NHL STENDEN
university of applied sciences

VOLUME 10 | ISSUE 2 | 2020

Research in Hospitality Management

Stenden
Hotel Management School

Academy of International Hospitality Research
aihr

NISC

Published by NISC (Pty) Ltd in association with
NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences

Research in **Hospitality Management**

ISSN 2415–5152 Online | ISSN 2224–3534 Print

Published by NISC (Pty) Ltd in association with NHL Stenden University, The Netherlands

Aims and Scope

Research in Hospitality Management (*RHM*) is a peer-reviewed Open Access journal publishing articles that make an original contribution to the understanding of hospitality and to the theory and practice of international hospitality management.

The journal focusses on three main areas: (1) "Hospitality (Management) Studies" includes articles related to the study of and the study for hospitality. The study of hospitality refers to studies about the essence and ethics of hospitality from a social sciences perspective, while the study for hospitality refers to a more disciplinary approach according to the quintessential managerial areas of Finance, Human Resources, Operations, Marketing & Sales, and Technology; (2) "Hospitality Management Education" is devoted to articles about curriculum content and delivery methods for training and educating hospitality managers. Considering the size and scope of the hospitality industry, and the number of staff and students involved, studies on efficient, effective, and innovative ways of developing hospitality competencies are considered indispensable; (3) "Student Research Projects" allows excellent student work to be published. Student work can relate to excellent BA dissertations or MA theses.

RHM also accommodates short communications, working papers, book reviews and discussion papers.

Subscriptions (for print issues)
Annual subscription rates (including VAT and postage where applicable):
International: Institutional subscriber: USD 73 Personal subscriber: USD 51.10 **Africa:** Institutional subscriber: ZAR 470 Personal subscriber: ZAR 329
Research in Hospitality Management can be ordered directly from the publisher: NISC (Pty) Ltd, PO Box 377, 4 Speke Street, Makhanda 6140, South Africa, Tel.: +27(0)46 622 9698, Fax: +27(0)46 622 9550, Email: journals@nisc.co.za, www.nisc.co.za
Copies of all back issues are available for purchase from the publisher.

Research in Hospitality Management is published by NISC (Pty) Ltd, 4 Speke Street, Makhanda, 6139, South Africa, in association with NHL Stenden University, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands.

Research in **Hospitality Management**

VOLUME 10 | ISSUE 2 DECEMBER 2020

EDITORIAL

Welcome to this issue of the *Research in Hospitality Management,* the journal of the Stenden Hotel Management School, NHLStenden University of Applied Sciences. This issue has just managed to squeeze into 2020 thanks to the hard work of our contributors, reviewers and our publishers in South Africa. To do this while coping with an overnight transition to online teaching, endless Zoom and Teams meetings, and spending time supporting students and colleagues, makes this issue extra special.

We start with the sad news of Dr Bill Rowson's untimely death, and an obituary in the journal he worked so hard to support seems only right and proper. We are working on a way to commemorate Bill's contribution to the academic writing development of our colleagues and students, and would like to hear from you if you have any suggestions.

