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POSSIBILITIES OF INCREASING THE EFFICIENCY OF USING HUMAN RESOURCES IN TOURISM

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Abstract: *The paper starts from the roles of the human resources in the development of the tourist agencies' activities (the role **of stimulator, creator and coordinator factor of the activity**) and has as a purpose to emphasize the essential problems of the human resources management in this kind of activity: creating a team work, its motivation and its creativity.*

Key words: human resources, team, motivation, creativity

JEL Classification: M0, M1, M12, M5, M54

In the development of the tourist agencies' activity, human resources have an *essential role*, which is an **activity stimulator**. The natural and anthropic potential, the technical and material resources, the attractions, the recreation elements of the tourist agencies turn from potential resources into resources ready for consumption, in the tourist activity, only when the human factor intervenes, which assures their functionality. But the relation between tourism and human resources has an opposite sense as well, that is that the stimulation of human factor is possible and conditioned by the presence of material resources.

At the same time, human resources play the role of a **creator factor** in the tourist activity, - the people are those who create new tourist products, who directly participate at the development and arrangement of the new tourist areas- , as well as the role of **coordinating factor** of the activity.

The tourism affiliation to the third sector emphasizes the *importance of human resources* involved in this activity.

The amount and quality of the tourist services essentially depend on:

- The personnel, that is the number of workers and their level of qualification;
- The correspondence between the characteristics of labour force's training and the fulfilled functions;
- The professionalism and promptitude in exercising their duties.

In his context, the evolution of tourism is directly related to the personnel's dynamic and structure, which motivates the great importance of the human resources.

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The role of this factor grows as the consumers' demands increase toward the quality of the services, the participation to the tourist movement of larger and various segments of population, as well as the transformations within the tourist phenomenon, mainly, emphasizing the active tourism forms.

The development of the tourist activity has direct consequences upon the use of human resource in the sense of creating new jobs, establishing a relatively high level of training and certain professional structures. Also, the specificity of the tourist activity, its complexity, given by the multitude and variety of its components, has an influence on the necessity of a personnel and its structure, on the demands concerning the training and selection, on the efficiency of using labour force.

The particularities of the labour force involved in tourism and the specificity of work in this sector establishes as a necessity the reassessment of the human resources management in this field.

Among the most important features which define the human resources and the labour process (Minciu R. 2001) in tourism are the following:

- The great consumption of live work;
- The superior moral responsibility for the performed services,
- The relatively high and complex training level,
- Direct relations employee-client,
- Seasonal occupation,
- High fluctuation of personnel,
- The use of part-time labour.

In the services sector, in general, and in the tourist sector in particular, the technical progress from the mechanization and automation field has a limited area of applicability, which leads to the use of a large number of workers and, due to this fact, to a lower labour productivity.

The process of consumer service in the tourist activity field requires the direct contact between the client, the services consumer and the employee, its executor. The direct contact implies satisfying the clients' demands both quantitatively, referring to the amount of performed services, number of clients served on a certain period of time and qualitatively, the services standard, the degree of satisfaction. From this perspective, the labour force in tourism must have special moral qualities: honesty, patience, promptness. The way in which a tourist has been served in a certain place, will certainly determine its return.

The relatively high and complex level of training is determined by the specificity of the performed work which beside the technical knowledge specific to the field, requires a good knowledge acquired through appropriate training. The tourist services require a multilateral training to the employed personnel so that any employee can meet the tourists' various and complex demands. The personnel's physical features and behaviour help in creating a more pleasant atmosphere and mood, stimulating the customers.

The direct relations established between the employee and the client/tourist, during the service, respectively the tourist consumption, imply special abilities of personnel concerning the communication and relation to the client. The employees must have knowledge of psychology and sociology necessary for revealing their clients' character and preferences, because through direct contact, the personnel can contribute to the stimulation of their clients' needs and therefore can influence the tourist consumption.

The temporary seasonal occupation and the high fluctuation of personnel compared to other sectors of activity are the result of the seasonal concentration of the tourist circulation and of the temporary work of an important part of the technical-material resources. Natural conditions, the organization of the economic and social life determines, as it is known, important variations of the tourist circulation intensity from a period to another. These generate, in their turn, similar variations in job occupation, with negative

effects on the employees and the results of their work. Thus, a large number of employees are required to handle the needs of the maximum activity periods, and therefore the demands are reduced in the process of their selection. At the same time, temporary employment stimulates efforts of increasing the level of training, neither from the economical agent, nor from the employees, so the services quality and the labour productivity is lower.

