

**Quality of Work Life in Tourism –
Implications for Competitive Advantage of the Tourism Industry**

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Abstract

Tourism is an extremely labour intensive and high-contact industry. Competing effectively with rival organizations requires not only a sufficient number of employees but first of all employees equipped with appropriate competencies. Nowadays human capital is of vital importance as it is the critical asset that creates sustainable competitive advantage. The ability to acquire and retain skilled, motivated and engaged personnel depends on the attractiveness of the career offered by employers. The aim of the paper is to identify job characteristics affecting work quality in tourism in the context of gaining competitive advantage of the tourism industry. The paper analyses the results of the fifth wave of the European Working Condition Survey run by Eurofound in 2010. Special attention is paid to facets that may affect significantly job satisfaction and, consequently, constitute key drivers of competitive advantage and tourism industry development; these include: financial conditions of employment, opportunities for vocational development, social relations, and work-life balance.

Keywords: Quality of work, human resources, competitive advantage, tourism industry, European Union

Introduction

A firm's success in the market is dependent on whether it has properly selected tangible and intangible resources and whether it is able to use them innovatively and efficiently. This means that the source of competitive advantage is the combination of exceptional resources and capabilities which help create a value for a customer (Evans et al., 2003). Since advantages based on tangible elements of a product are easy to copy, it can be noted that there is a marked increase in the significance of intangible resources. This is especially true for human resources, which are the only resource of entities that has competences to utilize other assets and thus can be recognized as autotelic. Efforts of tourist organizations should aim not only to attract employees with proper skills, but also create conditions that will make them stay with the firm in the long term and actively participate in realizing its strategic goals. Employees enjoying a high level of job satisfaction are characterized by loyalty towards their companies, and their attitudes and behaviours are conducive to providing quality services, maintaining a positive and long-term rapport with customers (Heskett et al., 1994; Van Looy et al., 2003). Such behaviours enhance effectiveness of gaining competitive advantage by implementing the differentiation strategy.

The increasing role and significance of human capital in contemporary enterprises as well as the indisputable link between internal service quality and organisational productivity and performance justifies the analysis of working conditions

in the tourism industry. Sector attractiveness affects the ability to compete for labour resources and to create sustainable competitive advantage in the contemporary market (Bednarska and Olszewski, 2011). Enhancing working conditions for tourism staff is considered to be one of important ways in which tourism could contribute to improving quality of life in general (Benckendorff et al., 2009).

The objective of the paper is to identify job and organisation characteristics determining the quality of work life in tourism in the context of gaining competitive advantage of the tourism industry. In the paper, the results of European Working Condition Survey run by European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions are analysed. Special attention is paid to attributes that may considerably influence the capacity to compete for human capital resources and, as a result, constitute key determinants of achieving competitive advantage and tourism industry development. The first section of the paper is devoted to human capital and its ability to provide sustainable competitive advantage. The second section gives insight to the concept and dimensions of the quality of work life. Findings of the study on work quality in the tourism industry and its dimensions as well as future research recommendations are presented in the third section.

Human Resources as a Source of Competitive Advantage in the Tourism Industry

The basis of a firm's ability to achieve its goals is its competitive potential, which encompasses a bundle of owned or controlled resources and capabilities that are used in the production process in order to create value for stakeholders. Contribution of assets to the creation and protection of a firm's value stems not only from the magnitude but also from the characteristics of the resources (Amit and Schoemaker, 1993; Peteraf and Barney, 2003). In the tourism industry, particular attention should be paid to human capital resources due to its labour intensity and the high potential to replicate the tangible components of competing products.

Proponents of the resource-based view of the firm argue that human capital can provide sustainable competitive advantage as employees with their knowledge, experience and skills are valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable resources. Since both the demand and the supply of labour in a factor market are heterogeneous, human resources increase the value of the firm. Human capital attributes are unevenly distributed across individuals and thus across firms, and this leads to scarcity of certain skills. Furthermore, companies have unique histories, and work processes are characterized by causal ambiguity and social complexity. As a result, the ability to duplicate the relevant components of human resources pool and the conditions under which these resources function is limited. Finally, because people have the potential not to become obsolete and to be transferable across a variety of products and markets, it is difficult to substitute them (Wright et al., 1994; Lado and Wilson, 1994; Boxall, 1998).

