

## EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION IN TOURISM BUSINESSES – AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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**Abstract:** Tourism is one of the most important sectors in Greece and it has been a key element of the economic activity in the country. Before the pandemic of COVID-19 tourism represented almost 30% of GDP and 25% of employment in Greece. This research paper aims to study the employee satisfaction in tourism, an important part of human resource management. For the purposes of this study an empirical analysis is conducted to tourism employees of the prefecture of Halkidiki. The findings support that the employees are not satisfied with their salaries, they accept their evaluation but there are no rewards, they are satisfied in general with their employment and they believe that they will be employed for the next tourism season.

**Key words:** tourism, employee satisfaction, empirical analysis, Greece

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### INTRODUCTION

One of the most important sectors in Greece is tourism and it has supported growth and employment in the country for the last decades, especially during the economic crisis. Until the beginning of 2020, just before the outbreak of COVID-19, tourism represented almost 30% of GDP and 25% of employment in Greece (OECD, 2020; Statista, 2021). Universally, public and private organizations have to adapt to the globalization of economic activities, developments in technologies and social media and demands of citizens based on the quality of values, actions, methods, satisfaction and many other aspects (Kusluvan et al., 2010; Baroutas et al., 2020). The business excellence of an organization is based on several factors one of which is human resources (Gong et al., 2009). Employee satisfaction is an important part of human resource management; thus it is important to study the employee satisfaction, the employees' evaluation, how the employees' performance is affected by the work environment and the certainty that the employees feel in tourism businesses. Suggestively, researchers study job satisfaction of employees in tourism sector in hotels or restaurants (Romero et al., 2018; Laškarin Ažić, 2017), in spa services of tourism (Perić et al., 2018; Perić et al., 2015) and in specific regions (Heimerl et al., 2020a; Heimerl et al., 2020b; Pekerşen and Tugay, 2020; Vijayakumar and Vivek, 2018; Schneider and Treisch, 2019). The job satisfaction of the employees' directly affects their work, the provided services to tourists and the financial performance of the business (Kusluvan et al., 2010; Perić et al., 2018; Chi and Gursoy, 2009). Furthermore, research regarding employees' job satisfaction in tourism sector is limited in Greece (Baroutas et al., 2020). Employee satisfaction is related to the services provided to tourists and loyalty.

There is an impact of employee satisfaction on the tourist satisfaction (Kusluvan et al., 2010). This research paper aims to study the employee satisfaction in tourism and the research questions are whether demographic characteristics affect the employee satisfaction. The structure of the paper is as follows. The second section provides the research methodology of this study, the third section presents demographic and professional characteristics, the fourth presents the associations between personal and professional characteristics and the last section concludes.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is the employee satisfaction in tourism businesses in the prefecture of Halkidiki, one of the most visited tourism regions of Greece (Mavragani et al., 2019; Enterprise Greece – Invest & Trade, 2021; INSETE, 2021). Halkidiki is considered to be the most popular tourist destination in the region of Northern Greece, both for foreign visitors and Greeks, but it has not been studied as other popular tourist regions (Mavragani et al., 2019; Kamenidou and Mamalis, 2015). Tourism in Halkidiki has been the most significant pillar of development at least for the last three decades (Avdimiotis and Tilikidou, 2017; Latinopoulos, 2018; Marits, 2013). Halkidiki performed second best (86.7%, after the island of Crete 87.3%) in the general satisfaction index of the Greek and competitive mass destinations “sun & sea” for September 2019. The same excellent performance is achieved for the same period for important touristic indexes like location, service, value for money (INSETE, 2021). The employment in the tourism sector is very demanding, regarding the workload and the level of quality of services since the employees are the link between the business and the customers

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(Belias et al., 2021). Thus, the study of job satisfaction of employees in the Greek tourism sector is of importance for the human resources departments since it is closely related to customer satisfaction (Rossidis et al., 2019).

