

Article

Theoretical Framework and Preliminary Evaluation of a Model for Analysing the Qualified Personnel Needing's in the Hotel Accommodation Sector

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Abstract: This study addresses the need for a comprehensive analysis of the demand for qualified personnel in Spain's hotel accommodation sector, situating the issue within a context of increasing demand for specialized and highly personalized services in the tourism industry. The objective of this research is to develop a theoretical framework and conduct a preliminary assessment of a model designed to identify and quantify the need for skilled professionals across hotels of different categories and locations. This model considers key factors such as seasonality, required technical competencies, and labour market demands in the tourism sector. The methodology employed combines quantitative and qualitative data analysis from multiple sources, including prior studies, surveys of human resources managers, a review of the academic literature on human resource assessment models in the hotel industry, and a validation survey. Preliminary findings indicate a significant shortage of professionals with advanced expertise in critical areas such as operations management, multilingual customer service, and process digitalization, highlighting the urgent need for a strategic approach to training and talent retention. The conclusions emphasize the importance of adapting workforce planning to the specific demands of Spain's hotel sector while drawing comparative insights from models in France and the United States. This study proposes strategies to enhance the sector's competitiveness and sustainability in an increasingly globalized market.

Keywords: hotel sector; staffing needs; human resources shortage; analysis model



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1. Introduction

Spain is one of the most visited tourist destinations in the world, registering 2023 more than 85.1 million international visitor arrivals and placing it in the international Top 2 ([Instituto de Turismo de España, 2024](#)), consolidating its position as a global leader in the sector. Before the pandemic, we already knew that Tourism and Hospitality contribute to improving economic opportunities for destinations ([Jafari, 1986](#); [Tisdell & Wen, 1991](#); [Archer, 1995](#); [Kuok et al., 2022](#); [Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020](#); [Morakabati et al., 2014](#); [Murakami, 2022](#); [Fotiadis et al., 2021](#); [Fernández et al., 2022](#)). Within the Spanish national economy, this represents 12% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), so this economic activity has an extraordinary strategic relevance at the economic-business level. Its transversal impact ranges from companies that act directly on tourism goods and services to associated industries, such as gastronomy and/or local commerce ([INE, 2024](#)). Among the former, the hotel sector stands out, employing more than 1.7 million people, equivalent to approxi-

mately 13% of the total labour force. Therefore, the hotel sector constitutes a fundamental pillar within the labour structure.

Human capital management in the hotel accommodation sector has become one of the main areas of interest, especially in contexts where service quality and customer satisfaction are differentiating factors. It is because the increase in demand for qualified personnel responds to the very evolution of tourism towards a model in which more personalized experiences and international service standards require employees with specific technical competencies and interpersonal skills, and the hotels are looking for a diversity of boardrooms in their human resources policies (Wood, 2024; Turiwork, 2024; Gutiérrez Broncano & Rubio Andrés, 2009; Sainaghi, 2005; Blanco et al., 2009; Yeh & Trejos, 2015; Ozdemir, 2020). It leads to a high demand for workers in essential roles within hotels, such as reception, housekeeping, and food & beverage. Regardless, the hotel sector is facing serious difficulties in meeting the need for qualified personnel, a situation that has been accentuated after the post-pandemic recovery (Caballero et al., 2022; CEDEFOP, 2024). The increase in travel demand could explain it, but the labour supply has been limited due to factors such as high turnover and difficult contractual conditions (OECD, 2024). However, the dependence of the hotel industry on many competent and qualified staff is considered an urgent need to retain and motivate current and future employees to stay in the field (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Wan et al., 2014; Kraemer et al., 2017; Raza et al., 2021).

Then, the hotel industry faces two problems: retaining qualified personnel and filling the required vacancies. The importance of hiring and retaining workers has been recognized across different disciplines (J. Park & Min, 2020; Schmidt & Pohler, 2018). The latter is especially accentuated in direct customer service and interpersonal service roles due to the high demand and lack of qualified workers (Caballero et al., 2022). In addition, the rise of digital technologies has created an additional demand for specific skills in digitization and automation in the sector, generating a growing interest in technological and multifunctional profiles, thus entering a market with very high competition, which makes it difficult both to recruit and retain this type of profiles. Likewise, one of the perceptions is that hotel jobs are temporary and fill new graduates' career gaps before finding occupations (Goh & Baum, 2021). The high personnel turnover, temporary jobs and irregular working hours have caused many workers to leave the sector due to the pandemic (The American Hotel & Lodging Association, 2024). It means that the stability of the workforce is currently low, and monetary reward motivation is not enough for staff loyalty because the employees would be proud of their organizations and develop a strong bond with them (Kraemer et al., 2017; Raza et al., 2021).

In this paper, using different analytical tools, a review will be made of the various studies and publications that highlight the growing concern about the lack of qualified personnel in the hotel sector, limiting its competitiveness and growth, both at the national and business levels. The aim is to demonstrate what some experts claim to be a lack of specific training and low remuneration as key factors in the flight of workers, leading to a generalized loss of qualified professionals. In addition, this study should suggest improvements to the sector that may be related to working conditions, more appropriate training programs, and collaboration with educational institutions that offer training aligned with market demands (Aldaz Hernández et al., 2023).

On the other hand, the hotel sector also faces the challenge of transmitting labour demands to generate supply, which is generating a climate of uncertainty for the future of the tourism sector in general. In an international context, tourism is recovering based on the preparation of destinations and hotels to receive tourists. Therefore, it is very relevant for the sector actors to adopt flexible models through data that adjust recruitment according to the projected tourist flows.

In the face of these economic issues, some authors propose that personalized incentives should be generated to prioritize the retention and training of workers to face the new global paradigm (OECD, 2024). A survey conducted during the year 2024 reports that 67% of hotels face staff shortages and, although to address this issue, 82% of companies have increased salaries and 59% have introduced more flexible schedules, 72% claim to continue having difficulties in filling vacancies, especially in positions such as housekeeping a lack of personnel that significantly impacts the service and overall operation of hotels (OECD, 2024). This lack of qualified personnel not only limits the quality of service in hotels but also negatively affects competitiveness and the ability to adapt to new business models, such as digitalization and sustainability (Caixabank, 2024). The hotel career is often identified with a low-skilled job, low social status, limited promotion opportunities (Wan et al., 2014), irregular and prolonged working hours (Brien et al., 2017), low pay (S. A. Park et al., 2017) and work-family conflict (Pan & Yeh, 2019). Thus, the main problems in the sector's human capital are identified, which is particularly accentuated in areas that require technical and specialized knowledge, such as accommodation management, customer service at high-end levels, or professional cuisine (Turiwork, 2024).

