

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN TOURISM

Violeta Cvetkovska Ocokoljić¹; Srđan Babić²;

Abstract

Globalization as a basic characteristic of the modern environment carried out a significant impact on the profile of tourists, the products and services they are seeking. Thanks to new communication technologies their dependence on information increases. Information are required through the internet, received through the web site or via the forum, until their demands are moving towards more individual and especially suited offer. The possibility of choice is large, and they want to feel and experience new places and new cultures. This means offering authentic product/service but the way of its presentation and experience adapt to the culture from which the customer comes. Intercultural communication is gaining in importance here. However, this knowledge does not come by itself. Human resources in the tourism sector should be educated. Tourist workers must properly be chosen first and then they had to develop additional skills related to knowledge of foreign languages, communication skills, create awareness for the cultures foreign tourists come from, all in order to provide better quality products/services.

Keywords: culture, human resources, tourism, communication.

Introduction

Today's organizations operate in a global environment, regardless of whether they are from production or service industry. Although the term globalization is used to describe the process of integration of markets and production globally, globalization is a process that can be viewed from multiple angles, as economic globalization, political globalization,

1 Violeta Cvetkovska Ocokoljić, Associate Professor, PhD, Faculty of culture and media, Goce Delčeva 8, +381 11 220 30 11, e-mail: vcvetkovska-ocokoljic@nezbit.edu.rs

2 Srđan Babić, Director of Idea Academy, master, Mercator-S d.o.o., Autoput za Zagreb 11/a, 064/4691189, e-mail: srdjan.babic@mercator.rs

cultural globalization, etc. Each of these aspects of globalization affect tourism, the providers and users of tourist services.

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. What reflects the new nature of tourism are: the development of mass tourism, the transition from organized tourist group travel to independent - solo travellers, the development of distant destinations, developing of package arrangements and shorter destinations. The increasing number of passengers has as the number one motive for the journey to explore new cultures and their traditions during the holidays (Cvetkovski et al., 2016, pg. 38).

According to the UNWTO forecast issued at the beginning of 2015, international tourist arrivals are expected to increase by 3% to 4% worldwide for the whole year, in line with the long-term forecast of an average growth of 3.8% a year set for the period 2010 to 2020. Destinations worldwide received some 332 million international tourists (overnight visitors) between January and April 2015, 14 million more than the same period last year, corresponding to an increase of 4%. (World Tourism Organization, UNWTO, 2015).

However, increase in international tourist arrivals in 2015 was 4.4%, while UNWTO forecasts, based on current trends increase between 3.5 and 4.5% in 2016 (UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, 2016).

The most visited region in the world is Europe.

Due to the increasing incomes from tourism that are realized in the world and the anticipated growth in the number of tourists in the future, many countries solution for their own developing are finding just in the tourism offer (Cvetkovski et al., 2014, p. 64).

This expansion of tourists should be used by Serbia as well. However, tourism generates income but not without investment. Among the most important investments are those related to human resources. Without educated managers, employees who provide services or design and enrich the offer, adjust offer to the requirements of tourists, understand intercultural differences and adapt to them but in those segments where it is expected, there is no good services, nor profits. That is why the proper human resources management is one of the key conditions for tourism development.

It is necessary to consider changes arising from the use of information and communication technologies in business and everyday life, as well as the intercultural dimension of globalization in order to understand the role and importance of human resource management in tourism.

The role of information-communication (IC) technologies in tourism

Although various aspects of globalization are already mentioned, it is considered that globalization is enabled primarily by the new information and communication (IC) technologies.

Information and communication technologies have entered our lives and become an important part of it. They are important to us in private life and at work as well. We are on the Internet while we dream about distant destinations, while considering the impressions of others that are exchanged on forums or trying to choose the right hotel relying on the comments of those who have already been there.

