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THE USE OF HUMAN RESOURCES INFORMATION SYSTEM (HRIS) IN CROATIAN HOTELS ON THE ADRIATIC COAST: A SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we will investigate usage and benefits of HRIS in tourism sector. The analysis of the empirical part will be observing hotel's or hotel holding's managers. Research results will provide characteristics of HRIS usage within stated hotels according to hotel's categorization, number of employees, number of beds and also within different counties. These variables will be used as control variables in testing the difference of HRIS characteristics by univariate and multivariate methods. Stated results will be provided through the set of hypotheses. In the last part of the paper, particular emphasis will be done on the activities and the degree of satisfactions of activities supported by HRIS.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Working environment today is rapidly changing and is much more affected by turbulence, uncertainty and instability than it was some decades ago. Organisations are confronted with the stated situation and in such circumstances have to manage their resources, such as: physical, financial, informational and human resources. They are today aware of the fact, that human resources represent their most valuable resources, one which is crucial for creating competitive advantage due to their specificities. In last decades companies have viewed human resources and human resources management (HRM) as the means to enhance the operations of the other organisational functions which directly contribute to the company's profitability and determine company's success in gaining a competitive advantage. On the other side, it is evident that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is used as support to all operations inside HRM. Intention of this paper is to explore the benefit of ICT to HRM considering reliance and usability of ICT "impersonate" in Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS). A Survey is in the context of tourism, more specifically through Croatian hotels on the Adriatic coast.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Tourism

Development of new technologies in ICT has made some crucial changes in world's society delivering new products and needs for standardization in communication and data transfer. These changes differ in businesses and have more influenced those who have and are willing to communicate and make business with others. As tourism is one of the leading branch of economics with the biggest growth in today's economy and also dependable on information transfer from all around the world, even greater evidence of ICT in tourism is expected.

ICT has become a main source of sustainable competitive advantage in tourism and hospitality industry due to the important role of information in description, promotion, distribution, organization and delivery of tourism products. ICT supports the ability of any subject in tourism to manage their resources, increase their productivity, market their offerings and develop partnership with consumers, suppliers, public sector organizations and other interest groups. ICT also enhances the development and maintenance of organizational competitiveness.

ICT is an instrument in researching consumer needs, investigating competition, assessing the external environment and reshaping business process by simultaneously creating framework of change, challenge and innovation (Buhalis, 2003). Competitiveness of tourism sector as final benefit and contribution of ICT in tourism depends upon the ability of tourism strategy management to take advantage of the new tools and design new products.

Since ICT and tourism are closely interrelated it should be difficult to identify whether ICT generates, or simply facilitates the changes in tourism demand and supply (Buhalis, 2003). These interrelations originated with stronger

development of ICT in the late 80's and the growth of causal and consecutive relationships that evolve together in indissoluble symbiosis till present time. Disposing with great power ICT now stimulates any business progression processes from its inception to the details of its implementation.

2.2 The role of Human Resources Management (HRM) in business

Human resources represent knowledge, skill, creative abilities, motivation and loyalty that companies dispose with. It also represents the whole intellectual and psychical energy that organisation can employ in implementing organisational goals as well as in business development (Bahtijarević Šiber, 1999.). Human resources management (HRM) represents sequence of interrelated managerial and organisational activities and tasks oriented to insuring adequate number and structure of employees as well as their knowledge, abilities, interests, motivation and behaviour required for realizing actual, developmental and organisational strategic goals (Bahtijarević Šiber, 1999). HRM represent concepts, techniques and functions that have to be performed in order to emphasise "man" as a factor in management. It is usually comprised of employees' recruitment and selection, introduction to employment, motivation, career development, education, promotion and performance appraisal (Marušić, 2006). Scope of human resources management activities is wider than it is previously mentioned and it includes human resources planning (number and structure), job analysis and job design, recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, motivation and rewarding, training and career development, job safety programmes, labour relations as well as human resources information system (HRIS).

III. HRIS AS A TECHNOLOGICAL SUPPORT TO HRM

Human Resources Information System (HRIS) also called HR modules should be defined as an intersection between human resources management (HRM) and information and communication technology (ICT). It merges HRM as a discipline within the field of the information and communication technology whereas the planning and programming of data processing systems are evolved into standardized routines and packages of enterprise resources planning (ERP) software. The ERP systems have their original software that integrates information from different applications into one universal database. The linkage of its financial and human resources modules through one database is important distinction to the individually and proprietary developed predecessors. Due to complexity in programming, capabilities and limited technical resources, HR executives rely on internal or external IT professionals to develop and maintain their Human Resources Management Systems (HRMS).

