

Demanda de mão-de-obra e exigências de qualificação no setor de hotelaria: o caso de Aracaju, Brasil

La demanda de mano de obra y las exigencias de calificación en el sector de la hospitalidad: el caso de Aracaju, Brasil

Manpower demand and qualification requirements in the hospitality sector: the case of Aracaju, Brazil

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Resumo

Um dos maiores desafios enfrentados pelo setor no país relaciona-se, sem dúvida, ao suprimento de mão-de-obra especializada visando melhorar a qualidade dos serviços. O principal objetivo deste trabalho é analisar a demanda de mão-de-obra e as necessidades de qualificação no setor em Aracaju, estado de Sergipe, Brasil. Foi utilizado o levantamento como método de pesquisa, através de 36 entrevistas pessoais, utilizando questionário estruturado, com proprietários e gerentes de hotéis. O estudo destacou que a maioria dos empregados possui apenas ensino primário, e este baixo nível de educação formal reflete-se em baixos salários e, conseqüentemente, baixo nível de motivação do pessoal. A participação em programas de capacitação é insignificante e a maioria dos proprietários/gerentes não demonstra preocupação com a qualificação dos funcionários.

Palavras chave: demanda de mão-de-obra; qualificação dos funcionários; capacitação.

Resumen

Uno de los mayores desafíos del sector en este país se relaciona, sin dudas, a proveer de mano de obra especializada, tratando de mejorar la calidad del servicio. Este estudio tiene como principal objetivo el análisis de la demanda de mano de obra, y de las necesidades de calificación en el sector de la hospitalidad en Aracaju, Sergipe, Brasil. EL método de investigación empleado, es en el relevamiento, usando treinta y seis entrevistas personales con los propietarios o gerentes de hoteles, a través de cuestionarios estructurados. El estudio destaca que la mayoría de los funcionarios posee, apenas, la escuela primaria, y este bajo nivel educacional se refleja en los bajos salarios, y consecuentemente, en los bajos niveles de motivación del staff. La participación en programas de entrenamiento, es escasa y la mayoría de los propietarios/gerentes, no están preocupados por la capacitación de sus funcionarios.

Palabras-clave: mano de obra; capacitación de funcionarios; entrenamiento.

Abstract

One of the biggest challenges facing the sector in this country undoubtedly relates to providing qualified manpower to improve the quality of services. The main objective of this study is to analyze manpower demand and qualification needs in the hospitality sector in Aracaju, in the State of Sergipe, Brazil. The research method adopted is a survey, by means of thirty-six personal interviews with business owners and hotel managers, based on a structured questionnaire. The study highlights that the majority of their employees have only primary school education, and this low level of formal education is reflected in the low salaries paid, and consequently the low levels of staff motivation. Participation through training programs is very modest, and most owners/managers are not really concerned with employee qualifications.

Keywords: manpower demand; employee qualification; training.

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1 Introduction

Generally speaking tourism is a highly competitive market and companies are looking for differentiation of their services through the development of employees' qualifications and skills. In Brazil, one in ten workers is directly or indirectly involved in tourism (LAGE AND MILONE, 1998), which is responsible for 2.5% of the jobs offered. This is significantly greater than most underdeveloped countries where tourism accounts for only 1% to 2% of the total number of jobs (ARBACHE, 2003). One of the biggest challenges to be faced by the sector in this country is undoubtedly related to providing qualified manpower to improve the quality of service.

In the hospitality sector, the majority of employees have high levels of direct contact with guests, and the need to reduce manpower turnover, increase qualifications and consequently productivity, is a major concern for the public as well as the private sector. This study has as its main objective the analysis of manpower demand and qualifications needs in the hospitality sector in Aracaju, state of Sergipe, Brazil. The State offers Brazilian educational institutions and the public sector subsidies to enable them to set up hospitality training which is better focused on the needs of companies.

