



HANOI UNIVERSITY

**TOURISM SECTOR: ACTIVITIES AND EMPLOYMENT
DEMAND OF ENTERPRISES IN HANOI**

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Executive Summary

This report summarises the results of the research conducted on the enterprises' tourism and hospitality sector of Hanoi as part of work package 2 of the Labour Market Observatory in Vietnam universities (LAB-MOVIE). The project aims to analyse and understand the demand and offer employment prospects in the local labour market. Particular attention is paid to the professional figures who work there and to the professionalism requirements required.

As the tourism and hospitality industry continues to develop over the years with the economic environment and technological changes, new professional figures have evolved, and some existing positions are contracted or changed. With a view to continuous training and updating useful information from the labour market, the project targets to strengthen and develop knowledge and skills for students to be well prepared for employment. The primary present and future objective for those who work in this area are, therefore, to provide a high-quality standard service that necessarily requires a high cultural level as well as a professional level of the figures involved, knowledge of the territory, history and geopolitics but also direct contact with local realities. In this sense, it is essential to have a university degree, especially for responsible figures and those who work closely with customers, which adds value to the professional skills that can also be acquired through experience. This research focused on the Hanoi tourism and hospitality sector has made it possible to represent the sector in terms of employment and needs, noting the professional skills present and expected in the local labour market through a concrete dialogue with the Hanoi realities that make it up.

1. Tourism sector

The LAB-MOVIE project aims to create a Labour Market Observatory in Vietnam universities to analyse and understand the local labour market and acquire information about its demand and offer. The project focuses on three sectors: telecommunication and information technology, tourism and hospitality and agrifood. This report studies the current state of the tourism sector and labour market and identifies the typical professional figures of the sector through surveying and interviewing tourism and hospitality enterprises in the locality of Hanoi. The study is not intended to be a detailed and in-depth analysis of the local labour market but simply a "taste" that knows how to stimulate the curiosity of young people who, in possession of an adequate degree, do not yet have the ideas completely clear concerning the area in which this title will be spendable and more sought after. The observatory also aims to construct a dialogue between those who have the task of preparing young people for work and those who create work with their entrepreneurial activities.

The project has two main objectives. Firstly, from the analysis results on demand for human resources and professional roles of local tourism and hospitality businesses, universities can provide helpful information to guide students on employment opportunities. Secondly, universities, in collaboration with enterprises, will adapt training according to the practical needs of businesses.

Service in general and tourism, in particular, is an economic sector that is difficult to classify segmentations on occupation and employment positions. If the manufacturing sector has definitions and classification criteria as follows:

1. Criteria on production technology: Companies will belong to the same field if they use the same input materials and apply the same production techniques.
2. Criteria on market consumption: Companies will belong to the same field if they have the same output market for their products or if companies produce interchangeable products.

The above criteria can be applied to the tourism sector for classification. It is impossible to define the boundary of tourism activities and the input materials that constitute them because tourism is a service sector with various products. At the same time, the consumption market is vast and different. In other words, there does not exist an industry that produces

solely one line of product and service for tourists or a branch of the economy that caters only to tourists.

To sum up the tourism industry, it is necessary to begin with a definition of tourists. The WTO (World Tourism Organization) defines a tourist as follows: “a tourist is anyone who goes to a place outside his/her permanent inhabiting environment (their place of daily routine) for a period of no more than one consecutive year with the main purpose of the trip not related to the earning money activity at the destination place”. From the above definition, we can identify three important factors for the formation of tourist behaviour:

1. Displacement from the permanent inhabiting environment
2. Not more than one consecutive year
3. Having different motivations/reasons (entertainment, work, etc.)

Destination, time and motivation are three main elements forming the tourism concept. Accordingly, WTO defines: "Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional". Since it is difficult to define precise boundaries, we can consider many sectors as tourism: from transportation, hospitality, restaurant, entertainment, media, health services and cultural heritage conservation services, architectures and landscapes, tourism promotion and management activities to agricultural production activities, activities that are indirectly related to tourism in the Agritourism type.

Although activities in the tourism field are very diverse and interdisciplinary, we can list some services that have the most important role and impact directly on the industry, including:

- Hospitality service: hotel, motel, campsite, homestay, resort;
- Restaurant service: restaurants, bars, cafeterias;
- Services provided by travel agencies such as planning, commercializing, purchasing and organizing tourism products: travel agency and tour operator;
- Tourist assisting service: tour guide, accompany, information office and tourist reception;
- Entertainment service: game park, mineral spring area, dance club, nightclub;
- Beauty care service: beauty centre, health care, mineral spring operation facilities;

- Cultural heritage management and exploitation services: museum, archaeological sites, botanical garden, zoo.

In the services listed above, we can identify some services that have a direct relationship with tourists more closely than the remaining services, such as hospitality services, travel agencies, tourist assisting services and cultural heritage management services.

Within the framework of the project, the research team focused on surveying human resource needs and requirements for an employment position in the hospitality sector, especially in 3–5-star hotels and the travel industry, to provide graduate students with the most realistic view of the labour market. For the travel agency, the research team surveyed travel agents, destination management companies, inbound travel agencies, and outbound and inbound travel agencies.

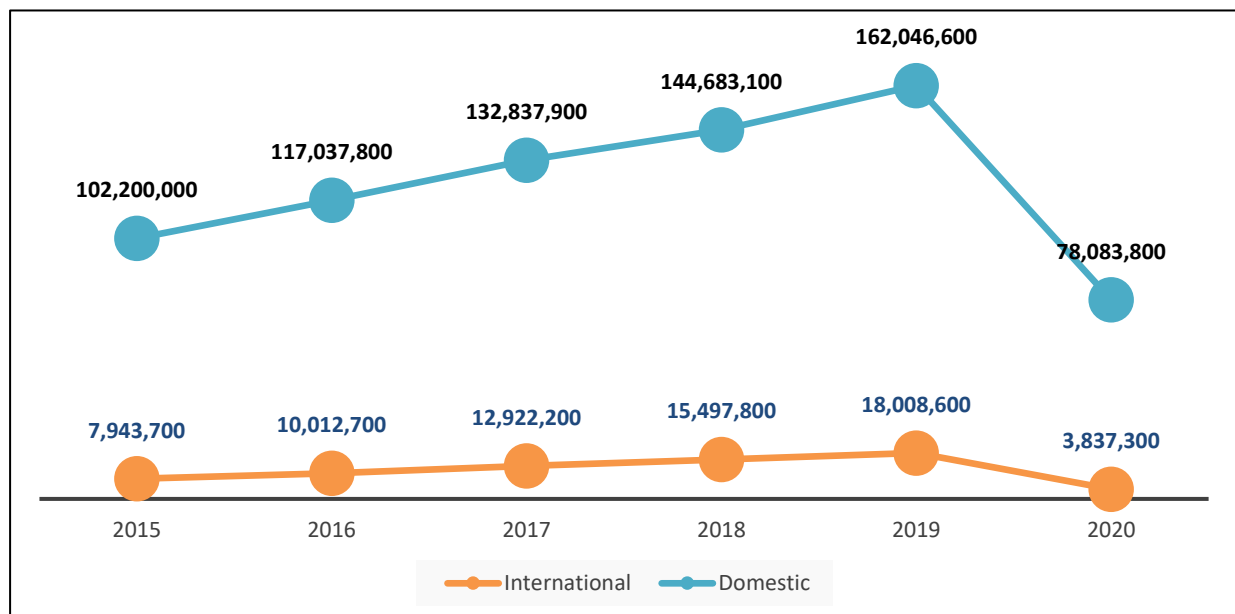
The determination of surveying mid and high-end accommodation establishments not only provides data on specific employment position requirements of the accommodation sector but also includes restaurant-related jobs or healthcare jobs because these services are often provided following regulations and classification standards imposed on national or local hospitality units. Article 4, Law on Tourism 2005 and Article 17 - Decree No. 92/2007/ND-CP stipulates that there are eight types of hospitality in Vietnam, including hotels; tourist villages; tourist villas; tourist apartments; tourist campsites; tourist accommodation; a household with rooms for tourist renting; other tourist hospitality establishments. By 2017, the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism proposed to add tourist cruise ships to the list of hospitality. Thus, according to Vietnam's regulations, there are currently 09 types of tourist accommodation allowed to register for business and exploitation.

To get an overview of the development of the tourism sector in Vietnam in general and Hanoi in particular, based on the statistics of the General Statistic Office and the Hanoi Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism, the research team collected and analyzed data related to international and domestic arrival to Vietnam in the 2015-2020 period.

The chart shows that Vietnam's tourism recorded a significant annual growth for international arrivals from 2015 to 2019, with a growth rate ranging from 11.6% (2015) to 12.9% (2019). Within four years, the number of international visitors to Vietnam has increased 2.3 times. For the domestic tourist, the annual growth rate fluctuates from 11.2% -

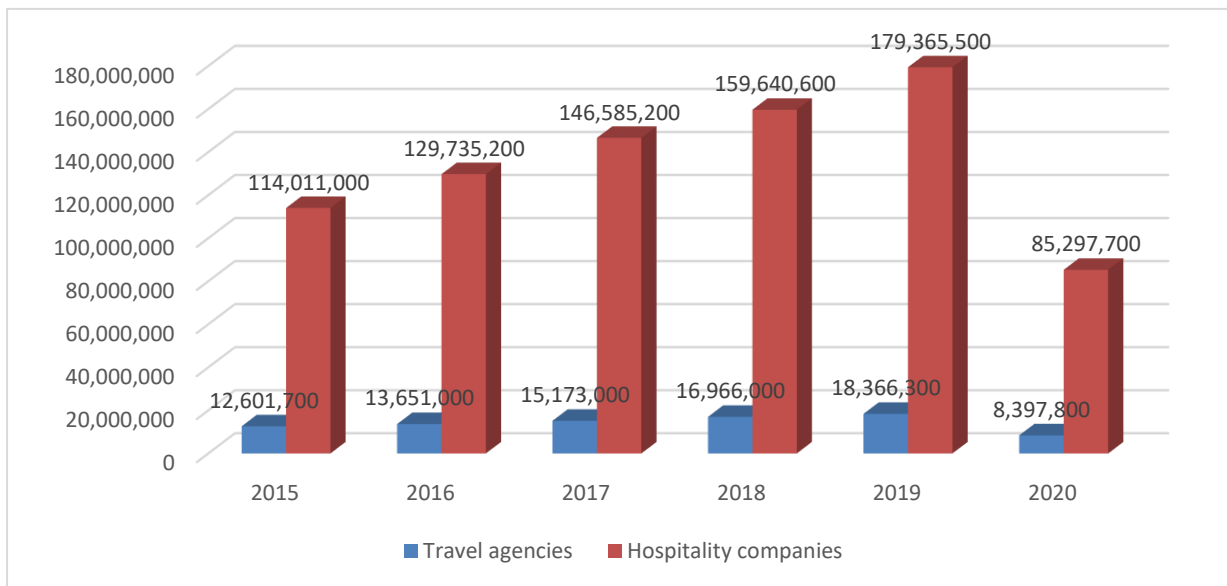
11.4%, and in 4 years, the number of tourists has increased by 1.5 times. However, when the Covid-19 pandemic broke out and severely impacted all economic and social sectors, tourism seemed to be the first and hardest hit sector. In 2020, the number of international and domestic visitors will decrease rapidly. International arrivals decreased 79%; domestic arrivals decreased by 52% over the same period in 2019, with the number of arrivals of 3,837,300 and 78,083,800, respectively.

Figure 1- Tourists to Vietnam (Source: General Statistic Office and the Hanoi Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism)



We recognize a huge difference in the number of international and domestic arrivals in Vietnam. It can be said that the domestic market share turned out to be the leading market share of Vietnam's tourism industry because the number of domestic tourists in the last six years is always 9 to 10 times higher than international visitors. Hospitality service has ten times more visitors than those served by travel agencies, reflecting that domestic tourists rarely buy package tours from travel agencies. Instead, most of them organize trips by themselves, planning their means of vehicles, sightseeing activities and hospitality service booking. The number of tourists served by tour agencies is very close to that of international visitors to Vietnam, showing that this service is mainly for international or Vietnamese tourists travelling abroad.

Figure 2- Tourists served by travel agencies and hospitality companies in Vietnam (Source: General Statistic Office and the Hanoi Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism)



As for Hanoi, from the figure above, we can see that the number of international arrivals to Hanoi almost coincides with the number of international arrivals to Vietnam in the 2015 – 2020 period. This fact has confirmed the role and position of Hanoi as a destination not to be missed when travelling to Vietnam. However, unlike the data on the national scale, the number of domestic visitors to Hanoi is not different from the number of international visitors, although the growth rate of domestic visitors still reached an impressive number year by year (11.4% in 2016 and 10.8% in 2019). Compared to the total number of domestic tourists in Vietnam, the statistic of Hanoi reflects the relatively limited level for the capital, where the number of visitors is only equal to 1/6 (2015) or 1/7 (2019) compared to the total number of domestic tourists nationwide. And, of course, it cannot be out of the market. In 2020, Hanoi also recorded a severe decrease of 79% and 61% international and domestic arrivals, respectively. Thus, compared nationwide, Hanoi has the same decrease in the number of international arrivals but a higher decrease level for the number of domestic arrivals (61% versus 52%).

