

Strategies on Attracting Staff in Times of Pandemic Targeting at Economic Recovery and Resurrection of the Tourism Sector

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Received: May 25, 2025 Accepted: June 29, 2025 Published: July 01, 2025</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Solutions, repercussions, procedure, human resources, services, tourism</p>	<p>The year 2020 imposed major changes in the way we think and organize. Entrepreneurs were forced by the situation they face, to think in perspective and to contemplate on innovative solutions to survive. The pandemic period has left its mark on the entire economy, and when we draw the line and analyse the remaining resources, we find that we were not prepared to go through such an experience, but we must always look to the future and look for solutions to be reborn. We find these solutions by rethinking the business, the way of working and of course by attracting the human resource indispensable to the activity. It is important to emphasize the idea of safety, and as a result, we should clarify and be transparent when it comes to providing various services in the field of tourism.</p>

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1. Introduction

The year 2020, respectively the appearance of the epidemic regarding the infection with the SARS-COV-2 coronavirus, marked in a significant way the states of the European Union and the whole humanity. This period has eloquently left its mark on our country, both in terms of human losses, diseases, but also economic and financial losses. All this is felt on the well-being of mankind who experienced a very different period from the way of coexistence they knew. Both the population and all sectors of the economy have felt extraordinary changes in terms of the bans that have been and continue to be, the fight and prevention of disease, and maintaining the health of the population. Viewed from several points of view, these restrictions have had a major impact on reducing the incidence of illness, but as expected, it is felt significantly at the level of entrepreneurs of small and medium enterprises and in some places and large ones, whose businesses are in free fall. Through studies conducted in various sectors of activity, it is understood that the pandemic has been felt throughout the planet and has equally affected the world's industries. Its effect manifests itself differently from industry to industry and from one company to another.

2. Literature review

As reflected in the statistical situation below, provided by the National Office of the Trade Register, all sectors were visibly and significantly affected in terms of figures, this can be seen by comparing the

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number of companies registered in 2020 compared with the previous year, 2019, when the activity took place under normal conditions (table 1).

Table 1. Registrations in the period 01.01.2020 - 31.12.2020 compared to the same period 2019

Section name according to NACE	Total registrations 01.01 - 31.12.2019	Total registrations 01.01 - 31.12.2020	Dynamics (%)
Activities of private households as employers of domestic personnel; activities of private households to produce goods and services intended for their own consumption	3.00	3.00	0,00
Administrative and support service activities	7,068	5,472	-22.58
Entertainment, cultural and recreational activities	5,385	2,707	-49.73
Professional, scientific and technical activities	12,875	10,375	-19.42
Public administration and defense; social insurance in the public system	20	11	-45.00
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	8,527	4,272	-49.90
Other service activities	8,403	6,486	-22.81
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	29,304	26,748	-8.72
Construction	14,760	13,682	-7.30
Water distribution; sanitation, waste management, decontamination activities	439	339	-22.78
Hotels and restaurants	6,997	4,923	-29.64
Extractive industry	117	117	0.00
Manufacturing industry	10,920	6,650	-39.10
Information and communications	7,505	7,146	-4.78
Financial intermediation and insurance	1,344	1,325	-1.41
Production and supply of electricity and heat, gas, hot water and air conditioning	86	186	116.28
Health and social work	3,350	2,593	-22.60
Transport and storage	11,029	11,688	5.98
Real estate transactions	2,689	2,634	-2.05
Education	3,399	2,582	-24.04
Total	134,220	109,939	-18.09

Source: National Trade Register Office (n.d.)

Imposing travel restrictions that means closing borders, and limiting the number of participants, have left their mark mainly on the tourism, transport and HORECA industries, which are the main sectors directly affected, but are followed close to other important sectors, such as the entertainment industry or event organizations and other.

Following the study carried out by the National Council for Small and Medium Enterprises (CNIMM), we are currently facing consequences that are deeply felt in the economy, namely: restriction of activity for

many companies in areas where restrictions have been imposed; staff availability; reduction of sales; impossibility to pay suppliers; suspension of activity that is uncertain - depending on the duration can be temporary or permanent; closure of enterprises.

According to the National Agency for Employment, the unemployment rate registered at the end of December 2020, at national level was 3.38%, 0.41% higher than in December last year (2019). The total number of registered unemployed at the end of 2020 was 296,051 people, a number that is increasing compared to the number of people registered in November of the same year, with 5,375 people (figure 1).

