



The hybrid employment in the Greek hospitality industry

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Abstract

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This thesis examines hybrid work, the flexible work model as it has been recently shaped, particularly because of the Covid-19 pandemic and focuses on its effects and applicability to the Greek hotel industry, particularly the 5* and 4* hotels. The focus on the hotels of these categories is due to the fact that they usually have organized H.R. functions and provide reliable data. In addition, they are the ones mostly influenced by the evolutions of the international labour trends.

Interviews with the industry's key players and questionnaires, along with informal discussions, were used to take the pulse of the specific market and to elicit market leaders' opinion as to the possible future outlook of the trend. In addition, discussions were held with other stakeholders of the industry, to take their views as well.

Background and theoretical info from the international literature and the labour market, along with the stated objectives of the thesis, help the reader grasp a reliable overview of the topic. In focus to the Greek hotel market, the thesis attempts to throw more light on the following questions: 1) Is this concept suitable for the hotel industry and to what extent it can be adopted? 2) What is the impact of hybrid work in the Greek hotel industry and what it affects? 3) What do the hotels need to change in case the hybrid or remote work affects them?

In conclusion, it appears that the hybrid work model is not being used by the Greek hotel market, due to the peculiarities of the business which is mostly based on a face-to-face contact and interaction. Exemptions for non-guest-contact positions (like admin, accounting, IT) take place but usually are of a short duration. Although the "conclusions" part of this thesis offers a current snapshot of the topic at the time of the report, it needs to be considered that hybrid employment is a relatively new trend and keeps evolving, maturing, and shaping along with time, as governmental interventions attempt to regulate it further to mitigate its disadvantages and to control possible abuses of it. In this respect and subject to the appropriate technological evolution, it may be gradually adopted in the future for certain hotel positions.

Keywords

Hybrid work, hybrid employment, flexible work, remote work, work model, hospitality, Covid-19 pandemic, hotels

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1 Introduction & objectives

1.1 Introduction

This report outlines the flexible work model, its historical background, its advantages, and disadvantages, as well as the theoretical framework of it, starting from a global perspective and focusing on the Greek hotel industry. It presents the research results on the subject topic and focuses on how they relate and/or affect the Greek hotel industry. The topic became almost a trend because of the Covid-19 pandemic which forced remote work as one of the measures to combat the pandemic (Mariniello, et al., 2021, 5). Although the topic remains very interesting and current almost worldwide, the scope of this report is geographically limited to Greece only, to avoid excessive content and referencing. By choice, the scope is limited to the hotel industry due to its peculiarities. The hotel product is based mostly on a face-to-face contact and -as such- is governed by its own set of rules and usually requires physical presence in the workplace. Due to this nature, it will be interesting to see whether remote or hybrid employment is suitable for the hotel industry. Although in some hotel positions (usually non guest contact) remote or hybrid working may be suitable, there are no known instances so far of remote working or hybrid employment for guest contact or core service positions.

1.2 Objectives

The objective of this research-oriented work is to throw more light on the concept of hybrid employment in the hotel industry and answer the following questions:

1. Is this concept suitable for the hotel industry and to what extent it can be adopted?
2. What is the impact of hybrid work in the Greek hotel industry and what it affects?
3. What do the hotels need to change in case the hybrid or remote work affects them?

Since hybrid work may appear in a hotel in two forms (by employees and/or by hybrid working guests of a hotel) it needs to be emphasized that the focus of this research is on the hybrid work of hotel employees, not in accommodating the needs of hybrid working guests. Interviews with the industry's key players and questionnaires, along with findings from informal conversations, complete the survey of the local hotel industry and give an overview of what the status is today. The overlay matrix in chapter 1.4 below, summarizes and references the answers to the investigative questions.

1.3 Demarcation

All the interviewed people are from a hotel background, mainly international or 5* and 4* hotels. The reason behind studying international and/or 5* and 4* hotels is because these hotels are the ones which lead the way and are influenced the most by the international trends. They also have organised human resources departments which can provide reliable data. In addition, this eliminates the risk of having inaccurate data due to people's bias towards family or other connections they might have in potential workplaces. On the other hand, it is a common knowledge in Greece that the 5* and 4* hotels lead the market in employment patterns and trends. Hotels in other categories either follow or do not have any systematic approach to these issues.

Another limiting factor is the very nature of the hotel business itself, which is built on a personal contact and interaction basis. Due to this factor, no literature or hotel-focused research work exists prior to the Covid-19 pandemic simply because hybrid employment was not known or even not thought of at the time for the hotels. In the absence of literature and prior research work and adequate legal framework, only personal experiences and interviews with the industry's key players are the sources of reliable information. This, however, creates another limiting factor which is the size of the statistical sample surveyed. Due to the small number of the surveyed persons, statistical validity of the results cannot be supported and, therefore, the results and the conclusions cannot be generalized and need to be evaluated accordingly.

An additional limiting factor is the seasonality of the hotel business in Greece. Most of the hotels are open and operational only during the spring-summer season. In the off-season period they are closed, and the staff is redundant, which means that the availability of resources (people and raw material) is extremely limited and usually difficult to obtain.

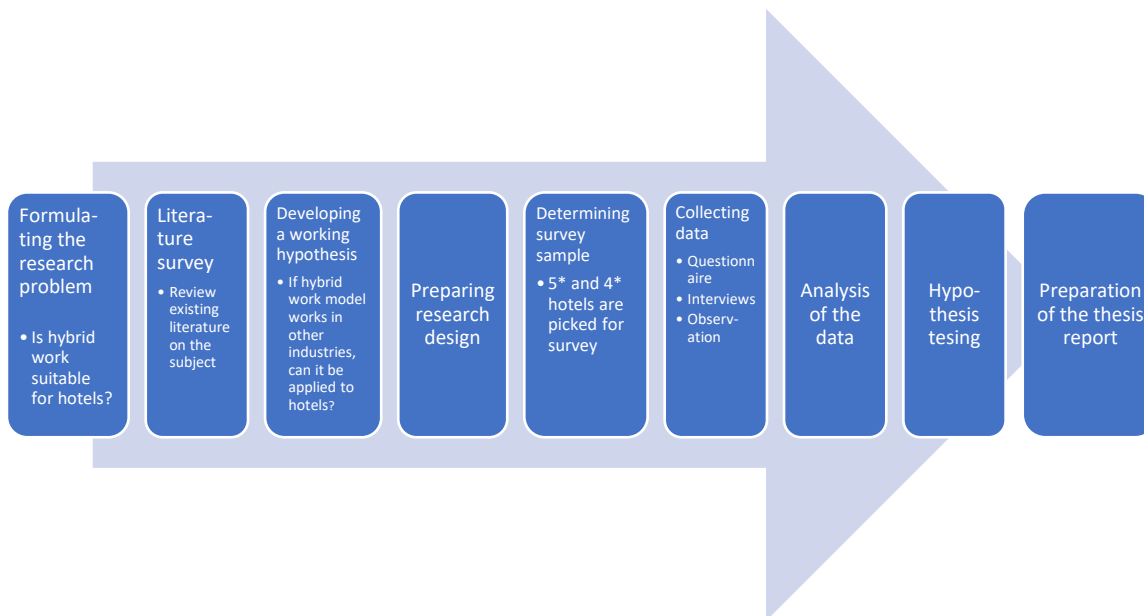
1.4 Overlay matrix.

Table 1. Overlay matrix (adapted from Peltonen 2017, 3)

Investigative questions	Theoretical framework (chapter)	Results (chapter)	Questionnaire (questions)
1. Is remote/hybrid work suitable for the hotel industry and to what extent can it be adopted?	3.1 & 4.1 & 4.4	5	1-8
2. What is the impact of hybrid work in the Greek hotel industry and what it affects?	4.4 & 4.5	6	2-3
3. What do the hotels need to change in case the hybrid or remote work affects them?	4.5	6	----

2 Methodology

The methodology used for this research thesis is outlined in the following graph and explained in more detail further below:



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Figure 1. Methodology design

The methodology reflects established academic research practices and theory, as they are presented by (Patel & Patel, 2019, 48-55) and (Pandey & Pandey, 2015, 55, 63). Primary stimulus for this research was the experience acquired during the Covid-19 pandemic and post-pandemic period, where many companies and many employees around the globe reverted to remote work to keep the economic activity going and maintain production.