Figure 3- Tourists to Hanoi (Source: General Statistic Office of Vietnam & Hanoi Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism)

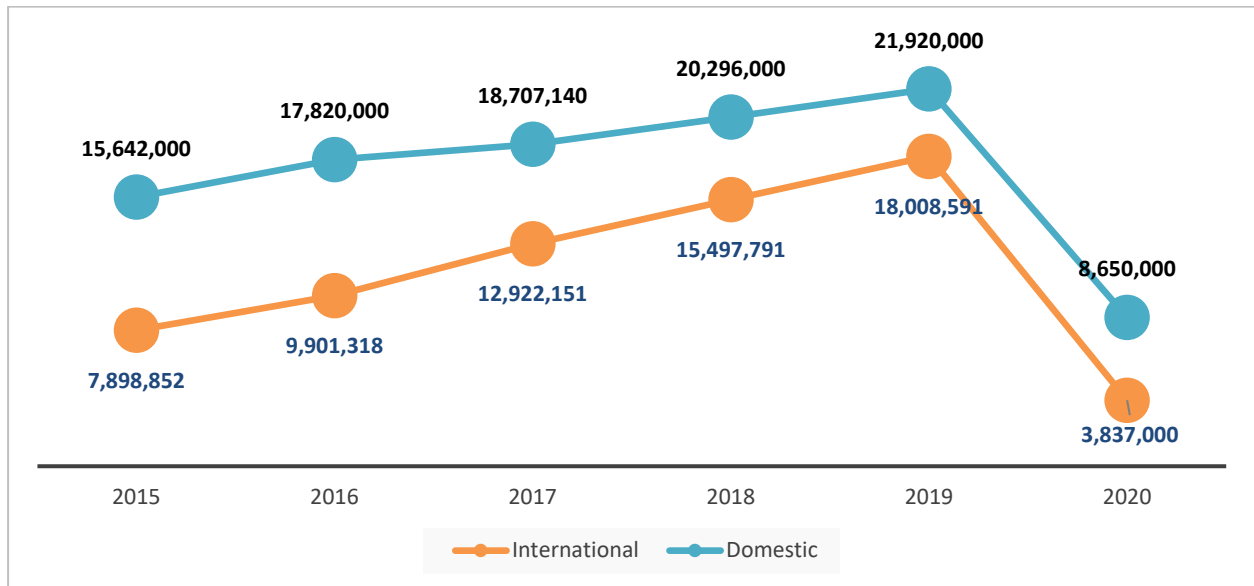


Table 1 - International tourists to Hanoi by nationality (Source: General Statistic Office and the Hanoi Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism)

Country	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
United State	491,249	552,644	614,117	687,226	746,171
Korea	1,112,978	1,543,883	2,415,245	3,485,406	4,290,802
Russia	338,843	433,987	574,164	606,637	646,524
Japan	671,379	740,592	798,119	826,674	951,962
France	211,636	240,808	255,369	279,659	287,655
Thailand	214,645	266,984	301,587	349,310	509,802
China	1,780,918	2,696,848	4,008,253	4,966,468	5,806,425
Australia	323,792	320,678	370,438	386,934	383,511
Italy	52,967	64,712	58,041	65,562	70,798
Germany	149,079	176,015	199,872	213,986	226,792

To sum up, it can be initially concluded that Hanoi is an attractive destination for international tourists in Vietnam. The growth rate of international and domestic tourists to Hanoi is quite stable, reaching over 10% annually. Hanoi's target market is Korea, China, Japan from Asia, France, Germany from Europe, the U.S, and Russia.

2. Research Methodology

As mentioned from the beginning, the Lab-Movie project aims to provide university students in Vietnam with an overview of the three research areas, including tourism. The research team hopes that with the labour market demand statistics and analysis on necessary skills of each job position in the field of tourism, universities and especially tourism majored graduates will clearly perceive the field of future career.

The research radiates around analyzing the demand and skills required for each job. Thus, it is necessary to figure out a detailed description of activities and skills for each job. In addition, the study also aims at sketching the future development trend of the tourism sector and the growth of job opportunities.

To achieve the above objectives, it is necessary to apply appropriate research methods. The research team has selected and applied the following methods:

2.1 Selection of research methodology

The first step in the research process is to determine which group of services in the tourism sector the survey shall be conducted. Among a series of industry groups listed above, the research team decided to choose two services with the most important and direct roles and positions for tourism activities, including:

- Hospitality service
- Travel agency service

For the hospitality service sector and travel agency, the research team conducted random face-to-face interviews at selected establishments. These interviews allow us to gather necessary information and identify job position groups, activities and skills required, which can then be compared with the training major selected at universities.

The research team conducted pilot interviews with five tour operators and three hotels. Hotels are selected randomly in the 4-5 star segment to comprehensively survey job positions that may incur from the organizational structure of a hotel, including housekeeping/room service, reception, restaurant, spa etc. Travel companies are also selected randomly with the criteria that the organizational structure of these companies

includes at least five job positions to have comprehensive and general data related to the occupational group in the travel industry.

Data collected from this pilot interview does not have a sample value because the information obtained is not representative of the entire field but only representative of enterprises participating in the survey.

In addition, the research team also conducted a CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) survey for tour operators and hotels on the list provided by the Hanoi Association of Small and Medium Enterprises and the Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism of Hanoi. This survey allows the research team to obtain an extensive database on the current status of the tourism industry, development trends and future career expectations.

2.2 Detection tools

The questionnaire web allows data collection in the quantification form valuable for describing characteristics of the research industry. A survey technique called CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) requires survey respondents to complete an online questionnaire through a link sent by the questioner. The data stored on the server will be downloaded for processing (through specialized statistical software).

The questionnaire web is designed in different parts to collect key information related to:

1. **Hotel/Travel agencies:** Information about business activities and company characteristics.
2. **Personnel:** Information about the number and position of employees, experts, and outsourced consultants currently working for the company
3. **Personnel recruitment goal and plan:** Information on trends in organizational structure changes, personnel changes in the latest year and recruitment plans for the next two years.
4. **Customers and investments:** Information about the client file about the company's investment goals.

The questionnaire for interview: Face-to-face interview is created to conduct in-

depth interviews (lasting about 2 hours) with experts or senior personnel in charge of the company. Through this survey tool, the research team hopes to obtain detailed and comprehensive data on the quantity, knowledge and skill requirements for each job position in each survey field. The questionnaire for face-to-face interviews has the same structure and questions as the online questionnaire sent via CAWI. However, an appendix will describe duties, tasks and skills required for job positions.

The questionnaire for a telephone interview is created to conduct interviews related to required activities, skills (technique - specialization - soft skills), and the prerequisites and how to implement each position. The telephone interview questionnaire has the same structure and questions as the face-to-face interview questionnaire.

3. Hotels

3.1.Overview of the hospitality industry

3.1.1.Standard classification of hotel accommodation

Vietnam National Standard 4391:2015 provides the official definition and standard classification of hotel accommodation facilities (TCVN 4391:2015). Under this standard, hotels are defined as accommodation built in block, providing visitors facilities, equipment and services. Hotel accommodation facilities are classified into hotels, resorts, floating hotels, and motels. The premises for the overnight stay of tourists can, therefore, be:

- Hotel room: the room for the overnight stay in the hotel and complementary accommodation, consisting of a room set up with a bedroom and bathroom;
- Suite: the room for an overnight stay in the hotel accommodation, consisting of a bedroom, a living room, bathroom, small kitchen and bar.
- Presidential suite/royal suites/ambassador suite: the luxury room with modern equipment of the highest standards for presidency or VIP customers.

Hotels are classified according to their requirements and are marked with a number of stars from 1 to 5. The number of stars is allocated based on the minimum qualitative requirements measured according to the location and architect, facilities and amenities, service quality, staffing, safety and security and services provided.

Table 2 - Requirement for the assignment of stars - room size (Number of rooms)

<i>Hotels</i>	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars
<i>Hotel</i>	10	20	50	80	100
<i>Resort</i>	10	15	40	60	80
<i>Floating hotel</i>	10	20	30	50	80
<i>Motel</i>	10	20	30	50	80

Table 3- Requirement for the assignment of stars - room area

Type of Hotels				
1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single room 12m² • Double or twin room 15m² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single room 15m² • Double or twin room 17m² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single room 18m² • Double or twin room 22m² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single room 21m² • Double or twin room 25m² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single room 24m² • Double or twin room 32m² • Suite 56m² • Presidential/VIP suite 100m²

Table 4: Requirement for the assignment of stars - Facilities

Hotels	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars
Reception					
Restaurant, bars		One restaurant	One restaurant with a bar	One restaurant 1 bar	2 restaurants 2 bars
			One meeting room	One conference room One boardroom One meeting room	One conference room 2 boardrooms 2 meeting rooms

Staff - Managers	Professional intermediate level	Professional intermediate level 1-year experience	College level 2-year experience foreign language level 3	university level 2-year experience foreign language level 4	university level 3-year experience foreign language level 4
Staff – Heads of Divisions		Vocational elemental level 1-year experience Office literacy Foreign language level 2 (head of reception only)	Professional intermediate level 2-year experience Office Information technology Foreign language level 3 (Head of reception and Head of F&B)	College level 2-year experience Office Information technology Foreign language level 3 (Head of F&B) and level 4 (Head of reception)	College level 3-year experience Office Information technology Foreign language level 4 (Head of F&B (Head of reception))
Staff – all services	Staff are trained Foreign language level 1 and office literacy for receptionist	20% of staff have a vocational certificate 80% of staff are trained Foreign language level 3 and office literacy for receptionist	50% of staff have a vocational certificate 50% of staff are trained Foreign language level 2 staff in F&B Foreign language level 3 and office literacy for receptionist	70% of staff have a vocational certificate 30% of staff are trained Office literacy Staff involved in direct services: foreign language level 2 Receptionist: foreign language level 4 and good use of office IT	70% of staff have a vocational certificate 30% of staff are trained Office literacy Staff involved in direct services: foreign language level 3 Receptionist: foreign language level 4 and good use of office IT

3.1.2. Facilities and accommodation capacity of hotels in Vietnam

Up to 2019, Vietnam has 22,184 accommodation establishments for 499,305

rooms. There are 5,884 hotels with 262,305 rooms, accounting for 26.5% of total accommodation establishments and 52.5% (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism). The five-star hotels and apartments are 182 accommodations, representing 3% of total hotels and four-star hotels are 302, representing 5% of the total. The number of 4 and 5-star hotels grew by 11% and 17%, respectively, in 2019 compared to the previous year, indicating the recent development of large-scale and high-end tourist accommodation. On the contrary, the number of certified registrations for 1-3 star tourist accommodations decreased by 14%. 1-star hotels are the most numerous, accounting for 60% of hotels in Vietnam, followed by 2-star hotels accounting for 21% of the total. There is a significant reduction in the number of 2-star hotels with a 22.8% decrease in 2019, followed by a 9.7% reduction in 1-start hotels.

Over the ten years, the number of tourist accommodations has increased substantially, with almost average double-digit growth each year. In 2019, the number of establishments was stagnant with only a 3% growth rate, but the number of rooms grew by 24%. The high growth in rooms of 24% in 2019 while the number of accommodations remains stable at 3% shows the shift to larger establishments. More large-scale and high-end tourist accommodations target big groups and high-spending visitors. This is evidenced by the growth in 5-star and 4-star hotels, while the number of 3-star hotels tends to decline (Figure 3). Because of the soar in luxury, high-end hotels, the number of rooms offered by 5-star hotels far exceeds those of 3-star and 4-stars despite the smaller number of establishments, as shown in Figure 4. The number of certified registration for ranking of 1-3 star tourist accommodation decreased. Many establishments do not register for ranking certification to relevant authorities, so they are not included in the statistics of ranked hotels (Vietnam Tourism Report 2019).

