THE ROLE OF TOURISTIC GUIDE IN TRAVEL AGENCY’S WORK PROCESS

Goran Perić, Sladana Mušikić, Marko Gašić

РОЛЯ НА ТУРИСТИЧЕСКИЯ СПРАВОЧНИК В РАБОТНИЯ ПРОЦЕС НА ТУРИСТИЧЕСКАТА АГЕНЦИЯ

Горан Перич, Сладжана Мушикич, Марко Гашич

ABSTRACT: Travel agency has always been and has remained the essence of tourism business. There cannot be a proper tourism development without understanding a travel agency, which makes this topic very interesting to many authors. On the very beginning of this paper, working process and executive functions are described. To succeed in business it is necessary to pay attention to each of those functions and to perform them with high level of quality, in order to achieve a basic goal of every travel – satisfaction of tourists. In the second part deals with human resources in travel agencies. Selling of tourism services demands specific capabilities in working process because of the nature of product which is not material. That emphasizes complexity of work and asks for continuous innovations. Guidance in tourism is the subject of third part, in which particular attention is being paid to the terms tour guide, tour escort and agency representative and the difference between them. Fourth part is depicting activities and role of a tour guide and his main characteristics. Also, evolution from the basic to professional guide is being shown. Fifth part tells about the influence of tour guide to tourists satisfaction. At the end, the conclusion is that tour guide is a key resource for any arrangement in tourism today. Without adequate service, there will be no satisfied tourists, and satisfied tourists are main initiators of all activities in tourism development.

Key words: travel agency, tourism guidance, tour guide, tourist

Introduction

Working process of one tourist agency underlies within working capability of people. Business matters of travel agency is providing a service of traveling, which is the basic assignment of human reassures. Human reassures of one travel agency represent the most important element in forming high quality tourist arrangement process- in this terms, described as tourist product, as well as in achievement of customers satisfaction- tourists. Employees in travel agency, next to the staff that create service program are highly specialized staff as tour guides, tourist companion, agency representative, and latest, tourist animators. The most certainly, tour guide is the most representative, the most eminent and most engaged part of overall staff of one travel agency and among tour organizers. Maybe unjust, but no less true, tour guide is being identified with tour agency he works for, in terms that tourists, based upon his work are giving theirs evaluation and judge travel agency provided quality.

Perhaps, in this reasons, special place of working process in travel agency and role of human engagement within it is being given to tour guide.

Travel agency’s work process

Efficiency of managing the business rate of one travel agency in grate matter depends as well upon organization of working process, and upon current market position of travel agency itself. All disposable types of working processes are characterized by four executive functions that provide realization of working process. Those are (Šteić, Šolov 2000, pp 205-206):

- financial function;
- purchase function;
- production function;
- selling function.
Field of finance regards jobs involved with acquiring and disposition of financial resources in the same level that has to do with affairs of obtaining and using funds.

The procurement jobs are most commonly related with obtaining hotel, transportation and other travel services. Differences in business regarded to acquisition of travel agencies and production entities is that the travel agency does not operate with a classical purchase material goods but ensures the rights of use of certain capacities and the right to engage in intermediary activities (Spasić 2004, pp. 56).

A production function can not be discussed in the classical sense as the production of some material goods, but at this stage travel agency offers the holders services of tourist attractions.

Sales jobs are of great importance for the business of the travel agency. This phase is related to the commission of the travel arrangements and most of the work is undertaken by commercial entities (hotels, restaurants, transporters, etc.). Tour operators (wholesalers) end their working process selling travel arrangements to travel agencies (retailers). Some of their activities are usually pursued through support services - tourist guides, companions, etc. At the headquarters of travel agencies is being performed most of the executive functions (finance, purchasing, production) while sales jobs are done in branch offices. To achieve success in business all these operations must be performed in best quality.

Features of human resources in travel agency

Human resources are a decisive factor in achieving quality services and reaching the effect of a satisfied tourists, which gives the travel agency - tour operator an advantage over competitors. The complexity of the business functions in a travel agency affect its staffing structure. There are three groups of employees in a travel agency:

- staff who create a utility - tourism product;
- specialized personnel in charge of travel agency business affairs;
- other-ancillary staff.

Creation of Setup Utility - tourism product requires a high level of education and specialized knowledge in various fields (history, culture, geography, architecture, transportation) that are relevant for a specific tourist destination. Bottom line is that sophisticated travel demand requires a highly specialized knowledge.

