

## CURRENT FEATURES OF TOURISM EMPLOYEES IN CROATIA

**Mato Bartoluci**  
**Danijela Ferjanić Hodak**

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### **Abstract**

The complexity and fragmentation of tourism leads to the question whether and to what extent is possible to determine the exact number of employees that can be attributed to tourism, which is the reason for choosing this topic for the research. First aim of the paper is to explain the complexity of labour force in tourism. Paper includes comparative analysis of tourism employment in Croatia and EU 27 countries. Second aim of the paper is to reexamine features of tourism employees: high seasonality, higher average age of employees, lower level of education, and higher share of employed women, which represents the main research question of the paper. Results and findings of the paper are based on the secondary research. Used research methods include: analysis of the existing theoretical and practical findings, the analysis of the relevant research findings available from secondary data sources, analysis of selected cases and case comparisons and descriptive statistics for the data analysis. The findings of the research showed constant growth in number of persons employed in accommodation and food service sector, both in Croatia and EU 27 countries. Total employment in EU 27 countries in analyzed period has also increased, but at a lower rate, while in Croatia it has declined, which shows the importance of tourism for the entire economy. The analysis of features of tourism employees showed that the age structure in analyzed activity has changed, which is, according to authors, the main contribution of the paper.

**Keywords** labour market, tourism employment, specifics of tourism employees, Croatia

### **INTRODUCTION**

The accelerated economic development conditioned by the development of technology and automation of the production replaces human labor in large scale and leads to labour redundancies in the primary and secondary sector, which is one of the reasons for the increase in unemployment, both in developed as well as in developing countries. Furthermore, "the labour market is currently experiencing strong dynamics due to increasingly diverse factors, among which: technological development, population migration, its ageing, etc." (Lupu, Tanase, Nica, 2014, 800). Labour surplus partly absorbs in the tertiary sector. "The service sector is becoming increasingly important carrier of economy and the level of employment in these activities becomes an important indicator of economic strength and development of specific region" (Pirjevec and Kesar 2002, 133). Service sector is responsible for 40% of the GDP of developing countries and for more than 65% of the GDP of developed countries (Cooper et al. 2008, 129-130). The importance and the dominant role of human labour in the service sector is emphasized by the term "moment of truth" which can be defined as the interaction between the client and the organization on the basis of which client

evaluates the quality of provided service (Baum 1993, 23), respectively, in a broader context, the moment when something important happens which will affect the future (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/the-moment-of-truth>). Although the importance of the human factor is largely reflected in the entire service sector, in tourism “people and the work organization are certainly among the most important development factors” (Cicvarić 1990, 159). “In tourism, the impact of some major technological characteristics on human factors (automation, robotics, computerization) are limited, and due to that, human factor has special position and role in the development of tourism” (Bartoluci, Čavlek et al. 2007, 30). However, while technological development does not result in reducing the number of employees in tourism, it greatly affects the structure of employment, and leads not only to the elimination of some jobs and the emergence of new, but also to changes in business activities in tourism (Baum 2007, 1391). The ability to embrace changes in business activity determine changes in the structure of employment in tourism, because, regardless of the available technology options on the market, structure of employees can begin to change only by the application of those changes.

The complexity and fragmentation of tourism leads to the question whether and to what extent is possible to determine the exact number of employees that can be attributed to tourism. Furthermore, in order to understand the problems of employment in tourism, it is necessary to analyze the specific characteristics of tourism which determine characteristics and structure of labour force in tourism. The domination of the female labour force, a greater proportion of employees with a lower level of education and qualifications and domination of older employees are that cited characteristics of tourism employees. On the other hand, the dynamism of the tourism market and technological developments lead to changes in the structure of employment in general, as well as in tourism, and therefore they need to be revised, which has been done in the paper.