The contribution of human capital to a firm's competitive advantage can be explained using the economic rent-based view. Labour resources can generate both Ricardian and Schumpeterian rents. Ricardian rents accrue from owning or controlling production factors that are inelastic in supply and varied in quality (inherently or as a result of inner development), which leads to heterogeneous productivity. Such rents are driven by employees with valuable scarce skills that cannot be easily replicated through training. Schumpeterian rents flow from the ability to operate in the face of uncertainty

and to implement innovations that enhance heterogeneity of other assets. Such rents are achieved by risk-taking and entrepreneurial insight into a complex environment (Chadwick and Dabu, 2009).

In the light of the discussion presented above it is difficult not to share in the opinion that the power to acquire and maintain labour resources with proper knowledge, skills, experience, creativity and commitment shapes the ability of the tourism industry to compete in the contemporary market. At the same time some researchers focus on challenges that are faced by contemporary entities operating in the tourism industry and which the entities have to handle in the process of competing for production factors, especially labour resources (Farrell, 2001; Keller, 2004; Baum, 2008; Enz, 2009; Bednarska, 2012). The limited competitiveness in this sphere stems from the properties of the tourism labour market which directly or indirectly affect working conditions and other job characteristics and determine quality of work life in the tourism industry.

Quality of Work Life – Concept and Dimensions

Perception of the quality of work life is of great importance both at a micro- and macroeconomic level. Favourable employment conditions give rise to high internal work motivation and satisfaction, high quality and productivity work performance, and low staff absenteeism and turnover. Consequently, they can enhance productivity of allocated resources and improve financial outcomes of enterprises (Heskett et al., 1994; Grönroos, 1994). Subjective satisfaction with the work experienced by individuals can provoke a higher productivity of the whole economy by stimulating creativity and innovativeness of workers. It also affects the decision of workforce to enter, stay with or leave certain sectors, thereby inducing structural changes in the economy (Bukowski, 2010).

The interrelations between the quality of work life, attitudes and behaviours of employees, and the performance of organizations (especially service ones) have prompted a great deal of empirical efforts. Table 1 summarizes findings of selected research projects run in the last decade on diverse aspects of job quality in the tourism industry and their direct and indirect consequences. It should be noted that dimensions of quality of work life are used in the operationalization of other constructs such as internal marketing practices, organisational climate, organisational culture (Kusluvan et al., 2010) and high-performance work practices (Davidson et al., 2011).

Different academic fields have conceptualized the quality of work life in different ways; consequently, there is no agreement upon its designation and determinants or even methods of measurement and indicators. However, researchers have reached the consensus that job quality is a multi-faceted concept that encompasses both subjective (individual) and objective (organisational) criteria (Efraty and Sirgy, 1990; Martel and Dupuis, 2006; Dahl et al., 2009). They have also noted that it is a dynamic construct and tends to change focus continuously (Nadler and Lawler, 1983). Perception of work quality originates from the interaction between the employee, job content and job context.

Table 1: Implications of work quality in the tourism industry – empirical studies