As noted, HRIS is a part of human resources management, and it has diversified implications on the process of managing human resources. Following text will present explanation of the term HRIS, as well as its fields of usage and its main implications on the human resources management, but most importantly, its main implications within the tourism sector, specifically hospitality industry. HRIS can be defined as a set of interrelated and mutually influential elements: people, objects, appearances and relations in the field of human resources, their movements, changes and openness toward its own internal and external environment. Environment is simultaneously characterised by the goals, tasks, functions, structures, process, input, output, information and management as well as the results of its own functioning (Vujić, 2005). It can also be noted that in business generally, HRIS includes procedures for collecting, storing, maintaining, retrieving, and validating data needed by an organisation about its human resources, personnel activities, and organisation unit characteristics.

HRIS technology replaces the four core HR activities by streamlining them electronically: payroll, time and labour management, benefit administration and HR management. It is realized as follows:

- The payroll module automates the pay process by gathering data on employee time and attendance, calculating various deductions and taxes, and generating employee tax reports. Data is generally fed from the human resources and time keeping modules to calculate automatic deposit. This module sends accounting information to the general ledger, as well.
- The time and labour management module applies new technology and methods to cost effectively gather and evaluate employee time/work information. The most advanced modules provide flexibility in data collection methods, labour distribution capabilities and data analysis features.

- The benefit administration module permits HR professionals to easily administer and track employee participation in benefits programmes (healthcare provider, insurance policy, pension plan)
- The HR management module is a component covering all other HR aspects from application to retirement. The system records basic demographic and address data, selection, training and development, capabilities and skills management, compensation planning records and other related activities. It also provide the ability to "read" applications and enter relevant data to applicable database fields, notify employers and provide positions management and provision control.

According to Bahtijarević Šiber (1999) human resources information system, or data base represent a fundamental assumption for performing activities from the whole field of human resources management. The main categories of information that are required are the main information about employees and information about job positions as well as its duties, requirements and conditions. According to the stated author, specificities of HRIS usage are as follows:

- analysis of human resources abilities used for fulfilling vacant positions in an organisation and meeting future business requirements
- identification of adequate candidates for promotion, transfer or retirement
- identification of job positions that are characterised with great fluctuation, absenteeism and insufficient performance
- succession planning
- anticipation of recruitment and training and development needed for fulfilling vacant job positions

Human resources information data include following aspects and following set of data for the required evidences (Vujić, 2005; Bahtijarević Šiber, 1999):

- personal data (name, age, sex, citizenship, professional qualifications)
- human resources planning (required structure and number of employees)
- *recruitment* (internal or external searches, cost of the recruitment process, process and cost of employees' socialization and integration into company)
- working experience (in present and previous companies, current and previous job positions)
- *education* (institutions and certificates, required training and programmes for future development, number of courses, scholarships)
- performance appraisal (standards evaluation, employees evaluation, results evaluation)
- specific development preferences (motivation, career development system)
- compensation structure (pay, benefits, incentives; current and previous, gross and net operating costs)
- rewards, patents, published articles and publications
- absenteeism rate, work attitude, discipline and complaints (number of dismissals, number of retired employees, number of complaints)
- *job safety programmes* (safety and health programmes in organisations, healthy working environment, occupational health and occupational accident, number of accidents and professional diseases, causes of accidents, employee standards)

According to Vujić (2005) all the above stated human resources activities require necessary information for managing and applying those activities. Those activities are usually identified as follows:

- information that human resources department requires as well as those that a company requires, related to usually working process
- information required by the employees
- information required by the company owners as well as by different state and other institutions

Furthermore, using the Internet or corporate Intranet as a communication and workflow vehicle, the HRIS technology can convert these into web-based HRIS components of the ERP system and permit to reduce transaction costs, leading to greater HR and organisational efficiency. Due to technology HR activities shift away from paper based processes to using self-service functionalities that benefit employees, managers and HR professionals alike. HR professionals are now possible to spend fewer resources in managing administrative HR activities and can apply free time and resources to concentrate on strategies of HR issues leading to business innovations.

