QUALITATIVE PERSONNEL RESOURCES – PRECONDITION FOR SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Abstract
One of the basic conditions for a successful and sustainable development of the tourism and hospitality industry is a constantly high quality of services that satisfies the clients’ desires. The factor, which determines the quality of services in the hospitality industry perhaps more than in other spheres, is personnel: its qualifications, knowledge, and competencies.

While performing the research on the tourism industry’s potential in the national economy, the authors of this article, by using the logical framework approach of the logical planning system of the problem tree, have analysed in depth the role of personnel resources, by defining the problem: “quality of personnel resources of hospitality companies does not conform to the labour market requirements.” As the result of the research, the most significant causes of problems in the personnel resources’ quality have been clarified and the potential consequences have been outlined.

Keywords: tourism, hospitality, staff qualification.

Introduction
The tourism industry in 2010, after the shock experienced due to the global financial crisis and economic downturn at the end of 2008 and during 2009, has recovered much more successfully than expected. On the global scale the number of tourists reached 940 million, which is 6.6% more than in 2009 and 23 million more than in 2008. The majority of travel destinations reported a positive growth, which frequently is written in two-digit numbers, thus on the whole compensating for losses or achieving results that are close to this target, but on average within the range of 5–8%.

In Latvia, too, the increase in numbers of foreign tourists can be seen, although not such a rapid one. After the big decrease (-21.5%) in 2009 as compared with 2008, in 2010 the numbers of foreign tourists grew by 3.8 % in comparison with 2009.

By declaring the tourism as one of the most prospective and top-priority branches of the national economy, among the many means for achievement of set objectives the issues of tourism education quality and problems in preparation of specialists, who conform to the labour market requirements, are especially topical, because the development of this industry can be attained only by high professionalism at all levels (planning, managerial, entrepreneurial, practical service provision). Main contributions into human capital of the tourism industry are made by the vocational training institutions, companies, and the industry employees themselves.

Tourism is a labour-intensive branch of the national economy, which due to its multiplicative impact stimulates the creation of jobs in the entire economy in different regions, including the less developed and neglected ones. Personnel resources are the main element to ensure sustainable tourism development and enhance the competitiveness of the sector, by directing attention to the quality of products and services. It must be especially pointed out that the tourism industry offers many opportunities to low-qualification workforce, thus contributing to furtherance of a flexible labour market and improvement of the overall situation.

Tourism industry employs specialists of various spheres, for example, at hotels – chambermaids, employees of guest reception service etc., at restaurants – cooks, waiters, barmen etc., at travel agencies – travel consultants etc., where the personnel resources have the dominating role in ensuring of the content and quality of the tourism product. Therefore in the tourism industry there is a need for educated workforce able to adapt to changing environment and retain the competitiveness of tourism companies.

Stressing the fact that qualified personnel resources maintain sustainable development in the tourism sector, scientists point out that when formulating the preconditions for creation of a successful tourism policy, one must be aware of the role of lifelong education in increase in personnel qualification and that only by ensuring regular training and professional improvement to the employees of this industry it is possible to maintain a constantly high quality of hospitality.
services being provided (Baum, 1997; Georg, 2002; Clark, 1998).

Nonetheless, the personnel resources’ development in the tourism industry depends on several circumstances. Engaging and retaining of qualified workforce for several large and small companies is a challenge because of peculiarities of the tourism labour market.

The aim of the research: to evaluate the most vital problem of tourism personnel resources, which is that quality of personnel resources does not comply with the labour market requirements, is not aligned with the consumers’ needs and and unbalanced among regions of Latvia.

The objectives of the research:
1. To analyse the most significant causes of problems of personnel resources’ quality and their consequences;
2. To survey the managers and employees of hospitality companies and make conclusions in context of the “Problem Tree”.

Theoretical framework of the research
Problem tree is a component of the logical structure approach to the logical planning system (The Logical Framework Approach). LogFrame in 1969 was worked out by Rosenberg and Posner in the USA (Rosenberg & Posner, 1979). The problem tree depicts problems, consequences, and deeper causes and allows determining the true roots of the unsatisfactory situation; it is defined also as reality modulation.

The problem tree consists of such elements:
• essential and direct causes of the main problem;
• essential and direct consequence of the main problem;
• problem tree with the linkage of causes and consequences.

