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SAFETY CULTURE AS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE FOR SLOVENIAN NATURAL HEALTH RESORTS

Abstract

BACKGROUND: Many studies are focused on safety culture. There is no study on employees' perceptions of safety culture in natural health resorts.

OBJECTIVE: This study aims to examine the concept of safety culture from the perspective of the employees in natural health resorts in Slovenia.

METHODS: The survey was administered to a sample of 268 employees in six Slovenian natural health resorts to measure the attitudes, practices/behaviors, knowledge, and training of employees.

RESULTS: The results of the survey did not show a statistical correlation between the employees' safety attitudes and their age, their level of education and their position within the organization. However, this study revealed significant differences in understanding of the safety measures and selected safety attitudes across six resorts. Similarly, the study revealed significant differences in knowledge and understanding of the safety protocols across six resorts. The results are reflecting higher management safety awareness in selected resorts what could result in an important competitive advantage for a selected organization.

CONCLUSIONS: The research provides an in-depth insight into the concept of safety culture, presented through the attitudes, practices/behaviors, knowledge, and training of employees in natural health resorts in Slovenia. Findings contribute to the development of conceptual knowledge in safety science.

Keywords: safety culture, natural health resorts, employees, behaviors, knowledge

1. Introduction

What kind of global environment we live in relation to safety and security is well illustrated by the statement of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice [1], which expresses deep concern that crime is becoming increasingly transnational, organized and complex and that criminals are increasingly exploiting new and emerging technologies, including the Internet, to carry out their illicit activities, thus creating unprecedented challenges in preventing and combating existing crimes, as well as new and emerging forms of crime. Although crime is not a central topic of the study, the statement shows the complexity of security in today's global world.

Safety and security are on the minds of many people, both laypeople and professionals, with wars, terrorism, shootings, accidents, and other life-threatening events happening in the world. Research has been growing in this field. Many authors discuss the concepts of safety and security, which include the state of being safe, passenger safety, feeling safe, national security, safety from attackers and fires, national security, personal safety, earthquake and fire security of buildings, property safety, security in social situations and safety at work [2, 3, 4, 5]. In our daily lives, we

encounter various forms of security and safety, such as human, sociological, psychological, military, food, transport, occupational and fire. Throughout history and in response to the development of modern technology, new forms of safety and security have emerged, such as information, cyber, corporate and hybrid security. The problems of security and safety are present everywhere and have been since the dawn of mankind [6].

In everyday use, the words ‘safety’ and ‘security’ invoke associations of freedom from threats and harm. Despite often being treated as synonymous, the two concepts also have diverse meanings. Frequently, the concepts are utilized to distinguish between the management of hazards from non-malicious intent (safety) and the management of threats stemming from rational humans with a malicious intent, such as sabotage, hacking, or terrorism (security) [7]. In some languages, for example in the Slovenian language, only one word describes safety and security. This fact causes some confusion with the use of these terms. In this article, the distinction between safety and security is recognized; however, at some points they are unavoidably used as synonyms.

Safety culture, which is the subject of the presented research, is a well-established concept familiar to laypeople, professionals, and academics [8]. The term ‘safety culture’ was first used as an explanatory factor in the investigations following the Chernobyl accident in 1986 [9]. Since then, the phenomenon of safety culture has been regarded as being crucial for preventing accidents in multiple sectors. Although the term and methods of measuring and achieving it remain contested, the concept is widely accepted and applied as a contributing factor to the safety of organizations [10].

In the organizational context, management is expected to provide resources to develop and implement safety measures. Therefore, employees’ beliefs, attitudes and practices need to be at the core of management attention and activities. Emphasis is put on minimum exposure of employees to hazards in the workplace.

This manuscript is not about the measurement and identification of different levels of an organization’s safety culture. Rather, the article aims to shed light on the key building blocks that constitute the concept of safety: attitudes, practices/behaviors, knowledge, and training of employees in selected organizations operating in natural health resorts in the Republic of Slovenia. The assumption is that every organization has an organizational culture. Cameron [11] states that organizational culture researchers have come to an agreement that “culture is a socially constructed attribute of organizations which serves as the ‘social glue’ binding an organization together”. If this is so, we could also conclude that every organization is a culture since it could not exist without the ‘glue’. Cultures in general, and organizational cultures specifically, differ regarding the constituencies or building blocks which glue the organization together – values and beliefs, behaviors and activities, knowledge and training. If they have the same building blocks, we could

assume that cultures are ‘the same’; however, they are always historically, politically, economically embedded. One important factor is also the business they do.

