

## **Food Consumption during Vacation: The Case of Kosher Tourism**

**Dr. Polyxeni Moira**

Professor  
Piraeus University of Applied Sciences  
[polmoira@teipir.gr](mailto:polmoira@teipir.gr)

**Dr. Dimitrios Mylonopoulos**

Professor  
Piraeus University of Applied Sciences  
[dimilon@teipir.gr](mailto:dimilon@teipir.gr)

**Panagiota Vasilopoulou**

Adjust Faculty  
TEI of Ionian Islands  
[panavasi1@teion.gr](mailto:panavasi1@teion.gr)

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**Abstract:** *Religion and culture are considered as key determinant factors influencing the consumption of food. The food sector plays a major role in tourism, which directly affects the level of satisfaction tourists derive from their vacation experience. The choices of food from tourists are, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced by the religious parameters and therefore, food constitutes an important factor in shaping the criteria according to which the selection of the destination is made.*

*The question is whether the tourism industry is aware of these needs and if it is adapted -or is willing to adapt - to the nutritional requirements of tourists according to their religion.*

*The present study was carried out by means of observation of Jewish tourists in a big hotel complex in the city of Patras, in Greece. On the one hand the dietary needs of Jewish tourists (Kosher tourists) are recorded, according to the requirements of their religion, and the responsiveness of the hotel enterprise to their requirements are registered on the other.*

*In particular, the specific dietary requirements of Jewish tourists based on religious element are examined, the way that the adaptation plan is implemented, any complaints and comments are recorded along with the reactions and behaviors of employees in the unit.*

*Finally, proposals are made, for a more rational adaptation of tourism enterprises to Kosher dietary needs of Jewish tourists, aimed at increasing the Jewish tourism flow to the country.*

**Keywords:** *alimentation, religion, tourism, Kosher tourism, Jews.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Culture and religion are two important factors affecting the consumption of food<sup>1</sup>. According to Goodenough (1971) the term culture is defined as a common set of characteristics, behaviors, and values that helps groups of people to choose their mode of action. Culture reflects a common way of thinking, affects the perception of the environment and how we adopt or adapt to change (Schein, 1983). Culture "guides" the way a group behaves in all dimensions of life and indicates "social standard" of human activities. Eating habits are included in these standardized social behaviors. According to Atkins and Bowler, (2001) and Logue (1991) culture determines decisively the foods that may be consumed a person. Carmouche and Kelly (1995) believe that the factors that shape our choices in food consumption are the social class, gender, culture, race and religion. Through culture, food is encoded into "acceptable" and therefore "permitted", to "good" or "bad". Culture determines which additional food and which properties of food are socially acceptable (Prescott et al., 2002). Thus, for example, the consumption of dog and cat meat that is socially acceptable in N. Korea - where it is called Gaegogi (Podberscek, 2009) - and in other cultures of South East Asia (Cambodia, China, Thailand and Vietnam), whereas it is rejected as unacceptable in western communities (Bartlett & Clifton, 2003; Podberscek, 2007). In these societies, the idea of eating dog meat or cat is considered heinous and immoral (Podberscek, 2009:617) even "taboo" (Fessler and Novelette, 2003).

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<sup>1</sup> Many researchers have replaced the word religion, as a term without meaning, with the term "civilization / culture" (Hinnells, 2005:6).

Religion has always played an important role in the selection and consumption of food (Khan, 1981). Most religions have specific dietary rules while providing clear instructions on how to prepare food (Halal or Kosher). For some religions (Islam, Judaism) these rules are very clear and regulate what, how and when to consume any food or its consumption should be avoided. Blix (2001) argues that since the dawn of civilization there were strong links between religion and alimentation. Generally there were clear distinctions between "good and bad", "edible or non-edible" or "Prohibited and non-prohibited", in all cultures and religions in relation to the consumption of food (Kittler & Sucher, 2004:13; Lupton, 1996:29).

In many nations voluntary abstinence from certain foods is observed, mainly for religious purposes. The practice of abstaining from food for certain periods is called "fasting". Many religions prohibit eating meat permanently or for a given period. Fasting was imposed on many nations of antiquity e.g. in ancient Asian nations and the Egyptians for religious reasons. The aim was to prepare the believers for their participation in religious ceremonies in order to honor or to propitiate a god. A typical example is one fact that is mentioned by Herodotus, that the Egyptians were subjected to fasting for religious reasons e.g. the major feasts of Isis, but also for health reasons (elder Papadopoulos, 1987:51-57). The habit of fasting passed from the Egyptians to the Greeks and the Jews and then by them to Christians and Muslims. In ancient Greek civilization, fasting was rather limited and it mainly involved the participants in the various "mysteries". For example the Athenians use to fast only during the celebration of "Eleusinian mysteries"<sup>2</sup> and "Thesmophoria"<sup>3</sup> in order for them to achieve maximum purification (catharsis) and atonement. The Spartans would order a general fasting, when they were to participate in combat operations. The priests of Zeus in Crete had to strictly refrain from eating meat, fish and any that had been cooked. In general, fasting, in the spirit of religions of ancient Greece, was a mean of atonement and of purification and was considered to be a test, which contributed to the annihilation of man and rendered it capable of perceiving their gods, i.e. the "divinization." Certain fasts were included in the circle of religious and philosophical schools and organizations such as the Orphic and Pythagorean. The Romans and generally the people of Italy participated widely in fasts. They fasted mainly national moments that the residents of various cities resorted to the test of fasting to seek divine assistance e.g. the Pompilios Noumas<sup>4</sup> fasted before offering a sacrifice to the gods. When the residents of Taranto were besieged by the Romans (282 BC), they sought the help of the residents of Reggio, and them, in order to propitiate the gods; they