In order to achieve the above, a structured questionnaire was used as the research instrument. It consisted of twenty-nine questions regarding demographic characteristics, working status, working conditions and job satisfaction. The questionnaire was pilot tested to determine if the questions could be well understood by respondents. The actual full-scale survey was conducted in the period of August to September 2019. The questionnaire was distributed to employees of hotels, restaurants, bars and shops in the region of Halkidiki. Because of time and cost constraints, the convenience sampling procedure along with the snowball sampling was employed. At the end of the survey period, 268 questionnaires were collected. The profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

**DEMOGRAPHIC AND PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

The sample consists of 162 female and 106 male, and the majority (61.2%) belongs to the age group “23-30”. As it concerns the education level, most of the respondents (47.8%) have a bachelor’s degree and 20.1% have vocational education and training. It is remarkable that 76.9% don’t have tourism education indicating that they work in tourism as a non-permanent job or because they wish to work in a different sector. However, two out of three works in tourism for more than one year and most of them work in a hotel, restaurant or bar. Only one out of four work for eight hours per day, while almost half (44%) work for more than eight hours per day and 26.9% have no fixed working hours per day, which most likely means that they work for more hours. The salary of one out of three is the basic one, while 61.9% is given a salary less than 1000 euro.

Table 1. Profile of the respondents

Demographic characteristics	Variable	Frequency	(%) Percentage
Gender	Male	106	39.6
	Female	162	60.4
Age	18-22	44	16.4
	23-30	164	61.2
	31-40	42	15.7
	41-50	18	6.7
Educational level	Secondary education	72	26.9
	Vocational education and training	54	20.1
	University	128	47.8
Tourism education	Yes	62	23.1
	No	206	76.9
Experience in Tourism	Less than 1 year	90	33.6
	1-4 years	104	38.8
	5-10 years	64	23.9
	11-20 years	6	2.2
	More than 20 years	4	1.5
Type of tourism business where you usually work	Hotel	88	32.8
	Bar/Tavern/Restaurant	104	38.8
	Beach bar	62	23.1
	Shop	4	1.5
	Retail	10	3.7
Working hours per day	Less than 6 hours	6	2.2
	7 hours	8	3
	8 hours	64	23.9
	More than 8 hours	118	44
	Non fixed	72	26.9
Job Post	House keeping	8	3
	Reception	34	12.7
	Bar/Tavern/Restaurant	182	67.9
	Entertainment	16	6
	Accounting	6	2.2
Month salary	Other	22	8.2
	Basic	50	18.7
	500-700	88	32.8
	701-1000	78	29.1
	1001-1500	40	14.9
More than 1500	12	4.5	

