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**TOURISTIC  
DESTINATIONS  
WHEN YOUR  
COMPETITIVENESS  
DEPENDS ON  
KNOWLEDGE  
YUCATAN CASE,  
MEXICO**

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**Abstract:** Tourism, being related to the goods and services demanded by tourists, is considered a transversal activity in the economy of a territory. Its importance lies in its ability to generate and spread economic growth in destinations, through the consumption of tourists and because it is an activity with a high capacity to generate jobs, foreign exchange and investment. The tourism sector requires an information and knowledge base, whose solidity depends on how truthful, timely, systematized and sufficient this base is, without which, the decisions and actions of all the participants in tourism - social, public and private - They can be counterproductive for the sustainability of the entire sector and reduce the benefits for the communities in which it occurs. The State of Yucatan has great tourism potential due to its geographical position, its natural resources and its cultural heritage, but it has not been fully exploited due to the fact that tourism promotion campaigns have not been properly oriented. The tourist products have not been enough for the tourist and the market segments that could be more successful for the State are not yet defined, on the other hand, the lack of training according to the specific needs of the destination, of updated information and the The absence of consistent methodologies for the collection and generation of reliable information are major obstacles in the promotion, development and competitiveness of tourist destinations in the State and throughout Mexico. The development of markets, products and promotional campaigns need to be supported by reliable and timely data for decision-making and actions in tourism development, the competitiveness of destinations requires training programs appropriate to their specific needs, this document condenses the activities carried out for the creation of a tourism training program for a specific type of destination, such as the town of Celestún,

1 As a comparative data, it is estimated that mining or agriculture will have a growth of 2% and 1.9% respectively. INEGI 2020.

Yucatán.

**Keywords:** Tourism, knowledge, training, competitiveness.

## INTRODUCTION

The increase in tourist activity in Mexico and in the world is nothing new, its enormous growth is something that has accelerated in recent years, to the extent that today in Mexico tourism is one of the largest sectors of the economy, with the largest contribution to the gross domestic product (16% of the national GDP) and the second provider of jobs (17% of the total number of jobs in the country) only below the commercial sector. The growth of the activity will not stop there, since it is estimated that the dynamism of the tourism sector will continue to increase at an annual growth rate of 2.9% in the next 10 years, even exceeding the estimated rate of the entire economy.<sup>1</sup>

The previous data shows a favorable panorama for tourism, sustaining and increasing it represents several challenges for those who participate in it from any of its transversal activities, as it represents one of the essential aspects for the achievement of greater growth and development of the tourist practice, and it is to increase competitiveness in destinations and the achievement of adequate management in them, which has already been pointed out repeatedly by those who study and promote this phenomenon of temporary migrations.

It is important to emphasize that at the base of all these aspects related to the increase and improvement of tourist activities is the knowledge, generated, disseminated, imparted, assimilated and practiced, about this global phenomenon; Therefore, it is considered that there is a direct relationship between the quality and quantity of information, knowledge and training available

and the greater competitiveness and adequate management of a tourist destination.

The training programs for the personnel of the companies that provide tourist services in a large part of the tourist destinations of the country, including those of the State of Yucatan, have not reached the coverage that is required, they are not adapted to the characteristics of the specific destinations. or they are limited to face-to-face courses that are restricted in their scope, due to mobility problems and rigid schedules, all of which reduces the agility of the social development of the community, puts the tourist competitiveness of said destination at risk and influences the decrease in enjoyment and satisfaction. of the visitor.

The importance of constant training for agents involved in the provision of tourism services is undeniable, in this sense, efforts have been made to provide training to the tourism sector continuously in recent years as an example we can cite the Tourism Development Secretariat (Sefotur), which entered into collaboration agreements with the different Chambers and organizations linked to tourism, for the delivery of training courses at operational, middle management and managerial levels. Although good results have been obtained in the number of participating companies and collaborators, mainly in the city of Merida, comprehensive training in communities with tourism potential has not been possible. The training model is not oriented to the specific needs of these sectors, but rather to already developed business sectors with high standards of specialization of tools and knowledge, leaving other destinations behind.