Researchers	Field of activity	Country	Respondents	Independent variables	Dependent variables
Back, Lee & Abbott	gambling industry	Korea	frontline employees	- internal service quality	- job satisfaction - organisational commitment
Bieger, Laesser & Boksberger	hotels and restaurants, destination management organizations, events and entertainment	Switzerland	employed in the tourism industry, educated in field of tourism	- job/organisation characteristics	- cross-industry labour mobility
Bouranta, Chitiris & Paravantis	catering industry	Greece	front-line personnel and patrons	- internal service quality	- external service quality
Churintr	hospitality industry	Thailand	employees at management and operational level	- perceived organisational culture	- job satisfaction - employee retention
Jago & Deery	hospitality industry	Australia	non-supervisory employees	- internal labour market variables	- job satisfaction - organisational commitment - intention to quit
Karatepe	hospitality industry	Romania	full-time frontline employees and managers	- high-performance work practices	- work engagement - job performance - extra-role customer service
Kim	travel agencies	Korea	contact employees	- job/organisation characteristics	- turnover intention
Ryan, Ghazali & Mohsin	fast food industry	Malaysia	non-managerial staff	- job/organisation characteristics	- job satisfaction - intention to leave
Slåtten & Mehmetoglu	hospitality industry	Norway	frontline employees	- job characteristics	- employee engagement - innovative behaviour
Tepeci	hospitality industry	Turkey	hospitality and tourism management students (with work experience)	- organisational culture	- job satisfaction - intent to remain
Tsaur, Yen & Yang	travel agencies	Taiwan	managers and frontline employees	- job characteristics	- employee creativity
Way, Sturman & Raab	hospitality industry	Asia	F&B managers and their direct supervisors	- service climate	- task performance - organisational citizenship behaviours

Source: Based on (Jago and Deery, 2004; Bieger et al., 2005; Bouranta et al., 2009; Churintr, 2010; Way et al., 2010; Back et al., 2011; Ryan et al., 2011; Slåtten and Mehmetoglu, 2011; Tepeci, 2011; Tsaur et al., 2011; Kim, 2012; Karatepe, 2013).

The initial focus of discussions on the quality of work was on the characteristics of the job task itself and the organisational environment in which work was carried out (Mühlau, 2011). Researchers placed a central emphasis on intrinsic aspects, such as skill utilization, task variety, the degree of autonomy and feedback (Hackman and Oldham, 1975) as well as health and safety. Over time the range of job quality dimensions has grown to include opportunities for development (and hence career progression), the promotion of worker involvement in decision-making, employment security and the extent to which careers are compatible with family lives (work-life balance) (Gallie, 2009). In the economic perspective on the quality of employment, pay is a core dimension. Since a level of wages impacts a person's well-being by determining the extent to which a worker is able to satisfy his needs, it obviously constitutes an central dimension of the quality of work life (Green, 2006).

Workplace quality determines an organization's image as an employer and its abilities to appeal to actual and potential hires. Many jobs in the tourism industry are not bestowed with high status and respect, and there are many factors contributing to this image. Many occupations in the industry are seasonal, part-time, low-skilled, low-paid, and require unsocial working hours. Internal labour markets are weak, so learning and promotion opportunities are limited. Moreover, employees are often confronted with unprofessional management practices and customers' inappropriate demands (Riley et al., 2002; Wood, 2003; Kusluvan et al., 2010). Since employees' effort and loyalty are affected by an organisation's ability to reciprocate with material and socioemotional benefits (Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003), the perceived status of tourism employment is regarded as a key determinant of the effective recruitment of quality labour. This is why it is valuable to investigate the perception of attractiveness of work in tourism and its geographical distribution. Despite numerous studies investigating various areas of quality of work life in the modern economy, surprisingly little research to date have focused on well-being at work in the tourism industry in the cross-national context.

Job Quality in Tourism in European Union

Research hypotheses

Based on the literature review the following research hypotheses have been developed:

- H1: The absolute level of quality of work life in the tourism industry is lower than the average across all economic activities.
- H2a: The relative level of quality of work life in the tourism industry is lower in developed countries.
- H2b: The relative level of quality of work life in the tourism industry is lower in countries which record high share of travel and tourism contribution to the economy.
- H3: The worst perceived dimension of work quality in the tourism industry are financial factors, the best – social factors.

Method

To complete the objective of the study desk research was conducted and secondary data were utilised. The basis of the analysis is the fifth edition of the European Working Condition Survey (EWCS) run in 2010 by European Foundation for

the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). In addition the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) 2010 annual report on the economic contribution of travel and tourism was investigated.