The aforementioned studies address the need for qualified personnel in the hotel and tourism sector not only in Spain, because the perceived values on work were found to vary among cultures (Hu et al., 2014; Cheung et al., 2018). It also highlights these same challenges in other international tourist destinations and related to the problems defined in terms of lack of training and specialization of personnel, presenting collectivism versus individualism, work-centric employees perceive a higher level of personal achievement between Chinese and American model, Eastern and Western models and their influence on job hospitality (Bogan & Dedeoglu, 2020; Meng, 2010; Hofstede, 2001; Han et al., 2017). In particular, the study carried out by Ceballos Hernández et al. (2010) revealed that Andalusia had crucial qualification needs for the improvement of the sector's competitiveness, highlighting that the sector is not profit had decreased due to a strategy of low prices and little investment in continuous training despite the growth in occupancy and turnover.

This study aims to address these research gaps by carrying out a bibliometric analysis that will provide us with clues to the state of the question. The paper will provide an updated theoretical framework on the hotel labour problem and a preliminary propositional model to analyze the variables necessary to attract qualified personnel in the hotel sector in Spain. Thus, the work will contribute to laying the foundations for a detailed analysis of the needs for qualified personnel in the hotel sector, providing a clear methodological framework for the collection and analysis of data that will contribute to the improvement of the competitiveness and sustainability of the sector in the long term. Through a comprehensive analysis of recent publications and conducting surveys of managers in the sector, the growing trend towards digitization and diversification of skills is identified (Liasidou et al., 2024), which poses significant challenges for human resource planning in the accommodation sector (Fernández Solís et al., 2024). The findings of this paper underline the importance of developing adaptative strategies in staff training and retention, which, in the long term, will enable the Spanish hotel industry to respond successfully to fluctuations in demand and changes in customer expectations in a globalized market (Hosstim, 2024).

In order to answer the main objective, the following research questions are proposed throughout the document:

RQ1: Is the research on human resource competencies in the hotel industry appropriate to the needs of the sector?

RQ2: Are the competencies of the Degree in Tourism studies aligned with the needs of the hotel industry?

RQ3: Do the human resources departments in the hotel industry look for qualified personnel in the labour market with specialized training to fill their vacancies?

The objectives set out in the paper begin with a review of the literature in which the state of the art of the works linked to the different problems raised so far are framed. The Methods section then discusses the different sections of the survey and the statistical data used to analyse the data obtained. Moreover, together with a description of the application of the pilot survey and the primary descriptive data, the results, the discussion and the main conclusions will be presented.

2. Bibliometric Analysis

The bibliometric analysis employs a SCOPUS database to analyze the topic's relevance and obtain bibliometric data on publications related to the topics addressed in this work between 2000 and 2024. To implement this framework, the authors should determine essential words associated with the topic and identify the works related to them. The method of selecting terms consists of observing whether the title, the abstract, or the keywords include them. In this way, Table 1 defines the searches that have been performed on the database according to the terms searched:

Table 1. Search keys and number of contributions by SCOPUS search outcome.

		N
1	(Hospitality OR Hotel*) AND (Labour OR Labor)	1965
2	(Hospitality OR Hotel*) AND (Labour OR Labor) AND (Survey OR Questionnaire)	335
3	(Hospitality OR Hotel*) AND (Labour OR Labor) AND (Spain OR España)	63
4	(Hospitality OR Hotel*) AND (Labour OR Labor) AND (Survey OR Questionnaire) AND (Spain OR España)	11

Source: Own elaboration from SCOPUS database.

The paper runs the Bibliometrix package on the R-project platform to implement the analysis of these searches found in the SCOPUS database (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). It also involves collaborative and regionalization aspects of the works included in each search. The graphs in Figure 1, summarize the information from the first search. They show that this is a topic with growing production, with more than 200 contributions on the subject in 2024. At the same time, the contributions have received an average of 5 citations in the last year; however, it can be seen how it has been growing in different phases over the last decades. Authors from the United States are the most productive, followed by those from the United Kingdom and China. Spain is fifth, although it stands out as one of the countries with the least collaboration with authors from third countries. As for the main authors, the prolific work of T. Baum has been constant and has had a significant impact during the last two decades. RNS Robinson and P. Lugosi also gave the continuity of this subject, while new authors such as A. García-Pozo and D. Farrugia have also appeared incipiently.

Figure 2 shows the position of the keywords according to development & relevance degree. The labour market is placed in the driving themes, while economic analysis and personnel are placed as niche topics. The study's lesser importance on salaries or sales within the study segment stands out. Figure 2 shows how P. Lugosi is one of the authors, together with Robinson and Baum, who are the most prolific in the development of research articles on the topics treated, preferably from the USA in the last 18 years and with substantial impacts in citations per year, both Robinson himself, as well as Madera and Lee before the pandemic, after which the impact of this research has been lower and citations

per year have decreased. In the Spanish research production, it is worth mentioning García Pozo, who took over from Ortega 10 years ago to conduct studies related to hotel sector employability.

