

## EFFECTIVENESS OF EDUCATION PROCESSES IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Conference paper

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – This paper seeks to explain problem of education and training of personnel in the hospitality and tourism sector, which takes a special place and special attention among jobs in the tourism, hotel and hospitality industry. The overall quality within the hospitality and tourism sector depends exactly on education and training, i.e. the overall level of education of employed staff.

**Design** – An overview of studies and education programs supporting tourism and hospitality in the Republic of Croatia – the identification for the need of better educational system, evaluation and overview of educational programs and importance for tourism and hospitality.

**Methodology** – Data was collected from tourists, statistical reports and analyses of variance used to identify problems in tourism and hospitality sector.

**Findings** – The paper finds that there are only few programs which can influence on education level and career patterns of employed staff in tourism and hospitality sector. Also, service quality is one of the most important elements in tourism product, so major focus must be on service and performance, and education and training of staff create a new value-added product or service.

**Originality** – The analysis of educational programs with its importance would be of interest to researches and educators, industry practitioners and other stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality sector.

**Keywords** education, tourism, hospitality, personnel, staff

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education and professional development of personnel holds a special place in the hospitality and tourism sector and receives special attention in tourism, hotel management and hospitality industry. In fact, the overall quality within the hospitality and tourism sector depends on education and professional development, i.e. on the overall level of education of employed personnel. High-quality and sustainable development of tourism demands an efficient national policy of education and professional development. Over the past decade particular attention was given to the education of personnel within most sectors because educated personnel presents both the first and the last link in the chain of competitiveness and business success. Hospitality and tourism professions are less popular and attractive, so this sector is faced with a lower number of students enrolled in existing tourist, hotel management and hospitality schools. The education system needs to be adapted to modern trends in hospitality and tourism.

Considering that the tourism sector in the Republic of Croatia has a share of 15 to 20 % of gross domestic product, it is rather obvious how important it is to invest in quality personnel and, ultimately, the quality itself.

The aim of this article is to present the importance of the education of personnel in the fields of hospitality and tourism, as well as the importance of paying attention to one of the most important drivers of Croatian economy and the sector which employs a relatively large number of the population. It also aims to present the manner in which the problem of personnel education can be addressed through secondary and higher education, and through lifelong learning programmes. The following methods were used in this paper: methods of induction and deduction, compilation, comparison, synthesis and analysis, empirical method, the counting method, and the survey method. The paper analyses the number of secondary school students, the structure and number of people attending the lifelong learning programme "Food and Beverage Specialist", and the elements of guests' satisfaction in hospitality and tourism.

## **1. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EDUCATION FOR HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM**

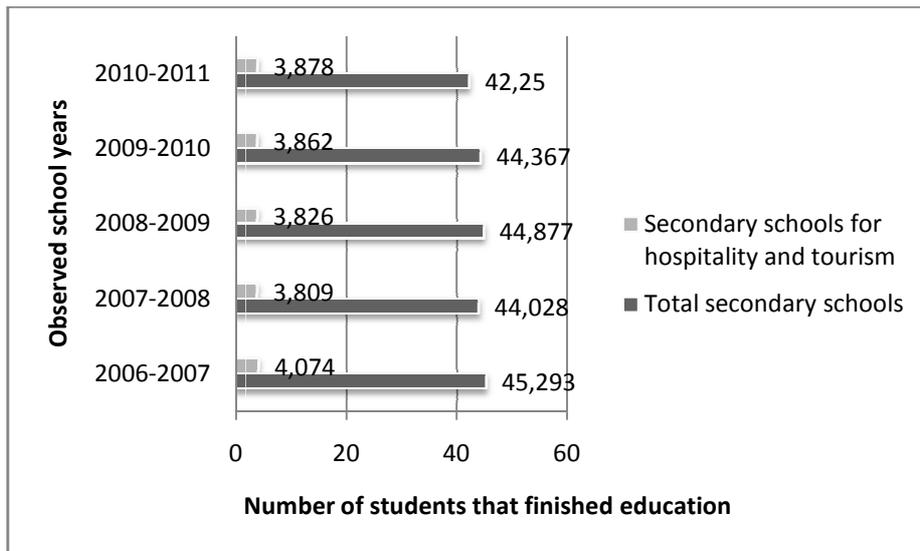
Education of personnel and their professional development comprise the most important factor that both directly and indirectly reflects the competitiveness of tourism products. On the tourism market, the Republic of Croatia has been recognized as a destination that can develop its potentials, and following the accession to the EU additional efforts need to be invested in strengthening competitiveness, promoting both existing and new resources, services, and products. Only educated personnel in hospitality and tourism enable the development of new technologies, innovative products and services, aiming to increase competitiveness of the tourism product, company and country.