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<sup>2</sup> The religious festival of the Great Eleusinian was celebrated at the 15th day of the month Boedromion (dedicated to Apollo Boidromios) lasted for nine days and took place in several stages. The third day was a day of fasting and the evening a meal took place consisting of bread made of honey and sesame seeds. The most important event was the procession which started from Athens to Eleusina the purpose of transporting the sacred objects that would be used in the rituals in closed containers (Keystone). The arrival of the adepts at Eleusina was followed by a ceremony of purification and fasting. According to ancient writers mystics had to carry the sacred (secret objects) from one vessel to another while fasting ended with swallowing Warren (porridge from cereals, of which the exact composition as well as the symbolism remains unknown). See The ritual of the Eleusinian Mysteries, Foundation of the Hellenic World, In [http://www.fhw.gr/chronos/05/gr/culture/4141ritual\\_eleusinia.html](http://www.fhw.gr/chronos/05/gr/culture/4141ritual_eleusinia.html)

<sup>3</sup> Thesmophoria constitute the most widespread celebration throughout the Greek world for the goddess Demeter and her daughter Persephone, where all participants were women. In Athens, the celebration lasted for three days, from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> of month Pyanopsionos, and followed a particular ritual. The second day of Thesmophoria was called fasting day. The women stayed in the sanctuary of the goddess, fasted and slept on makeshift beds, on the ground, made of branches of willow and other plants with anti aphrodisiac properties. Fasting was discontinued on the third day or the night before and ended subsequently in sacrifices and meat eating. Thesmoforia, Foundation of the Hellenic World, In series: Monasteries and shrines of Greece NGO Solidarity of the Church of Greece <http://www.fhw.gr/chronos/05/gr/culture/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> Pimpilios Noumas is considered to be the successor of the mythological first king of Rome, Romulus. He reigned in Rome at age 40, from 715-672 BC He was the first legislator and the second of the seven kings of Rome before the establishment of democracy. According to tradition he was a student of Pythagoras (Zoula, 2003).

fasted for 10 days before the beginning of the campaign. Also in Rome, some fasts were kept in honor of Demeter and Zeus (Vatalas, 262-263).

## **2. THE RELIGIOUS RESTRICTIONS IN FOOD CONSUMPTION**

The degree of commitment of every person-believer in the commandments of religion is related to the same religion, religious denomination, local religious community, but also the family and the broader social environment. Most religious dietary admonitions fall into two general categories: a) temporary abstinence from all or certain foods (fasting), b) stable and distinct eating habits that differ from the general population. The religious beliefs affect eating habits as part of everyday life or as part of a religious ritual. These rules are sometimes indicative and provide loose guidance to believers and sometimes constitute strict rules that believers must follow (Moira, 2009:76; Moira et al. 2012).

So Christians are not governed by explicit and strict diet restrictions i.e. there are no forbidden foods as with Muslims and Jews, or at least the bans have not lifelong force. Of course there are restrictions on food consumption, e.g. in certain fasting periods<sup>5</sup>, abstinence from meat on Friday etc. And in such cases the extent of prohibition or restriction varies according to the dogma (e.g. Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants, and Anglicans). And in such cases the extent of prohibition or restriction varies according to the dogma (e.g. Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants, and Anglicans). The practice of the Orthodox fasting may be considered as periodically vegetarian while eating fish and seafood is allowed under certain conditions (Sarri et al., 2003). In general, however, in the Christian religion, fasting - at certain periods or days - basically means abstinence and is considered an "exercise" of body and soul.