Tourist accommodation units increasingly face various types of threats. External risks are both environmental and competition in nature, the latter caused by information leakage. Internal risks are due to, high-wear installations, and poorly educated customers [12,13]. It seems that safety culture contributes to a competitive advantage in organizations operating in the tourist sector in general and in natural health resorts specifically.

Companies try to assess the level of safety culture in their organization. The aims of the assessment of safety culture are: to evaluate the key components of safety culture; to identify strengths (areas where safety culture is strong and safety performance is highly effective); to identify areas for improvement (areas that do not correspond to the indicators of a positive safety culture); to recommend strategies for improvement [14]. Safety culture assessment surveys provide the foundation for an interpretation of behavior-related safety issues. Considered with a cautious approach, this can be an effective starting point to discuss the behavioral dimensions of safety management within an organization, to initiate a change [15].

Natural health resorts differ from hotels or other tourist accommodation because of the combination of hospitality spa and wellness services. The International Spa Association [16] proposed a certified definition: “spas are places devoted to overall well-being through a variety of professional services that encourage the renewal of mind, body and spirit”. Zill [17] elaborates on these three elements and describes the spa experience as containing several elements including water, nourishment, movement, touch, integration, aesthetics, environment, cultural expression and social contribution. He [17] points to the complexity of elements, services and beneficial effects that make natural health resorts distinct from a hotel wellness. The ‘healing’ element of natural health resorts makes them different from tourist-only accommodation. The variety of services for natural health resorts guests defines the difference compared to hotels. However, the variety of services provided by natural health resorts also increases possible risks for both guests and employees. Injuries, and other health and safety related problems are more likely to occur in natural health resorts than in ‘normal’ hotels and other tourist facilities. Staff need to reduce the risk of safety-related problems by having good knowledge, respect, and the belief and attitudes that safety culture matters. Staff also need to adopt safety-related behaviors. Moreover, the attitudes of a company’s employees towards safety and necessary precautions can have beneficial effects on accident rates [18]. Therefore, it is essential to develop, build and create safety culture in any organization and specifically in natural health resorts.

Survey of a sample of respondents/employees from selected Slovenian natural health resorts was conducted and grounded in four hypotheses. The survey is based on the assumption that the safety culture consists of situational aspects (what the organization has in place - policies, procedures and

regulations); behavioral aspects (what people do, such as safety-related actions and behaviors), and psychological aspects (how people feel, the safety climate of the organization which is concerned with individual and group values, attitudes and perceptions) [19, 20].

Although there are natural health resorts around the world, so far, to our knowledge, no research has been done on the safety culture amongst staff in natural health resorts. From that point of view, the presented study is exploratory in nature and provides an insight into the concept of safety culture as a competitive advantage for a natural health resort through attitudes, practices/behavior, knowledge, and training in natural health resorts in Slovenia.

2. Theoretical background

Security and safety incorporate more than just technical solutions and physical protection; they entail the management of threats from rational, strategic actors. Thus, both concepts have a component that involves perceptions, shared understanding, and management of threats [8]. There is neither one single strategy to make a system safe nor is there a strategy that would work regardless of the system, its design, its business model, and its environment [21, 22]. Many components need to be interwoven to ensure that safety and security systems work.

One of the first definitions of safety culture was set out by Dhillon [23] and was explained as a set of human characteristics, such as behaviors, attitudes, and values, that contribute to the protection of all types of safety in a company. Safety culture is a subset of organizational culture which embraces the values shared among organization members about policies and regulation, safety-related behaviors, and safety-related feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions [19]. Cooper's work is based on the work of Bandura [23], who describes the relationship between the psychological factors of an individual, their environment and their behavior. Cooper [19] and Wu et al. [25] state that safety culture affects the attitudes and safety-related behavior of the members of an organization. Fernandez-Muniz et al. [26] argue that safety culture affects employees' health and safety perceptions, while Wu and Chen [27] connect safety culture with safety consequences such as injuries, fatalities, and other incidents.

