

3 Investigation methodology

Investigation is a process that distinguishes humans from other beings and the importance of scientific investigation in our modern society can not be denied. According to Elizondo (1986) science is the “conjoint of knowledge that describes, explains, controls, generalizes and predicts phenomena of nature and society in a methodical, rational and objective way”. Mondolfo stated yet in 1942 that “investigation occurs when we become aware of problems and when we feel an impulse to find a solution”, something that we can find as fundamental concept of investigation processes.

Considering the complexity and taking into account the limitations that result when trying to confirm a hypothesis for example due to restricted access to information, the careful selection of an investigation approach is important to assure the consistency of every kind of working paper. In the following the investigation approach that will be followed during this thesis will be explained and justified.

3.1. Investigation areas

Spain has been chosen as the central area of the investigation because of the following reasons:

The tourism industry is one of the most important sectors of the Spanish economy. Within all European countries, Spain is one of the main tourism destinations and one of the best actors in tourism. (Eurostat, 2008)

Since Spain joined the European Commission (which is now the European Union) in 1986 it has shown an extraordinary economic growth and an astonishing improvement in infrastructure. In terms of standard of living Spain has accomplished a reduction of the differential with the euro area to less than 13% in 2003 compared to a differential of 20% in 1995 (ILO, 2004). Accelerated economic progress usually requires additional workforce that in many cases has been provided through international migration in the past.⁶

Traditionally, Spain has been a country of emigration but in the past years with the improvements stated above, the country has become more attractive for international migration. Spain is facing a completely different scenario to what has been reality ten years ago.

As this thesis is elaborated in Mexico, focusing the second part of the investigation on Mexico suggests itself. The hotel and tourism industry has played an important role in the economic development of this country, too. It is to expect that there is offer of hotel and tourism specialized education. Furthermore, migration to Spain should be especially attractive for Mexicans (and other Latinos) because of the shared language and similar customs consequently to the colonization history.

⁶ Guest-work programs have helped to sustain economic growth mainly after the Second World War in countries such as Germany and France which was subject to numerous investigations.

3.2. Research types and methods

When the question comes to choosing an investigation method, we must consider that there will always be trade-offs and usually the topic limits the possibilities of choices we have. For several reasons, which shall be explained further in the following, multiple types of research have been included in this paper. The use of various investigation methods can enrich the analysis as each technique might bring up new facts and expose new facets of the examined topic (Clark M., 1998).

This thesis is elaborated in Mexico. Due to the physical distance from Spain, for the first part of the investigation which centres on the identification and description of the labour market situation in the Spanish hotel and tourism sector and the role international migration has played in the resolution of labour shortage in this sector, secondary investigation has been chosen as type of investigation. The analysis was based on the following statistical indicators:

- § Unemployment rate
- § Job vacancy rate
- § Employment growth

The analysis of statistical indicators was complemented by the insertion of information obtained out of existing surveys and documentations. Surveys that centre on the existence of job vacancies and inadequately staffed positions for companies and on job search processes and unsatisfactorily accepted positions for workforce can provide more detailed information in order to quantify labour shortage and mismatch situations. In this paper, principally two studies have been used as secondary literature to highlight the situation in the Spanish hotel and tourism sector. “An Analysis of Educational Mismatch and Labour Mobility in the Hospitality Industry” published in 2007 in the *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research* centres on mismatch situations attributable to qualifications and skills. It is based on an investigation conducted in 2000 based on 181 hotels and 121 restaurants with eight employees or more in Andalusia and has been utilized by the scientists Marchante, Ortega and Pagán in 2005. The survey “Situación de la Gestión de los Recursos Humanos en las empresas de Hostelería. Productividad y calidad del trabajo a través de la organización y gestión de personas” published by the “Federación Española de Hostelería” (FEHR) gives an overview about the recruitment situation in the Spanish hotel and tourism sector.

The second part of the investigation that centres on the evaluation of Mexican labour related to the hotel and tourism sector and on the disposition of future Mexican professionals to work in Spain was conducted in form of a primary investigation which involves the collection and interpretation of original data (Clark M., 1998). For this purpose, two questionnaires have been designed and distributed. One was dispersed amongst Mexican educational institutes that offer careers related to the hospitality industry, the second questionnaire was distributed amongst Mexican students inscribed in careers related to hotels and tourism such as for example Gastronomy and Hotel and Tourism Administration. Both questionnaires included as well quantitative as qualitative questions and it was

possible to answer the survey online and by means of a word-document annexed to an email (see appendix). The objectives that were to achieve and the sampling-types used will be explained in the following for the two questionnaires.