High fluctuation of personnel– more than half are seasonal employed – reduces the level of labour satisfaction of the employees (as a result of a lower income and of the uncertainty of a job), encourages moving to other sectors with permanent activity, determines higher costs to create and keep a job etc., increasing the complexity of problems the human resources policy have to deal with.

Compared to other sectors, the specificity of the tourist activity creates more part-time jobs, more “flexible” models of job occupation. We talk about week-end jobs, occasioned by different events, holidays or special activities (guides, sport instructors, hunting assistants etc.)

The personnel employed in tourism can fulfill its duties if it has the appropriate number and professional training. Having the necessary personnel takes into account *the permanent character* of an important part of it. The permanent character of the personnel comes as a solution to the difficulties created by the fluctuation due to the seasonal tourist activity. Several measures concerning job occupation can be applied off-season, when the demand is low:

- Professional training programs can be organized,
- Productive activities can be performed (making new food products that can be stored for the season, making goods for the endowment of the accommodation and public food units, renovating and repairing buildings and installations etc.)

The direct relation human resources – tourist activity and the particularities of human resources and labour process in tourism determine our claim that, for an efficient activity, the human resources management in tourism is a very important activity, with a complex content and specific ways of achievement.

All the knowledge, abilities and attitudes the tourist agencies need in order to compete as well as the activity of selection, training and development of the relations with the employees, are elements of the human resources management.

The human resources management has double role: that of creating *coherent, participative and competitive groups and of benefiting from the groups potential in the company's interest- efficiency.*

The means of achieving the role of human resources management are: trust, team spirit, work environment, humanitarian spirit, setting objectives, resources, offensive character and enterprising spirit.

In achieving its role, the human resources management must consider the fact that each company member is unique, having a well established individuality, materialized into a certain potential, needs, abilities and specific behaviour.

The relationships between managers and their employees established during the management process have been studied by researchers for a long time. R. Miles made a complex approach of these relations in his work “Theory of Management: Implication for Organization Behaviour and Development”. In an efficient system the main managerial duty, identified by the author, aims at connecting the organization's structure to human variable: needs, potential, attitudes, demographic characteristics. The author's management models are presented in table 1.

Table 1.
Management models

<i>Traditional Model</i>	<i>Human Relations Model</i>	<i>Human Resources Model</i>
Suppositions		
The work is unpleasant for most people	People desire to feel useful and important	The work is not inherently unpleasant
The employees' activity is less important than their income	People desire to be part of a team and their individuality to be recognized	People desire to contribute to the achievement of the objectives they participated to
Few employees want or can perform duties which require creativity, self-management and self-control	The needs are more important in people's work motivation than their income	Most people can carry out a creative work which requires more self-management and self-control than in present
Policies		
The main duty of the manager is to closely supervise and control his employees	The main duty of the manager is to make each employee feel useful and important	The main duty of the manager is to entirely use all the human resources he has
The manager has to separate his employees duties in simple, repeatable, easy to learn operations	The manager must inform his employees, listen to their objections towards his plans	The manager has to assure an organizational environment where all his employees can co-operate and offer their entire potential
He has to establish detailed work procedures and apply them firmly and correctly	He also has to let his employees practice the self-management and self-control for the routine problems	The employees participation in dealing with the important problems, their self-management and self-control is encouraged
<i>Manager's expectations</i>		
People can accept work if the payment is decent and their superior is fair	Informing and involving the employees in routine decision making will satisfy their need of belonging to a group and feel important	The employees' increased influence, their self-managing and self-controlling will determine the improvement of the activity's efficiency.
If the duties are simple and the people are closely supervised they will produce according to the expectations	Satisfying these needs will improve and reduce the resistance to the formal authority that is the employees will willingly co-operate	Work satisfaction can be improved and will determine the use of the entire resources

Source: after Miles R., 1999

The persons' multitude behaviours and the various management models of activity determine us to say that, in practice, a manager has to use more theories and models according to the specificity of the company and of the employees that he manages, a single theory and model being insufficient for an appropriate coordination of activity.

We will further deal with some of the problems we consider *essential in the human resources management in tourism*.

- Creating a team work,
- The team's motivation
- Its creativity.

1. The team – a way of increasing the efficiency of activity

In the present context of economy, the concept of “**team**” is very important and the necessity of understanding and using its potential is very acute.

