

## MANAGEMENT

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### **EFFECT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ON HUMAN RESOURCES PLANNING IN HOTEL BUSINESSES<sup>1</sup>**

***Abstract.** The aim of this study is to determine the effects of digital transformation on human resources planning in hotel businesses. In the study, it will be revealed how innovative processes, systems and tools such as new technology smart applications, automation systems, robots, online transactions used in hotel businesses within the scope of digital transformation affect human resources planning qualitatively and quantitatively. The research population consists of the general managers and human resources managers of the 5-star hotels operating in Turkey, which have developed in terms of digital transformation. The research will be carried out in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Antalya and Bodrum, as the hotels that have completed the digital transformation in the hotel industry in Turkey are still limited and they operate in different provinces throughout the country. The research will be carried out in the form of face-to-face-online interviews with the general managers and human resources managers of the hotels and through semi-structured questionnaires. Purposive sampling method was chosen as the research sampling method. The data will be analyzed with descriptive analysis technique. Research findings will be presented systematically by forming the main theme, classification and subgroups. The findings were compared with the information in the literature, and the discussion and conclusion were presented. Inferences and recommendations for literature and practice are presented. According to the results of the research, digital transformation affects human resources planning*

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*qualitatively and quantitatively, and being able to successfully benefit from digital transformation in hotel businesses requires a successful human resources planning.*

**Keywords:** *digital transformation 1, human resources planning 2, hotel 3, technology 4, smart applications 5.*

### **Digital Transformation and Tourism**

While tourism businesses want to increase efficiency thanks to digital transformation, facilitate the preference of tourists who adapt to digitalization very quickly, and provide them with reliable and fast service, tourists want to experience the most reliable and fast touristic experience in the shortest way (Atar, 2019; Tung and Law, 2017). The use of these digital and technological tools, especially in some business processes in hotel businesses, has either reduced or completely eliminated the need for labor there (Aydın, 2018). Technological developments that have emerged with digital transformation provide an opportunity for tourists to obtain the best service in the easiest and fastest way, while reducing the time and manpower spent in the operation processes for hotel businesses, while increasing the quality of the service offered (Seric and Gil-Saura, 2012; Topsakal et al., 2018). However, these technologies generally do not have self-executing features. For example; When a mobile application fails or a robotic technology device breaks down during service, the person who will have to make up for it at that moment is still a human.

In recent years, the use of technology-based tools, processes, methods and applications in business activities has become almost a necessity (Schwertner, 2017), in this case, the need for qualified personnel who can use digital transformation technologies has emerged. The difficulty of reaching qualified personnel due to the development and rapid progress of digital transformation technologies and the difficulties experienced by employees in adapting to this situation creates difficulties for both the business and the employee (Sucu, 2021). Because, employees may tend to resist over time against digital transformation technologies that they have difficulty in adapting at the beginning (Emeksiz, 2000; Sucu, 2021). Digital transformation developments in the tourism sector reduce the need for people over time, and this leads to employment problems. The fact that

many human-powered works are done electronically with the innovations brought by technology today provides positive benefits to businesses in terms of being able to do the same work with less personnel, cost, profitability, speed and efficiency (Forcadell, 2020). However, the negative effects it has on the human capital working in the tourism sector is a situation that should not be ignored (Kanberoğlu and Yıldırımçakar, 2021).

With digitalization, occurring in the tourism sector; digital transformation, virtual reality and artificial intelligence applications, data security, innovation, digital eco hotels, customer relationship management, digital tourism marketing, etc. How these issues will affect both the sector and tourism workers has been the subject of curiosity of researchers for a long time. When the relevant literature is examined, it is seen that the focus is on the positive effects of digital transformation on the tourism sector (Akram and Kumar, 2017; Arsenijevic and Jovic, 2019; Aydoğmuş and Engin, 2021; Barutçugil, 2004; Chung et al., 2015; Çorumluoğlu et al., 2008; Filizöz and Orhan, 2018; Gavalas et al., 2014; Hjalager, 2015; Jacobsen and Munar, 2012; Kaya, 2009; Kounavis et al., 2012; Kourouthanassis et al., 2015; Lydon, 2016; Seric and Gil-Saura, 2012; Soylu, 2018; Topsakal et al., 2018; Tung and Law, 2017; Zlatanov and Popesku, 2019). However, situations such as the use of digital tools caused by digital transformation, the emergence of new working methods, the necessity of learning new systems that have started to be used in the sector, make digitalization activities more difficult for employees. In particular, the adaptation process of employees to digitalization activities and their ability to use digital platforms can affect the process positively or, on the contrary, negatively. On the other hand, the changes that started with the digitalization process within the enterprise trigger the fear of losing their jobs in the employees, and in this case, it may cause the employees to resist the process. In the study conducted by Schwertner (2017), it is stated that a successful digitalization process in businesses requires a high level of employee participation in terms of motivation. As a result, employees are among the leading factors for a successful digitalization process to take place and to sustain it in the long term. In this case, it reveals the necessity of successful human resources planning in businesses.