Glendon and Clarke [28] describe safety culture as employees' attitudes towards security in the company, their perceptions of risk, their beliefs about managing and controlling risk, and their involvement in the activities that represent and reinforce safety culture. The growing number of available definitions in academic and corporate literature shows both the success of the concept and its ambiguities. The common point in these definitions is that safety culture, which is a subset of corporate culture, influences safety (establishing a link to safety in theory) [15].

Several authors divide safety culture in three main components [19, 20, 29]. They are behavioral, organizational, and psychological (Figure 1). “The psychological component aims to analyze the attitudes and perceptions of an individual and the group. The behavioral component evaluates external factors (wearing PPE, following operating procedures, etc.) applicable to individuals in the field and observable behavior. Finally, the organizational component corresponds to an analysis of business operations through its policies, procedures, and structure” [29].

Figure 1

The safety culture is a response to balanced organizational efforts reflected through the elements of an organizational culture that are focused on achieving safety goals. Safety culture should encompass both the members of the company and the systems and work activities of employees [30]. If all elements are achieved, the transition from general safety awareness to safety culture can be made. The transition only occurs when a group of employees begins to view safety violations as unacceptable in the environment in which they operate and begins to behave in a safety-conscious manner. According to Reiman and Rollengahen [31], safety culture is a concept defined at the level of the corporate group and refers to the shared values, attitudes, and beliefs of the company members. Thus, definitions of safety culture consider employee safety awareness as an aspect of safety culture [32, 33, 34]. A comparison of definitions of safety culture shows that: Rančigaj and Lobnikar [30] see it as part of organizational culture, Dhillon [23] as a set of human characteristics, Glendon and Clarke [28] as an attitude of employees towards corporate security, and Reiman and Rollengahen [31] as a concept. For example, the level of protection of a company's classified data reveals the extent to which the values of the people handling this data are aligned with the values of the company. From the various definitions of safety culture focusing on individual values and thus attitudes toward safety culture, it is clear that the understanding of and attitudes towards security in companies have changed significantly over the past 25 years. Fleming et al [35] describe safety culture as an internal attitude and opinion shared by group members. Helmreich et al and Morrow et al [36, 37] note that safety culture is shaped by the safety standards that employees apply to their behavior. Employees' behavior is influenced by their beliefs about the importance of safety and its value to the organization. The goal of management is to develop a set of strategies that encourage employees to be aware of risks, which enables the development of personal and workplace safety. At first glance, the answer to why accidents happen seems to be straightforward: from the perspective of an ordinary person (e.g., bad things happen to bad people) to a scientific rationale based on a cause-and-effect mechanism [38]. A great deal of research and investigation has been conducted into the causes and consequences of accidents, with the aim of learning from them and preparing preventive measures so that similar disasters do not happen again in companies [12]. The research results have greatly changed the view of the established way of working, attitudes towards safety issues and the development of new forms of risk

management. In a work environment, where the safety culture is perceived negatively, employee job satisfaction decreases, and the rate of absenteeism and resignations increases [39].

Around the turn of the century, between 1990 and 2005, new radical views of safety in companies were formed. Safety culture had become increasingly emphasized in conjunction with more holistic organizational approaches that do not function in isolation but are embedded in the wider and narrower societal environment. Such an understanding has led to conclusions that accidents are a result of insufficient resources, organization, and planning [8]. To better prevent human and processual errors, it is necessary to be familiar with various factors that influence the safety culture of employees' understanding of an organization's safety culture.[13]. The means of implementation of the safety policy should be clearly written and presented to all employees [40, 41], because employees' awareness of their role in the company is the key to considering safety standards and rules [42, 43]. Employee safety training is a factor that enables employees to work more safely in accordance with the company's safety policy [44]. Employees' knowledge of safety ensures proper implementation of safety procedures [45]. Trust between management and employees, employees and guests of natural health resorts and other stakeholders of the company is an important factor [46]. Safety culture cannot be improved directly, but companies can influence the factors that determine it. Each company has its own form of safety culture, which is influenced by various factors and is specific only to its organizational form and mode of operation. It can be unifying or divisive and represents a whole segment of safety habits and behaviors implemented in a particular group of employees in a company.