2 Manpower in the tourism and hospitality sector

Hospitality and tourism labour markets (and thus the skills that are required within them) generally exhibit diversity in both horizontal and vertical terms. In a horizontal sense, they include a very wide range of jobs, the extent depending upon the definition of the sector that is employed. The traditional research focus on tourism work concentrates on the hospitality sector and on areas that provide, primarily, food and beverage (MARS AND NICOD, 1984; GABRIEL, 1988) and, to a lesser extent, accommodation. Coverage of this discussion is well served by reference to Wood (1997), Guerrier and Deery (1998) and others. Wider research into tourism labour markets and work, particularly areas that have emerged more recently as a result of product and service changes (front desk, leisure, transport, entertainment, reservations call centres) is limited. The "newer" areas include functions and tasks that exhibit considerable crossover with work that falls outwith normal definitions of tourism in food and drink manufacture; office administration, IT systems management and specialist areas of sports and leisure. Indeed, it is fair to say that although there is long-standing debate as to whether the industry is "unique" (MULLINS, 1981; LASHLEY AND MORRISON, 2000), there is little doubt that there is little that is unique about technical dimensions of tourism skills. It is also important to note that the characteristics and the organisation of the tourism industry are subject to on-going re-structuring and evolutionary change. There are major labour market and skills implications of such change as businesses re-shape the range of services they offer (HJALAGER AND BAUM, 1998) or respond to fashion and trend imperatives in the consumer marketplace (WARHURST ET AL, 2000).

Vertical diversity in tourism work is represented by a more traditional classification that ranges from unskilled through semi-skilled and skilled to supervisory and management. This "traditional" perspective of work and, therefore, skills in hospitality is partly described by Riley (1996, p.18) in terms that suggest that the proportionate breakdown of the workforce in the hospitality sub-sector is dominated by the poorly trained and semi-skilled. Riley's simplification masks major business organisational diversity in the sector, reflecting the size, location and ownership of hospitality businesses.

Riley is useful in his application of the weak-strong internal labour market model within developed economies to illustrate the relationship that his workforce structure has to a number of externalities including educational requirements, points of entry into the workforce, workplace pay differentials and level of trade union membership. This analysis has important ramifications for the status of tourism work and the perceived attractiveness of the sector both for employment and educational/training opportunity. Keep and Mayhew (1999, p.8-9) summarise a list of the characteristics of hospitality work that tend to confirm Riley's weak internal labour market attribution:

- Tendency to low wages, except where skills shortages act to counter this.
- Prevalence of unsocial hours and family unfriendly shift patterns.
- Rare incidence of equal opportunities policies and male domination of higher level, better paid work.
- Poor or non-existent career structures.
- Informal recruitment practices.
- Failure to adopt formalised 'good practice' models of human resource management and development.
- Lack of any significant trade union presence.
- High levels of labour turnover
- Difficulties in recruitment and retention.

According to the International Organization of Tourism – OIT (in SANCHO, 2001, p.352), the hospitality sector presents some specific characteristics with regards to its labour market. These are: a high percentage of part-time, temporary, and occasional workers, mainly young employees with a very low level of qualification; a high presence of women in relation to other economic sectors, occupying positions with little responsibility; a high number of hours worked weekly with specific times and work shifts, by the employees of the sector, a level of unionization less than other sectors of the economy.

The skills profile of tourism, in turn, is influenced by the labour market that is available to it, both in direct terms and via educational and training establishments. The weak internal labour market characteristics in themselves impose downward pressures on the skills expectations that employers have of their staff and this, in turn, influences the nature and level of training which the educational system delivers. There is an evident cycle of down-skilling, not so much in response to the actual demands of hospitality work or of consumer expectations of what it can deliver, but as a result of the perceptions of potential employees and the expectations that employers have of them.

Much analyses of tourism labour markets and the assumptions which underpin them are based on developed world economies. Tourism work is widely characterised in both the popular press and in research-based academic sources as dominated by a low skills profile (WOOD, 1997), as Shaw and Williams (1994) rather brutally and, probably, unfairly put it, “uneducated, unmotivated, untrained, unskilled and unproductive” (p.142). Baum (1996; 2002; 2004) and Burns (1997) among others question the validity of such assessments in the context of developing countries and argue that tourism labour market characteristics are both economically and socially constructed and must be interpreted as such, rather than in terms of the sweeping generalisations frequently applied.

3 Tourism manpower in Brazil

According to Arbache (2003), the labour market of the tourism sector in Brazil is characterised by high numbers relative to productivity. Between 1993 and 1998, the number of people who were working in the tourism field rose by 41.5%, giving a total of 1.3 million Brazilians working in the sector. Compared to other sectors of the economy, tourism labour was responsible, in that period, for 2.5% of all jobs in Brazil. However, this activity can still be considered in Brazil as being at a semi-professional stage, and it still has to improve considerably to be compared to the countries that have already reached a much superior standard of performance and quality against a variety of economic and social indexes.

