TRAVEL AGENCY STAFF: THE NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES CONTEXT OF USE

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Abstract

Tourism service providers cannot satisfy all the demands they receive with their own resources. Sustainability comes from being part of a structure. Thus, networks with a certain degree of specialization are created and operated, in which the structural factor is intertwined with the technological one. Yet, in tourism industry, a large part of the employees joins the labour force without formal vocational training, acquiring knowledge and skills while working. More specifically, to be effective the staff of a travel agency need to use specialized working tools. Identifying a local research gap in the form of the mismatch between the capacity of specialized training in the context of the new technologies and the contemporary context of communication, this paper addresses the impact of the use of tools developed through modern information technologies and the way these new tools are ready to provide support for learning. The employee in tourism should not be formed to compete with the specialized integrated system, but to exploit it and come with added value in the provision of services.

Keywords:
Tourism 2.0, integrated training system, training, software.

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Introduction

The tourism development depends not only on attractive landscape and tourist facilities, but also on competitive services and their quality. The intermediary providing the services is a person or is based on employees. Efficient tourism is based on a human resource development strategy. In some specialized works it is stated that the employees training in tourism is a compulsory one. No-one mentions the field of approach and moreover, there is no mention of the skills and knowledge necessary for the employee in tourism in the near and medium future. Not in the least, it gives the impression that the tourism employee has to overemphasize knowledge because it is in competition with the new technologies, including the specialized integrated system, which, in turns, has the possibility to interact directly with the client - both the potential client and the final customer.

Organizational activity is based on planning and development policies, both underpinned by a well-defined desirability for the tertiary sector: to maintain continuity of service regardless of staff changes. Although hardly visible, no organization providing tourism services can fulfil all requests with their own resources. It must be part of a structure (national, regional, local). Thus, networks with a certain degree of specialization are created to operate. The structural factor is intertwined with the technological one, since the latter was designed to support communication.

In general, it can be appreciated the fact that change in tourism-specific organizations has been determined by technology, as well as social and demographic changes. Overall, changes are mainly driven by a high-level management structure that aims to achieve maximum efficiency and a minimum of stress for staff.

Quite a lot of countries face structural problems at the economic level and the crisis of qualified staff is a consequence of these problems. The phenomenon of globalization has a catalytic character for the development of the tourism industry and, implicitly, important consequences in terms of the seasonal or permanent migration of specialized human resources. The combination of the two leads to the registration of skilled personnel

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concentrations in some areas with a more lucrative touristic potential and relatively large areas with a shortage of qualified staff, even if the tourist potential is promising. Regardless of the situation, in both cases training is required as follows: in the case of specialized personnel concentration, to accommodate the occupation of the positions in the less demanding jobs and in the areas with staff shortages to meet the multiple qualification requirements.

Tourism businesses need to enhance their competitiveness by employing the emerging tools and re-engineering all processes. Tourism businesses need to become more flexible, more efficient and quicker in responding the consumer's requests. The ICT revolution offers a variety of tools and mechanisms that allow innovative and dynamic players to take advantage and strengthen their competitiveness. The use of ICTs in tourism businesses digitizes all processes and value chains in the tourism, travel, hospitality and catering industries. All business functions - sales and marketing, finance and accounting, human resource management, procurement, research - development and production, as well as strategy and planning for all sectors of the tourism industry, including tourism, travel, transport, leisure, hospitality, principals, intermediaries and public sector organizations - are influenced by the emerging capabilities of ICTs. Technological solutions are normally incorporated to increase efficiency and reduce the cost and time required for undertaking particular activities and processes (Gruescu, Nanu & Tanasie, 2009).

The present paper seeks to emphasize the influence between the relationship of the travel agency (as an organization) and the infrastructure used in the staff training. A comparative study of the tourism software solution and a vision of the travel agency through the perspective of its information aggregator function are intended to support that staff training should address the creation of skills oriented on the exploitation of new tools developed on the basis of contemporary information technologies.

1. Literature review

Despite rapid growth rates in tourism employment and the tourism industry's large labour market share, tourism is characterized by very high employee turnover rates (Kim, 2014). This is partly because work in the tourism industry is a low-paid occupation with challenging working conditions and limited opportunities for growth (Costa et al., 2017). Apart from the seasonal nature of tourism employment, it being characterized by casual, short-term employment conditions, low wage levels and decreased job security, one of the most significant issues that people working in tourism face relates to the hours' employees are expected to work (Stacey, 2015). Tourism is notorious for having very long work hours at unsocial times and days (e.g. the weekend). Besides, shift work is very common, mainly because tourist services are available 24 h a day, seven days a week (Deery & Jago, 2009). Hence, 'flexibility', in terms of the employee being available whenever the employer needs her or him, has become a sought-after or 'ideal' tourism employee characteristic (Costa et al., 2017).

