

**STUDENT'S CORNER**

## The Role of Higher Education in Developing Human Resources in the Field of Tourism

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**ABSTRACT**

*The present paper aims at a two-fold analysis of the labour market in the Romanian tourism field, both from the point of view of the latter's particularities – identified in the specialized literature – as well as by means of the data gathered from statistic-running sources pertaining to the main markers which characterize the labour market in this field (the employed population, structure of employed population based on gender, age groups, attained level of education etc.). Moreover, the paper features an outline of the current state of higher education in the field of tourism from the point of view of the university offers and the needs which should be satisfied by the study programs encompassed in the offers. Furthermore, the research comprises a survey-based analysis of how the students enrolled in the masters programs of the Faculty of Commerce within the Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest perceive the quality and relevance of the courses they are attending, as well as their opinion on a future career in tourism from the point of view of motivational factors which may positively or negatively influence the choice of this professional field. Taking into consideration the unquestionable importance of human capital in providing high-quality services in tourism, the training of human resources in this field should be maintained at the highest of standards, all the while acknowledging the key-role of higher education.*

**Keywords:** *human resources, tourism, higher education, labour market*

**JEL Classification**

I20, I25, J40, M53

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**Introduction**

The development of tourism has had remarkable positive effects, with the result of aiding the economic recovery of many countries with valuable tourist potential as well as by providing a significant segment for employment. In September 2012, the Eurostat statistics showed the existence of an estimative 12 to 14 million jobs in tourism in all the 27 member states of the European Union, from which 2.4 million in lodging alone. Moreover, the tourism industry accounts for over 5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the European Union.

The relationship between tourism and human capital is of a complex, inter-conditional nature, with each of the two elements acting as both cause and effect. Thus, boosting the growth of tourism is an important means through which the workforce can be revived while the evolution (and the stagnation respectively) of tourism development is based on the presence or lack of human resources in a given area.

Thus, the pinpointing of the industry's needs with regards to training human resources is essential and must be undergone in order to allow the higher education institutions to adapt their curricula and offer appropriate, high-standard educational services.

## 1. The particularities of working in tourism

In the field of human resources, tourism stands apart as a dynamic sector which creates jobs, especially for youths. Developing tourism, which is an industry that employs numerous staff and requires a comprehensive skill set (Neacșu, Baron and Snak, 2006), plays an essential role in the fight against unemployment.

It is a widely-accepted fact that employees play a paramount role in the successful providing of high-quality tourist services and consequently represent an essential resource for tourist organizations. For this reason, it is often stated that a company's success story is set around people, around their education and training, the way in which they are appreciated and rewarded, and around the aid they receive during the continuous process of study and career development (Gruescu, Nanu and Pîrvu, 2008). The interaction between tourists and tourism staff constitutes the foundation of the tourist experience, seen as a whole (Amoah and Baum, 1997).

However, this interaction presents numerous problems and is difficult to control, with the responsibility of offering high-quality services falling to front-office employees who are in direct contact with the clients: they must possess the proper skills, knowledge, attitude, authority and information needed to provide the clients with high-quality, personalized services, as well as being capable of learning and quickly adapt to changes (Beech and Chadwick, 2005).

Although the attested literature also presents clearly pejorative opinions according to which the services branch, and consequently tourism, is underpaid, frowned upon, lacking in benefits and with no real future, constituting a proper career choice solely for those who have never had a job, attention must also be granted to the diversity and variety of job opportunities in the field of tourism. Thus, in some areas and departments of tourism, the industry offers jobs in attractive work environments, within high social levels, competitive salaries and good work conditions. These jobs are very attractive and incur a very low level of staff fluctuation. On the other hand, there are also less well paid positions, with unsatisfactory working conditions and a high level of staff fluctuation, as well as issues in recruiting staff with certain qualifications (Nickson, 2007).

Tourism, as a workforce catalyst offers numerous advantages based on the following aspects:

- Numerous job opportunities for beginners, for youths (especially those at the beginning of their career), feminine staff, as well as the possibility of choosing from among a vast array of tourism-specific jobs;
- Seasonal or part-time jobs for those employees in need of time-flexibility in order to continue their studies or respect domestic responsibilities;
- Generating workplaces in areas with a high rate of unemployment (urban centres, rural communities);
- Leading to more job opportunities in small and medium enterprises – the main driving force of the market economy.

