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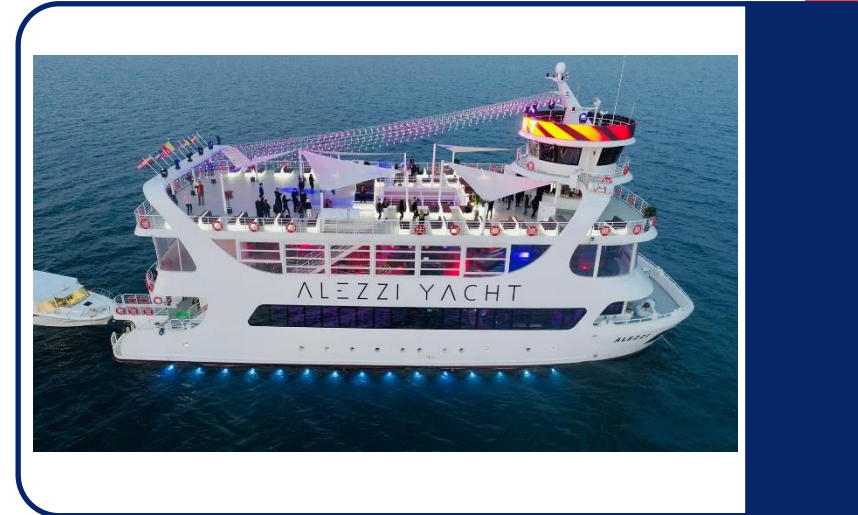




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**AN OVERVIEW OF THE EXISTING
GAP BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY
EDUCATIONAL OFFER FOCUSED ON
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE
MARITIME CRUISE INDUSTRY.
EVIDENCE FROM ROMANIA**



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Introduction



In the cruise industry, crew members play a key role.

If before the pandemic, they were employed from over 100 countries, only highly trained and dedicated professionals being chosen, now this industry has to deal with finding crew members at the local level, who will not only do their job for that were initially prepared, but also comply with and implement improved health and safety protocols that protect the well-being of those on board the ships.

Introduction

Even if previous studies targeting the cruise tourism sector have emphasized directions such as:



- cruising economies,
- management and marketing,
- cruise vessel operational efficiency,
- ship safety management,
- cruising regulations,
- the impact of COVID-19 on the cruise industry

few of them emphasize the need to capitalize on business opportunities, the skills needed for crew members, or the adaptation of the educational offer to the needs of this sector.

Thus, a significant research gap is yet to be filled.

The cruise concept

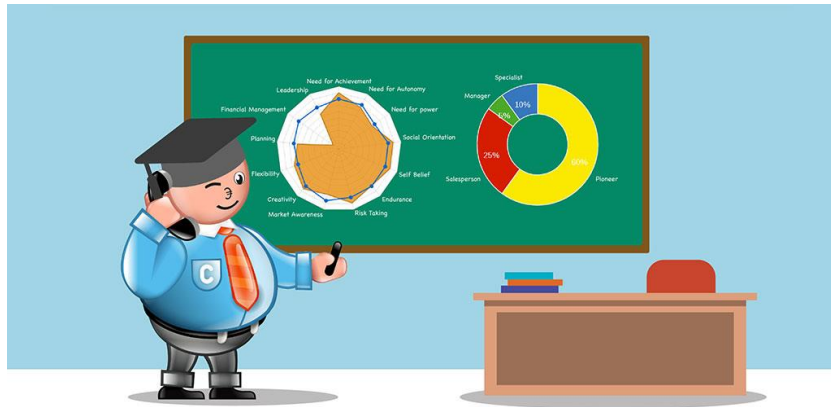
A cruise is more than *a form of transportation and a destination*, it's a *luxury experience* that offers comfort and great facilities onboard and at resort destinations.



A cruise can be seen as *a socio-economic system*, which is the result of the human, organizational and geographical entities interaction, focusing on *creating maritime-transportation-enabled leisure experiences*.