### **Human Resources Planning**

Since customer satisfaction and loyalty in tourism enterprises are directly related to employee performance, human resources planning is vital for the efficiency of these enterprises. Human resource planning forms the basis of human resource management and is also the beginning of a whole human resource management process. The most important result of not making or insufficient planning is that it causes inefficiency (Das and Barman, 2018; Met and Erdem, 2006). For this reason, error-free planning will ensure the healthy functioning of the whole process. The aim is to place the workforce correctly in terms of quantity and quality and to provide the highest efficiency from the existing ones.

Hotel businesses differ from other businesses due to some features they have. Employees are of great importance due to the features such as being more dependent on the workforce compared to other businesses, the customer can only experience the service when they come to the business, and the process cannot be repeated if there is a problem in the service offered (Tütüncü and Demir, 2003). In addition, it is not easy to measure productivity in hotel businesses. The main reason for this is that every individual working in hotel businesses is in direct contact with the customer and they create their own income and expenses (Pelit and Çetin, 2020). Since the service produced cannot be stored and a failed service cannot be changed as in other products, the approach towards employees should be more sensitive, flexible and different (Akbaba and Kılınc, 2001). For this reason, making employee-oriented human resources planning has a direct impact on the success of the business.

### **Research Method**

The study was built on the qualitative research method. As a research sampling method, "purposive sampling" method, which is one of the non-probability sampling methods, was used. Purposeful sampling method allows for in-depth investigation of situations and enables researchers to turn to relevant people from whom they can get the necessary information about the research topic (Maxwell, 1996). Considering the purpose of the research, it was decided that maximum diversity sampling, which is one of the purposive sampling methods, is the most appropriate sampling method

for the research. With maximum diversity sampling, it is aimed to find out whether there are common or shared phenomena among diverse situations and to reveal different dimensions of the problem according to diversity (Baltacı, 2018). As a data collection tool, face-to-face and online interview techniques from qualitative research methods were preferred. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasized that at the point of selection of the sample of qualitative studies, it is necessary to turn to those who will provide as much information as possible. For this reason, it is important to meet the amount of information needed by the researcher, not the number of samples. Based on this information, the sample of the research consists of general managers and human resources managers, who are key people in hotel businesses that have activities on digital transformation. Interviews were held with 15 people. The data obtained by descriptive analysis was organized and interpreted to make it understandable (Creswell, 2021). Content analysis was conducted in order to analyze the relatively superficial findings obtained by descriptive analysis in depth and to reveal the relationships between the obtained data (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2018). In the study, digital transformation in human resources planning;

It causes a quantitative (number of employees) decrease (Research basic question-1)

It causes an increase in qualitative (employee competencies and abilities) (Research basic question-2) research questions will be answered.

### **Results**

The average age of the participants was 43.6. When their educational status is examined, it has been determined that postgraduate graduates (53%) are in the majority, followed by undergraduates (47%). The average experience period of the participants in the sector was calculated as 21 years. The current position of 60% of the participants is human resources manager, while 40% of them work as general manager.

Participants evaluated the changes caused by digital and technological tools in the qualifications of human resources as 'positive change', 'negative change' and 'no change'. All participants, who evaluated them within the scope of positive change, emphasized two main issues. The first is 'more professional execution of the

processes' and the second is 'manpower open to changes, development, innovations and learning'. K5 from the participants said, "Digitalization committee has been established within our organization. Suggestions from everyone involved are being evaluated. The aim is to familiarize employees with this digitalization process beforehand. Because as long as employees are involved in the work, they can manage the process themselves. For example, we started a VR cafe initiative in the business now, we started doing it thanks to the feedback from the employees', K14'...National-international social media expert, being able to prepare promotional content, knowing digital marketing, constantly in self-development, coming with innovative ideas, guest Employees who offer differences that will create awareness, match our sensitivity to the environment, have the ability to explain and construct, and are conscious of using the digital tools we use become valuable.' In this way, some participants argue that one of the positive changes caused by digital and technological tools in the qualifications of human resources is the ability to use software and digital tools. All participants, who evaluated them as negative change, emphasized four main issues. The first is 'communication disconnection', the second is 'reduction in working time', the third is 'distraction' and the last is 'not learning the essence of the job'. The explanations of the participants as "K9's working time has decreased and their attention can be distracted very quickly" reveals their views on the subject. The participants who evaluated it within the scope of no change stated that there was no change in the literal sense. K3 'I literally couldn't see any change. There are no employees who direct them further and better...' reveals their thoughts on the subject. According to the findings, some participants evaluate the changes in the qualifications of human resources that will use digital and technological tools positively, while others state that this change is negative. Some of the participants emphasize that there is no change in the qualifications of the human resources that will use these tools.

The participants, who evaluated the use of digital and technological tools within the scope of the quantitative aspect of human resources, evaluated them in terms of "decrease in the number of employees or not". One of the participants, K2, said, "There has been a decrease in the number of employees in some departments.

