

The impact of human resources in achieving and developing quality in tourism, the premise of gaining success

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ABSTRACT

In the current context of financial crisis, the importance given to human resource of tourism has known significant changes regarding the ways of motivation and involvement in order that organizational objective to be achieved.

Quality is a *sine qua non* condition for gaining success in business which must be integrated into the company management and maintained to rates as high as possible. First objective of this paper it's been represented by emphasizing the idea that staff of travel agencies has a decisive role in achieving quality services, involvement of human resources at all levels allowing to use their skills and knowledge for the organization benefit.

In this respect, a special attention is given to the human resources professional training and to the skills improvement at work or outside of it. This idea is supported by all stakeholders need to transfer, especially to the customers, confidence and sense of safety in tourism products, elements that lead to their loyalty and to obtain long-term partnerships. Highlighting this fact is another objective of the article.

But, if these are not a priority, consumer perception of the company is influenced in a negative way and results in an image acquisition unfavorable, requiring higher costs and efforts to improve it. Thus, the current economic situation, launches a challenge to all companies, to secure a brand that consumers can identify and call, and it lies in the ability to create all favorable conditions for achieving staff integration and motivating in order to create quality at all levels.

KEYWORDS

human resources in tourism, quality of tourism, motivation, ethics, professional training.

JEL Classification

M12, H12, J24, O15

Introduction

“Human resources are a great human potential to be understood, motivated and trained to engage them at the highest level in order to achieve organizational objectives” D. Coleman. Starting from this quote, in tourism and services field in general, the staff has an unquestionable significance to the delimitation of high quality services from those with low quality. Development and education of the living resources in a tourism organization, is a first step in positioning it among the companies that pay particular attention to how they are perceived and understood by those to whom they are addressed.

Development concept has much deeper implications than it is observed at first site. The first challenges encountered in the road to success is reflected in the conquest of certain markets and destinations, in coping with technological change, changes the scale of values and performance, management restructuring. A competitive environment determines the company to overcome its limits, adjusting all resources to achieve the desired performance.

From this point of view to achieve the desired level, it is necessary for staff efforts to determine the efficiency and productivity, motivation playing a critical role in the allocation of energy invested by employees. “Therefore, managers have the mission to agree and to correlate the economic performance

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of the organization with the capabilities, possibilities and needs of employees”(Mihail Cristian Negulescu, 2008).

Viewed from another angle, this human resources implication in activities undertaken in the current economic environment has become more of a luxury for most business, the costs of maintaining employees happy at work is too high, considering to be less and less a priority, the desire to make a profit now exceeded the one of long-term welfare, which can not be reached by the same *means*.

A part of human resources involvement in achieving organizational purpose is undoubtedly training with all its forms. This “must become a necessary and mandatory process with investment character, whose feedback is long-term materialized.” (Mihail Cristian Negulescu , 2008). This idea supports the actuality and the always dynamic feature of training employees, its evolution, which is manifested in tourism. Scientific and technical development requires a continuous adaptation to new standards, models, methods and means of work, which needs implementation of a learning plan applied to all hierarchical levels to achieve competitive advantage, a vital element to survival in dealing with competitors and thus for quality assurance.

“The innovations of human resources serve as scarce and valuable resources that are difficult to imitate, therefore leverages the company’s strategic position.” (Barney, 1992; Lado&Wilson, 1994, Reed&DeFillippi, 1990), this is also another fact that supports the importance of staff as a strategic resource of the company.

1. Motivation and ethics – elements of success in tourism

Present constantly demonstrates the strong connection that was created between motivational theory and practice of management concerning it; the two entities complement each other, adding value to all activities undertaken.

Motivation is a complex issue, difficult to be understood, measured, maintained and developed, it is a real challenge for business so that it couldn’t be found a clearly answer to the question: *What makes employees to work efficiently?* The answers are varied, depending on a large number of factors, so that no employee has a perfect copy among co-workers in terms of satisfaction and motivation. Motivation is characterized by dynamism and directional capacity, “in a synthetic approach, we can say that the state of necessity must not only stimulate but also be able to direct the body to certain appropriate ways in order to meet the desires” (J. Nuttin). So motivated behavior is not only a cause but also a mean by which goals are achieved, its intensity is determined by personal needs, but also by external factors that can stimulate this behavior.

Taking as a base for these reasons, the motivation can be understood as a state of imbalance, a certain pressure due to unmet needs, which creates an individual discomfort in order to determine a behavior expression which responds to those needs.

On the other hand, motivation is not complete without the existence of the fairness element, and the two concepts are interrelated, it is important that each employed person to receive certainly that he is properly assessed, that he has the same rights and thus the same chances of job promotion.