It is because of this problem that it becomes important to carry out a diagnosis of the prevailing situation in this area, in specific destinations, in order to determine the corresponding training needs. In order for its promotion and application to be more dynamic

and aimed at interest groups, it is necessary to implement comprehensive programs suitable for specific destinations, which are innovative and take advantage of the flexibility that technology offers, put it to the test to solve possible problems, making the adjustments and improvements that are required in it; but above all, it is essential that once the program has been tested, it can be generalized, with the changes that each destination demands, through the systematization and transfer of knowledge.

Considering that competitiveness in tourist destinations depends largely on the knowledge that is generated to support the actions, linked to tourism, which affect a site. This raises the need to implement spaces for both training and systematization of information with the participation of the public, private, academic and social sectors for the generation of reliable and relevant tourism information and programs for the development of beneficial strategies for society.

Consequently, for this document, the objective is to explain the creation and implementation of systematic procedures or methodologies (to carry out the characterization of a specific type of destination, to know the training needs in the tourist companies of the site and others), to develop a comprehensive training program for direct customer service personnel (PICP) according to the needs of a specific type of destination, which in this case is the town of Celestún, Yucatán. In accordance with the stated objective, this document will mainly address the methodological aspects, also presenting the results and conclusions obtained.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The project has required several procedures, such as the development of the theoretical framework and the collection and

evaluation tools; case studies, problematic and successful; analysis of related bibliography, holding consensus workshops and interviews with key players in the sector. To carry out a comprehensive training program for tourism service provider personnel (PPST) according to the particularities of a type of destination, it was necessary to implement and systematize a series of procedures such as: the characterization and analysis of the destination and its tourism training needs, including skills analysis and job profiles; the creation of the training system, including its digital platform and procedures for its operation; carrying out the pilot test, its evaluation, the adjustment tools and their application; and to carry out workshops for the transfer of results to the user party, which in this case was the Ministry of Tourism Development of the State of Yucatan (Sefotur), seeking to facilitate its generalization and transfer to other possible destinations. These procedures are explained below:

## **DEVELOPMENT OF A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework supports the proposal, it is necessary to start from a clear understanding of the concepts that influence tourism, its relationship with the human factor and its performance in providing services to visitors. The highlighted concepts were linked one by one, with the topic of training, so that the subsequent analysis procedures for the proposal could be supported. The conceptual components addressed were diverse and the sources varied, mainly the official ones. (Sectur, 2014 and Sectur, 2016)

- Heritage, resource, attraction, product, tourist destination: what defines them, components; which factors increase or decrease its potential, the relationship with the human factor (how the performance of service providers

influences the increase or decrease of tourist attraction).

- Types of destination in Mexico: their characteristics, main challenges and possibilities, the incidence of the human factor.
- Tourism competitiveness: indicators, components, national situation.
- Provision of tourist service: its definition, types of provision, challenges and possibilities and the regulations in this regard.
- Quality in the tourist service: determining factors and quality requirements in the tourist service in contact personnel.
- Strengthening of the human factor - Tourism training, main determinants, challenges and possibilities.
- Current status of the tourist training offer in Mexico and Yucatan: its challenges, possibilities, main programs, as well as the training institutions.

## **PROCEDURES FOR EVALUATING THE SCOPE OF STUDY**

In order to delimit the scope of the study, it was necessary to implement an evaluation methodology of the type of Destination in which the proposal is intended to be implemented, in relation to the training of existing human resources in said destination.

In this procedure, the type of research to be carried out, the objectives, the hypothetical approach, its variables (characteristics of a type of destination; needs of a type of destination; need for training of contact personnel of tourism service providers / human factor and comprehensive tourism training program -novel, transferable, replicable-) and their operational and conceptual definitions, as

well as the indicators derived from the subject, which in this case were the following:

- Destination data, infrastructure, support, inventory of tourism resources.
- Registration of companies providing tourist lodging services.
- Registration of companies providing food and beverage services.
- Registry of contact personnel of companies providing tourist services.
- Opinions of tourists and users of companies providing tourist services.
- List of successful destinations, registration of their websites and electronic pages.

