



Practical Training in Tourism in the University of National and World Economy

Elenita Velikova¹, Mariana Ianeva², Ilija Gatovski³

Abstract

The growing importance of the tourism industry for the Bulgarian economy raises a numerous challenges for tourism education in universities. The majority of services in tourism supply further complicate the business of providing quality tourism product. Along to these facts we can add the constant redesigning of the tourism industry, the creation and adaptation of new sectors to it contribute to setting high requirements that tourism staff must meet. In order to respond to these changing conditions, managers need a solid preparation that must to be provided during their training in Bachelor's and Master's degree. In recent years one of the most discussed topics in the Bulgarian tourist industry is how to link education with tourism practice. The ever-growing need for well-trained staff, both in theory and in practical terms, became perhaps one of the key problems. Therefore, training in tourism in UNWE has entirely practical and applied focus. Emphasis is interactive forms of learning, where students have the opportunity to observe and participate in real terms the management process of tourism enterprises and tourist services. The aim of the authors of this report is to draw attention to the role of practical vocational training for the formation of competitive and professionally oriented staff with a high degree of adaptability to the needs of the labor market. Adapting training to the modern requirements of the tourist business environment will contribute to increasing the competitiveness and image of majors offering educational training on Transport and Tourism in UNWE.

Keywords: tourism, education, practical and applied focus, UNWE

1. Introduction

Today's dynamic travel environment, place numerous challenges to the universities providing education in tourism. First of an adjustment in majors' curricula and subjects is necessary to meet the market needs of tourism companies. The constantly changing conditions of the tourist services supply and the dynamics in consumer's tastes and preferences determine the necessity of students that are being trained in real terms, so they can develop the necessary knowledge, skills and competences. I.e. in support of innovative teaching methods and analysis of global best practices include practical training in which students have the opportunity to apply the acquired knowledge and develop their skills.

2. Good practice in tour operators' education

One of the key sub-sectors of the tourism industry and therefore the training associated with it is a **tour operator activity** and its extension **guide activity**. In this regard, professional training of personnel in the field of travel agencies must pass through several modules:

- The first module concerns the management and organization of those types of activities. Managerial knowledge and skills of students in the field of travel agencies are related to tasks which aimed at research and comparison of various organizational and management structures of small, medium and large companies and accordingly choice of structure based on the specific study case. Here the emphasis is on the management policies and priorities of the agency for its development.
- The second module of practical training is related to the development of standards, by which the travel agency will operate. The strategies of leading business in the field are being examined in order to identify

¹ Department: Economics of Tourism, UNWE, Bulgaria

² Department: Economics of Tourism, UNWE, Bulgaria

³ Department: Economics of Transport and Energy, Bulgaria

specific needs [1] and the determination and development of internal company standards. The regulations concerning mandatory rules are also being examined.

- The third module is identified by planning tour operator's product. Students are trained how to do market research or how to use secondary ones to choose attractive tourist destinations to segment the market and to position the potential product based on the conceptual project. Their knowledge is formed and based on the development of routes with a choice of accommodation and attractions that can be included in the travel program.

- The fourth module is training the negotiation and conclusion of agreements with potential partners in the construction of tourism product. Selected suppliers - hoteliers, transporters, restaurateurs on certain criteria, are being picked by two methods – qualitative and quantitative. Skills of conducting business correspondence draft offers are developed. Role-playing games for business meetings and negotiations between hoteliers and tour operators are carried out.

- The fifth module is forming a task on developing bundled products and creating a brochure or catalog, which will advertise and promote the program created by tourism students. For this purpose the students have been supplied with various tourist catalogs of existing on market tour operators. They need to compare them and to highlight according to the specified case the usage of what kind of tourist catalog will be appropriate so it can show the product in the most interesting way, but also to facilitate the agents to work with such a catalog. The practical training in this module is related to the study of tourism fairs and exhibitions, [2] where the travel agencies and their products are presented through their catalogs.

- The sixth module is connected with the advertising and promotion of tourism package. The practical training of students includes researching of internet sites of travel agencies with purpose to choose the presentation of the product in its own travel agency site. In this part of the training is carried out and partners research - travel agents who are interested in reselling products on receipt of commissions.

- The seventh module features the construction of students' skills to sell the product in the tourist office. At this stage the business games are the most heated, because they create an environment of a travel agency with employees who work in it, and customers who visit it. This situation forms communication skills to work with clients. Rules for office work connected with the offering tourism product, which includes working with tourist catalogs, maps, manuals, folders and other information, are created. The students learn how to provide quality service at the tourist office. In the same time they played games with demanding and dissatisfied customers and they look for opportunities for quality service, so that any potential and actual customer to be satisfied and to purchase and demanded his package.

