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## MANAGERIAL CURRENT ISSUES IN THE CONTEXT OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR IN TOURISM

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### Abstract

The field of Organizational Behaviour (OB) has a particular importance in an industry such as tourism, where employees are a key resource. Understanding how they identify and respond to the main challenges is essential. Following the literature review, the authors agreed that there are three current challenges that employees with a leading role in tourism must face: leadership, stress and digitization. Thus, a qualitative research was carried out. The general objective was to observe the way in which the employees with management position understand these three concepts and what they have to say about them. The analysis of the answers led to conclusions such as: underlining the differences between leaders and managers, accepting stress as part of the work and identifying methods to combat it, insufficient knowledge of the concept of digitization. The results of this research will be the basis of a future study, which will provide more comparable information, easier to generalize.

### Keywords

Organizational Behaviour, Tourism, Leadership, Stress, Digitization.

### JEL Classification

D23, L83, Z31

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### Introduction

Tourism, as a phenomenon of modern times, exceeded the borders of the countries, being a promoter of complex development: from the local economy to personal development. Regarding the management of tourism companies, despite the fact that many are small businesses, the economic reality and the speed with which the influencing factors change, obliges the adoption of a much more complex behaviour in organizations, able to cope with these changes, without considerable losses of time, health or employees. The aim of this paper is to highlight the opinions of tourism managers on three current issues in the OB sphere: leadership, stress and digitization. Based on the common elements identified, conclusions will be drawn. These will be useful from at least two perspectives: on the one hand, other managers

will be able to relate to these aspects and, on the other hand, the conclusions will contribute to deepening the research, by establishing some benchmarks for future analysis.

### **About Organizational Behaviour and Tourism**

As an academic discipline, Organizational Behaviour appears about half a century ago (Luthans, 2011). However, its indissoluble connection with humans makes some elements visible from the very beginning of civilization: an example could be religious leaders, who, through their abilities and actions, have produced similar effects to current leaders. The Industrial Revolution and the socio-economic development generated by it have increased the importance of the human resource. Even so, it took more than a century to draw any conclusions about how employees behave (Hawthorne studies). Gradually, there was a need to delimit the study of OB from the other disciplines: Organization Theory, Organization Development and Human Resources Management. Organizational Behaviour tends to be more theoretical and at a micro-level of analyse (Luthans, 2011).

Davis and Newstrom (1985) has defined OB as "the study and application of knowledge how people act or behave within organization. It is a human tool for human benefit. It applies broadly to the behaviour of people in all types of organizations such as business, government, schools and service organizations." A more comprehensive definition belongs to Johns (1997): OB refers to "the attitudes and behaviours of individuals and groups in organizations".

Robbins and Judge (2013) refers to OB as "a field of study that investigates the impact that individuals, groups, and structure have on behaviour within organizations, for the purpose of applying such knowledge toward improving an organization's effectiveness". Essentially, OB it is with people, about people and their experiences in a defined organizational context.

Although extremely complex and often chronophagous, OB (in fact, its understanding) can be a very valuable tool for organizations in their attempt to be successful in a very dynamic and competitive global market.

As a modern industry, tourism in 2017, covers 10% of world GDP, 1 of 10 jobs in the world, 7% of world exports (UNWTO and WTTC, 2018). With these figures in mind, it is easy to imagine how they relate to the field of humans: cultural variety, diversity, uniqueness. These are complex aspects and OB must face them, decoding and assisting the management in order to obtain the desired results.

Tourism is an area where OB can easily find its exemplification, due to the massive and direct involvement of people, both clients and service providers. The permanent networking with people for the purpose of providing tourism services generate multiple connections, often sensitive and based on trust. Furthermore, we are dealing with a lot of perceptions, attitudes and decisions, many of them related to the OB domain. To facilitate these connections and eliminate the frequent barriers (such as communication, culture etc.), managers need to be aware of the difficulties and problems arising from understanding and applying the various components of OB.

Organizational behaviour is based on the company's aspirations, ethics and goals. Ineffective leadership, poor work ethic or low employee morale, can be considered big problems in organization (Ayiekoh, 2013). Another author (Gade, 2013) classifies the challenges into five major categories according to their origins, as follows: demographic factors; diversification; technology; resistance to change; globalization. In Wicks opinion, (2018) the main challenges regarding OB are: diversity, ethics, technology and globalization.

