

Knowledge Management in the Tourism Industry in Project Management Paradigm

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Abstract : Tourism is a complex socio-economic phenomenon, partly regulated by national tourism industries. The sustainable development of tourism in a region, country or in tourist destination depends on a number of factors (political, economic, social, cultural, legal and technological), the understanding and correct interpretation of which is invariably anthropocentric. It is logical that for the successful functioning of a tour operating company, it is necessary to ensure its sustainable development. Sustainable tourism is defined as tourism that fully considers its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, taking into account the needs of the industry, the environment and the host communities. For the business enterprise, sustainable development is defined as adopting business strategies and activities that meet the needs of the enterprise and its stakeholders today while protecting, sustaining and enhancing the human and natural resources that will be needed in the future. In addition to a systemic approach to the analysis of tourist destinations, each tourism project can and should be considered as a system characterized by a very high degree of variability, since each particular case of its implementation differs from the previous and subsequent ones, sometimes in a cardinal way. At the same time, it is important to understand that this variability is predominantly of anthropogenic nature (except for force majeure situations that are considered separately and afterwards). Knowledge management is the process of creating, sharing, using and managing the knowledge and information of an organization. It refers to a multidisciplinary approach to achieve organisational objectives by making the best use of knowledge. Knowledge management is seen as a key systems component that allows obtaining, storing, transferring, and maintaining information and knowledge in particular, in a long-term perspective. The study aims, firstly, to identify (1) the dynamic changes in the Italian travel industry in the last 5 years before the COVID19 pandemic, which can be considered the scope of force majeure circumstances, (2) the impact of the pandemic on the industry and (3) efforts required to restore it, and secondly, how project management tools can help to improve knowledge management in tour operating companies to maintain their sustainability, diminish potential risks and restore their pre-pandemic performance level as soon as possible. The pilot research is based upon a systems approach and has employed a pilot survey, semi-structured interviews, prior research analysis (aka literature review), comparative analysis, cross-case analysis, and modelling. The results obtained are very encouraging: PM tools can improve knowledge management in tour operating companies and secure the more sustainable development of the Italian tourism industry based on proper knowledge management and risk management.

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