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Tourism Higher Education in Armenia

Is there a need to internationalize the tourism higher education of Armenia? Documentary research

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Abstract

Armenia is an historical country rich in cultural heritage. However, due to historical events, the tourism and education systems have faced various challenges, and the question of preserving and developing tourism has become primary. Accordingly, rapid changes in higher education and tourism have resulted in an overview of the concept of internationalization of tourism education in Armenia. The tourism industry plays a significant role in the development of Armenia's economy and society. Generally, there is a broader discussion of Armenian diaspora in the frame of tourism, but there is little attention on tourism education, particularly internationalization. Accordingly, this thesis focuses on the internationalization of tourism education in Armenia by conducting documentary and archival research. The thesis aims to review the current state of tourism education by underling its gaps and barriers in the development of international tourism. Notably, the thesis highlights appropriate efforts and strategies for the internationalization of tourism education.

Keywords: Internationalization, higher education, Armenia, tourism programs, international tourism

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

Globally, tourism is described as one of the largest industries and, one of the most important economic sectors in the world (Inui & Wheeler, 2006; Baggio, n.d). It has become a vital resource and an important industry in many countries, both economically and socially. Moreover, tourism is more than a contributor to economic growth. It is a contributor to social, and cultural growth. It enables people to travel to different destinations and move outside of their every day life for various purposes such as seeking something new or unique (World Tourism Organization, n. d.). The high mobility of visitors and their different travel purposes have increased the need to look deeply into tourism education (Daniel, Costa, Pita & Costa, 2017).

In turn, tourism education has looked deeply into the products and services offered to travelers. It has sought answers to questions such as how do destinations and services attract travelers and provide satisfactory service? Have travelers found what they sought from a place, country? The questions are many, and the answers, strategies, skills, knowledge are all encompassed in tourism education. Additionally, the economic impacts of tourism have been a dominant theme for discussions, and little attention has been paid to the education sector of tourism as a crucial factor in the development of tourism (Inui & Wheeler, 2006). Compared to other disciplines and fields of studies, emerging in the early 1970s, tourism education is more a recent development. Since that time, however, tourism education has become a prominent focus of governments (Inui & Wheeler, 2006).

Tourism has become a science which is studied at colleges and universities and is offered as long and short programs. One of the primary purposes of tourism education is to promote travelers' satisfaction, the competitiveness of products, the development of tour companies, prepare knowledgeable students for the competitive market and to increase the quality of the tourism market (Malihah & Setiyorini, 2014; Mohammed & Alsaleh, 2013). According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), if the necessary training and

education is guaranteed, tourism education has the potential to achieve customer satisfaction, and improve the competitiveness of businesses and regions (Ayikoru, Tribe & Airey, 2009).

Nowadays, tremendous changes have occurred in tourism industries due to economic, technological, and educational development (Sigala & Baum, 2003). These developments pose challenges and highlight the need to overview and transform the whole educational process, including educational curricula, learning materials, instructional practices and generally to overview barriers within tourism education (Sigala & Baum, 2003).

For the purposes of my thesis, I refer to tourism higher education and in particular, focus on tourism higher education in Armenian colleges and universities with an emphasis on the importance of the internationalization of tourism higher education. Public and private colleges and universities in Armenia are part of the Bologna process, and they offer various service and tourism programs in Yerevan, Armenia. Historically, the Bologna Process has had a huge influence in the development of internationalization of education in Armenia as a post-Soviet country.

Thus, this thesis reflects on the value of the Bologna process with regard to the internationalization of tourism higher education by considering what little research has been conducted on tourism higher education in Armenia. Additionally, the thesis reflects on challenges and barriers in tourism higher education, and emphasizes the significant role of internationalization of tourism education in Armenia.

To date, tourism higher education has not received due attention from the Armenian government or stakeholders and as noted above little research has been conducted regarding tourism education. On the other hand, the economic aspect of tourism is the center of attention. Secondly, Armenian diaspora tourism has always been a target, and there is not enough attention on the development of educational, international, rural, and nature tourism sectors (Gevorkyan, 2013). This thesis emphasizes the need to overview Armenian higher education tourism programs because there is great potential for the development of tourism and in attracting more international tourists to Armenia. There are significant Armenian

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tourism resources that require well-qualified human resources to expand opportunities in international tourism (Armenia, n. d.; Ghukasyan, Martirosyan & Balayan, 2017).

In the past, historical events such as war, and the collapse of the Soviet Union have had a significant effect on the Armenian tourism industry, especially the development of international tourism. Armenia is a post-Soviet country; which has experienced three main periods of social and political change: the Soviet period (1922-1991), the Transition period (1991-2004) and the Formative period (2004 – present) (Harutunyan, 2015). Those changes have had a significant impact on the development of tourism (Ghukasyan & et al., 2017). For example, the development of international tourism was not founded on a solid base albeit that tourism itself has been stable due to the Armenian diaspora. During the three change periods, tourism has faced various challenges. Currently, it is vital to stress the importance of the development of international tourism. However, Armenia is still facing challenges in rebuilding tourism as geographic limitations and closed borders add to the complexity of international tourism development (Report: Armenia Competitiveness Assessment, 2004).

Nevertheless, tourism has continued to be a primary sector in the economy due to the large Armenian diaspora, who remain true to their roots. Furthermore, there is a need to make tourism more competitive and attractive for international travelers.

This background highlights the importance of overviewing higher education tourism and an awareness of present and future barriers. The education sector is responsible for preparing human resources to deal with the various challenges. In addition, it prepares human resources to fulfil tourism industry/business needs (Malihah & Setiyorini, 2014). Education is a foundation and a way to develop any industry. Accordingly, this thesis sheds light on the value of internationalization of tourism higher education in Armenia by engaging in depth insight into international tourism issues.

Subsequently, I chose to research tourism higher education by highlighting the benefits of internationalization of tourism education in Armenia. It was essential for me to refer to the link between the internationalization of tourism education and the international tourism

industry by studying the benefits and challenges of internationalization of tourism higher education in Armenia.

1.2 Choosing a topic

I had an ambition and a strong interest to conduct my research into Armenia's tourism education as a research topic. However, since tourism education is a broad concept, in narrowing down the various perspectives, I decided to be more specific and emphasize the impact of the Bologna process on the internationalization of tourism higher education in Armenia. According to Knight (2013), the internationalization of education is an important area of study as tourism deals with international cooperation, multicultural and intercultural environments (Sangpikul, 2009). Another reason why I chose to research tourism education in Armenia was personal lived experience. Education has always been the foundation for understanding phenomena, and through education an understanding of how tourism is conducted in Armenia and can be advanced. Therefore, I chose to undertake a study of tourism education in Armenia.

When I searched for tourism programs to enrol in for my Master's degree, I could not find a relevant program that would assure knowledge, experience, development of communication skills, involvement with international students and, importantly, be convincing. Therefore, I chose to study abroad, which helped me to develop skills such as language, communication as well as achieve a diverse education, access internationally-based libraries, and live in a multicultural society.

The third important factor that determined my research area was the fact that Armenia faces various challenges and barriers regarding education as new education programs were adopted following the collapse of the Soviet Union. For a long period, Russian has been the priority language after Armenian. Importantly, there is a lack of research in tourism higher education, especially in the English language, and generally, there is a lack of research into tourism education. Therefore, in the case of Armenia, I narrowed my focus to the internationalization of tourism higher education by underlining the impact that the Bologna process has had on its

development. Specifically, my research contributes to understanding the impact of the Bologna process in the internationalization of tourism higher education, its issues, and potentials in the context of Armenia.

1.3 Objective of the study

In overview, this thesis was based on the representation of tourism education in Armenia. Writing the thesis has provided me with deep insights into tourism education and its importance in making a better tourism environment for local and international travelers. The more educated people are in tourism and who participate in destination tourism development the better the quality of life for both tourists and local people at a destination (Malihah & Setiyorini, 2014). In considering the value of tourism education, I focused on current tourism studies in Amenia and reflected on its challenges and barriers as a post-Soviet country. In doing so, it was essential for me to mention some historical facts that have impacted current tourism in Armenia.

The core focus of my study was to identify challenges and barriers concerning tourism education in Armenia. And as already intimated, I narrowed this focus specifically to the internationalization of tourism education to discover its challenges and to support the general introduction of internationalization of tourism education. According to Sangpikul (2009, p3), within the hospitality and tourism industry, there is a need to internationalize programs and curricula to prepare and equip students for the further challenges of the industry as well as globalization. Therefore, internationalization, whether of tourism education or general education, is an essential theme in my discussions. Moreover, the Bologna Process is a necessary tool for integrating internationalization into the tourism education system.

Thereby, the primary objective of this study is to generate knowledge, deep insights and to demonstrate the impact of the Bologna process in internationalizing the benefits of tourism higher education. Additionally, the research outlines an historical overview of tourism, supports the introduction of tourism and its natural resources, the significance of Armenian diaspora, and reflects on the role and importance of international tourism.

1.4 Research question

The first step in formulating my research commenced with reviews of educational materials and Armenian tourism and education documents. These preliminary reviews helped acquaint me with the existing issues and challenges within Armenian tourism and its education sector. After this initial review, and some brainstorming, several ideas came to mind as possible research questions. However, in considering my research purpose the previous literature review related to internationalization of tourism education and the impact of the Bologna process on it; the following research questions were formulated:

1) What are the gaps between tourism education and the tourism industry?

2) Whether the Bologna process facilitates the internationalization of tourism higher education in Armenia?

3) What are the benefits of the internationalization of tourism education in Armenia?

1.5 Methodology

The methodology chapter provides an outline of the research methods that were applied in my study. In brief, I utilised documentary and archival research methods for my research. My target research materials were electronic media and online education materials, which I accessed via the Internet. The purpose of my research project was to access all available data on the Internet relevant to my research. The Internet provides researchers with many opportunities to achieve answers since the Internet is the primary source of information nowadays.

1.6 Significance of the study

My research emphasizes the value of internationalizing tourism higher education in Armenia, outlines the current state of Armenian tourism, and references the past. The results of my study underscore the need for tourism studies. In my thesis, I took the opportunity to speak up about issues and challenges since this would be beneficial in furthering improvement of the tourism industry, especially international tourism. The significance of my study is twofold. First, I have used this opportunity to assist academic tourism research in Armenia since there is a lack of research in English. Second, I am able to familiarize readers from various backgrounds with Armenia, its tourism education and Armenian tourism in general.

1.7 Outline of Thesis

The outline of my thesis is structured into five chapters. The first chapter includes an introduction and presentation of my research theme. The first chapter outlines the structure, the research question, and the purpose of the thesis.

The second chapter recognizes history by referring to past events regarding tourism. In addition, the chapter provides an historical overview of tourism in the Soviet Union, refers to various tourism types in Armenia. Importantly, it briefly introduces international tourism and its barriers and reflects on the Armenian diaspora as an important tourism sector.

The third chapter outlines the theoretical foundation of my research and engages with extant literature associated with my frame of tourism education. Specifically, the thesis has used various theoretical perspectives and examples of different countries to examine the role of the Bologna process in the internationalization of tourism higher education.

