



PR1: Identification of skills, competences and knowledge requirements of tourism university students on today's highly complex and dynamic labour market

Poland

Structure of the research sample

Business	Number
Accommodation facility	33
Travel agency	12
Destination management organization	11
Catering facility	3
Total	59

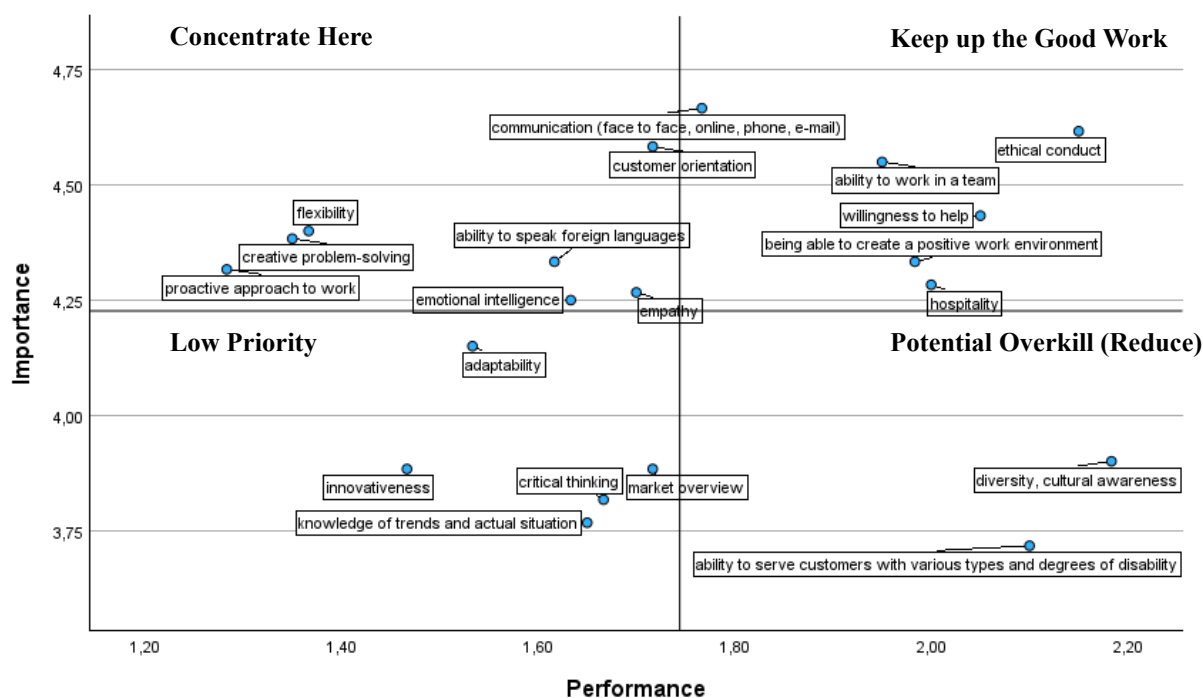
The collected data were analysed by importance-performance analysis (IPA). Moreover, the qualitative analysis was done by the Word Cruncher Analysis; in order to find out the most frequent words and word clouds were used to graphically present the outcomes.

The graphical interpretation of the importance-performance analysis (IPA) is presented in the following figures. Applying the data-centered quadrants approach, the results were analysed using the mean values of the available data. By identifying the most crucial attributes, IPA yields insights into which skills, competences and knowledge areas educators should focus.