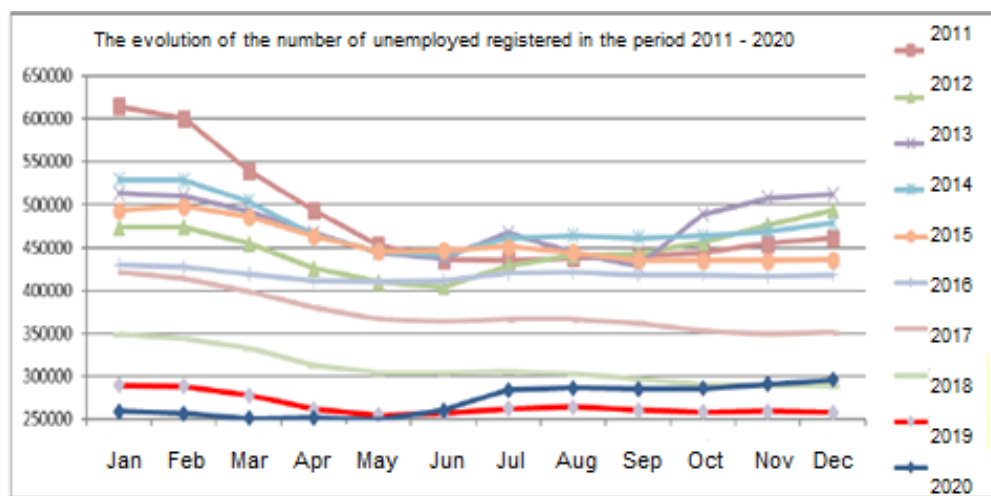


Figure 1. Evolution of unemployed registered in the period 2011-2020

Source: National Agency for Employment (n.d.)

The graphic expression above illustrates the increase in registered unemployment during 2020, compared to the previous year. It should be noted that this analysis reflects the evolution of the staff made redundant during the pandemic, namely the people who lost their jobs and not the people who are technically unemployed supported by both the state and the employer.

3. Materials and methods

Tourism is one of the most affected sectors because the restrictions imposed at this level were quite strict, feeling quite seriously the period of lockdown imposed in the country, both during the state of emergency and during the state of alert, on stopping the spread of the pandemic (table 2, table 3).

The only positive impact that tourism has experienced in the period when flight restrictions were not lifted or were lifted, but involved other measures to combat the epidemic, most tourists opted for domestic tourism at the expense of external tourism.

Table 2. Foreign Arrivals and Romanian Departures – December & Full Year 2020

	December 2020	%	Year 2020	%
Total arrivals	284,619	100.00	5,022,723	100.00
Road transport	247,286	86.90	4,150,797	82.60
Rail transport	2,382	0.80	42,836	0.90

	December 2020	%	Year 2020	%
Airline	26,415	9.30	729,878	14.50
Naval transport	8,536	3.00	99,212	2.00
Total departures	449,551	100.00	9,510,103	100.00
Road transport	356,918	79.40	6,756,787	71.00
Rail transport	1,569	0.40	36,437	0.40
Airline	89,067	19.80	2,693,728	28.30
Naval transport	1,997	0.40	23,151	0.30

Source: National Institute of Statistics (n.d.)

The studies carried out by the National Institute of Statistics, applicable on different samples, reveal that the arrivals of foreign visitors on the Romanian territory registered in December 2020, at the border points, registered a decrease of 69% compared to December 2019 (table 3).

Table 3. Arrivals and departures (2020 compared to 2019)

	December 2019	Dec. 2020/ Dec. 2019 (%)	2019	2020/2019 (%)
Total arrivals	919,538	31.00	12,815,430	39.20
Road transport	683,802	36.20	9,552,146	43.50
Rail transport	12,511	19.00	141,707	30.20
Airline	214,898	12.30	2,936,467	24.90
Naval transport	8,327	102.50	185,110	53.60
Total departures	1,455,193	30.90	23,065,770	41.20
Road transport	949,307	37.60	15,790,856	42.80
Rail transport	10,912	14.40	115,718	31.50
Airline	493,428	18.10	7,132,213	37.80
Naval transport	1,546	129.20	269,83	85.80

Source: National Institute of Statistics (n.d.)

The departures of Romanian visitors abroad also decreased significantly, in 2020 being registered at customs checkpoints, with 58.8% fewer departures from the country compared to the previous year (table 4).

