineering and management (the name of the degrees is either Engineering And Management In Public Foods And Agro Tourism, or Engineering And Management In

The Tourism Industry) and cultural studies (the name of the degree being Cultural Tourism). The most widespread of the four types of degrees is the business administration in tourism one. As can be seen in Figure 1 below, it is found in the offer of 40 Romanian Universities. The Figure also shows the

average number of places offered by each University in the years between 2011 and 2016

Fig.1 – Average number of places for Business Administration in Tourism Degree by University

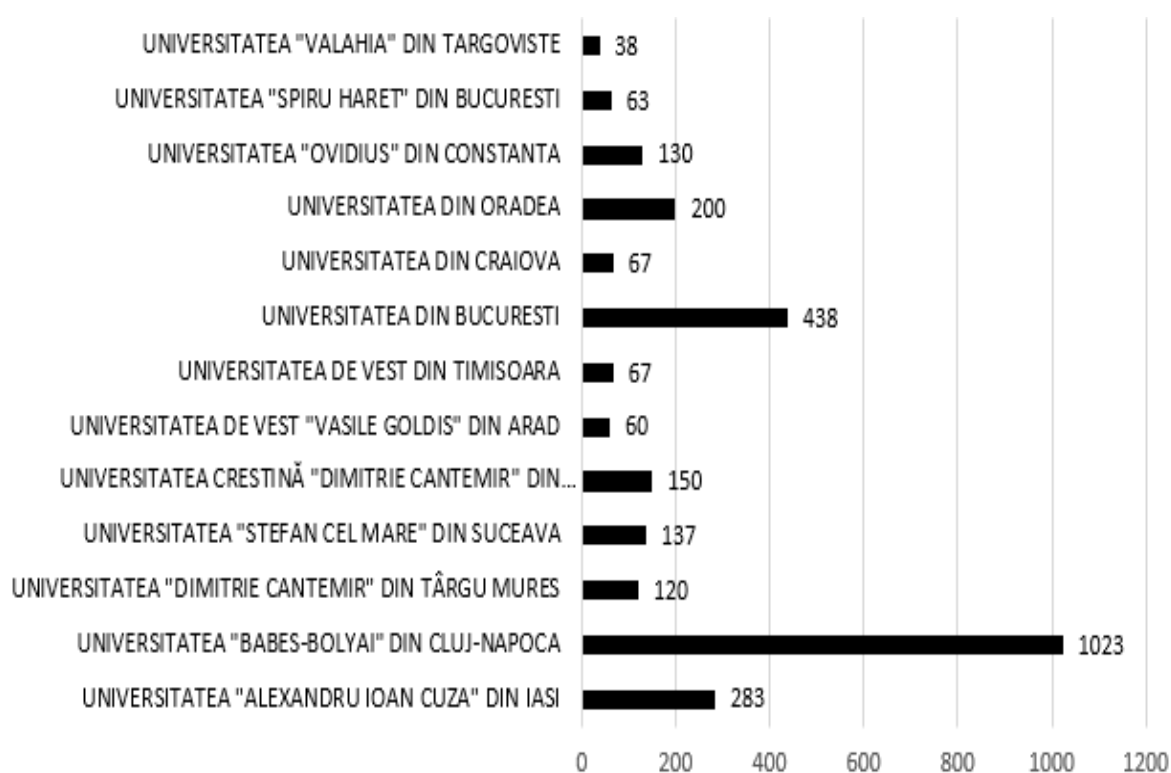


Source: Author's data consolidation

The second most common types of degrees are the Tourism Geography and Tourism Engineering and Management ones. As can be seen in Figures 2 and 3 below, both degrees are found in the offer of 13 different Romanian Universities.

