

LEADERSHIP IN TOURISM: FROM INDIVIDUAL TO BUSINESS SUCCESS

Fahri Idriz

Technical University of Sofia, Bulgaria

Abstract. In recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on leadership strategies that aim to create and maintain “human and social” connections within commercial enterprises. This indicates that leadership and leaders are considered in all efforts that promote interpersonal relationships and require social interaction, extending beyond the fundamental concepts of leadership, particularly in the tourism industry, where “person-to-person” interactions tend to be more enduring. People are at the heart of the tourism sector. Consequently, the primary objective of this paper is to highlight the practical aspects of implementing leadership styles that contribute to the success of individuals and businesses in Bulgaria, while simultaneously revealing their contemporary leadership characteristics.

Keywords: tourism leadership, business success, Bulgaria, tourist organization

JEL: L83, M12, M54

1. Introduction

The management of human resources in the tourism sector can be defined as a comprehensive system encompassing principles, methods, means, legal norms, rules, criteria, requirements, standards, procedures, policies, plans, and programs aimed at the formation and utilization of human resources within an organization, in alignment with its immediate interests and strategic objectives. Key components of this management include selection, training and development, formal procedures and policies, as well as the cultivation of culture and values within the organization. A strong corporate culture is essential for every company. Effective management is evident when organizations achieve high or increasing levels of employee motivation. Employees assess the efforts of management in the realm of human resource management and development in the following ways:

– The effectiveness of human resources management practices in business processes is directly linked to the existence of fair relationships among individuals within the organization, as well as mutual trust and the accountability of managers in fulfilling their commitments.

– People working in conditions typical of human resource management exhibit a strong sense of job security and a high level of satisfaction with their work.

– In companies where the principles of human resources are more thoroughly implemented, the level of motivation among employees is significantly higher.

No human being enjoys feeling insignificant in the workplace. No one wants to invest effort into tasks that leave them feeling unsuccessful, unappreciated, uncomfortable, or insecure. However, when these emotions shift towards feeling highly valued, significant to the organization, and secure both now and in the future, individuals are motivated to perform at their best. Human potential is limitless; the only limit is the sky (Boyadzhiev, 1994; Vladimirova, 2006).

The wealth of contemporary human resource management encompasses researches in the field of leadership. An examination of literature in this area reveals numerous contentious issues, as well as complex theoretical concepts and frameworks applicable in different sectors, including tourism industry. The prevalence of ready-made recipes and catchy slogans leadership and leaders in tourist organizations represents another extensive work within this field. Furthermore, the fundamental perspectives and strategies of prominent authors should not be underestimated in terms of their cost and practical application in tourist business (Evgeniev et al., 1993; Zahariev, 2001).

The primary issue in tourism leadership is a considerable challenge that tourist organizations encounter in establishing a cohesive leadership concept tailored to their specific context. This involves translating that concept into a leadership policy and effectively implementing it. Following authors, the subject of leadership encompasses a wide range of topics.

Even though the topic of leadership is relatively independent, it is crucial to acknowledge its intrinsic connection to the formation and management of teams, as well as the development of human resource management (HRM) systems within corporate environments. Under certain external circumstances, leadership – especially its mastery and application in tourist business practice – has gained significant importance nowadays.

2. Promoting Innovative Leadership Behaviour in the Workplace

Peter Drucker defined leadership as the ability to develop individuals who can transcend typical constraints and enhance the efficiency of human activities to meet higher standards. To deepen his understanding, Drucker emphasizes that while the management of a business organization cannot directly produce leaders, it can create an environment in which the leadership abilities and skills of both managers and workers can emerge. Practices aimed at maximizing leadership potential can be established (Iliev, 2005).

Simon Cooper believes that effective leadership involves creating an environment in which individuals can consistently achieve their full potential. He further

explains that while leadership and management are distinct concepts, they are interconnected. Leadership entails influencing team members and possessing the ability to inspire them to execute the company's vision.

