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Contemporary Issues in Tourism Management

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Executive Summary

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
1. Introduction	4
1.1 Background of The Selected Industry	4
1.2 Justification of the Contemporary Issue Selected	4
1.3 Aim of the Research Report	4
1.4 Organizational Overview	5
2. Literature Review	5
2.1 Overview of the Industry and The Pertaining Issue of Labour Shortage	5
2.2 Critical Rationale on The Great Resignation and Growing Staff Shortages in The Tourism Industry	6
2.3 Causing Factors of Labour Shortage	8
3. Discussion	11
3.1 Impact of Staff Shortage on Tui Group's Operational Consistency	11
3.2 Initial Furlough and Skill Gap	12
4. Conclusion	14
4.1 Critical Analysis of the Findings	14
4.2 Recommendations	15
References	18

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of The Selected Industry

Initially, it is crucial to establish a clear definition of the term 'tourism industry'. In essence, the term pertains to any actions associated with the temporary relocation of individuals from their habitual place of residence to alternative locations. The tourism industry is of significant magnitude globally and plays a crucial role in driving the economies of several nations (Revfine, 2023). The industry in question is characterized by its broad scope, encompassing not only the hospitality sector but also transportation and various other industries or sectors. Comprehending the interconnection between the tourism sector and mobility to various destinations is of utmost importance, as it encompasses not only recreational purposes but also corporate and other travel incentives (Wassler and Fan, 2021). From travel agencies, airlines to accommodation are few of the crucial elements in the tourism industry that plays a significant role in determining the growth potential of a company and the entire industry.

1.2 Justification of the Contemporary Issue Selected

The tourism industry in the United Kingdom is currently experiencing a dearth of personnel as the pandemic-related limitations are eventually lifted and consumer demand resurfaces (Sharma, Thomas and Paul, 2021). The expected scarcities in the workforce can be attributed primarily to two factors: the departure of European Union citizens subsequent to Brexit and the transition of workers across industries amid the ongoing pandemic. The sector will bear the burden of increased expenses associated with the recruitment and retention of new staff members. However, it is probable that these financial constraints are of a transitory nature (Sharma, Thomas and Paul, 2021).

1.3 Aim of the Research Report

The present research will explore the issue of employee shortage and how this has been impacting the overall travel industries potential to stay consistent with its operations and achieve resiliency in the face of adverse macro-economic factors. In this context, a wider literary and professional reading will be interpreted and rationalized to comprehend the existing circumstances pertaining to the industry and will be drawn to the case of Tui Group.

Objective:

- To compare and contrast existing literature to understand the issue of staff shortage
- To conduct company Research
- To rationalize secondary sources and derive valid information
- To evaluate industry reports to make observations

1.4 Organizational Overview

The TUI Group is a company based in Germany that operates within the ¹⁴leisure, travel, and tourism industries. TUI is an abbreviation that stands for Touristik Union International, which translates to "Tourism Union International." Prior to 1997, TUI AG operated under the name Preussag AG and was primarily engaged in mining activities (Tui Group, 2023). However, the company subsequently shifted its focus to the tourism industry. The company's headquarters are located in Hanover, Germany. The company possesses complete or partial ownership of ³various travel agencies, hotel chains, cruise lines, and retail shops, in addition to five European airlines. The group possesses the most extensive fleet of holiday aeroplanes in Europe and maintains numerous European tour operators.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of the Industry and The Pertaining Issue of Labour Shortage

¹⁷The Travel and Tourism industry in the year 2020 was characterized by a state of precariousness and a need to adapt in order to endure. The implementation of travel restrictions such as travel bans, mandatory COVID-19 testing, and quarantine protocols have resulted in a decrease in individuals' inclination to engage in travel activities. The tourism industry experienced a significant decline in revenue, leading airlines, hoteliers, and tour operators to reduce their workforce in order to maintain their operations. The current phenomenon of increased employee turnover has been referred to as the Great Resignation, the Great Attrition, and the Big Quit. The phenomenon in question commenced ¹⁶at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and, as per recent research, exhibits no indication of abating. According to official statistics, amidst an expanding worldwide economic crisis, employees are persisting in departing from their current employment or entertaining the idea of doing so.

