The industry-academia relationship in Higher Education in Tourism in Brazil: Faculty perspectives

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Abstract: This study looks at Faculty perspectives to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the industry- -academia relationship via multiple sources. The goals that were set for this study were two-fold: to analyse the strengths and problems of the industry-academia relationship over 15 Brazilian tourism undergraduate degrees; and identify factors that are enabling or holding back the relationship between industry-academia. For the multiple case study with cross-sectional analysis, we developed a matrix to analyzs the tourism programmes of study for three major components: proposed authors; proposed texts; and proposed audiences. The programme coordinators were invited to participate via e-mail and the ensuing on-line interviews were recorded and analysed using ATLAS.ti. The study identifies five strengths and six weaknesses, that are presented as case themes. Then, we summarise the factors enabling or impeding a better industry-academia relationship. The findings indicate that undergraduate dissertations, the alumni network within tourism organisations, and scientific communication build a strong bond between academia and industry. On the contrary, overemphasising non-vocational education, multi-disciplinary content without industry alignment and pursuit of government posts hinder greater industry- -academia interaction. In short, this study has contributed to understanding how academia can improve their relationshops with the industry, which could narrow the gap between what is expected of students by academia via what is asked of them in the labour market.

Keywords: Tourism; Higher education; Industry-Academia; Faculty; Brazil.

La relación sector-academia en la Enseñanza Superior de Turismo brasileña: Perspectivas del profesorado

Resumen: Este estudio de caso colectivo analizó las perspectivas del profesorado para identificar fortalezas y problemas en la relación industria-academia utilizando múltiples fuentes. Los objetivos que se plantearon para este estudio fueron dos: analizar los puntos fuertes y los problemas de la relación industria-academia desde la perspectiva de 15 licenciaturas de turismo brasileñas; e identificar los factores que están permitiendo o frenando la relación entre industria-academia. Para el estudio de caso múltiple com análisis transversal, desarrollamos una matriz para analizar el currículo de los programas de turismo, identificando tres componentes principales: autores de la propuesta; texto de la propuesta; y audiencia de la propuesta. Se invitó a los coordinadores por correo electrónico y las entrevistas en línea se grabaron y analizaron con ATLAS.ti. El estudio identificó cinco puntos fuertes y seis problemas, presentados como temas del caso. A continuación, se resumen los factores que están permitiendo o dificultando una relación más estrecha entre el sector y el mundo académico. Los resultados indican que la tesis de licenciatura, la red de antiguos alumnos dentro de las organizaciones turísticas y la comunicación científica crean un fuerte vínculo entre el mundo académico y el sector. Por otro lado, el excesivo énfasis en la educación no profesional, un plan de estudios multidisciplinar no alineado con el sector y la búsqueda de una carrera en el sector público dificultan una relación más genuina entre el sector y la academia. En resumen, este estudio ha contribuido a comprender los caminos de la academia hacia una relación más estrecha con el sector, lo que podría reducir la brecha entre lo que se espera de los estudiantes y su desempeño en el mercado laboral.

Palabras clave: Turismo; Enseñanza superior; Sector-Academia; Professorado; Brasil.

1. Introduction

Tourism in Brazil, the largest nation in South America, has been on the national public agenda since the 1990s when the country tried to overcome problems in the industry and consolidate tourism as an economic and social activity (Lohmann et al., 2021). In the 1970s and still today, tourism had already become a viable and significant alternative for job generation and wealth in Brazil (Trigo, 2000: 245). In that same period, Brazilian tourism programs in higher education (HE) were created, following similar reasons as tourism education developed worldwide in the previous decade (the 1960s): economic growth, tourism companies' strengthening, and the need for a specialized workforce (Airey, 2005). However, efforts to attract foreign tourists and include Brazilian cities as the top international destinations have failed. Over the last 20 years, Brazil struggled to attract international visitors, ranging from 5.2 to 6.6 million tourist arrivals yearly (see UNWTO Tourism Dashboard[1]). Also, the promise of turning tourism into a significant economic activity for the country has failed aside.

This scenario led us to reflect on the role of tourism education in Brazil. Historically, there is a very close link between the development of the tourism industry and tourism higher education (THE) (Airey, 2005; Tribe, 1997), even if it is not clear whether they work together or independently (Jones & Walmsley, 2021). The industry-academia relationship could materialize in the increase of employability, and this connection between education and work could enhance knowledge beyond the training developed in practice (Silveira et al., 2020). However, studies about employability with students (Leal, 2010; Pimentel and Paula, 2014) and alumni (Silveira et al., 2020), as well as documentary and bibliographic references (Silveira et al., 2012; Aranha and Rocha, 2014; Panosso Netto et al., 2017), have already highlighted gaps in the industry-academia relationship. Usually, this gap appears when what is expected from universities does not match the labor market needs.

