

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA
IP VOCATIONAL SCHOOL NO. 2 MUN. CHISINAU

ERASMUS+ Project "Moldova's Path to Advanced Skills in Tourism"



ETHICAL CONDUCT AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN TOURISM

Qualification: Operator in hotels and resorts

ISCED level: 3

Module XI Professional ethics

Resource type: Student guide

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CHISINAU, 2025

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Disclaimer

This material has been developed within the framework of an ERASMUS+ VET Capacity Building project funded by the European Commission., "Moldova's Path to Advanced Tourism Skills (MPATS)" through the consortium BK Plus – Cyprus, Moldovan Center for Innovation and Policy, Vocational School 2, Chisinau, Chisinau College of Ecology, iED – Greece, APRO Formazione – Italy, 2025 – 2027.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Dear students,

This Guide was developed within the *ERASMUS+ Project "Moldova's Path to Advanced Skills in Tourism"*, with the main objective of improving the quality and relevance of technical vocational education (VET) in the tourism sector in the Republic of Moldova.

The Guide is a curricular auxiliary intended for the effective implementation of the "Professional Deontology" Module within the Curriculum for initial training in the study program *"Services, Tourism and Leisure"* (code 10151), the qualification *"Operator in hotels and tourist complexes"* (code 10151.1).

The document is addressed to students who are going to study this discipline and aims to support them in forming an ethical, responsible and customer-oriented professional conduct.

The operator in hotels and tourist complexes carries out its activity mainly in accommodation structures with a tourist function, where professional ethics plays an essential role in providing quality, personalized services in line with customer expectations.

Future specialists have the responsibility to interact in a professional, ethical and empathetic way with clients, colleagues and superiors; to show a positive and respectful attitude; to manage sensitive information discreetly and actively contribute to the creation of a pleasant and safe tourist experience.

The learning purposes of the qualification *"Operator in hotels and tourist complexes"* aim to achieve a high level of professional competence, based on performance, responsibility and integrity, in accordance with the specific requirements of the tourism field.

In this regard, the Guide provides clear methodological benchmarks, examples of good practices and suggestions for adapting the contents of the module to the particularities of the educational and professional context. It contributes to the development of key competencies of future tourism professionals and the formation of an ethical organizational culture.

The purpose of this guide is to support students in developing ethical, responsible and professional skills, necessary for the correct management of relationships with clients and colleagues and for providing quality tourist services.

The guide aims to facilitate:

- developing a responsible, ethical and respectful attitude in interacting with customers and colleagues;
- training of essential skills for the provision of quality services, in accordance with the values and standards of the tourism sector;
- applying deontological principles in real work situations and managing ethical dilemmas in a professional way.

Thus, the Guide contributes to the formation of a solid professional identity of future operators in hotels and tourist complexes, in accordance with the requirements of the labor market and national and European occupational standards.

Objectives of the guide

1. Providing clear and structured educational support for students for teaching the "Professional Ethics" Module within the qualification "Operator in hotels and tourist complexes" (ISCED level 3).
2. Promoting a culture of ethics and responsibility among students, through activities that develop professional behaviors appropriate to the tourism context.
3. Facilitating the understanding and application of the principles of professional ethics in concrete situations in the professional life of the tourism operator.
4. Stimulating critical thinking and ethical decision-making capacity in the context of activities.

II. LEARNING UNITS

Unit 1: Professional Ethics in Tourism

- 1.1 The role of professional ethics in sustainable tourism

- 1.2 Codes of ethical conduct in hotels and resorts
- 1.3 Ethical behavior towards customers, colleagues, partners
- 1.4 Practical applications

1.1. The role of professional ethics in sustainable tourism



In sustainable tourism, understanding what ethics, morals, professional deontology and ethical behavior mean is very important. These concepts help us to be responsible and respect people, the environment and the local culture.



What does ethics and morals mean?

- **Ethics** is like an inner guide that tells us what is right and what is wrong. It is formed when we repeat correct actions until they become habits and define our character. Ethics help us make the right decisions and act responsibly.
- **Morality** is the rules and values that we apply in our daily lives. If ethics is more general and abstract, morality is practical and concrete.

Main differences:

Ethics	Morals
It is general and stable	It is concrete and applied
It comes from reflection and consciousness	It is learned through education and habits
It provides the framework for the rules of conduct	Set clear rules of behavior
Table 1 Differences between ethics and morality	

Professional Deontology in Tourism

Professional ethics is the code of conduct specific to a profession. In tourism, it involves adhering to ethical standards in relation to tourists, local communities and the environment. Professional ethical behavior implies acting honestly, transparently and responsibly, so that everyone involved in the tourism activity trusts you. This behavior is very important for tourism to be sustainable and to have a balance between economic development, environmental protection and respect for cultural values.

Why is sustainable tourism important?

Sustainable tourism means travelling and working in a way that reduces the negative impact on:

- Environment;

- the local economy;
- community culture.

At the same time, it promotes social and economic benefits for communities. For students who are training as a Hotel and Resort Operator: professionalism is not just about knowing how to check-in or serve customers. It means having a constant ethical behavior, respecting people, nature and cultural values.



Principles of professional ethics in tourism

The Tourism Employee Code of Conduct includes:

- Respect for guests – regardless of nationality, culture or social status;
- Discretion and confidentiality – keeps tourists' personal information;
- Fairness and transparency – do not deceive or manipulate customers;
- Care for the environment – use ecological practices.
- Promoting local values – respects and promotes the traditions and culture of the host community.

Important: all these are not just rules imposed by a regulation. They must become moral obligations and standards of professional behavior. Professional ethics in tourism means making the right decisions even when no one sees you. It helps to:

- Building trust between tourists, guides and hotel staff;
- Creating a pleasant experience for visitors;
- Protecting the environment and the local community;
- Maintaining a climate of respect and collaboration between colleagues.



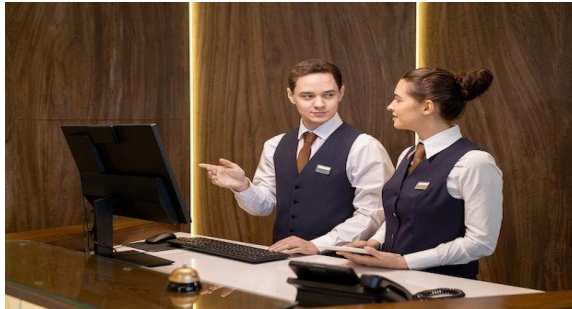
Example: If a tourist forgets his wallet in a hotel room and you hand it over to the reception without taking anything, you are acting ethically. This gesture strengthens the tourist's trust and the reputation of the place.



Examples of ethical behavior in tourism

1. **Respect for all tourists**It doesn't matter if they are foreigners or locals, young or old – everyone should be treated with respect.
2. **Transparency and fairness**Provide accurate information about fares, facilities, and routes. Don't hide details or scam customers for profit.

3. **Caring for the environment** Encourage recycling, reducing water and energy waste and using eco-friendly products.
4. **Promoting local culture** Teach tourists about traditions, customs and heritage. Don't judge or minimize the culture of the host community.



Professional ethics – everyone's responsibility

Every tourism employee, from guide to receptionist or maid, must be aware that:

- Small gestures matter – a smile, a clear explanation or spontaneous help creates positive experiences;
- Right decisions build reputation – respect and fairness attract satisfied tourists;
- Personal example inspires colleagues – ethical behavior can motivate the entire team



QUESTIONS AND SITUATIONS

1. What is ethics and how does it differ from morality in tourism?
2. What does professional ethics mean and why is it important for tourism employees?
3. It gives a concrete example of ethical behavior that a hotel operator can have towards a tourist.
How does sustainable tourism contribute to protecting the environment, economy and local culture?
4. Why is it important that small gestures (e.g. a smile, handing over a lost object) are considered ethical actions in the tourist activity?

1.2 Codes of Ethical Conduct in Hotels and Resorts What



is an Ethical Code of Conduct?

The code of ethical conduct in a hotel is a set of rules, principles and moral values that show how each employee should behave in relation to tourists, colleagues and the work environment. It is like a "good conduct guide" that helps staff make the right decisions and maintain an atmosphere of respect and trust. This code is not just a list of written rules, but a way to build a culture of respect, responsibility, and professionalism in everything that is done in a hotel. An ethical code of conduct shows what behaviors are acceptable and expected of employees of a hotel or resort.



In tourism, the code of ethics:

- maintains professionalism;
- builds customer trust;
- promotes sustainable and responsible tourism.

Purpose of the Code of Ethical Conduct

The main purpose of this code is to guide the behavior of employees in their daily work, so that relations with tourists, colleagues and management are carried out in a civilized, fair and responsible way.

The Code has the following objectives:

- define the standards of professional conduct in the hotel;
- to support employees in making moral decisions;
- to ensure a climate of trust, respect and cooperation;
- to contribute to customer respect, through ethical and quality services;
- to promote sustainable tourism, based on respect for people, nature and traditions.



The main values of a code of ethics in tourism

The codes of ethics in hotels and resorts are based on several important values:

- Respect for the customer – treat all tourists with kindness, equality and discretion.
- Professional responsibility – you do your job correctly and assume your mistakes.
- Integrity – be honest, avoid lies and conflicts of interest.
- Privacy – protects customer and colleague information.
- Collaboration and loyalty – supports the hotel's team and goals.
- Protecting the environment – use sustainable practices in daily activity (recycling, saving water and energy, etc.).

Code of Ethical Conduct in Tourism

Moral Principles Fundamental Values Ethical Behaviors



- Respect for people Respect – politeness Positive attitude towards people
- Integrity and honesty Empathy, tolerance of tourists and colleagues
- Responsibility Integrity – honesty Compliance with the rules
- Confidentiality Responsibility Financial Fairness
- Loyalty Confidentiality Keeping secrets
- Respect for the environment Protecting the environment Avoiding behaviors inappropriate (lies, discrimination, corruption)



A tourism based on respect, professionalism and trust

Schema 1 Code of Ethical Conduct



Examples of rules in an ethical code of conduct

1. He greets and politely responds to all customers.
2. Do not accept gifts or money in exchange for personal favors.
3. Immediately hand over to the reception any object lost or forgotten by the customer.
4. Do not discuss information about clients or colleagues in public spaces.
5. Comply with environmental protection policies (recycling, water saving).
6. Do not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, age, or personal orientation.
7. If a difficult ethical situation arises, ask for the support of the hierarchical superior.

Principles of ethical conduct in tourism

No.	Ethical principle	What it means in practice	Concrete example
1	Respect	Treat everyone with politeness and consideration	Greet customers and listen to their demands patiently
2	Honesty	Be honest and transparent in communication	You don't promise a room with a sea view if there isn't

No.	Ethical principle	What it means in practice	Concrete example
3	Responsibility	To take responsibility for tasks and mistakes	If you have made a wrong reservation, you recognize and look for a solution
4	Integrity	Avoid behaviors that may be considered unethical	You refuse a tip offered for a personal favor
5	Privacy	Protect customer data and information	You don't talk to others about tourists or their customs
6	Impartiality	Treat all tourists equally	Give the same level of attention to everyone, regardless of nationality or age
7	Collaboration	Work well in a team and help colleagues	Help a new colleague understand the procedures at the front desk
8	Respect for the environment	Protect nature and resources in your daily work	Turn off lights and air conditioning in unoccupied rooms
Table 1 Principles of ethical conduct			

These principles are not just rules, but **attitudes that form the character of a tourism professional**. An ethical employee inspires trust, creates a positive atmosphere and contributes to the development of responsible and sustainable tourism.

