


## DIAGNOSIS OF TRAINING NEEDS IN RURAL TOURISM COMPANIES IN THE CANTON OF COTACACHI

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### ABSTRACT

The tourism industry in Ecuador needs to have a scientific basis, according to its development and economic growth. According to the Plan for the Creation of Opportunities 2021 - 2025, the government has structured a policy aimed at strengthening the tourism system, therefore, the inquiry carried out with local business representatives will allow us to understand where to direct administrative tools and concrete actions with management models in tourism services. which will seek to promote a culture of quality and good service.

The purpose of this scientific article is to make a diagnosis of training needs of technical and administrative skills for the management of the tourist service of the parish of San Francisco and the Sagrario of the Cotacachi Canton of the province of Imbabura. To this end, it is proposed to develop a situational diagnosis, which evidences the reality of tourism service provider companies; and that allows this research to become a significant contribution to the canton.

**Keywords:** Diagnosis. Technical skills. Training. Rural tourism.

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## INTRODUCTION

Currently, the social and economic context that Ecuador is going through translates into slow economic growth in addition to a strong inequality of access to goods and services that negatively impact all corners of the country in a transversal way, from the national and local levels but also urban and rural. The challenge is to outline elements that consider cultural, natural, historical, heritage resources, etc., as a source of development for tourism through the use of the externalities offered by these material and intangible resources of the "province of the lakes" as it is known; and recently (May 2019) distinguished as a Global Geopark by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (Dávalos, Pinargote, & Brusil, 2019)

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The tourism industry in Ecuador needs to have a scientific basis, according to its development and economic growth. According to the Plan for the Creation of Opportunities 2021 - 2025, the government has structured a policy aimed at strengthening the tourism system, therefore, the inquiry carried out on local business representatives will allow us to understand where to direct administrative tools and concrete actions with quality management models in tourism services. which will seek to promote a culture of quality and good service.

Tourism is a booming economic and social activity, which contributes directly or indirectly to a developing area, generating significant monetary movements, allowing national and foreign investment (Santamaría, 2019). Currently, tourism is the key driver in the socioeconomic process of a destination, that is, the greater the transit of people in the destinations, the greater the economic flow and social development (Silva, 2018).

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in the current economic scenario, tourism is emerging as one of the most dynamic activities of global capitalism. (World Tourism Organization, 2012). Its importance can be seen in the contribution to the generation of wealth, *tourism represents one of the support services for the production of the labor force, for the progressive growth of industrial, commercial and financial relations in the different markets, tourism services serve to support the mobility of labor, which serves as a strategy for the production of capital* (Bravo, 2018).

The tourism sector is a sector with significant growth both globally and nationally, so according to (UNWTO, 2021) tourism contributes 4.6% of global GDP and more than 8.3% of employment. In this sense, the importance of adequate, accurate, up-to-date and

constant training should be highlighted, it is essential since all work carried out in this activity is aimed at a single objective: full customer satisfaction (Mesa, 2018).

During the last decades, countries have included the country brand as one of their competitive advantages in their strategies, which helps them to strengthen their international image in order to favor both tourism and their exports. Ecuador has sought to align itself with the global trend and this is how it consolidates a process of creation and dissemination of its brand "Ecuador loves life"; and in this way it ensures that the imaginary it communicates favors presenting to the world a country with both cultural and natural wealth (Chicaiza, Lastra, & Yáñez, 2014).

The province of Imbabura is in a process of economic and social growth, the declaration of a geopark has allowed the local population to set their sights on tourism as a strategy to strengthen the process of economic and social growth (Gómez, González, & Villalonga, 2019). A reference in this regard is made by (Kliksberg, 2006, p.12), when he states that the degree of trust between social actors, their norms of behavior and the level of associativity that characterizes them; they indicate the richness and strength of the internal social fabric of a society and therefore fundamental elements to achieve a sustainable and sustainable development of tourism.

On the other hand, Cotacachi seeks to make tourism a productive, friendly, economic, and socio-cultural alternative, in such a way that it allows the canton to become an important tourist destination in the local market (Quinga, 2013).