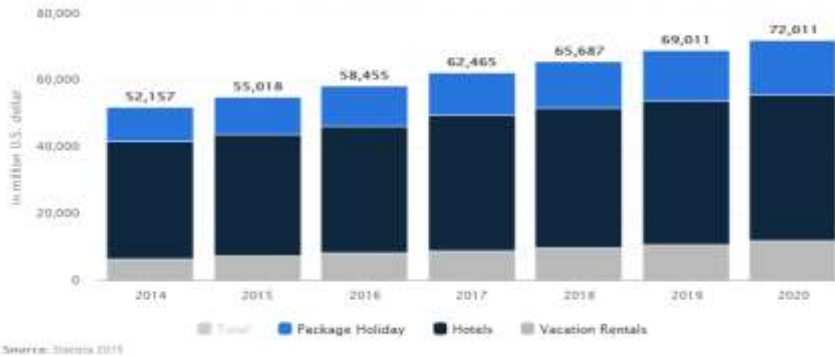
New technologies make communication easier and faster. It is easier to perceive the future service, to offer a service or to estimate it. With the help of new technologies it is easier to monitor competitors but also to improve or develop new tourism products and services. Tourism benefits from the new IC technologies.

New generations of travellers, especially younger ones, regularly set the pictures and comments from travelling to social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and others. They check other people's comments before travel, use trip advisor and other sites, rent accommodation over Airbnb website (Cvetkovski et al., 2016, p. 38).

In particular, the Internet has become an almost universal marketing tool in recent years. Research by ATLAS shows that over half the foreign tourists visiting cultural attractions in Europe and Asia in 2007 used the Internet to find information on the cultural site they were visiting. For those on a cultural holiday, this figure increased to over 60%. The creation of Internet platforms which provide information on cultural attractions and events is therefore extremely important, particularly in reaching international markets. There are a growing number of Internet sites which offer the possibility for tourists to package cultural sites and events with accommodation and travel (OECD, 2009).

New technologies allow interactive communication between the service provider and the customer.

Figure 1: Revenue from "Online" travel booking



Source: *The Statistics Portal Statista, 2016*

More and more people in the world use the Internet in order to book a trip. "On-line" travel booking refers to travel, hotel or private accommodation which is booked over the Internet.

The market segment which can be termed as "Online Travel Booking" can be split into the following sub-segments (The Statistics Portal Statista, 2016):

- The "Package Holidays" segment comprises of travel deals booked via the Internet using online travel agencies (e.g. Opodo, Expedia) or directly from a tour operator.
- Second segment relates to hotels, accommodation that can be booked directly via the web sites such as Hotels.com, Trivago and Booking.com, through a tour operator web sites or online travel agencies.
- The "Vacation Rentals" segment comprises of private accommodation that was arranged and booked online. This includes private holiday homes and houses, as well as short-term rental of private rooms or flats via portals such as Airbnb.

People use the Internet to get information about experiences of other tourists, find information about the organization which services they plan to use, and independently book various services. Internet allows the presentation of the offer, booking of hotels, private accommodation, and tickets for events, flight as well as the purchase of arrangements and to

check other people's impressions. Current tourists use the possibilities offered by ICT technology, he is an experienced, alert, resourceful, able to get directly in touch with the service providers because of what endangers tour operators and other intermediaries in the sale.

The issue is what number of tourist workers and managers is ready to use and adapt to new trends. It is necessary in order to keep pace with the times and be competitive in the tourism sector. Internet facilitates access to new markets, what certainly should be used but it is necessary to know how.

The importance of culture and intercultural communication in tourism

Tourism is not a new phenomenon. Tourism and travel have been part of the human experience for millennia. However, in the last years, tourism has grown in significance and emerged as a global phenomenon, affecting an increasing range of environments and attracting new markets as opportunities for travel have widened (Page & Connell, 2006, p.4).

Local communities are not just the hosts for tourism, but they are also participating directly in the tourism experience, helping to define the sense of place and atmosphere of regions (OECD, 2009, p.11). In creating this atmosphere of the region culture has an important role.

Culture creates authenticity and distinctiveness in the global tourism market. In this regard, "tourism experiences" that can connect people and visitors to local cultures are very important (OECD, 2009, p. 11). Culture is important for tourism, for the attractiveness and competitiveness of destinations. The most successful destinations are those that can create a positive synergy between culture and tourism (OECD, 2009, p.31).