 The fourth chapter covers my methodological framework, and highlights the methods I used to generate my database. It also outlines ethical considerations and presents methodological issues.
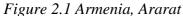
The fifth chapter incorporates data presentation and analyzes, and the last chapter summarizes my findings.

Chapter 2

2.1 Background Description

Prior to the literature review, analysis, discussion of empirical data and conclusion chapters, herein, I provide readers with a brief background description of tourism in Armenia. This is followed by reflections on post-Soviet Armenia and Armenian diaspora history as well as a short description regarding tourism development in Armenia. Then, consideration of the current Armenian education system and tourism study programs are presented. Lastly, I reflect on past events since understanding such events helps to gain a better understanding of tourism phenomena. Overall, the representation of the higher education system of Armenia and development of Tourism Studies assisted in gaining depth insights to utilize when considering my research results.

2.2 Armenia and its Tourism

Figure 2.1 Armenia, Ararat

Source: Lusine Matevosyan (2014)

Armenia has enormous potential to develop tourism resources. Its primary tourism resources can be used to make and create new and irreplaceable products since their advantage is their uniqueness. In addition, the existing resources can be utilized to attract more international travelers. According to Tovmasyan (2016), the main types of tourism in Armenia are nature, historical and cultural tourism, religious, wellness, sport, hiking, eco-and agro-tourism. These possess a great potency for development as they are based on existing assets.

Nature is considered the second most significant driving force in the country to attract travelers both from the Armenian diaspora and internationally due to its vast landscapes (Tourism Development Strategy of Armenia, 2019). Nature tourism also provides an opportunity to get to know Armenian history by visiting cultural and historical destinations. Armenia is one of the oldest countries and the first country that adopted Christianity as its official religion in the late third or early fourth century (Stringer, 2005; Sanasaryan &Vinals, 2020). Historical and cultural tourism is another type of tourism that always attracts travelers. These two gains more attention due to the ancient history of Armenia (Tovmasyan & Johan, 2018). Armenia has more than 24,000 historical, cultural monuments and churches (Tovmasyan & Johan, 2018). In addition, Armenia is popular because of its three Cultural Heritages, which are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Those heritages are:

- The Cathedral and Churches of Etchmiadzin and the Archaeological Site of Zvartnots

- Monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin

- Monastery of Geghard and the Upper Azat Valley (UNESCO, Armenia).

Accordingly, religious tourism has also developed as a type of tourism in Armenia, and it has become a centre for Christian pilgrims (Tovmasyan & Johan, 2018).

Wellness tourism also has a lot of potential due to its geographical locality. Accordingly, there are ten spa-resorts (Arzni, Tsakhkadzor, Jermuk, Hanqavan, Bjni, Dilijan, Sevan, Stepanavan, Syuniq, Lori) (Tovmasyan, 2018). Moreover, these spa-resorts are famous for their spectacular nature and mountains. Subsequently, the latter two provide opportunities for development and utilization for sport and adventure tourism as well as the attraction of more visitors from around the world. Similarly, urban tourism has shown strong progress, and many travelers prefer to spend their holidays in the capital city, Yerevan. The city has many attractions, for example, culture, art, museums, and galleries. Furthermore, according to Tovmasyan (2018), educational tourism has demonstrated significant improvement due to UWC Dilijan College, which offers an International Baccalaureate Diploma in academic programs in English. Moreover, many foreign students gain a medical education in Yerevan.

Consequently, medical tourism offers another developing field with many visitors visiting because of surgery needs and dental problems (Tovmasyan, 2018).

Despite the aforementioned, business tourism is not yet expanding its borders, and represents approximately seven per cent of the tourism industry in Armenia (Tourism Development Strategy of Armenia). Business tourism mainly takes place in Yerevan and is associated with conferences, exhibitions, and assemblies.

Dark tourism is irreversible for domestic and international visitors. Every year, on April 24, thousands people especially from the Armenian diaspora visit the Memorial and Armenian genocide museum in honour of Genocide victims. There is also another large group of travelers that are interested in finding leisure tourism activities in Yerevan and rural places. The main leisure activities that attract most travelers are food, wine events and festivals, where travelers aim to revel, seek various traditional foods, and spent a holiday in beautiful places in Armenia.

Given its large array of resources, the history and culture, Armenia has not realized its full tourism potential and needs more profound insight into using its current resources to attract more international travellers (Armenia -Travel and Tourism, 2019). According to Tovmasyan & Johan (2018), Armenia is a unique tourism destination with primary and unique resources. However, the main issues for Armenian tourism relate to maintaining tourism development. This would attract more international travelers to Armenia and improve the competitiveness of tourism businesses and regions. Armenia has a lot of potential to attract more travelers, not only travelers from the Armenian diaspora (Tourism Development Concept Paper, n. d., p. 4). Notably, it can offer different competitive tourism products and high-quality services to the global market diaspora (Tourism Development Concept Paper, n. d., p.4). As was claimed by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism (higher) education is an essential key to achieve customer satisfaction, to improve the competitiveness and productivity of the tourism industry if only critical approaches of education and training are guaranteed (Ayikoru, Tribe & Airey, 2009; Fayos Sola, 1997).

2.2.1 Tourism in Post-Soviet Armenia.

Figure 2.2 The Map of Armenia

Source: Adamia (2011)

Armenia is a country located in the Southern Caucasus Mountain, between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea (Sanasaryan &Vinals, 2020). Armenia is described as a country with a substantial historical and cultural legacy as well as the associated image of being a past small Soviet country (Bass, 2008). Armenia was previously one of the Soviet countries, and during Soviet times, it was popular because of its Spa-Resorts (Sanatoriums) (Tovmasyan, 2015). It was also popular because of its natural resources, which were used to develop medical tourism. Spa-Resorts or in Russian terms, Sanatoriums were primarily used to provide short-term holidays and medical services to groups of Soviet workers (Petersen, 2010). During the Soviet Era, Armenia had a flourishing tourism industry with more than 600,000 travelers a year (Harutjunjan, Loseby, 2011: 663). Medical tourism was the main target of tourism, and the main travelers were from Soviet countries. At that time, Soviet countries included Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belorussia (now Belarus), Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirgizia (now Kyrgyzstan), Latvia, Lithuania, Moldavia (now Moldova), Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan (Britannica, n. d.). The collapse of the Soviet Union brought the overthrow of those Spa-Resorts and economic problems in 1991(Petersen, 2010; Harutjunjan,

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Loseby, 2011). Many of those spa resorts were ruined, and many of them have been rebuilt into modern hotels. Only a few of the Spa resort have been kept their functions as a Spa, and they continue to be famous places to combine medical and leisure tourism nowadays. Those spas resorts were located in rural areas of Armenia in beautiful landscapes. But many of them were either difficult to reach or destroyed during the years. In addition, in all destinations of Armenia, it is still noticeable that Soviet-style architecture reigned; the buildings, monuments, resorts, hotels were designed Soviet-style and particularly in big cities. Thus, travelers receive visual cues denoting modern and Soviet times in Armenia. For more than 25 years, much architecture continues to remind travelers of the feeling of Soviet times, especially in Yerevan (Kiniry, 2018). In addition, during the last decades, tourism and education phenomena have obtained more attention.

Throughout the last two decades, the country has faced numerous changes and barriers that had affected the nation's further development in terms of tourism, language, education system, and industry policy (Bass, 2008). The changes occurred after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Soviet withdrawal brought a vital need for transformation in education, industries, markets, and government in 1992 (Kitchin & Boyle, 2011). The nation's most significant transformation was to adopt internationalisation into the education system, industries, market and adopt English as an essential language after Armenian. Thus, it can be said that the whole nation has faced great changes since moving from being a Soviet country to an independent country, the Republic of Armenia in 1991 (Ghukasyan, Martirosyan & Balayan, 2017). Over those transformations and changes, emigration has increased and has generated the concept of the Armenian diaspora.

2.2.2 Armenia Diaspora

After the Soviet Union's dissolution, many Armenians left their homelands and created large diasporas. According to statistics, the Armenian diaspora includes approximately 11 million people worldwide, particularly in the United States, the Russian Federation, and France (Ev Consulting, 2009). Historical events led to the growth of the diaspora, which had a

tremendous role in the post-Soviet economic performance of the Armenian Republic and especially on the development of tourism. According to Ev Consulting (2009), 'Armenia is one country without Diaspora is different one.' In addition, the Armenian diaspora has an incredibly large role in the tourism. Ethnic Armenians from Armenia provide a continuous flow of incoming tourists to Armenian (Tourism Development Strategy of Armenia, 2019). In addition to the fact that diaspora brings many travelers to Armenia, it is also a means of maintaining a strong connection between the Armenian diaspora communities and a valuable resource for raising the awareness of the tourism market of Armenia. The value of the Armenian diaspora in shaping and development of Armenia tourism is high valued given the geography and conflict between neighbour countries. Before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a disastrous earthquake destroyed the whole culture and history of the city Gyumri and a vast rural area that was famous for its tourist destinations. On the other hand, the conflict between Turkey and Azerbaijan's neighbour countries led to the close of the borders between those countries (Kitchin & Boyle, 2011). Thus, the border closures between the countries meant there was no way to travel from and through those countries. Especially because of the closed borders and conflicts, international tourism faced enormous challenges. The closures and conflicts continue to be an important theme for discussions. First, due to insufficient awareness, Armenia has become to be perceived as a dangerous destination to travel to, and where it is not safe to be. Generally, the extension of tourism increases the problem of ensuring the level and security of tourists (Tovmasyan & Tovmasyan, 2020). Security and safety are vital to the quality of tourism, the degree of satisfaction of tourists, and, importantly, on their decision and willingness to return to a particular destination or recommend others (Tovmasyan & Tovmasyan, 2020). The second theme relates to high ticket prices, and the problem of traveling to Armenia through Moscow. Moreover, in the last decades, tourism has been further developed due to diaspora travelers. Nevertheless, the purpose of people to travel to Armenia continues to be to visit their families and feel at home. Fifty percent of travelers from the diaspora who left their homeland seek to discover and restore their personal or family heritages (Tourism Development Strategy of Armenia, 2019). Despite the ethnic roots that bring travelers to their homelands, Armenian nature is a significant aspect that brings them home and helps them feel at home. Moreover, according to the survey, the travelers from the Armenian diaspora are satisfied with the hospitality of locals.

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The diaspora's significant role has been massive in nation formation, but its role is more significant with regard to tourism growth. Tourism could not afford to be reborn after hard times without the strength of the diaspora. The strength of diaspora lies in supporting finance, opening new opportunities for the workforce, assisting educational institutions, and contributing to development of tourist destinations. Over the past decade, the economy has begun slowly to revive, and tourism has promoted its recovery and tourism was announced as a main sector of economy (Harutjunjan & Loseby, 2011; Tovmasya, 2018). In addition, tourism has always been a focus of discussions and a need occurred to build an industry, which would attract more international travelers.

