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THE CHALLENGES OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY IN MONTENEGRO

Miško Rađenović^{1*}, Ana Tripković Marković², Obren Drljević³,
Radoslav Ćoso⁴

¹Academy of Knowledge, Budva, Montenegro

²Faculty of Business and Tourism, Budva, Montenegro

³Hospitality school "Sergej Stanić", Podgorica, Montenegro

⁴Lovanja d.o.o., Kotor, Montenegro

**radjenovicm@t-com.me*

Abstract

Human resources are considered the most valuable resource in any enterprise. In the hospitality industry, they are becoming more and more important considering the fact that when entering the hotel, guests encounter hotel staff who delivers the service first. Unprofessionalism and rudeness of the staff will result in customers finding service quality poor and unsatisfactory. In order to ensure the expertise and motivation of the employees, the enterprises must properly formulate and implement human resources management strategy. Professional and competent management is vital for controlling the strategy implementation. Lapses in management in one hotel division will create a chain reaction resulting in decreasing the quality of the overall service. Enterprises that fail to meet the needs and expectations of customers cannot survive in a market characterized by increasing competition. In Montenegro, there has been no extensive research on hotel management which would point out the most significant shortcomings in the management strategies. Considering the fact that Montenegro aspires to become a global tourist destination, it is necessary to invest in the quality of the whole tourism sector with special emphasis on the hospitality industry. This study analyses the most important management functions as well as the state of hotel management with special emphasis on the significance of human resources management and the necessary skills that managers must possess. The authors will present the vital flaws in the contemporary way of managing hotels and will give advices for improvement and recommend how to solve the identified problems.

Key words: management, human resources, Montenegro, tourism, strategy.

ИЗАЗОВИ МЕНАЏМЕНТА ЉУДСКИХ РЕСУРСА У ХОТЕЛСКОЈ ИНДУСТРИЈИ ЦРНЕ ГОРЕ

Апстракт

Људски ресурси сматрају се најважнијим ресурсом сваког предузећа. У хотелијерској индустрији они постају све значајнији с обзиром на то да по доласку у хотел гост прво среће запослене који пружају услугу. Непрофесионалност и нељубазност особља довешће до тога да потрошачи оцене квалитет услуге као низак и незадовољавајући. Како би се обезбедила стручност и мотивација запослених, предузеће мора адекватно да формулише и имплементира стратегије управљања људским ресурсима. Професионални и стручни менаџмент је кључан за контролу имплементације стратегије. Грешке у управљању једном хотелском дивизијом створиће ланчану реакцију која ће утицати на смањење квалитета целокупне услуге. Предузећа која не успеју да задовоље потребе потрошача не могу опстати на све конкурентнијем тржишту. У Црној Гори нису спроведена свеобухватна истраживања хотелског менаџмента која би идентификовала најзначајније пропусте у управљачким стратегијама. С обзиром на то да Црна Гора претендује да постане глобална туристичка дестинација, неопходно је инвестирати у квалитет целокупног туристичког сектора, са посебним нагласком на хотелијерску индустрију. У овом истраживању анализирани су најзначајније менаџмент функције и изазови хотелског менаџмента са фокусом на значај управљања људским ресурсима и неопходне вештине менаџера у хотелској индустрији. Аутори приказују најзначајније недостатке у хотелском управљању и дају препоруке за побољшања и предлоге за решавање идентификованих проблема.

Кључне речи: менаџмент, људски ресурси, Црна Гора, туризам, стратегија.

INTRODUCTION

Hotel guests are in direct contact with the employees and their satisfaction with the service and their perception of quality heavily depends on that relationship. Consequently, most successful are the enterprises which have loyal customers and are able to meet their needs better than the competitors. Since the characteristics of the product/service, price, promotion strategy and distribution channels can be easily copied, modern companies are progressively more focused on training the employees as they are a source of competitive advantage that is the most difficult to copy and imitate. Therefore, human resources are the most significant enterprise asset. Expert and capable managers are necessary for the successful staff management. This paper analyzes the role and importance of a successful management of a hotel enterprise with the aim to examine the state and challenges of management in Montenegrin hotels. The paper will point out the vital flaws in the contemporary way of managing hotels and will give advice and recommendations for improvement and solving the identified problems.