On the other hand, we understand that the tourism industry is also responsible for inserting students and graduates into the labor market (Silva et al., 2018). Tourism education must also be in tune with the industry (Tribe, 2002) as tourism knowledge should be realistic and have real connotations (Croy & Hall, 2003), becoming extra-disciplinary as the industry, governments, interest groups, and consultancies also produce knowledge (Tribe & Liburd, 2016). Otherwise as a profit-driven industry commonly the industry struggles to finding a balance between the economic and social ends of tourism. In sum, the industry and academia are diverse in scope and performance (Ezeuduji et al., 2022). Tourism as a profit-driven industry struggles to finding a balance between the economic and social ends; prioritizing different student skills and attitudes, which usually leads to a well-known employability gap (what is expected from students and what they perform in the labor market).

From the previous, this study's objectives are two-fold: analyze the strengths and problems of the industry-academia relationship from the perspective of 15 Brazilian tourism undergraduate degrees; and identify factors that are enabling or holding back a closer relationship between industry-academia. This collective case study (Creswell, 2014) considered an earlier context of tourism education that the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified. Therefore, the authors sought to verify how the undergraduate programs developed a relationship with the industry by examining their curricula and interviewing their coordinators. Kramer (1997) reinforces that, when analyzing curricula, today's knowledge requires the past to be in the spotlight. Thus, looking into the degrees' records and listening to the coordinators' voices contemplated the retrieval of previous activities and accumulated experiences.

Following the paper presents some issues on tourism higher education in Brazil, the methodological procedures and the main strengths and problems of the pre-pandemic industry-academia relationship. Finally, we summarize with six factors that are enabling or holding back the industry-academia relationship.

2. Tourism higher education in Brazil

Officially, tourism higher education in Brazil began in 1971, when the first program opened at the Faculdade de Turismo do Morumbi (currently Anhembi Morumbi University) in São Paulo, which is a private institution. The first degrees in public institutions emerged around the same time (Rejowski, 1996). However, establishing well-articulated tourism education guidelines occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, when new tourism programs started to arise throughout the country (Rejowski, 1996; Trigo, 1998), with a sharp increase in the number of degrees available from 1995 onwards (Trigo, 2000).

It is noteworthy that a massive deregulation process marked this period, opening the education system to private investments. Thus, many private higher education institutions have also included tourism programs, which required few investments to get started (Almeida Filho, 2007). Almeida Filho (2007) demonstrated that Brazil's higher education structure resulted from a fragmented conception of knowledge, educational models based on 19th-century European universities, incomplete or frustrated university reforms, and market opening. Likewise the purposes of THE in Brazil were to prepare students to practice.

Brazil developed a diversified curricular matrix characterized by multiple degrees. This reality also appears in tourism programs, and the most common titles are technologist[2], bachelor's degrees, specializations, master's degrees, and doctorates (Almeida Filho, 2007; Sogayar & Rejowski, 2014).

Despite the degrees' diversity and the expansion of Brazilian tourism higher education, the increasing number of programs in the 1990s proved unsustainable (Leal et al., 2012). The 20th century marked a significant decline in tourism programs throughout the country, especially after 2008 (Moscardi et al., 2020), indicating a balance between programs' quality and quantity (Ansarah, 2002).

However, there is evidence that higher education quality increased with graduate programs' birth (Ansarah, 2002) during the 2010s (Leal et al., 2012). On the other hand, Brazilian tourism education was still facing some problems due to the undergraduate programs' closing. These problems mirrored the non-integration of professionals in the industry (Bonfim et al., 2019; Silveira et al., 2012) and were noteworthy in private education since they did not evolve qualitatively (Almeida Filho, 2007; Bonfim et al., 2019; Silveira et al., 2012; Sogayar & Rejowski, 2014).

However, a single analysis of the programs' unbridled growth does not elucidate the reasons behind the crisis. The content taught in class plays a role in the dissonance between tourism education and industry expectations in private and public universities (Bonfim et al., 2019). The lack of focus on specific skills may be correlated with the low employability of students since the industry still struggles to understand the tourism professionals' skills and believes that they need more qualification (Pimentel & Paula, 2014).

While researching the professional's insertion in the industry, Silva et al. (2018: 522) identified that former students seek different areas of expertise and even additional degrees, which may indicate "the importance of specialization and acquisition of knowledge in specific areas not acquired at university". Looking at their performance, most graduates seem to work in activities where a technical background would be sufficient, even though most of them hold bachelor's degrees (Panosso Netto et al., 2017).

Moreover, the faculty's qualification in master's and doctorate degrees, mainly from other disciplines (e.g., geography, business, economics, and environmental sciences), brought a greater theoretical depth into tourism education. Therefore, universities started to focus on studying academic interest problems, which is ultimately not valued by the industry because it seeks practical and increasingly timely solutions (Panosso Netto et al., 2017; Silveira et al., 2012). Thus, understanding the economic, social, cultural, and political importance of tourism has yet to be achieved (Panosso Netto et al., 2017).

Specifically, in Brazil, the tourism knowledge system has not been consolidated since there is no interaction between the academia and the knowledge produced outside the university walls (Tribe & Liburd, 2016). Consequently, the programs in Brazil end up focusing on two areas: one more academic, emphasizing research and the humanistic and critical education of the professional, and another with more operational characteristics from the industry (Panosso Netto et al., 2017).