Figure 4: Statistics on accommodation in Vietnam in 10 years

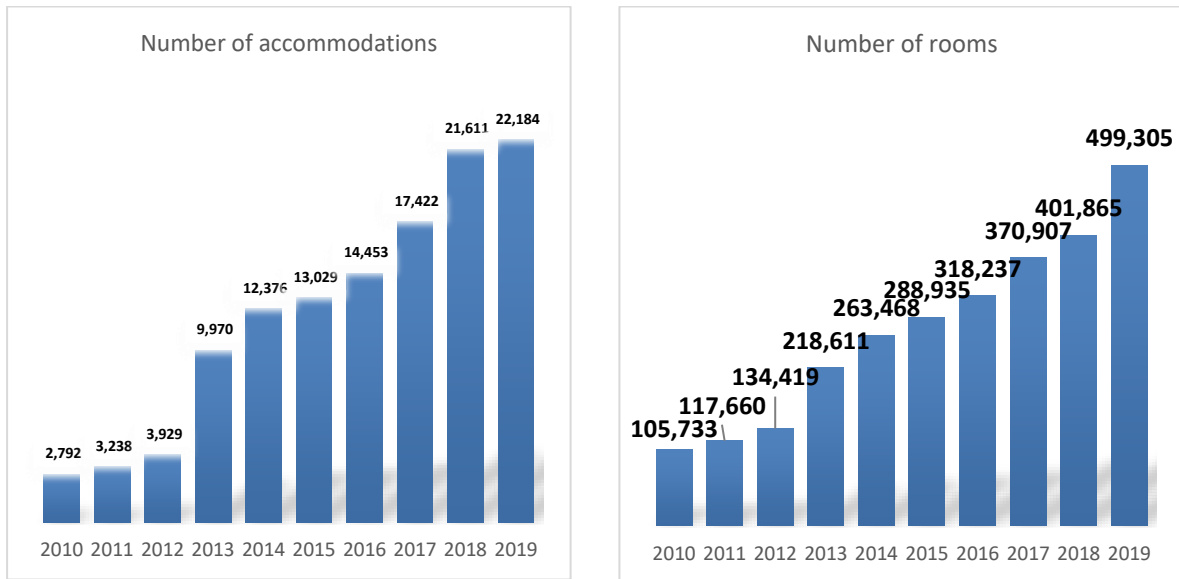
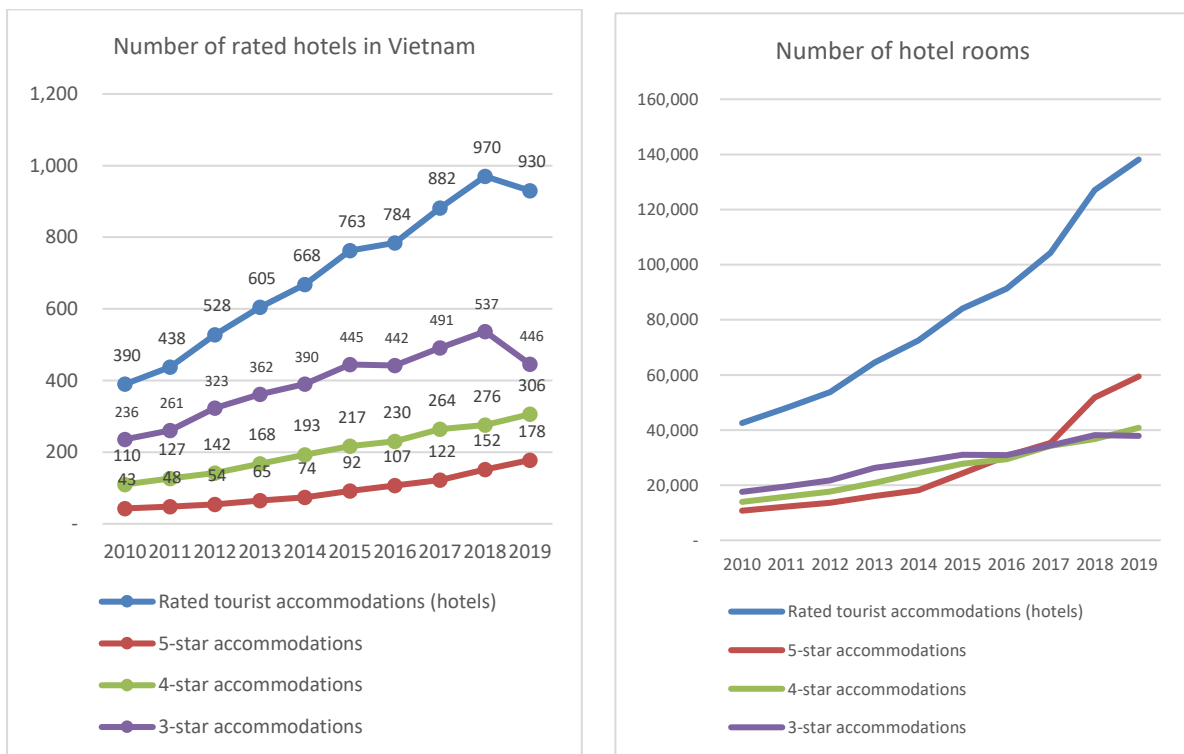


Figure 5: Statistics on ranked accommodation in Vietnam in 10 years



The COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected tourism and hospitality in Vietnam in 2020 and 2021. The pandemic with long-period lockdown in many countries has caused a serious interruption in the supply chain. Travelling has been restricted. The number of international visitors to Vietnam in 2020 dropped remarkably by 80% compared to 2019. Domestic visitors decline by more than 35% (Teer, 2021). Many accommodations were closed due to lockdown and social

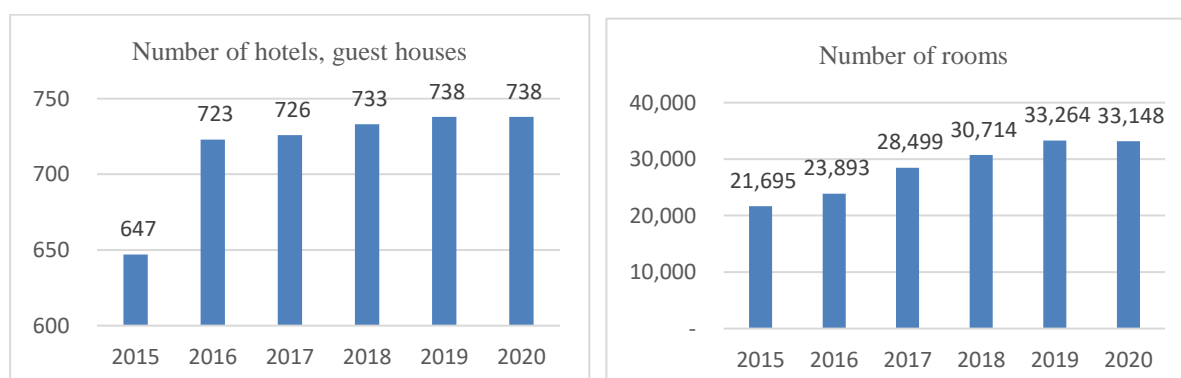
distancing in Vietnam. In 2020, 20% of tourist accommodations were closed according to VNAT, and the average occupancy was approximately 20-25%. In 2021, the situation was even worse. The number of foreign arrivals was down 96% compared to the previous year. 90% of tourist accommodations ceased operations. The average occupancy rate of accommodation establishments was just 5%. (<https://vietnamtourism.gov.vn/index.php/items/39260>).

By the end of October 2021, about 79% of Vietnamese people had been fully vaccinated, social distancing restrictions were lifted, and Vietnam entered a “new normal” period. In early 2022, international flights are reopened, tourism and hospitality started to recover, and the prospect for the industry is positive.

3.1.3. Facilities and accommodation capacity of hotels in Hanoi

In 2020, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic adversely impacted Vietnam and Hanoi tourism. Vietnam closed its borders. International visitors coming to Hanoi were only experts and technical workers. Some tourism businesses ceased operations. Many hotels in Hanoi were temporarily closed due to social distancing requirements. The number of international visitors to Hanoi in 2020 was 875,000, a reduction of 81.8% compared to 2019. The average occupancy rate was only 35%. Revenues of tourist accommodations were VND5,300 billion, which declined by 51% (Hanoi Statistical Year Book 2020). The prolonged pandemic until the end of 2021, with a long lockdown period and an increasing number of infected people, almost closed the tourism industry. In 2021, the hotel market in Hanoi continued to suffer a further drop in occupancy rate, to only 30.6%, down by around 5% compared to 2020.

Figure 6: Number of accommodation establishments and rooms in Hanoi 2015-2020



The number of hotels and rooms in Hanoi indicates a steady increase over the five years from 2015 to 2019. COVID 19 pandemic has stopped the investment in accommodation establishments. The number of rooms shows a slight decrease in 2020. Among the hotels in Hanoi, only 233 establishments are rated (approximately 32%), for which the number of 4 and 5 stars accounts only. 5% of the total. The majority of tourism accommodations are not rated.

Table 5: Numer of enterprises in tourism and accommodation services (Hanoi Statistical Year Book)

<i>Unit: Enterprise</i>	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Accommodation and food service activities	2,599	2,768	3,078	3,293	3,690	3,101
- <i>State enterprises</i>	19	14	16	17	11	11
+ <i>Central</i>	12	8	10	11	7	7
+ <i>Local</i>	7	6	6	6	4	4
- <i>Non-state enterprises</i>	2,513	2,657	2,959	3,121	3,461	2,900
- <i>Foreign-invested enterprises</i>	67	97	103	155	218	190
Tourist services	1,807	1,685	1,937	2,123	2,408	2,021
- <i>State enterprises</i>	8	6	6	7	6	6
+ <i>Central</i>	4	3	3	4	3	3
+ <i>Local</i>	4	3	3	3	3	3
- <i>Non-state enterprises</i>	1,790	1,666	1,918	2,101	2,383	2,000
- <i>Foreign-invested enterprises</i>	9	13	13	15	19	15

The table above displays the number of enterprises in tourism and accommodation services over the six years from 2015 to 2020. The number of enterprises grows over time from 2015 up to 2019 and falls in the year 2020 when the COVID-19 outbreak hits the country and the city. There is a shift in ownership structure from state-owned enterprises to the private sector. The state-owned

enterprises declined steadily, and private businesses grew significantly before the pandemic. Foreign-invested enterprises experience an increase, showing a strong presence in the Hanoi market.

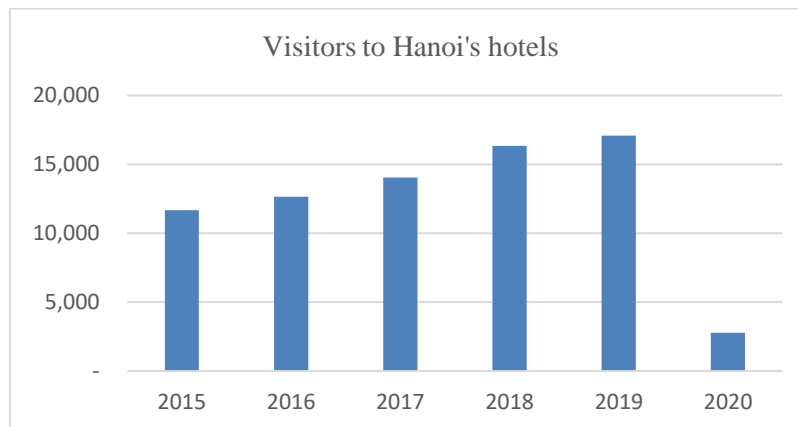
Table 6: Numer of employees in tourism and accommodation services (Hanoi Statistical Year Book)

<i>Unit: Person</i>	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Accommodation and food service activities	58,633	60,146	63,334	67,776	74,305	61,910
- <i>State enterprises</i>	3,119	2,083	1,859	1,768	918	910
+ <i>Central</i>	2,409	1,412	1,506	1,019	642	640
+ <i>Local</i>	710	671	353	749	276	270
- <i>Non-state enterprises</i>	45,300	46,489	49,451	53,234	60,264	50,000
- <i>Foreign-invested enterprises</i>	10,214	11,574	12,024	12,774	13,123	11,000
Tourist services	11,975	11,858	14,404	18,127	17,142	13,975
- <i>State enterprises</i>	505	290	346	232	499	475
+ <i>Central</i>	337	185	278	197	76	75
+ <i>Local</i>	168	105	68	35	423	400
- <i>Non-state enterprises</i>	11,251	11,148	13,356	17,200	16,029	13,000
- <i>Foreign-invested enterprises</i>	219	420	702	695	614	500

The table above shows the number of tourism and accommodation services employees. Employment in the sector has an increasing trend up to 2019 and drops in 2020. Most employees are in the private sector, accounting for more than 80% of employment in accommodation and food services and more than 90% in tourist services.

The number of visitors to Hanoi grew rapidly before 2020 and dropped in 2020, as indicated in the graph. The fall in 2020 continued in 2021, with an even further drop. A recovery is expected in 2022 as at least two doses vaccinate most Vietnamese people.

Figure 7: Visitors to Hanoi hotels



3.2. The current state

Below we will present the results of the web survey (CAWI) and face-to-face interview (FaF) conducted at hotels in Hanoi, mainly four and 5-stars for which it was available or was possible to get email contact. In particular, we will report some data relating to the characteristics of the staff and the performance of the accommodation facilities (hotels), especially concerning changes in the workforce.

Of the 30 hotels contacted for a survey or interview, 3 (or 10%) correctly completed all or most of the web questionnaire and 6 (or 20%) participated in the FaF interview. The sample is too small to process comprehensive data analysis with reliability. However, we can hypothesize a measure and an attitude concerning market trends and employment prospects. With the face-to-face interview, we can identify professional figures, requirements, expectations of knowledge, skills, and competencies required for each position.

