

Why is it worth a Career in Tourism Professions

Survey of the European College for Tourism Studies

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Research - Contribution to Career Orientation.

The following is a summary of a survey addressed to young people who are concerned about their career, but also to parents who are trying to help their children in choosing a suitable profession. And of course it is addressed to young men and women who have recently graduated from high school and see a number of ways opening in front of them to find out (unfortunately) later that most of them lead to dead-ends or to suffocating concentrations of unemployed scientists.

A career in tourism professions is worth:

Because tourism is one of the most important sections, if not the most important, **of the Greek economy**. It is a section that it does not only have present, but also, especially, future. Geographical position, climatic conditions, historical and cultural factors ensure a significant position of the country's tourism future in the global division of labor. The tourist activity can only increase as millions of people each year improve their financial status and are able to travel around the world. All forecasts and scientific analysis give to tourism some of the fastest growth rates.

Because the multifarious tourist activities in our country employ directly and indirectly, permanently or seasonally, almost one million people. And will continue to employ thousands of young people every year, as the old generations pass the baton to the younger ones. In other words, tourism is the largest employer in our country and one of the most important worldwide. This means that its stamp in a booklet of employment or social security or in a Curriculum Vitae "gives wings" to whoever would like to leave the country in order to try to get advantage of his potentials in the globalized economy.

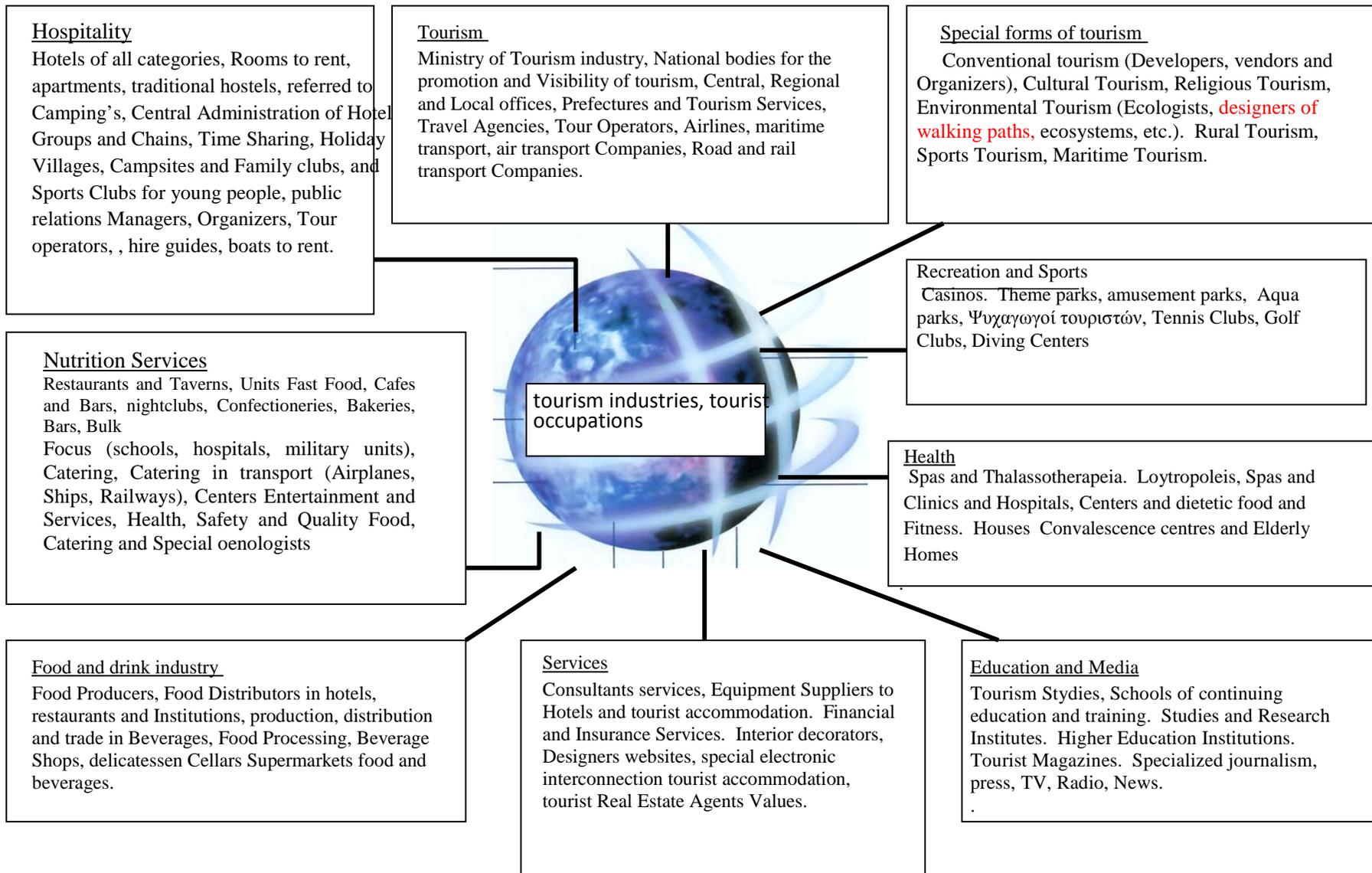
Because tourism, along with shipping, are the two major wealth-producing sections of our economy, supplying and supporting almost any other section. This means in macro-economic level, tourism is the pylon upon which the progress and the development of this country is based. And in micro-economic level, it means that every Greek family has an income directly or indirectly from tourism, which could be big or small, but it certainly is for many families the main income. From this income, hundreds of thousands of families earn a living, often by developing their activities without knowledge, infrastructures and necessary connections and with little help from the local and prefectural governments and the state. Now this model of tourism development is changing. It cannot be otherwise. And it is changing for the better. And along with this, the prospects of tourism professions change: They certainly become better.

