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Attraction factors in tourism industry from employee perspective

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Abstract

The tourism industry has several unique aspects that separate it from another working environments. These aspects can be seen as attraction or retention points for the current and potential tourism industry employees. The study focused on creating understanding towards tourism industry attraction factors from employee perspective. The research question was what the attraction factors in tourism industry are that current employees value and furthermore, how these factors could be utilized to keep employees satisfied and to attract new employees.

The research utilized quantitative research methods via survey. This was done by first identifying defining factors of tourism industry through theoretical background by various sources. The theoretical background of the study furthermore proceeded to create impression towards attractive work and how this is emphasized.

The survey focused on personnel that had experience from working in tourism industry. It focused on impressions that working on tourism industry has created by giving statements from various topics and furthermore, asking respondents to rank these statements by importance. Thereupon, it was possible to create prioritization for the statements rather than trusting only on agreed upon of the statements.

In conclusion, it was noted that respondents valued tourism industry's flexibility with job opportunities and wide range of possibilities the experience in tourism brings. The answer's also showed importance on furthermore training and how these benefits both employees and employers.

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1   Introduction

This thesis focuses on employees that are working in the industry and aspects they find appealing in tourism industry. It is important to understand employees' insight towards the industry since they have the experience and knowledge for the factors that determine industry's positive sides. These factors can then be utilized from tourism operators to firstly keep existing employees and secondarily attract new employees. The research question for the study is as followed - what are the attraction factors in tourism industry that current employees value? And furthermore, how these factors could be utilized to keep existing employees satisfied and to attract new employees?

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland released tourism sector report in 2022 that recognized challenges industry is having with push and pull factors. The report (2022) mentions COVID-19 pandemic and its affect on the industry – due the restrictions on travel the workforce decreased significantly when employees had to change industries, and this impacts tourism industry to this date. Creating knowledge about employees currently on the industry is therefore crucial since their reasons to stay in the industry despite that is important to understand.

Noticeably, one's perception towards the whole tourism industry is strongly connected to working experience and more directly to their employer. Therefore, this thesis emphasizes connection between employees and employers and introduces attraction aspects also from organizational level. Author's own experience in the tourism industry raised curiosity and questions about the positive sides of the industry – what makes individual appreciate and value their job in tourism? What are the factors that make one want to stay in the industry?

Purpose of this thesis is to determine factors that existing employees in tourism industry value and appreciate. Recognizing these factors can help to grow motivation that keeps these individuals in the industry. Furthermore, attraction factors could be utilized to attract new employees to the industry. Before this, it is important to familiarize with the setting where employees are based in. Theory part defines key concepts for the thesis and explains characteristics when working in tourism industry. Afterwards theory focuses on defining attraction from employer and employee perspective through attraction chain -framework.

2 Tourism industry

Working in tourism means operating in an enormous, global, ever-changing multifaceted industry that reacts rapidly to needs and represents current time and its trends (Holloway & Humphreys, 2022). Furthermore, Holloway and Humphreys (2022) stated that tourism is "the world's fastest growing business" that effects on global and nationwide level. In 2022 there were 962,8 million global arrivals (Statista, 2023) in which 61,75 percent were inbound arrivals to Europe (Statista, 2023b). Based on Statistics Finland (2023) there were 11,5 million arrivals from which majority, 81,6 percent, were domestic visitors (Statistics Finland, 2023). Another way to measure tourist's is by registered overnight stays which in total were 21,9 million in Finland in 2022 (Visit Finland, 2023).

The challenge of defining tourism highlights the complexity and versatile aspects of the industry. Tourism includes several variables and therefore having one definition that fits perfectly all circumstances is impossible. Based on Holloway and Humphreys (2022) tourism can be defined as a phenomenon where person visits a place with purpose and a person engaging with tourism is called tourist. Furthermore, World Tourism Organization UNWTO (n.d.) differentiates tourists and visitors by their length of stay – both are travelling outside their general life circle for purpose - visitor during the same day and tourist always with an overnight stay.

On this thesis, tourism industry is defined as Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland determines tourism on their annual Tourism Industry Report. On the report (2023), tourism industry is divided into two sections – core and extensive cluster. The core cluster includes accommodation, food service, and program services and tour operators (see Figure 1). Extensive cluster adds renting and leasing with passenger traffic to the cluster. (Kaihola, 2023). This definition will later be used on the thesis when creating categorization for survey answers.

Figure 1. Tourism cluster by Kaihola (2023).

Tourism industry is multifaceted industry that share touchpoints with several other industries. Typically, tourism as an industry consists of organizations that are connected to accommodation, food service, and leisure. Tourism operators can be either public or private while tourisms' importance to the operator can differ (Pesonen, 2017). Tourism operators can get their main source of income from tourism related operations (for example hotels), or tourism can be one part of operational roles such as passenger traffic (Pesonen, 2017). The connecting factor for these organizations is that they are in service sector and one of their core services are catered towards tourists. Tourism industry's core elements are customers, tourism companies offering services and destinations (Konu, Pesonen, & Reijonen, 2020). As stated by Holloway & Humphreys (2022), tourism industry is dependable on other services outside tourism, such as banks, transportation, and retail, and therefore create opportunities for economic benefit over industry boundaries.

2.1 Employee in tourism industry

Most recent public statistics about employment in tourism industry is data from 2021 in Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland (TEM) and Visit Finland's National and regional tourism accounts 2020-2021 -report. Based on the report (n.d.), there were 133 400 people employed in tourism extensive cluster in 2021. Majority of people were employed in food service sector, 45,4 percent, and passenger traffic, 34,8 percent, whereas in program services accumulated 10,4 percent of the personnel, accommodation 7,8 percent and lastly renting and leasing 1,5 percent. In food service sector, largest operators in 2021 were all lunch service providers - Compass Group (1 546 personnel), Sodexo Oy (1 380 personnel), and Arkea Oy (1 008 personnel). In program services main operators were fitness service provider SATS Group (264 personnel), amusement park Tampereen Särkänniemi Oy (238 personnel), and indoor playground chain HopLop Oy (232 personnel). In accommodation largest turnover companies were also largest employers – Scandic Hotels Oy with 975 personnel, Sokotel Oy with 734 personnel, and Holiday Club Resort Oy with 603 personnel. (TEM, n.d.).

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland established thematic report about employment in tourism industry which was released in May 2022. The report does not have statistics from pandemic years 2020 and 2021, but it portrays generalized pre-pandemic picture of industry personnel. Based on the report, in 2019, typical person working in tourism industry is a woman (71 percent of all employees) in food service (most employed sector), specifically restaurant environment, (73 percent of food service sector employees work in restaurants) in Uusimaa region (where 42 percent of Finland's tourism employment is focused) while having restaurant and large-scale household worker as professional title (most common title) and with median of total earnings 2,509 euros (monthly median in restaurant sector). (Harju-Myllyaho, et al., 2022).