First aim of the paper is to explain the complexity of labour force in tourism, which also includes explanation on tourism employment statistics and possible misleading. Second aim of the paper is to reexamine features of tourism employees, which has arisen from the fact that the vast majority of authors indicates that tourism industry, in comparison with labour market in general, is one with high seasonality, higher average age of employees, lower level of education, and higher share of employed women, which represents the main research question of the paper. To achieve set objectives of the paper (to provide an explanation of the complexity of labour force and to compare tourism employment in Croatia and EU 27 countries, to reexamine features of tourism employees) authors used relevant literature concerning tourism employment in general, as well as data collected from the official statistical reports and relevant websites. Results and findings of the paper are based on the secondary research. Used research methods include: analysis of the existing theoretical and practical findings related to the subject of the research, the analysis of the relevant research findings available from secondary data sources, analysis of selected cases and case comparisons and descriptive statistics for the data analysis.

## 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Kesar and Obadić (2003, 2) state that tourism must be considered and treated as a hybrid macro-economic system, not only as an economic branch. Despite the fact that tourism is considered as a business, industry or sector, it is possible and only properly defined as "highly sophisticated integrated system within the national economy whose scope and structure goes beyond the economic categories of activity, branch, industry or sector, and make it together connected, heterogeneous, interdependent and complementary fragments that together make up a logical, functional and balanced unit" (Kesar in Čavlek Bartoluci, Prebežac, Kesar et al. 2011, 243).

The employment function is one of the basic functions of tourism and can be defined as a "generator of new jobs as part of the main economic activities in the tourism, but also a series of other economic activities which are a function of the supply system activities that directly provide services to visitors" (Kesar in Čavlek et al. 2011, 270). Employment in tourism is often used as a tool for boosting economic growth and development (Liu and Wall 2006, 159), because, as Moutinho (2005, 254) states, "tourism creates the majority of jobs in the world and has a great importance for both developed and developing countries".

Baum (1993, 8) explains that the large number of economic activities and sectors involved in tourism practically disables experts to define the exact number of employees who belong to the tourism system, as well as it is not possible to be certain that any job classification in tourism is accurate. The majority of authors agree that, together with the direct employment in tourism, the indirect employment has an important role and has to be considered in analysis. Direct employment includes employment in the field of fundamental economic activities that belong to tourism, which includes catering, tourist mediators, marketing and retail, while indirect employment includes employment in all other related economic activities which are, to a greater or lesser extent, directed on the development tourism and income achieved on this basis (Kesar in Čavlek et al. 2011, 271). Chernyshev (2009, 5) states that one workplace in direct tourism employment generates 1.5 workplace in the context of indirect employment in tourism. This indicator largely depends on the development of tourism and the overall economy of a country. The only two economic activities that, according to Cicvarić (1990, 85), "are fully developed for tourism" are hospitality industry and tourism intermediaries. That is not totally correct, considering the fact that the part of hospitality industry doesn't belong only to tourism. The only activities that belong exclusively to tourism are accommodation and tourist intermediation which means that all of their effects can be fully attributed to tourism. Those activities create basis for all other tourist activities and the only fully belong to the system of tourism. On the other hand, there is a great number of economic activities which participate in tourism.

The importance of tourism employment is evident through the employment multiplier which can be defined as "an increase in the number of new jobs as a result of new employment in tourism" (Kesar in Čavlek et al. 2011, 271). For example, an increase in tourist arrivals and overnight stays in destination leads to an increase in demand for employees in the tourism, which results in direct and indirect employment of people in