3.2.1. The staff

The survey was conducted in 2020-2021 which was adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 outbreak period, hotels operated at reduced capacity. Most hotels cut down on human resources to maintain operations. Therefore, the data on hotel staffing does not represent everyday operations.

Regardless of the category, the hotels that participated in the survey mainly include non-seasonal employees (staff hired permanently). Among nine hotels in the

survey, only one five-star hotel had seasonal staff accounting for 3% of the total employees. The remaining hotels maintained minimum staffing. Therefore, no seasonal staff was needed.

Overall, graduates represent 59% of employees (non-seasonal and seasonal), seasonal staff who are university graduates account for only 1.5%, and non-seasonal staff for 57.5%. Graduates, therefore, operate mainly as non-seasonal workers at high-category facilities. The high percentage of graduates among hotel employees is attributable to several factors. 1st factor is COVID-19. The downsizing of hotel operations mostly occurred for seasonal staff, and only key employees were retained. 2nd factor is the ranking of hotels in the survey sample. 8 out of 9 hotels are four and five-star. Highly ranked hotels are subject to government requirements for the qualification of key positions.

Table 7: Percentage of graduates employed at the hotels that participated in the web survey and face-to-face interview by type of classification (non-seasonal, seasonal) and by category of the hotel (number of stars).

<i>Framing</i>	<i>3 stars</i>	<i>4 stars</i>	<i>5 stars</i>	<i>Total</i>
Seasonal and non-seasonal	28%	62%	59%	59.1%
Non-seasonal	28%	62%	56%	57.5%
Seasonal	0%	0%	3%	1.5%

On the other hand, women represent 51.8% of employees, regardless of whether we are talking about seasonal or non-seasonal employees (Table 7). The percentage of women employed is approximately 50%, slightly different among hotel categories.

Table 8: Percentage of women employed at the hotels participating in the web survey and face-to-face interview by type of classification (non-seasonal, seasonal) and hotel category (number of stars).

<i>Framing</i>	<i>3 stars</i>	<i>4 stars</i>	<i>5 stars</i>	<i>Total</i>
Seasonal and non-seasonal	46.3	51.8	52.4	51.8
Non-seasonal	46.3	51.8	50.2	50.7
Seasonal	0	0	2.2	1.1

As the survey was conducted during a very special period of the COVID-19 pandemic where social distancing was to be enforced, travelling was limited, and borders were closed, the need for freelancers was not identified in the hotels surveyed.

Finally, during the pandemic period where human resources were cut down, only two 5-star hotels from the survey still hosted university trainees (22%). Trainees and interns came mainly from courses of study in the tourism, linguistic and business administration fields. The other hotels surveyed did not recruit interns/trainees during these two years.

Table 9: Percentage distribution of the hotels that participated in the web survey and face-to-face interview by the current situation concerning the presence of university interns/trainees and by category (number of stars).

Hotels	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars	Total
Who currently have university trainees	0%	0%	40%	22%
Who currently do not have university trainees	100%	100%	60%	78%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
<i>Number of respondents</i>	1	3	5	9

In the last 24 months, the hotels have hired front office, room, kitchen and technical staff. The hirings required graduates from university or college for front office and technical positions, people with a vocational certificate for kitchen and room staff.

Table 10: Distribution of the hotels that participated in the web survey and face-to-face interview by the change in staff in the last 24 months and by category (number of stars).

Recruitment in the last 24 months	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars	Total
Yes, hiring (even for turnover only)			40%	22%
No, no change in headcount			20%	11%
No, on the contrary, the workforce has been reduced	100%	100%	40%	67%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
<i>Number of respondents</i>	1	3	5	9

3.2.2. Trend, outlook and changes in personnel

From 2020 through 2021, the COVID-19 outbreak seriously hit the country and the hospitality industry. Travelling was limited, and country borders were closed. A minimal number of international visitors came to Vietnam, and domestic visitors were restricted because of lockdown and social distancing requirements. Hotels operated at very low capacity. Some hotels were used as places for quarantine. All hotels that participated in the survey reported that they missed some goals.

In 2022, as more than 70% of the Vietnamese population is vaccinated, borders were opened from March, and no restriction was placed on travelling, the tourism and hospitality industry started to recover.

During the survey period in 2021, people interviewed were all positive about the prospect of tourism and hospitability. Among HR Managers of 9 hotels surveyed, 100% agreed that the hospitality industry would recover and grow again in the next two years.

In this context, 22.0% of hotels have been hired in the last 24 months (even for turnover alone), and those are five stars hotels. 2 other five stars hotels maintained their permanent staff, and the remaining hotels have reduced staff.

As for prospects, 100% of hotels believe that in the coming years, the economic trend of the tourism sector, as regards hotel accommodation, will be growing compared to the COVID period. The growth might not reach the pre-Covid period within a short time, but a strong recovery is expected.

In this future vision, 100% of hotels surveyed plan to hire in the next two years to prepare for recovery and growth. In the next two years, the hotels surveyed intend to recruit almost 500 new employees. The hires involve all areas of the hotel operation, including room, kitchen, food & beverage, front office, sales and marketing, and technical staff.

Instead, thinking more in the long term, the figures with the best employment prospects will be the Chef / Cook, the Guest relation, the Receptionist, and the Sales.

The professional figures sought are many. However, as many as 67% of the hotels that participated in the survey showed that they had difficulty finding staff due to the inadequacy of the candidates, 22% due to a small number of candidates, and 11% due to other reasons (table 14). Despite the expected growth of the hospitality industry in the coming years, the human resources that meet the requirements remain limited. The number of qualified candidates is small. Many experienced staff have moved to other industries. Job opportunities are available but recruiting high-quality staff is predicted to be challenging—several hotel positions, including kitchen and

sales, required qualifications, skills, and extensive training. However, after several years of working in the hotels with experience and training, they tend to leave, causing high staff turnover.

Table 11: Percentage distribution of the hotels that participated in the web survey and face-to-face interview for difficulties in finding staff and by category (number of stars).

<i>Hotels that in finding staff</i>	<i>3 stars</i>	<i>4 stars</i>	<i>5 stars</i>	<i>Total</i>
They have difficulties due to the inadequacy of the candidates	100%	100%	40%	67%
They have difficulties due to the small number of candidates			40%	22%
They have difficulties for other reasons			20%	11%
They have no difficulties				
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>9</i>

Specifically, the main difficulties concern the search for front office staff, kitchen and sales. Those professional figures will have the opportunity to grow and develop.

Finally, regarding investments, most of the hotels that participated in the survey concentrate on strengthening commercial network, enhancing advertising and communication via the web, training/updating personnel and recruiting staff.

3.3.Organizational structure

Below we will present the organizational structure, and the main professional figures employed at the Hanoi hotels of high category detected through face-to-face interviews.

We will outline neither the organizational structure common to all hotels nor an ideal organizational chart but a general framework that, although it cannot grasp all the facets of reality, can bring them together in a scheme that is as exhaustive as possible. So, although in many hotels in Hanoi, the entire organization chart is less articulated than the one traced here, and the employees employed play more roles than those described here for the individual professional figures, it was decided to present the situation as completely as possible. The typical organizational structure of four-star and five-star hotels is divided into five macro functional areas within which at least one manager and one or more employees operate.

In particular, these are the Management (General Director), the Sales and Marketing Area, the Room Division, the Food & Beverage Division, the Kitchen, the Front Office division, the Administration Division, and the Technical Division (figure 1).

- The **Management** is where all the activities related to the organization, coordination and strategic and financial management of the hotel are carried out.

- The **Administration Division** is where all the activities related to the hotel's administrative, accounting and financial management and the selection and management of human resources are carried out. Most of the four-star and separate five-star Accounting from Human Resource functions. Therefore, the administration area includes the Finance department (accounting and procurement) and Human resource department (recruitment and training).

- The **Sales and Marketing Division** is where all the activities are aimed at promoting, marketing and selling all services provided by the hotel. The division is responsible for planning, developing strategies, marketing, advertising, and promoting hotel services. It is also in charge of studying the market, and competitors, identifying potential customers, managing customer lists, and taking customer care. The division manages the communication and image of the hotel.

- The **Rooms Division (housekeeping)** is the main operating sector of the hotel company, where all the activities related to the management of reception and accommodation services plus any ancillary services are carried out. The housekeeping division includes three main functions: room attendance, public attendance and laundry. Many hotels include ancillary services (fitness, swimming pool, sauna, massages, etc.). Some other hotels have a separate Entertainment department.

- The **Front Office Division:** is where the check-in operations (reception and registration of the customer), customer assistance during the stay and check-out operations (relating to the customer's departure) are carried out. The division includes reception and concierge departments. The **Reception Department** manages the reservation system, welcomes customers, manages the assignment of the rooms, and provides accounting with information on customer arrangements. The **Concierge Department** manages the luggage service, the supervision of the hotel, the registration of customers, customer assistance, the cloakroom service, the elevator service, and the taxi call and car traffic management.

- The **Food & Beverage Division** is where the activities related to preparing and administering complete meals, food, and drinks served to customers on tables arranged in one or more special rooms are carried out. The Division is structured in restaurants, bars and lounges.
- The **Kitchen Division** is where all the activities related to food preservation and meal preparation are managed. The kitchen division is responsible for setting the menus and preparing, processing and cooking various food items. This division also prepares meals for hotel staff, serving as a canteen function.
- The **Technical division** deals with installing equipment, repairing and maintaining various tools and equipment, plants and green areas and supports other departments.

3.4. Professional Figures

3.4.1. Room Division Manager

The Room Division Manager is in charge of all housekeeping and room-related activities. He works as an employee under the direction and supervision of the Hotel Manager or Director.

The Room Division Manager is responsible for the Rooms Division and related areas/departments. It is, therefore, the professional figure who, starting from the strategies prepared by the management, manages with supervisory functions. This area contains the reception, concierge, floors, wardrobe and laundry services, sports facilities, care and well-being, verifying and determining organizational addresses to coordinate the various services, ensuring quality standards and customer satisfaction, and providing data projections that can facilitate the management activity of the structure.

In particular, the Room Division Manager ensures the implementation of the standard procedures prepared by the management and coordinates and supervises the departments of his sector, ensuring maximum collaboration to meet the demands of customers and management quickly. The Room Division Manager is responsible for managing the staff of the Room Division. Tasks include planning the department activities, supervising the working process of staff to meet the hotel standards, coordinating with other departments to meet customers' requirements, and handling

customer complaints. The manager needs to ensure and maintain a high level of service and professionalism in the area of its competence, ensuring a correct and professional attitude towards customers to maintain the hotel's style and class. He or she guarantees the state of efficiency and safety of the systems, furnishings and equipment, as well as the custody of the materials entrusted to it. They inspect a selection of rooms and common areas reserved for customers daily, verifying the level of comfort, cleanliness and hygiene. They suggest improvements by formulating asset investment requests for equipment, equipment and various materials. As the Head of the division they involve in recruiting, training, evaluating and promoting staff of the Division.

This figure is usually held by tourism graduates or in courses of study in business administration, economics and language. This figure requires extensive experience through lower to higher levels in the division. In any case, beyond the qualification possessed, numerous training and specialization courses form this professional figure. It must be said, however, that this figure, depending on the course of study, is formed in the field, first covering operational roles and then having the responsibility of individual services within the structure.

The Room Division Manager must have a thorough knowledge of the policies and procedures of the Room Division, the connected areas/departments and the hotel as a whole, the services offered by the hotel where he works, as well as the reference market and its operation. In particular, he must know hotel operational management, operating standards and procedures, budgeting techniques, pricing/revenue techniques, hotel marketing and income statement analysis. He must also possess excellent knowledge of personnel management, planning and organization techniques. Finally, he must know the specific regulations of the sector, the general principles of safety in the workplace, the contractual aspects and labour legislation.

This professional figure requires a strong command of the English language (both written and spoken). He must also possess computer skills as an expert user using specific software for hotels. This figure should possess the ability to organize one's work and that of others, managing team work, problems solving, and the relationship with customers. He must be courteous and patient, able to self-control and manage stress, attentive to details and able to handle customer complaints.

Finally, he must be available to work outside hours and on weekends.

3.4.2. Front Office Manager

The Front Office Manager or Head of Reception or Reception Manager can be part of the Room Division or a separate department. The position reports directly to Hotel Manager in a separate Front Office Division or reports to the Room Division Manager if the department is a part of the Room Division.

The Front Office Manager is the professional figure who takes care of all the services related to the reception, coordinating the activities of the entire hall. In addition to welcoming guests and providing them with suggestions and information on the place of stay, this professional figure also deals with the management of reservations, manages complaints and misunderstandings that occur or communicates to the reception and, more generally, coordinates and monitors the activity of the Front Office. In particular, the Front Office Manager is the position with the first point of contact with customers. He or she welcomes the customer upon arrival and provides assistance throughout the stay, manages the arrival and departure registers, provides for the customer's registration; is, therefore, responsible for room reservations, checks availability and proceeds with their assignment upon arrival of customers. It manages complaints and problems reported by customers and emergencies and carries out administrative and accounting operations such as issuing invoices and cash activity. It manages and coordinates the staff for room services, planning the presence of collaborators based on the booking requests received. It also manages contracts with travel agencies and tour operators and participates in designing packages to offer tourists. This figure requires university graduates, and priority is given to graduates from tourism or languages. The figure requires extensive training and experience.

