



European institute of Innovation, entrepreneurship and Technology

Name : Cherry

Student ID : 240015

Subject : Talent Management

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Talent Development Strategy for Post-COVID Tourism Startups

Abstract

The pandemic of COVID-19 brought unique obstacles to the tourism sector as it paused customer activities, suspended services, and cut demand, which forced businesses to adapt instantly to a new form of reality. This research sought to analyse the repercussions of COVID on the tourism and hospitality sectors and respond to a particular gap: applying well-defined theoretical frameworks, especially the three-R stakeholder collaboration model, has been very scant in analysing recovery strategies. As noted in previous studies, many have concentrated on short-term impacts or defined tactics instead of a comprehensive, systematic, stakeholder-centered, multi-step recovery approach. Using qualitative research methods, this study set out to answer how tourism service providers and the primary stakeholders managed the pandemic challenges through grounded theory. The data was gathered via semi-structured interviews with twenty participants who included owners of tourism businesses, managers of hotels and events, civil servants, and academics. These perspectives provide a rich multi-view understanding of how the entire sector dealt with the pandemic. Grounded theory was applied to form a model of recovery behaviours, which was constructed through coding data in open, axial, and selective stages using MAXQDA 2020 Software. The research for this article revealed several key strategies that helped businesses remain active during the pandemic and recover, such as cost reduction, digital transformation, and cultural changes.

Introduction

For the majority of the world's countries, tourism is one of the most important and lucrative industries of their economy (Gössling et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 caused the major decline of tourism and travel industry activities of the whole world (WEF, 2021). Statistically Reported, it is approximately estimated that the global pandemic triggered an unprecedented 80% drop in worldwide international tourism during the time (UNWTO, 2020b). Further, the decline in international arrivals/tourists was noted to be more than 20% in the first quarter of 2020, demonstrating the severity of the pandemic's effect on the globe (UNWTO, 2020a).

The growth in study on the topic of hospitality and tourism was triggered by the quick escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic (Aladag et al., 2020; Baum & Hai, 2020; Kock et al., 2020).

Research focused predominantly on restaurants (Brewer & Sebby, 2021; Chang et al., 2021; Kang et al., 2021; Kostromitina et al., 2021; Min et al., 2021; Peng & Chen, 2021; Tse et al., 2006), accommodation services (Herédia-Colaço & Rodrigues, 2021; Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2021), and tourist behavior with a focus on risk perception, travel anxiety, and fear (Almokdad et al. The COVID-19 pandemic affected global tourism while compelling

innovations in talent development measures, particularly for startups intending to thrive in the post-pandemic era. This Talent Development Strategy aims to offer flexible frameworks to drive human capital development within tourism startups, which will allow them to thrive under volatility, drive innovation, and build sustainable growth frameworks. Top priorities include the development of agile leadership and improving digital skills and functional competencies for enhanced flexibility and value support for business model dynamism. Emphasis is laid on remote teamwork and digital marketing, customer experience management, sustainable tourism, and other such related areas. Strategic partnerships with education institutions, government, and private sector programs, and other respective stakeholders will ensure enough support in driving a culture of continuous learning and workforce development. The approach promotes diversity, social engagement, and inclusive hiring practices with a special focus on the youth and women and aims to change locals' attitudes toward work.

Quick learning and entrepreneurial readiness will be created with mentorship and coaching, and supported experiential learning instruments. Startups will implement adaptable learning approaches, performance measurement, and anticipatory career paths to create teams robust against and dynamically shifting with the alterations in the market. The recommended plan enables the startups to endure shocks and emerge as leaders in the reorganized tourism system after COVID. This road map systematically synchronizes manpower capacity with innovation, customer demands, and sustainable development objectives in a post-COVID world.

Strategic talent rebuilding

Integrating gig workers into hospitality

This strategy solves the problem of workforce shortages while improving flexibility in the hospitality industry by incorporating gig workers into the talent mix. It adopts a hybrid workforce model that blends full-time employees with gig workers, maximizing operational efficiency, minimizing costs, and ensuring responsiveness to demand fluctuations. Important elements include the use of digital platforms for role definition and talent sourcing, flexible working arrangements, consistent guest experiences, and enabling training and supportive policies. This enhances the ability to rebuild resilient, enduring talent systems within an ever-evolving labour market. Changes we plan to implement include collaborating with local gig economy platforms and hospitality colleges for a pre-screened talent pool. We will also offer gig contracts for concierge and tour guide services, kitchen support, and private wellness training. Empower gig workers using mobile apps with microlearning modules on customer service, brand standards, and safety to enhance the company's position with flexible workers during peak and offseason, diminished overhead expenses, an expanded workforce, and including digital nomads and multilingual employees.

Defining Hybrid Roles

A combination of roles is common in hospitality, such as receptionists, concierges, event planners, as well as food and beverage services. These roles have been created to allow greater flexibility, better satisfaction, enhanced efficiency, and more work to be done by staff at so many levels. A Remote Guest Services Agent for Hospitality has customer issues that require a high level of concern to be attended to by phone, email, or chat. Remote agents take bookings, answer queries, handle complaints, and even some special requests while ensuring the customer has a good encounter. This position requires great communication skills and being detail oriented with meeting timeframes while maintaining standard policy and brand requirements. The second role is Hospitality Onsite Experience Curators, who create experiences for the guests and manage the Hospitality on an event basis in areas such as hotels and resorts. It includes customization of services, control of accompanying services and decor, interaction, and collaboration with other departments so that every detail is up to the brand's standard of excellence. They work on providing sophisticated experiences with no effort to exceed guest satisfaction and provide engravable memories. Last is a hospitality digital trainer who trains using digital equipment.