Research methodology
The following quantitative and qualitative research methods have been applied for achieving the goal and objectives of this Paper:
• Monographic or descriptive method for identifying and analyzing scientific findings and theories and interpreting the results of previous studies and for drawing conclusions;
• Analysis & deductive method for studying certain elements of the problem and their interconnections, and synthesis method for consolidating all the individual elements in a joint system and developing a common theory;
• Correlation method for proving the research hypothesis regarding the impact of personnel quality in the process of development of services.

As the result of the research, the central problem has been defined: quality of personnel resources of hospitality companies does not conform to the labour market requirements, it is not aligned with the needs of consumers and in the context of regions of Latvia.

Analysis of research results or scientific problem
During the research three main causes of the problem were analysed:
• nonconformity of young specialists to the labour market requirements;
• insufficient coverage of lifelong education;
• high fluctuation of workforce.

1. Nonconformity of young specialists to the labour market requirements
Vocational training must be defined as a practical and theoretical preparation for activity in a certain job, acquisition and perfection of professional qualification. Aware of the significance of personnel resources in the process of creation of a hospitality product, Scientists emphasise the important role of the State in ensuring of personnel resource planning and control processes. Georg (2002), Professor of the West-India University, points out that “tourism education policy must not be detached from the tourism policy”.

Preparation of young specialists at vocational education institutions takes place according to the approved standards of professions. The standard establishes the basic requirements for professional qualification, as well as relevant specific requirements – skills and knowhow necessary for performance of the main job tasks in the relevant profession.

When working out the standards, for each profession one determines:
• general characterisation according to the Professional qualification level;
• common, professional, and specific requirements of the industry;
• overall skills, attitude, and knowledge.

In the hospitality sphere 21 profession standards have been worked out.

Looking at the standards on the whole in the period of 2000–2010, one must point out that they are fragmented and differ little from each other. For example, in the catering sphere: (catering services’ specialist, catering services’ organiser, restaurant services’ specialist, hospitality services’ specialist, restaurant services’ commercial clerk etc.). The excessively fine specialisation contradicts the situation in the Latvian hospitality companies, where at small and micro companies 5-20 employees work, for example, cooks, waiters, chambermaids, administrators, and frequently one employee must execute several duties, and combination of job duties takes place.

Based on the profession standard, the education institution elaborates the vocational training programmes. It must be noted that for profession standard seve-
rual vocational training programmes can be elaborated. Observations by the authors indicate that frequently this circumstance that professional programmes have been elaborated in accordance with material-technical base, equipment and education and knowledge of teaching staff of the vocational training institution, has been the decisive reason for nonconformity of young specialists for labour market requirements.

But the nonconformity of vocational training to the labour market needs is the problem that is characteristic not only of Latvia. “What is the most characteristic of modern education?” asks Wildawsky, a researcher working on hospitality industry, and gives the answer: “Continuous process of changing of objectives. The modern education system can be characterised as a searcher of objectives, which enables the pedagogues to acknowledge their work as legitimate, while balancing between promises and actual execution.”

Inflexibility of education has two sources, as the authors point out:

- managers of educational institutions who are afraid to create a new approach to the instructional process which can endanger the academic homogeneity;
- teaching staff of educational institutions, to whom this would create additional working hours, complication in relationships with colleagues, disruption of habitual milieu and even the possibility to lose the job.

2. Insufficient coverage of lifelong education

Insufficient coverage of lifelong education, as well as lack of a unified norm-setting legal regulation for the formal and informal education, which would unequivocally and precisely define the objectives, principles, funding, and procedure for recognition of formal and informal education.

In Latvia the enhancement of qualification of employees of hospitality industry companies is provided by state-owned educational institutions and by several private and municipal educational establishments, offering both the accredited programmes for professional perfection, and workshops of several days in the interests education. But, as has been pointed out in the Research by the Baltic Social Sciences Institute “Accessibility of Lifelong Education and Opportunities for Educating Oneself in Latvia, they to a greater extent are just separate initiatives, and on the whole in Latvia there is no coordinated action in the field of lifelong education (2006). In the dynamic time of changes, when the notions about the business, competition and quality are so rapidly changing, “investment into personnel” is a significant precondition of quality, nonetheless, the analysis of situation in the Latvian hospitality companies has shown the opposite.