The Front Office Manager must have a thorough knowledge of the policies and procedures of the front office and the hotel as a whole, as well as the services offered by the hotel. He or she must know about hotel technology, particularly from a managerial, administrative and accounting point of view.

Tourism graduates or business administration graduates usually hold this figure.

Graduates from colleges in tourism with extensive experience can be accepted. Clearly, for this professional figure, it is essential to be proficient in the English language (written and spoken), and an additional language such as Korean, Chinese, or French is an advantage. He must also possess IT skills as a general user/expert using specific software for the front office activities such as Opera.

This figure is completed and characterized by the ability to organize one's work and that of others, group work, problem-solving and customer relationships. He or she must be courteous and patient, able to self-control and manage stress, and very precise but flexible. Finally, he must be available to work outside hours, on weekends and shifts.

3.4.3.The Receptionist

The Receptionist is part of the Front Office Department. It operates as an employee under the direction and supervision of the Front Office Manager. Undoubtedly, this professional figure is one of the key figures in hotel accommodation facilities.

The Receptionist takes care of welcoming customers and providing for all the organizational and administrative activities concerning the reception department of the structure where he works. It is, therefore, the professional figure who, in addition to welcoming guests and providing them with suggestions and information on the place of stay, deals with the management of reservations, complaints and misunderstandings that occur or are communicated to the reception. In particular, the Receptionist coordinates and controls the general progress of the reception and concierge service, manages room reservations, makes himself available to provide answers or clarifications to users, manages the arrival and departure registers, welcomes the customer, takes care of check-in and check-out procedures, carries out administrative and accounting operations, such as the issuance of invoices and cash activities (money collections, custody of values). It assists the customer during his stay, manages complaints and problems reported by customers, and provides information on the various services provided by the structure and the opportunities that can be found in the area (cultural events, tourist itineraries etc.)

This professional figure is usually covered by university graduates. Graduates in tourism, language, or business are preferred. The position can be held by college graduates who have experience in reception. In any case, beyond the qualification possessed, numerous training and specialization courses form this professional figure.

The Receptionist must have a thorough knowledge of the policies and procedures of the front office and the hotel as a whole, as well as the services offered by the hotel where he works. He or she must possess a good knowledge of the hotel, particularly from a managerial, administrative and accounting point of view. He must also have an in-depth knowledge of the tourism-hotel sector, the location where he works, and the communication and sales techniques.

This professional figure requires a thorough knowledge of the English language (written and spoken), and other languages (depending on the target customers of the hotel) such as Korean, Chinese, and French is an advantage. He must also possess IT skills as a general user/expert who uses specific software for the reception, such as opera.

This position is characterised by the ability to manage and develop a relationship with customers, problem-solving, team working. He or she must be courteous, honest and patient, able to self-control and manage stress, and precise and flexible in solving problems and handling customer complaints. He is expected to have passion and upselling skills. He must be open, friendly and tactful in dealing with customers and coordinating activities with other departments. Finally, he must be available to work outside hours, on weekends and shifts.

The figures of the Receptionist and the Receptionist are, without a doubt, the main professional figures of access to the world of work in the hotel sector for recent graduates.

3.4.4. Housekeeping Manager

The Housekeeping Manager is part of the Room Division. It operates as an employee under the direction and supervision of the Room Division Manager.

The Housekeeping Manager has the task of coordinating the room area and managing the team that takes care of the cleaning and hospitality on the floors and is assigned to the hotel's common areas. Therefore, it is the professional figure who must ensure that guests spend a pleasant holiday, always enjoy maximum comfort and can count on impeccable cleanliness in all hotel rooms, in compliance with the management's quality standards. In particular, the Housekeeping Manager manages the staff in charge of the plans, planning the shifts and roles so that the right number of people carries out each task at the appropriate times. He defines and manages the rooms' preparation and preparation and plans the ordinary and extraordinary maintenance interventions in the various environments of his competence. He is responsible for the purchase of cleaning products and the relationship with their suppliers, as well as for the correct activity of laundry, portering and cloakroom services, including the control and management of the department's costs. It prepares detailed reports intended for the management regarding the management of costs and how to optimize them where necessary and trains the staff so that it masters the practices and tools that ensure the highest possible quality in terms of comfort and cleanliness for guests and efficiency for the structure, creates and maintains a constant synergy between its department and the others of the structure, especially with the front office with which there must be a perfect understanding. University graduates usually cover this figure, but majoring in tourism or hospitality is advantageous. The figure requires extensive experience in housekeeping activities. Beyond the qualification possessed, numerous training and specialization courses form this professional figure. It must be said, however, that this figure, regardless of the course of study, is formed in the field, first covering operational roles and then having the responsibility of individual services within the structure.

The Housekeeping Manager must have an excellent knowledge of the departments and the entire hotel, as well as of the quality standards the Management provides. He must know the specific procedures and techniques for the operational management of the rooms and other rooms of the hotel, not only concerning aspects related to comfort and hygiene but also concerning the optimization of costs and times. The staff must know perfectly the characteristics of cleaning products to choose the best ones, optimize time and costs and preserve the surfaces on which they will be used. He must, therefore, possess notions of accounting and

administration for budget management. He or she must also know the fundamentals of interior and flower design to offer guests an always welcoming and unique atmosphere. Must possess excellent knowledge of the main techniques of personnel management and planning and organization of work.

For this professional figure, knowledge of English (written and spoken) is sufficient, while he must possess computer skills as a generic user.

This figure is completed and characterized by the ability to organize one's work and that of others, to group work, to problem-solving. He or she must be patient, honest, able to control and manage stress, attentive to details, and quick in handling tasks. Having creative and an excellent aesthetic taste will be an advantage. Finally, he must be available to work after hours and on weekends.

3.4.5. Food & Beverage Manager

The Food & Beverage Manager works under the direction and supervision of the Hotel Manager.

The Food & Beverage Manager coordinates and supervises all activities related to hotel catering. It is, therefore, the professional figure who plans the budget, takes care of the supply of the raw materials, manages the staff and controls the quality of the food and drinks. Its goal is to manage the restaurant business cost-efficiently and provide customers with a high level of service in line with the image and reputation of the restaurant. In particular, the Food & Beverage Manager deals with the economic planning of the area, defines the budget, and estimates the economic resources necessary for the supply of food and beverages. He collaborates with the Chef and the Sommelier to choose products, suppliers, dishes, and wines to be included in the menu. He implements hygiene and safety standards in preparing dishes, preserving food and drinks, and table service. Verify that the cleaning and sanitizing procedures of worktops and kitchen equipment are carried out correctly and regularly. It also manages stocks, verifies the quantity and expiration date, analyzes the warehouse turnover and places orders from suppliers based on the cooks' requests and the products' actual use. He takes care of the management of the kitchen brigade, restaurant and bar room, ensures sufficient staff for the normal

functioning of the activity, coordinates the various departments and responsible, assigns tasks, and manages shifts and replacements. It organizes non-organized events, such as buffets, meetings, conferences, themed dinners, etc. Finally, he takes care of the weekly reports on the restaurant's activity to be presented to the management (revenues, seats, participants in the events, etc.) and monitors performance monthly by analyzing the deviations from the budget.

This figure usually requires graduates from university or college, but priority is given to people with vocational certificates. In any case, beyond the qualification possessed, numerous training and specialization courses form this professional figure. It must be said, however, that this figure, independently of the course of study, is formed in the field, first covering operational roles and then having the responsibility of individual services within the structure.

The Food & Beverage Manager must have an excellent knowledge of the functioning of a restaurant, the departments that make it up (hall, kitchen, bar), and the quality standards the management sets. He must know the catering market, the organization of catering services, the market of suppliers and the catering offer of the territory. He and she must know the organoleptic characteristics of foods, and beverages and how to store them. He must also possess excellent knowledge of the main techniques of personnel management and planning and organization of work. Finally, he must know the health, hygiene and safety regulations, contractual aspects and labour legislation.

This professional figure needs a good knowledge of the English language (written and spoken). He must also possess computer skills as an expert user who uses specific management software of the hotel.

This figure is completed and characterized by the ability to develop a relationship with customers and suppliers, work effectively in a team, to problem-solving. The ability to present and possess upselling skills will be an advantage. He must be courteous and patient, able to control and manage stress, precise, attentive to details, and mentally flexible. Being creative, having passion and attention to individual customers to provide higher quality service. Finally, he must be available to work after hours and on weekends.

3.4.6.The Reservation Officer

The Reservation Officer receives reservation requests from guests, travel agents, and referral networks through various communication platforms. The main tasks of these professional figures include implementing the reservation procedures of the hotel and updating and maintaining reservation records following guests' booking confirmations. In addition, the reservation officer also fulfils customer reservation requests, verifies customer information and payment options, assigns rooms and responds to customers with confirmation emails or letters. The Reservation officer is also responsible for tracking room availability and forecasting room revenue and occupancy. He or she should know the types of rooms and available packages. They also update the availability of rooms via distribution channels (OTA, web booking) and follow compliance and quality assurance policies and procedures.

This figure usually requires graduates from university or college, but priority is given to tourism, business administration or language majors.

This professional figure requires a strong knowledge of the English language (written and spoken). He must also possess computer skills as an expert user having to use the hotel's specific front office computer system.

This figure is completed and characterized by the ability to develop relationships with customers, work effectively in a team, to problem-solving. The ability to present and possess upselling skills will be an advantage. He must be courteous and patient, able to control and manage stress, precise, attentive to details, and mentally flexible. Being creative, having passion and attention to individual customers to provide higher quality service. Additional skill expected is data analysis. Finally, he must be available to work after hours and on weekends.

3.4.7.The Marketing Manager/Executive

The marketing manager works in the Sales and Marketing department under the supervision of the Director of Sales and Marketing. The figure may also cover the media and communication area in the hotel. The marketing manager must deeply understand customers' needs to ensure guests are satisfied with the facilities and

services. The marketing manager's responsibilities include promoting the brand and services of the hotel, doing market research, coordinating marketing staff in developing marketing campaigns and promotion, following the hotel's business strategies, and managing the relationship with agencies and partners. He or she should focus on factors that help maximise customer awareness, build customer relationships, and manage the customer database. Detailed tasks include researching the market on the hotel brand recognition, developing and implementing marketing plans, designing marketing materials, writing content for marketing activities, proposing and implementing advertising and PR with providers, managing social media channels, updating information and responding to customer queries, carrying on email, SMS, SEO marketing, managing customer databases, the hotel website, preparing data analytics and forecasting of the market.

This figure usually requires university graduates, preferably marketing majors.

This professional figure requires a strong knowledge of the English language (both written and spoken). He must also possess computer skills as an expert user who uses specific tools for media and social networks (design, content writing etc.).

This figure is completed and characterized by the ability to develop a relationship with customers, the ability to organize one's work and that of others, group work, to problem-solving. He or she needs reporting, writing and presentation skills. Additional skills in content writing and designing are also necessary. He must be able to self-control, particularly in marketing and advertising campaigns, and be flexible and adaptable to the changing environment and market. Being creative is highly demanded. He must possess both an analytical and abstract mindset. Besides, the ability to be self-motivated and energetic is important. Finally, he must be willing to work after hours and on weekends.

3.4.8. The Sales Executive

The sales executive works in the Sales and Marketing department under the supervision of the Director of Sales and Marketing. Large hotels specialise in this figure to handle different segments, including sales executive – travel and trade, sales executive – corporate accounts, event and banquets. Sales executives oversee

activities that attract clients, sell hotel services to customers, identify potential clients, and develop new markets for the hotel services. Hotel sales executives make lists of potential customers and call or arrange meetings to identify customer needs and requirements. They prepare and present sales proposals to prospective customers, highlighting hotel service features, qualities and accompanying prices. They conduct price negotiations with customers, process and facilitate customer requests, coordinate and organise events, and assist customers in selecting appropriate services. Sales executives monitor booking and reservations, collaborate with other hotel staff to ensure customer service quality, and respond to and resolve problems raised by customers. They maintain contacts with clients to get feedback and identify potential future business opportunities. They also set annual budgets and implement strategies to achieve the targets.

This figure usually requires university graduates with preferable majors in business administration, tourism & hospitality and marketing.

This professional figure requires a strong knowledge of the English language (both written and spoken). He must also possess strong computer skills, mainly office applications.

This figure is completed and characterized by the ability to develop a relationship with customers, the ability to organize one's work and that of others, group work, to problem-solving. They need reporting, writing and presentation skills. He is expected to have skills to close a deal effectively and strong communication skills to deal with customers. He must be able to self-control, specific, particularly dealing with VIP customers, flexible and creative. He must possess both an analytical and abstract mindset. Besides, the ability to be self-motivated and energetic is important. He must be well presented and professional at all times. Finally, he must be willing to work after hours, on weekends, and travel.