Theoretical Review of the Hotel Management

The most frequently used definition of management today points out that management is a process of coordinating business activities in such a way "that the business is conducted efficiently and effectively: with people and with help of other people" (Robbins, Coulter, 2005, p.7). Thus, management implies guiding other people with the aim to help the organization accomplish its goals. The enterprise success is not just a result of talent, skills and abilities of the staff, but the way in which the company implements the strategy of management of human resources starting with selection, training, and motivation all the way to the evaluation of the accomplished (Dessler, 2007). The former focus on the low production costs and the economy of scale is slowly shifting towards the investment in knowledge. Such trend is especially visible in hospitality, since the guests evaluate the service quality based on the impression service staff makes.

The attitude of Kotler, Bowen and Maken's (2010) that "satisfied staff makes satisfied customers" becomes the basis for the conception of hospitality enterprises strategy. Management functions are mutually dependent and cannot be separated in practice. The most common classification of management functions is: planning, organizing, leadership, control and management of human resources (Petković, Janićijević, Bogićević-Milikić, 2006).

Planning is a management function which relates to decision making with the aim to direct the company by defining its mission, vision, goals, strategies and plans (Lončarević, Mašić, Djordjević-Boljanović, 2007). For example, the mission of the hotel Maestral is: "With the help of knowledge, professional approach and market considerations, we offer high level service and achieve good results in the hotel and casino complex that offers our guests accommodation, games, fun, recreation, food and beverage as well as favorable conditions for business"(Miško Radjenović, 2006., hotel manager of the hotel "Maestral"). By planning, companies minimize the risks and errors that may arise during the implementation of plans and strategies. Although planning itself cannot ensure the implementation of an adequate strategy, it can clarify and elaborate the consequences and identify what needs to be done in order for the strategy to be implemented (Torrington, Hall, Taylor, 2008).

Organizing, as a management function, is reflected in the organizational structure. A good organization provides material and human resources and builds a structure that is essential for an efficient business (Čerović, 2009 a). The organizational structure of a hotel enterprise depends on its size. Hotels may be small, medium or large, so their organizational structure also depends on the accommodation capacity (Košar, 2008, Čačić, 2010). However, most hotels have 5 main sectors or departments: rooms division (which consists of reception, housekeeping and wellness and spa);

food and beverage division; administration (usually including human resources, legal and financial sector); technical division, and marketing and sales. In large hotels, there is a special sector called human resources. In smaller hotels, on the other hand, these jobs are usually performed by the legal department. Petković, Janićijević and Bogičević Milikić (2006) point out that the companies today provide more funds for the human resources sector than they used to, which indicates the growing importance of this sector for gaining and maintaining a competitive advantage. During high season, hotels often employ additional staff because of the increased workload. For example, *Montenegro Stars Hotel Group* has over 800 employees during high season as well as a large number of seasonal workers (Misko Radjenović, 2007, F&B manager in the Montenegro Stars Hotel Group).

Guiding (coordinating, leading) is the third management function which relates to the guiding and motivating the employees to achieve the goals of the organization. Guiding includes three sub-functions: communication, motivation and leadership. Communication in the hotel company is significant for a number of reasons. Čerović (2013b) underlines the following: communication allows the manager to understand the employees' questions; alerts managers to potential problems; gives them information; motivates the employees and provides feedback. Communication can be exercised formally during meetings, but also informally or casually during working hours. Communication can be written or spoken. Half an hour daily meetings are usually held in hotels in the morning. They aim to provide information to the employees about the tasks and plans for the day. During high season, in big hotels, such meetings are organized several times a day. Managers can organize meetings once a week. These meetings are longer and usually last about 60 minutes. Important problems and issues affecting the functioning of the sector are discussed at these meetings. During the year, managers usually organize several longer meetings to discuss productivity, ways of improving the quality of service and implementing new strategies. Successful leaders must motivate the employees to achieve the desired professional results. Neinemaier and Hayes point out that poorly motivated staff are not consistent in performing their duties which affects the quality, as well as the quantity of their work performance. These results in guest dissatisfaction, increase of operating costs, and such employees often leave the company in search for better jobs (Neinemaier, Hayes 2005). Leadership as a sub-function of management refers to "the process used by an individual to influence a group in order to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2008, p.2). There has not been enough research on leadership in Montenegrin hotels, thus at this point it is not possible to reliably determine which leadership style would be most applicative in this region. On the other hand, successful leaders need to motivate the employees and inspire them to fulfill their maximum potential.

