

Situation Analysis and Level of Readiness of Thai Undergraduate institutions in Tourism and Hospitality to apply for international Accreditations, focusing on the UNWTO TedQual Certification

Jorge Arnanz ^{1,*}, Kanokkarn Kaewnuch ²

^{1, 2} Graduate School of Tourism Management

National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Thailand

Received: 29 July 2019

Revised: 30 October 2019

Accepted: 30 October 2019

ABSTRACT

The field of tourism and hospitality has existed in Thai higher education for over 50 years. Despite the numerous milestones and advancements enhancing the level of these programs, it has been frequently pointed out that their outcomes have been unsatisfactory when covering the necessary standards. Related to standards in higher education, the last decades have also seen an increased focus on quality assurance and accreditation as means to strengthen and guarantee the quality levels of academic institutions. In terms of tourism and hospitality education, the most important example would be the TedQual certification, offered by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). The aim of this paper is to outline the current situation and to evaluate the level of readiness of Thai undergraduate institutions to apply for international accreditations in tourism and hospitality (UNWTO TedQual, specifically). For this purpose, the researcher used a mixed research methodology, conducting a survey questionnaire among 320 lecturers and executives of Thai undergraduate institutions in tourism and hospitality and 7 in-depth interviews with executives from those universities. Regarding the findings on the situation analysis, there are several factors that have been mentioned by a majority of the participants in this research as their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and, therefore, they can be considered as representative of the Thai undergraduate education in tourism and hospitality. In terms of the findings about the level of readiness, the perceptions of the institutions on their potential to obtain international accreditations are higher than average (2.81 out of 5). However, the respondents and key informants in this research also outlined several factors to be improved to increase the possibilities of success of the institutions.

Keywords: Tourism and Hospitality, Higher Education, Accreditation, TedQual, SWOT

* Corresponding Author; Email: jorgearnanz@gmail.com

Introduction

It cannot be denied that Thailand is one of the most attractive destinations in the world. One of the main appeals of Thailand lays on the fact that Siam (as it was called until the 1940s) has never been conquered by a foreign country, while all its neighbours in South East Asia have been under the domain of European powers at one time or another (Berger, 2007). As stated by Chaisawat (2005), the main factors contributing to the increase of tourism in the past were a favourable currency exchange, the scarcity of natural disasters, a rather established political environment, the existence of tax refunds for visitors and the collaboration amid the private and public sectors. Moreover, the tourism and hospitality industry has recently become a crucial sector assisting to solve the nation's economic crises (Kariyapol, 2019).

The main events leading Thailand to become one of the regional powers in tourism and hospitality occurred several years after the “boom” of international tourism. Thailand has been one of the nations in the Asia-Pacific region experiencing a clear tourism increase since the setting of the first Thai Tourism Plan, in 1976 (Chaisawat, 2005). According to Baker and Phongpaichit (2005) the early 1980s brought a decrease in the agricultural exports in Thailand (its largest export) and the government responded by promoting tourism and labour export to the Middle East countries, as a way of earning further foreign exchange. Likewise, Sripun and Ladkin (2001) highlighted that Thailand was among the numerous developing nations using tourism as a way of stimulating economic growth, and as a source of overseas exchange income and labour. Tourism to Thailand has continued increasing exponentially in the last decades. The most recent official data, from the year 2017, shows that the number of tourist arrivals was over 35 million people, while the country's income derived from tourism ascended to over 57 billion US dollars (Thailand Department of Tourism, 2018). As a consequence of the global success of tourism, higher education programs in tourism and have bloomed in the last years, encouraged by the demand for additional and better qualified supervisory and management positions in the industry (Barrows and Bosselman, 1999). This has also been the case in Thailand and, therefore, a review on higher education in this country needs to be addressed.

