

## WORKAHOLISM IN TOURISM SECTOR: THE CASE OF TAIWAN

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*The main purpose of this paper is to examine the question of whether or not it would be beneficial for the tourism sector to recruit workaholic employees since they might be more suitable for this type of industry. A total of 2,000 questionnaires were distributed to employees working in the tourism industry in Taiwan and 420 valid samples were returned with a return rate of 21%, from them 82 were identified as workaholics. Workaholism in our research is differentiated in three categories: low-level, high-level and burnout workaholics and it's analysed by their relationship with work achievement and enjoyment, work involvement and inner work drivers. The core findings indicate that there are significant differences between high-level workaholism and the other categories. Therefore, it is suggested that tourism managements should select employees with high-level workaholism and this paper can serve as an indicator to assess recruiting procedures in the future.*

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**Keywords:** *Workaholism, Involvement, Inner drivers, Achievement and enjoyment*

JEL Classification: *L83, M1, O1*

### INTRODUCTION

Workaholism is viewed negatively in many studies (Schaufeli, Shimazu, & Taris, 2009; Snir & Harpaz, 2012) and it is criticized as a bad phenomenon since it might have a negative impact on the health of employees due to the long work and overtime hours (Fotiadis & Vassiliadis, 2013; Mudrack, 2006; Snir & Harpaz, 2012). Moreover it can lead to aggressive behavior in employees (Balducci, Cecchin, Fraccaroli, & Schaufeli, 2012) or it can cause problems to the workers family (Schaufeli, Shimazu, & Taris, 2009; Shimazu, Demerouti, Bakker,



Shimada, & Kawakami, 2011). In some working groups workaholism can be considered a necessity and not as a negative characteristic. Medical and tourist services with a high labor intensity and seasonality can welcome workaholics and even require employees to have workaholic characteristic if they want to be successful. In most cases workaholism is characterized by working many hours so a surgeon who is on a surgical operation for fifteen hours must be in the nature of workaholic if he/she wants to be able to cope with the intense and difficult work program. A tour operator or an employee in a restaurant or a pub need to withstand work pressure and serve all customers qualitatively in minimum time with the least possible complaints (Kamenidou, Mamalis, & Priporas, 2009; Vassiliadis, Fotiadis, & Piper, 2013; Vassiliadis & Fotiadis, 2008).

Analysing the existing literature it is evident that there are no scientific articles that explore the term workaholism in relation to the tourism industry. The purpose of this paper is to examine this relationship and to determine whether employees with workaholic characteristics are best suited to the tourist industry. We examined four dimensions related with workaholism: achievement motivation; work involvement, job related emotion and work orientation and we observed which the characteristics affect tourism sector employees on becoming workaholics and whether or not workaholism is a necessity for tourism sector employees.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Workaholism categories**

The term workaholism was first acknowledged in 1968 by Oates (1968) who defined a workaholic as someone who is so passionate with his work that he/she believes that is more valuable than his health, personal happiness, social relations and interpersonal relations (Brady, Vodanovich, & Rotunda, 2008; Oates, 1968). Most of the researches connect workaholism with increased working hours and bad working conditions (Balducci et al., 2012; Schaufeli et al., 2009). But in some cases workaholism is connected with positive evaluations. Imagine the previous example of a surgical doctor. He works several hours, sometimes he does not care for his personal health or his social relations, but he is extremely satisfied since he is saving a life, and at the same time he is well paid and maybe famous. Machlowitz (1980), found employees to be very satisfied and productive. Workaholics can work intensively but they are doing that because of some inner drivers (Machlowitz, 1980; Snir &

Harpaz, 2012; Sprankle, 1987). Personal background, psychological, cultural and even biological factors can affect employee behavior (Hung-Wen, 2010; Suan & Nasuridin, 2013). In some countries employees are used to working for example fourteen hours and in some others eight. Are employees who work 75% more a workaholic? Lately researchers distinguish workaholics in several categories related what they considered good or bad workaholism. Snir and Harpaz (2012), differentiate employees in situational and dispositional heavy work investors, Spence and Robbins (1992) to 3 categories related to enjoyment, drive and involvement and Scott, Moore, and Miceli (1997), identified three types of workaholism: (compulsive dependent, perfectionist and achievement oriented). The tourism sector as other sectors has and needs high-level workaholics. Occupational stress during the last years has increased significantly and created a burnout (Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007; Pienaar & Willemse, 2008). Burnout in essence is the overall perception that the reciprocal relationship of labour for pay is unfavorably balanced, and that recognition support and advancement is below expectation. High-level workaholics can become easily burnout workaholics if suddenly their work and efforts are not appreciated. Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova, and Bakker (2002) and Schaufeli et al. (2009) comment in their research that workaholism is associated with burnout which can lead to a service quality decline. Chen and Kao (2012), examined burnout and outcomes among flight attendants at Taiwanese airlines and found that burnout created health problems and worse job performance.