This scenario may represent the National Curricular Guidelines' direct application, which stipulates that tourism programs' curricula present basic content strongly linked to Human Sciences (sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, geography and aesthetics), plus specific content from business, economics, communication and accounting, and practical-theoretical content. A closer relationship with the industry would happen only in this last scope with field trips, inventory development, learning labs and internships (Brasil, 2006). Nevertheless, tourism higher education is commonly associated with a vocational and technical bias (Silveira et al., 2012), mainly because it was originated in a context of alignment with the industry (Airey, 2005). Regardless, as the curriculum and daily activities do not reflect this perspective, tourism in Brazil may have become more of a field of study than a profession (Panosso Netto et al., 2017; Silveira et al., 2012).

3. Research method

This qualitative case study with a cross-sectional analysis (data collected in 2020) presented the meanings that Brazilian undergraduate tourism programs attribute to the industry/academia relation, such as they are perceived and experienced in the daily lives of its actors. This case study

is also collective, given that the investigation focuses on one issue (industry-academia relationship) illustrated by multiple cases, namely, the 15 undergraduate programs in Brazil (Creswell, 2014). These programs are bounded in regions with differences on their industry (see Table 1 - City) which brought new information about the problems and strengths on the relationship between industry and academia, allowing a wider discovering about the factors that are enabling or holding back it.

Case studies use multiple sources of information and different forms of qualitative data (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, the authors based this research on bibliographic sources previously published about tourism and education, documentary materials (programs' curricula and information made available on the universities' websites), and semi-structured interviews with the coordinators in 2020 of the 15 undergraduate tourism programs in Brazil herein surveyed. Furthermore, this study sought to summarize factors enabling or holding back a closer relationship between industry-academia from the cases rather than only describing them. Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) state that theories emerge in developing and recognizing patterns within and between cases. Thus, the authors presented the results as case themes (Creswell, 2014) that reflect the strengths and problems in the existing industry/academia relation of Brazil's tourism education.

3.1. Selected programs

The study comprised 15 undergraduate tourism programs from all over the country (Table 1). The inclusion criteria for the programs were: a) programs that also have master's or doctorate degrees in the field, since graduate studies increase the quality of tourism education (Ansarah, 2002); and b) at least one representative from each region of the country. The programs that did not reply to the interview invitation after three attempts were replaced by different ones from the same region, appointed by other coordinators who participated in the study's interviewing phase. As there are no tourism master's and doctorate degrees in the North region, the authors selected the oldest program in the region.

Table 1: Sample of tourism undergraduate degrees

	Program	University	City
Mid-west			
Bachelor	Tourism	UnB*	Brasília
Northeast			
Bachelor	Tourism	UFMA	São Luís
Bachelor	Tourism	UFPE	Recife
Bachelor	Tourism	UFRN	Natal
Bachelor	Tourism	UFRN	Currais Novos
Bachelor	Hotel Management**	UFPE	Recife
North			
Bachelor	Tourism	UFPA	Belém
Southeast			
Bachelor	Tourism	PUC Campinas***	Campinas
Bachelor	Tourism	UFF	Niterói
Bachelor	Tourism	USP (ECA)	São Paulo
Bachelor	Leisure and Tourism	USP (EACH)	São Paulo
South			
Bachelor	Tourism	FURG	Santa Vitória do Palmar
Bachelor	Tourism	UFPR	Curitiba
Technologist	Tourism Management	UFPR Litoral	Matinhos
Technologist	Tourism Management	IFSC	Florianópolis

Source: The authors (2022)

Notes: * The graduate degree of UnB is deactivated since 2021. ** The Hotel Management at UFPE is connected to the Hotel and Tourism Department, and according to its pedagogical project, it follows the same national curricular guidelines as the undergraduate tourism programs in Brazil. ***PUC Campinas is the only private university.

Moreover, it is relevant to mention that there were two tourism and tourism-related programs in four universities, so the authors conducted analysis and interviews with both. In this way, it was possible to analyze diversified programs concerning the title (technologist or bachelor), types of institution (public or private), and reach in the country (regional or national).

3.2. Curricula

To analyze the 15 tourism programs' curricula, the authors developed an analysis matrix built, first and foremost, in Kramer's (1997) script to read educational proposals critically, thus, identifying three major components of the curriculum: a) proposal authors (who produced it); b) proposal text (components); and c) proposal audience (whom it will educate).

Additionally, the authors have also included some specific issues for tourism curricula design. For instance, guidelines on the development of tourism curricula listed by Fidgeon (2010) incorporated the three components, such as the program's orientation (vocational or liberal[3]), the balance between academia and industry, work experience, teaching models, and the program's focus (generalist, specialist, or international). For the analysis of the courses, Horng's (2004) study served as an example to classify the program's disciplines into a) tourism introductory disciplines; b) private management vocational disciplines; c) tourism vocational disciplines; d) public management vocational disciplines; e) liberal disciplines; f) language disciplines; g) research disciplines; h) internship; i) final thesis; j) extension/complementary activities; k) exchange program.

Lastly, the authors collected curricula on the programs' websites. The coordinators sent the documents that were not available online upon our request, except for PUC Campinas' curriculum, which could not be made available (PUC's information was consulted on the website only). The documents were read thoroughly, interpreted, and analyzed with qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 1983 cited in Flick, 2013) between July and August 2020. The Microsoft Excel software assisted in data organization and categorization.

