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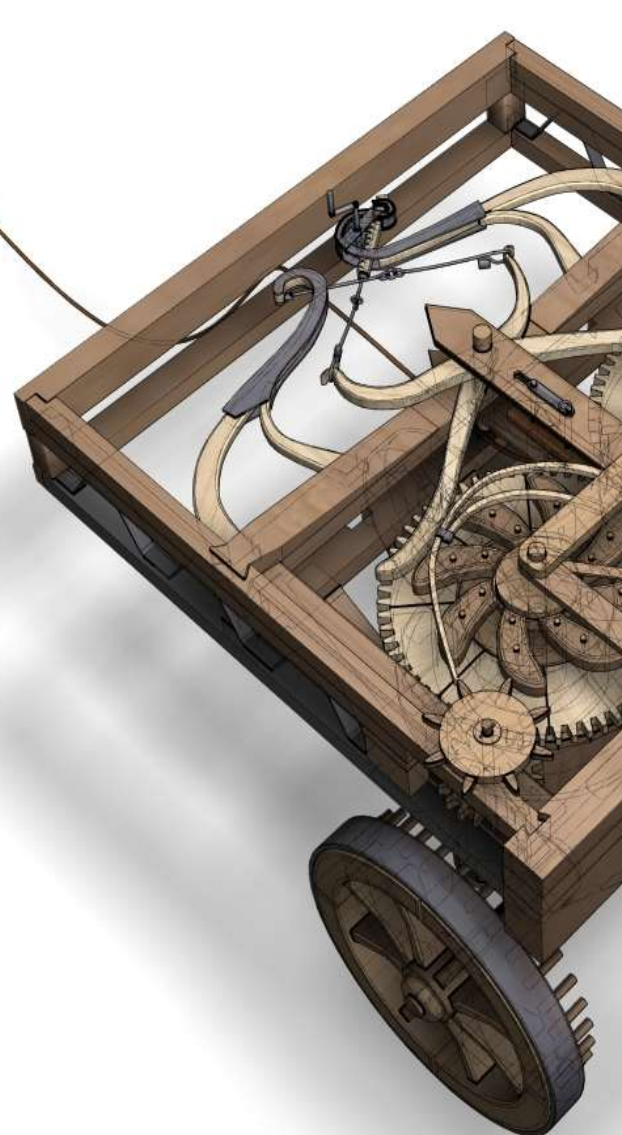
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**Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism** is an interdisciplinary research journal, aimed to publish articles and original research papers that should contribute to the development of both experimental and theoretical nature in the field of Environmental Management and Tourism Sciences.

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## Human Talent and Its Impact on the Quality of Service in the Rural Community-Based Tourism Sector. Analysis and Theoretical Perspectives

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### Abstract:

Human talent in the tourism sector necessarily incorporates a global vision for quality improvement and sustainable development. Increased competition and the need to improve quality in tourism are closely linked. The objective of this work was to analyse the role of human talent. To analyse its impact on customer care and service quality in the tourism sector. An analysis and theoretical perspectives on the subject were established. Quality management was analysed as a key axis in the development of the tourism sector. Adequate management and the process that identifies the importance of the professional in the area were determined. A qualitative approach methodology was developed. The design was documentary interpretative. Bibliographic information was collected with theoretical and scientific positions. The material and content approached was based on the theories of tourism service quality. The information collected was collected globally on the web. The information was analysed using the triangulation technique. It is concluded that it is necessary to generate suitable mechanisms for tourism service quality. In addition, the work of the professional in the area must be highlighted to obtain significant achievements. These achievements are the satisfaction of the client who demands a tourist service.