Muslims instead, follow strict diet rules, which are called Halal (lawful or permitted by God) and are based on Islamic Sharia law (Shari'ah). The Quran prohibits the consumption of pork and its derivatives, alcohol, various kinds of gelatin (containing pork fat) and products with emulsifying agents (e.g. canned). In addition many Muslims refrain from eating frozen vegetables with sauces, especially margarines, of consuming bread and dough which are made with dry yeast and drinking beverages that contain caffeine<sup>6</sup>. All these foods are Haram i.e. "unclean" and therefore illegal and "banned" (El Mouelhy, 1997, In Wan-Hassan & Awang, 2009:389). The consumption of carnivorous animals and sea creatures that have not fins and scales (e.g. squid, shrimp, lobster, etc) is also forbidden by the Quran. Last but not least, even the animals that Muslims are allowed to eat, must be slaughtered and prepared in a special ritual that is indicated by the Islamic rules (Koliou, 2005:64) and must, during their preparation, be kept separate from other foods. Explicit prohibition provided during the month Ramadan (Ramadan<sup>7</sup>). Muslims must abstain from any food, water, and drink from sunrise until sunset. Exempted from the Ramadan fasting are the infants, the mentally ill, the elderly, the sick, travelers (during the trip and replenish if fasting later), pregnant women, nursing mothers and women during menstruation, provided that they will replenish later the days of fasting (El-Ashi, 2013). To Muslims, fasting during Ramadan, basically means abstinence which is regarded as "exercise" of the body and "discipline" (El-Zibdeh, 2009:56). Muslims are obliged to consume only halal food even when traveling to foreign destinations/ abroad (Bon and Hussain, 2010).

The Jews follow strict dietary rules as well. It is characteristic that the word "fasting" is mentioned more than 40 times in the Old and New Testament. The words quoted are "tsum" 'innah nephesh", "afflict soul or self" i.e., practice self-denial, nesteia, nesteuein<sup>8</sup>. Fasting is also referred to, in the books of the prophets and in historic books (Warren, 2000). The Zionist Jews follow the dictates of religion by the book, while liberals deviate occasionally. The Jews follow strict rules that regulate their behavior in everyday life. The emphasis is on human communication and their behavior is directly related to many aspects of social life, such as alimentation (food and drink), clothing, entertainment, hygiene, behavior and communication. The dietary rules of the Jewish religion are

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<sup>5</sup> On days of fasting Christians abstain from eating meat, eggs, milk, animal products, dairy products, fish (except seafood, shellfish, fish roe and caviar), oil (excluding olives) and wine and thus modern spirits.

<sup>6</sup> Food culture and religion, RMIT University, Department of Food Service, State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel, In [http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Food\\_culture\\_and\\_religion?OpenDocument](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Food_culture_and_religion?OpenDocument)

<sup>7</sup> Fasting is one of the five pillars (duties) of Islam. (Kerr, 2006, In Partridge, 2006:376-381).

<sup>8</sup> The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Electronic Database by Biblesoft.

known by the term "Kashrut". In analogy foods that can be eaten are called "Kosher" i.e. "clean" or "permitted" (Masoudi, 1993:667). Prohibited foods include pork and horse meat; the hunt, the catch does not have fins and scales, and forbid eating meat together with dairy products. According to the Jewish religion, much like the Muslim, animals must be slaughtered in a specific way by a person who has undertaken this task. The consumption of insects is also explicitly prohibited. The Jews, in certain periods of fasting (e.g. Yom Kippur) refrain from eating any food from dawn until the next dawn<sup>9</sup>. Finally, all different types of food must be kept separate from other foods during the preparation (Moira, 2009:77-78; Moira & Mylonopoulos, 2013).

Hindus are mostly vegetarian. They often avoid consuming foods that their preparation has caused pain to the animals as this would burden their "karma". But even those who, in violation of the rule, consume meat avoid consuming pork and beef in particular because the cow is for them a sacred entity. But consume dairy products. It should be pointed out that there are often differences in the diet depending on the region or country of living (e.g. eating duck and crab may be prohibited or allowed depending on the region, as well as consumption of alcohol, onions, mushrooms, etc.).

Buddhists - as Buddhism is more a philosophy of life - do not follow strict dietary restrictions. But they avoid eating meat (especially beef) as it is considered that the Buddha reincarnated in various animal forms before taking the human form. In the West, most Buddhists follow a vegetarian diet. Some avoid dairy products (Moira, 2009:78; Moira & Mylonopoulos, 2013).

For at least three Asian religions / faiths -Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism- vegetarian cuisine constitutes common choice<sup>10</sup>. The vegetarian diet, especially in China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan is known as zhāicài ("Buddhist vegetarian cuisine"), in Vietnam as đồ chay, in Japan as shōjin ryōri ("devotion cuisine"), in Korea as *sachal eumsik* ("temple food") and various other names in other countries<sup>11</sup>. For Jainists, vegetarianism is mandatory. In Hindu and Mahayana Buddhism (vegetarianism) is supported by certain categories of religious beliefs (Walters & Portmess, 2001). To the contrary, it is not mandatory for Jews, for Christians, for Muslims and Sikhs<sup>12</sup>.

### 3. RELIGION, FOOD CONSUMPTION AND TOURISM

The element of alimentation is an important link in the chain of the tourism product (Wiltshier & Clarke, 2013:6). For this reason it is necessary to first identify and then respond in the most satisfactory manner in the different dietary needs of tourists in all aspects of the tourism industry.

