Chapter 83
Relevance of Strategic Management of Human Resources in Travel Agencies:
The Colombian Case

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ABSTRACT

The strategic organizational direction must deal with the causes that give rise to changes in the organizations in each of their levels. The strategy is affected by the principles, values, and interests of all those who have power in their environment. This chapter reports the results obtained in the Relevance dimension, achieved during more than 3 years of theoretical and applied research that has taken place as a result of the Responsible Integral Management Model (GIR) based on the Human Resources of the companies of the tourism sector, as in the Colombian case.

INTRODUCTION

In Colombia, the achievements and results of the government are published at the end of every presidential term, so the public can acknowledge them. Thus, Juan Manuel Santos Calderon, president for two four-term periods (2010-2014 and 2014-2018) presented the report of his governments' economic performance. This chapter considers the report presented for the Tourism industry, including data and some interviews by representatives from such industry (Dinero, 2018), considering that it is the best source of information of the industry. Considering the topic of this chapter, the authors deem convenient to present such information as an overview of the tourism industry in Colombia.

According to Maria Lorena Gutierrez, former Colombian Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism, in the 2010-2017 period, the income increased 68.2%; in 2018 the industry grew 38%, with 3.3 million tourists entering to the country. Hotel investments was 5.7 trillion COP in the period 2003-2017, 1.9 million new jobs were added to the industry and 45 tourist routes were implemented. Tourist services have improved especially in bird-watching, adventure, business and medical tourism, among others.

ProColombia, agency that promotes tourism and entrepreneurship, is working to consolidate the Country brand. In the last 12 years the number of air passengers in the country tripled, due to the entry in operation of low-cost airlines; since 2007, the number of flights increased from 500 to 1,000 per week (Semana, 2018). Lufthansa restarted operations and KLM, Spirit and JetBlue started to operate in Colombia, increasing the number of business, leisure and medical tourists. Low-cost airlines have made possible travelling by air to people from lower economic classes who traditionally could not afford to.

COTELCO, Colombian association that groups together hotels and tourism businesses, expresses that the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla has been beneficial for its associates, because there is a positive change about the perception of security and the possibilities to have a safer trip when traveling to Colombia. On the negative side, one problem mentioned by the report is the incidence of the informal economy; there are tourist agents that do not comply with the required regulations and fail to get the necessary certifications, thus affecting formal enterprises.

This shows that the Colombian tourism sector is growing and is assuming a significant role in economic development, and a consequence for travel agencies is that strategically managing human resources is becoming a real challenge that demands innovation in this appealing and dynamic organizational component. Hence, it is evident that achieving the economic, professional, administrative and most importantly, the social objectives, which frame the raison d'être of these companies, requires the qualification and professional strengthening of those having the responsibility of contributing to the achievement of those organizational objectives (Nieto, 2014).

In general terms, the theory of strategic management indicates that every enterprise succeeds when it formulates and implements a strategy that considers its personal objectives, those of its business units and those of its functions, as well as its values, and consider them all as the core to generate strategic consistence to add value to the organization. This process is used to make and analysis aimed at communicating and implementing the chosen strategy, that provides the necessary information to make strategic decisions (Pulido, 2008).

If an enterprise adequately fulfills this, with organizational approaches, it will achieve strategic competitiveness. Furthermore, this enterprise can continue enjoying this competitive advantage if the implemented strategy cannot be copied or replicated by its competitors or if it this is highly expensive. In this regard Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson (2015) point out that an organizational strategy is the set of

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