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PEDAGOGICS AND PSYCHOLOGY OF EDUCATION

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**COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE
AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS
WHEN INTERACTING WITH
CLIENT IN TOURISM**

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the role of psychological preparation of specialists in service and tourism to building relationships with clients of travel agencies. Attention is paid to what is important in psychological preparation of the expert assigned to the speech skill, because the possession of speech skills influences the formation of the motives and interests of the client, speed, completeness and the strength of assimilation of advertising materials, economy, recall; accuracy, consistency and brightness of managerial playback of the advertised material. The article analyses the role of communicative competence in dealing with customers. The psychological preparation is mainly only through the study of a variety of disciplines: psychological testing, the man and his needs, etc. and almost no study of the peculiarities of building communication with clients in practice. There was conducted a survey of data showing the importance of building personal relationships between employees and customers. There were developed recommendations to improve the communicative interaction with the psychological aspects of the relationship.

Keywords: communication; competence; psychology; training; psychological training; tourist business.

Service and tourism is the sphere of professional activity of a person-to-person type. As a matter of fact, the service activity is a creative process where psychological preparation and communicative competences come to the fore.

International tourism has been benefiting from political, economical, social and technological aspects of globalization and related processes of internationalization, liberalization, universalization and westernization, in the framework of globalization, during past more than 50 years [10].

Speech plays an important part in psychological preparation. This is due to the fact that client's motives and interests, speed, completeness and strength of the advertised material, economy, recall, accuracy, consistency and bright playback of the advertised material depend on the manager's speech. In a nutshell, there is no services promotion characteristics, which would not be directly related to the psychological preparation and speech skills of a specialist working in service and tourism. Speech skill is considered to be an important tool in service and tourism.

Psychological training of future specialists in service and tourism is focused primarily on formation of a competent professional person. Psychological preparation is created mainly only through the study of such disciplines as psychodiagnostics, a man and his needs, etc. and almost no study of building communication with clients in practice. This is evidenced by a number of problems in insufficient training on the basic psychological aspects of communication professionals with clients, both in the professional activity and the overall structure of psychological culture of personality. In this regard, we are interested in the study of psychological training of future specialists in the sphere of tourism and service.

In the framework of modern education, the problems of professional formation of the future specialist are closely connected with psychological preparation.

Psychological characteristic plays an important role in the psychological contact with the customer. The problem of establishing a contact with customers is that tourist managers have insufficient psychological and ethical literacy.

In tourism, communicative literacy is viewed as a system of internal resources required to build effective communication in personal interaction

with customers. Communication as a component of psychological aspect of customer interaction has universal invariant characteristics. The process of communication ensures the unity of interaction with clients, organizes mutual understanding and coordination of actions and behaviour.

In the field of service and tourism, communication is not just an ordinary function of psychological interaction, but also a functional category.

It is necessary to note that communicative competence as an important part of the psychological aspects of interaction with the client is the ability to establish and maintain the necessary contacts with other people. Effective communication is characterised by achieving greater certainty in understanding a partner, better understanding of the situation and the subject of communication that promotes problem-solving, ensures that the objectives correspond to the optimal use of resources.

Competent communication development suggests a number of fundamental areas of psychological interaction with customers. In this case, for the practice of development of communicative competence, it is important to limit types of communication to business or thematic and the similar.

Customer interaction building has become one of the most important with the growth in sales of tourist enterprises and building customer interaction with the psychological aspects.

It is worth saying that the tourists' service begins with contact establishment with the client and identifying his/her needs. It is worth noting that the employee when contacting a customer remembers that tourists buy not the properties of tourist products but the benefit associated with it. In this regard, it is recommended to establish a psychological contact with the client.

The knowledge and consideration of these factors that make a customer apply to a travel agency not only help managers to quickly understand why a potential tourist has decided to seek the services of a tourist firm and what exactly he/she expects from the trip, but also to build a correct line of his/her service in the office.

Basic components in the system of building relations with clients in terms of the psychological aspects of communication include:

1. Trust. A special place in the tourist business is occupied by the effective system of psychological relationships with customers. On the first stage of interaction you should create trusty and sometimes even friendly relationships during the entire service process: before the sale, during and after it. Constructed interaction is aimed at keeping the client; this can be achieved by improving the quality of service.

2. Informal meetings. Personal meetings with employees of tourist companies help to form a friendly contact and trusting relationships with customers. For example, during a housewarming celebration a company invites clients: organizes a tour of the office, buffet and dancing to the jazz band. In terms of the psychological aspect of communication, it is undoubtedly pleasant when the client is cared for and is given an opportunity to forget about the routine.

3. Personal support. It is important to ensure that each client has his/her personal manager in the tourist firm. An experienced employee will be able to better understand the customer's requirements and reflect them in the implementation of new packages.

4. Expectations. The quality of service should certainly comply with specifications. When presenting a tourist product, the manager of a tourist firm should not allow cheating consumer expectations. Otherwise, you can not only achieve customer loyalty, but also get negative reputation.