the tourism system. These employees will spend their income according to personal needs and preferences, which will lead to new employment in, for example, trade, public sector or education, which is ultimately a consequence of tourism development. In many countries, tourism encourages creation of new jobs and greatly contributes to the general welfare (Bečić and Črnjar 2009, 206). As stated by Kesar and Obadić (2003, 6) in the countries which are largely dependent on tourism the share of direct tourism can reach 50%. In most countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), this share is around 20%, while the most developed tourist destinations, which are also the developed countries, the tourism employs only 5% of the total workforce. The importance of tourism employment in total employment at the global level is evident from the data of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC 2017, 4), according to which in 2016 the number of people directly employed in tourism 108,741,000, which is 3,6% of total employment. These data includes employees in hotels, travel agencies and tour operators, airlines and other services in passenger transport and other activities directly connected with tourism. The total contribution of tourism employment (number of direct and indirect employees) in 2016 was 9.6% (292,220,000 employees). Tourism strongly contributes to the economic development of Croatia, which can be seen from different economic indicators. World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimated that in 2016 proportion of direct tourism employment in total employment in Croatia was 10% (138,000 employees), which means that every tenth employee in Croatia was directly employed in tourism. Furthermore, WTTC estimated indirect tourism employment on 23.4% (321,500 employees), which implies that, in 2016, every fourth employee in Croatia was indirect connected with tourism. Although tourism undoubtedly has a very important role in the total employment, shown data should be taken with a grain of salt for two reasons. The first is already described the inability of a clear resolution of employees in individual activities which belong to the system of tourism, and the other is, according Leiper (1999, 605) deliberately "inflating" the data with the aim of encouraging individual country to make additional efforts and resources in the development of tourism.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Inability of creating the exact number of employees in tourism greatly complicates the collection and processing of data related to the labor market in tourism at the national, and ultimately on the international level where the comparability of data should be enabled. A number of international organizations in the field of tourism and labor constantly create standards and classifications aiming to facilitate the collection and analysis of data, to ensure their accuracy and comparability and to assist countries in developing national classifications and associated methodology. In the analysis authors used relevant data retrieved from the Eurostat database (the statistical office of the European Union), which ensures their mutual comparability. Information contained in the database are collected at the national level, and the instrument used is the Labor Force Survey (EU LFS) adapted to the classification system of each country. Classification systems used for economic activities are NACE Rev. 1 and NACE Rev. 2, whereas for the occupations classification and education level are ISCO 88, ISCO and ISCED 08, 1997. In Croatia, the Labor Force Survey is carried out in 1996, and it collects data on the economically active population or labor force as recommended by

the ILO. This continuous quarterly survey in Croatia is conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics on the basis of the Official Statistics Act and according to the Program of Statistical Surveys of Republic of Croatia. The study uses the following classifications: NACE 2007, the NCO 2010 (National Classification of Occupations), ICSE (International Standard Classification of status in employment) and ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education). All these classifications are compatible with international classifications, which allow comparability of data.

A problem that was observed in the analysis of data is the distinction in the number of employed and unemployed persons in the CES of data obtained LFS. The main reason for this lies in the fact that the Register contains data on all employed and unemployed persons in Croatia, while the results of the surveys are assessed on the basis of a representative sample of households. Furthermore, data from the Registry shows the last day of each month, while the Survey presented data for a particular, reference week. The data is taken from the Registry on a monthly basis, while the survey is carried out every three months. In the paper, authors used the data used data obtained by the Labor Force Survey because they areas are comparable to EU 27 countries. One of the limitations of this analysis is the inability to display the total number of employees in tourism as a result of the above described complexity of tourism system. The Eurostat database provides data for accommodation and food service activities for the analyzed period (2011 to 2015) which makes up the vast majority of tourism employment, and therefore can be considered relevant.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The table shows the total number of employees and number of employees in the accommodation and food service sector in the EU 27 and Croatia, the share of accommodation in total number of employees, as well as chain indices.