Why is the Code of Ethical Conduct important?

In a hotel, every gesture, tone of voice or attitude counts. A satisfied customer can recommend the hotel further, and a dissatisfied one can avoid it forever. That is why the code of ethical conduct helps employees to act unitedly, fairly and politely, regardless of the situation.

Its importance:

- Ensures professional and respectful behavior towards customers;
- It creates a working climate based on cooperation and trust;
- Prevents conflicts and misunderstandings between colleagues;
- Protects the hotel's image and reputation;
- It contributes to responsible and sustainable tourism.

What does a code of ethical conduct in hotels contain?

Typically, the code of ethical conduct includes:

Domain	What it entails	Concrete examples
Professional behavior	Respect, politeness and fairness in the relationship with customers	Polite greeting, calm tone, appropriate language
Integrity	Avoiding lies, deception, and personal advantages	You don't promise services that can't be offered
Privacy	Protecting tourists' data and privacy	Don't share guest information

Domain	What it entails	Concrete examples
Mutual respect	Collaboration and support between colleagues	Help a colleague during busy times
Equality and non-discrimination	You treat all tourists the same, regardless of nationality, religion or social status	Give the same smile to every guest
Environmental responsibility	Take care of natural and environmental resources	Reduce water and energy waste, recycle
Safety and health	Respect hygiene and safety rules	Wear proper equipment and warn of dangers

Table 2 Areas of the Code of Ethical Conduct

The code of ethical conduct in hotels teaches employees how to be **respectful, honest, responsible and friendly**, which is exactly what any tourist wants from a person who welcomes him on vacation. An employee who respects the code of ethics **not only provides quality services**, but also contributes to **a better, cleaner and more humane tourist world**.

Consequences of non-compliance with the code of ethics

Violation of the code of conduct can affect both the hotel's image and the employee's personal career. Consequences may include:

- loss of customer trust;
- disciplinary sanctions;
- deterioration of professional reputation;
- conflicts between colleagues or with management.

A good tourism professional is not only defined by their uniform or smile, but also by the way they think and act ethically, even in difficult situations. Respecting the code of ethics means respect for oneself, for others and for the profession.



QUESTIONS AND SITUATIONS

1. What is a code of ethical conduct and why is it important in a hotel or resort?
2. What are the main values promoted by the code of ethics in tourism?
3. Give a concrete example of ethical behavior that an employee should have towards tourists.
4. What does it mean to respect the principle of confidentiality in tourism activity?
5. How does complying with the code of ethics contribute to the image and success of a hotel?
6. What consequences can arise if an employee does not comply with the rules of the code of ethical conduct?

1.3 Ethical behavior towards customers, colleagues, partners



What does ethical behavior mean in tourism?

Ethical behavior in tourism means acting fairly, respectfully and responsibly in all situations.

Whether you're talking to a tourist, working with colleagues, or collaborating with partners, your behavior shows your character and professionalism.

Ethics isn't just about written rules – it's your attitude, your gestures, and the way you make decisions, even when no one is looking at you.



Ethical behavior towards customers

Ethical behavior towards customers means the respectful, fair and professional way in which a tourism employee behaves with each guest. It's about how you communicate, listen, react and solve tourists' problems, so that they feel welcome, respected and appreciated.

- treat all tourists with kindness and patience;
- provides accurate and complete information;
- they keep their promises;
- maintain the confidentiality of personal data;
- It does not discriminate against or judge tourists based on appearance, age, religion, social status or nationality.



Example: If a tourist asks about a trip that is already fully booked, you honestly explain the situation and offer them alternatives, instead of promising something that cannot be offered.

In tourism, the customer is the center of activity. Without customers, there are no tourist services. That is why ethical behavior towards tourists is not only a professional rule, but an attitude of respect and care towards people.

A tourist who feels respected and well treated will:

- Return to the same place.
- recommend the hotel or agency to others;
- contribute to a positive image of the destination and employees.



Therefore, every gesture counts – a sincere smile, a polite greeting or a calm explanation can turn a simple interaction into a memorable experience.



Examples of ethical behavior towards customers

Situation	How to act ethically	What effect does it have
A tourist complains that the air conditioning does not work	You apologize, call the technician and offer a temporary solution	The customer feels that he is respected and important
A customer asks for information about a local trip	Provide accurate details or ask for help from a colleague	The tourist receives help and trust
A guest leaves an object in the room	You hand over the object to the reception without hesitation	You demonstrate honesty and integrity
A tourist has a nervous attitude	You listen to him calmly, you don't fight back, and you try to understand the problem	The situation eases, and the customer calms down
A customer asks you about a colleague	Do not comment and redirect the discussion to the hotel's services	Maintain discretion and professionalism

Table 1 Ethical behaviors towards customers

Ethical behavior towards customers is not just a professional obligation, but a human attitude based on respect, empathy and responsibility.

An employee who acts ethically becomes the ambassador of the hotel's values and contributes to the promotion of quality , friendly and sustainable tourism.

Ethical behavior towards colleagues

Ethical behavior towards colleagues means collaborating, respecting and supporting the people you work with, so that the team works harmoniously. In tourism, success depends on teamwork — from receptionist and chef to tour guide or maid, all contribute to the pleasant customer experience. An ethical colleague is one who:

- respects the opinions and work of others,
- communicate openly and honestly,

- help when needed,
- does not gossip or create tension



Example: If a colleague makes a mistake, you offer support to solve it and don't criticize them in front of customers.

Ethics between colleagues is like a bridge that connects people, without it, the team breaks down and mistakes, misunderstandings or lack of trust occur.

Principles of ethical behavior towards colleagues

Principle	What it means in practice	Concrete example
Respect	Appreciate your colleague's work and personality	You don't interrupt, you don't criticize ironically, you say "thank you"
Cooperation	You work together for a common purpose	You help your colleague when he's busy, even if it's not "your business"
Clear communication	Transmit information correctly and on time	You tell your colleague about changes in your schedule
Mutual support	Offer help and advice when needed	If a colleague makes a mistake, you help him correct, you don't judge him
Honesty	You are honest and loyal to the team	Don't lie to get rid of guilt or look better
Privacy	Do not disclose personal or professional problems	You don't talk about your colleagues' private lives
Positive attitude	Encourage and motivate colleagues	You congratulate a colleague for successes, you avoid negativity

Table 3 Principles of ethical behavior towards colleagues

What to avoid in the relationship with colleagues

- ✓ gossip or judging colleagues; ✓ competitive or selfish behaviors; ✓ refusal to cooperate; ✓ arrogant or ironic attitudes;
- ✓ lies, manipulation or favoritism; ✓ Spreading false or personal information.

Benefits of ethical peer behavior

- ✓ creates a pleasant and safe working environment;
- ✓ develops trust and solidarity;
- ✓ prevents conflicts and stress;
- ✓ increases the quality of customer service;
- ✓ promotes the positive image of the entire collective.

An ethical employee does not only work for himself, but for the team he is part of. Respect, cooperation and sincerity are the key to a harmonious atmosphere and quality work.

Colleagues who support each other become more than a team – they become a small professional family, which makes tourism mean joy and authentic hospitality.

Ethical behavior towards partners

In tourism, **partners** are all the people or organizations with which the hotel or agency collaborates: suppliers, guides, transporters, cleaning companies, travel agencies, partner restaurants, etc. Ethical behavior towards partners means building relationships based on trust, fairness and mutual respect.

An employee or team that behaves ethically with partners:

- respects the contracts and promises made,
- communicate openly and on time,
- does not deceive or hide information,
- treats all parties impartially,
- They are looking for fair and beneficial solutions for all.



Example: If a supplier cannot deliver the products on time, inform them in advance and look for alternative solutions together, without blaming them unfairly.

Why ethical behavior is important

- Builds the trust of customers and partners;
- It creates a positive and professional atmosphere among colleagues;
- Contributes to the hotel's positive reputation;
- It promotes responsible and sustainable tourism.

Golden rule: "Treat others as you would like to be treated."

Principles of ethical behavior towards partners

Principle	What does it mean	Concrete example
Fairness	Compliance with contractual terms and promises	If a payment date has been agreed, it shall be respected without delay
Transparency	Clear communication of information and decisions	Any changes in reservations or services are announced in a timely manner
Mutual respect	Treating partners as equals, without superiority	The point of view of each collaborator is listened to

Principle	What does it mean	Concrete example
Allegiance	Maintaining a relationship based on trust and discretion	No confidential information about a partner is disclosed
Responsibility	Making decisions and consequences	If a problem arises, the solution is sought, not the excuses
Professionalism	Punctuality, politeness and seriousness in collaboration	Prompt response to emails, appointments are followed
Equality	Fair treatment for all partners	No unjustified favors or discrimination are offered

Table 4 Principles of ethical behavior towards partners



Examples of ethical behavior towards partners

Situation	Ethical behavior	Positive effect
A partner delivers products late	Talk calmly, look for a solution together	Collaboration and mutual respect are maintained
A partner guide brings tourists to the hotel	Give them support and gratitude for their collaboration	You create a stable and beneficial relationship
A competing agency asks for information	Only transmit public data, not confidential information	The company's image is protected
A mistake is made in a contract	You admit the mistake and correct it transparently	Your partner appreciates sincerity
You get a more advantageous offer	Before changing partners, clearly communicate the reasons	Avoid misunderstandings and maintain a reputation for fairness

Table 5 Ethical behavior towards partners

What to avoid in the relationship with partners

- ✓lying, concealing information or manipulation;
- ✓accepting gifts or personal favors in exchange for professional advantages; ✓non-compliance with payment deadlines or contractual obligations;
- ✓negative talk about other partners;
- ✓betrayal of trust or disclosure of confidential information.

Benefits of ethical behavior towards partners

- ✓ developing stable and long-lasting collaborations;
- ✓ increasing trust in the company and employees;
- ✓ strengthening the organization's reputation;
- ✓ achieving better results and quality services;
- ✓ contributing to sustainable **tourism**, based on respect and cooperation.

Ethical behavior towards partners is the foundation of a healthy business in tourism. When all partners – hotels, agencies, carriers, restaurants – work with respect, transparency and fairness, everyone wins.



QUESTIONS AND SITUATIONS

1. What does it mean for you to behave ethically towards customers?
2. How can you show respect and professionalism when a customer is dissatisfied?
3. Why is cooperation and mutual support between colleagues important in the tourism environment?
4. What does loyalty and fairness mean in relations with business partners?
5. How does ethical communication contribute to maintaining a positive atmosphere in the work team?
6. Give an example of a situation in which you act ethically, even if no one would see you



Practical applications

Activity 1

Analysis of Ethical Codes of Conduct in Hotels and Resorts

Practical task: Select a real excerpt from a local or international hotel code of ethics and identify which rules reflect respect for the customer, which rules are aimed at protecting the environment and which are related to professional ethics.

Activity 2

Practical activity: Drafting a mini-code of ethical conduct

Objective: To identify ethical and unethical behaviors in tourism and to propose ethical rules adapted to the job of operator in hotels and tourist complexes.

Title: Be the creator of work ethics!

Activity 3

Role-playing – ethical situations at the reception, restaurant.

Objective: Practice empathy, assertive communication, handling complaints in an ethical way.