Bill Rowson's name will probably still appear for a number of issues as he was involved in so many things with so many people. Our first paper is one of those, coming from a student project by **Xandra Vasse** but also written in collaboration with our colleague **Marit de Vries**. It looks at how revenue strategies are communicated not just to the external consumer, but also internally to staff. Supporting staff in this way enables them to give better service to the guest in turn. A second staff-student collaborative paper is by **Robin Dijkstra** and **Wichard Zwaal** which takes a topical look at student motives for choosing between individual or group assessments, when given a choice. While it is perhaps not surprising that they found that students with a high degree of self-efficacy preferred individual assessments, they also found that students who were more extrinsically motivated chose group assessments — food for thought for those of us involved in curriculum and assessment design. The third paper in this category is that by **Martina Deiana** and **Chiara Fabbri**, who investigated the success of female leaders in the hospitality industry in the UK and Ireland within a large international hotel group. As well as identifying a number of barriers, their focus in this paper is on what can be done to support middle management to make that move into senior management. **Javed Suleri** of Stenden Hotel Management School reports on his study into learners' experiences and expectations of higher education in a time of pandemic. He finds that a large number of students seem to like learning virtually, and that even after the pandemic a significant number would like to see this format of higher education continue to pay a major role into the future. The handling of complaints is a subject that features regularly in our journal, and the paper by **Seonjeong Ally Lee**, **Aryn Karpinski** and **Avia Isreali** of Kent State University, Ohio, is an interesting addition to the body of knowledge because it focuses on the role of customer traits on complaining behaviour. They urge professional and researchers to consider technical and functional service failures, and suggest that service orientation is at the core of building a competitive advantage. Architecture, servicescapes and hotel lobbies are popular topics for hospitality management research, and the paper by **Minoas Pytharoulakis** and **Georgia Zouni** reports on a study conducted in Athens, Greece to develop a new "lobbyscape model" for 4-star and 5-star hotels. They argue that this space is under-utilised in terms of value generation and as a place where the overall quality of service can be highlighted and even improved. **Henrik Pahus** presents a research study into what organisations can do to retain volunteers at festival and investigates motivational drivers for volunteers at a time when it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract volunteers. His findings that community, self-realisation and purpose should be of interest to researchers and everyone who uses volunteers in their organization. The next paper is from **Delly Chatibura** of the University of Botswana. It is an early investigation into how the COVID-19 pandemic can be tracked through TripAdvisor comments from people who have travelled to Botswana. Surprisingly, fear, anxiety and trip disruption were less in evidence than might be expected, and instead travellers still posted compliments, recommendation and revisit intentions. This suggests our industry may be more resilient than many have suggested in recent months. **Gonneke Kragt**, a graduate of Stenden Hotel Management School tackles another global issue, that of human trafficking in hospitality. She investigates how prepared front office employees in Amsterdam hotels are to recognize and act on signals of human trafficking in their hotel. While some checklists and training are available, she finds that much more could and should be done. Finally, Roy Wood presents a thought-provoking paper reflecting on hospitality trade unionism in the UK and beyond. In his conclusion, he urges others to consider this field as one that is urgently in need of more academic research — a sentiment with which Dr Bill Rowson would have agreed wholeheartedly.

Thank you to all contributors and readers. If you would like to see your research published in this open access peer-reviewed journal, please get in touch with us. Stay safe.

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https://doi.org/10.1080/22243534.2020.1869488

Research in Hospitality Management 2020, 10(2): 67
https://doi.org/10.1080/22243534.2020.1869457

RHM
2020
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OBITUARY

Dr Bill Rowson (1953–2020)

We at Stenden Hotel Management School are saddened to report that our colleague Dr Bill Rowson passed away suddenly at his home in Leeuwarden in October. Our thoughts are with his wife and sons. Bill published regularly in this journal (often in collaboration with colleagues or students), so we would like to take a little piece of this journal to reflect on Bill's achievements and to think about what we must ensure we carry forward as his legacy.

Bill came from a British working-class background and was very proud of the fact that his first job was as a taxi driver. He used that to remind people that everyone could do what they wanted if they just set their mind to it. At the time of his passing, he was a valued member of the research group of the Professorship of Hospitality Studies, an author and co-author of many journal articles, book chapters and edited books. More importantly for him though, was the fact that he could use his position to help others to get onto the publishing ladder. Many reading this would never have got started with their first paper without Bill's encouragement. As someone said at his funeral, you never had "drempelvrees" or "fear of going in" standing outside Bill's office, and whatever you showed him, he always had something positive to say about it (though he was not afraid to tell the hard truth either).