Personnel education and professional development are very important for hospitality and management, which is confirmed by global education institutions and associations, the most influential being the World Tourism Organization whose observations and analyses are centred around personnel education and professional development. High-quality personnel, their knowledge and experience, as well as unused potential greatly affect the achievement of business results, and, through that, the very future of a company.

Figure 1 shows that less than 10 % of all students that finish secondary education come from a vocation that contributes to the national gross domestic product with a 15 to 20 % share. In other words, when compared, of 45,293 students that finished secondary school in the school year 2006-2007, 4,074 students (9 %) finished secondary schools of hotel and tourism management and hospitality. In the following school year 2007-2008 the total number of students was 44,028, among which 3,809 students (8.6 %) finished secondary schools of hotel and tourism management and hospitality. In the school year 2008-2009 the total number of students amounted to 44,877 students, and 3,826 (8.5 %) of them finished secondary schools of hotel and tourism management and hospitality. In the following years the total number of students decreased, while the number of students finishing secondary schools of hotel and tourism management and hospitality increased in both the relative number of students and the relative share. In the school year 2009-2010 the total number of students decreased to 44,367 students, and hotel and tourism management and hospitality vocations participated with 8.7 %,

i.e. 3,862 students. In the school year 2010-2011 the total number of students was 42,250, and 3,878 (9.4 %) of them finished secondary schools of hotel and tourism management and hospitality.

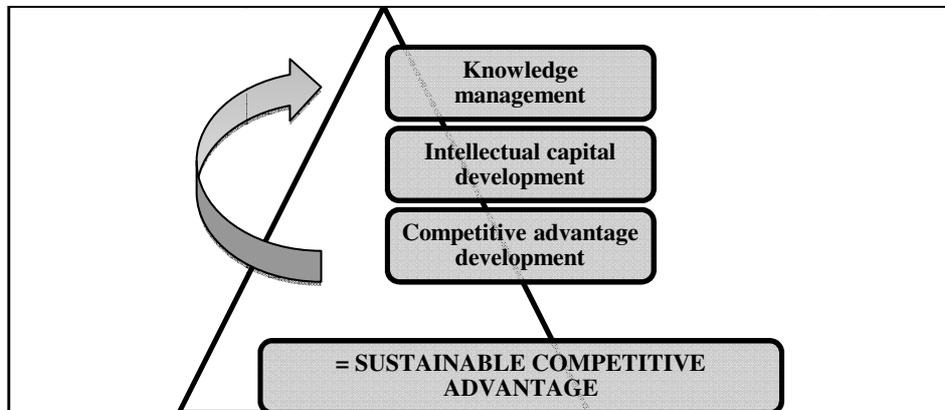
Figure 1: **Correlation between the total number of students that finished secondary education and the students that finished secondary schools of hotel and tourism management and hospitality**



Source: According to SYRC, 2012

Added value in hospitality and tourism can be achieved with professional and educated personnel whose work reflects their creativity, experience, competencies, motivation and satisfaction from providing services. Tourism companies that have embraced the work and business trends of international tourism companies, and recognized how to create new values for achieving competitive advantages have concluded that they must take care of human potentials, which is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: **Interaction of knowledge, intellectual capital and competitiveness**



Source: Intelektualni kapital, Temeljni čimbenik konkurentnosti poduzeća, Ministry of economy, labour and entrepreneurship, Zagreb, 2009, p. 62

Companies that continuously invest in education and professional development of personnel create new added value of the product or service. By investing in education of personnel companies manage knowledge, competence and capabilities of personnel in order to continually develop intellectual capital that will contribute to the development of company's competitive advantages.

Furthermore, one of the reasons for lack of learning among personnel is the fact that a large number of companies works only during the season. Seasonal workers, who make up over 40 % of the total number of employees, characterized by low motivation, low quality as well as poor knowledge, skills and competencies. Education and professional development of personnel are organized only in large hospitality and tourism companies, but the flaw of such an education is that it is usually not long enough or elaborated enough, while their quality is also questionable.