Table 4. Tourist Arrivals and Overnight Stays – 2020 vs. 2019

	Arrivals			Overnights		
	2019	2020	2019/ 2002	2019	2020	2019/ 2020
	thousands	thousands	%	thousands	thousands	%
Total	13,269	6,335	47.75	29,870	14,445	48.36
Romanian tourists	10,597	5,882	55.51	24,603	13,449	54.66
Foreign tourists *) of which:	2,672	453	16.97	5,267	996	18.91

	Arrivals			Overnights		
	2019	2020	2019/ 2002	2019	2020	2019/ 2020
	thousands	thousands	%	thousands	thousands	%
- Europe	1,983	355	17.91	3,795	769	20.26
- European Union**	1,531	264	17.22	2,910	562	19.30
- Asia	361	46	12.65	810	114	14.05
- North America	186	25	13.58	388	57	14.68
- South America	22	3	14.81	45	8	16.63
- Africa	20	5	23.50	41	11	27.87

Source: National Institute of Statistics (n.d)

According to the data provided by the National Institute of Statistics, the arrivals registered in the tourist reception structures with accommodation functions decreased considerably in 2020, compared to 2019, respectively by 52.54%, more than half of the arrivals registered in the previous year (figure 2).

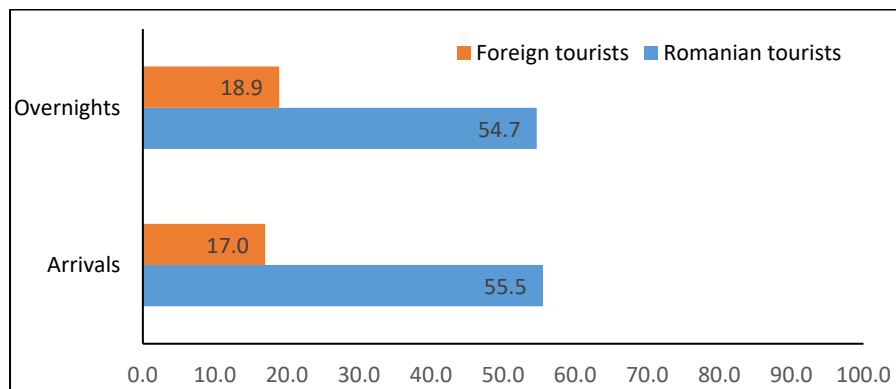


Figure 2. Tourist arrivals and overnight stays, in 2020 compared to 2019

Source: National Institute of Statistics (n.d.)

Also, regarding the number of people who spent the night in the tourist reception structures, there is also a significant decrease of 51.64%, the year 2020 putting its significant footprint at the level of revenues from tourism.

The situation of tourism is critical throughout the European Union and as a result, the European Commission proposed in May 2020, a series of measures to facilitate the gradual resumption of activity in this sector as well as providing liquidity totalling 8 billion EURO, through the European Investment Fund, to finance 100 000 small businesses in the field of services and tourism units according to the Eurostat website.

Until the end of 2019, the tourism sector was a beneficial sector in terms of the number of jobs it generates, but also in terms of the financial sector (table 5). Since mid-March 2020, the tourism industry has strongly felt the impact of the pandemic since its inception, with activity shrinking significantly, in some cases leading to a permanent loss of activity.

Table 5. Vacancies - activities of the national economy (sections) CAEN Rev.2

	Period							
	QI 2019	QII 2019	QIII 2019	QIV 2019	QI 2020	Q II 2020	QIII 2020	QIV 2020
	UM: Number							
Total	58,167	54,983	55,045	47,090	41,762	34,164	39,342	35,589
Hotels and restaurants	1,169	1,923	927	1,501	336	77	45	30

Source: National Institute of Statistics (2025)

The contractors were forced to temporarily close the business, sending the staff into technical unemployment. As can be seen according to figure 3, vacancies are in total decline reaching from over 1,500 vacancies at the end of the fourth quarter of 2019, to only 30 jobs at the end of the fourth quarter of 2020.

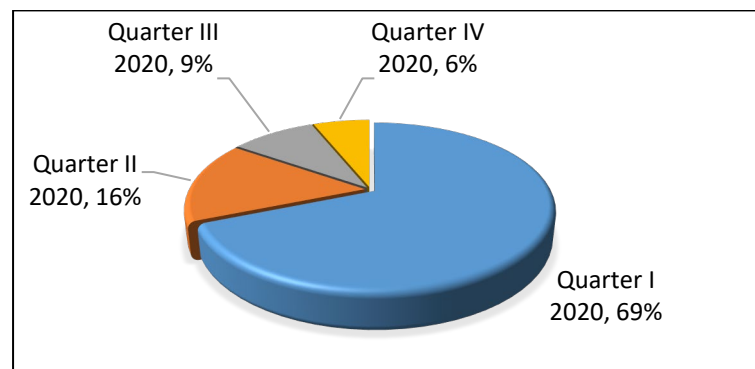


Figure 3. Vacancies in the tourism industry in 2020

Source: National Institute of Statistics (n.d)

Analysing the year 2020 in terms of jobs generated by the tourism sector, we note that in the first quarter of 2020 there were most vacancies, but as you can see the effect of the pandemic has left its mark on both jobs job vacancies in this field as well as on the new companies set up in this sector.

