

# Profile of the Professional in Tourism and Hotel Business Administration in Colombia Post Pandemic

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**Abstract:** This article presents a process of inquiry to describe the professional profile of the tourism sector, demanded by Colombian companies in the post-pandemic period. The objective of this article is to validate that what students are learning through Higher Education Institutions that train professionals in hospitality and tourism in Colombia at the professional level, corresponds to the needs of the sector. The categories covered in this article are tourism and education. The approach is qualitative where the analysis is interpretative and reflective, seeking to understand the experience of the professional profile of the tourism sector. Likewise, the instruments used were interviews with different actors of the sector to present and analyse the professional profile, knowing what is critical point of knowledge and the soft skills required to positively impact the sector through its management contributing to the competitiveness of Colombian tourism recognizing the professional demand of the sector; as a result of this exercise, it was evidenced that the level of education in tourism is a relevant factor that can directly affect the competitiveness of the tourism sector and the economy of the countries.

**Keywords:** Education, Tourism, Professional competencies, Professional profile, Soft skills

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## 1. Introduction

Tourism training in Colombia contributes to the competitiveness of Colombian tourism, receiving positive evaluations in terms of the availability of qualified personnel and the level of education and training. Likewise, the level of education with a focus on tourism is an important factor that can directly affect the competitiveness of countries in tourism, developing programs that can allow it to further increase the potential and growth of tourism should occur in an increasingly globalised environment (Castillo et al, 2015). Similarly, it is oriented towards the training of operational and administrative areas of tourism companies (Restrepo, 2014).

The importance of tourism education for human development is a contribution to what is believed to be done on a large scale in the field of tourism as a complement to education, it is a reality in which improvements in the quality of education in tourism are added (Fernandez et al., 2013). Likewise, professional education in tourism integrates knowing, doing, and knowing how to be, allowing students to adequately start their professional careers prepared (González, 2012). Thus, appropriation and understanding of the value of all types of tourism should be applied, emphasising the interest in professional education in tourism (Alonso, 2020).

It is important to make this article since there is no major relevant of publications on professional education in tourism in Colombia, based on this it is fundamental to know that tourism is growing as it is an attractive activity due to the country's comparative advantages of an immense natural and cultural wealth that, when appreciated, creates opportunities for remote and depressed areas to achieve economic and social objectives (Cabero, 2006). In summary, Colombia is positioned as a tourist destination in the region and the countries with the greatest presence in world tourism (Such et al., 2009).

The objective of this research is to analyse the relevance of professional training in hospitality and tourism in Colombia from a business perspective, considering the main lessons learned from the pandemic in the tourism sector, developing the challenges left to the sector, and the demand of the business sector based on new trends, especially those related to the supply of sustainable tourism. Likewise, it seeks to contribute to the competitiveness of Colombian tourism since the recognition of the professional demand of the sector generates relevant information for the educational sector to adjust its offer around the updating of such needs.

### **1.1 Professional Profile**

The professional profile is elaborated by considering relevant information coming from the outside world (Hawes et al., 2005). Likewise, the professional profile has internalised methods and interactive didactic strategies suitable for learning new knowledge (Travería, 2008). Nevertheless, it is a potential resource in the process and training management continues to have support services related to inclusive education (Solórzano, 2021). However, it refers to the process of preparation, training, updating and improvement of technical competencies with the processes of entry, training, and performance evaluation (Delgado, 2022).

It is a set of elements that come into play to carry out tourism in each area, which offers quality services and products, to meet the identified needs and achieve customer loyalty. Performing appropriate means that meet the demands of the customer, user, or public and achieve positioning the sector. Therefore, trends in the tourism sector are essentially directed by new technologies, with an emphasis on the use of the Internet and its services (Celis et al., 2020). It has been influenced by world events, making a synthesis of defining the competence that each professional must possess, and comparing the skills and knowledge of the tourism sector (Shulte, 2003).

### **1.2 Education in Tourism**

Higher education and professional education should be directed towards a complete understanding of both relationships, forming and training students in the different knowledge that at the same time involves diverse competencies (Irigoyen et al., 2011). Higher education should reflect the international, regional, and national dimensions, both in teaching and research; playing a fundamental role in the production, dissemination and assimilation of knowledge (Brunner et al., 2011). Likewise, in a framework of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, it is the priority of higher education (Ordorika, 2020).

Additionally, in education, an exploration of how the satisfaction and loyalty of tourism graduates in higher education have been evaluated is carried out, thus assuming a proposal where structural equation models were applied and validated with which the construction of employability would be developed (Eurico et al., 2015). However, the issue of employability has always been a challenge for these professionals and institutions, as it has been reflected in a problem where institutions perceive that the best students are more inclined to other areas than tourism (Juaneda et al., 2017), 2017). From there the question arises, what will be what is influencing this problem; the learning styles of students in higher education in tourism take center stage, studying how the information is arriving, the competence of students in the subject areas and the methods and delivery of teaching (Kim et al., 2018).