The Hotel Industry in Brazil, according to ABIH (Brazilian Association of Hotel Industries), generates about one million direct and indirect jobs in 18.000 existing hospitality business, with a gross revenue of about US\$ 2 billion, fixed net assets of about US\$ 10 billion and tax collection of over US\$ 400 million. The building of each new UH (Hotel Unit) generates from 0.4 to 2 (two) direct jobs (EMBRATUR, 2000).

The “Economic-Financial Study of the Means of Hospitality and Thematic Parks in Brazil”, developed by the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism along with EMBRATUR, reveals that the national hotel industry employs an average of 31 people per establishment, regardless of its classification. This figure varies according to the size of the company and the quality of services that are offered. As a total, the national hotel activity employed, in 1996, a total of 550.000 people (EMBRATUR, 2000).

According to data from EMBRATUR (2000), manpower that is used in hotel establishments in Brazil receives an average minimum salary. The highest salary levels belong to the administrative sector due to the level of qualification required for this area. Because the hospitality sector is, possibly, the only one of those segments of the tourism field which is present countrywide, Arbache (2003) believes that it is capable of showing, in a more reliable way, the characteristics of the Brazilian tourism labour market, including the differences in regional salaries. The low job pay in this segment can be associated with the low level of qualified manpower, the high number of family hospitality businesses, and the low salaries that are paid in the small localities and in the poorest regions.

Even though the educational level of employees in travel agencies and entertainment services is high, in general, the educational level of the tourism sector has grown relatively less than other sectors of the economy. This modest performance is due, mainly, to the low improvement in the educational level of the hotel, souvenir retail, and car rental segments that comprise about 80% of the workforce of the sector (ARBACHE, 2003).

In Brazil, it is important to understand that the problems associated with tourism manpower are aggravated by different social and economic causes. Two large problems related to manpower are the high levels of employee turnover and the lack of benefits provided by employers, places which neither offer satisfactory job status to their employees, nor a defined career plan. The salaries are low; the working hours are often inconvenient. In sum, the companies lack the means to maintain a stable workforce that is highly qualified (WTTC, 2003). In this, Brazil has many similarities to the situation in both developed and emerging tourism economies.

Professional training in the tourism field has been considered as a necessary investment for some time and, today, it is being highlighted. It is noticeable in this sector of the economy that there is an increasing search for multi-skilled professionals, a trend that mirrors developments in others sectors. In order to reach levels of professionalism, employees need to know how to deal with new technologies, speak different languages, and have other skills that are the result of the constant search for new information about current facts and future scenarios (WTTC, 2003).

The Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Tourism published, in 1995, a “National Tourism Policy – 1996/1999” that establishes the strategies, objectives, goals, and programs related to tourism. As expected, a focus on training is part of the Program of Development, and it is included in the strategy in those areas of financial support that have their focus on basic tourism infra-structure and professional training.

Various institutions in Brazil have responsibility for the training of manpower for the tourism field each with different objectives. EMBRATUR – the Brazilian Institute of Tourism is the organ that defines strategic policies for national tourism, takes care of advertising Brazil internationally, besides being responsible for gathering and publishing statistic data. Tourism vocational education, in Brazil, according to Howell and Uysal (1987), is the primary responsibility of SENAC – National Service of Business Learning. SENAC. With services all over Brazil, it has been working with education related to tourism and hotel business for over 50 years.

Annually, there are more than 120 thousand tourism students in Brazil that are finishing 280 courses in the basic, technical, and technological levels. SENAC is, therefore, the country’s biggest provider of training programmes that are related to the training of manpower that will become able to work at operational levels, and that offers courses to waiters, hotel maids, receptionists, cooks, and other professions that are related to the field. SEBRAE – the Brazilian Service of Support to

Micro and Small Companies, offers courses in the area of Tourism and Quality, the training of entrepreneurs, and other courses related to the training of managers of micro and small businesses.

However, professional education, according to Howell and Uysal (1987), is the responsibility of university institutions. According to ABDETH (Brazilian Association of the Directors of Hotel and Tourism Schools), in an article published in the newspaper Folha de São Paulo on May 21, 2001, there are nowadays 130 institutions that offer courses in hospitality, and 250 in Tourism, countrywide. According to this association, the number of university courses in hospitality has grown 1,757% in Brazil in ten years, and courses in Tourism, 900%, with the majority of courses being offered by private educational institutions.

