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LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY IN THE CROATIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY*

The source of prosperity and poverty

This paper focuses on labour productivity as an indicator of both labour efficiency, and the material prosperity of a country and its people.

In the introductory section, we explain the importance of studying labour productivity. We then define the elements of labour productivity, its impact on the economy, and productivity as the source of poverty and prosperity. In the third section, we examine labour productivity in the hotel industry of Croatia. We will explore the factors of productivity, and the causes of the present situation, and we will propose some measures for eliminating these weaknesses.

Key words: labour productivity, assessment and evaluation, productivity factors, hotel industry.

1. INTRODUCTION

Man at work (man and labour) is the subject of multidisciplinary studies and research in economics, law, sociology, psychology, medicine, technology, etc.

The economic study of man at work is focused on the economic effect of labour, which can be measured using labour productivity indicators.

Labour productivity is the basic indicator of the productive efficiency and the economic strength of a given country. Man, as the worker, is the motivating force behind all economic activities. Economic output, as the sum of all products and services produced, depends on the worker.

Labour productivity is important, because it reveals the productive efficiency of the individual worker, as well as the entire work force. It is the base and source of both prosperity and poverty of a given country and its citizens.

* A part of the study has been published in the book "Kontroling" (1)

Labour productivity is also an indicator of the dynamic growth, and economic development of a country, and the material prosperity that its citizens enjoy. The task and objective of economic studies is to increase the level of labour productivity. The results of these studies should be a key factor in improving economic output, the standard of living and the quality of life.

Economic studies involve the study of the concept of labour productivity, the factors that affect labour productivity, and the measures that can be applied to increase labour productivity. These studies are complex due to the large number of factors affecting labour productivity.

Labour productivity as a measure of productive efficiency is temporally defined, and it relates to output of labour achieved in a specified period of time in the past or present. Labour productivity can also be used to determine future trends in economic growth. The economic development of each country has its own temporal flow, and it builds on the past and the present. The material prosperity of the individual, as well as society at large, will depend on the intensity of past and present economic efficiency.

In this paper, we will focus on labour productivity in the hospitality industry of Croatia. The objective of the paper is to define the concept of labour productivity, to depict the specific factors that impact on labour productivity, and to determine the measures that could affect the increase of labour productivity in the Croatian hospitality industry.

Our approach to research comprises two sections. In the second section, we will define the concept and importance of labour productivity in the economy of a country. In the third section, we will focus on labour productivity in the hotel industry, and we will define some measures for improving labour productivity in this industry. In our conclusion, we will summarize the results of the study.

2. LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY – A SOURCE OF PROSPERITY AND POVERTY

Studies concerning labour productivity are both essential and useful especially because the labour productivity of the Croatian economy in quantitative and qualitative terms is far too low with regard to labour productivity in economically developed countries.

We will begin with the definition of labour productivity: labour productivity is the ratio of the quantity of standard quality goods and services produced, and the period of time required for this production. Although theory shows the necessity to redefine the indicators of productivity in the ratio of produced added value and time consumed, statistics (including tourist statistics) continue to use the classic indicator (the ration of output and time). This source is also applied in practice with emphasis on both the

output and the quality of the output. The produced added value is measured by other indicators of business performance, or by internal labour productivity indicators (due to data accessibility). Goods and services, as the size and quality of economic output, form a whole, and are of equal importance in measuring and assessing the level of labour productivity. Improvement in labour productivity occurs when the size of output of standard (subscribed, predetermined) quality is increased over an identical or shorter period of labour. If the volume of output increases, but the quality of output declines, there will no rise in labour productivity, because the market value of the output will have dropped causing productive efficiency to increase (higher output per unit of time), and the business effectiveness to decline (smaller market value of the output due to lower quality).*

Quality is now the key to success on the market, and it is the factor that determines the performance of enterprise and the performance of the economy at large. Quality is achieved by implementing the Total Quality Management (TQM) system based on standardization and norms.