Control is the fourth management function. It refers to the degree of the goal accomplishment (Čerović, 2006c). By means of control, managers determine the ratio between the set goals and standards and the achieved results. Recurrent control makes possible for the managers to promptly detect problems in the efficiency and effectiveness of the work performance and to timely discover its causes and take corrective measures (Lonačerević, Masić, Djordjević-Boljanović, 2007). Thus, the process of control has several phases: setting the standards, measuring the performance and eliminating deviations (Weihrich and Koontz, 1998). Standards may be qualitative or quantitative and they involve defining the performance criteria. Performance criteria entail correlation of the achieved results with the set standards. If there are discrepancies, they should be removed. For example, if it is determined that an employee did not achieve the required standards due to the lack of knowledge and skills, it is necessary to undertake additional training.

All the above mentioned is crucial for carrying out every day work in a hotel successfully. In order to raise the efficiency of hotel management in Montenegro, we initiated this study through primary research.

The Specificity of the Human Resources Management in the Hospitality Industry

Human resources management in the hospitality industry has a few specificities which arise as a consequence of the characteristics of the hospitality industry itself. *The Strategy of Human Resources Development in the Tourism Sector in Montenegro* published in 2007, singles out five such characteristics (p.10):

1. The quality of tourism services depends on the service quality of several providers, bearing in mind that the tourism product or service consists of several components, creating in such a way a service package. If one of the services that make up the package is of low quality, tourists will perceive the full service as poor. For example, if a hotel has nice interior and comfortable beds, but the service at the restaurant is slow and food quality is not satisfactory, tourists will not be satisfied with the overall hotel service and most likely will not return to this hotel. For this reason, it is necessary that hotel enterprises invest in each employee;

2. Tourism is an industry that is characterized by intensive work. Services cannot be provided to the tourists without adequate human resources both in qualitative and quantitative terms;

3. The quality of the overall tourism product is affected by other industries and activities such as transport, food and beverage division, agriculture etc;

4. In addition to the specific professional knowledge related to tourism, hotel employees must possess general knowledge about

complementary activities. For example, the chefs at the hotel must know which groceries are easy to find and at what price, which ones are expensive, how much time it takes to deliver certain products, etc;

5. Many SMEs operate in the tourism sector. The owners of such companies are more inclined to employ workers who have several skills and are more flexible.

Job satisfaction affects the loyalty of employees. They are also likely to leave the hotel, which creates a big expense to the process of re-recruitment, selection, socialization, education, etc. Čerović (2013c, p.14) points out that those hotels which are often left by employees "are less likely to be well positioned in the market." If the working conditions are poor, the hotel will eventually acquire a bad reputation. Professional, talented and promising staff will have no desire to work in such a hotel.

In comparison with the managers in other economy branches, hotel managers need to be "more entrepreneurial, imaginative, pervasive, persistent and patient" (Cerović, 2003, p.82). A manager who is not patient and imaginative can hardly overcome everyday problems successfully and in a way that will not have a negative impact on the service quality and employee satisfaction. Some important qualities of a successful hotel manager are (Ratković, 2006, p.28): emotional, resistant, stable, calm and realistic, ambitious, active, enthusiastic and always well-informed, sociable, spontaneous and always open to cooperation, independent, determined, firm in his beliefs, tidy, always on time, practical, ready to help in solving practical problems even if they appear insolvable.