2.2 Critical Rationale on The Great Resignation and Growing Staff Shortages in The Tourism Industry

Currently in the United Kingdom, the number of job vacancies surpasses the number of individuals who are unemployed, marking the first instance of such an occurrence since the commencement of record-keeping. As a result, there was a notable decrease of 18.6% in the quantity of employment opportunities sustained by the sector, with figures dropping from 333 million jobs in 2019 to 271 million jobs in 2020. In 2021, the relaxation of travel restrictions by governments resulted in a resurgence of travel demand, leading to a 6.7% increase in the workforce of the industry, which now stands at 289 million workers (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2022). After experiencing a growth of 21.7% in the year 2021, it is anticipated that the Travel & Tourism sector's contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will increase by 43.7% in the year 2022-23. The criticality of a suitable workforce's availability cannot be overstated in supporting this growth (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2022). The industry is presently experiencing a dearth of personnel, rendering it exceedingly challenging to secure potential applicants to occupy the mounting employment opportunities. One of the primary contributors to the escalation of personnel deficits is the phenomenon that, amidst the pandemic, a considerable proportion of Travel & Tourism workers who were furloughed or terminated their employment, transitioned to alternative industries or withdrew from the workforce altogether.

In the current scenario, where the demand for labour is increasing while the supply remains limited, the Travel & Tourism industry will need to engage in a competitive struggle with other sectors to draw in fresh talent. A significant determinant is the reduction in the quantity of migrant workers, who are indispensable to the industry, due to the travel limitations imposed during the pandemic. Preceding the outbreak of the pandemic, individuals who were born outside of the United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU) comprised 16% of the labour force in the tourism industry. The repatriation of migrant labourers to their countries of origin and the decline in immigration during the year 2020 have not contributed to the mitigation of the diminishing labour pool. Some industries within the sector may encounter recruitment obstacles that are more distinct than those of other sectors (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2022). Within the aviation sector, newly recruited pilots are required to undergo extensive training, while airport support personnel are subjected to stringent

security screenings, which may entail a delay in receiving clearance from a government agency.

The duration of training and processes required for these roles is considerable, resulting in a limited ability to fulfil the demand for such positions on short notice. In addition, certain job positions necessitate ongoing training, however, the interruption caused by the pandemic has had a detrimental impact on this crucial process. However, during the period spanning from 2022 to 2032, it is anticipated that the sector will experience an increase of 126 million employment opportunities. Nevertheless, if the underlying factors contributing to the insufficiency of staff are not effectively resolved, this predicament may impede the sector's capacity to attain complete recuperation and expansion (Hospitality Net, 2022). The ¹³research conducted by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) in partnership with ¹²Oxford Economics, examines the matter of workforce insufficiencies in France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the European Union. This is accomplished by evaluating two indicators of labor scarcity: net labor shortfall and gross labour shortfall (Hospitality Net, 2022). The determination of a net labour shortfall involves the subtraction of labor demand from labour supply.

The Travel & Tourism sector is likely to experience repercussions in various industries due to a deficit of labour in one of its constituent sectors. As an illustration, hotels could potentially satisfy their labor demands; however, in the event of a scarcity of bus or train operators, hotel staff may encounter challenges in commuting to their respective workplaces (World Economic Forum, 2022). Consequently, the gross labor shortfall factor incorporates these externalities and yields more accurate assessments of the actual labor deficit. According to this analysis of 185 countries, the United Kingdom experienced the eighth lowest decline in the quantity of jobs that were directly backed by the Travel and Tourism industry in 2020 (UK in a Changing Europe, 2023). This outcome can be attributed primarily to the government's job-retention programme. The year 2021 saw a rise in the quantity of labourers who were employed in the sector, with an increase from 1.57 million to 1.63 million, indicating a growth of 3.7%. It is projected that the UK tourism industry will encounter an average gross labour deficit of approximately 114,000 as the number of visitors to the country increases in the latter half of 2022-23 (World Economic Forum, 2022). It is anticipated that the labour shortage will intensify during the high-demand season in the third quarter of 2022 to