Although last chapter created generalized picture of a person working in tourism industry, it is notable that it does not necessarily represent correct picture of tourism employee. Employer in tourism is aligned with image of industry itself – tourism provides different opportunities due its multifaceted nature and therefore people have their own backgrounds, motivations, and reasons why they work in the industry (Holloway & Humphreys, 2022). Tourism industry is attractive to for example students and 30 percent of work force was aged between 15 to 24 in 2023 (PAM, 2023b) since it accommodates possibility to work while studying.

Tourism industry is seen as service-based industry where customer experience is highlighted. This emphasizes the importance of skillful, experienced employees who are professionals in their field. In Finland, tourism can be studied in vocational and university level degrees. Noticeably, number of applicants for vocational school have been decreasing whereas university level has steady number of applicants annually. (TEM, n.d.b.). Kaihola (2023) stated that graduates from vocational schools cannot resolve lack of employees in tourism fields. Kaihola's report suggested that solutions for lack of vocational graduates could be offering for example short courses instead of focusing several year degree programs and increasing education taught in English. Noticeably, tourism industry is sensitive to change in work force – since its qualities, tourism industry does not require commitment and it is possible to enter field without previous experience or education. Less than 20 percent of work force has university level degree education and over 20 percent have only graduated comprehensive school level (PAM, 2023b). Lack of commitment was noticeable during COVID-19 pandemic when operators had to reduce their employees and for example in accommodation sector almost one fifth of the employees left the field permanently (Kaihola, 2023).

2.2 Employee requirements

Working in tourism industry requires understanding industry's unique aspects. Reijonen (2020) recognized three main aspects of the industry – location based operating environment, domination of SMEs, and selling experience-based product. These aspects will be discussed next. Other aspects related to tourism industry mention worthy are seasonality, potential to grow and innovate, labor intensity, and customer orientation (MaRa, n.d.).

Arguably, tourism operators and their location are usually interdependent. Location or destination can be the starting point for the company and its core service. It is common to establish tourism business in rural location due to for example area's nature travel possibilities. This emphasizes the importance of understanding the overall impact of area's other operators connected to the process which can create cooperation as well as competition. Creating inclusive operator cluster with shared vision for the destination increases the viability of the area - generates jobs, improves attractiveness of the area, and makes profit for the companies. (Reijonen, 2020).

Another unique aspect for tourism organization's is that majority of operators are small and medium-sized enterprises. Term "SME" refers to an organization with less than 10 employees and this

definition implies to around 90 percent (Reijonen, 2020) of 38 600 Finland's tourism operators in 2021 (Visit Finland, 2023c). Therefore, it is common that entrepreneur themselves are heavily involved in daily operations and viewed as the face of the company and overall, tourism industry offers good basis for entrepreneurship (Reijonen, 2020). Due to its multi-disciplinary nature, practically anyone can turn their interest into tourism business, even without previous experience or education to the industry. Establishing tourism business is usually encouraged since it affects to surrounding operators. Tourism business can be someone's way to live wanted lifestyle (such as husky safari operator in rural area) where the business provides livelihood and resources to support one's personal interests. (Reijonen, 2020). Due the heavy emphasize on entrepreneurship, Reijonen (2020) mentioned that it is common that businesses in tourism industry are family owned. Therefore, interests to operate the business can differ and motivation to succeed is more personal, perhaps wanting to preserve family legacy. Motivation and reality to for example grow the business can be limited but otherwise family business can offer more personal and solicitous customer experience. Family run business resembles its owners highlighting their values, skills, and knowledge, as well as their personality. (Reijonen, 2020).

Last differentiating aspect for tourism industry is that companies' core products are usually intangible, experiences created together with the customers. Since experiencing service is subjective and relying on one's personal feelings, companies are providing possibilities rather than finished products. Testing and measuring services are challenging and emphasize is on social and emotional aspects rather than practicality. Understanding the customer needs and wishes is therefore crucial for creating experience that exceeds expectations. (Reijonen, 2020). Konu (2020) described that experiences are usually motive behind the travel. Meaningful experiences are the core when customer consumes travel product. Travel product either consists of all services during the travel or just one sector such as accommodation – nevertheless they all create product that is seen as service since "se on aineeton, vaihteleva ja ainutkertainen [it is intangible, variable and unique]" (Konu, 2020). All aspects of travel create the meaningful experience for the customer, and it may contain parts that are not enjoyable itself to some (such as transportation) but effect on the overall experience and therefore differences between personalities should be acknowledged (Konu, 2020).

Trends in tourism effect on employee requirements. Visit Finland (2021) recognized three main global megatrends on their Future International Trends in 2022 -report – digitalization and technology, sustainable travel, and nature and outdoors travel. These are seen as Finland's strengths that should be optimized when planning and marketing travel products. These trends might create new market sectors and therefore adaptation for the employees. Kaihola (2023) mentioned, that although new skills, for example cultural knowledge, leadership, niche expertise, are needed in the future, tourism industry in its core is attaining and exceeding customer expectations. This requires emotional intelligent and customer service skills, along with problem solving and multi-skilled characteristics to succeed in the field. (Kaihola, 2023).

Although number of employees is usually an indicator of growth (Konu, Pesonen, & Reijonen, 2020), tourism industry has incidence challenge where employees and employers do not find each other. There could be several reasons for this such as location-based differences where operator is in area where finding competent work force is challenging. Also, open position might require experience that does not match potential job seekers. Additionally, personal chemistry – due to significant number or SME's, company owners are often operating daily tasks and have more personal connection to the company than corporation owners. Therefore, relationship between employee and employer might become more meaningful which requires shared values and working mentality. (Konu, Pesonen, & Reijonen, 2020).

3 Attractive work

Attraction is defined by Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) as *"a quality or force of someone or something that tends to pull others in or create interest in the person or thing"*. Collins Dictionary (n.d.) also adds that "*An attraction is a feature which makes something interesting or desirable.".* In Finnish, based on the Institute for the Languages of Finland, word '*vetovoima'* describes that something has "*viehätysvoima, kiehtovuus, houkuttavuus [charm, fascination, attractiveness]"* (Kotimaisten kielten keskus, 2022). These definitions might create image towards the word itself which is the connecting theme throughout this thesis.

3.1 Service Union United PAM's Attraction Barometer 2023

Attractiveness is surveyed annually by Service Union United (PAM) from Finnish population of working age impressions towards attraction factors in service industry which gathers results to Attraction Barometer. Barometer includes retail, tourism, and real estate services industries and determines there for example industry recognition, attractiveness, and associations. (PAM, n.d.). Attraction Barometer 2023 was executed by Veria that surveyed 1,103 people aged from 18 to 65 years old (PAM; Kantar Public, 2023). Answers to this barometer from tourism industry perspective are introduced next.

When asked about the associations related to tourism industry, majority of the answers recognized that industry requires interaction between different kind of people as well as it has lots of part-time job. Over 50 percent of the answerers associated tourism industry employees facing threat and acts of violence and sexual harassment. On the other hand, only few percent of the answerers associated tourism industry fitting for people with young children, or that industry is flexible with scheduling or that it has attracting wages. Barometer also surveys opinions towards society, for example, striking, taxation, immigration, and financial growth. When asked, should working on Sundays stay compensated, 85 percent of the answerers agreed. (PAM; Kantar Public, 2023). Sunday compensation is correspondent to tourism industry since its one of the unique aspects it has – commonality to work when others are on holiday.