Role-playing game 1: Ethical situation at the front desk

Title: The Dissatisfied Customer and the Wrong Booking

Context: A guest arrives at the hotel but finds that their reservation for a room with a sea view has been recorded as one with a courtyard view.

Roles:

- Receptionist
- The dissatisfied customer
- The supervisor (game observer)

Activity 4

Analyze situations of ethical and unethical behavior in tourism

Situation 1: Resolve a complaint

- Context: A tourist complains that the air conditioning does not work in the room.

- **Ethical behavior:** The employee listens carefully, politely apologizes, and immediately escalates the issue to the front desk or technical team, providing an estimated timeline for remediation.
- **Unethical behavior:** The employee ignores the complaint or responds irritably: "It's none of my business, go to the reception!"

Situation 2: **Protecting the environment**

- **Context:** A maid notices that a customer has asked for a daily towel change, although it is not necessary.
- **Ethical behavior:** Politely reminds the tourist of the hotel's eco-friendly policy and encourages them to reuse towels if possible.
- **Unethical behavior:** Change towels without any communication, ignoring sustainability policies.

Situation 3: **Discrimination**

- **Context:** A couple of tourists from a different culture are treated differently from the rest of the customers.
- **Ethical behavior:** The employee provides them with the same level of attention, kindness, and service as all other tourists.
- **Unethical behavior:** Speaks coldly, ignores them, or makes inappropriate comments.

Activity 5

"Ethics in Action" – Short team project – develops a code of ethics for the tourism unit

Objective: Stimulate the application of the concepts of professional ethics and deontology in concrete contexts in hotels and tourist complexes, by creating an educational product.

Unit 2: Ethical communication in the professional environment

2.1 Principles of ethical communication: respect, empathy, assertiveness

2.2 Ethical barriers in communication and methods of overcoming

2.3 Practical applications

2.1 Principles of ethical communication: respect, empathy, assertiveness.



Ethical communication means conveying messages in a fair, respectful and responsible way, no matter the situation – whether you are talking face-to-face, online, at school or even with people from other cultures.

It's not just about not lying or manipulating, it's about being:

- honest – you tell the truth and don't hide important things;
- transparent – you leave no room for intentional misunderstandings;
- empathetic – you try to understand what the other person feels;
- Responsible – you think about how what you say affects the other.

Why does ethical communication matter in tourism?



Because tourism is based on the direct relationship between people. If you work with tourists or in close areas, the way you communicate can make the difference between a pleasant experience and an unpleasant one.

Ethical communication helps because:

- It increases confidence – tourists have more security when they know they are being treated fairly.
- Reduce conflicts – discussions remain calm, without unnecessary arguments.
- Encourage cooperation – people work better together.
- It develops you personally and professionally – you learn to be better in your relationship with others.
- It contributes to a healthy atmosphere – everyone feels respected and listened to.

In a democratic and pluralistic society, ethical communication contributes to building trust between individuals, combating disinformation and promoting a climate of dialogue and understanding. Therefore, numerous authors and researchers have analyzed and defined this concept from various perspectives, highlighting its importance in both personal and public or professional relationships, highlighting various principles:

1. Johannesen, Valde & Whedbee (2008)

In the paper "*Ethics in Human Communication*", Johannesen, Valde and Whedbee define ethical communication as a process in which the choice of means and goals of communication is carried out responsibly, based on respect for others and honest behavior.



Main ideas: Responsibility, respect for interlocutors, honesty and fairness are the foundations of ethical communication. This means that when communicating, we must be careful not to manipulate or deceive, but to act transparently and fairly.

2. Richard L. Johannesen (1996)

Johannesen is an influential author in the field of communication ethics, and in his work, he argues that ethical communication must be evaluated according to three essential principles: truthfulness, dignity of the person, and moral correctness.



Main ideas: Truth and respect for human dignity are essential. Communication must not only be factually accurate, but it must also be moral, that is, treat all individuals with respect and avoid any form of abuse or manipulation.

3. Aristotle (Rhetoric, 350 î.Hr.)

Although the term "ethical communication" had not existed in his time, Aristotle defined a similar concept by *ethos* — the character of the speaker who influences the audience's perception of the credibility and validity of his message. He argued that in order to be ethical, the speaker must be considered a virtuous person.



Main ideas: Ethos, i.e. the moral character of the speaker, is essential for persuasion and for building a credible message. Ethical communication involves not only the transmission of a message, but also the integrity and virtue of the one who transmits it.

4. Sissela Bok (1978) – in "Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life"

Bok focuses on the aspect of honesty in communication. She argues that **lying** is fundamentally immoral because it undermines trust between individuals and within society. According to her, ethical communication always implies sincerity and transparency, even when it is difficult.



Main ideas: Truth and trust are fundamental to human relationships and the proper functioning of society. Lies, even with good intentions, have long-term negative consequences and should be avoided.

Ethical communication is a set of principles and moral norms that guide the interaction between people in such a way as to promote respect, integrity and responsibility.

General principles of ethical communication



1. Respect for the interlocutor

- Active and non-judgmental listening.
- Avoiding offensive language, discrimination, or labeling.
- Recognition of the value and dignity of each person.

2. Truth and honesty

- Providing accurate, clear and verifiable information.
- Avoiding manipulation, lying or intentional concealment of information.

3. Responsibility

- Assuming the consequences of the words and deeds communicated.
- Communication with the intention of building, not destroying.

4. Privacy

- Protecting sensitive or personal information.
- Compliance with the limits set in private or professional communications.

5. Authenticity

- The sincere and congruent expression of one's own thoughts and emotions.
- Avoiding pretense, false conformism or duplicitarianism.

6. Empathy

- The ability to understand the other's perspective.
- Open dialogue, free of rigid judgments.

7. Balance and fairness

- Giving equal opportunity to all involved.
- Avoid dominating the discussion or imposing one's point of view.

8. Assertiveness

- Assertive communication style.
- Avoiding aggressive and passive style in communication and behavior.

The principle of respect for the interlocutor



Respect in communication means seeing the value and dignity of each person you talk to. This is shown by a behavior:

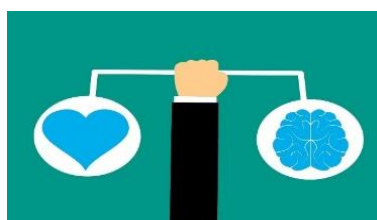
- polite and attentive,
- empathetic (trying to understand what the other person feels),
- No bias (don't judge by age, social status, culture, language, or opinions).

In tourism, this principle is super important, because workers interact daily with very different people – tourists, colleagues, authorities, suppliers.

If you take respect into account, you manage to:

- provide quality services,
- avoid tense situations,
- You build a good professional image.

Essential components of respect in tourism



1. Polite and professional communication

- Use of appropriate forms of address: "please", "thank you", "with pleasure".
- Avoid high, sarcastic or ironic tones, even in tense situations.

2. Active Listening

- Paying real attention to customers' questions, concerns, or complaints.
- Avoid interrupting or ignoring requests.

3. Embracing cultural diversity

- Adapting behavior and language according to the culture of tourists (e.g. avoiding offensive gestures in a certain culture).
- Respect for religious or dietary customs and sensitivities.

4. Fair treatment of all customers

- No person shall be discriminated against on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, sex, age or disability.
- Providing additional support to vulnerable tourists (the elderly, children, people with disabilities).



Concrete examples of application:

- **At the reception:** A foreign tourist with a strong accent asks a question. The tourism worker shows patience and clarifies the answer with kindness, without grimaces or rude comments.
- **During a guided tour:** A tour guide provides space for each tourist to express himself, not just the most vocal, and politely answers even seemingly trivial questions.
- **In the face of a complaint:** If a dissatisfied customer expresses frustration, the tourism employee does not respond aggressively, but actively listens, validates emotions and tries to find a respectful solution.



Positive or negative consequences

If COMPLIED	If IGNORED
- Customers feel that they are treated with dignity and return with confidence.	- Conflicts, complaints, and negative reviews occur.
- A positive and collaborative atmosphere is created.	- The personal image and reputation of the company are damaged.

If COMPLIED	If IGNORED
- Encourage loyalty and referrals from tourists.	- It can lead to interethnic or cultural tensions
Table 1 Customer Respect	

Respect in ethical communication is not just a form of politeness, but a professional obligation of the tourism worker. It is the basis of a relationship of trust and satisfaction between the provider and the client. In a field that sells experiences and emotions, the way you communicate is as important as the service offered.



Embracing cultural diversity



In tourism, you meet people from all over the world – each with their own customs, traditions and beliefs. To communicate well with them, it is important to respect these differences and adjust your behavior so that you do not offend unintentionally.



Example:

- A common gesture to you may be offensive in another culture;
- Certain words or jokes that seem normal here may be inappropriate for someone elsewhere.

Accepting cultural diversity means being open, curious, and respectful, even if people don't think or behave like you.

- **Reisinger & Turner (2003)**, in *Cross-Cultural Behaviour in Tourism*, shows how a lack of understanding of cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings and complaints from tourists.

- **Edward Hall (1976)**, in *Beyond Culture*, introduced the concepts of "high-context" and "low-context" culture, useful for understanding why some behaviors may seem offensive in certain countries.

Fair treatment of all customers



In tourism, it is very important to treat all people equally fairly and respectfully, regardless of:

- where they come from,
- how old they are,
- this social status has,
- whether or not they have a disability.

This means applying the same rules of communication and behavior with each customer.

Why is it essential?

- because you show professionalism,
- you create an inclusive and friendly **environment**,
- and you convey to tourists that they are valuable and welcome, without exception.

The UNWTO (World Tourism Organization) promotes in its ethical codes the principle of equal access and non-discrimination in tourism services.

- **Pizam & Ellis (1999)**, in *Customer satisfaction and its measurement in hospitality enterprises*, shows that perceived fairness in the treatment of the customer is directly related to customer satisfaction.

The principle of empathy in ethical communication



Empathy is about understanding and feeling what another person is going through, without mixing your own thoughts or emotions with their own. In other words, you try to put yourself in the other person's shoes and see the situation through their eyes.

In ethical communication, empathy plays a very important role because it helps you:

- you recognize the emotions of those around you,
- respond in an appropriate way to their needs and feelings,
- you avoid misunderstandings and conflicts,
- you build closer and more respectful relationships.

Sometimes, empathy is also shown without words – through the tone of voice, facial expression, gestures or simply through the attention you give to the speaker.

Empathy in the context of tourism



In tourism, empathy is a professional tool that directly contributes to customer satisfaction and loyalty. Empathetic workers understand the emotions, expectations and moods of tourists, which allows them to:

- to provide personalized services,
- defuse conflicts,
- manage complaints more effectively,
- create an atmosphere of trust and hospitality.