5. Bonuses and discounts. An important way to improve the relationship with the customer, and thus increase his/her loyalty is to develop a system of discounts and bonuses. Discounts gradation is carried out on two principles: depending on the volume of customer orders for the year, or the status of the customer.

We see that this system allows combining a psychological interaction between customers and employees. The reason is that the longer the firm works with the client, the more he/she is committed to the firm. In addition, the relationship with the customer is strengthened to the point where many issues can be solved by one call, without the execution of documents [2, p.75].

In our opinion, in order to develop a communicative competence, it should be used in dealing with staff training. Training will contrib-

ute to the development of employees' psychological literacy.

The main approaches to the interpretation of the concept of "training".

For the first time the term "socio-psychological training" was used by a German scientist M. Vorweg. N. Bogomolova notes that the purpose of the training consists in mastering the socio-psychological knowledge in order to create the necessary social attitudes in a certain way of activity [8].

E. Sidorenko said that the training of communicative competence aims to study business communication and the creation of effective methods for resolving them [7].

Conducting of trainings develops skills of building relationships with clients. Development skills to support and assist clients in the selection of tourist services are of particular value.

The study of psychological aspects of communication with customers in the tourism business was conducted in a number of tourist firms in Barnaul.

In assessing the psychological aspects of communication of employees and clients, we used the indicators proposed by A. Alisultanova, characterizing the process of strategy formation of effective relationships with clients. These include:

- A number of proposals aimed at cultural characteristics of the client;
- The percentage of "core" customers;
- The number of joint activities undertaken with clients [1].

By questioning 95 clients of travel companies in the period from September 2014 to March 2015 we assessed the level of communicative competence of employees and identified psychological problems in communication with customers.

We conducted a research aimed at determining the attitude of consumers who repeatedly (two or more times) used the services of the same firm. A critical opinion of the customers is an important part of our research. As a result of the survey, we can conclude that personal peculiarities of employees, their psychological aspects of communication influence the sales success.

Currently, in the customers' opinion, there are problems in building the customer-employ-

ee interaction, and this is largely due to the employees' insufficient level of communication literacy.

The analysis of the target markets has enabled us to draw a conclusion that the travellers' cultural sensitivity, the level of education, etc. cover various segments of the tourist market. This allows retaining existing customers and attracting new ones. It should be noted that the use of this indicator in building customer relationships allows avoiding financial losses and "find-your-customer".

The process of forming effective relationship strategies with clients is reflected in such an indicator as the percentage of "core" customers. We believe that the "basic" customers are the same customers who constantly apply to this tourist firm.

The main reasons for the choice of a tourist firm, in the opinion of customers, are as follows:

- Company's image - 80%;
- Service culture - 75%;
- Professional skills of employees in dealing with customers - 65%.

As part of our research, it is our priority to react to customers' feedback towards travel firms to improve sales success and staff professionalism (tourist packages and tours). As a result of the survey, we have to say that sales success is greatly influenced by the individual client-centered approach and staff competence in the psychological aspects of communication.

A similar number of responses suggest that every manager has her/his view of successful sales practices. One is believed to deliberately practice acquired sales skills that are well trained in classes, while the others are natural sales managers who achieve higher sales as natural salesmen in a number of every-day customer-salesman situations at work (Figure 1).

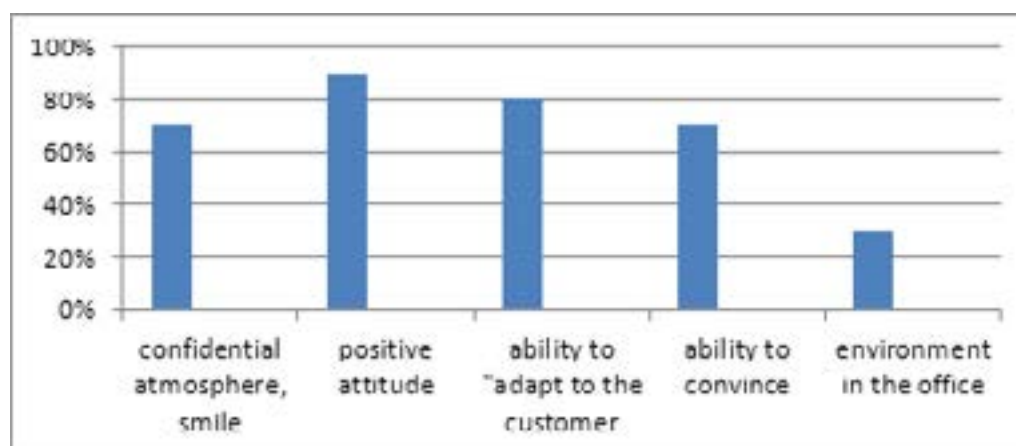


Fig. 1. Assessment of a client-centered approach (customer preferences)

Travel firm clients respond to the question "How do you think two-way interaction between customers and staff is carried out" (Figure 2).