Working in tourism, and in the hotel industry in particular, presents specific characteristics, with a list of the aforementioned traits, identified by the International Labour Organization, presented below (Vellas and Becherel, 1995).

Firstly, working in tourism is characterized by a low level of technical requirements: many of the hotel and food-preparation jobs do not call for a high degree of specialized knowledge; such as the position of porter, elevator worker, concierge, security guard, laundry worker etc. This fact has a negative influence on the hotel industry's image, especially in those countries where wages for such positions are very low on account of the high rate of unemployment and the readily-available workforce.

Secondly, tourism is defined by high levels of work mobility: even when the position is not seasonal, fluctuations related to the degree of workforce training are often registered.

Thus, in more demanding periods of intense tourist presence, there is a tendency to employ occasional additional staff even for just a few days or for only one evening. In the instance of seasonal activities, tourism organizers must often resort to improvising as well as relocating the necessary staff to certain

resorts (on the sea-coast during summertime and at mountain resorts in winter), taking on numerous unqualified (or insufficiently qualified) seasonal staff which leads not only to staff fluctuations but also to low quality services for tourists.

Yet another characteristic refers to inconvenient work hours and schedules: the fact that the employees of the field have to work during week-ends or during the night, on holidays, all the while being forced to spend their own holidays in off-season makes staff recruitment difficult, especially in what youths are concerned.

The length of the workday is also specific to the industry: running a hotel requires the organization of staff teams during well-defined day and night time frames. Although in the great hotel chains the work-schedule has been adapted to previously-existing patterns from other sectors of the economy, in the case of smaller hotels or independent restaurants, a shift-based system could even be non-existent, the employees having to cover the entire working-schedule with obvious negative repercussions on family life and other aspects.

Moreover, the high degree of fatigue, both mental and physical is a characteristic of working in tourism: for example, most of the cooking-related kitchen jobs are very tiring and uncomfortable. The temperatures spike; employees must carry different heavy loads, spend long periods of time without sitting down and, during rush-hours, the intense activity can lead to amplified tension. The same situation can describe the activity of porters, room cleaners, waiters etc.

Another important factor for taking into consideration is the psychological stress: the staff working directly with clients must display patience, good humour and control over any and all situations. The respective employees must maintain courtesy, calm and keep smiling even when clients are complaining (sometimes unfairly), or otherwise criticize the received services. Furthermore, many positions require compulsory attire, of both elegance and sharpness. Other requirements may refer to the ability of speaking several foreign languages, the need for proper diction and plenty of tact in relating with the clients.

An issue of special interest should be staff fluctuation in tourism, especially at managerial levels, where it concerns highly-qualified employees (graduates of a higher education program). In their study, Arjan van Rheede, Debbie Tromp and Robert J. Bloome state that the fluctuation of this kind of employees within the hospitality industry is increasing in Europe, with the search for ways in which to halt the phenomenon constituting one of the main challenges in the field (Van Rheede, Tromp and Bloome, 2009).

## **2. Tourism in the context of higher education**

From the point of view of professional training, a vast majority of specialists from within the industry believe that tourism is in need of highly qualified staff, possessing a wealth of knowledge, superior training and the ability to speak an international language as well as the capacity of recommending and promoting the tourist product which they are marketing. The same specialists also admit that tourism is an industry encompassing activities which do not require trained staff, thus absorbing a great portion of the unqualified or under qualified workforce (Gruescu, Nanu and Pîrvu, 2008).

The main issues concerning tourism, namely the quality and availability of qualified staff, the rewards and benefits, staff fluctuation, the schedule and working conditions, as well as the employment of expatriates are connected and can even be solved through education. The academic programs developed over the years in the field of tourism are meant to meet this industry's demands for developing human resources capable of coping with a competitive environment. The aforementioned demands are (Amoah and Baum, 1997):

- Keeping the industry in touch with modern technology and trends;
- Disposing of qualified candidates, ready at any moment to replace already employed staff;
- Improving the image of working in tourism;
- Supplying staff to new, developing activities, within tourism;
- Regulating the already available jobs in tourism;

- Meeting the increased demands for services and communication from clients.

