Tourism is already an important economic sector for many countries and regions around the world. In the terms of resources, many states have little more than attractive, currently unpolluted environments to market internationally in order to sustain their growing populations’ increasing demands. It is vital that such destinations understand the ways in which modern tourism can be harnessed to serve their needs without damaging the assets upon which the prosperity depends.

Today, the business volume of tourism equals or even surpasses that of oil exports, food products or auto-mobiles. Tourism has become one of the major players in international commerce, and represents at the same time one of the main income sources for many developing countries. This growth goes hand in hand with an increasing diversification and competition among destinations. This global spread of tourism in industrialised and developed states has produced economic and employment benefits in many related sectors – from construction to agriculture or telecommunications. The contribution of tourism to economic well-being depends on the quality and the revenues of the tourism offer. United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) assists destinations in their sustainable positioning in even more complex national and international markets. As the United Nations agency dedicated to tourism, UNWTO points out that particularly developing countries tend to benefit from sustainable tourism and acts to help make this a reality.

In the way to green economy the role of the quality of the education has become significant. The article summarizes the opinions of tourism specialists on how practically suitable and qualitative was the knowledge from their studies. The article is dedicated for specialists of the tourism industry, for their awareness and satisfaction with the knowledge gained in the study process. Article aims to find the views of the emerging tourism company managers on the state of the industry, current study programs and the need to change them.

The article includes results of a survey done in 2013, which demonstrates the need for changes in study programs and the need for more professional practice opportunities during studies.

Paradoxically, the developing tourist destination countries have a far greater potential influence over their countries’ tourism. They are potentially better capable to evaluate the success of their marketing efforts and impact of lifelong learning, new skills and competences. In practice, however, they mostly have very restricted budgets, lack of the professional management skills to exploit their advantages and are often dominated by powerful tour operator influences.

Keywords: tourism, learning, green economy, attitude, Latvia.

Introduction

In a world of change, one constant in the last quarter of the twentieth century has been the sustained growth of tourism both as an activity and industry. It is clear that tourism is a major force in the economy of the world, an activity of global importance and significance (Cooper et al., 2000).

Topicality of the subject-matter is prescribed by a necessity of modern study programs in the tourism sector, new knowledge and skills which can be used in practical business.

The development of the local tourism market is an essential part of the Latvian tourism sector and one of the marketing strategy goals of the Latvian tourism. Today priority is given to the aspects like quality, innovations and product compliance with the current market trends and requirements, namely demographic changes and change in consumer behaviour, safety, authentic offers, and environment protection. This trend should also be taken into consideration in Latvia, for the major part of tourists in Europe are experienced travellers with high requirements.

It is possible that travel and tourism industry is the most important industry in the world. During the twentieth century there were many studies conducted round the world to evaluate the economical effect of tourism within regions, instead of studying of social effect and its environmental influence. The environment plays an essential role for tourism development (Atstaja, 2013).

Green growth and green economy are two keywords of global economy in the last few years. Concerning the green economy, contents of this notion varies from a comprehensive, environmentally and socially sound economy in all its possible forms to some of its aspects highlighted as key areas of the
green economy. This study is based on the concept that each country, including Latvia, must have a broad understanding of major theoretical and practical issues of green growth, impacts that green economy developments leave on the society as a whole, processes that affect economic well-being, benefit and losses, and ultimately how all those developments affect everyday life of each individual (Atstaja et al., 2012). Green economy in the aspect of its fields: energy production and services; green construction; clean technology research; clean technologies manufacture; green products manufacture; transport; agriculture; waste management; chemistry and material manufacture; food production, services; eco-tourism; gardening; ecosystems, park management; environmental services; green financial services; city logistic; wholesale; public administration and other institutions.

The majority of green jobs combine existing skills sets with additional skills relating to green technologies, applications or processes. There will be a need for invention, innovation and moulding of some radically new professional expertise. However, the main challenge is to reform and upgrade the VET system and to offer opportunities for initial training, up-skilling and retraining across the entire range of jobs and occupations in a lifelong learning setting (Wells, 2012).