2.2.3 International tourism

Armenia has significant tourism potential and the number of international travellers to Armenia is growing as previously mentioned (Armenia: South Corridor Tourism Development Strategy, 2015). During the last decades since 2005, the high growth of international travelers has been visible (Armenia: South Corridor Tourism Development Strategy,2015). In recent years, from 2011, tourism develops rapidly in Armenia particularly rural, recreational spiritual and cultural (Tovmasyan & Tovmasyan, 2018). Based on the Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Armenia, international arrivals are mainly from Russia, Georgia, Iran, the USA, Kazakhstan, and European countries—Germany, France, Poland, and the Netherlands. In addition, it shows a small scale of arrivals from other countries as well. According to a study in 2019, there have been a high growth of international travelers (Tourism Development Strategy of Armenia, 2019).

The study showed that foreign travelers first heard about Armenia from their friends and only fourteen percent from social webpages, such as Instagram and YouTube (Tourism Development Strategy of Armenia, 2019). The first-time travelers preferred to have leisure and spend time in nature. Preferable cultural, wellness and business travelers are those who have been to Armenia before. Of note is that the primary visit to Armenia is a short stay period. This has proved that Armenia has strong potential to develop not only domestic but

also international tourism. The purpose of international travelers has been categorized into seven types of tourism: cultural, adventure, business, nature, leisure, and sanatorium (spa resorts) (Tourism Development Strategy of Armenia, 2019). According to the Tourism Committee: RM (Republic of Armenia) Ministry of Economy (2019) research, international visitors' purposes were varied. Most international travelers have business and professional purposes (14%), while more than 27% of international travellers travelled for nature, leisure, culture, health treatment (Tovmasyan, 2016).

According to the World Travel &Tourism Council's 2020 annual research on Armenia, the international tourism sector represents 12.5 percent of total employment (web page: International Trade Administration). Moreover, international visitors contributed over 1.2 billion dollars to the local economy through their spending in 2019 (web page: Armenia-Country Commercial Guide). Though, there has been a growth in international travelers to Armenia, there is still a need for improvement to attract and be famous among the destination lists of travelers.

According to the World Economic Forums' Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report (2017), Armenia was ranked 84th out of 136 countries (webpage: Privacy Shield Framework). The report also mentioned, despite the high growth of travelers, there is a need for success in the frame of international market competitiveness. Regardless of the richness of culture and history, churches, and monasteries in Armenia, there are several barriers to Armenia's international tourism development. Most historical places have not been rebuilt, are undeveloped and difficult to reach. Many hotels do not adopt international standards, and remarkably, there is a need for more communication skills in the multicultural environment of tourism.

2.3 Armenian Higher education system

Armenia is a country with a 1600-year history of literacy, as education has been traditionally high valued (UNESCO 2013; Inzelt, 2015). Education in Armenia has a deep and rich history dating from the early centuries. During the centuries, education has become more valuable,

and it has always been linked with cultural life, spiritual and national identity. The development of Armenian education is divided into four main phases: 1) pre-Soviet up to 1921; 2) Soviet beginning from 1922 to the collapse of the Soviet Union 1991; 3) transition from 1991to 2004; and the last one is formative from 2004 to the present (Harutunyan, 2015). Overviewed here is research into the Armenian higher education system during the last two phrases: transition and formative.

2.3.1 Transition period

The transition period began with the independence of Armenia. The liberation from the Soviet Union was a difficult transition period since the transition was not directly connected to education, but it was a time for growth of the Armenian nation, specifically, from Soviet Armenia to an independent country. It was a transition period for all kinds of industries, including tourism and education. Thus, the phenomena gained new value and meaning. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the newly independent nations looked for quick solutions to stabilize and develop their economies (Huisman, Smolentseva & Froumin, 2018). Due to economic issues, higher education became less centralized and its development more unpredictable in Armenia (Harutyunyan, 2015). At the time, a range of issues and new challenges appeared in the education system, and a proper approach towards reshaping the education system was required. Accordingly, to meet the demand for higher education in Armenia, many private and public universities opened. Since 1992, Armenian universities started to make a gradual transition by introducing Bachelor and Master's qualifications and maintaining the pre-existing Diploma Specialist qualification (Harutyunyan, 2015). In addition, from 1991 to 2000, the Armenian government with the support of the World Bank determined to adopt European models of higher education and made them available in Armenia (Harutyunyan, 2015). Accordingly, in 2005, the Armenian Government and Ministry of Education and Science signed the Bologna Process, which was aimed to align higher education with the international standards of the EU (Terzian, 2016).

2.3.2 The Formative period

The year 2004 was significant since Armenia embarked on a new stage of higher education reforms following signing of the Bologna Process (Harutunyan, 2015). The purpose of signing the Bologna Process was to open opportunities for students, reform the curriculum, and apply international standards into the whole educational system. Bologna education has become an essential component of education since it aimed to strengthen the role and responsibility of society in making decisions about higher education (Terzian, 2016; Motova, 2016). In addition, it ensured the academic freedom and autonomy of educational institutions (Motova, 2016). Therefore, society's involvement in making decisions and providing academic freedom to educational institutions were crucial points to consider in the case of Armenia. The communist ideology became history, and it started a new period by highlighting the importance of academic freedom and the internationalization of education.

The reformation of curriculum started with the transition from a one-tier structure to three-tier higher education qualifications (Harutunyan, 2015). The current qualifications of Armenian education are Bachelor's qualification, which require 240 ECTS as a four-year full-time programme as well as Master two years and Doctorate degrees (Harutyunyan, 2015).

2.3.3 The Bologna Process

There are 46 countries in Europe, including Armenia, taking part in the Bologna Agreement. Each country has developed its legislation to adopt the Bologna process by considering various national traditions and structures and social and political facts (Munar,2007). The Bologna process was formed to reach a coherent and cohesive European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Furthermore, it is argued that the Bologna process is an opportunity to use the systemic changes to gain a more robust image for tourism by contributing to the formation of tourism exchange programs and training abroad as well as to increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of European Higher Education Institutions (Munar, 2017; Werner,2008). Moreover, it promotes the mobility of teaching staff and students and the employability of graduates (Werner, 2008). These mentioned reforms are considered beneficial for a post-Soviet country like Armenia, where the Bologna process has been adopted enthusiastically to

improve the higher education system (Karakhanyan, Veen, & Bergen, 2011). The Bologna agreement was adopted in 2005 because of increased unemployment and migration caused by economic and social crisis (Motova, 2016). The economic and social changes had made education inaccessible, and the process aimed to increase graduates' employability and boost student's mobility internationally. Furthermore, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it created a need to make education internationalized because it could be seen as a tool to improve the education system and contribute to the development of tourism education in Armenia. According to Munar (2007), the mechanisms of Bologna structure involve a standardization process that can help solve the problem of fragmentation in tourism scholarship and may further development regarding tourism higher education.

Due to the adaptation of the Bologna process, each year, universities and colleges are increasingly engaged in various international cooperation programs. There is a notable increase in the number of European inter-university cooperation programs (Harutyunyan, 2015). Due to the development of the Bologna process, 35 Bachelor's and 50 Master's education programs in foreign languages are offered in foreign languages (Harutyunyan, 2015). The development of foreign languages plays a vital role in the mobility of students, creating a multicultural environment, developing communication skills, and encouraging the exchange of experience and knowledge. It is significant to mention that those programs are mainly carried out with the Russian Federation and Western European universities (Harutyunyan, 2015). Furthermore, the adaptation of the Bologna process has contributed to further development of education in Armenia.

2.4 Tourism study programs

Higher education in tourism began its development when the Armenian Government and Ministry of Science applied the Bologna process into its system. As a result, teaching has shown stable progress, even though the formation period of the education system was demanding and challenging. Thus, more tourism study programs have started to be re-established in post-Soviet Armenia. In addition, the tourism study as stipulated by the Republic of Armenia on Tourism law, which is under the control of the Tourism Committee. The official tourism authority, the Tourism Committee, was established in 2016 (web page: International Trade Administration). The Tourism Committee has a policy function to promote tourism regarding the different tourism areas within Armenia (web page: International Trade Administration). Therefore, the Tourism Committee of the Ministry of Economy is considering the main authorial body to determine tourism programs, partnerships, and corporations between local and international universities and stakeholders to benefit, strengthen and grow the tourism sector (web page: Ministry of Economy of The Republic of Armenia).

To the date, six universities have various tourism programs in universities and two colleges (refer to Figure 2.3). One of those universities is (1) the Armenian Institute for Tourism, a branch of the Russian Federation, and it re-establish an Institution in the field of Tourism management in 2001. The Institute for tourism had become the only university in Armenia and in the region that carries out higher professional tourism education in tourism management (web page: Armenian Institute for Tourism). The studies are carried out in Russian, and Russian is considered one of the obligatory examinations for admission. It is essential to mention, even though it is a Branch of the Russian Federation, the university serves to develop tourism in Armenia, and contribute to meeting the demand for qualified resources for the Armenian tourism industry (web: Armenian Institute for Tourism)

The next university is (2) the European University, which offers a Bachelor's degree in service. The duration of the study is four years full-time. According to the curricula description, at the completion of the educational program, students have to have the knowledge, ability, and skills to use in the international tourism management, and tourism

business. In addition, they participate in various tourism activities such as tour operations and hospitality management. According to the curricula, Russian and English are considered the main teaching languages.

The capital city of Armenia is considered as the central place for universities and colleges. Still, it is remarkable to mention that in Ijevan, the branch of 3) Yerevan State University offers "Service and Tourism Management". The tourism faculty was re-established in 2004 (webpage: Yerevan State University).

In addition, (4) the Armenia State economics provides a Bachelor program in Tourism and Service and a Master's degree in Tourism Management (webpage: Armenian State Economics). Adding to the list of universities that offers Sustainable Tourism program is 5) The Yerevan State University of Armenia. The faculty has opened in 2013 and offered full and part-time education systems both for Bachelor and Master's degree programs (webpage: Yerevan State University).

 (6) The Brusov State University presents the international tourism program at a Master's degree level, which offers full and part-time study. Finally, two colleges, 7) Yerevan State College of Humanities and 8) Yerevan State Armenia Greek College of Tourism, Service, and Food, offer tourism programs in vocational degrees. The Yerevan State College of Humanities offers a qualification in Hotel and Tourist Complex Service Management requiring a profound knowledge of the foreign languages: English and Russian. Both colleges identify Russian and English as foreign languages, and the study is mainly in Armenian.