Because the transformation of most of the jobs to digital has reduced the number of people doing that job..." Some participants argue that the use of digital tools reduces the number of human resources. On the other hand, K14 said "states that "...Because people's expectations have increased, there is a need for people who can reach them, communicate with them, use digital channels, and people who can take care of them more..." Some participants say that there is no decrease in the number of human resources, and even an increase in some points. The findings show that the digital transformation in hotels causes a change in the number of human resources.

According to the findings, it is possible to say that in hotel businesses that manage the process correctly, employees who look at digital transformation as a resource that helps them, on the contrary, strive to be involved in the process, not resistance. However, it is possible to say that employees who feel fear and uneasiness due to changes in habits and changes in work processes experience the fear of losing their job, as well as resistance to digital transformation.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

No matter how much businesses are equipped with digital and technological tools, it is the employees who will use them and carry out the process together. As the number of digital and technological tools used or their characteristics change, this leads to positive and negative changes in the qualities of human resources. Human resources are trying to add different skills to themselves in order to improve themselves and not be left out of the process. This situation is specified by Bulut and Akçacı (2017), Muro et al. (2017) is also included in the studies by Klein (2020). It has been concluded that the use of digital and technological tools causes lack of communication in human resources, reduction in working time, distraction and not learning the essence of the job within the scope of negative change. Employees are distracted very quickly due to the stimuli around them, and they do not spend time learning the nature of the work as the work is carried out digitally. The findings reveal that the changes in the qualifications of human resources that will use digital and technological tools can be positive (a more development-oriented, open to change, compatible employee profile against innovation processes) can also be negative. As Ermolaeva (2017) stated in her study, the human resources planning

that businesses will develop in accordance with the needs of digital transformation will facilitate the transition to digital technologies for employees and thus increase the efficiency of businesses. For this reason, the human resources department should focus on the negative changes that digital transformation has created on the qualifications of human resources, the underlying causes of these changes should be learned and human resources planning should be made accordingly.

It has been concluded that the use of digital tools quantitatively reduces human resources in some departments. Because in some departments, the transformation of jobs to digital causes a decrease in the number of employees doing that job. Seric and Gil-Saura (2012) and Topsakal et al. (2018), they mentioned a situation similar to the result of the study, and they said that the technological developments that emerged with the digital transformation provided an increase in the quality of the service offered by reducing the time and manpower spent in the operation processes for hotel businesses. In his study, Aydın (2018) stated that digital transformation caused some problems such as unemployment and employment in sub-business lines, with the fulfillment of many activities performed with physical strength in an integrated manner with machines and the widespread use of robotic systems in the industry. Digital transformation developments in the tourism sector reduce the need for people over time, and this leads to employment problems. In such an environment, what the employee in charge of this job will do in that department should be determined within the framework of the plans.

In addition, it has been determined that employees who are aware of the fact that all kinds of innovations used in the study make their work easier, do not experience any resistance to digital transformation and fear of losing their job. On the other hand, it is seen that there are employees who resist because their habits will change and they will be unemployed. The findings are similar to the findings of Hoch (2017) as a result of his research on businesses operating around the world. Hoch (2017) examined the challenges faced by businesses working to achieve an effective digital transformation, and the most striking point is that one of the types of difficulties encountered, regardless of business size, is 'employee rejection'. Muro et al. (2017) stated in their studies that when employees who cannot adapt to and do not have the skills to use



digital technologies face the fear of losing their jobs, they tend to be prejudiced against the use of these technologies and may be reactive towards those who can use them among their colleagues. Sucu (2021) stated that the difficulty of reaching qualified personnel is a challenge for both the business and the employee due to the development and rapid progress of digital transformation technologies and the difficulties experienced by employees in adapting to this situation. Because, according to similar findings in the studies of Emeksiz (2000) and Sucu (2021), employees may tend to resist digital transformation technologies that they have difficulty in adapting at the beginning. In such an environment, not harming the corporate culture and involving the employees in the process is only possible with a successful human resources planning. With a successful human resources planning, it should be ensured that employees adopt digital business culture, do not remain indifferent to transformation activities, approach transformation activities positively without resisting change, and benefit from digital tools. In his study, Schwertner (2017) states that a high level of employee participation in terms of motivation should be ensured for a successful digital transformation process in businesses. For this reason, the successful execution of the digital transformation process in the enterprise is possible with the right human resources planning.

While planning human resources, internal and external factors should be considered in the planning process. Planning may not achieve the desired results due to reasons such as the resistance of the employees to the changes made or planned to be made. Although planning encounters resistance, businesses must plan in order to survive. It is only possible for businesses to employ appropriate employees to meet their needs with a systematic planning. In an enterprise that detects the current and future employee shortages and surpluses, human resources planning is important in terms of fair distribution of duties, regular work, prevention of excessive workload, and optimum number of personnel.

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