Čerović (2009d, p.120-121) distinguishes two groups of managers in tourism: analytical tourism managers and creative tourism managers. Analytical tourism manager is a manager who finds and explores the facts, synthesizes and evaluates them with the aim to make effective business decisions. Creative tourism manager is the one that creates new ideas, bases his work on imagination and intuition rather than on facts. An ideal hotel manager has to possess both sets of skills. Čerović (2009e, p.120-121) mentions some of the most important abilities and skills a tourism manager must possess to differentiate himself from other managers: good knowledge of tourism activities; analytical skills; creativity and determination; flexibility; initiatives; leadership; organization; entrepreneurship and risk taking.

METHODS

The authors researched the general state of human resource management as well as the most important strategies used by the managers in Montenegrin hotels. The basis for this research was the Research of the State of Human Resources in Hospitality in Montenegro, done by Radjenović in 2015. The survey method was used for data gathering. The first part of the

questionnaire, consisting of 26 questions, had pre-defined possible answers, while the second part allowed the respondents to write their own answers. Field research was performed in the period from 01.07.2014 to 01.04.2015. The sample included 505 respondents that are employed in over thirty hotels with 3, 4 and 5 stars on the territory of several municipalities in Montenegro: Budva, Bar, Ulcinj, Herceg Novi, Podgorica, Žabljak, Kolašin, and Kotor. For the data analysis, the SPSS Statistic software was used.

RESULTS

This section of the paper presents the most important research findings which indicate the characteristics of the management in the hotels in Montenegro. When it comes to the level of education, it can be concluded that the largest number of managers are highly educated. The difference in the level of education of the managers and directors compared to other employees is shown in the table below.

Table 1. The level of education of the employees in the Montenegrin hotels

	The level of education						Total
	Elementary school	High School	College	Faculty	Magister	Doctorate	
Directors and managers	1 (2.04%)	7 (14.29%)	10 (20.41%)	25 (51.02%)	1 (2.04%)	4 (8.16%)	48 (9.94%)
Hotel staff	6 (1.37%)	256 (58.45%)	74 (16.89%)	96 (21.92%)	3 (0.68%)	0 (0.005)	435 (90.06%)
Total	7 (1.45%)	263 (54.45%)	84 (17.39%)	121 (25.05%)	4 (0.83%)	4 (0.83%)	483 (95.64%)

The Chi-square test shows that there is a statistical correlation between the work positions and the level of education, $\chi^2(6,487)=69,119$, $p=0.000$ (<0.001). The table shows that the majority of staff has secondary education, while the majority of managers have a college degree. This is a favorable indicator because managers, in addition to non-formal education and professional experience, must have a formal education.

When it comes to the managers' age, the study shows that most of them are between 30 and 50 years old.

Table 2. The age of the hotel employees in Montenegro according to their work positions

Work position	Age category			Total
	From 20-30 years old	From 30-50 years old	Over 50	
Directors and managers	17 (34.69%)	22 (44.90%)	10 (20.41%)	49 (10.08%)
Hotel staff	236 (54.00%)	166 (37.99%)	35 (8.01%)	437 (89.92%)
Total	253 (52.06%)	188 (38.68%)	45 (9.26%)	486 (96.24%)

The Chi-square test shows that there is a statistical correlation between the work position and age category, $\chi^2(2,486)=11.016$, $p=0.004$ (<0.05). The table confirms that the majority of staff are between 20 to 30 years of age, while the managers and directors are slightly older. This is a favorable indicator because it shows that the work experience is associated with the age and that this is one of the factors which affect the progression in the profession. At the same time, it is the best way to advance to a higher position in the company.

The following table shows the relation between the years of work experience in the hotel industry and work positions.

Table 3. The years of work experience of managers

Work position	The years of work experience in the hospitality industry				Total
	Less than 3 years	From 3 to 10 years	From 10 to 20 years	Over 20 years	
Directors and managers	5 (10.20%)	20 (40.82%)	17 (34.69%)	7 (14.29%)	49 (10.08%)
Hotel staff	151 (34.55%)	193 (44.16%)	54 (13.26%)	39 (8.92%)	437 (89.92%)
Total	156 (32.10%)	213 (43.83%)	71 (14.61%)	46 (9.47%)	486 (96.24%)

The Chi-square test shows that there is a statistical correlation between the work positions and age category, $\chi^2(3,486)=24.637$, $p=0.000$ (<0.001). The table indicates that the majority of the staff has up to 10 years of experience in the hotel industry, while managers and directors have more experience (most of them possess from 3 to 20 years of experience).