2.1 Research method & tools.

The research method and tools used for this report are:

Review of international literature on the topic. The review was done online using the internet and resulted in the collection of the data required for this thesis, to enable the drafting of this report and give the reader the ability to understand the general environment (theoretical and historical framework) within which the developments of the hybrid employment take place. The data were selected based on relevancy and time.

Research of the Greek hotel labour market to see if and to what extend the international trends have been adopted locally and/or to what extend (if at all) remote, or hybrid work impacts the hotels in any way. The research focused on big hotels (>250 rooms) of 4 and 5 stars, including those operated by international hotel chains. For the purposes of this research, 25 hotels around Greece's more touristic destinations were surveyed. The survey was carried out via personal discussions with key players in the field (hotel managers, hoteliers, directors of human resources), as well as via semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. During the survey, the demerits pointed out by (Pandey & Pandey, 2015, 55, 63), for this type of tool were considered.

Review of Greek legal framework relating to employment and/or hotel employment. It needs to be noted here that the Greek legislation on the matter (as well as on any matter in general) is of a country-wide application, which means that whatever is enacted on the matter applies to everybody in the country, regardless of location.

Data collection tools: a) online reviews, b) local semi-structured interviews of the hotel market leaders, as explained in more detail in the following chapter, c) direct observation of the local hotel vacancies as posted during the research period (125 hotel vacancies were spotted), c) interviews with competent governmental authorities (e.g. National Tourism Organization and Ministry of Tourism) and d) the use of questionnaires.

2.2 Interviews

To design and prepare for the interviews, I have read many articles on the art of interviewing. Pretty much all writers conclude that: Interviews in general are a well-recognized and accepted method for collecting research data (Patel & Patel, 2019, 48-55); (Pandey & Pandey, 2015, 55, 63). Personal interviews are a valuable research method. In the words of (Rabionete, 2011, 563-566) "Qualitative interviewing is a flexible and powerful tool to capture the voices and the ways people make meaning of their experience". Although interviews are not free from demerits (Pandey & Pandey, 2015, 55, 63), they facilitate direct and imminent gathering of data, they are less formal due to the social interaction which takes place, and they may -sometimes- provide confidential information which could not otherwise be provided. Particular attention was given to selecting the people to be interviewed.

Based on personal experience in the hotel industry, for this research I decided to pick people who are reputable hotel owners or senior managers of 5* or 4* hotels, are influential in the market and

the society, lead or actively participate in hotel related organizations and bodies and have the authority to make fundamental decisions affecting the direction of their business.

The reason for selecting international and/or 5* or 4* hotels is because these hotels are the ones which lead the way in the hospitality business and are influenced the most by the international trends. They also have organized human resources departments which can provide reliable data. In addition, this eliminates the risk of having inaccurate data due to people's bias towards family or other connections they might have in potential workplaces.

2.3 Questionnaire

If the interview is the vehicle for collecting research data, the questionnaire is the inseparable tool to elicit that data. The "heart of a survey" as called by (Krosnick & Presser, 2010, 263). The importance of the tool is evidenced from the extensive literature on the subject. Many methodology textbooks and articles suggest a variety of tips and characteristics of a good questionnaire. From the opening statement to the structure of each question, all have their importance. The best method, though, is the one which fits the purpose of the survey. In this particular survey, simplicity, avoidance of technical terms and jargon, short open-ended questions, were all chosen to be the fundamental characteristics of the questionnaire. Another criterion was the relevance of the questions to the pros and cons of the remote/hybrid work, as those are mentioned in the literature cited in this thesis.

The questions included in the questionnaire are mostly open-ended so that they allow the respondent to express freely his/her opinions and views. They derive from personal experience, as well as from the family's long-standing experience in the hospitality field. The questionnaire was tested and proven in practice that it worked fine and served the purpose of the survey at the very end.

The questionnaire used for this purpose can be found in Appendix 1.

3 Global overview

To help the reader gather a complete picture and the international trends on the topic, this chapter gives a general overview of the background, the theoretical framework and the key concepts, the advantages, and disadvantages of it, as well as the current trends.

3.1 Historical background

“Hybrid” is a relatively new term in the employment field. Primarily it originates from the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced many companies around the globe to lock-down and allow their staff to work remotely (from home or anywhere). As it relates to the hospitality industry specifically, hotels had been mandated to physically close-down and release their staff for as long as the lock-down continued. As a result, those workers had to look for employment elsewhere thus emigrating from the hotel industry. When the lock-down was lifted as the pandemic subsided, hotels faced the surprise to see lots of their staff not willing to come back, since -in the meantime- they had settled in other employment fields with better terms in many cases. This phenomenon has become known as the “Great Resignation” (Liu-Lastres, et al., 2022) and -according to U.S. labour statistics- caused an unprecedented wave of resignations (Gittleman, M., 2022). Especially in the U.S. hotel industry, during 2022 in one month only more than 900.000 employees left their hotel jobs affecting all areas of operations including frontline workers, restaurant and housekeeping staff, and hotel management. (Hotel Business Review, 2023). The situation is not different in Europe either. According to “The Insider”, the magazine of the Glion Institute of Higher Education, a recent McKinsey poll found 47% of hospitality and leisure workers are likely to leave their current job in the next 3-6 months, while 64% of those likely to leave said they would resign without another job in hand (The Insider, 2022). This situation put the hoteliers on their toes to adapt to the new reality and modify their employment terms, thus -among other measures- allowing “hybrid” or “remote” employment, since it looks like this new trend came to stay in the general employment market and will affect employment in the years to come, regardless of industry or field. Of course, it will take several years to formulate in line with the peculiarities and become a day-to-day part, or common practice of the hotel industry. Historically, major transformations take time and go through turbulences till they get a status of their own (Kotter, 1995, 59); (Elder, 1994, 4-15). It looks probable this will happen in this case as well.

Judging from the literature on the topic, however, remote work was an issue of the past as well. It did not surface during the Covid-19 pandemic suddenly. Granted, the pandemic may have given it a new dimension, but the issue has been there for the last 2-3 decades. As mentioned by Joice

(Joice, 2000), especially for the Federal U.S. Government,” *An initial spurt of activity occurred in the late 70's and early 80's and appeared to fade out by the mid 80's*”. According to (Messenger & Gschwind, 2016, Abstract), “Research on detachment of work from the employer's premises dates to the previous century. In the 1970s and 1980s, Jack Nilles and Allan Toffler predicted that work of the future would be relocated into or nearby employees' homes with the help of technology, called “Telework”.

Nevertheless, the Covid-19 pandemic is the fact that gave remote work a new dimension recently, and caused its expansion even to fields it was never thought of before (like the hotel industry). As summarized by Hansen, Lambert & others (Hansen, et al., 2023, 36) the vacancy postings that explicitly offer hybrid or fully remote work in United Kingdom, United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand rose sharply since the 2020. In particular, while up to 2020 they were ranging around 0-2 %, in 2023 they reached 18 % for the UK, 12 % for US, Australia, Canada, and 10 % for NZ. Similar sharp increases are reported for the European Union as well (Luca, et al., 2023, 11-12).

It needs to be noted, however, that recently there has been a trend by big companies to cease the flexible work arrangements and call people back to the office. See more details in chapter 3.4 further below. As the dispute increases (office-remote-hybrid) author Adam Grant (Grant, 2023) puts it briefly: “To all the companies calling people back to the office full-time: Do not mistake presence for performance. Showing up is not a sign of commitment or contribution. It is an act of compliance. What matters is the value people create, not the place they inhabit.”

3.2 Key concepts

Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge, n.d.) defines the term “hybrid” as meaning “a plant or animal that has been produced from two different types of plant or animal, especially to get better characteristics”. This is the original meaning of course. Later on, the term got other meanings as well, such as hybrid car (vehicle that uses two or more distinct types of power (U.S. Department of Energy, n.d.)), hybrid plant (Green Facts Org., n.d.) etc.