The tourism product is considered complexly. It is estimated based on the attractiveness of a certain region or tourist destination, based on quality of hotels and offered services (from accommodation, food and drinks to the most varied program of culture, entertainment, sports and recreational facilities, organized excursions etc.). By understanding tourists' behaviour and their cultural background becomes possible to adjust the tourist offer to specific customers and promote it in the right way (Cvetkovski et al., 2016, p. 38).

Culture can be seen as an integral part of tourism offer, on the one hand, while on the other hand, it determines expectations of tourists, because their desires, needs and behaviors will vary depending on which culture they come from (Cvetkovski et al., 2016, p. 31).

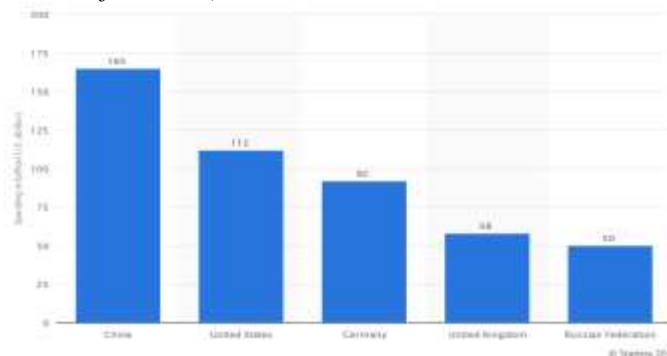
For tourists from China and Great Britain, food is the most important aspect of any successful holiday. Japanese tourists want a constant attention and care, which is not the case with the Americans. The highest expectations of hotel services quality have British tourists and tourists from the United States. Generally, tourists from individualistic cultures (according to Hofstede) require efficient, fast and error-free service, unlike tourists from collectivist cultures where the sincerity by the personnel providing the services, is the most important factor. In individualistic cultures there is a distance between the recipient and the provider of service, and the degree of closeness and interaction are reduced to a minimum. Also, tourists from collectivist cultures such as those of Japan and Korea, they rely heavily on tourist organizations, travel guides and recommendations from friends and relatives while collecting information about traveling. They also prefer to buy gifts and allocate a larger budget for gifts. Germans are willing to take more risk, they prefer to travel independently to travel longer time and visit more destinations (according to Reisinger, 2009).

Chinese tourists have great purchasing power. They book via mobile before leaving; 53% of Chinese travelers, book hotel accommodation via web or via app, and more than 600 million of these Asian citizens use the Internet regularly (<http://bit.fieramilano.it/en/how-welcome-chinese-tourists>).

In the U.S. surveys of “historic/cultural travelers” indicate that 30% of domestic tourists are influenced in their choice of destination by a specific art, cultural or heritage event or activity. In Korea, the promotion of spiritual heritage is not only generating visitors but also increasing cross-cultural communication (OECD, 2009).

Countries with the largest tourism expenditure include China, the United States and Germany.

Figure 2: *The leading countries in international tourism spending in 2014 (in billions of dollars)*



Source: *The Statistics Portal Statista, 2016*

Tourism implies direct contact between tourists and hosts, intercultural communication. Therefore, the greater the cultural differences between international tourists and locals in the tourist place are, the greater will be the chance of misunderstandings and different conflict situations. Misunderstanding arises due to different interpretations of verbal signals (such as the degree of expression of attitudes and feelings, speed of speech, the degree of kindness in speech, etc.) and in particular non-verbal symbols (such as facial expressions, gaze, touching, the size of personal space, gestures and position of body). Differences in values, beliefs, rules of social behavior, can be the cause of misinterpretation, inadequate perception, confusion or conflict.

In accordance with the new requirements of the environment there is need to change the education system and involvement of intercultural learning because new environment increasingly seeking workers who are multi qualified, flexible and educated (Langović, Milićević et al., 2015. p. 187).

