

AN APPROACH TO THE DEFINING FACTORS OF SALARIES IN THE SPANISH TOURIST SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The importance of workers in labour-intensive industries, such as tourism, is undeniable. In this sense, it has been investigated for decades from various methodological approaches. However, in the academic literature on tourism, the PLS-SEM path modelling technique has hardly been used. **Methodology:** Therefore, this work uses that technique to contrast which factors define the employees' wages in the Spanish tourism industry. Additionally, an IPMA analysis is carried out, which provides informed decision-making. **Findings:** Thus, the main results obtained are the verification and measurement of the relationships of Human Capital, Labour Conditions and Market with Wages, and the relation between Human Capital and Labour Conditions. Besides, the improvement points in each variable are identified. Especial emphasis is given to those related to Human Capital and, partially, to the Market. **Originality:** Considering the turning point that the temporary cessation of the tourism industry activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic has been, it is essential to take advantage of it to identify and correct existing deficiencies. Therefore, this work aims to be a base document for the identification of these problems. **Research limitations:** However, there are certain limitations to this study. Mainly, as the indicators used are given by the 2018 Salary Structure Survey, they are stiff, and so the design of the model turns to be more difficult.

Keywords: Human Capital, Labour Conditions, Spain, Hospitality, Wages, Tourism

JEL: C51, I36, L83, P36, O15, Z30

UNA APROXIMACIÓN A LOS DEFINIDORES DE LOS SALARIOS EN EL SECTOR TURISTICO ESPAÑOL

RESUMEN

Objetivo: La importancia de los trabajadores en industrias intensivas en mano de obra, como el turismo, es innegable. En este sentido, se ha investigado durante décadas desde diferentes metodologías. Sin embargo, en la literatura académica en turismo, la técnica *PLS-SEM path modelling* apenas ha sido utilizada.

Metodología: Por ello, este trabajo emplea esta técnica para contrastar los factores que definen los salarios de los empleados en la industria turística española. Además, se lleva a cabo un análisis IPMA, que permite la toma de decisiones informada.

Resultados: Así, los principales resultados obtenidos son la verificación y medida de las relaciones del Capital Humano, Condiciones Laborales y Mercado con los Salarios, y la relación entre Capital Humano y Condiciones Laborales. Además, se identifican los puntos de mejora de cada variable. Se presta un interés especial a aquellos relacionados con el Capital Humano y, parcialmente, el Mercado.

Originalidad: Considerando el punto de inflexión que el cese de actividad temporal de la actividad de la industria turística ha supuesto a causa de la pandemia COVID-19, es esencial aprovechar para identificar y corregir las deficiencias existentes. Además, este trabajo pretende ser un documento base para la identificación de estos problemas.

Limitaciones: No obstante, existen algunas limitaciones en este estudio. Principalmente los indicadores utilizados proceden de la Encuesta de Estructura Salarial de 2018, son fijos y, por ende, el diseño del modelo se torna más difícil.

Palabras clave: Capital Humano, Condiciones Laborales, España, Hostelería, Salarios, Turismo

JEL: C51, I36, L83, P36, O15, Z30

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of employees in labour-intensive industries is well known, although it is even more relevant in those industries oriented to services. That is the case of the tourism industry as it employs a large volume of people who must also have a certain level of training and multidisciplinary skills. However, it is often considered a type of activity that generates precarious jobs because of its temporary nature and low remunerations.

In this sense, although the data in absolute terms are unquestionable, it is worth asking whether there are nuances in them. For this, the academic literature has tried to answer this question through various methodologies applied to tourism, as detailed later in this work.

Specifically, this work aims to provide a new approach to the study of the employees of the tourism industry. To achieve that, the PLS-SEM path modelling technique is applied, taking tourism workers in Spain as the study population. This technique allows the modelling of hypotheses through constructs to find significant relationships between them that may explain several specific phenomena.

Thus, this paper proposes a model that considers the constructs "market", "human capital" and "working conditions" as explanatory elements of the construct "salary". In this way, the aim is to find out whether the relationships of the individual indicators with the salary of tourist workers, previously contrasted in the scientific literature, are consistent when they form part of a logical construct that groups them.