The diversity of the Cotacachi canton promotes development as a tourist alternative, given the advantages it has for its inhabitants, entrepreneurs and urban and rural businessmen, by generating new jobs, promoting family income, and valuing tangible and intangible heritage (Bravo D., 2017)

Currently Cotacachi is made up of 2 urban parishes that make up the canton itself. The urban parishes into which Cotacachi is divided are as follows: El Sagrario located north of 10 de Agosto Street and San Francisco located south of 10 de Agosto Street (Municipality of Cotacachi, 2020).

In Cotacachi, tourism activity has been managed in a disorderly and empirical way in recent years, the last tourism development plan of the canton was prepared in 2002, this fact has not allowed an orderly development of this sector in the parishes of the canton (Association of Municipalities of Ecuador, 2019).

Castelluci (2009) argues that tourism anywhere in the world should have as its primary objective to contribute to the development of peoples. This goal can be achieved through full customer satisfaction. The growing trend in tourism demands more quality in

the provision of services. This situation forces tourist destinations to analyze their current competitiveness in relation to the quality of services, this through the implementation of training programs that are focused on the strengthening of operational personnel.(Reyes J. , 2019)

In this context, Granados & Amaru (2013) must acquire up-to-date knowledge, which allows them to strengthen generic competencies and training in skills and abilities. That is why training is a crucial process for those who develop a tourism activity (Torres, 2016). It is through training that human capital receives the appropriate and necessary technical and theoretical knowledge to correctly develop their function within the tourism company (Valle, Barca, González, & Núñez, 1999). Therefore, if adequate and accurate training is not available, the results could be jeopardized, training can be tedious in many cases, but the benefits obtained are so important that it must be considered as a necessity, since otherwise it becomes a serious problem of competitiveness (Aguilera, 2017). In other words, training is generated by a need, every need is the product of a lack, the lack can be identified if you compare what you have with what you should have; therefore, training needs are those shortcomings of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that personnel have in relation to what the position demands (Díaz Y., 2018).

In agreement, Díaz, Gómez, & De la Osa (2008) present a theory that allows the identification of individual training needs, based on the definition of the competencies that are required for the performance of the same. (Polo, 2003) mentions that, in a shared process, there is a shift from a detection of training needs to one of improvement; It starts from the trainer's previous experience to discover what they need to know, and then develops the content they need to acquire to perform better.

On the other hand, (Guamán, 2018) mentions that there are two groups of identified training needs: Manifest needs and hidden needs.

**Manifest needs:** These are those arising from a change in the organizational structure due to the mobility of personnel or as a response to the technological progress of tourism companies, becoming quite unquestionable needs of the staff, who will occupy a newly created position, working methods and procedures.

**Hidden needs:** They are aimed at identifying the deficiencies in the knowledge, skills and abilities of the owners of tourism companies, which do not allow them to perform optimally in each of their tasks within their job (p.41).

That is why training is a crucial process for those who develop a tourism activity. It is through training that human capital receives the appropriate and necessary technical and

theoretical knowledge to correctly develop its function within the tourism company (González, 1993).(Torres, 2016)

In this sense, the execution of training processes is based on the ethics of service based on principles in relation to the skills, aptitudes and knowledge that an employee can develop continuously. Process improvement is the main objective sought when implementing a training process, especially in the tourism field (Morillo, 2016).

Therefore, if we do not have the appropriate and accurate training, the results could be jeopardized. Training can be tedious in many cases, but the benefits obtained are so important that it must be considered a necessity, since otherwise it becomes a serious problem of competitiveness (Aguilera, 2017).

## METHODOLOGY

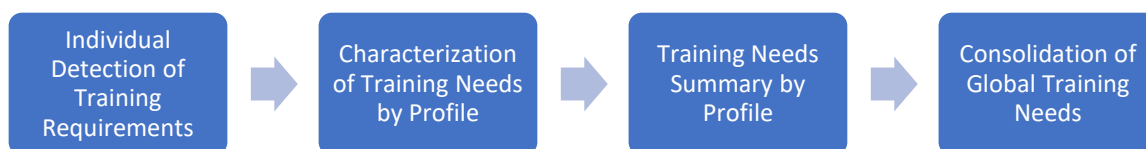
With this research work, the training needs of several companies in the Cotacachi canton were identified, for this a methodology with a qualitative approach was applied. Qualitative research is based on the correlation of variables, this type of research allows the collection of data, description of phenomena, contexts, facts and circumstances, in addition to identifying independent and joint features in order to detail how they are and how they are represented within a population (Sampieri et al., 2014).