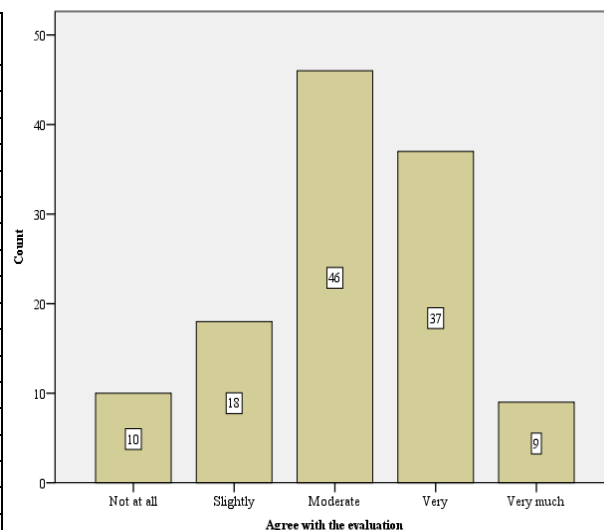


Figure 1. Agree with the evaluation

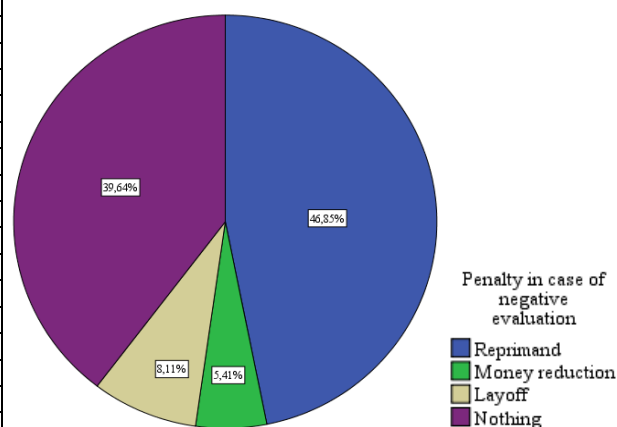


Figure 2. Penalty in case of a negative evaluation

The majority of the respondents (60.4%) state that evaluation of staff is realized either by the business’s owner (46.6%) or manager/chief (54%). Most of the respondents (76.3%) agree with the evaluation (Figure 1), while 57.4% support that there are not rewards in case of a positive one. Those who are rewarded indicate that the reward is moral (44%), money bonus (41%), a day off (7%) and a promotion (8%). In case of a negative evaluation, 39.6% reply that there is no penalty, 46.8% that there is reprimand, 8.1% that they were fired and 5.4% state a salary reduction (Figure 2).

In the question whether the job performance is affected by their relationship with their colleagues 36.6% reply that it does, 24.6% that it does not and 38.8% that it does sometimes. Most of the respondents believe that they will find a job

next season (50.7%), 34.4% neither agree nor disagree, while 28.4% disagree or totally disagree (see, Figure 3). Almost half of the respondents (50.7%) are satisfied with the customer treatment, 36.6% are neutral, while 12.7% are not satisfied. Forty one percent of the respondents (41%) keep a moderate position in regards with the satisfaction from their salary, 30.6% are satisfied and 28.4% are not. Most of the respondents (60.4%) believe that there is undeclared work in tourism professions, 28.8% neither agree nor disagree, while only 11.2% do not agree with that view (Figure 4). On the contrary, 48.5% of the respondents reply that businesses cover insurance payments, 33.6% is neutral, while 17.9% do not agree with that view.

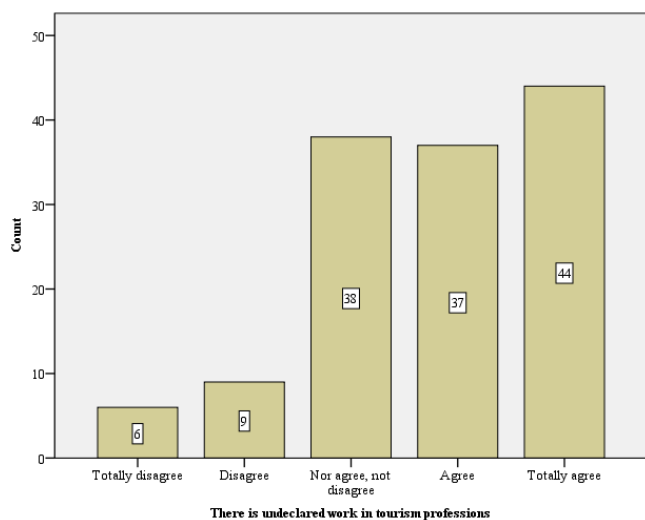


Figure 4. There is undeclared work in tourism professions

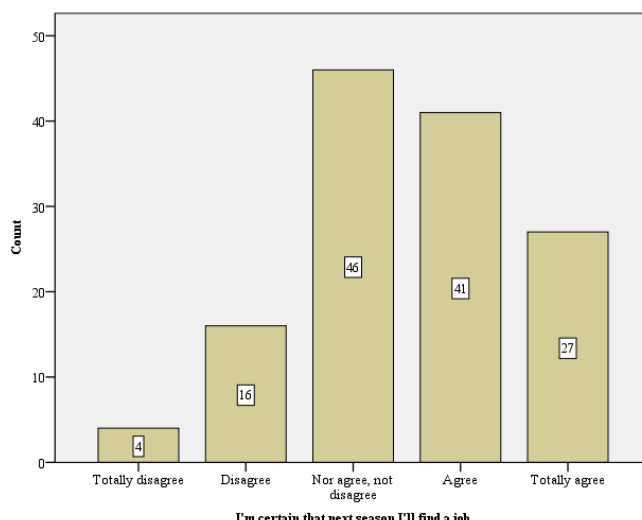


Figure 3. I'm certain that next season I'll find a job

Almost half of the respondents (44%) work in tourism because they have not found anything better, 30.6% disagrees with that and 25.4% are neutral (Figure 5). In accordance with the previous view, 50.8% believe that the seasonal employment in tourism is not for a permanent career, 23.9% disagree with that and 25.4% are in the middle.