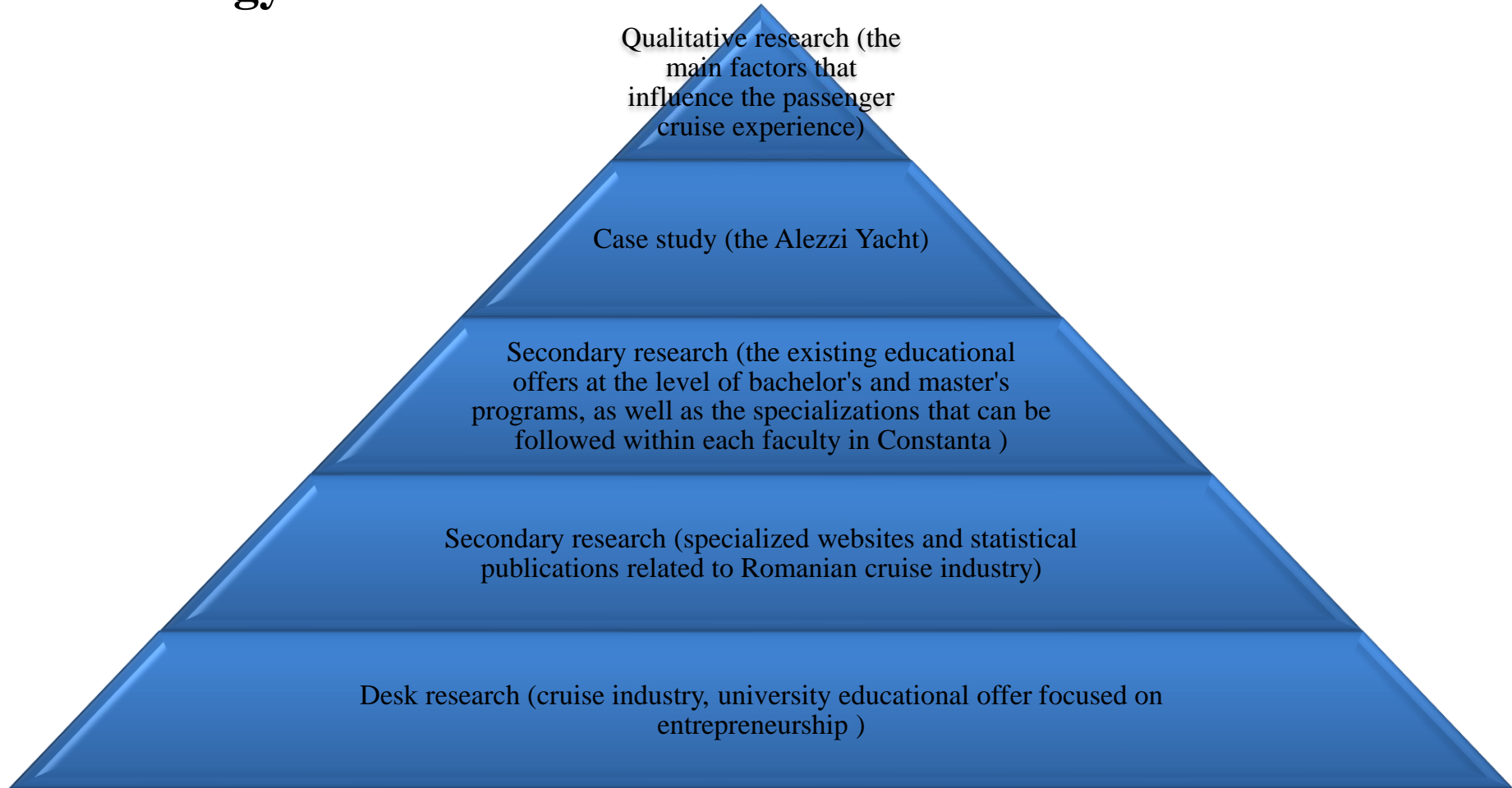
The purpose of the paper

The goal of this paper is to present the existing gap between the university educational offer focused on entrepreneurship and the maritime cruise industry, offering evidence from Romania.



To achieve this goal, the authors illustrate this gap by using a case study that presents the factors that influence the Alezzi Yacht passengers' satisfaction.

Methodology



The cruise industry from Constanta

Constanta is a Romanian port city located on the Black Sea's western coast, being the capital of Constanta county, the 5th in Romania in terms of the number of inhabitants. Constanta Port is a maritime and river port, being located on the Western coast of the Black Sea. Constanta Port is the Black Sea's largest, and Europe's 18th-largest cargo port.

Regarding the cruise industry, Constanta is visited by yachts and smaller-sized luxury ships. In 2020, among the ships that had reservations on the Constanta cruise market, there were ultra-premium cruise travel brands like Azamara, Phoenix Reisen, Fred Olsen, RSSC-Regent Seven Seas, Crystal, Oceania, Silversea, or SeaDream.