Food consumption both during the trip as well as during stay at the destination has been the subject of research in recent years. Through several surveys demonstrate that the interest of tourists for food can play an important role when choosing a destination (Hall & Mitchell, 2001; Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Long, 2004). According to Hall & Sharples (2003) the tourism expenditure for food is the one third of the total tourist expenditure, whereas according to Telfer & Wall (2000) this expense constitutes a significant amount of tourism expenditure. The choices and preferences of the tourists are recognized as substantial in the tourism demand resulting in significant impact on the tourism supply such as imports for food, local produce, etc. (Torres, 2002; Torres, 2003).

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<sup>9</sup> According to the Torah, Jews are forbidden to consume insects. Vayikra (Leviticus) 11:41 states, "v'chol ha'sheretz h'ashoraitz al ha'aretz sheketz hu lo yochal" (Steen, 2010:4). Everything that creeps on the earth's surface is odious and should not be consumed (the same applies to shellfish marine animals etc. "creep" on the bottom. Therefore, any food that has insects cannot be consumed until they are removed.

<sup>10</sup> Jainism is an ascetic religion in India, and was founded in the 6th century. B.C. It teaches immortality and reincarnation, and denies the existence of any divine being. The followers of Jainism are vegetarians. The consumption of any products coming from dead animals is prohibited. They also refrain from any unnecessary damage to plants. Their goal is to inflict the least possible violence on living beings, so they avoid consuming roots and corms, which means uprooting and therefore death for the plant. (Salter, 2006, In Partridge, 2006:165).

<sup>11</sup> Buddhist cuisine, In <http://www.answers.com/topic/buddhist-cuisine>

<sup>12</sup> Sikhism: A Universal Message. 13 March 2009, In <http://www.sikhism.com/rehatmaryada>

The interconnection of culture, religion and food is, until today, active in large parts of the population in both developing and developed countries. In fact these influences on food consumption during the holidays have been recognized by several studies. According to Pizam and Sussmann (1995) the Japanese, French and Italian tourists usually avoid consuming local foods at their destination and are looking for their national cuisine. According to a survey by March (1997), food consumption during holiday is affected by cultural or religious factors. In particular it has been established that Muslims and Indonesians require the food they eat is Halal (March, 1997:234), whereas the Koreans have a strong preference for their national cuisine.

Other studies have shown that religions, depending on the severity, influence behavior in relation to food consumption during the holidays. According to Minkus & McKenna (2007, In Lada et al, 2009:68), 70% of Muslims obey the rules of Islam, and therefore those related to food consumption. Wan-Hassan & Hall, (2003) studying the behavior of Muslim tourists in New Zealand found that the largest percentage (82,2%) are looking for Halal food and especially 39.6% said they preferred to manufacture the food as there was no confidence in the locals of properly preparing the food. Also, Ching et al (2005, In Zailiani et al, 2011) after a survey led by the hotels in Malaysia concluded that the level of satisfaction of Asian tourists, especially Muslims depends on providing Halal food. Furthermore, a market research, conducted by the government organization for Tourism of Cyprus (Cyprus Tourism Organization) on the development of the tourist markets of UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait, shows that tourists from these countries prefer destinations which offer Halal products in accordance with Islamic traditions (CTO, 2009:5).

As for the Jews, Cohen and Avieli (2004:760) found that, although they tend to be somewhat flexible in the consumption of non-Kosher food, they are extremely worried about hygiene issues and categorically refuse the consumption of foods which is unacceptable such as meat dog, cat and any other animal that is crawling.

#### **4. THE MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS DIETARY RESTRICTIONS**

For the reasons mentioned, the food sector of the tourism industry will often undertake initiatives to manage the particularity required by religious belief to the alimentary needs of tourists.

The issue of food, depending on the religious beliefs of customers-tourists, seems to have led to the creation of new tourism products. Indicative of its importance, is the fact that it is being referenced as Halal Tourism (Battour, 2010), given the fact that the tourism market for the Muslim community, is estimated to account up to 1.57 billion people (Scott & Jafari, In UNWTO, 2011:50). Several hotel enterprises aspiring to Jewish tourists, who are distinguished for their high consumer expenditure, are projecting "Kosher Holidays". So there is a website *kosherholidays.com* where the faithful Jews can look for holidays in hotels that respect the rules of Kosher, e.g. a boutique hotel in Venice, located in the heart of the Jewish ghetto, close to the Jewish Museum, that offers breakfast and kosher certified by the Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community of Venice<sup>13</sup>. Hotel in Milan highlights the fact that they serve certified kosher breakfast for free, served in plastic plates, with plastic cutlery. It also highlights the fact that the staff knows all the best kosher restaurants, bakeries and supermarkets in the area<sup>14</sup>. Hotel in Ukraine emphasizes the fact that special kitchen is available for groups, where Kosher food is prepared under the supervision of the Rabbi of the Jewish community of Kiev<sup>15</sup>.