Figure 2.3 The List of Tourism Higher Education Programs

Name of Institution	Faculty	Programs	Degree	Language/s of instruction	Region
1. Armenian Institute for Tourism	Tourism	Tourism Management	Bachelor and Training Specialist	Russian	Armenia, Yerevan
2.Yerevan State University	Geography and Geology	Service, Sustainable Tourism	Bachelor Sustainable Tourism	Armenian English	Armenia, Yerevan
3.European University	Tourism	Service (Tourism)	Bachelor	Russian Armenian English	Armenia, Yerevan
4. Yerevan State University Ijevan Branch	Tourism Management and Cultural Studies	Service, Tourism	Bachelor Master	Armenian English	Armenia, Ijevan
5. Armenian State University of Economics	Management	Tourism Management	Master	Armenian Russian English	Armenia, Yerevan
6. Yerevan State Linguistic University after V. Brusov	Tourism	International Tourism, Service	Master	Armenia Russian English	Armenia, Yerevan
7. Yerevan State Armenian-Greek college of Tourism, Service and Food Industry	Tourism Service	Service, Food, Tourism	Vocational	Armenian	Armenia, Yerevan
8. Yerevan State College of Humanities	Tourism	Hotel and Tourist Complex Service Management	Specialized Secondary Education	Armenian Foreign languages	Armenia, Yerevan

Source: Lusine Matevosyan, 2021

Chapter 3

Literature review

This chapter presents my literature review that informed my analyzes and discussions of my empirical data for this thesis. Specifically, the literature review reflects on the following research questions.

1) What are the gaps between tourism education and the tourism industry?

2) Whether the Bologna process facilitates the internationalization of tourism higher education in Armenia?

3) What are the benefits of the internationalization of tourism education in Armenia?

3.1 Thoughts Related to Theories Chosen

The literature review considers an important part of research since it contributes depthful understanding of my chosen topic as well as a useful analytical framework. It is necessary to mention that the literature review was the hardest part of my writing because there was a lack of literature regarding Armenia's tourism higher education. Subsequently, I had to choose articles focused on various countries' cases that would offer answers to my research questions as well as to generate fruitful discussions.

Relevant theories were chosen from tourism education, including articles about internationalization, trends and issues, and the relationship between tourism education and the tourism industry. In my literature review, I referred to the following articles: "A Highlight of Tourism and Hospitality Education Issued in Taiwan" (Liu, 2006), "Internationalization of Hospitality and Tourism Higher Education: A Perspective from Thailand (Sangpikul, 2009), "Trends and Issues in Tourism and Hospitality Higher Education: Visioning the Future"

(Sigala & Baum, 2003). These articles promoted the necessary comprehension regarding tourism education, and furthered my discussions.

3.2 Tourism Education

Tourism education first developed in technical/vocational schools in Europe, which provided training regarding competencies relevant for hospitality, hotel management and related business skills (Butler, 1999; Morgen, 2004; Inui, 2006). For many years, this training focus traditionally orientated courses to requisite skills development (Cooper & Shephared, 1997). The purpose of the training was to develop practical knowledge and techniques to meet the industry's needs. However, the growth of tourism demanded a professional workforce and accordingly the need to expand tourism programs arose. Several international bodies such as the World Tourism Organization, American Express, the International Labour Organisation, and the World Travel and Tourism Council publicly recognized the fundamental necessity of training and education to ensure a professional and productive tourism industry (Cooper & Shepherd, p.35, 1997).

Over the last three decades, the number of hospitality degree programs has steadily increased (Jafari, 1997; Tribe, 2006a; Munar, 2007). The number of tourism programs has also grown rapidly. Many countries offer higher education degrees in tourism at undergraduate and graduate levels, and doctoral programs have expanded to include tourism studies (Jafari, 1990, Munar, 2007). Today, higher education and research have grown into their own multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary subject, which has been discussed and debated in academia the world over (Airey & Tribe, 2007). Accordingly, a multitude of textbooks and journals have been published. Examples of the latter include Annals of Tourism Research, the Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education, and the Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism, which is the official journal of International Society of Travel and Tourism Educators (Airey & Tribe, 2007).

Airey and Tribe (2007) advanced the necessity of looking at tourism education and its discussion at an international level (Airey & Tribe, 2007). Many discussions have been conducted to analyze curricula as well as to evaluate teaching at an international level. Still,

there is little attention on tourism higher education and the evaluation of tourism programs. Focusing on journal articles, Tribe (2002) categorized hospitality and tourism education research up to 2001. He overwhelmingly found the majority of articles focused on curriculum issues, and an insignificant number of research studies examined student progression and achievement, quality, teaching, learning and resources (Hsu et al., 2017).

There has been a large expansion of tourism programs worldwide. In the beginning, the tourism programs were developed within the context of the general development of vocational education, and this has been the key theme underlying educational outcomes in Europe over the past 50 years (Airey, 2005, p. 14). Airey (2008, p.3) mentioned that tourism education has undergone three developmental stages: the industrial stage with a strong business orientation, the fragmented stage involving debates and uncertainty about curriculum content as well as the extension of many hospitality and tourism programs (Hsu et al., 2017). The last stage was called the benchmark stage (the 2000s), distinguished by broader content in hospitality and tourism programs at the degree level (Hsu et al., 2017).

Noteworthy is that the spread of tourism education has enhanced debates and discussions regarding the connection between tourism and tourism education. According to Stuart (2002), the emerging trend in the hospitality and tourism academy is that researchers are distancing themselves from the industry (Hsu et al., 2017). The next remarkable issue in the frame of tourism and hospitality is a lack of industry experience (Hsu et al., 2017). Kim and Jeong (2018) mentioned the need for industry experience and claimed that through internships, which are an integral part of hospitality and tourism programs, students explore their career options and enhance knowledge and skills. Notably, students seek links between academic theories and practical application of these in the workforce. (Kim & Jeong, 2018).

Another issue evident and which has been noted for years is the low involvement of industry and community stakeholders in program design and teaching (Hsu et al., 2017). It is clear that inadequate communication between industry and community stakeholders led to various issues within tourism.

Kim and Jeong (2018) indicated that hospitality and tourism services are based on collaborative work and ongoing communications. This is important for industry experience such as internships. Specifically, the integration of internships and making them successful requires cooperation between stakeholders, students, and educators (Kim and Jeong, 2018).

Hjalger's (2003, 33-34) claimed that "closer links between stakeholders and educational institutions is a step towards the professionalism of the entire sector and to improving the knowledge base and innovative and economic capabilities" (Melihah & Seritorini, 2014). Tovmasyan (2018) claimed that the most critical issue of tourism development is ensuring correspondence between tourism education and industry.

Managing innovative capabilities is an essential part of tourism and tourism education. It is an ongoing process, and it requires an overview and integration of new approaches in the frame of education. Therefore, tourism education is needed to encourage innovative capabilities in study processes, which are beneficial in upgrading workforce skills, competence of the tourism industry, and boosting competitiveness (Zivitere et al., 2019). The skills, the competence of the tourism industry, competitiveness, and producing well-rounded graduates are the most discussed themes within tourism education. Tovmasyan (2018) highlighted the necessity of ensuring practical education occurs in universities to develop primary skills and crucial competencies that benefit the industry. As mentioned, the education system must provide all the competencies required of students.

Bringing innovative capabilities into tourism education is a complex, and simultaneously a long process. It requires cooperation with other universities, faculties, and the creation of more short- and long-term tourism exchange programs. These are beneficial for the development of various skill sets of students, the promotion of the development of academic subjects addressing the specific needs of industry such as marketing, finance, management, and human resources. Tovmasyan (2018) indicated that being flexible, having a strategic mind, analytical and communication skills as well as a professional background are requisites for the labour market. Sangpikul (2009) propounded the internationalizing of higher education contributes many benefits to the academic community, staff development, student learning experiences, curriculum development, research collaboration, international

cooperation and intercultural understanding (Knight, 2007; Komolmas, 1999; Mok, 2007; Sangpikul, 2007).

3.3 The Concept of Internationalization in Tourism Education

Many discourses refer to internationalization, which sheds light on its value and importance in political science, government and education relations. The internationalization of higher education is widely considered a strategic priority for governments around the world because of the economic, political, social and academic benefits associated with it (Cracium, 2018; Harutyunyan & Ohanyan, 2019, p76;).

Debates regarding the internationalization of education commenced in the 1980s (Knight, 2003). Nevertheless, there is conventional literature regarding internationalization, albeit the center of attention is the manufacturing sector. Few studies have been conducted regarding internationalization of tourism education. For example, Tribe (2005) noted that up until 2001 that eighty-six per cent of tourism education publications were related to curriculum issues, and only three per cent of publications addressed globalization (Hsu, n. d).

Researchers have referred to internationalization by underscoring its meaning within tourism and education. In addition, internationalization has become a significant aspect of university functions as universities consider the need for increasing the quality and diversity of education offered (Aperyan, 2021). In many developed countries, internationalization has become a key trend in developing the national education system.

According to Aperyan (2021, p. 80), internationalization is a process of sustainable cooperation and interaction of national education systems based on general objectives and principles. These general objectives and principles aim to meet global needs. The term international emphasizes the relationship between and among various nations and countries (Knight, 2004; Renfors, 2018). Takagi (2015) highlights that internationalization of tourism and hospitality enhances graduates and institutions' international competitiveness. In addition, Dewit and Hunter (2005) emphasized that the systematic process ensures that all students develop international, intercultural, and global perspectives (Renfors, 2018). Knight (2003)

proposed a fuller definition of internationalization as a process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, function, or delivery of education. Accordingly, the specific concepts of the definition aimed to convey that internationalization is an ongoing, lengthy, and continuing process, which aims to prepare graduates to understand diverse cultures, develop sensitivity to different perspectives, be capable of working, communicate with people as well as be able to work in a multicultural environment (Hsu, n. d; Sangpikul, 2009). Many countries consider the benefits of internationalization and stress the evaluation of internationalization in higher education.

Tourism is highly diverse and internationally oriented (Sangpikul, 2009). Therefore, with respect to hospitality and tourism industries, there is a strong need to internationalize programs and curricula to prepare students for the ever-present challenges of globalization (Sangpikul, 2009). Moreover, Renfors (2017) highlighted that it is necessary to integrate internationalization into tourism education to achieve professional and sustainable tourism industries.

The internationalization of higher education is one of the most important aspects of Armenia's social and industrial development. Armenia is a part of the European Higher Education Area and takes part in internationalization processes (Aperyan, 2021). Its internationalization process is in its early stage of development, and is becoming a critical trend in the development of Armenian national systems of education (Aperyan, 2021). Internationalization has become a critical trend within the education system since it promotes the development of various programs and international academic staff and assists the improvement of strategies regarding education and industry. In the main, the notion of internationalization of tourism education is to create and develop a strategy that meets the needs of incoming and outgoing travelers, and to support the mobility of students between undeveloped and developed countries (Unurlu, 2021, p.36). However, Haruyunyan & Ohanyan (2019, p.70) highlight that strategic thinking about internationalization is a new phenomenon. Such strategic thinking serves to override any lack of clarity that might lead to deficient policies that are not equipped to deliver intended outcomes. Moreover, universities and leaders may be able to increase the effectiveness of internationalization of education if education policies, regulations and international managing activities are concerned about it. In

addition, globally, it is evident that well-oriented strategies improve the effectiveness and competitiveness of higher education (Harutyunyan & Ohanyan, 2019). Further, the development of communication within a multicultural environment and ensuring wide understanding within tourism industries is important.