4 Methodology

The objective of this study is to analyze the demand of manpower and identify the needs for professional training in the hotel sector in Aracaju, the state capital of Sergipe. Aracaju is on the coast of the State of Sergipe, which is located in North East Region of Brazil. This region is one of the poorest in Brazil, but because of its sandy beaches and hot climate, is considered the area of greatest potential for tourism growth, both domestic and overseas. Sergipe State is Brazil's smallest, with 1,784,475 inhabitants according to the 2000 Census, has 163 kilometers of beaches and a hinterland dominated by the San Francisco River, the second biggest river in Brazil. In the city of Canindé of São Francisco, around 200 km from the capital city, the river has created the 70 kilometer Xingó Canyon, the world's largest. Aracaju has about 500,000 inhabitants and is the main gateway to the State. The main attraction of the city is the tranquil quality of life, scenic beaches, an average temperature of 27° C all year round and many cultural festivals, like the St. John commemorations.

The following questions and research were developed in order to meet project objectives:

- What are the demands for manpower in the hotel sector in the city of Aracaju?
- What are the needs for the training of manpower in the hotel sector in Aracaju?

The field research took place in the state capital, Aracaju, because it is the biggest tourist site in the State and also because it absorbs the greatest number of personnel. Table 1 presents the context of the city and the sector.

Table 1: Context of the City and the sector

CHARACTERISTICS	Aracaju, Brazil
Status	Capital city of the State of Sergipe
Population (2006)	505.286
Area (Km)	174
Jobs in Service Sector	53,568 (12%)
Employees in Tourism	4,424 (1%)
Average gross weekly earnings (2000)	£60.00
Unemployment rate (2001)	4%
Serviced Accommodation (rooms) (2000)	2,026
Average Room Size Accommodation	87.5% < 50
Average annual occupancy	50%
Increase in bedroom stock	400% (1980 -2000)
Tourism Expenditure Domestic per night (1999)	£29
Domestic market	98% (Neighbouring State of Bahia, Northeast region 85%)
Overseas market	2%

Source: <http://www.ibge.gov.br/>; PRODETUR (2002)

The method of sampling in this research was the non-probabilistic by accessibility. By this method, “the researcher selects the elements to which he/she has access, assuming that they will be able to, in some way, represent the universe” (Gil, 1999, p.104). For the composition of the sample, representative hotel companies were chosen (the traditional and/or big ones) from the city downtown area and ones on the seashore, based on pragmatic access criteria. A total of 36 establishments participated in the survey.

Table 2: Number of rooms

Number of Rooms	Absolute frequency	Relative Frequency
From 1 to 25	11	30.6
From 26 to 50	14	38.9
From 51 to 75	6	16.7
From 76 to 90	1	2.8
Above de 90	3	8.3
No response	1	2.8

Source: Field work (2005)

As can be seen in table 2 the majority of the hotels of the sample (69.5%) are of small size as have up to 50 rooms while 19.5% have between 51 and 90 rooms and only 8.3% have more than 90 rooms.

The study was directed towards the owners or managers of the hospitality industry. It can be seen in table 3 that 38,9% of the interviewees were business owners while 61,1% were hotel managers. When comparing the education level of the two groups it can be seen that owners have higher education level than managers as 35.7% of them have university degree while among managers this percentage is 27.3 %.

Table 3: Education Level x Hotel ownership

		Education Level										Total	
		Junior High School		High School (not finished)..		High School. (finished)		University. (not finished).		University. Degree			
Hotel Ownership	Yes	1	7,1%	0	0	6	42,8%	2	14,3%	5	35,7%	14	100,0%
	No	3	13,6%	1	4,5%	11	50,0%	1	4,5%	6	27,3%	22	100,0%
Total		4		1		17		3		11		36	

Source: Field work (2005)

The research method that was used in this study was based on personal interviews. According to Gil (1999), such method consists of directly questioning people in whose behaviour the researcher has an interest. The instrument used for data collection in this research was a standardized questionnaire for all the interviews, with open and closed questions. The questionnaire was tested prior to the research, leading to some changes in its form and contents with the objective of increasing clarity and validity. The information that was obtained was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, leading to the postulation of conclusions from the collected data.

The quantitative data was analyzed using absolute and relative frequencies. The qualitative data, though, received treatment through which all the answers were listed and, from them, information was classified according to the key subjects. For the purpose of data analysis of this study the quantitative and qualitative data were combined in order to, not only show the

frequency in which the phenomena occur, but also to investigate how and why they occur. Also, the comparison of variables was undertaken in order to investigate the relationship between them and, in this way, to more deeply understand the results.