The developments of the surrounding environment, which generally affect the economy and therefore the tourism, are so rapid that need solutions from the field teams, who identify the momentary challenges and try to find solutions with the help of the resources that they have in hand, often improvising, having no time to find the best solution.

In the work process in tourism, interdependence relations are established between the executors of tourism services, who form the company’s team and the consumers. The efficiency of the tourism activity requires a perfect performance, at all levels, from the management personnel to the unqualified one, because the success evaluation of a journey depends on the ability to satisfy every tourist’s demand and preference. From this perspective, the personnel has to prove the ability to work in a team.

In a two-member team there is an additional distinct component. The additional component is the relation between the two, the link which makes two separate individuals a whole. This intangible element, this energetic link (fig.1), which intensifies the knowledge and experience of each member, determines a manager to say: “I don’t want to hire the best but those who can form the best team!”

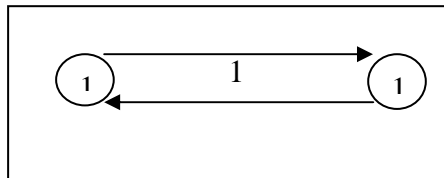


Fig. 1. The team’s synergetic effect

According to the textbooks, a team is a small group of people with complementary abilities, interested in achieving a common goal on the basis of a set of performances objectives and who adopt an approach for which they mutually assume the responsibility.

In general, people have a clear idea on the concept of a team. But dealing with a real situation, where they have to apply their knowledge, they simply fail, in most cases, even the minimum potential of performance which exists in every team; not to mention that, they rarely explore new possibilities of using this potential.

The advantages of team work

Why teams manage better? Let us list several arguments.

- They bring together knowledge and abilities which surpass those of any individual from the team;
- Having clear objectives and well established communication channels, they can solve various problems in real time: they are quick, flexible and efficient, because they have the expertise and the means close at hand;
- The team provides a unique social dimension: it functions only after surpassing the obstacles of trust and personality (in fact, that is how groups become teams);
- Last but not least, a specific sense of humour is developed and good mood is set in when working together, as if in complicity, and a satisfaction of belonging to a more powerful entity, compared to the single individual.

The virtues of team work are obvious. Teams make the employees happier, giving them the feeling that they have a role in defying their own work. These lead to an increase in efficiency and to elimination of some hierarchical levels, where the orders used to come from.

Theoretically, the teams allow the company to take advantage of the

abilities and creativity of the entire work force, instead of relying only on the specialists ability of detecting the problems and offering solutions.

Today, most of average or big companies are led by managerial teams. The shift of power from the individual to the team is, to a certain extent, due to the present environment.

The concentration of power tends to corrupt – therefore, it is preferable to be dispersed. Then, the higher the level of education of persons having the age of employment, the higher their desire to have a word concerning the management.

Meredith Belbin (1996), studying the way in which each individual contributes to the team's activity, depending on his own personality, abilities and features, has identified eight different, but complementary roles. These are:

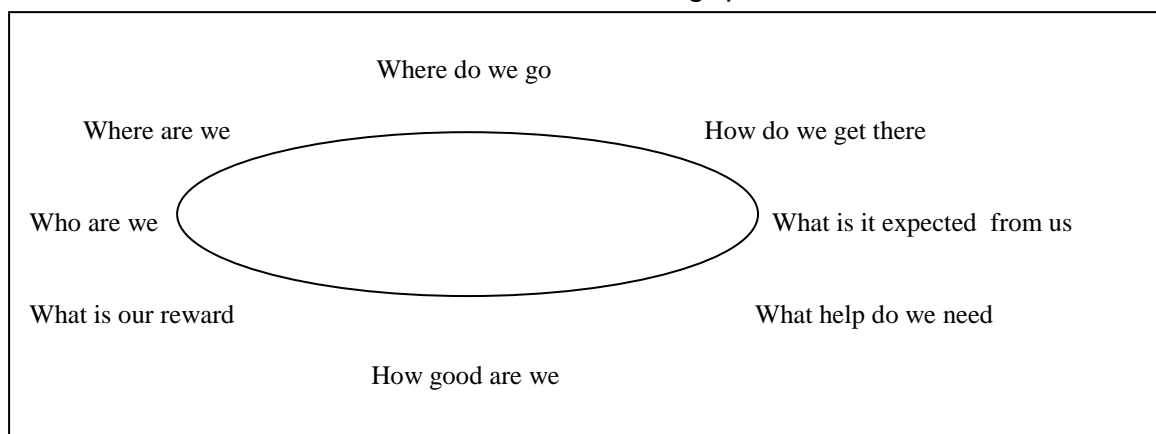
- The designer – brilliant, has a lot of imagination, wide knowledge, capable of solving difficult problems;
- The resource investigator – ability for human contacts and for exploring the new. The ability of face challenges;
- The coordinator – the ability of dealing and accepting his potential partners according to their merits and without prejudices. A strong sense of objectives;
- The moderator– interested and willing to fight against inertia, against lack of efficiency, having courage in surpassing the obstacles, dealing with stress;
- The monitor – the assessor – ability of judgment, discretion, stubbornness, strategic thinking;
- Team worker – ability of dealing with people and situations and of promoting the team spirit;
- The creator – ability in organizing, practical sense, hard worker, self-discipline sense;
- The finalizer – ability to pursue an objective until its completion, detects errors and omissions; perfectionism;
- The specialist (a role added to Belbin's list) – firm in pursuing his intended objective, he has the ability of self-initiation, provides knowledge and elements that few people possess.