**Keywords:** human resources; customer service; tourism; rural-community; qualitative research.

**JEL Classification:** J24; O15; Z32.

### Introduction

It is well known in the world that tourism organizations are continuously trying to improve their quality of service for customer satisfaction. To increase their profitability and achieve better results, continuous improvement is applied within the framework of strategies that shape quality in tourism. In this way, evidence determines the contribution of quality and the improvement of competitiveness. Profitability, customer satisfaction and the

consolidation of a new culture in the tourism sector. This culture involves the analysis and impact of the human factor on the expected results (Park and Jeong 2019)

The background of service quality from a theoretical and practical point of view goes back decades. Quality has been addressed in relation to the business sectors, but also in the tourism sector. The impact of tourism on global economies and the sustainable development of nations is important. The analysis of tourists' satisfaction with different services is known as total quality. The impact on the different contributions and findings brings with it the contribution of tourism to the endogenous and sustainable development of the tourist destinations of interest. Thus, current trends are aimed at generating a high level of quality in services. Competitiveness and positioning in the global market, nowadays, seeks to improve the quality of service. Quality is achieved through differentiation among competitors. In addition to increased productivity in the service process and increased customer satisfaction. Also, through increased employee morale, improved management and better labour relations; encompassing these aspects as a competitive advantage in the global marketplace. (Aldaz, Guerrero, Navarro, Cejas, Moreno and Flor, 2021)

In this order of ideas, to understand development, it is necessary to consider factors such as financial capital, business networks, civil organizations based on trust and identified with a territory, innovation systems, universities and government bodies, heritage, quality of life, among others. Factors such as financial capital, business networks, civil organizations based on trust and identified with a territory, innovation systems, universities, government bodies, heritage, quality of life, among others. However, within the framework of the literature on service quality, it is necessary to consider customer satisfaction now of using a service. It is fundamentally the intervention of three main actors: tourist, businessmen, residents. The tourist seeks the satisfaction of his travel experience, the businessman seeks the profitability of the business, and the resident seeks, through tourism, to raise the standard of living and quality of life of the population through the service provided. Under these conditions, it should be noted that the characteristics of quality services are essentially perceived by customers (Berhanu and Apar 2020). The result of the service must be considered, which fundamentally originates from the person who performs the service. In other words, human talent. In tourism services, intangible elements predominate. Governmental bodies linked to tourism, as well as companies in the tourism sector, offer their clients an intangible product or service. This is the main service provided by the tourism and hospitality professional, hence the strategic importance of human talent. There are many conceptualizations that derive from the quality of services in terms of the tourism sector. One of the most widely accepted meanings in the literature understands service quality as quality perceived by customers. Thus, quality now resides in the one who receives the service and admits satisfaction with it (Mendes, Guerriero and Matos 2016). For this reason, the consumer's overall judgement of the overall excellence or superiority of the service must take quality into account. It therefore ceases to be objective and becomes subjective, where the consumer says it is and what he or she perceives it to be. Thus, the paradox expressed by the above-mentioned scholars that only consumers judge quality, all other judgements are essentially irrelevant.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that the theoretical approach to service quality in the tourism and hotel sector has had an outstanding approach through the SERVQUAL scale or model. The SERVQUAL system is a tool that suggests that the difference between citizens' general expectations and their perceptions of the service provided can constitute a measure of service quality. The relevant contributions derived from studies on hotels and accommodation should not be overlooked (Haywantee 2020).

Zhenpeng & Hailin (2016) suggest that SERVQUAL is a simple and useful diagnostic tool for measuring service quality. Particularly in terms of the potential that can be demonstrated by service people in this sector. By considering the dimensions that make up the constructs of service quality, i.e., the Gap model. This model is based on the idea that the customer perceives the quality of a service as the difference between what he expects and what he receives. This means addressing additional perceptions such as:

The gap between management's perceptions of the service provided and consumers' perceptions of service quality.

The gap between management's perceptions of the service delivered and the consumer's expectations, and the gap between management's opinion of the consumer's expectations and management's opinion of the service delivered. In any of the cases in which a quality service is provided by the tourism sector professional, it is necessary to adopt a mechanism that proposes appropriate measures to determine the influence of satisfaction expected by the person receiving the service. By analyzing the perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty of the consumer, as well as the possible results that give conformity to the existence of an adequate quality chain (value-satisfaction-loyalty), it is necessary to evaluate the perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty of the consumer (Sazzad, Suresh and Sree 2021; Abreu, Ruhanen and Arcodia 2018).