Soft skills, competences and knowledge

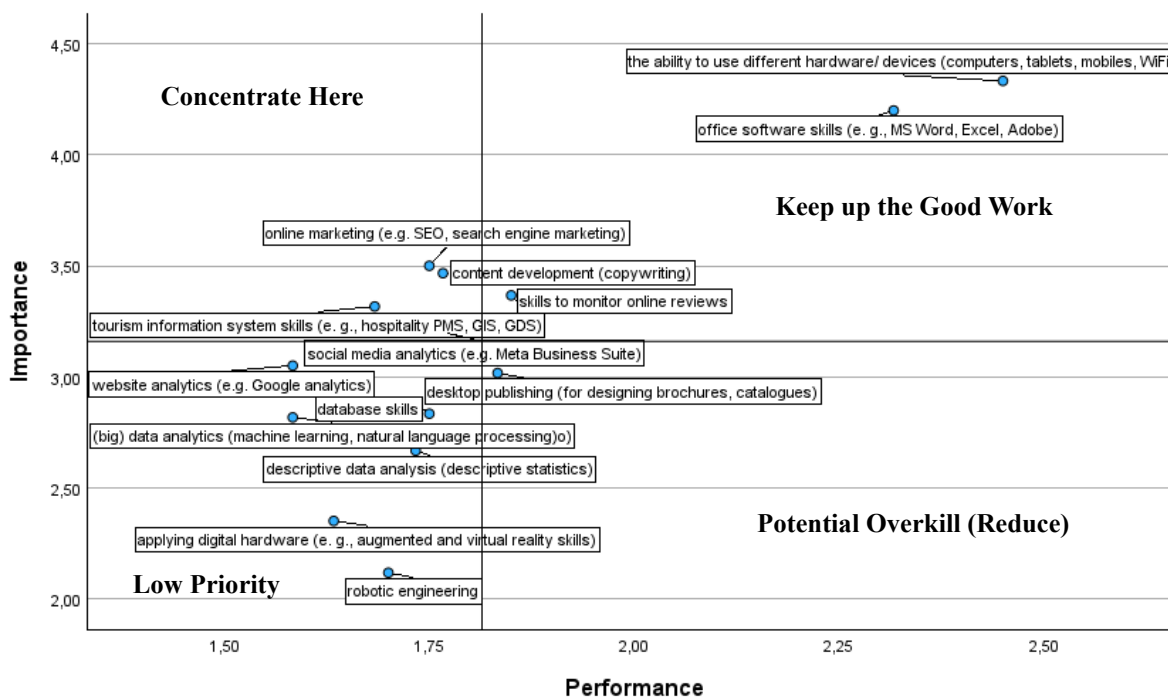


Regarding soft skills, competencies and knowledge, the most urgent are issues located in the quadrant - Concentrate here. The skills, competencies, and knowledge found in this quadrant are in high demand and hold significant importance for employers. However, the performance and proficiency of graduates in these areas are currently very low. Based on the obtained results, employers agree that flexibility, creative problem-solving, proactive approach to work, emotional intelligence, ability to speak foreign languages, empathy, customer orientation should be strengthened during the teaching process. These variables also exhibit the largest gap between importance and performance, indicating that they hold significant value for employers but are the least mastered skills by students. The encouraging result is that both the importance and performance are high and thus the recommendation to keep up the good work is focused on communication, willingness to help, ethical conduct, ability to work in a team, being able to create a positive work environment and hospitalsity.