Imagine a world wherein driverless cars roam the streets and highways, robots deliver services at our homes, offices, hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions; a world wherein humans are connected, through a variety of wearable and even built-in devices, to the material and immaterial networks in a seamless, constant, and ubiquitous way; and a world wherein there is no technical boundary between our everyday life and travel due to our capabilities to represent and simulate the tourism-like experience. These are plausible scenarios, and some of them are becoming parts of reality as we speak. For example, much of the information on the Internet today is being generated by computer programs powered by artificial intelligence. With these scenarios on the horizon, there will be numerous new problems related to the interactions between human and data, networks and machine intelligence. There will be interests in understanding how technology assists and shapes travel information search and decision making in various settings (Werthner et al., 2015). There will be interests in developing smart systems that best serve travellers at tourist destinations. Besides these practical questions, technology will continue to help us interpret and perhaps redefine what it means to be a tourist (Xiang, 2018).

Obviously, there will be concerns and issues related to the quality, trustworthiness and ethics of the applications of big data, social knowledge and machine intelligence. However, most importantly, information technology is connected to travel and tourism in so many ways, that it will provide us new room for imagination and new room to envision our future. Due to technology, there are now possibilities to access a variety of data, in massive quantities, in different formats, and, potentially, real time (Xiang, 2018).

With open data and shared social knowledge serving as the foundations for the tourism experience and for new mechanisms of innovation, today's tourism is not only an intensive information field. It is fair to say that information constitutes the fabrics of tourism, and tourism management is inseparable from information technology (Xiang, 2018).

2. Romanian case

Socio-economic changes that followed 1989 and demographic trends have decisively influenced the evolution and structure of employment in Romania (Rațiu & Oroian, 2012). Despite an economic revival in recent years, the slow growth trend was maintained due to a temporary migration to countries of Western Europe and the declining working age of population. Labour structure underwent significant changes, the main directions being to restrict the primary sector (including mining) and the secondary, along with the development of constructions and services sectors. The share of employment in tourism is very low, despite a slight increase over the last 3-4 years (Rațiu & Oroian, 2012). Given this phenomenon, in 2008, only 26% of tourism companies (hotels and restaurants) organized training courses for their employees. By regions of development, the best situation from this point of view is met in Bucharest (44% of the questioned companies have organized training programs for their employees) and the Western region (38%), the last being the South region, with a share of 24% (Rațiu & Oroian, 2012).

In Romania, the supply of tourism courses has grown considerably over the past two decades. Such growth has been supplied fuelled by the rapid expansion of industry and recognition by governments, that tourism contributes significantly both to the local and national economies. Yet, as a general observation, Vranciu, Arionesei and Neamţu (2014) appreciate that the tourism industry has not been appreciated for its commitment to adult professional training and education, which is a real problem, because: a) tourism is rapidly changing and staff must be aware of its progress, b) training and Education are an essential part of individuals' personal development and of increasing their job satisfaction.

Adult training has a key role in the professional training of European citizens and the social inclusion of less favoured categories on the labour market, representing a significant advantage on collective and individual level, and raising the overall level of citizens' skills contributes to improving the economic and social indicators (Vranciu, Arionesei & Neamțu, 2014).

In Romania, education policies are deficient and should be directed towards creating more opportunities for professional training and adult education. Moreover, training programs developers and providers should be given a more coherent strategy designed for the long-term development of education. Only with an emphasis on quality, accessibility and involvement from the authorities, our country will be able to gradually reach an educational model (Vranciu, Arionesei & Neamțu, 2014).

Over the last decade, a number of tourism academic and life-learning education institutions have been dedicated to raising the standards for tourism education and training curricula, not only to keep pace with the rapidly growing global tourism industry, but also to take leadership roles in its quality and direction (Gruescu, Nanu & Tănăsie, 2009).