Because tourism encloses an incredibly wide variety of professions. No other section of the economy offers so many professions and so many options and combinations. The table below gives an idea, small and indicative, of tourism professions from which a young person can choose. Just reading the companies that employ tourism professionals is a time-consuming task. If different specialties who are employed in each one of those companies are mentioned and analyzed, then the recording of professions and jobs require a whole book. For example, a hotel unit employs only at the Rooms Division, among others, and the following specialties:

• Receptionists
• Reservation specialists
• Cashiers and accounting staff
• Maids and Housekeepers
• Telephone operators and computer and audiovisual systems operators
• Customer service and public relations office
• Salesmen
• Marketing Specialists
• Rooms Division Manager

Panel

Employment and Career Opportunities in Space Tourism



Repeating this analysis for each form of tourism business we can get the "Panorama of Tourism Professions," which is so impressive as it sounds. If a young person is attracted by the variety of activities that he can do and if the wide variety of choice have some value (and the experience does not last long to confirm that they have great value), then his road leads to the "avenue" of tourism.

Because education in the tourism professions is not just specialization: it is multi - specialization.

The need to serve customers from many aspects (transportation, accommodation, nutrition, recreation, entertainment, tours, sightseeing, etc.) and to perform complex tasks (such as customer reception and bill payment, order taking for lunch and serving, sales and public relations, promotion of conference venues and organization of conferences and meetings, negotiations with tour operators/travel agencies and relations with suppliers, culinary arts and financial management), tourism professionals are almost never confined to one or two specialties, but expand and acquire three, four and often more. It is very rare and almost impossible to find a tourism professional who has acquired and has confined to a single specialty. The rule in the tourism industry is multi - specialization and multiple skills, not the limitation to only one specialty and a single skill. Just a look at the lessons taught to students of any tourism school to get an idea of the variety of knowledge and skills offered to potential tourism professionals.

The feature of the multi-specialization of a professional who activates in the tourism industry has very important consequences. It is worth noting some of them:

➤ **The different and multifarious activities of tourism leaves no room for boredom and satiety,** which is often created by the occupation with a single activity. And the interest that one has for his job is the best guarantee that he will do well and move on.

➤ **The constantly changing conditions of competition and globalized economy often make it desirable or necessary for the employee to move to another, or similar specialty.** In fact, studies show that young people now entering the labor market will change job and employer on average seven times, some of which will involve a specialty change. While, therefore, others should go again back to school to acquire a new specialty, the tourism professional has only to take advantage of accumulated knowledge, skills and experiences that he needs every time.