Dimensions of empathy relevant to tourism

(according to **Davis' model, 1983** – *Interpersonal Reactivity Index*)

Dimension	Explanation	Application in tourism
Cognitive empathy	Ability to understand each other's thoughts and perspective	The tour guide understands why a tourist is confused or frustrated and explains it another way
Affective empathy	Emotional reaction to another's state (compassion, care)	The receptionist notices the anxiety of a foreign tourist and reassures him with a warm tone and support
Emotional regulation	Managing one's own emotional reaction to the emotions of others	The employee keeps calm in front of an agitated or rude tourist

Dimension	Explanation	Application in tourism
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Table 2 Dimensions of empathy



Concrete examples of application in tourism

Practical situation	Empathetic worker behavior
A tourist is lost in a foreign city	The hotel employee accompanies him to the map, reassures him, explains the steps clearly
A family with tired children complains about slow work	The waiter apologizes, quickly brings a small bonus (water/toy), validates the discomfort
An elderly customer says she feels lonely	The guide listens to her with interest, encourages her to interact with the group

Table 3 Tourism Situations

The importance of empathy as an ethical principle in tourism - Creates human connections between tourists and service providers

- Increases loyalty to the company or destination
- Supports ethical and sensitive intercultural communication
- Improves the management of complaints and difficult moments- Encourages harmonious relationships and a positive image of the profession

Why is empathy important in tourism?

Empathy is not only a human quality, but also an ethical value. It helps people understand each other better, respect each other and adapt to each other's needs.

In tourism, where relationships and emotions are the basis of all interactions, empathy makes the difference:

- turn a simple trip into a memorable experience,
- creates an authentic bond between the employee and the tourist,
- It makes customers feel listened to and appreciated. That's why empathy is not just a personal quality, but an essential professional skill and an integral part of communication in tourism.

The principle of affectivity in ethical communication

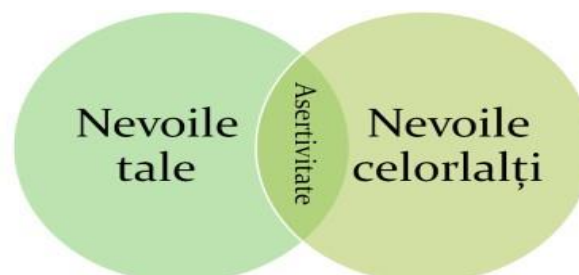


Figure 1 Communication needs

Assertiveness means saying what you think, what you feel and what you need in a clear, direct and respectful **way**, without hurting anyone and without letting yourself be trampled underfoot. It is the most balanced communication style – neither aggressive nor passive.

In tourism, where you meet very different people on a daily basis, assertiveness is an essential skill.

A tourism worker who communicates assertively can:

- to say openly what expectations he has,
- to show their limits without fear,
- propose appropriate solutions,
- to respect the customer, even when tense situations arise.

That's why assertiveness is not just a "plus" in communication, but a successful strategy in tourism. It directly influences both the satisfaction of tourists and the reputation of the services offered.

Features of assertive communication



- You say what you think and feel without fear, openly and honestly.
- Respect the opinions of others even if you disagree.
- You can say "no" without feeling guilty or rude.
- The tone of voice is calm, firm and clear.
- Body language – proper eye contact and relaxed posture.
- You listen actively and empathetically, trying to understand what others are feeling.

Assertiveness vs. other communication styles

Communication style	Description	Effects
Assertive	Clear, respectful, balanced expression	Healthy relationships, trust, cooperation
Passive	Avoiding expressing needs or opinions	Frustration, disrespect, self-blame
Aggressive	Domination, disrespect, forced imposition	Conflicts, rejection, fear

Communication style	Description	Effects
Passive-aggressive	Indirect expression, irony, sarcasm	Confusion, tension, manipulation

Table 4 Communication Styles

Benefits of assertive communication

- Improve relationships – with friends, colleagues and customers.
- Increase your self-confidence – you feel more confident when expressing your opinions.
- It reduces stress and increases personal satisfaction.
- Promote clarity – your messages are understood without confusion.
- It prevents conflicts and helps resolve disputes quickly.



How to develop assertive communication

1. Identify your emotions and needs – ask yourself, "What am I really feeling? What do I want?"
2. Use "I" messages – for example: "I feel like I'm not being listened to" instead of: "You never listen to me"
3. Practice polite refusal – for example: "Thank you for the proposal, but I can't accept it now."
4. Maintain eye contact and open posture – show that you are involved and calm.
5. Avoid impulsive reactions – take a deep breath and think before you respond.



Assertiveness - a skill that is learned

Assertiveness is not a talent you are born with, but a skill that you can develop by:

- conscious exercise,
- self-knowledge,
- reflection on one's own emotions and behaviors.

Assertive communication helps you have:

- better and more harmonious relationships with others,
- greater self-confidence,
- An authentic presence in any situation – at school, with friends or at work.

It is a valuable tool not only to be heard, but also to create connections based on respect, clarity, and cooperation.



QUESTIONS AND SITUATIONS

1. What does ethical communication mean and what are the main values it promotes?
2. What are the main principles of ethical communication and how do they apply in customer relations in tourism?
3. How can respect for the interlocutor influence the quality of tourist services?
4. What role does empathy play in ethical communication and how does it help create a positive experience for tourists?
5. Why is assertiveness important in tourism and how does it differ from passive or aggressive communication?

2.2 Ethical barriers in communication and methods of overcoming



Communication is the process by which people transmit thoughts, emotions and information, in order to understand each other and collaborate. However, even if the desire to communicate is sincere, sometimes the message does not reach the other person correctly. In such situations, communication barriers appear, obstacles that hinder or distort understanding between people.

In tourism, these barriers may be more visible, as workers interact with people from different cultures, who speak other languages and have other customs. That is why a tourism worker must learn to recognize and overcome communication barriers, in order to maintain a respectful, clear and effective relationship with all interlocutors. Knowing the barriers in communication is the first step towards overcoming them. Thus, we can prevent misunderstandings, conflicts or unpleasant situations and contribute to a pleasant and professional atmosphere in the relationship with tourists and colleagues.



1. Language barriers



Example: the tourist speaks another language, and the employee does not fully understand him.

Overtaking methods:

- using simple, clear words;
- using translators or translation applications;
- learning basic expressions in several international languages.

2. Cultural barriers



Example: Gestures, customs, or rules of politeness differ between countries.

Overtaking methods:

- respect for cultural diversity;
- documenting the traditions and values of tourists;
- avoiding prejudice and jokes on sensitive topics.

3. Emotional barriers



Example: the tourist is tired, nervous or scared and no longer listens carefully.

Overtaking methods:

- adopting a calm and respectful attitude;
- active and patient listening;
- transmitting empathy ("I understand that it is difficult for you, let's solve it together").

4. Attention and concentration barriers



Example: Noise, crowding, or lack of interest make communication difficult.

Overtaking methods:

- choosing a quieter place for discussion;
- Explain it briefly, using essential ideas;
- supporting verbal communication through visual materials (maps, leaflets, panels).

5. Technical barriers



Example: Phones, emails, or booking systems aren't working.

Overtaking methods:

- Early checking of equipment;
- offering alternatives (written information, direct explanations);
- Maintaining a positive attitude towards the customer even in difficult technical situations.

6. Ethical barriers



Example: disrespect, high tone, aggressive communication or lies.

Overtaking methods:

- use respectful and polite language;
- sincerity and transparency in answers;
- adopting assertive, not passive or aggressive communication.



QUESTIONS AND SITUATIONS

1. Why is it important for a tourism worker to recognize and overcome communication barriers in relation to tourists?
2. What are the main barriers that can arise in the communication between a tourism worker and a tourist?
3. How can we overcome a cultural barrier when communicating with tourists from other countries?
4. What attitude should be adopted to overcome emotional barriers in communication?



2.4 Practical applications

Activity 1 Questionnaire

Objective: Determines the assertive, passive, aggressive communication style.

Instruction: How true are the following statements as descriptions of your behavior?

Answer options:

- 1- never true 3- often true
2- sometimes true 4- always true

1.	When my work is praised, I respond with more modesty than I really feel.
2.	If people are rude, so will I.
3.	Other people find me interesting.
4.	I find it difficult to talk to a group of strangers.
5.	I don't mind using stinging words when it helps me prove my point of view.
6.	I tell the boss if something doesn't suit me in arranging the work schedule.
7.	If others interrupt me when I speak, I suffer in silence.
8.	When someone criticizes my work/activity, I find a way to fix it.
9.	I can express my pride in what I have done without being boastful.
10.	I think people take advantage of me.
11.	I tell people what they want to hear, if that helps me get what I want.
12.	It's not hard for me to ask someone for help.
13.	I lend my stuff to others, even if I don't want to do that.
14.	I win in contradictions because I know how to dominate the discussion.
15.	I can express my true feelings in front of someone I really care about.
16.	When I'm angry at others, I prefer to hold back my emotions instead of expressing them.
17.	When I criticize someone's action, that person makes me angry.

18. I think I can defend my rights.

SCORE

Passive Score

Gather the answers to the statements: 1,4,7,10,13,16.

Total_____

Aggressive Score

Gather the answers to the statements: 2,5,8,11,14,17.

Total_____

Assertive Score

Gather the answers to the statements: 3,6,9,12,15,18.

Total_____

Characteristic of types of behavior

The aggressive type: offends, humiliates, despises others, high tone, hostile, mean, finds fault with everything others do, interrupts the interlocutor.

The passive type: self-denial, does not defend his interests, feelings of guilt, fear, is submissive, reacts sickly to criticism.

The assertive type: respects himself and others, expresses his desires, feelings honestly and openly, communicates openly, criticizes constructively, trusts in his own strength, takes into account the suggestions of others, asks for and offers help with pleasure.

Activity 2 "EU Message" Objective: Develop the skills of formulating the assertive message. Instructions: **1.** The concrete situation (observable fact, without judgment) "*When...*"
Express the facts, without judging or blaming.

Example: "When you're late for the meeting..."

2. The emotional state (how I feel in that situation) "...
I feel..."

Express your own emotion, not an interpretation of the other.

Example: "... I feel frustrated and neglected..."

3. The consequence for you (why it affects you) "...
because..."

Explain the real or perceived impact on you.

Example: "... because I try hard to stick to the schedule and I have the impression that my time is not worth it."

4. Clear request (what do you want in return)

"I would like / Please / I appreciate if..."

Be direct, realistic and respectful in expressing the need.

Example: "I would appreciate it if we could set a time together that we both respect."

What to avoid in an assertive message:

- Accusations: "You never...", "It's your fault..."
- Tags: "You're careless / lazy / annoying..."
- Generalizations: "You always do this..."
- Sarcastic, passive-aggressive, or authoritarian tone

Activity 3 Broken Disc

Objective: Mention the assertive position in the face of pressure.

1. Instructions: Simulate a situation in which one student pressures (e.g. convinces someone else to accept something), and the other responds repetitively, calmly and firmly, with the same message:

"Thank you, but I choose not to participate." "I understand what you're saying, but my decision remains unchanged."

2. Reflection questions: - Was it difficult to identify other solutions?
- How do you feel, what emotions are you experiencing?

Activity 4 Assertive Letters

Objective: Practice clear expressions in writing.

1. Instructions: Write a short letter to an imaginary or real person, in which they express a dissatisfaction or need in an assertive way.

Unit 3: Ethics in Conflict Management

3.1 Types of conflicts in the tourism environment

3.2 The role of ethics in conflict resolution

3.3 Practical applications

3.1 Types of conflicts in the tourism environment



How do conflicts arise?

Conflicts do not necessarily mean something bad. They are part of life and, sometimes, they can even be a chance to learn something about ourselves and others. In tourism, where we meet different people on a daily basis, from different cultures, with their own customs and expectations, it is normal for tensions or misunderstandings to arise.



Example

- a tourist gets upset because he didn't get the room he wanted;
- two colleagues at the front desk have different opinions on how to serve a customer;

- A local community does not agree with the behavior of some visitors.

