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## THE IMPORTANCE OF HR IN TOURISM

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### ABSTRACT

HR is crucial in tourism for building a motivated and skilled workforce through strategic recruitment, training, and employee support, which directly enhances customer service and business success. By effectively managing employees, HR ensures high-quality service, improves guest satisfaction, and maintains a positive work environment, ultimately contributing to a company's competitiveness and overall goals.

### KEYWORDS

Tourism, service, guest satisfaction, training, staff.

HRM is necessary to ensure the success of all businesses. It is especially important for the tourism industry, where the services provided are so often directly influenced by the quality of interactions between the employees and customers. For example, a hotel guest may have a fantastic experience not just because of the room's amenities but because of the warm, attentive service of the staff. A friendly greeting, prompt assistance, and the ability to resolve issues quickly can leave a lasting impression on the guest, influencing their decision to return or recommend the hotel to others.

These positive interactions are critical because they create memorable experiences, foster customer loyalty, and build the brand's reputation.

Effective HRM helps companies manage their workforce to provide exceptional services, retain talent, and maintain a positive organizational culture. From hotels and resorts to travel agencies and tour operators, tourism businesses encompass a range of HR needs that require tailored strategies. For example, resorts may grapple with managing seasonal labor, restaurants may struggle to maintain consistent service quality, and international travel agencies may need to improve the cultural competence of their staff, and so on. Thus, HRM in tourism goes way beyond the typical recruitment and training activities.

This function of HR in tourism encompasses the training, development, and career progression of employees. Training guarantees that the employees have the skills required to perform their tasks and responsibilities efficiently. In tourism, where the customer experience is

essentially the product, employees must be well-trained to meet all their customer expectations.

Many tourism businesses actually invest in training programs that can help enhance the staff's customer service skills, cultural sensitivity, and language proficiency. For instance, the HRM of an international hotel chain may provide language training for its staff, especially for those who did not attend a hospitality business school. The aim is to help them improve their communication skills, particularly with guests from other countries. Similarly, the HRM at a travel company may offer training on digital tools and booking systems, as they help improve operational efficiency.

*Tourism continues to be a major contributor to the global economy. In 2023, it directly and indirectly generated approximately 330 million jobs globally. This number is expected to have climbed to 348 million in 2024, surpassing pre-pandemic employment levels, and even go up to 449 million by 2034.*

In tourism, the ebb and flow of demand often create the need for seasonal and temporary staffing. Picture a beach resort bustling with guests in the summer but sparsely populated in the winter. Staffing for these fluctuations is a complex juggling act.

Businesses must hire enough employees to provide services during peak seasons but also manage the challenge of temporary contracts, which can lead to workforce instability. It's not uncommon for hospitality employers to scramble in high season, leading to stressed-out staff and inconsistency in guest experiences.

The transient nature of seasonal work adds another layer of difficulty as businesses struggle to attract skilled workers who know they will be employed for only a part of the year.

As mentioned before, the tourism industry, especially hospitality, is notorious for high turnover rates. According to a study conducted with 100 employees working in the hospitality sector in the Maldives, low salaries, poor supervisor behavior, and lack of career growth are the main reasons for high turnover. For instance, a restaurant may lose a talented chef, because they see no path to promotion, leaving managers scrambling to maintain service quality.

In addition to these factors, other reasons, such as fewer social hours, lack of benefits packages, and insufficient training contribute to the churn, making it a challenge for tourism businesses to retain staff and ensure consistent services.

Tourism, by its very nature, draws in guests from every corner of the world. A luxury hotel in Dubai might serve guests from Asia, Europe, and the Americas in a single day. As a result, the workforce in these businesses must be diverse as well as culturally sensitive.

While this is an amazing opportunity for those who want to work abroad and experience diverse, international settings, it can sometimes lead to social missteps. Imagine a tour guide misinterpreting a cultural norm, unintentionally offending international tourists, or an employee

at a multicultural resort not understanding how to interact with guests from other backgrounds. These situations point to the critical need for cultural sensitivity training that reflects the wide-ranging backgrounds of both employees and guests in tourism.

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