The employee satisfaction with how the managers treat them is presented in the table below.

Table 4. The employee satisfaction with how the managers treat them

	The number of respondents (%)
I am not satisfied at all	15 (3.11%)
I am not satisfied	27 (5.60%)
I am neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	66 (13.69%)
I am mostly satisfied	155 (32.16%)
I am very satisfied	219 (45.44%)
Total	482 (95.45%)

The majority of the staff are very pleased with how the manager treats them. The minority of the examinees are not satisfied at all. Even though the structure of the responses indicates that the majority of managers succeeded in establishing an excellent relationship with their employees, the results should be taken with a certain reserve. The survey was anonymous, but it is possible that a certain number of employees gave managers higher assessment fearing that they will have access to the results of the survey.

The following results are interesting since they show a direct correlation between the general satisfaction with the work conditions and how the staff is treated by the managers. The summarized results are presented in the following table.

Table 5. The correlation between the satisfaction with the work conditions and of how the staff is treated by the managers

Satisfaction with the way the managers treat the staff	Satisfaction with the work conditions in a hotel					Total
	I am not satisfied at all	I am mostly dissatisfied	I am neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	I am mostly satisfied	I am very satisfied	
I am not satisfied at all	4 (28.57%)	6 (42.86%)	3 (21.43%)	1 (7.14%)	0 (0.00%)	14 (2.99%)
I am mostly dissatisfied	2 (8.33%)	7 (29.17%)	14 (58.33%)	1 (4.17%)	0 (0.00%)	24 (5.12%)
I am neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	1 (1.59%)	8 (12.70%)	36 (57.14%)	18 (28.57%)	0 (0.00%)	63 (13.43%)
I am mostly satisfied	1 (0.65%)	6 (3.90%)	64 (41.56%)	72 (46.75%)	11 (7.14%)	154 (32.84%)
I am very satisfied	0 (0.00%)	3 (1.40%)	35 (16.36%)	71 (33.18%)	105 (49.07%)	214 (45.63%)
Total	8 (1.71%)	30 (6.40%)	152 (32.41%)	163 (34.75%)	116 (24.73%)	469 (92.88%)

The Chi-square test shows that there is a statistical correlation between how the managers treat the staff and the general satisfaction with the work conditions in a hotel, $\chi^2 (16,469)=283,008$, $p=0.000$ (<0.001).

The table shows that the examinees are either satisfied or dissatisfied, therefore, besides the satisfactory pay (which has already proven to be one of the criteria and preconditions for general satisfaction (Radjenović, 2015), the managers' treatment of the staff is one of the crucial criteria for employee satisfaction.

Managers should be the highest in the hierarchical structure and they are directly responsible for decision making. However, the research has shown that this is not always the case. According to the author's experience, the hotel owners are the ones who make direct decisions, both strategic and operational. The question arises: what is the role of managers, what are their responsibilities and why are they employed? This may be one of the explanations to why certain hotels are not able to accomplish their predetermined goals. In the author's opinion, the answer to these questions lays in the fact that hotel enterprises are often headed by the owners who believe that they know the hotel, as well as the managerial business, the best, but often, in reality, they have no previous experience and knowledge about the hotel industry.

Table 6. The opinion of the respondents about who makes decisions in a hotel

	The number of respondents (%)
Owner	143 (29.07%)
General director	265 (53.86%)
Direct department manager	73 (14.84%)
Staff member in a department	11 (2.24%)
Total	492 (66.58%)

Another important issue is productivity measurement.

Table 7. Should productivity be measured in a hotel where the respondents work?