An increasing number of Armenian higher education institutions have integrated internationalization, but there is little literature referring to the internationalization of tourism education. Moreover, there is little literature that focuses on tourism education in Armenia.

Tourism education has several benefits regarding the development of international tourism. One of the benefits of internationalization is that it promotes teaching and learning of foreign languages, mainly English. Due to globalization, intercultural and multilanguage communication is becoming more important and obligatory for tourism industries. Effective communication skills are requisites to ensure quality and needed performance standards for tourism industries (Kostic Bobanovic & Grzinic, J., 2011).

Further, the internationalization of tourism education ensures a range of opportunities for students to participate in exchange programs, and to study abroad. As Kim and Jeong (2018) pointed out studying abroad broadens students' perspectives and possibly places them in a more competitive position in the job market.

Chapter 4

Methodology

This chapter refers to and examines the methods used in this thesis. The chapter provides a rationale for my choice of research strategy, data collection methods, and analysis. Accordingly, the chapter also reflects on data collection and analysis and addresses ethics as well as challenges, barriers and limitations associated with conducting my research.

4.1 Research Strategy

Methodology is a crucial part of a thesis. Choosing the method, which would help me and simultaneously lead the work into a larger work was not easy. Before launching into writing, I read many articles about methodology and attempted to understand research strategies. Research is a long and complicated process that requires a sound understanding of research methods as well as insight into the project you wish to conduct. My study started with the formulation of my research question.

Every piece of research has a goal and a purpose. From the beginning, I was sure that I wanted to research in the field of tourism education since little research existed that framed tourism higher education in Armenia. I was confident exploring the area, but it was complicated to choose the right method for my research. Researchers can use various types of strategies to achieve results. The choice of research method, and strategies depends on the researcher's goal and purpose. I formulated two research questions related to the purpose of my thesis, which was to study tourism higher education in Armenia and acquire answers or suggestions with respect to my research questions.

I chose to use qualitative research. As is well known, there are primarily two types of methods: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research promotes collecting and analyzing information to increase understanding of a topic or issue (Ficher (n.d.); Quantitative

Research Methods). Compared to quantitative research, qualitative research is not countable or measurable (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & De Lacey, 2016). Moreover, qualitative methods are usually applied to research questions that focus on experience, meaning, and perspectives (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & De Lacey, 2016). While both methods are actively used by the scientific world, the choice depends on the research question and the purpose.

I chose to use documentary and archival research methods with data drawn from electronic media, academic materials, and online education materials to gain the information that I required to obtain an in-depth perspective of tourism higher education in Armenia. My research methods allowed me to analyze documents and program information, which helped me to understand Armenian tourism education in more detail.

4.2 Data Collection process

In recent years, many scholars have discussed the importance of literature research but compared with other methods, it has received little attention (Ahmed, 2010). It has been argued that documentary research is considered unclear, and that there is no set way regarding how researchers should use it (Qualitative research methods: Documentary research). However, these criticisms are not proven since history as a discipline provides us with the value of the past and the present and uses a series of documents such as state government archives to allow researchers to reflect on contemporary issues (Qualitative research methods: Documentary research). Ahmed (2010) also argued that the documentary research method is productive and even more useful than social surveys, in-depth interviews, or participant observation. Furthermore, with the increase of Internet and computer-mediated research tools, policy researchers can obtain and search a wider range of documents with greater ease than ever before (Moe, 2012). The rapid evolution of the Internet and computer-mediated research tools ensure that researchers can access a wide range of documents, and online academic materials (Moe, 2012).

Documents are beneficial and practical for obtaining the required data, especially for those who do not have the opportunities to do interviews. Reviewing documents provides huge

opportunities to find the answers to research questions, reflect on history, and gain more knowledge about a field. To use this research method, researchers need to collect documents that contain appropriate information for the research project and then analyze the documents in various ways (Scale, 2012).

In the early stage of my investigations, I decided to do semi-structured interviews to gather the necessary information. After consideration of my research questions and the purpose of my thesis, I found it more useful to use documentary and archival research methods. I decided on documentary and archival research since documents from schools, colleges, and universities can provide valuable and necessary information suitable for the frame of my research questions (Fitzgerald, 2012). While the method is helpful, it is not easier to conduct since, according to Moe (2012), it is not well explained either in textbooks and communication studies or in most research contributions. Earlier, John Scott (1990) mentioned, interviews, questionnaires, and other methods are at the core of and introduced in detail in research textbooks (Moe, 2012).

 The first challenge I faced was to find appropriate theories to guide the conduct of my research. I was familiar with the methods due to articles that I had read, but it took effort to comprehend the method as well as considerable skill to interpret the documents. The interpretation of the documents is complicated since it is necessary to classify them as primary or secondary as well as private or public documents. Complications arise in finding valid and reliable documents on the Internet. In addition to documents and documentary methods, it was necessary to apply archival research methods to print media, academic materials, and online education materials in order to obtain an extensive understanding of data related to my research questions. The following questions were formed to further guide my research:

1) What are the gaps between tourism education and the tourism industry?

2) Whether the Bologna process facilitates the internationalization of tourism higher education in Armenia?

3) What are the benefits of the internationalization of tourism education in Armenia?

The first research question was applied to print and online materials to gather empirical data. The following research method was used since this question aimed to determine how many universities had tourism international programs. Through this method, I had the opportunity to determine the universities that offered international tourism higher programs in Armenia. It was useful to apply the method since it provided more details regarding tourism education in Armenia. The second research question relates to internationalism tourism education and aims to underline which sector/s can benefit from it by making tourism education international. Documentary and archival methods were used, and in addition, online educational materials were considered as data. I found it essential to reflect on the past of Armenia. In particular, I reflected on the last decades after the dissolving of the Soviet Union from 2005 to 2020 to underline the benefits of internationalism tourism education in Armenia.

Figure 4.1 Chosen Documents of Analysis

Author	Title/Publisher	Year of Publication	Study Relevant Codes
Aperyan, Y.	*The Internationalization of Higher Education in Armenia*	2021	Internationalization, Higher education
Harutyunyan, H & Ohanyan, A.	Strategic Thinking in Internationalization of Tertiary Institutions of Armenia: Drawbacks and Prospects	2019	Internationalization, Higher education
Strategy Challenge Management Report	UNTWO Silk Road Project	2012	Tourism industry
Tovmasyan, G.	Analysis of the organization of education and the labor market in the field of education of the Republic of Armenia. (Translated)	2018	Tourism education, Labor market,
Saakyan, I.	Social Sciences. Current Experience and Actual Issues of Development of Tourism in the Republic of Armenia	2020	Tourism education, Tourism, Internationalization
Armenia: South Corridor Tourism Development Strategy	Social, Urban, Rural and Resilience Global Practice East and Central Asia Region	2015	Tourism, Tourism education

International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE) Foundation	Knowledge and Skills Assessment of Hospitality and Tourism Sector in Armenia	2018	Tourism, Tourism education, Labor market
Munar, A. M.	Is the Bologna Process Globalizing Tourism Education	2007	Armenian tourism, Bologna Process
Republic of Armenia Tourism Development	Report (Translated)	2020	Tourism education, Internationalization, Tourism industry
Improving the activities of the RA Government in the field of tourism	Document (Translated)	2018-2019	Tourism education, Internationalization, Tourism industry
Karapetyan, S.	Trends in the development of the organizational structure of tourism management in the Republic of Armenia	2016	Tourism development, Tourism in Armenia, Tourism education
Promoting Heritage- And Culture -Based Experiential Tourism In the Black Sea Basin	Regional Needs Assessment Reports (Translated)	2020	Tourism development, Tourism in Armenia, Tourism education
Developing a Digital Tourism Platform for Armenia (DTPA)	A policy brief for Culture and Creativity EU-Eastern Partnership Programme.	n.d.	Tourism, Tourism education

Source: Lusine Matevosyan, 2021

Figure 4.2 Chosen Documents of Analysis

Author	Title/Publisher	Year of Publication	Study Relevant Codes
Amiryan, H.	*Sustainable Tourism Development and Monitoring in Developing Countries: The Case of Armenia*	2013	Tourism education, Sustainable tourism
The European Higher Education Area in 2018	Bologna Process Implementation Report	2018	Tourism higher education
Motova, G. N.	The Bologna Process: 15 Years Later	2016	The Bologna Process

Hovakimyan, H., Klimek, M., Freyer, B. & Hayrapetyan, R.	Sustainable Shift from Centralized to Participatory Higher Education in Post-Soviet Countries: Systematic Literature Review	2021	Higher education
Huisman, J., Smolentseva, A. & Froumin, I.	25 Years of Transformations of Higher Education Systems in Post-Soviet Countries	2018	Higher education, Tourism
Harutyunyan, K.	Reforms in the Higher Education of Armenia in the Context of the Bologna Process	2015	Higher education, Internationalization
Harutyunyan, H. & Ohanyan, A.	Strategic Thinking in Internationalization of Tertiary Institutions of Armenia: Drawbacks and Prospects	2019	Tourism education, Internationalization of education
Higher Education in Armenia Today: a focused review	Report for the Open Society Foundation Armenia	2013	Tourism development, Tourism in Armenia, Tourism education
Tovmasyan, G.	New and innovative solutions for improving tourism education and raising satisfaction of students in Armenia	2018	Tourism education, Internationalization of education

Source: Lusine Matevosyan, 2021

4.3 Preparation and organization of doing the research

Documentary methods vary from primary research data where the researcher is responsible for the entire research process from the design of the project to collecting, analyzing and discussing the research data (Stewart, 1984; Ahmed, 2010). Designing a research project is a long and complex process. It demands a good understanding of the selected method, including the disadvantages and advantages of the method, and consideration of ethnics as a vital part of the research process. In particular, documentary research is not considered a simple method to apply, since the researcher deals with documents from various sources, researchers face several challenges such as considering bias, and accessing different web pages. Nevertheless,

the researcher takes responsibility for the conduct of the research and presents readers with objective findings.

As I mentioned above, choosing my research method was not initially obvious to me. It took time and effort to determine the specific strategy. In addition, the hardest part of my research was to formulate the final research question since it had changed many times. After the final formulation of the research question, I decided upon documentary and electronic media research. I chose to focus on print media since I could not travel to Armenia, I accessed all necessary information from electronic media. Even though the contribution of print media in providing information and transfer of knowledge is remarkable, electronic media continues to develop rapidly due to the technological revolution that has modernized print media (web: Anjum). For my research foundation, I started my research by investigating the sources with which I would work. Firstly, I attempted to find electronic magazines, newspapers as well as archives, and documents. Second, I located webpages of universities that offered tourism higher education in Armenia. It was important as well to highlight program descriptions. Program descriptions were a significant part of my investigation since they helped me gain insight into the gaps and the issues that I needed to consider. It was beneficial to find an Armenian tourism blog that reflected on the issues and clarified foreign travelers' information. It was also significant for me to research the "Tourism Committee and Ministry of the economy of Armenia" webpage.