There is a positive correlation between quality and productivity: the higher the productivity, the superior the quality; the lower the productivity, the inferior the quality. This relationship is determined by the degree to which work is organized: the greater the degree of organization, the larger the output; the lower the degree of organization, the smaller the output, and the TQM is based on the quality of labour organization and labour standards.

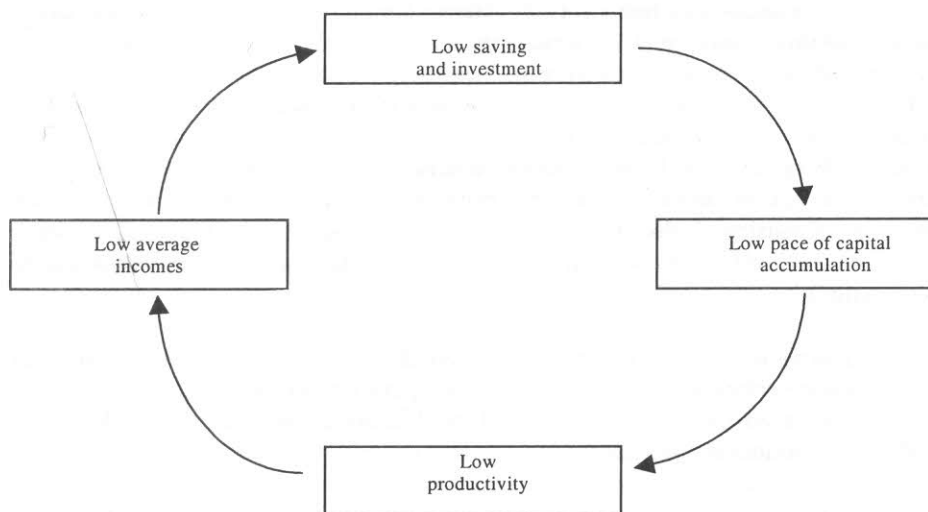
The second element of labour productivity is labour input. The trend is to reduce the amount of labour input by improving the techniques and technologies of work, which serve to humanize and facilitate work. This leads to an increase of labour output and productivity, and in turn to an increase of free time and quality of life that the worker can enjoy.

Human potentials and intellectual capital are the most important factors in the economic development and prosperity of a country. Knowledge and technology are the fundamental forces of production and the determinants of labour productivity.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita indicates the prosperity of an individual, of society and of a country. It serves as a global/national indicator of labour productivity. Low labour productivity means poverty, and this is one of the features of economically undeveloped countries (transitional countries). High labour productivity signifies material prosperity, and it is characteristic of economically developed countries. (3)

* effectiveness – doing the right things, making what the market requires
efficiency – doing things right, using the minimum amount of resources

Fig. 1: The vicious circle of underdevelopment and poverty



Source: Paul A. Samuelson, William Nordhaus, *Economics*, 14th edition, McGraw-Hill, Inc., New York, 1992, pp 700

It is difficult to break the vicious circle of underdevelopment and poverty. Low incomes are the cause of low savings and small investments. This leads to few opportunities for capital investments in modern machinery and technology, as well as investments in personnel (low wages), which in turn results in low productivity. The circle is closed, and begins again. The only way to exit from the circle of underdevelopment and poverty is to break this destructive chain.

Economic development builds on the optimum combination of four factors: human resources, natural resources, knowledge and technology, together with economic development strategies.

The renewal of Croatia's economy is today underway, and development strategies are being formulated for individual branches and the economy as a whole. It is crucial that these strategies contain elements that will spur labour productivity across all branches of economy. Without an increase in labour productivity, it will not be possible to renew the economy of Croatia, achieve a faster rate of economic growth and increase the prosperity of the country and its people.

3. LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

Labour productivity in the hotel industry is of great economic importance, as tourism is one of the strategic branches of development within the Croatian economy. The specific characteristics of tourism and the hotel industry, as the backbone of tourism development, demand and determine a specific approach to investigating labour productivity.

