

Review Article

Challenges of Knowledge Management in the Organizations from the Tourism Activity in the Republic of North Macedonia

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Abstract – *This Tourism is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. What should be especially emphasized is that tourism is an equally important branch of business, not only in developed countries but also in developing countries. Tourism encourages the development of many other complementary industries (agriculture, animal husbandry, food production, transport, etc.) and thus provides a larger number of jobs in those activities. The development of tourism and hospitality today largely depends on human resources. Therefore, the subject treated in this paper is knowledge management as a factor for tourism development. Starting from the subject of the research in this paper, and that is the management of knowledge as a factor for the development of tourism, the question of the professional development of the employees in tourism was raised as a problem. The paradox is that the sphere of tourism is developing very fast, and the competencies of human resources in this area do not follow that. Namely, the employees do not have established habits for information education (self-education) using the opportunities provided by the Internet and other electronic media, and the organizations did not understand the essence of investing in employee training to improve their competencies and thus performance. It is not an expense. In the context of the research, two target groups were used, citizens of the Republic of Northern Macedonia as users of catering and tourism services and employees of organizations in this area. Regarding the first target group, users of catering - tourist services, survey/scaling were used, and it included 305 respondents. In relation to the second target group, survey/scaling was also used, and it involved 64 respondents.*

Keywords - *Tourism, human resources, management, employees, managers, organizations.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, tourism is one of the fastest-growing economic activities in the world. What should be especially emphasized is that tourism is an equally important branch of business, not only in developed countries but also in developing countries. Namely, tourism encourages the development of many other complementary economic

branches (agriculture, animal husbandry, food production, transport, etc.) and thus provides a larger number of jobs in those activities. Thus, tourism encourages the development of entrepreneurship in all countries, regardless of their degree of economic development. This is especially important because it accelerates the development of underdeveloped countries. In short, tourism is an important factor in the economic progress and development policy of any country.

The development of tourism today is interdependent and is determined by the technical, information, and communication progress, urbanization, increased labour productivity, the standard of employment, cultural habits, and educational development.

Tourism is one of the few activities that connects nations and countries in the world without any prejudices, which is one of the main reasons that allows tourism to grow faster. At one time, tourism was a privilege only for the chosen social class, while today it is available to the average person, becoming in recent decades an integral part of the lifestyle of modern man.

Tourism analysts predict that by 2030 the investment of those who travel as tourists to foreign countries in relation to the total number of people in the world will reach 14.1%, which means that it can reach another activity.

In order to achieve these predictions, it is necessary to make many changes in the way of working and providing appropriately qualified employees in all types of organizations in the field of tourism. Changes have always been an important part of operations and business decisions, but nowadays, companies are facing new challenges of globalization that are dramatically accelerating the pace of change. So Shariq points out that "we are entering a time when our future will be determined by our ability to use our knowledge wisely, our precious global resource." This leads to the affirmation of the knowledge management approach in tourism. This today (when I finish this paper) becomes extremely important



and current given the collapse of tourism and transport and the pandemic of the "coronavirus".

According to the previous one, the subject that will be treated in this paper is knowledge management as a factor for tourism development. In that context, special emphasis was placed on the current situation in the Republic of Northern Macedonia.

II. MANAGEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND FORMS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Knowledge is often said to be the only resource that has an infinite dimension because the level of knowledge increases thanks to the transmission or distribution of knowledge, while human resources are the media through which organizations use knowledge. The human resources in the organization are the ones that give the final dimension to knowledge because the infinite growth of knowledge as the main obstacle is opposed by human attention, which has a real, final dimension.

Given the importance of employee knowledge as the intellectual capital of any organization, today, special emphasis is placed on knowledge management in each organization. The process of knowledge management goes through a series of stages, forming its life cycle. According to the life cycle model of knowledge management proposed by the author Pentti Sydanmaanlakku, the process of knowledge management consists of five stages and includes:

- Knowledge Creation
- Knowledge Capture
- Knowledge Storing
- Knowledge Sharing
- Knowledge Application.

Post-industrial society today is at the stage of the so-called managerial revolution, which, as Drucker points out, is the third change in the dynamics of the application of knowledge, when science is applied directly to science - and knowledge is applied to knowledge. The management revolution emphasizes the importance of intellectual capital and the knowledge and necessity of its application as a prerequisite for creating added value and successful organizational management. Knowledge Workers are becoming the dominant group within the workforce. The three basic characteristics of knowledge are:

- Uncontrolled spread, because knowledge spreads and travels easier than money
- Verbal mobility, because knowledge is available to all through formal education that is relatively easy to acquire
- Potential for success as well as for failure, because knowledge is necessary to do the job and almost anyone can get it and use it as a "tool or tool for work", but it does not guarantee success to everyone.