In order to present the importance of HRIS, it is necessary to emphasize that qualitative and in due time information presents the most important goal that HRIS can provide, in order to insure profitable business results. Information is an organisation's resources and in synergy with its feedback it ensures a base for qualitative business process and its control. Some of the important HRIS features are facilitation of business process with reduction of paper work, increase of information accuracy and accessibility. Furthermore, HRIS as a segment of information system contributes to capability for increasing performance results, leading and control automation, greater coordination of information activities, compatibility and comparability towards external sources of information as well as possibility for providing business process in the most professional way.

IV. ORGANISATION OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENTS WITHIN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Large businesses, among other departments, have Human Resources Department (HRD) whose main activity is human resources management. Accordingly to this, HRD exists in hotels, with the emphasis that activity of this department in smaller hotels is provided by a hotel manager (general manager) while certain aspects can be delegated to his/her assistant, while activity in big hotels or a hotel holding is delegated to the special department which is one of the leading service departments (Medlik, Ingram, 2002.). A hotel can be recognised as an independent unit, or according to its services, quality of services, types of services, location and other specificities it can be recognised as a member of hotel holding. A hotel holding represents a system of hotels which are integrated under the same brand name. Integration of different standards characterises holdings with a wider scope of positive attributes than negative ones (Cerović, 2003).

Number of employees within different hotel's departments depends on different factors, including also the importance of each business in a hotel, as well as criteria that are implemented in employee's allocation. Allocation of employees is also regulated by human resources requirements of particular hotel's department, requesting various professional skills and abilities from their employees. It is obvious that hotel size is positively correlated with the range of different professions and complexity of employees' structure (Medlik, Ingram, 2002).

In order to present some specificities of holdings' human resources departments, it is necessary to mention that line managers in hotels usually are not in charge of administrative activities, but are engaged in human resources selection, training and development, performance appraisal and labour relations. In a hotel holding, according to Medlik and Ingram (2002), usually human resources manager delegates certain duties to middle managers, such as a manager for recruitment (in charge of recruitment and selection), a manager for human resources development (in charge of training) and a manager for health and safety (in charge of employees' health, social insurance and employees' accommodation). This type of organisation is present in hotel holdings, which are characterised with a high number of hotels as well as with a great number of employees within a holding. As stated, middle managers in hotel holdings, respond to human resources manager, while the latter responds to a general manager. Everyday duties regarding human resources management are assigned to few key employees of the HRD as well as particular employees in charge of human resources within each hotel. In addition, within hotel holding, there is also human resources manager responsible for human s management of head office employees, a hotel manager and assistants.

V. SURVEY OF THE USE OF HUMAN RESOURCES INFORMATION SYSTEM (HRIS) IN CROATIAN HOTELS

5.1 Methodology

Definition of a hotel can be differently imposed. According to Croatian documents which regard on catering and hospitality industry a hotel is defined as a catering facility which provides services of accommodation and breakfast as well as other usual catering services (Galičić, Ivanović, Lupić, 2005). Hotels can be differently grouped according to size, but different methodologies can cause obstacles for comparisons within hospitality industry. Hotels can be grouped according to the number of employees, but generally they are grouped according to the number of hotel rooms or hotel beds, which additionally disturb simplicity of classification. Some classifications define small hotels

as those up to 30 beds, while others define small hotels as those up to 200 beds. This affirms the fact that a comparison according to size is quite difficult regarding different classifications.

In this paper, we will emphasize two classifications, the UN and the Croatian classification. The UN classifies hotels as:

- small hotels (40-80 beds)
- medium hotels (80-150 beds)
- large hotels (150 beds and more)

According to Galičić, Ivanović, Lupić (2005) the Croatian classification of hotels is:

- small hotels (5-50 rooms)
- medium hotels (51-200 rooms)
- large hotels (200 rooms and more)

Administrative State Department of Split - Dalmatia County (www.dalmacija.hr) suggested classification of hotels up to 25 rooms (small hotels) and 25 rooms and more (medium and large size hotels) which we used in the empirical part of this paper.