A human-resource development strategy should focus on two goals: firstly, offering competitive work conditions and career-development opportunities, with adequate recruitment on all levels of employment and, secondly, providing study and training opportunities for all positions and specialisations (Doswell, 1997).

A series of programs, meant to provide education in this field, such as training sessions for the acquirement of basic skills, and tourist management programs have been developed over time, in order to grant future employees the knowledge and skill sets needed in tourism. There are two types of educational and training providers (Gee and Fayos-Sola, 1997): those who offer courses and formal study programs (such as vocational or academic programs) and employer-offered training (such as management-oriented training programs).

One may, therefore, distinguish between education, which fulfils the purpose of offering information and passing on knowledge to students, and training, which entails the acquirement and honing of specific skills (the precise steps needed for completing a certain task). In most cases, the students require both types of instruction, especially in the case of some vocational fields such as tourism. Therefore, finding a balance between the two is compulsory when it comes to tourism workforce formation (Doswell, 1997).

As for the academic programs, they are most often provided by higher education institutions and offer both general and business management know-how as well as specific skills used in the hospitality field. Work experience comprising practice stages or internships of one semester or even one year in length constitute, in most cases, a compulsory requirement of the curriculum. Moreover, universities also offer tourism-oriented courses in which tourism is studied and researched from a number of perspectives, such as management, sociology and geography.

Despite the availability of increasing professional training opportunities in the field, the workforce involved in tourism is still perceived as having a low professional status. The situation is changing, however, especially with employers who are more preoccupied with formal, academic education, meant to supplement the education provided through workplace training programs (Gee and Fayos-Sola, 1997).

Performance in tourism can be enhanced through training of specialists. Although numerous educational institutions offer courses in tourism (high schools, professional schools, universities with both bachelor's and master's programs, postgraduate studies and doctoral studies), the quality of Romanian tourism remains low and is unable to provide top-grade services (Țigu, Andreeva and Nica, 2010).

In our country, the capital obviously has the highest concentration of specialized institutions on all levels: high schools, professional schools and universities. Taking into consideration the purpose of the present paper, we will be concentrating on the university offers with regards to specialization programs in tourism. For example, the Faculty of Commerce within the Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest was the first to include tourism in its curricula, towards the end of the 1960'. In 1977, tourism was granted the rank of specialization within the Faculty of Commerce and after 1990, the study of the field had been included in the educational planning of numerous public or private universities both in Bucharest and in numerous other Romanian cities: Constanța, Craiova, Ploiești, Timișoara, Iași, Suceava, Cluj, Târgu-Jiu etc. (Țigu, Andreeva and Nica, 2010).

After joining the European Union, Romania adopted the Bologna educational system, which structures higher education thus: bachelor's cycle (3 years), master's cycle (2 years), doctoral cycle (3 years). Within bachelor's studies, tourism is found in two fields of study: economy (the Economy of Commerce, Tourism and Services specialization) and business administration (the Business Administration in Commerce, Tourism, Services, Commodity Science and Quality Management specialization). The master's studies are more varied, and are meant for those students who continue their training in the field of tourism (research or in-depth master's program) or those who chose to change their bachelor's studies field (professional or complementary master's program). The names of

the master's programs are suggestive for the available specializations: Business administration in tourism, Tourism Management and Marketing, Business in tourism, Business administration in the hospitality industry, Business administration in the hotel industry etc.

Among the studied disciplines in most of these tourism-oriented programs, one may find: The Economy of Services; Tourism Economy; Tourism Operational Techniques; Administration of Commercial Enterprises, Tourism and Services; Ecotourism; Hotel and Restaurant Technology; Ethics in Commerce, Tourism and Services; Tourist-destinations Management; Hotel Management; The Management of Human Resources in Tourism; Tourism Operations Management; Territorial Landscaping in Tourism; Rural Tourism; The Management of Change and Development in Tourism; Tourism Marketing etc.

The interest shown by youths towards university programs such as those mentioned above, which can provide them with a specialization in the field of tourism, is primarily influenced by their perception of the field from the point of view of such elements as the degree of development of the tourist market in a given period of time, public tourism development policies, tourism labour market job opportunities, the rate of investment in tourism etc.