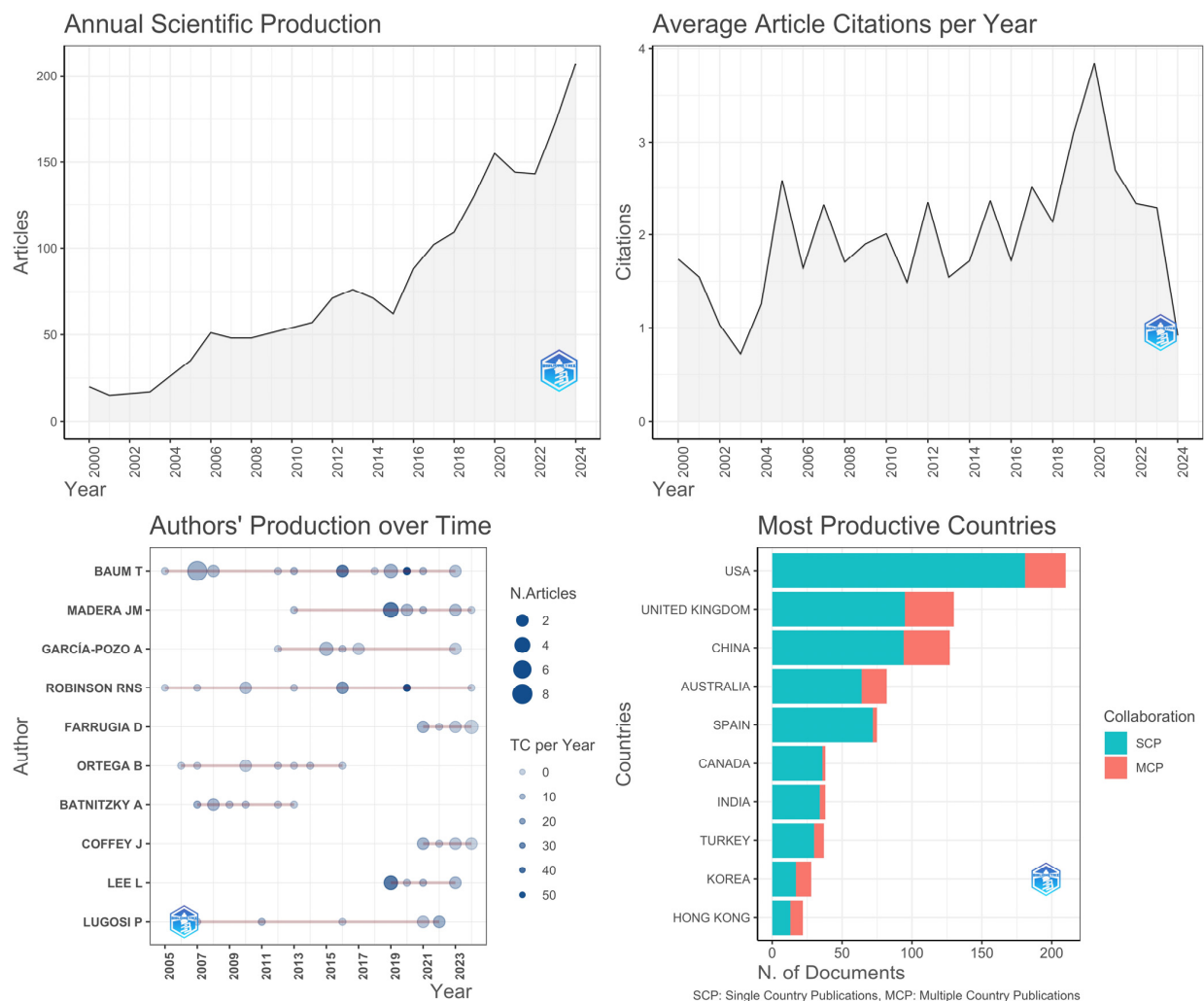


Figure 1. Main data summary from the first Scopus search. Source: Own elaboration.

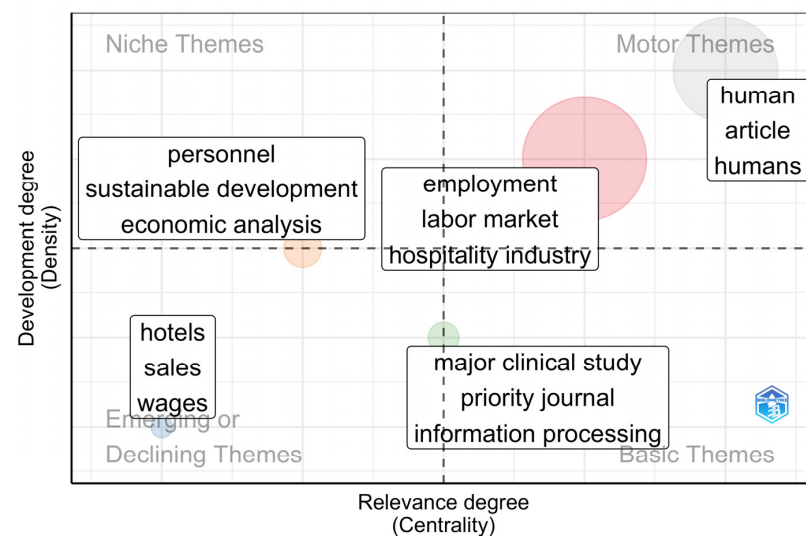


Figure 2. Thematic map based on first search topics. Source: Own elaboration.

It is true that, as shown in Figure 3, the Emerging or Declining Themes are maintained and salaries are in a place of relative importance concerning more thematic studies, such as the gender gap that may exist in management positions in hotel chains and large investment groups that support the hotel industry. The niche Themes that have proliferated have much to do with the trend of grants from both, national and international institutions to carry out research projects, hence Sustainable Development as an element of importance along with Economic Analysis.

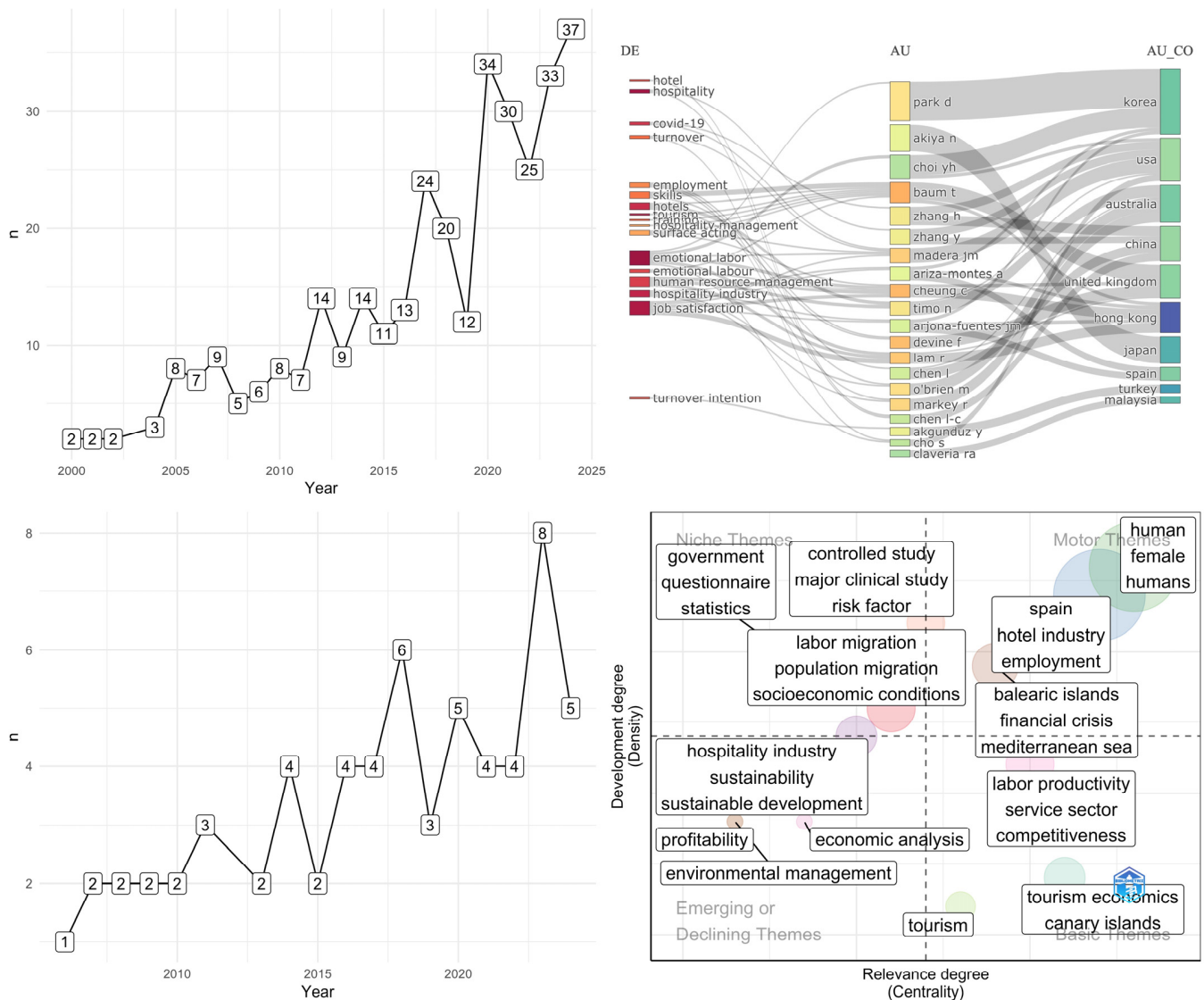


Figure 3. Descriptives of search 2 (first row) and 3 (second row). Source: Own elaboration.