Because in Romanian tourism field we cannot talk yet about the diversity of the workforce (in the sense of belonging to different nations) and because studies on the motivation and ethics of the employees have been already conducted (Buzea 2015, EY, 2017, Beiu, 2018, Oncioiu et al., 2018), the authors decided to direct the research to the following areas: leadership, stress and digitization.

In regard to leadership, most theoretical references begin from his differentiation out of management. Thus, if a manager is a person who acts in order to limit the choices and comply with a plan, a leader is seen as a person with unique approaches, who thinks outside the box and finds ways to solve dilemmas (Adair, cited by Pavelescu, 2014). A manager who does not have leadership qualities will always have problems with motivating and forming a team that works well together. Thus, a leader has the ability to make people happy with what they do, to feel that their work helps to achieve the long-term goal of the organization. He challenges employees to go beyond the basic level of efficiency and to try to reach their full potential. When appropriate, recognize their achievements and reward them. Perhaps most important, it treats mistakes as learning experiences (Kouzes and Pozner, 1998).

Another delimitation that other researchers make is that the leader has soul, passion and creativity, while the manager has mind, reason and perseverance. A leader is flexible, innovative and courageous, and a manager is rather consulting, analytical and authoritative (Bohoris and Vorria, 2008).

Concerning the relationship between leadership, tourism and OB, it can be concluded that in tourism, a leader is needed rather than a manager.

Stress has been playing a major role in organizations in recent decades. Cause to the onset of many diseases, stress is frequently felt in the professional activity. Although some level of it is natural, when it becomes excessive it can have a negative impact on productivity and performance. Stressed employees have low motivation and low productivity, and organizations in which they operate have less chance of success in a competitive market (Leka et al., 2003).

The hospitality industry sometimes subjects employees to difficult experiences: scheduling, working with people, laborious physical work, etc. All this leads to pressures and challenges, respectively the emergence of stress, which is proving to be one of the biggest problems encountered in the hospitality industry. (Lo and Lamm, 2005). Other causes of stress are delegations, the road to work and especially time spent in traffic. (Legrain et al., 2015). Employees may also be stressed by tasks that exceed their level of knowledge and skills, too large a volume of activity, deadlines or difficulties of integration into the group.

For Romania, the results of the 2017 National Stress Survey (Dynamic HR and Learning Network, 2017) reveal that the level of stress among Romanians is an increased one, with over 80% of the population showing symptoms of stress of a physical, emotional or social nature, which have a visible negative effect on the person's life. A worrying percentage can be observed in the sphere of emotional stress that reaches the accentuated level in almost 11% of the population. Behaviours that support or generate high levels of stress are those related to poor eating habits, fatigue, states of irritability and stress in relationships with others. Perhaps the most worrying result is that young people most often experience fatigue and exhaustion, depressing moods and stress in relation to others. As a consequence, the hospitality industry in Romania must pay attention to these aspects, in order to help its employees, if needed.

The newest of the three domains that will be approached in the research is the digitization, respectively the transition from the classical, analogical, to the digital processes (Abi-Saab, 2015). Digital means anything that could be viewed or accessed by gadgets or electronic equipment. More explicitly, digitization is the process of transformation / conversion at the level of a company of any analogical information or physical things (documents, images, sounds, signals, location data, identity cards, etc.) in digital format, so that they can be used through computer systems (data storage, platforms, applications, etc.). Applicability in organizations is reflected in the area of distribution, sales, financial, production, communication, etc. Among the digital products are: electronic invoicing, electronic signature, electronic archiving, cloud storage, Facebook page, company website, ERP solutions (Enterprise Resource Planning), CRM solutions (Customer Relationship

Management); ARP solutions (Advanced Planning and Scheduling); BI solutions (Business Intelligence), mobile digital applications for sales team management, e-commerce sales (selling products through an online platform - virtual store) (Encore Research, 2018).

Nowadays, people are traveling more than ever, with extremely different requirements and expectations. In fact, according to Forbes, the hospitality and tourism industry has been "completely turned on its head in recent years" by trends including mobile integration, Artificial Intelligence and chatbots, integration of the "Internet of Things", focus on data, online reputation and virtual reality (Hughes, 2018). Thus, ignoring digitization or using it only at the primary level can cause market problems for organizations. For managers, the issue of digitization is not only about the costs involved, but also how they manage to explain to employees the need for change.