Productivity measurement	The number of respondents (%)
Yes	153 (30.30%)
No	181 (35.84%)
I do not know how productivity is measured	116 (22.97%)
No answer	55 (10.89%)
Total	505 (100.00%)

The results show that only 153 respondents (30.30%) gave a positive answer to the question about measuring productivity. The missing responses can be considered as the responses occurring because of the ignorance regarding the question.

The authors believe that the majority of employees should be familiar with the concept of productivity and the way in which it is measured. If the employees know what productivity is and that productivity measurement

evaluates their work, most of them would do their best to quickly and efficiently complete their duties. It is recommended that all employees are periodically informed about productivity, and the results should be in direct correlation with: rewards, incentives, bonuses, etc. For the examinees who gave an affirmative answer to the question of productivity measurement, the answers about measurement methods are presented.

Table 8. Ways in which productivity can be measured

Ways in which productivity can be measured	The number of respondents (%)
The number of overnight stays / average number of employees	68 (46.58%)
Gross turnover / average number of employees	35 (23.97%)
Hours worked / standardized working hours	39 (26.71%)
Other	4 (2.74%)
Total	146 (28.91%)

The difference between knowledge about measuring productivity among different hierarchical positions is presented in the following table.

Table 9. Comparative analysis of the answers of managers and staff to the question: Is productivity measured in the hotel where you work?

Work position in a hotel	Productivity measurement in a hotel				Total
	Yes	No	I do not know how productivity is measured	No answer	
Director or manager	39 (79.59%)	7 (14.29%)	2 (4.08%)	1 (2.04%)	49 (10.06%)
Staff member	111 (25.34%)	167 (38.13%)	108 (24.66%)	52 (11.87%)	438 (89.94%)
Total	150 (30.80%)	174 (35.73%)	110 (22.59%)	53 (10.88%)	487 (96.43%)

The Chi-square test shows that there is a statistical connection between the work position and knowledge about productivity measurement in the hotel, $\chi^2(3,487)=61,294$, $p=0.000$ (<0.001). The table shows that managers and directors have a substantially higher level of knowledge about productivity measurement. Nevertheless, the awareness of productivity measurement must increase among employees.

DISCUSSION

Without doubt, the research of structural characteristics of hotel management in Montenegro has confirmed the theoretical frameworks which were the baseline for this research project, but at the same time

have pointed out some systematic deficiencies that are specifically attached to the destination in question.

In the first place, and in accordance with the global findings on the subject, managers are in position to contribute substantially to the general satisfaction with work conditions (Table 5) which empowers them to influence productivity significantly. The majority of the examinees (77,6%) are very or mostly satisfied with how the managers treat them (Table 4).

Almost 20% of hotel directors and managers don't measure productivity or do not know how productivity is measured (Table 9). Not surprisingly, one third of the respondents do not know if productivity is measured or avoid answering (Table 7). It is significant that not even the basic managerial tools, such as productivity, are used in hotel management. Subsequently, managers are not in the position to analyze any changes of productivity, lacking important decision making information. Not even simple motivation awards or just punishment standards can be implemented in human resource management without strong productivity standards. The further research analysis provides 2 possible explanations of the identified problems.

The period of transition in Montenegro has left the unclear role determination between the ownership and managerial function (Table 6). Underdeveloped managerial function or over-controlling owners have much power in higher levels of hotel structure (almost 83%).

The reason for the above mentioned situation leads us to the very first results of the survey where more than one third of the hotel managers don't have a faculty diploma (Table 1). Unfortunately, the lack of formal education is not compensated with experience – more than half of the managers have less than 10 years of experience in the hotel industry (Table 3). Having in mind that the age structure is at a satisfactory level (Table 2) the hotel managers are either coming from other industries or have not been able to gain experience.

The initial assumption of a successful enterprise in the hotel industry is as following – a dissatisfied guest will never return to the hotel, and the long-term survival in the market is conditioned by the high service quality and meeting the consumers' expectations. For this reason, it is necessary to invest in service quality, service process and employees. This means that the position of a hotel manager should be entrusted to competent, experienced people who possess the necessary skills to work in a dynamic business environment.