Basic Guidelines of Lifelong Policy for 2007 – 2013 adopted in 2007 emphasize the significance of informal education, noting that the most important political objectives related to lifelong education are its accessibility, availability, and system of laws and regulations. Linkage between and continuity of formal and informal education, ability to implement the recognition system of informal education and its methodology, as well as access to structural funds are necessary (Basic Guidelines of Lifelong Policy).

As an example of the need in the tourism and hospitality industry for immediate implementation of the system qualification recognition, one can mention the situation that has arisen upon entry into effect of the Regulations No. 409 of the Cabinet of Ministers “On Requirements of Professional Qualification of Persons Employed in Food Turnover” (2005). Data of the research “Assessment of Necessity of Investment into Human Capital of Hospitality Industry” shows that only 53% of employees and only 5% of managers conform to the qualification requirements stipulated in the Regulations No. 409 of the Cabinet of Ministers, but there are no grounds to affirm that one half of the employees and 95% of the managers of companies are unqualified. In the same research industry experts demonstrate that managers of hospitality companies frequently evaluate higher the experience that is acquired from other people, when an individual masters one’s skills and knowhow empirically, evaluates and analyses in his/her consciousness mastered things, practises and obtains necessary knowhow at other companies of the industry, than the vocational training. Thus, it is significant to as soon as possible to implement flexible recognition of knowledge and qualification obtained informally and non-formally, creating the opportunity for those employed in the industry – cooks, waiters, barmen, chambermaids etc. – to attest the professionalism acquired in experience, self-instruction, at courses and workshops.

3. High fluctuation of workforce

High fluctuation of workforce that is caused by harsh working conditions, low salary and limited possibilities for the employee’s growth is the 3rd most significant cause for the nonconformity of quality of personnel resources in hospitality companies to the requirements of labour market.

Although the need for qualification enhancement is determined by various reasons (e. g., alterations in legislation, job advancement, consumer complaints etc.), the frequent fluctuation of employees is one of the essential signals. A very wide-spread situation in the hospitality sphere is that university graduates remain outside the labour market or choose other professions; therefore the qualitative aspect of education is very important.
Researches in foreign countries indicate similar trends – in France and the USA in the hospitality sector very frequently young people without vocational training work as waiters, barmen, chambermaids, receptionists. At present the hotel and restaurant industry is characterised by the high specific weight of young, unqualified personnel, as is pointed out in the research on the development trends of labour market in the hotel and restaurant sector of France and the USA (Meriot, 2000).

Conclusions and proposals

1. In the analysis process of problem tree the primary consequences when low-quality personnel resources are employed in companies were discovered as well as results of their impact in the long term. The research confirmed the impact of personnel resources in the service-provision process.

2. As a result of decrease in the hospitality services quality, the production volumes, workload, and specific weight of constant guests are diminishing at companies.

3. Having regard to the fact that tourism business activity has a great multiplicative effect, as the production volumes at a hospitality company decrease, the entrepreneurial activity in other related industries is also hampered, for example, in food manufacturing, trade, at dry-cleaner’s, in sales of souvenirs etc. Negative feedback of foreign visitors can also adversely influence the image of Latvia abroad and reduce the competitiveness of Latvia in the international rivalry of tourism countries.

4. Fragmented nature of standards and instructional programmes, insufficient coverage of practical classes and practices, weak cooperation between planners of education, industrial schools, employers and social partners within this research must be mentioned as the central causes of nonconformity of young specialists to the labour market demands. Moreover, as the foreign tourism planning specialists emphasise, the preparation process of tourism specialists in the industry must take place in coordination with the tourism policy strategies of the whole country.

5. In order to improve the situation, it is necessary to eliminate the discovered problems and their causes:
   - to facilitate the cooperation of vocational training institutions with companies and potential employers, employers’ association, professional organisations, thus enlarging the employment possibilities of people being educated after finishing the school;
   - to stimulate the participation of municipalities in funding of industrial schools and preparation of hospitality specialists necessary in the regions, thus to a greater extent attracting the region’s residents to learning at industrials schools of their own region and reducing the qualitative problems of personnel resources’ reliability in regional context;
   - to optimise the vocational training grid according to the social – economic situation in Latvia, reducing the number of fragmented programmes and standards in hospitality specialties, to unify programmes that comprise many specialisations of hospitality sphere, creating opportunities for specialisation by courses of one’s choice, distant-learning methods and individual plans.