As it relates to employment, there is a variety of terms which are synonymous and refer to flexible work arrangements. As mentioned by Dr Leslie Haddon (Haddon, 2016, 19) “As those who have researched teleworking will be aware, there are numerous definitions of the phenomenon and variations concerning where to draw boundaries around this working practice.” Eurofound, (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions) (Eurofound, n.d.) defines teleworking as “Telework is a work arrangement in which work is performed outside a default place of

work, normally the employer's premises, by means of information and communication technologies (ICT)." According to the European framework agreement on telework (European Framework Agreement on Telework, 2002), teleworking is 'a form of organising and/or performing work, using information technology, in the context of an employment contract/relationship, where work that could be performed at the employer's premises is carried out away from those premises on a regular basis.' (EUR_lex, 2005). Other empirical terms are working from home, mobile work, remote work, and flexible workplace. In their book "Hybrid work: Definition, origins, debates, and outlook" (Vartiainen & Vanharanta, 2023, 11-12) outline the various definitions of flexible work as they are found in the European Union. See below:

" **Remote work** is a work arrangement in which an employee resides and works at a location outside the local commuting area for his or her employer's worksite (e.g., Mokhtarian, 1991). A remote worker can be self-employed or dependent on an employer. Remote work is a comprehensive concept and does not require visits to the main workplace or the use of electronic personal devices, thus allowing many types of and locations for work, and it can involve mobile work.

Telework is fully or partially carried out at an alternative location rather than the default place of work, and personal electronic devices (i.e., telecommunications) are used to perform the work (e.g., Eurofound, 2020b; ILO, 2020b). A teleworker can be a self-employed or a dependent worker. Teleworkers who use multiple locations are called mobile multilocational workers (Andriessen and Vartiainen, 2006; Lilischkis, 2003, p. 3) or mobile teleworkers (Hislop and Axtell, 2007, 2009). They are employees who spend some paid work time away from home or their main workplace, for example, on business trips, in the field, while travelling, or on a customer's premises.

Home-based telework occurs at home using electronic devices. 'Permanent teleworkers' spend more than 90 % of their work time working from home.

'**Supplementary teleworkers**' or 'regular teleworkers' spend one full day per week working at home.

'**Occasional teleworkers**' work from home at least once in a 4-week period (e.g., ILO, 2020b). Home-based remote work is carried out at home. Home-based workers do not use electronic devices. They can also work at home 'permanently,' 'regularly,' or 'occasionally.'

Digital online telework is a common form of employment across the globe that uses online platforms to enable individuals, teams, and organisations to access other individuals or organisations from anywhere and at any time to solve problems or provide services in exchange for payment (e.g., Berg et al, 2018)."

The terms "hybrid work" and -for quite some years- "hybrid job" have distinct meanings although many times they get confused. According to Webex Dictionary (Webex, n.d.) "hybrid work" means "a flexible work model that supports a blend of in-office, remote, and on-the-go workers. It offers employees the autonomy to choose to work wherever and however they are most productive". The Chartered Institute of Personal Development (CIPD, 2024) gives the following definition: "Hybrid working is a form of flexible working where workers spend some of their time working remotely (usually, but not necessarily, from home) and some in the employer's workspace." The definitions refer to the subject of the employment, in this case the employee. To avoid confusion, we prefer

the term “hybrid employment” instead. This is a relatively new concept which flourished during the Covid-19 pandemic and seems like it came to stay. The definition is still in debate as explained in the report “Hybrid work in Europe: Concept and practice” (Eurofound: Hybrid work in Europe: Concept and practice, 2023, 1).

“Hybrid job” on the other hand, is a job role that includes roles and responsibilities bundled together from two separate jobs. Simply put it, refers to a new kind of job role which is a mix of two separate job roles. This is an old term, it has long time existed in employment to denote jobs which, for example, were amalgamated due to reorganization.

For the purposes of this research, focus will only be on the hybrid work model and its application and/or impact in the hotel industry, because it **combines the physical work presence (which is indispensable in the hotel industry) and the remote work for some day(s)**.

3.3 Advantages and disadvantages of the hybrid employment

The wide and general acceptance of the hybrid work model in the recent years, is generally attributed to its advantages without this meaning that it is free from disadvantages. Like everything in life, it has its own advantages and disadvantages. Both will be examined in this chapter, so that the reader can gain a general perspective of this trend. It needs to be kept in mind however, that focusing on the disadvantages helps mitigating those as the time goes by. We have seen this in recent years -during and post Covid 19 pandemic- when many companies were not prepared for such work models although they were forced (by law or necessity) to get into those even by way of experimentation.

As summarized by Dr Tsibursky, Gleb (Tsibursky, 2023): “As the world of work continues to evolve, it’s clear that hybrid and remote work will play an increasingly important role in the future. While these new work models bring significant benefits, they also pose challenges that require careful consideration and attention. By prioritizing workplace culture, mental health support, and technology, companies can navigate the challenges of hybrid/remote work and thrive in the future of work.”

Many researchers report about the same advantages-disadvantages of the teleworking in general. Obviously, due to the nature of the hybrid model (combination of in-the-office and remote work), those advantages-disadvantages are mitigated proportionately. Indicatively, Isabel A. Tavares (Tavares, 2017, 32) summarized those as below.

Table 2. Tavares, A. Isabel. (2017). Adapted from “Telework and health effects review.” *International Journal of Healthcare*. 3. 30. 10.5430/ijh.v3n2p30

Advantages	Disadvantages
Balance of home and work life	Blurring of boundaries between work and home time and overwork
Increased flexibility and autonomy	Presenteeism
Reduction in commuting time	Social isolation
Increased productivity	Lack of support and inadequate equipment
Higher morale and job satisfaction	Career progression or promotions
Avoidance of office politics	Resentment from colleagues
Source: (Tavares, 2017, 32)	

Obviously, the mix and the intensity of advantages-disadvantages adjusts in accordance with the hybrid employment model followed in a particular situation.

Gallup Workplace having surveyed more than 200.000 employees in the United States of America, reports the biggest advantages and challenges of hybrid work as follows (Wigert, et al., 2023):

Table 3. Gallup workplace survey findings (adapted from (Wigert, et al., 2023)

Biggest advantages	Biggest challenges
Improved work balance	Less access to work resources/equipment
More efficient use of time	Less connected to organization culture
Less burnout	Decreased collaboration with team
More freedom	Impaired working relationships
Higher productivity	Reduced cross-functional communication

Pertaining to the Greek labour market, the Greek Deputy Minister of Labor adds another advantage: that of increased employment opportunities for social groups with special mobility needs (Michaelidou, 2022). This is especially important from a social perspective since it removes a

serious employment obstacle for individuals in this category. The Adecco survey reveals similar advantages as well. (Adecco, 2021, 6,10,13).

As to the work-life balance, whether it is an advantage or not, see opposing view by (Tzavela, 2023, 54) who debates this issue by saying that the developments in technology and remote work not only do not help work-life balance, but -on the contrary- cause unclarity on the boundaries between work and personal life and increase stress (our translation of the original in Greek language).

3.4 Current trends

Although during the Covid-19 pandemic and shortly afterwards, hybrid employment seemed to be flourishing and that it would be the trend of the future for the workplace, the opposite trend is being experienced recently. Many big companies, including technology companies who ranked top on hybrid jobs a couple of years earlier, are now calling their employees back to the traditional workplace claiming that the experiment did not succeed and that it hurts productivity. (Euronews, 2023). In the European Union, the picture is opposite, though, as outlined below.

The number of the examples and the profile of the companies involved causes concerns as to whether this is the first stage of failure for hybrid employment. Even Zoom, which led the way in teleconferencing during the pandemic and benefited a lot from it, called it employees back to the office (Kristian, 2023). The same stands true for Meta (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp) as mentioned by (Taylor, 2023). A few months earlier, Elon Mask did the same for the X (former Twitter) staff (Wagner, 2022). Amazon followed the way for its employees (Roth, 2023). This new trend fuels reactions and protests among the employees of the various companies around the world and is considered as an initiative to renegotiate the terms and conditions of the flexible work arrangements. Professor Mark Steward, however, remains positive that whatever happens remote work is not going to end (moneyreview.gr, 2023). On the other hand, Wigert & Others (Wigert, et al., 2023), having surveyed more than 200.000 employees, as it says, report a more optimistic picture for the United States, by labelling it as “The future of the office has arrived ... and it is **hybrid**.”. Continuing the same survey summary, it reports that “In fact, the future first arrived several months ago. Based on our findings, it’s unlikely that everyone will return to the office five days a week in the foreseeable future. It’s also unlikely that fully remote work will become the new normal.” Based on the same survey, things seem to be settling somewhere in the middle, i.e. a few days in the office and few days remote. In fact, there is an important shift from 2022 to 2023: a clear preference to hybrid work (2-3 days).