Enz [47] understands hotel security as the protection of hotel employees, guests and property from possible injuries and deaths, with the goal of convincing guests to choose the hotel again. From this point of view, hotel safety and consequently safety culture could be considered a hotel's competitive advantage. For a hotel and for a natural health resort, this means providing economic, financial, and informational security. Groenenboom and Jones [48] and, later, Khadka [49] point to hotel security as the hotel's legal responsibility to protect guests and their property from threats by those who wish to harm them. With its infrastructure and facilities, the natural health resort offers hospitality and nutrition on the one hand, and spa and medical services on the other. For a natural health resort complete service, safety needs to be ensured.

We can conclude that natural health resort safety encompasses several areas: fire safety regulations, setting annual leave according to working availability in the individual workplace, handling sharp objects or other infectious items, monitoring the implementation of swimming safety measures, monitoring the health status of guests, and so on. The safety system of a natural health resort company must be built on the characteristics of each security factor and the people involved in the company.

3. Methodology

As already described, the research focus is on safety culture as a competitive advantage, achieved through the key building blocks that constitute the concept of safety culture in the workplace: safety attitudes, compliance with safety recommendations, knowledge and understanding of safety measures and on-going training of employees. Following the conceptual framework, we designed the dedicated questionnaire with questions organized in five sections.

The first section addressed employees' demographic data. The second section related to employees' safety attitudes reflecting their values and beliefs. Questions within the third section addressed employees' behaviors and activities to identify how their practice is compliant with safety recommendations. The fourth section addressed the employees' knowledge and understanding of safety measures, and the fifth section addressed the on-going safety training of employees.

After a successful pilot study, the survey was run in six Slovenian natural health resorts, starting in May, and ending in June 2021. 268 employees participated in the survey.

To understand what influences the safety culture in each organization/health resort, the survey data has been used to test the following hypotheses:

H1: Safety culture can represent a competitive advantage for an organization.

H2: Employees' educational attainment affects safety culture.

H3: Employees' age affects safety culture'.

H4: Safety training of employees contributes to safety culture.

As already stated, organizational cultures specifically differ regarding the constituencies or building blocks which glue an organization together; organizational safety values and beliefs, behaviors and activities, knowledge and understanding and training vary from company to company. They can be based on zero-incident programs or defined simply as a general preventive statement.

A positive safety culture can represent an organization's competitive advantage. The creation of a positive safety culture can cause one resort's guests to feel safer during their stay in that resort. At the same time, employees can also feel safer in their workplace. An organization's strategy to heavily invest in their employees and consider them the key participants in the process of safety culture creation could, therefore, result in an important competitive advantage.

The data has been analyzed with descriptive statistics, and MANOVA, ANOVA and contingency analysis have been used to test the research hypotheses.

4. Results

The section starts with the sample presentation. We continue with the analysis of components of safety culture across six health resorts and various participants' groups. The findings are important for understanding the factors or determinants that can have a significant impact on an organization's safety culture. Finally, the results are discussed from the perspective of hypotheses originally proposed.

4.1 Sample profile

268 employees from six Slovenian natural health resorts (TT1, TT2, TT3, TT5, TT9, TT10) participated in the study. Their participation was voluntary and anonymous. 385 questionnaires were sent to the sample. 202 questionnaires were submitted via an online survey system, whereas the remaining 183 questionnaires were completed on paper. We received 268 questionnaires; hence the response rate was 69.61%. The largest number of respondents came from TT9 (24.6%), followed by respondents from TT5 (22.8%) and respondents from TT1 (20.5%). The fewest respondents in the sample came from TT10 (9.3%).

Age profile

Most respondents were over 50 years old (31.3%). This is followed by the age groups from 41 to 50 years old (28.7%) and from 31 to 40 years old (23.9%). There were 4.9% from the 18 to 25 years old group, and just 0.4% under 18 years old. Considering the result of a chi-square test ($p = 0.310$) there were no statistically significant differences in employees' age profiles between the six natural health resorts.

Educational attainment profile

45.1% of respondents completed secondary education, 36 % completed a bachelor level degree, whereas 5.6 % participants have a master's or doctoral degree. Considering the result of a chi-square test ($p = 0.091$) there were no statistically significant differences in the employees' educational attainment profiles between the six natural health resorts. It has to be considered, however, that such an educational attainment profile is not representative of the entire hospitality sector, where only 16.6% completed a tertiary education [50, 51].