This period must be seen as a new challenge, from which we can synthesize the beneficial and less beneficial things, with the help of which to develop the innovative spirit on the business line so that in any situation we can recover and look for solutions to prosper and be prepared in any situation.

In the current context, we need to consider a different way of approaching human resources, aiming at health security and its individual needs, considering and analysing the facilities that each employer is willing to offer. If the employee is satisfied, customers will certainly feel this terribly important aspect at this time and the results will not be long in coming.

At present, tourism is in a certain recovery, through local tourism - domestic tourism. Considering the tourist potential of Romania, as well as the need to relaunch this sector, the organization Alliance for Tourism (APT) was recently established, which aims to relaunch tourism at national level.

It is envisaged to return to normal activity, but of course to attract staff during the pandemic the employer must prepare safety measures in accordance with the law, which will be necessary for an indefinite period, and change the vision of attracting the necessary human resources. As starting points it should consider making several changes to the recruitment process, learning process, and the reward process.

The recruitment process must be carried out in the first stage exclusively online to simplify the procedure and reduce costs, so that both the interviewee and the employer or participant on his part are safe and the time allocated to the interview is shorter. If the interviewee folds according to the requirements of the job, then the face-to-face meeting can be moved to the second step. At present this is one of the most sensitive processes because there is some limitation of the employer. The labour force market in our country identifies a series of inconsistencies when assessing the qualification in the field for which time is allocated in the recruitment process.

The challenge for entrepreneurs now is the limited budget that does not allow them to use the services of trained people, and performance leaves much to be desired.

- ✧ As a solution to this process, a series of measures can be considered that can facilitate the employer's decision, being constrained by the reduction of the budget at least for the next period:
- ✧ the project for which additional human resources are needed must be identified.
- ✧ establishing the necessary staff for the business cycle to be the appropriate one.
- ✧ identification of the essential qualities that the future employee must have, respectively secondary education, minimum qualification, foreign languages he / she masters, age, driving license required or not, experience, other skills, etc.
- ✧ establishing the budget of expenses that can be allocated to support these expenses (total salary expenses - include salary taxes - CAS / CASS / tax)
- ✧ As a recommendation, the employer must perform a needs analysis and then, depending on the line of business, establish the concrete organizational chart.

The learning process - it must be done gradually, so that the employee does not feel constrained and forced, but to feel relaxed and eager to develop and thus the activity is done with pleasure and customers are satisfied. The learning process must also consider the preparation from the point of view of maintaining safety and health, because at this moment clients follow this aspect in detail and to return to a normal life, we must look at this part much differently than before.

The learning process differs from employee to employee depending on personality, occupation, and things related to personal sphere. To establish the necessary training in the field, the employer can use an anonymous questionnaire to ensure that it is completed according to the knowledge, but also honestly by employees, whose results can be centralized, and a minimum level can be established from which the learning process can begin. The reward process is an incentive for the workforce and may differ depending on the requirements of each person.

To determine the needs of each person, an individual study can be carried out on the degree of satisfaction of the reward methods. Employee compensation can be determined based on the results of annual evaluations, based on which the employer can consider expanding the range of rewards, by giving free time, a medical subscription or even financial remuneration.

5. Conclusions

The moment of the appearance of the SARS-COV-2 coronavirus will remain a significant moment, from all points of view, from which surely all mankind had something to learn. At this moment, attempts are being made to relaunch activities in all affected areas. After a period of about a year in which the economy froze due to the decline in the activities of various sectors of activity.

The year 2020 was a year full of challenges, which forced us to adapt to a rather ambiguous challenge, and which developed creativity and the need to adapt for survival.

The aim is to set in motion the activity of hard-to-try tourism during this period and to resume life in normal conditions, but as a starting point, the needs of consumers must be considered for them to create demand. It is an area where consumers raise the standard of services, and depending on their requirements, and offers can diversify.

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