The important thing is how we react to the conflict. We can choose to get angry and amplify the tension, or we can choose to listen, understand, and find a balanced solution.



Types of conflicts in tourism

1. Conflicts between employees – arise when there are misunderstandings about tasks, communication or work style.
2. Conflicts between employees and tourists – when customer expectations do not match the services offered.
3. Conflicts between tourists – for example, when two visitors have different behaviors or needs.
4. Conflicts between tourists and the local community – when rules, traditions or values are not respected.

General classification of conflicts in tourism:

Type of conflict	Description	Concrete example
1. Interpersonal	It occurs between two people (client-employee or between colleagues).	A tourist criticizes the tone of the receptionist.
2. Intergroup	Between groups: tourists vs. staff, hotel teams, groups of tourists, etc.	Dispute between a group of foreign tourists and restaurant staff.
3. Intercultural	It arises from differences in values, norms and customs between cultures.	A tourist feels offended by gestures considered normal locally.
4. Contractual/legal	It involves misunderstandings related to compliance with booking conditions, payments, etc.	The client asks for a full refund for a cancelled trip.
5. Internal Organizational	Between employees or departments within the same company.	The guide and the manager do not agree on the program.
6. Commercial/Partnership	Between travel agencies, hotels, carriers, partners.	The hotel refuses to offer breakfast included, contrary to the contract with the agency.

Type of conflict	Description	Concrete example
7. Tourists–local community	When the behavior of tourists negatively affects the community, the hosts of conflicts.	The locals are bothered by the noise and pollution caused by tourists.
Table 1 Types of conflicts		

The relevance of conflict recognition

- Contributes to improving the relationship with the customer;
- It allows the correction of organizational deficiencies;
- Helps maintain a positive atmosphere among staff;
- It prevents complaints, image crises or legal problems from occurring.

Causes and effects of conflicts in the tourism environment

CAUSES EFFECTS
• Unrealistic expectations of tourists → Customer dissatisfaction • Lack of effective communication → Negative complaints/reviews • Cultural or linguistic barriers → Intercultural conflicts • Lack of trained personnel → Poor services, internal tensions • Chaotic schedule / overload → Stress among employees • Tense relationships between colleagues → Decreased team cohesion
Table 2 Causes and effects

Understanding the types of conflicts and developing assertive communication contribute decisively to creating a professional, safe and pleasant tourist environment – both for tourists and for the staff in the field.

Conflicts in tourism often arise spontaneously, but they can be prevented if the root causes are understood. They can be grouped into several categories:

1. Communicational causes

- Ineffective or ambiguous communication between staff and tourists.
- Contradictory information or lack of clarity in tourist offers.
- Language barriers that lead to misunderstandings.



Example: Foreign tourists do not understand the conditions for cancelling their reservation due to a mistranslation of the website.

2. Intercultural causes

- Differences in cultural values, norms and customs.
- Different perceptions of acceptable behavior (e.g., punctuality, clothing, attitude).
- Lack of intercultural training of tourist staff.



Example: An Asian tourist considers direct eye contact rude, but the staff interprets it as disrespectful.

3. Organizational and operational causes

- Staff overload in season.
- Lack of coordination between departments or partners.
- Logistical deficiencies (delays, wrong bookings, lack of staff).



Example: A bus is late because the agency has not confirmed the correct time with the driver.

4. Emotional and psychological causes

- Tourists are on vacation and have very high expectations.
- Employees are stressed, tired, or lacking motivation.
- The accumulated frustration can generate disproportionate reactions.



Example: A client reacts aggressively to a small discomfort (e.g. the pillow is too strong), because she already feels tense due to the delayed flight

5. Quality of service cases

- Differences between promised and delivered services.
- Uneven standards within tourism networks).
- Lack of continuous professional training.



Example: The brochure shows luxury rooms, but the reality does not correspond.

The consequences of the conflict can be immediately visible or long-term, affecting not only the parties involved, but also the image of the organization and the tourist experience.

Effects on tourists

- Decreased tourist satisfaction.
- Negative reviews on profile platforms.
- Termination of facility services or refund requests.
- Lack of loyalty and negative promotion.



Effects on personnel

- Decreased motivation and satisfaction at work.
- Occurrence of occupational stress and burnout
- Internal tensions and reduced team efficiency.
- Increased risk of resignations and staff turnover.



Effects on the organization/agency

- Declining the reputation of the tourism brand.
- Financial losses (discounts, refunds, litigation).
- Possible legal or contractual sanctions.



Effects on the local community

- The population's dissatisfaction with the tourist activity.
- Blocking sustainable tourism development initiatives.
- Social conflicts, protests or requests for restrictions



QUESTIONS AND SITUATIONS

1. What does a conflict mean in the context of tourism and why should it not always be seen as a negative thing?
2. What are the most common causes that can lead to conflicts between employees and tourists?
3. How can assertive communication help you manage conflict in a positive way?
4. What consequences can unresolved conflicts have on tourists, employees and the image of a travel agency?
5. Imagine that a tourist is dissatisfied with the services received. What steps would you take to smooth out the situation without losing calm and mutual respect?

3.2 The role of ethics in conflict resolution



Ethics play a key role in preventing and resolving conflicts, helping to maintain a climate of trust, respect and cooperation. Ethics means doing what is right, even when no one is seeing you. It helps us to behave with respect, to be honest and to make decisions that do not hurt others. In tourism, where we work daily with people from different backgrounds and cultures, ethics are essential to keep a pleasant atmosphere and calmly resolve any misunderstandings.



Why ethics is important when conflict arises

When tensions arise, ethical rules are like an inner guide that shows us how to react with balance. Ethics helps us to:

- we listen and respect the point of view of the other;
- we do not accuse, but seek fair solutions for both sides;
- we recognize when we make mistakes and take responsibility;

- We treat everyone with the same fairness.

In tourism, ethical behavior matters enormously. You can have the nicest hotel or the best

deal, but if people don't feel respected, they won't come back.

Examples

A tourist is unhappy with the room.

An ethical employee does not argue, but listens, apologizes and tries to find a solution: another room or a small compensation bonus.

Two colleagues contradict each other at the reception.

Instead of blaming each other, they sit down and discuss calmly, as a team, to find an option that satisfies both the customers and the staff.

A client wants special treatment in exchange for a tip.

An ethical employee politely refuses and explains that all tourists are treated equally, regardless of money or status.

The values that help us to be fair

1. Respect – speak nicely, even when you're nervous.
2. Honesty – tell the truth, don't make excuses.
3. Responsibility – take responsibility for your mistakes and fix them.
4. Fairness – treat all people with the same justice.
5. Empathy – try to understand what the other person feels.



Ethics is not just about rules written on paper. It's about your attitude — the way you choose to speak, react, and respect people. A young person who behaves ethically inspires confidence, creates a positive atmosphere and makes tourists leave with a smile on their faces.

Conflict prevention Ethical communication can prevent conflict because:

- reduce suspicions and misunderstandings;
- encourages open and responsible expression of opinions;
- limit abusive, manipulative or aggressive behavior.

In tourism, workers come into contact with people from diverse cultures, religions and traditions. Ethical respect involves avoiding prejudices, stereotypes and expressing oneself through neutral and polite language. Ethics requires communication based on transparency, sincerity and clarification of rights and obligations. The information provided to tourists must be complete, real and non-misleading. Avoiding manipulation and conflicts of interest in the field of tourism is also paramount. The ethical worker does not exploit the client's naivety and does not favor personal interests to the detriment of professional fairness. It is paramount to prevent conflict situations rather than to solve them.



Why is it paramount to prevent conflicts instead of resolving them?

Resolving a conflict involves resources of time, emotional effort, image or financial costs, while prevention creates a stable framework, in which tensions no longer arise or are mitigated from the beginning.

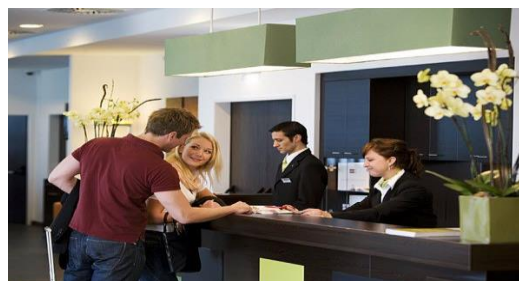
Prevention is a sign of professionalism and ethical maturity

A tourism worker who anticipates possible tensions and takes proactive measures proves:

- respect for the client;
- care for his team;
- understanding of professional responsibilities;
- assertive communication skills.

Ethics is not only manifested in reactions to problems, but especially in the ability to avoid them through right decisions and conscious attitudes.

Prevention through clear communication, training and internal organization reduces risks to a minimum.



Communication – an essential tool

Many conflicts start from:

- insufficient or unclear information;
- unrealistic promises;
- unspoken expectations;
- cultural differences ignored.

Ethical and proactive communication is the key to prevention:

- the rules, conditions, rights and obligations are explained in advance;
- ambiguous expressions are avoided;
- Clarifications and relevant examples are provided.



Prevention is the highest form of conflict resolution, because it not only avoids the problem, but strengthens relationships, trust and quality of services. From an ethical point of view, prevention means respecting: time, dignity, emotions and the rights of all those involved. In tourism, where image and human interaction are everything, conflict prevention becomes not just a recommendation, but a moral and professional responsibility.

Fair conflict resolution A fair and equitable resolution means listening carefully, being honest and treating each person with respect.



What does a fair settlement mean?

A

solution based on professional ethics means:

- actively listen to everyone involved, without interrupting;
- to show empathy – that is, to try to understand what the other person feels;
- admit mistakes and take your share of responsibility;
- seek a fair solution that does not violate anyone's rights or dignity;
- to be impartial – that is, not to take anyone's side just because they are your friend or colleague;
- avoid favoritism and prejudice;
- To try to repair the relationship, not just to "close" the conflict.



Examples of application in tourism

In tourism, people work with tourists, colleagues, bosses – that is, in an environment full of interactions. Therefore, it is normal that sometimes misunderstandings arise. The important thing is how you react:

If a customer is dissatisfied, you don't contradict him on the spot, but listen to him, show him that you care and look for a solution together.

If you made a wrong reservation, you acknowledge and propose an alternative.

This shows professionalism and respect, and people appreciate honesty.

If two colleagues don't get along, it's good to talk openly, calmly, and look for a variant that helps both of them.

Fairness means treating all people equally, without differences. When you are fair, you also make others trust you. Ethics helps you to be a basic person, who brings peace and balance, not tension. Resolving a conflict is not just "done, it's over". It means rebuilding the relationship and trust between people. This is how a professional and pleasant tourist environment is built, where everyone feels respected.

Stages of conflict resolution



conflict resolution requires a clear, multi-step process that respects all parties involved and seeks a fair and lasting solution.

Ethical

1. Identifying the conflict

- What actually happened?
- Who are the parties involved?
- What is the real cause (not just the symptom)?



Important: Don't act impulsively. Record facts objectively and from multiple sources.

2. Active and impartial listening

- Each part is listened to without interruption, with empathy.
- Premature positions or direct blame are avoided.
- Open-ended questions are used for clarification.



Ethical: Every voice must be heard and treated with respect.

3. Clarification of points of view

- Common elements and points of divergence shall be identified.
- The problem is reformulated in neutral and constructive language.