- The eighth module is building knowledge and skills in students on the occasion the very conduct of tourist trip and full realization of the program of the tour operator. The training pays attention not only to the requirement to adherence with the tourism program according to the brochure and the contract between the customer and the tour operator, but also with the work with suppliers during the trip. The control over the suppliers in order for further their selection is essential [3]. In this module the roles playing games dialed with disgruntled customers during the trip and stay in the tourist destinations as well as the issue of complaints during the trip. Students study the preparation of surveys with questionnaires on customer satisfaction during the trip. On this stage relevance and application has the organization of passenger transport and the quality and competitiveness of the road infrastructure. [4]

3. Innovative educational practices in additional disciplines

The Practical tourism training in UNWE is also used for other special subjects set in the curriculum. Special interest is the practice of assigning students to develop **research projects** in which they, alone or in a team, research the latest trends in the studied problems. Thus building exploratory and analytical skills, adapting to dynamic conditions, teamwork skills and presentation skills. Students investigate problems and solve them, based on recent studies by integrating knowledge from new or interdisciplinary fields and demonstrate the ability to generate new knowledge and procedures related to scientific research and innovation. The best course developments are directed to participation in organized annual scientific conference for undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD students "The diversity of tourism in scientific knowledge."

In the context of the **entertainment industry**, whose revenues generate 70% of additional tourism services, students construct entertainment programs, studying the best practices of leading tourist destinations, applying them to the specificities of tourism business in Bulgaria [5]. Within **management**

training events in tourism future managers are taught how to choose appropriate to conduct a specific destination events depending on the objectives tourist destination wants to achieve - socio-cultural, economic, commercial, political, physical and psychological effects [6]. After gaining knowledge about types of events, development of event mission and the necessary management functions for its implementation, students develop a concept for their own event, depending on their personal preferences and tastes. With concrete implementation of the acquired knowledge and skills students have the opportunity to submit at organize an annual meeting of graduates students called "Evening of the specialty." It is traditionally organized on 21.02. - the "International tourist guide day". The event is usually devoted to a particular subject, which is implemented through a program involving current students of the major.

With its specific features and training in **spa and wellness tourism**. The course integrates a wide range of knowledge and sources of information of methods for achieving prosperity in the modern tourism environment. Within the framework of practical training students visit various spa and wellness centres in Sofia and the country side and receive training in organizational and managerial aspects of the activity. The complexity and diversity of sites offering spa and wellness services, is illustrated by the inclusion in the program of the visit of different types of structures and complexes - Day Spa, Destination Spa, Resort/hotel Spa, Spa Lifestyle Real Estate, Medical Spa, Wellness centres and others. In addition to the managerial aspect of the activity, students are trained in determining the economic attractiveness of investment in the spa and wellness industry through the development of business evaluation of activities related to disclosure of the strengths and weaknesses of the companies, outlining specific management decisions and evaluation of the company [7].

Teaching **aesthetics of the tourism environment** is also modified in two aspects - economic and managerial. The economic perspective is assessing the impact of aesthetics on the effectiveness of the tourist sites while management perspective analyzes issues related to the competitiveness of the sites and their impact on consumer choice. [8] On this basis, a system of indicators is developed by which students can make realistic assessments of aesthetics by visiting places of staying and dining. These assessments allow them to evaluate the quality class.

In order to facilitate the realization of students, every year their CVs are being issued in a register and it is sent to potential employers. Originally this register is spread of tourism fair organized annually in Sofia. Under this initiative there are organized meetings with potential employers, visiting tourist sites in the form of "open day", lectures by psychologists and specialist in human resources management.

4. Conclusion

The reviewed issues of training in tourism do not exhaust all the possibilities of educational programs. They only refer to the competence of the authors of the publication. In reality when doing their Bachelor's, Master's and PhD studies, students gain a lot more knowledge, skills, competence, students gain all of this based on combination between presenting and teaching.

References

- [1] Tsonev, N., *Marketing in Tourism*, Publishing Complex – UNWE, S., 2014.
- [2] Yaneva, M., Consulting project for identification and promotion of a tourist destination, *Journal of Science & Research*, vol.2(3), 2011.
- [3] Ianeva, M., *Tour Guide Service*, Publishing Complex – UNWE, S., 2014.
- [4] Гътовски, И., Повишаване качеството на транспортното обслужване на туризма чрез развитието на пътно-шосейната инфраструктура“, *Научна конференция „Бизнесът – позитивната сила в обществото“*, 2013, С., НБУ.
- [5] Емилова, И., *Еволюция и развитие на пазара на нетрадиционни туристически услуги във високоурбанизираните центрове*, Българската камара за образование, наука и култура, С., 2014.
- [6] Velikova, E., The Influence of the Events in Tourism, *Journal of Science & Research*, vol.1, 9/ 2016.
- [7] Йорданов, Д., Бизнес оценка на предприемаческата дейност, чрез модифициране на методиката на Форбс, списание *"Икономика и комуникации"*, брой 8/2014.
- [8] Velikova, E., Aestheticization of the Tourism Environment, Publishing Complex – UNWE, S., 2014.