Within this process, the construction of measurement instruments and procedures for collecting information for each of the indicators was also carried out; Both the instrument construction tables and their formats were produced.

In order for the proposal of the comprehensive training program to adhere to the needs and characteristics of the site, a general diagnosis of the destination and the work circumstances of the contact personnel of the companies providing tourism services were carried out. This activity involved collecting information for each indicator, its analysis, graphs and synthetic tables, SWOT analysis of each indicator, as well as deriving partial and general conclusions from all of this. See image 1.

An investigation was made of documents from the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (Semarnat), the National Institute of Ecology (INE), the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), the Ministry of Social Development (Sedesol), the National Institute for Federalism and Municipal Development (Inafed) and the

official page of the Government of the State of Yucatan in order to collect the required information regarding general data of the destination, which is divided into: a) Geographic and environmental information, b) Sociodemographic and economic information, and c) Evident peculiarities on the site.

Trips were made to the study area -Celestún- to verify the current conditions of the site, its roads, its urban image, its public spaces, the cleanliness of its streets and beaches. As evidence of the particularities in the site, photographs were taken that were integrated into the results section for analysis.

An evaluation was also carried out to know the attributes that the tourism service providers (PST) of the population of Celestún Yucatán have, in what refers to “profiles and competencies”, an instrument was applied based on the Standard Technique of Labor Competence (SEP-Saber, 2016), and subsequently its analysis was carried out. The following criteria were considered:

1. Provision of reception and guest service for your accommodation.
2. Supervision of the conditions of registration and stay of the guest.
3. Attention to guests.
4. Preparation and serving of beverages.
5. On-site attention to visitors during tourist tours.

In each of the previous criteria, the positions corresponding to the activities indicated in said criterion were evaluated and weighted based on one hundred points, that is, in criterion 1 the position of Receptionist was considered; in criterion 2, the positions of Hotel Administrator, Hotel Manager (Small Establishment), Reception Manager; in criterion 3, Waiter, Room Service Waiter; in criterion 4, bartender and in criterion 5, tourist guides.

