

## Managerial Competences in Hotel Management in Kosovo

Elizabeta MITREVA<sup>1\*</sup>, Alberta TAHIRI<sup>2</sup>, Idriz KOVACI<sup>2</sup>, Oliver FILIPOSKI<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University "Goce Delcev" – Shtip, The Republic of North Macedonia

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Applied Sciences, Ferizaj, Kosovo

\*Corresponding author; E-mail: elizabeta.mitreva@ugd.edu.mk; elizabeta.mitreva@gmail.com

### Abstract

*Management competencies are a key factor for creating effective and attractive hotel offer for hotels that will be competitive in the international tourism market. Managers, as holders of the entire process of planning, organizing, motivating and controlling of hotel activities have been placed in front of the challenge to productively use their knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences in formulating effective development strategies that will enable realization of the objectives of the hotel.*

*Proceeding from this, the goal of the paper is through theoretical and empirical research is to consider the management skills as a factor for the development of the hotel running in Kosovo. In addition, by applying the techniques of surveying and depth interview of managers and surveys of employees and hotel guests will see the positives, but also the shortcomings of the hotel offer in terms of managerial competence. Based on the findings, recommendations will be given for improving management competencies and through them the hotel offer in Kosovo.*

**Keywords:** managerial competencies; knowledge; skills; personal characteristics; innovation; tourism market; hotel offer; competitiveness.

### 1. Introduction

Kosovo, as a new state, after the difficult economic and political processes that it faced in the last century, found the first decade of this century with a large number of difficulties in the field of economy, health, education and tourism. When we are on the field of tourism Kosovo has started to be affirmed as a potential tourist market only after 1971, which is related with the construction of the Adriatic highway. Until then, tourism in Kosovo has not been developed. In that period the main concept was the development of local tourism. The neglect of tourism has influenced its economic and social development. Problems also existed in urban areas in relation to hotel accommodation facilities.

Today, tourism in Kosovo is characterized by continuous development and high sensitivity. Facing insecure factors, whether internal or external, touristic supply and hotel supply within it is oriented towards attracting the attention of the international tourist opinion in order to utilize the cultural and natural values in terms of tourism. As a sector of economy, the role and importance of tourism is widely accepted because it helps to increase gross domestic product, improve balance of payments, create new jobs, increase investment and promote development whether it is locally, regionally or nationally.

Previous researches show that there is a lot of advantages of Kosovo as a touristic destination such as natural and cultural values, the positive attitude of the population towards tourism, gastronomic services by offering traditional foods, the introduction of private colleges and universities in the field of tourism and hospitality, involvement in international organizations' projects to increase the capacity and quality of staff in the field of hospitality and tourism etc. But, on the other hand, there are a lot of researches that has noted a large number of weaknesses or disadvantages. As main weak points of tourism of Kosovo are: lack of public awareness of tourism and hotels as a source of welfare and development of their careers, lack of a national

tourism development program, poor quality of hotel and tourist services, lack of specialized staff and trained, low mobility of workforce in terms of tourism and hotels, but also the lack of competences of management staff in the field of tourism and hotels in Kosovo.

In the context of these conditions, hospitality in Kosovo may and should be managed strategically. A key role in defining and implementing strategies for the development of quality hotel offerings is the hotel management staff. With their skills and abilities, managers are a key factor in facing a turbulent and troubled environment. This is confirmed by theoretical and empirical research in the field of management with its conclusion that managers are the most important and expensive source of modern enterprise (Kay & Russette, 2000).

### 2. Literature Review

Management skills include the knowledge and skills of the individual in the position of the manager, needed to carry out the managerial activities and tasks. Hotel managers, as well as managers in general, should possess the necessary skills to facilitate work with people around them, and at the same time help them to organize more efficiently, coordinate and control the work of subordinates in order to realize effectively the goals (Crawford & Nahmias, 2010). Depending on the managerial level in which they are located, managers must possess a certain level of skills. In literature the most widespread systematization of managerial skills is in technical, human and conceptual skills. Literature also includes the division of management skills into general, specific and key skills.

General management competences are skills that should possess each manager, in order to realize qualitative work, regardless of the managerial level in which it is located (Dhiman, 2012).

