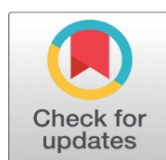
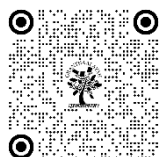


ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

It is very evident that the tourism industry is vast and wide-ranging, diverse and exciting. A job in the tourism field can be adventurous, highly exciting and well paid also. Consequently, the job opportunities in the tourism industry are amongst the fastest growing in the world of employment. Fundamentally, the idea is that a degree in tourism management equips students on the fundamentals on sustainability, human resources, project management, and much more. The knowledge gained through a degree in this field will be useful for a variety of different careers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is very evident that the tourism industry is vast and wide-ranging, diverse and exciting. A job in the tourism field can be adventurous, highly exciting and well paid also. Consequently, the job opportunities in the tourism industry are amongst the fastest growing in the world of employment. Fundamentally, the idea is that a degree in tourism management equips students on the fundamentals on sustainability, human resources, project management, and much more. The knowledge gained through a degree in this field will be useful for a variety of different careers.

There are jobs in transportation, airline industry, car rentals, coach services, railways, spacecraft, different varieties of accommodation, hotels, camping sites, cruises, farmhouse accommodations, food and beverages, restaurants, catering, night clubs, entertaining, casino, tourist information centres, shopping, tourist guides and operators, online travel agencies, education, and tours and travels marketing. It can be undoubtedly seen that the travel and tourism industries technically cater to slightly different groups of people, but they are extremely closely linked. They consist of

organisations within the transportation, accommodation, entertainment, and food and beverage sectors, along with several related industries.

Concentrating on the Indian scenario, it can also be understood that the tourism industry in India, which is also developing rapidly is in need of excellent, experienced and well qualified personnel. The online website of *India Today*, has a very interesting article on education and jobs in the tourism industry and has rightly quoted the owner of an institute to highlight the importance of education and skills necessary for this industry. "Students have endless career opportunities in the fastest growing industry of travel," says Rashmi Samarvir Arora, Owner of Costa Training Institute, Mumbai and a Hub Partner for Travel & tourism, TISS SVE (np).

This industry needs experienced people and communication is an important factor in this field. However, there are many colleges, universities and private institutes that offer Bachelor's or Master's degrees, diplomas, certificates or distance learning courses in various sectors of travel and tourism such as management in tourism, travel or hotels, tour operation or airline management, destination management, airline ticketing, travel administration etc.

Anyone who wishes to work in the travel and tourism industry needs to ideally be equipped with knowledge of the global culture and all aspects of travel business. He/she also requires to be completely cognizant of how to guarantee customer satisfaction, while managing a large volume of business. A strong knowledge in history, geography, art and architecture of India is definitely an added asset. It is better that employees know at least one foreign language apart from English and their native language in India.

A post graduate degree can help a person get into a lucrative position as a manager or as an administrator. Short term training programmes are offered by many travel agencies. Most candidates are absorbed. One can also opt for vocational courses to get a B. Voc degree. The article in the *India Today* website, "A career in Travel and Tourism: Everything You Wanted to Know" quotes Rashmi Samarvir Arora, Owner of Costa Training Institute, Mumbai (Hub Partner for Travel & tourism, TISS SVE):

Costa Training Institute HUB Partner of TISS has designed both, short- term & long - term job-oriented courses in Travel & Tourism to supply skilled workforce to the travel industry. Short-term courses like Certificate in Tour Operations & Destination Marketing give complete knowledge to students and make them ready to work in Travel field (np).

Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) is a major in a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. Graduate students can also pursue a Masters of Business Administration, a Master's of Science, or a Doctorate of Philosophy in Hospitality and Tourism Management. Individuals who intend to work in the Hospitality Industry do go in for such higher studies. Arora lays more emphasis on skills than just plain book knowledge, when he comments:

Skills required could include knowledge of Computer reservation systems (CRS- Amadeus, Galileo, Sabre & Abacus), Air fares and ticketing skills, Language skills, Selling skills, experience of handling money & foreign currencies, Customer service, Travel agency management and travel & tourism geography knowledge (np).