It should be pointed out that due to the fact that the kosher foods are considered to be healthy and safe, a significant increase in consumption and non-Jews is recorded. According to the available data<sup>16</sup> in the U.S. there are 1.300.000 Jews kosher consumers, another 3.500.000 Muslims consume kosher, and 7.500.000 who consider kosher food to be the best. The overall market for Kosher stands at 3.5 billion dollars while kosher products buys amount to 305 billion dollars. The market for the period 2005-2008 recorded an annual increase of 15% whereas in 2008-2011, an annual increase of 10% was recorded.

In order for the tourist enterprises to demonstrate their adaptation to the requirements of Halal or Kosher, they pursue their certification. There are agencies and organizations that grant credentials and

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<sup>13</sup> Kosher Boutique Hotel, in [http://www.kosherholidays.net/MainV2\\_EN.aspx?HotelCountryID=Italy](http://www.kosherholidays.net/MainV2_EN.aspx?HotelCountryID=Italy)

<sup>14</sup> Kosher vacation in Milan, in [http://www.kosherholidays.net/mainv\\_en.aspx](http://www.kosherholidays.net/mainv_en.aspx)

<sup>15</sup> Promenad Hotel - Yampol, Ukraine, In [http://www.kosherholidays.net/mainv\\_en.aspx](http://www.kosherholidays.net/mainv_en.aspx)

<sup>16</sup> The Kosher express, In <http://thekosherexpress.com/blog/kosher-in-2012/>

signs, certifying that food is prepared in accordance with the religious beliefs of the tourists. The main regional certification body is the Union of Orthodox Jews in the U.S. (Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America/UOJCA) which constitutes one of the oldest Jewish organizations in the U.S. The Association supervises and certifies businesses on providing kosher food<sup>17</sup>. In accordance to the data available, in 2010 the Association oversaw more than 400.000 foods in 8.000 factories in 80 different countries. At the state level, in some countries, the effort to approach customers with dietary requirements of according to religion is more systematic. In this context the government body of Tourism in New Zealand has launched an initiative to promote the country as a tourism destination for the Muslim countries of the Middle East (Wan Hassan and Hall, 2003; Wan Hassan and Awang, 2009). What s more, the city of Buenos Aires organized kosher festival sponsored by the Ministry of Culture of Argentina (JTA, 2013). On the website of the operator of the city, information on kosher restaurants, hotels, synagogues and other places of interest to Jews was included. Special emphasis was put on the fact that eleven hotels in the city are Kosher certified and their staff is trained to meet the specific needs of Jews ratings.

#### 4.1. Greece and Jewish tourists

Israel and Greece have a lot in common, regarding tourism. Greece is a country with ancient history, culture, and a strong Jewish community in many cities, that is before the Second World War, so it attracts Jews from around the world. In particular, both the capital Athens, and the second largest city Thessaloniki, collect the interest due to monuments associated with the presence of the Jewish community in Greece<sup>18</sup>.


In 2011, a cooperation protocol was signed between Greece and Israel for the promotion of tourism between the two countries<sup>19</sup>. It also established direct flights between Thessaloniki and Tel Aviv<sup>20</sup>. Tourist arrivals, solely from Israel, increased by 57% in 2010 (CIJA, 2011; Greek news Agenda, 2011). Despite the fact that Jews from around the world<sup>21</sup>, visit Greece, there is no official record of the total number of visitors. Moreover, there is little interest in on the certification of food companies as Kosher<sup>22</sup>. The Kosher certification is given by the High Rabbi Authority and the local authorized services (e.g. in Greece there are in Athens and Thessaloniki). Even less seems to be the interest in the restaurants getting the Kosher certification. In Athens there is only one restaurant which operates on the Kosher system, the Gostijo<sup>23</sup>. Through internet research three more restaurants were detected, but they state that they offer kosher meals by arrangement.

The Greek state via the official tourism organization, take no action to attract tourists showcasing the satisfaction of these particular dietary needs. Moreover, surveys in curricula at all education levels of the Greek educational system, as well as training programs, have found that there is no course or curriculum on religion and alimentation. (Moira, 2008a; Moira, 2008b; Moira et al., 2008; Kuruvilla et al, 2011).

#### 4.2. Survey Methodology

The purpose of the survey was to collect empirical data that reflect the attitudes of Jewish visitors on their diet during the holidays, always in relation to their religion. Qualitative research observation, combined with interviewing was the method applied. According to Goffman (1961) each social group has a distinctive feature and the best way to understand it is to observe. Observation in market

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<sup>17</sup> The symbol  is used, as well as other international signs: K, OK, OU, KF, or KLBD. See Kosher Certification, In <http://oukosher.org/kosher-overview/growth-of-kosher-certification/>

<sup>18</sup> e.g. at the foot of the Temple of Hephaestus found traces of an ancient synagogue of the 3rd AD century. There is also a Holocaust memorial which was launched in 2010, the Jewish museum, etc..