Table 1: **The total number of employees (000) and the number of persons employed in the accommodation and food service sector in the EU 27 and Croatia in the period from 2011 to 2015**

	<b>Employment</b>	<b>2011.</b>	<b>2012.</b>	<b>2013.</b>	<b>2014.</b>	<b>2015.</b>
<b>EU 27</b>	Total employment	214,593.7	214,245.0	213,890.9	216,768.6	219,255.9
	Index	100	99,8	99,7	101	102,2
	Accommodation and food service sector	9,525.6	9,587.6	9,542.1	9,843.0	10,236.3
	Index	100	100,7	100,2	103.3	107,5
	Share of the accommodation and food service sector	4,4	4,5	4,5	4,5	4,7

	<b>Employment</b>	<b>2011.</b>	<b>2012.</b>	<b>2013.</b>	<b>2014.</b>	<b>2015.</b>
<b>Croatia</b>	Total employment	1,624.9	1,566.1	1,524.0	1,565.7	1,585.3
	Index	100	96,4	93,8	96,4	97,6
	Accommodation and food service sector	89,7	89,3	94,0	95,5	102,3
	Index	100	99,6	104,8	106,5	114
	Share of the accommodation and food service sector	5,5	5,7	6,2	6,1	6,5

Source: Eurostat (available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>)

The table shows decline in total number of employees in the EU 27 countries in 2012 and 2013 compared to the base year and an increase of 1% in 2014 and 2% in 2015. Despite the decline in total employment in the EU 27 countries, the number of persons employed in accommodation and food service sector recorded a constant growth in according to the base year, and its share in total employment is also progressive. In Croatia, the number of employees is constantly declining, while the number of persons employed in accommodation and food service sector in 2015 increased by 14% compared to the base year, and its share in total employment in the same year was even 6.5%.

The analyzed data support the fact that the often underlined importance of tourism role in the employment is a consequence of tourism contribution to economic growth and development, and the increasing number of tourism employees. On the other hand, the fact that needs to be mentioned is that the majority of jobs in tourism are relatively low-paid jobs that are generally considered to require no special skills or qualifications. "A qualified workforce is considered to be one with certain educational phase and some work experience required for position to which they will be employed" (Kovačević 2001, 69), as tourism is often not the case. Some of the reasons are evident from the tourism system specifics which determine the specifics of the labor market and labor force in the tourism.

Riley (in Baum, ed. 1993, 48), among other globally applicable specifics of the labor market in tourism, states seasonal employment as a result of seasonality of tourism, which undoubtedly affects all aspects of the tourism offer, as well as the labor market, where the labour demand is increased during the summer, leading to seasonal employment. One of the aspects affected is innovation. For instance, Zontek (2016, 61) points out the fact that "in service sector, especially in tourism, human resources are the source of values for innovation", but the seasonality affects innovation in negative way, since employees stay in a company only in summer period, and consequently, can not give an effort to innovation in a large extent. Furthermore, due to the increased labour demand, it is difficult to find quality labour force, which often leads to hiring employees who do not have the necessary qualifications or experience for the job at which they received. "Despite the fact that many jobs in tourism require few hard skills and should therefore be open to a wide labour market, human resource managers report a dearth of qualified applicants" (Terry, 2015,111). Many employees usually work in the company only during the season and therefore are not additionally educated and trained for the job they do because the employer thinks it is not worth to invest in

employees who will remain at the company only during the season. Moreover, beside education and training, “modern tourism employee” should have highly developed communication skills and emotional intelligence to gain success in the modern tourism labour market (Donina and Grizane, 2015, 30). Riley (in Baum, ed. 1993) lists few other specifics such as transferability of skills from organization to organization, rigidity within the organization (employees do not change position within the organization except in the case of promotion) and a large share of jobs that are very easy to overcome and do not require special qualifications.

Along with the previously mentioned high proportion of employees with lower level of education and qualifications, and a high proportion of seasonal employment, Pirjevec and Kesar (2002, 139) reported a high level of female workers and domination of older employees. The high proportion of female workers can be explained by the fact that majority of work in tourism fits the basic characteristics of female labor force. For example, in the hotel business jobs within the department of the household, food and beverage department, as well as administration are dominated by women, which is also the case in travel agencies and air transportation. “Worldwide, the active participation of women in working life is determined by the structure of the labour market, employment policies implemented, investments in education, and the legal structure and cultural conditions that govern working life” (Fidan, Boztoprak, Usta, Sari, Guzey, 2016, 58).