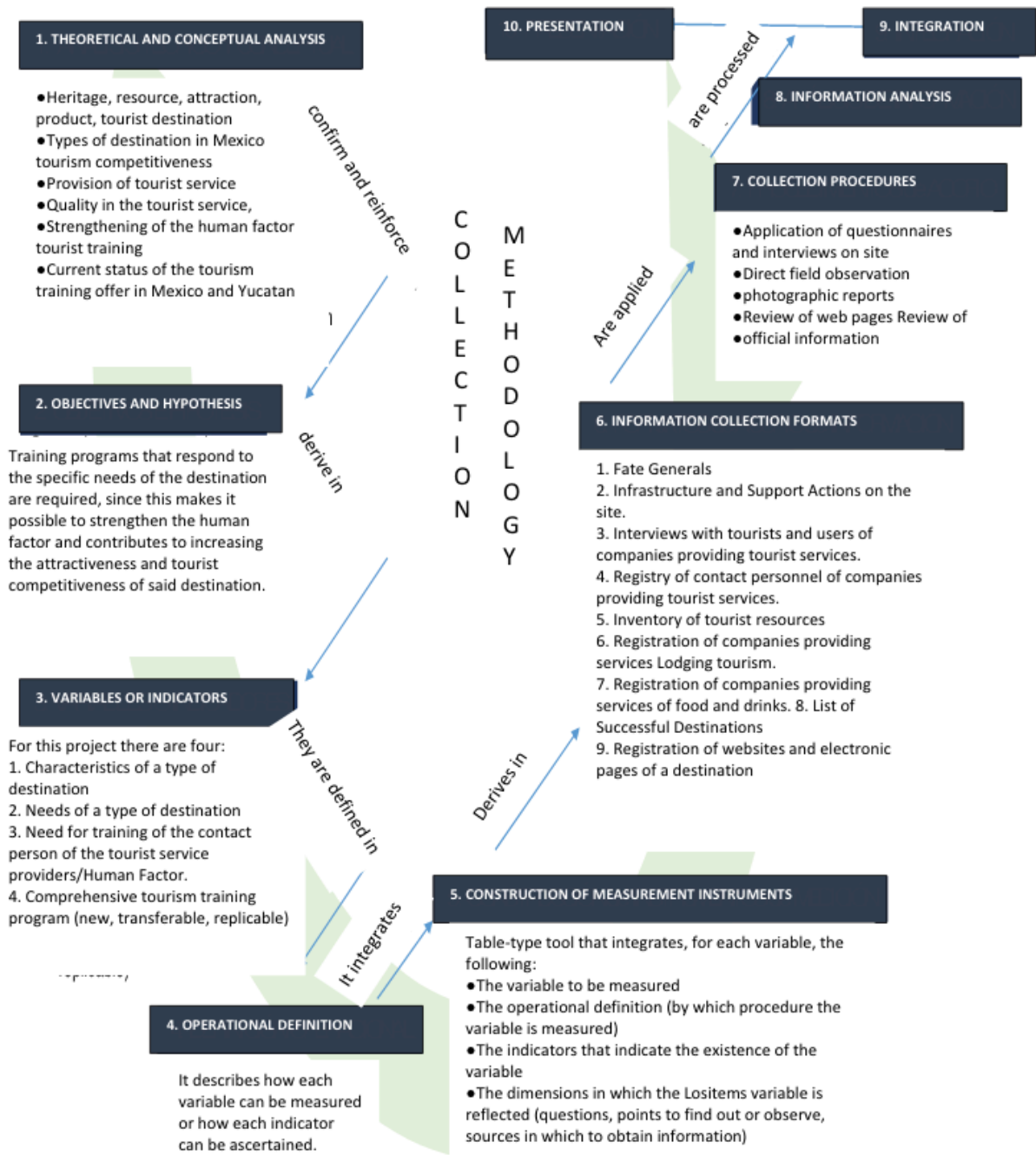


Image 1. Procedures to perform the diagnosis

Source: self made, 2018.

Given the detected need for training in the English language, an evaluation was carried out to measure the general level of service providers in the town of Celestún to design a course that is true to reality. The tool evaluates three sections (grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension) that allow accrediting 1 of 6 categories: A1 and A2 for an elementary level, B1 and B2 for an intermediate level, C1 and C2 for an advanced level, using as a parameter the Common European Reference Framework.

Field trips were carried out in which all the companies providing tourism services (EPST) in Celestún were contacted, obtaining 81 responses from the contact personnel. For the systematization of the information, a database was created, and later, graphs were generated for a better interpretation.

In summary, the measurement instruments created were applied to the characterization of the selected destination (the port of Celestún, Yucatán), and to tourism service providers of said destination; a diagnosis of the training requirements on the site was carried out, with which a system has been created that includes a virtual platform as a didactic tool, for which a comparative analysis of the current tools that were compatible with the objectives of the project was carried out, the Moodle platform was chosen for its versatility and ease of use.

The system was tested in workshops held in Celestún with the staff of direct customer service of tourism companies, for its assimilation and dissemination, the results were evaluated, adjustments to the system were proposed and a self-assessment tool was created for the user tourism companies.

## **THEORETICAL APPROACH**

In order to determine the procedures, conceive and develop a training system that integrates not only the economic aspects of the companies but also the human conditions

of their personnel, the influence that organizations have on the formal and informal learning processes of their organizations was analyzed. personal, through its cultural, structural and functional determinants, based on the approaches of Marolla (2012). To clarify the analysis, Image 2 was generated in which it is stated that in order to articulate both levels of learning -formal and informal- actions must be carried out in certain areas of activity of the companies and thus be able to achieve the development of the company and also of your staff.