Therefore, this work is structured as follows. After this introduction, a brief review of the literature is made on the previously used methodologies. Also, the hypotheses raised, and the main results of the existing academic literature are shown. Thirdly, the methodology and data used are presented. Then, the results are presented and discussed. Finally, some conclusions and recommendations are proposed, along with potential future lines of research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies about the value of workers in the productive fabric and, especially, their remuneration concerning such appreciation, date back to the end of the 18th century, with Adam Smith (Smith, 2011), who mentioned the influence of knowledge and skills of workers on production, and that these should be paid proportionally to the time and cost of their acquisition. However, it is considered that studies aimed at theorizing and quantifying these influences begin the definition of the term "human capital" by Schultz (1961). After him, it was Mincer (1974) who proposed the first quantitative approach to the question by an approximation of the composition of wages through factors such as education and experience. Although this first proposal, associated with the Human

Capital Theory, is the most accepted of all the approaches proposed, it suffers from the lack of more elements that define it, as is the case of seniority or the existence of educational mismatch, among others (Burgos-Flores & López-Montes, 2011).

Consequently, many studies have followed in Mincer's wake by applying more complex regressions to his studies. Specifically, with regard to studies focused on the tourism industry, the use of Mincerian regressions is the methodology par excellence to know what elements and to what degree influence the salary of tourism workers. In these studies, the main interest falls on the existence of educational imbalances (Marchante et al., 2005; Barros & Santos, 2009; García-Pozo et al., 2014) and the effect of the gender variable on the received salary (Kortt et al., 2018; Ons-Cappa et al., 2020).

On the other hand, following the objective of these previous studies, other authors have complemented their research by applying the Oaxaca-Blinder salary decomposition analysis (García-Pozo et al., 2012) and Oaxaca-Ransom (Marfil-Cotilla & Campos-Soria, 2021), or expanded Cobb-Douglas functions (Marchante & Ortega, 2010; Miroslav & Ribaric, 2013; Kang et al., 2019).

However, the main conclusions drawn from previous studies are as follows. On the one hand, the importance of the education of individuals -in years of study- as a way to increase the wages received (Marchante et al., 2005; Barros & Santos, 2009), as well as the positive effects of experience and tenure (Garcia & Tugores, 2015; Kortt et al., 2018; Ons-Cappa et al., 2020). However, (Miroslav & Ribaric, 2013) found partially different results, corroborating the positive effect of education but ruling out the influence of age or tenure.

Furthermore, in some of these studies, and others dedicated exclusively, the innate characters of individuals are analysed under the premise that they penalize workers in certain cases. Thus, even though there may be other discriminatory factors such as nationality or ethnicity, scientific articles that address this phenomenon in the tourism industry focus on wage discrimination based on gender (Garcia & Tugores, 2015; Kortt et al., 2018; Ons-Cappa et al., 2020; Marfil-Cotilla & Campos-Soria, 2021).

Of course, other methodologies have been used to study the innate and acquired characters that affect the wages of employees in the tourism industry, although their use is not as widespread as in the case of the previously mentioned ones. However, it is necessary to clarify that the PLS-SEM technique has been used in studies that deal with tourism (Secondi et al., 2011; Ceballos-Santamaría et al., 2021), although its use is residual in its application to human resources. Specifically, in 2020 began to be used slightly significantly, although not through the previously proposed approach. Thus, Dahash & Al-Dirawi (2018) and Abdolmaleki et al., (2020) used this technique to identify the elements and interactions of Intellectual Capital in case studies in Iran. Additionally, Orlandini (2020) and Sharma & Bhat (2020) focused their work on the organization itself, analysing factors such as market orientation, organizational performance, or innovation in services. In that sense, the only study that has currently used a PLS-SEM methodology

in the field of tourism and human capital is the one of Assaker et al., (2020), which considers elements such as experience, level of education or tenure, among others, to know the effect of these characters on the performance of the company, specifically restaurants.

That is why this study is novel and relevant to the field of tourism as it proposes a new technique to contrast a series of hypotheses not previously dealt with in the literature through this methodological approach.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This work uses the PLS-SEM path modelling methodology to contrast the hypotheses described below, based on the indicators and constructs shown in Table 1. The choice of this methodology is mainly based on the nature of the study, and in the requirements that PLS-SEM path modelling specifies in terms of the necessary characteristics of the data. On the one hand, this study is explanatory in its nature, as the hypotheses have previously been tested using other methodologies, as extracted from the literature review carried out. On the other hand, PLS-SEM is especially desirable when there is no uniformity in the measurement scales (Bodoff & Ho, 2016; Schubert et al., 2018) and does not require a specific distribution of the data – something predictable in a multivariate analysis whose variables differ substantially in their nature – (Chin, 2010). Besides, its robustness against skewed distributions, multicollinearity problems between constructs and indicators, and poor model specification (Cassel et al., 1999), added to the fact that it avoids issues such as indeterminacy of factors, negative estimations of variance or correlations greater than 1 (Fornell & Bookstein, 1982), makes this methodology very interesting for the study of the hypotheses raised.