Domination of older employees can be explained by the fact that a large share of jobs are very easy to overcome and do not require special qualifications, which allows employment of those people who, according to their age, are not able to perform tasks in other industries and sectors. Due to the described characteristics tourism literature often describes tourism as a "safe haven" (eg. Szívás, Riley, Airey 2003), which, on the one hand, has a positive effect on the overall economy, while, on the other hand, can have negative impact on the quality of services rendered in tourism. With the described specific features, it is necessary to mention the working hours in tourism, which are very different from the rest of the labor market, since it includes weekend work and night work. Also, persons employed in the tourism are usually not able to use their vacation in the summer months, due to the high tourism season.

Concerning the fact that tourism market is highly dynamic and subservient to changes, authors considered that some of tourism labour specifics have changed over time are not the one described in literature. The analyzed characteristics (for 2015) were age, education level and gender of employees. The reason for choosing those three characteristics lies in the fact that most of the authors (e.g. Liu and Wall 2006, 163; Pirjevec and Kesar 2002, 139 et al.) emphasizes precisely these characteristics to describe and explain the specifics of the labor force in tourism. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: **The total number of employees (000) and the number of persons employed in accommodation and food service sector according to observed characteristics in the EU 27 countries and Croatia in 2015**

	Employment	Age			Education level			Gender	
		15-34	35-54	>55	1	2	3	Male	Female
EU 27	Total employment	66,173.4	113,642.5	39,440	39,943	105,422	73,112	118,573	100,683
	Share (%)	30.2	51.8	18	18.3	48.3	33.4	54.1	45.9
	Accommodation and food service sector	4,679	4,308	1,250	3,095	5,533	1,557	4,744	5,492
	Share (%)	45.7	42.1	12.2	30.4	54.3	15.3	46.3	53.6
Croatia	Total employment	479.6	843.8	261.8	170.6	976.5	437.6	854.8	730.5
	Share (%)	30.3	53.2	16.5	10.8	61.6	27.6	53.9	46.1
	Accommodation and food service sector	39.7	49.2	13.1	8	81.8	12.5	43	59.2
	Share (%)	39.1	48.1	12.8	7.8	80	12.2	42.1	57.9

Source: Eurostat (available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>)

Employees are divided into three age groups. The first group includes employees aged between 15 and 34 years, second group includes employees between 35 and 54 years, while the third group consists of employees over 55 years. Contrary to expectations, in Croatia and in the EU 27 countries, share of employees older than 55 years in the accommodation and food service sector is lower than the share of employees older than 55 years in total employment, while the share of employees aged between 15 and 34 years in this sector is in average 10-15% higher than their share in total employment.

Another observed characteristic is the level of education. Eurostat database classifies employees by level of education into three groups (group 1 includes the lowest education). The groups are created according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1997). The data shows that employees in the accommodation and food service sector in the EU 27 countries have an average lower level of education, while in Croatia it is not the case, confirming that this very specificity does not apply when it comes to Croatia. Last observed specificity refers to the gender structure, and assumes that the proportion of women employed in this activity is higher than the share of women in total employment, which was confirmed on the basis of the data presented.

The analysis leads to the conclusion that changes on tourism market and the development of technology led to changes in the age structure of employees in analyzed activity, which, according to authors, can be adapted for tourism in total. Accordingly, the specifics of the labor force in tourism referred to in the literature are not valid always and everywhere, but it is very often a stereotype that needs to be changed.

Jobs in tourism "are closely related to man and the quality of his work, and there are very few jobs that can be successfully replaced by technical substitutes" (Kesar in Čavlek et al. 2011, 274). Although human factor undoubtedly plays a key role in the



entire service sector, its role in tourism is nearly always crucial because it largely depends on the degree of satisfaction of tourists. Most occupations in tourism requires only a high school education, which is reflected in the educational structure of employees, but it does not imply that these activities can and should be done by employees who are not qualified for them. On the contrary, each of these professions requires specific knowledge and skills. As stated Bartoluci and Budimski (2010, 18), the system of tourism education in Croatia is not performed well at all levels of education. The same authors point out the fact that the number of students graduating from high schools specialize in tourism is declining, what leads to a large number of unskilled labor force, especially during the season. All subjects of tourism offer would have to become aware of the importance of education and training of employees in the hotel and make a step forward in terms of standardization of lifelong learning for the purposes of tourism, certification of management positions and systematization of jobs (Kesar in Čavlek et al. 2011, 274).