Comparison between retail and tourism industry can be seen reasonable since both industries are service industries with several similarities – they both accommodate especially younger work force with mainly secondary degree education and majority of the workers are women (PAM, 2023b). The barometer asked how attractive it would be to work in the tourism industry in which 27 percent of respondents answered positively (very and quite attractive). Compared to retail industry, 41 percent positive answers, both industries are experiencing slight improvement year by year. Other question determined is how acceptable answerers find their close one working in the industry – on tourism industry 52 percent positive answers whereas retail industry 65 percent positive answers. (PAM; Kantar Public, 2023).

3.2   Attraction chain -framework

Huhta and Myllyntaus (2021) introduced theoretical framework called an attraction chain, '*ve-tovoimaketju*', on their handbook for employee developers. Based on this framework, attraction is achieved by overall process that focuses on three main themes – employee understanding, employee experience, and employer brand. (2021) These themes are represented on the figure below (see Figure 2) and are explained on next chapters with focus on employee perspective.
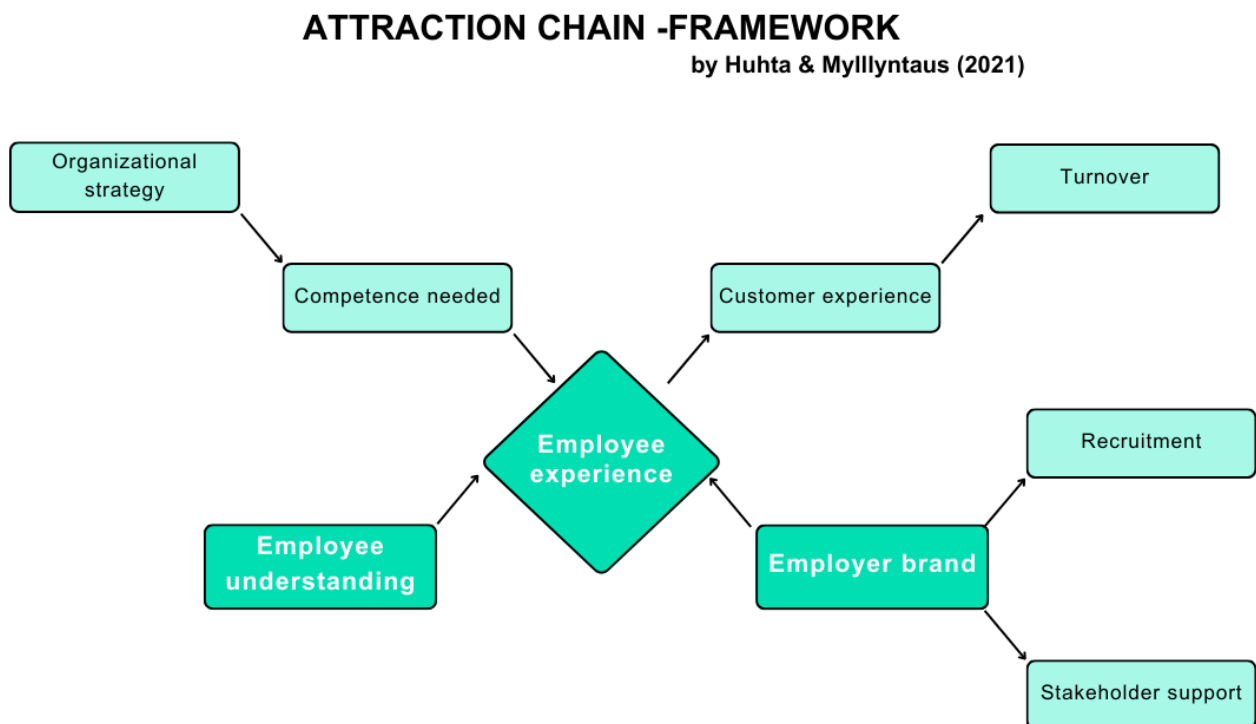
Figure 2. Attraction chain framework (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

3.2.1   Employee experience

Based on Huhta and Myllyntaus (2021), human life is filled with experiences that create sense of meaningfulness and shape the way we behave. Experiencing requires active role and it has one's emotions in the center. Experience has three main factors – individual accomplishments or acts that impact emotions, conscious interaction one is part-taking and lastly, it creates memories and meaningful outcomes. Ideally, experiences enhance positive feelings and emotions towards the

subject and create memory traces that capture experienced emotions for a long time. Therefore, experiences are impactful way to enhance one's vision and satisfaction towards their work. Huhta and Myllyntaus (2021) outlined employee experience as touchpoints employee and employer share throughout employment journey which generate thoughts and feelings towards work itself as well as working environment and organization. Positive employee experiences rarely happen accidentally rather than requiring target-orientated planning in cooperation with employees. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

When developing employee experience, wanted outcome is to create added value for the employers. This added value usually shows as work satisfaction, organization's differentiation, business benefit, and development efficiency. Satisfied employees are strongly connected to their workplaces and feel that they are valued and have sense of belonging to the organization. Differentiation from other organizations create strong attribute to the organization and positive employee experience is crucial for the image. Business benefit by employee experience reduces staff costs and create more profit through enhanced customer experiences. Lastly, employee experience improves organizations development process when requirements for employee-orientated approach are understood. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

Noticeably, work engagement benefits both employers and organizations. The work engagement requires interaction between employees and work environment, and it is the wanted outcome for employee experience development. Increasing work engagement creates more business – employees are crucial part of the customer experience and engaged employees are motivated to serve customers better. For the employees, engagement creates better opportunities to develop and strengthen their knowledge, which can lead to promotions. It also benefits one's private life – one's adaptation skills improve and experiencing satisfaction at work follows to other aspects at work. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

Huhta and Myllyntaus (2021) present employee experience development process that includes eight following steps:

1. Understand organization's strategy.

Organization' strategy represents goals and objectives to reach them. Changes in organization strategy create usually changes in needed competencies which may require recruitments and developing existing employees' knowledge and skills. Ideally, organization's strategy includes exact plan how wanted success is achieved, rather than just goal setting and possible outcomes. When strategy is clear and attainable, it creates framework for other sub-strategies in for example HR and brand management. They all create attraction towards the organization. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

2. Create framework for employee experience.

Huhta and Myllyntaus (2021) present their own framework that can be modified to fit desired needs. Framework's purpose is to indicate factors that employees experience on their daily life and these elements can be utilized to increase desired value such as work engagement. Elements of the framework are purpose of the organization's existence, organizational culture, leadership, work's characteristics, social environment, well-being, physical environment, and work equipment. Organizations should emphasize elements that are important to that specific organization, for example in tourism industry where entrepreneurship is popular, leadership is not necessarily as important as one's well-being.