### **3. Research methodology**

The undergone research is based on the statistical data analysis which characterizes the present state of the labour market in the "Hotels and Restaurants" sector and its evolution between the years 2007 and 2011 in Romania. Furthermore, a questionnaire-based, quantitative research has also been undergone among the students of the two tourist profile master's programs offered by the Faculty of Commerce within the Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest: Business Administration in Tourism (research masters' program) and Management and Marketing in Tourism (professional masters' program). The questionnaire was filled-in by a lot of 56 students.

The main goals of the research were to identify the current labour market trends in the Romanian field of tourism and to discover the motivation of the students who are attending a higher education program in the field, their opinion with regards to the educational services they have been provided and to what degree do they believe the programs will aid them in their attempt to join the tourism labour market.

Already existing, rigorous statistic data regarding the employed labour force in tourism is extremely limited, although it can facilitate a synthetic market analysis of the field based on existing statistic data of the "Hotels and Restaurants" sector. However, it fails to accurately portray the state of the tourism industry. The statistic data used in the research was facilitated by the National Institute of Statistics and the website of the Statistical Office of the European Union, Eurostat.

### **4. Results and observations**

This section of the paper presents the results attained after analysing both the statistical data concerning the labour market in the "Hotels and Restaurant" sector and the information gathered with the help of the questionnaire-based research among students.

#### **4.1 The labour market in the Romanian Hotels and Restaurants sector**

In the following section we have illustrated and analysed the statistic data concerning the labour market in the "Hotels and Restaurants" sector. In this research we have used statistic data in connection with: the number of employees in the "Hotels and Restaurants" sector, compared with the total number of employees in Romania, the structure of the former on the basis of the graduated education levels, age groups, gender, activity nature (part-time/full-time), average seniority with the same employer, the number of employees with permanent contracts and the number of workers with atypical work history.

Thus, Table 1 presents the number of employees in the “Hotels and Restaurants” sector, compared with the total number of employees in the 2007-2011 time frame. One may observe that, although at the national level the number of employees has registered an annual decline since 2009, the number of employees in the “Hotels and Restaurants” sector has registered continuous growth throughout the period. The annual average number of employees in this sector has been of 164.2 thousand during the period 2007-2011, with a registered growth of around 12 thousand workers per year (the equivalent of an average growth rate of 7.8%).

The percentage of employees engaged in tourism out of the total number of Romanian employees has risen in the analysed period, although its value has remained relatively low: climbing from 1.46% in 2007 to 2.02% in 2011. A possible cause for the growth of this percentage is the development and extension of tourist activities in Romania, even during a period of crisis, such as the current one. Furthermore, seeing how tourism is extensively based on workforce, one can also account for the increased number of employees in this field.

**The percentage of employees engaged in the “Hotels and Restaurants” sector out of the total number of Romanian employees**

**Table 1**

Category Year	No. of employees in the Hotels and Restaurants (thousands)	No. of employees in Romania (thousands)	Percentage (%)
2007	137	9 353	1,46
2008	154	9 369	1,64
2009	165	9 243	1,78
2010	180	9 239	1,95
2011	185	9 138	2,02

Source: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search\\_database](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database)

As for the structure of schedule-based activity types (part-time/full-time employees), statistics reveal that under 2% of the employees from the studied field have a part-time contract, representing a discrepancy with one of the characteristics of the labour market in this domain, namely flexibility, the availability of a large number of part-time positions. Thus, the average annual number of full-time employees was, in the analysed period, of 162.6 thousand, a figure with an annual average growth rate of 11.5 thousand workers (an annual average growth rhythm of 7.6%). However, from the resulting data one can observe a rising tendency for increase of the part-time employee percentage during the studied period, although the percentage is still very low.

**The activity-type structure of employees – part-time/full-time (thousands)**

**Table 2**

Category Year	Total no. of employees in Hotels and Restaurants	No. of part-time employees in Hotels and Restaurants	Percentage (%)
2007	137	1	136
2008	154	1	153
2009	165	1	164
2010	180	2	178
2011	185	3	182

Source: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search\\_database](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database)

Of equal interest for the present paper is the analysis of the data which illustrates the levels of graduated education of employees in the “Hotels and Restaurants” sector. Statistic sources show that only a very limited number of employees in this sector have graduated higher education institution courses, with most of the employees having graduated only high school education (high school and after high school studies). This fact is mostly due to the preponderantly unqualified jobs available in the sector, which do not require their employees to be highly qualified. Consequently, individuals with higher education prefer to be a part of other fields.