Special or specific managerial competences are required to

accomplish the standard performance for a concrete managerial position.

Main managerial competences are those skills that managers give great importance and which increase the efficiency of employees.

Successful conduct of business activities towards meeting the goals of the hotel is conditioned by the possession of a set of performances of the managers, which will advance managerial activity. The modern manager is challenged to effectively manage the hotel in turbulent and challenging conditions through coordination and orientation of the overall activity of all employees (Dhiman, 2012).

In order to reach the strategic hospitality objectives in a more effective way, the critical factors on managing team in literature are (Pirnar, 2015; Zehrer & Mössenlechner, 2009):

- ❑ Leadership – or possession of leadership skills as an important prerequisite, through which management will motivate and guide its employees to effective work.
- ❑ Trust – represents an important component for the establishment and maintenance of a successful relationship as well as cooperation between employees and management on the one hand, and the hotel and tourists on the other.
- ❑ Focusing on the same goal: The manager should clearly define the vision and goals of the hotel and encourage all employees to strive for a common goal. All employees or hotel work teams also work to meet individual goals and interests, and this is fine as long as they are positively related to hotel goals.
- ❑ Distributing and sharing knowledge throughout the hotel – the possession of individual knowledge and individual skills is of no relevance to the promotion of hotel performance, if it is not transmitted among other employees. The modern manager is distinguished from the ability to bring the best out of the individual and to motivate them to share their accumulated knowledge and experiences among other colleagues at the hotel.
- ❑ Mutual Respect – the manager is responsible for creating a climate of mutual respect among employees, respecting the responsibilities and duties of the individual's work, their attitudes, ideas and proposals, as well as evaluating their efforts towards fulfilling their work duties.
- ❑ Supportive relationships between specific management levels – to achieve high performance, manager levels need to communicate and help each other.
- ❑ The existence of a developed communication system – effective management means the existence of developed communicative skills, as well as the communication channels developed both inside and outside the hotel.
- ❑ Build and maintain a modernized internal information exchange system and record data that will increase managers' control and advance co-operation with staff.
- ❑ Building good interpersonal relationships – managers need to maintain good interpersonal relationships with employees as well as with other stakeholders.
- ❑ Equal Power Distribution – the modern manager performs equal distribution in the delegation of responsibility and power to coordinate the activities between the individual organizational units, but also among the employees who work in shifts.
- ❑ Provision of supportive administration – the existence of an effective registration system greatly supports the planning and control process.

## 2.1. Model of four pillars of managerial competences

According to this model, there are four pillars of managerial skills and performance, which are mutually dependent and cannot function without the other. They are (Kay & Russette, 2000):

**Knowledge of the organization** – Involves the development of knowledge and understanding of current policies and operational processes in order to see if the team's activities are effective and fit the organization's strategic goals. This includes skills that are related to the mission, vision, goals and procedures of the organization (Okumus & Yagci, 2006).

**Leadership and Human Resource Management** – Involves the ability to work with people, both within the organization as well as in establishing good relationships with clients and tourists (Gamage & Pang, 2003).

**Particularly important** are skills to guide employees, team building skills, problem-solving skills, skills to ensure worker efficiency, ongoing collaboration and staff communication, employee orientation, and feedback (Munar & Montaña, 2009).

**Resource Management** – Involves the conceptual skills of managers, respectively planning skills, the ability to organize enterprise processes, strategic goals placement, information management, and more (Crawford & Nahmias, 2010).

**Communication efficiency** – Involves the development of skills that will enable smooth and enjoyable interactions between staff and clients. This pillar contains the ability to effectively hold meetings, interpersonal collaboration, presentations, written communication, constructive meetings etc. (Phelan & Sharpley, 2012).

## 3. Methods in the Research and Analysis of the Results

In preparing of this research paper in the process of collecting, sorting and analyzing available data, have been used logical and scientific approaches (Cheung, Law & He, 2010). During this research the following methods that were used are:

- ❑ The quantitative and statistical method by which the obtained data are processed and the mutual dependence of the managerial skills and performance of hotels in Kosovo is determined;
- ❑ The descriptive method will be used to explain the findings through research materials and documents for the elaborated field;
- ❑ The interview technique of managers, employees and tourists using a structured questionnaire.