The job satisfaction appears at the question whether the respondents would recommend to someone they know in the business they work, in which 49.3% reply “yes”, 39.6% reply “with conditions” and only 11.2% reply “no” (Figure 6). Additionally, 35.1% state that they would like to work to same business next season, 42.5% “with conditions” and 22.4% “no”. Most of the respondents are satisfied from their work in general, since 45.5% are satisfied from their colleagues, 38% are satisfied from their manager, 31.4% are satisfied from business policy and 47.8% are satisfied from their job, with the corresponding moderate percentages to be around 35% in each category.

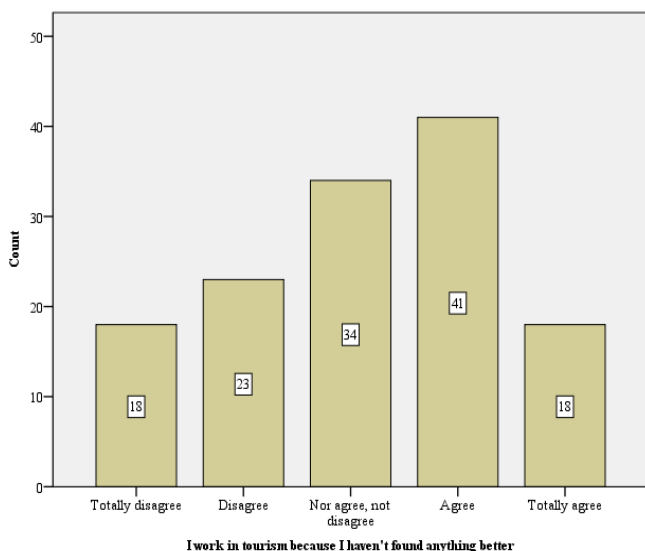


Figure 5. I work in tourism because I haven't found anything better

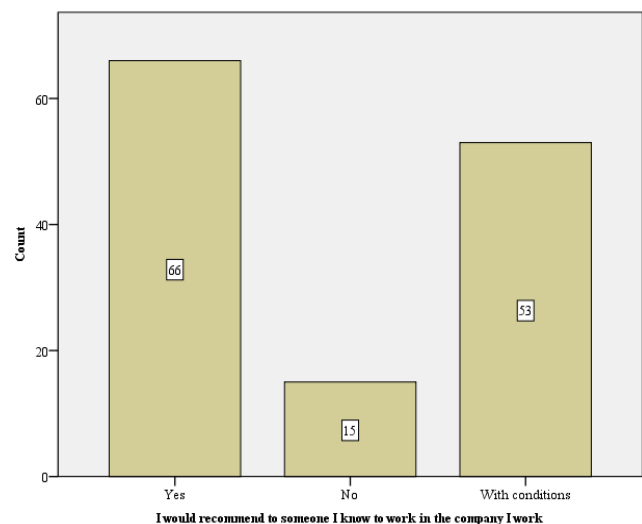


Figure 6. I would recommend to someone I know to work in the same company I work

### ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The findings of chi-square test between personal and professional characteristics and all other qualitative variables of the questionnaire are indicated in Table 2. The dependent variables are indicated along with the chi-square value and the p-value. Specifically, month salary depends on gender since 63% of female are paid with the basic salary or with 500-700 euro, while the corresponding percentage for male is 33.9%.