Several quotes from renowned leadership expert John Maxwell are both noteworthy and beneficial from both scientific and practical perspectives: management is a job, but leadership is a quality. In a corporate organization, an individual may be assigned a management role without necessarily embodying leadership qualities. Additionally, a leader means taking action to build relationships with others and achieve objectives that followers perceive as their own. A leader in a corporate environment requires the ability to influence others in all directions. 99% of the time, individuals at various levels within an organization's structure achieve the same leadership outcomes as those at the top, specifically the ability to influence others. Holding a position of power is not a prerequisite for effective leadership; one does not need to be on top is a choice, not merely a title or position. Moreover, cultivating followers is a fundamental aspect of the leadership process. (Iliev, 2009)

Given definitions, are useful in tourist industry, where managers and employees work out together to serve the clients: at the hotel, restaurants and etc. Nevertheless, innovative workplace behavior is a crucial element of human resource management that enhances organizational performance, especially in tourism. It fosters individual initiative and creative thinking among employees. Additionally, it promotes behaviors aimed at achieving proactivity, as well as the introduction and implementation of new ideas, processes, products, and procedures. Non-traditional behavior exhibited by individual employees should not be regarded as "deviant behavior" in the business context; rather, it should be recognized as a vital factor for success. This diverse behavior emerges when we acknowledge that we are dealing with similar individuals—humans are governed by other humans.

It is essential for an organization to promote growth by leveraging the competitive advantages provided by its human resources. Management identifies, utilizes, and nurtures these advantages. Managers harness the potential of employees in the labor process to directly or indirectly enhance the value of the enterprise's production, motivating their workforce as each individual strives to reach their full potential in personal development.

The tourism industry **sells memorable experiences, emotions, and fresh air**, generating substantial profits for those who provide quality service to their guests. (Idriz & Geshkov, 2023) The main motto of the tourism industry is: Treat guests like kings and welcome them appropriately. Accepted within the tourism sector states, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. Understanding drivers for tourism industry growth we fully agree with Ivanova and Genchev (2024) that efficiency as a tourism serves as a potential for boosting growth and contributes significantly to job creation. But, the COVID – 19 changes the "game" as demolished the direct connection tourism employees - tourists.

Accordingly, the leader or manager of any organization, particularly in the tourism sector, must inspire others through personal example and demonstrate an indomitable and unwavering spirit. It is the leader who motivates team members to look ahead, be proactive, and commit to ideas that transcend their immediate interests. People must believe in inspiring ideologies that foster growth. When we learn to celebrate the successes of others as we do our own, we become more successful in every trail on market.

Human resource management can be defined as the communication between employees and employers aimed at achieving specific organizational goals and fostering positive outcomes. The advantages of implementing innovative approaches and practices in human resource management benefit not only individuals but also enhance the overall process. In the tourism industry, costs associated with human resources represent a significant portion of an organization's budget. Effective management of these resources promotes employee development and provides opportunities for individuals to build and enhance their potential. Human resource management encompasses various practices related to employee engagement, including selection, training and development, formal procedures and policies, as well as the cultivation of organizational culture and values.

A man, in his role as an idea generator, possesses qualities such as imagination, creativity, intuition, and insight, which enable him to develop a comprehensive service business and design individual services. It is essential for a human resource investor to possess the assets, knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to assess risks effectively. This capability allows them to successfully reallocate and reinvest their earnings in a manner that maximizes future profitability. Invest in individuals, and you will achieve success! Always allocate at least 15% of your earnings to invest in the training and development of your team.

The manager, in his capacity as the leader-manager of a tourism enterprise, performs various functions such as leader, organizer, motivator, and coordinator across different sectors, including restaurants, hotels, and travel agencies. He is dedicated to the optimal use of resources and is committed to the continuous growth of the tourism business he oversees. The leader-manager understands that profit is not his primary focus; rather, he recognizes that profit is a natural outcome of delivering high-quality work.

Man possesses innate qualities and acquired competencies that enable him to fulfill various roles. Human potential is limitless, while machines have a finite capacity. Knowledge and skills empower individuals to manage and develop the components of the internal business environment and to transform environmental challenges into opportunities.

The importance of the human factor in achieving success in the tourism industry is well established. In many sectors, including tourism and both light and heavy industries, human labor is and will continue to be irreplaceable. Can you envision

a robot serving as your tour guide or welcoming you at reception with a smile and warmth? Any business that aims to grow must prioritize investing in its human resources.

Human resource management requires ongoing effort.

- For the improvement of the implementation of both and long-term goals.
- To enhance the results obtained.
- To enhance the quality and productivity of labor.

The primary factors and challenges affecting the development of human resources in tourism include an aging population and the need for higher educational standards. The age demographic in the hospitality industry presents a significant issue both now and in the future, as employers in this sector increasingly seek young and mobile personnel. Additionally, the tourism industry faces challenges related to seasonality and high employee turnover, which further complicate workforce stability. The sector struggles to ensure job security for its employees, and an aging population exacerbates the problem by limiting the influx of new, well-prepared individuals into the tourism workforce.