### 3.1. Analysis of the level of managerial competences in the hotel industry in the Republic of Kosovo

Although the natural and cultural values represent a qualitative basis for the development of different forms of alternative tourism in Kosovo, one of the important factors for the quality of the tourist offer is the managerial competences in the hotel capacities of the country. Organizational competence consists of the knowledge, skills, experiences, behaviours and processes necessary for the successful development of the hotel's activity as a whole. They are largely conditioned by the knowledge and skills of the staff they possess, and developing their skills. For that goal on this research we made a deep survey with managers and employees in 10 of the most important facilities in Kosovo.

In the research process were included also 30 managers from 10 hotels establishments and from different levels of management, Figure 1.

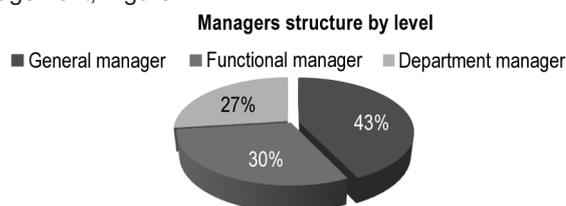


Figure 1. Structure of managers by management level

Half of them are aged between 30 and 40 years, showing the capacity of management staff to improve their knowledge and skills.

According to the degree of education, 46% of surveyed managers are expert professionals in the field of tourism and hospitality, but there is also a significant percentage (37%) of managers who are educated in natural sciences, Figure 2.

Managers structure by level of education

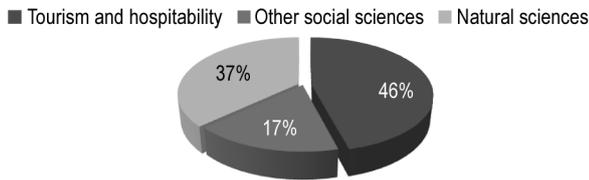


Figure 2. Managers structure by level of education

The analysis of responses shows that the majority (83%) of senior managers have high education, and from the interview conducted is informed that only 43% have expertise in the field of tourism and hotels, while one of the surveyed managers holds master degree in tourism.

From the completed survey and the interview conducted, it can be seen that 63% of managers are satisfied with the success of the hotel. But 30% of the managers decreed by achieving high results and their efforts to increase their offer's participation in the Western European market.

In order to identify the personal characteristics of managers in the hotel industry in Kosovo, they analyzed their attitude to the challenges faced. In addition, most of them, 47% analyze problems and seek solutions. On the other hand, 30% in emerging issues require new opportunities to promote the offer, Figure 3.

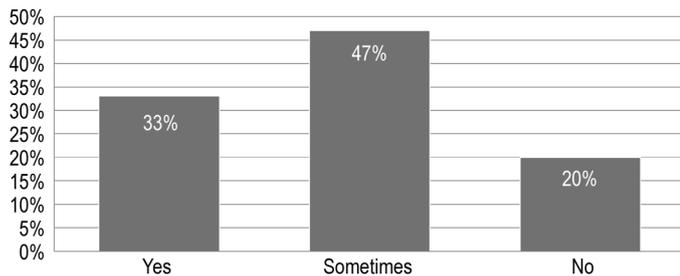


Figure 3. Existence of the professional mutual competitive climate of employees

Most managers, 73%, believe they are creative people. However, most managers have stated that they sometimes create a climate of mutual competition for employees in delivering ideas and creative solutions. The smallest is the percentage of those who permanently promote creativity in the hotel. This is also confirmed by the earnings of surveyed hotel workers.

Regarding the work atmosphere of hotels, most managers, respectively 63% think that in their hotels has a decent working climate, while 37% think it needs to be improved.

Towards this point, it should be noted that 40% of managers have stated that they only sometimes take part in resolving conflicts among employees, while only 27% always participate in the successful selection of conflicts within the hotel. The remaining 33% leave employees a certain period of time to

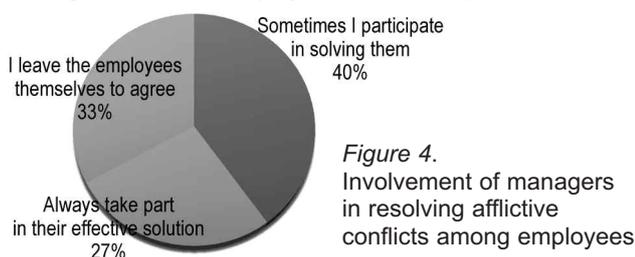


Figure 4. Involvement of managers in resolving afflicitive conflicts among employees

solve the problem themselves, and then engage in solving the problem, Figure 4.