As for the other searches, questionnaires are an incipient tool in labour market research in the Tourism sector, as can be seen in the first graph in Figure 3. On the other hand, the upper right graph also shows that topics are very varied, and that South Korea and the United States are the main countries that collaborate in this type of research.

Focusing on the third search engine, the topic has also been gaining relative importance over the years in Spain, although not as abruptly as in the two previous searches. As for the location of the topics, the hotel sector and employability are the main drivers of this subject (Kotsakov et al., 2024), but it should be noted that questionnaires and their statistical treatment are in the niche market of this field of study.

As can be seen in the table below right, the concern of a tourist destination is more significant, and this is reflected in the appearance of Basic Themes in studies on the hotel sector in the Canary Islands, together with studies on general Tourism. However, the proliferation of studies on employability by gender in the sector or as a Thematic Engine also in the Balearic Islands is much lower.

It goes without saying that both archipelagos in the Spanish tourism industry are fundamental for attracting tourist flows of special interest in the outbound markets. Together with the Costa del Sol and Costa Blanca, they are the destinations that receive a higher percentage of international tourists, especially from the United Kingdom, Germany, and Italy ([Instituto de Turismo de España, 2024](#); [INE, 2024](#)).

It is striking that there are no studies that represent the powerful urban hotel industry, such as Barcelona and/or Valencia, dedicated mostly to the creation of a Business Travel and MICE offer that has turned Spain into one of the most active destinations in this type of offer, placing Spain in the Top-3 in the Organizations of Events and Congresses ([ICCA, 2024](#)).

Finally, the fourth search is minimal and does not allow for as broad an analysis as the previous searches. However, Figure 4 shows that questionnaires are being used to study tourism and its work environment, both from the point of view of wages and human capital formation and gender equality issues. At a general level, the hotel industry is a topic frequently analysed in studies, as is, to a lesser extent, the labour market, employability, and human capital formation.



Figure 4. World cloud for search 4 and 3, respectively. Source: Own elaboration.

The results of the search show us how Hospitality and Gender have been very prolific in the development of studies that can be consulted through SCOPUS, as well as conclusions related to the management of Human Capital and the direct relationship or not that they have in the Wages within the tourism industry. These topics correspond to the day-to-day circumstances that affect the paralysis process that the tourism sector is experiencing when it comes to recruiting qualified personnel to fill vacancies. It is therefore important to highlight the need to accompany these needs with research results that adapt the level of follow-up in research to facilitate and transmit possible solutions to the productive sector. The gender wage gap in the hotel sector indeed continues to be a recurring theme, especially in terms of government aid for projects that help to make this internal problem visible, both from the economic point of view and from the gender point of view, in which the visibility of the differences in salary scales is also a problem for filling vacancies in hotels.

The right chart in Figure 4 shows how the topics are much more abundant and, starting from a generic and much more abundant base such as Hospitality and Tourism, have a close relationship with the Hotel Industry and Labour Productivity, both closely related thematic lines, together with Profitability. On the other hand, the bias of the research during the post-pandemic period led to studies on the impact of COVID-19 ([Baum et al., 2020](#)) and the future of the tourism sector in general and the hotel industry in particular, due to the different

conditions arising from the different states of confinement and strategies for the readmission of the international tourists, loses weight. Once again, Gender and Discrimination appear as recurring themes from studies promoted by public institutions that seek to make visible those problems that have existed and, in some cases, persist (Hsu, 2020).

3. Theoretical Framework

As a key component of the tourism industry, the hotel sector faces unique challenges in human capital management, especially regarding the qualification and number of staff required to meet the demands of such a dynamic environment. As the sector evolves, driven by global trends such as digitalization, sustainability and new consumer expectations, the demand for qualified staff becomes increasingly critical. The theoretical framework of this study focuses on analyzing how the characteristics of hotel entities influence staffing needs, and on developing a methodological model capable of assessing the supply and demand of talent in this context. The information gathered shows two dimensions that need to be considered, as Table 2 depicts.

Table 2. Requirements for the recruitment of new employees in the hotel sector.

Qualitative	Quantitative
Greater labour flexibility	High turnover
Better working conditions	Extended vacancies
Less extensive shifts	Need accentuated in important tourist destinations
Appropriate work-life balance	Increasing investment in digital and customer service skills training programs to improve staff readiness and retention in this sector
	Investing in digitization to optimize recruitment or in continuing education programs
	Adapting labour policies to these new demands

Source: Own elaboration.

Regarding training, the lack of specialization has been reiterated as one of the most notable shortcomings, and knowledge is not adapted to the demands of such a dynamic and competitive market as the hotel sector. This is reflected in the discrepancies found in the literature review, which compares the areas of competence of specialized training in tourism in the main countries receiving tourism: France, Spain, and the United States.

3.1. Competence Development

The report by the IMANcorp Foundation and the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Fernández Solís et al., 2024) points out that digitalization has greatly impacted the transformation of occupations in the hotel sector, highlighting the need for new digital skills while highlighting the importance of adapting to emerging technologies. It is changing the internal management of hotels and the customer experience, which implies a requirement for staff training in digital and advanced management tools (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). At the same time, the shortage of skilled personnel can be alleviated by a review of wage and labour policies to address the brain drain (Fernández Solís et al., 2024). It is also stressed that the global context of digital transformation is causing the tourism sector to demand specific training in these fields to ensure its competitiveness. In detail, training in digital competencies related to accommodation management and customer service should be provided. For its part, the shortage of qualified personnel in the face of high turnover rates and with such a changing technological environment has meant that companies in the hotel sector are adopting their digital tools. There has been an increased demand for specialized technical training in areas linked to automation, big data, and artificial intelligence (Singh

& Singh, 2024). It means creating new opportunities to better manage talent in areas such as reservation management, dynamic pricing and contactless operations (Caballero et al., 2022; Hosstim, 2024), among others. Digitization in the Hospitality sector has led to a growth in technological skills to handle advanced employee management platforms, and there is a clear trend towards improving competencies through continuous training and integration of these technologies (Wood, 2024).

The need for a joint strategy between companies and training entities to address the deficits in professional qualification must be highlighted in order to guarantee the economic sustainability and competitiveness of the sector in the long term through the constant transfer that university-industry collaboration must entail (Jiménez, 2009). Significant gaps persist, however, in terms of adequate preparation for the highest levels of responsibility, despite government-subsidized training programs and the possibility of improving skills through free courses.