Totally satisfied from customer treatment are 20.8% of men and only 3.7% of women. Almost half of women (49.3%) reply that they work in tourism because they have not found a better job, including replies “agree” and “totally

agree”, while the corresponding percentage for men is 35.8% and most stated “agree” (Table 3). Most of the oldest respondents indicate that there is reward in case of a positive evaluation and their reward is “money bonus” or “moral bonus”. The penalty in case of a negative evaluation is usually for the young reprimand, while for the eldest is layoff. Regarding satisfaction from their job the eldest respondents are “very” or “very much” satisfied, while the youngest ones are moderate satisfied. The eldest respondents are not certain that they will find a job next season (Table 4) and they are not satisfied from customer treatment. Also, the youngest respondents are not certain that there is undeclared work in tourism professions and they wish they would work in the same business next season.

Table 2. Dependent variables and chi-square test

Variables		Chi-square value	p-value
Gender	Month Salary	33.011	0.000
	Job Performance is affected by my relationship with my colleagues	9.313	0.009
	Customer treatment is satisfactory	14.404	0.006
	I work in tourism because I haven't found anything better	10.646	0.031
Age	Reward in case of positive evaluation	8.390	0.039
	What kind of reward	35.308	0.002
	Penalty in case of negative evaluation	17.961	0.036
	Satisfaction from my job	22.235	0.035
	I'm certain that next season I'll find a job	44.100	0.000
	Customer treatment is satisfactory	38.315	0.000
	There is undeclared work in tourism professions	30.995	0.002
	I'd like to work to the same business next season	13.409	0.037
Educational level	Month salary	26.789	0.044
	Evaluation of staff is realized	13.672	0.008
	Who performs the evaluation	84.006	0.000
	Reward in case of positive evaluation	9.722	0.045
	What kind of reward	55.259	0.000
Tourism education	Businesses also cover insurance payments	41.756	0.000
	Month salary	9.913	0.042
Experience it Tourism	I work in tourism because I haven't found anything better	10.337	0.035
	Month salary	34.606	0.004
	Reward in case of positive evaluation	10.020	0.040
	Satisfaction from business policy	55.252	0.000
	I'm certain that next season I'll find a job	30.525	0.015
	Customer treatment is satisfactory	32.253	0.009
Type of tourism business where you usually word	I work in tourism because I haven't found anything better	26.588	0.046
	Evaluation of staff is realized	10.899	0.028
	Who performs the evaluation	40.932	0.001
	Agree with the evaluation	32.091	0.010
	Satisfaction from colleagues	29.307	0.022
	I'm certain that next season I'll find a job	27.928	0.032
	Customer treatment is satisfactory	48.851	0.000
Working hours per day	I work in tourism because I haven't found anything better	26.978	0.042
	Who performs the evaluation	38.081	0.001
Job Post	I work in tourism because I haven't found anything better	28.653	0.026
	What kind of reward	54.174	0.001

Table 3. Gender \* I work in tourism because I haven't found anything better Crosstabulation

			I work in tourism because I haven't found anything better					Total
			Totally disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Totally agree	
Gender	Male	Count	22	10	36	28	10	106
		% within Gender	20.8%	9.4%	34.0%	26.4%	9.4%	100.0%
	Female	Count	14	36	32	54	26	102
		% within Gender	8.6%	22.2%	19.8%	33.3%	16.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	36	46	68	82	36	268	
	% within Gender	13.4%	17.2%	25.4%	30.6%	13.4%	100.0%	

The educational level seems to be associated with the variables regarding evaluation and monthly salary. Respondents of all educational levels, except for holders of a bachelor's or master's degree, state that evaluation of staff is realized. Employees with secondary education or PhD indicate that there is a reward in case of positive evaluation and the other groups that there is not. The ones with the lowest educational levels reply that they get money or moral bonus in that case, while the one with the upper educational levels state that businesses don't cover insurance payments.