Because tourism professions not just enable the employee's mobility: they maximize his potential.

The tourism professional has no difficulty:

➤ To leave a workgroup or a department of the company and go to another [such as Purchasing, Sales- Marketing, Room Service, Food and Beverage, Conference Events, Travel and Recreation].

➤ To leave a certain form of tourism business to join another different form [e.g. from a hotel unit to a tourist office or from conference facilities in the food and beverage department or from a casino to boat rental (yachting) or from a spa to a cruise ship, to confine ourselves to some examples]. And of course, has no difficulty in a new company to perform a different specialty from the one he performed in the previous company.

➤ To leave a town, a place or even a country in order to learn, to work and live in another. The tourist activity is a primarily internationalized activity and those who serve it have a "passport" for all countries of the world, without expiration date. One can start his career by travelling and working in the most distant part of the world and to terminate it in a different part of his own choice and preference.

The advantages of a profession with mobility (avoiding unemployment, higher wages, better working conditions and life etc) are commonly known. What is less known is that the tourist professions maximize mobility potential and choices of a person.

Because tourism section offers the best potential for rapid progression to high administrative positions. Most managers of tourism businesses started from simple employee to reach within ten (fifteen maximum) years in this position. As far as the graduates of the Higher Schools of Tourism are concerned, a large percentage of them reaches:

❑ Within three to five years the position of Head of Department (Reception, Food and Beverage, Conferences etc.)

- ❑ Within five to seven years the position of Assistant Director and
- ❑ Within seven to ten years the position of Director (Manager or even General Manager).

After completing their studies, young people who choose tourism often take their first administrative duties within a few years and before even completing a decade, they stand in leading positions of a company and, often, at the very top of a company. A survey which we carried out shows that one third of managers of tourism businesses are under 35 years and the other third is under 45 years. In no other section of the economy we can see so many young people in leading positions of a company. In no other business young people with skills have so many opportunities to see their ambitions fulfilled so quickly. And of course this is not about a few positions, but nearly about half administrative positions offered by the Greek economy as a whole. Therefore, in the plentitude of options offered by the tourism professions, we should add something very attractive for ambitious and capable people: rapid career development.

Because tourism does not require advanced scientific skills and tourism education promotes both professional and academic qualifications. You do not need to be "gifted" at math, writing, financial or new technologies to be distinguished in tourism. Just be good at technical skills, interpersonal skills, communication and cooperation with others. Tourism requires first of all professional qualifications and those who complement those with others, even better. There is no punishment and ostracism for those who are not particularly gifted with academic and scientific qualifications. Indeed, what matters most in the tourism professions is not "academic" intelligence (intelligent quotient), but the emotional intelligence (emotional quotient), which includes the control of emotions and behavior, as well as the proper handling of relations with other people. Those who excel in tourism (but also to all other sections, as relevant researches show) are people with emotional intelligence and mental maturity, even when their 'academic' intelligence does not reach a high level. Tourism can be a matter (of quality) of the product and the relation between price and product (value for money), but, above all, a matter of human relationships with customers. Therefore, tourism requires from each new entrant basically one thing: to "do well" with people, which is not difficult or unpleasant. But this leads us to the next feature of tourism.

Because tourism employees are able to be in constant contact with people, to develop and satisfy their sociability, to enjoy what they carry out in order to keep their customers happy. In the professional environment of tourism, technology is not dominant neither the savings nor the connections with intermediaries and interests. The human factor is dominant, the interest for our fellow man, a cheerful face, optimism, a smile, the concern for quality, the attention to detail, the love for the nice and beautiful things. These are the elements that make a professional successful: in tourism and perhaps in any other section. Which means that whoever has a career in tourism will probably also succeed in another section which may choose later. Not to mention the fact that these

elements that make a person succeed in his professional life, determine to a large extent the success of his private life. By whatever such an event means.

The Negative Side of Tourism Professions

However, since everything positive thing has usually also a negative side, also tourism has its own drawbacks, some of which are real and some other virtual. The **real drawbacks** include:

☞ In many tourism businesses, occupation is seasonal: during the winter months the company does not operate and most staff is not employed, financially covered by the premium of seasonal unemployment. This is the most serious drawback of tourism section, because it reduces the income of the employee during the winter months. However, the impacts of this phenomenon are mitigated because:

- ❖ It does not affect all tourism businesses (city hotels, casinos, travel agencies, conference venues, etc.).