Interpersonal communication issue is also severe during the economic crisis when companies need to strengthen their image in which to inspire confidence to the consumers in the brand that they sell and to deliver fair and effective concept of quality in everything they set to undertake both in relations with the outside and inside the company.

Based on a questionnaire applied to a hotel in Argeş County, situation can easily shade company in terms of staff motivation.

To the question **The management delivers a sufficient training?** 66,67% of respondents said they disagree partially with this statement, and this derives from the need to restrict the company’s staff costs and therefore to reduce investment in this field. But internal leadership deals with the responsibility to inform employees with needed data about their tasks and even organize internal trainings in every department when there are changes of any kind which might interfere with their ability to work efficient.

The **access to sufficient information about the company benefits** question reveals that 66,67% of respondents feel that access to information is limited, but enough to be able to perform tasks efficient without in any way be affected by this.

In matter of **satisfaction with the benefits received from the company**, most workers are partially satisfied (62,50%). This is directly related to salary reduction recorded during the economic crisis which in turn led to lower staff costs and generally at the firm level. However 8,33% are satisfied with the current situation, they are generally young people, on their first job, who don't have major expenses and who feel more motivated by intangible elements, such us application of ethical principles in creating fair relationships at work.

I feel motivated to work – the share of respondents partially disagree with this is 48,83%, which means a greater importance given to efficient communication achieved in the company, work environment and job security than wages. The material motivation idea is highlighted in the conclusions drawn from employees on how to grant bonuses, 41, 67% say they are partially unsatisfied because of reduced incomes to all employees, but these can still provide a decent living, as far as possible nowadays.

These were the situations where the company hasn't the most positive impact on staff.

The remaining points discussed in content of the applied questionnaire are positive, relating generally to communication between employees and management, but also concerning the communication implications within teams work. The managers have a significant openness in management concerning communication and informing employees on business plans and decisions (Figure no.1). Thus, they consult subordinates about decisions involving staff, but also in those linked by business processes and development. Possibilities for promotion and expression of ideas are appreciated by most employees as well.

Likewise, 60% of employees want to have more free time spent with family, due to overtime that they make for the commitment to work more and not being necessary the need of hiring other persons.

In conclusion, the high-level management is sensitive to the motivation of employees by giving due importance to decision making and inspiring them the will to participate in meeting the organizational goals. There is also a pleasant, creative and informal communication given by fostering understanding and leaders' capacity of listening to their problems.

However, it can be outlined several proposals to the present situation:

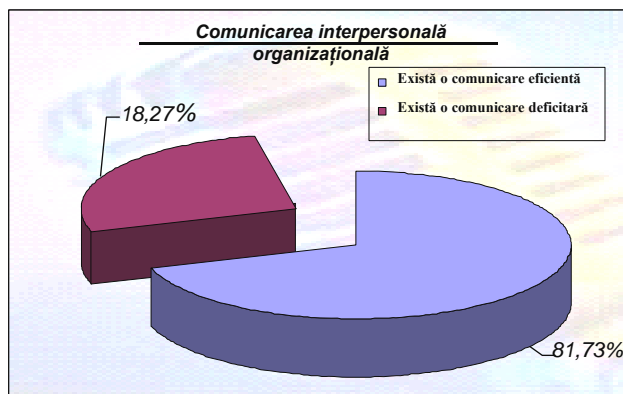
Increased access to information by creating a communication system after Norbert Wiener's cybernetic model, in terms of information transmission regarding every decision taken or discussed at meetings and not only, to each employee (out-put). The staff, in turn, can intervene with proposals, updates or additions in response to out-put, which under this model is named in-put.

A better relationship between senior management and employees may be established by implementing a system of coaching and mentoring. Thus, in a period of six months, for example, must be set measurable objectives, clear, so that the one who is *trained* needs to follow them durring this period until the next evaluation of the results. Throughout this process must to be guided by his coach in order to optimize results, which involves creating precise and effective measures by which is achieved the desired purpose in accordance with company vision and personal needs of the employee.

Also, to motivate staff, the informal meetings between employees are efficient, the organization of team buildings, events and holidays, which everyone should attend to. These measures develop interpersonal communication and increase the chances of formation of functional work groups, which participate actively in achieving organizational goals.

The organizing of working visits it creates a calm state among employees, being able to weak the formal barrier between employees and management. Likewise, organization of the creative ideas contests for discovering the most suitable persons that can work together in teams.

Figure no.1 Interpersonal communication within the organization



2. Training

If we refer to this dimension of success in business the essential is given by the reality that there will always be gaps, smaller or larger between level of training attained and the level required by quality standards, which all services providers in tourism field have to be align with. Therefore, the usefulness of training is proven and can not miss from the long-term adopted strategy.