3.2.1 Survey on educational institutes offering careers related to hospitality and tourism

The survey designed for educational institutes (see appendix) included questions related to the offer and popularity of hotel and tourism careers with the following objectives:

- § Identify the most demanded and least demanded careers; find an approximate number of graduates in those programs.
- § Find out if Institutions maintain active contacts with companies related to tourism, especially with Spanish companies. Figure out if institutions offer possibilities to students to study or work abroad, especially in Spain.
- § Determine the purpose of the offered education, focusing on the perspectives of graduates related to hierarchical level and most common jobs accepted by recently graduated students. Spot the main focus of education concerning operative or administrative formation.

As research method a convenience sample was applied. This non-probabilistic or purposive approach can be used in order to focus on a specific issue or on several particular issues. By definition, those samples go to the heart of a study's objective or are in line with the general parameters of a study's concerns (Clark M., 1998). The questionnaire was sent by the Director of the UDLA Department of Tourism to approximately 40 purposively selected Mexican members of the CONPEHT, the Confederación Panamericana de Hotelería, Gastronomía y Turismo. By this way a relatively high return rate was to expect and the relevance and significance of the received answers to the research aspect could be augmented. Therefore we can assume that even with a small number of answers the results is reliable and valid unless not representative for Mexican institutions offering careers related to the hospitality industry. It was possible in any case to detect a general tendency concerning the aspects that had to be tracked.

The invitation to participate in the survey was sent on 13th of February. Over a period of approximately two months the participating universities could either answer the questionnaire in a word document (see appendix) and send it back or fill in the survey online (http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=ajYfR1CZoQfsZPWUXk_2bLjw_3d_3d). Most of the seven questionnaires were answered online; the two questionnaires sent via email (document) were transmitted manually into the online tool. In the analysis of the results (see chapter 5.2.2) no distinction was made according to the way of transmittal.

3.2.2 Survey on students in careers related to hospitality and tourism

The questionnaire which was addressed to Mexican students of careers related to hotels and tourism (see appendix) had the following objectives:

- § Determine expectations of Mexican students concerning the labour market in Mexico including aspects as difficulty to find a job, hierarchical level, functions and responsibilities (operative vs. administrative focus), applicability of knowledge acquired during studies and evaluation of working conditions. Determine expectations concerning the Spanish labour market including the same aspects. Comparison of expectations; confirm or disconfirm the assumption that expectations differ at the moment of evaluating the perspectives of graduates in Spain and Mexico.
- § Determine and compare preferred working areas and willingness to get employed in certain positions/jobs. Find out if Mexican students are willing to be employed in Spain at jobs/positions different to jobs they would be disposed to carry out in Mexico.
- § Determine the level of disposition of Mexican students to immigrate in general and get an idea of the attractiveness of Spain as country of destination in particular. Identify the disposition to immigrate to Spain according to the different categories of migration established in the 2nd chapter of this paper. Ascertain the principal push- and pull factors for Mexican students and detect barriers and obstacles that students consider most when thinking about the possibility to work in Spain.
- § Gather information about realized experiences of students that have been working or studying abroad.

Even though it would have been possible and permitted to apply the survey personally and physically present in UDLA classes, this option wasn't considered the best one as the results would have been deflected and only representative for a very special group of students, representing a minimal proportion of the Mexican university population⁷. In order to obtain a more equally spread population as basis for the investigation, a research method similar to snowball samplings has been chosen. This investigation method which has been frequented in sociological investigation when controversial themes have been investigated is an appropriate method to minimize efforts and costs at the same time reaching a possibly high number of persons relevant to the subject. In a first step, around 40 educational institutes that offer careers related to the hotel and tourism sector were selected and the responsible for the respective careers were contacted by email. They were asked to distribute the questionnaire amongst their students relevant to the investigation topic. Wit the estimation that every institution offers only one career related to hotels and tourism and if we further assume that there are about 50 students per semester at a regular study length of 10 semesters, the sample size was 2000. Considering that not every

⁷ UDLA students are characterized by a social background different to the main part of Mexican society. The families of average UDLA students are usually wealthy and belong to the upper 5% scale of the population.

institution would be willing to distribute the questionnaire, a reduction of the sample by half of the possible sample size was considered probable, reducing the sample to 1000 students. Assuming a response rate of 10%, around 100 answers were expected.

In fact, 121 answers were contained during the period of approximately two months (first request via email 11th of February 2009, reminder 26th of February, link open until the first days of April) during which the students could answer the questionnaire online (http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=1ggs5Y1JLZiwi5hGifTDVw_3d_3d) or fill in the survey in a word document (see appendix). More than 90% of the questionnaires were answered online. In order to facilitate the analysis the answers obtained via email (document) were transmitted manually into the online tool. In the analysis of the results (see chapter 5.2.3) no distinction was made according to the way of transmittal.