The labour market situation in the tourism sector means that companies need to attract and retain talent (Giousmpasoglou & Marinakou, 2024) and ensure that staff is sufficiently trained to meet the challenges of the digital age and improve competitiveness. There is a growing shortage of skilled workers, especially in key areas such as catering and hotel management. According to data from Hosstim (2024), at the end of 2023, employment in the hotel sector reached record figures, with more than 1.9 million workers in August, surpassing per-pandemic levels. However, this employment growth has not been accompanied by an equal evolution in staff training, as more than half of the employees in the sector do not have specific training appropriate to their functions (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

As a result, the demand for well-trained professionals in the tourism field continues to increase due to the sustained growth of the sector. However, more than 50% of the hospitality workforce does not have a degree related to their work, highlighting the urgent need to professionalize the sector, especially in hotel management, specialized cuisine, and customer service (Caixabank, 2024). In addition, only 20% of workers in the hospitality sector have technical training in vocational education, and barely 10% have university studies. This lack of qualifications is linked to low wages and difficult working conditions, contributing to the flight of skilled workers (Caixabank, 2024).

The tourism sector demands a variety of job profiles with specific training needs for each of them. As can be seen in Figure 5, the structure is based on basic personnel requiring training at the undergraduate level. Intermediate positions fundamentally require university degree training. At the next level, the training needs of operations management combine the above with higher university postgraduate degrees. In contrast, at the top of responsibilities, management teams will directly demand this specialized training.



Figure 5. Levels of responsibility in tourism organizations. Source: ANECA (2004).

During the development of this work, a review has been made of different professional opportunities to which the studies of Tourism lead in such a way that, from a competency point of view, it could be known first-hand what academic preparation the graduates reach in the different levels of training in tourism. Similarly, this same problem, which is becoming visible in other countries with tourist attractions of special interest, also has different levels of studies in Tourism, from non-regulated training, vocational training and higher studies, Bachelor or Postgraduate. Thus, there has also been a review of the competencies of the degrees leading to higher certification in Tourism in Spain through the modifications introduced in the curriculum by ANECA in 2020 or the competencies introduced by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation of the French Republic or Secretary of State for Education of United States of America.

According to the previous study for the implementation of the Degree in Tourism, following the format of the European Higher Education Area (EEES), the training needs in the labour field were marked by the discrepancy between the durability of a job, the ability to adapt and the transition to other higher positions. Thus, ANECA (2020), in its adaptation of Tourism studies, stated that the different levels of studies made it possible to aspire to different positions in accommodation companies, as Table 3 depicts.

Table 3. Competence definition of job positions in Hotel Management for Tourism studies in Spain.

Fields	Companies	Career Opportunities	CFGM	CFGS	Tourism Degree	Master Tourism
Accommodations	Hotel/Camping/Spa and in general any accommodation company (including accommodation matches for Cruises)	Director			X	
		Deputy director			X	
		Lodging Area Manager			X	
		Head of Reception			X	
		2nd Head of Reception			X	
		Receptionist		X	T	
		First Concierge		T		
		Janitor		T		
		Reception and/or Concierge Assistant		T		
		Public Relations		X	T	
		Book Manager			X	
		Head of Administration			X	
		Sales Manager			X	
		Commercial		X	T	
		Administrative		X	T	
		Administrative Assistant		T		
		Governor		C	X	
		Section manager (Sub governor)		X	T	
		Laundry and Linen Manager		X	T	
		Camping Manager		X	T	
		Tourist or Leisure Time Animator		X	T	
	Hotel Chains and Associations	Hotel Chain manager				C s/t
		Chief Financial Officer			C s/t	X
		Human Resources Manager			C s/t	X
		Sales Manager			C s/t	X
		Marketing Manager			C s/t	X
		Quality Manager			C s/t	X
		Operations Manager			C s/t	X
		Reservations manager (booking)			C s/t	X

Source: ANECA (2020). Notes: "X" identifies a position to be occupied as the final objective of the training; "T" identifies a position to be occupied in transit (first job); "C" identifies a position to be occupied with a complement (either training or professional qualifications). Abbreviations: "s/t" according to size; CFGM Intermediate Level Training CycleM "CFGS" Higher Level Training Cycle.

3.2. Adaptation to Labour Market

According to the Caixabank Dualiza report (2023), only 20% of workers in the hotel sector have technical training, which reinforces the urgency of adapting professional training programs to the real demands of the labour market (Fotiadis et al., 2021), making it clear that operational entities in areas such as reception, housekeeping and catering, to more complex skills in management, marketing and customer service that have to be addressed by training in their functions, which generates a disconnection between market needs and the available labour supply (Caixabank, 2024), causing constant mismatches that result in high staff turnover, especially in low-skilled operational areas, such as catering and accommodation care (ICCA, 2024).

A key aspect of human resource management in the hospitality industry (Baum, 2019) is the alignment between candidate profiles and the specific needs of hotels, where the ability to fill vacancies with qualified personnel depends mainly on the existence of labour policies that encourage continuous training, job stability, and collaboration between the different actors in the sector, including governments, companies, and educational institutions (Caixabank, 2024). In this sense, a training system aligned with the industry's needs and better management of professional training is essential to reduce waiting times, fill vacancies, and improve the quality of service (Caballero et al., 2022; Liasidou et al., 2024).

In this context, it is essential to develop a specific model to gather information to analyze the needs of qualified hotel personnel. For this purpose, different key variables must be considered, such as the duration of selection processes, the nature of vacancies, the level of qualification required, and the willingness of candidates to adapt to the sector's demands. A model based on these elements makes it possible to obtain accurate data that facilitates the implementation of effective labour policies that reduce the gap between the supply and demand of talent in the sector (Velázquez-Castro & Cruz-Coria, 2022). Likewise, consolidating all this information is a tool for developing training plans to meet the sector's demand and anticipate changes.

Existing literature highlights the importance of having a robust model to analyze and forecast staffing needs based on the particular requirements of each hotel establishment, considering variables such as seasonality, hotel size and customer profile (CBRE, 2024; Les Hoteliers, 2024); however, to date, there are divergent approaches as to how to define core competencies and the optimal number of staff (Rivas García et al., 2019), with some studies prioritizing labour flexibility (Pérez Zúñiga et al., 2018; Guillermo y Gloria, 2024) and others emphasizing specialization (Hosstim, 2024; Mews, 2024).

Considering that the expectations of workers have changed, not only due to the pandemic but also based on the current life model in which they are looking for not only qualitative but also quantitative elements driven by the increase in remote work opportunities (remote working) in other sectors, this represents a challenge for the human resources departments of hotels. Regarding the quantitative dimensions, there is a mismatch between what the sector demands and the demands of workers, and we must include the different measures taken by public administrations that, in some cases, can slow down and even hinder the agility in attracting talent, not only in Spain (Caballero et al., 2022; OECD, 2024), but globally with a very significant shortage of qualified personnel prepared for the use of digital tools and that improve the overall efficiency of the company (Hosstim, 2024).