middle of 2023, with a projected deficit of 128,000 workers due to an insufficient supply to meet the demand. In terms of proportionality, it can be inferred that approximately 1 out of every 14 employment opportunities may potentially remain unoccupied, indicating a deficit of 7% (De Smet, 2023).

As per World Economic Forum (2022), the escalation in the level of economic inactivity has played a role in the problem. In the initial quarter of 2020, the count of individuals within the working age bracket who were either not employed or not actively seeking employment amounted to 92,000. According to De Smet (2023), during the period of December 2021 to February 2022, there was an increase in the number of individuals classified as economically inactive in the workforce, reaching a total of 487,000. The significant departure of employees from the workforce has resulted in a reduction of the available labour force that employers can recruit from. The challenge faced by the industry in regards to staffing shortages has been further exacerbated by the more stringent immigration regulations implemented by the government in response to Brexit. The third quarter of 2022 was expected to witness a significant implication on the industries such as accommodation, entertainment, and air transport. As per Sealy (2020), these industries were projected to encounter a scarcity of workers, with an estimated 18% (1 in 6 unfilled vacancies), 12% (1 in 8), and 11% (1 in 9) shortage of employees, respectively.

2.3 Causing Factors of Labour Shortage

I. Early Retirements and Health Concerns

The House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee has identified that the primary reason for the existing shortages in the UK labour market is the significant number of individuals opting for early retirement and exiting the workforce in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic (UK in a Changing Europe, 2023). The investigative committee's report analysed the ratio of individuals who were neither employed nor actively seeking employment to the number of available job openings. The present scarcity in the labour market can be attributed to a variety of factors, including retirement, heightened illness rates, alterations in migration patterns, and the ageing demographic of the United Kingdom (Fitch Ratings, 2021).

II. Brexit

Scholars have observed that the situation may have been exacerbated by the implementation of new immigration regulations following the Brexit referendum. There exist varying perspectives regarding the degree to which Brexit-related factors are serving as a contributing factor to the challenges in the UK's labour supply (Ladkin *et al.*, 2023). According to a report by the Bank of England, a decline in labour supply has been observed, which can be attributed in part to decelerated population growth. This phenomenon has been driven by reduced net migration from the European Union. In September of 2022, there was a notable deficit of approximately 460,000 workers of EU origin. As per Kuzior, Kettler and Raş, (2022), this was partially, yet not entirely, offset by a rise of roughly 130,000 workers who were not of EU origin. The reduction in the number of employed individuals, which amounts to approximately 330,000, constitutes a 1% decrease in the overall labour force.

III. Unsupportive Employers and Lack of Flexibility

In the first phase of the pandemic, the employers have furloughed a bulk of employees from their employments. This has resulted in a lack of credibility in terms of the industry potential. The sudden revoking of support and benefits from the employer has made employees uncertain about their future in the industry and many are switching their professional sectors. Apart from this, employees in tourism and travel industry are seeking coordination and collaborative approach from their leaders and employers. They want to gain autonomy over their work and get appreciated for their work progression. However, there is another requirement which is causing employees to quit, the need for flexible working provisions. Since the pandemic, employees are appreciating remote-working, part time working professions, extended weekends etc. According to (House of Commons (2022)), employees want to work from home because of an increased work-life balance. Employees having added household responsibilities and childcare duties want employer support and demand for flexible working conditions so that they can accomplish both personal and professional responsibilities.

IV. Inadequate Compensation

Low compensation and benefits are the reason for employee departure from the traditional employment markets, especially in the tourism sector, the employees are complaining about the low compensation, overworking and poor work-life balance. All

these are barring them to feel inspired, especially in the post-pandemic market (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2022). The age group of 25-5 years have primarily indicated that they want better employment benefits and compensation packages. They are aware of their professional worth and want to be rewarded accordingly.

