

CHARACTERISTICS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE COMPETENCIES AND PROBLEM SOLVING EFFECTIVENESS IN TOURISM SECTOR

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This paper outlines some customer service competencies (CSc) characteristics identified in five links of tourism business chain from three Colombian cities nominated on the national development plan as productive stakes (Armenia, Palmira-Buga and Neiva). Indeed it was explored the relationship between CSc and problem solving effectiveness (PSE). The assessment was applied to 337 workers from 172 visited businesses, using two collect data instruments: a CSc checklist and an problem solving effectiveness test. In a first analysis the CSc results were compared with a model built according to international performance rules; this comparison showed distances of 20-40% from the built model. With a second analysis, it was found that the samples scores from the three cities were grouped below the expected value on PSE. Using SPSS v.16 on a third step, it was observed independence between the two measured variables ($r=0.02$), indicating that they don't require each other to improve customer service quality in tourism's moments of truth. The results invite to extend the study to other cities where tourism is a relevant economic activity, and to focus the workers training on enhancement emotional situations coping and teamwork skills because of these appeared as lower competencies.

KEY WORDS: *costumer service competencies, problem solving processes, tourism sector.*