Higher Education in Thailand: Tourism and Hospitality Management Programs

It can be stated that higher education in Thailand has had some similarities in its historic development to the processes in other countries both in Asia and worldwide. Higher education in Thailand has a short history, which started in the early years of the 20th century, with functions and organisation based on Western examples (Mounier and Tangchuang, eds. 2010). According to Baker and Phongpaichit (2005) before the 20th century there were some precedents such as the Suan

Kulap School (founded in 1881), focused on the education of civil servants, and the King's School (established in 1897), dedicated to the preparation of students to continue their academic career abroad. The first university in Thailand, Chulalongkorn University, was established in 1917 by King Rama VI with a curriculum centred on the humanities, law and economics. Its main purpose was to form competent civil servants and to further strengthen and expand the nation-state (Mounier and Tangchuang, 2010). More than a decade passed until the foundation of the second university in Thailand in 1933; the University of Moral and Political Sciences (Thammasat University), which aimed to educate a new type of bureaucrat for the new post-absolutist era (Baker and Phongpaichit, 2005). Following the establishment of the second university in the country other major institutions were founded with similar intentions. Mounier and Tangchuang (2010) highlighted the importance of the following universities in 1943: Mahidol University, Kasetsart University and Maejo University. During this period, higher education was considered an essential tool for preparing Thai citizens to manage the various organisations related with the establishment of Siam's modern governmental scheme (Fry and Bi, 2013).

The university system started expanding in the 1960s with the encouragement of the United States. This decade marked the blooming of the first provincial higher education institutions, and the following decade of the 1970s was the starting point for open universities, with the foundation of Ramkhamhaeng University, and the expansion of private universities and colleges (Baker and Phongpaichit, 2005). According to Pliansupap (2015), the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC) currently oversees a total of 173 higher education institutions, including 80 public universities, 73 private tertiary education institutions and 20 community colleges. In conclusion, it can be said that the present and future of the higher education system in Thailand runs parallel to that of the rest of the world and it is and will be dominated by business logic and determined by the market (Mounier and Tangchuang, 2010).

Linking to these facts, it can be stated that the characteristics of tourism and hospitality institutions are similar to business schools, since both their programs place the stress on applied skill development. Therefore, they should as well focus on associating with industry professionals (Barrows and Bosselman, 1999). The next paragraphs will analyse the situation of tourism and hospitality as an educational discipline in the country. Sripun and Ladkin (2001) considered that tourism and hospitality education in Thailand is a rather recent development within the nation's academic system. The following part of this section will include a summary of the main historical events related to the tourism and hospitality higher education as outlined by Chaisawat (2005):

- Tourism and hospitality undergraduate education started being offered in Thailand in 1955 as a major in "Travel management" within the Bachelor of Commerce Degree from Chulalongkorn University.

- The concept of community college was brought by Prince of Songkla University with the establishment of the Phuket campus in 1977. Here, a two-year diploma in Hotel and Tourism Management was offered to fulfil the staff necessities of the industry in the area.
- In 1993, Prince of Songkla University established the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management where a four-year international program in this discipline was offered in Thailand for the first time.
- In 2003, the meeting “Higher Education Revolution: Curriculum Development for Higher Education for Excellence” took place in Bangkok and approved the implementation of 10 subjects as core courses for tourism and hospitality bachelor programs.
- The Tourism Academic Association of Thailand (TAAT) was founded in 2005 with the following objectives: to develop and reform the body of language of the discipline, to mediate between academic staff and related institutions, to encourage and improve the potential of lecturers, curricula and research, and to publicise academic information to the community and institutions.

Dredge, Airey and Gross (2015) pointed out that tourism and hospitality programs in Asian nations have evolved from being virtually an imitation of the Western systems to a more custom-made strategy, or a localised version of those imported curricula. As a consequence of the “boom” of tourism and hospitality programs in Thailand, the number of graduates was sufficient to match the demands of the sector but the quality levels were somehow unsatisfactory, as their qualifications did not cover the necessary standards (Chaisawat, 2005).

Accreditation in Tourism and Hospitality Education

Accreditation would be a potential method for ensuring quality and offering recognition. Jung and Latchen (2012) defined accreditation as a process of evaluation and revision by a certification organisation, which qualifies a university, program or course to be recognised or accredited as meeting certain necessary criteria or standards. The last few decades have seen an increase in the interest on accreditation within tourism and hospitality institutions, especially at international levels. In particular, within the tourism and hospitality industry, the UNWTO plays the major role in assisting and increasing the quality of the industry-related education (Barbini and Presutti, 2010). Consequently, the quest for worldwide acknowledgement and accreditation in the tourism and hospitality higher education, to improve the reliability of the field in the current competitive framework, has lead to the creation of several international certifications, such as TedQual and THE-ICE (Dredge, Airey and Gross, 2015).

