Introduction: Prioritizing Education in Tourism

Education is the cornerstone of sustainable tourism development. Investing in tourism skills and training is now more critical than ever, empowering individuals and communities, driving innovation, fostering responsible practices, and ultimately contributing to the long-term resilience and success of the sector.

Addressing the existing gaps in tourism education and prioritizing the empowerment of young people, can create a skilled and resilient workforce capable of navigating the challenges and opportunities presented by the future of tourism. Managing these challenges will be vital to ensuring the future success of tourism as well as maximizing the opportunities it provides for the next generation.

Background:

The quality and accessibility of tourism education vary greatly across regions and countries. There is a global need for better infrastructure and resources to provide comprehensive and up-to-date training for the tourism workforce. Additionally, the rapid evolution of technology poses new challenges to keeping tourism education relevant and adaptable.

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) forecasts continued growth in international tourist arrivals in the coming years, leading to a surge in employment opportunities within the tourism sector. By 2030, the tourism sector could provide employment for over 300 million people worldwide. To harness this growth potential, a skilled and knowledgeable workforce is paramount, and requires the sector to address existing gaps in education and training.

The public and private sectors have a mutual interest in resolving these limitations to realize the sector's potential to make a positive contribution from both an economic and social perspective. Youth plays an important role in this context. According to
WTTC, the tourism sector employs a higher proportion of youth than is represented in the workforce overall at a global level and has an even more important role in some markets. Especially young people could benefit from the projected growth in tourism employment, once access barriers to quality education and training are overcome. These barriers include a lack of educational resources, limited vocational training options, and insufficient alignment between educational curricula and industry demands. This is in addition to wider factors which are influencing young people’s decisions, including perceptions of the sector as an employer and wider cultural and technological shifts across the world. Addressing these challenges is crucial to ensuring youth inclusion and engagement in the tourism sector.

**UNWTO’s Education Journey:**

The UNWTO Tourism Online Academy was launched in 2019 as a digital platform offering affordable, self-paced tourism and hospitality online courses. It has since grown significantly, with over 23,000 students from more than 150 countries, driven in part by the pandemic, highlighting the increasing importance of online education.

The UNWTO Tourism Education Guidelines provide a comprehensive approach to improving and supporting the tourism sector through education. They emphasize the importance of tourism education pathways and advocate for improved access to address the industry's talent shortage, starting with high school education. The UNWTO Education Toolkit, developed in collaboration with institutions like Cambridge Assessment International Education, AHLEI, and IBO, promotes the integration of tourism studies into high school curricula. It aims to attract and nurture talent specific to the tourism sector, addressing the industry's skills gap.

UNWTO and Lucerne University have launched a Bachelor of Science degree program in International Sustainable Tourism. This program, spanning three years, addresses the need for skilled professionals capable of fostering sustainability in the tourism sector on a global scale.
WTTC Overview of Skills and Youth in Travel & Tourism

New data from WTTC and the Sustainable Global Tourism Center shows that youth employment in Travel & Tourism grew by 27.6% between 2010 and 2019. Although it dropped in 2020, it's evidently rebounding. Travel & Tourism accounted for 8.2% in 2019 of youth employment, up from 6.4% in 2010. This highlights the need for high-quality jobs to attract young talent, crucial as the industry faces staff shortages. Its recovery and future growth depend on addressing this issue and implementing policies to support a skilled workforce.

The 2023 WTM Ministers’ Summit:

This year’s conversation will align with the overall World Travel Market campaign around the Power to Change, with a big focus on sustainability, diversity, and inclusion. The Summit will offer a unique platform for stakeholders to come together, exchange ideas, and forge innovative solutions that will contribute to shape the educational journey in the tourism sector, fostering prosperity and sustainable growth for all.