Recent Hr Trends And Strategies To Deal With Challenges In Tourism Industry In India

Sandeep Kumar
Shri Vishwakarma Skill University
India

Abstract:

Tourism nowadays is emerging as a significant socio-economic activity. It is a vital industry in international arena as well. Tourism industry is one of the leading economic drivers in service sector. Human Resources play a crucial role in sustainability oriented tourism development initiative. There has been a surge in the demand of human resources in travel industry and it’s observed that there is change in the pattern of demand and supply as well, demand being in favour of educated and specialized personnel where as supply side lacking the required skills. There is no evidence that shows tour operators and travel agency following any kind of HRD policies and this sector is severely lagging in terms of professionalism. This outcome of skill shortage is due to poor management and lack of investment in people. When we see workforce in this industry in general perspective they appear to be unskilled, unproductive, untrained and uneducated. This paper is an attempt to find out what obstacles HR is facing and what trends they are adopting to overcome challenges in tourism industry in India.

Keywords: Human Resources, Tourism, HR Challenges, Education system, HR Trends.

Introduction:

Tertiary sector nowadays is major component of economic growth of many countries and tourism industry is one of the big piece of this pie. Travel and tourism industry significantly affects not only the GDP growth of the country but also employs a large number of people. Therefore, many developing countries promote tourism to boost the socio-economic growth. But when it comes to country like India, the word development carries a different meaning and switches more towards alleviate the problem of unemployment. Since this industry employs a huge number of people, Human Resource Department plays a vital role in managing this huge workforce. Its role is increased even more where large organizations, big hotel chains are involved in the foray, to maintain the high standards of efficiency and quality. These intended objectives can be achieved only if we define them specifically to Human Resource Development.

Tourism Industry in India: An Overview

Tourism is one of the most important growth engines for any economy. Though if we see India on international arena, it has a very little share of the whole pie of the industry but there has been a quite remarkable growth in foreign tourist arrivals in India in the recent years. The “Incredible India” campaign in overseas markets has been promoted well. According the data provided by Ministry of Tourism, GoI, for the year 2013, Inbound international tourists were 6.97 million with a yoy growth rate of 5.9%, looks impressive but it’s .64% of international share with 42nd position. Whereas outbound international departures were 16.63 million for the same year with the growth rate of 11.4%, this figure too looks good but it’s too very low 1.59% with 16th position. A foreign exchange earnings in the same year was 107671 crores or 18.44 billion USD In the same year, domestic travelers to all the states and UTs were 1145 million with a growth rate of 9.6%. Figures can be deceiving, and these are the proofs, though India is a vast country with so much variety in terms of languages, landscapes, cultures, cuisines and climates, still there is so much to tap. With the kind of heritage we are proud of, there is huge potential for growth in terms of foreign tourists arrival.

HRD playing a crucial role:

The tourism industry in India is getting competitive every passing day (Chand and Chauhan). This industry has to face many challenges like ever increasing demand for customer orientation, highly
volatile markets, and orientation towards customized packages, international competition and continual addition of new players in the industry. Hence, in this volatile environment only those tourism organizations will succeed which are prepared to face the competitive threats and ready to cash on the opportunities to match the demands of the market. However there are several HR issues that plague this industry like high turnover due to low wages, high demand to work any hour of the day at any given point to suit the customer requirements and above all skill shortages. There is a huge gap between tourism education and courses with the industry requirements. Sometimes, even the tourism school graduates do not join this industry at all and join other lucrative sectors, which is sheer waste of skills and resources. Besides, forecasting of skills needed in the future is also a challenge. Furthermore, specialized tourism avenues like Eco-tourism, medical tourism, adventure tourism, religious tourism, recreational tourism and last but not the least business tourism increase the demand of additional expertise in the existing skill sets of manpower (Ashraf & Mathur).

Additionally there is universal and overlapping demand for knowledge and competencies like knowledge of tourism products and services, major attractions, acquaintance with geographical aspects, ticketing and reservation expertise, itinerary planning, visa and travel insurance, foreign exchange knowledge to name a few. If the business has to sustain they have to have a number of HRD strategies aimed at equipping their personnel. But Indian tourism despite having huge potential is performing below par due to lack of organized efforts to develop the man force of this industry (Page et al, 2001).

All these challenges can be defeated by skilled and efficient manpower. In general medium and large scale tourism enterprise, HR issues are usually linked with the workforce, and hence recognizing the role of their development is of utmost importance. Continuous investment in the human resource through training and development activities are recognized throughout the world (Page et al, 2001).

Challenges faced by HR Department:

There are so many challenges faced by tourism industry in India in general. Some of the major issues are: lack of qualified staff at operational as well as managerial level, high turnover rate, unwillingness of tourism courses graduates to enter the industry and the vast gap between academic curriculum and realities of the industry to name a few. The tourism industry is ripe with manpower issues and people working in HR department are left with the responsibility of fixing them.