**Table 1.** Different types of workaholism

<b>Low-involvement Workaholism</b>	<b>High-level Workaholism</b>	<b>Burnout Workaholism</b>
-Several working hours -Compulsive depended -Health Problems -Social Problems -Low work involvement -Low work enjoyment	-Several working hours -Inner drivers (personal background, psychological, cultural and even biological factors) -Satisfaction -Self-esteem -Achievement -Work involvement -Work enjoyment	-Several working hours -Work involvement -Inner drivers (personal background, psychological, cultural and even biological factors) -Emotional Exhaustion -Depersonalization -Low self personal accomplishment

## **Work Achievement and enjoyment**

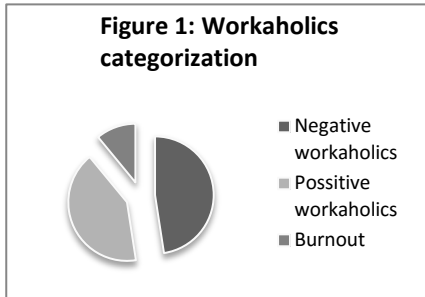
Workaholics according to Schaufeli et al. (2009), are on a high need of work achievement (Mudrack, 2006). Butler (1999), concluded that task-involvement is a motivational state in which a person's main goal is to acquire skills and understanding whereas the main goal in ego-involvement is to demonstrate superior abilities. Achievement goals can affect the way a person performs a task and represent a desire to show competence (Fotiadis, Huan, & Costantino, 2013; Fotiadis & Vassiliadis, 2010; Harackiewicz, Barron, Tauer, & Elliot, 2002; Harackiewicz, Durik, Barron, Linnenbrink-Garcia, & Tauer, 2008). Performances of individuals are often compared against standards or with others for assessments. Machlowitz (1980), observed very high enjoyment among workaholics. Given the literature on work commitment and enjoyment, that many workaholics derive enjoyment and job satisfaction from their work. Work enjoyment measures the level of pleasure derived from work, and has high internal consistency (Spence & Robbins, 1992). Work enjoyment is the extent to which the person gains a sense of emotional satisfaction from work (Aziz & Cunningham, 2008). The above literature indicates that high-level workaholics will be different from others in issues related with namely, mastery, work orientation, competition, and personal concerns, enjoyment and job satisfaction. Based on the above literature review about work achievement and enjoyment we make the following hypotheses

*H1. High-level workaholics will be significantly different from others in terms of work achievement motivation and enjoyment*

## **Work involvement**

Lodahl and Kejner (1965), indicated that work involvement is the importance of work; and the importance of work as part of self-worth, as recognized by individuals. Scott et al. (1997), contended that workaholism represents a pattern of behavior, whereas work involvement is an attitude; thus, one may be highly work involved yet not engage in workaholic behavior. Marsall (2004), considered work involvement as the psychological identification of work to employees.

*H2. High-level workaholics will be motivated significantly more by higher-order needs related to self-actualization.*



### Inner Work driver

Drive relates to an inner pressure to work and captures the compulsion to work that was central to the early definitions of workaholism. It ensures that employee who wants to be considered for a fair and objective opportunity. Work drive is a reflection of the person's internal motivation to work. The Work drive allows management to make an initial assessment of employees' attitudes and behavior on job performance criteria.

*H3. The importance of various inner work drivers will differ significantly between high-level, low-level and burnout workaholics.*

### METHODOLOGY

Workaholic for our research is the employees who believe that their work is the most important factor in life and that's why they work beyond the hours and energy that is required (Schaufeli et al., 2009). If answers to the questions "How many hours you work" was more than 10 every day and "Work goes first and all the other spheres of life follows" was agree or totally agree then we classified those employee as workaholics. A total of 2,000 questionnaires were distributed to employees working in the tourism industry in Taiwan and 420 valid samples were returned with a return rate of 21%, from them 82 were identified as workaholics (Figure 1).