5 Labour demand

Labour demand was analyzed against the following indicators: educational level, salaries, temporary use of manpower, professionals that are more difficult to hire, main manpower deficiencies, and the increase in the number of employees.

5.1 Hotel Staff and their Educational Level

Increasing the educational level and the professional qualifications of staff is the way to support the development of the Brazilian economy, and in this way the quality of its products and services will be enhanced. More specifically, in the hotel business, this provides a step towards the achievement of better quality in meeting the needs of tourists and, consequently, a competitive advantage. In this context of the Brazilian environment, with a low educational level in the work force, the hotel sector in Aracaju is no exception.

It is observed in Table 4 that employee's education level in the hotels that took part of the study is overall low. It can be seen that 5.3% of them have not finished junior high school, 45.8% have finished junior high school, 9.7% have not finished high school, and 32.3% have finished high school.

When focusing on the most important professional categories, it was found that among the hotel business managers, 2.6% of them have not finished junior high school and 5.1% have not finished high school; 33.3% have finished high school, 2.6% have a technical diploma, and a significant number, 56.4% have university training, representing the professional administrators. The managers' main areas of graduation are: Administration (three), Hotel Administration (three), Accounting (two), Law (one), Foreign Trade (one), and Engineering (one).

Table 4: Manpower Educational Level

	Junior High School (not finished)		Junior High School (finished)		High School (not finished)		High School (finished)		Technical diploma		University (not finished)		University degree		Total
	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%	
Manager	1	2,6	-	-	2	5,1	13	33,3	1	2,6	3	7,7	19	48,7	39
Office staff	-	-	4	9,8	-	-	28	68,3	-	-	-	-	9	21,9	41
Receptionist	-	-	16	13,9	14	12,2	79	68,7	-	-	-	-	6	5,2	115
Phone Operator	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
Cook	4	6,6	34	55,7	10	16,4	13	21,3	-	-	-	-	-	-	61
Cook assistant	3	8,8	23	67,6	-	-	8	23,5	-	-	-	-	-	-	34
Waiter	2	3,1	32	49,2	11	16,9	20	30,8	-	-	-	-	-	-	65
Maitre	-	-	1	16,7	1	16,7	4	66,6	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Doorman	8	34,8	10	43,5	2	8,7	3	13,0	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
Messenger	1	1,6	27	44,3	3	4,9	30	49,2	-	-	-	-	-	-	61
General services	8	13,8	38	65,5	3	5,2	9	15,5	-	-	-	-	-	-	58
Maintenance	2	6,9	18	62,0	4	13,8	2	6,9	3	10,4	-	-	-	-	29
Housekeeping	6	5,0	94	79,0	15	12,6	4	3,4	-	-	-	-	-	-	119
Laundry	2	5,4	26	70,3	3	8,1	6	16,2	-	-	-	-	-	-	37
Accountant	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	11,1	-	-	-	-	8	88,8	9
Total	37	5,3	323	45,8	68	9,7	228	32,3	4	0,6	3	0,4	42	5,9	705

Abs—absolute frequency, % —relative frequency
Source: Field work (2005)

With respect to receptionists, it was found that the main demand for their hiring is that they have achieved high school level; because 68.7% meet such a demand and 5.2% have a university degree. The demand for a specified minimum educational level for receptionists increases, according to those interviewed, the salary level of these professionals. The justification for such a requirement is that the receptionists are the ones responsible for the first contact of the client with the company and, consequently, for their first impression about the establishment. This specific requirement is interestingly at variance with trends in the European hotel industry where specific educational requirements are unusual (Baum and Odgers, 2001).

Staff who occupy positions as cook assistants, housekeeping services, waiter, doorman, maintenance services and laundry services among others usually have relatively low educational levels. As a requirement for hiring to those positions, most of the time, only junior high school level is necessary. Such positions constitute the majority of employees of any hotel company; in other words, it represents the biggest element in any payroll.