Sales of tourism services requires from working staff in the agency special abilities and skills in the work because it is intangible product. Therefore, staff who work in a travel agency and who are in direct contact with consumers and tourists must meet the following requirements (Štetić, Šolov 2000, pp 208):

- good knowledge of the psychology of consumers and users of tourism services, to understand their requirements;
- knowledge of general and particular commercial transaction;
- commercial spirit and a sense for the client's needs;
- transparency, objectivity and patience in dealing with customers and
- to speak at least one foreign language and know a few more.

Staff specialized in business travel arrangements and theirs execution are the specialized staff: tour guides, travel companions and agency representatives in recent times and animators.

Tourist Guiding

When we talk about a tourist guide we can tell that that is one of the oldest professions, with its existence that goes two and a half millennia, but only with the development of the tourism phenomenon and its massive expansion, tourism management has become an important factor in the operation of travel agencies and tour operators. The concept of tourism management primarily involves the following activities (Rabotić 2009, pp. 50):

- Directing tourists during their travel and accommodation, i.e. in the area of transit and receiving regions (direct guiding under the tourists pointing to the direction of travel to certain destinations and attractions);
- Demonstrating attraction (inside and out);
- Interpretation of attraction (individual forms, as well as the context in which they are incurred and are: socio - political, historical, cultural, etc.)
- Informing and advising tourists during their stay at the destination.
Travel Guide is defined as "a person who takes visitors (tourists) in the language by their own choice, they interpret the cultural, historical and natural heritage of an area and the is qualified by the competent authorities and law of the area."\(^1\)

According to the tourism industry law in our country, the task of tour guide is to show and do professional explaining of the natural, cultural, historical, archaeological, ethnographic and other tourist attractions that introduces tourists to the historical, cultural and socio-economic development of certain areas and places.\(^2\)

A particular problem in the precise determination of what person is a tour guide is the fact that as a result of the division of labor and specialization processes in contemporary tourism, profiled several occupations that are similar to each other and that we have already mentioned. Here we highlight the concept of tourist companion, which is defined as "a person who in the name of the travel agency - tour organizers, is accompanying the group on the road, oversees the implementation of tourism programs - itineraries, services and all other aspects of the tour, in order to agreed journey between the organizers and the passengers realize fully and efficiently."\(^3\)

Travel companion serves as the responsible contact person at the site between consumers, service providers and travel agency – tour organizers.

There are two areas in which the role of tourist guide manifests, though in the execution of the assignments they often overlap. Here is an example, the multi-day journey that takes place in the receptive region, the role of tour guide is not only to shows and explains attractions, but also to track the participants and take care of them during the tour, if the role of the companion is not presented in specific third party.

It is necessary to point out another occupation that is associated with the tourist guide, which is an agency representative. This is a person who in the name of the travel agency - tour organizers welcomes tourists to the destination, take care of their program activities, their comfort and safety, and performs a number of administrative tasks related to the implementation of such travel arrangements (Rabotić 2011, pp. 27). Although in this case there is not much to do with the tourist guide, it is a fact that many guides are working occasionally in such jobs. This interest arose from the needs of tourism organizations and tour operators at the destination to have a professional and reliable person. As the "extended arm" of travel agency and tour operators, agency representative take care of the tourists on the spot and as well represent a tourist agency.

**Activities and roles of tour guide**

Sociologist Erik Cohen of the University of Jerusalem, in his work “The Tourist Guide: The Origin, Structure and Dynamics of a Role” from 1985 shows the evolution of management, presenting it as the transition from the original guide to professional guides and concludes that guides descend from two line of its predecessor - the pathfinder and the mentors. The functions of both predecessors are integrated in modern leading role and are reported in two spheres - the leadership and mediation one. According to Cohen, there are four main components of the guide which can be identified and evaluated:

- **Instrumental component** of tour guide relates to his task to freely realize his tour and contains several elements - steering access and control;
- **The social component** involves managing tension, social integration and cohesion, as well as the use of humor and fun elements to build and maintain the morale of the tourist groups;
- **Interactive guide component** relates to his function as an intermediary between travel groups and the local population, and providers of tourist services and consists of two main elements - the presentation and organization;
- **Communicative component** of the guide is one of the most important and consists of four elements that can be ranked according to range that he as a mentor accomplish in communication with his group - selection, information, interpretation and fabrication.