Together, these three characteristics make the knowledge society highly competitive with organizations and individuals.

According to research conducted by O'Dell and Grayson, the most commonly recognized consequences of systematic knowledge management of organizations are: improved practice and business processes, increased general operations, increased customer/customer service satisfaction, improved capabilities, employees, or organizational learning, and increasing innovation.

The main goal of knowledge management is to improve employee competencies. Competence is considered as a combination of knowledge, skills, and formed positive attitudes, and includes readiness for additional learning and motivation to work. Namely, the term competence means the total engagement of abilities and knowledge to achieve a certain goal, and the term competence means ability (combination of knowledge, skills, established attitudes, and motivation) to perform certain tasks.

Competence is a term of Latin origin (cometare, competent) and means "to achieve, to be better ...". The term English competence means the ability to perform some work activities according to a predetermined and defined criterion or standard.

The development of human resources is not only aimed at acquiring specific skills for performing their work tasks but also includes:

- Forming attitudes for greater employee engagement;
- Improving employee communication;
- Proactive attitude towards innovative solutions.

What is especially important today is that the acquisition of competencies is achieved not only through formal education but much more through and through non-formal and informal education (self-education):

Informal education - is organized and planned content that takes place outside the formal education system (seminars, training, courses, etc.). These are activities that encourage individual learning, acquiring different knowledge skills, developing attitudes and values, activities that are complementary to formal education. It is usually the basis for some kind of certification or licensing.

Information education - is an unplanned, individually, mostly personally initiated education. It is acquired on the basis of everyday experiences, socialization, use of professional literature, communication with other people, watching educational shows. This type of education is often called accidental learning or learning in from.

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF TOURISM

Management nowadays represents one of those terms that are very frequently used in everyday contacts and practice, but is rare and not by everyone, taken in its correct meaning. It is necessary to treat management more like an activity or process rather than a term or event. Management refers to performing tasks or providing

grounds for things to happen, and it refers to a process that everybody accepts as a manner or culture of living within the frames of their organizations.

The management is goal-oriented and takes care of achieving good results. Visible results understand establishing a set or a system of values regarding the nature of these results and the significance due to which the results are to be achieved. Becoming a successful manager is actually developing a capacity to understand the nature of results and achievements and their linkage within corresponding systems of values. This implies that the management is not and can not be neutral when it comes to values and results.

With its social functions (health, cultural, educational, political, etc.), tourism moves millions of people in their free time, with their earned funds or social benefits, to travel in different directions, either in their own country (domestic tourism) or outside the country (foreign tourism).

Various authors have tried to define tourism in different ways, and among them, the following are most often mentioned:

- Tourism is a set of relationships and phenomena that occur during the travels and stay of foreigners in a certain area if that stay does not mean settlement and is not related to acquiring earnings or doing business.
- Modern tourism is characterized by polyfunctionality and inter-functional connection, but also by individualization of tourist behaviour.
- Tourism, through its numerous social functions (health, recreational, sports, cultural, entertainment, environmental, social, political, moral, religious, educational, etc.) in states of increasingly expressed and designed intellectual, spiritual and physical needs, as well as humanistic values, acquires the means and challenge of a happier and more organized human future, his, can be said the complete form of free time use.

The field of tourism in the Republic of Northern Macedonia is monitored with a monthly statistical survey, as well as with five-year surveys for the travel of the domestic population and with surveys for foreign tourists in accommodation facilities and for foreign visitors at the border crossings. They provide monthly and annual data on tourists and overnight stays by types and categories of accommodation facilities, country of tourist affiliation, types of places of residence, facilities, and the like. It also provides data on the socio-economic structure of domestic and foreign tourists, the manner and purpose of the trip - the stay, as well as data on the size and structure of costs and other data related to the trip - the stay.

The catering industry is monitored with a quarterly, annual, three-year, and five-year statistical survey. These surveys provide data on the size of the turnover and its structure by type of services and individual products, quarterly and annually, as well as data on the consumption

of raw materials for food preparation in catering - input, technical equipment, and catering staff according to occupation and education, as well as data on the size of accommodation facilities, technical and other characteristics that express the level of comfort and content of the tourist offer.