Table 1. Latent factors

Latent Factor	Item
Human Capital (HC)	Education (HC1)
	Experience (HC2)
	Tenure (HC3)
Labor Conditions (LC)	Type of working day (LC1)
	Type of contract (LC2)
	Job category (LC3)
Market (M)	Type of market (M1)
	Regulation (M2)
Wage (W)	Gross hourly wage (W1)
	Responsibility (W2)
	Business size (W3)

Source: Authors.

These relationships are supported by previous academic literature, although others are novel in this study. It is worth mentioning that the scientific literature on tourism supports these relationships. Nevertheless, differences are expected for other industries or the economy as a whole, since some characteristics of the tourism industry, such as the educational mismatch of its workers or the form of regulation of wages, could be a differentiating element worthy of study.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Human capital (HC) influences employees' wages (W).

In the first place, the positive relationship between Human Capital (HC) and Wages (W) (H2) is supported through its three indicators: education (HC1) (Lillo-Bañuls & Ramón-Rodríguez, 2005; Marchante & Ortega, 2010; Ons-Cappa et al., 2020), experience (HC2) (Marchante et al., 2005; García-Pozo et al., 2014) and tenure (HC3) (Muñoz-Bullón, 2009; Marfil-Cotilla & Campos-Soria, 2021).

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Labour conditions (LC) influence employees' wages (W).

Likewise, the relationship between Labour Conditions (LC) and Wages (W) (H3) was contrasted by (García-Pozo et al., 2014; Ons-Cappa et al., 2020). However, these works considered the type of working day (LC1) and the type of contract (LC2) in the same dimension and did not include the job category (LC3) of the employees. Even so, they describe a positive relationship, just like the one found in the present study.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Human capital (HC) influences employees' labour conditions (LC).

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Market conditions (M) influence employees' wages (W).

Nevertheless, the relationships between Human Capital (HC) and Labour Conditions (LC) (H3), and between Market (M) and Wages (W) (H4), have not been previously treated in the academic literature on tourism in the terms raised in this study, although the latter has recently been studied by Marfil-Cotilla & Campos-Soria (2021) from a gender perspective. In this sense, the contrast of both hypotheses brings quite interesting results since they confirm that such relationships exist and that they are positive and significant. However, the relationship between Human Capital and Labour Conditions stands out due to its high intensity compared to the other latent variables.

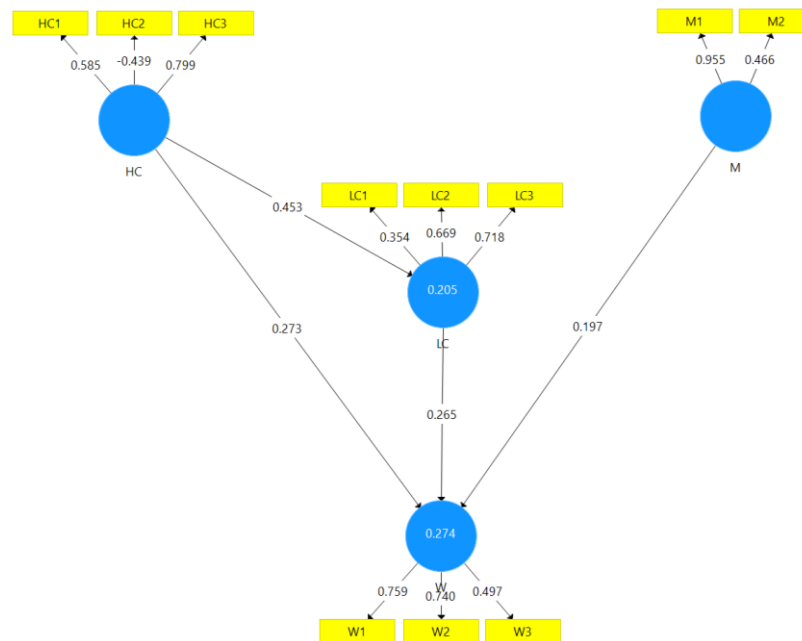
Regarding the sample, it has been extracted from the Salary Structure Survey, in the four-year wave of 2018, which is prepared by the National Institute of Statistics (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2020). Through the effect size (f^2) and the power tables (Cohen, 1988), using the approximation of Green (1991) – for four predictors and small effect size, $n \geq 599$ –, it is verified that the available sample – $n=7,332$ – is enough for the execution of the model. Missing values have been treated through replacement by mean.