In order to get important data for the empirical part of this paper we conducted a survey within Croatian hotels. Croatia is divided into 20 Counties, but for the purpose of the research we were oriented just on 6 Croatian counties situated on the Adriatic Coast, which represent Counties with the highest concentration of the hotels. According to data that were available from the Croatian Ministry of the Sea, Tourism, Transport and Development regarding all hotels that have been categorised in Croatia until 03 February 2007 (www.mmtpr.hr; 01 March 2007) and the recommendation of Administrative State Department of Split - Dalmatia County regarding hotel size, we conducted survey on 257 hotels on the Adriatic Coast from 01 March 2007 till 15 April 2007. Questionnaires were anonymously sent by post to the hotel managers, and 28 questionnaires (10.89 %) returned. Whilst, managers that were fulfilling the questionnaire were able to answer in the name of hotel holding if their hotel was a member of the holding (in this case the survey was sent to the manager of a hotel holding), so generally, we received answers on behalf of 89 hotels which represents 34.63%.

Questionnaire was comprised of three mutually interrelated sections. Firstly, the nature of the questions in this section was general, mainly regarding on hotel size, hotel categorisation and the number of the employees. Secondly, the questions within this section were mainly corresponding to the existence of the HRM within hotels and the number and the qualification of the employees within HRD. Finally, the major part of the last section was regarding the usage of IT within hotels, particularly within HRD, as well as the activities and degrees of satisfaction of activities supported by HRIS.

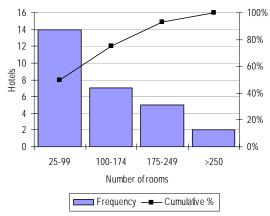
The obtained results from the above mentioned questionnaire enable us to create and test the set of hypotheses. These are as follows:

- H1: There is a positive and strong linear correlation between a hotel categorization and a number of beds within hotels which use HRIS
- H2: Majority of hotels with Human Resources Department are members of a hotel holding
- H3: Human Resources Department exists within a majority of hotels which use HRIS
- H4: The activities supported by HRIS are note equally relevant for HRIS users

5.2. Results and discussion

From the observed sample, it can be noticed that distribution of hotels by rooms is not symmetric. Results of grouping hotels in equal bins of 75 rooms are presented in Figure 1. From the Figure 1 it can be seen that distribution of hotels is positively skewed, which means that the most of hotels are concentrated in a range between 25 and 99 rooms, and that there are few hotels with extremely large number of rooms. The cumulative percentages are also presented on the second axis.

Figure 1: Histogram of hotels by rooms with cumulative percentages

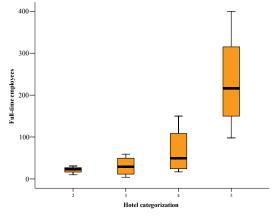


Source: Survey March-April 2007.

From the cross-tabulation analysis, i.e. two-dimensional grouping of hotels, we found out that on average 65% of hotels with categorization 2 and 3 have up to 150 beds, while 80% of hotels with categorization 5 have more than 300 beds. Almost the same pattern can be seen by grouping hotels by categorization and a number of full-time employees, which means that hotels with second and third categorization employ up to 100 full-time employees, while the hotels with fourth and fifth categorization employ much more full-time employees (more than 300). Even so, hotels with up to 100 full-time employees have on average up to 50 part-time employees. Therefore, a higher categorization means a greater number of employees, but also a greater variation from the average number of employees (Figure 2).

In Figure 2 some essential statistics are presented for each hotel categorization, i.e. the five number summaries: minimum, 1st quartile, median, 3rd quartile and maximum. Higher difference between these numbers means greater dispersion from the central tendency measure. These differences are also evident between hotels which are integrated in a hotel holding and the ones that are not integrated in a hotel holding (Table 1), which can be explained by the fact that a high hotel categorization is obliged to offer a greater customer service which requires a higher number of employees.

Figure 2: Box plots of hotels categorization by the number of full-time employees



Source: Survey March-April 2007

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of integrated and non integrated hotel holdings

	_	Hotel l	nolding
		No	Yes
	Mean	76	171
Number of	Standard Deviation	60	103
beds	Minimum	28	25
	Maximum	193	381
	Mean	31	107
Full-time employees	Standard Deviation	27	117
	Minimum	4	23
	Maximum	98	400
Part-time	Mean	16	53
employees	Standard Deviation	14	71
	Minimum	0	0
	Maximum	49	250
	Table N %	53.6%	46.4%

Source: Survey March-April 2007

Table 2 shows the percentages of hotels which are open during the whole year by their categorization. For example, less than an average of hotels, which are open during the whole year, are in the second categorization, while all hotels in the fifth categorization are open during the whole year, which can also be proved by the fact that hotels in the fifth categorization offer numerous all inclusive services.