Distribution of participants across departments

The majority of participants are employed in the spa department (36%) as was anticipated. Employees in the F&B service (food and beverage) department follow (with 19.4%) and the

smallest group is the reception department (13.4%). The distribution across departments was not, however, the same in all six resorts. A significantly lower portion of participants from the spa department was found in TT10 (only 4%) and TT2 (10.7%). On other hand, a significantly higher portion of participants in the F&B service department was found in TT10 (56%).

Analysis of safety attitudes

Considering our research hypotheses, the first analysis was focused on comparison of employees' safety attitudes across six natural health resorts, age groups, employees' groups with different level of education and employees' groups occupying various positions within the organization. Multivariate comparison across listed groups was done using MANOVA. In the case of statistically significant Wilks' lambda (multivariate level), further analysis was conducted using ANOVA to test the differences of each individual variable.

The results (Table 1) showed no significant differences in the safety attitudes of the participants (employees) when considering their age (Wilks' lambda $p = 0.567$), education level (Wilks' lambda $p = 0.130$) and their position within the organization (Wilks' lambda $p = 0.289$). This means that the results of the survey did not show a statistical correlation between the employees' safety attitudes and their age, their level of education and their position within the organization.

One statistical difference has been found, when comparing safety attitudes across six natural health resorts (Wilks' lambda $p = 0.001$). Considering single ANOVA results there was a significantly lower average agreement of employees in TT2 with the statement "Employees have regular safety training" ($p = 0.036$).

Table 1

Analysis of safety practices/ behaviors

Comparison of practices/ behaviors across natural health resort locations, age groups, employees' groups with various levels of education and employees' groups occupying various positions within the organization has been done with MANOVA as well. Again, the results (Table 2) showed no significant differences in the safety practices and behaviors of the participants (employees) when considering their age (Wilks' lambda $p = 0.450$), education level (Wilks' lambda $p = 0.881$) and their position within the organization (Wilks' lambda $p = 0.820$). This means that the results of the

survey did not show a statistical correlation between the employees' safety practices and behaviors and their age, their level of education and their position within the organization. The employees' safety practices and behaviors do not differ either across six natural health resorts (Wilks' lambda $p = 0.092$).

The highest average score (4.82 out of 5) can be seen for the statement "In my work, I pay attention to the protection of guests' personal data" (SD: 0.548). The implementation of GDPR in Slovene legislation in 2018 could explain such results. This new General Data Protection Regulation raised the standard of personal data protection and individuals' rights, while also imposing greater responsibility and stringer requirements on companies, such as natural health resorts, regarding guests' personal data. In this case, all personal data, such as the name, surname, date of birth, address, national identification number and tax number of a guest, as well as the make and type of their car, allow attribution to a specific person. This also includes information about the profile of a guest, which is created with analytical tools. Based on a guest's characteristics, the natural health resort determines their habits, e.g., what they buy or what they like to eat in the natural health resort, and thus adapts its gastronomic and tourist offers to different guest segments which it addresses through various marketing activities. The lowest average score (4.52 out of 5) can be seen for the statement "If I notice risky behavior of a guest, I bring this to their attention" (SD = 0.771).

Table 2

Analysis of knowledge and understanding of safety protocols

Only 5.6% of participants on average do not understand the use of a fire extinguisher. Significant differences were found, however, between six natural health resorts. The most favorable results were identified within TT9, whereas a significantly higher portion of participants from TT2 (21.4%) do not understand the proper use of a fire extinguisher.

Considering the understanding of the proper use of defibrillator results are not as favorable as for the use of a fire extinguisher. On average, 35.1% of participants do not understand the proper use of a defibrillator. The most favorable results were identified within TT5 where 91.8% of participants are already familiar with the use of defibrillator. On the other hand, 71.4% of participants in TT2 and 64.0% of participants in TT10 do not understand the proper use of a defibrillator.

On average, 86.2% of participants understand how to carry out an evacuation. Again, the situation differs across the six natural health resorts (Table 3). The most unfavorable results were identified in relation to TT2 where 42.9% of participants do not understand the evacuation procedure. A high portion of participants not understanding the evacuation procedure, 21.2%, is identified in relation to TT3. A much better situation is seen in TT10 and TT5, where 96% and 93.4% of participants are familiar with the evacuation procedure.

Table 3

On average, 86.9% of participants were aware of first aid procedures; however, more significant heterogeneity has been identified across various employees' groups (Table 4). The results of the survey showed a statistical correlation between the employees' understanding of first aid measures and their age (Pearson chi-square $p = 0.004$) and their position within the organization (Pearson chi-square $p = 0.005$).