Tourism is different from other sectors; the consumer satisfaction depends almost totally on the *soft* features of those who have direct contact with them. Not everyone can be able to grow professionally in this field, in addition to native qualities it is also important the educational factor, more than in other areas of activity. Giving the impression and certainty to costumers that the company wishes as much as they to find the best solution to meet the fullest requirements, is an important part of organization culture and motivation, which leads to brand loyalty.

Tourism workers are present whenever a service is provided, material and moral responsibility are very high and tourism product depends so much on the performance delivered by all involved personnel. Teamwork, when it's made efficiently, is the right way to prevent inconveniences which might exist after *consuming* the service and to solve conflicts between companies and consumers.

Seasonality, specifically in the tourism area, is another important aspect in terms of professional development which influences it in a negative way. Details such as natural conditions, the travelers' program flexibility at work, the availability for choosing a certain type of tour package, etc., determinate the existence of seasonality in tourism. This involves significant oscillations in employment, causing a lower requirement in the selection of staff during period of maximum activity.

It can be seen the employees share by economic activity and by educational level (Chart no.1).

Chart no. 1. The share of persons employed by economic activity and by level of education (2007)

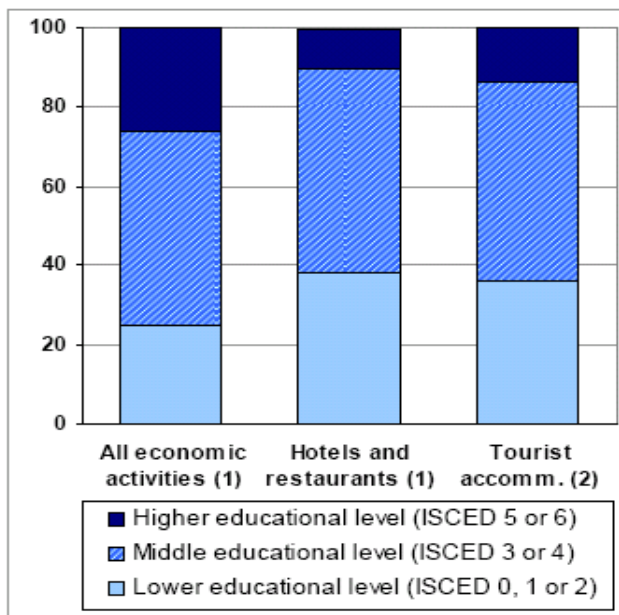
	All economic activities			Hotels and restaurants sector			Tourist accommodation sector		
	Lower	Middle	Higher	Lower	Middle	Higher	Lower	Middle	Higher
EU-27 ¹	25	49	26	38	51	10	36	50	14
BE	23	39	38	34	54	12	:	:	:
BG	15	60	25	10	80	11	:	66	:
CZ	6	79	15	8	88	4	.	84	.
DK	25	43	30	45	41	8	42	41	:
DE	15	59	25	34	59	7	27	64	9
EE	10	56	34	:	70	:	:	:	:
IE	25	38	34	25	45	23	:	:	:
EL	36	39	25	42	50	8	39	50	11
ES	44	24	33	57	27	16	53	25	22
FR	25	45	30	38	49	13	33	47	19
IT	39	45	16	51	45	5	43	48	9
CY	24	40	36	30	47	22	24	43	29
LV	14	62	24	:	79	:	:	:	:
LT	8	59	33	:	75	.	:	:	:
LU	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
HU	13	66	22	14	78	7	14	72	16
MT	60	22	18	71	25	:	73	:	:
NL	25	43	30	43	47	8	37	51	.
AT	19	63	18	31	63	6	28	65	.
PL	10	68	23	9	82	9	.	77	.
PT	71	15	14	80	16	4	71	22	:
RO	25	61	14	12	81	8	:	70	:
SI	16	61	23	.	76	.	:	:	:
SK	4	79	16	5	92	4	:	90	:
FI	17	47	36	23	63	15	.	61	22
SE	14	54	31	30	56	10	25	60	15
UK	22	45	33	28	56	15	:	:	:
HR	18	63	19	.	81	:	.	.	:
TR	66	21	13	70	25	5	:	.	:
IS	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
NO	22	44	34	44	45	13	37	46	.
CH	16	53	30	32	54	14	36	51	13

Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey

Notes: 1) EU-27 for "All economic activities" and "Hotels and restaurants sector" based on data for 24 Member States (not including EE, LV and LU); EU-27 for "Tourist accommodation sector" based on data for 15 Member States that account for 77% of EU employment in this sector (not including BE, BG, EE, IE, LV, LT, LU, MT, RO, SI, SK and UK).