Table 2: The percentage of hotels that are open during the whole year

	Average				
2	3 4 5				
33%	44%	50%	100%	54%	

Source: Survey March-April 2007

H1: There is a positive and strong linear correlation between a hotel categorization and a number of beds within hotels which use HRIS

Generally, it is obvious that there is a positive correlation between a hotel categorization and a number of beds. But we find it very interesting that this correlation exists due to the hotels which are using HRIS within information system (Figure 3). Therefore, two Spearman's coefficients of correlation are calculated within each subgroup. The subgroup that uses HRIS is characterized by a positive correlation with higher intensity, twice greater than correlation of the subgroup which does not use HRIS. Namely, these correlations are tested using one tailed test, which pointed out that correlation of the subgroup using HRIS (0.674) is statistically significant at the p-value less than 1%. This proves that stated hypothesis can be accepted.

Figure 3: Scatter diagram with correlations between hotel categorization and number of beds within subgroups

Source: Survey March-April 2007

In order to quantify the change of the employee's number influenced by the increase of one bed, we evaluated linear regression without a constant term. Results of regression analysis are presented in Tables 3 a-c.

Hotel categorization

Table 3 a. Estimated Regression Parameters

Unstandardized Coefficients	,559*
R	,763
R Square	,582
Std. Error of the Estimate	70,869

^{*}Estimated regression coefficient is statistically significant at p-value 0.01 (t-statistic equals 6,023)

Table 3 b. ANOVA Summary

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	182183,195	1	182183,195	36,274	,000
Residual	130581,805	26	5022,377		
Total	312765,000	27			

Source: Survey March-April 2007.

Using the number of beds as independent variable and full-time employees as dependent one, from the estimated coefficient in Table 3 b. it can be interpreted that by the increase of one bed the number of full-time employees increases by 0.559, i.e. per two beds an increase of one employee is required. From the t-statistic it is evident that this parameter is statistically significant. The constant term is excluded from regression model, because it was not approved as relevant predictive variable. From ANOVA table the F-statistic also shows significance of the whole regression model. R square value and standard error of the estimate are also satisfactory, which indicates that a regression model is representative. When observations are separated in two subgroups depending on if a hotel uses HRIS or not, the relationship between beds and full-time employees is much different (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Scatter diagram with line fits between number of beds and full-time employees within subgroups

Source: Survey March-April 2007

By estimating the best line fit to the each subgroup it is evident that the relationship between a number of beds and full-time employees in hotels which use HRIS is immanent. Even so this relationship is exponentially increasing in comparison to the hotels which do not use HRIS within the information system.

200 Number of beds 300

400

H2: Majority of hotels with Human Resources Department are members of a hotel holding

100

Table 4: Cross-tabulation analysis of a hotel holding by Human Resources Department

			Human Resource Department		
			No	Yes	Total
Hotel holding	No	%	86,7%	13,3%	100,0%
	Yes	%	7,7%	92,3%	100,0%
Total		%	50,0%	50,0%	100,0%

Source: Survey March-April 2007

From Table 4 it is evident that 92.3% of hotels which are integrated in a hotel holding have Human Resources Department in comparison to the hotels which are not integrated in a hotel holding (13.3%). The difference between these two proportions is tested using one tailed t-test. Empirical significance very close to zero corresponds to test statistic of 4.17, which means that above stated hypothesis can be accepted, i.e. the proportion of hotels which are members of a hotel holding and have Human Resources Department in much greater than the hotels which are not members of a hotel holding.

The same pattern is shown in comparison depending if hotels use HRIS or not (Table 5).

H3: Human Resources Department exists within a majority of hotels which use HRIS

Table 5: Cross-tabulation analysis of HRIS usage within the information system by Human Resources Department

HRIS usage	No	Yes	
Human Dagauraag Danartmant		50.0%	50.0%
Human Resources Department	Yes	28.6%	71.4%

Source: Survey March-April 2007

The differences between proportions of hotels which use HRIS regarding to HRD are also tested. From t-test statistic (3.56) we have found empirical p-value less than 0.05, which means that there is a more than 20% hotel with HRD which uses HRIS in comparison to the hotels without HRD which also uses HRIS. This proves that stated hypothesis can be accepted.