The International Centre of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education (THE-ICE) is an international accreditation based in Australia offering trustworthy standards and promoting the academic quality of its certified members to potential students (Airey, Tribe, Beckendorff and Xiao,

2014). Apart from these objectives, THE-ICE has additionally developed into a significant network for tourism and hospitality knowledge creation (Dredge, Airey and Gross, 2015). Finally, Ring, Dickinger and Wober (2009) outlined another important accreditation body: the Institute of Hospitality. This British organisation represents professional leaders within the tourism and hospitality industry and accredits industry related programs, both in the United Kingdom and internationally.

The UNWTO TedQual Certification

Arguably, most people would agree that the best ways to controlling whether organisations or institutions within a given sector offer the required quality standards would be to refer to the main international organisation within that specific industry. Regarding the field of tourism and hospitality higher education, a good starting point would consequently be to take consider the quality system for education produced by the World Tourism Organisation, or UNWTO (Airey, Tribe, Beckendorff and Xiao, 2014). Barbini and Presutti (2010) stated that the Tourism Education Quality (TedQual) certificate is a quality accreditation program for the tourism and hospitality sector, accessible to education institutions worldwide, and grounded on a voluntary application principle. Liu, Tsai, Horng and Lee (2010) pointed out that the main goal of TedQual was to detect the academic needs of the tourism and hospitality industry, to minimise the gap between the academic demand and supply, and to give priority to the essential arrangements to diminish this gap. Therefore, to achieve this aim, the TedQual system has been structured around three essential elements: quality standards, quality audit and quality certification. This TedQual Certification will be issued for a period of one to four years, and it can be renewed after expiration (UNWTO Themis Foundation. 2018). The inspection for this certification takes into account the information provided by the academic institutions regarding 5 key areas: public and private sectors employers, students, the curriculum and pedagogical system, the faculty, and the management (Airey, Tribe, Beckendorff and Xiao, 2014).

Research Methodology

Research Design

The researcher has used a mixed methods approach in this article in order to combine the characteristics and benefits of both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Population and Sample

The population of this research was formed by the lecturers and executives working at the 117 institutions in Thailand with undergraduate programs in tourism and hospitality. The quantitative

sample involved 320 individuals from the previously mentioned population. Concerning the sample used for the qualitative part of the research, the researcher used purposive sampling and expert sampling, and conducted interviews to managing representatives of these institutions until saturation in the responses. The final sample consisted of the 7 university executives listed below:

1. Dr. Roberto Gozzoli, Chair of the Tourism and Hospitality Management Division, Mahidol University International College
2. Dr. Monticha Khruasuwan, Dean of the College of Tourism and Hospitality, Sripatum University
3. Dr. La-iard Silanoi, Dean of the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Mahasarakham University
4. Dr. Chompunuch Jittithavorn, Vice Dean for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance, Phayao University
5. Ms. Yaowaporn Lertkultanon, Dean of the Faculty of Hospitality Industry, Dusit Thani College
6. Ms. Suttiman Siammai, International Tourism Management Coordinator, Bangkok University International College
7. Ms. Kanjana Komnapinit Hannon, Director at the Office of International Relations, Sripatum University, and former Associate Dean and Vice President of Marketing and Communications, Dusit Thani College

Research Instruments

Regarding the research instruments, the quantitative part of the research used a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was written in English and Thai, in order to facilitate the level of understanding of all the participants and it was divided in 3 main sections: 1) Evaluation of the tourism and hospitality undergraduate programs in Thailand (including 11 areas of analysis to be rated using a 5 Likert scale). 2) SWOT analysis of the participants' institution (including options in for the participants to tick if they considered any of them to be a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity or Threat at their institution, and an open field for them to add other factors to include in the analysis). 3) Level of readiness of the institution to obtain UNWTO TedQual and other international accreditations (using a 5 Likert scale, with these values: 1 for "Not at all ready" and 5 for "Totally ready"). The first section (evaluation) will be analysed in a separate publication by the researcher. This article will include an analysis of the results gathered from other 2 sections (SWOT Analysis and Level of Readiness). The reliability and validity of the research instruments were tested by using data triangulation, the inclusion of detailed descriptions, and the revision of research tools by peers. Moreover, an IOC (Item-Objective Congruence) survey was conducted and resulted in a positive score of 0.86 out of 1.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed using Google Forms and data was collected from October 2018 to December 2018. About the qualitative instrument used in this article, the researcher will complement the information obtained through the survey questionnaire with data gathered from semi-structured interviews.