A high proportion of participants of 41-50 years old (26%) did not know the procedures for rendering first aid, whereas younger participants were statistically more familiar with the procedures.

Participants working in the animation and recreation department were the most knowledgeable about first aid procedures (100%), followed by participants working in the spa department (95.6%). Participants working in the human resources and legal department were the least familiar with first aid measures (50%).

An unexpectedly low portion of participants in TT2 (42.9%) were familiar with first aid measures, whereas the most favorable situation was found in TT1 and TT3 where 94.5% and 93.9% of participants understand the proper use of first aid measures.

Table 4

Analysis of safety training

Most participants (94.4%) participated in safety training once a year and only 4.9% of participants attended the training twice a year. We would expect most of the Slovenian natural health resort employees to receive training several times a year. Žgank [52], who performed research in one of

the Slovenian natural health resorts, found that employees' training is determined by their current needs and the availability of relevant and engaging training opportunities in the market.

Table 5

5. Discussion

All natural health resorts in the study were operating within the same legislative framework. However, this study revealed significant differences in understanding of the safety measures and selected safety attitudes across six resorts.

The results could reflect higher management safety awareness in selected resorts. The organization's strategy to heavily invest in their employees and consider them the key participants in the process of safety culture creation could result in an important competitive advantage for a selected organization. Considering the results, we are confirming the hypothesis H1.

Not the same can be concluded regarding the hypothesis H2, referring to 'the impact of employees' educational attainment on safety culture. We mostly found no statistically significant correlation between the components of safety culture and educational attainment and consequently the H2 cannot be confirmed.

The results of the survey showed a statistical correlation between the employees' understanding of first aid measures and their age (Pearson chi-square $p = 0.004$). A high proportion of participants of 41-50 years old (26%) did not know the procedures for rendering first aid, whereas younger participants were statistically more familiar with the procedures. We are considering this finding as important since knowing first aid measures is critical because it can mean the difference between life and death for someone in need. It is important to have the knowledge and skills necessary to respond effectively and quickly. Understanding first aid measures also increases one's confidence and ability to help in an emergency.

From the managers' perspective, the results are also important. Considering statistical differences, we are emphasizing the importance of regularly refreshing one's knowledge of safety procedures and protocols, even for those who have already received training in the past. As time passes, it is common for people to forget details and information, whereas regular safety training helps to keep employees up to date with the latest procedures and protocols and helps to maintain a strong safety culture within the organization. Consequently, we are confirming the hypothesis H3.

In formulating hypothesis H4 we anticipated a greater degree of variability in the frequency of safety training among the participants. The results revealed a completely different situation and the lack of variability in the frequency of safety training prevents the confirmation of hypothesis H4.

Our study on safety culture in Slovenian natural health resorts, like any other research, had certain limitations, including the limitation of not being able to make statistical generalizations due to the non-random sampling method used. Additionally, the response rate of the respondents was not fully within our control, as some of the planned survey participants were unavailable, unwilling, or not allowed by their companies to participate in the survey.

6. Conclusion

The current safety and security situation in the world is tense. The war between Ukraine and Russia has caused an energy and food crisis, power relations have been changing, the Covid 19 pandemic has a 'long tail' and, in Europe, recent frauds have threatened the trust in public, European institutions. As a result, many organizations strive to improve their safety culture to deliver effective health and safety management and enhance their safety performance [9, 53, 54]. In addition, tourism has been affected by different safety and security issues across the world and locally, and there is an environmental crisis [55, 56, 57, 58, 59]. Peace and stability in a country or region are a prerequisite for the successful development of the tourism industry, and hence also for natural health resorts.

Research on organizational safety culture, being measurement and/or maturity systems, and similar shows a growing body of literature in the field of oil, gas, construction, and healthcare [60]. However, research on natural health resorts has not been found.

This study was focused on the organizational level and explored safety culture as a competitive advantage for natural health resorts through attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, and training. The basic findings relate to the four hypotheses and based on the analysis, we confirmed two hypotheses: H1: Safety culture is a competitive advantage for a natural health resort, and H3: The age of employees is positively related to safety culture. Based on the conducted analysis, two hypotheses could not be confirmed: H2: Employees' level of education is positively related to the safety culture., and H4: The frequency of employees' participation in training is positively related to safety culture.