## **Work achievement and enjoyment scale**

In the hypothetical workaholism trajectory, motivations should change over time as employees become more involved, and therefore the motivations of high-level workaholics (HI) respondents should differ significantly from burnout and low-level workaholics. In particular, the HI segment should stress personal development and self-actualizing motives, rather than those relating to relaxation and socializing. Statements in the scale cover psychological, social, competitive and achievement motivations. We base our achievement and enjoyment scale on the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2002) and the INTLEAVE scale (Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006; Karatepe, Uludag, Menevis, Hadzimehmedagic, & Baddar, 2006) The importance of 20 possible achievement and enjoyment statements was indicated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = Never to 7 = every day (table 3).

## **Involvement Scale**

A multi-dimensional involvement scale was constructed (see table 4), drawing from (Phongsavan et al., 2011) Consumer Involvement Profile. While the underlying principles remain constant when constructing multi-dimensional involvement scales, items in the scale have to reflect some of the peculiar features of the particular involvement pursuit. The importance of 10 possible involvement statements was indicated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = Not Important to 7 = Very important.

## **Inner work drivers**

An inner work drivers scale was also administered (Table 5). Inspiration for this scale came from (Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006; Karatepe et al., 2006) and all the above measurement scales and the existing literature related with workaholism, but most of the items had to be modified to fit the context of our research. The purpose was to determine how level of inner work drives affects workaholism level. The importance of 10 possible involvement statements was indicated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = Not Important to 7 = Very important.

## **Reliability and Validity**

Our measurement tool scale was examined for its reliability with the well-used Cronbach Alpha statistical test (Cronbach, 1947; Cronbach &

Warrington, 1951). Reliability related with  $\alpha$  coefficient was in every case over the value of 0.70. In work achievement and enjoyment scale a coefficient was  $0.87 < 0.70$ , in work involvement scale was  $0.91 < 0.70$  and in inner work driver's scale was  $0.77 < 0.70$ . As several researchers have noted if alpha coefficient is higher than 0.70 the level of adequacy is accepted (Netemeyer et al., 2004; Nunnally, 1977)

We are using validity when we are trying to examine if an instrument is appropriate for the subject we investigate. Content validity was used to examine if our instrument is measuring what is supposed to measure (Chu & Murrmann, 2006). Tourism management experts and researchers all around Taiwan were asked to examine and review each scale and to express their opinion about its significance. It was suggested that 2 items should be removed because they did not exhibit strong face validity for the inner work driver's scale and one item from work achievement and enjoyment scale.

## **DATA AND ANALYSIS**

### **Profile of respondent**

Most of the respondent (62.1%) are females and between the age of 36-45. The average respondent was 43.4 years old. More than 85% of the respondents were between 26-55 years old. Married subjects constituted 65.9% of the respondents and single subjects 31.7%. Most of them (72.0%) were employed full time and some of them (11.0%), were self-employed. A total of 45.1% were university degree graduates and 26.8% possess a community or technical college diploma, while 3.7% were postgraduate degree graduates.

Highly-involved (HI) workaholics according to our classification were between 32 and 34. The rest of the workaholics were classified as low-involved & burnout. These two groups will henceforth be referred to as the remaining groups, the remainder, or the other two groups. There are statistically significant differences ( $p < .01$ ) between the two groups. According to our hypothesis, high-level workaholics will be significantly different from others in terms of work achievement motivation and enjoyment. As we can see there were in most of the items significant differences regarding work achievement motivation and enjoyment, as expected. The biggest gap between high-level and overall mean is on items 3 "I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose" (2.39) and "I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose" (1.84). High-level workaholics feels security in their job and that's why they have a negative

gap related with the overall mean in “I will be probably be looking for another job soon” (-1.01), “I often think about leaving this job” (-0.87) and It would not take much to make me leave my work (-0.55).

**Table 2.** Work involvement scale, comparing the high-level workaholics segment and the remainder

Statement	N	Overall Mean	HI Mean	HI n	HI – Overall Mean Gap	Remain mean	Remain n	Significance
1. Without this job I would be bored	82	5.09	5.67	34	0.58	5.02	48	1%
2. The work I do says much about the person I am	82	5.24	5.81	34	0.57	5.19	48	n.s
3. Work takes so much time, it leaves little for other activities	82	3.36	3.04	34	-0.32	3.41	48	1%
4. Others probably say I spend too much time on work related issues	82	4.25	5.25	34	1.0	4.27	48	1%
5. Competing to achieve work goals is a particularly pleasurable experience.	82	4.4	4.49	34	0.09	4.41	48	n.s
6. I attach great importance to my work target times.	82	4.3	5.3	34	1.0	4.28	48	1%
7. I read a lot about my work in specialized magazines and books	82	4.26	4.96	34	0.7	4.24	48	1%
8. I always go to conferences related to my work	82	4.42	4.96	34	0.54	4.41	48	1%
9. I spend money from my pocket so I can be better at my work	82	4.61	5.16	34	0.55	4.58	48	1%
10. I belong and I am dedicated to my professional union	82	4.94	5.57	34	0.63	4.91	48	1%