The success of a team depends on the way in which there roles mingle and manifest. A team raises equilibrium problems, but here we don't talk about well-balanced persons, but about the balance between its members.

So, how can we use Belbin's theory? We must try to understand people's preferences toward certain roles. It isn't always about having a team of eight or nine people, each with their role. As a rule, although they have preferences, most people can efficiently assume one or more roles from the ones mentioned above, after their needs.

What is certain for a fact is that a team which does not have actors capable of playing the necessary roles will eventually fall apart, when facing the first serious problems; but by no means will it be capable of performance.

A team that works has the answers to the following questions:



From the studies made on several tourist agencies we can agree upon a series of favourable effects beneficial to the team relation - profitability in tourism. These aim at the precise definition of economical problems which are to be solved, the complex description of the objectives to be reached and their premises, the insuring of work efficiency and in this way the increase of work and profit productivity, promptly taking decisions and obtaining the safety in the functioning of the entire team activity.

Work team has a series of *limits*.

One of the most frequently made errors is that of team formation instead of some much firmer measures. A typical mistake is the setting of vague objectives.

The specialized studies have identified the causes of team's inefficiency starting from the identification of its goals: either they became confused, either they lost their urgency character or the signification in the eyes of the team, either various individual aims have occurred, which became prior to the collective aims or, the organization on teams has been introduced without changing the systems of performance and payment evaluation. This sends out confusing messages to the employees, because they are asked to individually fight for rewards and recognition.

Moreover, team work costs money: pilot – programs, time.

Nevertheless, the biggest problem of team work is of a political nature. Almost inevitably, forming a team undermines the forces distribution in a company. The managers of the average echelon often see the teams from the production level as threats to their authority and even to their status.

Teams do not represent the solution to any present and future problems of an organization. They will not bring miraculous solutions, they will not improve the performances of any group, and they will not help the general manager to face any challenge. Nevertheless, teams generally "beat" groups or individuals.

But everywhere the price of success means total involvement and exercise. Few groups become teams without discipline. To reach the performance of forming a team is a special challenge. The individualism as a mentality transmitted through generations, the well-known confusion between the team and the team work, the negative experiences – all these sabotage the initiative of trying, now when the team is so necessary.

Groups do not become teams because they are told to do so. The fact that a group of people is called a team does not automatically mean that it also acts as a team. And a managerial team is maybe the hardest thing to do.

The conclusion is that there is much unused potential in the teams created in most companies. We consider that this reserve of performance, of reaction ability, of adaptation, of survival and growth, requires a new attention.

To permanently assure a high quality level in the consumer services, the groups of employees in tourism should rely on forming and maintaining close relation with clients, on organizing multifunctional team client - oriented. Obtaining a superior quality is related to the personnel's training, on the company's expense, to the personnel's authorization to act when it is needed without waiting for the managers suggestions, and last but not least to the constantly self-satisfaction and relaxed attitude.

The teams formed within the tourist agencies take part in a common activity, having as a common goal achieving the final objectives.

The team's efficiency is related to a series of decisive factors such as: the team's size (4-7 members) and each one's role within the team. It is better that each member receive a mission with defining features, mission transposed in a function. The impression that the individuals are very important in the company's system must be created. The motivation within the team increases when its members know the anticipated results and consider them realistic. Motivation through involvement is effective only if the importance

of the task for the individual is perceived as an increase of his responsibility and not as a management order.