Most of the countries that provide tourism are developed countries that have access to technology and constantly use the computerized systems of reservation and the Internet. The world networks of information and distribution – **CRS**- *Computer reservation systems*, **GDS**- *global distribution systems and the internet* play a decisive role in the sector of international tourism, because they connect the producers to the consumers of touristic products. These systems represent the vertebral spine of the international networks of information, that offer facilities for touristic operators, tour-operators, travel agencies, air lines, in order to obtain and process information, to book and commercialize tourist products. CRSs and GDSs were the most important facilitators of the tourism industry's changes until the arrival of the internet, as they provided a comprehensive travel marketing and distribution system and were often called 'travel supermarkets'. GDSs have been used in order to facilitate and manage the drastic expansion of tourism enterprises and destinations globally. GDSs comprise the essence of the tourism industry, as they connect the vast majority of the tourism suppliers to the travel trade and tourism intermediaries. They enable immediate itinerary building and reservation confirmations. The internet has an advantage over any other media in its ability to permanently expose information to a global audience. The net vastly improves the information availability and user interaction. An effective website keeps a company in business 24 hours a day, 365 days a year in a global market place. Anybody in any part of the world can access its marketing information at any time they desire. This ability will greatly reduce place and time utility woes. Accessibility is vital in international trade where business spans across different time zones. The Web makes it possible for companies to improve the service quality at all levels of customer interaction i.e. pre-sale, during and post-sale. Using the internet can help save on distribution costs. Promotion and distribution of tickets is a big cost factor in the airline industry. Selling tickets on the internet can eliminate travel agent commission and GDS fees paid by the airlines. An internet-based supply channel management can also save procurement costs for businesses (Gruescu, Nanu and Tanasie, 2009).

Nearly 75% of tourism employees enter the workforce without formal tourism training, acquiring knowledge and skills while on the job. For this reason, many new tourism workers have occupation-specific skills, but may only have a limited understanding of the business, customer expectations and related employer's needs (Destination British Columbia, 2011).

Training can take many forms, but normally starts with a comprehensive orientation program and should continue throughout the employee's tenure with an organization. Training can be formal or informal and include internal and external options such as: industry courses, on-the-job training, cross-training and the like. Ongoing training is a must for the success of any business and should be well thought out and meaningful to both the employee and the organization as a whole (Destination British Columbia, 2011). In this context, medium and high level management is particularly important, as many directors and supervisors do not have practical professional skills.

The need for the training and development of staff in the modern tourist industry, as reported by Miller et al. (1998), arises from the development of science, technical and technological advancements and their implementation in tourism and hospitality, the change of tourists' and potential tourists' expectations, the change of the management system, the need to improve the quality of the present services and many more (Simonceska, 2002).

The relationship between the tourism industry and higher education and specialized institutions must be complex and interdependent. Stimulating tourism development must become a means of promoting the development of labour force and hence, improvement of tourism depends on human resources with a high degree of training (Platon, 2016).

3. Travel agencies and infrastructure as a factor in staff training

Tourism-specific services are primarily provided through organizations and, to a lesser extent, by authorized or un-authorized persons. Relevantly, the tourism industry is gaining more efficiency by exploiting support networks. In the support networks, data is circulated both in formal and informal fashion. In the territories where tourism resources are efficiently exploited, the share of officially transmitted data is predominant.

Within specialized organizations, the weight of the different categories of used information differs, depending on their profile. Travel agencies are the organizations in which, relatively balanced, intensive, most of the information categories are used.

Looking on structural basis, the core infrastructure is based on the elements in which information flows are concentrated. Travel agencies and specialized travel agency-type services are the cores that support these networks.

Travel agencies have to work in informational harmony with the organizations whose specific tourism uses them. This can be done through its own resources, which consume significant energy for cultivating and sustaining win-win interest from stakeholders - parties that are not necessarily subordinated to the tourism industry, but are predominantly subsumed to service providers.

The travel agency acts in front of the stage, through the public component of dialogue with customers, and behind the scenes, through the communication component with the stakeholders and the specific functional activity of its own organization. Depending on the form of exposure, the staff of a travel agency must have specific skills. Turning to the aspects of globalization, we mention that the tourism industry needs to adapt and be sensitive to the cultural and context issues which are specific to each tourist destination, not only through the provision of services, but also through the labour force and the working manner. The effectiveness of this approach is aimed at training the training staff, which should be complementary to the practical specialization of supervisors and managers, knowing that many executives and supervisors do not have practical professional skills.

Last but not least, the following aspect needs to be considered: computerization comes to correct and restructure current flows into an organizational system based on traditional principles. The logical organization based on software algorithms sanctions arbitrary decisions taken by people (be they patrons or employees of tourism organizations). The more traditionally decisions on the organization of tourism agencies are arbitrarily applied without respecting the specific rigors, the implementation of IT in that organization will be more difficult, with great risks of abandonment; without that the hired personnel realize that the inadequate situation is due to poor organization. Abandoning the IT effort is the premise of organizational bankruptcy in the medium term.