Scientific research problem that is being solved – until now in Latvia the tourism program graduates’ attitude towards quality of the acquired education and its conformity to requirements of the labour market has not been analysed.

For the better description of the situation the authors have chosen the example of tourism industry because of its characteristics – great potential and perspectives for successful analysis of the role of education in the industry and for demonstration of how the new tendencies are reflected in the learning process.

Tourism in Latvia is witnessing a visible growth horizontally and vertically. Manpower education and training highly contribute to the success, growth and competitiveness of the industry. There are different institutions that are running various courses at different skill levels in the Latvia. There is also a clear absence of solid control measures through a specialized administrative unit to bridge the gap between employers’ expectations and curricula output. As a result, a need arises for establishing and enforcing quality standards in tourism education and training (Chlaidze, V. et al., 2008).

Aim of the article is to clarify the education situation of tourism sector employees. In order to accomplish the aim, the following tasks are being solved:

1) research papers and literature is being analysed on drafting and implementing of tourism program occupational standard in programs of various levels;
2) the latest trends and requirements are being studied for lifelong education, green jobs and green economy;
3) opinion of graduates of various Latvian educational establishments is being clarified about practical application of the acquired knowledge and necessary abilities, skills or theory which should be included in studies.

The article is dedicated to the matters of education connecting knowledge, skills and attitude with whom the owners and managers are in contact in a day-to-day basis. It has been concluded by interviewing and surveying that it is necessary for the tourism-specialists to continue to broaden their knowledge and to develop skills after receiving the diploma.

The research has resulted with the novelty that the specialists of the field are ready for constructive change and are interested in taking part in making improvements in study courses and programs.

Scientific originality and practical significance of the article is:

- There are highlighted the main examples of case study topics, included tourism industry problems and sustainable development.
- Proposed basic illustration of situation and attitude.
- Explaining the knowledge, results and attitude between educational institutions and professional organisations.

Materials and Methods. The research employed a combination of approaches; predominantly literature review, analyses of statistical date, surveys and interview methodologies. Recognising the need understand lifelong learning process in tourism industry adaption as an iterative learning process, the literature review, policy learning in the context tourism education development in the Latvia.

Theoretical analysis of the scientific works and practical papers in this field was taken as the research method. Analysis of statistical data and systems analyse was applied as well. In the research there are 297 answers from the respondents summarized.

The respondents were employees of the tourism industry who have completed their studies or training programs achieving the qualification in the last six year. From the respondents a sub-sample group was made ignoring the those whose study field was not related to the tourism. As a result, information about 13 different educational institutions with more than 21 study-programs was obtained.

For data processing computes programs were used. The financial source of respondent’s education was not analyzed because of the no distinction between the answers of the respondents who have educated outside of the Latvia and those whose study field was not related to the tourism. As a result, information about 13 different educational institutions founded by legal entity or the government.

Key results of the research:

1) Information has been gathered about articles and scientific literature which would be useful for making new study programs;
2) Areas and risks have been clarified to which more attention should be paid during the study process, in order to make study programs comply with labour market requirements.
3) Conclusions may serve as basis for further research and activities.

This article deals only with the ideas of some problems and results of tourism industry in Latvia and the authors will be grateful for any discussion, criticism and contributions to the topic under discussion.

Theoretical background

Over the decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Modern tourism is closely linked to development and encompasses
From the economical viewpoint, those are the measures that help improving the environment as the whole and guarantees that tourism brings environment to the optimum harmony. However, it is undeniable that all the tourism industry sectors increasingly respond to eco-tourism problems, so environment-friendly tourism, which can be sustained while the number of tourists continues to increase. Indisputably, tourism and environment constantly interact. Tourism influences environment and environment quality influences tourism (Atstaja et al 2000).