4.4 Handling documentary and electronic media sources

Handling documentary, electronic media, and general information from different sources is vital when gathering and analyzing data. Networked information sources and services can rapidly increase bias in sources (Tonta, 2004). Thus, it does not mean that all existing information on the Internet is valid and reliable. Several researchers have mentioned ways to overcome the problems of reliability and bias (McCulloch, 2004). Primarily, it is necessary to use various kinds of documents that will represent alternative viewpoints and interests (McCulloch, 2004). Accordingly, I did not determine how many documents were needed. It mainly depended on how many were able to be obtained on the Internet to achieve my

research outcomes. Thus, considering the following facts, I did not limit the research by quantity. First, my aim was to acquire the required data and afterwards to sort through the located documents according to their 1) authenticity, 2) credibility, 3) representativeness, and 4) meaning (Atheide, 2004). Tosh (2002) advised that researchers should not be dependent on a single source; while (McCulloch (2004) recommended that researchers need to have many alternatives to compare and interpret information.

Handling documentary, electronic media, and general information in research is vital in gathering and analyzing data. Those four criteria were applied to assess documents and, in addition, were examined with respect to the authors' position regarding why they wrote the document. Web pages were examined as well. Atheide (2004) suggested that the range of primary sources must be decided by researchers, and added that all organizations have policy documents, media releases, statistics and research reports that are publicly available. The primary sources of my empirical data were:

-Official letters and correspondence

-Parliamentary debates

-Government reports.

Considering the suggestions mentioned previously, document handling started by determining if the selected sources could be used as primary and secondary in my research (Streefkerk, 2018). Further, information can be classified based on personal experience. When we deal with internet sources, and documents, it is beneficial to be able to categorize the source and make it comprehensible.

Categorizing the documents helped to avoid a "messy" research strategy, albeit for me, in the beginning, the method chapter seemed like a mess and difficult to apply in practice. In categorizing, I asked simple questions of myself regarding my research frame. These questions aimed to help me sort my sources. The questions were:

- Does this source ensure original information?
-What is the purpose of the document/source?
- Was someone who published the information directly involved in the events?
- Who are the authors, and when was it published?

- Does this source give valid and reliable information?

- Is it helpful to apply in analysis?

- To what extent does it correspond to my research questions?

With the help of these questions, I was able to use my time productively and to ground my research.

The primary sources I collected included official documents, as well as diaries, newspapers. My secondary sources were textbooks, journal articles, interpretive books, blogs, newspapers, and academic books. The secondary sources were beneficial to gain an overview of the topic and to understand how other researchers approached it (Streefkerk, 2018). With respect to blogs, during the research, I discovered that one blog was not advisable to use because there was the potential presence of personalized information.

4.5 Advantages and limitations of documentary and archival research

Frequently, we choose the kind of research we will use by considering its advantages. All types of research have advantages and disadvantages, thus, researchers need to consider both.

When I considered choosing documentary and archival methods, I acknowledged some primary factors. The main factor of timing created some boundaries. The time was not appropriate to travel to Armenia to conduct interviews or to do them online. Travel was not possible since the situation was complex due to Covid-19 and second there was war in Armenia. Accordingly, one of the advantages of documentary and archival research was that it can be accessed conveniently by the researcher (Fitzgerald, 2012). There was no obligation to travel and assemble participants for doing the research. The main issue was finding documents that were valuable, authentic, credible, representative, and meaningful. Nevertheless, one challenge to finding documents was that there are limited documents on the Armenian web pages. In addition, it was challenging to locate the documents which provided the origins of information, and subsequently, if there was bias or whether the information was subjective.

For my research purpose, the documentary and archival method provided depthful insight into tourism education in Armenia and general insights into international tourism, its gaps, and its

benefits. I could access many web pages of universities to gather data for my research project. The methods can also provide access to information that may otherwise be difficult to gain via interviews (Fitzgerald, 2012). However, at the same time, the most significant limitation was that the university's official page could be hacked, and become unavailable. So, the web pages are not accessible all the time, and researchers can not rely on that the pages will be available regularly.

In addition, many available web pages and electronic media did not have language options. Languages were either Armenian or Russian, and in a few cases English. Subsequently, this demanded that I translate and interpret Armenian and Russian pages into English, which was time-consuming. The language factor is vital, and it is necessary to think about it in advance. I translated the Armenian or Russian documents into English when I needed to cite them in my thesis. I translated significant points, which were essential to mention and did not change the original meaning or generally use a lot of time on translation.

I used electronic tools to store all documents, and created archives where possible. It was a productive and organized way to collect data since it helped manage the documents and information more efficiently.

4.6 Ethics

Ethics was an indispensable part of my research. It was essential to understand my rights in the frame of documentary and archival methods. Before I started to analyze the documents, I focused on understanding ethics in detail. As information about ethics was unclear to me, to achieve my understanding of ethics took much reading.

In the early stages, I considered the application of documentary and archival research to gather data from educational materials' webpages.

The documents, and academic materials were gathered from official and public web pages. I mainly used documents that were available in the public domain. A proper understanding of

ethics helped me to avoid mistakes in my documentary analysis.

The documents did not contain sensitive or private information, and only texts were included in my analysis. The sources of documents were mentioned.

4.7 Challenges, Barriers and Limitations

In the process of analysing documents, articles, and web pages, I encountered various challenges. A search of theoretical pages of universities sought to locate current tourism studies information. Accordingly, the first challenge encountered occurred when referring to the language option of university web pages. The information on the official web pages of the universities was in Armenian. Even though university web pages had three language options, the information about programs was insufficient and unavailable, especially in English. There was only one Russian language alternative amongst the six universities, which was a branch of a Russian university.

At the same time, the webpages referred to academic materials, and documents many of which were available in Russian or Armenian. Subsequently, the articles or educational reports required translation from Armenian and Russian into English. A point of note was that few published articles or information were available on the Internet.

The next difficulty that narrowed my research was outdated and missing information. The tourism programs did not provide complete descriptions of programs. Before analysis, the data was checked, and the validity of the information was verified via different sources. Accordingly, to Harutunyan & Ohanyan (2019), educational institutions do not provide adequate information, which is considered a significant barrier to captivating the broad public's attention and in conducting research. It was difficult to find educational materials and significant issues arise when mixing marketing and educational materials and low standards of written content (Harutunyan & Ohanyan, 2019). Finally, valid articles, reports, and documents were chosen for the research project, although it was the most challenging part of my research—gaining all the necessary information.

Chapter 5

Analyzes and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the analyzes and discussions of my findings are represented. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, I applied documentary and archival research, and in addition, electronic media, and academic articles were included in my research project.

This chapter is a significant chapter in my thesis since it provides the opportunity to share theoretical understandings of my research topic within existing theoretical frameworks. With this purpose in mind, the chapter highlights the five main areas that emerged from my analyzes. My research aimed to find answers to my research questions or either identified areas requiring further research. Accordingly, my research was conducted in order to understand how tourism education in Armenia developed over the last two decades, and also it reviewed current tourism programs. Furthermore, to achieve in-depth insights into Armenian tourism education and its issues, it was necessary to study Armenia's tourism strengths and weaknesses. My research also investigated Armenian tourism education challenges and barriers encountered during internationalization processes.

The five main areas of my research are divided into separate parts. In my analyzes I identified eight themes that assisted in representing and reflecting my empirical data in a systemized way and also in interpreting the findings according to related literature. In this chapter, three significant areas organize my discussion. First, the representation of tourism higher education data in Armenia. Second, the languages of communication in Armenian tourism education. Third, issues and potentials related to the Bologna process in Armenian tourism education.

5.2 Findings

During the analysis of my empirical data, as already noted, eight main themes emerged and are discussed in this chapter. The eight themes were divided into two main groups. The first

group containing five themes illustrates the skills of students enrolled in tourism programs, and the second group contains three themes regarding administration. The five themes in group one refers to the description of tourism education programs, study materials, student's communication skills in tourism programs, guiding skills, and practical and theoretical skills. The three themes in group two are: strategies and policies, staff professional development, and the significance of marketing policies in tourism programs.

5.2.1 Issues within Armenian Tourism Studies

The data analysis revealed that there was limited public information about tourism and service programs (Harutyunyan & Ohanyan, 2019). The central part of my empirical data collection looked at existing tourism and service programs in higher education institutions. Nowadays, they are eight tourism-oriented educational institutions in Armenia. Several of the tourism-oriented institutions have started their activities since 2007 (International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE) Foundation, 2018).

First, the analysis of official university website pages indicated a lack of information on tourism programs. The description of programs were primarily generic in nature, and very little attention was drawn to exchange programs, or cooperation between international universities. Elsewhere, Harutyunyan & Ohanyan (2019) have highlighted that the universities have outstanding programs, which are not adequately presented to the broader public, including international audiences. Notably, in the case of tourism and service programs, there was limited description in English. For instance, the official website of Yerevan State Armenian-Greek College of Tourism, Service and Food Industry, which offers tertiary vocational education, did not provide information in English even though there was an English language option. The primary exciting information was in Armenian. The same applies to the Russian university, which has a tourism and management program, all the information was in Russian. Within tourism study curricula, it is essential to overview foreign language strategies to attract more international students and professors by making the information available and reliable. In addition, the language of instruction in many tourism studies is Armenian. Subsequently, there is a lack of language communication skills for an international environment where English is the dominant language (International Center for

Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE) Foundation, 2018). Moreover, the lack of English language skills, limits opportunities for students and graduates to participate in various exchange programs and/or work abroad in the field of Tourism.

Many universities have provided a list of the courses they offer. In addition, some of them had information available on their websites. Noteworthy was that most universities also lacked strategy/policies to attract foreign professors (except for the American University of Armenia), and a transparent system of rewards for teaching in English was also absent (Harutyunyan & Ohanyan, 2019, p.75).

5.2.2 Study materials

There is a lack of study materials regarding tourism that uses extant foreign tourism literature. According to experts, teaching materials are not updated by universities and teachers (Keryan et al., 2020). The variety of textbooks and materials is limited and outdated (International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE). Improving *"the general education curricula and standards and textbooks and instructional materials remains a significant challenge for increasing the education quality according to international standards"* (Armenia: Education for all, 2015). Moreover, the access to different libraries and modern information and communication technologies in educational processes are insufficient; there is a lack of e-learning materials (Armenia: Education for all, 2015). Therefore, teaching/learning materials particularly in tourism need more development, which will promote a broader overview of tourism and prepare educational professionals. Tovmasyan (2018) also highlighted that the study materials are old, and lectures are not developed regarding tourism studies. The students need professional and fresh knowledge which corresponds to the current needs of the industry.

5.2.3 Communication skills

Another visible gap that was found during my analysis was the lack of communication skills among tourism employees and students. It is necessary to mention that higher education in tourism or service is not a requisite in order to work in low to medium level positions (*International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE) Foundation, 2018).*

"Thus, the knowledge and skills in communication, particularly in foreign languages, is critical regarding the tourism industry" (International *Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE) Foundation,2018).* The main dissatisfaction of international visitors relates to communication skills especially outside the cities that are the main tourist attractions. In particular, "Graduates lack soft skills, and most importantly they lack communication skills with customers such as in-person and telephone communication protocol, proper body language specific to the service sector, conflict mitigation skills with customers"(*International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE) Foundation, p. 10, 2018).* Body language and problem-solving skills are important in tourism and a lack of these skills can contribute to visitor misunderstanding (Lin, n.d.).