5.2 Salaries

It was observed in table 5 that the majority of the employees of the researched companies (54.7%) earn up to twice the Brazilian minimum wage. The minimum wage was in February 2005, around R\$ 260,00. The ones that receive up to three times the minimum wage are, mainly, maitre (83.3%), managers (75.0%), accountants (40%), and doormen (17.4%), due to the additional pay they receive for working night shifts. However, it is noticeable that, excepting for the managers, office personnel, maitre, and doormen, 12.8% of other professionals receive no more than the minimum wage per month. As examples this applies to telephone operators (37.5%), general services (32.2%), laundry services (26.3%), housekeeping services (23.0%), cook assistant (22.9%), and accountants (20.0%). It is important to say that all accountants that are on the low salaries are not full time employees that work for other companies at the same time.

Table 5: Manpower Salary

	1 SM		1 a 2 MS		2 a 3 MS		Above 3 MS		No response		Total	
	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%
Manager	-	-	1	2,5	4	10,0	30	75,0	5	12,5	40	100,0
Office personnel	-	-	9	20,0	36	80,0	-	-	-	-	45	100,0
Receptionist	4	3,5	65	56,5	46	40,0	-	-	-	-	115	100,0
Phone Operator	3	37,5	5	62,5	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	100,0
Cook	12	19,7	29	47,5	20	32,8	-	-	-	-	61	100,0
Cook assistent	8	22,9	23	65,7	4	11,4	-	-	-	-	35	100,0
Waiter	3	4,6	35	53,8	27	41,6	-	-	-	-	65	100,0
Maitre	-	-	-	-	1	16,7	5	83,3	-	-	6	100,0
Doorman	-	-	19	82,6	-	-	4	17,4	-	-	23	100,0
General Service	19	32,2	40	67,8	-	-	-	-	-	-	59	100,0
Maintenance	2	6,9	12	41,4	15	51,7	-	-	-	-	29	100,0
Housekeeping	28	23,0	94	77,0	-	-	-	-	-	-	122	100,0
Laudry	10	26,3	28	73,7	-	-	-	-	-	-	38	100,0
Accountant	2	20,0	2	20,0	1	10,0	4	40,0	1	10,0	10	100,0
Total	92	12,8	392	54,7	154	21,5	73	10,2	6	0,8	717	100,0

Abs – absolute frequency, % – relative frequency Ms – Minimum salary
Source: Field work.

It was also observed that there is a close connection between educational level and salary. Low educational levels are closely related to low salaries and to a low standard in the quality of services that are offered to the tourists. According to Campos (1999), people who are better

trained earn better salaries. More and more, professionals need to know how to deal with new technologies, languages, and other skills to be able to pursue a career. The new professional needs to be, above all, well informed. On the other hand, companies will have to be better prepared to accommodate this kind of employee.

5.3 The existence of temporary manpower

The majority of the hotel interviewees (61.1%), consider their staff to be satisfactory and, for that reason, they do not see the need for hiring alternative labour. In general, such extra hiring occurs in 'high season' when there is an increase in the number of guests and when they need to replace employees who are on vacation. Such situations happen in companies that work with reduced staff, in order to cut costs, and in those companies that provide seasonal functions such as Christmas and New Year's Eve. General services, cooks, and housekeeping are the most required positions during such periods.

Once we know which positions companies have more difficulty in filling, it is possible to identify the reasons for such problems and to better stimulate the labour market in order to encourage new entrants. According to the interviewees, the main barrier to hiring in the hotel field in Sergipe is the low quality of manpower. Contradictorily, management needs to have such qualified professionals on their staff. However, they claim that such professionals are bound to refuse the positions on offer because of the low salary level that is offered by the State's hotel industry. This presents a major problem for the smaller companies because they do not have the opportunity to hire qualified professionals because they demand better salaries.

It was also observed that the main concern of senior management in the survey hotels and inns is about the hiring of receptionists, due to the importance of such positions. They also talked about the difficulty in finding waiters and cooks with good qualification levels. Positions relating to housekeeping and kitchen services were also mentioned, however, less frequently.

5.4 Main Manpower Deficiencies

After verifying the major of difficulties in hiring professional staff in the hotel sector, the most frequent deficiencies with regard to the performance of their jobs were also investigated. According to the interviewees, the most critical point related to employees' communication problems. Knowing how to serve guests, how to provide them with clear information, how to be "nice", to talk in a polite and formal way, how to "sell the hotel", and to maintain a good inter-relationship are the points that present the biggest deficiencies. Those responsible also complain about employees' lack of commitment, focus, and responsibility with regard to their duties. However, there is a proportion (41.7%) who assert that they do not have problems with manpower. The reason for this situation, they explain, is because their employees have been on their staff for a long time. So, they see themselves as being very much in tune with the company's rules and demands and that there has already been enough time to correct mistakes in the way that things are undertaken. According to them, corrections and improvements are part of an everyday process.