3.3. Interviews

In the interviews, the coordinators responded on the industry/academia relation, indicating the strengths and problems they identify in this relationship. The 15 coordinators were invited via e-mail and agreed to the Term of Free and Informed Consent. The remote interviews took place during July 2020 through the Microsoft Teams platform. All interviews were recorded (with the respondents' authorization) and transcribed to facilitate data's interpretation and analysis, which occurred through the ATLAS.ti software. As the study deals with human beings, the Ethics Committee of the author's university approved this research on June 24, 2020[4]. Thus, the authors encoded the respondents' names according to five characteristics to keep their identity anonymous. These codes (Table 2) will indicate citations when presenting the results.

Table 2: Encoding of respondents

Interview order	n
#1 #2 #3 #4 #5...#15	15
Respondent's gender	
M (Male)	8
F (Female)	7
Respondent's educational background	
TUR (Tourism/Hospitality)	10
AA (Another area)	5
Program creation	
BT (Before 2000)	8
AT (After 2000)	7

Source: The authors (2022)

The following sections describe the five main strengths and six problems of the pre-pandemic industry/academia relation identified in the programs' curricula and the coordinators' interviews. Additionally, the authors added literature on each topic to analyze the results.

4. The industry/academia relation's strengths

4.1. Internships: where the magic happens
Interns play a strategic role in the knowledge exchange between the industry and the university since they belong to both realities and feed information to both sides (Kapasi, 2023; Panosso Netto et al., 2017). The coordinators' speech and curricula highlight the internships' significance.

#2/M/TUR/AT: We have many agreements with local companies [...]. So, the student already starts to interact with the industry during his or her education. The internship is their first professional experience.

#5/M/TUR/BT: So, the special relationship occurs through internship contracts.

It is interesting to note that only three out of the 15 programs do not have mandatory internships in their curriculum. Nonetheless, the coordinators stated that the students look for internships to complement their studies, reinforcing their relevance to the exchanges with the industry. Martins (2019), for example, found that students consider the practice of non-mandatory internships essential for the professional experience because it complements the theoretical knowledge from the classes. Furthermore, internships are a fundamental component of professional learning because they develop soft skills, enabling students to learn outside the formal education space (Piovani et al., 2020; Silveira et al., 2020).

#11/F/AA/AT: We do not have mandatory internships. We encourage the students to take an internship with the help of a thousand contacts everyone has. So, in the first phase, we already have many students becoming interns at an inn, a hotel, or being hired to work in companies.

#12/M/AA/AT: The internship is voluntary. Even so, we have a vast number of students going to take internships, which will make up their academic trajectory.

The curricula usually state that interns must always report to an advisor or make coursework to validate the credits in the case of mandatory internships. Despite this obligation, the programs' coordination does not seem to follow up or carry out evaluation surveys on the activities performed by students as interns, with the exceptions reported below:

#1/F/AA/BT: We have a new coordinator role now, the internship coordinator [...]. So, it has to be this person, a person who can better exchange with the industry.

#4/M/TUR/BT: Mapping job opportunities [...]. A student is currently responsible for making the calls [...]. She joined the tourism program and decided to do it voluntarily. She was supposed to call companies and uncover job opportunities and internships.

As illustrated, rather than just monitoring the quality of the internship agreements, the programs can establish a structure that maps out job opportunities, strengthening the exchange with the industry and assessing whether the job opportunities match the education of the tourism professional, or if they are just companies looking for qualified and low-cost "serviceman" (#12/M/AA/AT).

4.2. Final thesis: the student's feedback to the program – and why not to the industry?
The industry/academia relation can also benefit from the students' final thesis, which is mandatory in all curricula analyzed in this study. When analyzing the research experience in international undergraduate programs, Kirillova and Au (2020) identified that students who write final coursework understand the scientific research's value and benefits. In turn, Oliveira (2013: 61) also points out that "writing a conclusion work is also seen as the opportunity to develop skills in the professional field". This

allows programs to be flexible (Fidgeon, 2010) as to the presentation and submission of the research, which may be more directed towards the industry.

For example, at UFPR Litoral, UFF, UFPE (Hotel Management), and USP (EACH), the student can opt to make a business plan, while at UnB, they can produce a legislation draft, audiovisual materials, software, or technical reports. At FURG and UFRN (Natal), the conclusion work can also be an industry-related intervention project, such as a marketing plan or a tourism plan for public management. However, curricula do not state if the students prefer thesis or business practice. Thus, it was impossible to verify whether students who are not interested in research choose a different type of final thesis or do what a higher education program mainly expects: scientific research.

4.3. Alumni: the long-lasting relationship with the industry

As respondent #5/M/TUR/BT mentioned, the longest-lasting relationship between the industry and the university happens with the alumni network. A good connection with former students contributes to the program's prestige and reputation (Van Dyke et al., 1994), to the university's name (Chen & Murphy, 2018), and helps graduates find better job opportunities (Vieregge et al., 2013). The interviewed coordinators mentioned that alumni who currently work in the industry understand the program's importance. Moreover, they may return to the university to attend events and lectures about the industry or become future employers.