The interviews took place between January and May 2019. The data obtained from the abovementioned informants will offer a crucial additional perspective on both the situation analysis of the undergraduate institutions in tourism and hospitality in Thailand and their level of readiness to obtain international accreditations.

Data Analysis

Regarding the data analysis, the quantitative information was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of SPSS. The qualitative information was analysed by content analysis, using NVivo as a software tool to facilitate the process.

Findings

Situation Analysis of Thai Undergraduate Institutions in Tourism and Hospitality

In order to provide a situation analysis of tourism and hospitality undergraduate education in Thailand and to complement the evaluation presented in the previous pages, this section would be divided into three parts:

- The first part will present the quantitative information on the strengths and weaknesses selected by the 320 participants of the survey from the closed-ended questions included in the questionnaire;
- The second part will complement the strengths and weaknesses by adding the qualitative responses to the open-ended questions included in the survey, and the relevant information gathered during the semi-structured interviews with representatives of undergraduate institutions in tourism and hospitality in Thailand.
- Lastly, the opportunities and threats will be solely drawn from the qualitative information collected both during the survey (as open-ended questions) and from the semi-structured interviews mentioned before.

Regarding the quantitative results, the figure in below presents the trends of the items listed as **strengths** by the respondents of the survey:

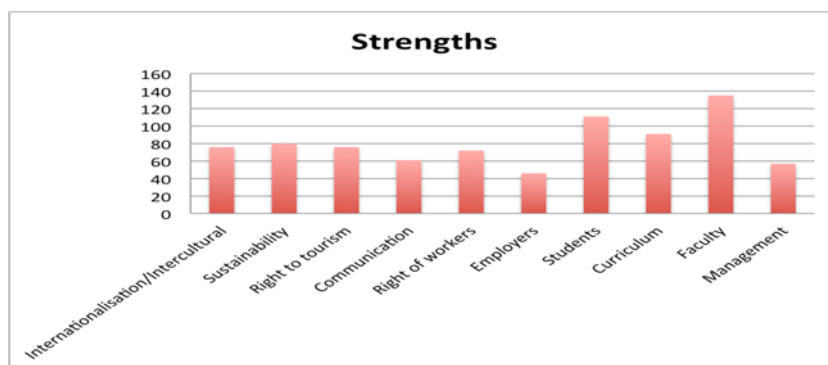


Figure 1 Strengths (quantitative) Distribution

In the section of the questionnaire regarding strengths of the tourism and hospitality undergraduate institutions, the participants were supplied with 10 options to tick those they considered to be strengths. There were no limits in terms of the number of options to be ticked and, therefore, the number of answers by respondent varied significantly. In the total results, there were 805 options ticked by the participants, an average of 2.52 strengths selected by each respondent. The results were distributed as presented on Figure 1. The most popular strengths were the faculty (chosen by 135 individuals), the students (chosen by 111 respondents) and the curriculum (chosen by 91 of the participants).

Regarding the **weaknesses**, the figure below presents the trends on the quantitative data collected during the survey in this field:

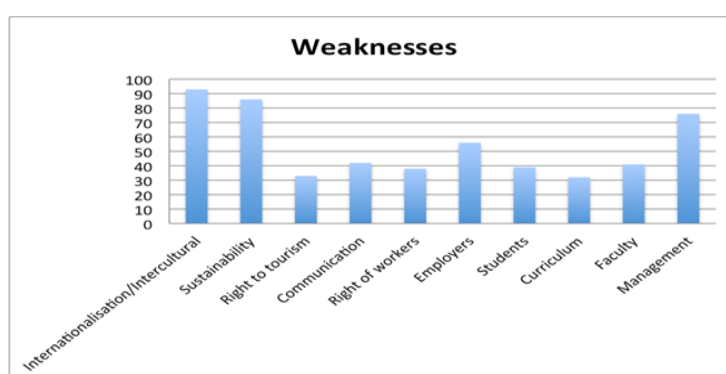


Figure 2 Weaknesses (quantitative) Distribution

As previously mentioned with the strengths, the participants were also supplied with 10 options to tick those they considered to be weaknesses. Here, the number of answers by respondent varied significantly as well. In the total results, there were 536 options ticked by the participants, an average of 1.68 weaknesses selected by each respondent, clearly inferior to the number of strengths.