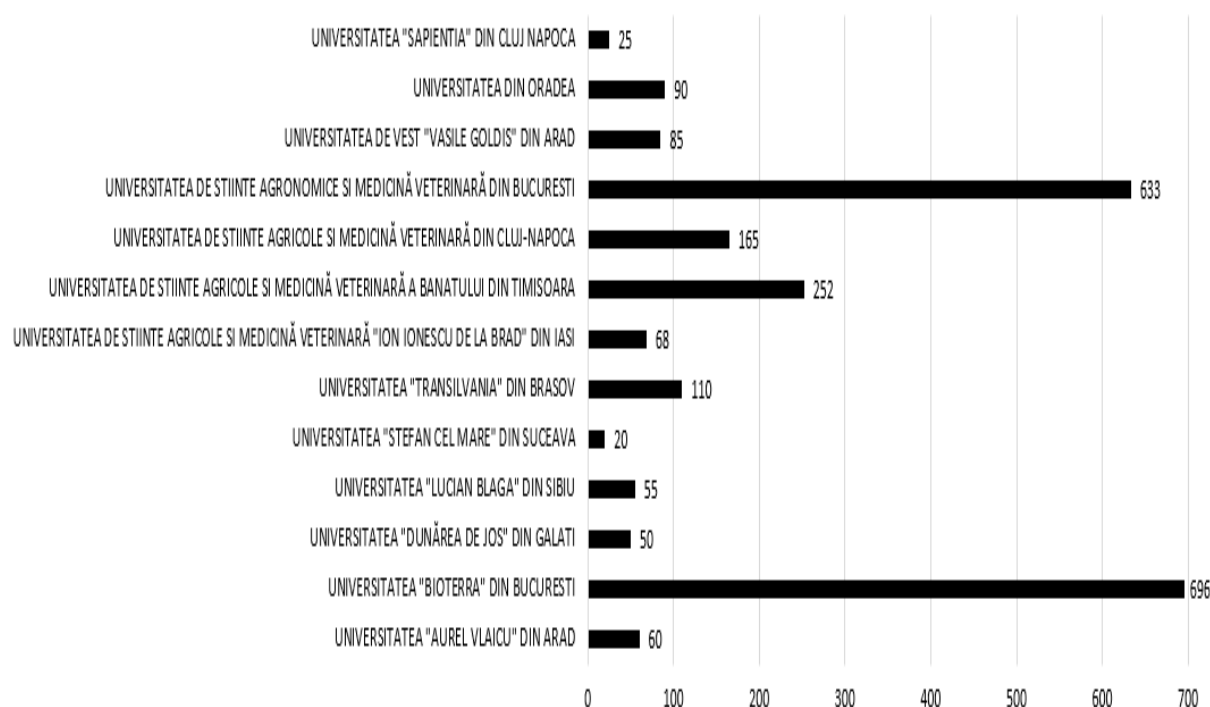
The Figures also show the average number of places offered by each University in the years between 2011 and 2016

Fig.2 – Average number of places for Tourism Geography Degree by University



Source: Author's data consolidation

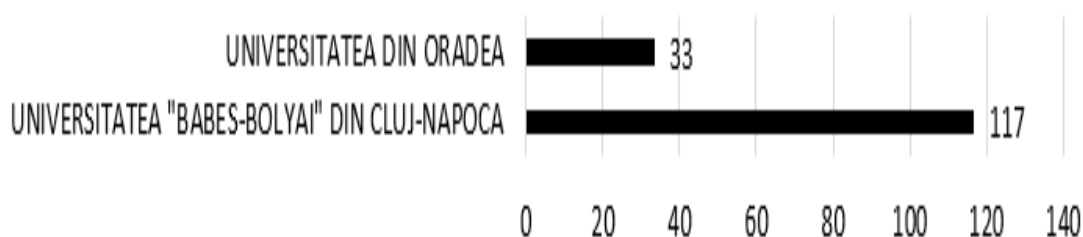
Fig.3 –Average number of places for Tourism Engineering and Management Degree by University



Source: Author's data consolidation

The last most common type of degree is the Cultural Tourism one. As can be seen in Figure 4 it is only found in the offer of 2 Romanian Universities. The Figure also shows the average number of places offered by each University in the years between 2011 and 2016