Undoubtedly, the development of competencies in higher education is fundamental, these capabilities are based on the individual capacity to learn, as well as their social and professional experience (Rivas et al., 2019). On the other hand, during the research conducted, it is evident that hospitality and tourism programs have begun to emerge sharing their academic offerings with other programs abroad in the pursuit of internationalization, however, through these programs, both institutions ensure that they can reach their goals (Kim et al., 2018). In addition, intrinsic motives refer to students' enjoyment, vocation, and personal satisfaction; while extrinsic motives are those that show external recognition to the activity itself (prestige, social approval, family expectations, remuneration) (Juaneda et al., 2017).

Nowadays, education has become one of the most important factors for the advancement and progress of hotel and tourism management (Wu et al., 2017). Likewise, quality education contributes to the welfare and quality of life needs of professional people with a tourism and hospitality profile (Maga et al., 2017). However, a permanent comprehensive education supports, complements and deepens the professional training of hospitality and tourism in Colombia (Camilleri et al., 2018).

## **2. Methodology**

This article is based on a descriptive analysis with a qualitative approach. For this purpose, interviews were conducted with businessmen, senior managers of the sector and public employees, all of them with the professional profile of Tourism and Hotel Business Administrator, which provided data allowing to obtain qualitative information. The type of research is descriptive, taking into account that the answers are presented according to the professional profile of the interviewees. This research took into account the conceptual category of tourism and education, from the professional field of tourism training. Seeking to describe the perception of the professional study of tourism in Colombia.

For this research the target population was delimited, to professional entrepreneurs in tourism, having the collection of information was carried out during the first semester of the year 2022, in two phases, first a conversation was developed, where professionals were invited to participate in this space and in the second phase semi-structured surveys of own elaboration were carried out, for this, the interviews allow giving freedom to the interviewee as to the interviewer and discuss relevant topics to obtain the required information. Finally, the information was classified using an inductive method, in which there is a central interest in developing categories as close as possible to the material to be interpreted (Andrade et al., 2002).

*The profile of the interviewees is described below:*

Angela Murillo Casas: Industrial Designer from Andes University, Master of Commerce and Business Tourism and Hotel Administration from the International College of Management Sydney (ICMS), with certifications in Business Tourism and events, Revenue Management, International Tourism Management and Integrated Management of Amusement Parks and Recreation in the Context of the Pandemic, with eighteen years of experience in the hospitality and tourism sector in which she has had the opportunity to perform different roles, from staff personnel in event companies in Australia, operational director of travel and event logistics, marketing consultant for hotel chains, and currently serving as Ecotourism Manager at Aviatur.

Joseph Matrinez Chavez: Environmental Engineer, with training in NLP, coaching, quality auditing, business administration, has worked in areas of training and development in companies of different sectors and currently serves as Head of training and human development in On Vacation, a prestigious Colombian hotel chain.

Juan Sebastian Gonzales: industrial engineer from the School of Engineering of Antioquia, General Manager of Aloft Bogota, with more than ten years of experience leading different areas of the hotel sector, such as: Room divisions manager at the Radisson Decapolis in Panama, director of rooms at the Hard Rock in Panama, has worked in the opening of luxury boutique hotels in Colombia and Panama.

Carlos Alfredo Leal Becerra: He studied Hotel Management at the Essex Country College and Hotel Management at the Universidad Externado de Colombia, General Manager of the Wydham Garden Barranquilla Hotel, with twenty-eight years of experience at the head of important hotels in the city of Barranquilla, such as Holliday In and Estelar Hotels

Johan Peña: Biologist by profession, specialist in Environmental Management, Master in Environmental Management from the Javeriana University, and CEO of Glamping Colombia, which is located in Guatavita Colombia, with more than ten years in the market.

Rolando Torres Aguilera: Tourism and Hotel Administrator from UNIMINUTO, with training in Digital Marketing, Tourism Project Design, Tourist Guidance, he is currently the National Manager of the Travel Agency "Red de Viajeros por el Mundo".

Isabelle Leon Moreno: the youngest of the group representing the public sector, contractor of the Vice Ministry of Commerce Industry and Tourism, Tourism and Hotel Administrator, Master's Degree in Tourism Planning and Management from the Externado University.

### 3. Results

The main lessons learned from the pandemic are evidenced, assuming and giving their respective solutions to the challenges, considering the skills and the main strengths of the human talent of the sector. Also, the expectations of the sector and the prioritization in the organizations of the topic of sustainable and sustainable development at present.