#10/F/TUR/BT: In general, these professionals who are former students keep in constant touch with us, attend university events, keep a relatively frequent presence.

An attractive practice for tourism programs could be the creation of alumni associations, projects, halls of fame, or official actions to maintain contact with former students in a closer and more formal way, thus enhancing the relationship between the program and the organizations where these professionals work (Min et al., 2019; Vieregge et al., 2013).

4.4. The most common practices: participation in councils and events

There are other coexistence practices between the industry and academia, namely, faculty participation in councils, events, seminars, and conferences (Griffin, 2022; Panosso Netto et al., 2017). The respondents also listed these examples.

#2/M/TUR/AT: Our program belongs to many councils. In governance instances.

#4/M/TUR/BT: We started to bring more of the industry into the classroom [...], to bring entrepreneurs to talk in the classroom, to expose their realities.

#7/M/AA/AT: We have an agreement with industry associations; we have a partnership with Brazil Convention & Visitor Bureau, with the Federation of Conventions, with the Conventions of neighboring cities. All of this creates a great communication channel.

Additionally, it was possible to perceive the relationship as more personal than institutional. The industry/academia relation seems to occur due to interpersonal connections rather than the formalization and development of joint projects (Panosso Netto et al., 2017), as some respondents explain that:

#6/M/TUR/BT: I started to have many meetings with the industry [...] to present my proposal.

#11/F/AA/AT: I am part of the regional governance instance of tourism, so here in my WhatsApp, I have contacts ranging from the president of ABAV[5] to the Department's president, and this brings us closer to the industry.

Finally, the respondents also mentioned examples of field trips (#2/M/TUR/AT) and practical classes in companies (#3/F/TUR/BT; #4/M/TUR/BT), which already exist in the national curriculum, and in-company research, such as hospitality projects and chambermaid and hotel receptionists training (#2/M/TUR/AT).

4.5. Social media: out of sight, out of mind

The final strength identified in the industry/academia relation was the programs' social media presence. We searched for the 15 programs on Facebook and Instagram and found that they have at least one account on one of these websites. Scientific communication expanded within the academic community 50 years ago (Guenther & Joubert, 2017). It means disclosing the "world of tourism" (Tribe & Liburd, 2016: 56) that researchers produce in universities. As some coordinators expressed, this type of communication is a crucial link between knowledge production and society, industry, and government, which are unfamiliar with the academic language (Weingart & Guenther, 2016).

#1/F/AA/BT: We are currently working on the program's media communication. We created an Instagram account, which gave us colossal visibility; from interviews with newspapers, we are being requested more and more for security protocols.

#2/M/TUR/AT: For the industry, for these companies, it is essential to know what is produced, what comes from the universities, and our program, more specifically because it qualifies the product, qualifies the services that are offered.

In a recent study, Griffin (2022) showed that communication still hinders hospitality industry/academia relations. In turn, social media have brought a new dimension (Araújo, 2018) for the programs to promote what they are doing, their research, projects, and even the future professionals they are educating.

5. The industry/academia relation's problems

5.1. Liberal or vocational? That is the question

The vocational approach in tourism curricula highlights skills, qualities, and behaviours essential for employability. Thus, students become operational professionals and transition smoothly to the labour market as they acquire technical skills and management knowledge to rise in their careers (Fidgeon, 2010). However, this approach receives criticism for being restrictive and mechanical. Other pedagogical proposals, such as the liberal one, provide a counterpoint as they promote reflective and contemplative values (Dredge et al., 2012) that help students, for example, to evaluate tourism critically and freely. This approach should also be careful to keep the individual from a realistic and meaningful perception of what is socially desirable and practised (Fidgeon, 2010).

In the analyzed tourism programs, the authors noticed that the coordinators perceive the industry's influence on tourism education as essential for higher education learning in Brazil and worldwide (Airey, 2005; Trigo, 2000). However, are the programs in Brazil more vocational than liberal? At first, the criticism regarding vocational education is apparent in the respondents' speech. Most programs, mainly bachelor's degrees, understand that the university's role and, consequently, the tourism programs' function is to educate critically reflective citizens.

#1/F/AA/BT: Our students are at the university. That is what the university is for, to develop critical thinking in the first place.

#4/M/TUR/BT: I recognize that academia is still too preoccupied with itself, that if we keep things the way they are, it moves further away from the dynamic and maybe technical way of the industry.

#10/F/TUR/BT: I think that in undergraduate programs, we have to educate critical people who, on the one hand, will know the industry but still act according to a more critical perspective, looking for more sustainable ways to develop tourism.

#12/M/AA/AT: Well, our program here is a bachelor's degree, and we try to work on education in the realm of ideas required by a bachelor's degree, right? Hence, it is not a technical education.

In the curricula, the general objectives aim at educating professionals to work in the industry. The indication of more humanistic education is also evident in sentences such as: "ensuring a critical and reflective professional education" (UFPR Curitiba); "to educate professionals who work in the industry

[...] based on the foundations of scientific research and human sciences" (ECA USP); "to provide a professional development [...] with the differential of a humanist vision" (EACH USP), among others.