3.4.9. The Guest Relations Officer

The guest relations officer is part of the Front Office Department. It operates as an employee under the direction and supervision of the Front Office Manager. A guest relations officer serves as a central point of contact for guests and ensures the

hotel's highest level of guest service. The duties of this professional figure include greeting guests, providing useful information about the hotel and services, helping guests to make travel arrangements, addressing customer complaints., respond to guest queries in a timely and efficient manner.

This figure requires university graduates, preferably majoring in tourism & hospitality. These figures require experience and a thorough understanding of the hotel's operations and activities.

This professional figure requires a strong knowledge of the English language (both written and spoken). He must also possess computer skills as an expert user using specific hotel software (Opera).

This figure is completed and characterized by the strong ability to develop a relationship with customers and excellent problem-solving skills. He must be able to self-control, responsive, tactful and delicate in dealing with guests. Finally, he must be willing to work after hours and on weekends.

4. Travel and Tourism Agencies

4.1.Overview of the travel and tourism industry

According to Law on Tourism (Law No.09/2017/QH14 of June 19, 2017), tourism businesses include travel services, tourists transportation, tourist accommodation and other tourism services, including food services, shopping services, sports services, recreation services, healthcare services and other relevant services provided for tourists. In more detail, the scope of travel services has been stated in section 1, article 30 in Law on Tourism (Law on Tourism, 2017), including:

- Provision of domestic tours for domestic tourists
- Provision of international tours for inbound tourists and outbound tourists
- The international travel service provider has been allowed to provide international and domestic tours
- Foreign-invested businesses shall only provide international tours for inbound tourists unless otherwise prescribed by the treaties to which the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a signatory.

For the business to operate as a travel services provider, they need to meet the following requirements:

- The enterprise is established as prescribed by the Business Law;
- The enterprise must deposit the minimum required amount to the bank;
- The person in charge of travel services must hold an associate degree or higher degree in tourism. If they have an associate degree or higher degree in another major, a certificate of training in domestic and(or) international tour operation is required.

In addition, the list of specialised educational majors in travel services has been stated under 3, chapter 1, Circular 06/2017/TT-BVHTTDL in extension to the Law on Tourism (Circular 06/2017/TT-BVHTTDL, 2017). These includes:

- Hospitality and Tourism Management
- Travel Management
- Tour Operation
- Tourism Marketing
- Tourism
- Tourism and Travel
- Tourism business management
- Foreign educational providers' degrees must be recognised under the Ministry of Education and Training and Ministry of Labour – Invalids and Social Affairs.

Beyond the requirement by Law, the travel and tourism agencies stay within the category of travel services businesses. Within this category are two main types of companies: tour operators and travel agencies.

- Tour operators: are responsible for all the travel services included in the package holiday, even if other suppliers deliver part of the services. Depending on the contract between the tour operator and the customers, it will state the tour operators' responsibility regarding their services. The main job of the tour operator is to put together package holidays and sell other travel services related to the package. The tour operator could sell the package directly to the consumer or use

the services of a travel agent to do so. The tour operators could be divided into the inbound and (or) outbound services, domestic and (or) international services.

- Travel agents: are agencies that sell package holidays and travel arrangements provided by other businesses such as tour operators, hotels, airlines etc. In theory, the travel agent does not usually design or create the package holidays they sell. Unlike the tour operator, the travel agents do not act as a Principal. It means the tour operators are responsible for the package holidays while the travel agent is not. The travel agent may also have its terms of business which cover how the booking will be made and other relevant information. The travel agencies can be classified based on the scale of services, including wholesaling and retailing. It could also be classified based on the relationship with the principal, including the general or exclusive agent.

In Vietnam, it is fair to say that the difference between tour operators and travel agents is blurred. Many travel agents also create their tourism products. When putting together the package, the tour operators act as agents for the other travel services providers. In addition, the development of Information technologies along with the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have shaped the travel services following new trends (*Future of Tourism in 2022 | 10 Things Tour Companies Need To Prepare*, n.d.), including:

- The physical distance while travelling: Although many governments have lifted the travel restriction, COVID-19 will still be circulating in the following years. Many tourists will take precautions by distancing themselves from the crowd. Tour operators must be more creative in reassuring the consumers while enjoying their trips.
- Constant desire to travel in "bubbles": Similar to the preference for physical distance, many travellers want to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission by travelling in their own small groups. This is the challenge for tour operators and travel agents to create tailored packages for people travelling in small groups or even as individuals.
- Rise of FIT (free independent travellers): FIT travellers are those who plan their own trips and travel on their own schedule. With the ease of using the Internet to research and book their travel, FIT travellers can be flexible with their travel

plans. It is also an opportunity for tour operators and travel agents to connect with consumers with the support of information technology.

- Staying connected before and during travel: Travelers will be cautious to avoid being caught off guard now that everyone knows what may occur during a pandemic and how rapidly things can change without notice. Tour operators must inform consumers of any modifications to their arrangements continuously. Any information you can give them in advance of their journeys, such as the most recent tightening or loosening of regulations at their destination, would be appreciated because it will help them feel prepared and informed. Customers' minds can be at ease by receiving a pre-trip email from their tour operator, improving their appreciation of your service and attention to detail.
- Recovery of business travel: According to a McKinsey report, in 2020, total global business travel expenses were down 52%. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the rise of video conferencing and the increasing popularity of work-from-home arrangements. However, the lift of travel ban in many countries and the development of viable vaccines have increased the likelihood of a faster recovery for corporate travel. Many businesses will still want to travel to maintain client relationships as face-to-face meetings are still important for many businesses.
- New types of "leisure" travellers: The growth of online collaboration tools, cloud computing and other digital innovations has created the opportunity for people to work anywhere, anytime. The concept of leisure travellers relates to people who combine work and recreation in their trip due to the flexibility of their work.
- Rethinking destination: Vietnam can be considered as one of the countries that managed the pandemic well and keep pushing to achieve high vaccination rates. For the traveller, Vietnam could make them feel safer than other destinations.
- Changes to how people travel – and how far: The transportation choice is not just based on how quickly people can get to the destination. Nowadays, people also care about the experience of using different transportation. For example, many people may still be nervous about flying, so look for continued demand for "low travel," such as travel by road and rail. Even people willing to fly to their destination may want to choose ground travel to be able to physically distance, open windows, take breaks outside, etc.

- Emerging and continuing niches: These niches include reunion travel, nostalgia travel and adventurous travel.
- How people book travel: With the development of digital innovations, there are many ways to connect businesses and consumers. It is important for travel services companies to develop their own system to approach the consumers effectively. Travel companies will need robust booking systems and processes to cope with a high volume of bookings.

4.2.The current status of Vietnam's tourism industry

In 2019, Vietnam reached a record of 18 million foreign visitors and 85 million domestic visitors. The total revenue from tourism was approximately 755 thousand billion Vietnam Dong, equivalent to 9.2% of GDP (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly slowed the tourism industry's increasing trend. As shown in the table below, the number of visitors (both domestic and international) has dramatically reduced due to the travel ban across countries and within the country.

Table 12: Number of visitors (thousands of visitors) and revenue from tourism (billion VND) – Data collected from the General Statistics Office of Vietnam (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2022)

Years	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<i>Foreign visitors</i>	12,697.4	13,747.3	14,957.5	17,318.9	7,213.9	2,550.2
<i>Domestic visitors</i>	117,037.8	132,837.9	144,683.1	162,046.6	78,083.8	48,949.9
<i>Total visitors using travel services</i>	13,651.0	15,173.0	16,966.0	18,366.3	8,397.8	3,426.5
<i>Foreign visitors (using travel services)</i>	3,584.5	4,556.4	5,125.9	5,730.3	2,520.4	217.1
<i>Domestic visitors (using travel services)</i>	9,477.6	9,918.4	11,062.2	11,791.2	5,789.4	3,206.9
<i>Vietnamese visitors travelling overseas</i>	588.8	698.3	777.9	844.8	88.0	2.5
<i>Total revenue (whole country)</i>	32,530.3	36,111.8	40,371.2	44,669.9	16,492.0	6,596.2
<i>Total revenue (Hanoi area)</i>	8,065.30	8,465.80	9,273.70	10,145.50	5,184.40	2,846.20

Table 13: Percentage of distribution of foreign visitors to Vietnam in 2019 in comparison with 2018 – Tourism Yearbook of Vietnam 2019 (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2020)

<i>Origins of foreign visitors</i>	Number of visitors (thousands)	Percentage change compared to the previous year
<i>China</i>	5,806	16.9
<i>Korea</i>	4,291	23.1
<i>Japan</i>	952	15.2
<i>Taiwan</i>	927	29.8
<i>U.S</i>	746	8.6
<i>Russia</i>	647	6.6
<i>Malaysia</i>	606	12.2
<i>Thailand</i>	510	45.9
<i>Australia</i>	384	-0.9
<i>UK</i>	315	5.7
<i>Singapore</i>	309	7.9
<i>France</i>	288	2.9
<i>Cambodia</i>	228	12.3
<i>Germany</i>	227	6.0
<i>Philippines</i>	179	18.2
<i>India</i>	169	27.7
<i>Canada</i>	159	6.4
<i>Indonesia</i>	107	21.3

In 2022, with the lift of the travel ban in many countries, including Vietnam, the tourism industry has started to show signs of recovery. The vaccination rate of 82.3% of the population (counted on August 14, 2022) (Ministry of Health, 2022) and the Government's decision to fully reopen international tourism from March 15, the first six months of 2022 have shown positive signs for the tourism industry. According to the Bureau of Statistics, Vietnam has welcomed 602 thousand international visitors, an increase of 582.2% compared with the first six months of 2021 (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2022). In addition, the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism has reported 60.8 million domestic visitors in the first six months of 2022 (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2022).

4.2.1. Local units and employees

From 2020 to 2021, Vietnam's tourism industry has experienced a great crisis. According to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, more than 300 international travel service companies had applied to revoke their license, and 90% of tourism businesses had been closed (van Dinh, 2021).

Table 14: Number of businesses operating in tourism and travel sectors – General Statistics Office of Vietnam (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2022)

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<i>Number of travel agencies, tour operators and other supporting service providers</i>	5,236	5,882	6,428	7,271	7,306
<i>Number of international travel agency</i>				2,667	2,519

Table 15: Number of new registrations and businesses back to operation – Business Registration Management Agency

Number of enterprises	Total	Types of business		
		Hotel; F&B services	Labour services, tourism	Entertainment, Art
<i>New registration</i>	55,842	3,065	3,902	483
<i>Business back to operation</i>	29,653	2,362	2,215	344
<i>Comparison to prior years</i>				
<i>New registration</i>	16.8	27.7	23.4	4.5
<i>Business back to operation</i>	63.1	63.5	50.5	53.6

The first six months of 2022 have seen increased tourism business (including travel agencies). Up to December 2021, the Government has started to support the tourism industry by reducing the registration fees for travel services businesses (562 businesses have received the fee reduction). In addition, there have been 15,792 applications for tour guide registration that have been financially supported with a total support amount of 58 billion VND (Trung Khanh, 2022). The table above shows a more positive sign of recovery regarding the number of businesses newly registered or back in operation.

In the Hanoi area, the number of travel companies has also increased. According to the Hanoi Tourism Department website, 1,041 international and 191 domestic travel companies are currently listed (Hanoi Tourism Department, 2022a, 2022b). Among these companies, 64 were listed after September 2021, when Vietnam ended the social distancing policy.

4.2.2.Demand for labour

According to the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, in 2019, the tourism sector is required approximately 40,000 labours. However, the number of students who graduated from Tourism institutions is only 15,000, with roughly 12%

having a college or bachelor's degree. Within 1.3 million labours working in the tourism sector, only 42% of total employees have been trained under a tourism major; 38% of total employees come from other sectors, and 20% have not received proper training. (Nam, 2019; van Dinh, 2021)

In 2020, tourism businesses had reduced from 70% to 80% of their employees. In 2021, full-time employment was approximately 25% compared to 2020. The tourism industry's human resources have faced many difficulties, with 30% of employees having terminated their employment contracts and 35% temporarily withdrawing from the industry (Nam, 2019). Many employees, including seniors, have been forced to change their jobs. The COVID-19 pandemic has also negatively impacted the number of students enrolled in tourism and hospitality majors, with the recruitment rate only reaching 75% to 80% of the target.

With the recovery of the tourism sector and the Tourism Development Plan – Vision to 2030 by the Government, the tourism sector is expected to create 5.5 to 6 million jobs with 2 million direct jobs in 2025 (Trung Khanh, 2022). It is a great challenge for the Government Authorities, businesses, educational providers etc., to achieve this ambitious target.

4.3.The current status

In this section, we will present the results of the web survey (CAWI) and face-to-face interview (FAF) conducted at travel and tourism agencies in Hanoi for which it was available or was possible to get an email and phone contact. In particular, we will report some data relating to the characteristics of the staff and the performance of the travel companies, especially concerning changes in the workforce.