Most managers are delighted with the way they run the hotel business, but we cannot disregard the fact that 49% of managers who think that they are generally satisfied, but still have to invest in their skills, as well as the attitude of 5% of interviewed managers who are not satisfied with their work, Figure 5.

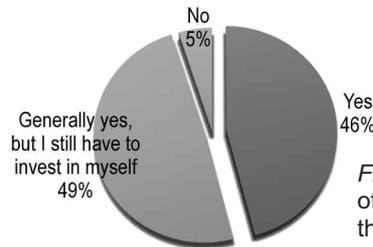


Figure 5. Level of satisfaction of managers from the way they manage the hotel

With regard to their activities to achieve advancement and development of managerial competencies, the analysis shows that managers refine their knowledge in several methods, including 17% permanently, 50% temporarily and 33% very rarely.

Most managers (37%), advance their knowledge and skills in their job mostly by trainers and trainings. Other method applied by managers according from the interview are internal trainings, even (36%) of managers have stated that. More than half of the respondents, 64%, develop through work in the workplace, while 54% apply rotation at work.

Almost one third (27%) of managers apply the development of their competences outside the workplace, most of them (87%) through participation in seminars, 62% attend courses, 75% are educated through problem solving, while 37% analyze cases. 23% of managers interviewed take care of advancing their competencies independently and individually, Figure 6.

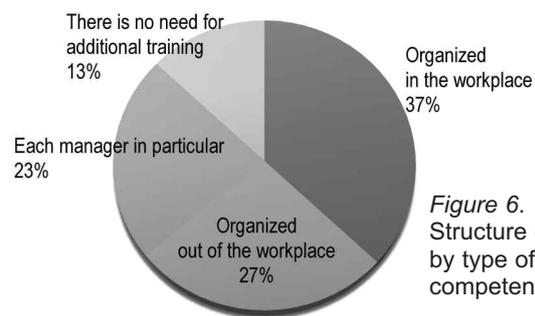


Figure 6. Structure of managers by type of training and competencies

In the question whether the employees in their hotels upgrade their skills, 70% of the respondents responded positively, 43% of managers stated that they organize training and development of employees through the transfer of experiences from other employees, 33% send employees to seminars, while 30% do not implement the employee's skills advancement, Figure 7.

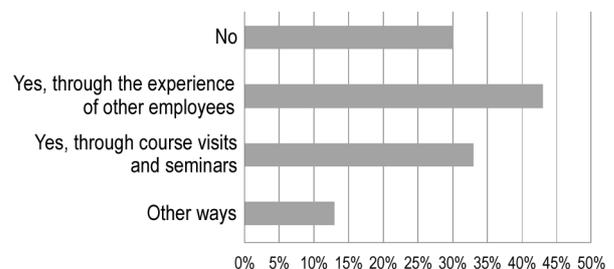


Figure 7. Structure of managers by investment in improving the skills of employees

From the research conducted through the survey and the interview it has been proved that the development and refinement of hotel staff is provided in different ways.

