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**Talent Management in the Greek Hotel industry: An investigation of
Millennials' recruitment and selection practices in luxury hotels**

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Extended Abstract

The concept of Talent Management (TM) has become the focus of many studies in recent years aiming to highlight its importance especially in hotel industry. According to Barron (2008), McKinsey (1998) coined the term TM, but many researchers argue that the concept is not yet well defined and most significantly its practice reveals limited application. Its current importance and the attention it has gained the past few years as a topic is well presented by Horner (2017), who states that 7,000 articles with different themes have been written about it. Vaiman et al. (2012) identify seven important factors that greatly influence the decision making of TM, shaping its concept and its context globally. One of the most important factors is focused on demographic trends and more specifically on Millennials whose numbers have increased markedly in the workplace. Thunnissen et al. (2013) highlight that most TM research focuses on the context of North America and more specifically on its global multinational enterprises. Chung and D'Annunzio-Green (2018) attempt to investigate the concept of TM in hospitality in a broader context and claim there is

limited emphasis put on small and medium enterprises (SME's) and even less on the hospitality industry in the European context.

It should be noted that Greece faced challenging times after the 2008 economic crisis, with most businesses struggling to survive in a hostile environment and with unemployment, especially of the young people, reaching record highs. The term Generation G, according to Smith (2017), describes the young talented and highly qualified Greeks, who leave their country in search of better career opportunities and work-life balance. It is estimated that between 2010 and 2013, approximately 200,000 Greek millennials (under the age of 35), left Greece seeking a better future (Vasilaki, 2018).

Greece has acknowledged tourism as a most valuable industry, considering it a sector that can help the country overcome the economic crisis, thus effort is made to sustain and promote tourism. In addition, according to (SETE Intelligence 2015), 45.3% of tourism revenues go to the accommodation sector. The growing number of tourists visiting the country since the beginning of the economic crisis, is beyond doubt important for the hotel industry; on the other hand, the positive forecasts about the future tourist arrivals, create a demanding environment for hoteliers and hospitality operators. Since the hospitality industry constitutes a major economic pillar for Greece, it is essential that the best practices be implemented to properly serve the sector so as to increase hotel customer experience and offer advantages in a highly competitive world. A great obstacle to create an indigenous competitive workforce is the Brain Drain phenomenon that has deprived Greece from Millennial talents, meaning that all stakeholders in the hotel industry should endeavour to reverse it.

The current qualitative research employed in-depth semi-structured interviews with senior managers in 4 & 5* hotels in Greece. The aim of the study is to investigate their perceptions and experiences in regards to millennial talent management practices in the Greek luxury hotel sector. Bolander et al. (2017) highlight that it is more valuable for such a complex topic to be investigated in larger organisations, not necessarily in direct numbers but comparatively with other organisations within the industry, where resources for adopting and implementing those practices are

more possible to exist. Thus, the managers of this study were chosen among the 4 and 5* hotels in an effort to collect rich data for a complex topic with limited applications in practice within this study's context. The sample of the study consisted of 11 senior managers from Greek 4 and 5* hotels. The interviews took place at the peak of the summer season (high season) a fact that rendered the interviews' planning particularly challenging. The primary data were collected within a period of 20 days (namely, from 26 June to 14 July); the interviews were conducted in mainland Greece (Ioannina, Athens, and Patra) and in two Greek islands (Crete, Cephalonia) so as to cover a geographical range as wide as possible. All interviews were conducted in Greek, transcribed and translated to English. The qualitative data collected were then processed with the employment of thematic analysis (Bryman, 2015).

The findings of this research suggest that implementing talent management cannot be seen as a uniform approach. TM has to be seen in the context of particular factors such as the country's economy, the labour market in local, regional and national level, the national and organisational culture, and the size, structure and ownership status of hotels (i.e. individual versus corporate hotel chain). In addition, the impact of external pressures by education and government related stakeholders, should be also considered. The conclusions from this study confirm that various agents who have a vested interest in the industry are to collaborate closely as the multi-stakeholder approach suggests (Sheehan et al., 2018). The findings also revealed that hotel senior managers have no confidence in TM recruitment and selection practices due to pressures from the external environment and TM shortages; as a result they encourage internal talent development, based on existing staff. In addition, the conclusions of this study are consistent with Giousmpasoglou (2012) suggesting that General Managers are greatly involved in the TM recruitment and selection process. Finally, it was found that although hotel senior managers think of Millennials as the future in the Greek hospitality industry, there are no formalised policies and practices intending to attract talents from this group.

This research provides new insights on how talent management is perceived by Greek hotel senior managers revealing the importance of multi-dimensional factors that need to be taken into account if Greece is to thrive in a highly competitive global

market. In addition, the findings of this study can provide valuable insights in the current effort to investigate TM in hospitality in the context of SMEs in Europe (Chung and D'Annunzio-Green, 2018).

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