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Human resource risk assessment in selected hotels in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship

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University of Szczecin, Poland E-mail: anna.tokarz-kocik@usz.edu.pl ORCID: 0000-0002-4129-045X **Abstract:** The objective of the article is to assess human resource risk in selected hotels. A theoretical part of the study is a result of the use of the desk research method. An empirical part includes the results of interviews with human resource managers conducted in five hotels located in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship and the assessment of the human resource risk level in the analyzed hotels. Respondents assessed two elements: the probability of occurring risk events and their impact on a hotel. The human resource risk level is a product of these two parameters expressed in points. Due to a limited number of research entities, the article involves the analysis of the case study. Therefore, the research findings cannot be generalized with regard to the whole industry. However, they can serve as the basis for a discussion on the phenomenon of human resource risk in the hotel industry and its impact on work efficiency, thus the functioning of the whole organization.

Keywords: risk, human resources, personnel, hotel

1. Introduction

A paradigm shift currently taking place in management, which involves valuing employees' knowledge and commitment as key factors of the market success, results in attaching greater importance to human capital in the structure of hotel resources which is defined as the stock of knowledge, skills, health and motivation to work which people possess.

In literature on the subject (Barro 2001; Becker 2002; Becker 2009), there are at least two key features of human capital emphasized. Firstly, it is characterized by non-transferable property rights which means that through an employment agreement an employer acquires solely a right to use employee's skills in a given manner, but they do not become their owners. Secondly, human resources differ from the other factors of production in terms of the fact that they can become an unreliable element of a company, especially when they are not properly

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managed. People managing these resources should accept human diversity and simultaneously develop conditions enabling employees to use their abilities for the benefit of a company.

The special role of human resources in the hotel industry stems from dominating significance of an intangible element (service) in the structure of a hotel company product. A functional nature of a service causes that the behaviour and aptitudes of employees serving customers have a great impact on the usability of a final product as the personnel taking part in the process of providing services are perceived as its integral part.

On the one hand, hiring employees determines achieving hotel company's goals and its market position, but on the other hand it is a source of risk which may undermine the market position of a hotel company caused by inappropriate employees' attitudes and behaviours, and result in the provision of a product of quality that does not meet customer expectations. The inappropriate behaviour of incompetent and demotivated personnel can negatively affect the functioning of a hotel company and the profit levels.

The objective of the article is to assess human resource risk in selected hotels. For the purpose of the study, the following research hypothesis was formulated:

The method of human resource management (especially in terms of motivating) determines the level of human resource risk in a hotel company.

The article is the result of literature studies and empirical research conducted in five hotels in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship.

The reason for an attempt to assess human resource risk in hotels in this article is the fact that the issue has been scarcely discussed in the literature on the subject. There are numerous publications dealing with the problem of human resource management in service companies or general issues connected with risk management. However, there are very few studies combining these two fields and addressing problems connected with human resources as a source of risk in an organization. The review of articles published since 2000 in a wide range of high-quality management journals shows that limited research was conducted in terms of the perspective of risk management with regard to human resources (Becker and Smidt, 2016). In terms of the presented approach, the issues of human resource risk in the hotel industry discussed in the article have not been subject to a scientific discussion in Polish and foreign literature. This article supplements a theoretical gap in terms of analyzing relations between human resource management and human resource risk. The article also fills out an empirical gap stemming from the poor recognition of human resource risk in service companies, especially from the hotel industry.

2. Risk essence

Risk is a common phenomenon under market economy conditions. It is an inherent property of any decisions made by a human.

The analysis of the literature on the subject clearly indicates the coexistence of many parallel interpretations of risk. A scientific discussion focuses on relations between risk and such terms as uncertainty, probability of events, threats, above-average benefits. The way of perceiving risk has been changing over time. It is clearly noticeable that the first considerations about the nature of risk within the field of economics focused on the comparison of colloquial and scientific terms of risk and uncertainty as well as their significance in the context of

probability theory. They constituted works by pioneers which were polemical and definitely incomplete, however, they paved the way for further development of knowledge about risk in economics (Urbanowska-Sojkin, 2013).

In the neoclassical trend of the analysis of risk connected with the functioning of a company, a fundamental category around which considerations about risk focused was profit (Knight, 1921; Modigliani and Miller, 1958). Given the fact that in the conditions of uncertainty a profit is a variable, two following principles of defining risk were adopted in research:

- the operations of a company are governed by the value of possible profit fluctuations;
- the operations of a company are governed by the value of expected profits.

In the event of the existence of two possible investment options producing the same expected profit according to projections, an entrepreneur chooses that investment option in which the expected profit fluctuation is lower.