With regard to the desired qualitative advancement in tourism and the overall competitive ability of the sector, special attention must be paid to the development of innovative education programmes<sup>1</sup> that can be provided through:

- Development of appropriate professional training programmes for tourism personnel
- Providing direct support for their positioning in tourism education, professional training and other forms of knowledge transfer, and for the creation of the policy of structural education in tourism
- Information management to promote personnel work activity, both in supply and in demand
- Training in tourism in order to improve business operations
- Development of an education programme in tourism

<sup>1</sup> Peršić, M., *Obrazovanje, znanost i kadrovi kao pretpostavka razvoja turizma*, <http://www.uniri.hr/gprt/f>, 2005., p. 85.

- Providing help to tourism personnel – consulting services and research
- Implementation of a quality programme –Ted Qual programme
- Assessment of information and other needs in tourism, and
- Promotion of training in order to achieve quality in tourism

Investment in its personnel is inevitable for a tourism company striving to meet the guests' needs since it thereby educates them to provide additional satisfaction to customers. Moreover, satisfied personnel will demonstrate their satisfaction in their contact with guests, thus presenting an organization culture that will ultimately affect the guests' satisfaction.

The organization culture of a hotel company is created by its management, top management as a rule, with its philosophy and business orientation through systematic implementation and development of basic values and norms of behaviour, manner of communication, system of promotion and management style in general. The most important means in creation and development of the existing organization culture of hotel companies is IT<sup>2</sup>, whose rapid development can provide very good solutions for the application and implementation of organization culture.

## **2. PERSONNEL ISSUE IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM**

The implementation of a quality policy in secondary and higher education institutions which will particularly strive for long-term development and long-lasting educational values in the tourism sector didn't completely take hold in academic circles. Big problem of the tourism industry in Croatia is the public perception of vocational occupations such as waiter, receptionist, chef, etc. seeing that the public misunderstands occupations in tourism, which is one of the potential reasons for the lack of quality personnel since students show no interest in the above occupations. Therefore, enterprises in the tourism industry face problems when hiring, developing and maintaining a dedicated, competent, well-managed and motivated workforce focused on providing quality products to increasingly more demanding and critical customers.

In order to help eliminate potential personnel problems, the Ministry of Tourism presented the "Programme for encouraging personnel education in hospitality and tourism", which is based on the Croatian Government's programme guidelines and the Croatian tourism development strategy. The Programme for encouraging personnel education in tourism aims both at raising the quality of Croatian tourism by educating new personnel and professionally training existing personnel, and at raising interest among the young for vocations in hospitality and tourism by raising educational standards.

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<sup>2</sup> Galičić V., Ivanović S., *Informacijska tehnologija i organizacijska kultura hotelskih poduzeća*, Informatologia, Vol. 41, Zagreb, 2008, p. 35.

According to Bartoluci and Budimski, the system of secondary education of personnel is complex and not entirely representative from statistical data<sup>3</sup> so it requires a separate research. The tourism sector is characterized by its complexity due to different profiles of professional personnel such as: travel guide, tourism and hotel management school graduate, animator, receptionist, waiter, bartender, sommelier, hostess, cook, baker, pastry chef, maintenance staff, security and other types of professions and jobs.

### 3. SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM SECTOR IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

In the school year 2006-2007 4,074 students finished secondary school for hotel and tourism management, and that number decreased by 7 % in the following school year 2007-2008. The school year 2008-2009 again saw an increase trend in the number of students – that year 3,826 students finished secondary school in the hospitality and tourism sector, which is still 6 % lower than in the school year 2006-2007. However, a positive shift can be observed and it continues in the school year 2009-2010 when 38 more students finished the school than in the previous year, which is almost 1 % more when compared to the previous year. In the school year 2010-2011 3,878 students finished school, indicating a slight increase of 0.4 %. The number of students in this sector continues to grow.

When it comes to student enrolment, weaker growth can be attributed to poor promotion of professional occupations and weak employment opportunities after graduating from secondary school. In order to entice a positive trend in student enrolment in schools, the Ministry of Tourism has initiated a programme that encourages the education and professional training of personnel in the hospitality and tourism industry. Counties, as founders of secondary schools, will participate in the programme with the same amount as the Ministry, and the same applies when it comes to secondary school and higher education student scholarships, and participation in equipping demonstration rooms in schools for occupations in tourism and hospitality.