The EWCS is a comparative multi-national survey which offers a source of information about various aspects of work environment and the quality of work life. The main topics covered in the questionnaire are: job context, working time, work organisation, physical, cognitive and psychosocial factors, economic benefits, career prospects, health and well-being, work–life balance, discrimination practices, and satisfaction with working conditions (Eurofound, 2012). The research covered almost 44000 respondents from 34 countries¹ – interviews were carried in all EU27 Member States plus Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Norway and Turkey. The sample is representative of the target population, which was all residents of these countries aged 15 or older who were in employment at the time of the survey (Eurofound, 2012).

The WTTC reports provide information on an annual basis about economic impact of tourism. Data are gathered for 181 economies around the world and demonstrate both direct and total (direct, indirect, and induced) contribution of travel and tourism to GDP, employment, and investment (WTTC, 2010).

Due to the fact that the EWCS carries out its sectoral analysis based on the NACE Rev. 2 classification, the subsequent analysis relates to accommodation and food service activities (the HoReCa sector). Tourism characteristic activities are not limited to hotels and restaurants, but the HoReCa sector is a good representative of the tourism industry because of its high relative importance in total tourism expenditures. Persons employed (and self-employed) in the sector account for 5 % of the total sample, roughly 2100 respondents. Table 2 shows selected statistics for the interviewed HoReCa workers.

Table 2: Respondent profiles

Variable	Category	HoReCa	Accommodation	Food service
Age [years]	average	37.0	41.0	36.0
Tenure [years]	average	6.2	8.9	5.6
Gender [%]	female	52.6	62.6	50.1
	male	47.4	37.4	49.9
Employment status [%]	self-employed	18.8	9.2	21.3
	employed	78.4	88.5	75.9
	other	2.7	2.3	2.8
Employment contract [%]	indefinite contract	61.7	67.2	60.1
	temporary contract	18.0	16.9	18.4
	no contract	19.7	15.1	21.0
Occupation [%]	managers	16.7	12.2	17.8
	professionals and technicians	5.0	8.1	4.2
	service workers	56.4	32.6	62.5
	elementary occupations	14.9	28.4	11.4
	other	7.1	18.7	4.1
Level of education	median	secondary	secondary	secondary

Source: Based on EWCS 2010 datasets.

¹ Every five years, Eurofound carries out the EWCS, interviewing both employees and self-employed people; the first wave of the survey was held in 1991 and covered ca 12500 workers from 12 countries.

The picture that emerges from table 2 is that the hotels and restaurants sector is characterised by young workforce and short tenure. Relatively high fraction of employees reports working without any contract. Looking at the occupation structure, considerable proportion are service workers and those performing elementary tasks. The general level of education remains fairly low.

Since quality of work life is conceptualized in terms of need satisfaction as employees' perception of their physical and mental well-being at work (Lillo-Bañuls and Casado-Díaz, 2011; Zink, 2011), job satisfaction is the most common variable used to determine the level of work quality in a given organization (Mirvis and Lawler, 1984). In general, the larger incongruity between one's needs and the organization's ability to meet those needs, the lower is experience of job satisfaction and consequently of work quality (Efraty and Sirgy, 1990; Sirgy et al., 2001).

To identify job quality determinants deductive approach was applied. Based on the findings of several empirical studies (Sirgy et al., 2001; Edvardsson and Gustavsson, 2003; Green, 2006; Kandasamy and Ancheri, 2009) as well as data availability, eight job and organisation attributes were chosen to picture working environment; these include: job content (work itself), pay, job security, career prospects, leadership, social relations, work-life balance, and exposure to health and safety risks.