The next group of risk researchers (defensive trend) consider it only as a negative phenomenon, as the possibility of a loss. The main representatives of this trend are German economists: F. Philipp and W. Mellwig. The first describes risk as "the possibility of making a wrong decision" (Philipp, 1967). According to W. Mellwig, risk is "danger of achieving an adverse effect" (1972).

Summing up the above considerations, it should be claimed that from the point of view of effects two approaches to risk can be distinguished. The negative concept interprets risk as the possibility of failure to achieve expected effects, therefore, risk is associated with a set of negative terms such as *threat*, *loss*, *danger*, *damage*.

The second concept—neutral one—is based on the assumption that risk is neither a positive nor negative phenomenon. It mainly approaches risk as a state of uncertainty about future effects of particular events. Their result is better or worse than expected, therefore, risk in some situations is an opportunity and in others it is a threat. As part of the neutral approach, risk is also interpreted as the possibility of achieving an effect other than intended (expected), however, without assessing whether this effect will be positive or negative (Jajuga, 2008).

Over the centuries of development of societies, the approach to risk has also evolved: from identifying it with fate, a merciless force determining the course of events, to perceiving it as a phenomenon which may be recognized, measured, managed and controlled.

3. Human resource risk in the hotel industry

The main problem in the functioning of modern hotel companies is the fact that there is no certainty with regard to activities. Threats that occur when conducting business activity may lead a company to bankruptcy and a list of risk factors is long and diverse. Their common characteristic is the fact that they directly affect the financial situation of an entity. By contributing to generating specific types of costs or increasing sales revenue, they imply the level of effectiveness of human resource and investment decisions which is reflected in the company's situation. Therefore, it is of great significance to identify risk factors which may affect the functioning of a given entity.

One of the types of risk is human resource risk, that is the risk connected with an organization's social system. It can be defined as "involvement under conditions of uncertainty in ac-

tivities concerning personnel which may prove unsuccessful" (Lipka, 2002a, p. 24). Exposing itself to danger, a company may significantly increase not only its chances of survival, but also its chances of development, and human capital may be enriched. Depending on speed and accuracy of the undertaken human resource activities, it can pose a threat to (loss for) or be an opportunity for business activity.

Human resource risk is not a homogenous category which means that many partial types of risk can be distinguished, namely (Tokarz-Kocik 2012):

- recruitment risk—failure to adjust labour demand and supply in quantitative and qualitative terms;
- selection risk—is a decision-making situation which involves opportunities and threats arising from employing a given person on the basis of adopted selection criteria;
- evaluation risk connected with the process of developing, formulating and expressing personal attributes, employee's behaviour at work and the results they obtain;
- risk of investment in employees' development, including the following partial types of human resource risk: the risk of the lack of employees' willingness to develop; the risk of the lack of expenditure on human capital; the risk of leaving work by employees who the company invested in; the risk of a gap between personnel's knowledge and skills;
- motivational risk—consequences for a company resulting from a specific selection of motivational tools towards particular employees;
- risk of occurring abnormal conduct, including conduct not following business ethics;
- risk of redundancy may be connected with such processes as restructuring, privatization, mergers (the costs of severance pay, a new recruitment process, training for a new employee).

Human resource activities are subject to recruitment risk arising from the changeability of phenomena in the labour market. The above phenomena build up due to the growing mobility of society and migration risk, and thus human resource risk becomes increasingly multidimensional and changes dynamically over time. Labour market expansion due to the Polish membership in the European Union provides more possibilities of searching an attractive job by employees and intensifies economic migration. For Polish companies, it is a challenge in terms of a growth of competitiveness which goes beyond national borders and also makes it necessary to open up to immigrants from other countries (Bizon-Górecka, 2009).

Selection risk is connected with the lack of certainty in terms of the choice of employees as people who should enrich hotel human resources. Therefore, it includes a threat that instead of multiplying human capital qualitatively it will lead to its impoverishment with all related consequences.

The next function of human resource management, that is evaluation, is subject to a special risk due to difficulties with a selection of relevant evaluation techniques. Nevertheless, resigning from evaluation to not make mistakes is not a right solution as evaluation results are known to constitute a starting point for various human resource decisions. When determining the level of evaluation risk, the level of objectivity of evaluation procedures performed in a company should be taken into account, including an appraisal interview.

The motivation function also involves risk. The highest risk level corresponds with obtaining a result which is the opposite of motivational activities, that is the state of employees' demotivation, despite particular expenditure on satisfying employees' needs in a better way.