It is important one involved in the touristic offer make familiar with the cultural tradition of tourists in order to allow better depth understanding of their behavior and understand their expectations. However, this does not mean that we should lose originality. The key thing is in balance, to provide tourists with what they expect, to promote them that in the way they want, but to preserve the originality of traditional local culture, because the destination must have a unique characteristics which differ it from other destinations in order to attract tourists. In all of this, education is essential.

Culture is also closely connected with religion. Although religion can be abused and used as a justification for the worst forms of hatred, violence and murder (Cvetkovska, Ocokoljić et al., 2012) as a part of the culture it has a very important role in tourism.

The tourist attraction is usually viewed from the perspective of service user, because it defines what it is attractive. However, sometimes some destinations do not attract tourists. It is not because they are not enough interesting but because of lack of promotion, political instability, problematic access to the destination or some other reasons. The most visited destinations are in the most developed countries. These countries better use their capacities, in order to destination make closer to tourists and made it more attractive.

The importance of human resources in tourism

The competitive advantage of the country in the global economy depends on educational structure and skills of its population. It affects all sectors, as well as tourism. Although the natural resources, infrastructure, standard of living and level of development of the country have an important role, people are the key resources that ensure a high quality of service, as well the tourism product.

Tourism is connected to people because visitors are people, as well as service providers. Only highly-skilled workforce can ensure competitiveness and thus creating jobs in tourism.

Tourism is a sector that depends most on the human resources. Especially in Serbia, it is a sector that has to compete for scarce resources in order to ensure survival.

To manage human resources means at all times have the required number of employees in the right places and with the necessary knowledge and skills.

All activities of human resource management have its role in the tourism sector as well. Starting from the analysis of work and planning of human resources through recruitment and selection, through socialization, training and education, performance evaluation, reward and motivation, health and safety of employees and career management (according to

Jovanović, Božinov et al., 2008), all activities are necessary, although some are viewed as being more important in relation to the other.

Zaithaml and Bitner (2000) summarize the key steps in attracting and retaining employees. They believe that it is important to access employee development in order to provide quality service, then provide the necessary support systems; retain the best and provide useful frameworks against which the efforts in the area of staff development could be measured.

Human resources management should start with an analysis of the current situation and human resource planning. It is necessary to determine the level of education and experience of different categories of employees, and to align them with the job requirements. Finding employees, particularly migrant workers, often is not the problem. However, the real challenge for the HR department is to find employees with the right skills, knowledge and attitude towards work that will enable the organization achievement of outlined objectives.

However, these activities are often taken for granted.

Jobs in the tourism sector vary from those that require lower qualifications, to those that require a university degree, developed communication skills and extensive experience. In this sense, we can talk about (OECD, 2000):

1. Permanently employed workers who have secure jobs and earnings. These workers are often functionally flexible (multi-skilling). It is characteristic that these jobs belong to managerial and professional staff whose skills are in high demand on the labor market.
2. Workers who belong to the group of peripheral, temporary workers. These include, for example, seasonal workers. Their jobs are less secure they have no career prospects and often are semi-skilled or unskilled. Staff turnover in this group is high. In addition to this first group there are other groups of flexible workers, such as part-time, temporary workers, those who work on call or students. These workers often function as a reserve pool, and they are flexible because the organization can engage them or dispose with increase or decrease of the workload.

Given the fact that in tourism there are a number of small, family firms, when workload is increasing they often involve family, friends, and other close people.

Although important jobs in the tourism sector belong to managers and professional staff, a large part of work is performed by seasonal workforce. As noted above, these workers are often poorly paid and therefore they are not very motivated. However, given that they are in direct contact with the people receiving the service (workers in restaurants, cafés, those who rent sun loungers on the beaches, etc.) or affect the pleasure of stay although they are not in direct contact with customers (maids in hotels) their role in the service quality is a huge.

It is interesting that a large part of the workforce in this sector belongs to the younger population. However, especially in the lower positions, they are characterized by low motivation, poor creativity, low professionalism (which is why it may happen that in a five-star hotel you receive a three-star service). These are problems that have to be solved in the process of recruitment and selection of candidates for vacancies.