This would be the central contextualization of the problem to generate the development of the proposed research work when it is established as its objective to analyse the role of human talent and its impact on customer service. Similarly, the quality of service in the tourism sector, establishing an analysis and theoretical perspectives on the subject. Likewise, it is worth noting among the analyses and theoretical perspectives that revolve around the subject that in studies of quality, specifically in the tourism sector (Hatzithomas, Boutsouki, Fotini Theodorakioglou and Papadopoulou 2021). From different perspectives, various components articulated with the search for improvement in the tourist service are analyzed and where the strategic role of the professional tourist service provider is considered. Human talent, especially those factors that determine the tourist's perception, satisfaction, and the service provider's behavioral intentions (Kunst and Neven 2021).

The role of human talent management in the promotion of quality service is analyzed in a timely manner through the satisfaction perceived by consumers to satisfy their needs and desires for various reasons, achieving satisfaction implies a pleasurable experience and, therefore, desirable by the customer (Schweinsberg, Fennell, and Hassanli 2021). On the other hand because it is understood as a reward for the consumer's decision-making process. And finally, because it serves as a reinforcement for the consumer to repeat it in future situations (Bertocchi, Camatti, Salmasi and Borg 2021). It should also be noted that a quality service is one that meets or exceeds the initial expectation, and a poor-quality service is one where expectations are not met (Perez, Guerreiro and Mendes 2021).

## 1. Research Objectives

General Objective:

To analyze the role of human talent and its impact on customer service and service quality in the tourism sector, establishing an analysis and theoretical perspectives around the topic.

Specific:

1. To study the theoretical components linked to the quality of services in the tourism system from a global perspective.
2. To describe the SERVQUAL model as a tool that suggests the identification of indicators associated with the perceptions regarding the service provided in the tourism sector.
3. To analyze human talent as a key factor in attracting and linking customers demanding tourism in order to generate the importance of satisfaction in achieving excellent service quality.

## 2. Methodology

The study was developed through a qualitative approach. The work applies the methodological approach of the scientific method. Systematic processing was applied, and the interpretations were inextricably interwoven. It was applied the consultation of bibliographies that are extracted through first and second-hand sources on the web. The form adopted for the development of the study allowed the interpretation of the knowledge surrounding the bibliographical consultations made. The validation of the information that was compiled was identified and demonstrated. A coherent, objective and systematic process of interpretation was generated around the theories associated with the subject of the study. To this end, the different interpretative articulations that identify the scientific method were affirmed through a type of research of a documentary nature (Frost and Frost 2021).

The qualitative method as part of science and whose unique method (documentary sources) allowed the construction of valid and effective knowledge in all changes of human knowledge. In the meantime, the inherent theme of human talent and its impact on the quality of service in the tourism sector was addressed. For the understanding, its meaning and its action, documentary techniques were used (files, written works, scientific monographs) that allowed the production of knowledge under the free approach of preconceived theories. In this way, it was possible to generate the interpretation and theoretical approaches to the subject under study (Sigala 2020).

## 3. Analysis of the Results

### 3.1 General Customer Service Considerations

Service is the result of a combination of factors such as the qualities, skills and efforts of very different talents, but all of them are concentrated in the figure of the professional who performs his or her work, which is made effective through the provision of the service. In this sense, the key to the service is to take the place of the person who receives the results of the process, i.e. the client, which is defined by Sabote, Dolores, Frías and Castañeda (2016) as "the recipient of one or more of the specified outcomes of a process".

Correspondingly in the tourism sector, being the approach of interest in this research work, it is necessary to point out that there is a classification of the customer, which requires the understanding and scope of any tourism organisation, whether public or private, in this sense, taking into account the appropriate conceptualisation of the customer who demands the service, implies the assurance of quality adjusted to the search for the expected profitability as well as customer satisfaction, in any case, The role of the professional in tourism is fundamental, by virtue of what has been stated, it is convenient to point out the meanings conceived with the different clients, among which the primary clients stand out, which are the people who represent the *raison d'être* of a service provider, they tend to be mostly external and particularly the improvements in terms of the quality of the service for this type of clients is given by the way in which the service provider (entity and/or organisations) and how it is perceived from the client's point of view (Wassler and Fan 2021).