Leading to that may result from failure to notice the types of risk at the operational level occurring when applying specific financial and non-financial incentives.

Excessive, insufficient as well as improperly targeted managers' efforts aiming at developing attitudes and behaviours of employees may be harmful. An incentive scheme should be not only consistent with the general strategy of a company (including: sub-strategy of cost development), but also compatible with the requirements of the company's environment (i.e. attracting right job candidates). Failure to meet any of the above requirements that modern incentive schemes face increases motivational risk, thus the risk of a hotel as an employer (McGee and Rennie, 2012).

Due to the service aspect of a hotel product, the measurement of social dysfunctions and preventive actions that can be undertaken in this respect is of great significance for the functioning of a company. The mentioned social dysfunctions have specific financial implications which translate into a decrease in work efficiency, an increase in the number (cost) of mistakes as well as a decrease in trust in a service provider experienced by both corporate and individual clients. When the possibilities of reducing negative phenomena in the form of various abnormal behaviours are considered, it is possible to obtain social effects (e.g. improving the working atmosphere) as well as economic ones (a higher level of motivation to work smoothly and efficiently).

As there is a variety of risks, a key problem for entrepreneurs in the hotel industry is defining sources of human resource risk, the extent and impact it can have on the conducted activity, and then undertaking activities aiming at reducing risk.

4. Research methodology

this phenomenon grows.

An initial stage of the analysis of human resource risk is identifying its sources. A static approach to potential opportunities and threats without any measure is insufficient for an organization as it does not provide information necessary to rank risk factors according to their significance to the functioning of a hotel. Therefore, in the next stage types of risks distinguished at the identification stage have to be assessed.

The assessment involves attributing relevant categories to specific types of risk. In practice, it requires analyzing two aspects:

- susceptibility of a given factor to unexpected changes, i.e. the probability of occurrence of some event;
- and consequences of these changes, that is the impact of the event on company's results. It requires determining the so-called subjective probability as human resource events are usually of an individual nature, so it is not possible to determine their objective probability referring to mass and repeatable events (Lipka, 2002b, p. 59). Therefore, this stage involves connecting losses with the probability of their occurrence. The risk of activity increases when the probability of the occurrence of a given event increases or when the scale of effects of

The assessment of human resource risk in the hotel industry was conducted in five hotels in Poland which represent all standards according to hotel rating (1–5 stars). Among the hotels, there were three chain hotels and two independent hotels. The hotel selection was purposive.

To assess the level of human resource risk in the analyzed hotels, the author used her original method based on the research on the opinions of hotel managers responsible for human resource

policies. The method of a structured interview was used combining the advantages of an interview and a survey. The questionnaire included a list of factors illustrating specific aspects of human resource risk. The interview involved two stages. In the first one, respondents answered the question: "How probable is it that the phenomenon listed in the table will happen in the analyzed hotel?" The options of answers corresponded with the five-point scale defining the probability of occurrence:

- 1-rare;
- 2—unlikely;
- 3—moderate;
- 4—likely;
- 5—very likely to occur.

In the second part of the interview, respondents assessed hypothetical impact of the occurrence of a given event on the functioning of a hotel. When answering, respondents could choose one of five options:

- 1-marginal impact;
- 2—minor impact;
- 3—moderate impact;
- 4—major impact;
- 5—extreme impact.

On the basis of the respondents' answers, the indicators of human resource risk level (HRRL) for specific events, separately for each analyzed hotel, were calculated.

The level of risk is a resultant (product) of two parameters expressed in points, i.e. the probability of risk occurrence and its potential impact on a company. Due to a five-point scale of both probability and impact of risk occurrence, the level of a given type of risk could adopt values from 1 to 25. It was assumed that for the HRRL indicator of a value:

- from 15 to 25—risk is high,
- from 8 to 12—risk is moderate.
- from 1 to 6—risk is low.

The Table 2 shows findings of the interview.