One of the problems European tourists will face in Armenia is the lack of English language skills of most hospitality industry employees. The big hotels and restaurants in more touristic areas of the country will probably be able to serve the tourist in English, but elsewhere there is most of the time a maximum of one employee that speaks English fluently enough to help out a tourist. As the second language in Armenia is Russian, Russian speaking tourists will not face any language barriers (Buyle, 2015).

But it is more important to know other languages such as English, French and German to develop more cooperation with international tourism schools and programs. Since language plays a significant role not only in the development of communication skills; it also promotes the development of cooperation between universities, and faculties more broadly. Moreover, cooperation with other European countries can in itself promote integration of internationalization of tourism higher education since the Russian language has always been the main source of information for all types of professions. Besides, *"*most of the books are in Russian" (Language Education Policy Profile, 2009).

Moreover, new modern books, especially in English, can be useful regarding the development of writing, communication skills, understanding different cultures, and widening opportunities to discover tourism studies as well as the creation of more web pages that represent tourism in Armenia. It should be said that modern textbooks provide a range of stimulating and appropriate learning activities (Language Education Policy Profile, p.28, 2009). The rapid growth of globalization has led to pressure and change in education approaches and the application of new methods and learning resources (Bibbings, n. d.). Such new approaches should promote tourism education extensively, and it should provide a broad and demanding education at all levels (Airey & Tribe, n. d.). Eight in twenty-five higher education institutions and five tourism and service programs are in English or in other languages, and many of those institutions attempt to integrate internationalization into the education system (Harutyunyan & Ohanyan, 2019). Though most universities still lack strategies/policies to attract foreign professors and students as well as a clear system of rewards for teaching in English was absent (Harutyunyan & Ohanyan, 2019). Thereby, the role of foreign languages, particularly English, plays a vital role in integrating internationalization into the system and improving competency and capability to develop tourism education.

5.2.4 Guiding skills

Tour operators and tour guides are essential stakeholders in producing and consuming organized trips (Cetin & Yarcan, 2017, p.345). In addition, guides as a representative reproduce the destination environment by conveying knowledge of culture, history, and meaning. Thus, skilful, experienced, and professional guides are needed regarding tourism in Armenia. Yet, despite this, there is an insufficiency in prepared and skill-oriented guiding programs. This is one of the main issues within tourism education in Armenia.

According to the Tourism Development of Armenia (2019), a guide's lack of education and training leads to misinformation about Armenian history, culture, and destination attractiveness. Therefore, this kind of deficit in professionalism negatively affects the development of Armenia as a tourist destination. Tovmasyan (2018) underlines "the need for

guides to know English and deal with foreigners in a multicultural society". In addition, the International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education Foundation (2018) highlighted that unskilled tourism industry staff, whether with higher or secondary education outside of Yerevan, is a challenge. Moreover, it is added:

Tour guides, though, have significant knowledge gaps in cultural awareness. Cultural awareness must be taught in a broader perspective and extend from history and religion to gastronomy, wine, language, art, etc. Lack of training in cultural awareness, especially among tour guides, is a significant knowledge gap of tourism academic programs in Armenia (International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education Foundation, 2018, p.11-12)

The educated and well-skilled tourist guide is significant for the successful development of tourism in any country and the importance of the quality of tourist guides must be considered. This requires cooperation between tour stakeholders and educational institutions. Moreover, it demands preparing guides who are able to handle various challenges within trips, be fully experienced and have a tourist guide license. In the case of Armenia, the tour guides either do not have a license or proper education. This kind of approach towards tourism leads to misunderstanding and miscommunication between locals and tourists (Saakyan, 2020). In some countries, tour guiding jobs are performed by people without a tourist guide license, which leads to many other issues within tourism, such as lack of trust and safety towards tourism in Armenia (Unkovic, 2017).

Many comments underscored the importance of the tourism industry, mainly tour guides, requiring tourism education and for trainers to cooperate with and to understand the industry's current gaps. On the other hand, within tourism programs obstacles exist, which hinder the building of relationships between tourism study programs and industry. Accordingly, Harutyunyan and Ohanyan advocate for proper strategies, concrete regulations, guidelines in managing local and international projects, and addressing incoming and outgoing mobility barriers between institutions (Harmony project, 2017). Moreover, the International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE) Foundation (2018, p. 14) has claimed that "*the tourism diplomas or certificates from local programs are not much appreciated since theoretical knowledge is outdated, very general and usually not applicable*". Besides this, those people who are highly qualified regarding tourism prefer to work in international

development tourism organizations instead, and tour agencies have mentioned the difficulties of finding appropriate staff with practical skills and experience (International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE) Foundation, 2018).

The tourism industry is highly international and interculturally-oriented. Therefore, graduates need to have a solid background for understanding how to deal with various cultures (Sangpikul, 2009). Since the tourism industry considers internationally oriented business, there is a need to emphasize the internationalization of tourism education and develop practical skills instead of only applying theoretical components within curricula. Regarding the development of guiding skills, it is important to generate cooperation between different tourism institutions, where students are able to develop communication, language skills, broad perspectives, and so on.

5.2.5 Practical Skills Instead of Theoretical

With the development of tourism study programs and the increasing number of travelers in Armenia, the need for skilful employees among students has become primary. Moreover, university graduates with high tourism education are assumed to be ready for the labor market after graduation. Therefore, the internationalization of tourism education is beneficial for the development of labor-based industries. However, theoretical, and practical education should not be distinguished as different aspects. On the contrary, theory leads to improvement and formation of practical skills. Therefore, the internationalization of tourism education should be applied and understood not only theoretically but practically and thereby promote the improvement of practical skills. Education by itself is composed of these two essential elements. Relatedly, internationalization of tourism higher education should stimulate the development of practical skills among graduates at the international level. Ruhanen (2005, p.35) stated there is pressure on tertiary education institutions to offer balance in theoretical, and practical skills required by the industries that will ultimately employ the students. In addition, there has always been a huge gap between practical and theoretical skills regarding tourism education in Armenia. The following quotes demonstrate this:

"In the case of tourism education, programs are very theoretical, and the textbooks are outdated. Moreover, there is no solid internship program or exchange program, or its quality corresponds to the international tourism market" (International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education Foundation, 2018).

According to hotel managers, tourism programs are largely focused on management and marketing, and little attention has been paid to applying the theory into practice (International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education Foundation, 2018, p.10).
"The educational model is based on theoretical, there is little programmatic attention to practical aspects" (Report for the Open Society Foundation Armenia, 2013).

"Graduates are not able to use/put the knowledge into practice. Since, as mentioned, the textbooks are outdated, so much of the theoretical knowledge is not relevant and valuable. Students who will work in the tourism industry need to have the opportunity to gain practical skills that can be useful and applicable in the future. Moreover, lack of practical knowledge creates a misperception among students about their future jobs, especially the first jobs" (International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE) Foundation (2018).

A lack of practical skills among students makes them uncompetitive in the labor market; and many students face difficulties in finding a job after graduation (Keryan et al., 2020). My preliminary analysis of the Armenia Tourism Development Strategy (2020) highlighted the importance of preparing human resources with practical skills, and that those resources had the ability to apply theoretical knowledge in marketing. Accordingly, human resources are critical in the Armenia tourism industry. There is also a deficiency in employees with management skills, a need for more digital marketing specialists, social media marketers, and employees with customer service skills, and organizational skills. Moreover, experts mentioned that teachers disregard the value of practical knowledge by considering it non-scientific (Keryan, et al., 2020). Thereby, teachers emphasize learning theory, and a small amount of attention is paid towards learning how to apply theory in real life situations. Even though practice is included in curricula, students occasionally exit a 'classroom reality' and

enter instead a 'labor reality'. Still, as yet, few opportunities exist to integrate novelty into study and engage in knowledge and experience/practice exchanges.

However, exchange programs with other international institutions should cultivate and give students the opportunity to perceive and learn from real-life experience. In addition, to contributing to students' learning, international staff will also significantly benefit faculty members (Black, 2004; Railmond & Halliburton, 1995; Sangpikul, 2009). Developing international exchange programs in tourism education in Armenia will be beneficial not only in exchanging education and experiences but also in developing transitional mobility of students and staff. After all, applying the internationalization of tourism education through the development of exchange programs will prepare students to work effectively in an international and multicultural context.

5.2.6 Staff Professional Development

In addition to developing communication and multicultural skills, another way to apply internationalization and improve tourism education in Armenia is via the professional development of staff and teachers. It is noted that internationalization is achieved through development and integration of new skills, attitudes, and knowledge in students, faculty, and staff professional development (Karakhanyan, n.d, p. 84). Staff development promotes faculty members' academic development by encouraging members to experience and participate in various international educational activities (Sangpikul, 2009). In addition, it contributes to applying new modern methods to teaching, developing academic and practical skills such as services and intercultural communication, contributing to exchange experiences and knowledge as well as increasing awareness about tourism and its challenges. However, the internationalization of tourism education and the improvement of tourism programs cannot occur as long as teachers do not take training, participate in international conferences, present research papers at international conferences, and apply for various overseas tourism programs.

According to Harutyunyan & Ohanyan (2019), *"there is a need to gain a competitive advantage in attracting more local and international students, involving staff in international exchange programs, conducting joint research, establishing collaborative degree and exchange programs, etc. in the Armenian education system"* (Alpenidze, 2015).

Teachers should encourage students to explore, write, and represent Armenian tourism. Teachers in various Armenian educational institutions should conduct more research regarding tourism. Additionally, the Armenian government and universities should promote academic activities.

In the context of Armenia, Aperyan (2021) advanced that internationalization of education should be conducted through the development of teacher and student mobility and through academic activities by considering the current needs and barriers regarding international tourism in Armenia.

The education system must meet the needs and requirements of the tourism industry, and the development of tourism requires a highly skilled specialist in that sphere to carry out research, process and implement policy and have international experience. It is important that classes have teachers with real international experience rather than only theoretical knowledge (Black, 2004).

"Teachers must be able to demonstrate their own experience of more than one national approach" *(Black, 2004).* Nevertheless, sharing and demonstrating their own experiences enhance students' broader perspective about future careers. Moreover, the Armenian society, which is more closed and conservative, would open its doors and this would lead to discovering more about tourism. Since there is a lack of qualified and experienced teachers within tourism, many issues appear in the industry. Nowadays, several problems are related to a lack of qualified staff, which leads to a lack of motivated students during the learning process (Aperyan, 2021). Additionally, there is a high demand for experienced teachers who would encourage and give students motivation to go more deeply into the tourism industry. For instance, tourism programs which offer international tourism studies are supposed to ensure depthful insight into international tourism and high mobility of students, along with

use of international textbooks in studies. But it is worth mentioning that the majority of universities do not have the capacities to internationalize education programs, curricula or increase international student numbers (Harutyunyan & Ohanyan, 2019). Although the fact that the government emphasizes the importance of internationalization of higher education, internationalization of education should be recognized by the government and corporations, which are supposed to carry out funding opportunities for students and teachers to participate in various tourism exchange programs (Harutyunyan & Ohanyan, 2019).