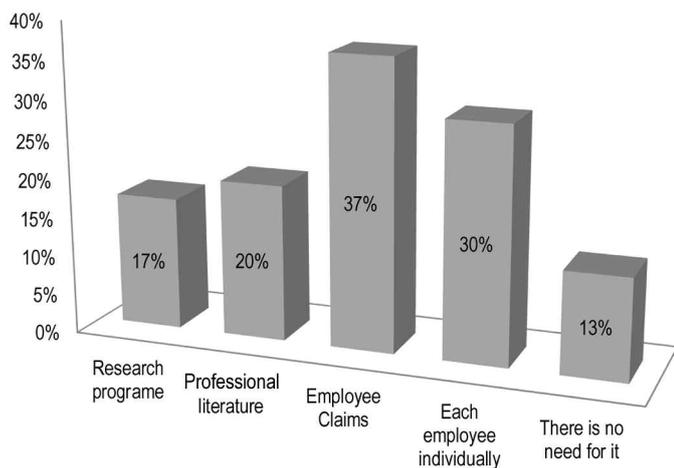


Figure 8. The way of ensuring the performance of the employees

Most of the surveyed managers (43%) said that as a motivational tool for employees use salary increase, while the vast majority of managers (34%) believe that the workers for their work should receive a fixed salary. Only 13% of surveyed managers believe that establishing and maintaining a good interpersonal relationship climate is a tool that will result in greater motivation for employees. Improving working conditions as a factor for greater motivation and better employee performance is an option for only 10% of managers, Figure 10.

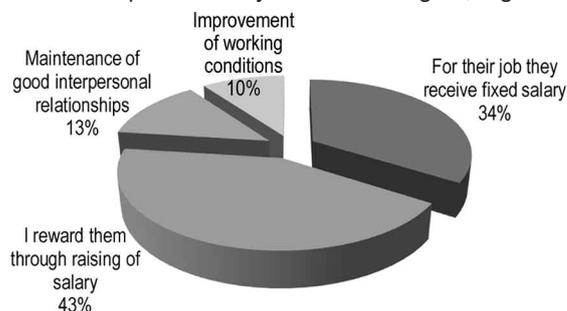


Figure 10. Managers structure according to the motivation of employees

The largest number of managers, 37%, organize training for the employees based on their requirements, while only 17% of managers apply training and development of hotel staff in plan. There is a large percentage of managers (30%) who think that employees themselves must deal with advancing their skills, while 20% of managers have stated that employees refine their skills by using professional literature. An important part of managers, even 13% think that there is no need for additional skills development with the justification that employees are quite upgraded in the work process.

In order to gain more information about the way of decision making in hotels, the managers was asked about the level at which decisions are made and what is the participation of employees in problem solving. From their responses to the survey and the interview, it can be noticed that decisions are brought by senior management, while the professional participation of other employees is extremely symbolic. Only 37% of managers have stated that decisions are made by the management team, while the rest of 63% stated that the main manager is the one who makes the decisions, and the team only applies them. Regarding the participation of employees with their professional suggestions in the formulation of decisions, especially in defining strategic directions of bid creation, managers have stated through interview that employees have little impact on this process.

So even though most managers (70%) stated that workers feel like important elements from the hotel's overall team, only 17% of managers accept employee suggestions if they are sound, 56% only sometimes admit professional suggestions, while the remaining 27% do not accept the professional opinions of employees.

Of particular interest in this study was to see how managers take the risk of making decisions. The vast majority of respondents stated that they avoid the risk, while 40% make a risk assessment and based on it make decisions. The rest are managers who risk without analysis and evaluation, Figure 9.

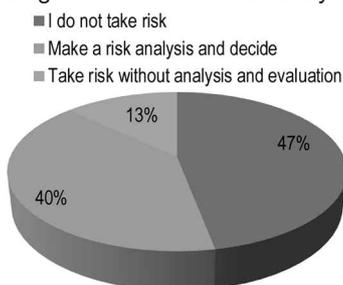


Figure 9. Structure of managers according to the level of undertaking the risk

In order to see the level of motivation that exists among the employees, within the framework of the survey, we asked the managers do they motivate their employees and how?

From the managers' responses in relation to controlling hotel activities, all managers have responded that they supervise their employees during their activities.

When we asked the managers about how they check their employees at the hotel, most managers (93%) said they conduct surveys to their guest to see their level of satisfaction. 57% of managers stated that they did quality control through the realization of ISO standards, while checking by tracking the hotel's financial performance reports was the answer of 30% of the interviewed managers.

## 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The majority of the managers of the hotel establishments have a higher education, but there is a relatively small number of professionals in the field of tourism and hospitality industry. There is a considerable number of managers that have a university degree in natural sciences, which presents a weakness, in terms of hospitality industry domain in Kosovo.

Most of the managers are aged between 30 and 40, a fact which enabled them to develop their competences in a permanent way.

Most of the managers (78%), are bilinguals, 51% of whom speak only one foreign language whereas the others speak two or more foreign languages.

The manager's vision is to penetrate/breakthrough in the newest marketplaces through innovations in the offerings.