The results were distributed as presented on Figure 2. The most popular weaknesses were internationalisation and interculturality (chosen by 93 individuals), sustainability (chosen by 86 respondents) and the management (chosen by 76 of the participants).

In order to **complement the strengths and weaknesses** originated from the quantitative data, other qualitative data will be added from the questions “Other strengths of your institution” and “Other weaknesses of your institution” included in the questionnaire plus the information acquired during the interviews with representatives of undergraduate institutions in tourism and hospitality in Thailand. In case of the strengths, this qualitative information coincides in many cases with the top scoring results in the quantitative part of the questionnaires. Numerous respondents and part of the interviewees agreed that the faculty members, the students and the curriculum are some of the strengths of Thai undergraduate institutions in this field. They even specify which factors within these categories they value most as strong points of the institutions. Examples of the factors mentioned are:

- Faculty members: Adequate lecturers, high number of academic professionals, and mix of academic and industrial expertise.
- Students: High perseverance and patience of the students and service mind.
- Curriculum: Variety of programs and outcome-based design.

Other strengths highlighted by the participants in the survey and the respondents of the semi-structured interviews were:

- Job opportunities of the programs in this field
- Update on industry trends
- Availability of field trips to complement the formal education
- Unique way of hospitality existing in Thai education
- Focus and familiarity on service operations
- Inclusion of real-time issues in the teaching and learning process

Regarding the weaknesses extracted from the qualitative data, the answers differed substantially from the results gathered from the quantitative information. The qualitative data gathered from the participants of the survey and the interviewees, also pointed out internationalisation and interculturality as one of the main weaknesses of Thai institutions. The respondents specifically mentioned several factors within this category, such as language skills of the students, language skills of the lecturers, and too much focus on the local characteristics of the industry. **Other weaknesses** highlighted by the respondents and the interviewees were:

- Misconception of tourism and hospitality as a solely service-driven industry
- Too much focus on hospitality (leaving tourism behind)
- The characteristics and limitations and inflexibility of the Thai Education System
- Curriculum: non-innovative, not focus on practical skills
- Need for external guest lecturers to complement the limitations of the faculty
- Students lacking eagerness to study
- Students not matching the job requirements

Finally, the opportunities and threats, as concepts that are more abstract than the strengths and weaknesses, were drawn solely from the qualitative information included in the survey under the questions “Potential opportunities for your institution” and “Potential threats to your institution” and the answers from the semi-structured interviews. Regarding the opportunities, the responses were very varied, but numerous respondents and interviewees coincided in similar categories. The main factors considered as **opportunities** were:

- Attracting students from other countries to study in our institutions (many respondents highlighted CLMV, AEC, and China)
- Creating a more attractive curriculum (more specific, fewer credits, etc.)
- Collaborations, MOU with foreign institutions (including the design of dual programs, internships overseas, etc.)
- Design of programs and courses based on the feedback from the industry
- Courses focused on the practical side of tourism and hospitality
- Short courses to complement the offer of undergraduate programs
- Trends of the labour market, which is now more focused on the service perspective than ever
- Working more closely with the government and other public institutions

Similarly to the case of the opportunities, the threats drawn from the survey and the interviews were very varied but have similar characteristics in terms of the categories covered by the participants. The main factors considered as **threats** were:

- Smaller pool of students due to the lower birth rate in recent years
- Competition from foreign institutions (Thai students going abroad for their undergraduate degrees and nationals from other countries choosing other options rather than Thai institutions)
- Online programs offered by some of the bigger universities in the world
- Curriculum getting out of date easily due to the 5-year framework
- Risk of not picking up with the new trends in terms of industry and technology
- Too much dependence on external support (government, other institutions)