Finally, the chosen model has been specified reflectively, with the constructs all related to wage and human capital with labour conditions (Figure 1), designed to contrast the hypotheses shown in Table 4. Furthermore, the authors have tried to include the

maximum number of relevant variables for the topic from among those contained in the Salary Structure Survey. However, even though a greater number of indicators reduces inconveniences such as the indeterminacy of common factors and increases the reliability of the composite measures (Sarstedt et al., 2016; Rigdon et al., 2019; Rigdon et al., 2020), just the necessary ones have been added so as not to vitiate the value of R2.

Yet, two types of analysis have been carried out. First, a traditional PLS analysis was performed to measure the intensity of the relationships between indicators and constructs and between constructs, followed by bootstrapping, which allows the contrast of the hypotheses raised. Finally, an IPMA analysis has been carried out to determine the relative importance and performance of the latent variables considered.

Figure 1. Structural equations model.



Source: Authors.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the model shown in Figure 1, the estimations have been performed using the PLS-SEM path modelling methodology, through the SmartPLS 3.0 software (Ringle et al., 2014). As previously mentioned, the specification of the model and the choice of indicators respond to the existing literature regarding the subject of study. However, it is important to note that the indicators used have not been defined by the researchers but are given by the Salary Structure Survey (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2020) in its four-year wave of 2018. In this sense, the use of this survey is pertinent as the sample accumulates more than 220,000 individuals, carefully and rigorously collected by the

National Institute of Statistics, which is the most complete and reliable sample in existence. In the case of tourist activities, the sample amounts to 7,332 individuals.

This survey explicitly collects the indicators used but with different measurement scales, as a result of the heterogeneity of variables it considers. In this way, it has been necessary to carry out adaptations before the execution of the calculations to adapt such variables and their data to the specifications required by the methodology used. Consequently, the variables have been scaled on a Likert scale 1 to 7 in identical aperture intervals, on a Likert scale 1 to 3 when there were no more categories (M1 and M2), and as dummy variables (W2, LC1 and LC2).

Firstly, it is necessary to assess the measurement model (Table 2) following the criteria for reflective models, the only type of construct used in this study. On the one hand, the individual reliability analysis of the indicators is carried out through the value of the external loads, whose value must be greater than or equal to 0.707 (Hair et al., 2019), although close values are usually accepted in the literature. Under this criterion, most of the indicators used, in all the constructs, present acceptable values.

On the other hand, regarding the rest of the reliability measures of the constructs, following Hair et al. (2019), the following values emerge. On the one hand, the Composite Reliability of the “Salary” and “Market” constructs stands out, as well as their proximity in the case of “Labour Conditions”. On the other hand, Convergent Validity (AVE) is notable in the “Market” construct. However, although the design of the constructs can be improved, the nature of the data and the variables does not allow modifying the indicators that make up the constructs without distorting reality. Furthermore, doing so would contravene the existing literature insofar as it is the one that theoretically supports this model. All in all, the R2A value is very good because even applying the adjusted goodness indicator, that is, more consistent but more restrictive, the values it yields are high and significant, so the predictive capacity of the model is good.

Table 2. Validity and Reliability measures.

	AVE	Composite reliability	R²_A	Cronbach’s α
<i>HC</i>	0.391	0.328		-0.553
<i>LC</i>	0.363	0.613	0.205	0.132
<i>M</i>	0.564	0.699	0.274	0.308
<i>W</i>	0.457	0.710		0.385

Source: Authors.

Next, Table 3 shows the correlations between latent variables, direct effects, and totals. In this sense, the relationships between Human Capital (HC) and Labour Conditions (LC), between Human Capital (HC) and Wages (W) and between Labour Conditions (LC) and Wages (W) are especially noteworthy. Therefore, the dependency between the constructs is confirmed.