3. Establish current state.

Current state should be established through employee perspective – what are existing strengths and weaknesses and where to develop them. This can be attained by researching current staff and even potential recruits. Utilizing both quantitative (for example surveys) and qualitative (for example interviews) research methods give better understanding to employee perspective. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

4. Define strategy for employee experience.

After creating an understanding of employee perspective, organization should establish strategies for visions organization is pursuing. Employee experience strategy's mission is to create framework how organization differentiates from others, what employee experience it seeks and how

these actions are attained. It is better to focus on limited aspects to develop to maximize their potential to succeed and then grow them into competitive factors. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

5. Create approach for employee understanding.

Part of the process is having clear vision how employee understanding is achieved. Organization should create framework on how and when this is collected from employees – having current data from employees creates possibilities to respond challenges reactively and give employees platform for feedback. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

6. Develop employee orientated leadership.

The employee-center is crucial – it requires prioritizing employees' needs and listening to them throughout processes. This can demand changes in organization's management and leadership culture – rather than telling employees what to do (usually as cost-efficiency as possible) employee-orientated leader gives employees responsibility and possibility to affect their contribution. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

7. Create processes for developing employee experience.

There are three levels included when creating processes for developing employee experience. Firstly, organizational level that creates bases for all the development such as strategies, vision and mission, and practical development tools. Secondly, processes and meaningful moments in which organization leads touchpoints for employees to emphasize their work engagement. Lastly, unit and team level which includes allowing room for innovation and excitement in connection with social networks. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

8. Repeat the steps.

Employee experience development is an on-going process that must be tackled from the beginning regularly. Changes in inside and outside organizational levels bring new challenges that must be addressed and supervised. Goal for the development process is to create continuum that is positive and innovative. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

3.2.2 Employee understanding

Employee understanding describes the methods organization utilizes to be aware of their current and potential employees need, wants, emotions, and expectations. This understanding requires continuous dialogue that is complimented by collected data rather than assumptions. The data collection is done regularly from all employees, preferably even from people that are not in an employment relationship with the organization, and that data is then analyzed accordingly. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021). Martin Konn (2023) states on an article considering employee understanding several benefits for both employer and employe perspective. When employers provide their employees possibilities to effect on the workplace, it increases their willingness to engage and perform better. These possibilities to affect could be for example providing platform to give feedback, being transparent and communicating with the community along with giving possibilities to grow and develop on their careers. Accordingly, this makes the employees hopefully more motivated towards their work which can be seen as better customer service which leads to customer loyalty and increased profit. Therefore, if employees feel valued and understood, they are less likely to leave their jobs. (Konn, 2023).

Employee understanding and customer understanding are deeply connected. Huhta and Myllyntaus (2021) mentioned that companies create their strategies based on customer needs and expectations and thereafter start developing organizational brand and customer experience. This should be applied to employees' perspective too – often organizations assume knowing what employees want and need, without having communicated that to other parties. This can create misunderstandings and focusing on aspects that are not necessarily as important to employees as the organization thinks. The goal for employee understanding is knowledge management, decision making based on facts. Knowledge management utilizes data collected from desired target groups such as previous and current employees. Arguably, collecting the employee feedback is crucial for developing the company. The employment understanding can be collected through quantitative or qualitative research methods. Interviews and workshops are an example of qualitative methods. No matter the method, it is important to follow through with implementations after collecting the responses. If not, it signals to employees their ideas are not appreciated and will decrease their willingness to answer for example work well-being surveys in the future. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

Based on Huhta and Myllyntaus (2021), the most common quantitative method to collect feed-back from the employees are regular anonymous census surveys that measure important themes from the organization. The census survey focuses on attracting wide range on employees from different departments. It is crucial to create understanding towards employees' daily tasks and develop them in cooperation with management and employees. Employee understanding can be studied from all aspects, from workstations to work schedules and from work and leisure balance to rewarding systems. Huhta and Myllyntaus (2021) recommend keeping the schedule for the survey and releasing of the responses tight as possible to create momentum for the possible development points. The collected responses should also be shared with all the employees to create trustworthy and transparent communication. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

3.2.3 Employer brand

The organizational attraction is created mainly through brand image. Huhta and Myllyntaus (2021) defined brand image as creating impressions and loyalty towards the organization that either connect or estrange people. Other part when creating attractive organization with positive brand image is employee experience which plays crucial role since it can either strengthen or weaken company's vision. This ideally creates attraction, retention, and engagement. Preferably, organization is attractive when its brand image is strong and employee experience is good. There are also other attraction benefits for organization which strong brand image creates. When organization has strong, memorable brand image it increases customer experience – customers are familiar and most importantly know the company. From employee perspective, strong brand image creates engagement – employees might have personal motivation to succeed on the company and it also might make recruitment process easier. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

Valuable brand attracts valuable employees. The brand image can be seen as human relations (HR) responsibility, although development of the brand should be managed by all departments and stated on organizational strategy. The HR is responsible for recruiting and overseeing staff that fits organizations strategy and vision – who are fitting to employer brand, are there any specific qualities that are seek after. When managing employer brand, employee experience and its goals should emphasize each other. Employer brand is also connected to communication whereas it

aims to connect with employees and potential recruits. Employees are responsible for the brand image as well, since their communication to for example closed ones affect further their perception towards the organization. Therefore, it is important to realize this potential and aim for valuable experiences that employees are happily distributing. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

Strategy & Employer Brand Consultant Lauri Vaisto (2024) introduces basic principles of employer branding. Based on Vaisto, employer branding is systematic and preserving process that requires clear managerial department that understands its agenda and needed resources. Arguably, employer branding can be seen either as strategic or tactical. Strategic employer branding is goal-oriented with long-term effectiveness, focusing on messages how to attract possible employees. Whereas tactical employer branding focuses on daily tasks, communication with the employees. Nevertheless, both complement each other. Another factor affecting employer branding Vaisto mentions is divide to internal and external picture. The internal picture is the culture and work atmosphere, the factors existing employees perceive and how they communicate about their employers. Where the external picture focuses on the image potential recruits have towards the employer and should the organization effect on these images. (Vaisto, 2024).

3.3   The Model of 40 Attributes of the Universum

Huhta and Myllyntaus (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021) introduced briefly in their book Universum's research framework for employer brand. Universum (n.d.) is global employer branding specialist organization that has several focuses such as annual World's Most Attractive Employers ranking and The Employer Branding Academy. One of their branding tools is The Model of 40 Attributes of the Universum which unfortunately is not available freely on the internet. Therefore, the only information considering the model is from the previously mentioned book. Nevertheless, the model was too fitting for this research to ignore since it gave exact framework for the survey that was modified fitting for the tourism industry. The model will be introduced shortly next.