Level of Readiness of Thai Institutions to Apply for UNWTO TedQual

The information about how prepared Thai institutions are to apply for international accreditation in tourism and hospitality was gathered as quantitative data during the 320 people survey and as qualitative data during the interviews with the 7 representatives of Thai universities. The descriptive statistics of this question are presented in the table below:

Table 1 Descriptive Results of the Level of Readiness of Thai Institutions

Valid	320		
Mean	2.8063		
Median	3.0000		
Std. Deviation	0.60817		
Values	Frequency	Percentage	Cum. Percentage
1.00	4	1.3	1.3
2.00	82	25.6	26.9
3.00	208	65.0	91.9
4.00	24	7.5	99.4
5.00	2	0.6	100.0
Total	320	100.0	

The average score of the answers to the question “In a scale of 1-5 (being 1 "Not at all ready" and 5 "Totally ready") what do you personally consider the level of readiness of your institution is to apply and comply with the requirements and procedures of TedQual or any similar international accreditation?” was 2.81 out of 5. While this score can be seen as positive overall (it is higher than 2.5), when compared to the average score of the evaluation of Thai undergraduate institutions in tourism and hospitality (mentioned as a part of the survey questionnaire and that resulted on an average of 3.61 out of 5) it is slightly low. It shows that despite having a generally positive perception on the quality of their institutions, the respondents do not consider they are totally ready to apply for international accreditations. On the positive side, a very high percentage of the participants (over 73%) gave a positive score (3 or higher) to the institutions and only 4 participants (1.3%) considered the universities were “Not at all ready” for the accreditation. On the negative side, there were only 2 respondents (less than 1%) who considered that the institutions were “Totally ready” to get an international accreditation in tourism and hospitality which implies that there are factors still to be improved for this institutions to obtain international accreditations in tourism and hospitality.

In terms of the factors to improve regarding this level of readiness, the informants in the semi-structured interviews listed the following items:

- Need to improve the quality of the students
- Focus on internationalisation of institutions and programs
- Improving the level of quality assurance
- Applying changes in terms of culture and directions and attitude towards accreditation

Another approach to assess the level of readiness of the institutions is to look at the inferential statistics comparing the results of this question between the different groups within 2 levels of analysis of the respondents: “Type of university”, and “Language of the program”. For this purpose, the Mann-Whitney U test was used, as this is an adequate non-parametric tool to test the differences between participants with different conditions. The results were as follows:

Type of university: Private vs. Public

The histogram below shows a similar shape in both sides, which is one of the assumptions needed for the Mann-Whitney U test to be effective, even if the size of the groups are different, as in this case (172 private universities and 148 public universities). The result of the Mann-Whitney U test shows that there is not a significant difference ($U=12,586$, $p=0.838$) between the evaluation of the level of readiness of Thai institutions to obtain international accreditations in tourism and hospitality from the perspective of private universities and public universities, since the p-value is higher than 0.05. However, the results are slightly more positive from the perspective of private institutions.

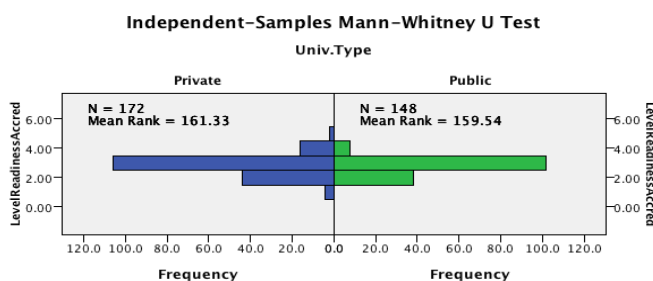


Figure 3 Histogram Private vs. Public

Table 2 Private vs. Public Tests

Total N	320
Mann-Whitney U	12,586.000
Wilcoxon W	23,612.000
Test Statistic	12,586.000
Standard Error	694.407
Standardized Test Statistic	-.204
Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)	.838

Language of the program: English vs. Thai

The histogram in the below shows a similar shape in both sides. The result of the Mann-Whitney U test shows that there is not a significant difference ($U = 13,598.5$, $p = 0.106$) between the evaluation of the level of readiness of Thai institutions to obtain international accreditations in tourism and hospitality from the perspective of members of English-speaking programs and those from Thai-speaking programs since the p-value is higher than 0.05. However, the results are clearly more positive from the perspective of the Thai-speaking programs.