Between 2007 and 2011, the annual average number of employees with higher education has been of 12.8 thousand (with an average of 7.8%); the annual average number of employees with only high school studies has been of 132.8 thousand (with an average of 80.9%) and the annual average number of employees with primary and gymnasium studies has been of 18.6 thousand (with an average of 11.3%). However, the number of higher education employees has increased annually with around two thousand individuals, and an annual average growth rate of 14.64%.

A clearer analysis of the reasons for which youths choose to follow tourism specializations offered by higher education institutions and a subsequent career in tourism is featured in the following chapter and is based on the survey of the students enrolled in the two masters' programs with tourism specialisation organized by the Faculty of Commerce within the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest.

#### The structure of employees based on graduated education cycles (thousands)

Table 3

Category Year	Total no. of employees in Hotels and Restaurants	No. of employees with primary and gymnasium studies	No. of employees with high school and after high school studies	No. of workers with higher education
2007	137	16	110	11
2008	154	19	125	10
2009	165	22	134	9
2010	180	19	146	15
2011	185	17	149	19

Source: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search\\_database](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database)

Of equal relevance is the gender structure of tourism employees, seeing that many believe the field's jobs to be more suited for women (the maid positions, for example). This belief is also confirmed by statistics which show that, in Romania, during the studied period and in the studied field, an annual average number of 102.8 thousand women held positions in tourism (with an annual average increase of 5.25 thousand women) while the number of male employees was of 61.4 (with an annual average increase of 6.75 thousand men). Thus, the annual average ratio of the two genders compared to the total number of employees in the "Hotels and Restaurants" sector has been 62.6% women and 37.4% men, between 2007 and 2011.

#### The gender-based structure (thousands)

Table 4

Category Year	Total no. of employees in Hotels and Restaurants	No. of women employees in Hotels and Restaurants	No. of men employees in Hotels and Restaurants
2007	137	90	47
2008	154	100	54
2009	165	105	60
2010	180	108	72
2011	185	111	74

Source: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search\\_database](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database)

Yet another characteristic of the tourism industry which has been confirmed by the "Hotels and Restaurants"-relevant statistics is the fact that tourism is a field which offers an important number of job opportunities for youths, facilitating the flexibility required for study continuance as well as a starting point for subsequent career development. As one may observe in the content of Table 5, almost half the employees in the Romanian "Hotels and Restaurants" sector are between 15 and 34 years old. More precisely, the age-structure of employees in this sector indicates that, between 2007 and 2011, the annual average number of employees with the ages of between 15 and 24 years was of 25.8 thousand (with 15.7% out of the total); those with the ages between 25 and 34 years was of 54.2 thousand (with 26.8% out of the total); those with the ages between 35 and 44 was of 44 thousand (with 18.7% out of the total) and those with the ages over 55 was of 9.6 thousand (with 5.8% out of the total).

### The age-structure of employees

**Table 5**

Category Year	Total no. of employees in Hotels and Restaurants	No. of employees between the ages of 15-24	No. of employees between the ages of 25-34	No. of employees between the ages of 35-44	No. of employees between the ages of 45-54	No. of employees over the age of 55
2007	137	25	44	34	27	7
2008	154	24	49	42	31	8
2009	165	22	53	47	35	8
2010	180	27	62	48	31	12
2011	185	31	63	49	29	13

Source: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search\\_database](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database)

Another relevant indicator for the depiction of the labour market in the “Hotels and Restaurants” sector is the percentage of employees with a permanent contract compared with the total number of employees in the sector. In the case of Romania, as it transpires from Table 6, the percentage has kept an even level of about 90% between 2007 and 2011. The value in itself is very high and comes in conflict with those who consider the jobs in tourism to be of a temporary nature, dictated by the seasonal character of the tourist activity.

One must also mention that the difference between the total number of employees from the studied sector and the number of employees from the entire field is represented by the following categories: owners, freelancers and unpaid domestic agents. In Romania, during the analysed period, this difference is, on average, of 7.8 thousand individuals, which means that the three aforementioned categories hold a very small ratio out of the total number of employees of the “Hotels and Restaurants” sector. The annual average number of employees in this sector has been of 156.4 thousand individuals between 2007 and 2011, with an annual average increase of 12.5 thousand employees, and an annual average growth rhythm of 8.6%.