Secondary customers are those who have a vital interest, almost always of monetary (financial) aspect, within the institution that are usually the type of customer as suppliers of goods or products, the customer, or Internal customers, mostly are those service providers (human / professional talent) and on the other hand the suppliers of the product. They are those who belong to the organisation and who because they are part of it, do not cease to participate in the provision of the service by the other employees of the organisation or the tourism organisation. The classification also adopts the conceptualisation of the external client as a person who does not belong to the service provider, but nevertheless, the attention is focused on them by offering a product or service (Ulrika, Fischer and Liu 2021).

Adapting strategies oriented to the tourist service, implies responding to indicators such as the clarity, object and scope of the content of the work on the part of the tourist service provider, taking into account the level of feedback resulting from the results, the meaning of the functions of the service provided and the autonomy conferred by these functions in the job, highlighting the competences of the employee or tourism professional. Group work is another of the factors to be mentioned, the same that seeks participation and the satisfaction of the need for affiliation that the type of client may generate, stimulation is also a key factor, it is necessary that the tourism professional has a fair remuneration that determines their quality of life, linked to the results of the work and the efforts made, among other aspects it is important to point out the working conditions, the tourism professional must obtain adequate working conditions from the service provider, which are safe, hygienic, comfortable and aesthetic (Mandić and Kennell 2021). Finally, welfare conditions include a working environment that guarantees food, working hours, transport, among others.

Providing a quality service will require a constant effort on the part of the entire organisation, entity or tourism company. Parameters must be established, investments must be made, people must be committed, certain processes must be improved, and all of this must be linked to the objectives of the scope and/or purpose of the tourism sector, since it is not possible to improve service by focusing on isolated points, since the improvements obtained will probably be temporary and not consistent. When dealing with customer service, whether internal or external, three interrelated aspects must be properly conceptualised, i.e. the demands of the tourism service that responds to the characteristics desired by the customer for the service demanded and the willingness and possibility of the same, the goal of the service identified by the values and characteristics of those factors or parameters that are offered to the customer interested in tourism, or in enjoying their stay in an establishment and/or accommodation, and finally, understanding the scope of the level of service, as the degree to which the goal of service is fulfilled (Canh and Thanh 2021).

### 3.2 Regarding Quality of Service

The starting point of all quality management is to understand the requirements of customers and to analyse how to offer them solutions or features that meet their needs. To achieve this, different authors have emerged, with different tendencies. It is not of vital importance how they approach the subject since all of them are based, in one way or another, on the expectations and demands of customers so that a quality service can be provided, but it is important to highlight the concept that they offer, to begin with, Moreno, Rodríguez and Such, (2018) defines "a social act that occurs in direct contact between the customer and the representative of the service company".

In this sense, for Kirilenko and Stepchenkova (2018) service quality is the basis for the survival of an organisation, where competition and the existence of increasingly well-informed customers imply two factors that contribute to these conditions, as expressed by Hanafiah & Zulkifly (2019), when referring to the fact that the starting point for all management in order to obtain a quality service; it consists of understanding the demands of the clients and analysing how to offer them solutions that respond to their needs. Therefore, it can be said that service quality is a difficult concept to define, as is the concept of quality, since it is assessed by each person who consumes the service and therefore the scale of measurement will be relative (Hopkins 2021).

The management of service quality has therefore become a priority strategy for public and private institutions, more and more of them are trying to define it, measure it and finally improve it to seek continuous progress in the processes and in this way provide an efficient and effective service that allows them to achieve quality. That is why, in times of globalisation, where the world has become more complex, changes and planned actions must be generated, which in turn determine the development of new strategies in order not to be absorbed by the new demands of the market that have adopted as a global philosophy to satisfy the needs of customers and to continuously improve through the staff that performs its functions (Mingzhao, Rasoolimanesh, Puvaneswaran and Kunasekaran 2021).

The SERVQUAL model as a basis for Service Quality in the Tourism Sector. A theoretical analysis of its scope:

For the last decade, the growing importance of the service sector in the world's economies has undoubtedly been the main cause of the increase in literature on the different economic sectors in which service is of great importance. In recent years, service approaches have dealt extensively with different topics, one of which has been service quality. There are different models in the academic literature which have been defined as suitable for measuring service quality, one of them being the model proposed by Park and Jeong (2019), known as SERVQUAL, but there are also contributions which confer importance on the model proposed by Kwok, Ying, Ahmad; Khalifah (2016), known as SERVPERF. It should be noted, in this aspect, that the main difference established in the framework of perceptions and expectations with respect to these models, focuses on the scales used, *i.e.* the first SERVQUAL model is that it uses a scale based on perceptions and expectations while the second uses only perceptions (Mair and Smith 2021).