Job satisfaction was measured on one-item scale, work quality dimensions – on multi-item scales. Respondents used 5-point scale ranging from “very low” (1) to “very high” (5) to assess working environment and their overall satisfaction with being employed by a given company. Variables have been recoded so that higher value in the dimension refers to higher quality. The data analysis was based on general descriptive statistics, the t-test for mean differences and the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Results and discussion

To make evident the relative level of employee satisfaction in the tourism industry, the findings for the HoReCa sector are compared to the total economy (Fig. 1.). The analysis includes 19 sections of the economy – sections T (Activities of households as employers) and U (Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies) were excluded. To demonstrate the geographical distribution of employees' perception of well-being at work, the results are analysed separately for old member states, new member states, and candidate states (Fig. 2.) as well as for states reporting high and low tourism and travel (T&T) contribution to the national economy (Fig. 3). To categorise countries as registering high or low T&T economic impact, the average level of T&T direct contribution to GDP was used as a reference point, it was projected at 2.8% in 2010 (WTTC, 2010). All the variables presented were measured on 5-point scale – higher score on the scale indicates higher quality.



Figure 1: Job satisfaction level

Source: Based on EWCS 2010 datasets.

It is apparent that tourism employees experience lower overall job satisfaction than the average across all economic activities. The mean difference equals 0.13 and is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), thus hypothesis 1 can be confirmed.

The negative relation between the tourism industry and the total economy can be observed in each analysed group of states. It should be noted that even though in absolute terms job quality in the HoReCa sector in old member states appears high, the discrepancy between the tourism industry and the total economy in UE-15 is substantial – it equals 0.15 compared to 0.03 and 0.09 in new member states and candidate states respectively. Thus, in relative terms, in developed economies quality of work in tourism is perceived as inferior in comparison with the average across all economic activities. The analysis of variance confirmed significant differences between means at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), consequently hypothesis 2a is supported.

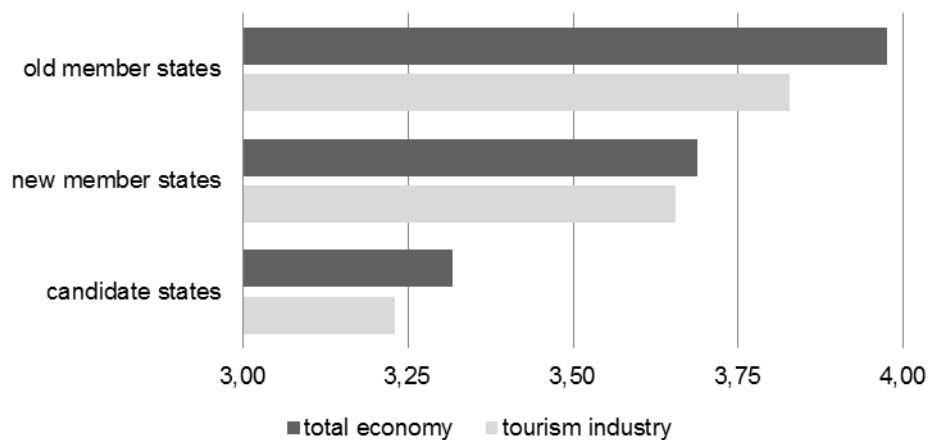


Figure 2: Job satisfaction level (group of countries – EU membership)

Source: Based on EWCS 2010 datasets.

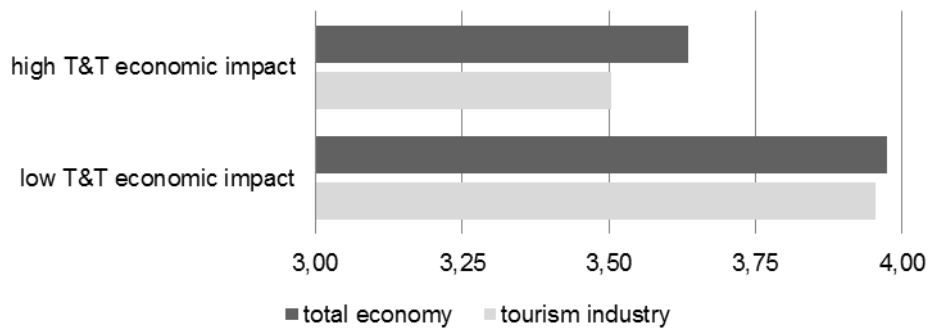


Figure 3: Job satisfaction level (group of countries – T&T economic impact)

Source: Based on EWCS 2010 and WTTC 2010 datasets.