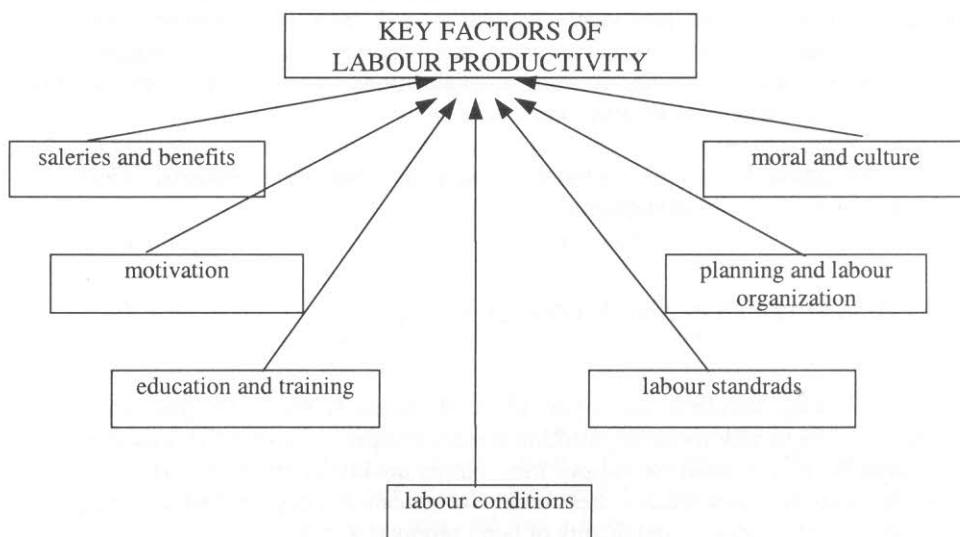
Catering and tourist workers are the carriers of the tourist product and output. Their productivity is subject to an array of internal and external factors.

External factors include: social and political systems; the degree of democracy; the level of economic development; the structure of the economy; the growth rate of national output; the condition and development of infrastructure, roads and communication; the position of other service activities (trade, etc.); demographic policies; economic policies; labour laws; ecology; the cultural level; competition and the local environment; the importance and image of tourism and hospitality (tradition and social status), the educational system; and other environmental factors.

Internal factors that impact on productivity are: ownership and the privatisation process; adherence to world-recognized hotel working standards; product and service quality (TQM); modern work organization and planning; standard hotel systems for monitoring work results; investments in modern equipment and technology; interpersonal relations; continuous training of managers and hotel staff; internal rules and regulations dealing with work and remuneration, wages and other income; staff motivation and skill; the hiring system; career planning for talented personnel; the personnel qualification structure; the style of management and communication; the quality of hotel services; working conditions; the coefficient of fluctuation; guest satisfaction; marketing activities; personnel management system; business ethics, morale and culture; and other internal factors.

Of the many factors stated, special attention should be given to those closely linked to work and workers as the key factors of labour productivity.

Fig. 2: Key internal factors of productivity



The extent to which each internal factor can influence productivity should be determined. Accordingly, measures should be taken to enhance the positive impacts, and eliminate the negative impacts, of these factors.

The assessment and evaluation of labour productivity in the hotel industry is defined through international hotel standards of controlling, based on the Uniform system of accounts for the lodging industry (8) and the statistics of the World Tourism Organization (WTO).

Controlling, as a function of management, involves the following activities: performance planning; performance assessment and monitoring; plan deviation analysis and determining measures to enhance performance. This includes labour productivity, as one of the indicators of company performance and business results.

We can assess labour productivity by applying international standard indicators of labour productivity in the hotel industry. These indicators can be divided into the following groups (1):

- Global labour productivity indicators for the hotel at large
- Partial labour productivity indicators for hotel departments
- Labour productivity indicators for individual jobs in the catering industry.

The advantages of applying standard international indicators of labour productivity are comparability and objective assessment.

It is necessary to determine the method for monitoring, assessing and evaluating each of the influential factors.