The Model of 40 Attributes of the Universum creates an estimation how for example an organization is considered by external stakeholders. The model is utilized with quantitative research meth-

ods such as surveys since it has possibility to collect numerical data. The model has four viewpoints with different focus points: the reputation & image, people & culture, salary & progress opportunities, and characteristics [of work]. Firstly, the reputation & image describes characteristics of the organization such as, how attractive, and interesting services and products it has, its ethical standards, is it innovative, and positivity towards new technologies. Second part, people & culture, focuses on the social atmosphere: how creative and dynamic, diverse, and friendly environments with possibilities to affect and balance time with personal life. The third part, salary & progress, is straightforward: are promotions and further education encouraged, compensation and benefits seem motivational, and treatment is (gender) equal. Lastly, the characteristics are the content and requirements, such as how safe and performance-oriented work is, and is it seem safe and flexible. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

4   Research process

As introduced by Durand and Chantler (2014), when conducting quantitative research, the goal is to measure different concepts with numerical data, most commonly via survey. This data is attained through measurement and having variables that are usually comparable to each other. The purpose of quantitative research is often to create overall picture of the phenomena than can be ideally then generalized (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021). Generalization is possible when there are enough responses correspondent to the sample size and thus far results have factual base rather than speculation. Generalized data is representative and trustworthy since its sample size is large enough to characterize research's target audience. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021). The ideal sample size creates more reliable results and less room for error although reaching this ideal size is often not feasible due to for example resources (Baggio & Klobas, 2011).

4.1   Survey

Survey is an effective method when researching for example populations opinions towards specific trends and opinions with numerical data. Utilizing different variables and comparing them to each other can create patterns and relationships for further assessment. Survey creates possibilities to examine population with reasonable resources and it is usually less committal compared to other

study methods that require experimenting and long-lasting management. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This survey utilizes both quantitative and categorical data. The quantitative data is numerical data that measures something, in this case answerer's opinions towards the tourism industry. Whereas categorical data focuses on creating qualifying aspects of the answerers' such as their years of experience in tourism industry. (Baggio & Klobas, 2011). To create better understanding of answerer's opinions the survey utilizes Likert scale that requires statements in which answerers' have five levels of agreement (4 - agree and 5 - strongly agree) or disagreement (2 - disagree or 1 - strongly disagree). The scaling gives opportunities for seeing answerer's perceptions widely and give them possibility also to answer without taking sides (3 – neither agree or disagree). (Dimitrov, 2011).

Nevertheless, it is important to create understanding what statements respondents find meaningful. The goal for research is to improve aspects that are meaningful, and this cannot be determined if respondents are only asked to give overall rating for certain themes. Not necessarily the lowest rating is automatically theme that is most important to the respondents, but it can also be an aspect that does not need to be improved. (Huhta & Myllyntaus, 2021).

4.2 Hypothesis

Based on the gathered theory, it is expected that multidisciplinary features of the industry will be emphasized – one's experience might not be directly comparable to another's since experience on working in tourism industry is the sum of many aspects. These aspects are strongly related to one's employment experience and work environment, which are furthermore connected to one's personality – experience of the workplace may differ from employee to employee. The results of this research are most likely aligned with previously mentioned PAM's attraction barometer and overall characteristics of the tourism industry. In summary, defining factors of the tourism industry divide opinions – what suits for one does not complement necessarily others lifestyle.

4.3   Implementation of the survey

The survey was shared through author's own connections and social media channels where it reached 15 respondents. Only requirement for the respondents were that they are or have been working on the tourism industry, although of course one could argue that knowing the author was second requirement since the survey was shared for small circle of people. It was created with Webropol-platform which JAMK University of applied sciences recommends. All the answers were collected anonymously without any possibility to identify respondents, and this was explained in the beginning of the survey.

Noticeably, due to number of responses, it is not possible to generalize these answers. Generalizing requires 10-15% responses from the target group and due to limitations of this thesis that was not attainable. Required number of responses to create generalization would have been at least 13 000 and processing and analyzing that amount of data would have needed more resources and knowledge to handle. (Nikolopoulou, 2022).

On the survey, there were in total 17 questions, including one open-ended option. Only first question was mandatory and other questions were voluntarily – therefore, respondents could skip questions they did not want or cannot answer to have more precise answers. Hence, not all the questions have 15 responses. The survey was sorted in three parts – background questions, opinion-based questions, and clarifying questions. Survey was done both English and Finnish, giving participant possibility to choose their language at the beginning. Answers to the survey questions will be introduced next.

Background questions

First question of the survey was the only mandatory one which asked how many of the respondents had either worked or done their practical training in tourism field during the year of 2023. From the respondents, n=9 had worked in the tourism industry past year, whereas n=6 had not. Noticeably, when asking the respondents current relations to the tourism industry, all the respondents answered some role and therefore they could be legitimated to have connections to

the tourism. Respondents could choose multiple relations to the industry and majority of the respondents were either students n=8 or employees n=7. Other relations were jobseekers n=4 or other n=2 which were specified as recently graduated and previous employee.

As mentioned before, this thesis follows Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland definition of tourism industry with core and extensive clusters. Therefore, respondents were asked to identify their sectors and from the survey, majority of the respondents had worked or done their practical training in 2023 at accommodation sector n=6 and/or food service sector n=3. Both program services and transportation had one respondent n=1 whereas none of the respondents had worked on renting services. Also noticeably, n=12 had or were currently studying university level degree on tourism and on average respondents n=13 had 3,2 years of experience of operating on the tourism industry.

Opinion-based questions

Second part of the survey studied respondents' opinions and impressions towards tourism industry. In this part of the survey, respondents were asked to evaluate statements and how much they agreed or disagreed with them. Utilizing Likert's scale respondents had five level evaluation from 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neither agree or disagree, 4 – agree to 5 – strongly agree. Afterwards, respondents were asked to choose three most important statements from the section to create better understanding towards the opinion. Thus, to recognize the importance of the statements to the respondents creates possibility to see potential improvement aspects since there is not necessarily always correlation between most polarized opinions – one might feel strongly about certain issue, but they do not see it important enough to for example develop that aspect but rather see meaningfulness on issues that are already thriving. Therefore, rather than concentrating on developing least agreed aspects, maintaining, and focusing on most important aspects can be more fruitful.

Clarifying questions

The last part of the survey focused on few clarifying questions, which could help determine better understanding towards respondents' perspective. From the respondents, n=8 would maybe recommend working on the tourism industry for their close ones, and n=4 would recommend, and