Table 1: Students that finished secondary schools in the hospitality and tourism sector by years

	Finished secondary school				
	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
<b>Hospitality and tourism</b>	4,074	3,809	3,826	3,862	3,878

Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Croatia, 2012, p. 474

<sup>3</sup> Bartoluci M., Budimski V., *Obrazovni sustav stručnih kadrova za potrebe turizma u Hrvatskoj*, Hrvatski znanstveno stručni skup o menadžmentu u turizmu i sportu: zbornik radova, Vol.1 No.1, March 2010, p. 5.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia initiated the project that resulted in the "Study for the improvement of secondary education for the needs of the hospital management and hospitality sectors in Croatia" which set certain goals for improving the education system by:<sup>4</sup>

- Improving work conditions and school rationalization,
- Innovation of existing and the implementation of new plans and programmes,
- Improving teaching classes in schools, especially practical training,
- Improving cooperation between the industry and secondary schools.

The project that is closely connected with this study, initiated by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, aims at improving the system of vocational education and training which will lead to the development and accumulation of human capital as a prerequisite for economic growth, quality employment and social objectives. The objectives of the Development Strategy of the Vocational Education System in the Republic of Croatia 2008-2013 are the following:

- To define directions of vocational education development and modes for their realization,
- To determine parameters of changes in vocational education,
- To establish mechanisms for systematic monitoring and realization of objectives,
- To promote equal learning rights and conditions for all,
- To promote vocational education and training,
- To enhance the quality of vocational education,
- To build mechanisms of comparability and recognition of Croatian vocational qualifications in Europe (European Qualifications Framework).

In order to achieve the set objectives and tasks, teachers will have a special role in the successfully implemented reform of vocational education. Therefore, the Ministry emphasizes the necessity for reforming the system of initial education, training and promotion of teachers. In addition to the knowledge and understanding of the subject and the scope of work, in a system oriented towards learning outcomes the teacher must have great pedagogical knowledge in applying methods, creating and applying logical operation, and should encourage students to ask questions and discuss.

The policy of the Strategy is rather ambitious as it strives to achieve creative development based on competencies and learning outcomes, as well as harmonization of education and labour market needs. Furthermore, the Strategy includes the concept of lifelong learning whose implementation and upgrade entirely depends on the quality of the constructed vocational education system.

Regardless of the set strategies and the objectives pursued, the secondary education system for tourism has been significantly revised and its implementation does not meet the quality requirement on all levels of education, including practical training in secondary schools and higher education institutions. Secondary vocational schools and trade associations must encourage secondary school students to sign student trainee

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<sup>4</sup> Hendija, Z., et al., *Unapređenje srednjoškolskog obrazovanja za potrebe hotelijerstva i ugostiteljstva Hrvatske*, Zagreb: Institut za turizam, 1998., p. 105.

agreements with the institutions in which they will have their practical training, and also work after they finish secondary school. Less students finish secondary schools specialized for the needed knowledge in the tourism sector, and consequentially, a large number of unqualified labour force provides services in tourism during the season.

#### **4. HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM SECTOR IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

A quality policy in higher education institutions is also faced with certain obstacles, especially when valorising long-term values of education in the tourism sector. Much like secondary education, higher education faces similar problems such as insufficient investment and financing of higher education institutions, and reforms that are yet to take hold in some higher education institutions. In other words, all university studies have introduced the so-called Bologna system, and in a few years' time practice will show the quality of professional personnel.

Higher education in the Republic of Croatia for the tourism sector offers different types and possibilities of education and professional development programmes directed towards the education of both different manager profiles and other higher education personnel in the following sectors: finance, accounting, public procurement, planning and analysis, auditing, controlling, marketing and so on. In Croatia there are several systems of higher education of qualified personnel in the tourism sector: university studies, professional degree courses in applied sciences and colleges.<sup>5</sup>

University studies in the field of hospitality and tourism are held at several faculties in Croatia, offering satisfactory quality study programmes:

