



Career Competence for Career Success in Tourism Industry: Students' Opinions

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Abstract

The tourism industry is one of the most rapidly growing sectors globally and effective management of this industry means that for many developed and developing countries guarantees the economic growth, stable incomes, jobs. However, studies, conducted in tourism employment field says that the tourism industry has a lack of skilled workforce, including managers. The reason is both - low salaries, long working hours, work on holidays and weekends, lack of career opportunities as well as unsatisfied expectations of tourism industry employers related to new employee career competence. Analysing the factors that determine the successful professional activity of managers in tourism industry it was established that it is undoubtedly interlinked with person's career competency. It is person's self-management of his or her working and learning experiences in order to achieve desired career progress. The responsibility for the young professional career competence lies with both - the person, as well as institutions of higher education. It became obvious that in order to eliminate the lack of high-skilled workers in the tourism industry institutions of higher education must train professionals who demonstrate career competence corresponding to the expectations of employees. Also it shows the need for research about the approach of employers, students and institutions of higher education to career competence and its components.

The aim of this research is to evaluate importance of career competence areas of future tourism managers for successful career in the tourism industry.

The research results proved that career competence is one of the vital factor for employment and for a successful career in the tourism industry. According to students' opinion realizing their career in tourism important are initiative, self-respect and respect to others, self-presentation, the ability to communicate and cooperate, work in team or group, think critically, social responsibility, the planning ability and ability to set goals and manage projects.

Keywords: career, career competency, students, tourism industry

1. Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the most rapidly growing global sectors and the effective management of this industry means that for many developed and developing countries it guarantees the economic growth, stable income, jobs. However, the research carried out in tourism employment field proves that tourism industry undergoes difficulties lacking qualified working force, employees recruiting and retaining in this sector [4, 1, 2, 11]. Although most tourism employers report difficulties in recruiting and retaining experienced managers [2]. The reason for this, as it is often indicated, is comparatively low salaries, long and not regular working hours, work on holidays and weekends, lack of training and also low career opportunities [8]. Whilst analysing the factors determining successful career in the alternating world, it was established that it is undoubtedly interlinked with person's career competency [5, 6] and tourism sector here is not an exception [3]. People having ambitions to get an appropriate salary, real perspectives to climb career ladder, fell happy and satisfied when joining the labour market have to possess proper knowledge, skills, personal experience and be ready for lifelong learning and improvement [7].

Career competence, generalizing the standing points of various authors [7,10], could be approached as the management of individual's work and training experience aiming to perceive, plan and develop career, which depends on various skills and personal features. As the competence of modern career is characterized by integrity, four aspects - personal, social, learning and professional, could be pointed out. Usually these aspects are identified as sub competences of career competency and has appropriate skills, knowledges and abilities.

It therefore becomes evident that in order to have a successful employment and career in tourism industry, students who are studying tourism study programs must have and constantly improve these knowledges, skills and abilities.

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2. Research Methods

The qualitative research method written survey is chosen for the evaluating importance of career competence areas of future tourism managers for successful career in the tourism industry.

The study was carried out in Lithuanian institution of higher education in the year 2015. The students of the first circle study programmes associated with tourism were questioned. The research included 203 respondents. The subjects were categorised according to age (92.1%, n=187 of participants were 17-22 years old and 7.9%, n=16 of participants were 23-28 years old) gender (45.3%, n=92 of participants were men and 54.7%, n=111 were women), and the year of studies (35.0%, n=71 of participants were the first-year students, 19.2%, n=39 were second-year students, 24.6%, n=50 third-year and 21.2%, n=43 were fourth-year students).

The research instrument was adapted based on Rosinaite's (2008) research highlighted points, "national career development", and Stanišauskienė's (2004) compiled list of abilities guaranteeing integral career competence. Respondents expressed their approval or disapproval in five-point Likert scale, where 1 - absolutely disagree, 5 - absolutely agree.

The data were processed using SPSS 17 for Windows.

3. Research Results

The analysis of research data, related to the selection of study programme, showed that the greater part of respondents (77.3%, n=157) indicated the tourism-related study programmes as a priority choice when entering a university. When carrying out the analysis of the students of tourism related study programmes that are planning to work in tourism sector it was established that 75.9% (n =154) of all respondents would like to work in this sector. The data analysis based on gender showed significant differences. It proved that compared to men, more women tend to remain in the tourism sector after the graduation.

The analysis of student opinion on the most important sub competence of career competency was found that all aspects are important (respectively personal sub competence – 4,3, social – 4,2, learning – 4,1 and professional – 4,3 points).

Analysis the students' assessment of personal competence skills and their significance led to the distinction of three major groups of skills self-respect and respect to others (M=4,5), showed initiative (M=4,4) and self-presentation (M=4,4). Ability of self-cognition was established of least importance (M=3,8).

Analysing the skills determining social competence, it was established that students point out the following skills as the most important for work in tourism sector: communication (M=4,7), cooperation (M=4,6), teamwork and group work (M=4,4). The following skills are of least importance: trust in people (M=3,8), cognition of social processes (M=3,9) and links to surroundings (M=3,9).

It was established that such skill as critical thinking (M=4,3) is the most important as regards learning sub-competence. Other characteristics - innovativeness and readiness of self-development (M=4,0) are important too.

When analysing students opinions and how they assess significance factor of professional competences skills, three major groups of skills were established: responsibility for personal own activities and their result (M=4,6), planning (M=4,5), managing projects (M=4,4). Taking risks (M=3,7) and specific professional knowledges (M=3,9) were established as the least required skills.

4. Conclusions

The research results proved that career competence is one of the vital factors for employment and for a successful career in the tourism industry. The research proves that in Lithuania, as well as in many other countries, a greater part of students, studying in tourism-related study programmes would like to work in tourism sector after the graduation. According to students' opinion realizing their career in tourism important are initiative, self-respect and respect to others, self-presentation, the ability to communicate and cooperate, work in team or group, think critically, social responsibility, the planning ability and ability to set goals and manage projects.

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