The need for language skills has been mentioned by the head of an institution, but not much emphasized. It is only mentioned in the list of skills, but not in the subjects. In India language skills mean not only the native language or mother tongue, but also fluency in the global language, English. English is now a need and not a substitute in this industry, nationally and internationally. Tourists are from so many different countries and from our own diverse states in India.

The article in the *India Today* website, "A career in Travel and Tourism: Everything You Wanted to Know" once again reiterates and affirms that the most significant qualification for people who seek job opportunities in this field is that:

At almost every point of work in this field, employees need to interact personally with the customers and understand their needs while making them comfortable, so as to be able to provide the best service in terms of travel options and arrangements.

Language skills are extremely essential and a person employed in the tourism industry cannot survive without it. Employees in the travel and tourism industry need the following essential prerequisites: to be skilled, confident, well-groomed, be able to handle people very well, and possess good interpersonal skills. These can be achieved only if a person has excellent language skills. Where there is no suitable, vibrant and logical communication, there is no success.

The tourism industry provides rich opportunities for intercultural encounters. "Tourism is centred on the fundamental principles of exchange between peoples and is both an expression and experience of culture. It reaches into some deep conceptual territories relating to how we construct and understand ourselves, the world and the multi-

layered relationships between them" (Dimitrova, et al., 2015, p. 225). The tourism industry, once more, is a useful tool to share, sustain, and improve cultural diversity. Cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are intensely significant in the tourism industry in today's society which is marked by globalization. Cultural differences are the fundamental subject for studies addressing intercultural communication. Good knowledge of other cultures is a necessary step to get to recognize the differences and to relate to others through approaches of understanding and tolerance which are edifices for genuine intercultural dialogue, especially in the tourism industry. In the tourism industry it is important for employees to have, in addition to the usual culturally independent skills such as technical, social, conceptual and strategic competences, multicultural competence which is necessary when different culture groups converge. Cross-cultural or inter cultural business communication is, therefore, very helpful in building cultural intelligence.

Systematic communication with the actual and potential customers and with the trade intermediaries, bridging the gap between producer on the one hand and the consumer on the other, is also needed (Bhatia 273).

In *Marketing Communications in Tourism and Hospitality: Concepts, Strategies and Cases*, McCabe mentions that the abstractness, generality, non-searchability and intangibility are the specific characteristics of the tourism and hospitality industry hence, "the importance of people and quality of service linked expertise of individuals or within the organization collectively is a key force in marketing communication" (11). The unlimited access to information, development of transportation and other amenities have led to tens of thousands of people traveling to a destination every day. And this increase in tourism can have economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts on both local communities and entire nations.

Whether you are going to India to eat Indian food and visit the Taj Mahal, or travelling to Paris to see the Eiffel Tower, for the people and the lights, and the restaurants and the wine you are considered to be a tourist. Wherever tourists come from or go, there is one thing they often have in common: They often speak English. According to N. Krishnaswamy English was thrust upon the colonized, and so Indians adopted this language as their own and in fact there are more speakers of English in India than their own mother tongues. It makes one wonder whether it is a bane or a boon. The British rulers brought the railways, telegraph, telephones, printing press and their educational system which definitely included their language English. It is considered to be a blessing, as it opened the international doors to the educated. Though some consider it to be a symbol of 'eternal slavery' as our eminent language expert, Krishnaswamy has defined it, yet it is nurtured because of its 'market value' (6).

Research on job opportunities for the tourism sector, was carried out to analyse the needs of the labour market, showed that more than 79% of advertisements request knowledge of the English language as an essential necessity. The preferences of companies vary: some request, competence of written English, others oral skills and, in many cases, they require language proficiency in both skills. This sounds logical when we are well aware that English has become the global language of communication par excellence. It is extremely essential that all people involved in the tourism sector have good instruction, use of the English language and management of communication skills necessary to meet all the requirements of the sector, as this will produce services of excellence faster, and there will be an increase in long-term benefits. Marketing communication skills is also an important area where the English language plays a vital role.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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