Hard skills, competences and knowledge

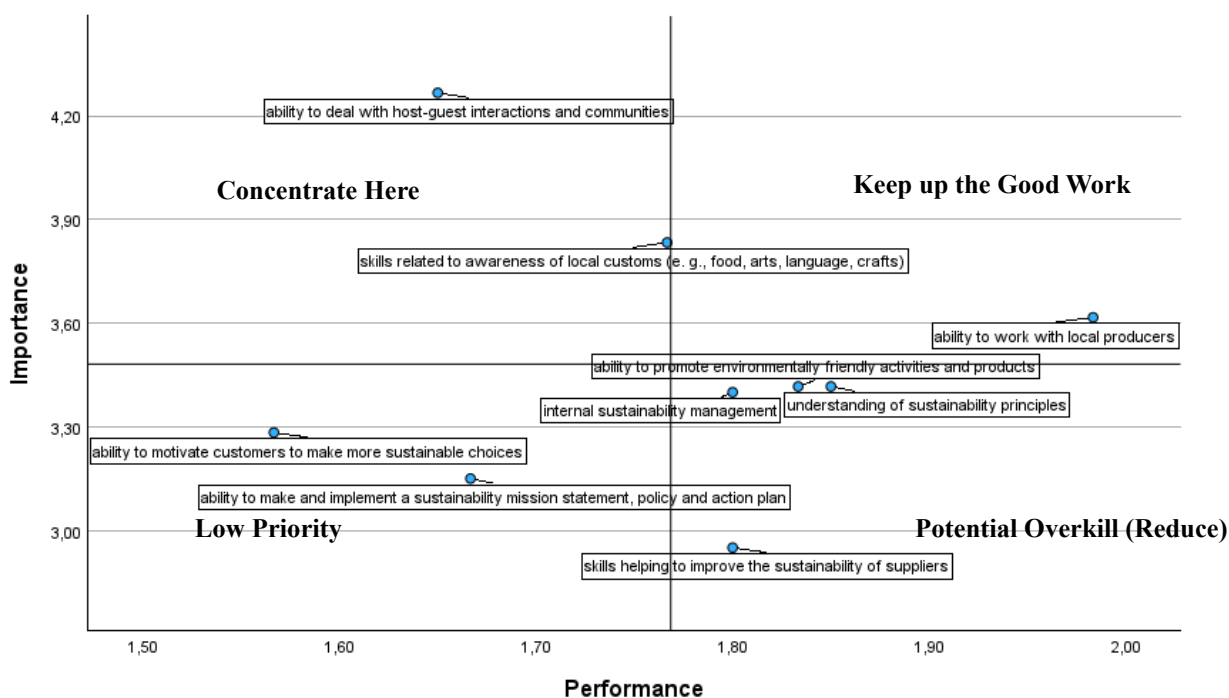


In terms of equipping students with the necessary hard skills, competencies, and knowledge for the labour market, the focus should be directed towards areas that exhibit the most significant gap between importance and performance, such as online marketing, content development and tourism information systems. According to businesses, not so much attention is required in the domains of big data, database, website and social media analytics, descriptive data analytics, applying digital hardware or robotic engineering. However, as UNWTO (2019) indicates, big data and data analytics, together with environmental related technologies, emerge as the most valued technologies to consider in term of future skills development. European Commission also emphasizes the importance of developing hard skills. The growing importance of hard skills for the success is indisputable, particularly when analyzing the main trends (megatrends) in tourism, which are: socio-demographic changes, technological progress, and sustainable development (European Commission, 2022), out of which the technological one seems to be the most overwhelming and dominating. Therefore, in the near future these skills, competencies and knowledge will be more important. Minimal attention from the point of view of the labour market, i.e. employers is needed for robotic engineering and the application of digital hardware. Graduates are well equipped with office software skills, ability to use different hardware and devices and skills to monitor online reviews.





Sustainability skills, competences and knowledge



In regard to sustainability skills, employers currently place significant importance on skills related to awareness of local customers, ability to deal with host-guest interactions and communities. According to businesses, not so much attention is required in the domains of ability to motivate customers to make more sustainable choices and to make and implement a sustainability mission statement, policy and action plan. Graduates are well equipped with ability to work with local producers.





Requirements for an “ideal” employee



Tourism businesses also expressed their requirements for an ideal employee. According to the word cloud, the most important requirement for an ideal employee is ability to learn, followed by flexibility, communicativeness, hardwork, team player, technology savvy, customer-orientation and multilingualism.

Characteristics of university a graduate according to the employers



Co-funded by
the European Union



The employers characterise the university graduate, as a person with high expectations, who can work with information and communication technologies, knows a foreign languages, but without professionally educated, lazy, have little practical experience, irresponsible and non-independent.

Conclusion

The obtained results indicate the need for changes in teaching content as well as teaching styles, methods and techniques in order to make a fit between the graduates' skills and the real needs of the labour market represented by the employers' expectations. The obtained results can be applied to the learning process by employing carefully selected student tasks to make a progress in the required skills. Higher education institutions should focus more intensively on developing the proactive approach to work, creative problem-solving and ability to speak foreign languages. Flexibility and customer orientation should be more essential part of the learning process. As far as hard skills, there is a need to prioritize the topics of online marketing, content development and tourism information system. Employers increasingly value candidates who possess knowledge and commitment to sustainable practices. Additionally, incorporating case studies, leveraging best practices, and engaging students in solving specific assignments and problems from industry can greatly enhance their smart skills development.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**