For example, we need to formulate and apply personnel satisfaction indicators. These are indicators of personnel fluctuation and turnover, absentee indicators, motivation indicators, work condition indicators (security and health), education and promotion indicators (training, courses, specialization, career moves), remuneration indicators (wages and other income), etc.

Optimum labour productivity requires set working standards, which are indicators of work quality and quantity.

4. RATIONALIZATION AND WORK QUALITY

Working standards are a part of hotel standards that have great impact on productivity. Generally speaking, working standards represent a set of various standards governing the time needed for various jobs, output quality, conduct at work (behaviour towards guests and co-workers), dress code, the educational degrees and skills required to achieve given quantities and quality of hotel products and services.

In more specific terms, working standards proscribe the basic elements of labour: quantity, quality, time and costs, each of which has its own standard:

- Quantity standard
- Quality standard
- Time standard
- Cost standard
- Ethical standard.

These standards should give us the answers to the following questions:

- The number and type of quantitative units needed to carry out a certain job
- The method and level required to accomplish a task
- The time needed to complete a task
- The acceptable costs for carrying out a task
- The reason for doing the job.

Working standards are closely linked to hotel performance by determining the volume and quality of hotel products and services (and thus determining the total income). Labour costs have considerable impact on the overall level of hotel costs. Labour costs account for about 30% of overall operational costs of a hotel. In order to eliminate all unnecessary costs, the actual volume of hotel operations must coincide with the number of workers actually required. In other words, labour cost standards must be adhered to. This requires knowing, on a day-to-day basis, exactly how many workers are needed to achieve the daily task. The number of workers needed should be planned against a weekly or monthly operational plan. In this way, variable labour costs are rationalized i.e. reduced to an optimum level.

The assessment, evaluation and remuneration of employee labour should be linked to the achieved result of work i.e. the volume and quality of completed tasks (for administrative jobs), and the volume and quality of output (for production and service workers). The remuneration system should stimulate work and rewards; it should serve to promote the best workers and to demote workers with low performance. An adequate and just system of remuneration will have considerable impact on improving the level of labour production. The assessment and remuneration of work is the task of the manager. The worker, however, should be familiar with the criteria, and should be involved in formulating the criteria and in evaluating his/her own work. (4)

A U.S. study on labour productivity in the hotel industry has revealed a paradox involving labour productivity and technology (5). Namely, more than 84% of all information technology has been installed in the service industries. Statistics have, nevertheless, shown a drop in productivity in the service industries below the productivity levels of other industries. The ratio of income and hours of labour measure labour productivity in the American hotel industry. From 1958 to 1985, productivity showed a growth rate of 1,3% per year. A drop of 2,8% was observed from 1985 to 1990. A survey of hotel managers revealed that a boost in productivity was expected

following the introduction of information technology in individual departments (the reception desk, for example). Labour productivity did in fact increase in these departments, but the overall productivity of the hotel was not enhanced. The quality and numbers of guest services, however, did increase. The conclusion is that the productivity paradox is perhaps not really a paradox, but rather a strategy of hotel managers, who are more willing to opt for enhanced quality of services for guests, than for an increase in labour productivity. This is quality as a strategy, and as a contemporary stage in the development of Total Quality Management.

Studies on labour productivity in the Croatian hotel industry, based on the number of room/nights per employee for the period from 1974 to 1999 show a slowdown and drop in labour productivity. Data in Table 1 illustrate this fact. (6)