1. The University of Dubrovnik in its programmes offers the opportunity to partake in undergraduate studies, graduate studies and postgraduate studies.
2. The Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management in Opatija offers the opportunity to study at the undergraduate level, graduate level and postgraduate specialist level: postgraduate interdisciplinary studies, as well as undertake postgraduate doctoral studies "Business Administration in Tourism and Hospitality" and "Management of Sustainable Development" to obtain the academic degree of Doctor of Science. Lifelong learning programmes at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management include: Travel Guide Seminar, Office Manager Seminar, Tourist Animators Seminar, Hotel Directors Seminar, Differential programme as a prerequisite for the enrolment in graduate studies, Models and Methods for Monitoring Business Excellence, USALI & Benchmarking in Hotel Industry, courses of business communication in foreign languages, as well as the lifelong learning programme "Food and Beverage Specialist".
3. The Faculty of Economics in Split offers undergraduate studies, graduate studies and a professional degree course.

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<sup>5</sup> Bartoluci M., Budimski V., *Obrazovni sustav stručnih kadrova za potrebe turizma u Hrvatskoj*, Hrvatski znanstveno stručni skup o menadžmentu u turizmu i sportu: zbornik radova, Vol. 1 No. 1, March 2010, p. 8.

4. The Faculty of Philosophy in Zadar offers undergraduate and graduate university studies of culture and tourism (single major) whose programme differentiates it from other faculties and studies because it combines two important and inseparable components of culture and tourism.
5. The Faculty of Economics and Business in Zagreb - the study of tourism is offered on all study levels - professional degree course, undergraduate programme, graduate programme "Tourism" and postgraduate specialist programme "Management in tourism", as well as the doctoral programme.

The higher education system also includes a system of professional degree courses in applied sciences and a system of colleges which provide several opportunities for education and professional development for tourism needs. The Universities of Applied Sciences in Čakovec and Šibenik are the most important for the tourism sector.

1. The University of Applied Sciences in Čakovec offers a professional degree course of Tourism and Sport Management.
2. The Business School for Tourism and Hotel Management Utilus offers a professional degree course.
3. Zagreb School of Management, a member of the Vern Group, offers an undergraduate professional degree course of Tourism and Hotel Management.
4. Virovitica College of Tourism Management and Informatics offers an undergraduate professional degree course "Management in Rural Tourism".

Tourism is in part also studied at other higher education institutions. However, due to lack of information on other higher education institutions and specialized schools and their programmes, they are not separately presented. However, the quality and work results in the tourism sector can be valorised in a few years' time.

Although the offer of tourism study programmes among higher education institutions can be considered satisfactory, the share of professionals with a higher education degree is still relatively small in the tourism sector. That is devastating should one consider the fact that we are a country that traditionally participates in the global tourism market and which used to be the promoter of quality services in tourism.

Given that the education system does not keep pace with technical and technological developments, secondary and higher education institutions in the tourism industry should inevitably harmonize and connect their own educational plans and programmes, practical classes and vocational programmes with the work and development of tourism companies. In order to upgrade knowledge to skill, and to establish a better relation between education and the economy, it is necessary to enhance professional student practice in all secondary, applied science and university studies.

Specificities in personnel education in the field of hospitality and tourism, and particularities of the overall tourist activity, especially an uneven workload (daily, weekly, annually), imposed the need to separate practical classes (held during the school year) from professional practice attended after the school year (during the tourist season). In order to adequately organize the process of organization and attendance of practical classes and professional student practice, and to direct it as

planned, certain assumptions must be fulfilled. The most important among them are the following:

- Status and normative regulation, and the position of practical classes in the overall curriculum of secondary schools and faculties, and the personnel policy of a hotel company where students will do their practical work;
- Giving greater importance to personnel and educational and professional issues related to practical lessons;
- More significant engagement of hotel management in the realization of practical classes, as well as the implementation of their annual (and long-term) plans
- Permanent cooperation between vocational secondary schools and faculties, and hotel companies in which secondary and university students are sent to attend practical classes and student practice.

Education, professional development and practical classes must constitute a permanently programme-directed activity towards actual objectives of secondary and higher education institutions and hotel companies. Due to their significantly numerous personnel and developed organization structure, large hotel companies should permanently be interested in identifying needs in personnel education.