n=3 would not recommend. When asked about their own future on the tourism industry, n=10 of the respondents see themselves working on the industry from year now. On contrary, when asked if the respondent had thought about leaving the industry during the past month, this created the average score of 2.1 (n=13) where 0 – not at all and 5 – very often.
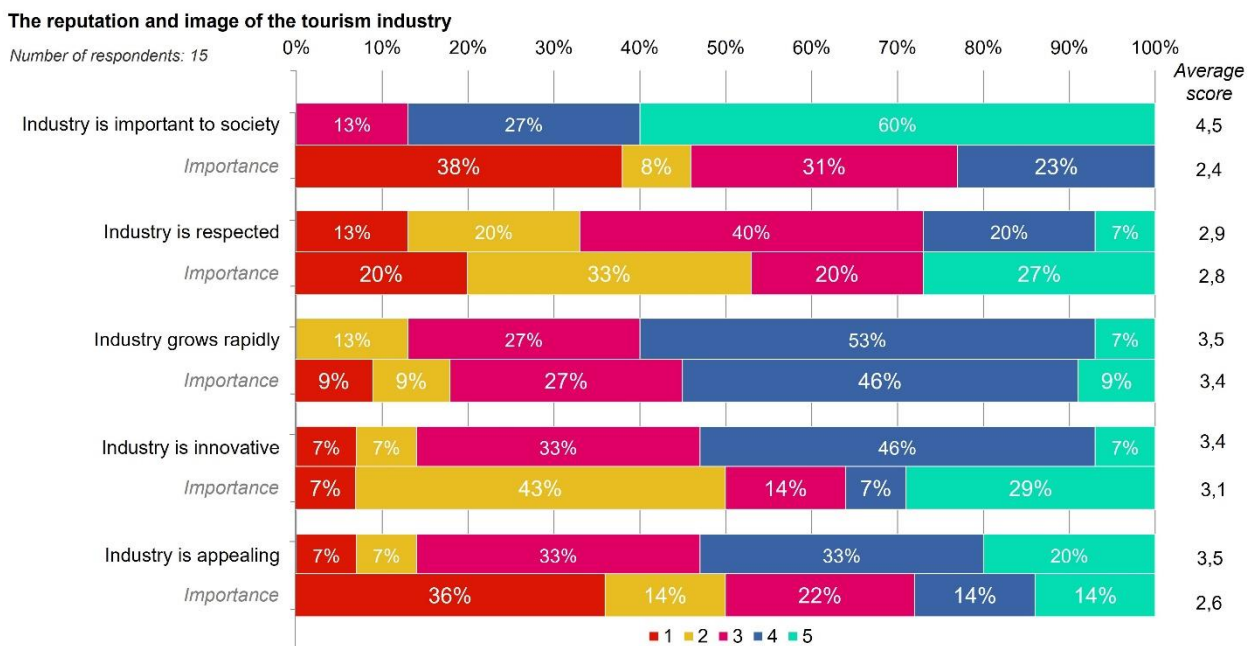
4.4   Findings of the survey

Figure 3. Section 1: The reputation and image -part survey responses.

First section asked about the reputation and image (see Figure 3 above) of the tourism industry in which all 15 respondents answered. Based on the survey, majority of the respondents agreed that the tourism industry is important to the society with average score of 4.5, but this statement was least important compared to others with average score of 2.4. The respondents found the rapid growth as most important statement (average score 3.4) whereas in evaluation it was on the shared second place with appeal (both with average score of 3.5).
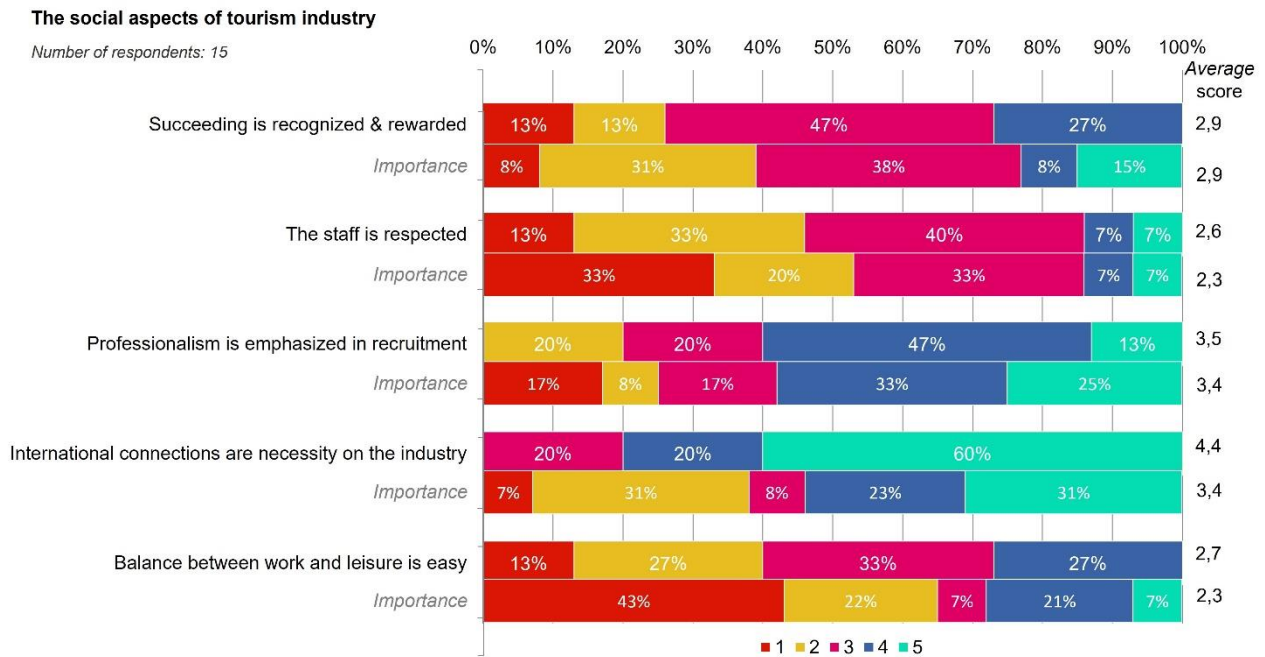
The social aspects of tourism industry

Number of respondents: 15

	1	2	3	4	5	Average score
Succeeding is recognized & rewarded	13%	13%	47%	27%		2,9
Importance	8%	31%	38%	8%	15%	2,9
The staff is respected	13%	33%	40%	7%	7%	2,6
Importance	33%	20%	33%	7%	7%	2,3
Professionalism is emphasized in recruitment		20%	20%	47%	13%	3,5
Importance	17%	8%	17%	33%	25%	3,4
International connections are necessity on the industry			20%	20%	60%	4,4
Importance	7%	31%	8%	23%	31%	3,4
Balance between work and leisure is easy	13%	27%	33%	27%		2,7
Importance	43%	22%	7%	21%	7%	2,3

Figure 4. Section 2: The social aspects -part survey responses.

Second section created understanding towards the social aspects (see Figure 4 above) of the tourism industry which also was answered by all the 15 respondents. For them, international connections on the industry were mostly agreed on statement (average score of 4.4) whereas respect towards staff was least agreed on with average score of 2.6. Nevertheless, when asked about the importance of the statements, internationalization and recruiting professionals were most valued (both with average score of 3.4) whereas appreciation and balance between work and leisure were least important both with average score of 2.3.