In the process of recruitment and selection of candidates, apart from knowledge and experience variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, and religion are often significant. Depending on these variables candidates will have different knowledge and experience, but also they will have different expectations and desires. A key role here belongs to perception, because it can be said that "the services quality is in the eye of the observer". Even when tourists receive the same service this does not mean that they will assess service quality the same, given that the perception is individual, and that it includes our knowledge and interests.

Baum and Szivas (2007) considered that the effective management of human resources as a critical resource in tourism cannot happen without planning, development and support at the different levels (level of organizations, destinations and states).

In the analysis of services quality must be taken into account the perception of the service user and employee. If the employee and the customer share the same values, then the expected service quality will be achieved. When there is a gap, due to cultural and other reasons, it is necessary to start with the development and training of employees (Jones & Haven-Tang, 2005, p. 6).

The study of the manner in which man observes the world around him, receives various information and in feedback affects the environment essentially is directed on the relationship between seeing and what has been seen, through the history of mankind (Cvetkovska Ocokoljić & Cvetkovski, 2012, p. 1901). Human memory is not only a cognitive act. It is also the creative act that allows the man to receive, recognize, preserve and process information from the environment (Cvetkovska, Ocokoljić et al., 2012, p. 311).

Employers use different strategies for recruiting candidates for vacant positions, depending on which position shall be filled, i.e. what education level the candidate should have, what skills and experience. Care must be taken on whether the future employee should have a degree in tourism, degree in some other areas, whether employee even need a diploma, whether he/she previously worked on similar tasks or comes from other industries. Many later problems and costs can be avoided by selecting the right candidate.

The lack of quality manpower is encouraging employers to recruit and then select people without the necessary qualifications. Therefore, their subsequent training is required, because the connection between employee performance and service quality is obvious. Motivated and loyal employees provide a higher service quality and therefore contribute to a higher degree of satisfaction and greater customer loyalty. If we try to look at the deeper connection, we can assume that increase in the level of knowledge and skills of employees, will contribute to increased service quality, and this will further increase the competitiveness of the destination itself. However, this process must involve all employees.

On the other hand a large staff turnover prevents the provision of standard and high-quality service, increase the costs of recruitment and selection, as well as costs of training and development of employees.

A high quality of tourist services can be realized only through education and training of employees at all levels. The role of managers is to create an organizational culture in which training will be seen as an investment. This means that in the tourism sector is crucial to invest in quality staff and managers. Therefore, in addition to recruitment and selection, employee education and training are equally important activities of human resource management.

However, while the human resources in this sector are most valuable resources, investment in them (in training and education) is relatively small. It comes down to question how they can better perform the current job, not to development of new skills or acquiring of new knowledge. This particularly relates to small firms, where due to the large number of seasonal and temporary workers, employers are not interested to invest in employees.

Since the tourism sector is specific, it is necessary that staff have the specific knowledge as well. Bearing in mind the globalization and international tourist arrivals, insufficient knowledge of foreign languages, especially English, is a major drawback. English language is not required only for those at higher hierarchical positions in the organization, but is essential to all people that come into contact with tourists. Ignorance of the language and different cultures leads difficulties in communicating with tourists. Among the skills, communication skills which are necessary at all levels especially stand out. Emotional intelligence is also important because it allows adjustment to clients and situation, and their understanding. In addition, depending on the specific position at which the employee works, he/she will need the specific technical knowledge as well. At the managerial level knowledge of marketing, finance, strategic planning, project management, human resources management, computer skills, and understanding the role and application of computers in the tourism sector are required. It is also important that managers know how to manage change, how to innovate and develop tourism products, and to know how to manage the crisis communications.

For a successful training and education it is crucial to be aware of the challenges and try to overcome them. Some helpful suggestions would be the following (Junggeburdt 2004, p. 32):

- Make the learning process job-related;
- Where possible, apply the mentoring;
- Provide strong support to learning by managers, as well as by employees;
- Integrate learning in career development of the employee;
- Ensure that learning plans are transparent;
- Make learning fun;
- Set goals and criteria in order to evaluate the results and outcomes;
- Know that partnership is crucial to the success of any learning process, etc.

