

# THE COMPETENCIES OF RECREATIONAL SPORT INSTRUCTOR NEEDED FOR SPORT TOURISM IN TAIWAN

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## INTRODUCTION

The study attempted to explore what and how recreational sport instructors (RSI) accomplish their tasks at resort. In addition to accommodation, resorts provide tourists place, facility and instruction for recreation, exploration, adventure experience, relaxation et al to attract repeated or new coming tourists. For outdoor recreation and sport tourists, RSI plays an important role in guiding and facilitating tourists' memorable experiences during stay. A well trained and experienced RSI is capable of shielding risks inherent in activity and promoting competence of participants to realize adventure tourists' expectations (Morgan, Moore & Mansell, 2005; Priest and Carpenter, 1992). Although tourism industry is steadily growing, it is sensitive, changing and challenging for individual organizations.

In Taiwan, there are 11.7% of 92 million domestic tourists are motivated by ecology, outdoor recreation and sport as shown in the national survey of 2005. However, few individual sport tourism organizations have sufficient resources to train RSI to meet sport tourists' requests.

## METHODS

The research subjects are eight senior managers working in four distinguished resorts around Taiwan. They were intentionally selected and interviewed with two researchers during September to October, 2006. These four resorts branded as NALUWAN, FARGLORY, YOHO, CLUB MED, are located at mountain, riverside or seashore. The issues of interview focused on the major tasks of RSI and the competencies needed to meet their tasks in resort services operations. Content analysis was conducted to summarize what and how resorts request on RSI's tasks and competencies. Comparisons were also made among four resorts.

## RESULTS

According to contents analysis, there are four major findings from this study.

**Major task of RSI:** RSIs' major task at resorts is promoting happiness by guiding tourists participating outdoor recreation and sport meanwhile maintaining safety and preventing injury. To meet the major task, RSI need three kinds of competence, named as common personal, core functional and specific functional competences.

**Common personal competence:** One cannot be an outstanding RSI without service-oriented motives, traits, interpersonal communication skill, self-management and learning capability.

**Core functional competence:** Every RSI must learn the ability of safety prevention, CPR, emergency resolution and programming.

**Specific functional competence:** Specific recreational sport skills, such as mountaineering, bird watching, eco-interpretation, golfing, surfing, and skin or SCUBDA diving, aerobic dancing, rafting, canoeing, cycling et al. are required only when resorts offer these recreational sport services. The required specific functional competencies are significantly different among seashore, riverside and mountain resorts.

## DISCUSSION / CONCLUSIONS

As shown in this study, RSI needs a variety of competencies to accomplish their tasks and search for excellence. When guiding tourists, RSI needs not only be friendly and passionate but also careful, tender and patient. Capability of CPR and safety prevention is required for every RSI to take care of accidents or emergency at the first time they might encounter. Self-management and learning capability for RSI is critically needed to adapt to the changing, diverse, demanding and challenging working environment related to outdoor recreation and sport tourism. The structure of RSI's competencies requested by resorts is similar to other competencies on work described by Kraus, Barber & Shapiro (2001) and Spencer & Spencer (1993).

The importance of RSI has caught much attention while outdoor recreation and sport tourism becomes attractive in Taiwan. The excellent performance of RSI really makes a difference for sport tourists' travelling experiences. Satisfied sport tourists have significant higher revisit rate. Fortunately, most of these functional competencies could and should be attained by professional training. As for personal competencies, such as self-management, service-oriented motives and traits could also be attained by proper approaches with time.

To meet the development needs of sport tourism, a government hosted project, *Taiwan Youth Preoccupation Training Program for Recreation Instructors* (Kao, 2006) has initiated the professional training for RSI since 2003. *Outward Bound Taiwan* was established in 2005 to echo the demands in outdoor adventure recreation. Organizations, either nonprofits or enterprise, which provide professional training and employment matching for RSI and tourism organizations could be valuable at this point and near future in Taiwan. However, the organization should be capable of coordinating and meeting requests of sport tourism services delivery and career development of RSI.

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