Of the 30 travel companies contacted for a web survey or face-to-face interview, 10 (or 33.33%) correctly completed all or most of the web questionnaire and 12 (or 40%) participated in the interview. Although the response rate is not too low, the sample size is still small to properly process data analysis. However, we have attempted to hypothesise a measure and attitude concerning market trends and labour prospects. In addition, the face-to-face interviews help us further understand the organisational structure and professional figures within each enterprise.

The data we will report below will be presented by crossing them concerning the type of agency. It is worth mentioning that all the businesses that participated in the survey and interview operated as tour operators, with 5 of them (16.7%) also operating as travel agents. In addition, there are travel companies that also provide other services, including culture development for other businesses (2), tourism development projects with Government and other organisations (1) and visa services for the traveller (2).

4.3.1. The staff

According to the size, the number of full-time employees with long-term contracts can be used to distinguish between small ones (from 1 to 3 employees), medium ones (from 4 to 10 employees) and, therefore, those large (more than ten employees). Based on this criteria, there is one small business, six medium businesses and 15 large businesses. Interestingly, only small business has been downgraded from medium one, and there is also one medium-sized business that has been downgraded from the large one. These changes resulted from the employee reduction due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, full-time employees are almost university graduates regardless of business size, with the coverage of university graduates ranging from 80% to 100%. Regarding seasonal employees that contract with businesses, the proportion of university graduates among these employees stays between 70% and 100%. For collaborators and freelancers, it is impossible to work out the percentage distribution of people holding university degrees due to the fluctuating number of hiring and the differences in requirements among businesses.

Women represent from 65% up to 90% of employees. This result shows a very high percentage. On the other hand, the tourism sector is based on professional figures attractive to the female gender also because the training required by the sector concerns degree courses and professional institutes, traditionally followed by women. However, it is worth mentioning that the position of tour guides shows the opposite result. Most businesses prefer male employees for the position of tour guides due to the nature of the job that requires pressure to handle both physically and mentally.

In addition, only 5 out of 30 companies (16.6%) indicate the existence of family members of shareholders or owners working in the business. The number of family members participating in business activity is relatively low, ranging from 1 to 3 people within each of the five businesses.

20 out of 22 companies (90.9%) indicated that they collaborate with freelancers in carrying out the enterprise's activities. The exception belongs to one company, a state-owned business, and one company which operates as a destination management company (DMC). In most cases, the freelancers are tour guides. Some businesses also mentioned the use of freelancers for the position of content creator and marketing staff.

Table 16: Percentage distribution of the agencies by the collaboration with freelancers and by the size of businesses.

Agencies that	Small size	Medium size	Large size	Total
<i>Collaborate with freelancers</i>	100%	100%	86.7%	90.9%
<i>Not collaborate with freelancers</i>	0	0	13.3%	9.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
<i>Number of respondents</i>	1	6	15	22

It should be noted that there are two (2) out of 10 companies that participated in the web survey indicated that they do not have university trainees. The interns/trainees mainly come from courses of study in tourism & hospitality, marketing, business administration and foreign language.

Table 17: Percentage distribution of the agencies that participated in the web survey by the current situation concerning university interns/trainees and by size (class of employees).

Agencies that	Small size	Medium size	Large size	Total
<i>Have university trainees</i>	0	75%	83.3%	80%
<i>Do not have university trainees</i>	0	25%	16.7%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
<i>Number of respondents</i>	0	4	6	10

4.3.2.Trend, outlook and changes in personnel

During 2020-2021, the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively influenced the hospitality industry. Travel activities have been reduced to a minimum due to the

travel ban across country borders, the requirement of lockdown and social distancing. Both international and domestic travelling has been reduced to the lowest level over the last 4-5 years. As mentioned in the overview, employment within the travel business sector has experienced a significant reduction in the workforce.

By the end of 2021, domestic travel has started to recover with the removal of domestic social distancing. Related to international travel, as the Vietnamese Government decided to lift all the ban in March 2022, the number of foreign visitors has started to grow significantly.

During the interviews in 2021, all participants were optimistic about the prospect of tourism in the incoming years. Among 12 representatives participating in Face-to-face interviews, 100% agreed that the tourism industry would recover and grow again in the next two years. The responses are similar to those who participated in the web survey.

Over the last 24 months, some companies still hire staff. The recruitment includes the salesperson, tour guide, tour managers and marketing staff. Regarding recruitment, 7 out of 10 companies or an equivalent of 70% of travel companies participating in the web survey mentioned difficulty finding staff. The main reason is the small number of candidates, followed by the lack of high-quality staff. As some business owners and managers shared, the travel companies also experienced staff turnover. After several years of working with the company and gaining experience and skills, the employees tend to leave for more attractive career opportunities.

Table 18: Distribution of the companies that participated in the web survey by the change in staff in the last 24 months and by size

<i>Recruitment in the last 24 months</i>	Small size	Medium size	Large size	Total
<i>Yes, hiring (even for turnover only)</i>	0	25%	83.3%	60%
<i>No change in headcount</i>	0	25%	16.7%	20%
<i>Workforce reduction</i>	0	50%	0	20%
<i>Total</i>	100%	100%	100%	100%
<i>Number of respondents</i>	0	4	6	10

Table 19: Percentage distribution of companies that participated in the web survey for difficulties in finding staff and by size.

Recruitment in the last 24 months	Small size	Medium size	Large size	Total
<i>They have difficulties due to the inadequacy of the candidates</i>	0	0	33.3%	20%
<i>They have difficulties due to the small number of candidates</i>	0	50%	16.7%	30%
<i>They have difficulties for other reasons</i>	0	0	33.3%	20%
<i>They have no difficulties</i>	0	50%	16.7%	30%
Total	0	100%	100%	100%
<i>Number of respondents</i>	0	4	5	10

Regarding the plan for the next 24 months, 19 out of 22 (86.4%) travel companies have stated that they will start recruiting more people in sales, marketing, customer services, tour management etc. One company is planning to keep the same workforce as the current. Among the two enterprises that plan to reduce the workforce, one has explained its plan to reduce the number of full-time, long-term contract employees to replace freelancers.

Table 20: Distribution of the companies that participated in both the web survey and interviews by the change in staff in the next 24 months and by size

Recruitment in the next 24 months	Small size	Medium size	Large size	Total
<i>Yes, hiring (even for turnover only)</i>	100%	83.3%	86.6%	86.4%
<i>No change in headcount</i>	0	0	6.7%	4.5%
<i>Workforce reduction</i>	0	16.7%	6.7%	9.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
<i>Number of respondents</i>	1	6	15	22

Last but not least, regarding the investment decision in the future, most businesses are focused on expanding their network to communicate better with customers, business partners etc. At the same time, the companies' main focuses are improving products offered and strengthening the workforce.

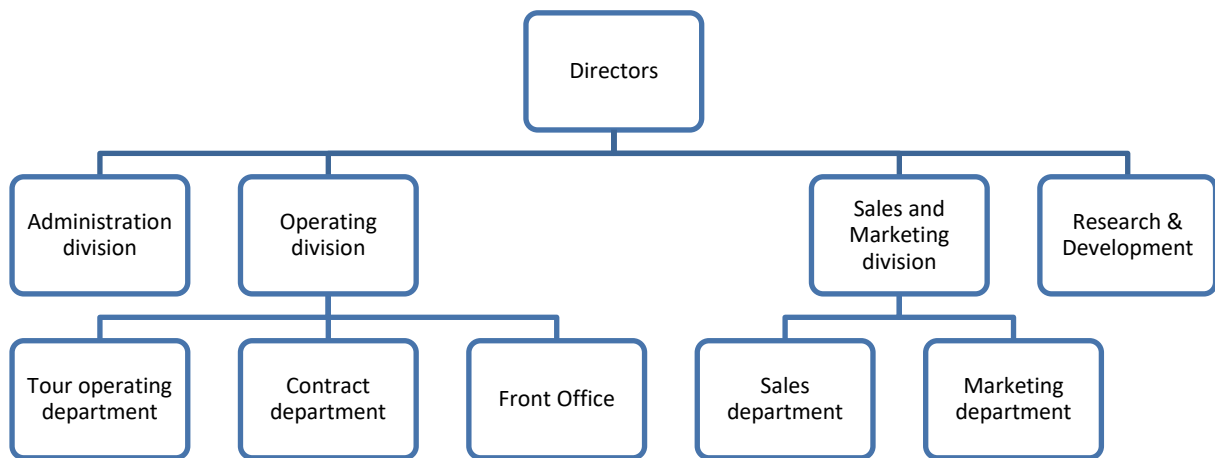
Table 21: Distribution of the companies that participated in the web survey by investment decision to specific operating activities

	Will invest soon	Currently investing	Already invested enough	No plan to invest	Total
Business Restructuring	3	5	1	1	10
Acquisition of new software	2	5	2	1	10
Develop/ Enhance the online sales/booking system	2	7	1	0	10
Expand the sales network	4	6	0	0	10
Expand the business network with partners/suppliers	4	6	0	0	10
Increase the level of advertisement and online communication	4	6	0	0	10
Introduction of new services	4	6	0	0	10
Recruit the new position in the business	4	6	0	0	10
Recruit the existing position in the business	4	6	0	0	10
Training	3	7	0	0	10

4.4.Organisational structure

Through the face-to-face interviews, we can gain insight into the business structure and the main professional employed at the travel and tourism agencies. One of the key characteristics of travel companies' structures is their flexibility. Therefore, the organisational structure presented in this report is neither the ideal organisational chart nor the popular one for all companies within the sector. However, we attempt to gather all the common departments considered important for most travel companies. The typical organisational structure of travel companies should be divided into four divisions, including the administration division, sales and marketing division, the operational division, and the research and development division.

Figure 8: Schematic representation of the typical organizational structure of medium/large travel and tourism agencies



- **The Directors or Management area:** is where the executives and top-level managers coordinate and control all the business activities. In addition, all important business decisions, including strategic, financial, operational, policy, etc., are made within this area before being employed by the whole company.
- **The Administration division:** This division could contain several departments, including administration, accounting, financial management and human resources. For many small/medium-sized companies, these functions could be carried out by a few staff. The employees might be required to take responsibility for different positions simultaneously. For example, the accountant of the company might also be the one that handles other administrative activities at the office.
- **The Operational division:** This division can be considered the heart of the travel companies, where all the activities are related to delivering tourism products. Within this division are a tour operating department, a contract department and an agency department.
 - **The tour operating department or the project department** is responsible for the actual products and services to be carried out. The functions of this department include trip planning, tour operating, handling all necessary bookings and other preparation for the products/services to be ready to deliver to customers.
 - **The contract department:** This department is responsible for managing and maintaining the relationship with business partners and services providers such as

hotels, transportation partners, freelancers, etc., where the trips and stays occur.

- ***The agency department (or front office department):*** is where the intermediation activities are carried out. This department exists in the business that operates as travel agencies to connect the need of end-consumers with the service providers such as airlines, hotels, other transportation companies etc.
- **The Sales and Marketing division:** In some companies, this division could be divided into two separate divisions for better distinguishment. All of the actions intended to advertise and market the goods and services offered by the agency, as well as those intended to research and keep an eye on the competition and the tourist industry, are carried out in the commercial and marketing area. Within this area, it is important to distinguish the function of sales and marketing.
- ***The sales department:*** is responsible for selling products and services to customers. This department's main tasks are managing relationships with potential and existing clients and providing solutions for clients that eventually lead to a sale. In some companies, the job of this department does not stop when the customers have booked the trips. The salespeople might be required to continue providing customer services by following up with customers after sales.
 - ***The marketing department:*** is responsible for informing and attracting people to the business's brand, products and services. Marketers should use market research and analysis to understand the interest of potential customers. After that, the marketing campaign or strategy can be developed using appropriate techniques
 - It is worth mentioning that it has become more common for travel companies to hire specialised individuals in the fields of communication and web, such as the Web Developer, the Web Master, the Web Analyst, the Graphic Designer, etc. Due to the growing use of the Internet and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the promotion and sales of tourism products and services have experienced a considerable switch to digital content. Many businesses have paid more attention to the IT sector to approach and enhance communication with consumers. For these areas, these tasks can also be outsourced to independent contractors or professionals employed by specialised businesses.
- **The Research and Development division (R&D):** is responsible for the creation of

new products/services or the enhancement/ improvement of existing products/ services to maintain the competitive advantages of the company. For some companies, this division could be combined with the Operational division or partly combined with the Marketing area. Throughout the face-to-face interviews, many companies have mentioned the importance of market data analysis and content creation that will lead to product developments. The tourism industry is very competitive with many competitors and the fast-moving pace of consumers' demands. Therefore, the travel companies need to understand the market movements, the change in the social environment, the need of consumers etc., to develop more attractive products and services.

4.5.The professional figures

This section will present several professional figures operating within the Operational, Sales and Marketing division and the R&D division. The choice of professional figures relates to the positions that interviewers consider important to the travel business and potentially even more important in the future. These professional figures include the head of tourism planning, project manager, tour operators, sales managers, head of the marketing department, chief content officer, and product developer.