In this context, it is important to state some parameters according to the State Statistical Office of the Republic of Northern Macedonia. According to publicly given key indicators, the situation is as follows:

Number of tourists (December 2019): 61,468
Number of tourists (December 2019 / December 2018): 108.7
Number of nights (December 2019): 119 412
Number of nights (December 2019 / December 2018): 104.8
Number of domestic tourists (index) (December 2019 / December 2018): 101.7
Number of foreign tourists (index) (December 2019 / December 2018): 112.6

In line with the increase in the representation of the tourism sector in the overall world economy, the number of existing jobs was increasing, but new ones are being created, which showed a tendency to increase the number of employees in this sector. With the increase of the tourist operation and the spending of the domestic and foreign tourists, there was an inclusion of a large number of employees in the tourist economy, which increased the number of workers who directly or indirectly participate in the provision of tourist services.

The latest official data, according to the State Statistical Office from March 12, 2020, should also be stated. The number of tourists in January 2020 is 55,266, and the number of nights spent is 109,733. The number of tourists in January 2020, in January 2019 increased by 12.7%, and the number of nights spent increased by 6.9%. The number of overnight stays of domestic tourists in January 2020, in January-January 2019, increased by 1.5%, and the number of overnight stays of foreign tourists increased by 11.4%.

This meant a good start to the new 2020, but the situation has changed dramatically with the World Health Organization's March 2020 pandemic. That meant isolation instead of globalization, and normally the first economic activity that suffered the blow was tourism. All tourist arrangements from the country abroad and vice versa, from abroad to the country, were cancelled. Hotel facilities remained empty, travel agencies shut down their activities, and restaurants and cafeterias were closed by a government decision. No one knows until when. No one can guess where tourism will move and how it will develop in the future, and it is uncertain. The only thing for sure is that everything will not be the same as before.

At this point, restarting tourism worldwide will require a whole new approach and a new strategy, which will

mean something completely new and qualitatively better. This will lead to new entrepreneurial ventures in the direction of innovative tourist offers. Only very well-trained employees and tourism managers will be able to do that. So, the time is coming when knowledge management and even talent management will be the key factors in facing the challenges of the time that will come after the pandemic, but also with creative solutions to get tourism out of this unwanted situation.

It should be noted that the development of tourism, so far, has been based on globalization and the great mobility of citizens around the world. But today, we need to think about the fact that the pandemic is shaking the foundations of globalization and affirming regionalization and isolation. In other words, it means that tourism in the near future will be focused on domestic tourists and tourists from neighbouring countries. Thus, the healing process of tourism is likely to begin. How this will be implemented and how the tourism crisis will be overcome will largely depend on the capabilities of human resources, their competencies, and innovative ideas. So, managing tourism employees will be extremely important

IV. EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN TOURISM

Contemporary tendencies and conditions clearly show that there is an emergent need for continuous changes in the organizations in all fields of work and living, which become their benchmark. This particularly applies to organizations in the field of tourism. With the changes in the organizations, there are bigger needs and expectations in relation to management and the need for bigger expertise of the labour force. If these needs are met, there will be a powerful organization with a competitive advantage. The importance of the quality workforce in the tourism sector is stressed out by Kulas et al., and according to them, Tourism is an extremely labour-intensive and dynamic activity, which means that tourism services are based on the quality of human resources. The function of the human resources in the future will include staff with different experience, skills, and competencies, creating a bigger perspective of what this profession means. The management of human resources is strictly connected with organizational performances and achievements.

The specificity of the tourist product and the tourist needs affects the specificity of the human resources that actively participate in the creation of the tourist offer and the provision of tourist services.

However, the quality of human resources in tourism and hospitality has a special dimension. The tourist worker communicates directly with the users of the tourist role. It requires not only to be educated and professional but also to be communicative, kind, patient, tolerant, self-confident, and emotionally stable.

The development and promotion of the competitiveness of tourism and hospitality do not only

mean the existence of natural beauties, or only on the basis of improving the quality of tourist and hotel offers, but above all, the existence of quality and properly educated production and service human resources and managers. Who has the opportunity and obligation for continuous education and improvement of their competencies? Education is a complex, continuous and long-term process, whether it is the time in which it takes place or the goals that are desired to be achieved, and as such, it covers a sociological, psychological, and developmental component. Education should be distinguished from the terms teaching, training, or employee development.