Table 3. Matrix of correlations between latent variables, direct and total effects.

	Matrix of correlations				Total effects			
	<i>HC</i>	<i>LC</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>HC</i>	<i>LC</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>
<i>HC</i>	1				0.453			0.393
<i>LC</i>	0.453	1						0.265
<i>M</i>	0.144	0.093	1					0.197
<i>W</i>	0.421	0.407	0.261	1				

Source: Authors.

On the other hand, it is necessary to carry out the contrast of the proposed hypotheses. To do so, bootstrapping has been carried out with 10,000 samples, as recommended by Streukens & Leroi-Werelds (2016), which provides the values collected in Table 4. All the t-statistics obtained are statistically significant at 99 %. Consequently, all hypotheses are confirmed. That is, Human Capital (HC) influences Working Conditions (LC) (H1), Human Capital influences Wages (W) (H1), Working Conditions (LC) influence wages (W) (H2) and the Market (M) influences the Wages (W) (H4).

Table 4. Hypothesis test for direct effects between latent variables.

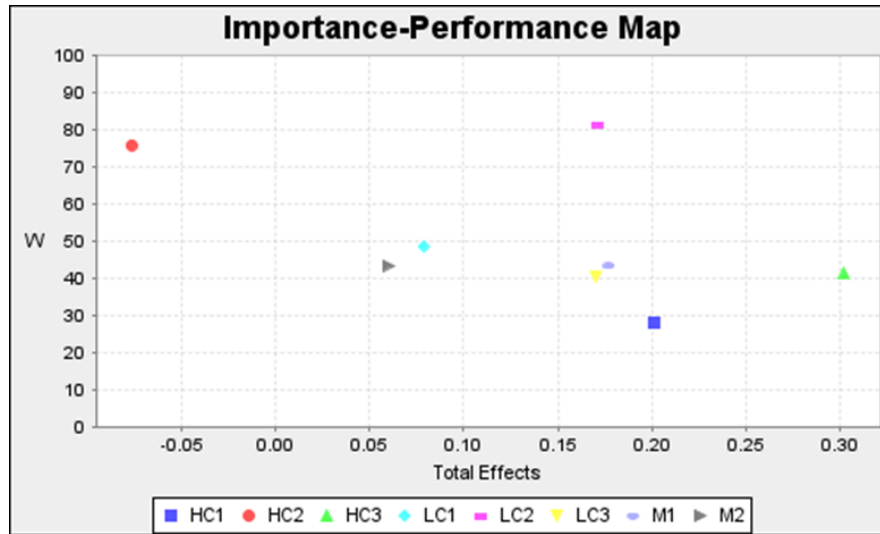
	Direct effects	Standard errors	t statistics
<i>HC</i> → <i>LC</i>	0.453	0.010	43.654*
<i>HC</i> → <i>W</i>	0.273	0.013	21.264*
<i>LC</i> → <i>W</i>	0.265	0.017	15.690*
<i>M</i> → <i>W</i>	0.197	0.011	17.394*

Note: *0.001; **0.01; ***0.1

Source: Authors.

Lastly, an IPMA analysis has been carried out (Figure 2) to show the relative importance and performance of the latent variables in the structural equation model. This type of analysis is especially recommended to offer more informed conclusions, oriented to its application in managerial or governance decisions (Hair et al., 2018). In this way, it is intended to complement the verification of the proposed hypotheses, to suggest actions aimed at improving the performance of the tourism industry concerning human capital. This is even more relevant in the current context of low tourism activity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which may allow rethinking some strategies to improve the different items considered in this study as latent variables. Said strategies must be proposed both from the private sector and from the institutions, independently and jointly, knowing the influence of both in the development of the tourism industry, especially through public policies (Sánchez-Cubo et al., 2021).

Figure 2. IPMA analysis of the model indicators with respect to Wages (W).



Source: Authors.

To carry out this type of analysis, one of the constructs must be defined as the target construct. Given the model shown in Figure 1, the target construct is "Wages" (W). Thus, Figure 2 presents the indicators of the other constructs in a two-dimensional grid that considers their importance and performance. In general, most of the indicators present acceptable values, especially those relating to Labour Conditions (LC), since their importance and performance are similar. Among its indicators, the poor role of the type of working day stands out –generally marked by abuse of part-time contracts (Ons-Cappa et al., 2020)–. The other indicators present acceptable values, although the performance of the type of occupation - labour category - can be improved while the tourism industry is characterized by a significantly higher volume of core employees in relation to the number of managers (García-Pozo et al., 2011).