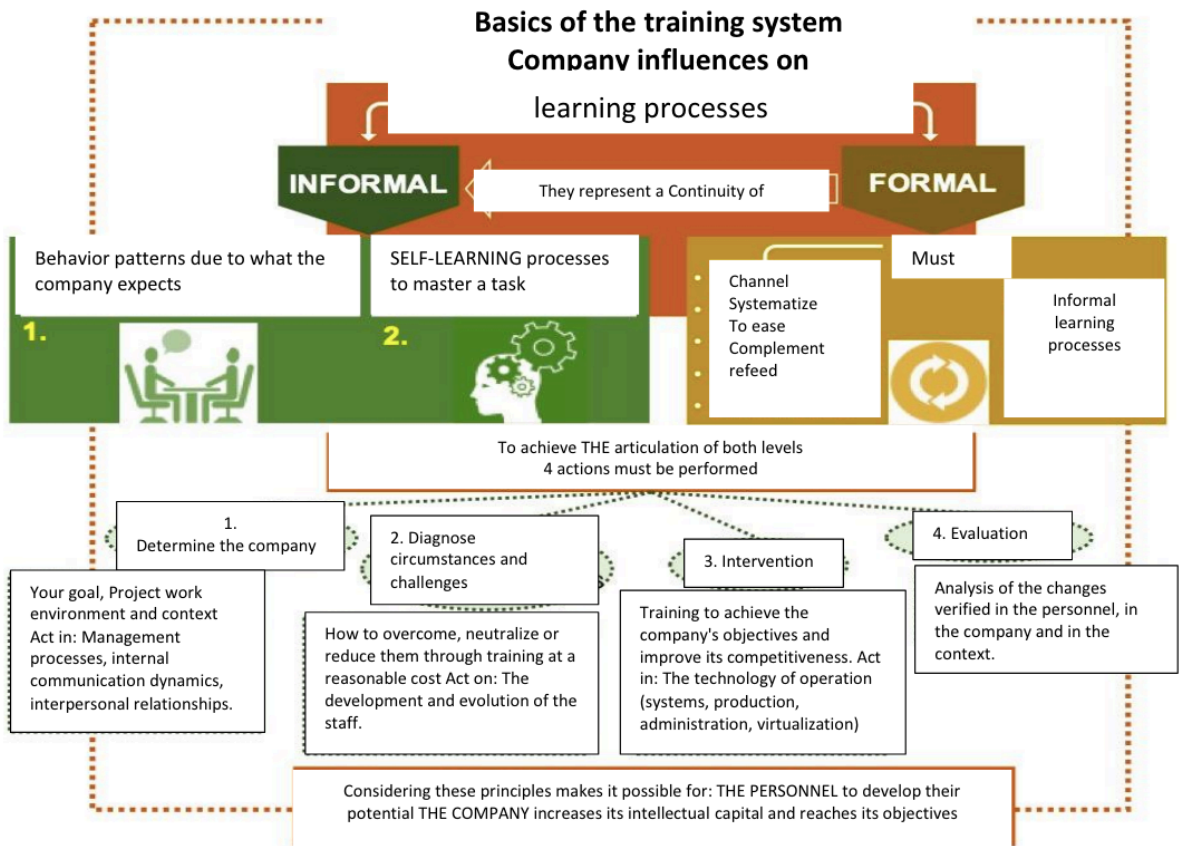
It is essential to make it clear that, although this project focused on the training of specific personnel in direct contact with tourists, it cannot be lost sight of that for a comprehensive training system to work, it is necessary to consider all the actors involved. they influence the fact, from the high levels of leadership and management, to the political, economic and administrative conditions, which offer or enable the spaces and conditions for any training program to have an effect.

In other words, this system will not be able to fully function without prior or simultaneous training, which ensures a minimum awareness of the need for training for staff, owners, managers or managers of EPSTs; that the local and state authorities facilitate the conditions for the development of the program and that the socioeconomic and cultural conditions of the target public, in this case the EPST contact personnel, as well as their availability, make it possible to take advantage of the system.