The data provided concludes that more than one third of workers in accommodation field have a low education level. There are two socio-demographic groups: young people and women. A lower level is recorded for those who have a poor level of education. 36% of employees have graduated from high school compared to average EU labor market which stood at 25%. A special case is Switzerland; the percentage of those with lower education is more than double it holds on the market.

Chart no. 2. The share of persons employed by economic activity and by level of education (2007)



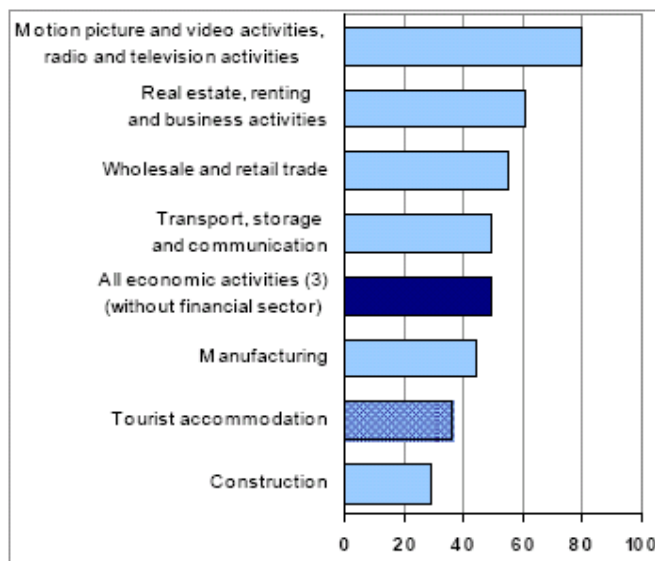
Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey

Notes: 1) "All economic activities" and "Hotels and restaurants sector" based on data for 24 Member States (not including EE, LV and LU); 2) "Tourist accommodation sector" based on data for 15 Member States that account for 77% of EU employment in this sector (not including BE, BG, EE, IE, LV, LT, LU, MT, RO, SI, SK and UK).

Also other countries that provide jobs for people with low education are: Portugal, occupying first place in EU, Germany, Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

So dealing with the tourist accommodation does not require a high level of skills and abilities. But the share of computer use at work is 36% compared with the average of 49% in the economic sectors (lowest recorded level is in construction), which demonstrates that PC skills have a great importance in this area. (Chart No.3)

Chart no. 3. Share of employees using computers in their daily work, by economic activity, EU – 272 (2007)



Source: Eurostat, Community survey on ICT usage and e-commerce in enterprises

Notes: 1) Scope: enterprises with 10 or more employees; 2) EU-27 based on data for 25 Member States (not including DK and LU); 3) "All economic activities" covers enterprises classified in the following sections and groups of the NACE Rev. 1.1 classification: section D (manufacturing); section F (construction); section G (distributive trades); groups 55.1 and 55.2 of section H (hotels and accommodation); section I (transport, storage and communication); section K (real estate, renting and business activities) and groups 92.1 and 92.2 of section O (motion picture, video, radio and television activities).

Unfortunately, it can be seen that the trend is no graduation of a higher education to fill jobs in tourism, but to achieve performance employees must attend to training courses, depending on their needs, the objectives set and the organizational culture. Regarding the higher positions occupied in this field, graduation of faculty and master is required, but not necessarily in this specialization. In practice, more important than tourism education for occupying the leadership position is the experience gained in this area. Often, it is forget that without proper education this status shouldn't be reached in the first stage, that's why many find it hard to recover the lack of education along the way. A well-trained staff is considered to represent the company in all respects, being a true ambassador of organizational culture and values of the particular travel agency, which have to be accurately transmitted to all stakeholders

Conclusions

Tourism is closely linked with the economy, in general, but especially its relation to issues concerning social side, specific to modern civilization in which we live, it is an integral part of society and it is influenced by its development. In its dynamics, both at national and international level, tourism is present within large segments and fully meets their needs. Travel service provider is placed in center, implying its participations in all activities related to tourism in its complexity. A significant aspect is that of staff competence in tourism, human resource is a vital resource necessary to any organization existence.

Hospitality, a distinct branch of tourism, involves processes and related activities in respect of accommodation, reception, stay and departure of travelers. This industry is continuously changing,

evolving to new functions and forms of benefits. The specific travel company is represented by the uniqueness of products, services requiring a certain prestige and a favorable impression, given the environment, quality, promptness, courtesy, items related to organizational culture and plays an important role in delivering the service. And all these are made with the help of human resources effort in a company.

Because of this, human factor is the main component that can provide functionality to other components of the offer. Also, the volume and quality of tourism are directly proportional to the number of service consumers and in turn it affects the development of human resources in tourism by creating new jobs and by achieving a higher level of training.

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