<sup>19</sup> According to data from 2012, the Jewish population of Israel amounts to 5,901,100 inhabitants, 42.9% of the total world population, The Jewish Population of the World, *The Jewish Population of the World*, (2012). Jewish Virtual Library, In <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Judaism/jewpop.html>

<sup>20</sup> Conducted by Aegean Airlines.

<sup>21</sup> The total of the worldwide Jewish population amounts to 6.183.200. The Jewish Population of the World(2012).Jewish Virtual Library, In <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Judaism/jewpop.html>

<sup>22</sup> In Crete there was activation of the Exporters "Association of Crete Exporters", See Association of Crete Exporters(2013),In<http://creteexporters.com/content/attachments.el/DELTIO%20KOSHER.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> The name comes from the Latin meaning "offering food to friends and neighbors", (Levick, 2011) & Tracing Jewish Athens, In <http://balkon3.com/gr/?p=1146>.

research is "the systematic process of recording human behavior .... as it happens" (Churchill and Iacobucci, 2002). The truth being that by the observation method, the observer measures or records something, but cannot record the "why" of behavior, this research method, is used in combination with other methods of data collection e.g. in-depth interviews and historical records (Kyriazi, 2002; Siomkos & Mavros, 2008:271). This method allows the study of the incentives that drive people to specific actions and behaviors. Observation is appropriate when the investigational topic or phenomenon concerns small groups, geographically limited and therefore easily observable (Kyriazi, 2002:275). In this case the covert and structured observation was preferred (Undistinguished and Structured Observation) i.e. the customers were not aware that their behavior was recorded while the observers were focused only on behavior that had been pre-determined i.e. conduct in relation to food consumption (Wilson, 2006; Siomkos & Mavros, 2008:275-277). The observer, as an employee and communication manager with the team on behalf of the hotel business, was well accepted in the social space of the group, and could react normally and non-intrusive, which is a guarantee of the effective implementation of the method (Kyriazi, 2002:282).

In parallel, for the recording and investigation of the specific requirements of Jewish tourists during their holidays all stages of the process were studied: starting with the signing of the agreement between the tourist office in Thessaloniki and large hotel complex in Patras, the arrival of the Rabbi who arrived prior to the groups arrival in order to monitor the compliance of the hotel with the requirements regarding food preparation and the process of purifying utensils, premises preparation and food storage. Next, the behavior and views of members of organized group that stayed at the hotel were observed and recorded, through interviews.

A total of 157 rooms were allocated, in three periods: 1/8 to 6/8, 6/8 to 21/8 and 21/8 to 27/8/2013. The guests were approximately 500 people, of whom 70% were mainly families with children. Families were generally the extend type of family i.e. they were accompanied by other family members such as grandparents, uncles or other relatives. The whole process was recorded by two managers of the hotel, through observation, and through 20 interviews with Jewish clients who agreed to answer questions. The interviews were taken from customers tied to devote time to answer questions and lasted 45 minutes. Also been recorded the reactions and attitudes of the hotel staff to "requirements" of visitors.

### 4.3. The Case Study

In June 2013 there was contact from a travel agency in Thessaloniki, who worked with large agency of France, with a big hotel complex in Patras looking to reach an agreement on the accommodation for a group of about 500 Franco - Jewish tourists from Paris. These Jews belong to the group of Ashkenazic<sup>24</sup>.

The main aim and requirement of the agent was that the hotel complex would ensure the supply Kosher food or otherwise to ensure the conditions of manufacturing Kosher Food. Due to lack of previous experience in hosting Jewish visitors, the hotel management chose to ensure and confirm by signing the relevant contract, the conditions necessary for the preparation of pure/kosher food to visitors on a daily basis (full board).

The contract expressly provided for the supply of specific, fully equipped food preparation area/kitchen; secure storage facilities, disposal of all means for the preparation and consumption of food, the provision of cooling premises for the food and to ban access of the hotel staff to these areas. There was specific reference to the fact that the kitchen area would be handed over to the Jewish crew, three days prior to the arrival of the group in order to for them to perform a special process of "purification/cleansing of the area", during which the kitchen would be cleaned under Jewish ritual in the presence of the Rabbi. The contract also stated that the preparation of food would be made by

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<sup>24</sup> The Ashkenazic is a separate cultural category Jews of France, Germany and Eastern Europe. Ashkenazi Jews. *The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*, In <http://hugr.huji.ac.il/AshkenaziJews.aspx>, access 23/10/2013. Unlike the Jews of Spain, Portugal, North Africa and the Middle East, they belong to the group of Sephardi Jews (Sephardic). They are distinguished into the Sephardim, originating from Spain and Portugal and the Mizrachim, a native of North Africa and the Middle East. The faith of the Sephardic Jews differs from that of the Ashkenazic. The two cultural groups have different consumption habits regarding diet, have different habits that follow during the holidays and eat different traditional foods. See Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews, Judaism 10, In <http://www.jewfaq.org/ashkseph.htm>

Jewish cooks, with materials that would be delivered to the hotel under the travel agency's provision. The representatives of the tourist office asked to contact local suppliers of fresh fruit and vegetables, which were purchased from the local market, always under the supervision of the Rabbi<sup>25</sup> or a representative of the French tourist office. Finally, it was requested that there would be external storage for keeping kosher food, shipped with a container from France. Apart from the prescribed purification of sites by the rabbi who accompanied the group, it was also stated that the supervision of the preparation of the dishes would be made by him without the presence of hotel staff. Their requirements also included the use of a conference room as their "Synagogue".