The study also sought to identify, specifically, the deficiencies relating to behavioural aspects of the manpower. It was observed that half the employers claim to be unhappy with the general educational level of their employees, and that includes, mainly, their commitment to the quality of the services, lack of discipline, attendance, and punctuality, lack of good manners, honesty and hygiene. However, the balance of managers (50%) assert that there are not behaviour problems in their companies.

5.5 Increase in the number of employees

It was reported that 66.7% of the interviewees do not intend to increase their staff. The main justification given by those who do not intend, at least at the present time, to increase the amount of manpower in their companies, was the fact that they consider their staff satisfactory for the activities that are performed in their establishments. To a lesser degree, the interviewees affirmed that they cannot hire new people because of the company's low profitability, caused by the low number of tourists visiting the State.

One third of the sample, consisting of those who plan to hire new employees, affirmed that they will do so under specific conditions, such as during 'high season', due to an increase in the number of hotel guests, as temporary replacements for employees who are on vacation, for renovation of the establishment in order to create more space to accommodate more guests and, as a last resort, for whenever there is an increase in the demand for tourism. For the two last options, the posts will not be temporary. This finding is at variance with European trends which are moving increasingly towards the engagement of flexible, non-permanent workers (Lai and Baum, 2005). The most in-demand kinds of professionals, under these circumstances are all the ones who belong to the operational area: cooks, general services, receptionists, waiters, and housekeeping.

The study also sought to identify the intention of the respondents with regard to the hiring of graduate professionals to work in their companies. It was found that the majority of respondents (52.8%) do not plan to hire applicants with a university degree. Among the justifications that were given, it is important to highlight companies' difficulties in offering salaries that would be compatible for university level, which are seen as representing a high cost to companies. Some of the interviewees (19.4%) do not consider it necessary to have graduates working in their companies. Examples of the answers given by respondents include:

"I do not intend to hire. I think it is difficult for a graduate professional to agree to making the low salary the hotel business offers". "I do not think about hiring graduate people because of the costs, it would be very expensive".

Among the 44.4% who showed interest in hiring graduate professionals, it was noted that they could be hired as managers, receptionists, and in the reservations area.

6 Manpower training needs

The needs for manpower training were analyzed in this study through the following indicators: required knowledge and skills, commitment, identification of training needs, and evaluation of training offers.

6.1 Required knowledge and skills

Respondents from the hotels and inns in this study were asked about the skills and kinds of knowledge they considered to be important in the hiring of their employees. Some of the answers can be better understood through the interviewees' own words, for instance: "to know how to serve the clients well", that is, to be able to provide the clients with information about tourist attractions and other pieces of information, to be kind and fast in solving problems. "To be communicative"- implies knowing how to get along well with the clients and co-workers and to be polite and friendly.

To be knowledgeable in the administrative as well as in the operational areas is considered to be the most important requirement when hiring managers. Besides that, the ability to deal with internal

and external clients was highlighted. In general, this study affirms that the manager needs to know about all the company's operational areas, to have a leadership profile in order to motivate teamwork and obtain quick and practical resolutions to problems, to know who to deal with internal and external clients, and to be communicative.

For the hiring of professionals such as office assistants, the requirement that is taken mostly into consideration is to have previous experience in the area. Knowing how to deal with ICT applications is also seen as fundamental for the performance of tasks related to this kind of position and, as in all the hotel positions, there is a need to be communicative and to have a good appearance.

The position of receptionist is of great importance to the hotel business because those working in this area deal directly with the public. The most important requirement for the hiring of this kind of professional is to be communicative. To have a healthy and neat appearance, as well as to know how to serve the clients well, are also part of the characteristics of the profile of those recruited to such posts. For this position, the interviewees consider previous experience to be an important factor, but not the most relevant one. As for knowing other languages, only two respondents mentioned such a requirement. However, it is considered to be a differentiator when hiring staff. This focus on generic skills rather than technical capabilities is consistent with Baum and Odger's (2001) findings in Europe.

The study found that qualified chefs are among the professionals that are more difficult to recruit in the in the specific study labour market. This finding is in line with general experience in the hospitality sector worldwide. It was also noted that such a shortage is due to the limited number of courses in that field offered by the State training agencies, providing such professionals with the technical knowledge that is essential for the performance of such activities. In order to hire such professionals, it is necessary for them to have specific knowledge in the field, previous experience, and knowledge of the complex hygiene environment. Characteristics such as being quick, not being wasteful, and having a neat appearance were also mentioned although less frequently. It was found that there are similar characteristics in the hiring of chefs and kitchen porters, in terms of skills pre-requisites.