The hotel sector, as a key component of the tourism industry, faces unique challenges in managing its human resources, especially in terms of the qualification and number of staff required to meet the demands such as digitization, sustainability and new consumer expectations, the need for qualified personnel becomes increasingly critical. The theoretical framework of this study focuses on analyzing how the particular characteristics of hotel en-

tities influence staffing needs and developing a methodological model capable of assessing talent supply and demand in this context.

Several studies have emphasized the specific training needs of the hotel industry, the demand for new additions to the workforce, and the constant adaptation that must be made. It is due to the dynamic and changing conditions of the tourism market (Hsu, 2020; Pérez Zúñiga et al., 2018; Mews, 2024) as well as the need for competence in technological tools, new recruitment and training methodologies, and the potential for less personal interaction with customers through mechanization and robotization procedures in the hotel industry. 43% of respondents in 2014 (Sidhu & Calderon, 2014; Brownell & Chung, 2001) for research about professional competencies in the hotel sector thought that the workforce in the tourism sector was prepared, while 34% of respondents thought that the Academy does not prepare graduates for what companies need. It is they who, within the human resources departments, have to carry out specific training programs.

In 2018, The Learning House published a study about skills gaps in the labour market, in which more than 600 US hotel human resources managers participated. The study found that 52% of employers identified a gap in workers' skills, and 47% of these managers blamed higher education. It makes it necessary for the education sector and the hospitality industry to constantly and periodically meet to learn about the training needs detected by companies and those that human resources must meet when they join the tourism workforce, as Table 4 depicts.

Table 4. Studies on professional competencies in the field of higher education in Tourism.

Authors and Year	Develop	Competencies
Smith and Cooper (2000)	Different studies that have advanced knowledge about the most appropriate competencies for the hotel sector. They created different models of competencies useful for developing the human resources system of a hotel company.	- Oral and written communication skills. - Leadership. - Teamwork - Use of Technologies - Problem solving skills
Brownell and Chung (2001)		
Chung-Herrera et al. (2003)		
Maher (2004)		
Sisson and Adams (2013)		
Wang and Tsai (2014)		
Dopson and Nelson (2003)	They identify the most representative areas of work in hotels: human resources management, accounting, new technologies, marketing, public relations, sales and business management.	
Tesone and Ricci (2005)	Include new competencies	- Teamwork - Communication skills - Customer service
Mayo and Thomas-Haysbert (2005)	The figure of Revenue Manager emerges in hotels and requires other competencies of interest.	- Database management - Statistics
Quinn (2013)	He stated that most of the skills in the tourism industry are in areas of work directly related to personalized attention.	- Customer and consumer service - Teamwork - Exercise leadership - Work time management - Ability to train other colleagues - Human resources management - Working in multicultural environments

Table 4. Cont.

Authors and Year	Develop	Competencies
Wang and Tsai (2014)	Identified new competencies in human resources management	- Leadership - Management and knowledge of specific technical skills - Work attitude - Personal characteristics

Source: Own elaboration.

Sisson and Adams (2013) wondered whether competencies differed according to the department to which we were referring. They found that 76% of the competencies are similar in different operational areas of the hotel, such as front desk, accommodation management, food and beverage, or event and meeting management.

It is true that hotels' training needs have been increasing, given the growth of the tourism business, which has made the sector increasingly complex and new training strategies necessary (Castro García & Hernández Silva, 2024). To this must be added the fact that fewer and fewer people are joining the workforce, and the retirement of baby boomers will affect economic growth (Sisson & Adams, 2013; Carnevale et al., 2013) or the changes that are taking place in human resources policies in the hotel sector (Mooney, 2020).

The competencies that were established in the training programs of the leading countries in receiving international tourists since the adaptation made by the United States in 2016/2017, the modification made by the Republic of France published in 2019 on the new competencies that the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovations, as well as the comparison with regulations of the Ministry of Education that published the competencies in 2012 for the studies of Degree in Tourism, after a process of exchange of experiences between the educational public administration, private tourism companies and training institutions established that the essential competencies for the hotel sector were, as Table 5 depicts.

Table 5. Comparison of competencies in higher studies in Tourism France–USA–Spain.

List of Competencies	France	USA	Spain
Capacity for analysis and synthesis	X	X	X
Organizational and planning skills	X	X	X
Oral and written communication in native language	X	X	X
Knowledge of foreign language	X	O	X
Computer skills related to the field of study	X	X	X
Information management capacity	X	X	X
Troubleshooting	X	O	X
Decision making	X	O	X
Teamwork	X	X	X
Working in an interdisciplinary team	X	O	X
Working in an international context	O	X	X
Interpersonal relationship skills	X	X	X
Recognition of diversity and multiculturalism	O	O	X
Critical reasoning	O	O	X

Table 5. Cont.

List of Competencies	France	USA	Spain
Ethical commitment	X	X	X
Autonomous learning	X	O	X
Adaptation to new situations	X	X	X
Creativity	O	O	X
Leadership	X	O	X
Knowledge of other cultures and customs	X	O	X
Initiative and entrepreneurship	O	X	X
Motivation for quality	X	X	X
Sensitivity to environmental issues	X	O	X

Source: Own elaboration from official information France–USA–Spain. Note: X confirms that it is included among the competencies of educational standards associated with the study; O it is not included among the formative competencies.

In this comparison, we find that the competencies of standard blocks, such as customer management or tourism information management, advocate essential elements that coincide with the capacity for analysis and expression in the native language and foreign languages. However, the United States shows a discrepancy in this regard (Kotollaku & Lekli, 2024), as well as in the competencies referred to as problem-solving and decision-making. At the same time, they do have in common the commitment to competencies related to Leadership, ethical commitment, and motivation for quality.

On the other hand, there is an apparent discrepancy between France, the USA, and Spain concerning creativity. In these two countries, creativity is not taken into account, just as in the USA, knowledge of other cultures and customs is not taken into account. However, they do have in common the skills in interpersonal relations and teamwork, together with the ability to manage information and knowledge in technologies adapted to the hotel sector.

3.3. Application

The methodological approach was structured around the study of research based on a qualitative and quantitative analysis, complemented by a preliminary evaluation of the proposed model and descriptive reports from public and private institutions about labour market behaviour, as shown in Figure 6.

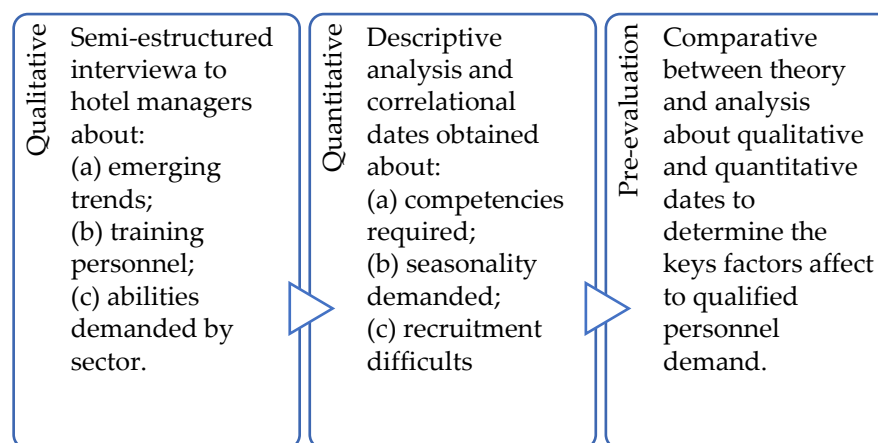


Figure 6. Main phases of the Methodological approach. Source: Own elaboration.