However, most of the managers work on implementing the existing offer of the hotel (hospitality industry), but there is a very important group of the managers which bring about innovations in the hospitality industry offering.

Although managers believe that it is important for the employees to feel as a significant part of the hotel team, most of them rarely accept the opinions and professional views of the employees in the hotel, or (27%) do not include them at all in the company's creative process.

Taking in consideration the manager's high percentage of decision making, it can be concluded that hospitality industry in Kosovo, does not create an atmosphere of dividing and transferring/conveying the individual's knowledge, which makes it difficult to create a qualitative and attractive hospitality/hotel product.

It is worthy of noting that the majority of the surveyed managers, do not look at the new and challenging situations as an opportunity of the hotel's progress, rather as an obstacle in realizing the programs. They need to be well analyzed, before

finding a solution that could have a negative effect on the competitive advantages in the market. Every delayed reaction, foils the successful accomplishment of the hospitality/hotel performances.

Almost half of the managers have declared that they attempt to elude risky situations, namely, they are contented with the existing hospitality activities. 13% of the managers take risks, but they do not analyse and assess the risk, which is negative as well, since it leads to making fast and unwise decisions. On the other hand, 40% of the managers, initially assess the risk and then make a decision. This concluded that the entrepreneur abilities of the managers are not represented and developed in an appropriate manner.

A small percentage of group-decision making, as well as a small number of generating and using the creative ideas of the employees, states that the advantages of group work, which is very important especially in the area of hospitality industry, are not utilized.

Managers pay very little attention to improving their knowledge, abilities and experiences, i.e. their competences.

Managers, in terms of training and developing their competences, they tend to train more and gain experience in the workplace, mainly through the coaches. There's little training through seminars and courses, whereas exists a considerable percentage of the managers who develop their competences in an independent manner.

Concerning the assurance of developing the human staff in hotels, the number of the managers who in a planned way orientate the development of their employees is small, compared to the managers who complete trainings from time to time, with a request from their employees. A considerable number of managers think that extra training is not necessary for the employees, or that they need to perfect/improve their abilities by themselves.

The majority of the managers believe that knowledge should be perfected through experience of the other employees, whereas a smaller percentage believes that this might be adjusted through attending seminars and courses. Nevertheless, they fail to see the importance of constant knowledge training, but, think that sometimes a process of advancement ought to be organized.

From the answers of the managers, it can be concluded, that the hotel has a nice and peaceful working atmosphere, whereas the employees are satisfied with the rapport they have with their managers, and most of them, completely trust their managers.

Managers perform quality control mostly through the level of

guest satisfaction, but do not undertake risk. Most managers ignore the facts that lead to a lack of innovation and there is no variety of bidding, which suppresses the hypothesis that: Managers for the future of hotel supply think strategically.

There is a significant presence of lack of planned orientation for the development of managers and other employees at the hotels.

Based on this can be given these recommendations:

- ❑ To create a quality and attractive tourist product in Kosovo as a tourist destination that has potential for tourism development, it is necessary to develop a strong competition in the hotel business.
- ❑ Since knowledge is an important component of management, professional knowledge, visions, leadership, culture, competence, and team collaboration should be part of the knowledge management in hotels.
- ❑ Knowledge management in hotels in Kosovo is not implemented satisfactorily. Formal education needs to be constantly upgraded and modernized through various forms of training and development and implemented, supported by an appropriate organizational culture in which the free circulation of information and exchange of ideas between managers and other employees will be stimulated.
- ❑ Hotel managers should be aware of the importance and the necessity of organizing teamwork, as well as the creation of an atmosphere of mutual cooperation. Also they should share and expand the knowledge among employees, encourage creative solutions of employees which will enable managers to get the best out of their employees.
- ❑ In order to be able to offer attractive offers in the international tourism market, managers need to think strategically for the creation of an innovative range of services that will fully satisfy the expectations of contemporary tourists.
- ❑ In order to be a successful leader, managers must be good motivators for employees, above all by meeting their material expectations.
- ❑ Hotel managers should plan to develop the skills of employees through different methods.
- ❑ To enable managers to meet the above mentioned suggestions, they must continually advance their competencies, respectively expand their knowledge and refine their skills.

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