Learning is a process of acquiring knowledge, skills, and habits through education. Learning outcomes are assessed according to changes in the behaviour of the individual, i.e., for employees means changes in work behaviour or performance at work. Today, in the time of intensive application of information and communication technology, e-learning is of great importance (E-learning).

The training is a prepared and organized system for the realization of a certain program for acquiring knowledge and skills for performing certain work tasks through properly designed activities. The training is in the field of non-formal education. The most common forms of training for employees in the workplace are instruction, job rotation, specialist professional education. In addition to these forms, in countries with developed tourism and hospitality, where great emphasis is placed on informal education of employees, are used: lectures, panel discussions, counselling, seminars, courses, congresses, instructions, practical training, study visits, professional excursions, work introduction, internship, mentions.

The training needs and to improve the competencies of the employees are numerous, but those that refer to the modern development of science and technology stand out, as well as the ways of managing the work processes and the requirements of the clients.

In addition to the informal, in the field of tourism and catering, self-education or information education is of great importance. This can be especially intense and rewarding today, given the opportunities offered by the Internet. But collegial conversations, sharing experiences, and observation are very effective and useful forms of joint learning with colleagues.

When it comes to the Republic of Northern Macedonia, it should be noted that within the secondary vocational education for catering - tourism (formal education), which provides the largest number of employees in tourism, hospitality, and hospitality, there are appropriate degrees of education and profiles, for example:

- Four-year-old: hotel-tourist technician, event and animation technician, catering technician for rural tourism, catering technician
- Three-year-olds: waiter, cook, confectioner, maid, baker, butcher, bartender.

It should be noted that these three-year profiles can be realized in two years, but this is a lower level, and there is a limited opportunity for employment in hotels and luxury restaurants. In this context, it should be noted that the cafeterias employ people without proper education, which in my opinion is a serious problem. This affects the quality of service due to their inability to do so. Such staff has neither the knowledge nor the skills nor the sense of tourist-catering behaviour. This problem, not only in this area but in the whole real sector, can be solved most simply through shorter forms of non-formal education, through certification. But that requires proper legislation and agreement between the economy ministry and chambers of commerce.

Unlike other countries, especially Switzerland, Austria, Finland, Slovenia, non-formal education in our country is too formalized. The existing procedures are complex and take a lot of time and energy that does not go in favour of the business community. Rigidity with laws and procedures is a limiting factor, creating additional stress for the business sector and not meeting its needs. Therefore, it is inevitable that certain steps will be taken to reduce the rigidity of non-formal education regulations. In this regard, the Economic Chamber of Macedonia, in cooperation with the relevant educational institutions and international experts, undertakes activities to simplify the procedures for verification of non-formal education programs and verification of the institutions that provide those programs. This would help educational service providers to offer market-oriented programs and respond more quickly to the needs of companies to provide a competent workforce.

Strengthening non-formal education is an effective and efficient way to further acquire and improve practical skills and competencies in individuals, whether employed or unemployed.

V. EMPIRICAL CONNECTION

Starting from the subject of research in this paper, which is knowledge management as a factor for tourism development, I raised the issue of professional development of tourism employees as a problem. The fact is that not only is there a problem with quality education through formal education, but the issue of built culture is

very critical, as an individual of each employee and the tourism and catering organizations, in terms of the need for continuous professional development. The paradox is that the sphere of tourism is developing very fast, and the competencies of human resources in this area do not follow that. Namely, the employees do not have established habits for information education (self-education) using the opportunities provided by the Internet and other electronic media, and the organizations did not understand the essence of investing in employee training to improve their competencies, and therefore their performance, is not an expense. It is an investment in intellectual capital, which leads to an improvement in the quality of products and services in tourism and hospitality, and thus an increased volume of work and profit.

In the context of the research, two target groups were used, citizens of RSM as users of catering and tourism services and employees of organizations in this area.

Regarding the first target group, users of catering - tourist services, I used survey/scaling, and it covered 305 respondents. Regarding the second target group, I also used survey/scaling, and it covered 64 respondents.