6. In the hospitality industry 21 profession standard has been worked out, the majority of which have similarly defined skills, knowledge and responsibility, which consequently fragments and tangles the vocational training of this industry, and as a result of which a lesser attention is directed to essential knowledge and skills.

7. Education level in the hospitality personnel’s qualification has a vital role, but the knowledge and skills acquired in vocational training do not always conform to the requirements set by the industry.

8. When elaborating the national strategy for tourism development, its objective must be not only uniting of the vocational training with tourism industry, but on a broader scale creating the link between tourism environment and global education in the national context. Thus, for example, in Great Britain for the tourism industry development in the global context such objectives have been set:
   - to facilitate use of innovations and novel technologies in the tourism industry;
   - to create for tourism industry the access to young educated specialists;
   - to enhance the profession’s prestige in the world;
   - to regulate employment;
   - to reduce foreign workforce;
   - to respond to the constantly growing requirements of guests in the field of services and communications.

9. To improve the situation, it is necessary to eliminate such problem tree causes in the provision of lifelong education:
   - complicated, multi-dimensional character of production and services of hospitality companies, the status of small and micro companies that stipulates the division of many duties between a numerically small staff and complications running of the company. To motivate the management to get involved in solving of lifelong education issue, the acquisition of the EU funds must be made easier and the state support policy must be worked out;
• for development of a unified lifelong system a coordinated system of laws and regulation and efficient administration of resources (including finances) must be formed;
• to work out a model of funding that stimulates the enhancement of hospitality specialists’ qualification, to facilitate the creation of scholarship fund, under which the person educated or student receives the scholarship from potential/present employers;
• to ensure the re-qualification of education during entire life, paying special attention to training at the workplace and during working time, as well as mastering of foreign languages;
• to develop in the country acquisition of a part of hospitality professions from practitioners (cooks, confectioners, barmen, waiters, chambermaids).

10. High workforce fluctuation can be decreased through forming a complex of actions and activities between companies in cooperation with municipalities, to decrease migration of employees to other regions and foreign countries, as well as to increase long-term employment at companies on the whole:
• for entrepreneurs – to facilitate in cooperation with municipalities the self-development of personnel resources, to ensure the increase in competitiveness and places of employment;
• for entrepreneurs – to support studying activities, to get involved in the study process, simultaneously ensuring to those who study practice places at companies and potential jobs in future;
• to work out at companies the strategy for development of personnel resources, thus furthering the formation of a knowledge-based business activity, ensuring an increased creation of jobs and greater social cohesion at companies.

11. As the persons employed in hotel and restaurant industry are not representatives of regulated professions, they have broad opportunities to work in hospitality companies (with or without qualification) outside of Latvia, where there are no determined requirements for the qualification. Professional qualification in the specialities of hospitality sphere is significant, but it is not decisive. Great importance pertains to the attitude, wish to serve, openness, interest in clients and professional actions to be performed. Requirements for professional qualification stipulated in Latvia for those employed in food industry are objective (from the angle of food safety), but thus engagement of relevant human resources is hindered in the hospitality industry.

12. Main features that characterise the preparation process successfully executed by several foreign countries are close, involved cooperation between the planners of vocational training, those who shape the tourism policy, those who implement the vocational training, companies of the industry and social partners, as well as realisation of continuity in vocational training.

13. Preparation of hospitality industry specialists must take place at the national level within the scope of tourism policy, thus outlining the role of human resources in securing a sustainable tourism development. It necessitates:
• at the national level to work out forms of cooperation between vocational training institutions and professional associations of the industry that represent the companies of hospitality industry, in issues of planning and preparing of specialists;
• to elaborate economically reasonable educational programmes that would conform to the needs of companies, especially at small and micro companies;
• to systematically determine the demand for human resources at hospitality companies of the region, which would enable a rapid adaptation to the actual needs of the industry’s companies;
• to update the profession standards, syllabuses of study subjects in hospitality industry specialities in accordance with labour market requirements;
• a financial support by the state to employers who train employees for the company’s finances, as well as when the practical training of students of vocational training institutions is carried out.

References
Ресурсы квалифицированного персонала как основное условие для успешного развития туризма

Резюме

Одним из базовых принципов успешного и продолжительного развития индустрии туризма и гостеприимства является неизменное качество обслуживания, отвечающее желаниям клиента. В свою очередь, определяющим качество услуг фактором в индустрии гостеприимства, вероятно, в большей степени, чем в других областях, является персонал - его квалификация, знания и компетенция.