Calls of sea-going vessels by type of ship/year (2015-2021)

Calls of sea-going vessels by type of ship/year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Passenger	37	17	13	11	17	0	3
Cargo	1971	1812	1815	1785	1807	1927	1751
Portcontainer	610	684	592	524	510	475	494
Tank	668	665	608	670	687	581	587
Bulk carrier	589	607	574	628	622	558	645
Others	730	546	491	521	533	490	505
Total	4605	4331	4093	4139	14176	4031	3985

The cruise industry from Constanta

Unfortunately, the number of cancellations started to increase (the war between Ukraine and Russia). More than that, the losses generated by this unfortunate and unstable situation also extend to other industries, in the Constanta area being affected not only the event organization sector for maritime ship passengers but also wine tourism (those who dock at the port and led to the wineries of Dobrogea and the traditional shows ended up paying at least 50 euros per person for this experience).

Thus, in order to be able to face such uncertain situations, it is necessary to intervene on several levels (economic, social, and political) so that the cruise tourism industry in the Constanta area can recover and begin to be exploited at maximum capacity.

The situation of maritime passenger ships for 2022

The situation of maritime passenger ships	Number
Sea vessels announced for 2022	40
Sea vessels that canceled the visit for 2022	18

The workforce needed in the cruise industry

The papers published in the area of cruise tourism indicate that one of the big problems of this sector is related to the workforce. It is difficult to find skilled and willing people to work in this sector, especially due to the unattractive conditions in this sector: *low job security and stability, uncomfortable work schedules and long working hours, uncompetitive wages; work–life conflict, low social prestige* .

There are three important groups of employees in the cruise industry: *officers* (e.g. captain, chief engineer, hotel director, or cruise director), *crew* (e.g. motormen, waiters, deckmen or cooks), and *staff* (e.g. photographers, shop managers, hairdressers, aerobics instructors, entertainers, and tour guides).

Taking into account the fact that each of these crew members has a well-defined role on the board of the ship, it is important for the ship management to find trained, experienced people, as soon as possible, who are willing to work in this sector.

Educational offer from Constanta regarding university studies

The educational offer from Constanta is quite limited, but large enough for a port city. There are 2 state universities ("Mircea cel Bătrân" Naval Academy and Ovidius University of Constanța), with a total of 19 faculties, and 2 private universities ("Andrei Saguna" University and "Spiru Haret" University).

The authors analyzed the bachelor's degree programs and the master programs from these 22 faculties in order to determine what are the directions for the training of professional skills within the analyzed faculties from Constanta.

All the faculties have at least 2 different specializations for the bachelor's degree programs, and most of them have also more than 2 different master's programs.

Educational offer from Constanta regarding university studies

Taking into account that Constanta is more than a port city, with multiple economic opportunities, the authors were interested in analyzing the existing specializations in the university educational offer in terms of the training offered in the field of business management or administration (4 specializations focused on business management or administration which can be found in the offers of 4 faculties).

5% of the university educational offer of bachelor's degree programs emphasizes how young people can learn skills, gain knowledge and competencies to be able to take advantage of the opportunities in the Constanta area, to transform those opportunities into business ideas and to manage businesses to both increase profits and bring value to the market.

21.25% of the bachelor's programs and 12.82% of the master's programs focus on learning skills specific to port areas, approximately 16% train engineers, while the rest of the offers are divided between all the other sectors of activity of an economy.

THE ALEZZI YACHT CASE STUDY

Alezzi Yacht is a cruise ship that offers a sea experience along the Romanian coast along the Black Sea coast and a culinary escape for an unforgettable lunch, the choice of a sunset dinner, an extraordinary club night or participation in various worldly events. In addition, Alezzi Yacht deals with the organization of private events.



The cruise ship has a seating capacity of 780 and has three public decks. The Alezzi Yacht is moored in Berth 9 of Midia Port, the departure point for mini-cruises to Tomis Port.

The ship was specially designed for unique experiences to the rhythm of the music, being not only a cruise ship for transporting people, but also a floating bar/restaurant vessel.

THE ALEZZI YACHT CASE STUDY

Google satisfaction score - 4.6 (275 reviews)

Facebook satisfaction score - 4.8 (260 reviews)



The authors of this paper analyzed each of the 535 reviews and, based on qualitative research, determined the main factors that influence the overall satisfaction score of the passengers of the Alezzi Yacht cruise ship.