### The number of employees with a permanent contract (thousands)

**Table 6**

Category Year	Total no. of employees in Hotels and Restaurants	No. of salaried employees in Hotels and Restaurants	No. of salaried employees with a permanent contract in Hotels and Restaurants	The percentage of salaried employees with a permanent contract in the total number of employees (%)
2007	137	128	122	89
2008	154	145	137	89
2009	165	158	151	92
2010	180	173	166	92
2011	185	178	167	90

Source: Institutul Național de Statistică (2007-2011), *Forța de muncă în România: Ocupare și șomaj*, București

One of the particularities of working in tourism, as was previously mentioned in the first chapter, is the inconvenient schedules and timetables. The inconvenience is confirmed after examining the Romanian statistics on the number of individuals working in atypical conditions in the “Hotels and Restaurants” sector during the 4 weeks previous to data collection. Working during evenings, nights or week-ends (Saturdays and Sundays) constitute atypical working conditions.

Table 7 contains data regarding the number of individuals in the “Hotels and Restaurants” sector who have engaged in atypical work. The annual average percentage represented by these individuals out of the total number of employees of the analysed sector is 80.4% between 2007 and 2011, which represents a very high percentage of employees who work during the evening, nights and week-ends. The annual average number of employees who engaged in atypical work during the analysed period was of 132 thousand, with an annual average increase of 11.25 thousand employees, making for an annual average growth rhythm of 9.2%.

As for the frequency with which the individuals engage in atypical work during the evenings, Saturdays or Sundays, the number of individuals who state that they are “often” working during these intervals is far higher than those “sometimes” working, whereas during night time, the number of those “often working” is far lower than those “sometimes” engaged in night shifts. Thus, the annual average percentage of those who have declared to have worked often during the evenings is of 41.2% out of the total number of employees in the sector; the percentage of employees often working during night time is lower, of only 13.6% out of the total; the percentage of those often working on Saturdays is of 49.2% out of the total and the percentage of employees often working on Sundays is of 35.9% out of the total.

**Hotels and Restaurants employees who were engaged in atypical work conditions in the last 4 weeks, according to the type and frequency of task (thousands)**

Table 7

Category Year	Employees engaged in atypical work	Employees working during the evenings		Employees working during nights		Employees working on Saturdays		Employees working on Sundays	
		Often	Some times	Often	Some times	Often	Some times	Often	Some times
2007	107	50	33	17	23	68	36	46	41
2008	124	59	36	19	25	71	47	50	45
2009	129	67	40	23	24	78	45	59	44
2010	148	82	43	27	30	96	47	73	45
2011	152	80	49	26	34	91	56	67	54

Source: Institutul Național de Statistică (2007-2011), *Forța de muncă în România: Ocupare și șomaj, București*

Although some may argue that tourism is suffering because of staff fluctuation, Romanian statistics from within the “Hotels and Restaurants” sector reveal that the number of employees with an average seniority of over two years with the same employer is far greater than that of the employees with less than two years seniority. During the analysed period, the percentage of the latter has dropped from 33.6 in 2007 to 25.3 in 2011, while the formers’ ratio has risen from 66.4 in 2007 to 74.7 in 2011.

**Employee structure based on the average seniority with the same employer (thousands)**

Table 8

Category Year	No. of employees in Hotels and Restaurants	No. of employees with an average seniority of over 2 years with the same employer	No. of employees with an average seniority of under 2 years with the same employer
2007	128	85	43
2008	145	100	45
2009	158	113	45
2010	173	130	43
2011	178	133	45

Source: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search\\_database](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database)

After analysing all the selected data types, one may assert they are, for the most part, in accordance with the particularities of the labour market identified in the first chapter of the paper and are therefore a confirmation in practice of the attested literature concepts. However, there are also some contrasts, such as the very low percentage of employees working part-time, or the fairly significant percentage of employees with a seniority surpassing two years with the same employer.

#### 4.2 Student opinions about a possible career in tourism

The survey applied to the students was mainly intended to identify the measure in which they believed some factors to stimulate their choice of a career in tourism and the measure in which others deterred them from making the choice. Another purpose of the survey was to determine whether the students were of the opinion that the courses which they were attending at the time would indeed aid them in a future inclusion on the labour market.