## **RESULTS**

According to the information collected and its analysis, the following results are obtained, which are summarized in Image 3, located at the end of this section.

- The area of study (Celestún, Yucatán) in a municipality with a wealth of tourist attractions, however, has not managed



Picture 2.

Source: self made, 2018.



to position itself in the international and international tourism market, despite the fact that more than thirty years ago in the Regional Plan for Tourism Development of the Mayan Caribbean Zone (Segob, 1980) was considered as “a destination with excellent natural resources where a large number of flamingos were concentrated that can generate a certain specialized flow of international tourism..., the potential of its products, make Celestún an important alternative in the tourism development of the Yucatan subsystem”.

- The population of Celestún that provides tourist services throughout the year is 240 people, 136 surveys were carried out (56% of the total)
- The tourism service providers (PST) that were approached for the collection of information, participate or work in the entities registered in Celestún, which are:
  - 18 food and beverage establishments
  - 15 hosting companies.
  - 9 cooperatives of tourist services (boatmen)
  - 5 artisan cooperatives
- It was found that there is an awareness on the part of the PST, and of the same contact personnel who work in them, of the need for training in the destination and of the benefits that this can bring to them, their family, their sector and to the same destination, contributing to its positioning in the different national and international markets based on competitiveness.
- The result obtained from the evaluation of competencies by profile in the destination indicates that in all the cases analyzed, the score obtained exceeds the average qualification of the Technical Standard of Labor

Competence (SEP-Saber, 2016), which indicates that it is fulfilled, with more than 50% of the total points to qualify, related to the competition and job position of each of them.

- Deficiencies and training needs were detected in different very localized areas. The need most pointed out by the staff surveyed was the English language, since foreign tourists arrive at the site and it is difficult for them to interact with them, so an intervention to train them on this issue becomes urgent.
- It was identified that the majority of the service providers that participated in the evaluation - 84% of the EPST contact personnel - have an elementary level of English according to MCRE (49% with level A1 and 35% with level A2).). To delve into data and observations corresponding to the different types of EPST in the locality.
- From the evaluation of the didactic tools to implement the program, it is derived that for the purposes of this project, Moodle is revealed as an indispensable pedagogical tool for those teachers who are committed to meaningful and collaborative learning as a basis for the teaching-learning processes that are carried out in the different educational institutions since it is free software and it is easy to adapt this platform to the needs and objectives of the training system that is proposed at different levels, which can be adapted to the needs that arise. register in each tourist destination, considering the facilities provided by the municipalities for the delivery and the preparation of the same participants.
- The site urgently needs a PICP in order to provide quality service to visitors.

The PICP may be applied in any average locality in Mexico that has service providers and/or tourist cooperatives and that have the means for the adequate transfer and implementation derived from the proposed program.

- As a result of the antecedents and the diagnosis carried out both in the chosen destination, in the tourist companies and with the personnel that work in them, and in adherence to the bases of the training system, a system is proposed as a strategy that contemplates a training program which for its effect, has been developed in respective stages through the following actions and characteristics.
- In general, deficiencies and training needs were detected in the areas of administration, promotion, logistics for groups, sanitation-food handling, information technology, tourist information, marketing and first aid, but the need most pointed out by the personnel surveyed was mastery of English language.
- There is a lack of awareness at the managerial level of the importance of training in their personnel, this makes it difficult to take advantage of programs aimed at junior personnel in tourism companies.
- Although initially it was indicated as a resolved matter, the chosen destination presents serious connectivity problems with the computer network, so programs in which good connectivity is essential, such as the one proposed, will have difficulty being implemented, as was the case.

Even with the problems described above, it was possible to create a training instrument applicable to a given context and social group, according to their specific needs. During

the pilot test, alternative solutions to the lack of connectivity (mixed and face-to-face teaching) were implemented, with which it was possible to train a group of workers in the sector, on a priority topic and requested by them. It was possible to implement an adjustment tool (self-assessment tool) to minimize a problem detected, such as positive managerial participation.