The dependence of tourism education appears only with the month salary and the state “I work in tourism because I haven't found anything better”. Studies in tourism seem to result in a better salary. More specifically, 64.5% of specialized

employees have a salary of more than 701 euro, while the corresponding percentage for the non-specialized is 43.7%. As it was expected, 50.5% of those who are not educated in tourism state that “I work in tourism because I haven't found anything better” with the corresponding percentage of the other group to be 21.6%. As expected, the more experienced in tourism respondents have a better salary, they state that there is no reward in case of a positive evaluation, they are more satisfied from business policy, but not so much by the customer treatment and they are not certain if they work in tourism because they haven't found anything better. The type of tourism business where the respondents usually work seems to affect most the variables regarding evaluation. According to the respondents, evaluation is realized at hotels, shops and restaurants, but not so much at beach bars and in retail. The evaluation is usually performed by the chief at hotels and shops, by the owner at restaurants, beach bars and in retail. Only the respondents who work at hotels and restaurants agree with the evaluation. Most of the groups are moderate satisfied from their colleagues and only those who work in restaurants and beach bars are “very” or “very much” satisfied from their colleagues (48.1% and 48.4%, respectively). Most of the respondents are “very” or “very much” certain that they will find a job next season (50% at hotels, 57.7% at restaurants and 41.9% at beach bars, see, Figure 7). Those who work at beach bars are very satisfied from customer treatment (58.1%, see, Figure 8). The respondents who indicate that they work in tourism because they have not found a better job are those who work in restaurants (59.7%) and beach bars (45.2%); all other groups don't agree with this statement.

Table 4. Age\* I'm certain that next season I'll find a job Crosstabulation

		I'm certain that next season I'll find a job			Total
		Totally disagree or Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree or Totally agree	
18-22	% within Age	4.5%	50.0%	45.5%	100,0%
23-30	% within Age	12.2%	30.5%	57.4%	100,0%
31-40	% within Age	19.0%	38.1%	42.6%	100,0%
41-50	% within Age	55.5%	22.2%	22.2%	100,0%
Total	% within Age	14,9%	34,3%	50,7%	100,0%

Table 5. Descriptive measures of the new variables

	General satisfaction	Positive specific satisfaction	Negative specific satisfaction
Mean	12.64	13.39	10.32
Median	13	14	11
1st quartile	10	12	8
3rd quartile	15	15	12
SD	3.544	2.578	2.688
Min	4	4	3
Max	20	20	15

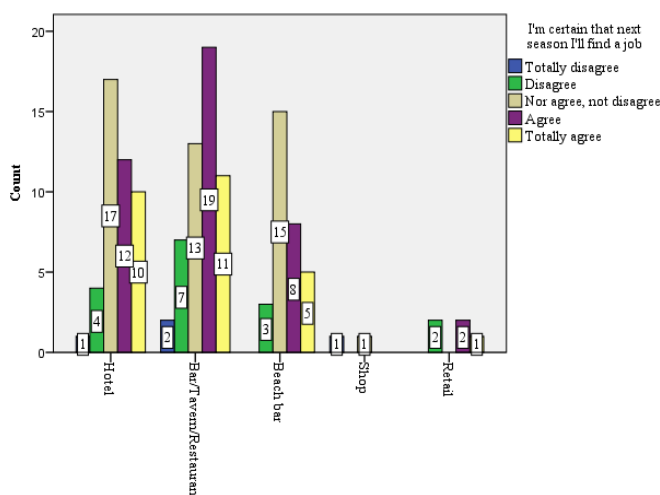


Figure 7. I'm certain that next season I'll find a job \* Type of tourist business where you usually work Crosstabulation

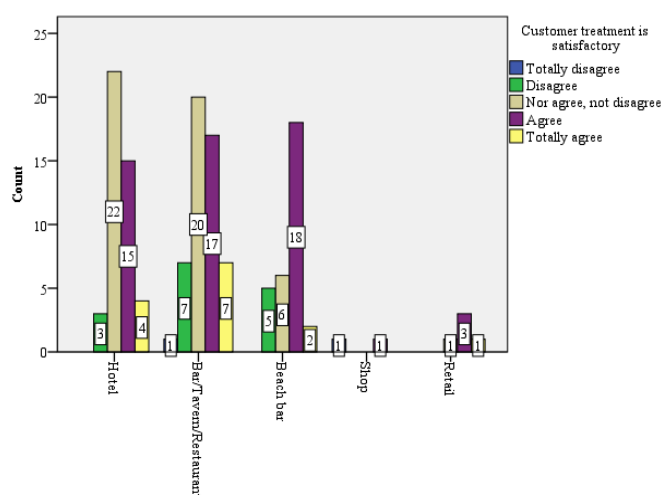


Figure 8. Customer treatment is satisfactory \* Type of tourist business where you usually work Crosstabulation