3. Motivation of Employees in Tourism

Motivation is a challenging and intricate process to study due to its multidisciplinary nature. Understanding these characteristics enables management to achieve organizational goals by harnessing the efforts of motivated individuals. In this context, motivation serves as a crucial management function and can be considered one of the most important aspects of effective leadership (Kopeva et al., 2015; Sterev et al., 2017):

– A primary management task within the organization is to motivate individuals to engage in effective work and harness their full potential, as human capabilities are limitless.

– Practice demonstrates that the achievement of an organization's goals largely depends on the human factor, which often determines the success or failure of their implementation.

– Human resources are characterized by their uniqueness and inimitability. They are responsible for producing, planning, organizing, and controlling the economic activities of an organization.

In the field of human resource management, there is a wealth of theoretical and methodological foundations, as well as applied approaches and solutions. The issue of motivation is inherently present within this body of knowledge. However, practice reveals a lack of understanding and mastery of the motivational process, leading to a significant underestimation of its management. Consequently, this results in an inability to enhance employee motivation in the workplace.

The process of human resource management is essential, however, effective human resource management must lead to high or increasing employee motivation

within the company. In other words, the level of employee motivation, as well as the trend in this level, serves as a crucial criterion for assessing the quality of the company's human resource management.

Following researchers, management through motivation can be defined as directing the behavior of employees in a manner that aligns their actions with the company's objectives, ensuring that each employee contributes to the best of their abilities, and long for meaningful engagement in their work. Thus, every company's management is interested in fully utilizing the potential of its employees. According to researchers, this corporate motivation system is considered the most effective, as it employs motivational strategies tailored to the characteristics of the company and the specific needs of its employees.

The primary reason is that motivation represents one of the most significant resources within modern organizations: human resources. It is widely believed that an organization's effectiveness and excellence are primarily achieved through its people. Consequently, all managers aim to lead their organizations by focusing on human resource management. Strategies for attracting, retaining, and fostering alignment with personnel are among the most crucial and foundational aspects of management, and they are developed based on motivational theories.

The second reason for the significant interest of managers in motivation is that it varies among individuals. People differ in their motivations' content, characteristics, and intensity. For example, in a vegetable garden, if we water all the plants equally and expose them to the same amount of sunlight, some will yield abundant produce while others may wither. This analogy applies to people as well. Motivation is a unique process for each individual, influenced by their personal desires and value systems.

The third reason that enhances researchers' interest in motivation is the emerging concept of organizational effectiveness. It is increasingly viewed as the ability of managers to inspire individuals within the organization to achieve goals and meet various performance criteria.

The fourth reason is that many organizations, in recent times, are treating their human resources strategically and seeking to create a so-called "talent bank. They take special care to "grow" suitable specialists and develop them into leaders. The foundation of the programs aimed at enhancing personnel suitability includes effective career planning and remuneration strategies to create an optimal work organization. Central to these efforts are motivation mechanisms.

The types of motivational approaches that are suitable and applicable in the tourism industry can be categorized into the following six groups:

- Material and non-material benefits provide workers with tangible, financial, or moral-psychological advantages.
- Positive and negative influences either encourage and promote desired behaviors or limit and sanction undesirable ones.

– Internal and external motivation: Internal forms of motivation are associated with the nature of the work, one's attitude toward the profession, self-expression, the pursuit of competence, satisfaction with achievements, and the desire for autonomy. In contrast, extrinsic motivators focus on the level of success in relation to the company's objectives and the evaluation by management. These motivators are primarily linked to compensation and working conditions.

– Corporate motivators impact both teams and individuals, influencing the scope and number of employees involved. According to Elton Mayo, the desire for social inclusion in the workplace is a fundamental aspect of human behavior.

– Short-term and long-term goals refer to the duration in which motivators are effective. Short-term motivators primarily focus on remuneration and may include meal vouchers or company-provided transportation. Additionally, social packages are becoming increasingly popular and often encompass long-term incentives such as supplementary health and pension insurance, savings plans, and educational loans.

– Personal Motivation: This refers to the psychological traits and personal characteristics of individual employees. The motivation process varies among individuals based on their unique characteristics. Effective communication between management and staff, along with regular assessment and self-assessment, is essential to clarify these differences.

4. Use of Innovative Leadership approach to Motivate Human Resources in Tourism

Following Idriz and Sterev (2024) the human resource management policy of tourist organizations reflects the perspectives, attitudes, and sense of responsibility of management and staff regarding their interactions with tourists. It encompasses the relationships and dynamics that influence individuals, as well as the pursuit of optimal performance in relation to specific roles, functions, and tasks. Following, the tourism leadership in not given, in should be trained.