## APPLICATION AREAS

The main area of application is tourism training, however, the project included a series of systematized procedures that enrich the methodological area of social disciplines.

The Comprehensive Tourism Training Program for PST Personnel according to the needs and characteristics of a type of destination, which was proposed, has the following possibilities:

Possibility of Coverage: To all providers of tourist services -staff of lodging centers, restaurants, disco bars, tourist guides, tourist informants, boatmen, as well as taxi drivers, police officers and tourist servers- of destinations similar to the one chosen in the project, which must request the system, to the City Council of their locality, through their company or group (associations, cooperatives, groups and/or unions of the tourist industry)

The system includes courses that allow the PST to improve and enhance their skills, abilities, attitudes and technical knowledge and put them into practice in the establishments and areas where they work. The individual improves his performance and job possibilities, a greater satisfaction of the tourist to whom he provides the service is possible, the company providing the service is better qualified before its potential clientele and the competitiveness of the destination increases.

They are training in tourism labor skills that yields the diagnosis of training needs of

ACTION	ACTION IN THE CHOSEN DESTINATION	STAGE
	Determine the type of Context / Destination	Stage 1
	Coastal Destination / Ecotourism	
	Celestun, Yucatan	
	Determine the type of the Company	Stage 1
	Tourist service provider	
	-Lodging	
	-Food and drinks	
<b>DETERMINE</b>	-Tourist cooperatives	
	-Tourist guide	
	Determine the type of Staff	Stage 1
	Tourist contact staff	Stage 2
	-Floor managers, receptionist, porter	
	- Waiter, Head waiter, Bartender	
	-Lanchero, offering craftsman	
	-Tourist guide	
	-Other specific to the destination in question	
	Diagnose circumstances and challenges	Stage 1
	Destiny:	Stage 2
	Destination with great tourist potential	
	Sufficient infrastructure and equipment	
	Appropriate communication and image	
<b>TO DIAGNOSE</b>	Business	
	Small and medium tourism business	
	Mostly family businesses	
	Scarce training processes and programs	
	Staff:	
	poorly trained	
	Low socioeconomic status	
	Interested in your training	
	Intervention	Stage 2
	Training program with the use of ICT's	Stage 3
	Subject to pilot course: Basic English (A1)	
<b>TO INTERVENE</b>	With face-to-face monitor in basic level courses	
	Mixed (online and face-to-face support) at intermediate levels	
	Completely online at advanced levels	
	Pilot test	
	Evaluation	Stage 3
<b>EVALUATE</b>	Face-to-face, mixed and online depending on the level	Stage 4
	Self-assessment instruments for TSPs	

Image 3. Structure of the training system

Fuente: Elaboración propia, 2018.

the locality. They are offered in virtual mode through the Moodle platform with variable duration depending on the training needs. (The “Basic English Course offered is 100 Hrs.) In specific cases it can be offered in a mixed and/or face-to-face manner.

Various Contents (See on the platform)

- Self-assessment of company training needs
- Virtual training courses for personnel in contact with tourists
- Technical standards of skills and job profiles in Tourism.
- Didactic Manuals for tourist training (if applicable)

Available courses (See on the platform)

1. Basic English / communicating in English
  - possible courses
  - Attention and Satisfaction to the Tourist / Service with Quality / Quality in the service
  - Competent/skilled/qualified/apt waiter
  - Tourism culture for contact personnel
  - Knowing your environment and your culture
  - Image and Public Relations
  - Personal Improvement and Leadership
  - First aid

The exercise of training is of vital importance in any work environment for the sake of economic, social, labor improvement, human development, business competitiveness, etc., especially in activities related to the provision of tourist services.

An important factor to consider is the educational level of the population providing tourism services in a community, therefore, “the tailor-made suit” of the training programs is carried out in order to detect the real needs of the selected population. that lead to better practices in the service activities provided to tourists, providing better experiences for visitors, more overnight stays and economic benefits in the community.