Factors affecting the general score of Alezzi Yacht passengers

Main factors	Factors	Google reviews	Facebook review
Employees	careful	90.91%	85.00%
	empathetic	89.82%	80.00%
	qualified	80.00%	55.77%
	smiling	9.82%	43.46%
	enough employees for the existing capacity	2.91%	1.15%
	dress thematically	4.36%	4.62%
	polite	52.73%	55.77%
Food	tasty	89.09%	33.46%
	served at the right temperature	11.64%	2.69%
	the right amount of food	0.73%	0.38%
	looking good	68.00%	23.08%
	luxury food	11.64%	21.54%
	specialties served	23.64%	13.08%
	great variety	43.64%	40.77%

Factors affecting the general score of Alezzi Yacht passengers

Main factors	Factors	Google reviews	Facebook review
Drinks	great variety	7.64%	9.23%
	right price	3.64%	8.85%
Prices	suitable for the offered quality	15.64%	13.46%
Atmosphere	relaxing	58.18%	43.46%
	festival atmosphere	83.27%	90.00%
	clubbing	83.64%	85.00%
	exciting	90.18%	91.15%
	unforgettable	93.09%	92.31%
	friendly	29.82%	26.54%
	the place where you can meet new people	28.36%	33.08%
	the place where you can have fun	94.55%	94.23%
	the place where you can dance	72.73%	81.54%
	the place where you can attend concerts	68.00%	43.08%
	the place where you can admire the sea	20.36%	21.54%
	the place where you can enjoy the sunset	12.36%	33.46%
	the place where you can enjoy with your family and children	41.09%	43.85%
	the place where you can enjoy with friends	64.73%	55.77%

Factors affecting the general score of Alezzi Yacht passengers

Main factors	Factors	Google reviews	Facebook review
Music	great variety	94.55%	97.31%
	live music	74.18%	76.15%
	DJ	56.73%	78.46%
	live band	64.00%	71.92%
	concerts	12.36%	65.38%
	festival atmosphere	83.27%	90.00%
	good sound system	60.00%	72.69%
The facilities on the ship	new	31.64%	25.77%
	luxuriant	16.36%	20.38%
	comfortable	12.36%	21.54%
Time and distance	usually between 3 and 5 hours	52.73%	13.08%
	adapted according to the event	1.09%	2.69%
	around the port	37.45%	55.00%
	by the sea, approximately 1 km from the shore	37.45%	48.08%
	during the day	20.36%	8.85%
	at sunset	31.64%	17.69%
	in the night	48.00%	73.46%

Conclusions

The cruise tourism industry is very important for the development of a country's tourism sector. For many years, ***cruises are no longer just a means of transport by sea***, they have become ***a real luxurious experience*** in which passengers can enjoy all the comfort of a 5-star complex on board the ship.

The results of the case study carried out on Alezzi Yacht indicate that on board of the ship there should be ***well-trained staff from other fields***, who will properly deal with the preparation and serving of meals and drinks, ensuring a very good sound and an interactive light show, creating a party atmosphere, immortalizing photo or video moments, as well as offering other types of services that will pleasantly surprise the passengers.

Conclusions

Analyzing the educational offer in Constanta at the level of specializations offered for bachelor's and master's studies, the authors found that there are ***enough programs to provide training for the technical part required on the board of a cruise ship.***

However, when it comes to ***training offered in the area of entrepreneurship or business administration,*** there is a more ***limited offer*** in this direction.

This could indicate ***a problem for the cruise industry in Constanta*** because it is not enough to offer certain types of services on board a cruise ship, but you have to do it in such a way as to find the most profitable and sustainable solutions for this business area.

Conclusions

Thus, even if the passengers place great emphasis on the services offered by the cruise ship crew and the way they behave on board the ship, it is important that in this industry ***the employees also have an entrepreneurial mindset***, so that they can ***identify the latent needs*** of the customers, to ***see*** the ***opportunities*** that can appear in this industry and to ***find creative solutions*** to ***bring added value to economies and society***.

Unfortunately, ***the educational offer in Constanta is still not 100% adapted to this type of mentality***, the emphasis being on the good functioning of an economy in a classic way and ***less on the development of creative tourism, supporting an entrepreneurial mindset***, which could help all the industries in the maritime and port area.

Thus, the results of this paper highlight the ***existing discrepancy between the skills and specializations of the personnel needed in cruise services and the specializations offered by the Romanian educational environment***, offering an overview of the existing gap between the university educational offer focused on entrepreneurship and the maritime cruise industry.

Thank You