Table 2. Human resource risk factors in five hotels in Poland

 incorrect selection of assessment methods (excessive costs, incomplete information about an employee) 	2	2	w		-	6	ю	2	4	33	9	9	9	4	3
m) lack of employees' knowledge of assessment criteria	2	2	3		-	4	4	2	S	4	∞	∞	9	5	4
n) failure to use assessment results during further human resource decisions (e.g. about remuneration)	2	7	ĸ	-	1	4	5	3	2	4	∞	10	6	5	4
o) lack of clear promotion procedures (career paths)		2	3	2	-	4	4	3	4	4	4	∞	6	∞	4
p) pathological phenomena in a hotel (employee theft of, e.g. alcohol, cleaning agents)	-	-	7	3	2	S	5	4	v.	4	5	v.	∞	15	∞
q) stealing from hotel guests					-	5	5	4	5	5	2	5	4	5	2
r) high voluntary turnover of receptionists			2	4	-	5	4	3	4	5	2	4	9	16	2
s) high voluntary turnover of porters ^a	ı		-		-	- 1	4	С	ж	5	ı	4	3	3	2
t) high voluntary turnover of room attendants			-	4	-	4	4	С	2	S	4	4	3	∞	2
u) high voluntary turnover of chefs			2	2	2	4	4	3	ж	3	4	4	9	9	9
v) high voluntary turnover of waiters, bartenders	1	1	2	2	2	4	4	3	4	5	4	4	9		10
w) high voluntary turnover of managers	1	1	1	2	1	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	∞	4
$x)\ \ high\ voluntary\ turnover\ of\ marketing\ employees^a$	1	1	3	5	1	-	4	4	4	4	1	4	12	20	4
y) reduced quality of service due to improper behaviour of personnel	1	1	2	3	1	5	4	4	5	3	5	4	8	15	3
 z) losing by a hotel the reputation of a good employer as a result of improper human resource activities 	1	1	2	3	1	5	4	4	5	4	5	4		15	4

 $\ensuremath{^{\text{a}}}$ No answers in a 1-star hotel because the listed positions are not present there.

Source: Author's own elaboration based on primary research results.

The findings showed in Table 2 indicate that managers perceive risk in hotels quite differently and it does not depend directly on the category of a hotel where the respondent works.

The occurrence of the majority of human resource events presented in Table 2 in 1-, 2- and 3-star hotels as well as 5-star hotels was assessed by respondents as rare or unlikely; only the manager of the 4-star hotel marked that the excessive turnover of receptionists and room attendants is likely, and the turnover of marketing employees is very likely. It follows that due to the complexity of human nature and diverse conditions for activities each hotel company should assess human resource risk individually. It can be confirmed when comparing the answers of the managers of 4- and 5-star hotels concerning the event marked in the table with the letter x, i.e. high turnover of marketing employees. The manager of the 4-star hotel considered this event as very likely and with major impact on the hotel functioning, whereas the manager of the 5-star hotel (that is a hotel of a similar category) marked the answer—rare. It is worth emphasizing that both hotels are located in seaside resorts where there is the so-called employee's market. The cause of the excessive turnover of marketing employees in the 4-star hotel was a high risk of conflicts between employees, and this was not the case in the 5-star hotel.

The results of the second part of the research concerning potential consequences of an event on the functioning of a hotel were less diverse. Respondents most often chose the answer options—"major" or "extreme" impact of the event on hotel operations. The next step in risk assessment is preparing the so-called risk map as part of which the level of risk for the organization is analyzed (Rudnicki 2008, p. 14). Scores, including the presentation of risk in the form of a 5 × 5 matrix for the analyzed hotels, are presented in Figure 1.

IMPACT					
Extreme 5	5 1*—a, g, i, p, q, r, w, y, z 2*—a, p, q 3*—w 4*—e, m, n, q 5*—k, q, r, s, t,	10 1*—e, f 2*—n 4*—f, g, i 5*—v	15 4*—a, p, y, z	20	25
Major 4	2*—r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z 3*—q	3*—a, p, y, z 4*—j, k, o, v, w	12 1*—h 2*—b, c, d, i 3*—x 5*—j	16 4*—r	20 4*—x
Moderate 3	3 1*—s 3*—s, t 4*—s 5*—b, d, l, y	6 1*—1 2*—1 3*—b, c, e, g, r, u, v 4*—u 5*—u	3*—f, i, j, n, o	12 4*—d	15
Minor 2	2 3*—d	4	6 3*—h, k, l, m 5*—a	8 4*—t	10
Marginal 1	5*—g, h	2	3	4	5
	Rare 1	Unlikely 2	Moderate 3	Likely 4	Very likely 5
				PROB	ABILITY

1*, 2*, 3*, 4*, 5*—the category of the analyzed hotel (from 1 to 5 stars)

Letters *a*–*z* mean human resource threats listed in the first column of Table 2.

Figure 1. Map of human resource risk in the analyzed hotels

S o u r c e: Author's own elaboration based on primary research results.

In order to assess risk, the following scale was applied:

- high risk (15–25)—significantly affects key hotel operations; makes performing tasks and objectives impossible; generates financial losses; requires taking immediate corrective measures;
- moderate risk (8–12)—potentially affects key hotel operations; poses a threat to performing tasks and objectives; poses a threat to financial losses; requires regular monitoring and verification as well as taking proper measures;

- low risk (1–6)—does not affect key hotel operations; does not block performing tasks and objectives; requires monitoring and observation.