The analysis based on the relative importance of tourism for the national economy revealed that the overall level of well-being at work, both in tourism and non-tourism jobs, is much lower in countries which record high share of travel and tourism contribution to GDP. Moreover, the comparative quality of work life in the tourism industry (measured by the distance between the HoReCa's and other sectors' job satisfaction) is worse than in less tourism-dependent economies. The mean difference equals 0.13 (compared to 0.02) and is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), thus the data support hypothesis 2b.

In absolute terms the highest job satisfaction in tourism is claimed in Denmark (4.13) and Belgium (4.10), the lowest – in Kosovo (3.04) and Turkey (3.07). In relative terms the tourism industry is considered to be the best employer in Albania (111%) and Slovakia (106%), the worst – in Cyprus (91%) and Montenegro (91%).

To show the range of job satisfaction within the economy, activities with reported maximum and minimum satisfaction rate are presented (Tab. 3).

Table 3: Job satisfaction level and economic activities

Group of countries	The highest satisfaction rate	The lowest satisfaction rate	HoReCa's rank
Old member states	R – Art , entertainment and recreation (4.22)	A – Agriculture, forestry and fishing (3.64)	17 (3.83)
New member states	M – Professional, scientific and technical activities (4.05)	C – Manufacturing (3.46)	13 (3.65)
Candidate states	K – Financial and insurance activities (3.95)	A – Agriculture, forestry and fishing (2.77)	14 (3.23)
High T&T economic impact	K – Financial and insurance activities (3.95)	A – Agriculture, forestry and fishing (3.05)	13 (3.50)
Low T&T economic impact	R – Arts, entertainment and recreation (4.22)	A – Agriculture, forestry and fishing (3.59)	12 (3.95)
Total	R – Arts, entertainment and recreation (4.08)	A – Agriculture, forestry and fishing (3.25)	16 (3.66)

Source: Based on EWCS 2010 and WTTC 2010 datasets.

Figures 4-6 provide a graphical representation of perceived dimensions of quality of work life in the tourism industry.

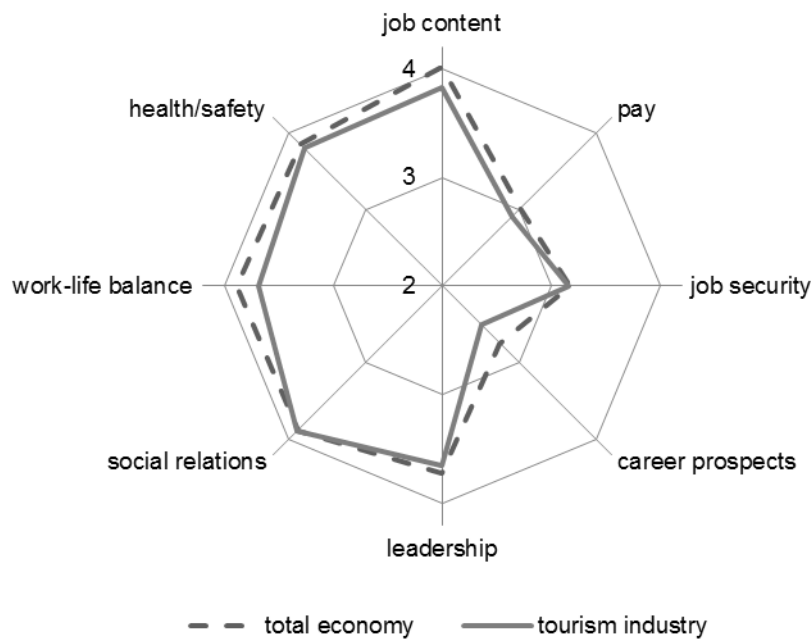


Figure 4: Dimensions of quality of work life

Source: Based on EWCS 2010 datasets.