Digital onboarding framework

The Digital Onboarding Framework brings to life an effective model that incorporates technology for onboarding new employees into hospitality businesses. It focuses on captivating and responsive onboarding accuracy via e-learning, virtual tours, digital documents, training, and interactivity. This helps new hires ease into the company culture, policies, business readiness, retention, and new hire utilization.

Components of digital onboarding

- ☐ Pre-onboarding portal: enhances the initial onboarding experience by equipping new hires with necessary resources and information to ensure an effortless ease into the company.
- ☐ Safety procedures, guest services, and brand voice classes will use Gamified learning modules.
- ☐ AI buddy chatbot: Personalized assistance is offered through a hospitality AI buddy chatbot that manages service requests and elevates operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. For example, handling FAQs for the first 30 days.

□ Virtual mentor pairing: encourages aspiring professionals through online pairing with experienced industry mentors, aiding in personalized guidance and skills development in the hospitality industry.

2.2 **Digital tool** learning management systems are an integral part of onboarding, with integration with micro learning, multilingual support. Mobile app access is another tool for training staff, scheduling, and feedback in one place. Lastly, an onboarding dashboard to track progress, completion rates, and satisfaction scores.

Employer Branding and Talent Acquisition

GCC plans to underscore its business benefits not as an expenditure but as an investment in order to increase its employer branding. The perception of an employer by its prospective and current employees are useful in evaluating GCC plans to augment its corporate image and strengthen employer branding with specific cash-less initiatives which have resulted in GCC receiving more attention on a regional and global level.

GCC aims to enhance employer branding utilizing cash-less initiatives while focusing on areas perceives as gaps. GCC targets branding positioning with clear targeting focusing specifically on garnering tertiary and secondary value in the Gulf Region which offers endorsed secondary benefits for cash-less investment.

Rebuild the employee value proposition EVP

““WORK WITH PURPOSE, GROW WITH US, LIVE WELL.” Our refreshed Employee Value Proposition captures our vision for who we want to be tomorrow. As ‘put in purpose and people’, our Value Proposition is focused on growth, inclusion, impact, and a culture of progress. It is driven by meaningful work and development in a supportive environment while protecting the voice of everyone. We seek to engage and retain people passionate about collaboration and positive change through well-being, innovation, and shared success.

social media job posts



Join the Journey in redefining hospitality!

We are hiring hybrid guest experience specialists

Flexible hours, career growth, and wellness-first culture.

Apply via link in bio #workwithpurpose #hoteljobs#remoteHospitality

LinkedIn post

WE'RE HIRING!

We're building a new kind of hotel chain-one that celebrates local culture and global talent now seeking.

Gig concierge hosts (Rio & Medllin)

Remote reservation specialists

Digital training designers

What we offer:

Flexible contracts

Wellness incentives

Growth in a purpose-driven culture

Apply now and be part of something big. #hospitalitycareers #GigEconomy
#workwelltraveFar.

Performance management with AI dashboards

Feature	Function
Dynamic Scheduling	AI forecasts high occupancy and suggests optimal staff deployment.
Sentiment Analysis	Gauge employee morale via internal feedback and engagement scores.
Real-Time Training Nudges	Triggers refresher modules when performance dips.
Customer Feedback Loop	Links guest reviews to the staff involved in the service.

4.2 Dashboards KPIs:

Guest satisfaction score per staff member

Daily engagement index(based on check-ins and surveys)

Training completion and retention analytics

Take efficiency response time

Long-term resilience and wellness integration

Resilience-Driven Workforce Programs

These training programs often include courses on coping with and overcoming obstacles, emotional intelligence, building resilience against stress, flexible thinking, and inspiration. This is often referred to as ‘employee recovery training.’ The focus of such training is to equip employees with the skills, tools, and mentality needed for recovery and learning from failure and excel in difficult environments. Overcoming obstacles change the economy and technological disruptions, generating new ideas, and maintaining high productivity levels during times of adversity.

Wellness as a Core Cultural Value

The significance of holistic health—physical, mental, emotional, and social—at all levels of an organisation, community, or society is highlighted by wellness as a fundamental cultural value. Actions, priorities, policies, and changes towards healthier living and supportive environments are all taken care of when a culture supports this extent. This dedication influences leadership, work-life balance, relationships, community, and support systems; it goes beyond simply offering health benefits or fitness programs. Organisations that prioritise wellness report increases in employee morale, productivity, and retention; societies that prioritise wellness at the core level show improved public health outcomes and greater social cohesion. A culture that prioritises wellness and incorporates it into daily life shows a dedication to the general development of people and society at large.

6 Recommendation Summary

Focus Area	Recommendation
Gig Integration	Formalize gig pathways with digital contracts and LMS access.
Hybrid Roles	Define fluid job scopes with performance clarity.
Digital Onboarding	Launch a mobile-first, gamified experience with mentoring.
Branding & EVP	Emphasize flexibility, wellness, and impact.
AI Dashboards	Implement tools that combine performance with well-being metrics.
Wellness Programs	Institutionalize mental health, fitness, and downtime.

Conclusion

Fostering a resilient, flexible workforce and rebuilding strong staff loyalty is my main objective as the HR Director of a startup hotel chain in South America negotiating recovery in a post-COVID-19 environment. Reaching these calls for a strategic concentration on well-being, open communication, ongoing learning, and an inclusive, goal-driven culture.

We not only equip our teams for future disruptions but also show a real dedication to their growth and security by giving employee health and safety top priority, providing flexible working models where appropriate, and funding strong training and upskill programs. Further improving engagement and retention is re-establishing trust by open leadership, appreciating employee contributions, and building career paths.

Our people are, at last, the centre of our service. Creating a dynamic and encouraging environment helps us to.

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