In the European Union, though, 45 % of European companies enable workers to work remotely up to three days each week. According to Eurostat (Eurostat, 2022) the number of people working from home in the EU increased more than double compared to pre-pandemic stages. According to ONES blog (Ones Blog, 2023) “Working from home is now recognized as a legal right rather than a benefit across the EU, particularly in the Netherlands. Regulatory bodies and governments across Europe are proposing new legislation that would need workplace flexibility.” In summary, it could be said that the debate is still on and will take a while for things to settle. It looks probable, though, that -as usual- things will settle somewhere in the middle: few days in the traditional office and few days remotely. After all this is exactly what “hybrid work” is.

4 Greek market overview

This chapter focuses on the Greek environment and provides a generic picture of the labour market regardless of product or industry field, focusing -in conclusion- on the hotel industry and its relationship with the hybrid employment by examining the current outlook, the Greek legal framework, the suitability for the hotel industry and the future outlook.

4.1 Current outlook of the Greek labour market in relation with hybrid employment

Although for the last twenty-five years there is quite extensive research and Greek academic literature on hybrid or remote work, this seems to be examining the topic from a theoretical perspective more than reality. In general, telework of any kind was very sparingly used in the Greek labour market prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, Greece had one of the lowest telework % in the European Union (see figure 2 below). It was estimated to 4,3 % for 2009 and to 5,3 % for 2019 (National Institute of Labour and Human Resources, 2020, 8). According to the same source (page 2), the major highlights of teleworking in E.U. prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, are:

- Telework steadily increased during the period 2009-2019 from 12,4 % to 16,1 %.
- Telework is preferred more by the self-employed individuals (37 %) and less by employees (12,7 %). In Greece the percentages for the same categories are 7,9 % for self-employed and 4,3 %. All percentages refer to 2019.
- Telework is mostly used in the fields of IT and Telecommunications (40 %) and Knowledge Intensive Business Services (35 %).
- High percentages were also noted in education (32 %).
- Low percentages (below 10 %) were noted in the fields with low technology and high labour intensive such as industrial production and in customer service where personal interaction is required.
- Telework is more common among white collar employees in management positions, whose work is usually performed through computers.
- Generally, there are significant variations in teleworking among the E.U. countries. Few countries scored high exceeding 30 % (Sweden, Finland, Holland), while below 10% was scored by more than 50% of the European countries.
- Significant variations in the use of telework are also noted in the same economic fields and same job categories in various countries, among small and big companies and gender.

The pandemic, however, created the need for telework and the legislative adoption which followed crafted the environment for it to accelerate during the pandemic. The post-pandemic situation,

although does not pose the same environment, still does have a positive climate for the hybrid employment in certain fields. In extraordinary situations, however, like weather conditions, strikes, earthquakes, which do not allow commute to the workplace, remote work is invoked especially by civil services. Although the international trend on the matter seems to be reversing recently, it is quite early for Greece to show similar trends. After all, the Greek workplace has never shown big preference for remote work, if one excludes the pandemic period.

As shown in the following graph by Eurofound (Eurofound - Demetriades, S.; Cabrita, J.; Eiffe, F. F., 2023, 11), Greece was scoring low anyway among the EU countries on the share of employees working from home (see figure 2).

Figure 3: Shares of employees working from home by country, EU27, 2019–2021 (%)

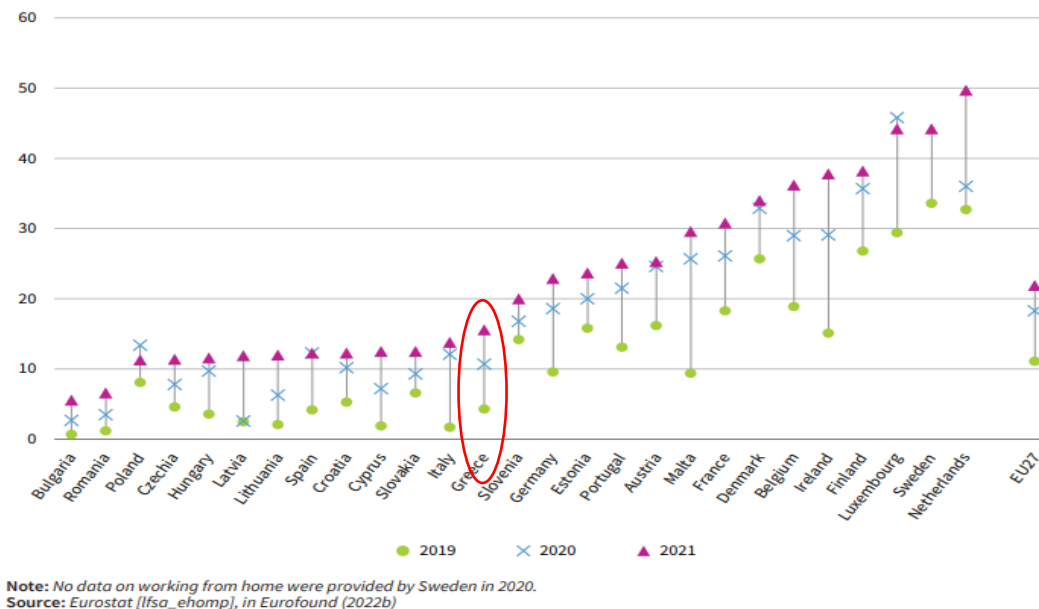


Figure 2. Adapted from (Eurofound - Demetriades, S.; Cabrita, J.; Eiffe, F. F., 2023, 11)

In accordance with eKathimerini (Salourou, 2023) :

“In 2023 teleworking has decreased by 5 % compared to 2022 and much more compared to the mass application of the measure during the pandemic period. Compared to 2021 the hybrid work model has decreased from 48 % to 21 %. However, it appears that a certain degree of teleworking will now become the new norm.

Greek businesses are slowly preparing, with 55 % knowing, according to a Hellenic Federation of Enterprises survey, that now more than half of employees’ tasks can be conducted remotely. Therefore, 41 % have already provided training in the use of digital media and communication tools in the recent past, with 7 out of 10 companies knowing that teleworking is considered an element that will attract staff.”

At a recent conference on Hybrid Employment, organized by S.E.V. (Greek Industries Association) within the framework of the EU project SEVSOCODIAL, the following findings were reported, as a result of a survey amongst 251 Greek industries: (S.E.V. - Association of Greek Industries, 2022).

- 55 % of the Greek industries estimate that today more than half of the employees' duties can be performed remotely.

- 7 out of 10 Greek industries assess the effects of hybrid employment as “positive” or “almost positive”.

- 41 % of the Greek industries offered some kind of training in the use of digital media and communication tools.

- The industries consider that the hybrid employment model is preferred by 9 out of 10 workers.

- 4 out of 10 industries apply a hybrid employment model 2 days per week, while 3 out of 10 apply it up to 3 days per week.

Hybrid employment is considered by 7 out of 10 industries as a positive tool for the attraction of workers, while more than 66 % consider that hybrid employment brought considerable changes in the company culture. (Banks.com.gr, 2022)

According to Christos Ioannou, Director of Employment and Labour Market of the Greek Industries Association, presented at the same conference as above, the Greek position vis a vis Hybrid Employment is in line with the international developments on the subject. « What we lived during the pandemic as hybrid employment on a massive scale, was the 4th wave of teleworking internationally, since the previous ones were of a much smaller scale». “Based on today’s experience” Mr. Ioannou said, “not all jobs are suitable for hybrid employment. The degree of digital transformation of the production and services in an economy, increases these capabilities”. It is true that digitalization of the economy and the absorption of digital skills by the population, are the backbone of remote work of any kind. This seems quite true and in-line with the findings of another research by (Mariniello, et al., 2021, 5), where it shows the category of “personal service workers” at the bottom of his “Prevalence of telework by occupation” graph.