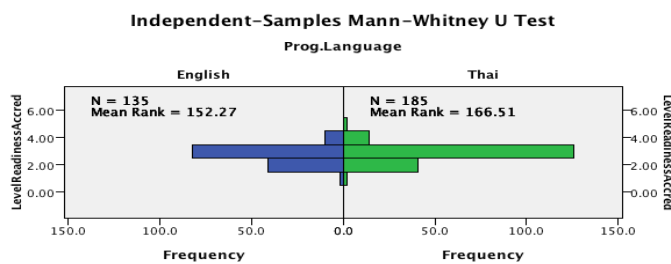


Figure 4 Histogram English vs. Thai

Table 3 English vs. Thai Tests

Total N	320
Mann-Whitney U	13,598.500
Wilcoxon W	30,803.500
Test Statistic	13,598.500
Standard Error	687.815
Standardized Test Statistic	1.615
Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)	.106

Conclusion

This article has provided the readers and interested institutions with an overview of the situation of higher education in Thailand from the perspective of tourism and hospitality education and the international accreditation outlook. In the current times, there is an increased importance on implementing adequate quality assurance and accreditation systems in this particular academic field. In these terms, it can be highlighted that international accreditation in tourism and hospitality in Thai universities has not been popular and there is a scarcity of higher education institutions in the country accredited with the main international accreditation in the field (UNWTO TedQual Certification). The only 2 representatives of Thai tourism and hospitality education with this accreditation are the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) and Mahidol University, which received the certification in 2018. For these reasons, it would be advisable for a country such as Thailand, one of the top tourism powers in the world, to have successful academic institutions being able to deliver high quality standards and to be accredited by the most important organisation in tourism and hospitality.

In order to do this, it is crucial for Thai institutions in tourism and hospitality to evaluate themselves via a situation analysis in order to find the room for overall improvement and to lead them to increase their possibilities to achieve this international certification. The first part of this

research has outlined the factors considered as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats by the 320 respondents of the survey questionnaire and the 7 executives from the Thai undergraduate institutions in tourism and hospitality who took part of the semi-structured interview process. The summary of these results is shown in the next table:

Table 4 SWOT of the Tourism and Hospitality Undergraduate Education in Thailand

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Faculty members (adequate, professional, good mix of professional and academic background) - Students (high perseverance, patience, service mind) - Curriculum (variety, outcome-based, focus on service operations, inclusion of field trips) - Unique way of hospitality in Thailand - Job opportunities - Update on industry trends and real-time issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internationalisation and interculturality (language skills, focus on mainly local characteristics of the industry) - Sustainability, culture and local benefits - Management - Curriculum (non-innovative, too much focus on hospitality rather than tourism, inflexibility of Thai Education System) - Faculty (need for external guest lecturers to complement their limitations) - Students (lack of eagerness to study, not matching job requirements)
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attracting students from other countries (CLMV, AEC, and China) - Creating a more attractive curriculum (more specific, fewer credits, more focused on practical side of tourism and hospitality) - Collaborations with foreign institutions (dual programmes, internships overseas) - Design of programmes and courses based on the feedback from the industry and the trends in the labour market - Short courses to complement the offer of undergraduate programmes - Working more closely with the government and other public institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Smaller pool of students (lower birth rate in recent years) - Competition from foreign institutions - Online programmes offered by some of the bigger universities in the world - Curriculum getting out of date easily due to the 5-year framework - Risk of not picking up with the new trends in terms of industry and technology - Too much dependence on external support (government, other institutions)

Regarding the level of readiness of the institutions to be accredited by the UNWTO TedQual or other international accreditations, the perspective of the 320 respondents of the survey questionnaire is not as positive as the evaluation of their institutions. While the average score of the fields assessed about the undergraduate institutions in tourism and hospitality in Thailand was 3.61 out of 5, the perception of the level of readiness to be accredited internationally resulted in 2.81 in a scale of 5. Finally, it can be emphasised that the perceptions of private institutions and Thai-speaking programs are more positive than those from their counterparties (public institutions and English-speaking programs).