There are certain factors which affect the degree of satisfaction within a team, such as: work conditions, interpersonal relations, the salary, the management and control system, the company's policy and administration. Among the factors mentioned above, here are also certain motivational factors such as: promotion, offering a greater responsibility, the recognition of merits, career achievement, but we will talk about them in the next subchapter.

The team's process of formation and rendering it efficient implies several stages:

→ *forming the team* by establishing its goal, its management, its way of work, its period of existence and its working rules;

→ *the outburst*, the stage of internal conflicts, the stage of building trust within the team;

→ *the norming*, in this stage establishing working and functioning norms, the organisational framework, the role of each member;

→ *the stage of team functioning*, when the optimal performance is reached and when the way in which the team works is outlined.

The most important team role in a tourist agency is that of creating a positive attitude towards the consumer because high quality services are provided this way.

This favourable attitude concerning the clients can be induced to team members through the following actions:

- integrating the new employees within the company, from their first day of work, by presenting them with the instructions concerning the place where they would perform their activity, the period of probation with the purpose of creating the sense of belonging to a group;
- presenting the activities performed within the company in detail and the activity which the new employee is going to perform;
- granting a short period of time for preparation, documentation and adjustment;
- management's implication in first-line activities for short periods of time so that it remains connected to the pulse of activities performed within the company;
- granting the personnel the possibility to express their feelings concerning the activities they perform and their discontent so that the management is able to assess the employees' satisfaction and finally the consumers' satisfaction;

The improvement of work conditions acts as another factor of increasing the efficiency of human activity within the tourist company. In this sense, the following measures are necessary:

- ensuring a minimum reasonable period of daily and weekly repaus;
- granting paid leaves of absence, compensations as spare time and remunerations for holidays during which the employees have to work;
- designing educational and professional training programmes having as an objective the improvement of competences and the quality of professional performances as well as career perspectives;
- gradual elimination of segmented hourly programme;
- providing and maintaining on the company expenses special working outfit corresponding to the employees dignity;
- granting priority to the previous part-time employees of the company to seasonal or cyclic employment;
- training courses should be available to anybody interested and, if possible, free of charge;
- The content of training programmes should rely on technical, professional and administration disciplines, but should also include disciplines such as healthcare, hygiene, the study of foreign languages, the quality of the environment etc;

- Cooperation of the competent national authorities with national and private international organisations in order to establish internationally accepted minimum norms for validating competences and establishing the equivalence of competence and responsibility levels internationally;
- Initiation of multilateral or bilateral agreements for the possibility of performing probations abroad

2. Motivation – a means of stimulating the company’s personnel towards performance and profitability

The tourist agency’s performances at large are the result of the sum of individual performances of its members. The individual performances are permanently influenced by the following factors: professional ability, motivation and image of one’s own role within the company.

Motivation (Russu C., 1996) expresses the fact that a set of motives – needs, tendencies, emotions, intentions, ideals – which support the performance of certain actions and acts and the adoption of certain attitudes always lie at the basis of human condition.

The carrying factors of motivations are those elements which determine a person to perform certain actions or assume certain attitudes.

Motivation represents the support of engaging in the action of attaining a result and satisfaction hints at the already attained results. The main theories concerning personnel’s motivation are:

- theories dealing with *the content of motivation*, that is, on the individual needs which the organisation satisfy;
- theories studying *the process of occurrence and action of motivation* according to which the essential element is the person’s expectations concerning the result to which his work and behaviour would lead to;
- the theory according to which *the knowledge of past experiences lies at the basis of motivation* concerning the results determined by various types of behaviour;
- the theory which deals with *motivation systemically* making the connection between the person’s characteristics (professional ability, experience, features of character, temperament, needs, interests), the work characteristics (its complexity and variety, the nature of tasks, the level of assumed responsibility, the depth of work and its flexibility) and the work environment (the company’s ambience, the intensity of concern for knowledge and of satisfying peoples needs).

An appropriate ambience for improving work results in tourism concerns every manager who, directly or indirectly, is involved in maximising the performances of his employees. This is influenced by three main factors: motivation, abilities and resources. While resources can be allotted to the desired level and abilities can be formed through education and training, things are different concerning **motivation**.

The employees are the most motivated to contribute to the efficiency of the company when what they offer (time loyalty, cooperation) is directly proportional to what they get in exchange. However, the perception of equity is also influenced by the knowledge of what others get. Let’s imagine that an employee receives a salary much bigger than he has ever dreamed of and he deserves it. The employee is satisfied until he finds out that somebody else, with the same studies, experience, performance, receives a bigger salary. A state of discontent will follow, as well as a series of questions, and generally, a lack of interest.