The research results indicate that the decisions which should be made by professional managers are often made by hotel owners in Montenegro. It is reasonable to assume that these decisions often do not coincide with the decisions of professional managers. This indicates the need for further research on the role of the hotels managers in Montenegro. Considering the fact that many employees are not familiar with productivity

measurement and its importance, the question arises: Which are the key functions of the hotel managers in Montenegro? In order to solve the above mentioned problems, it is essential that both owners and managers are motivated to implement changes. This means that the state should promote education and continuous training of human resources. One way of doing this is by organizing conferences, seminars and print brochures intended for the manager teams in the hotel industry. Furthermore, it is important to follow global trends and good business practice in the developed countries and well-known international destinations.

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ИЗАЗОВИ МЕНАЏМЕНТА ЉУДСКИХ РЕСУРСА У ХОТЕЛСКОЈ ИНДУСТРИЈИ ЦРНЕ ГОРЕ

Мишко Рађеновић¹, Ана Трипковић Марковић²,
Обрен Дрљевић³, Радослав Ћосо⁴

¹Академија знања д. о. о., Будва, Црна Гора

²Факултет за бизнис и туризам, Будва, Црна Гора

³Угоститељска школа „Сергеј Станић”, Подгорица, Црна Гора

⁴Ловања д. о. о., Котор, Црна Гора

Резиме

Наше истраживање имало је за циљ да помогне бољем разумевању могућности приступа информационим технологијама деце у Србији, као и њихових приоритетних активности на мрежи, у складу са њиховим демографским особинама, како би се обезбедиле одређене смернице за комуникацију са њима и истакле особености по којима се разликује њихово понашање на мрежи у односу на понашање њихових вршњака у свету. О великој важности и разнородним функцијама које интернет има у дечијим животима сведоче бројна истраживања спроведена на различите теме из овог домена, како у региону тако и у свету.

Резултати наше студије о присуству рачунара у српским домовима у складу су са налазима претходних истраживања која су спроведена глобално – ови резултати указују на то да су компјутери у великој мери присутни у животу деце и са растом њихових година информационе технологије добијају на важности. Међутим, постоји значајна разлика – тзв. дигитални јаз између српске и европске деце у могућностима приступа интернету. По неким индицијама, мања могућност коришћења интернета може негативно утицати на дечије академске перформансе.

Очекивано, дечији пол није утицао на присуство рачунара у њиховим домовима. Занимљиво је приметити да, у супротности са резултатима претходних студија, резултати нашег истраживања показују да деца која живе у граду са нижим примањима чешће имају рачунар у кући него деца која живе у граду са изнадпросечним примањима (главни град). Разлог за то може се тражити у осталим слободним активностима које су деци доступне у богатијим срединама.

Слично као у случају доступности рачунара, резултати показују да и старија деца интернету приступају више него млађа. Анализа по полу показује да су дечаки склонији од девојчица да користе интернет, међутим, њихове активности се не разликују у великој мери. Дечаки више користе интернет за играње онлајн игрица, што подразумева да проводе више времена у онлајн простору. Такође су у већој мери изложени онлајн ризицима, па је неопходан већи степен праћења њихових активности. У погледу коришћења комуникационих алата нису пронађене разлике по полу, што може указивати на то да се родни јаз у том домену полако премошћава.

На основу резултата, могу се дати одређене препоруке за образовне институције и друштво у целини. Неопходно је да се процес дигитализације школа што пре спроведе, као и да се интерактивни материјали – засновани на игрицама, уведу као учила ради што ефективнијег процеса учења ђака. Континуирано се мора радити на усавршавању метода за унапређивање дечије безбедности у сајбер простору, као што је потребно да се врши и стална контрола дечијих онлајн активности, чак и у њиховом адолесцентском периоду.

Представљена студија спада у прилично неистражену област од стране локалних истраживача, где се још увек суочавамо са значајним недостатком сазнања по том питању. Студија пружа прве увиде у дечије онлајн понашање и стога се може сматрати вредном полазном тачком за будућа истраживања која се буду бавила истом тематиком.