On the contrary, Human Capital (HC) and Market (M) present fewer positive results. On the one hand, the market presents relatively low importance and medium performance. This means that its two indicators also have low levels of importance and performance. Specifically, both present similar importance –downwards–, although the type of market is significantly more important than the type of regulation –labour agreements–. Therefore, regarding the Market, actions should be taken on the market type, prioritizing the generation or attraction of multinational companies, to increase the performance of this indicator in Wages (W). To this end, incentives for internationalisation are key, possibly through tax benefits in Spain.

On the other hand, Human Capital appears as a very important variable, although with noticeably low performance. Among its indicators, there is a great difference between previous experience and educational level and seniority. While the latter has high importance and a medium performance, the importance of the former is negative, although their performance is very high. Consequently, actions should focus on increasing the performance of educational level and seniority on salary. A priori, this would go through establishing remuneration criteria according to both parameters,

beyond the minimum wage. That is, adding a variable module to the minimum wage based on both indicators. However, this can be a barrier to hiring over-educated personnel, that is, people with a higher level of education than that required for a certain job.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The importance of studying employees, in all its dimensions, is well known. Even more so in labour-intensive industries, such as tourism. This is why this issue has been widely covered in the academic literature on tourism, although not so many pieces of work deal with it from a quantitative approach. Among these latter ones, the PLS-SEM path modelling technique is especially underused and has not been used for the study of wages in the tourism industry. Therefore, this work presents a novel methodological approach to the issue. It contrasts a series of hypotheses whose constructs are composed of indicators that are present, and which are analysed in previous works.

Thus, after carrying out the two proposed analyses –PLS algorithm with bootstrapping, and IPMA–, the results they produce allow the contrast of the hypotheses and the proposal of actions in certain areas susceptible to improvement. In the first place, as reflected in Table 4, the four hypotheses raised are confirmed. That is, Human Capital (CH) influences Labour Conditions (LC) (H3) and Human Capital (HC), the Market (M) and Labour Conditions (LC) influence Wages (W) (H1, H2, H4). To highlight the novel contribution that the demonstration of a causal relationship between Human Capital (HC) and Labour Conditions (LC) (H3) involves, as it has a strong direct effect -0.453 –. On the other hand, the contrast in the relationship between Market (M) and Wages (W) (H4) also represents a novel contribution to the tourism literature related to the issue since it has hardly been studied previously.

Additionally, thanks to the IPMA analysis, recommendations can be made to increase the values of both the indicators and the constructs. These recommendations should serve as a guide to improve the performance of the different variables studied. However, based on the results obtained, the main actions should revolve around a better assessment of the factors "tenure" and "educational level" for the final remuneration, as well as to encourage the internationalization of tourism companies.

For the first of the questions, two non-mutually exclusive actions are proposed. On the one hand, to establish a variable supplement to the minimum inter-professional wage based on the aforementioned indicators. Currently, some companies provide their workers with a supplement for seniority, although it is at the mercy of the entity itself. For this reason, it would be interesting if this supplement to the salary were, really, a mandatory part of the minimum wage. However, this could generate an increase in the volume of under-educated workers since their hiring would entail a lower cost if this measure were not properly articulated.

On the other hand, regarding the internationalization of companies, it is proposed to implement tax benefits for those companies with viable plans to internationalize in the short or medium term. This, according to the data obtained, would increase workers' wages as they are better remunerated as the company operates in larger markets.

However, the present work supposes, on the one hand, the testing of a series of classical hypotheses in the literature from a different methodological approach and, on the other hand, the contribution of new appropriately validated hypotheses. Thus, the results obtained can serve as a starting point for the application of effective business management policies in tourism organizations, to optimize the remuneration of their employees and, consequently, as an ultimate goal, increase their satisfaction. Currently, the context of the practice of tourism inactivity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic should serve to carry out an in-depth analysis of the tourism industry as a whole and address the structural problems it suffers, taking advantage of the occasion to try to solve them. In this sense, one of the biggest problems in the tourism industry is job insecurity and low wages for grassroots workers. Therefore, taking the data derived from this study, as well as the proposed actions, the interested agents could consider making decisions aimed at alleviating these deficiencies.

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