4. Comparative study of software solutions applied in tourism

The specialized integrated system is a working tool. It is designed to serve two categories of users: specialized tourism staff (including stakeholder's staff) and the general public. This is done by distinctly designed and dynamically displayed interfaces, depending on the user profile (individual or group parameterization) existing as a system entry.

The design of specialized integrated systems is a replica adapted to the informational context of the organizational management systems it serves. The managerial component is provided by parameterization to solve tasks in the context of lower, middle or upper level managerial responsibilities. Typically, the dedicated integrated system

must provide the necessary functionalities for the activities it supports and/or assists, and the management component is provided through administrative functionalities associated with the current type. A relational database complex allows the creation of profile records, records in which the properties of certain classes of activity are kept. Based on these records containing data used to enforce access and service rights, the specialized integrated system can manage policies (sets of rules) that enable it to simulate human behaviour under repetitive application conditions.

The public interface of specialized integrated systems offers customers the ability to use them in accordance with established policies, just as the employee of a travel agency, for example, does.

The more specialized modules and, the more connected stakeholders and the more quality data introduced in the integrated system are, the greater of positive responses will be, offered by specialized integrated systems.

The quality of positive responses provided by specialized integrated systems is given by the integration way and participation of travel agencies and stakeholders in service delivery. Initially, the use of integrated systems is predominantly individual, with each organization, putting itself into the centre of the system and ignoring the network context. It is an evolutionary feature that combines complexity with the level of competence of users to operate in the context of data processing equipment. As the degree of use of computer-based applications increases, the ability to understand and work in a group in the context of diluting spatial and temporal aspects as perceived in traditional activity is amplified.

Although in specialized systems used in other fields (such as integrated systems used by information organizations - libraries, archives, information offices etc.), a high level of understanding and group work was achieved in a consortium context, in services from tourism this is still a desideratum. Consortium work is more than the sum of services and/or organizations connected via data networks to an integrated consortium integrated system. It comes with superior data capitalization by increasing the degree of uniformity of the data input by creating shared data and shared index files and by building responses to queries that take into account the context in which they were placed (location, operator access, addressability etc.).

A key element in operating an integrated tourism specialized system is its connection to global data networks (Internet). The Internet is one of the basic elements of the infrastructure for electronic services provided in tourism through specialized integrated software.

The Internet is used both for direct and/or intermediated information by **travel agencies** and stakeholders, as well as for direct information and ordering by a part of **customers**.

We synthetically present a comparative scenario for five currently available software solutions. Their choice was based on the dissemination of relevant information in the online environment. The dates of origin are as follows (Table 1):

Table no. 1: List of products compared and their origin

Product	**Producer**	**Location Head Office**	**Country**
TINA	dcs+	Bucharest	Romania
ClientBase	Sabre	Southlake, Texas	USA
Dolphin	Dolphin Dynamics	London	Great Britain
PHPTRAVELS	PHPTRAVELS	Liverpool	Great Britain
Travel Management Software	Techno Heaven Consultancy	Deira, Dubai	United Arab Emirates

Source: based on research conducted by author

Not without interest is the fact that four of the five companies have their headquarters for the development of products in world-recognized countries in terms of the high potential of human resources in programming and tourism resources (dcs+ in Romania, Sabre in the USA, PHPTRAVELS in Pakistan, and Techno Heaven Consultancy in India).

The criteria used for the comparison are divided into several related categories and subcategories: the extension of the information circulation standard; integrated services (reservation, marketing, payment processing); associated services provided by manufacturing firms (type of assistance, availability versus testing, training).

The result of the measurements is shown in the Table no. 2.