The data collected in the framework of this research are available to be consulted to ensure transparency and replicability of the study. Consulted information should be preferable open access to create opportunities for contact, adaptation, and correction between Academy researchers and Human Resources managers.

Analyzing the needs for qualified personnel in the hotel sector requires a multidimensional approach that considers both the labour market's characteristics and the sector's demands. Nevertheless, we need to consider different variables from the studies related to the personnel selection process in the hotel industry, as the authors have demonstrated, as we present in Figures 2 and 4. These variables, like "A long time to fill vacancies", can generate additional costs for hotels, directly affecting their operations and the quality of service offered. In addition, a more extended selection process may indicate a lack of qualified personnel in the labour market, as repeatedly indicated, for the positions in demand (Mooney, 2020). This parameter also allows for measuring the degree of alignment between the demands of hotels and the availability of qualified candidates in the market.

The hotel vacancy type is a determining factor in understanding the need for qualified personnel. The hotel sector includes vacancies at various levels, from operational (receptionist, waiters) to managerial (managers, marketing managers). According to the Caixabank Dualiza study (2024), the most common vacancies in the sector are concentrated in customer service and operational services, which often require specific skills but not necessarily higher-level academic training (Liasidou et al., 2024). In turn, higher-level vacancies, such as operations managers or department heads, require a more specialized skill set, highlighting the need to segment vacancies according to the level of qualification required. Identifying the types of vacancies is essential to establish training and recruitment policies targeted at each hierarchical level of the hotel.

The level of qualification required for each vacancy is a key variable in this analysis. Research on qualifications in the hotel sector shows that, despite growing demand for workers with technical and university training, many positions continue to be filled by personnel without adequate qualifications. Thus, we find that only 20% of employees in the hotel sector have specific technical training in hospitality, and barely 10% have a university degree (SEPE, 2023). It highlights the importance of measuring the discrepancies between the qualifications required by hotels and those available in the labour market. It can direct training and education efforts towards areas of greatest need.

Technical competence and industry-specific skills are critical to the success of a staff management model in the hospitality industry. The skills valued in the sector include not only technical competencies (i.e., knowledge of hotel management systems, digital marketing, or financial management) (León-Gómez et al., 2024) but also transversal skills such as customer service, problem-solving, and the ability to work under pressure: soft skills and training, in the use of new technologies, such as online booking systems, are increasingly in demand, so this variable is fundamental for evaluating the effectiveness of training programs and the match between employees' competencies and the sector's expectations (Hosstim, 2024).

Staff turnover is another relevant indicator to measure the need for qualified personnel in the hotel sector, so high employee turnover can reflect several factors, including working conditions, low wages, and lack of opportunities for professional growth. According to an ILO report (2021) based on Dopson and Nelson (2003), the hotel sector is one of the sectors with the highest turnover rates, which increases the pressure on selection and training processes (Fernández Solís et al., 2024): assessing staff turnover and the reasons behind it, together with retention policies implemented, allows a better understanding of the factors affecting the recruitment and retention of qualified personnel within the sector.

Digitalization and new technologies redefine staffing needs in the hotel sector. Thus, from using artificial intelligence-based hotel management tools to adopting digital customer service platforms, digital skills have become indispensable competencies for many positions in the sector. The IMANcorp Foundation highlights that the lack of technological skills contributes to a skills gap in the sector (Fernández Solís et al., 2024). In this sense, assessing the digital readiness of staff regarding hotels' technological demands becomes an essential variable for any analysis of skilled staffing needs (A. Singh & Hassan, 2024).

Working conditions and training policies are crucial in attracting and retaining qualified talent in the hospitality industry. Continuous training and professional development policies are vital to ensure that employees maintain the necessary skills to perform their duties effectively; hence, improving staff training in areas such as customer service and specialization in specific areas such as professional cooking of hotel management is considered key (Mayo & Thomas-Haysbert, 2005). In addition, working conditions, such as wages, working hours, and growth opportunities, directly influence staff satisfaction and retention (Reina-Mena & Fusté-Forné, 2023).

Our main objective is to obtain accurate data on the needs for qualified personnel in the hotel sector knowing state of the art from Bibliometric research about studies based on questionnaires/surveys from 2000 until 2024. It includes information on vacancies, the level of qualification required for the different positions, vacancy filling times, the quality of training offered, the alignment between employees' qualifications and the profiles demanded and the human resources policies in use.

4. Results & Discussion

Establishing variables related to training policies and working conditions will allow us to identify key areas for improvement in personnel management because Wood (2024), Yeh and Trejos (2015), Gutiérrez Broncano and Rubio Andrés (2009) and Sainaghi (2005) determine qualified personnel is needed in hotel sector (Turiwork, 2024). The rationale for the variables considered in this analysis responds to the need for a detailed understanding of labour market dynamics in the hotel sector, with a special focus on the discrepancies between available and required qualifications already said Ceballos Hernández et al. (2010), Wan et al. (2014), Rivas García et al. (2019), J. Park and Min (2020) or Baum et al. (2020) through the educational regulations about competences in France, Spain and United States. Evaluating these variables will provide a solid basis for developing human resources policies that improve the recruitment, retention and training of qualified personnel, contributing to the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the sector, taking into account that our research has not assessed the cultural differences in work based on the territorialization of work, as well as the business culture of the hotels to which these hiring plans belong and the internal training plans as established by Ozdemir (2020), Raza et al. (2021), Aldaz Hernández et al. (2023) and Kotsakov et al. (2024), and so, the differences between urban hotels and beach resorts with many similar management processes but not the exact needs to assume the seasonality of the vacancies.

It is important in all papers to consider some limitations, like Jiménez (2009), inherent to the study design, such as the possible lack of representativeness of the sample, like in Jiménez (2009) too. Nevertheless, we can affirm that RQ1 is very important that the Academy and researchers follow work very hard to connect hotel industry qualification personnel demands with research advances periodically (Jiménez, 2009), like did it Caballero et al. (2022), Fernández Solís et al. (2024) and other researchers like Beesley and Davidson (2013) or like did by Baum (2019) before the pandemic. We have not considered gender discrimination, although the existing gap and the studies carried out have been pointed out (Caballero et al., 2022; Fernández Solís et al., 2024; Baum, 2019; Beesley &

[Davidson, 2013](#)). Adapting the human resources competencies demanded in the hotel industry is fundamental.