21st century has brought new breezes in the development of economics – IKT is widening the technological options but the orientation towards green economics is imposing new requirements such as the development of new employment options, skills and knowledge. Table 1 displays the traditional aims and objectives which are included in the study programs of tourism.

**Table 1. Aims and objectives in the tourism programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims and Objectives</th>
<th>Mentions %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tourism offers exciting career opportunities</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tourism offers employment/employer links</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tourism is a large, global, growth industry</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tourism allows the application of skills/theory</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Tourism offers international (career) opportunities</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The course develops business/management skills</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Opportunities exist in the private/public sectors</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The course develops transferable skills</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The course provides a sound academic education</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Tourism provides a broad foundation for study</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The course aims to meet the needs of the tourism industry</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. It develops analysis/understanding of decision-making</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The course takes a European perspective</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. It broaches social/sustainable concerns</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. It develops professionalism and professional attitudes</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. The course emphasizes quality and excellence</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. It aims to develop flexibility</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. It broaches an understanding of service and service delivery</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. It aims to develop successful graduates</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. It seeks to develop an understanding of competitive forces</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Traditional skills sets describe established occupations (e.g. welder), additional skills refer to new skills that are added without completely changing the nature of an occupation (organic farming methods, insulation standards in buildings etc.), new skills sets refer to emerging occupations in low-carbon economies (bio-fuels technician, energy consultant etc.). However, the borders between the categories are blurred, e.g. newly emerging occupations almost always build upon traditional skills (Wells, 2012), see fig.1.

The majority of green jobs combine existing skills sets with additional skills relating to green technologies, applications or processes (IL0, 2011). Developing competences like environmental awareness, systems thinking and creativity will need as much attention as the delivery of specific skills. The promotion of competences in learners needs to be an integral part of the entire education system, from early childhood to adult education (Wells, 2012).

![Figure 1. Competences and skills to the green result](Wells, 2012)

**Human traits and habits consist of personal values and attitude. To develop green thinking during study process it is required to develop civil responsibility and critical thinking. At the international level, the work in the field of competences began in 1990 under the aegis of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development – OECD with the international interdisciplinary programme Definition and Selection of Competencies “Education – Lifelong Learning and the Knowledge Economy” (DeSeCo, 2012).**

In reality, in the world community there is a consent concerning the importance of such competences as social, communicative, literacy (including skills in processing information, solving problems, critical thinking, processing native and foreign languages, systemic thinking and life-long learning competence) necessary for successful participation in social life. Besides, in some countries values have become an aspect of special attention (Lobanova, T., Shunin, Y., 2008).

The topic has been widely studied and included in research articles by the scientists from many different countries (Germany, Romania, Spain, UK, Australia, USA, Baltic Sea Region countries, etc).

There have been done surveys on the situation in Baltic Sea Region countries, to find the solution for the analysis of innovation capabilities in small and medium enterprises. In the model, we distinguish between capacities, such as access to financial, physical, technological and human resources, and competencies, such as knowledge and skills, market and entrepreneurial orientation (Baumane, I. et al., 2011; Atstaja,
as well as the characteristics of the situation in tourism area of higher education in Latvia (Chlaidze, V. et al., 2008).

Part of the authors has chosen to study a sub-sector of the tourism industry, for example Eco-tourism, accordingly making the formulation of the practical benefits from learning process and knowledge (Mathew, C. D. et al., 2012). The research on how the owners/managers of small and medium hotels were overcoming their weaknesses in terms of lack of knowledge and skills in running the business was done by part of the authors.

At the same time, the owners and managers of small and medium hotels also felt that the government should play a more proactive role in promoting the tourism industry (Jaafar, M. et al., 2011; Paris, C.M., 2011; Jamal, T. et al., 2011; Bethell, S., Morgan, K., 2011; Tsaur, S.-H. et al., 2010). The most of the analyzation of personnel’s competence was done tourism hotel industry (Liu, Z.-Y. Et al, 2011; Clarke, A., et al., 2009).