Such an example lies at the basis of the equity theory, which can be identified in practice on the following coordinates:

- in judging the level of compensations, the employee does not have a standard in mind, therefore, he will compare his salary to the salary of a person in a similar situation;
- in equity occurs when an employee considers the proportion between what he offers and what he get unequal;
- in equity generates a tension which the employee tries to eliminate;
- the perception of inequity in the sense of a smaller salary is usually more frequent than the other way around; it is easier to accept a bigger salary which generates a strong motivation than the opposite circumstance which is intolerable.

The factors which contribute to an employee's perception on his contribution in the activities of the organisation are: abilities, education, experience and effort. The length of service, availability, loyalty and sociability can also be taken into account. However, in the perception of inequity, the influencing factors are often subjective.

For an employee, the degree of education can be relevant and therefore, he can disagree with the decision of another person's promotion based on this criterion. That is the reason for which a manager should understand the distorted perception and should try to be fair to his employees. The exchange which is going to be assessed from the equity point of view is based on the contributions brought by the two parties:

<i>The company's contributions</i>	<i>The employees' contributions</i>
- salary	- loyalty
- security	- cooperation
- responsibility	- attachment
- promotion	- initiative
- work safety	- productivity

Along with maintaining the equity, the manager can also influence the employees' behaviour in matters such as: fear, money and competition.

Fear, as a frame of mind of the employees, is totally unproductive from a motivational point of view. Fear demoralises and does not generate, except for short periods of time, the desired performances. The classical theory is based, essentially, on the coercive force and penalties, but this created hostility among the employees and also reduces the initiative, creativity and loyalty.

Fear can be a good motivator in circumstances in which the manager is faced with a new challenge or unprecedented risks, as a defence reaction.

Money is extremely differently seen by the employees, even if it is the main motivator for performing an activity. Having in view Maslow's pyramid of needs, one can identify money as a primary means of satisfying primary needs such as: food, clothing, accommodation etc. at a different level, money stands for safety, social status, power or prestige.

As people's needs are constantly changing, money can also acquire a different significance over time. However, the urgent encountered issue deals with "the price" to be paid.

Competition is by definition extremely motivating. The need of competition is deeply rooted in human consciousness and under the pressure of competition the managers and the employees are motivated to obtain the most performant products. As any type of motivation, competition offers people a meaning for their efforts and gives satisfaction when the target has been reached.

Thus, the effort and the fatigue become more easily accepted. Competing against rivals of similar importance is an important stimulus for the ego. Competition contributes to the consolidation of personal value and self-esteem, key-variables of individual and company success.

The expectancy model (or anticipation)

A theory which gains more and more popularity in the field of motivation is based on the assumption that the personnel is motivated by the intensity of the desire to acquire something and by the measure in which they hope to achieve it. The fundamental variables of the expectancy model are:

- the probability that a certain level of effort leads to a certain level of performance;
- the probability that a certain level of effort leads to a certain level of results;
- the psychological perception of the result.

In practice, the expectancy model is characterised by complexity as it expresses the possibility of obtaining different results out of the same action. A salesman, for instance, will determine the amount of effort he makes during his first days, considering that a high level of effort leads to the desired results (a greater reward), but also to undesired results (reducing acting social life).

For an employee, raise of salary can be more important than family life, while another can think of family life as a priority. What it connects the primary results of their actions with the secondary ones is called instrumentality, and the psychological perception is called valence. Therefore, expectancy, instrumentality and valence become the three motivational forces of the model (see fig. 2)