<p><b>What were the main lessons learned from the pandemic in terms of Human Talent management and work teams?</b></p>	<p><b>Joseph Matrinez Chavez</b></p> <p>From the perspective of the human resources area, this is a new reality, which forced the whole team to overcome this critical moment and be resilient; virtuality became the new way of working, and the relationship with the employee had to solidify in terms of trust regarding their ability to self-manage, since at that time there was no longer control of entry, permanence or exit from the office, this confidence was reflected in a new attitude of the employees, who immediately perceived the positive impact on their quality of life by working from home, in general showed a greater commitment to the company.</p>
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	<p><b>Carlos Alfredo Leal Becerra</b></p> <p>Faced with the pressure of this situation in which the establishments were closed, there were not enough financial resources to maintain the payrolls of the different locations, and a new relationship was created between owners, managers and employees, in which we all really worked for the common good: design strategies to not have to lay off workers, there arose different contributions to reduce costs and save resources, products were redesigned, new markets were opened, which usually before pandemic were not contemplated.</p> <p><b>Juan Sebastian Gonzales</b></p> <p>The main lesson of the pandemic in terms of work teams and their management, is that they should be oriented to planning and risk reduction, obviously no one had in their risk matrices a pandemic that would freeze the tourism sector and hit it so hard, but these teams should be oriented to foresee different adverse situations and generate the respective strategies to reduce or eliminate them; the direction in this context must be a direction aimed at encouraging the creativity of the teams, because it is from there where solutions to difficulties arise, not in vain during this process within the company were able to redesign products / services, diversify our offer which reduces the impact of unexpected events like this.</p>
<p><b>What are the main challenges that the pandemic has left us?</b></p>	<p><b>Johan Peña</b></p> <p>The main challenge after the pandemic is precisely to recover, develop strategies to diversify our market segments to ensure steady cash flow and meet the debts incurred during this period, the sense of crisis that brought the pandemic. The sense of crisis that the pandemic brought with it made many of us step out of our comfort zone and devise new paths for our businesses. In terms of personnel, we learned that solid teams prevail during crises and are the ones that provide creative solutions to problems, so it is not enough that the personnel have technical knowledge and experience, but that their values and vision coincide with the direction of the business.</p> <p><b>Rolando Torres Aguilera</b></p> <p>After the pandemic we compete with thousands of businessmen equally affected by the pandemic, all with the need to recover their position in the market, so it forces us to generate attractive value propositions that allow us to enter new markets and prevail in the current ones, we must not only worry about generating an offer of innovative services but that these are of quality, which in many cases represents increased costs and expenses, more trained personnel is required, which again leads us to restructure our costs, something we learned to do very well in pandemic.</p>
<p><b>The World Economic Forum proposes this TOP 10 of the skills needed for professionals in 2025. Which of these apply to our sector, which ones do you think are missing?</b></p>	<p><b>Angela Murillo Casas</b></p> <p>Obviously, the skills related to resilience, stress management and flexibility, recent history has confirmed it, we need people willing to work in problematic situations, who have the ability to go through them without negatively affecting their health, performance and relationships with others, these are elements that no knowledge or technical expertise can overcome, because without them there is no self-regulation. On the other hand, I also consider that management and technological development are vital to streamline our processes, guaranteeing quality, as well as to enter new markets and develop innovative products or services.</p> <p><b>Isabelle Leon Moreno</b></p> <p>Creativity and leadership are undoubtedly the most important skills, every day human beings are exposed to different problems and it depends on the creative ability to solve them, companies and society pressure us to generate new products and services, for which creativity is also necessary, and it is what professionals work on every day, but the development of these solutions or new products could not be carried out without the right leadership to carry out these ideas, motivate teams and consolidate the proposed goals.</p>
<p><b>What are the main strengths of the</b></p>	<p><b>Carlos Alfredo Leal Becerra</b></p>