Under this description, several research methods were used that allowed a process of detection of real training needs to be carried out (Pastaz & Ruiz, 2020). Other authors propose a methodology based on descriptive, documentary and field research, through the use of research tools such as: the observation sheet that allows demonstrating the current situation of companies, interviews and direct observation, in order to detect the problems arising in situ (Gómez, 2012).

For this reason, the Training Need Detection Process (DNC) aims to discover, integrate and prioritize training needs based on the analysis of the skills that are required of people to adequately perform the different activities and job roles.

For the development of this research, the methodology applied by (Carrión, 2005) is presented, which mentions the steps to be followed to carry out an effective diagnosis of training needs:

## Stage 1: Situation Analysis (Training Needs Study)



A first step in this process will be the search and detection of training needs of each of the tourism companies in the parishes of San Francisco and El Sagrario, as well as the knowledge and skills necessary for work performance.

This process comprises four phases:

1. Individual Detection of Training Requirements
2. Characterization of Training Needs by company
3. Synthesis of Training Needs by company
4. Consolidation of Global Training Needs

First Phase:

For the individual detection of training requirements, a tool was designed and applied to collect information (interview) to all the officials involved. This interview was not anonymous since the needs or skills gaps are specific to each person.

Second Phase:

As a second step, the Characterization of Training Needs was carried out, this was done once, the instrument (interview) was applied to each of the people who are part of the rural tourism companies. The characterization of needs is proposed according to the criteria issued by a team of certified trainers, who raised the competency gaps that were found and that are likely to be solved through training actions.

Third Phase:

As a third step, a Synthesis of Training Needs by company was carried out, this by recording the findings on a matrix that allows to organize in a simple way the training needs present in each of the companies.

Once the results were consolidated, they were analyzed and training priorities were established according to different gaps detected, it should be noted that these were worked on according to their level of priority and importance.

Fourth Phase:

For the development of this phase, a Consolidated Global Training Needs was prepared and presented, which corresponds to the last phase of the process. In this document, the training needs must be grouped according to the demand found in each of the rural tourism companies in the parishes of El Sagrario and San Francisco in the Cotacachi canton.

## DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS

Nowadays, jobs and professions in the tourism sector require constant updating of content, so that a task or function can be carried out correctly, which means that tourism actors must receive specific training in the face of these incessant advances (Peñaloza et al, 2011). In this sense, human capital is constituted as a strategic factor for the achievement of competitiveness objectives in the tourism organizations of the parish of El Sagrario and San Francisco of the Cotacachi canton. The economic growth of the tourism sector is largely determined by the development of its human resources (Lillo, 2012).

For the development of this research, several investigations were determined, of which the most important are presented. The data collected from these scientific articles correspond to the way in which the results are interpreted by the researcher, and as other authors say or have found on the subject.

In this sense, it is a question of elucidating what the results mean and why things happened that way.

Board 1: Analyzed Articles

Item Name	Author	Central theme
<b>Diagnosis of training needs for the UBPC of Pinar del Río</b>	Mabel Caridad Prieto Olivera Raida Alicia Pérez-Marimón <sup>2</sup>	In the achievement of a good DNC, both the immediate superiors and the personnel involved with the position must participate and both provide accurate, truthful and relevant data regarding the information requested, for this it is recommended that the personnel who participate, both on one side and the other, have knowledge of the information that is handled, understand it and contribute to the expansion of it.
<b>Diagnosing Training Needs is a Local Issue</b>	Efrén Méndez Morales	<p>The object of study is the training and/or education needs of the officials who work in the CCSS programmatic units. In this type of research, the object is limited to this area, however, in the diagnostic designs it must be described.</p> <p>It should be noted that, in this type of study, an important set of training desires emerge that must be isolated and discarded because they do not constitute the essence of the object under investigation. A real need for training results from the performance gap that an official presents according to what he knows and what he should know in relation to institutional policies, the type of product or service provided by the programmatic unit and the functions he performs in his job.</p>



