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Romanian versus Bulgarian Tourism Labour Market Analysis

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Abstract

The paper analyses the state of the Romanian and Bulgarian tourism sector labour markets, by comparing them in terms of total annual and quarterly number of employees and their structures based on average seniority with the same employer, permanent/temporary activity and full time/part time activity. The main objective of the research is to identify the main differences between the two countries' labour markets and relate them to the differences existing in the overall tourism market. Obtained results are expected to show that a more flexible and well-structured labour market can lead to better performance of the tourism industry.

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1. Introduction

Tourism is a fundamental contributor to the world economy and has proven to be one of the strongest and most resilient economic activities over the past years, by creating millions of jobs and generating billions of dollars in exports (UNWTO, 2015). Also, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) both consider that tourism is an important agent for development, as it is a lead export sector and is one of the world's top job creators, but also that tourism can help the transition to a green economy (ILO and UNWTO, 2009).

The UNWTO Tourism Highlights report (2014) shows key figures that support the statement that tourism has become one of the largest and the fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. These figures show that one in eleven jobs available in the world is created in the tourism sector, which accounts for 9% of the world's GDP and generates

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6% of the world's exports (which accounts for US\$1.4 trillion). The latest information available confirms that international tourist arrivals reached 1,138 million in 2014 (which means that there was a 4.7% increase over 2013), this being the fifth consecutive year of above average growth since the economic crisis in 2009 (UNWTO, 2015).

The outlook for 2015, as seen by UNWTO (2015), is a positive one, international tourists arrivals being expected to grow between 3% and 4% at a worldwide level, while the strongest regional growth is expected to be in Asia and the Pacific and the Americas, followed by Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

Employment in the tourism sector is expected to include not only job creation, but also decent and productive work in sustainable organisations. This could be achieved through national and local development strategies and new products and services with high labour content that can generate a multiplying impact and a high level of sustainability (ILO and UNWTO, 2009).

The research paper continues with a literature review on subjects such as tourism labour market particularities, Romanian tourism overview and tourism labour market description, as well as Bulgarian tourism overview and tourism labour market description. Following this theoretical approach, the next section will introduce the research methodology that was used, and after that the results of the research will be discussed and interpreted.

2. Theoretical framework

This section of the research paper provides an overview on the Romanian and Bulgarian tourism industries, while also briefly describing their labour markets, not before highlighting the main aspects and particularities that give specificity to the tourism labour markets all over the world.

Particularities of the tourism labour market

The tourism industry offers a considerably wide range of employment opportunities, beginning with professional, skilled positions and finishing with unskilled or semi-skilled work, either paid full time, part time, casual or temporary employment. Nevertheless, this benefit can also be seen as a challenge or an inhibitor to decent work (Ruhanen, 2009). There are some segments of the population with less access to the labour market, for which tourism is especially recognised to generate employment; these segments are women, young people, immigrants or rural population. All of them should be given the security of a decent work by ensuring they have the possibility to develop their careers and advance their professionalism (ILO and UNWTO, 2009).

Tourism's employment structures tend to rely heavily on a combination of core staff and high numbers of temporary employees who are part of the population segment mentioned above. The reason for this is that the tourism market is sensitive and vulnerable due to varying economic, political, seasonal and meteorological factors (Pizam, 2010).

Depending on the different stakeholders' point of view, the tourism labour market has both positive and negative aspects. On one hand, there are the low or semi-skilled positions that make the industry attractive to new entrants into the labour market or people with minimal education and/or formal qualifications, and also help alleviate poverty by providing income and experience, therefore contributing to the people's social inclusion and personal development (Ruhanen, 2009). Pizam (2010) adds to the list of positive aspects elements such as job variety, low levels of supervision, personal incentives, teamwork, and interaction with people or pleasant work environment. The research of Nickson (2007) is also consistent with these findings, his study mentioning attractive characteristics such as large numbers of jobs for new entrants, young people and women, wide range of seasonal or part-time jobs and job generation in areas with high unemployment rates.

On the other hand, there are also a number of aspects that make tourism an undesirable employer, as it is associated with poor labour conditions such as low pay, low skills, long and irregular working hours, and also little career advancement opportunities. The findings of Pizam (2010) are consistent with this latter point of view, his research mentioning negative features such as variable and unsocial hours, low payment, relatively low status, high amount of stress, or very long working hours in some cases. The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2014) offers figures that support the findings of researchers by means of a study conducted at a worldwide level, which reveals that the average number of weekly hours worked by hotel and restaurant employees is 51 (20% more than the average working week for the entire economy), and also that the average salary paid to these workers is with 23.75% less than the average salary for the entire economy.

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