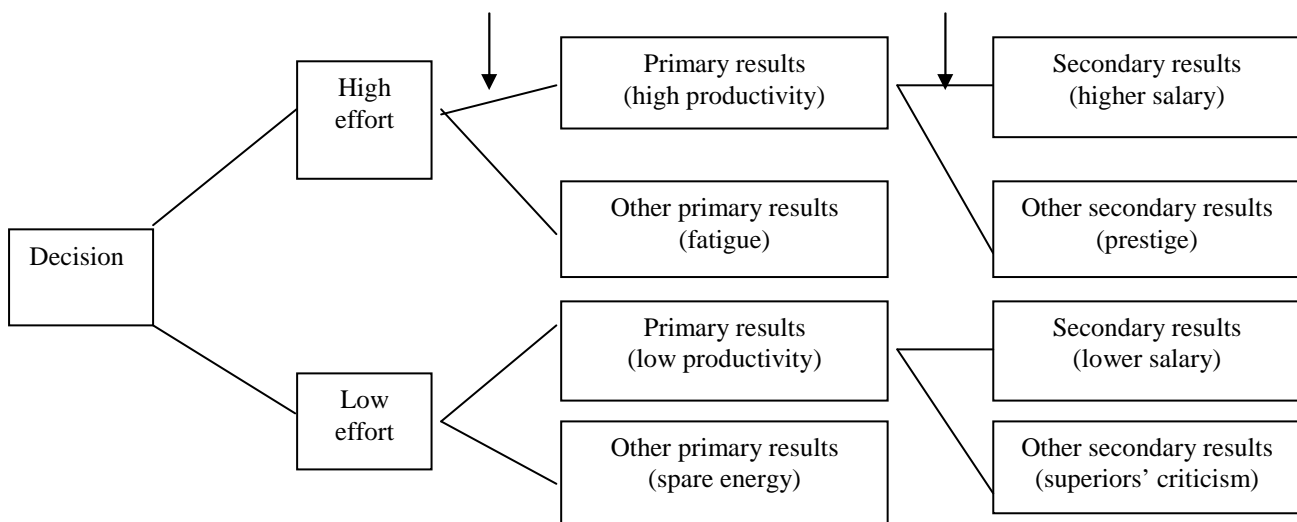


Fig.2. – Motivational forces of the expectancy model

Although difficult to apply, the expectancy model offers the managers the possibility to identify the extremely various impulses which determine the employees to perform a certain activity. A good manager assumes the task of understanding the valences and needs of each employee and tries to satisfy them. If recognition and prestige are of utmost importance for an employee, the manager will apply this reward as it is the sole efficient motivator.

The analysis of motivational problems

Motivational problems occur when there is a discrepancy between what is expected and what is performed, most often due to a low effort. The analysis of motivational problems can lead to faulty results unless certain misleading causes are excluded from the very beginning:

- the problem of communication, when the employee has not understood what he was supposed to do;

- the problem of communication, when the employee lacks the physical and mental abilities necessary for the activity;
- the problem of training, when the employee lacks the necessary studies;
- the problem of environment, when the employee knows what to do but lacks the appropriate conditions.

If low performances are not caused by such problems, then one can look for the causes of failure in the motivational policy. In order to be efficient any motivational measure must respect a few basic rules:

- the rewarded behaviour repeats while the sanctioned one does not;
- for a factor to be motivating it is necessary that the employee believes it will satisfy a need;
- usually, a rewarded behaviour is more motivating than a sanctioned one;
- the desired behaviour is more likely to occur if the reward is immediate.

The reality points out the fact that the employees' motivation is often blocked out by control procedures, rules and regulations and generally by the company's policy. Presently, the employees' motivation to the highest level represents a high-priority concern for managers.

The study of motivation in the analysed tourist agencies, theoretically and practically, allows us to *emphasise the factors of influence* both internal and individual which determine the employee's motivation (needs, attitudes, interests, behaviours, system of values) and external (wage system, task assigning, work group, control and surveillance system, communication, spare time). The two types of factors interact with each other, influencing employees' behaviour, their activity and thus the activity of the tourist agency and implicitly its results.

Among the *instruments of influencing the motivation* of the employees of a tourist agency, for performing an activity based on efficiency criteria, we stress the importance of the following:

- *money stimulation;*
- *the objective appreciation of employees' performances* and fixing a reward;
- *a favourable work environment* considering the fact that a person generally spends most of his active time at the work place;
- *creating possibilities for employees to participate to decision-making* in a higher degree than in the productive field also considering the specificity of the consumer service tourist activity;
- *efficiently solving the employees' problems;*
- *stimulating group cohesion.*

3. Development of personnel's creativity – a means of increasing efficiency in a tourist agency

The management of a tourist agency in the present must be based on the creative and initiative spirit of the employees and not on a bureaucratic approach. Human resources, which "constitute the supplementary source of survival and the main source of efficiency, effectiveness and welfare of civilisation" (Petrescu I., 1995) must be stimulated from the point of view of their creative potential, because, especially in this field, material, financial and informational resources can not be properly valued in the absence of creativity.

Creativity refers to a person's ability and intellectual force to find new ideas, and innovation refers to putting the new ideas in practice (Snak O., 2001). Creativity can represent an important factor of increasing efficiency of a performed activity.