According to different authors, in the tourism industry, effective leadership is a product of collaboration between management and staff. It is fostered through targeted training that creates a motivating environment conducive to teamwork among management, employees, and clients. Furthermore, being a leader in the tourism sector entails establishing a foundation of transparent communication, mutual respect, and open dialogue among all stakeholders. This approach is often characterized as the primary style of shared leadership.

The mentoring provided by the managers in tourism and their team's experienced, reliable members is the most effective approach to fostering staff development. In a mentorship setting through tailored training and education, the knowledge and skills acquired by the tourism staff significantly enhance their competence within company-customers' relations.

According to Kirova and Yordanova (2024) digital transformation, incl. in tourism, has led to job polarization and necessitates a comprehensive reform of the innovation and leadership educational system, increased expectation that individuals to leverage creativity as it becomes a standard in the tourist organization.

Following primary requirements, educators and trainers do not sell knowledge as a product. Training motivational knowledge does not make us salespeople, rather, trainers are ambassadors of goodwill. Motivational trainers' focus is on people, as well as their knowledge and future success. They serve as a vital link between individuals and their business management. Accordingly, their primary goal is to make employees as well as leaders lives easier, especially in tourism sector where all staff are serving other people outside the organization. Therefore, the tourism leadership is all about relationship with customers and how business' staff is motivated to share their business experiences and knowledge to inspire and motivate other employees and clients as well.

In essence, what do tourism leadership trainers look like in the business environment? They provide everyone they train with a plan for a fulfilling life and guidance on how to shape their future. These are effective motivational methods. Treating tourism employees with goodwill should not be viewed as an additional expense, rather, it is a motivational strategy and a powerful incentive that can transform any company into a global player.

Leadership education is not a profit-driven effort; educators understand this. However, trainers can inspire tourist business staff by turning motivational lectures into engaging spectacles where everyone plays a leading role. Employees are the main characters in their company's narrative, and trainers' role is to master the art of presenting this story to them. Experience always emphasizes humanity's values and aspirations. When a person is in a position to be of service to their community, environment, or society, they should always extend a helping hand and never abandon those in need. This fosters a profound sense of motivation and belonging, which is the essence of corporate culture. In such an environment, individuals feel valued and significant within the broader context of humanity.

The primary advice for managers and leaders is to always treat all employees with the respect, understanding, and empathy they deserve. This approach fosters motivation and encourages individuals to showcase their full potential. Human capabilities are limitless, and for a motivated person, the sky is the limit. Interactions with each another in tourist industry can transform work into a fulfilling experience, strengthen employees' connection to the organization, and inspire them to engage both their minds and subconscious. A sense of significance and belonging, along with the desire to be part of a team and contribute to the work process, is what drives us to rise each morning.

The direct relationship between employees and satisfied customers is crucial for a successful tourist business. A kind and devoted attitude fosters strong interpersonal

connections. When managers in tourism treat their employees with the respect they deserve, employees, in turn, will approach their work with the same respect and unwavering loyalty.

Transform the workplace into a second home for tourist business' employees, creating an environment they cannot imagine living without, is the main advice for success in tourism leadership. Here's how to treat every employee in a manner that encourages them to treat your business with the same care. This is the essence of motivation for excellence. While a machine cannot be motivated, a motivated person can drive that machine to achieve remarkable efficiency. The most valuable asset for any company is a motivated employee. To cultivate this motivation, it is essential to give the respect we expect to receive. In return, employees will reward us with exceptional service, high-quality products, and steadfast loyalty. Customers do not purchase a logo or a brand; they invest in a comprehensive set of values. Any company that aspires to be number one must instill a sense of dedication that resonates in the hearts and minds of all motivated employees and their customers.

5. Conclusion

Among the primary factors influencing the development of human resources and the state of the workforce in the tourism sector, as well as in the broader economy, are population aging, rising education levels, and the mobility and turnover of employees.

Human resources are the key components that integrate raw materials, technological expertise, financial assets, and all other resources to create products. They are responsible for production, planning, organizing, and controlling processes. As leaders, they motivate and implement effective management strategies. Human resources possess the unique ability to leverage the organization's other resources, driving success and innovation within the organization itself.

Human resources exhibit a unique consistency. Individuals who come together to work within a single organization require equitable treatment. Those who experience fair treatment are more productive and satisfied, while those who face injustice tend to be unproductive and dissatisfied. This distinction is what transforms human resources into either a significant strength or a considerable weakness.

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✉ **Dr. Fahri Idriz, Assoc. Prof.**
Economics and Management Faculty
Technical University of Sofia
Sofia, Bulgaria
E-mail: meattsa@abv.bg