3. Discussion

3.1 Impact of Staff Shortage on Tui Group's Operational Consistency

Discussion on the increasing staff shortages in the tourism industry demands for a justified exemplification of the Tui Group. In the post-pandemic scenario, the company had to face a set of impediments which costed the group monetary and reputational damage to a certain extent. In light of the ongoing global shortage of airline personnel resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, TUI Airways in the United Kingdom had to advise passengers to consider bringing their own provisions of food and beverages for select flights during the mid quarter of 2022. The unorthodox circumstance can be attributed to a deficiency in personnel at the airline's catering provider (Peters, 2022). TUI Airways, a prominent leisure airline in the United Kingdom, has notified its passengers that they will not receive in-flight catering services on flights departing from 15 airports across the country. The contracted catering supplier of the airline had been facing significant staff shortages, which had resulted in its inability to provide catering services for the airline's short and mid-haul flights (Blazquez, 2022).

The global aviation sector is currently experiencing a significant deficit of personnel in all areas. The issue at hand has affected a wide range of industry personnel, including pilots, cabin crew, airport staff, airside ground staff, and maintenance workers (Delahaye, 2022). TUI, a holiday group, has incurred a financial loss of £63 million due to the recent travel disruption that caused significant airport congestion, resulting in the cancellation and prolonged delay of flights (Gibbons, 2022). The company reported that its clientele experienced approximately 200 instances of flight cancellations during the months of May and June. This was primarily attributed to difficulties at Manchester Airport, which were caused by a shortage of personnel.

Tui and its designated ground handling agent, Swissport, encountered notable difficulties with their check-in and baggage retrieval procedures at Manchester airport. Based on in-depth conversations with the management teams of Tui and Swissport, it has been reported that they are currently facing a temporary shortage of personnel, which is a challenge shared by other companies operating in the aviation and travel sectors (International Airport Review, 2022). The airline is currently encountering significant challenges due to a shortage of pilots and flight attendants. As a result, the company is actively seeking additional crew members to operate flights. Despite commencing the recruitment process for the upcoming season several months ago,

TUI's cabin and flight crew are subjected to a rigorous and time-consuming training and security protocol (Gibbons, 2022). According to an insider, there exist shortages of staff at the airport ID centres responsible for providing crew members with their identification documents. The operation of a flight by a crew member is contingent upon the possession of an airline or airport identification.

In the aftermath of the pandemic, airlines and airports have encountered difficulties in managing ¹⁸ staff shortages and a surge in demand, among other factors, leading to extended queues, flight delays, luggage complications, and other challenges for vacationers. For several weeks, TUI airports have been experiencing tumultuous situations due to their challenges in managing employee absences. Despite the lifting of isolation mandates in the United Kingdom, airlines and airports were experiencing staffing shortages due to employee illnesses, including positive Covid-19 diagnoses resulting in absences from work (Delahaye, 2022). They had to encounter staff shortages ranging from airport security personnel to ground handlers, resulting in a deceleration of operations and consequent delays. Nonetheless, it is not solely the diseases that is responsible for the scarcity. The pandemic had a severe impact on the company, resulting in widespread job losses. The repercussions of this are currently being experienced.

3.2 Initial Furlough and Skill Gap

Numerous employees in the aviation ecosystem have lost their jobs, been placed on indefinite furlough, or been encouraged to take advantage of early retirement programmes ¹⁵ as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The departure of experienced personnel has resulted in a knowledge gap. The current pandemic and potentially the global economic climate have prompted individuals to reconsider their life choices, reassess their priorities, and in some instances, instigated modifications in their professional trajectories or employers. The current worldwide reorganisation of the labour force has been referred to as the 'Great Resignation' by certain individuals (International Airport Review, 2022). In the aviation industry, this phenomenon has resulted in a migration of workers to other sectors and, more recently, has presented a considerable obstacle in terms of staff recruitment and retention as air travel demand rebounds.