However, the SERVPERF model only measures perceptions of the service outcome. Nevertheless, over time the SERVQUAL model has been the most accepted in the academic world and has even been adopted as a model in different sectors, one of them being the tourism sector, being the purpose of this work to address this field (tourism), it should be noted that the Tourism Law, conceived as Law 97 in the Registro Oficial Suplemento 733 of 27-Dec-2002, with the last modification on 06-May-2008 and being in force in Ecuador gives rise to the need to guarantee this quality when it defines tourism in Art. 2 of the aforementioned law defines tourism as the exercise of all activities associated with the movement of persons to places other than their habitual residence; without the intention of settling permanently in them, likewise Art. 3 defines the principles of tourism activity, which identify aspects such as a) Private initiative as a fundamental pillar of the sector; with its contribution through direct investment, employment generation and national and international promotion; b) The participation of provincial and cantonal governments to promote and support tourism development, within the framework of decentralisation; c) The promotion of national infrastructure and the improvement of basic public services to guarantee the adequate satisfaction of tourists; d) The permanent conservation of the country's natural and cultural resources; e) The initiative and participation of indigenous community initiative and participation in the development of the tourism sector; f) The promotion of tourism development and the improvement of public services to guarantee the adequate satisfaction of tourists; g) The promotion of tourism in the country's natural and cultural resources; h) The promotion of the development of tourism in the country; i) The promotion of tourism in the country; j) The promotion of tourism in the country. e) The initiative and participation of indigenous, peasant, montubia or Afro-Ecuadorian communities, with their culture and traditions, preserving their identity, protecting their ecosystem and participating in the provision of tourism services, under the terms provided for in this Law and its regulations (Aldáz, Guerrero, Navarro, Cejas, Moreno and Flor 2021).

Given this condition, studies, analyses and perspectives on the use of models that measure the quality of service in this sector, quality assurance stands out as a priority as a natural evolution of quality control, taking into account the supervision of systems, as well as the prevention of failures and defects in the framework of customer service, thus attending to errors before they occur. In this sense, quality assurance focuses on guaranteeing the organisation's offerings, compliance with the specifications previously established by the institution providing the tourist service, as well as ensuring customer satisfaction. In this way, establishing a set of planned and systematic actions, which, when implemented in the quality system, makes possible the proportion and adequacy of the trust, product or service, which in turn implies the satisfaction of the needs required by the user. A summary of the strategic and key model of service quality proposed by Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (ob.cit.) proposes dimensions of quality such as reliability, security capacity, organisations, where expectations are established adjusted to conditioners such as communication, personal needs, interpersonal relationships, as well as perceptions such as quality of services.

The SERVQUAL model defines service quality as the difference between customers' actual perceptions of the service and the expectations they had previously formed about it. Thus, a customer will rate the quality of a

service negatively/positively if the perceptions he/she has obtained are lower/greater than the expectations he/she had. For this reason, the tourism sector maintains that one of its objectives is to emphasise differentiation by means of a quality service provided by the professional in the area who attends to tourists, who must pay special attention to the fact of exceeding the expectations of their clients. If service quality is a function of the difference between perceptions and expectations, then the management of both would be relevant and important. The analysis of this model (SERVQUAL) defines that the conditioning factors of communication between the different users of the service, as well as the needs that each client wishes to satisfy through the service they are going to receive, the past experiences they may have of the same or similar services, and the external communication carried out by the service provider, usually through advertising or promotional actions that are fundamental to guaranteeing the service demanded by a tourist. In the tourism sector, it is necessary to adapt the dimensions of the SERVQUAL model that determines service satisfaction as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Meaning of the SERVQUAL model dimensions

| Dimension             | Meaning                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tangible elements (T) | Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, and ICTs                                                                     |
| Reliability (RY)      | Ability to deliver the promised service accurately to generate customer satisfaction.                                      |
| Responsiveness (R)    | Desire to assist customers and to serve them quickly and efficiently through competent staff.                              |
| Assurance (A)         | Knowledge of the service provided and courtesy of employees as well as their ability to convey confidence to the customer. |
| Empathy (E)           | Individual customer service                                                                                                |