При проведении исследования потенциала индустрии туризма в народном хозяйстве авторы данной работы, используя логический структурный подход системы логического планирования дерева проблем, провели углубленный анализ роли кадровых ресурсов, определив как проблему - «качество кадровых ресурсов предприятий индустрии туризма не отвечают требованиям рынка труда». В результате проведенного исследования выкristаллизовались самые существенные причины проблем с качеством кадровых ресурсов, а также были определены возможные последствия.

Целью исследования является оценка самой существенной проблемы кадровых ресурсов в туризме - качество кадровых ресурсов не отвечает требованиям рынка труда, не приведено к балансу с нуждами потребителей и в контексте латвийских регионов.

Исследование имеет следующие задачи:
- проанализировать причины и следствия основных проблем качества кадровых ресурсов в туризме;
- сделать выводы в контексте «Дерева проблем».

Дерево проблем является составной частью подхода структуры логистики системы логического планирования (The Logical Framework Approach). LogFrame был создан Розенбергом и Познером (Rosenberg & Posner, 1979) в 1996 году в Америке. Дерево проблем отражает проблемы, последствия глубинные причины и позволяет установить истинные корни неудовлетворительной ситуации, оно также определяется как модулирование реальности.

Дерево проблем состоит из следующих элементов:
- существенные и непосредственные причины главных проблем;
- существенные и непосредственные последствия главной проблемы;
- дерево проблем с причинно-следственной связью.

По итогам анализа исследования определена центральная проблема: качество кадровых ресурсов предприятий индустрии гостеприимства не отвечает требованиям рынка труда, не приведено к балансу с нуждами потребителей и в контексте латвийских регионов.

В процессе исследования были идентифицированы три основные причины проблем:
- несоответствие молодых специалистов требованиям рынка труда;
- недостаточное обеспечение непрерывного обучения;
- высокая текучесть кадров.

Для достижения целей и задач диссертации были применены следующие количественные и качественные методы исследования:
- монографический или описательный метод для записи и оценки научных заключений и теорий, интерпретации ранее проведенных исследований и формулирования выводов;
- метод анализа и дедукции для исследования отдельных элементов проблемы и их взаимосвязи, с тем чтобы объединить отдельные элементы в единую систему и создать общую теорию;
- определение отношений для доказательства выдвинутой исследованием гипотезы влияния качества кадровых ресурсов на процесс создания услуг.

Туризм является трудоемкой отраслью народного хозяйства, которая благодаря своему мультиплексному воздействию стимулирует создание рабочих мест во всем народном хозяйстве в разных регионах, в том числе в менее развитых и заброшенных. Кадровые ресурсы являются главным элементом в достижении долгосрочного развития туризма и повышения конкурентоспособности отрасли, привлекая внимание к качеству продукции и услуг.

Индустрия туризма предлагает много возможностей для малоквалифицированных работников, внося свой вклад в поддержку гибкого рынка труда и улучшение общей ситуации.

В процессе анализа дерева проблем были обнаружены первичные последствия найма малоквалифицированных работников, внося свой вклад в поддержку гибкого рынка труда и улучшение общей ситуации.

Для улучшения ситуации необходимо устранить выявленные проблемы и их причины:
- содействовать сотрудничеству учреждений профессионального образования с предприятиями и потенциальными работодателями, ассоциацией работодателей, профессиональными организациями, поддерживая тем самым возможности занятости для учащихся после окончания учебы;
- поощрять участие самоуправлений в финансировании профессионально-технических училищ и подготовке необходимых для регионов специалистов отрасли гостеприимства, тем самым привлекая жителей региона к обучению в профессионально-технических учреждениях региона и уменьшая проблемы обеспечения качественных кадровых ресурсов в контексте регионов.
• оптимизировать сеть профессионально-технического образования в соответствии с социально-экономической ситуацией в Латвии, уменьшив количество раздробленных программ и стандартов по специальностям индустрии гостеприимства, объединяя программы, которые охватывают многие области специализации в сфере гостеприимства, создавая возможности специализироваться с помощью выбранных курсов, методов дистанционного обучения и индивидуальных планов.

**Ключевые слова:** туризм, гостеприимство, квалификация персонала.

*Fig. 1. Problem Tree of Quality of Personnel Resources of Hospitality Companies*

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