Furthermore, the volatility in traffic flow resulting from erratic and divergent health policies enforced by governmental bodies has also exerted a substantial influence on the appeal of aviation as a potential employer (Miller, 2020). In addition to the immediate task of addressing recruitment, retention, motivation, training, and upskilling of the workforce to satisfy present demand, aviation stakeholders face a medium-term challenge of revitalising the appeal and inclusivity of the industry for the upcoming cohort of professionals. Furthermore, employers within the aviation industry will be required to consider the novel skill sets that will be essential for aviation personnel to operate within an environment that features substantial levels of automation (International Airport Review, 2022). The transition of a considerable number of personnel from manual labour-oriented roles to the supervision of automated machinery or equipment necessitates a specific skill set.

The entire workforce of Tui, comprising 10,000 employees, had been notified that their remuneration was to be reduced by as much as 50% ¹ as a measure to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Starting in April, 2020, employees who were obligated to work experienced a 30% decrease in their basic pay and contracted hours. Conversely, those who worked less than 50% or not at all received a 50% reduction (Hancock, 2020). Although the growing diseases and illnesses among the employee's post-pandemic is another crucial aspect responsible for the growing staff shortage, but the impact of initial furlough of 11,000 skilled and experienced employees by the company cannot be denied in this context (Miller, 2020). This has resulted in a skill gap that will need additional time to revive since the company has been trying to improve its training and development processes to match and align with the existing demand in the tourism industry.

However, this will be another challenge to successfully overcome and also attributing to additional staff shortages. From the literary analysis, one common theme of inadequate training and professional development has been derived which is causing employee shortage (ILO, 2022). Aviation industry trainings are time-consuming and instant training and skill developments are impossible to meet the standard of operations desired. This time gap is causing additional operational bottlenecks and restricting the company to cater to the growing demand amid the rapid industry rebound.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Critical Analysis of the Findings

Extensive research from the secondary sources has provide a wider reading and precise comprehensibility around the chosen subject of staff shortage in the tourism industry. By comparing and contrasting several insights and industry reports, a convincing explanation and justification on the relevance of the subject could be derived. When the common themes are applied in the chosen company context, Tui Group, a robust elucidation on the issue could be found. The analysis enabled a credible rationale on the issue and provided supportive resources to realize the importance of the subject.

Tourism has historically played a significant role in promoting socio-economic progress in numerous nations and territories. It has the capacity to encourage entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, particularly for communities residing in local, coastal, rural, and remote areas. Additionally, tourism can facilitate the establishment of infrastructure and public services. Preceding the year 2020, the worldwide tourism industry had undergone a period of consistent expansion and variation lasting for approximately sixty years. The tourism industry emerged as a prominent economic sector in 2019, exhibiting rapid growth and attaining a significant position among the largest economic sectors worldwide. The tourism industry, which had experienced significant growth and expansion over a prolonged period, ¹⁹has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has resulted in adverse effects on the tourism enterprises, the livelihoods of tourism workers, as well as the communities and nations that depend on tourism. ¹The COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent limitations imposed on travel and tourism as a measure to mitigate the spread of the virus have revealed the sector's susceptibility to external pressures and its precariousness.

Because of pre-existing structural challenges, the high levels of fragmentation in the sector, the interconnectedness of its firms, and the high proportion of MSMEs, the consequences of the pandemic have been accentuated on the tourist industry. The industry has experienced a significant decline in employment opportunities and a deterioration in labour conditions, with self-employed individuals, females, and youths being disproportionately affected. Additionally, numerous enterprises have been forced to shut down. The tourism sector was brought to a halt as a result of the COVID-

19 pandemic and the ensuing measures taken to mitigate its spread. In the year 2021, several nations and regions sustained the prevailing circumstances, whereas others endeavoured to expedite the recuperation process in the industry and extend a cordial reception to visitors, despite a plethora of uncertainties. The aviation sector, along with its associated industries, experienced significant disruptions in operations, including intermittent and extended restrictions in domestic as well as international flights, during the years 2020 and 2021.