With the implementation of the aforementioned mechanisms, such as verifying that the destination has adequate internet access; implement a backup hosting site; use the course backup mechanism; have a portable computer equipment; applying the self-assessment tool prior to carrying out the diagnosis of training needs, it is guaranteed that the interruption of the availability of the technological tool does not hinder the training process and adding the appropriate awareness exercises to the entrepreneurs and the participating personnel can be ensure greater collaboration and commitment to achieve better results in its implementation in any national destination that has similarities with the chosen destination.

## CONCLUSIONS

This project was born from the need to have training programs in accordance with the real requirements of the working population, which carry out activities and provide direct contact services to tourists in a selected tourist destination based on defined parameters, in such a way that the results of said programs improve the competitiveness and quality of service in said community. Likewise, it is essential to consider the tourist attractions of the destination that play an important role in the visitor experience.

In order to carry out said comprehensive training program and so that it can subsequently be generalized and transferred to other possible destinations, it became necessary to implement and systematize a series of both theoretical and practical procedures that were integrated into large sections, such as: a definition and the development of a theoretical framework of sustenance; determining the steps to assess the scope of study; the processes to carry out the collection of information and its subsequent analysis to derive from it, the diagnosis of the

destination, including the determination of the training needs of the human resources of the indicated EPS.

The previous procedures allow a better and more adequate response to the detected needs, they also facilitate their implementation, through innovative systems that make their use more efficient. These actions make it more feasible to improve the competitiveness of destinations and enable the development of their social environment.

From the analysis presented above, we can consider different relevant aspects that are the starting point for the design and implementation of the project that concerns us, such as the presentation of a training system that allows, through the implementation of technology, an adequate Approach to providers of tourist services that maintain direct contact with visitors. In this way, by identifying their training needs, it is possible to ensure that their skills, to a certain extent empirical, as well as the extensive knowledge they have of the management and origin of the main attractions and resources of the destinations, is channeled and potentiated to reach the quality of service that the satisfaction of the expectations of the tourist requires and in this way, contribute to the economic development of the sector in the community where they are located.

The self-assessment tool proposed by this system will make it possible to identify these training needs based on concerns presented by direct contact service providers and to raise awareness among employees, businessmen and the municipal government of the destination, of the importance of carrying out an adequate implementation of courses aimed at increasing the competitiveness and quality of the service offered to visitors today.

Considering the situation of the localities where this training system is intended to be applied and after analyzing different LMS

platforms, it is convenient, for the purposes of this project, to use Moodle as the technological platform that allows training to be taken to another level in the tourist destinations of our State with the possibility of being replicated in every country. It is through it and the proper guidance of professional trainers that the advantages and contributions to learning can represent a positive impact on the development of the sector in the place where they are implemented.

With the versatility that this platform offers, it is possible to implement different levels of training that adapt to the needs of each destination. Finally, it is necessary to point out that the joint collaboration of the municipalities of the destinations addressed is required, to provide the appropriate facilities for the delivery of the courses; that the availability of the productive sector is fundamental for the best use of the training proposals; and that the adaptation of the contents of the material that the certified trainers will provide, will have to be adapted to the reality and needs of each community.

In summary, the proposed training program was structured based on a real diagnosis of the chosen destination and the personnel in direct contact with the tourist. The platform implemented to cover the objective was able to host, in a friendly and practical way, the information and training and adjustment tools that were proposed.

The conclusions of the path of both theoretical-conceptual and practical procedures, show the need to increase and focus the existing proposals in terms of training, due to its great importance for the achievement and improvement of the competitiveness of destinations and because apparently, these proposals are not only insufficient, but are also out of focus on the specific realities of particular destinations.

For any destination that intends to

implement a training program, it is important to carry out a broad diagnosis of needs related to the subject, so that they can create programs appropriate to what has been detected and implement them with innovative systems that are adaptable to the site, which will make their use possible. These actions make it more feasible to improve the competitiveness of destinations and the development of their social environment.

The research has made it possible to clarify the importance of systematized studies in the tourist area and also how the knowledge of the activity, its participants and the place in which it takes place, enables the tourist competitiveness of destinations.

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