Table 1. The average number of room/nights per employee in Croatian hotels

Year	Number of hotel room/nights in 000	Degree of utilized capacity %	No. of hotel staff (as per 30. 9.)	Average number of rm/nights per employee	Basic index
1974.	13.373	37,3	22.137	604,1	100
1975.	14.350	39,2	24.135	594,6	98
1976.	14.280	38,2	24.651	579,3	96
1977.	14.989	38,3	25.151	596,0	99
1978.	17.436	43,2	25.572	681,8	113
1979.	17.948	44,0	26.709	672,0	111
1980.	17.521	42,4	27.127	645,9	107
1981.	18.194	43,2	28.125	646,9	107
1982.	17.773	41,1	29.201	608,6	101
1983.	17.764	40,0	29.696	598,2	99
1984.	19.486	43,1	31.608	616,5	102
1985.	20.975	45,0	34.308	611,4	101
1986.	21.219	43,0	36.097	587,8	97
1987.	21.986	43,0	36.611	600,5	99
1988.	21.768	41,7	37.498	580,5	96
1989.	21.552	41,2	38.021	566,8	94
1990.	20.716	39,7	34.406	602,1	100
1991.	5.904	13,1	22.205	265,9	44
1992.	4.983	10,2	12.091	412,1	68
1993.	5.729	11,5	13.468	425,4	70
1994.	8.433	16,9	17.178	490,9	81
1995.	5.587	11,1	14.669	380,9	63
1996.	8.551	17,3	17.198	497,2	82
1997.	11.247	22,8	20.956	536,7	89
1998.	11.388	22,9	* 21.457	530,7	88
1999.	9.605	20,4	18.304	524,8	87

Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Croatia (processed data for each year)

* Situation as per August 31

The basic index of room/nights per employee illustrates a long-term downward trend, although an increase can be observed in certain years (1978, 1979, 1980 and 1981). The war years (1991, 1992, 1993 and 1995) show a considerable drop. This conditionally synthetic indicator of output per employee illustrates the low efficiency and rationality of labour in Croatian hotels. The degree of utilization of lodging facilities is due to the dominant number of hotels with seasonal operation, within the framework of Croatian hotel industry.

Table 2. Business indicators of Croatian hotels

Year	No. of hotels	Number of hotel rooms	Average no. of rooms per hotel	Number of hotel beds	Average no. of beds per hotel	No. of workers per 100 rooms
1974.	423	47.196	111,6	98.147	232,0	47
1975.	422	48.352	114,6	100.255	237,6	50
1976.	425	49.824	117,2	102.367	240,9	49
1977.	388	51.759	133,4	107.358	276,7	49
1978.	427	52.848	123,8	110.693	259,2	48
1979.	433	53.471	123,5	111.869	258,4	50
1980.	434	54.301	125,1	113.177	260,8	50
1981.	441	55.343	125,5	115.389	261,7	51
1982.	447	56.274	125,9	118.503	265,1	52
1983.	455	58.011	127,5	121.570	267,2	51
1984.	453	58.517	129,2	123.890	273,7	54
1985.	454	59.877	131,9	127.802	281,5	57
1986.	471	63.380	134,6	135.182	287,0	57
1987.	474	65.001	137,1	140.064	295,5	56
1988.	476	65.900	138,4	142.974	300,4	57
1989.	475	66.230	139,4	143.332	301,8	57
1990.	479	65.930	137,6	142.917	298,4	52
1991.	387	57.385	148,3	123.946	320,3	39
1992.	443	62.035	140,0	134.166	302,9	20
1993.	457	62.827	137,5	136.250	298,1	22
1994.	463	63.206	136,5	136.997	295,9	27
1995.	464	63.825	137,6	138.535	298,6	23
1996.	465	62.287	134,0	135.398	291,2	28
1997.	453	62.054	137,0	135.114	298,3	34
1998.	458	62.580	136,6	136.113	297,2	34
1999.	433	59.178	136,7	129.410	298,3	31

Source: The Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Croatia (processed data for each year)

In the average, Croatian hotel are too large, the number of rooms ranging from 112 to 148 (usually double rooms). In these conditions, it is difficult to coordinate the required number of employees with the daily or weekly volume of operation (number of guests). Coordination is carried out only during the tourist season, and even then, not quite successfully. Two of the reasons for this are the lacking personnel policy of the hotels and the inflexible labour legislation.

During the years before the war (1974 – 1990), the number of employees per 100 rooms ranged from 47 to 57, which was far too high a figure with respect to the low utilization of lodging facilities. In the war and post-war years, this number dropped, but so did the degree of lodging facilities utilization.