Table no. 2. Comparative exposure of the analysed characteristics

	TINA	ClientBase	Dolphin	PHPTRAVELS	Travel Management Software
Web Platform	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PC Client Application	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mobile Application	✓	×	×	✓	✓
Customer Database	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Single/Group Reservations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Central Reservation System	✓	×	×	✓	✓
Flight Booking	✓	×	✓	✓	×
Rental Car Reservations	✓	×	✓	✓	✓
GDS/OTA Integration	✓	×	×	✓	×
Itinerary Creation	×	✓	✓	×	✓
Marketing Management	✓	✓	✓	×	×
Quote Management	✓	×	✓	×	✓
Promotions Management	×	✓	×	×	✓
Payment Processing	×	✓	✓	✓	✓
Online Support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Free Trial	✓	✓	×	×	✓
Free Version	×	×	×	×	✓
Training | In Person	✓	×	✓	✓	✓
Training | Live Online	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
Training | Webinars	×	✓	✓	×	✓
Training | Documentation	✓	✓	×	✓	×

Remark: GDS – Global Distribution Systems; OTA – Online Travel Agents

Source: based on research conducted by author

Regarding the information retrieval standard, it is noted that all applications have a PC client (the oldest form of work implemented during the development of Client/Server systems), which reflects the application of the retrospective compatibility principle of the programs packages. On one hand, this aspect reflects the intention to be easy to use by the staff of long-time agencies and, on the other hand, the fact that some of the applications are not recent, probably being designed more than 15 years ago. Supporting this latest observation is also the fact that not all software solutions have mobile applications, betting a pre-design of smartphone application bums, but also less importance in design for customer access to systems, and, implicitly, a somewhat disinterest in 2.0 principles, changing the service delivery paradigm and targeting the customer as a producer of information through its contribution as a result of interacting with the software systems applied in tourism.

Analysing by the area of the integrated service-specific criteria, it can be noticed that all systems have a customer information storage and management component and are ready for booking transactions, but not all have a central reservation database, which betrays the distributed workflow. Hence, it can be concluded that either the respective software systems are not up-to-date structurally in order to have their own superior capacity to handle booking records, or the environment in which they are used is a collaborative, shared environment in which travel agencies operate on working principles based on openness and trust in bilateral relations and, implicitly, on collaboration between different organizations. It is interesting to note that the US system, ClientBase, does not provide a central booking system nor book flights and car rentals. This can be explained by the fact that IT has begun in the US, and this is a drawback, since computer systems and networks have been created in the 1990s - after the widespread use of personal computers - traditional machinery exploitation and labour relations have prevented systems upgrading in line with technological developments, materializing in a genuine barrier to overall development and justifying world-wide situations whereby less developed countries have modern technologies in both communications (the use of state-of-the-art equipment) and information processing than the countries where these technologies were originally created and implemented.

In the context of the presented and the results of the GDS/OTA integration criterion, we can state that TINA and PHPTRAVELS are the newest, in terms of their design time, given that they include this important functionality. This is also revealed by the inversion of the options for all the analysed software systems in the situation observed for the forthcoming criterion regarding the creation of itineraries. GDS solves aspects of route creation in a sophisticated manner, which is why a system of this kind no longer requires a module with dedicated functionality, as long as the use of a specialized system is integrated.

The marketing assistance component reflects heterogeneous situations, driven by the economic development of the companies in which these software products are used. Ignoring PHPTRAVELS that does not address the issue in any way, we can see that Travel Management Software does not address marketing management. It is possible that this aspect is influenced by the marketplace, located in an economic area dominated by the decision more influenced by managerial will, and less centred on the need of the clients, even if the system has the functionality to manage reviews.

It is very likely that the market has also determined the results for the payment processing criterion. The software systems in the Anglo-Saxon tourist services are characterized by a long-term evolution of electronic payments processing and the use of virtual payment cards and instruments. In Romania and Central Europe, electronic payment has not reached a critical mass on the basis of which software systems dedicated to certain service categories make the effort to implement functionalities for electronic payment processing.

From the perspective of criteria related to training or tangent to the training process, it can be noticed that all firms offer online support services, as well as different forms of training. The best result from this perspective is registered by the Travel Management Software Provider, which, with the exception of the documentation, provides all the services that are being pursued in this analysis. The dcs+ followed by Sabre is the next one. The assessment is subjective, given that the provision of training in person may be more effective than conducting training sessions through webinars.

The comparative analysis highlights the situation at this point in which there is a tendency to shift from the first-generation specialized programs to those of the new generation, characterized by the stronger influence of the concept of public interactivity (2.0). This aspect is highlighted by the migration to programs with graphical interfaces designed to provide a user-oriented work context. Choosing the quality graphical interface determines, on one hand, greater accessibility to customer-level users and, on the other hand, an increased adaptability culminating in the devices included in the category of mobile data processing equipment.

These elements are complementary to those of the help desk structure existing in the specialized integrated system. Together with the training services, they come to offer the possibility for the staff to provide facilities for learning and qualitative growth in the provision of services through working tools that provide more and more fine-tuned information and provide them with less and less time.