High Turnover: Turnover is one of the biggest challenges in tourism sector. In 2013, it was as high as 4.8 percent in 2013. With high turnover rates, along with reduced workforce and extended workload to current workforce, HR department face another challenge of recruiting again. Even filling the entry level position with the required skills has become an issue in itself. When the department fails to fully assess the candidates, chances of placing the right person in the wrong role increases. Besides, high turnover go hand in hand with training issues as when the rate of retention is low, management tends to put newly recruited people on the floor even before teaching them how to do the job properly.

Low Morale: Employee morale plays a crucial role in the success of any organization. Keeping your people happy and engaged all the time is very demanding and daunting task for HR department. It’s the responsibility of HR department to keep their employees happy and engaged. Giving them constructive feedback, providing their salaries on time, occasionally organizing recreational activities for them, giving importance to their families are some of the tasks HRD can go for to make their employees morale high. If your employees are happy, your clients are definitely going to be happy.

Increased Harassment cases: Harassment is global phenomenon. Every industry is prone to it and tourism industry is no exception to it. It is a matter of embarrassment and disgrace that this is enrooted in our culture that it pushes back the progress in every sphere of life. Since the entry of women
workforce in corporate world, number of cases has arisen at an alarming rate. Though not every case is real, but even the fabricated ones are capable of tarnishing the image of not just the industry per se, but image of the country also come at stake.

**Inequity amongst employees:** Discrimination is prevalent in all the industries. Favoritism, unequal remuneration cause disharmony in the organization. Inequality is not just morally and ethically wrong but also takes the sheen away from the whole industry in general.

**Inexperienced and unskilled managers:** Sometimes to fill the gap due to high attrition, unskilled junior level employees are promoted in haste and their positions are filled through fresh recruitment. These inexperienced managers lack a clear and firm vision and skills to manage the workforce and this sudden change in their job description makes them lose their focus. Besides, they have high resistance from their ex- peers who do not come to terms with their undue promotion.

**Current Trends for HR department to deal with these challenges:**

**Workforce is the backbone of Tourism Industry:**

Tourism is one of the largest sectors of economy in terms of earnings. Filling and keeping the right talent is extremely grueling task. But in an industry where attrition is way too high and pool is quite low, the onus lies with HR department to maintain the upkeep of their staff, training them, engaging them and above all developing them. These tasks can be very time consuming and financially challenging as well. But if you have to float and to survive these are the basic things which has to be done for your workforce.

**Utilize people analytics:**

Right from tracking employees’ performance to measuring the retention rates and / or training outcomes, analytics tools help in connecting dots between HR trends and financial performance. People analytics solutions are not new to HR, but in 2019 they are likely to become more prominent. A report by Deloitte on Global Human Capital Trends, found that people analytics is now considered a high priority for 84% of executives.

**Flexi Hours:**

In order to attract better qualified candidates, organizations need to become more flexible in terms of work conditions. Technology is advancing at a very vast pace and people are now capable enough to work from anywhere---any nook or cranny. Some of them just don’t want the stereotyped nine to five kind of job and feel suffocated at the mere thought of that. Besides, there are lots of jobs in tourism industry which can be done by work from home people as well. The better experienced people who are retired and not able to join office can take advantage and HRD can also tap the advantage of required skills and experience to do certain tasks. It would be a win-win situation for both of them.

**Emphasis on Soft skills:**

Todays millennial are more tech savvy and lot more active on social media as well. They have end number of friends on social networking sites than in real life and are very active and effective on those platforms but when it comes to working in teams and communicating with colleagues, they may not be as effective. In 2019, HR managers need to anticipate the need for more soft skills trainings like teamwork, interpersonal communication, time management etc. in order to bring cohesiveness in teams.

**Conclusion:**

Tourism in India is important for the country's economy and is growing rapidly. The World Travel and Tourism Council calculated that tourism generated ₹16.91 lakh crore (US$240 billion) or 9.2% of India's GDP in 2018 and supported 42.673 million jobs, 8.1% of its total employment. The sector is predicted to grow at an annual rate of 6.9% to ₹32.05 lakh crore (US$460 billion) by 2028
(9.9% of GDP). The success of tourism industry depends on the quality of its workforce. The real challenge of HR department for this industry is recruiting and retaining employees with the right skill sets, knowledge about their industry and attitude towards their work and they can adopt a number of approaches to attain that, viz: targeting under-represented groups, providing career development opportunities and ensuring that management see training and development activities as an investment rather than expenses, providing conducive environment to work, and giving remuneration at par with the industry. All these measure may not yield immediate results, rather their benefits can be reaped for the years to come.

References: