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MEASUREMENT OF HOSPITALITY EMPLOYEES' COMPETENCIES

Field: economics, academic discipline: management

SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

PhD thesis written under the academic supervision of  
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## Summary in English

Modern management theory puts more and more emphasis on the issues of human resources management and human capital management. Employees, their knowledge, competencies, and abilities are perceived to be one of the company's most valuable resources. What is more, acquiring and retaining competent employees as well as the development of their competencies are crucial factors that determine the market success of temporary organizations. Competency-based management is believed to be a helpful and effective tool used in many functions of the organization, for example in employment planning, recruitment or in succession planning.

Despite great attention devoted to defining and classifying competencies as well as to identify the employer's expectations regarding employees' competencies, few studies take into account the topic of measuring competencies and competency gaps. The main objective of this dissertation is to address this research gap as well as to develop an author's own method of measuring employees' competency gaps. The method presented in the doctoral thesis finds its roots in the theoretical assumptions of the *Importance-Performance Analysis*, which was primarily used in quality management to assess customer satisfaction. The method was reinvented and adjusted to the research needs. The author's method may be used in many industries in order to measure the competencies and competency gaps of employees occupying various positions.

The empirical study focuses on the hotel industry, which is a part of the tourism market. The hotel industry was chosen due to the fact that it is a very labour intensive industry. Besides, it is proven that the business success of hotels depends mostly on the employees' competencies. The empirical study, mainly the process of competency gaps measurement, was conducted among the group of over 90 hotel receptionists. This position reflects the specifics of hospitality job.

Taking into account the main goal of the doctoral thesis, the following hypothesis was formulated: *There is a set of competencies defined by employers and required from hotel employees.* The author aimed to verify the following three auxiliary hypotheses:

1. *There is a mismatch between the employers' expectations regarding the desired competencies held by hotel industry employees and job candidates as well as the competencies actually mastered by them.*

2. *Competency gaps may be of qualitative character (insufficiently developed competencies) as well as of quantitative type (total lack of required competencies).*

3. *The employees may be overskilled, they may have competencies developed on a higher level than the one expected by the employers.*

In order to verify the research hypotheses, quantitative and qualitative studies were carried out. The empirical research was conducted in August and September 2018. Exactly 20 individual in-depth interviews with hotel managers were conducted. Competencies and competency gaps of 90 hotel receptionists were measured. The conducted research allowed to prove the main research hypothesis. The competency requirements were divided into three subgroups: knowledge and experience, skills and personal characteristics. Based on the research, it was concluded that employers pay the greatest attention to personality traits, while they perceive knowledge, skills, and experience as less important. The results showed that the actual competencies held by employees and job candidates do not meet the employers' expectations.

Job candidates, who apply for the position of hotel receptionists have quantitative competency gaps. This means that they lack specific competencies desired by employers. Job candidates do not have knowledge, experience, skills or personal qualities sought in the hotel industry. The problem of quantitative competency gaps does not apply to those employed in hotels. The employees usually have the required competencies, but further development (eg. training) is required. Thus, employees' competency gaps are of qualitative character, which means that employees have a given competence, but its level is not well-enough developed. The conducted study proves that there are also such employees, who have various competencies developed at a level exceeding the employer's expectations, these are for example good command of second foreign language, broad general knowledge or having a higher education.

The doctoral thesis consists of an introduction, five chapters, conclusion and attachments. The dissertation begins with the presentation of the theoretical framework, with particular emphasis on the review of Polish and international literature on competency-based management. The first chapter reviews and clarifies the definitions of competency and competency gap. Chapter two presents the issue of measurement in economics, as well as reveals the problems related to the competency measurement. Later the existing methods used to identify and quantify competencies and competency gaps are listed and assessed in terms of their advantages and disadvantages. The third chapter discusses the characteristics of hotel and tourism industry. This chapter provides a description of working conditions and the management challenges related to this industry. The chapter presents the literature review on competency requirements for job candidates and employees working as hotels. The fourth chapter presents a brief description of the research methodology, tools and methods used in the

study. The research procedure, including the recruitment and selection of respondents, is summarized. Later the author's method of measuring competencies and competency gaps is described. The last chapter contains a summary of research results and conclusions derived from individual in-depth interviews, as well as an analysis of the results of competency measurement. In the first part of the chapter, the barriers and prospects of the Polish hotel market were discussed. Later the competency-based management and tools used by managers in hotels were presented. Lastly, the competencies required from hotel receptionists and mentioned by respondents were listed. The second part of the chapter sums up the results of competency gaps measurement as well as the detailed results obtained in two selected hotels. Finally, the conclusions and future research suggestions regarding competency-based management and competency measurement were presented.

**Key phrases:** competency based management, tourism labour market, competency gap, human capital management, hospitality.

**JEL classification:** J24, O15, M54, Z3, L83,