From empirical data it was interesting to examine which of activities are most performed within HRIS, and to evaluate their usefulness from observed sample. The most performed activities are creating data base, data processing and data storage, which usefulness is equally evaluated at average degree of 4.14. It is necessary to remark that there is no difference in evaluation of usefulness of these activities depending on if hotel is or is not integrated in a hotel holding, or regarding the existence of HRD.

H4: The activities supported by HRIS are note equally relevant for HRIS users

Furthermore, the most supported activities within HRIS are the compensation system and personal data. These two activities are evaluated very high with average degree of satisfaction of 4.57 and 4.25 for hotels with HRD. The same high degree of satisfaction of these activities is evaluated at 4.50 and 4.43 for hotels which are integrated within a hotel holding.

However, all activities in hotels with HRD are evaluated with lower degree of satisfaction in comparison to the hotels without HRD. These differences have proved not to be statistically significant, even the highest difference is evident for selection activity according to central tendency measures (mean and mode).

Table 6: Expected degrees of satisfaction of activities supported by HRIS

Activities supported by HRIS		Human Resources Department		Hotel holding	
		No	Yes	No	Yes
Planning	Mean	4,00	3,67	3,50	4,00
1 iaiiiiiig	Mode	4,00	4,00 3,00		3,00
Recruitment	Mean	3,00	3,60	3,50	3,50
Recruitment	Mode	3,00	4,00	3,00	2,00
Selection	Mean	5,00	3,50	4,00	3,67
Selection	Mode	5,00	3,00	3,00	3,00
Training and Development	Mean	4,00	3,80	4,00	3,80
Training and Development	Mode	4,00	3,00	4,00	3,00
Parformance appraisal	Mean	4,00	3,80	4,00	3,80
Performance appraisal	Mode	3,00	3,00	3,00	3,00
Compensation system	Mean		4,57	5,00	4,50
Compensation system	Mode		5,00	5,00	5,00
D 1 1.4.	Mean		4,25	3,00	4,43
Personal data	Mode		5,00	3,00	5,00
Desision moline	Mean	4,00	3,67	3,00	3,67
Decision making	Mode	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00

Source: Survey March-April 2007

According to Figure 5 the compensation system and personal data are evaluated with the highest degree of satisfaction among all activities supported by HRIS. However, F-test based on analysis of variance ANOVA (testing the average degrees of satisfaction between activities supported by HRIS) indicates that last stated hypothesis can not be accepted at the empirical p-value of 0.212.

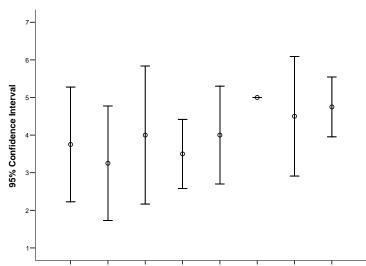


Figure 5: Means plot with 95% confidence interval

Source: Survey March-April 2007

VI. CONCLUSION

In the final part of our paper it can be concluded that Croatian hotels on the Adriatic Coast are in accordance with the above stated theoretical overview. That is tested through the set of hypothesis which proves that within Croatian hotels exists a positive and strong linear correlation between hotel categorization and number of beds within hotels which use HRIS, that majority of hotels with Human Resources Department are members of hotel holding, that Human Resources Department exists within majority of hotels which use HRIS and finally that activities supported by HRIS are not equally relevant for HRIS users. HRIS users pointed out high degrees of satisfaction with activities supported by HRIS which emphasizes the high relevance of HRIS in business, particularly in service industry. Hotels that are not members of a hotel holding partially hesitate about implementation of HRIS, considering it not important due to their hotel size. On the contrary, majority of hotels that are members of hotel holding already have implemented HRIS as part of their information system, while others consider it as a necessity in near future. The main reasons pro are as following: business process is facilitated, HRM activities are more accurate, required evidence are simpler and business efficiency is more reliable. Finally, HRIS contributes to each business subjects, particularly to service industry due to better quality of HRM activities. Furthermore, the whole tourism demand and hotel competitiveness as well can be indirectly influenced by adequate implementation of HRIS.

ENDNOTES

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