Along the same lines, Richard McGahey (McGahey, 2024) is reporting that “Remote work was—and still is—more likely for certain occupations and industries. Workers in information, finance, business services, and government (including education), and those with higher education credentials in managerial and office jobs, were and are much more able to work remotely.”

A positive acceptance of hybrid employment is reported by a global survey «Resetting Normal: Defining the New Era of Work», according to which a 53 % of workers (61 % of Greek workers) prefer the hybrid employment model as it combines the advantages of both working models. In the same survey which took place in 25 countries (including Greece) and 15.000 office workers, it is reported

that hybrid employment did not affect productivity in any negative way, while 82 % of the respondents stated that they feel as productive if not more than before (85 % for Greece). (Adecco, 2021, 6,10,13). As it can be seen, Greek findings on the matter do not differ much from international findings.

While the above paint a very positive picture for hybrid employment in the Greek economy during the pandemic and post pandemic period, the situation is not the same, though, as it relates to hotels specifically as it is further presented in more detail in chapter 4.4. The reason is that the hotel business has been established based on a personal contact and interaction and this is how it flourished over the decades.

4.2 Greek Legal framework

Searching for hotel specific Greek legislative references to hybrid employment in the hotel industry, one cannot find any specific reference.

The first mention of the term “teleworking” in a Greek legal context date back to 1998. Section 1 of the Law on the regulation of employment relationships 2639/1998 (Act on the regulation of employment relationships 2639/1998, 1998) refers to teleworking in its text without giving any clear and concise meaning to it.

A more organized approach was made in 2006 by the social partners (Greek Industrial Association and General Workers Confederation), whereby the General National Collective Agreement (GNCA) by its article 4 adopts the European Framework Agreement and makes it part of the GNCA as Appendix B. According to Efterpi Zelialidou (Zelialidou, 2023):

“Pursuant to Appendix B of the aforementioned legislation (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 2006: 9-13) the following rights were granted to employees: the refusal or request of teleworking by the employees without affecting the employment relationship (Article 3) and the preservation of the same rights as employees who execute their work on the company’s premises (Article 4). Furthermore, the following obligations of employers were established, the respect of teleworkers’ privacy (Article 6), the provision to teleworkers with the necessary equipment for their work (Article 7), the protection of teleworkers’ health in relation to visual display (Article 8) and equal opportunities in training, development, and evaluation with non-teleworkers (Article 10). Under Article 4 of the convention, the immediate implementation of the European teleworking framework in Greece was agreed upon, as a voluntary benefit, with the aim of reforming the labour organization.”

As to the remote/flexible working in general (i.e. non-hotel-specific), a more concentrated approach was done by the Greek government in 2010, whereby (Act on measures for work safety, 2010) makes the first attempt to regulate sporadic instances of remote working. It was then followed by various amendments and legislative degrees like the (Act on Emergency measures for the

protection from Covid-19, 2020) regulating remote working issues during the pandemic) and the most recent law (Law 4808/2021, 2021), which places remote working on a more organized framework, as detailed by the subsequent joint Ministerial Decision by the Ministers of Labor and Health (Joint Ministerial Decision on Teleworking (Act on Regulating teleworking, 2022)). None of the aforesaid legal provisions, though, refers to hotels specifically.

As stated in the beginning (page 4), the Greek legislation on the matter (as well as any other matter) is of a country-wide application, which means that whatever is enacted on the matter applies to everybody, regardless of location, unless the law expressly mandates otherwise.

4.3 A snapshot of the Greek hotel industry

Greece is among the top 10 travel destinations of the world (Independent, 2023) and attracts more than 32,000,000 travellers in 2023, scoring a 17.3 % increase over 2022 (27.25m travellers) (Kousounis, 2024). This is three times the population of the country and has a significant contribution to the country's GDP.

According to the Bank of Greece (Central Bank), the income from tourism for 2023 (period Jan-Nov) rose to €20.11 billion (Oikonomikos Taxydrompos, 2024), which is about 11 % of the country's GDP. It is estimated that for the entire year 2023 it will exceed that of 2022 which was €24 billion and accounted for 11 % of the GDP ((INSETE, 2023, 2).

With such an incoming travel, Greece needs a lot of hotel infrastructure to respond to the increasing demand. In fact, hotel investments have increased considerably in the last few years and a concentrated effort is being made to shift to higher hotel categories. As a result, the 5* and 4* categories have increased substantially in the last five years, while 1* and 2* categories are diminishing rapidly.

The following table shows the Greek capacity in terms of hotels and hotel rooms/beds for 2022:

Table 4. Hotel capacity

Category	5*	4*	3*	2*	1*	Total
Units	744	1807	2903	3411	1222	10087
Rooms	99985	128567	103236	88844	23204	443835
Beds	209420	258506	202421	168610	46667	885624

Source: (INSETE, 2023, 2)

With such a high impact on the gross domestic product (GDP), the Greek hotel industry shares a high percentage of the total employment in the country. According to a report by “Insete Intelligence” (Research Institute of the Greek Tourism Confederation) (INSETE INTELLIGENCE, 2023, 19) total employment in hotels was 262,981 positions, out of which 60,225 positions were not covered despite the high unemployment (Great Resignation?). Lodging and dining combined, employ more than 1 million workers, which accounts for 20 % of total employment in the country.

4.4 Suitability of hybrid employment for the hotel industry

Before focusing on the Greek hotel industry, let us see whether the international hotel industry has adopted any kind of hybrid employment and to what extent. Research through internet does not reveal any systematic and/or structured approach to such employment status. There are scattered postings for hybrid jobs but those are for management, admin, sales, IT, in general non-guest-contact positions. Big international hotel chains have made changes to accommodate hybrid workers, but those are either for their own employees who travel around, or for employees from other companies who want to work out of a hotel room on their travel. No job posting(s) for guest contact positions or hotel core-service positions have been spotted, though, which sounds logical.

Marriott International (Marriott International, n.d.) has modified their recruitment site to show and search hybrid or remote jobs. Hilton (Hilton, n.d.) did the same as well. Vice President of Workspace Management at Marriott International, Stacey Cohen (Cohen, 2023) puts it in a nutshell: “We heard it over and over-not only from our associates but also from our leaders- Yes, we need traditional workspace with workstations and offices. But we also wanted to give (them) choice and flexibility.” In 2022, Marriott International opened a new global headquarters in Bethesda, Maryland. In a new era of work, where employee expectations have changed, the company wanted to create a hospitable hybrid work environment—an extension of the same hospitality it has offered guests for generations. Marriott built a space with plenty of ancillary locations, flexible meeting areas of varying sizes, and spaces for more private individual or one-on-one work. On most floors, there is a main area with individual workstations surrounded by shared, versatile spaces with soft seating which feels much more like a hotel lobby than a cubicle. (Marriott International, 2022).

By the looks of it and despite the generally positive environment for hybrid employment in Greece, in other (non-hotel fields) as outlined above, the situation is entirely different in the Greek hotel industry. Prior to Covid-19 pandemic, the flexible employment of any kind (teleworking, remote work, hybrid work) was almost unknown in the Greek hospitality field. During the pandemic, though, a necessity was felt that some hotel positions (primarily admin or office work) could work remotely. As

mentioned by our interviewees, during that time, hospitality managers came face-to-face with the parameters and the difficulties of the new situation. Being entirely unprepared for it, they had to deal with several logistics (equipment, communications, training, legal etc.) and had to find solutions for related problems although they had no prior experience on it. (See tabulation of interviews in Appendix 2).

Post pandemic, however, it was realized by both parties (employers and employees) that the new model could be useful to both under certain conditions. A combination of remote work and physical presence in the workplace for certain positions (admin, sales, IT) could be equally productive and - in some cases- even attractive. So, here came the hybrid employment. A combination of in-the-office and remote work the mix of which could offer a bearable blend of advantages and disadvantages and improve work-life balance.