Example: "I understood that what generated the annoyance is the lack of information

about the trip schedule."

4. Finding a solution that is acceptable to both parties

- Possible options for solving it are discussed.
- A solution is being sought where both parties can gain something, feel respected.



Ethical: Authoritarian imposition of solutions is avoided. Voluntary participation in decision-making is essential.

5. Application of the solution and monitoring of the result

- The chosen solution is implemented.
- It is returned, if necessary, for the evaluation of efficiency



Example: "Has it been solved? Is everyone satisfied?"

Skills and attitudes necessary for ethical conflict resolution

Competence	Description
Empathy	The ability to understand the emotions and point of view of the other
Assertiveness	Clearly but respectfully expressing one's own needs and boundaries
Flexibility	Willingness to adjust solutions
Self-control	Managing your emotions in tense situations
Professional ethics	Correct, impartial action, in the interest of the client and the organization

Table 1 Conflict resolution powers

Common mistakes in conflict resolution

- Ignoring the problem hoping that it will go away on its own
 - Blaming someone directly without listening
 - Imposing a solution without consultation
 - Showing superiority or sarcasm
 - Publicly exposing the conflict (lack of discretion and respect)
- Ethical conflict resolution is not just about "solving a problem", but about repairing relationships, regaining trust and grows professionally. In the field of tourism, where reputation is everything, a well-managed conflict can become a valuable lesson.



QUESTIONS AND SITUATIONS

1. Why is ethics important when a conflict arises between a tourism worker and a client?
2. What personal values can help you prevent conflicts in your relationships with tourists or colleagues?
3. How can you act ethically when a customer is dissatisfied without making

the situation worse?
has broken out?

4. Why is it better to prevent a conflict than to resolve it after it has broken out?
5. What does a fair resolution of a conflict mean to you and what attitudes support it (e.g. empathy, honesty, self-control)?



3.3 Practical Applications Activity 1 Circle of Trust (Non-Violent Communication)

Objective: Practice open communication, listening and expressing needs.

Instruction: Form a circle of several colleagues and, in turn, express a dissatisfaction in a respectful way ("I feel... when... because... I would need..."), without being interrupted.

Reflection Questions: What did you like the most? Why? What was harder for you to understand or do?

Activity 2 Scale of conflict

Objective: Become aware of the stages of a conflict and learn proper time management.

Instruction: Analyze a conflict situation and place it on a scale (from "misunderstanding" to "verbal aggression" and "relational rupture"). Discuss how you can intervene at the early stages.

Reflection Questions: How did you feel? What emotions did you experience? What experiences have you learned?

Activity 3 The 3-Step Technique: Observe - Feel - Sky

Objective: Develop assertive expressions.

Instruction: Formulate messages in 3 steps:

- *I notice*: "I noticed that..."

- *I feel*: "I felt..."

- *I ask*: "Please to..."

Example: "I noticed that you raised your voice. I felt offended. Please let's talk calmly."

Activity 4 The Golden Rules of Conflict

Objective: Establish healthy behavioral norms.

Instruction: Formulate together a set of 5 - 7 ethical rules for conflict management (e.g.: "Listen without interrupting", "Do not raise your voice", "Respect the opinion of the other"), which are displayed and respected in activities.

Unit 4: Organizational culture in hotels and resorts

- 4.1. Defining organizational culture. Functions and levels of organizational culture.
- 4.2. Specific elements of organizational culture in a hotel/resort.
- 4.3. The impact and benefits of social responsibility. The role of the operator.
- 4.4. Practical applications

4.1 Defining organizational culture



Any organization/institution **in our case, hotel or tourist complex** is a social structure, made up of a group of people who act together to achieve certain goals. The effectiveness of achieving these goals is dependent on the existence of internal organizational mechanisms that facilitate or block the achievement of these goals. One of these mechanisms is organizational culture (OC). In fact, most organizational processes are significantly influenced by organizational culture. Organizational culture is considered to be the invisible, intangible "driving force" behind all phenomena and things in the organization. Thus, the organizational culture represents a system of values, beliefs, principles of activity, norms, symbols specific to an organization/institution (in our case, hotel or tourist complex), which become the reference framework, the major determinant of behavior, the essential factor in effectively promoting changes at the level of institution and that influence the way employees of a company in the travel industry interact with each other and with customers.



The organizational culture is the "spirit of the house", the atmosphere and the way in which one works and interacts with colleagues and tourists.

Example:



A hotel or tourist complex where tourists are greeted with a smile, they are offered help without being asked, and a professional attitude is maintained, creates a positive, customer-oriented organizational culture.

OC is a collective phenomenon because it is accepted (at least partially) by people who live and work together in the same social environment where it was acquired. Each member of an organization has an individual culture, consisting of the systems of knowledge, values, symbols, attitudes and behaviors that define his personality and determine his decisions and actions in relation to the other components of the community in which he operates.

Namely, organizational culture shapes individual and group identity. Through the values displayed, through the actions carried out, the organizational culture places pressures on a newcomer within it, determining changes in his way of perception, thinking and action. In order to be accepted, the individual will tend to "reproject" certain personality traits, so as to integrate as well as possible into the group in which he wants to carry out his activity. So, CO through

its levels becomes a major determinant of the behavior of the members of an organization. In organizations with a viable, strong OC, employees know what is expected of them and what types of decisions and methods of action are accepted. As a result, they quickly focus their actions on achieving the set goals. And vice versa, in weak cultures, where there are no generally accepted decision-making or behavioral models, employees will not assume responsibilities.

Thus, the customer (tourist) perceives not only the cleanliness or comfort of the room, but also the behavior of the staff, the hospitality, the ambience and the authenticity of the experience offered. All of this is influenced by organizational culture.

Functions and levels of organizational culture



The functions of the organizational culture can be:

- providing a protective screen between the individual and the world;
- social integration of the members of the organization and adaptation of the system to the constantly changing environment;
- to achieve the organization's goals by directing employees;
- to maintain positive moral socio-cultural models for the organization, by promoting positive values, beneficial to the organization and society in general;
- production of the material and spiritual elements of the organization;
- transformation of man from a biosocial unit into a unit of the social spirit.

Levels, elements and tools for organisational culture analysis (OC)

Levels of organizational culture	Specific elements	CO Analysis Methods and Tools
<i>Visible artifacts</i>	• Ceremonies (Memorable evenings) • Rituals (Welcoming tourists with a glass of brandy or traditional carol, painted eggs, a souvenir) • Habits (Leadership to set a personal example (modeling through behavior) • Myths • Legends, stories • Heroes of the organization (Employees with honorable experience/mentors, but also reward for positive behaviors and correction of inappropriate ones)	• Call • Interview-based survey • Observation • Document analysis • Group discussions

	• Language and symbols unwritten rules (obligatory greeting, smile, respect for the customer, traditional uniform, logo) • Official documents • Arrangement (thematic decorations)	
Level of values	• Values (hospitality, authenticity, respect for tradition) • Employees' perception of different types of culture: power, role, task and person.	• Group discussions • Questionnaire • List of values
Level of basic presumptions	• Those values of maximum depth that make up a stable pattern that is the basis of most of the organization's manifestations.	• Group discussions
Table 1 Levels of organizational culture		

Example:



A chef and waiter who cooperate and communicate well will provide a smoother and more pleasant service to customers.

On the other hand, a dissatisfied, unappreciated or overworked maid will have a negative impact on cleanliness and, implicitly, on the comfort of guests.

The healthy internal atmosphere starts with a clear, positive organizational culture shared by all team members.

4.2 Specific elements of organizational culture in a hotel/resort.



From the above, it can be deduced that conceptually CO refers to several constituent elements: the rules of behavior, the norms that develop within the work groups, the dominant values, the philosophy of the organization, the rules established for efficient functioning, the spirit and climate that characterize the organization in the internal environment and in the relations with the environment.

1. Values

Definition: The basic principles that guide staff behavior and decisions. They are invisible, but they influence everything that happens.

Examples:

Hospitality: All guests are treated with kindness, regardless of age, nationality or length of stay.



Authenticity: Real local experiences are offered: food cooked according to traditional recipes, rustic furniture, activities such as cow milking or fruit picking.

Respect for tradition: The décor, ambient music and organized activities reflect the customs of the place, without falsely marketing them.

Practical activity: Students may be challenged to identify the values of a hotel/hostel after watching a video or study visit.

2. Standards

Definition: Unwritten or written rules that establish the accepted behaviors among employees and in the relationship with tourists.

Examples:

Greeting of guests upon arrival: Regardless of the time, the staff welcomes guests with a smile and a welcome formula: "Welcome to our Guesthouse!".



Punctuality: Breakfast is served at the exact time announced, and tourist activities start on time.

Appropriate clothing: Employees wear clean clothes, possibly with traditional elements (ie, embroidered apron), to preserve the professional and cultural image.

3. Symbols

Definition: Objects, colors, logos, decorations or any visual element that expresses the identity and values of the place.

Examples:

Traditional uniform: Staff wear shirts or embroidered shirts with local motifs, even in combination with modern clothing.



Acronym: It can include a local symbolic element – a edelweiss flower, a house with a porch, a chariot wheel.

Thematic decorations: The interior is decorated with traditional objects (towels, clay pots, folk costumes), each room having a theme (e.g. "The Hunter's Room", "The Big House").

Definition: Activities or habits organized periodically, which express belonging to a style of the place and create a memorable experience for the customer.

Examples:



Welcoming tourists with a glass of brandy or carols: Guests are greeted with local products and traditional greetings, especially during the holidays.

Friday Folklore Evening: One day a week is dedicated to local stories, traditional music and folk dances.

Departure ritual: The guest receives a small symbolic souvenir (a traditional magnet, a bag of medicinal plants from the garden) and is led to the gate by the staff.

5. Language

Definition: The way employees talk to each other and to customers. It includes expressions, tone, addressing formulas that convey respect, belonging, empathy.

Examples:

Respectful and warm formulas: "Welcome, with love!", "Have beautiful days!", "With pleasure, anytime!"



Local expressions: "No, welcome to the table!" in Transylvania, "Well I found you, my dears!" in Moldova.

Calm, empathetic tone: Even in the face of a complaint, the staff responds calmly, tries to understand the customer's needs and address them with respect.

The adaptability of CO to the changing demands of tourists

The tourist market is dynamic: tourists are becoming more demanding, diversified and informed. A guesthouse with an organizational culture open to learning, innovation and adaptation will face these challenges.



The role of organizational culture in the hotel or tourist complex

CO influences:

1. Quality of customer service

Organizational culture determines how employees relate to customers and their work. If values such as respect, empathy, promptness and attention to detail are cultivated in the hotel, then these values will be directly reflected in the quality of services.



Examples An organizational culture focused on authentic hospitality will lead to attentive behavior towards the customer: sincere smile, clear answers, initiative in offering help or recommendations.

On the other hand, in a poorly defined or conflictual culture, employees may be uninvolved, indifferent or even hostile in their relationship with tourists, affecting the overall image of the place.

The organizational culture is the "filter" through which all services pass: cleaning, service, communication, reaction to complaints, etc.

2. Internal working atmosphere

Culture influences employee relationships, leadership style, degree of collaboration, and individual motivation.

- In a hotel with an internal culture based on mutual respect, support and open communication, employees work effectively together, and conflicts are resolved constructively.
- However, if the culture tolerates favoritism, lack of communication or constant criticism, frustration, motivation and even migration of staff appears.