The first target group was given 12 questions/statements, to which they had to express their opinion/position with a grade of 1 to 5, according to the following meaning:

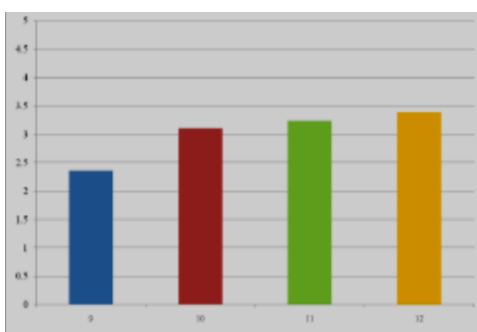
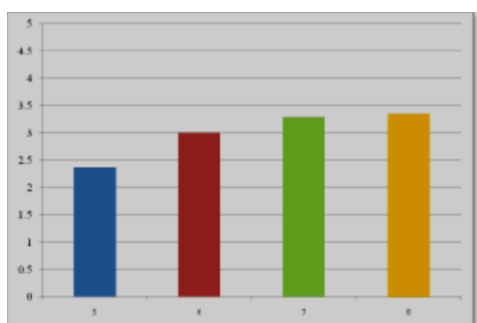
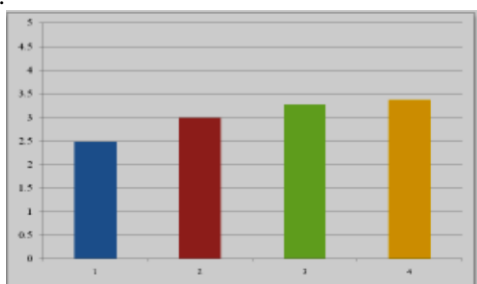
- I don't agree at all
- I partially agree
- On average (neutral), I agree
- I agree
- I very much agree.

The obtained results expressed in absolute numbers and percentages accordingly, as well as the calculated mean value or coefficient of significance, are systematized in the following table I.

Table 1. Results Users of Catering and Tourism Services

	Expression	1	2	3	4	5	Average
		%	%	%	%	%	
1	I am Satisfied with the Service of the Employees in the Cafeterias	4414.4	11437.4	10735.1	3511.5	51.6	2.49
2	I am Satisfied with the Service of the Employees in the Restaurants	227.2	7524.6	12139.7	5819.0	299.5	2.99
3	I am Satisfied with the Service of the Hotel Staff	123.9	6019.7	11537.7	6922.6	4916.1	3.27
4	I am Satisfied with the Service of the Travel Agencies (They Provide me with the Services Provided in the Offer)	82.6	4514.8	12741.6	7624.9	4916.1	3.37
5	The Staff at the Cafeterias are well Trained	5217.0	12139.7	9932.5	299.5	41.3	2.38
6	Restaurant Staff are well Trained	196.2	7223.6	12741.6	6120.0	268.6	3.01
7	Hotel Staff are well Trained	93.0	5718.7	12039.3	7223.6	4715.4	3.30
8	The Employees of the Travel Agencies are well Trained	72.3	4615.1	13042.6	7524.6	4715.4	3.36
9	Cafeteria Staff Have Good Communication Skills and are Helpful	4916.1	12139.6	11537.7	175.6	31.0	2.36
10	Restaurant Staff Have Good Communication Skills and are Helpful	185.9	6320.7	12641.3	6521.3	3310.8	3.11
11	Hotel Staff Have Good Communication Skills and are Helpful	113.6	6220.3	11838.7	7023.0	4414.4	3.24
12	Employees of Travel Agencies Have Good Communication Skills and are Helpful	62.0	4213.7	13143.0	7825.6	4815.7	3.39

The data and results from the previous table are graphically presented in groups of 4 in the following three graphs.



What can be seen is that the total average value of the coefficient of significance is 3.02, i.e., the respondents believe that the quality of the school-tourist offer and service is assessed as average, which is a result of insufficient competence of employees in organizations in this area.

The situation with the cafeterias is the worst, and the situation with the hotels and travel agencies is slightly better. It is obvious that the staff in these organizations is insufficiently trained and is not improving.

One of the reasons is that most of them are seasonal employees, some with inadequate qualifications (especially in cafeterias and partly in restaurants).

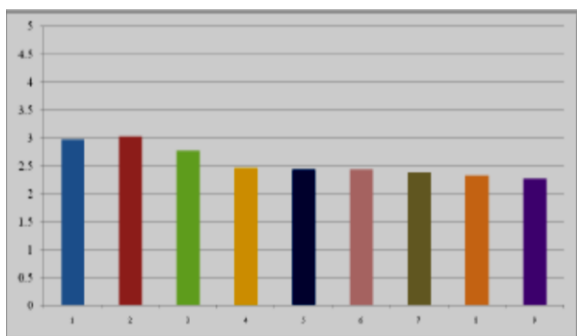
A good part of the younger ones who are educated for cooks, waiters, receptionists, and others. In the main season, they go to work in some closer tourist developed countries such as Greece, Montenegro, Croatia, and others.