		The desire for training results from the spirit of self-improvement, which is normal in most people but should not be included in the table of needs, given its reduced impact on the organization.
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Source: The author

Item Name	Author	Central theme
<b>Diagnosis of Training Needs in Public Officials</b>	Díaz de Casanova, PeggyHernández, MaydelisPérez, Yamilet	The business environment is an agent of constant change and every day it becomes more and more globalized. That is why only organizations that ride at the forefront of these innovations are the most capable of adapting to the environment. Vocational training according to Hill (2007, p12) "constitutes the first stage of development of an individual or group of individuals that is characterized by a curricular program in some discipline and that allows those who obtain it to reach increasingly higher educational levels. In general, they are medium and long-term programs."
<b>Diagnosis of Training Needs for the Animation and Entertainment Staff at the Marival Resort Nuevo Vallarta Hotel</b>	Carlos A. Navarrete Cueto, Maira Rosalía Flores Peña, Mónica Guzmán Pérez, Omar de la Rosa Martínez	Usually those who work in the area of animation and tourist recreation have technical studies in English, they do not have a technical career in tourism and very few have a degree in tourism or related career, in some cases they have nothing to do with tourism and by chance of fate they are in that place doing their best around animation and tourist recreation.

Source: The author

The analysis of the scientific literature made it possible to determine the most relevant aspects of each of the investigations in relation to the topic of study. For Prieto & Pérez (2011), training is generally accepted as one of the best solutions to increase the productivity of organizations by improving the skills and knowledge of employees. On the other hand, (Méndez, 2004) emphasizes the meaning of training planning and the development of human talent as a key to determining the destiny of organizations, which beyond taking a reactive stance in the face of the changing environment of the tourism market, focuses on training as a specific solution to daily problems and contingencies.

Consequently, Casanova, Hernández, & Yamilet, (2018) state that for training to have a strategic sense, it is vital that it is adjusted to the needs of the organization. For this purpose, the Training Needs Diagnosis (DNC) approaches the needs of the business, the characteristics of the current position and the people who occupy the position, presenting a three-dimensional vision of the training process, and finally (Navarrete, Flores, Guzmán, & de la Rosa, 2019) they argue that training can be effective, only if it solves a problem that is



caused by a lack of knowledge, competencies and skills. It is for this reason that the Assessment of Training Needs is particularly necessary in today's changing environment. Consequently, the objective of the training needs diagnosis is to ensure that the training addresses existing problems, is adapted to the current and future objectives of the organization and is also carried out in an effective and cost-effective manner.

In accordance with the research carried out, the difficulties and deficiencies presented by the owners and collaborators of the tourist companies of the parishes of El Sagrario and San Francisco of the Cotacachi canton are exposed, through the structuring of a SWOT matrix with the purpose of identifying and diagnosing the environment in which tourism companies operate.

Bryant, (2002) defines this matrix as the "general state of interpretation of the data in light of the totality of the available evidence, including sources of bias and imprecision (internal validity) and discussion of external validity, as detailed in Table 2.

Board 2: Matriz Foda

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spaces with a quiet environment for training.</li> <li>- Evidence of training activities for the benefit of employees. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal motivations when planning a training.</li> <li>- Information is evidenced in ancestral customs and traditions of the locality for the study and development of a training plan.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Communities organized to carry out training.</li> <li>- Complex knowledge in tourism training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coexistence of interaction between tourism collaborators.</li> <li>- Activities in the communities and the parish for economic benefits. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training with more skills and values.</li> <li>- Quality customer service services.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insufficient trainers suitable for changing the vision of employees in charge of the tourism field.</li> <li>- Little help from the highest authorities.</li> <li>- Lack of attention to giving information to tourists who are interested in these topics.</li> <li>- Problems in providing a correct tourist service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of investment by competent authorities.</li> <li>-Lack of information on rural tourism.</li> <li>-Lack of support with other tourism companies in providing training.</li> <li>-Hiring of trainers in tourism areas, but without adaptation in the processes.</li> <li>- Failures on the part of public authorities in detailing information on rural and urban tourism of tourist sites and establishments.</li> </ul>

Source: The author

The SWOT matrix allowed us to observe positive and negative aspects presented by the tourism organizations of the parishes of El Sagrario and San Francisco del Canton Cotacachi.