According to Mr. Thanasis Passas (Passas, 2023), Director of Human Resources Athens Hilton, Athens):

“Hotel employment is essentially based on face-to-face service. Physical presence in the work area is generally presupposed. Granted, there can be some exemptions, but these simply verify the rule. During the pandemic, we tried remote work for some positions (sales, admin, management, IT) and we experienced the advantages and disadvantages of it. Although we realized that we were unprepared for this experiment, soon we adjusted due to the emergency of the situation, and gradually both sides got used to it.”

Andreas Meletiou, Hospitality Human Resources Consultant, Athens-Greece (Meletiou, 2023) said in an interview:

“Due to its nature the hotel product requires face-to-face interaction and necessitates physical presence. The hotel product is not a hard product: it cannot be stored or stockpiled and cannot be produced without concurrent consumption. The hotel product creates experiences, and the customer takes with him/her the experiences, not the product itself. This being the case, working in the hotel necessitates physical presence and interaction. Remote work of any kind or combination is not, therefore, suitable for the hotel business in my opinion. There could be some exemptions under certain conditions and criteria, but those are very limited and of short duration usually”.

Along the same lines is Mr. Christos Ioannou (S.E.V. - Association of Greek Industries, 2022), who states that “not all jobs are suitable for hybrid employment. The degree of digital transformation of the production and services in an economy, increases these capabilities”. As said earlier, digitalization of the economy and the digital skills or the workforce are the backbone of remote work. The same or similar responses were given by almost all the respondents to our survey.

The hotel business, however, has been established based on a personal contact and interaction and this is how it flourished over the decades. The evolution of technology so far, has replaced only very limited hotel positions, but is far from replacing the core hotel positions which -at present- cannot be thought of without the personal contact and interaction of the human factor. This is why”

Accommodation and food services” score very low on Teleworkability as shown on the following graph (figure 3) by the European Commission’s Science and Knowledge Service (European Commission, 2020, 3). As comes out from our interviews, surveyed market leaders and hoteliers are on the same line and do not seem to foresee the time when core hotel positions could be replaced by technology.



Figure 3. Adapted from Teleworkability of occupations in EU. Source: (European Commission, 2020, 3)

4.5 Digital nomads

Digital nomads are another form of remote or hybrid work, which does not fall outside of a hotel interest. According to (Hannonen, 2020, 335-353), “The term “digital nomad” was introduced by Makimoto and Manners in 1997 to describe an outcome of technological advancement on people’s lives (Makimoto and Manners 1997).” The term describes a category of mobile professionals, who perform their work remotely from anywhere in the world, utilizing digital technologies, while “digital nomadism” refers to the lifestyle that is developed by these highly mobile location independent professionals.

Greek hoteliers see business opportunities in this field of remote/hybrid workers, and they started marketing to such potential clientele already. They offer all a remote worker may need: a place to stay, telecommunication infrastructure, web connectivity, quiet place, etc. Ms. Ioana Dreta, Managing Director of “Marketing Greece”, explains her marketing campaign titled “Work from Greece” saying that it’s time for the Greek market to follow the example of other European cities, like Helsinki, and she goes on presenting the various packages that are now available for the “digital nomads” as they are called. (Souki, 2020). Digital nomads made their presence felt during the covid pandemic and they continue to be considered by the hotels as a viable market segment. The “Hotels Network” blog (The Hotels Network, 2021) puts it very concisely:

“With the exponential growth of remote working, many people have started to reconsider what it truly means to work remotely. This mindset shift has brought the boost of the digital nomadic lifestyle. A Digital Nomad is someone who works remotely from different locations while traveling the world. Relying on stable Wi-Fi and their personal devices to work from coffee shops, co-working spaces or libraries, the intrigue of this style of working has captured the attention of people everywhere.”

As Fred Bean (Bean, 2023) reports in the “Hotelier Magazine”:

“A report from MBO Partners found nearly 17 million Americans identified as digital nomads, more than double the number from 2019, and they work in a variety of industries. Globally the number of digital nomads, currently stands at more than 35 million (according to a report by Statista). Countries and governments are helping this trend with more than 50 offering digital-nomad visas because these group of people are valuable, spending more money than short-stay tourists.”

And the report concludes by mentioning that this group of people contributes a global economic value of \$787 billion per year! A number impressingly big to be ignored.

Greek hotels, in an effort to take their fair share out of this market, are already marketing actively to this segment and are adjusting their services to it accordingly. And their efforts seem to bring satisfactory results so far. As mentioned by Skai News (Skai.gr, 2024) in their report on the issue, hundreds digital nomads are making Syros Island as their base, and they contribute to the local economy.

In their work “Attracting digital nomads: Smart destination strategies, innovation and competitiveness” the authors (Zhou, et al., 2024, 9) summarize nomad needs as shown on the following graph (figure 4):



Figure 4. Needs for digital nomads. Source: (Zhou, et al., 2024, 9). Open access under the terms of the Creative Commons CC-BY license, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

As can be seen from the above graph, nomad needs fall in two major categories: those which are within the hotels' direct control and those which are beyond hotels' control. For those which are beyond hotels' control, the hotels cannot do much on their own, but they can influence decision making in the respective areas, though. As to those needs which fall within hotels' direct control, after reviewing extensive literature on the topic, the needs can be summarized as follows:

- Decent and quiet, clean, and sanitized hotel room.
- Fast internet.
- Variety of power outlets for charging electronic devices.
- Secure door locks and safes (a laptop lock could even be provided).
- Free toiletries for the road.
- Free water bottles.
- Access to necessary supplies, such as a printer, notepads, pencils, etc.
- Contactless check-in and checkout options.
- Enough space to work or even cook, if possible.

4.6 Future outlook

Based on the findings of our research, hybrid employment in the Greek hotels does not seem to have a promising future under normal realities, unlike hybrid employment in other sectors of the Greek economy, which receive a more positive acceptance and -therefore- have a brighter future outlook. There could be some exemptions in hotels, as already said, but those are rare and of limited duration. Of course, market conditions keep evolving and so does technology, making it hard to predict what will happen after some years. Certainly Covid-19 pandemic had left behind some experiences and good lessons which could be a great food for thought in the years to come.

A recent survey by the Athens University of Economics and Business (Galanaki, 2022), comes to verify the aforementioned outlook of the hybrid employment in the other sectors (non-hotel) of the Greek economy. According to the survey:

- 85 % of those currently teleworking, prefer to continue teleworking.
- 84 % prefer hybrid employment one or more days per week (50,5 %) or whenever required (34 %).
- The majority of the respondents recognises that teleworking benefits them in terms of time and money savings.
- Respondents in general do not feel that teleworking affects their performance in any way, positive or negative.

Interesting findings but do not -at the moment at least- addresses the fundamental issue of who is going to take care of the hotel guest if the employee is not physically present in the field. As mentioned earlier (page 16), the hospitality business has been established based on a personal contact and interaction and this is how it flourished over the decades. It may be a paradigm but requires a lot to happen to trigger a paradigm shift... As noted by (Barrero, et al., 2023, 4), based on US data, “Traditional working arrangements continue to prevail in front-line retail jobs, **restaurants and bars, hotels**, transportation, construction jobs, manufactures, many healthcare jobs, janitorial and cleaning services, onsite security services, and other jobs that require face-to-face contact with customers, clients”. Rightly so, for present at least.

5 Results

To detect the suitability of hybrid employment for hotels, its impact -if any- and what needs to change by the hotels in response to hybrid/remote employment, several tools were used to collect the necessary data. The research results from the various tools used for this work, are presented in this chapter by each tool used for data collection.

5.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire appearing on Appendix 1, was used for structured interviews with selected key players of the local hotel industry. In total five influential persons of high standing in the hotel industry were surveyed. Their answers and opinions are considered as representing the entire group of 4*+5* hotels, because of their role and impact in the field. As it can be seen from the tabulation of the results in Appendix 2, their responses are almost unanimous, thus gaining extra validity despite the small number of respondents. On one issue they all are categorical: hotel customer service cannot be replaced by hybrid solutions. Hotel service is based on face-to-face interaction, this is what the customer is paying for, and this is what creates customers experiences with lasting effects. At this stage nothing is foreseen in the horizon which could indicate a different approach.