The respondents from the second target group were given 9 questions/statements through the conducted survey/scaling, in which they had to express their opinion/attitude by placing a grade from 1 to 5, according to the following meaning:

- I don't agree at all
- I partially agree
- On average (neutral), I agree
- I agree
- I very much agree.

The obtained results expressed in absolute numbers and percentages, respectively, as well as the calculated mean value or significance coefficient, are systematized in the following table 2.

	Expression	1	2	3	4	5	Average
		%	%	%	%	%	
1	Employees in Catering and Tourism Organizations Have Established Habits and Use Forms of Self-education	23.1	1726.6	2945.3	1218.7	46.3	2.98
2	Employees of Catering and Tourism Organizations Use the Internet as a Form of Self-education	23.1	1523.4	3046.9	1320.3	46.3	3.03
3	Employees in Catering and Tourism Organizations Cooperate with Each Other and Share Their Knowledge and New Experiences from the Activity They Perform	57.8	1726.6	3148.4	914.1	23.1	2.78
4	In Catering and Tourism Organizations, the Management Carries out Trainings for the Employees	812.4	2437.5	2742.2	46.3	11.6	2.47
5	In the Catering and Tourism Organizations, the Management Realizes Trainings for Improving the Communication Skills of the Employees.	914.1	2335.8	2742.2	46.3	11.6	2.45
6	In the Catering and Tourism Organizations, the Management Realizes Trainings for Improving the Skills of the Employees for Team Work.	812.4	2437.4	2843.9	34.7	11.6	2.45
7	In Catering and Tourism Organizations, the Management Conducts Trainings for the Employees for Transferring the Innovations in the Activity in which they Work	1015.6	2335.8	2843.9	23.1	11.6	2.39
8	In your Catering-Tourist Organization, Joint Projects /Events with Other Domestic Catering-Tourist Organizations are Realized	1117.2	2539.1	2437.4	34.7	11.6	2.34
9	In your Catering - Tourist Organization, Joint Projects/Events with Foreign Catering - Tourist Organizations are Realized	1218.8	2742.2	2234.3	23.1	11.6	2.27



From the results presented in the previous table, it can be concluded that the employees in the catering and tourism organizations believe that their colleagues do not have established habits for self-education or information education. Namely, the average value or coefficient of significance is 2.93 (calculated for the first three statements), which is slightly lower than the average. This corresponds to the attitudes of the respondents from the first focus group (users of catering - tourism services) in terms of the ability of employees in these organizations and the quality of service they provide.

The results are even worse than the forms of non-formal education in catering and tourism organizations (coefficient 2.39 calculated for statements 4 to 9). So the situation with knowledge management regarding its use and attention paid by managers is at an unsatisfactory level.

The issue of implementing knowledge management in tourism and catering organizations, in particular, will be highlighted today with the coronavirus virus pandemic that has caused the collapse of the industry and transportation in general. A way out of the situation will mean new approaches and strategies for the development of tourism and a much broader and better offer. At first, the emphasis will be on domestic tourists. Short-term entrepreneurial ventures and a strategy for continuous medium-term development are needed.

VI. CONCLUSION

The conducted research showed that the necessary attention was not paid to the tourist and catering organizations, and the importance of managing the knowledge of the employees by the owners and managers of these organizations was not realized. According to the views of the surveyed customers of the catering and tourism services, it was concluded that most of them are not satisfied with the quality of the offer and the service, i.e., the attitude of the employees. For the most part, this is due to insufficient staffing capacity. Also, the findings show that very little attention has been paid in the past to the professional development of employees in this area. As a consequence, there is no built-in awareness and established habits for self-education, but also the lack of awareness among managers and owners to organize various forms of non-formal education.

This activity, which is largely seasonal, provides ample time for training and other forms outside of the season when work intensity is reduced. But it requires a structured

and systematic approach to knowledge management. Human resources are extremely important for the efficient and effective work of organizations dealing with catering and tourism. They are the "software" that needs to be constantly developed because even the best "hardware", good infrastructural capabilities of the organization (catering and tourism facilities) will not provide the desired quality of services for users of those catering - tourism services. A good investment in human resources today is an opportunity for better success and profit tomorrow.

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