Of the findings of the SWOT matrix, the most relevant strength refers to companies with spaces and a quiet environment for training, however, in contrast the most notorious weakness refers to the lack of planning on the part of public and private organizations.

Within the opportunities aspect, the diversity of tourist activities that can be developed in communities and parishes as a means to obtain an economic benefit that allows maintaining sustainable and sustainable tourism is highlighted. Finally, it is considered that the greatest threat corresponds to the insufficiency of trainers in tourism issues, which allow substantially improving the daily performance of companies, especially when training in tourism companies in the canton of Cotacachi and its parishes, must be conceived precisely as models of education and training of technical skills, through which it is necessary first, To form a culture of corporate identity, based on the social values of productivity and quality in operational tasks. (Reyes & Óscar, 2011)

Based on the above, it was possible to obtain a real vision of the current state of tourism workers regarding the type of knowledge they have, what skills they have and what level of education they have, thus evidencing the importance of having a diagnosis on the need for training presented by companies in the tourism sector of the Cotacachi canton. It is worth mentioning as an important fact that the people who are dedicated to tourism in the Cotacachi canton, over the years have been developing empirical knowledge, most of them based on years of experience serving the tourist and overcoming the difficulties that arise in the operational part day by day, becoming this the factor responsible for the poor quality in the provision of the service. causing dissatisfaction in the tourist for the services received.

## RESULTS

According to the research carried out and the data exposed, the difficulties and deficiencies presented by the owners and collaborators of tourist establishments in the fields of: technology management, administrative processes, assertive communication, customer service, sales and tourist information are shown, the data show that all these establishments present serious difficulties, this is largely due to the lack of commitment and accompaniment on the part of the of local governments, through the execution of training programs, which causes tourism servers to have less knowledge of the processes within tourism activities.

Below is a matrix with the training needs presented by tourism companies in the parishes of El Sagrario and San Francisco de Cotacachi.

Board 3: Training Needs Matrix

Training Needs Matrix			
Problems	Requirement	Proposal	Solution
<b>Language management.</b>	Workers who know how to speak different languages in special English.	Provide English courses by the owners to the reception staff.	Invest in language trainings for front desk staff.
<b>Registration in office programs.</b>	Contracted staff must have knowledge of the use of office programs for reception.	Knowledge in the use of office programs such as Excel and Word.	Manage training workshops for the management of office programs.
<b>Document system management.</b>	Staff who manage matrices for the registration of activities carried out by guests.	Establishments should use different documents for the registration of activities.	Create different matrices for activity logging.
<b>Booking management.</b>	Establishments must have several forms of reservation to facilitate the customer's accommodation.	Have applications that help the receptionist to keep a good control of the reservations.	Research the different applications that exist for bookings.
<b>Payment methods.</b>	Establishments must have several means for the customer to make their payment.	Provide training to personnel through different financial institutions.	Hire a finance specialist to guide staff on payment methods.
<b>Technology management.</b>	Always be informed about the evolution of technology.	Acquire new technological equipment.	Train personnel in the use of new technological equipment.
<b>Assertive communication.</b>	Interest on the part of the owners in maintaining communication in an efficient way.	Have training processes in oral and written communication.	Train staff in effective communication.

Fountain. The author.

Once the difficulties were identified and with the sample obtained from the analysis of the interviews, the findings of the research were reviewed. Thus, the results show five points of interest for those who propose to implement a training program. These points are: assertive communication, the use of technology, languages, administrative processes, sales and customer service, the latter being the most relevant that must be prioritized and covered in relation to the demand for tourism services.

In this sense, training in customer service is the first priority of establishments dedicated to tourism, this need becomes a fundamental aspect for the development of tourism in this sector, under this perception it becomes necessary and important that employees improve their knowledge, skills and abilities, so that they can offer a quality service to each of the customers. In addition to generating added value to the business, in a way that allows customer loyalty, these being the key engine for the tourism development of organizations.