Compared to the average, the tourism industry has significantly unfavourable scores on a number of dimensions under investigation. Only one facet – relations with co-workers – turned out to be a strength of tourism enterprises as employers. Intrinsic value of work, financial compensation, job security, opportunities for vocational development, management process, balance between career and private life, and health/safety conditions are perceived relatively bad. Three aspects of work quality dimensions deserve special attention, namely prospects for career advancement, work-life fit, and job content, which are rated very unfavourably in comparison with the total economy (the mean differences equal 0.24, 0.20, and 0.19 respectively). This seems to be a substantial challenge for contemporary tourism enterprises. As hypothesized, tourism employees experience high satisfaction with social relations but contrary to expectation, a level of wages has not received the lowest score neither in absolute nor in relative terms, thus the data partially support hypothesis 3.

The perception of working environment dimensions in the tourism industry varies geographically. Employees in candidate states rate most of job and organisation attributes lower than their colleagues in member states. The largest negative discrepancies were diagnosed for interpersonal relations, work itself, and work-life balance. Employees in tourism-dependent economies find all of work quality dimensions under investigation to be less favourable than their colleagues in countries reporting low tourism and travel economic impact. The worst comparative rates were given to remuneration, opportunities for development, and employment security.



Figure 5: Dimensions of quality of work life in tourism (group of countries – EU membership)

Source: Based on EWCS 2010 datasets.

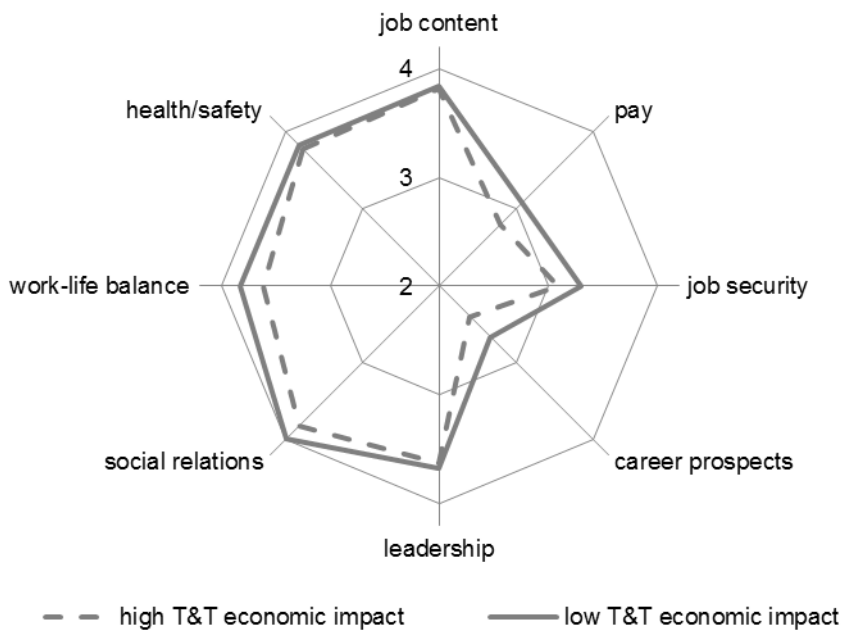


Figure 6: Dimensions of quality of work life in tourism (group of countries – T&T economic impact)

Source: Based on EWCS 2010 and WTTC 2010 datasets.

All of the dimensions under investigation correlate significantly (at the 0.01 level) with employee satisfaction in tourism. The strongest relationship was identified between job satisfaction and remuneration level (Tab. 4). It should be noted, however, that non-financial aspects like relations with co-workers and management practices are also critical for physical and mental well-being at work. What is more, these factors grow in importance in developed economies.

Table 4: Major job satisfaction correlates

Group of countries	Pearson correlation - highest position	Pearson correlation - second highest position
Old member states	social relations (.456)	pay (.447)
New member states	pay (.435)	social relations (.355)
Candidate states	pay (.503)	leadership (.435)
High T&T economic impact	pay (.472)	social relations (.412)
Low T&T economic impact	social relations (.452)	leadership (.438)
Total	pay (.460)	social relations (.427)

Source: Based on EWCS 2010 and WTTC 2010 datasets.