The degree by which labour productivity can increase also depends on the quality of personnel i.e. the knowledge, skills and motivation of personnel. One of the reasons for low productivity in the hotel industry is the unsatisfactory educational qualification structure of employees in Croatian tourism and the catering industry.

Table 3. The overall number of employees in tourism and catering as per educational degree (situation as per March 31, 1996)

Educational degree	Total	%
University degree	1.461	3,5
Ph.D.	-	
M.Sc.	31	0,0
College degree	1.918	4,6
Secondary school degree	11.611	28,1
Elementary school degree	2.627	6,4
Highly skilled worker	2.825	6,8
Skilled worker	12.662	30,5
Semi-skilled worker	2.095	
Unskilled worker	6.186	15,0
Overall total	41.380	100

Source: Data processed from the Statistical Report "Employment and Wages in 1996", The Government Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb, 1999, pp 16

Table 4. The structure of employees in tourism and catering as per educational degree (situation as per March 31, 1996)

Educational degree	Tourism	%	Catering	%
University degree	377	13,2	1.084	2,8
Ph.D.	-	-	-	-
M.Sc.	2	0,0	29	0,0
College degree	371	12,9	1.547	4,0
Secondary school degree	1.395	48,6	10.216	26,5
Elementary school degree	90	3,1	2.532	6,6
Highly skilled worker	92	3,2	2.733	7,1
Skilled worker	408	14,2	12.254	31,8
Semi-skilled worker	25	0,9	2.070	5,4
Unskilled worker	111	3,9	6.075	15,8
Overall total	2.869	100	38.511	100

Source: Data processed from the Statistical Report "Employment and Wages in 1996", The Government Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb, 1999, pp 16

Out of the total number of persons employed in the catering and tourist industry (41.380), only 7% (2.869) work in the tourist industry and 83% (38.511) work in the catering industry i.e. in hotels and restaurants. This ratio is not consistent to actual requirements. It reveals a lacking and inadequate tourist service and tourism marketing. Although tourism cannot exist without hotels and restaurants, it is the intermediate tourist services that make the tourist product available on the market.

The educational structure of employees in tourism is somewhat better than in the catering industry. Although this is acceptable with regard to the complexity of work, it is nevertheless unsatisfactory. Namely, almost half of all employees (48,6%) have only secondary school degrees; there is an excess of skilled workers (14,2%), and a shortage of employees with university degrees (13,2%) and college degrees (12,9%).

We can conclude that there is an "academic shortage" with regard to the ever more demanding and complex need for knowledge, dictated by the harsh competition on the world tourist market.

The same applies to workers in the catering industry. Only 2,8% hold university degrees and only 4% have college degrees. The number of unskilled workers is too high (15,6%). Higher and better education is needed to meet the demand for superior quality services in hotels and restaurants. Quality is now the basic orientation of business policy and development strategy.

Table 5 features analytical data on workers in the catering industry.

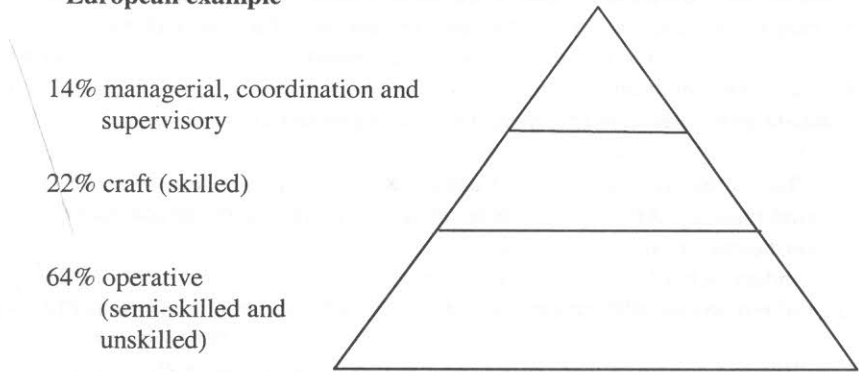
Table 5. Workers in the catering industry (situation as per August 31, 1995)