Working hours per day effect the variable “who performs the evaluation”, since those who work for 8 hours and more reply that the chief performs the evaluation, while those who work for 8 hours or less reply that the owner realizes it. Those who work for 8 hours or less state that “I work in tourism because I haven't found anything better” but those who work for more hours state the opposite. Those who work in entertainment or restaurants are more likely to get money bonus in case of a positive reward, those who work in reception, housekeeping or accounting are more likely to get a moral reward.

In order to study the overall satisfaction, the above variables were grouped in scales. Specifically, three scales were created; the general satisfaction (from the items of “from colleagues”, “manager”, “policy” and “job”), the positive specific satisfaction (from the items of “I'll find a job next season”, “the income is enough”, “customer treatment” and “insurance payments”) and the negative specific satisfaction (from the items of “undeclared work”, “haven't found better job”, “not for a permanent work”). Because 1–5 points were given in the five scaled answers, “I totally disagree” to “I totally agree”, a score for each question/view is received. Four questions/views mean a minimum possible score of four and a maximum possible score of 20 per respondent. The descriptive statistics of these variables are indicated in Table 5. The reliability estimate with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  is in all cases very satisfactory. Also, general satisfaction is highly correlated with positive specific satisfaction (Pearson correlation is 0.463 and p-value is 0.000).

Independent-samples t test is next used to compare the above three scales and variables with two categories. This test tests the significance of the difference between two sample means. The significance value of the t-statistic in Table 6 being lower than 0.05 (p-value), provides evidence of a statistically significant difference between the two samples

(gender, tourism education, evaluation of staff is realized and reward in case of positive evaluation). Because of the sign of the confidence intervals of these tests, those who have 1-4 years experience in tourism are more satisfied than those who work for less than one year and those who support that evaluation of staff is realized and that there is a reward in case of positive evaluation are more satisfied is concluded. In order to compare the three scales of employee satisfaction and variables with more than two categories, the one-way ANOVA procedure is applied. Table 7 indicates which variables contribute the most to our cluster solution. Variables with large F values provide the greatest separation between clusters. In cases where the p-value is lower than 0.05, there is evidence that at least two means are different between them.

Table 6. Independent-Samples t-test

Variables		t-test	p-value
Positive specific satisfaction	Tourism education	-2.312	0.023
Positive specific satisfaction	Evaluation of staff is realized	3.156	0.002
General satisfaction	Reward in case of positive evaluation	2.578	0.011
Positive specific satisfaction	Reward in case of positive evaluation	2.421	0.017

Table 7. One-way ANOVA

Variables		F	p-value
General satisfaction	Agree with the evaluation	8.534	0.000
General satisfaction	Penalty in case of negative evaluation	2.947	0.036
General satisfaction	Job performance is affected by my relationship with my colleagues	3.992	0.021
General satisfaction	There is undeclared work in tourism professions	3.113	0.018
General satisfaction	I would recommend to someone I know to work in the business I work	11.186	0.000
General satisfaction	I'd like to work to the same business next season	15.100	0.000
Positive specific satisfaction	Age	3.571	0.016
Positive specific satisfaction	Educational level	2.651	0.036
Positive specific satisfaction	Experience in tourism	4.321	0.003
Positive specific satisfaction	Type of tourism business where you usually work	2.505	0.045
Positive specific satisfaction	Month salary	5.672	0.000
Positive specific satisfaction	Agree with the evaluation	6.162	0.000
Positive specific satisfaction	Penalty in case of negative evaluation	6.807	0.000
Positive specific satisfaction	I would recommend to someone I know to work in the business I work	5.562	0.005
Positive specific satisfaction	I'd like to work to the same business next season	12.640	0.000
Negative specific satisfaction	Age	2.684	0.049
Negative specific satisfaction	Month salary	3.322	0.013
Negative specific satisfaction	Type of tourism business where you usually work	3.678	0.007
Negative specific satisfaction	Job post	2.642	0.049