Waging and benefits of tourism industry
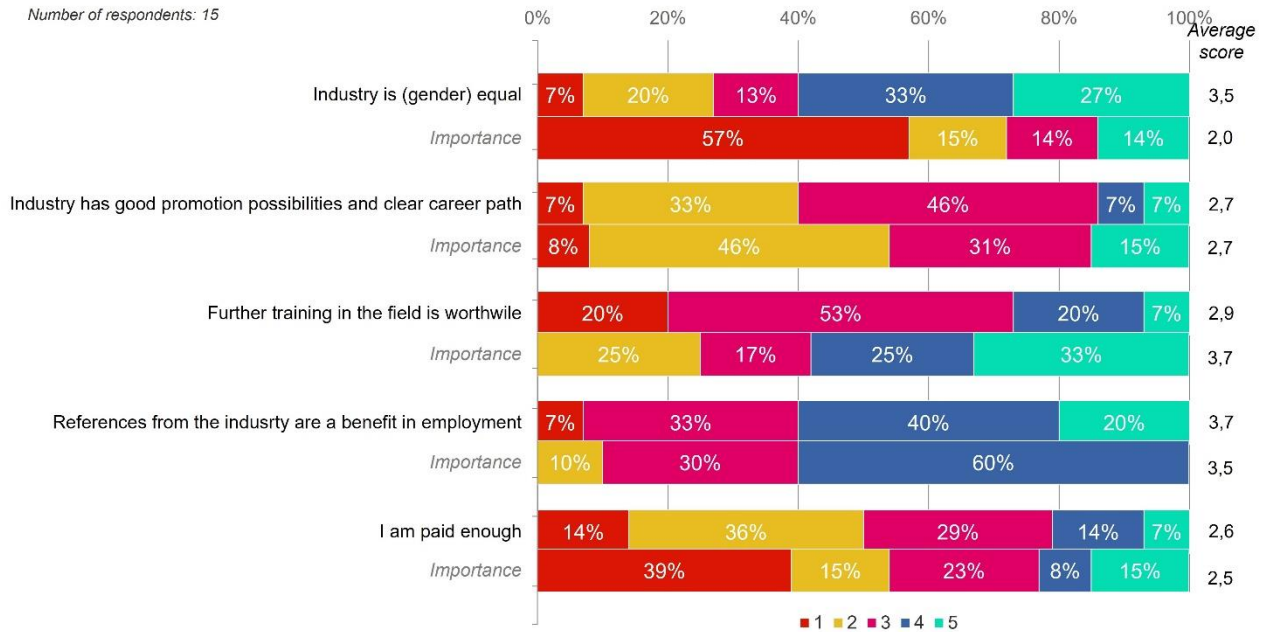
Number of respondents: 15

Figure 5. Section 3: The waging and benefits -part survey responses.

On the third section, focus was on opinions towards waging and benefits (see Figure 5 above) of the tourism industry which also were answered by all 15 respondents. Least agreed upon statement was that tourism industry pays enough (average score of 2.6) whilst most agreed upon statement created impression that working in the industry are benefit for further employment (average score of 3.7). Respondents found further training (average score of 3.7) and references (average score of 3.5) most important, however waging, with average score of 2.5, and equality, average score of 2.0, were found least important.

Characteristics of tourism industry
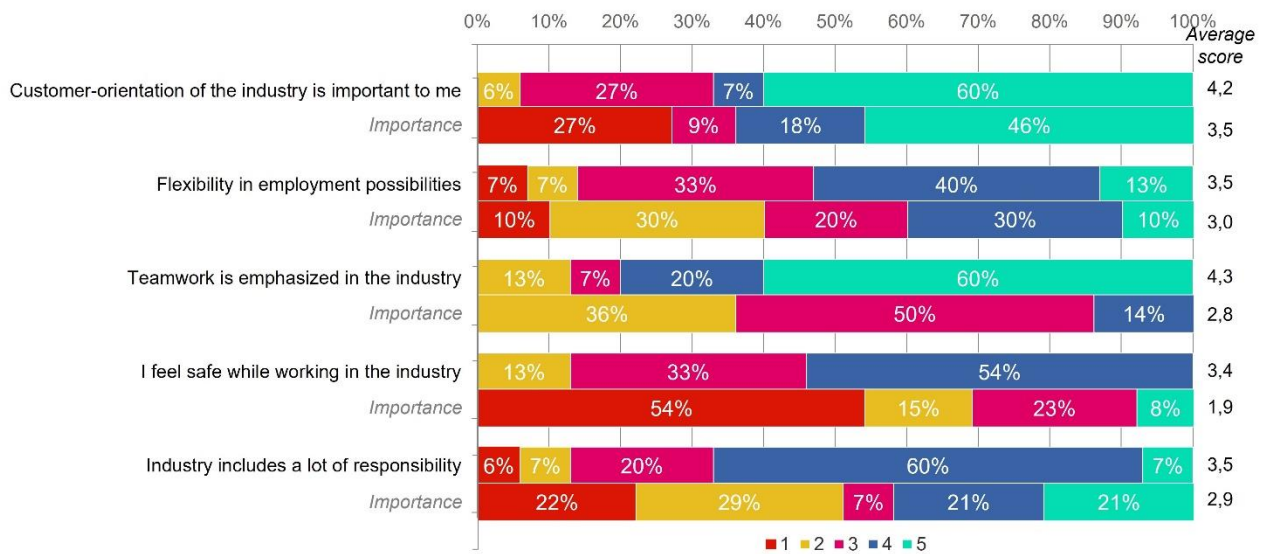
Number of respondents: 15

Figure 6. Section 4: The general characteristics -part survey responses.

Fourth section, in which all 15 respondents answered, was about general characteristics (see Figure 6 above) of tourism industry. Most agreed upon statements were that teamwork in emphasized on the industry (average score of 4.3) and that customer-orientation of the industry is important to the respondent (4.2). Least agreed upon statements included for the respondents were responsibility and flexible employment, both with 3.5 average score, and feeling of safety while working with average score of 3.4. The respondents found customer orientation as most important aspect (average score of 3.5) whereas safety was least important to them with just 1.9 average score.

5   Discussion & conclusions

The research findings emphasized the extent of the tourism industry. That is noticeable from answers to the statements – none of the statements gathered unitary answers from all the respondents. Especially with sample amount on mind, it could be expected to have less divide between the statements than with large sample size. Few statements gathered more than 50 percent second-

ing – for example, respondents strongly agreed (5) that tourism industry is important to the society (60 percent) in which international connections are necessity (60 percent), customer-oriented industry was important (60 percent), and respondents agreed that teamwork is emphasized (60 percent). Although, when comparing these statements to their importance to respondents, only two of them were aligned – respondents felt that importance to the society and customer-orientation mattered to them. The industry itself as research topic is challenging since workplaces are usually where one has their experience to the industry. Therefore, it can be difficult to determine universal opinions focusing only the industry related factors. Some statements are easier to see as bigger picture, such as tourism industry's importance to the society whereas feeling of safety is more likely connected to one's personal experience of specific workplace.

On section 1 considering the reputation and image of the tourism industry, respondents valued most by the average score the statements that tourism industry is important to society, and industry grows rapidly and is innovative. Based on these statements' importance to the respondents, rapid-growth and innovations are seen as most important statements whereas importance to the society is not. From employee perspective, this could mean possibilities to follow and create trends of the industry amongst work tasks and employment opportunities. Therefore, the industry changes constantly creating market sectors to new products and services, which can require adjusting from the employees.