Creative thinking and imagination are important elements of tourist activity and the absence of creativity undoubtedly leads to stagnation and, in time, can even turn to an economical disaster for a tourist agency.

Maintaining the competition implies a continuous activity in the field of creativity and innovation, for developing new products and services, more sophisticated, more refined and more individualised. Innovative activities are not performed as campaigns and no manager can come up with a consistent support for planning precise deadlines for conceiving an innovation, as well as he cannot foresee or expect the immediate regain of the efforts invested such as energy, money and time, for experimenting and launching new products and services in the tourist circuit.

In practice, one can resort to a series of *measures leading to the stimulation and development of personnel's creativity within the tourist agency*:

- providing an environment favourable to creativity by: advanced personnel training, encouraging the employees to discover new solutions for problems occurred within the agency, encouraging free expression of ideas, of information exchange, stimulating the dialogue with the clients and consumers of tourist products in order to become closer to them, reducing and eliminating hierarchical distances;
- providing favourable work conditions to potentially creative persons in order to experiment the proposed solutions;
- diversifying the individual's integration methods within the creative group through effective participation of employees to organising their own work, arousing the employees' sense of belonging to the agency and the feeling that their dignity and professionalism are recognised within the agency, organising recreational activities outside the agency for a stronger consolidation of the group;
- granting a high liberty of thought, action and expression by stimulating the employees' formulation of solutions;
- forming complex creative groups;
- educating the creative groups by stimulating the knowledge resulted from the group's creative activity, by transferring knowledge and information from the external environment;
- turning innovation into an important element for the environment which should provide the employees with the motivation of reaching targeted objectives;
- providing a diversified and flexible informational system;
- extending the use of methods and techniques of stimulating creativity;
- selecting, hiring and promoting initiative persons.

The process of creativity is not an easy one, with a linear evolution, but it generally implies following several stages presented in table 2:

Table 2
Stages in the process of creativity

No.	Stage	Characteristics
1	The stage of instinctive search	The new ideas can be found at the subconscious level, without a definite purpose
2	The intuitive stage	The interferences of various environmental forces occur at this stage and the connections which determine these interferences are understood
3	The materialization stage	The sorting out of ideas occurs, eliminating the inapplicable ones in the tourist agency and the re-initiation with the purpose of analysis of the ideas which prove to be useful for conceiving a new tourist product, a new service or a more efficient procedure of consumer service
4	Logistic definition of new ideas	Deals with transforming new ideas into operational processes associated with the analysis of the economical aspects necessary for their implementation (the possibilities and costs of

Some techniques of stimulating creativity are based on group interaction, and others on stimulating the initiatives of individuals within the tourist agency.

Based on these researches, one can assert that the techniques of stimulating creativity, such as *brainstorming*, *synectics*, *the Delbecq method* within the tourist industry of our country are not used at all. The recommendations in this sense focus on the managers' familiarity with the potential benefits of these techniques and their practical every-day implementation.

Conclusions

A way of increasing efficiency in the tourist activity is represented by **teams** which present a large variety of advantages: they combine knowledge and skills which surpass those on any individual within the team; having clear objectives and established communication channels, teams are able to solve various problems in real time: they are fast, flexible and efficient because they can use expertise and means; the team offers a unique social dimension: it does not function unless it overcomes trust and personality barriers (this is also the way in which groups become teams) and not least, a specific sense of humour develops and a sense of wellbeing while working together is created, as if in complicity, as well as the satisfaction to belong to a stronger entity compared to the individual alone.

Basically, teams allow tourist agencies to benefit from the skills and creativity of the entire work force instead of relying only on the specialists' ability to detect problems and offer solutions. Today, most medium and large companies are lead by managerial teams.

The shift of power from the individual to the team is due, more or less, to the environment specific to the tourist activity, which sums up a set of services whose efficient quantification consists of making the client the number one priority by the complete quality of the management in order to rise above the consumers' expectations.

According to research, a series of malfunctions in the activity of tourist agencies have occurred, which can be corrected through several **perfecting actions**, such as:

- formulating an appropriate strategy to put the following motto into practice: "our client comes first", surpassing this way the status of a philosophy. From this perspective, the following are required: *defining the clients' demands and exigencies, describing competitors' activities, defining the vision of the future*;
- adopting and understanding the vision of the tourist agency;
- defining key results;
- explaining newly adopted values;
- selecting and interpreting the information about performances;
- organizing the audit to departments of the tourist agency;
- training the employees;
- using individual qualities;
- creating potential advantages.

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