### **Research: methodology, main findings and discussions**

The purpose of this research is to find out information on the three aspects of the OB field from the Romanian tourism managers. The research is a qualitative, exploratory type. This implies interviewing a small number of people, the data being not statistically representative for the studied population. Regarding sample, the number recommended is 12. "For most research enterprises ... in which the aim is to understand common perceptions and experiences among a group of relatively homogeneous individuals, twelve interviews should suffice" (Guest et al., 2006). Qualitative research studies in depth: the motivations, the emotions, the perceptions, the feelings that cause people to act in different ways. It is based on the development of hypotheses for conducting quantitative research, in-depth understanding of the attitudes, opinions, beliefs, behaviours of individuals or groups of people (IMAS, 2008). The method used for this research is the interview, the process being the semi-structured interview. The only requirement was that the three issues must be discussed in the following order: leadership, stress and digitization. As for the sample, it was composed of 16 respondents with managerial positions in tourism organizations. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed and they were analysed. The period of application of the interviews was November 15– December 15, 2018. They lasted on average 30 minutes. Overall, the students from the Master of Business Administration in Tourism, year II, 2018-2019, ASE Bucharest, appreciated the openness of the managers to provide correct information.

The centralization of the data, lead to the following distribution: 5 respondents from the field of accommodation units, 10 from the travel agencies, and one from an airline.

The respondents from the accommodations provided structured information on topics, as follows: *regarding leadership* – managers are close to their subordinates, trying to motivate them and to reach to their personal problems; the difference between leader and manager is known, "the manager only commanding, while the leader looks beyond these aspects"; regarding the mode of action and the abilities of a good leader, the following were specified: "to get involved in all activities and not to get back from nothing, and if there is any problem to offer help to the employees; to speak to people from equal to equal, but also to know how to prevail when necessary; to know how to motivate their employees and have the power to convince them; to make the employees trust in their manager, but also in themselves; to know how to communicate effectively "; leaders are hard to find; although the term "boss" is still used, managers prefer to avoid using the word "subordinate"; conflicts are solved by the manager's decision; learning from mistakes.

*Regarding stress* – managers perceive that employees have a moderate level of stress, justified by their low age and the environment in which they grew up (rural); stressful situations occur more often for front office staff or in situations where the workload increases, such as in the case of event tourism; for managers, stress is related to customer satisfaction, interaction with foreign tourists, permanent staff search.

*Regarding digitization* – there is some confusion about the term, overlapping in the opinion of some respondents with the technology, with the endowments; reservations through Booking platform are appreciated, visibility through Facebook page and website.

The respondents from the travel agencies had the following opinions: *regarding leadership* – decisions are made as a group, although sometimes, due to time pressure, this is not possible; trust is built on collaboration, openness and equality; motivation in work is crucial to success; the manager offers the possibility for the employees to take on the role of leader; awareness of their own qualities and defects; regarding the actions and the abilities of a good leader, the following were specified: “fairness, confidence in one's own strengths, decision-making power, empathy, communication, knowing how to organize and plan, passion, integrity, generosity, creative consistency, wisdom and openness are for study”; the difference between leader and manager: “the first one observes things and does not get involved directly and from heart, the second has a broader vision; the leader has a great openness to the team, is oriented towards mobilizing all the employees to achieve the common goal; the manager says: *you have to do, the leader says: we have to do*”; the major challenge for a leader is to reconcile everyone, everyone to be happy; customers, employees, management; “The difficulty of a leader is to harmonize the team and lead it to the final goal with the same rhythm and enthusiasm”; the most beautiful part for a leader is the teamwork that brings the expected results.

*Regarding stress* – the stress level is rated as average; the sources of stress are related to the clients who do not communicate the preferences and needs correctly, but also to the service providers that operate changes generating chain effects (overbooking, cancellations or changes of the flights), situations in which the volume of work increases, the stress from personal life, legislation changes, traffic; short-term effects of the stress: fatigue, mental exhaustion; long-term effects of the stress: decreased enthusiasm; some actions regarding stress management: raising awareness of the gravity of the situation and focusing on quick solutions, combining personal and professional life, ensuring a relaxing working environment, a flexible program, communication, better estimation of time under high traffic conditions, positive attitude; the association of the “dead-line” term with stress.