High risk was identified exclusively in the 4-star hotel for the following events:

- lack of people willing to work in a hotel (risk marked in Table 2 and in Figure 1 with the letter a);
- pathological phenomena in a hotel (risk marked in Table 2 and in Figure 1 with the letter p);
- high turnover of receptionists (risk marked in Table 2 and in Figure 1 with the letter r);
- high turnover of marketing employees (risk marked in Table 2 and in Figure 1 with the letter x);
- reducing the quality of service due to improper behaviour of personnel (risk marked in Table 2 and in Figure 1 with the letter *y*);
- losing by a hotel the reputation of a good employer as a result of improper human resource activities (risk marked in Table 2 and in Figure 1 with the letter z).

The types of risk listed above require taking immediate corrective measures.

In the case of the remaining analyzed hotels (1-, 2-, 3- and 5-star hotels) human resource risk is moderate and low, which means that they have to be monitored.

Specific features of a hotel product (such as uniqueness, personal contact when providing services) cause that employees' skills and attitudes affect hotel guest satisfaction, thus hotel financial results. The inappropriate behaviour of demotivated personnel can negatively affect the functioning of a hotel company and the profit levels. In order to reduce human resource risk in hotels, it is important to analyze the level of fulfilment of specific employees' needs constantly and minimize negative effects of inconsistent human resource activities through developing a coherent system of financial and non-financial incentives affecting subordinates' behaviours.

5. Conclusion

Determining the level of human resource risk enables evaluating and prioritizing it, that is sorting the identified and assessed types of risk by the extent to which the risk poses a threat to the performance of the tasks and objectives of a hotel. With regard to all identified and assessed types of risk, a proper type of risk response should be determined.

The case studies presented in the article confirmed that:

- the level of human resource risk depends considerably on the management and methods of motivating employees;
- proper human resource management (especially appropriate motivational activities) reduces human resource risk and leads to a higher level of employee commitment, whereas inappropriate motivational activities result in an increase in human resource turnover in hotels;
- the process of motivating consciously requires that managers have high abilities enabling them to understand employees' needs and skills to predict the motivational effectiveness of specific incentives; this in turn means the necessity of surveying employees' expectations regularly and determining individual hierarchies of particular incentives.

It is important that a hotel monitors employees' opinions due to several reasons. Firstly, it is often the only reliable source of knowledge of employees' needs as well as their assessment of a hotel as an employer. Secondly, it enables allocating funds properly and developing

long-term plans concerning personnel, and it is an instrument warning of upcoming threats. Moreover, from the point of view of employees, personnel opinion surveys are a clear signal that the company management is interested in the opinions of employees and takes them into account when making important decisions.

Due to a limited number of research entities, the article involves the analysis of the case study. Therefore, the research findings cannot be generalized with regard to the whole industry. However, they can serve as the basis for a discussion on the phenomenon of human resource risk in the hotel industry and its impact on work efficiency, thus the functioning of the whole organization.

One might also consider further research including new factors determining employees' behaviour: individual and macroeconomic ones, as well as the analysis of their impact on the human resource risk level. It is also worth extending the research (e.g. generalizing it across Poland) as well as applying less subjective instruments of measurement.

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Ocena ryzyka personalnego w wybranych hotelach w województwie zachodniopomorskim

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest ocena ryzyka personalnego w wybranych przedsiębiorstwach hotelarskich. Część teoretyczna opracowania jest wynikiem wykorzystania metody badawczej desk research. W części empirycznej przedstawiono wyniki wywiadów przeprowadzonych z menedżerami personalnymi w pięciu hotelach zlokalizowanych w województwie zachodniopomorskim i dokonano oceny poziomu ryzyka personalnego w badanych obiektach. Respondenci oceniali dwa elementy: prawdopodobieństwo wystapienia zda-

rzeń ryzykownych oraz wielkość ich skutków dla hotelu. Poziom ryzyka personalnego jest iloczynem tych dwóch wyrażonych punktowo parametrów. Ze względu na ograniczoną liczbę podmiotów badawczych artykuł ma charakter analizy studium przypadku. Stąd też rezultatów badań nie można uogólniać na całą branżę. Mogą one jednak stanowić podstawę do dyskusji nad zjawiskiem ryzyka personalnego w hotelarstwie i jego wpływu na efektywność pracy, a w rezultacie na funkcjonowanie całej organizacji.

Słowa kluczowe: ryzyko, zasoby ludzkie, personel, hotel