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\(^1\) [http://wftga.org/tourist-guiding/what-tourist-guide](http://wftga.org/tourist-guiding/what-tourist-guide)


\(^3\) [http://wftga.org/tourist-guiding/what-tourist-guide](http://wftga.org/tourist-guiding/what-tourist-guide)
Table 1. The differences between tourist guide and travel companion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourist guide</th>
<th>Travel companion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcomes tourists in the destination a &quot;local guide&quot;</td>
<td>Monitor tourists during the whole trip &quot;tour leader&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His work relates to the defined geographical area - tourist destination</td>
<td>His work relates to the journey as such, regardless of the destination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unofficially represents a country, city or destination where it provides his services</td>
<td>Officially represents a travel agency – tour organizers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has the status of professional person, in most countries the necessary license is needed (professional examination)</td>
<td>It has the status of an expert, in the most cases special permission is not required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the most countries, the tourist guide activity is governed by the law</td>
<td>Activity is not usually regulated by the law, but with the systematization of jobs in travel agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His final beneficiaries are tourist groups and individual visitors</td>
<td>The end-users of his services are only tourist groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2. Display of main components of the tour guide role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External oriented</th>
<th>Internal oriented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership sphere</strong></td>
<td><strong>Animator</strong> (priority: social)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source guide (primate: instrumental)</td>
<td>Management of tensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focus</td>
<td>• Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Access</td>
<td>• Morale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• control</td>
<td>• Animation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intermediary sphere</strong></td>
<td><strong>Professional guide</strong> (supremacy: communicative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist companion (supremacy: interactive)</td>
<td>• Selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presentation</td>
<td>• Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The organization</td>
<td>• Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fabrication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cohen argues that the proposed table includes almost all of the activities that concern activities of a tourist guide. In the role of a professional guide emphasis is directed to the internal sphere. Capacity of his role will can be significantly reduced if with the group travels and a companion, who takes care of the implementation of travel, but in this case the guide can focus on the communicative component. And the importance of the social component is greater than that of the original guide, but it usually does not become dominant. As the emphasis shifts from the particular standard programs and sightseeing tours to various group activities, the social component usually crystallizes in the special role of animators.

According to Cohen, the transition of the original guide and professional one shows distancing from leadership spheres and approaching the sphere of mediation, with the communicative component as a core role. With the changed conditions on the tour, if performed by a professional guide, a change of emphasis in almost all components happens.

In the instrumental component, the reutilization of direction travel - itineraries focus shifts from finding a way to provide access to that are not regularly open to the public and the control group. Then, with the advent of interactive components of commercial tourism facilities focus turns to the presentation of the organization arrangements. In social component, from the integration emphasis shifts toward the active concern of morality of the tourist groups and animation. Communicative component experiencing the most important changes and instead of mere attraction and selection of information, the focus gets interpretation.

The impact of tourism leadership on the quality of the tourism product and visitor satisfaction

Visitor satisfaction is a key factor to achieve competitive advantages of travel agencies and tour operators. As the primary elements of service quality travel agencies National Association of Travel Agencies - Directory takes the following: level of professionalism within travel agencies organization, quality of the travel programs that are offered, the quality of services of a travel guide, the quality of transport services, accommodation and food, the quality and scope of opportunities for entertainment, recreation, leisure, optional excursions where you can learn about the cultural and historical monuments and the like. The tourism product is a set of resources (goods and services), which "produces" the tourism industry (hotels, tour operators, travel agencies, airlines ...) (Perić, Kocić 2009, pp. 41). So tourism product contains elements of various products and services offered in the package arrangement by tour operator or travel agency. As such, travel arrangement is characterized by a substantial degree of intangibility. Its overall quality is hard to keep under control, because the quality of individual services can not be standardized. Therefore, the human factor is crucial, and is expressed as a variation of each service contact. Many studies have shown that in the service industry there is a high degree of impact of human resources in the first line of business in the consumer's perception of service quality. In case of tourist arrangement travel agency relationship - tour organizers ratio with tourists is almost entirely carried by one worker, tour guide. Thus, his behavior and overall performance reflects a dominant influence on satisfaction of tourists towards travel agency or tour operator. Here one can mention one of the few national studies, a relatively small sample in which were surveyed managers of travel agencies (22), travel guides (23), and participants in organized tourist trips (25). To the question "How much is a travel guide determining factor for the quality of travel," 44% of tourists said they are important, and 40% that they are very important. Among the managers of travel agencies 54.5% said it was very important, and 31.8% of them said that is important. The majority of respondents tourist guides (69.6%) considered it very important, while 30.4% said that it is important (Čuruvija 2007, pp. 1053).

Conclusion

Travel guides are the key players in the business of travel agencies and tour operators, and in particular they are responsible for guest satisfaction for the services provided by travel agencies through a package tour - tourist product. After speaking the language of tourists, tour guides act as a catalyst for the relationship between tourists and locals, enable communication, understanding and action among people who speak different languages and belong to different cultures. In a way they appear as "local experts" and representatives
of the country's unofficial "ambassadors" to foreign tourists. From the foregoing, it is clear that the tour guides are one of the most important personnel who participate in the work process travel agency, and without which it can not be realized travel arrangement.

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