The survey consisted of 15 questions from among which 6 were tied to the respondents studies, seven to the status of tourism on the labour market and the students desire to work in this field, one referred to the respondents gender and another allowed them to add other comments pertaining to the survey topic. In accordance with previous statements, 56 students filled in the questionnaire in March, last year. From among the respondents, half declared that they were employed at the time of the survey while the other half remained unemployed.

From among the 28 employed students, 11 were working in tourism whilst 17 were working in other fields. When applying the data to the whole group, one observed that 20% of the surveyed students are working in tourism, 30% were active in other fields and 50% were unemployed. Consequently, less than half the employed participants were active in their field of choice, namely tourism, which paves the way for a more minute research into the student's reasons for choosing a different field of work.

As for the desire of the respondents to follow a professional route in the field of tourism, a single student responded in the negative, 13 students were still doubtful while the other 42 were willing to pursue work in the field. One knows that tourism offers a variety of jobs from which potential candidates may choose. As for professional choice, 23% of the students stated they would want to work in a hotel, 21% would pursue an opening in a tourism agency, 20% would be active in the field of event organizing and 15% would prefer tourism endorsement offices. The least desirable field seemed to be the restaurant field (with only 3% of the students stating a preference for it), followed by transportation (5% of the students).

When it came to the students opinion about positive or negative influences on their choice of whether or not to pursue a career in tourism, they were required to grade, on a scale of 1 to 5 (1-not at all, 5-very much) the degree to which they believed to be influenced (positively or negatively) by the following factors:

1. Positive influence:

- Working in a culturally-rich environment;
- The dynamic, varied nature of the job;
- Rapid advancement opportunities;
- The desire to meet the clients' demands;
- Professional development opportunities;
- Extensive travel opportunities;
- Significant incomes, gained after accumulating experience;
- Pleasant working environment.

2. Negative influence:

- Relatively low salaries;
- Inconvenient work schedule;
- High physical and mental strain;
- Compulsory previous experience in the field;
- Difficulty in satisfying clients;
- Lack of promotion possibilities within small companies;
- Reduced market dynamics;
- Small number of management positions compared to regular positions.

Student replies with regards to these motivational factors show that, for the most part, they have mainly been positively influenced by factors such as working in a culturally-rich environment; the dynamic, varied nature of the job; the desire to meet the clients' demands; professional development opportunities; extensive travel opportunities and significant incomes, gained after accumulating experience. The "Pleasant working environment" factor had a significant impact on the students desire to work in tourism while the "Rapid advancement opportunities" factor had neither a small, nor a significant influence.

Furthermore, the students seemed to have found the following negative-influence factors of similar unimportance, seeing that, for the majority, they didn't hold much sway over the desire to work in tourism: the inconvenient work schedule; high physical and mental strain; the difficulty in satisfying

clients as well as low market dynamics. On the other hand, factors such as relatively low salaries; compulsory previous experience in the field; lack of promotion possibilities within small companies and the reduced number of management positions compared to regular positions have a significant and very high negative influence on the students' wishes to continue working in tourism.

As for the responses of the surveyed students regarding the quality and relevance of the attended master's studies, one must note that the answers ranged from 1 to 5 (1 being of inconsequential relevance and 5 being of very high relevance) and were meant to evaluate the following aspects of the study programs: the usefulness of the studied courses, the level of training of the professors, the level of interaction with the private sector, the level of applied learning, the level of knowledge, aptitudes and professional skills gained as well as the relevance of the master's program graduation certificate in obtaining the desired job.

Thus, 41% of the respondents were of the opinion that the usefulness of the studied courses was neither low nor great, whereas 34% of them qualifying the usefulness level as high and 14% as low. Opinions on the professors level of training indicates a 52% of the students deeming the training level to be very high, 23% deeming it to be high and 25% considering it neither low nor high. As for the degree of interaction with the private sector, the students are less content, with 30% of the responses arguing for a low level of interaction, 23% believing it to be very low and 30% arguing for a medium level. The situation is almost identical when it comes to the level of applied learning, which 9% of the students believed to be high, 36% deemed very low, 20% considered to be low while 30% perceive it neither to be low, nor high.