The second point of interest or priority for training is in the administrative processes, although the owners of the tourist establishments develop an empirical administration, it is considered that it is necessary to reinforce this knowledge, this in order to measure compliance with the processes through indicators and results.

The use of technology as a third important point or training priority. When starting a business, it is necessary to have the necessary knowledge in technology and handling of state-of-the-art equipment, since they become vital actions to be able to promote, sell and to relate to the customer and society.

Assertive communication is the next point of interest, the owners of these establishments are mostly elderly people. Under this appreciation, it should be mentioned that the importance of proper communication management and basic learning of the English language should be considered, a primary point within the service to tourists.

Finally, the need for sales training. In tourism it is necessary to know how to sell. Sales training serves as a business development engine since it provides tools that are focused on facilitating sales in a better way and with a higher volume.

However, it is important to mention that state entities must pay special attention to these training points in order to solve them and provide a greater experience within the tourism activity. Tourism workers must be willing to receive training that allows them to successfully acquire a good relationship with the tourist. In addition to this, companies must take the initiative and develop programs with expert trainers in each of the aforementioned topics in order to improve the tourist experience within the Parishes.

Finally, it should be mentioned that despite the fact that most of the rural tourism companies in the parish of El Sagrario and San Francisco intend to give the necessary support to customers and propose the non-need for training, these begin to be relevant until companies begin to face problems in these aspects. Only then will companies understand the need to implement training programs on service quality strategies.

It is worth mentioning that companies that do not listen to or respond to the needs of their customers can experience serious difficulties during loyalty. For this reason, it is necessary for these companies to ensure that each of the services provided to customers is carried out in a way that makes them feel unique and special, which is why a series of competencies that can only be achieved through training are presented below.

Board 4: Skills to be acquired through training

Skills to be acquired through training				
Facility Management	Languages	Customer Care and Service	Hospitality	Quality culture
Budget control	Technical English Management	Customer service	Providing quality service	Tourist organization
Technology know-how	Basic French skills	Care for children	Managing Good Habits	Social behaviour
Advertising	Kichwua	Care for the disabled	Handling with each of the types of customers.	Learning in tourism areas
Marketing and promotion	Spanish	Attention to foreigners and locals	Skills specific to the position of managing informant.	Goals and objectives
Communication	Communication	Customer Experience	Knowledge of the client's needs.	Knowledge of local products
Business management	Linguistics	Tourist excitement	Knowledge and correct use of protocol rules	Knowledge of the territories
Business and Commercial Management	Grammar	Problem Management	Use of the client's language orally and in writing.	Consumer Safety and Protection
Analyst and planner in training programs	Phonetics	Customer Support	Cultural and entertainment services.	Principles of continuous improvement

Fountain. The author

## CONCLUSIONS

Tourism has been going through great changes, the needs and demands of tourists are becoming stronger, this means that companies must promote and implement a culture of constant learning, which allows employees to perfect their professional skills and abilities. It is important for every company to carry out periodic diagnoses that allow the generation of planned processes of continuous training based on the needs of customers.

The Tourism Sector Plan 2021-2025 proposed by the executive aims to reactivate tourism and turn it into a sustainable economic activity whose contribution to the well-being and wealth of the country is recognized and valued (MINTUR, 2021) this proposal is associated with the development of labor capacities of the tourism actors of the Cotacachi canton. In this sense, the generation of knowledge is achieved through the implementation of strategies aimed at promoting reflection and the systematization of knowledge through daily practice that allow them to face significant situations linked to the environment.

The application of a DNC should always be directed towards the preparation of personnel, it is better to have professionals specialized in tourism who have the ability to adapt the methodology to the different target groups during the teaching-learning process. As a result, the establishments must monitor variables such as knowledge, skills, abilities,



experience and attitudes in the personnel under their charge, in addition to establishing the characterization of the profile corresponding to the position they perform.

It is necessary that the owners of each tourism company allocate a percentage of the budget generated annually for the implementation of a training plan that allows strengthening the individual and collective capacities of the service providers of the Cotacachi canton. From the above, it is evident that tourism is one of the economic activities that present sustained and sustainable growth, with a growing demand, which demands a greater generation of personalized and quality experiences, so there is an express and fundamental need for continuous improvement in sectoral labor skills.

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