The tendency is that the specialized integrated system can replace most of the activities currently carried out by a travel agency staff. This will have a positive response only after Artificial Intelligence (AI) will become sufficiently developed and accessible to process the information so that it can be interpreted as knowledge and conveyed as such, copying human reasoning.

Currently, the specialized integrated system is mainly used for the creation and automated management of relevant databases, no matter where they are. The stage effort is channelled into shaping the mentality of staff in order to support as widely as possible shared work through specialized integrated systems.

5. The function of tourist information aggregator of travel agencies

It has already been argued that tourism agencies have to work in informational symbiosis with the organizations whose specific tourism applies them. The informational context of a travel agency organization is specific to any entity whose activity involves, in a significant amount, the aggregation of information from diverse, heterogeneous sources.

The business specificity of an organization with a travel agency requires, in addition to aggregating specific information, to come with added value. The more a travel agency expands its market, the more it is under pressure to increase the share of the creation of informational content with which it contributes to the added-value component. Thus, if in the early incipient stages of the activity, the most important part is informational compilation and the use of instruments created mostly by external entities of the organization (stakeholders as products and service providers), the evolution of the travel agency implies the transformation of the activity in the direction of transition from the component of the extensive development to the intensive development. Intensive development involves turning the agency, to a greater extent, into an information producer. The quality of the

information produced by the agency is the success of the market capture, the success rate in the choice of service packages and the customer satisfaction indicator recorded after the end of the consumption cycle of the chosen service package.

Customer satisfaction is a complex indicator. The fine agreement in the management of travel agencies is the provision of advice that helps the potential client to reach its goal. Consultancy is an often-minimized element of practical importance. Not often, consulting is misunderstood as an oratorical talent that has a decisive role in selling a tourist package. The effect of the consultancy can be found in the satisfaction indicator obtained by providing a service to a customer (or group of customers). A low value of this indicator may be due to the discrepancy between the customer's expectations (where part of the contribution is given by the consultancy provided by the travel agency) and the expression of experience in qualitative values.

Having well-defined tourist packages and a constructively applied advice, the travel agency can handle the provision of a low-risk service package in terms of the factors that can determine the variation of the specific options it has for the client to whom it provides that package.

Both the staff employed within the travel agency and the specialized integrated IT system (through the policies configured in its parameterization) must be continuously trained, so that the three key elements (the development of tourist packages, consultancy and intermediation) are dynamically solved. The "training" of the specialized integrated computer system is carried out today by human personnel, who has advanced competences in the field of information technologies, implicitly, of programming and administration of automated management systems. Both categories of staff require formal training, informal training and lifelong learning, to be effective under the conditions set out.

In view of these considerations, the training of employees in tourism and, in particular, those working in travel agencies, should focus on: the quality of service delivery, advice from the point of view of the human experience acquired directly by the employee, integration into the final decision (including resources/knowledge not indexed in software systems) and on education in the spirit of capitalizing on the individual's experience in delivering finely calibrated results that are not found in the Internet or software systems. In conclusion, the employee should not be formed to compete with the specialized integrated system, but to exploit it and come with added value.

The aggregate function of the travel agency as an organization are not only the external information resources, but also the superior valorisation of internal information resources, which – in this context – includes staff and working tools (especially the specialized integrated IT system).

Conclusions

Similar to many other activities in the tertiary economy area, in tourism there is a need for permanent education and training. A basic feature of education and training processes is that both the trainer and the training staff are aware of the fact that the trend of specialized systems is to replace the current activities, which have a high degree of redundancy, currently carried out by the employees of the agencies of tourism. In this context, the employee should not be formed to compete with the specialized integrated system, but to exploit it and come with added value.

Added value can be obtained from staff who regularly attend specialized training sessions, where it is necessary to follow the quality of service delivery, the development of skills in order to provide advice on service delivery and the creation of added value in the services provided by integrating useful information, but not found on the internet through the use of the individual's (employee's) experience.

The training processes must take into account the barriers that staff encounter. Whether we are talking about new resistance or competition-related issues between service providers, training needs to address these issues. In practice, the efficient use of technology, implicitly of specialized integrated systems, focuses on the relationships between agency staff and the relationships between clients and agency staff.

Technology reduces the importance of traditional language, time and space barriers. With time, as new generations born and raised in the current technological environment will come into action, the stress generated by the predominantly repetitive operations will decrease, and the work capacity will be focused on finer activities and deep complex creativity. Vocational training will have a much more important role to play in achieving this.

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