THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE NEGOTIATION SKILLS FOR ENHANCING MANAGERIAL PERFORMANCE IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

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Abstract. *The aim of this research is to shed light on the importance of negotiation skills in improving managerial performance in tourism. The study analyses secondary data from a number of tourism-related sources to examine the role of effective negotiation and communication competencies in tourism management and highlight possible areas for improvement. The findings offer important insights into how effective negotiation strategies contribute to a more efficient management in the tourism context.*
Keywords*: negotiation skills, communication skills, management, tourism*

Background

Negotiation skills have long been recognized as a cornerstone of success in contemporary business environments. Numerous studies have shown their importance to organizational performance and professional effectiveness (Lim et al., 2016; Robles, 2012; Shuayto, 2013). Employers increasingly value managers who demonstrate both technical competence and a strong mastery of people skills like being able to work with others, adapt to new situations, and communicate effectively (Binsaeed et al., 2016).

Robles (2012), examining managerial perspectives, identified negotiation skills as the second most essential competency in business, surpassed only by integrity. Effective communication is the key to success in any business, and in particular in the tourism industry, where customers are the focus. In tourism communication is not about giving information it is also about understanding people's feelings and building relationships.

For managers in the tourism industry, communication goes beyond the basic transmission of information. Instead, it embodies emotional exchange, cultural connection, and service relationship-building (Lolli, 2013a). Wesley et al. (2017) even highlight communication as the most vital soft skill in the tourism profession. The study by Paksoy et al., 2017 found that hospitality managers spend up to 80% of their time communicating with others. The quality of their communication directly affects how happy their employees are and how well they do their jobs.

Go et al. (1996) proposed a reversed pyramid model for organizational structure in hospitality, emphasizing the primacy of front-line employees who engage with guests. This model underscores that everyone in the tourism industry from the people at the desk to the managers needs to be good at negotiating with customers, colleagues and others to sustain a positive service environment (Lolli, 2013a).

Gaps in Research and New Directions

While the importance of business communication has been extensively studied, most prior research has focused broadly on interpersonal or general communication rather than specific negotiation skill types. Negotiation skills are often seen as part of a group of skills called soft skills and are measured in a simple way. There is no one way of categorizing negotiation skills that everyone agrees on. (Baird & Parayitam, 2019; Robles, 2012; Wesley et al., 2017).

Existing frameworks often categorize negotiation skills based on their intended outcomes. Conrad and Newberry (2012) organized them into organizational, leadership, and interpersonal communication skills; Waldeck et al. (2012) proposed six clusters that include interpersonal relationships, mediated communication, intergroup interactions, enthusiasm and creativity, non-verbal cues, and speaking and listening abilities. However, no single universally accepted classification exists across the literature.

The rise of technology has changed the way people negotiate in the tourism industry, and tourism workers now require both traditional interpersonal abilities and technology-driven digital communication skills (Carlisle et al., 2021).

Still, most research addressing digital competence treats it as a general technical skill rather than a facet of communication. No comprehensive studies have tied these forms—verbal, nonverbal, and digital—together using the manner of message transmission as a conceptual framework. Therefore, existing assessments cannot fully capture the skill set demanded by the modern tourism workplace, where technological fluency and human interaction intersect.

Communication Skills in the Tourism Context

Tourism and hospitality are human-centered businesses where good negotiation skills are essential for providing good service and making customers happy. Thus, industry workers need to be chosen and trained well to communicate effectively. (Cuic Tankovic, 2020). Managers' communication ability is one of the most critical job qualifications in this field, deeply embedded in daily operations and interactions (Lolli, 2013a).

Communication in the tourism industry can be categorized as external, internal, and interpersonal. External communication addresses interactions between employees and guests. Internal communication, though less visible, is equally vital because it fosters staff satisfaction and coordination, which in turn influence customer experiences (Ryan et al., 1996). Internally, communication supports core management functions such as instructing employees, facilitating cooperation, delivering feedback, and motivating teams (Guffey & Loewy, 2010).

Interpersonal communication, meanwhile, involves a high degree of emotional exchange and personal engagement (Zhu et al., 2006). It connects individuals through mutual consideration, empathy, and adaptation to others' psychological and emotional states (Burleson, 2010). This process usually involves two-way exchanges—verbal or nonverbal—built on trust and shared understanding, often occurring in direct and voluntary interactions. These exchanges are foundational to how service experiences are co-created between employees and guests.

Previous studies have shown that that negotiation skills are among the most important competencies for future professionals in the field (Wang et al., 2009). However, a recurring issue is that many new graduates who want to work in the tourism industry lack communication skills. (Lolli, 2013b). This deficiency highlights the need for continued academic research and more effective communication training programs. Moreover, longstanding evidence points to persistent

communication weaknesses among tourism managers, suggesting that industry-specific frameworks for assessing and improving communication remain underdeveloped (Peterson, 1997).

Conclusion

The growing body of research confirms that communication skills are essential for success in the tourism industry, underpinning both internal coordination and customer experience. Furthermore, the tourism context amplifies their relevance because communication is inseparable from guest interaction, service quality, and organizational culture.

In the future, researchers should try to develop validated measurement instruments encompassing the five key dimensions of communication—listening, oral, written, non-verbal, and digital—reflecting the diverse ways messages are transmitted and interpreted. This model would equip educators, researchers, and practitioners to train tourism employees who are not just articulate but also attentive listeners, culturally sensitive non-verbal communicators, and proficient digital interactors. These competencies, collectively, will continue to be important for tourism organizations in the years to come.

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