*Regarding digitization* – digitization allows a better communication with customers and also between employees; digitization makes work from home possible; it can provide the necessary frame for innovation; it represents a facilitator between information and creation of holiday packages; digitization is a way to collaborate and create, to receive feedback almost instantly; respondents are aware of its role, but are still at the beginning in terms of complex solutions, especially those involving large budgets; overlapping terms, even confusion: “digitization” and “technology”; digitization is seen as a natural progression, extremely useful for easing work, a factor that offers competitive advantage; however, it can sometimes be a form of stress, due to the resistance to change of some employees; it represents a challenge for managers, due to the speed with which it propagates; it changes consumer behaviour and transforms industries.

The respondent from the airline company stated the following points of view on *leadership*: the team is important, everyone must understand their role and be aware that only together the performance can be achieved; the success of a manager is reflected in the results, but also in the satisfaction of each member of the team; adapting the management style to each employee. *Stress* is managed through better forecasting and organization. Exceeding the most difficult times is done through good communication and mediation of conflict situations.

*Digitization* implies partnering with a Direct Connect type distribution system, but also with global distribution systems. Also, they have an interface for programming applications that provides instant data regarding the journey, a website, a social media presence, a blog.

The respondents belonging to accommodations correctly differentiate the terms "manager" and "leader". Themselves, by the way they lead, have qualities of leaders. From the general questions (naturally occurred during interviews ) resulted that the companies are facing an acute lack of personnel. In these conditions it is absolutely necessary that the superior be rather a leader than a manager. Often, approaching people and treating them as collaborators instead of subordinates generate motivation and ultimately commitment to the organization. As far as the travel agencies sector is concerned, the creation of united teams is essential. The teams must be able to solve current problems alone. From the specifications of the respondents it is easy to create a profile of the leader of a tourism agency. It includes features such as: fairness, confidence in one's own strengths, empathy, passion, integrity, generosity, creative consistency, wisdom and also behavioural aspect, such as: decision-making power, capacity for organization, planning, communication, openness to study. For the airline it is observed the use of the word manager, rather than leader. However, the focus falls on the team and on the individual satisfaction, seen as a motivator of the performance.

For the accommodations, the stress is related to the periods when there are groups of foreign tourists or events that require the team to do more than they do in a regular working day. Again, the staff problem appears as a key element in an industry such as tourism. In travel agencies, stress comes from both ends of the distribution chain: on the one hand customers who do not clearly formulate the requirements and on the other hand service providers (especially air transport or accommodation) who make decisions that directly and negatively affect clients of agencies. To manage stress it is necessary to truly understand its level and to anticipate, as far as possible, the delicate periods or situations for which it is imperative to have certain procedures created to facilitate the decisions of the employees.

As for digitization, this extremely active component of organizational life, it must be viewed with the confidence of facilitating many relationships between stakeholders. However, once the fear of change is overcome, frequent trainings and briefings should take place. Technology and digitalization, beyond the common elements that they have, need to be emphasized: it is not enough to have technology and digital solutions, if the employees use them incorrectly or not at all. It is noticeable that these interviewed companies are at the beginning of the digitalization era, but every one, according to the budget and the degree of awareness, is willing to invest in this field.

### **Conclusions**

Through this research, the authors proposed to openly approach three sensitive, but extremely current areas of the OB of tourism companies: leadership, stress and digitization. Apparently different, these three areas are intertwined, the leadership component being the one that can make the two factors, one human (stress) and one technological (digitalization), have an appropriate and positive role in organizations.

The results of this qualitative research will be used for a new research that will take place during the academic year 2019 – 2020. Based on the information gained from this research, the authors will create an interview guide. General objectives will be formulated, such as: highlighting the differences between leader and manager in the tourism field, determining the characteristics of the tourism leader, identifying ways to anticipate and combat stress in the organization, appreciation of the way in which digitalization has entered the tourism companies, etc. Also, the term "digitization" will be clarified to avoid confusion with the "technology" one. Subsequently, the results will be used to carry out a quantitative research representative for the tourism field and / or its sectors.

The limits of the research are related to the small sample size and the type of research (qualitative). Thus, it is directly influenced by the person of the interviewer (in this case 16 different people), who by the attitude and manner of expression could have constrained and/or influenced the answers.

Without claiming to be representative for the entire tourism field in Romania, the paper makes significant contributions to the three areas analysed in the field of OB, leadership, stress and digitalization, being a solid starting point for future research (realized by the authors or by others).

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