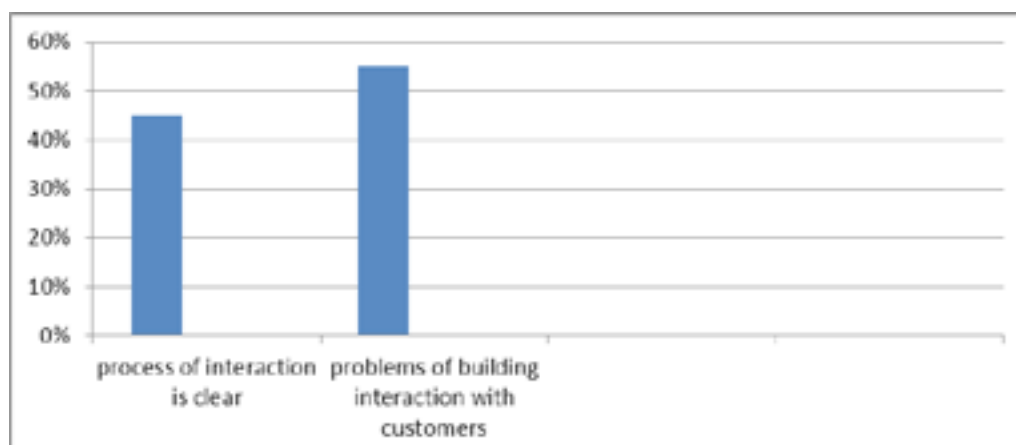


Fig. 2. The process of two-way interaction between customers and staff in travel firms

At present, we see that according to the feedback, the problems of customer-salesman interaction are largely caused by the lack of necessary professionalism in the travel firm staff towards clients.

Also, we have evaluated the ability of a travel firm manager to present the tourist information about a tourist product.

The results of the survey proved that successful tourist product sales are influenced by the ability of competent staff members to present tourist information showing respect and individual approach to each client. As the survey suggests, sales managers often handle client's requests only.

- information is presented clearly and accurately - 36%;
- travel firm manager is limited only to responding to customer questions - 44%
- information on quality and structure of the tourism product is limited only to handout materials - 20%.

The obtained survey data indicate the existing problem in proper "anticipatory" measures taken to meet clients' expectations when introducing new tourist products. The effective sales in the tourist business are largely influenced by how well the travel firm staff use client-centered approaches. Thus, the customer-oriented individual approach in the tourist business enhances competitive advantages and stimulates the successful customer-salesman relationship.

The analysis based on the customer surveys has created the image of a travel firm. In the survey, such parameters as customer friendly behavior and respect by the travel firm staff, as well as proper communication skills are at the top on the list for the clients.

Clients expect that each specific travel firm is associated with one-of-a-kind professional and customer-friendly manners demonstrated by the travel firm staff.

Thus, the survey suggests that the customer's satisfaction when communicating with staff members is higher if each customer is individually approached. One of the main objectives of the study was to find out what is most important to consumers when choosing a travel firm. The results showed that the image of a travel firm rates its status. When building relationships

with clients, travel firms do not always go beyond "facts" information and give some "extras". Customer satisfaction testing is not often part of the service, and the staff are not always willing to go all the way along with clients when choosing a trip. All the above signals the need to develop measures which will improve the "psychology" of dealing with clients in the tourism services.

The analysis suggests that communicative psychology skills in the tourist business are required to successfully increase sales and improve competitive advantages. To this end, we have proposed what-to-do recommendations which are close to the problems of our research.

As psychological aspects aimed at increasing effective communicative interactions with clients we follow the recommendations below:

- clarity and accuracy of objectives in developing communicative competence of employees in interacting with customers;
- precise planning of the professional work by employees of tourist firms in interacting with customers;
- analysis and comparison of the interim results in attempts to achieve high communicative competence of employees needed to improve the quality of verbal interaction with customers.

In this regard, the process of communicative competence needs psychological individual approaches for successful customer-salesman interaction.

In our opinion, the individual approaches towards clients are the following:

- to identify interests, abilities of travel firm staff in the field of professional communication - tests and staff training;
- to engage employees in full-time training, self-study on communicative competence in the field of customer-salesman communication at all stages of their professional activities;
- to identify manager's personal difficulties in interaction with clients (objective - subjective, situational - long-standing, primary - secondary, cognitive - motivational);
- to identify the causes of unproductive communication between tourist firm employees and clients; to develop measures for psychological adjustment, and problem-resolving in customer-salesman interaction;
- to develop training programs, etc.

Specific areas for developing communicative competences are the following:

- To have a comprehensive study and evaluation of professionalism and personality of travel firm managers under client-centered approach;

- To psychologically and pedagogically adjust professional communication between staff and clients;

- To psychologically maintain employee's willingness to effectively and professionally communicate with different groups of customers;

- To identify the level of psychological communicative competences and willingness of employees to professionally approach a client in the attempts to meet his/her needs;

- To implement measures for psychological adjustment of mental tension, emotional and volitional excitability and other adverse mental states, expressed in destructive behavioral responses resulting from intense professional activities;

- To counsel staff on the psychological aspects of required and sufficient skills in the field of communicative competence;

- To psychologically support the negotiating strategies and tactics with clients, including negotiating in conflict situations.

Thus, as a result of the study, we proposed a number of recommendations for stronger communicative competences needed for travel firm staff (psychological aspects of communication).

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