The results obtained in this study provide a detailed insight into the needs for qualified personnel in the hotel accommodation sector and how are the planning and competencies in different countries that represent the Top-3 international tourist destinations in the world. We can affirm in RQ2 that despite efforts by many hotels to adapt to new market demands, several gaps persist in the training and recruitment of staff with specific competencies, such as technological and multilingual skills like said [Pérez Zúñiga et al. \(2018\)](#), like [Baum \(2019\)](#) or [Velázquez-Castro and Cruz-Coria \(2022\)](#), which prove to be essential in an increasingly internationalized and digitized hotel environment like presented in reports by [Caixabank \(2024\)](#), [ICCA \(2024\)](#) or [The American Hotel and Lodging Association \(2024\)](#), but the competencies in educational planning in Tourism Degree needs continuous changes to adapt it the same that [Aldaz Hernández et al. \(2023\)](#) affirmed. In comparison, between Top-3 countries, we can get information about different points of view around the specific competencies that are more important, or not, between them. About our comparative of previous studies, which have highlighted the importance of continuous training and specialization of staff in specific areas such as tourism experience management and customer service, the findings of this study corroborate that training in technical and technological skills is becoming a priority in the hotel sector like in [Fernández et al. \(2022\)](#).

Thus, while some studies like [V. Singh and Singh \(2024\)](#) and [Fernández et al. \(2022\)](#), or the report by [Hosstim \(2024\)](#), suggest that automation and digitization will decrease the need for staff in some areas. The results of this research show that, as [Caballero et al. \(2022\)](#) say, these trends are creating a more specific demand for staff with advanced technical skills, especially in the management of digital systems, revenue management, channel management, and the use of technological tools for the personalization of customer service and the governance mechanism will benefit internal monitoring and increasing revenue hotel ([Pérez Zúñiga et al., 2018](#); [Velázquez-Castro & Cruz-Coria, 2022](#); [Giousmpasoglou & Marinakou, 2024](#)).

The research indeed carried out in recent years by [García Pozo, Baum \(2019\)](#), and [Lugosi](#) has tried to shed light on the needs that the hotel sector has raised in the face of the changes that are being assumed. However, the emergence of new tourist typologies, new technologies that streamline procedures and improve the customer experience, and, with it, the need to find qualified personnel with new skills beyond those that have traditionally been necessary demonstrate that solve the RQ3 about specialized training is required by Human Resources in the hotel industry.

In addition, seasonality, which has been widely documented in the literature on hotel employment ([Abdollahi et al., 2023](#)) like by [CBRE \(2024\)](#) and [Les Hoteliers reports \(2024\)](#), continues to be a determining factor in the variability of skilled staffing needs, especially in tourist destinations with high seasonal demand. This finding is consistent with the work of [Pérez Zúñiga et al. \(2018\)](#) or specialized podcasts like [Guillermo y Gloria \(2024\)](#), who point to the need for flexible and adaptive hiring strategies depending on fluctuations in hotel occupancy. Despite this, the results obtained by [Mooney \(2020\)](#) or [Castro García and Hernández Silva \(2024\)](#) suggest that many hotels have not yet fully implemented these strategies, which may lead to staff shortages during periods of high demand or to an overload in personnel management during the low season.

One of the main implications of this study is the need for the training of future professionals in the hotel sector to be aligned between the approaches of the institutions that create the curricula. These needs are generated through the evolution of the tourism market and, finally, the recruitment policy approaches of hotel HR managers to adapt their staff planning approaches to the particular characteristics of each establishment. While

luxury hotels require a higher level of specialization and a more personalized approach to training, mid-range hotels seem to be prioritizing training in cross-cutting skills and the ability to adapt to various functions within the establishment. This finding is in line with what has been proposed by other authors who suggest diversification of skills as a key strategy to improve operational efficiency in the hotel industry.

Although the proposed analysis model's preliminary assessment suggests that it can be a helpful tool for forecasting skilled staffing needs, further validation is required in different geographical contexts and in different types of hotel establishments: the integration of additional variables, such as the influence of digital labour platforms or the impact of changes in labour policies, could enrich the model and make it more robust. It is a crucial aspect that must be addressed in future research.

The paper confirms that the market has not entirely switched to human resource competencies, although there are programs based on providing competencies to cover the labour demand. It solves RQ1, which should be expanded with more micro-data to conclude with intensely argued arguments. The market needs changes in the Tourism Degrees to adapt to the incipient technology transformation, so a similar resolution has the RQ2. The last research question (RQ3) is a response affirmatively because the primary objective of human resources departments is to look for qualified personnel, which in more cases are vacancies in the long term. After all, the market does not provide them.

In terms of future directions, it would be pertinent to explore further the impact of new technologies and flexible employment platforms on the training and recruitment of qualified personnel, as well as the role of artificial intelligence in the personalization of the customer experience and its relationship with staffing need in the hotel sector. In addition, broader studies that include a greater diversity of hotel profiles and tourism regions would allow for a deeper and more detailed understanding of labour market dynamics in this sector, which could lead to more accurate and contextualized recommendations for human resource management in the lodging industry.

To summarize, the results of this research underscore the importance of strategic personnel planning at the country level for the vocational training and higher education of skilled and qualified personnel that considers both the attitude and the ability to cope with the flexibility required to adapt to fluctuations in the tourism market. In addition, human resources managers must focus not only on recruiting qualified staff but also on motivating and retaining their staff through continuous training and talent retention, which are the key factors for the sustainability and competitiveness of the hotel sector in a globalized environment.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of skill needs in the hotel accommodation sector has revealed a number of key trends that are essential for effective human resource planning in the tourism industry: firstly, the results of the study show that, while the demand for qualified personnel has grown steadily, technological and multilingual skills have become priority requirements in a globalized and increasingly digitized context, a trend detected that coincides with previous studies highlighting the importance of staff specialization in technological areas, although our research has highlighted that, far from reducing the need for employment, digitization and automation are driving demand for more advanced and specific skills, posing new challenges for training and recruitment; secondly, with seasonality being a determining factor in staff planning, especially in those destinations with high seasonal demand, our findings suggest that many hotel establishments have not yet implemented staff planning strategies that allow them to respond flexibly and efficiently to fluctuations in demand, which can generate operational inefficiencies, thus underscoring the need for

hotels to adopt adaptive approaches to recruitment and training, adjusting to the specific characteristics of each establishment and destination.

The proposed analysis model's preliminary results indicate its potential as a helpful tool for anticipating skilled workforce needs. However, additional validations in broader and more diverse contexts are required to ensure its applicability in different types of establishments and regions. In addition, the integration of new variables, such as the influence of digital employment platforms or the impact of labour policies, could significantly improve the model and make it more representative of the sector's reality.

Finally, this study highlights the importance of comprehensive strategic planning that not only addresses staff recruitment but also continuous training and talent retention in the hotel sector since, in order to achieve competitiveness and sustainability in the sector, it is essential for human resources managers to work proactively in anticipating labour needs, considering market demands and changing customer expectations, and adapting personnel policies to the fast changes that characterize the global tourism environment.

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