These assumptions created some misconceptions about technologist degrees in Brazil. Thus some bachelor's coordinators stated that technical and vocational education should be the responsibility of the technologist education programs.

#1/F/AA/BT: We are not a program of... I am not looking down on federal institutes, but they can stay with the technical part.

#10/F/TUR/BT: I think the university has a critical training role because, if I want to train someone to be a hotel receptionist [...], I think there are technical and technologist programs that can handle this better.

Nevertheless, the technologist programs analyzed in this study also have a critical and reflexive component which, according to the respondents above, should be in the bachelor's degrees from universities. The main goal of the IFSC's program, for example, is "to train tourism managers [...] with a critical and entrepreneurial vision". The pedagogical proposal of the UFPR Litoral's program corresponds to the very conception of this campus, which also incorporates disciplines of Cultural and Humanistic Interactions in technologist programs.

While including humanistic conceptions into their pedagogical practice, technologist programs seem to respond to industry expectations better. A study conducted in a technologist degree in São Paulo revealed that students achieved high levels of employability, mainly in the tour operation business (Santos et al., 2015). A possible response to this scenario could be a greater alignment of vocational and liberal axes in those degrees. However, in both bachelor and technologist degrees, the education focuses on strategic and leadership positions rather than operational ones. This focus would contradict the coordinators' statements (#2/M/TUR/AT; #5/M/TUR/BT), who reinforced that most of the tourism professionals work in operational vacancies (Panosso Netto et al., 2017).

None of the programs herein analyzed have courses about, for example, sales and negotiation practices, which are essential skills for graduates to work as travel consultants in travel agencies, the companies that most employ tourism professionals (Silveira et al., 2020). Only four programs (UFPE – Hotel Management, UFPE – Tourism, UFRN Natal, and UFF) have specific content on information systems and tools to book airline tickets, hotels, and other tourist services reservations. Additionally, some more technical courses are offered exclusively as optional disciplines (e.g., ceremonial, food and beverage handling, governance), and course applicability does not reach a satisfactory tooling level (#5/M/TUR/BT).

These findings do not represent a plea that tourism education should be only vocational, not critical and reflexive. There must be a balance (Tribe, 2002), which has not yet happened in the programs analyzed, as their curricula ignore applicable content essential for professionals in the labour market. It appears that degrees use this natural approach with the industry to legitimate the programs, prospect new students, and engage current students.

One justification used on some occasions is that graduates can learn technical skills directly from the employer (#10/F/TUR/BT) since many companies offer complementary training to their employees (Silveira et al., 2020). However, would not it be more interesting – and expected – that graduates arrive at the labor market knowing the skills for his/her position? Perhaps, in this way, tourism programs may strengthen the industry/academia relation since students would learn from practical experiences during their degree, increasing programs' reputation and professional performance.

5.2. A national curriculum stuck in time

This study's second problem is whether the tourism National Curricular Guidelines still make sense for the programs. The guidelines present three building blocks (basic content, specific content, and practical-theoretical content) which are much more multidisciplinary than interdisciplinary, pointing out other fields of knowledge (i.e., sociology, economy, geography) that the programs' content should be grounded (Brasil, 2006). This configuration is similar to Jafari and Brent Ritchie's Wheel of Knowledge (1981), describing the broad range of disciplines from which to study tourism and, in the case of Brazilian undergraduate programs, widely used in the construction of tourism curricula. All curricula follow the national guidelines – including the technologist, which have their own legislation – and, therefore, present similarities in the courses' distribution, the alumni's profile, and the desired skills. The idea of a stagnant curriculum is present in the coordinators' speech, as exemplified below.

#7/M/AA/AT: And another thing I observe is a criticism of mine. If you are going to do this study, you will come to the same conclusion, that everyone copied each other's curriculum matrix. They are very similar. My program is similar to state x, state y.

#14/F/AA/BT: First, I will open a parenthesis: our 2006 tourism curriculum guidelines do not address competencies. They address some issues specific to the profile of the tourism student, and I do not think it is good wording. I think it is a good idea, but the wording leaves something to be desired.

The curriculum – which is in a path of constant change (Kramer, 1997) and, therefore, periodically monitored, reviewed, and planned by the faculty – depends on a standard text that has not been revised since 2006. Thus, the guidelines' structure, created to offer theoretical input to the programs, raises some difficulties highlighted by the coordinators. The first of them is the distance between theory and practice.

#1/F/AA/BT: Students say: "Until the fourth period, it is one program, from the fifth period on it is another program". I had never realized this before I was a coordinator [...]. They have an event course in the third [period]. They will see theory, what is an event, how to do one. Then, in the sixth [period], they have to do it in practice. So, it is very dissociable.

Moreover, the core academic subjects (sociological, anthropological, historical, philosophical, geographic, cultural, and artistic aspects), which are more liberal than vocational, do not dialogue with tourism when offered by other departments, in the case of programs that do not have the required structure or faculty to conduct the courses internally.

#4/M/TUR/BT: All these subjects are at the beginning of the program. And then some of them are managed by professors who do not build a clear bridge with tourism. Our highest failure rates are in the subjects with professors from other departments.