<p><b>human talent in our sector?</b></p>	<p>Our charisma and dedication to service allow us to stand out, and our staff is always very friendly and willing to help anyone who needs it without any interest. Likewise, the leaders who head the work groups are able to solve problems in a timely manner.</p> <p>Both public and private entities are trying to professionalize the sector more and more, which makes tourism services have more and more characteristics of competitive quality at an international level. Finally, there is an added value that makes our human talent stand out and it is the recursion and achievement orientation, we are constantly generating different alternatives to solve the problems that may arise in the day to day.</p> <p><b>Joseph Martinez Chavez</b></p> <p>The hospitality of our human resources surpasses the offer in other countries, our offer goes beyond the offer of the good or service, there is a genuine concern for the welfare of the tourist, so the tourist actor becomes something that I call as an advisor of the experience, in which the workers of the sector not only advise on all the aspects to take into account during the stay but also help to manage related services required by tourists during their stay, this is also due to the construction of clusters and solid communities of the different links in the tourism chain, which facilitate the tourist experience.</p>
<p><b>What are the sector's main expectations in terms of human resources?</b></p>	<p><b>Angela Murillo Casas</b></p> <p>The sector expects to have professionals who speak the language of customers, who have the knowledge and skills to properly manage social networks, as these have become the main channel for attracting and communicating with customers; who know how to efficiently analyze information to identify new trends and customer needs, and develop products or services that meet those needs. This requires soft skills such as empathy, communication and decision making.</p> <p><b>Isabelle Leon Moreno</b></p> <p>Our sector requires bilingual personnel with a high environmental sense committed to sustainability. Many areas of our country due to the armed conflict were isolated, out of reach of citizens, so after the peace treaty, we are discovering wonderful natural and cultural destinations with great tourism potential, the task of professionals facing the opening of all these destinations, is to develop sustainable tourism products that ensure the care of the environment. Bilingualism is indispensable, especially for business tourism, which according to figures is one of the most in demand in the main cities of the country.</p> <p><b>Carlos Alfredo Leal Becerra</b></p> <p>The tourism professional must be a versatile person with an excellent command of the technologies that contribute to facilitate the processes, but at the same time with the corresponding soft skills that allow him/her to adequately lead his/her work teams to provide quality services to tourists. Finally, there is an unquestionable need for bilingual personnel, fluent in at least a second language, to respond to the government's efforts to attract foreign tourists.</p> <p><b>Rolando Torres Aguilera</b></p> <p>The sector needs personnel with the ability to make decisions in critical situations and with the capacity to generate alliances, since the strengthening of the sector depends on strategic alliances between the different actors in the production chain in order to deliver increasingly complete and competitive services.</p>
<p><b>How are organizations prioritizing and how are their teams disseminating the topic of sustainable</b></p>	<p><b>Johan Peña</b></p> <p>Each service provider is classified according to the element it manages, the type of service it provides, and organizes its sustainability accordingly.</p> <p>Sustainability is a reality and policy must improve the performance of tourism activities by introducing mechanisms to improve them and mitigate the negative effects that may be caused by tourism activity.</p>

<b>development and sustainability today?</b>	Promotion, management, procurement and regulation are not easy tasks. Implementing these policies in the best possible way costs money and time, and if they are not implemented, they entail irreversible social, cultural, economic and environmental risks.
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#### 4. Conclusions and Discussions

The profile of the professional in Colombia has a positive influence in terms of the availability and level of education of qualified personnel, having a very high profile that directly affects competitiveness by increasing the diversity of undergraduate and graduate programs in the country. Therefore, higher and university education is fundamental, these skills are based on or related to the individual capacity to learn, allowing students to begin to adapt to their professionals' careers increasing more and more the professional profile in Colombia.

Regarding the soft skills necessary for the professional in the tourism sector, it is evident that the greatest challenge is based on making decisions in the face of unforeseen events, which allow continuity and congruence with the business objectives; this was the dilemma faced by professionals in the sector during the pandemic, therefore, the continuity of these companies was due precisely to the ability to adapt to the situation without underestimating the organizational objectives.

The main lesson learned for the sector from the pandemic is the creative capacity of managers and leaders to turn the situation into an opportunity to improve their offer in the infrastructure aspects that could be modified during this period. Likewise, a new vision of risk management was identified, which leads to a concern for the diversification of the portfolio and market segments. However, one of the most important differentiating factors for graduates of the sector is their knowledge and applicability of the technical elements of the service and its quality, a fundamental aspect in the competitiveness of the sector at the international level.

Equally important, the pandemic ratifies cultural aspects that stand out, such as the sense of belonging of all the collaborators of the company in general, where everyone can contribute ideas that allow to appeasing the situation presented. In addition, there is a great concern for savings, resource management and self-management, which arose from teleworking and brought several positive consequences in terms of employee motivation, quality of life and reduction of travel time.

According to the findings, training is a very high profile that directly affects competitiveness by increasing the diversity of undergraduate and graduate careers in the country. However, for Delgado (2022), training is the preparation of technical competencies with the processes of entry and performance evaluation. Therefore, the performance of the professional is evaluated having a high profile, which influences competitiveness in the sector.

Likewise, training in the sector requires bilingual personnel with a high environmental sense committed to sustainability, being versatile and competent in technologies that help facilitate the process, as stated by Gulchendra (2020) hotel and tourism education in Colombia has been extended in a generalized manner with emphasis on a second language. Similarly, the needs of customers, users or the public and strive to position the industry which, Garcia (2018) indicates have been developed thanks to the methodological strategies used by the teacher to teach students.

##### 4.1 Future Lines of Research

The profile of the entrepreneurs should be analysed according to the economic conditions.

Establish projects that allow knowing the economy, taking into account the relationship with entrepreneurs, seeing the weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats in order to articulate them.

Establish more specific actions to direct education in tourism, based on the findings generated.

Identify, based on innovation, different possibilities to expand the portfolio of companies in the sector.

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