The section 2 created understanding towards social aspects of tourism industry. The most agreed upon statements by average score were also most important ones to the respondents – results showed that international connections are necessary as well as emphasizing professionalism when recruiting. This could create expectations from employee perspective to have tools and capabilities to cater towards international customers rather than having focus solely on domestic travelers. Nevertheless, employees are expecting to have colleagues that are proficient to work with and this should be noticed as early as the recruitment process.

The waging and benefits were focused on section 3. Most agreed upon statements by the average score were that industry is (gender) equal and references are beneficial in employment. Later was most important statement for the respondents by the average score as well as that further training in the field is worthwhile. Based on these responses, it seems valuable to employees that they

are continuously trained at their work to improve their skills and therefore, training and educating should be encouraged by the employers. Furthermore, these investments will benefit the employer to have skilled staff with up-to-date knowledge, and the employee themselves in the future in case of employment process.

Lastly, section 4 focused on general characteristics of the tourism industry. Noticeably, two statements were most agreed upon by the average score – customer-oriented industry was important to the respondents as well as emphasize on the teamwork. By the importance of the statements, customer-orientation and flexibility in employment possibilities had highest average score. Tourism industry is service-based field which does not exist without human connections, and it was positively highlighted on the answers. From employee perspective, it is relevant to keep this in mind and gravitate towards organizations that share similar views towards the attitudes and service points with the human connections. The service industry is not for everyone, but as noticed on the answers tourism industry has flexibility in employment possibilities and therefore can cater towards different types of employees.

5.1   Conclusions and development proposals

This research hopefully gave small glimpse of insight towards people working in tourism industry. The employee perspective is crucial to consider when creating organizational strategies and development processes due the industry's customer-centered nature. Noticeably, employees are the key element for organizational success since they are usually the center touchpoint with the customer and the organization. The employees can be seen as the face of the organization and their input should not be diminished. Positive working conditions create motivated and satisfied employees that only benefit the organization on the long run. The industry and organizations are intertwined and sometimes difficult to determine if experiences are related to the industry or only the organization itself. Therefore, researching industry as one phenomenon is difficult, since it is challenging to determine one's impressions towards just the industry which is most likely affected by the status of their workplace. Also, it is noted that this research might have different results if the same questions were asked from only previous tourism industry employees, since they could have some sort of resentment towards the industry and or their previous employers.

The development proposal based on this research is increasing the employee perspective -based research. It was noticeable that finding references that focus on this matter was challenging – for example employee management often focuses the organizational perspective of the employees without necessarily knowledge about employees' motives and reasons. The employee perspective is as versatile as there are employees and that creates the challenge – there cannot be necessarily one or few formulas that fit everyone. The research results on this thesis showed that employees appreciate further-training and developing their skills, and this could be one aspect for the employers to focus on encouraging. Nevertheless, the continuous dialogue between employers and employees is crucial, either with personal discussions or surveys. Main thing is not to silence employees' voices but rather let them be heard.

5.2   Reliability and ethicality

The research utilized structured questionnaire which improves the accuracy of the gathered data for furthermore reliability of the conclusions. The survey was conducted via Webropol which gives standardized system for data collection and analysis. Beforehand, a survey was tested by the author and author's parent, who is linguistic teacher, to find possible grammar errors and increase clarity of the questions. Therefore, it was ensured that the survey was reliable, and the final questions and survey flow would minimize the confusion for the respondents and furthermore increase the reliability of the collected data.

This research was conducted with ethical principles. It follows JAMK University of Applied Sciences reporting instructions and therefore it can be seen as trustworthy and reliable. European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ALLEA, 2023) describes that research ethics are closely related to other topics of research integrity such as data management and data protection. The ethical research practices do not include plagiarism in any form or falsification of the results.

This research has been ethically conducted and it does not include plagiarism in any form. All the references have been carefully examined and resourced while using only reliable sources. The survey was done anonymously which protects respondents from identifying and participating in the

survey was voluntarily. All the data collected and used was only for research this purpose and will not be furthermore used. The author will keep all rights reserved for this research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Online survey questions

1. Have you worked or had an internship in the tourism industry during 2023?

   a. *Yes*

   b. *No*

2. If yes, in what field?

   a. *Accommodation*

   b. *Food service*

   c. *Program services*

   d. *Renting*

   e. *Transportation*

3. How long in total have you operated in tourism field?

   0-10 years scale

4. In the tourism industry, are you currently... (you can choose multiple)

   a. *Employee.*

   b. *Entrepreneur*

   c. *Student*

   d. *Trainee*

   e. *Jobseeker*

   f. *Something else, specify.*

5. Have you studied or currently studying tourism degree?

   a. *Yes, vocational school.*

   b. *Yes, university level.*

   c. *Yes, both.*

   d. *No.*

Statements

6. The reputation and image of the tourism industry (1-5)

   o *Industry is appealing*

   o *Industry is innovative*

   o *Industry grows rapidly*

   o *Industry is respected*

- *Industry is important to society*

7. In your opinion, rank by prioritization claims from previous question. Choose at least top three.

   - *Appeal*

   - *Innovative*

   - *Rapid growth*

   - *Respect*

   - *Importance to society*

8. The social aspects of tourism industry (1-5)

   - *Balance between work and leisure is easy*

   - *International connections are necessity on the industry*

   - *Professionalism is emphasized in recruitment*

   - *The staff is respected*

   - *Succeeding is recognized & rewarded*

9. In your opinion, rank by prioritization claims from previous question. Choose at least top three.

   - *Work & leisure balance*

   - *Internationalization*

   - *Recruiting professionals*

   - *Appreciation*

   - *Succeeding & rewarding*

10. Waging and benefits of tourism industry (1-5)

    - *I am paid enough*

    - *References from the industry are a benefit in employment*

    - *Further training in the field is worthwhile*

    - *Industry has good promotion possibilities and clear career path*

    - *Industry is (gender) equal*

11. In your opinion, rank by prioritization claims from previous question. Choose at least top three.

    - *Waging*

    - *References*

    - *Further training*

    - *Promotions & career path*

o   *Equality*

12. Characteristics of tourism industry (1-5)

o   *Industry includes a lot of responsibility*

o   *I feel safe while working in the industry*

o   *Teamwork is emphasized in the industry*

o   *Flexibility in employment possibilities*

o   *Customer-orientation of the industry is important to me*

13. In your opinion, rank by prioritization claims from previous question. Choose at least top three.

o   *Responsibility*

o   *Safety*

o   *Teamwork*

o   *Employment possibilities*

o   *Customer-orientation*

14. Would you recommend working in tourism industry to your close-one?

o   *Yes*

o   *No*

o   *Maybe*

o   *Not sure*

15. Have you considered leaving tourism industry during past month? (0 - not at all - 5 - very often)

0 to 5 scale

16. Do you see yourself working in tourism industry from one year now?

a.   *Yes*

b.   *No*

c.   *Not sure*

17. If you have further thoughts about the subject feel free to express them.