#8/F/TUR/AT: People mistake interdisciplinarity for knowledge overlap. We have many professors from other fields who will overlap knowledge, not treat the knowledge in tourism in an interdisciplinary way. The focus of these professors is not tourism [...]. Students learn from people who are not from this field.

In this way, interdisciplinarity and extra-disciplinarity (i.e., the knowledge produced outside the academia) are absent from the legislation that regulates the programs and, consequently, the curricula and pedagogical practice (Tribe & Liburd, 2016).

5.3. Fixation on public service and the fear of the private

Most of the programs analyzed are from public universities, and, as seen previously, the exponential growth of undergraduate degrees in private institutions was unsustainable. For this reason, a strong approximation between the programs and the public sector, in general, is apparent. The programs' curricula usually make a historical and contextual rescue of universities, and their analysis demonstrated that the university's role in Brazil goes beyond education. Research is very clearly present, but the extension projects, which are gaining prominence in the curricula, bring students and programs closer to society (Rodrigues et al., 2013).

In this way, there is a consensus that public universities must contribute to society. However, what seems to happen, especially in programs not located in large population hubs - such as UFPR Litoral, FURG and UFRN Currais Novos[6] - is outsourcing the State's role to universities, sometimes without additional resources and with outreach projects providing assistance rather than development.

#2/M/TUR/AT: So, we have a student transit, at least on a regional level, that is more underprivileged. So, people depend a lot on the university's role and the tourism program's responses.

#9/M/TUR/AT: The program was created due to this demand by REUNI [Federal Universities Restructuring and Expansion Plan] in a small town, where the tourism industry is relatively weak, so to speak, and most of the people end up doing the internship at the City Hall itself.

What happens in tourism programs is that students and professors elaborate municipal, regional, and state tourism plans, plus inventories and projects, free of charge, under the pretext that students need to learn how to do them in practice (#10/F/TUR/BT). However, students generally do not use this knowledge after they graduate because the public sector does not absorb tourism professionals the same way the private sector does (Silveira et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, the fixation on the public sector still occupies a prominent place in curricula. For instance, the first four skills listed in the national guidelines are about public management. Regarding the curricula's text, the objectives, justifications, and graduates' profile usually focus first on educating students for the public sector, and then for the private sector: "to train interculturally competent tourism professionals, capable of dealing [...] in public or private organizations" (UFPE - Tourism); "to train tourism graduates with the ability to work [...] in the public sector, the private sector, and the third sector" (UFRN - Currais Novos). It is not possible to state whether this prioritization is intentional. However, it is interesting to note that the public sector is more notorious in the texts.

The interviewees' speech also demonstrated that the strong relationship with the public sphere (i.e., public universities, the desire for professionals to work in public organizations, and the universities' contributions that should be the State's responsibility) makes tourism programs afraid to approach the private sector.

#6/M/TUR/BT: We have to change the mindset of some professors who still see the industry as an obstacle […]. In some professors' minds, if the industry goes inside the university, public universities will be privatized. One thing has nothing to do with the other.

#7/M/AA/AT: The industry exercises a force. This force exists. However, the public university still resists this force. It is almost as if there is a protective ring preventing us from suffering these influences, and we also want to establish walls, filters […].

There is a fear that if programs establish a connection with the industry, the public asset will become privatized. It is almost an anti-capitalist rancor (#9/M/TUR/AT).

5.4. It is not our fault – or is it?

When asked about the industry/academia relation's problems, some coordinators listed general problems of the industry (e.g., predatory structure and remuneration) and the public sector (e.g., legislation and professional regulation) as barriers to improving this relationship (#3/F/TUR/BT; #8/F/TUR/AT; #13/F/TUR/BT). Although the tourism industry presents seasonality, low qualification, low remuneration, long working hours, high turnover, greater participation of small companies (Kucukusta, 2016; Silva et al., 2018), academia should not stay in its ivory tower (Fidgeon, 2010) only criticizing the current model. Programs require constant self-assessment and need to understand that education can contribute to the industry's gradual evolution, which leads us to the following theme.

5.5. Unheard voices from the industry

According to the analysis, the programs do not consult the industry to elaborate the curriculum. When asked if the program knew about the local industry's demands, few coordinators cited initiatives to understand them. Furthermore, when this practice occurs, it is informal through the relationship between individuals (coordinators and professors) and the industry.

#3/F/TUR/BT: We do not really ask this question in a systematic, recurring way, no. I think it is very informal.

#6/M/TUR/BT: I believe that we have never had a project coordinated by any professor to determine the industry's needs.

#11/F/AA/AT: So, officially, how can I tell you that we know about the industry's demands? By the experience itself. We know by the relationship between us, between professors, between lodging facilities, services, restaurants, and other institutions.

It is noteworthy that only three programs mentioned they had some proximity to the local tourism industry (UFPE – Hotel Management, UFPE – Tourism, and UFMA) when designing the curriculum. Even so, their curricula do not clarify the industry's requests.