Fig.4 – Average number of places for Cultural Tourism by University



Source: Author's data consolidation

offered each year in the period between 2011 and 2016

With regards to the evolution of the number of offered places by the Romanian Universities for each of the four types of degrees, Table 1 below shows the total number (for both full time learning and distance learning) of places

Table 1 – Total number of places offered by type of degree

Type of Degree	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Business Administration in Tourism	9130	9095	8970	8285	7645	6685
Tourism Geography	2729	2859	2919	2924	2640	2575
Tourism Engineering and Management	2005	2400	2520	2345	2365	2215
Cultural Tourism	0	180	180	180	180	180
TOTAL	13864	14534	14589	13734	12830	11655

Source: Author's data consolidation

Data shows that the highest number of places offered throughout the analyzed period were for the Business Administration in Tourism degree, with an average of 8302 places per year, followed by Tourism Geography with an average of 2775 places per year, Tourism Engineering and Management with an average of 2309 places per year and Cultural Tourism with an average of 150 places per year.

The number of places offered for the Business Administration in Tourism degree has registered an average annual decrease of 489 places during the assessed period of time, which means its annual decrease rhythm was of -0.96%.

The number of places offered for the Tourism Geography degree has registered an average annual decrease of 31 places during the same period of time, which means it had an annual decrease rhythm of -0.18%.

On the other hand, the number of places offered for the Tourism Engineering and Management degree has registered an average annual increase of 42 places during the assessed period of time, which means it had an annual increase rhythm of 0.31%.

For the Cultural Tourism degree there was no offer in the first year of the assessed timeframe – 2011 – but starting with 2012 it was

introduced and kept constant until 2016 at 180 places per year.

When looking at the total number of places offered by the Romanian Universities for all four Tourism specializations, one can see that it has registered an average annual decrease of 442 places, which means its annual decrease rhythm was of -0.68%.

Overall, the results show that Tourism Degrees are to be found in the educational offer of a large number of Romanian Universities under multiple types of specializations, but the number of offered places has seen a decreasing trend during the timeframe analyzed in this paper – 2011 to 2016

5. CONCLUSIONS

As it has been highlighted in the literature review section of the article, the connection between tourism competitiveness and the role of education in developing the adequate human resources for this industry is still a new theme of research.

Despite of this, recent studies do show that in order to be able to support tourism's growth, educational providers need to align with all other industry stakeholders in order to be able to provide the required types of study programs and design the appropriate curricula which

would help develop students' skills and competencies.

The research included in this paper, which was based on the consolidation of secondary data coming from the Nomenclatures of domains and specializations/ university programs and the structure of higher education institutions for years 2011 to 2016, has revealed that Romanian Universities have included Tourism as a specialization domain in their educational offer under various degree types: Tourism Business Administration, Tourism Geography, Tourism Engineering and Management and Cultural Tourism. This shows that Romanian Universities are able to provide the industry with skilled graduates for various tourism jobs. When looking at the evolution of the number of places offered by the Universities for each of the four types of tourism degrees, the research has shown that the most widespread specialization is the Business Administration in Tourism one, while the least widespread one is the Cultural Tourism one. This is probably due to both the size of the prospective students demand for each of the degree types and the labour market demand for specialist in each of these fields of the tourism industry.

Also, the research has revealed the fact that the evolution of the total number of offered places has seen a decreasing trend during the analyzed period of time. This shows that, most probably, student demand has decreased for Tourism Degrees during these last 6 years. Given the not so good reputation of tourism as an employer, as has been shown in the literature review section, the fact that students tend to not choose tourism for their university degree anymore is an expected consequence.

In order to further develop this study and give an accurate explanation of the identified decreasing trend of the Romanian Universities' Tourism Degrees offer, its correlation with the evolution of the Romanian tourism market during the same period of time should be analyzed.

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