	No. of workers	%	%
TOTAL	37.909	100	
Managers	3.432	9,1	100
<i>Directors</i>	677		19,6
<i>Managers of lodging and catering facilities</i>	1.179		34,4
<i>Other managers</i>	1.579		46,0
Service personnel	17.406	45,9	
Reception personnel	8.252	21,8	
Maintenance and transport personnel	5.096	13,4	
Administrative personnel	1.473	3,9	
Accountants and cashiers	2.250	5,9	

Source: Data processed from the Bulletin "The Catering Industry 1995", The Government Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb 1996

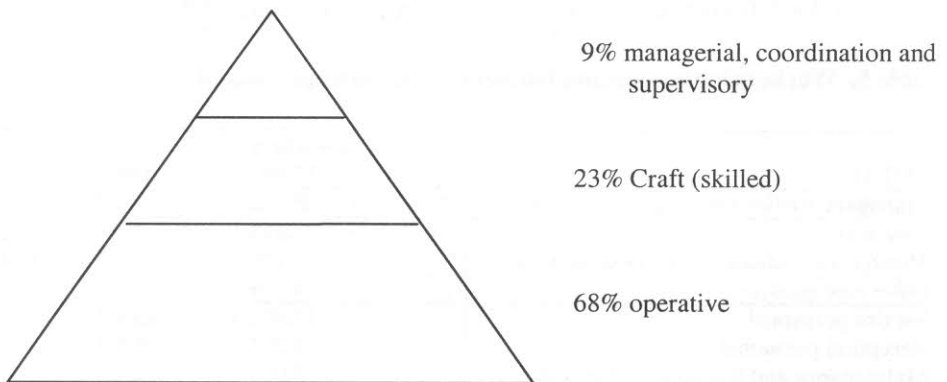
Special reference is made to the managerial structure. Managers account for 9,1% of all employees in the catering industry (hotels and restaurants), this percentage being too low with regard to the European model of structure and task complexity (knowledge and skills). Figures 3 and 4 illustrate this fact.

Fig. 3: Model of knowledge and skills of personnel in the catering industry - European example



Source: Tom Baum (1995), "Personnel Management in European Tourism and Hospitality – A Strategic Approach", Chapman & Hall, 2-6, Boundary Row, London SE1 8 HN, UK, pp. 77

Fig. 4: Model of knowledge and skills of personnel in the catering industry - Croatian example



Source: Data in Table 5

In addition to this, a conventional non-market hierarchy of management still exists in the Croatian hospitality industry (Fig. 5), whereas in countries with a developed market economy we find a market-oriented hierarchy of management (Fig. 6). This situation is caused by the non-market approach and attitude of Croatian hospitality managers (for example, almost all of our directors feel that they should personally deal with guests!)