5.2 Interviews

Besides the questionnaire, numerous interviews -either in person or over the telephone- with several managers in the hotel industry have also taken place and reiterate what the questionnaires reveal. It appears that it is a common belief in the industry that the nature of the job requires -in most cases- personal interaction, which cannot be replaced by hybrid solutions. This is what the customer is expecting and is paying for. Customer perceptions and expectations may change over time, but this cannot be foreseen at present. Usually, such changes take very long time to establish. The informal discussions tested the reliability and the validity of the interviews, and the results obtained via the questionnaires.

5.3 Review of Greek legal framework

An extensive review was conducted to spot the legal developments on this matter. Despite the extensive and -in many cases- detailed legislation on other matters of social activity and interaction, the legislation on hybrid or remote employment is very limited and mostly very recent (during and post Covid-19 pandemic). This indicates that the importance and the priority of this matter is still

very low in the Greek society and the Greek state. More details on the findings about this issue, appear in Chapter 4.2.

5.4 Direct observation and monitoring of local hotel vacancy postings

Observation and monitoring are a reliable and valid technique for evaluation of the research data (Pandey & Pandey, 2015, 55, 63). Throughout the preparation of this report, posted hotel vacancies were monitored to spot vacancies for hybrid/remote employment. Although in other industry fields such vacancies appeared from time to time, in the hotel industry however, out of 125 posted positions not even one was for remote or hybrid employment. This reiterates the findings of the questionnaires and those of the interviews as well. The fact that no single vacancy for hotel hybrid job has been posted, indirectly evidences the lack of attractiveness and the suitability of this type of jobs for the hotel industry and validates the data obtained by the other survey methods.

6 Discussion

As stated at the beginning, the objective of this research was to answer the questions:

1. Is this concept of hybrid employment suitable for the Greek hospitality industry and to what extent can it be adopted?
2. What is the impact of hybrid work in the Greek hospitality industry and what it affects?
3. What do the hotels need to change in case the hybrid or remote work affects them?

I believe that the research work done on the subject, gives a reliable overview of this specific labour market, and enables the conclusion that the objective has been achieved and the questions have been broadly answered, as summarized below.

As to question 1 above, there has been a lot of discussion as to the applicability of the hybrid/flexible employment in the hotel industry (see chapters 4.4 and 5 above). Unanimously the key stakeholders of this market say that this work model is not yet suitable for guest-contact positions, due to the very nature of the business. At the same time, they remain positive for non-guest-contact positions like admin, sales, IT etc. As it comes out, hotels do not seem to be the right field for hybrid employment in Greece, due to the very nature of the business. The prevailing rule is that physical presence and interaction with the customer is the basis of the entire business. Exemptions can take place based on individual realities, but those are of a temporary nature and/or of a short duration. The hotel sector, though, remains open and positive to hybrid employment solutions for certain non-guest contact positions, like in sales and marketing, administration, IT. The experimentation during the covid-19 pandemic though, set the foundation for a more receptive approach on the issue and planted the seed for a cultural shift if the circumstances warrant so in future and the technology provides guest-friendly solutions.

As to question 2 above, regarding the impact of hybrid work in the Greek hospitality industry, the answer is twofold:

- a) The impact of the hybrid work in the form of employment relationship is almost none under normal circumstances as explained already (chapter 4.4), due to the very nature of the core hospitality jobs. Exceptions made for other support jobs are of a temporary nature and short duration, which does not change the overall picture.
- b) Hybrid work in the form of a hotel customer, though, seems to be rising and opens an entirely new market segment for the hotels. The so called “digital nomads” are making a remarkable impact in the global hotel industry (see chapter 4.5) and their economic value is way too big to be overlooked.

This leads to question #3: What do the hotels need to change in case the hybrid or remote work affects them. Since the digital nomads are becoming an important market segment for hotels, to be successful in this market hotels (in general, not only Greek hotels) need to ensure that their services are aligned to what these customers want, as those are outlined in p. 22 and chapter 4.5.

On the other hand, we have seen that other sectors of the Greek economy are more “fertile” for hybrid employment solutions. There is a generally positive trend after the Covid-19 pandemic and it seems that -as the time goes by- the receptiveness to flexible employment solutions will increase (see p.15, chapter 4.1).

6.1 Recommendations and future research topics

To my knowledge, this is the first detailed research and report on the matter of remote or hybrid employment in Greek hotels. The research process offered a good understanding and insight of the local hotel industry and the reasons differentiating it from other industry fields as it relates to employment.

Time may be premature for hotels to embrace the hybrid work model since practices and habits of decades cannot be overturned overnight. I believe, however, that this work model should not be ruled out *a-priori* since hybrid hotel employees could be a dynamic workforce that bridges the gap between traditional hotel roles and the evolving needs of guests in the following ways:

- Flexible Work Arrangements: Hybrid hotel employees combine the best of both worlds. They seamlessly transition between on-site and remote work. These employees may spend part of their time at the hotel property, handling guest services, housekeeping, or front desk duties. Simultaneously, they engage in remote tasks, such as administrative work or customer inquiries.
- Roles of Hybrid Hotel Employees:
 - Front Desk and Guest Services: Hybrid employees greet guests, check them in, and assist with inquiries. They also manage reservations and handle administrative tasks.
 - Housekeeping and Maintenance: These employees ensure rooms are clean, well-maintained, and ready for guests. They may also address minor repairs.
 - Remote Tasks: Hybrid employees handle customer service requests via email, phone, or chat. They manage bookings, coordinate events, and handle administrative duties from off-site locations.
- Benefits of Hybrid Employment in Hotels:

- **Adaptability:** Hybrid employees can swiftly shift between in-person and remote work based on demand. This flexibility enhances operational efficiency and enables the hotel respond swiftly and efficiently to evolving guest needs and desires.
- **Cost-Effective:** Hotels can optimize staffing levels by utilizing hybrid roles. Employees handle tasks both on-site and remotely, reducing the need for additional hires and additional office space.
- **Improved Guest Experience:** Hybrid employees provide seamless service. Whether they're physically present or working remotely, guests receive consistent assistance, without them realizing where the employee is at the time.
- **Challenges and Considerations:**
 - **Technology:** Effective communication tools and reliable internet access are essential for successful hybrid employment.
 - **Training:** Employees need training to excel in both on-site and remote tasks.
 - **Work-Life Balance:** Balancing work across different environments requires discipline and time management, as well as systems to check compliance.

Hybrid hotel employees embody adaptability, versatility, and customer-centricity. As the hotel industry evolves, this blended approach ensures efficient operations and exceptional guest experiences. The success of hybrid employment, though, lies in achieving the right balance between physical presence, support systems and tools, as well as remote arrangements.

I hope this offers a good ground for further research in the future, so that the evolution of remote or hybrid work in hotels is monitored over time. As stated in the report, the ground is now relatively fertile, compared to the pre-pandemic period, and hoteliers are becoming more receptive to solutions of hybrid employment. I would highly recommend, however, that similar future research is carried out during the spring-summer period (as opposed to the off-season) due to the seasonality of the hotel business in Greece. In the spring-summer period all hotels are open and operational, thus providing much more resources for consideration (more people to interview and discuss with, both in ownership and management levels, as well in the workers level, and much more hotel vacancies are posted). I would also recommend expanding the demographics of the research, to increase validity of the survey.

Future researchers can use this groundwork and the information herein to build and capitalise on it, continuing the research over-time to capture the evolution of this new trend and analyse it further. Potential research topics, apart from the topic of this research, could be:

- Hybrid employment in hotel guest-contact positions
- Statistical research in hotel hybrid employment

- Hotel hybrid employment: past, present, and future

6.2 Reliability and ethical considerations

Reliability, in general, is the degree to which research results can be repeated and reproduced under the same conditions. From a more scientific standpoint, though, Joppe Marion defines reliability as "...The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study..." (Golafshani, 2003, 598-599). In the words of Alfred Tsikati (Tsikati, 2023, 51) "validity and reliability are the two most important and fundamental features in the evaluation of any measurement or tool for good research". According to Singh "Validity and reliability increase transparency and decrease opportunities to insert researcher bias in qualitative research" (Tsikati, 2023, 51).