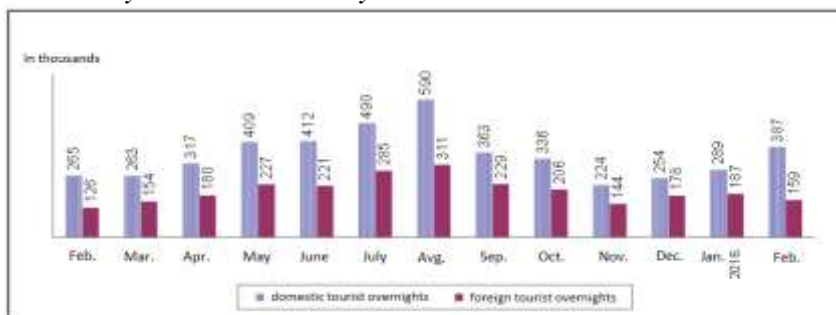
Therefore, human resource planning, training, education and career management of employees should be considered as long-term activities of strategic importance for tourism organizations and destinations.

In the Republic of Serbia the number of tourist arrivals has increased by 26.9% in February 2016 compared to February 2015, while the number of overnight stays increased by 39.5%. In February 2016 compared with February 2015, the number of domestic tourist overnight stays has been increased by 46%, while the number of overnight stays of foreign tourists increased by 26% (Statistical office of the Republic of Serbia, 2016).

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has projected that by 2030, the number of international tourist arrivals will almost double, reaching more than 1.8 billion. The largest market for international tourist arrivals will be Europe again (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2015).

It is obvious that the positive trend in terms of growth in the number of tourists can be seen in Serbia as well. In this sense, the advantage should be taken from this positive trend which is predicted to continue in the future. However, the situation in Serbia, in terms of development of tourist destinations, organization and education and professionalism of tourism workers is pretty poor. Human resource management is therefore even more important.

Figure 3: Tourists overnight stay in the Republic of Serbia in the period from February 2015 to February 2016 in thousands



Source: Statistical office of the Republic of Serbia, 2016

The lack of quality and talented candidates for a job in the tourism sector in Serbia, leads to the recruiting and selecting unskilled or candidates with no experience, which further leads to a lower service quality. However, increasing the quality of service is crucial in order to build a

positive reputation of the region and country in the world. This is the only way to attract tourists, make them want to come back again but next time with their friends or to recommend tourist destination to others.

Conclusion

Intercultural communication, the use of the Internet during the collection of information about hotels, transport and other services, access to social networks, search for information and presence at forums, internet access via telephone, the expansion of religious, cultural and congress tourism, wine tours, health tourism, all are characteristics of environment in which we live.

These changes affect the tourists because they change their lifestyle, habits and needs and from the tourism sector seek to get closer to tourists, through specific marketing instruments of tourist destinations, products and specific organizations and to address their needs through the creation of unique tourism experiences.

All this affects the types of knowledge and skills that are or will be required of employees in this sector.

The essence of travel is in the fact that a person travels and stays in an environment that does not represent his usual environment. Person wants to experience a new environment and a new culture. To justify their expectations, tourism offer and service must be appropriate, consistent with their requirements i.e. need to have high quality. However, such a service does not come by itself, it requires an educated and motivated employees.

In this sense, it is necessary first to expand i.e. implement new sources for recruiting candidates, in order to include those outside the local region or country. Recruitment and selection should also include those candidates who do not currently have the necessary skills but have the potential to acquire them. It is necessary to develop partnerships with educational institutions in order to create curricula more aligned to the specific needs of the tourism sector. Then it is necessary to provide additional training and development of employees in this sector, provide a clear career development of employees, and invest in employees through their further education and training.

During training of new knowledge and skills, it is necessary to take into account the intercultural context of business and the role of IC technologies in the life of each person. What can certainly be singled out is that the human resources in tourism are necessary to manage.

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