Specifically, regarding general satisfaction the age group of 23-30 is more satisfied than those of 41-50 (p-value is 0.042). Among those who agree with the evaluation, are less satisfied those who reply "not at all" than those who reply "moderate", "very" and "very much". Also, "slightly" is less than "moderate" and "very". Among those who state that their job performance is affected by their relationship with their colleagues, those who state "no" are less satisfied than those who replied "yes". The respondents who would recommend to someone they know to work in the business they work are more satisfied than those who would not recommend and those who would recommend with conditions (p-value is 0.008). Finally, the respondents who would like to work to the same business next season are more satisfied than those who do not (p-value is 0.000) and with conditions (p-value is 0.039) and with conditions is more than would not (p-value is 0.002).

Regarding the positive specific satisfaction the age groups of 23-30 and 31-40 are more satisfied than 41-50 (p-values are 0.042 and 0.009, respectively). More satisfied are those who are experienced with more than 21 years than those who have less than one year experience (p-value is 0.008). All respondents with salaries above 700 euro are more satisfied than the ones with lower salaries. The respondents who have supported that they get a penalty in case of negative evaluation, those who get a reprimand are more satisfied than those who got layoff (p-value is 0.003). The respondents who would recommend to someone they know to work in the business they work, those who replied "yes" are more satisfied than those who replied "no" (p-value is 0.024) and "with conditions" (p-value is 0.021). Finally, those who would like to work to the same business next season, those who replied "yes" are more satisfied than "no" (p-value is 0.000) and "with conditions" (p-value is 0.015) and "with conditions" are more than "no" (p-value is 0.022). Regarding the negative specific satisfaction, those who work in restaurants are more negative satisfied than those who work in a hotel (p-value is 0.030). Those who have salaries above 1500 euro are less negative satisfied than those with salary 500-700 euro (p-value is 0.008).

## CONCLUSIONS

Human resources are essential for the performance of any business and employee performance is associated with service quality and customer satisfaction according to the literature review (Chatzopoulou et al., 2015). However, several topics of employment management practices and conditions of tourism industry sectors and organizations have not been thoroughly studied. Most of the studies on human resource management practices are based on data received from subjective perceptions of managers or department heads (Kusluvan et al., 2010). This paper empirically studied the view of employees. As tourism is a central pillar of the Greek economy, it must be studied in all its aspects. Tourism is affected by the services provided to tourists; if tourists are happy with their stay, they will visit the country again. The quality of

provided services is affected by employee satisfaction, thus, it is important for the tourism carriers to study this topic in all regions of the country. This paper enriched the existing literature in the subject of employee satisfaction in tourism and more specifically in the region of Halkidiki; Halkidiki region is one of the most popular tourist destinations, but it has not been studied extensively. This study examines the employee satisfaction in tourism sector and specifically whether demographic characteristics affect the employee satisfaction. The findings support that the employees are not satisfied with their salaries, they accept the outcome of the realized evaluation, but there are no rewards in case of a positive evaluation, they are satisfied in general with their job and they believe that they will remain in their job for the next tourism season.

Findings suggest that customer treatment is satisfactory, that the staff evaluation has a significant effect on the type of tourism business where the respondents usually work and that the respondents are certain that they will find a job next season. Findings also indicate that gender, tourism education, experience in tourism, working hours per day and type of tourism business where the respondents usually work, seem to significantly affect their view that they work in tourism because they haven't found another job. Future research could investigate employees' satisfaction in other tourism regions of Greece. Additionally, the results could be compared with those for other European countries especially to countries of the South. Finally, it would be interesting to repeat this study in the tourism seasons after the pandemic of COVID-19.

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