## **5. LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM SECTOR IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

When it comes to lifelong learning, the hospitality and tourism sector fails to keep pace with numerous other occupations in the Republic of Croatia, which is the reason behind the initiative of the Association of Employers in Croatian Hospitality (UPUHH). It has developed education and training programmes in cooperation with the Croatian Culinary Federation (HKS), Croatian Sommelier Club (HSK), and the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, all of which is supported by the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia. During a period of ten years UPUHH organized more than 180 seminars for more than 6,000 attendants from all departments of the hotel.

The seminars' objectives include:

- Introductory theoretical lessons introducing the attendants with the obtained level of quality in the provision of services in developed tourist countries, business standards and the overall importance of the profession;
- Practical lessons (workshops) that develop needed skills, specialist knowledge and procedures of production and service workers in the hospitality and restaurant management sectors, especially when it comes to receptionists, hotel hostesses, cooks, pastry chefs, waiters, bartenders
- Creation of assumptions for the enhancement of quality performance of process functions in order for economic subjects in hospitality and tourism, and the overall Croatian economy, to achieve higher quality services and better business results.

Besides UPUHH, on the market there are specialized companies and associations conducting programmes of education, training and consulting. However, their engagement is irrelevant when compared to the number of employees in the hospitality and tourism sectors neither of which show interest for the education and professional development of personnel nor have they recognized the importance thereof.

**Table 2: Organizations offering lifelong learning programmes in the Republic of Croatia**

	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Organization's programme</b>
<b>1.</b>	Association of Employers in Croatian Hospitality	Professional development of production and service employees in the hospitality and restaurant management sectors
<b>2.</b>	Croatian Sommelier Club	Education of professional sommeliers
<b>3.</b>	Public Open University Libar	In 2008-2009 conducted professional and education programmes in the field of tourism and hospitality

Source: Authors' work

In order to achieve the objective of improving the tourism industry through education and training of personnel in tourism the following prerequisites must be met:<sup>6</sup>

- Defined minimum tourist contents that must be included in the regular curricula at all education level
- Improved teaching and communicating methods modelled upon the best methods in the world
- Set criteria for the evaluation of public and private, education and scientific institutions important for the development of tourism
- Created legal basis for the certification and licensing of knowledge based on uniform criteria for the profession
- Ensured conditions for conducting practical classes and practical work, and enabled other opportunities for acquiring experience and linking theory and best practices
- Developed organizational forms and channels for providing consultancy services to personnel in tourism
- Proposed system of tax policy measures, incentives and exemptions to improve the system and ensure different financing sources.

The lifelong learning programme "Food and Beverage Specialist" at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management in Opatija received a positive professional and pedagogical opinion of the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education to perform the programme in the hospitality and tourism sector. The above

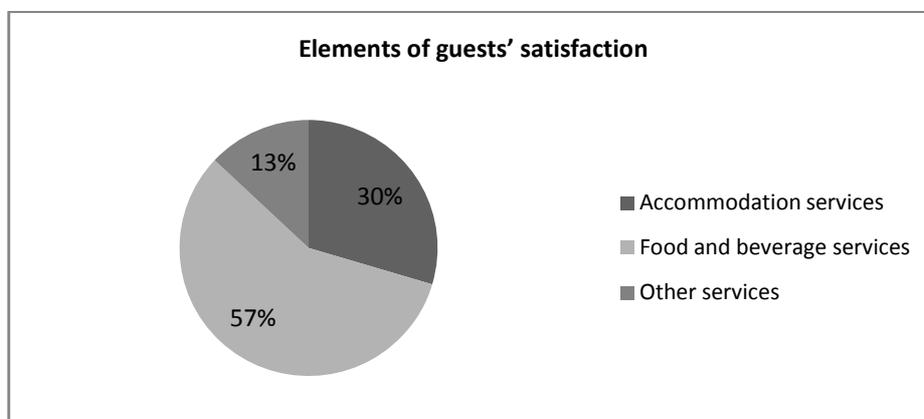
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<sup>6</sup> Peršić, M., *Obrazovanje, znanost i kadrovi kao pretpostavka razvoja turizma*, <http://www.uniri.hr/gprt/f>, 2005., p. 14.

programme was also approved by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia and the University of Rijeka.