The above results verify the first hypothesis. High-level workaholics differ significantly in terms of work achievement motivation and enjoyment. They feel secured in their work environment and they feel uncomfortable in their work when they work more since they are enjoying their work and times pass fast. They are proud, inspired and detached from their work and they seem to feel energetic and enthusiastic.

In the same way we compared high-level workaholics with the rest of the group in relation to work involvement scale. According to our



hypothesis high-level workaholics will be motivated and involved significantly more by higher-order needs related to self-actualization. The results indicate that there are significant difference ( $p < .01$ ) between high-level workaholics and the other two groups. As we can see in table 2 the highest gap between high-level workaholics and overall mean is on that usually “Others probably say they spend too much time on work related issues” (1.0), “They attach great importance to their work target times” (1.0) and “they read a lot about their work in specialized magazines and books” (1.0). They also go to conferences and they spent money from their pocket so they can be better to be better in their work.

**Table 3.** Inner work driver’s scale, comparing the high-level workaholism segment and the remainder

Statement	N	Over all Mean	HI Mean	HI n	HI – Over all Mean Gap	Rem ain mean	Rem ain n	Sig nifi cance
1. I enjoy working in situations involving competition with others	82	4.3	4.8	34	1.10	4.27	48	1%
2. It is important for me to perform better than others on a task	82	4.14	4.7	34	0.56	4.09	48	1%
3. My job is well within the scope of my abilities	82	5.07	5.59	34	0.52	5.03	48	1%
4. I feel that I am overqualified for the work I do	82	5.13	5.74	34	0.61	5.1	48	1%
5. My past experiences and accomplishments increase my confidence that I will be able to perform successfully in this job	82	5.07	5.77	34	0.70	5.01	48	1%
6. My culture is the main reason that I am so good in this job	82	3.95	4.94	34	0.99	3.96	48	n.s
7. My religion doesn’t allow me to work by the style I want	82	4.23	4.29	34	0.06	4.22	48	n.s
8. I am a top performer	82	5.23	5.84	34	0.61	5.18	48	1%
9. I am more flexible than other workers because of my nationality	82	4.34	4.59	34	0.25	4.38	48	1%
10. In my previous work I was working more and the conditions were worse	82	4.24	4.62	34	0.38	4.70	48	1%

The second hypothesis is therefore confirmed. High-level workaholics are more work involved in their jobs. They care so much about their work, so they spend their personal time and money on becoming better and more productive employees since without their work, they would be bored and would only feel satisfied when their level of work represents the level of person they are.

The third hypothesis is also confirmed. As we can see in table 3, there are statistical differences between the high-level workaholics and the remaining groups. As some researchers have proven self-actualization was consider one of the most important work drivers (Lam, Zhang, & Baum, 2001). In our research it is visible that competitiveness is the most important inner work driver.

The highest gap between the overall mean and the High level workaholics are on items like “I enjoy working in situations involving competition with others” (1.10), “My culture is the main reason that I am so good in this job” (0.99) and “My past experiences and accomplishments increase my confidence that I will be able to perform successfully in this job” (0.70). The above results verify hypothesis three that the importance of various inner work drivers will differ significantly between high-level, low-level and burnout workaholics.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION**

As many researchers identified already, workaholism has several different categories. In some cases, it has negative effects and in some it has positive effects and it is welcomed. In this paper, we classified workaholism in three categories (Low-level, High-level and Burnout workaholism) and we examined whether high-level workaholics differ from the other groups in terms of work achievement motivation and enjoyment, motivation and involved needs and inner work drivers. Empirical results indicated that high-level workaholics enjoy their work and they don't care for their timetable since this satisfies their ambitions and it covers their need for competition. On the basis of the findings of this research, researchers suggests that human resources management personnel in the tourism industry should recruit job applicants who exhibit high competitiveness as achievement motivations because this indicator can serve as a reference to assessing workaholism and better performance in the tourism industry.

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*SUBMITTED: MAY 2013*

*REVISION SUBMITTED: SEP 2013*

*ACCEPTED: NOV 2013*

*REFEREED ANONYMOUSLY*

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