Despite the relatively relaxed measures in some countries, economic activity was still impacted by various factors, such as the implementation of physical distancing measures and the global spill over effects, which included impediments to international tourism and migration. The global economy experienced a significant decline in the contribution of the tourism sector due to the impact of the pandemic. The biggest concern which has caused immense financial damage is staff shortage. This has emerged as the result of the pandemic, when pandemic started, large companies such as the Tui Group, had to furlough many of its experienced employees to keep up with the operational costs and reduce the additional economic burden amid the industrial slowdown. But now when the industry is reviving with sudden surge in tourism and airline bookings, the skill gap is emerging as a sever issue. Although there is rehiring and training and employee development plan have been undertaken, but the necessary pace of recovery is yet to achieve to meet the surging demands.

4.2 Recommendations

- a) Facilitating talent mobility, both domestically and internationally, can serve as an efficient strategy to tackle workforce shortages and mitigate skill gaps. Furthermore, it is imperative for governments to reassess their migration policies, optimize visa procedures, facilitate the growth of regional markets, and tackle concerns related to tax treaties (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2022).
- b) The COVID-19 pandemic expedited the transition towards adaptable work arrangements, such as hybrid and remote work. Facilitating and endorsing adaptable and off-site labour practices, when viable, can serve as a valuable mechanism for mitigating scarcities in skilled personnel, especially in cases where limitations on travel impede workforce mobility. This approach has the potential to incentivize employees to resume their work duties in the aftermath

of the pandemic, particularly among those who have caregiving obligations for dependents such as minors or elderly relatives (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2022). It is advisable to take into account part-time or contract-based prospects, if feasible. In addition, the implementation of flexible work arrangements has been linked to the adoption of abbreviated workweeks, resulting in extended weekends. An increasing body of evidence suggests that the reduction of working hours, without any reduction in pay, has a positive impact on both productivity and overall well-being.

- c) Facilitating and endorsing satisfactory employment, that is secure, equitable, efficient, and significant - is crucial in the recruitment and retention of skilled individuals. The present concern has gained further significance in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, as a considerable number of individuals are grappling with mental health issues and harbouring apprehensions and anxieties regarding their financial stability and joblessness (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2022). Within this context, both the public and private sectors possess a noteworthy responsibility in augmenting the mental wellbeing of their employees. It is recommended that employers consider offering competitive compensation packages and employee benefits.
- d) Efforts to provide training, reskilling, and upskilling opportunities for employees in the Travel & Tourism industry, with a focus on improving skills related to digital literacy, will be crucial in enhancing the sector's workforce preparedness and addressing talent scarcity concerns. Continual training that encompasses present and future requirements is imperative. In addition to providing training, reskilling, and upskilling opportunities, the Travel & Tourism industry should prioritize efforts to enhance the appeal of its career options in order to attract and retain fresh talent (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2022). It is recommended that employers highlight the variety of positions available that accommodate a diverse set of competencies. The aforementioned objective could be accomplished via initiatives such as awareness events and career path mapping approaches.
- e) The establishment of Public-Private-Community Partnerships (PPCP) and collaborative efforts across various governmental tiers, including the international level, will be imperative in mitigating workforce deficiencies and achieving favourable outcomes. Enhanced collaboration and coordination

among nations can potentially result in the relaxation of restrictions and the implementation of favourable visa policies, thereby facilitating the movement of workers across international boundaries. Furthermore, it has the potential to facilitate the acknowledgement of competencies and credentials of labourers across international boundaries (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2022). The expedited onboarding and reduction of unnecessary processes for certain roles, especially within the aviation industry, could be facilitated by the mutual consideration of training and employee background records by authorities. This is due to the extensive duration of training, re-training, and processes within the aviation industry.

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