Example:

A chef and waiter who cooperate and communicate well will provide a smoother and more pleasant service to customers.

On the other hand, a dissatisfied, unappreciated or overworked maid will have a negative impact on cleanliness and, implicitly, on the comfort of guests.

The healthy internal atmosphere starts with a clear, positive organizational culture shared by all team members.

3. The image of the hotel/tourist complex in the community and on the tourist market

Organizational culture is automatically reflected externally – in online reviews, in customer impressions, in relationships with suppliers and the local community.

- A location that emphasizes tradition, authenticity, and social responsibility will be perceived as a trusted local brand.

- Positive culture also means loyal employees, who become ambassadors of the image outside the workplace.

Elements such as:

- Participation in local events,
- Support for local producers (e.g. breakfast with products from farms in the area),
- Respect for the environment (eco-guesthouses) are expressions of an assumed organizational culture, which contributes to the reputation of the hotel/tourist complex.

A hotel/guesthouse operator must not only understand the organizational culture, but also consciously build it by:

- Personal example,
- Team Building,
- Establishing clear and assumed values.

A hotel/resort with a coherent organizational culture is more than just a place of accommodation – it is an authentic, coherent and memorable experience for the tourist.

Organizational culture reflects social responsibility through decisions, behaviors and relationships.



4.3 Impact and benefits of social responsibility. The role of the operator.

The social responsibility of the operator and the company in the context of the organizational culture is an essential component for sustainable development, building reputation and creating a healthy relationship with the community, employees and tourists. It reflects the values, attitudes and behaviors assumed by operators and employees in their daily work, directly influencing the organizational culture of the unit.



Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the hotel sector refers to the set of voluntary actions through which the hotel or tourist complex contributes to social welfare, environmental protection and local economic development, beyond legal obligations.

This includes:

- Caring for employees (working conditions, professional training, pay equity);
- Respect for the environment (waste management, energy efficiency, resource saving);
- Involvement in the local community (collaborations with local producers, sponsorships, volunteering);
- Promoting business ethics (transparency, integrity, fair treatment for customers and partners);
- Accessibility and inclusion (facilities for people with disabilities, diversity in employment).

Examples of concrete actions of social responsibilities towards:

	Domain	Dimensions of social responsibility	Example of action
1.	Medium	Implementation of eco practices (recycling, saving resources).	Installing solar panels, using eco-

		Construction and maintenance of the location with nature-friendly materials. Encouraging sustainable tourism and eco-friendly behaviour among tourists.	friendly cleaning products, recycling wastewater.
2.	Social	Collaboration with local producers (food, handicrafts). Promoting the cultural and natural heritage of the area. Involvement in local events or charitable actions.	Employing people from vulnerable groups, supporting local social causes
3.	Economic	Providing quality, safe and transparent services. Listening to feedback and continuously improving services. Correct information about the offers and values of the guesthouse.	Purchasing food from local producers
4.	Educational and cultural	Collaborating with schools, NGOs or local authorities for community projects.	Offering internships for pupils or students. Organizing events to promote local traditions
Table 2 Areas of social responsibility			

Positive impact:

- Increasing customer trust – tourists prefer responsible establishments that actively contribute to the common good;
 - Competitive advantage – differentiation on the market compared to other operators;
 - Employee and customer localization – social engagement increases satisfaction and loyalty;
 - Sustainable partnerships – attracting responsible investors and collaborators.

Negative impact (in the absence of RS):

- Public criticism or scandals – lack of transparency or care for the environment can lead to reputational damage;
 - Decrease in attractiveness to customers aware of social and environmental issues;
 - Difficulties in attracting and retaining employees – especially from the younger generations who value social involvement.

Social responsibility is an investment in the future of the hotel or tourist complex. It is not just a form of philanthropy, but a sustainable development strategy that brings economic, social and image benefits. A responsible operator becomes a leader in the community, and its positive image attracts customers, employees and valuable partners.

Examples.

A hotel/resort collaborates with local craftsmen to decorate the rooms and offers tourists pottery or weaving workshops.



A guesthouse captures rainwater to irrigate the garden and uses local organic products in the kitchen.

A guesthouse provides employees with annual training courses and organizes team building activities to maintain a positive atmosphere



Social responsibility contributes to the

- Improving reputation and brand image.
- Customer loyalty by providing an authentic and ethical experience.
- Motivation and stability of employees, who feel valued and involved.
- Sustainable business growth through integration into the community and the natural landscape.

The role of the guesthouse operator

The operator is the initiator and prime example of a responsible organizational culture. He/she must:

- Owns and promotes the ethical values of the hotel/resort.
- Involve employees in social and environmental actions.
- Monitor the social and environmental impact of the activity.

A tourist guesthouse operator is not only a provider of accommodation services, but also an **active social actor** that contributes to the sustainable development of the area.

Examples of social responsibility in guesthouses:



Promoting local products and producers (e.g. homemade cheese, traditional ceramics);

Providing jobs for young people or people in the community;

Selection of environmentally friendly materials, waste recycling;

Informing tourists about rules of conduct in nature or in local cultural spaces.

Controller responsible:

Respect employee rights;

Ensures an internal climate based on ethics, inclusion and equality;

Educate tourists by their own example: respect for people, places and customs.

A responsible operator is an opinion leader, who contributes to the image of quality tourism.



4.4 Practical applications

Activity 1 – Case study:

Task: Choose a hostel in the country. Do your research:

- what kind of connections it has with the local community,
- if they promote local products,
- how they manage natural resources (water, waste, energy).

Result: PowerPoint presentation or A3 poster.

Activity 2 – Team simulation:

Theme: Organizing a "Green Guesthouse Day"

Task: Develop a plan of activities to promote the guesthouse as a responsible tourism model

(e.g. selective collection, ecological guided tour, menu with seasonal products, etc.).

Rating: by originality, applicability and tourist relevance.

Activity 3 – Self-assessment test:

1. Which of the following answers is an example of social responsibility?

A. Increase in prices in season B. Use of single-use plastics C. Hiring locals for cultural activities D. Building a larger parking lot

- Correct answer: A

2. Organizational culture includes:

A. Only the manager's decisions B. Only the products offered C. An organization's values, symbols, language, and rules D. The number of rooms available.

Correct answer: C

Activity 4:

Imagine that you are the administrator of a guesthouse in a tourist area of the country.

Fill in the table below, choosing for each type of responsibility 2 concrete actions that you would implement.

Table no.3

Type of responsibility	Action-example	Proposed actions
Towards tourists	Personalized guide with local attractions	
Towards employees	Monthly Hospitality Training	
Towards the community	Partnership with local craftsmen	
Towards the environment	Selective waste collection	
Towards the local culture	Evenings with traditional dances and costumes	

Reflection question:

Why do you think tourists appreciate tourist complexes that get involved in the life of the community and respect nature?

Activity 5: Grid Test

Instructions: Choose the correct option.

You can have one or more correct variants.

a) What does social responsibility mean in a guesthouse?

A. Increase in profit each season B. Respect for tourists, employees, the community and the environment. Promotion of international products D. Active involvement in the cultural and ecological life of the area

Correct answer: B and D

b) Which of the following examples illustrates environmental responsibility?

A. Dumping waste into the river B. Use of solar panels C. Offering traditional menus D. Selective waste collection

Correct answer: B and D

c) What actions can be considered responsibility towards the community?

- A. Importing souvenirs from China
- B. Hiring local youth
- C. Purchase of products from farmers in area
- D. Prohibition of access of locals in the courtyard of the guesthouse

Correct answer: B and C

d) Why is it important for a guesthouse to promote the local culture?

- A. To attract tourists interested in authenticity
- B. To copy the model of pensions abroad
- C. To respect the specifics of the area
- D. To create a standardized atmosphere

Correct answer: A and C

e) Which of the following reflects a lack of social responsibility?

- A. Waiters are trained periodically
- B. The owner avoids paying local taxes
- C. Traditional cooking workshops are organized
- D. Excess single-use plastic is used

Correct answer: B and D

Activity 6: Case study:

- Analyze the organizational culture of a local hotel.
- Simulation: Develop a plan for integrating a new employee into the organization's organizational culture.
- Questionnaire: Conduct a questionnaire about an organization's values and norms.

Activity 7: Roleplay:

It simulates the employee-customer interaction in a positive and a negative context.

Activity 8: Activity sheet:

Visit a hotel or resort or watch an introductory video.

Notes:

- 3 observable artifacts (furniture, uniforms, language, behavior)
- 2 values promoted in interactions
- 1 behavior that supports adaptability to change
- Team projects, mini-presentations

Activity 9: Good practice:

The "House in the Meadow" Guesthouse introduced a traditional dress code for employees, organized welcome rituals with local dishes and involved the community in weekly cultural activities. These elements have become an integral part of the organizational culture, significantly increasing customer loyalty. Conduct a short study on:

- A hotel or tourist complex in the Republic of Moldova that has a strong cultural identity (e.g. Eco-touristic guesthouses, themed guesthouses – local traditions, agriculture, slow tourism, etc.). Analyze and write down:
 - Ways to motivate and train the team.
 - Promotion strategies that reflect internal values.

Activity 10:

Task: Identify 3 hotels/resorts in the country and analyze:

- The values promoted on the website/social pages.
- The atmosphere observable from photos/reviews.

- Tourists' comments on the attitude of the staff.

Unit V. Professional image of the tourism operator

- 5.1.Components of personal image: behavior, appearance, language
- 5.2.Personal image and professional brand
- 5.3.The importance of image in creating a positive relationship with the customer
- 5.4.Practical applications

5.1. Components of personal image: behavior, appearance, language

Personal image is how others perceive us — how we behave, how we look, and how we communicate. In the field of tourism, this image matters enormously, because the employee is often the first person the customer comes into contact with. In other words, you are the company's business card!



a) Professional behavior Behavior is the first thing a customer notices. The way you speak, react and treat people can make the difference between a pleasant experience and an unpleasant one.

What matters most:

- Positive and open attitude – Even in tense moments, try to remain calm, kind and solution-oriented.
- Respect for ethical rules – Inappropriate jokes, aggressive language or discrimination of any kind are not allowed.
- Punctuality and responsibility – Present on time, attentive to tasks and willing to take responsibility for mistakes when they occur.
- Empathy and active listening – When you truly listen to a customer, you can better understand their needs and gain their trust.



Example:

A tired customer arrives at the front desk and discovers that the reservation doesn't appear in the system. An operator who keeps calm, listens to the problem and immediately offers an

alternative solution (for example, another available camera) can turn an unpleasant situation into a positive one.

b) Physical appearance and outfit First impression is formed in a few seconds, and your appearance sends a clear message about your professionalism and seriousness.

Simple but important rules:

- Wear a clean outfit that matches the company's dress code.
- Take care of personal hygiene – clean and styled hair, neat nails, clean shoes.
- Avoid excess – strong perfumes, garish make-up or too much jewelry.
- Maintain a correct posture – sit upright, relaxed, but with a professional attitude.



Example:

A tour guide who wears a clean uniform, smiles naturally, and has an open attitude inspires trust and respect from the very first eye contact.

c) Verbal and nonverbal language The words you choose and the tone of voice are just as important as your facial expression or gestures. Effective communication always combines what you say with the way you say it.