Source: Cejas, Navarro, Yanez, Aldaz and Mendoza (2021)

Table 2. Quality Dimensions

| Dimensions                                                                                                       | Quality                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>TANGIBLE ELEMENTS</b><br>Appearance of Physical Facilities, Equipment, Personnel and Communication Materials  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The utility has modern looking equipment.</li> <li>2. The physical facilities of the utility are visually appealing.</li> <li>3. The utility's employees are neat in appearance.</li> <li>4. Material items (brochures, statements, and the like) are visually appealing.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>RELIABILITY</b><br>Ability to Perform the Promised Service Reliably and Carefully                             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When the service provider promises to do something in a certain amount of time, it does it.</li> <li>2. When a customer has a problem, and the tourism organization shows a sincere interest in solving it.</li> <li>3. The tourism organization gets the service right the first time.</li> <li>4. The tourism organization completes the service within the promised time.</li> <li>5. The tourism service organization insists on keeping error-free records.</li> </ol> |
| <b>RESPONSIVENESS</b><br>Willingness and Willingness of Employees to Assist the Customer and Provide the Service | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The tourism professional providing the service communicates to customers when the service will be completed.</li> <li>2. Tourism professionals offer prompt service to their customers.</li> <li>3. The tourism and service professionals are always ready to help their clients.</li> <li>4. The tourism professional is never too busy to answer their customers' questions.</li> </ol>                                                                                   |
| <b>SAFETY</b><br>Employees' Displayed Knowledge and Skills to Inspire Credibility and Confidence                 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The tourism professional's behavior conveys confidence to their customers.</li> <li>2. Customers feel that they can transact with the services you provide.</li> <li>3. The tourism and service professional are always friendly to customers.</li> <li>4. The tourism professional has sufficient knowledge to answer the clients' questions.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                   |
| <b>EMPATHY</b><br>Individualized attention offered by Enterprises to Consumers                                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The tourism professional provides their customers with individualized attention.</li> <li>2. The tourism professional has convenient working hours for all customers.</li> <li>3. The tourism professional has employees who offer personalized attention to their clients.</li> <li>4. The tourism professional has the best interests of his/her clients at heart.</li> </ol> <p>The tourism professional understands the specific needs of his/her clients.</p>          |

Source: Cejas, Navarro, Yanez, Aldaz and Mendoza (2021)

In this way the SERVQUAL tool, highlights 22 propositions or items, which allows to evaluate the quality of service in different fields, so that for each item two ways of generating the measurement of expectations are considered, placing the categories of services and perceptions in an appropriate manner, taking into account

among other aspects the dimensions highlighted in advance (see table 2), likewise the 22 items of the model are shown below as a reference to apply the model in the tourism sector.

The above dimensions make it possible to measure the appreciation of customers who receive a particular service, especially in the tourism sector.

## Conclusion

The approach of the study focused on analyzing the role of human talent and its impact on customer service and service quality in the tourism sector. An analysis and theoretical perspectives on the subject are established. To this end, the authors followed different approaches that allowed them to develop the ideal components based on the quality of service with an emphasis on the tourism sector. Everything was designed from a global perspective. To this end, emphasis was placed on the World Tourism Organization (WTO). The WTO states that tourism is one of the most important activities on a planetary level, as it is people who travel and stay in places other than their usual environment. These activities require a service that guarantees quality, which is why human talent plays a preponderant role. When these people make a trip, they expect to obtain a wide range of support services. Public and private services, which interact well to their satisfaction.

For Uslu and Akay (2019) it is necessary to highlight the leading role played by demand, supply, tourism spaces, and those who in turn exercise the role of market operators through the tourism professional. It also takes into consideration travel agencies, tour operators, transport companies, public and private organizations that, through the professional work of human talent, are the architects of the organization, promotion and development of tourism. Finally, the work of tourism highlights the leading role of human talent as a key factor in attracting and linking customers demanding tourism to generate the importance of satisfaction in achieving an excellent quality of service.