Fig. 5: Conventional hierarchy of management

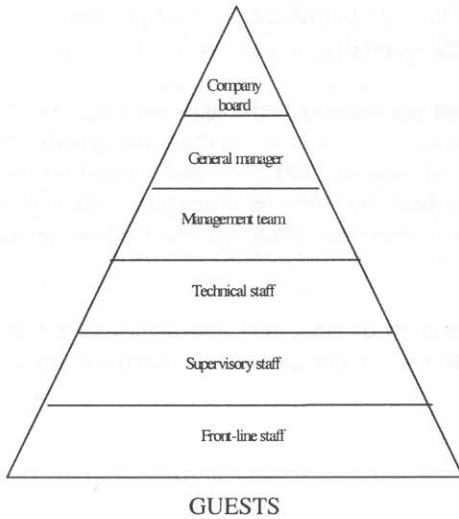


Fig. 6: Market-oriented organization

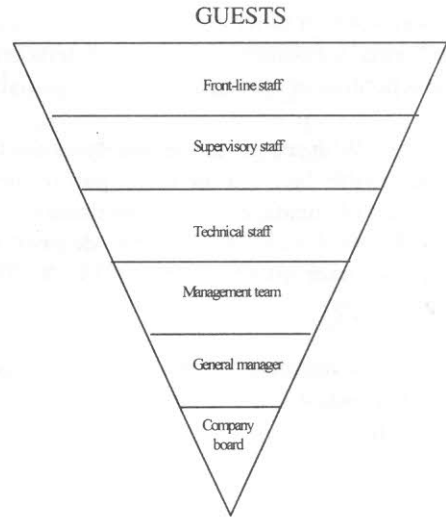


Table 5. Educational degree of catering industry managers

Educational degree	Total	%	Directors		Managers of lodging and catering facil.		Other managers	
				%		%		%
University	424	12,4	245	36,2	109	9,3	70	4,4
College	550	16,0	188	27,8	230	19,5	132	8,4
Secondary school	880	25,7	173	25,6	327	27,7	380	24,1
Elementary school	39	1,1	3	0,4	11	0,9	25	1,6
Highly skilled workers	656	19,1	33	4,9	242	20,5	381	24,2
Skilled workers	812	23,7	32	4,7	234	19,8	546	34,6
Semi-skilled workers	39	1,1	3	0,4	16	1,5	20	1,3
Unskilled workers	32	0,9	-	-	10	0,8	22	1,4
OVERALL TOTAL	3.432	100	677	100	1.179	100	1.576	100
	100		19,7		34,4		45,9	

Source: Data processed from the paper "The Catering Industry 1995", The Government Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb 1996, pp 12

Out of the total number of managers, only 12,4% has a university degree. Only 36% (a third!) of all directors, 9,3% of all lodging and catering facilities managers and a mere 4,4% of other types of managers hold a university degree. This situation calls for additional schooling of the present personnel through permanent training programs, and the schooling of managerial staff in specialized university courses for hotel managers.

With regard to the quality of the Croatian catering and tourist industry, it is an unacceptable fact that the major part of the managerial structure in the catering industry consists of managers with secondary school degrees (25,7%) and skilled-worker qualifications (23,7%). College degrees are held by 16% of managers, and highly skilled worker qualifications by 19,1%. This is also one of the reasons for low labour productivity.

Investments in the training and education of personnel and managers for the catering industry are a crucial factor for survival in the growing competition on the tourist market (7).

5. CONCLUSION

Labour productivity is a constant challenge and topic of research, as it is one of the fundamental indicators of the an enterprise performance, as well as an indicator of the economic growth and wealth of a country.

Low labour productivity is one of the weaknesses and causes of poverty in economically underdeveloped countries. The material wealth of a country and its people depends on work and knowledge, as these are the source of profit, which is the goal of every economic activity.

The specific characteristics of the hotel industry call for a specific approach to this study. The large number of influential factors reveals the complexity of the research.

Labour productivity in the Croatian hotel industry is not satisfactory. It is necessary undertake an array of measures impacting on both external and internal factors in order to improve labour productivity, the standard of the workers and the level of economic wealth. This paper addresses only some of the causes of low productivity and the measures by which these causes can be eliminated.

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Sažetak

PRODUKTIVNOST RADA HOTELSKE INDUSTRIJE HRVATSKE

Izvor blagostanja i siromaštva

Rad je fokusiran na produktivnost rada, pokazatelja efikasnosti rada ali i pokazatelja materijalnog blagostanja zemlje i njenih građana.

U uvodnom dijelu obrazlaže se važnost istraživanja produktivnosti rada. Nakon toga definiraju se elementi produktivnosti rada i utjecaj u gospodarstvu zemlje, produktivnost kao izvor siromaštva i blagostanja. U trećem dijelu detaljno se istražuje produktivnost rada na primjeru hotelske industrije Hrvatske, faktore produktivnosti, uzroke stanja te te predlažu neku mjeru za otklanjanje utvrđenih slabosti.

Ključne riječi: produktivnost rada, mjerenje i ocjenjivanje, faktori produktivnosti, hotelska industrija.