The level of knowledge, aptitudes and professional skills gained is considered to be neither low nor high by 41% of the students while 32% evaluated it as being high and 5% as very high. On the other hand, 16% of the students consider it to be low and 5% very low. The usefulness of the graduation certificate in obtaining the desired job was deemed by 36% of the respondents to be neither lacking nor significant, while 21% of them deemed it significant and 16% very significant. On the other hand, 14% of the students considered the graduation certificate highly unhelpful and 13% simply unhelpful.

Although from the gathered information the students seem to be rather dissatisfied with the master's program they had chosen (for 95%, the program was their first choice while the other 5% being assigned to the program as a secondary choice from the entrance examination); 39% of the students believed that the program provided adequate training for future, individual problem-solving which may be needed in the current Romanian touristic climate. (See chart 12). Moreover, 43% of the respondent students believed that attending other specialization courses, apart from the master's program would prove very useful for labour market integration, 39% considered attendance useful, 16% believed other courses to be less useful and 2% deemed them useless.

One must also mention the fact that, at the moment of the survey, out of the 56 respondent students, 9 were in their second year of Tourism Management and Marketing, 11 were in their first year of the same master's program, 13 were in their second year of Business administration in tourism and 23 were in their first year of the same master's program. Furthermore, 46 of the students enrolled in the master's program right after graduating their bachelor's cycle, 4 students enrolled at one year after their graduation, 5 students stated that they enrolled after a period of between 2 and 5 years after their graduation and one student enrolled in the master's program after more than five years from graduating the bachelor's cycle.

### **Conclusions and suggestions**

After consulting the attested literature, the main characteristics of working in the field of tourism have been identified and among them one can find: the low level of work technical requirements; the high rate of work mobility; the inconvenient schedules and working hours; the high level of physical and mental fatigue; the presence of some psychological constraints; the high level of staff fluctuation etc.

The gathered statistical data regarding the labour market in the Romanian "Hotels and Restaurants" sector suggest the existence in practice of the mentioned characteristics, especially in the case of working during inconvenient days and periods of time where, as it was previously shown, a large percentage of the employees from this sector are working during evenings, nights or on Saturdays and

Sundays (constituting “atypical work”). On the other hand, the statistics do not confirm the issue of staff fluctuation, showing that the majority of workers have a seniority exceeding two years with the same employer.

Over time, with the increasing need of adequate training of tourism workforce, field-specific study programs have been developed for high school and after high school education as well as for higher education institutions. The measure in which these programs manage to instruct highly trained staff, capable of providing the clients of the tourism industry with high quality services is, however, questioned.

Despite all this, young graduates of high schools and subsequently of universities continue to choose tourism specializations, for they are being drawn to the work environment and the dynamic nature of this sector of activity. According to the survey-based analysis, the students are not, however, very content with the quality of the provided educational services and are not convinced that a graduation certificate will in any way aid them in a later accession onto the tourism labour market.

Therefore, the educational institutions ought to be permanently informed, both on the realities of the labour market in this field and about the employer expectations from the future employees of the industry, as well as on the students’ needs and requirements. Thus, they will be able to adapt their curriculum to include market requirements, concomitantly aiding the students in their quest for the required aptitudes, knowledge and skills.

Moreover, the students request a higher degree of applied training and interaction with the private sector, and universities ought to adapt and give them the opportunity for training and practising with the knowledge gained during courses. The higher education institutions should seek more partnerships with the private sector in order to send their students on practice stages, as well as organize visits at the headquarters of the economic agents in order to showcase how potential work in a hotel, tourism agency, a restaurant, and so on, would look and feel like.

The students’ needs for applied training could also be satisfied during seminar activities, with the aid of a multitude of interactive applications as well as through virtual training technologies, which would allow the students to simulate various tourist agency-specific activities.

In conclusion, one may state that the role of higher education in the instruction and training of tourism-related human resources is essential, especially in the case of management positions, where the education-level of future employees constitutes a defining element of their potential for success and subsequent career development in the field of tourism. Although the percentage of employees with higher education out of the total number of employees engaged in tourism is still low, the numbers are continuously rising and it is imperative for this tendency to be preserved in order to make Romania a provider of high-quality tourist services, with the help of a workforce trained according to the highest standards.

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