The impact caused by tourism is connected not only to the person who receives the service, but also to the person who provides it. In this aspect, they depend on a series of interconnected factors such as the state of conservation, particular characteristics of the local environment, type of tourism, as well as the community's capacity to manage tourism resources, among other aspects. It will not be possible to bring this together if there is no real strength in the human talent prepared to serve the tourism sector. To this end, the tourism sector must generate a link with the human talent prepared to provide quality service. This implies ensuring that the different policies and procedures of the organizations in this sector have employees with the required competencies to achieve the purposes. Competencies are fundamental and can in turn strengthen high-performance work systems, being an axis of strategic influence based on the quality of tourism services.

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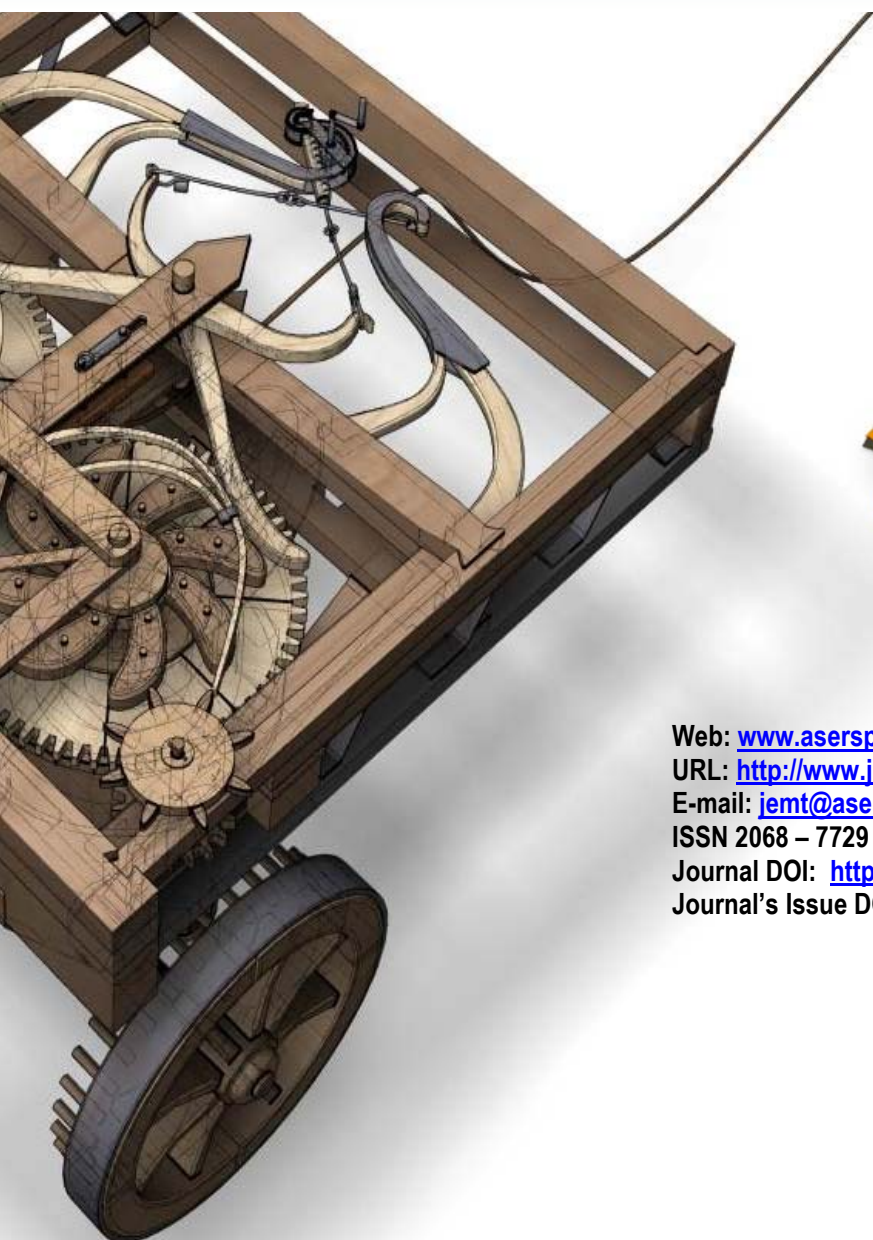
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