The scientific research articles have been done on the compatibility between content of education and the job requirements (Fidgeon, P. R., 2010; Bustelo, F. E. et al., 2010; Gallardo, A. L. et al. 2009; Braun, P., Hollick, M., 2006; Zapalska, A. M., 2006; Paul R. Fidgeon, 2010; Ruhanen, L., 2006; Dredge, D., 2012; Sheng-Hshiuang Tsaur et al., 2010). Usually information management does not support many of the key-knowledge work processes.

Neglecting, the fact that each knowledge worker develops his own subjective configuration based on past experiences, the information absorbed and the particular context of the use of individual skills and abilities. In the relation of tourism curriculum, sustainable tourism pedagogy un knowledges, principles and practice (Jamal, T.B., 2004), as well as Green initiatives into practice (Ciocârlan-Chitucea, A. et al., 2012; Nicholls, S., Kang, S., 2012; Yeoman, I., 2012) Results demonstrated that sometimes substantial differences between the perceived importance of environmental initiatives and their actual adoption or implementation, which includes the importance of variety in assignments to stimulate creative and critical skills.

The findings about tourism employment, green projects, green tourism programs, ways to reach a far broader constituency, provides tools to those who are expected to achieve the targets, green stuff, (Janta, H. et al., 2012; Mcneely, J. A., 2011; Roper, W., 2010). Environmentally friendly measures, domestic and international tourists’ attitudes and sustainable tourism development, supporting the principles of sustainable development in tourism are analyzed (Barkmann, J., Zschiegner, A. K., 2010; Khoshkam, M., Marzuki, A., 2011; Wight, P.A., 2002) Discussing numerous activities during the course of the early 1990s, which arguably moved the government into a “strong sustainability” mode, through its support of the principles of sustainable development, tourism, and ecotourism. As very important factor the necessity of examination and testing of the competency, skills and knowledge and management issues has been emphasized (Cecil, A. Rt al. 2013; Kasim, R.S.R., Omar, A., 2012; Matev, D., Assenova, M., 2012)

Results

Tourism is already an important economic sector for many countries and regions around the world. In resources terms, many states have little more than attractive, currently unpolluted environments to market internationally in order to sustain their growing populations’ increasing demands. It is vital that such destinations understand the ways in which modern tourism can be harnessed to serve their needs without damaging the assets upon which prosperity depends (Middleton, 1998), see fig.2.
The results permit reliable verification of real situation. Apparently the reliability of data of the Table 2 must be clarified by educational institutions listed in the table.

The results permit reliable verification of real situation. Apparently the reliability of data of the Table 2 must be clarified by educational institutions listed in the table.

Individual respondents have pointed out that they regularly continue to develop their knowledge in the field, by qualification courses, seminars, and by continuing the higher education, see fig. 4.

Fig. 5 shown, that respondents answers, that they think, that study results is corresponds with market demands. The results can be seen as objective, taking into account that only employees of the industry were surveyed. It is probable that by surveying all the graduate’s the situation would be