6.2 Participation in training and the identification of training needs

A significant proportion (38.9%) of the interviewees affirmed that they do not train their staff. It is important to highlight that internal training, as the only way of training employees, is carried out by 27.8% of the consulted establishments and that all the companies that train their employees externally (33.3%) also provide internal training. It was noted that that the trainers, internal or external, need to keep up with the latest changes in the sector so that the quality of the training is guaranteed through the elimination of inappropriate work habits by trainees, and through their continued learning. In general, the training that is done internally happens during the period of induction of new employees when performing tasks or through periodic evaluations.

One of the objectives of the study was to identify the training needs of the professionals of the sector, based on the real needs of the hotel enterprises, from the perspective of the owners/managers. Initially, the study sought to identify the needs of those in the managerial area, and it found that only 11.1% of the interviewees mentioned that such training was not needed.

The others pointed out that courses in customer services, marketing and sales, languages, hotel, computing, and tourism are the most required for the position of manager. Only one of the interviewees mentioned business administration as being important for the managerial area. With regard to specific hotel operational areas, the most required courses were in reception and customer services, followed by ones offered in the areas of housekeeping, waiting, cooks, computing, sales, and languages.

6.3 Evaluation of the training offered

The interviewees also gave their opinions with regards to the offering of specific training in the hotel sector, provided by public and private agencies. The data demonstrates that only 25% are satisfied with the existing training provision in the State. The statements below illustrate their opinions:

“Perhaps the problem is not the lack of offering, but the lack of motivation of the Inns’ and Hotels’ owners in sending their employees to take courses”. “I think that the offering is good, the problem is that people don’t like to attend courses. SEBRAE is always offering courses in all kinds of areas and they invite people to take them”.

A proportion (27.8%) of those in hotel management, who were not able to give their opinions about courses on offer, made the following comments:

“I don’t know, because we rarely receive any correspondence, SEBRAE sends something once in a while”. “Nowadays, in the managerial area, there is only SEBRAE, even so, they don’t advertise to companies”

7 Conclusions

With regard to those working in the hospitality sector in Sergipe State, Brazil, it was found that workers have a low educational level, along with other factors, has implications in the level of salaries offered to such professionals. The occupations that are most in demand are receptionists and housekeeping, and the ones that receive the best salaries are maitre and manager. Due to the lack of qualified manpower, there are difficulties in hiring for positions of receptionist, waiter, and chef. The most frequent deficiencies of the professionals that are hired are, in general: communications, lack of commitment with regard to quality and professionalism due to a deficiency in professional training. This part of the study builds on the work of a number of authors who have addressed skills required of employees by hospitality employers (TAS, 1988; BAUM, 1991)

Few companies of the sector intend to increase their staff, and the majority of them do not intend to hire graduates when they do recruit. As for staff training, it was found that participation in external courses is still relatively limited, that not all companies show interest in providing training, and that a significant proportion of interviewees think that there is a shortage of qualified manpower in the State.

In general, the hotel companies in Sergipe face a dilemma. On one hand, they need qualified manpower because the quality of the services that are offered depends on these professionals because, most of the time, they deal directly with the clients. However, the salaries that are offered are low, which makes it difficult to hire people who are qualified and to train manpower that is already in-service, due to the costs that are involved in the training process. Besides this, the attitude towards manpower training do not seem appropriate as an expressive percentage of hotels do not train their employees at all. According to Arbache (2003), this is also the wider reality of the Brazilian hotel sector and this makes it clear that formal education has a direct correlation with salary offered, productivity, and individual performance at work, that is, individuals who have received better education and training are the ones who show better performance and, therefore, earn the best salaries.

This study, located in the emerging tourism destination of Brazil, provides a useful insight into labour market challenges faced by the hospitality sector in a developing country context. It complements a significant range of research studies which have been located within developed tourism economies and, interestingly, does not show dramatic differences from such work. Human resource practices

addressed in this paper are a good barometer of development within the tourism sector. The Sergipe experience points to a rapidly weakening labour market in the tourism and hospitality sector, a clear indicator of the maturation and growth of the tourism sector and the wider economy in the state.

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