According to Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS 2016, 54) the average annual number of hours in the accommodation and food service sector in Croatia in 2015 amounted to 2,056 hours, which is only 2 hours more than the Croatian average, and the number of overtime hours was only 16, which is lower than average. It is necessary to take into account that these figures represent the annual average and the hotel employees during the winter months often work part-time, while the number of working hours during the summer often doubles. Furthermore, a large number of overtime hours are often not recorded due to set legal limits connected to the number of working hours. Overtime work in many cases is not additionally paid, or not registered to avoid paying contributions. The average monthly salary per person for employed in legal entities in 2014 in Croatia amounted 5,529 Croatian kuna, while in the accommodation and food service sector it was 5,033 Croatian kuna (CBS 2016, 260), which is 9% lower than average.

Despite the fact that working conditions in the hospitality industry are often difficult and unfavorable, primarily due to the seasonal nature of the business, a large number of working hours per week during the season and work on weekends, data shows that this activity employs more and more people every year. Because of its characteristics represents a kind of "safe haven" for the part of the workforce that is unable to get a job in some other workplaces. Due to the constant tourism growth both worldwide and in Croatia, it is expected that the share of employees in the hotel industry in the total number of employees in Croatia will continue the current trend. It is extremely important to have a quality education system, as well as constantly educate of existing employees, without which it is not possible to provide quality tourism services.

## **CONCLUSION**

Tourism as an economic activity largely dependent on the efficiency of the labor force that is difficult to substitute with other forms of work (such as machine work), which can be advantage only in case of having quality and educated labor force, since the labour force will greatly affects the efficiency of a company. Furthermore, rapid economic development leads to changes in the employment structure and the service

sector not only becoming increasingly important, but mostly manages to absorb the surplus of workforce resulting from a technology development and automation of production in primary and secondary sector. Limitation of the impact of these factors on tourism gives tourism a special position and role on the labor market. The importance and of tourism on global and national level of the economy is evident from the constant tourism growth and an increase in the number of employees, which has been confirmed in the analyses. Due to the large number of activities and sectors involved in tourism it is practically not possible to define the exact number of employees who belong to the tourism system. The effects of tourism on employment are evident in a number of sectors and activities.

The specifics of the labor market in tourism concern to seasonal employment, a high proportion of employees with a lower level of education and qualifications, a high level of female workers and high proportion of older employees. The results of the research showed that changes on tourism market and the development of technology led to changes in the age structure of employees and the specifics of the labor force in tourism referred to in the literature are not valid always and everywhere, but it is very often a stereotype that needs to be changed.

This significant change in the age structure can be considered as a main contribution of the paper, since the majority of literature still consider different. Although it can be concluded that the aim of the paper is realized, and that set objectives have been reached, this short analysis opened new research questions that need to be answered in order to understand and manage employees in tourism.

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**Mato Bartoluci**, PhD, Tenured Professor

University of Zagreb

Faculty of Economics and Business

Department of Tourism

J.F. Kennedy Square 6, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia

Phone: +385-1-2383270

E-mail: [mbartoluci@efzg.hr](mailto:mbartoluci@efzg.hr)

**Danijela Ferjanić Hodak**, PhD, Assistant Professor

University of Zagreb

Faculty of Economics and Business

Department of Tourism

J.F. Kennedy Square 6, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia

Phone: +385-1-2383269

E-mail: [dferjanic@efzg.hr](mailto:dferjanic@efzg.hr)