#### 4.4. Behavior Observation

Prior to the arrival of the tourists the Rabbi inspected the food preparation area. He particularly stressed that there should be separation of the repositories for meat, fish and dairy products. He also made the arrangements for the purification of the food preparation area. In fact, this action which required throwing hot water in utensils and in the surrounding area, led to a short circuit in vegetables refrigerator. Fruits and vegetables thoroughly inspected not only before purchasing, but also during the preparation. As it is expressly forbidden to eat insects, special attention is given to vegetables with leaves that may have insects hidden in their leaves, such as lettuce, cauliflower etc., like several fruits such as strawberries. As stated, the supplier or the load at which insects are found is excluded, while there are explicitly specified procedures for monitoring fruit and vegetables (Steen, 2010).

The food preparation was done by a person who had come for this purpose. The whole process was under the supervision of the Mashgiach<sup>26</sup>. Mashgiach is the person responsible for supervising the preparation of food in accordance with the rules for it to be Kosher. Supervisor/Mashgiach oversaw the entire process as well as the process of transferring the food from the kitchen to the consumption area. As the hotel's waiters were not allowed to enter the area, food transfer was taking place through small elevators. Guests manifested certain behavior before, during and after the completion of breakfast, lunch and dinner. The start of each meal was preceded by a prayer, under the guidance of Rabbi. They would also ritually wash their hands before eating bread. Every Friday afternoon after 19.00 they only ate couscous<sup>27</sup>.

On Saturday, the prayer took place, always by the rabbi, in a conference room that was made available by the hotel and was properly designed/ rearranged in accordance with the requests of the tourist office in Paris. I.e. there were candles; there were separate areas for men and women, access to third parties denied, etc.

On the same day, which is considered to be sacred as a day of rest, religious and spiritual practice<sup>28</sup>, any intense physical activities were avoided. This day is special for all Jews. It starts on Friday afternoon and ends Saturday night. According to the hotel staff, their main occupation was sunbathing and swimming all day long and they were in general unusually quiet<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> A Rabbi is not a priest but "teacher", i.e. a person who is a connoisseur of Jewish law (halakhah / Jewish law) and traditions, guides the community and solves problems related to the interpretation of the law. Rabbis, Priests, and Other Religious Functionaries, Judaism 10, In <http://www.jewfaq.org/rabbi.htm>

<sup>26</sup> The Mashgiach may have the title of Rabbi, but this is not necessary (Blech, 2008:65).

<sup>27</sup> In Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia) there were large Jewish communities, especially during the French colonial period. These Jews were using local produce cooked according to their tradition. Thus, the couscous is typical African-Jewish dish. Eating couscous on Friday night is a habit of Jewish families in South Africa and France (Roden, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> For six days you may perform melachah, but the seventh day is a complete Sabbath, holy to the Lord ... it is an eternal sign that in six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed. -Exodus 31:15-17.

<sup>29</sup> According to the Talmud there are 39 activities prohibited on Saturday. These included cooking, washing clothes, building work, repairs, writing, setting fires, fishing etc. Certainly the degree of compliance with the prohibitions depend on whether one follows the Orthodox Jewish doctrine or preservative. Please note that Saturday prohibitions do not preclude any effort. Instead, Jews are encouraged to play games, take a walk, sing, attend lectures etc. Shabbat: The Sabbath, *Religion Facts*, In <http://www.religionfacts.com/judaism/holidays/shabbat.htm>



#### **4.5. Findings and Discussion**

*Tourists – guests:* It was extremely difficult for Jewish tourists to accept to talk about matters of religion and diet. However, when they agreed to do so, their statements were almost identical and categorical. They believe that their diet is not a limitation, but an attitude or a "way of life".

*Their responses are typical, like:*

- It is not difficult for me to follow the requirements for Kosher diet. The hard part is that the rest of the world does not». (Male, age 40, male age 62 and female age 58)
- Being a Jew is more than a religion, it is a way of life». (Male, age 60)
- Similar were their statements about whether the way they handle food and their general behavior causes negative comments.
- We are not interested in the comments of others. We live and we follow the Jewish tradition» (Couple age 40 and 45)
- I believe that God is above all and we must obey his commands without us seeking the reason behind them. Since God does not allow us to eat certain foods, He has reasons, which I do not doubt». (Male, age 75)

It is also concluded that the origin of their lifestyle and behavior is a source of pride.