5.6. Hallway conversation or legit claims?

The students' voices were also not present in the analyzed curricula. Only UFRN (Currais Novos and Natal) and ECA – USP programs addressed student claims. Other curricula mention that the students had participated in their elaboration but fail to explain students' role in this construction. The dialogue between students and professors is informal (Leal et al., 2013), as identified in the interviews: "I already felt that our program had an industry gap, given the students' informal feedback" (#7/M/AA/AT).

Understanding what students want and need is essential. For example, Van Hoof and Wu (2014) identified that students and graduated better evaluate specific hospitality courses in preference and importance rather than liberal disciplines. Therefore, as professors usually have positive attitudes towards talking, exchanging, and listening to students (Leal et al., 2013), these practices could be institutionalized by the programs, allowing a constant evaluation of curricula and the industry-academia relationship.

Considering the identification of these five strengths (internships, undergraduate thesis, alumni, events participation, social media) and six problems (liberal vs vocational curriculum, National Curricular Guidelines, career in public service, blaming the industry, unheard voices from the industry), we summarize the factors that are enabling or holding back a closer relationship between industry-academia.

6. Final considerations

Brazil's Tourism higher education has developed theoretically but is still distant from the industry. The creation of the first program in 1971 was a bet on an activity that appeared to be worldwide synonymous with wealth. The exponential offer of programs during the 1990s, when tourism was still considered the future profession (despite, at that point, having been studied in Brazil for 25 years), seems to be better understood from the educational system's deregulation and the opening of new universities. Due to the programs' closure in the following decade, the distance between academia and the industry became evident. The non-inclusion of tourism professionals in the tourism industry entails these issues to their education.

Considering the industry-academia relationship as a critical element for the success of both, our collective case study assessed the strengths and problems existing in this relationship from the perspective of 15 tourism undergraduate degrees in Brazil. This qualitative study analyzed the documents (curricula) and the interviews with the programs' coordinators as sources that recorded and witnessed the history of the industry-academia relationship, its strengths and problems. Drawing on faculty perspectives we then present some factors that are enabling or holding back a closer relationship between industry-academia.

According to the interviewees the factors enabling the relationship between the industry and academia are three: (1) the *final thesis,* that can bring practical contributions to the industry besides its scientific research; (2) the *alumni's network* within tourism organizations, upon which it is possible to built a long-term industry-academia relationship; and, (3) the *scientific communication* as a tool to raise awareness of science-related topics disclosing academia activities on social networks and toward industry. Conversely, there are some factors holding back a closer relationship between industry-academia, also listed as three major issues: (1) Brazilian tourism education *focuses mainly on non-vocational courses* and does not teach the tools for the student to work in the industry; (2) the programs focus on a *multidisciplinary content structur*e, which makes it challenging to align the study of tourism with the world of tourism (industry); and, (3) there is a preference within the program's curricula for *planning and public management courses*, a sector that, contrary to the industry, does not massively employ tourism professionals.

The nature of the academia-industry relationship lies in hearing collaborative and divergent views. So, students' voices not formally presented in curricula design reinforce a sole dominance of scholarly standpoints. However, it is noteworthy that data on undergraduate research in relation to practical studies, the applicability of these studies within the tourism industry, the proportion of graduates employed in the sector and/or who have become employers and, the results of the social media activities (content, interaction, engagement), although relevant to understanding the relationship between the industry and academia, were not mentioned by the interviewees.

This study highlights paths to the planning, designing, and reviewing of tourism curricula by educators seeking a closer relationship with the industry. So, we recognize that courses' syllabi were not analyzed as we looked at the faculty's perspective on the industry-academia relationship. Therefore, future research should investigate documents that somewhat register and bring other viewpoints about

the industry-academia relationships to include different understandings, perspectives and voices, such as students, alumni and industry. Moreover, we suggest expand into other programs, especially in private universities, since this study's results did not represent the totality of existing programs in Brazil that would amplify the reality in scrutiny.

In sum, the so-called barrier between academia and the tourism industry could be challenged by knowing the existing bridges, paving new ones, and overcoming constraints between industry and academia.

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Notes

[1]   World Tourism Organization (2022). Global and regional tourism performance. https://www.unwto.org/tourism-data/global-and-regional-tourism-performance.

[2]   Fast-term Higher Education programs in Brazil, similar to a vocational degree completed within two or three years. In Brazil they are named Tecnólogos.

[3]   The vocational approach emphasizes curriculum skills for employability; conversely, a liberal orientation promotes reflective and contemplative values to critically and freely evaluate and see the world. (Fidget, 2010; Dredge et al., 2012).

[4]   This project was approved by the Ethics Committee in Research (CAAE 31439220.7.0000.0102).

[5]   Brazilian Association of Travel Agencies (ABAV) directs and leads the development of the national travel industry for more than 60 years, and it has 3000 travel agency members which come from 27 states, and they represents 80 percent nation travel market. Source: https://www.wta-web.org/eng/members.

[6]   UFPR Litoral is at Matinhos, a south Brazilian coastal city with 39.359 inhabitants. FURG is at Santa Vitória do Palmar in the extreme south of Brazil, bordering Uruguay, with 30.983 inhabitants. UFRN - Currais Novos is at Currais Novos, an inland city in northeastern Brazil with 41.318 inhabitants. Source: https://censo2022.ibge.gov.br/panorama.