On the other hand, ethical considerations are those principles and values which guide and govern the research process in both, design, and application. The importance of research ethics is evidenced by the number of academic articles and citation on the matter. Although the vast majority of those refer to sensitive fields of science, like medical, health, computer, genetics etc., still certain principles should be upheld in social reports like this one. Those are generic principles (e.g., honesty, respect for autonomy, conflict of interest etc.) and are the foundation of civil society; violation of such principles undermines the social order. If an action would promote greater good for individuals and society but violate one of the absolute principles upon which society is founded, then the action is deemed to be wrong (Atkinson, 2017, 50). Those principles derive their origin from the Aristotle philosophy about virtues and ethics.

Every diligence has been made so that this report upholds and conforms to the generally accepted principles and rules of reliability and ethics. As to the reliability, the very nature of the issue as well as the slow evolution of the hybrid or remote work in hotels, makes it certain that repetition of this work under normal circumstances will bring about the same results. As to the ethical considerations, the low sensitivity of the subject matter and the absence of any economic interest (e.g. no funding) safeguard the absence of any conflict of interest. As to the personal freedom of the respondents, their respect and their anonymity all are evidenced in the questionnaire (Appendix 1, preface statement) and the tabulation of results (Appendix 2). In addition, no personal data are processed in or by this thesis.

6.3 Personal learnings

When I first embarked on this effort, I had no idea of the depth and complexity of the subject matter. I just liked the subject of hybrid/remote employment because it was something contemporary and certainly unknown to hotel operations. My hypothesis was: if the Covid-19 pandemic made remote work as the “miracle solution” in several industry fields around the world, why not to work well in the hotel industry as well?

Engaging in the research work to collect the data for the thesis report, I realized that it was a totally new learning experience. The process of digging down to find suitable and credible sources and material, got me in touch with the controversy of the various theories and intrigued me to expand my research further. In doing so I read so many articles which left me with good learnings even they are not chosen to be part of my sources. Focusing on the hotel industry subsequently, I got a better insight of the hotel business, and I came across the peculiarities of service, which differentiate the industry since it requires face-to face contact and interaction with the customer as a “*conditio sine qua non*”. These conditions (i.e. face-to-face contact and interaction) are not provided by remote work of any kind.

The overall research experience helped me also prepare for my future academic or professional goals, as it uncovered my abilities, interests, and potential. It also helped me cultivate personal skills such as resourcefulness, flexibility, self-confidence, and self-motivation, as well as learning from mistakes.

In drafting and composing the thesis report, I learned so many things about the typology, the referencing, and the specifications of it, about the various functions of the word processing software which make life easier in this respect, and -last but not least- I had great support and guidance from my thesis supervisor whose input and support was immensely invaluable. Overall, this experiential learning is a fundamental step forward to my education and career.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questionnaire.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

INTERVIEW SUBJECT: **HYBRID EMPLOYMENT / REMOTE WORKING IN HOTELS**

INTERVIEWEE NAME: _____ INTERVIEWEE STATUS: _____

INTERVIEW DATE: __/__/____ HOTEL COMPANY: _____

Preface: *One of the issues emerged during the coronavirus pandemic is teleworking/remote work. It seems to be something that is here to stay and will keep us busy for a long time. It is a given that for some positions teleworking is suitable, I would say, while in others it is not so much. As it relates to hotels, where the execution of work is mainly characterized by face-to-face contact, and within the framework of my Bachelor in Hotel Management, I chose to research **whether hybrid work / teleworking suits the hotels and/or it is offered by any hotel(s) and to what extent.** To this end, I have prepared a few questions, and I would request your valuable and concise input on each one of them.*

(If applicable) For our convenience, please allow me to record our conversation with the assurance that the recording will be used solely for the purposes of my research work and then be deleted.

QUESTIONS:

1. During the Covid-19 pandemic period, did you have people working from home? How many approximately? In what positions?
2. Did this way of working (teleworking either in full or in part) surface some operational problems and -if yes- which are those?
3. What questions or problems did the people who participated in teleworking bring up (if any)?
4. Do you currently (after the pandemic) have people who telework in whole or in part and in which positions?
5. Is your hotel company positive/open to teleworking fully or partly (hybrid)? If not, what are the reasons for it?
6. Have you defined a policy on the subject matter and what does it cover? I would appreciate it if you could give an overview of it.
7. Based on your experience, and given the peculiarities of hotel work, what is your view on teleworking/hybrid working in hotels? Can it be applied to what extent and for which positions would it be easy to apply?
8. In case you believe that teleworking/hybrid work is not suitable for any or some hotel positions, can you please list some reasons for that?

9. From time to time, various objections have been raised on the issue, saying that teleworking (in full or in part) is a form of "sloppiness" or laziness. Some even say it is counterproductive. What is your view on this?
10. What else would you have to add about the topic that would give a noteworthy content to my research?
11. Please feel free to comment/add/expand on any related issue which you think may give more value to my research work on this topic.
12. Do you have any objection to me mentioning yours and/or your hotel's name in the outcome of my research work? YES NO (Please circle accordingly)

Thank you very much for your kind cooperation and valuable input.

Andreas Meletiou
Bachelor student on Hotel Management

Appendix 2. Tabulation of interview results

Q #	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5
1	Back-office positions (marketing, sales, reservations, accounting, HR and purchasing. About 1/3 of back-office positions.	All worked from home except maintenance staff, for safety reasons and service staff.	Only the managers in admin positions like finance, sales, and human resources.	Only the managers in admin positions like finance, sales, and human resources.	Key managers and key positions in Finance and HR to deal with authorities.
2	Adaptation to new situation. Technical issues, such as organizing the remote workstations.	Technical issues: equipment, software, internet speed. Staff training.	Lack of equipment, connectivity, and software issues due to security reasons.	Many problems in the beginning. Lack of equipment, connectivity, and software issues due to security reasons.	No major issues. IT and Management were prepared.
3	Technicalities which were never faced in the past.	Uncertainty for the future, salary concerns, and redundancy concerns.	Problems of connectivity.	Connectivity issues. Low speed connection, etc. All resolved soon.	Internet connections. Allowance for internet.
4	One position full time. Other managers occasionally.	Two persons (IT. + Digital marketing).	None.	Hotel closed currently. Some persons work remotely.	None. May permit isolated exemptions for serious reasons.
5	Yes, we do. Some positions can do it.	Yes, we are open and follow trends.	No, due to service needs, requiring direct communication between the teams.	Yes, we are positive for positions where it can work. We have no problem.	No, we are not. Reason be the personal service.
6	Yes, we do have a policy. Copies attached.	No policy, but we are flexible when required.	No policy.	No policy.	No policy.
7	Yes, hybrid can be applied for non-guest-contact positions.	Yes, hybrid can be applied for non-guest-contact positions.	Yes, could be applied to specific positions and for certain days in the month.	Can work in admin positions. Not in operations where personal contact is needed	No, it cannot be applied. Service needs personal contact.
8	Human contact is a prerequisite in our industry and that cannot change.	Not for guest-contact positions due to the nature of the industry.	Human contact is prerequisite for great service.	Not for guest-contact positions due to the nature of the industry.	The personal service we offer makes it non-suitable.
9	I agree to an extent. I believe it also has to do with the culture of each person and the way they	All depends on the individual's attitude and professionalism. It also depends on the scope of work	Remote work is suited to other sectors. In hospitality, though, direct contact is	Do not agree with those terms. They are used by those who don't	It is a matter of maturity, professionalism, company culture and company's mechanisms in place

Q #	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5
	have learned to work or even on the environment.	and the company culture.	prerequisite of service.	Know what remote work is.	to observe work and projects done.
10	Hotels need to invest in technology to help employees give great service. Human contact cannot be replaced in hospitality. Shall be supplemented by technology to simplify service processes.	The working environment is rapidly changing. Organizations should follow the new trends, adapt quickly to them, and keep a balance between satisfied employees and shareholders.	Nothing more to add.	Am very positive on remote work. Helps both sides and provides more flexibility.	Nothing more to add.
11	No other comments.	Talk about: a) Big Quit, also known as Great Resignation and b) Work-life balance.	Nothing more to add.	Nothing more to add.	Nothing more to add.
12	No objection in using company's name.	No objection in using company's name.	Would prefer to avoid using company's or my name.	No objection in using company's name.	Would prefer to avoid using company's or my name.