5.2.7 Modern approaches and strategies

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Armenian tourism education required resources to realise the development of education fully. The country was in significant need of transformation at different levels to ensure its survival and later competitiveness at the international level (Karakhanyan, 2018). Generally, education has shown growth during the last decade, but tourism programs require more attention to affect development, especially in international tourism. The analysis of some documents and articles has both highlighted and acknowledged modern approaches and new strategies within tourism education programs. In Armenia, an historical change within the education system occurred with the adoption of the Bologna Agreement. According to Motova (2016), the purpose of the Bologna process was to provide successful regional cooperation within participating countries. Thus, the Bologna process demands academic progress, mobility programs by students and teachers, exchange, and collaboration with educational institutions at the international level (Cardos, Portela, Sa & Alexandre, 2006).

Furthermore, the Bologna process aims to improve the quality and relevance of teaching and learning by integrating internationalization, and by promoting the employability of graduates throughout their working life in a rapidly changing labor market (Cardos et al., 2006). Remarkably, the internationalization of higher education has become an essential policy for Armenia at the national and institutional levels. Accordingly, it has been recognized that there is strategy in the benefits of internationalization of the Armenian education system. Thus, the emergence of Erasmus, and the development of approaches to harmonize comprehensive internationalization strategies in higher education, research and innovation in EU and Partner

Countries. The HARMONY project aimed to clarify the current development level of internationalization of higher education in Armenia (Harutyunyan & Ohanyan, 2019). In the case of Armenia, the Bologna reforms were either not sufficiently elaborated or well understood in Armenia (Report for the Open Society Foundation Armenia, 2013). To support the integration of internationalization, more concrete strategies are required to attract foreign professors, and the lack of concrete policies regarding cooperation between international faculties and institutions requires redress (Harutyunyan & Ohanyan, 2019). It must also be mentioned that there is a strong need to review strategies at the national level since they are insufficient and do not ensure sustainable development regarding education. To promote the development of internationalization within the education system first and foremost, there is a need to improve the current education system at the national level since the current education system can be described as a combination of various strategies and policies. Specifically:

"This is a rather dysfunctional educational model, as such not supportive for the development of an open society in Armenia – rather the opposite. At the same time, the higher education system is not devoid of potential to contribute to the open society, provided however significant changes occur. Among others, significant changes to the current educational model in higher education appear to be necessary" (Report for the Open Society Foundation Armenia, 2013).

One of the main issues is the lack of funding and maintenance to assist students in applying for exchange programs and to stimulate student mobility. Accordingly, there is a need for appropriate strategies to assist the mobility of students and teachers. Besides this, the government provides little attention to the training of teachers regarding all kinds of education. Many teachers cannot take part in international movements because of insufficient financial support from the government. The primary issue highlights the need to make the kind of policies that will assure international experience for teachers as well as exposure to new methods, and broad perspectives about tourism and new study materials instead of old study materials that do not reflect current tourism needs and issues. The lack of sources of different research journals and the unavailability of electronic books are significant issues, especially in tourism studies. Students need to have access to various electronic libraries to extend their awareness and critical understanding of tourism. Teaching, particularly for international tourism, should ensure the university library system is accessible to students,

and promotes the use of advanced learning technologies and approaches (Report for the Open Society Foundation Armenia, 2013).

And as already noted before, there is a need to promote teacher mobility and involvement of an international specialist who has success and practice in tourism education (Tovmasyan, 2018). Adopting these kind of policy supports the development of the tourism education sector, which needs enhancement and due attention by the government.

Currently, the education system is underdeveloped in Armenia. The primary key for ensuring sustainable tourism development is to accept the necessary approaches for developing education. There is an urgency to create new traditions and teaching methods to contribute critical knowledge about the present and prepare students to face present and future challenges in tourism. Therefore, it requires an overview of the current tourism standards and to then to determine which is/are the appropriate approaches to improve standards and facilitate the development of tourism. Additionally, research into why Armenia continues to have issues attracting international travelers requires attention.

5.2.8 Significance of marketing policies in tourism programs

The last but essential issue recognized during the analysis of documents is the lack of marketing skills. My documentary review and analysis highlighted a shortage of marketing skills among tourism students. As mentioned previously, there is no balance between applying theoretical and practical skills in tourism education study processes. Thus, the main issue is that the students cannot apply theoretical marketing skills into practice due to a lack of internships. Little attention is drawn to developing marketing skills and ensuring students acquire all necessary marketing skills. Marketing is considered to be an inseparable part of tourism since tourism and service industries comprise a wide variety of diverse types of business, which aim to deliver consistent, unique, satisfying products to consumers (Goldsmith & Tsiotsou, 2012). Therefore, it is essential to deliver and ensure an environment where travelers can be satisfied with essential products in tourism. Nevertheless, during the analysis of documents, the shortcomings of marketing skills became evident among Armenian tourism institutions and their students.

Furthermore, the aforementioned information about programs is either insufficient or scarce, which underscores the lack of proficient skills regarding marketing (Harutyunyan & Ohanyan, 2019). Giving valid and sufficient information about programs is essential since it attracts international students to come and study in Armenia. Moreover, it plays a vital role in attracting more students and promoting cooperation amongst various international tourism programs. The internationalization of tourism education marketing is considered a key trend since it manages and operates strategies for the benefit of tourism programs.

My analysis of documentary materials demonstrates that "*with a limited tourism marketing office, data collection and market research have been severely lacking, which has been a severe constraint for any targeted marketing efforts and investment mobilization programs*" *(Armenia: South Corridor Tourism Development Strategy,2015, p. 72).* In the case of Armenia, the investment mobilization programs are primarily focused on developing tourism since these promote the development of tourism programs. Therefore, data collection and market research are keys for developing tourism education and the tourism industry since those would clearly provide considerable information about the barriers and potentials of the tourism industry. Nevertheless, it is essential to conduct other research via social media because it is considered one of the leading platforms for travelers. Thus, it is necessary to establish a digital platform that is accessible and available for international travelers. According to the International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education Foundation (2018, p. 2), "*almost 80% of respondents claim that their staff needs to improve E-Marketing skills. A reason for this could be that many travel agencies in Armenia are promoting themselves via social media platforms*".

As already mentioned in this chapter, Armenia is a beautiful tourist destination. Moreover, it is a place with strong tourism potential, but according to the Final Report: Armenia Competitiveness Assessment (2004, p. 30), "*there is no concerted industry strategy to project Armenia as a unique, differentiated travel destination. Nor is there much effort put into niche market segments, especially at the higher end quality travel experience. Moreover, what target marketing does exist is not consistent*". This reinforces the fact that there is a lack of collaboration between tourism programs and stakeholders. The tourism industry requires collaboration between tourism programs and stakeholders since this ensures comprehension regarding obstacles that require address by the education sector since education creates quality human resources (International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education

Foundation (2018). In addition, the education institutions themselves should cultivate marketing strategies that are beneficial for tourism development.

Another conspicuous point is that there is unawareness regarding tourism needs. Education cannot be a target without awareness and collaboration. "*As many hotel managers mentioned, Armenian academic institutions in the tourism field primarily focus on the general theory of management and marketing, while the practical implication of these subjects has significant gaps" (International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education Foundation, 2018, p.10).*

Chapter 6

6.1 Conclusion

In this thesis, I addressed three research questions. Answers to the questions were explored by conducting documentary and archival research of various reports, articles, and documents regarding tourism higher education in Armenia. My three questions were:

1)   What are the gaps between tourism education and the tourism industry?

2)   Whether the Bologna process facilitates the internationalization of tourism higher education in Armenia?

3)   What are the benefits of the internationalization of tourism education in Armenia?

As a post-Soviet country, Armenia faces various challenges and barriers. Some barriers in international tourism relate to the current state of tourism education in Armenia, which requires refreshment and review. In the main, international tourism requires human resources with skills and knowledge sets capable of improving international tourism. However, this requires experiential learning in tourism education contexts that are currently lacking. Additionally, while the Armenian Government has highlighted the significance of internationalizing Armenian education; tourism as a multicultural environment demands sufficient comprehension of how to deal with interculturalism and preparation of students for the challenges of globalization. Such comprehension and associated actions are yet to be fully actualized.

Despite the Armenian Government's attempts to integrate internationalization into the education system by adopting the Bologna process; my analysis of articles and reports highlighted that as, yet tourism does not receive proper and due attention or effort. Considering that tourism in Armenia is in its early stage of development, the government needs to overview current tourism education. While the mobility of travelers to Armenia is ensured by the Armenian diaspora, who do not seek something new but seek the feeling of being at home; other segments are required. Primarily, international tourism is

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underdeveloped in Armenia, and little is known about tourism in Armenia.

Accordingly, education is the key to developing tourism in Armenia, which will also serve to provide sustainable development for international travelers to Armenia. Relatedly, considering the country's geographical issues, tourism requires more attention to ensure safe, high-quality services to travelers who will come back after their first-time visit. Therefore, relevant market policies for further development in the international market are vital for Armenia.

In my research, I discovered the necessity for internationalization of tourism education in Armenia by identifying the main issues and the gaps that occur due to a lack of strategies in programs and the lack of collaborative work between the government agency of the Tourism Committee and tourism education institutions. Relevant collaborations between the government and tourism education institutions will lead to improvements in the tourism industry as a whole.

The Government carried out an essential contribution by adopting the Bologna process after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the case of education, it was a big step to adopt the Bologna process, which can offer students a variety of opportunities if reasonable efforts and policies are applied in tourism institutions. However, according to research into educational and international tourism, it is evident that the Bologna process is in its early development stages in Armenia, and more recognition about its features and benefits is needed. And furthermore, tourism needs improvement.

Overall, my findings emphasized several other issues regarding tourism education. Such improvements refer to reviewing the tourism education curricula and ensuring students can apply theory into practice. Furthermore, tourism programs should emphasize developing English communication skills, utilize exchange programs agreements with overseas programs, and renew study materials with new books that promote access to international tourism journals. In addition, there is a lack of assistance in teaching staff's professional development, which also requires appropriate acknowledgement and redress. For Armenian universities, highlighting the significance of their internationalization of tourism education could prove to

be a valuable tool with respect to market competitiveness. In addition, the internationalization of tourism education has the ability to contribute to improving the current state of tourism and its promotion through the development of education tourism, mobility of students by exchanging various experiences and skills, and, importantly, ensuring dissemination about tourism in Armenia.

6.2 Further implications and research

As already mentioned in this chapter, little is known about tourism and tourism education in Armenia. Subsequently, with regard to further research, it would be useful to have more English research regarding the status and nature of current tourism and tourism education in Armenia.

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