- Being a Jew is a matter of choice. Being a Jew means to live according to the commandments of the Torah<sup>30</sup>». (Male, age 62)
- Obeying the rules of the Torah makes me proud and connects me with the great Jewish family». (Female, age 35).
- Furthermore, the specific nature of the kosher diet does not seem to be recognized as such, instead it seems that it is considered to be perfectly normal. So they assert in every way the ability to meet their religious dietary requirements:
- Eating kosher food becomes difficult when trying to eat in a non-Kosher restaurant or at someone's house who does not comply with the requirements of kosher diet. In these cases, the lack of information about the ingredients of the food and the way of preparation makes it difficult to comply with the Kosher». (Male, age 40 and 50).
- I was fortunate to grow up in a traditional Jewish home where Saturday was a day of rest, the holidays were fun and joyful and the adherence to kosher rules was strict». (Female, age 32 and male 50).
- When I travel, I insist compliance with the kosher rules. If they cannot provide me what I ask, I do not choose the destination». (Male, age 52).

*Hotel employees:* The hotel unit employed 55 staff in all specialties. All the employees, even those who were employed in the food sector, claimed ignorance of the specific requirements and characteristics of the Jews, both in terms of food consumption, as well as to the needs of prayer. When asked about whether the Jews refrain from eating certain foods, the answer was only "pork". Even though eleven of them had a bachelor's degree in tourism management, they all agreed they had not been taught of the particular alimentary requirements of different religious groups.

Their reactions on the hosting of Jewish tourists and their particular needs in the subject of food, varied from curiosity, annoyance, disapproval to mockery. Specifically, 50% believed the requirements "funny" and 58% "scenic". Also, 15% considered them "interesting" and 43% "excessive". They considered the "requirements" of customers to be quite extravagant or even exaggerated, emphasizing on the fact that they had been denied access to areas of their responsibility. They said:

- I find exaggerated the fact that they bring their food from abroad, do not allow the entry of third parties nor the staff in the kitchen, do not eat anything unless it is permitted. I do not like fanaticism». (Male, age 45).
- I was not allowed to go into the kitchen to get the food. They had to send it to me in the lift! It is impossible to work this way». (Male, age 25).

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<sup>30</sup> Torah is the holy book of Judaism which includes the Jewish law, i.e. rules delivered by Moses to the Jews, along with the oral traditions later recorded in the Talmud.

- They threw hot water on the equipment, in order to purify it! Eventually, they ended up causing a short-circuit to the vegetable refrigerator!» (Female, age 38).
- They prayed three times a day. And indeed, they did not want any spectators. They chose to be isolated in the area that was made available to them». (Female, age 29).

## 5. CONCLUSION

The food sector is an important part in tourism and directly affects the satisfaction of tourists. The choices of food from tourists are determined, to a greater or lesser extent, by the religious aspect and therefore, for some religions or denominations, food is an important factor in shaping the criteria based on which the selection of the destination is made. Therefore it is necessary for the tourist industry to pay the necessary attention to this dimension of the relationship between religion and food. According to the survey results, religion plays an important role in the dietary choices of Jews and thus the possibility of providing kosher food is an important parameter in the selection of a tourist destination. This is important to a greater extent when food choices are considered to be "a lifestyle" and not coercion.

Greece, as a country the economy of which depends on tourism, according to the available data, has not leveraged the aspect of religion in the planning and promotion of destinations in order to attract tourists from countries that have high tourist consumer spending and are characterized by special dietary requirements. Also, according to the survey conducted in the employees of the hotel, what is more important is that there is no information, no education or training of employees in the tourism sector on the specific needs and requirements of the tourists according to their religion, and how to manage them.

Further research is proposed, aiming to collect information about the choices, desires and needs not only of Jewish tourists, but tourists and other religions as well (e.g. Muslims) and the extent to which they affect the tourists decision making progress. In this way, a more rational, targeted and effective promotion of the country in the international market will be possible.

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#### AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHY



**Dr. Polyxeni Moira**, holds a PhD in Sociology from Panteion University of Political and Social Sciences, Greece. She has been teaching at higher education over the last 17 years. She is currently a Professor at the Department of Department of Business Management at the Piraeus University of Applied Sciences in Greece. She is also a Visiting Professor at the University of Aegean and the Hellenic Open University. She has published 12 scientific books in the field of tourism and articles in more than 20 international and Greek journals.



**Dr. Dimitrios Mylonopoulos**, holds a PhD in Public Law from Panteion University of Political and Social Sciences, Greece. He is retired senior officer in Hellenic Coast Guard. He is currently Professor at the Department of Business Management at the Piraeus University of Applied Sciences (Greece). He is also a Visiting Professor at the University of Patras, at Hellenic Naval Academy and at Hellenic Open University. He has published scientific books in the field of tourism and maritime issues and articles in international and Greek journals.



**Panagiota Vasilopoulou**, holds a Bachelor degree and a MSc in Tourism Business Management. She is currently adjust faculty at TEI of Ionian Islands and she is also Member of the Clefs d'Or association