The food and beverage sector is extremely important for overall tourist satisfaction, which can be seen in Figure 3. The research was conducted on 500 respondents who have stayed in hotels on the Croatian coast in the season of 2013. It was found that 30 %, i.e. 148 respondents, consider accommodation services as the key element of satisfaction in hospitality and tourism. Food and beverage services are the key elements of satisfaction for 287 respondents, i. e. 57 %, while 65 respondents, i.e. 13 %, declared other services to be the most important<sup>7</sup>.

Figure 3: Elements of satisfaction in hospitality and tourism



Source: Authors' work

The conducted research has shown that more than 50 % of satisfaction with services amounts to food and beverage services, which is rather important, especially if it is kept in mind that most of the guests in hotels consume meals on a half board basis followed by overnight stays with included breakfast. A very small number of hotels provides full board services, mainly because of the demand.

As a form of extra service, restaurants offering food and beverages present a key element of satisfaction at a destination because they do not include additional elements such as accommodation services or other services that can reduce dissatisfaction. Due to the above, the quality of hospitality services needs to be improved through lifelong training of personnel in order to raise awareness among all employees that the quality of services should be a number one priority and that a guest must not leave a hospitality facility dissatisfied. A "customer relation management" system can help achieve that objective. According to Galičić and Ivanović, the system tackles the very essence and integrity of service providers' relations necessary to create and successfully deliver a value for a customer<sup>8</sup>, with simultaneous distributor's profit.

<sup>7</sup> Other services include wellness, sports and animation.

<sup>8</sup> Galičić V., Ivanović S., *Menadžment zadovoljstva gosta*, Fakultet za menadžment u turizmu i ugostiteljstvu, Opatija, 2008, p. 53.

Table 3 shows that the lifelong learning programme "Food and Beverage Specialist" in its three years of existence has attracted 118 attendants from all over Croatia.

Table 3: **Number of people who attended the lifelong learning programme "Food and Beverage Specialist"**

Year	Number of attendants of the "Food and Beverage Specialist" programme		
	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Number of attendants	36	48	34 <sup>9</sup>

Source: Authors' work

Table 4 shows the structure of attendants of the lifelong learning programme "Food and Beverage Specialist" in the academic years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. It is obvious that there are more male than female attendants, the ratio being 31 to 5 in the first observed period and 34 to 14 in the second observed period. Age range of the attendants is at its peak in the 19 to 39 group, amounting to 20 attendants in the first observed period, i.e. 31 attendants in the second observed period. The following is the age range between 31 and 40 with 11 and 12 attendants respectively. There were a few attendants older than 40 years - only 5 in the academic year 2011-2012 and 4 in the academic year 2012-2013. In the second observed period, i.e. academic year 2012-2013, there was only 1 attendant under the age of 18.

Table 4: **Structure of attendants of the lifelong learning programme "Food and Beverage Specialist" in the academic years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013**

	Gender structure		Age range				Education		
	M	F	Under 18	19 - 39	31 - 40	Over 40	Secondary	Professional degree	Higher
2011-2012	31	5	0	20	11	5	24	2	12
2012-2013	34	14	1	31	12	4	38	7	3

Source: Authors' work

Table 4 also shows that 24 attendants in the academic year 2011-2012 completed secondary education, in comparison to 38 of them in the academic year 2012-2013. There were 2 attendants with a professional degree in the first observed period and 7 in the second observed period. Attendants with a higher education degree include 12 attendants in the first observed period and 3 in the second observed period.

<sup>9</sup> 34 people enrolled in the programme in the academic year 2013-2014, but they still attend the lifelong learning programme "Food and Beverage Specialist".

## CONCLUSION

Education of personnel and their professional development comprise the most important factor that both directly and indirectly reflects the competitiveness of a tourism product. On the tourism market the Republic of Croatia has been recognized as a destination that can develop its potentials, and following the accession to the EU additional efforts need to be invested in strengthening competitiveness, promoting both existing and new resources, services, and products.

Education, professional development and practical classes must constitute a permanently programme-directed activity towards the actual objectives of secondary and higher education institutions and hotel companies.

Current trends in the hospitality and tourism sector demand continuous investment in education and programmes that will help to raise the quality of services provided in the hospitality and tourism industry. Investment in its personnel is inevitable for a tourism company striving to meet the guests' needs since it thereby educates them to provide additional satisfaction to customers. Moreover, satisfied personnel will demonstrate their satisfaction in contact with guests, thus presenting an organization culture that will ultimately affect the guests' satisfaction.

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