The study substantiates the importance of safety culture in gaining competitive advantage. Confirmed hypothesis 1 means that from the organizational point of view, safety culture acts as a

competitive advantage. Confirmed hypothesis 3 encourages investment in the training of Slovenian natural health resort employees in the field of safety. However, age is a less important precaution measure than we expected. This fact leads to implications for management of natural health resorts. Namely, we could say that age and education do not have such an effect on safety culture as expected but there are significant differences between natural health resorts as organizations in the study. If this is so, it can be stated that safety culture does not depend on individuals so much as it depends on the collective - employees and management of a natural health resort who share the same attitudes, beliefs, behave in a 'safety-ensuring' manner and participate in training. If this is so, then safety culture can 'act' as a competitive advantage for a natural health resort. In addition, it is important to develop all dimensions of safety culture due to their interwoven complexity.

This finding has important implications for management. In order to consider safety culture as a competitive advantage, management needs to focus on employees and develop them as a group, a collective entity, rather than to focus on individuals. Well-trained individuals constitute a group; however, it is the group as a whole that can ensure competitive advantage. If we go further, it is possible to think about business model innovation for organizations operating in natural health resorts under the study.

The study also raised implications for further research. Reiman and Rollenhagen [61], and Dekker [62] suggest that a preoccupation with safety culture has shifted the focus away from more systemic accounts of the causes of accidents and encouraged a rather more superficial account of how safety is related to system levels and other organizational dynamics (e.g., how safety culture changes over time). Their precaution, along with the results from this study, can be considered as a call towards more complex and comparative research in different fields, from natural health resorts to the whole area of tourism and hospitality.

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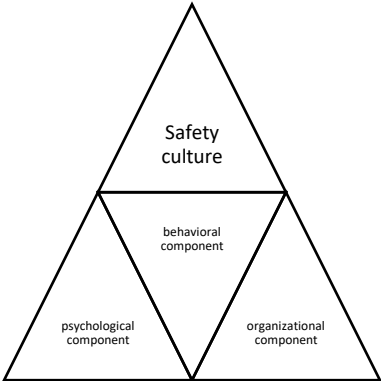


Figure 1: The components of safety culture [28]

Table 1: Comparison of employees' safety attitudes across age groups, employees' groups with different level of education, resorts and resorts' departments (MANOVA)

Fixed Factor	Wilks' Lambda	F	Sig.
Age Group	0.848	0.950	0.567
Educational Attainment	0.839	1.276	0.130
Department	0.686	1.080	0.289
Resort	0.738	1.780	0.001

Table 2: Comparison of employees' safety practices across age groups, employees' groups with different level of education, resorts, and resorts' departments (MANOVA)

Fixed Factor	Wilks' Lambda	F	Sig.
Age Group	0.908	1.010	0.450
Educational Attainment	0.952	0.644	0.881
Department	0.854	0.814	0.820
Resort	0.875	1.401	0.092

Table 3: Comparison of employees' knowledge and understanding of evacuation procedure across age groups, employees' groups with different level of education, resorts, and resorts' departments.
(Chi-Square Tests)

Variable	Pearson Chi-Square	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Knowledge of evacuation procedures across age groups	10.289	0.067
Knowledge of evacuation procedures across groups with different level of education	10.579	0.032
Knowledge of evacuation procedures across departments	10.823	0.371
Knowledge of evacuation procedures across resorts	27.049	0.000

Table 4: Comparison of employees' knowledge and understanding of first aid measures across age groups, employees' groups with different level of education, resorts, and resorts' departments.
(Chi-Square Tests)

Variable	Pearson Chi-Square	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Knowledge of first aid measures across age groups	17.404	0.004
Knowledge of first aid measures across employees' groups with different level of education	8.936	0.063
Knowledge of first aid measures across departments	25.201	0.005
Knowledge of first aid measures across resorts	27.671	0.000

Table 5: Comparison of employees' participation in safety-related training across age groups, employees' groups with different level of education, resorts, and resorts' departments.
(Chi-Square Tests)

Variable	Pearson Chi-Square	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Participation in training across age groups	5.132	0.882
Participation in training across employees' groups with different level of education	7.306	0.504
Participation in training across departments	26.976	0.136
Participation in training across resorts	9.788	0.459