Suggestions

The situation analysis presented in this article can be useful to assist Thai institutions to assess similar patterns in the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats within their organisations, and to get an idea on the “room for improvement” before deciding whether or not to apply for the UNWTO TedQual Certification. However, the researcher strongly encourages the interested institutions to evaluate themselves and to prepare their own situation analysis. A survey questionnaire similar to the one conducted by the researcher would be an appropriate tool to be used by the institution for this self-evaluation, since it has been designed following the characteristics of the UNWTO TedQual Certification, and the results would be fully related to the criteria of this international accreditation.

Once they have evaluated their actual situation and analysed their strong and weak points, Thai undergraduate institutions will be able to reassess their level of readiness to apply for international accreditations and to implement the necessary tools for improvement and success in their application. In this aspect they can also focus on some of the items to be considered as per the informants in the semi-structured interviews, namely the need to improve the quality of the students, the need to focus on internationalisation of institutions and programs, the improvement of the level of quality assurance, and the application of changes in terms of culture and directions and attitude towards accreditation. Of course, each institution will need to consider its own particularities, as the differences between universities and their perceptions have already been highlighted in this study when comparing the results of private vs. public universities and Thai-speaking programs vs. English-speaking programs.

References

- Airey, D., Tribe, J., Benckendorff, P. and Xiao, H. (2014). The Managerial Gaze: The Long Tail of Tourism Education and Research. *Journal of Travel Research*, 54(2), 139–151.
- Baker, C. and Phongpaichit, P. (2005). *A History of Thailand*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Barbini, F.M. and Presutti, M. (2010). The TEDQual Certification: quality management at the Faculty of Economics-Rimini. *AlmaTourism*, 1, 54-57.
- Barrows, C.W. and Bosselman, R.H. Eds. (1999). *Hospitality Management Education*. New York: The Haworth Hospitality Press.
- Berger, A.A. (2007). *Thailand Tourism*. New York: The Haworth Hospitality and Tourism Press.
- Chaisawat, M. (2005). Travel and Tourism Education in Thailand. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 5(3), 197-224. DOI: 10.1300/J172v05n03_02

- Dredge, D., Airey, D. and Gross, M.J. (2015). *The Routledge Handbook of Tourism and Hospitality Education*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Fry, G.W. and Bi, H. (2013). The evolution of educational reform in Thailand: the Thai educational paradox. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 51(3) 290 - 319. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09578231311311483>
- Jung, I. and Latchem, C. (2012). *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Distance Education and e-Learning. Models, Policies and Research*. New York: Routledge.
- Kariyapol, T. (2019). The Operation of “Zero-Dollar Tours” after Their Rising Popularity in Thailand. A Case Study of Phuket, A Province Located in Southern Thailand. *Sripatum Review of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 19(1), 19-31.
- Liu, Y. A., Tsai, C.T., Horng, J.S. and Lee, M.H. (2010). An Initial Inquiry of Program Evaluation Framework for Tourism Higher Education in Taiwan. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 10(1), 1-21. DOI: 10.1080/15313220903558520
- Mounier, A. and Tangchuang, P. (2010). *Education and knowledge in Thailand*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.
- Pliansupap, S. (2015). *International Programs in Thailand and ASEAN, Vol. 9*. Bangkok: FTC (Thailand).
- Ring, A., Dickinger, A. and Wöber, K. (2009). Designing the Ideal Undergraduate Program in Tourism: Expectations from Industry and Educators. *Journal of Travel Research*, 48(1), 106-121.
- Sripun, M. and Ladkin, A. (2001). Total Quality Management and Tourism and Hospitality Education. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 2(1-2), 89-103. DOI: 10.1300/J162v02n01_06
- Thailand Department of Tourism. (2018). *Thailand Department of Tourism Website*. [Online]. Retrieved November 8, 2018 from: <http://www.tourism.go.th>
- UNWTO Themis Foundation. (2018). *UNWTO Themis Foundation Website*. [Online]. Retrieved November 8, 2018 from <http://www.themis.unwto.org>