4.5.1.Head of the Tourism Planning

The Head of Tourism planning coordinates, supervises and oversees the subordinates' jobs within the planning department. Specifically, the head of tourism planning needs to coordinate tour operators' and project managers' jobs and workloads, distribute tasks and validate work completed. A great challenge for this position is identifying the best options for creating the best product for the client, respecting the regulation and industry-specific rules, ensuring the sales margins and speeding up the implementation process.

In addition, it is important for the Head of Tourism planning to manage effective communication with the correspondents of the destination, the service providers such as transportation partners, hotels, etc., where the trips will take place. By doing so, the business might be able to negotiate the best prices for high-quality service simultaneously. It is also vital for the Head of Tourism planning to be dynamic in

terms of staying on market trends and constantly looking for new suppliers and correspondents. He (she) also needs to involve in the design, development and testing of the new products or services and give feedback for better improvement.

The Head of Tourism Planning collaborates closely with the Contract Manager for the management of relationships with correspondents and suppliers during the conception, planning, and organisation of tourist packages, as well as with the Booking Manager for the monitoring of booking progress and evaluation of the closure or opening of the files, i.e. to determine whether to proceed with the final booking of all modes of transportation, lodging, and the various activities. He (she) also communicates with the marketing manager to track the market's trends and, consequently, guide the activity of tourism planning.

The Director of Tourism Planning needs to know about tourist geography, travel laws, travel marketing, and travel psychology. It is necessary to understand and use the procedures for planning tourist services, producing on-demand travel catalogues, acquiring transportation and lodging services, and accounting and cost analysis techniques. Must be familiar with the structure and operations of tour operators, travel agencies, and transportation businesses. He must also be knowledgeable about contracts with service providers and currencies and their variations (currency exchange) (transport companies, hotels, guides, etc.). Finally, it must know how the market is developing and what the competitor offers.

These figures usually require long-term experience within the industry and the company. There is no mention of the requirement of study major that the person needs to graduate. However, degrees in tourism and hospitality management, tourism economics, business administration, and foreign language might have more advantages in terms of knowledge to handle the job. However, his (her) experience and cumulative knowledge gained from actual work are more important than the academic degree.

This professional figure requires fluent foreign language skills in English (and any other common foreign language). Both writing and speaking skills are essential. He (she) must also possess the appropriate skills to use Office software and any specific software package employed by the company.

In terms of personal characteristics, the Head of Tourism planning needs to have the ability to organise his (her) own work along with group work. Problem-solving skills and maintaining relationships with customers and suppliers are also important for this job. He (she) needs to be precise, good at handling pressure, but still flexible mentally. In addition, the availability of work after hours and readiness to travel is also required.

4.5.2. Project/ Product Manager

The task of creating, coordinating and testing trips and stays falls to the Project/Product Manager. To package a product, trip, or vacation, a professional must plan and determine its structural characteristics (type and level of services), costs (from the acquisition of services to the printing of any catalogue, up to distribution), and all characteristics in terms of investment for the agency. This professional must do so based on his experience and knowledge of the tourism market as well as the recommendations of the Marketing Office in response to the need and interests of the visitors. Nowadays, to satisfy the demand from the consumers, the project manager needs to adapt to tailor the proposals following the customers' requests.

In term of product management, the manager needs to study the market and competitive trends, selects the destination and itinerary, determines distinctive routes to highlight the diversity of the territory and satisfy the interests of tourists, design integrated tourist itineraries, and formulates various hypotheses for determining the length of the trip and the kinds of services and amenities to be provided to customers.

Additionally, the product managers need to communicate with the correspondents of the destinations or those who will give all the information he (she) needs to build the trip, and also contacts the transportation company and lodging providers of the location where the trips will take place. To have a better product, the project manager normally takes field inspection before moving to the negotiation stage with these service providers. During the inspection, the project manager will attempt to establish the best possible prices at which to offer the packages, tests the goods and ensures that the services provided by the suppliers comply with the earlier agreements signed. Other tasks of the project manager include the participation in

the creation of educational and promotional advertising materials, the continuous update on new market trends and searches for new suppliers.

Like the Head of Tourism planning, the project manager needs to be knowledgeable about tourist geography, travel laws, travel marketing, and travel psychology. A degree in Tourism and Hospitality major is an advantage but not a compulsory requirement. In fact, it is more important to have as many years of experience in the sector working under operating roles to understand how the products are operated in real life. In addition, the techniques for producing catalogue trips and travel on demand, the techniques for acquiring transportation and lodging services, accounting processes, and cost analysis are all things he must be familiar with and apply.

This professional figure requires fluent foreign language skills in English (and any other common foreign language). Both writing and speaking skills are essential. He (she) must also possess the appropriate skills to use Office software and any specific software package employed by the company.

In terms of personal characteristics, the Project manager must be able to organise his (her) work along with the group work. Problem-solving skills and maintaining relationships with customers and suppliers are also important for this job. He (she) needs to be precise, good at handling pressure, but still flexible mentally. Creativity and adaptive characteristics are also important for this position to quickly adjust to unexpected market changes or customer demands. In addition, the availability of work after hours and readiness to travel is also required.

4.5.3. Tour operator

Tour operator is one key figure in travel and tourism agencies. It is fair to say that the tour operator heavily relies on the success of each product or service to be delivered to customers. This person works as an employee under the direction and supervision of the Head of Tourism Planning and Project Managers. The project manager conceptualises and plans the various packages, while the Operator brings those plans to fruition. It is, therefore, the professional figure that, once the packages have been sold by the travel agencies and that the booking staff has registered the reservations, proceeds to the booking of all modes of transportation, accommodation,

and the various activities that have been scheduled. In more detail, the tour operator deals with all operations relating to the confirmation, modification, or cancellation of reservations of transportations, accommodations, places of interest and other activities that are included in the packages

The tour operator must have an in-depth understanding of all the tour packages offered to customers and solid expertise in tourism geography. It needs to be able to navigate plans, timetables effortlessly, and rates, as well as know-how transportation lines, travel manufacturers, and hotel amenities work. Therefore, the tour operator should be able to operate the necessary technology for booking trips and tickets. Additionally, he needs to be familiar with accounting concepts like billing and reporting. Last but not least, he needs to be familiar with the legislation governing tourism, particularly regarding the protection of consumers and the management of complaints and refunds.

The tour operator needs to know tourist geography, travel laws, travel marketing, and travel psychology. A degree in Tourism and Hospitality major is an advantage but not a compulsory requirement. Similar to the project manager position, experience gained from tour operation is also very important.

This professional figure requires fluent foreign language skills in English (and any other common foreign language). Both writing and speaking skills are essential. He (she) must also possess the appropriate skills to use Office software and any specific software package employed by the company.

Regarding personal characteristics, the Tour operator needs to be able to organise his (her) work along with the group work. The problem-solving skills and the ability to maintain relationships with customers and suppliers are also important for this job. He (she) needs to be precise, good at handling pressure, but still flexible mentally. Staying calm, patient and adaptive are essential characteristics for this position. In addition, the availability of work after hours and readiness to travel is also required.

4.5.4.Sales Managers/ Sales Executives

The sales manager works under the direction of the Sales and Marketing division director in the Sales department. Sales managers oversee operations that attract

customers, sell tourism products and services, and identify prospective customers. A sales manager's responsibility is to monitor lists of prospective and existing clients by following up with or scheduling meetings to determine customer wants and requirements. The sales managers must produce and deliver presentations to prospective clients, emphasising the product's characteristics, qualities, and prices. They negotiate prices with customers, process and facilitate customer requests, and assist customers in customising or modifying products to satisfy their needs. Sales managers are also responsible for monitoring booking and reservations, collaborating with tour operators and staff in the operational position to provide customer assistance and handle customer issues. In addition, they must keep in touch with clients to receive feedback and find future business opportunities. In addition, they establish annual budgets and develop strategies to attain the objectives.

Typically, this professional figure necessitates college graduates, particularly with degrees in business administration, tourism & hospitality, and marketing. However, expertise as a salesperson or in a commercial environment is also essential.

This professional position requires fluency in a foreign language, specifically English (and other common foreign language). Both oral and written communication abilities are necessary. Additionally, he (she) must be proficient with Microsoft Office and other company-specific software packages.

This figure is finished and characterised by the ability to create relationships with clients, coordinate one's and others' work, work in groups, and solve problems. He (she) needs skills in report writing and presentation. He (she) must have the skills necessary to close deals effectively and communicate effectively with consumers. Essential characteristics are self-control, patience, specificity, adaptability, creativity, self-motivation, and vigour. He must always be well-groomed and professional. Lastly, he (she) must be willing to work nights, weekends, and travel.

4.5.5. Head of Marketing Department/ Marketing Executive

The marketing manager works under the direction of the director of Sales and Marketing in the Sales and Marketing division. The figure may also include the company's publicity and communication department. The marketing manager is

responsible for promoting the company's brand, product, and services, conducting market research, coordinating marketing staff in developing marketing campaigns and promotions following the travel company's business strategies, and managing the company's relationships with other agencies and partners. The marketing manager should comprehensively understand the market and all market participants, including consumers, competitors, and others. He (she) should concentrate on maximising customer awareness, fostering client relationships, and managing customer databases. Researching the market on brand recognition, developing and implementing marketing plans, designing marketing materials, writing content for marketing activities, proposing and implementing advertising, managing social media channels, updating information and responding to customer inquiries, managing customer databases, the hotel's website, preparing data analytics and forecasting of the market are among the specific responsibilities.

Typically, this figure demands college grads, ideally marketing majors. However, it must be stated that participation in marketing projects is equally as crucial as academic knowledge.

This professional position requires an excellent command of the English language (both written and spoken). Additionally, he (she) must have expert-level computer abilities to utilise specialised media and social network tools (design, content writing, etc.).

This figure is finished and characterised by the ability to create relationships with clients, coordinate one's and others' work, work in groups, and solve problems. He (she) needs skills in report writing and presentation. Additional skills in content creation and design are required. He must be self-disciplined, highly detailed in his marketing and advertising campaigns, versatile, and adaptable to an ever-changing market and environment. Creativity is in high demand. Both an analytical and abstract attitude are required of him. Additionally, the capacity to be self-motivated and enthusiastic is essential. He must also be willing to work overtime and weekends.

4.5.6.Chief content officer

This professional figure works under the direction of the Marketing executive.

With the rapid growth of the Internet and Information technology, the marketing battlefield has expanded significantly to the digital network. Chief content officers are responsible for producing material for dissemination on several digital channels. This includes text, audio, and video content. Their responsibilities include crafting editorial strategies linked with the company strategy and promoting the organisation's mission and vision. The chief content officers should be able to analyse market data to assist with developing the content plans; drafting and implementing content strategy; liaising with public relations, marketing, IT, and customer services to ensure consistency in the brand message. Moreover, the chief content officer oversees all marketing and communication content across multiple platforms and supervises writers to ensure the content is created according to the organisation's brand.

This figure demands college grads, ideally marketing, communication, public relation or language majors. However, it must be stated that the experience of participating in marketing projects is equally as crucial as academic knowledge.

This professional position requires an excellent command of the English language (both written and spoken). Additionally, he must have expert-level computer abilities to utilise specialised media and social network tools (design, content writing, etc.).

This figure requires the ability to organise one's own and others' work, work in groups, and solve problems. He (she) needs skills in report writing and presentation. Additional skills in content creation and design are required. He must be self-disciplined and highly detailed in his marketing and advertising campaigns. Creativity is in high demand. Both an analytical and imaginative attitude are required of him. Additionally, the capacity to be self-motivated and enthusiastic is essential. He must also be willing to work overtime and weekends.

4.5.7.Product Developer

This professional figure shares many similar characteristics with the Project/Product manager. In many companies, these two positions are handled by the same personnel. However, as the tourism market becomes more competitive, many travel companies have focused more resources on developing innovative products to gain a

competitive advantage.

As the product developers help create new products and improve the existing ones, it requires an in-depth understanding of any aspect of the company, such as brand image, strategy, current products and services etc. To engineer and design the products that meet consumers' needs and market trends, the product developer must work closely with the operational and marketing teams. The main tasks of these professional figures include completing product and marketing research, assessing competitors' products, identifying the weakness or point of improvement in the existing products or services of the companies, conceptualising the products, validating the solution, developing the product or applying changes to current products and collecting feedback from customers for further developments.

This figure demands college grads, ideally business administration, marketing, communication, and public relations majors. In addition, understanding the market and consumers' needs gained from years of experience is also valuable.

This professional position requires an excellent command of the English language (both written and spoken). Additionally, he or she must have expert-level computer abilities to analyse data.

This figure requires the ability to organise one's own and others' work, work in groups, and solve problems. He or she needs data analysis, report writing and presentation skills. He or she must be self-disciplined and highly detailed in planning. Critical thinking and creativity are in high demand. Both an analytical and imaginative attitude are required of him. Additionally, the capacity to be self-motivated and enthusiastic is essential. He must also be willing to work overtime and ready for travel when required.

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