Summarizing, the quality of work life in the tourism industry is rated lower than the average across all economic activities. The employee satisfaction discrepancy between tourism and non-tourism jobs is considerably high in old member states and in tourism-dependent economies. Compared with the average, the tourism industry has unfavourable scores on most of working environment dimensions. Only one attribute – relations with co-workers – appears to be a strength of tourism enterprises as employers. Job content, financial compensation, security of employment, prospects for career, leadership, work-life balance, and health/safety conditions are perceived as weaknesses.

The results of the study correspond with those found by previous research on the tourism industry as a workplace, run among current and potential employees. In line with this investigation, others observed that relationships with colleagues are commonly pointed out as attractive aspects of tourism employment (Gallardo et al., 2010; Richardson, 2010). On the other hand, as noted by Mueller and Peters (2005), Weaver (2009), Janes and Wisnom (2010), limited avenues for career progression are key drivers to exit the industry. Other adverse experiences contributing to dissatisfaction and subsequent turnover relate to poor management qualifications (Poulston, 2009; Janta et al., 2011) and lack of work-life balance (Ryan et al., 2011). The study also reveals that the industry's image of being low paid holds true (Bieger et al., 2005; Poulston, 2009; Gallardo et al., 2010).

The research investigated cross-national variables that have not been examined in the previous studies on quality of work life in tourism. Results clearly indicate that there are significant country differences in both absolute and relative levels of tourism employees' job satisfaction. Absolute job quality is higher in the developed countries and in countries which record minor tourism economic impact, while comparative perceived well-being at work is lower in the developed and tourism-dependant economies.

Limitations, implications and future research

The study is not without shortcomings. First of all, it draws from secondary source of information and has a major disadvantage which is inherent in its nature – the analysis is limited to available data, it is possible then that other factors (not covered in the study) influence the quality of work life in tourism. Besides variables have been categorized in a way which constrained the investigation to the HoReCa sector. Another limitation is that all variables in the Eurofound survey were measured with self-reports and based on the same source, hence the research findings might be influenced by common method variance and response consistency effects. Finally, the study uses cross-sectional data, hence it doesn't track the trends in job quality in the tourism industry.

The findings of the study have both practical and research implications. From a practical view, the study would add to the understanding of the influence of job and organisation attributes on the perception of well-being at work. Given the importance of internal quality in the service-profit chain, it is in the best interests of an employer to identify job satisfaction determinants. The tourism industry entities could learn the factors that should be modified or emphasized in their recruitment strategy to attract and retain committed and loyal employees who are ready to create and deliver value to customers.

Future research should seek insights into the nature of relations between working conditions and job satisfaction, as well as factors moderating the links between the variables such as demographic characteristics and work experience. A longitudinal study of employees' perceptions of work quality could produce interesting conclusions. Still to be examined is the degree to which the results could be confirmed for other tourism characteristic activities. It would also be beneficial to identify and refine the consequences of the quality of work life, especially to investigate the relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction in tourism.

Conclusions

The dynamic increase in the intensity of competition requires entities operating in the contemporary market to seek new sources of competitive advantages. Since the tourism industry is notably labour intensive and high-contact, human capital resources are key element of competitive potential. Therefore, the ability to recruit and retain qualified personnel is considered paramount for the competitiveness of the tourism sector. Given the acknowledgement of the significance of the customer-employee interaction in the tourism service delivery, surprisingly little research to date has focused on working conditions in tourism. Job quality affects hires' decisions to enter or leave the industry and job satisfaction is demonstrated in the process of delivering services; consequently, it influences the value gained by customers and a company's performance.

Investigation of the quality of work life in tourism and its drivers is critical in order to identify challenges that are faced by contemporary tourism enterprises and which the firms have to handle in the process of attracting human capital resources. Only when companies work towards identifying their strengths and weaknesses as employers and then striving to develop the strengths and to overcome the weaknesses can they hope to successfully compete in recruiting and retaining the best available

candidates. Effects of this rivalry are of key importance for gaining competitive advantage and developing the tourism industry.

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