

# (SP) MANAGER PROFILE AND PORTUGUESE TOURIST ADVENTURE SPORTS COMPANIES CHARACTERIZATION

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## Introduction

In the last decade, due to a huge increase of free time, as well as a big search for adventure and leisure activities (Celma, 2004), the number of companies related to adventure sports have increased a lot. These companies are all over the country, from the interior to the littoral, and with several activities, climbing, rafting, and ballooning, among many others.

In spite of these, we don't know much about them. Who are they? When were they founded? Who are and which are the abilities of their managers?

The goal of this investigation is to characterize these companies in two levels: the company itself and the profile of the manager.

The instrument used to characterize the manager profile and the way the company is administrated was a questionnaire, purpose-built for this investigation.

## Methods

### Sample:

The sample of this study was built by 35 managers of 35 certified companies with Permit<sup>2</sup> issued by the Portuguese Directorate-General of Tourism and that develop Adventure Sports activities.

### Instrument:

The instrument used in the present study was created by the researchers wilfully to this investigation. It has 21 questions and it is divided in 2 parts. The first part is about information related to the manager and the second part has 9 questions about the company. In order to guarantee the reliability and the validity of the valuation instrument, a pre-test with five company managers that fulfilled the sample inclusion criteria was performed. After their corrections, the final valuation instrument which was used in this study was designed

### Statistical Analysis:

To analyze the data, the researchers used the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS<sup>®</sup>) v. 13.0 for *Windows*<sup>®</sup>.

In order to fulfil the objectives and also characterize the sample, the researchers analysed the answers' frequency, using descriptive statistic, mainly the frequency (n), the percentage (%), the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), the standard deviation ( $\pm SD$ ) and the variation coefficient ( $VC = SD/\bar{x} \times 100$ ).

## Results and Discussion

The objective of the analysis of the sports situation of a company is to obtain a set of data which determine the existence and the flows in the sports world and, by the collected

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<sup>2</sup> Decree-Law 204/2000, 1st September subsequently altered by the Decree-Law 108/2002, 16th April.

data, to gather the information from which it is possible to develop the planning process. (Pires, 2003).

Having as an objective the manager profile characterization and the managing model of the tourist adventure sports companies we can conclude that:

The company manager who develops adventure sports activities is mostly a male individual, 37 years old ( $SD=8,61$ ;  $VC=23,30\%$ ), with a college degree, has been a manager for the company for 5 years ( $SD=3,52$ ;  $VC=79,42\%$ ) and whose main professional activity is not being a manager.

Mainly, the companies were created in 2000 and they were given the Permit in 2003. Their most representative capital is 12.500 €. They have a mean of 2 partners ( $SD=1,02$ ;  $VC=44,48\%$ ) and 2 managers ( $SD=1,07$ ;  $VC=55,76\%$ );

The companies are mostly small and their managers are usually their partners. The managers have managerial formation, but do not attend training courses and consider their academic and professional formation to be adequate or quite adequate. The managerial areas in which the manager has more knowledge are planning projects performance and management, computer science and Internet and administration procedures. On the other hand, they do not have or find it important to have specific knowledge of sports management.

About the common management areas, the individuals consider human resources management, planning and marketing as the most important ones. So, these areas should be the ones in which the individuals and the training institutions (schools, universities and others) should develop their courses in order to fulfil a market need.

In this way, the researchers defend that the management formation is not as wide as it should be.

In relation to the company strategy, the factors that the managers consider to be the most important are the “increase of the services quality”, the “earnings increase”, the “innovation”, the “business consolidation” and the “reinforcement of the company image”. According to the managers, the least important factor is to “eliminate competition”.

The company strategy is mainly directed to the search of the “increase of the service quality” and “earnings increase”, which means a strategy clearly directed to exterior aspects of the organization. The “human resources management” and the “relation with the other companies” are the least relevant aspects.

Once the managers consider their company prices not competitive and its geographical location not ideal, and also consider one of their goals the “earnings increase”, the researchers defend a strategy that redefines prices, considering the cost of the activities and the difficult access to the services by the consumer.

In relation to the “companies competitiveness”, the most relevant factors are the “variety of the products / services”, the “quality” and the “client oriented service”. The main activities developed by the companies are trekking, paintball, rappel, slide, btt, flat water canoeing and orienteering.

The least developed activities are canyoning, mountaineering, rafting, white water canoeing, sky diving and caving.

In general, the companies have their own spaces to develop the activities (paintball, btt and others) and do not develop other commercial activities beyond adventure sports. The main clients are individual and group tourists as well as central and local municipalities.

The international tour-operators, human resources management companies, junior and juvenile groups, residents, sports associations are the clients that least hire these services. These clients appear to be an excellent target to these companies.

With the knowledge acquired in this investigation, the researchers believe that they can make a contribution to define a coherent and integrated strategy, in order to help these companies to improve their business and prosper.

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