- ❖ It does not apply for all staff (e.g. upper administrative staff, sales and marketing department, preservers, guardians, etc.).

- ❖ Efforts are being made (with increasing success) to extend the tourist season.

- ❖ It allows seasonal employees to occupy with something else during the winter months.

☞ In certain "peak" seasons (Christmas and Easter holidays, July and August), the work volume is intensive and sometimes require increased working hours. Perhaps the main consequence of this phenomenon is that it is not easy for a tourism employee to rest or go on vacation these periods, as other employees do (just because some people have to serve them these periods). But, of course, tourism employees can go on vacation in all other periods. In addition, all professions face, more or less, peak seasons in their activities, without making them less attractive.

☞ Tourism is affected by economic conditions, by promotions (at national, regional, prefectural and local level) and by eventual errors or omissions of its conveyors. As an activity it is connected to the international and domestic economic situation and the promotional campaigns. Furthermore, eventual unsuccessful actions or omissions of a tourist conveyor (e.g. a hotel, travel agency or of other tourism business) negatively affect not only the responsible conveyor or company, but also many other tourism businesses operating in the same area. This is a serious "sensitivity" of this

section that concerns those who are interested in it. Of course, this "sensitivity" is mitigated by the fact that:

❖ From the economic conditions almost all sections of the economy are affected and therefore the alternatives are actually very limited.

❖ The promotions will be "co-decided" in the future from the majority of tourism conveyors and this ensures that they will be more effective.

❖ The interdependence of tourism conveyors and companies has become the subject of responsibility of both the state and the employees in the tourist circuit. The development of tourist consciousness has become the target for most tourism conveyors and that day that will also become a school course is not far, as it is done in other countries.

In **virtual disadvantages** there are several variations of the following attitude:

That the tourist employee performs a labor "somewhat degrading of his personality," because he "serves" customers. This attitude has its roots in the era when industrial development and manufacturing were deified and was enforced by some naive sayings such as "we will not become the waiters of Europe." This is an attitude which no longer has any basis and it is based on misunderstandings, because:

❖ The dynamism of an economy is not expressed only or mainly through industrial production (the so-called secondary sector, with agriculture being the primary sector), but from the services: trade, banking and insurance, telecommunications, tourism, health, sports etc. (which we call the tertiary sector). In the United States of America, for example, the tertiary sector dominates, not the secondary. And in Europe, in Germany, the predominantly industrial country, the various states (Länder) have thrown themselves on a race of who will develop further and faster its tourism. The services, therefore, is the "key" for the development of a place and tourism is one of the most dynamic service industries.

❖ The service in general and the customer service is not a task that degrades the person who offers it, but it is a necessity and an opportunity to create competitive advantage. At the same time, it is a primary feeder of the profitability and development of a company and, of course, of the well-being of its employees. Therefore, the attitude that the customer service degrades the employee is not only baseless, but is also highly dangerous because it overturns the whole culture and climate that should identify a modern and competitive economy. Indeed, this attitude is a "recipe for self-destruction": puts people that imbue from it in the margin or out of the market labor.

A look at our social environment convinces us that professionally successful are those who work very hard to serve their customers. If reality does not actually teaches us, then there is no anyone else to do it.

The Balance of positive and negative points

Creating a balance of positive and negative points, we must evaluate and "weigh" the benefits and drawbacks of a career in tourism. It is obvious that **the evaluation gives to the benefits incomparably greater importance than it gives to the drawbacks.** The "balance" is remarkably positive, making tourism one of the most attractive options of profession that a young person can make. This is also proved by the fact that few tourism professionals leave the industry in order to deal with someone else. In a time when divorces in private and professional life are continuously rising, tourism can be proud that it has perhaps the least than any other section. And it's good to start our lives with a person and with a profession for which our mind is not thinking to get divorce from.

To the question thus, "Why is it worth a career in tourism professions?" the answer is clear: Because , apart from a few negative points, **the tourist professions gather a lot and important benefits that make them one of the best, feasible and promising choices of profession**, which a young person can make.