Verbal language:

- Use a clear, polite, and friendly tone.
- Avoid negative expressions such as "it can't be done" or "I don't know".
- Choose pleasant formulas: "Please", "Thank you", "With pleasure", "I'm sorry for the inconvenience".

Nonverbal language:

- Smile sincerely.
- Maintain eye contact, but not be pushy.
- Adopt an open posture, show interest and availability.
- Avoid gestures that can convey nervousness: sighs, frowns, looking down.



Example:

If a customer asks about the breakfast schedule, an answer like: "Of course! Breakfast is served between 07:00 and 10:00. If you wish, I can make you a reservation for a quiet meal." It sounds much more professional and kind than a simple "I don't know exactly, check with the restaurant."

Your professional image is built day by day, through small gestures, through the way you speak, behave and look. In tourism, your smile can be the beginning of an unforgettable experience for a visitor!



QUESTIONS AND SITUATIONS

1. How does your daily behavior (tone of voice, attitude, punctuality) influence your professional image in front of clients and colleagues?
2. To what extent do you consider that your physical appearance and outfit comply with the

requirements of professionalism in the field of tourism?

3. How aware are you of your nonverbal language (gestures, facial expressions, eye contact) when communicating with others?

4. How do you usually react in tense situations and what could you improve to convey calm and respect?

5.: What can you do concretely, every day, to strengthen a positive and trustworthy personal image in the professional environment?

5.2. Personal image and professional branding What is professional branding?



Professional branding is the reputation you build step by step, through everything you do at work — the way you behave, communicate, and perform your tasks. It shows who you are as a professional, not just as a person. In tourism, your personal brand is extremely important, because you represent the company's image in front of customers. The way you behave, speak and react influences the way people perceive the entire hotel, hostel or agency where you work. A strong professional brand is based on consistency, that is, on constant facts and attitudes, regardless of the situation. It's not enough to be kind once; You must always be kind. Every interaction, every smile and every decision contributes to your professional image.



Why the professional brand is important in tourism

- Customers don't just remember the services, but the way they felt. You contribute directly to this experience.
- A positive professional image leads to recommendations, recognition and new opportunities.
- Your personal brand influences the trust of your employer and colleagues in you.
- In a field based on human interaction, such as tourism, personal reputation becomes your professional capital.



Example:

A tour guide who greets his clients with a smile on his face, speaks respectfully, provides correct information and keeps calm in unforeseen situations quickly becomes a valued

professional. Guests will remember not only the places they visited, but also the pleasant way they were treated.

How to build a professional brand?

A strong brand is not formed overnight. It is built over time, through constant actions, correct decisions and the desire to become better and better.

The components of a successful professional brand:

Component	What does it mean concretely	Practical example in tourism
Coherence between word and deed	Do what you promise and be trustworthy.	You say that you come back with information in 10 minutes – you really come back in 10 minutes.
Respect	Towards clients, colleagues, superiors, rules and schedule.	You are polite and calm even with nervous or dissatisfied customers.
Desire for development	You are constantly learning, attending classes, asking for feedback.	Learn new expressions in English or French to get along better with tourists.
Professional competence	You know the rules and services of the unit.	Answer questions about restaurant hours or hotel facilities correctly.
Positive attitude	You find solutions, not excuses.	If a reservation is missing from the system, calmly provide alternatives and support.
Responsibility	You assume your mistakes and learn from them.	If you have forgotten an important detail, apologize and quickly fix the situation

Table 1 Professional Brand Components



Your brand is also built online. The way you post on social networks (language, pictures, comments) can influence your professional image. **To build a solid professional brand, consider the following:**

1. Know your values and strengths. Be aware of what defines you as a professional — seriousness, empathy, fairness, or team spirit.
2. Be consistent in your behavior and communication. People need to know what to expect from you. Be polite, punctual and trustworthy in any context.
3. Invest in continuing education. They attend classes, learn foreign languages, develop new skills. Knowledge brings trust and respect.
4. Build positive relationships. He collaborates openly with colleagues and treats each client with respect. Every interaction contributes to your image.

5. Respect professional ethics. Honesty, discretion and responsibility are essential elements of a sustainable professional brand.
6. Be authentic. Don't try to copy the style of others. Be yourself — sincere, involved, and passionate about what you do.



Example:

A tour guide who is always well prepared, smiles, speaks respectfully and provides correct information will be recommended by tourists and appreciated by the employer. Over time, he becomes the "image" of the company, an example of professionalism and trust.

The professional brand is not just a label, but a continuous process of personal and professional development. It is built through each choice how you speak, how you dress, how you treat people and how you react to challenges. In tourism, your smile, your calmness and your competence become the image of the place you represent.

The personal image **and** the professional brand are closely linked, but not identical. The personal image is what others see about you now, and the professional brand - what others think of you over time.

The difference between personal image and professional brand

Aspect	Personal image	Professional Brand
Definition	It's how others perceive you at first glance – through behavior, attire, language, and attitude.	It is your professional reputation, built over time, through actions, skills and constant values.
Duration	It forms quickly (in the first minutes of interaction).	It is formed slowly, through consistency and repeated experiences.
Main elements	Physical appearance, verbal and nonverbal language, daily attitude.	Professional behavior, competence, ethics, seriousness and the way of relating to others.
Purpose	Create an immediate positive impression.	To inspire trust, respect and long-term recognition.
Result	A favorable first impression.	A solid reputation that recommends you as a professional.
Example in tourism	A receptionist smiles, is polite and dressed appropriately – conveys a positive image.	Over time, through professionalism and seriousness, that receptionist becomes recognized by customers and colleagues as a reliable employee – this is his professional brand.

Table 2 Difference between personal image and professional brand



QUESTIONS AND SITUATIONS

1. In the event that a dissatisfied customer arrives at the reception, how would you react to demonstrate a positive attitude and respect, according to the professional brand?
2. What concrete actions can you take to develop your professional competence in tourism, so that you are considered a reliable professional?
3. How does your verbal and nonverbal language influence the customer's first impression and how does it relate to your personal image?
4. What behaviors or posts on social networks can negatively or positively affect your professional brand in tourism?
5. How can I make my personal image and professional brand consistent and create a positive impression in the long run?

5.3. The importance of image in creating a positive relationship with the customer



The professional image is the first impression you create and one of the strongest. It conveys who you are as a person, but also the value of the company you represent. A sincere smile, a careful look, a neat outfit, and a calm voice can make a customer feel respected, understood, and welcome. Even the smallest details matter: how you greet, how you listen, how you react in difficult situations. A friendly tone or a patient attitude can turn an issue into an opportunity to gain the customer's trust.



Why does the professional image matter in the relationship with the client?

In tourism, the customer does not just buy a product, but a complete experience. This includes:

- the atmosphere of the place visited;
- the quality of services;
- the way you communicate and behave with people.

The benefits of a positive professional image

Benefit	What does it mean concretely
Confidence	The customer feels that he is in good hands and is sure that the services are of quality.
Allegiance	The client returns, recommends the hotel or agency to others, becoming a brand promoter.
Flexibility in difficult situations	When you have a positive image, the customer is more patient and willing to collaborate.

Benefit	What does it mean concretely
Personal advantages	A good image helps you advance professionally, receive recommendations and get noticed in the field.
Team reputation	A team that conveys professionalism and trust contributes to the success of the entire company.
Table 1 Benefits of Professional Image	

Personal image does not only mean beautiful clothes, but above all: positive attitude and openness to people; cleanliness and personal care; respectful and friendly communication; appropriate behavior in any situation.



Behaviors that strengthen the relationship with the customer

Behavior	Concrete example
Polite greeting and initiative	"Hello! Can I help you with your luggage?"
Empathy	"I realize you're tired after the road. We immediately lead you to the room."
Discretion and respect	You don't comment out loud on a customer's preferences or behavior.
Attention to detail	You remember that a customer asked for an extra pillow last time and you prepare it in advance.
Positive attitude	Even when you're tired or pressed for time, stay calm and smile.
Neat appearance and appropriate outfit	A clean uniform, well-groomed hair and a correct posture convey professionalism and seriousness.
Table 2 Customer Behaviors	

Professional image is a combination of appearance, attitude and behavior. Professional image is a combination of

- :• external appearance – the way you dress, present yourself and take care of your outfit;
- attitude – the way you react to new or difficult situations;
- behavior – respect, politeness and willingness to help;

- nonverbal communication – gestures, tone of voice, look, smile.

The customer perceives all these elements together and forms an impression in just a few seconds. That is why your professional image must be constantly taken care of, not only when you are supervised by superiors.



How can you improve your personal image?

- Maintain daily cleanliness and personal care.
- Choose an outfit appropriate to the type of activity (clean uniform, comfortable shoes, discreet accessories)
- Be punctual and organized.
- Smile sincerely and use a warm tone when speaking.
- Avoid conflicts, gossip or negative attitudes.
- Show willingness to help and interest in customer needs. Your personal image is your business card in the field of tourism. It reflects who you are, how you think, and how you respect people. A positive image is built every day, through simple details: a smile, a nice word, a neat outfit. When you have a good personal image, you attract respect, trust and professional success.



QUESTIONS AND SITUATIONS

1. How does your attitude and tone of voice contribute to creating a positive first impression for the customer?
2. Which of the behaviors presented in Table 2 (empathy, attention to detail, discretion, etc.) do you think you apply best and which ones could you improve?
3. How does your personal image (appearance, care, outfit) influence customer trust and loyalty?
4. What concrete steps will you take daily to improve your personal image and sustain positive customer relationships?



5.4. Practical applications

Activity 1 Exercise: Build your professional brand

Each student:

- Write 3 personal qualities that contribute to your professional image
- Identify 2 things you can improve
- Propose 3 concrete steps to strengthen your brand

Activity 2 Creating a professional brand mini-portfolio

Objective: To build a professional identity that reflects one's own qualities, skills and values.

Instructions:

Write a mini-portfolio that includes:

- A brief personal presentation (as a future tourism professional)
- List of relevant qualities and skills
- Examples of professional behaviours demonstrated in practice (traineeships, school activities)
- A professional photo (optional)

Activity 3 Case studies:

Situation: A guest arrives at the hotel after a long drive. He is tired and irritated because the reservation does not appear in the system.

Question:

What behaviors and skills must the operator demonstrate in order to maintain a professional image and resolve the situation successfully?

Activity 4 Self-assessment: Personal professional image

Objective: To become aware of one's own image and to identify areas for improvement.

Instructions:

Each student completes a self-assessment sheet that includes:

- How do I perceive my outfit?
- What attitude do I adopt towards customers?
- How do I react in difficult situations?
- What are my strengths?
- What can I improve?

At the end, set 2 goals for the development of your personal image.

III. Recommended bibliography

Specialized books and manuals:

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16. Sălăvăstru, Dorina – *The Psychology of Education*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2004
17. Șchiopu, Ursula – *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Psychology*, Babel Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997
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Educational Guides and Resources:

1. Alberti & Emmons – *"Your Perfect Right"* – practical guide to assertive communication.
2. CNCFPA (National Council for Adult Vocational Training) – *Occupational Standard: Hotel Worker / Hotel Receptionist*
3. Cedefop / ETF – *Tourism and hospitality – key competences for employment*, translations and resources available online
4. Methodological Guides for Entrepreneurial Education and Personal Development, various editions, Ministry of Education, 2020–2024

5. Ministry of Education – *Curriculum for the qualification of Operator in Hotels and Tourist Complexes*, level 3, updated

Disclaimer

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