### Table 2. Study programs given by the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational institution</th>
<th>Study program</th>
<th>Length of studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alberta College</td>
<td>Cultural Tourism Management</td>
<td>2 years, part time studies or distance learning - 2.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Centre „Buts”</td>
<td>Tourism services</td>
<td>Qualification – travel consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Centre „Buts”</td>
<td>Tourism Organisation of business</td>
<td>320 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Centre „Buts”</td>
<td>Eco-tourism creator in Latvia</td>
<td>50 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Centre „Buts”</td>
<td>Health and SPA tourism</td>
<td>50 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Centre „Buts”</td>
<td>Rural tourism in Latvia</td>
<td>50 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liepaja University</td>
<td>Tourism management</td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional school Valmiera</td>
<td>Tourism services organisation</td>
<td>Professional education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvian Academy of Sport Education</td>
<td>Manager of active tourism</td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBA</td>
<td>Tourism and Hotel Service</td>
<td>first level prof. higher education study programmes, 2.5 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISMA University of Applied Sciences</td>
<td>Tourism and hospitality management</td>
<td>4 years, professional BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liepājas Valsts tehnikums</td>
<td>Small business manager of tourism and services</td>
<td>first level prof. higher education study programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidzeme University College</td>
<td>Tourist Guide – Travel and Event Manager</td>
<td>Bachelor programme 4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidzeme University College</td>
<td>Tourism Organisation and Management</td>
<td>Bachelor, 3.5 years, part time studies: 4.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidzeme University College</td>
<td>Strategic Tourism Management</td>
<td>Master programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viduslatgalēs profesionala vidusskola</td>
<td>Rural tourism</td>
<td>The average professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Turība</td>
<td>Manager of enterprises and institutions</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Turība</td>
<td>Management of Leisure and Business Events</td>
<td>professional Bachelor’s study programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Turība</td>
<td>Tourism and Hospitality Management</td>
<td>professional Bachelor’s study programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Turība</td>
<td>Strategic Management in Tourism – professional Master’s study programme</td>
<td>first level professional higher education study programmes, 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ltd “Latgales mācību centrs”</td>
<td>Tourism services</td>
<td>960 hours, qualification: travellers’ consultant’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’.
characterized differently. In general, the respondents have noted the situation in the industry, where the most of the risks are identified and regulated, as a positive factor:

- Responsibility and risks at construction process;
- Fire security at countryside tourism accommodations;
- Water supply and sewerage in countryside tourism accommodations;
- Power supply in countryside tourism accommodations;
- Gas supply and ventilation in countryside tourism accommodations;
- Customers feeling of comfort, health and life safety in countryside tourism accommodations;
- Customers belongings security in countryside tourism accommodations;
- Insurance in countryside tourism accommodations;
- Sauna safety;
- Safety conditions of pools, hot massage baths, fitness units in countryside tourism accommodations;
- Active holidays safety in countryside tourism accommodations;
- Movement of food in countryside tourism enterprises;
- The main risk factors are customer’s recklessness and ignorance of instructions or safety demands.

The survey clearly indicated the most significant skills gaps in the areas of “the practical use of foreign languages”, “intercultural communication” “customer service”, and “communications”. Other skill sets that emerged as high priority needs by various respondent groups included “Safety and security”, “health & safety”, “the practical organization of the work” “problem-solving”, “team working”, and “business management”. The survey findings were highly consistent and validated the data reported. In terms of knowledge gaps, the most important were “customer service”, “geography”, and “ethics”, “the use of modern ICT”, “the use of data basis”. Other key areas for various respondent groups were “food hygiene”, “catering”, “wait staff training”, and “business planning and work place organisation”.

For further research it is planned to analyze the answers especially from the employees of the rural tourism, eco-tourism etc. industry.

Acknowledgement

Great gratitude to the managers and owners of tourism companies who helped with the selection of formulation and organization of the survey.

Conclusions

- Tourism creates jobs for local people. It also increases the income of other businesses that supply the tourism industry. There are highlighted the main examples of case study topics, included tourism industry problems in the way to greening economy and sustainable development.
- Green economics is not just about the environment. The implementation of its main principles requires outstanding human creativity, knowledge and the participation of everyone. Green economy is a way to solve development and environmental impact dilemma.
- The article proposes and demonstrates the basic illustration of the situation and attitude which states that the aims and objectives of the tourism-programs are regulated and strictly defined; the respondents are satisfied with the skills and knowledge obtained, valuating them as adequate to the needs of the labour market, partly corresponding to the competences and skills in the lifelong learning and knowledge economy.
- In comparison with many other countries, Latvia is a safe place for travelling, in Latvia, we can rest both in the countryside and in cities without worry or risk. By observing elementary precautions, your trip around Latvia will be safe and worry-free. Mostly it is due to the knowledge, skills and the attitude in the working process of the specialists.

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