Bill gained his BA (Hons) in Business Studies from the University of Wolverhampton, and then a PhD in Employee Relations from Manchester Metropolitan University. He was also an elected member of the Institute of Hospitality. He has worked for universities right across the globe, including Manchester Metropolitan University, Leeds Becket University, Nottingham Trent University, Sheffield Hallam University, the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management in Dubai and Beijing Hospitality Institute in China. He loved teaching, but he was also a prolific author, writing or co-authoring over 50 peer-reviewed academic journal articles and many conference papers. He also co-authored a book *Experiencing Hospitality* with his long-time collaborator, Conrad Lashley, and contributed many book chapters. He was working on a co-authored book on human resource management and a paper on the future of hospitality jobs. Bill had also been involved in very many consultancy projects for the hospitality industry, and he always felt strongly that academic research should also be relevant research, and he was fascinated with artificial intelligence, robotics and the impact of the gig economy on people's working lives. He was working on a gender disparity study in South Africa with colleagues in South Africa and Italy. He was writing on hospitableness in non-hospitality settings. When we were discussing how best to support colleagues and students in their academic research and writing, he said,

> *If you don't feel inspired, you find it difficult to write – I know I do. For me, when I get an idea to start to write, I like to work when that is in my mind, and not on a set time or day, and then I will often work until I run out of good thoughts – sometimes after a few hours but sometimes after a whole day.*

As you can see from the above list, he was a very busy man, but also someone who loved what he was doing. His ability to see potential in almost anything was what made people go to him with vague ideas and he took great pleasure in helping them craft their hunches and thoughts into management projects, master's theses, conference and journal papers and book chapters. It is a very difficult thing to find time for other people when you are very busy, but Bill always seemed to manage it.

Some time ago Bill happened to mention to me that he had two favourite quotes. One was from René Descartes, the French philosopher, who said *Dubito, ergo cogito, ergo sum*, meaning "I doubt, therefore I think, therefore I am". His other favourite was from Albert Einstein, who once said "If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on it, I would use the first 55 minutes determining the proper questions to ask". That quiet, reflective approach to research, and his ability to always see the glass as half full not half empty, was what made Bill such a much loved and highly respected colleague. Two comments that people said at the time of his funeral really struck a chord with me. One said, "Bill was one of my favourite colleagues" and the other said simply, "We need more Bills".

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Research in Hospitality Management 2020, 10(2): 69–74
https://doi.org/10.1080/22243534.2020.1869458

RHM
2020
Research in
Hospitality
Management

The impact of internal communication on customers' perception of revenue strategies

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ABSTRACT: This article focuses on communication, specifically internal communication, which is often underestimated when changes to management strategy affect both employees and customer perception. The article focuses on the front-office team in a hotel that is carrying out a new revenue strategy. Typically, this involved some internal communication about the new revenue strategy. How this information was delivered to the front desk employees and the value of the information is discussed in this article. The data was gathered by means of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with five experts, and showed that in most cases the front desk employees either received some form of training or at least some information about the new system. The data also illustrates that this information was beneficial and helped the front desk employees deal with situations where customers had been given a room rate via an online travel agency (OTA) or booking platform and the employees had to deal with the confusion caused for the customer and agree on a room rate. Most of the staff were empowered to make adjustment to the price to satisfy the customers. Internal communication appears to play a more important role in achieving customer satisfaction when comparing the outcome of the research with academic literature. The latter often illustrates that companies focus more on consumer marketing (external communication for customers) and not enough on internal communication.

KEYWORDS: customer perception, front office, internal communication, revenue management, room rate changes

Introduction

When strategic changes are made in a business, in this case the hotel industry, what is the best approach for the hotel management to inform both staff and customers? In this article the focus of the study is a hotel business that is changing its revenue management strategy. The article gives an insight into the best way to inform the hotel staff so that they can explain the changes to customers so that the consumers perceive the price changes as fair and acceptable.

Academic literature

Changes to a business communication strategy is a difficult task and involves an array of different elements that can typically be categorised as internal or external elements. In this article, we take the case of a change in the revenue management strategy resulting in a room rate price change for the customer. When changing or introducing a new revenue management strategy (RM), the relevant parties who should be informed are employees and consumers if prices are affected. If this change of strategy is conducted in an appropriate manner, customer satisfaction can be maintained or even improved. Hence, when the internal communication about an RM strategy is clearly shared with managers and employees, the internal communication should be improved as employees will know what is expected of them and external communication with the customers should be improved as well, and this will most likely have a positive effect on the guest's perception about the hotel room rates.

Communication

Communication is a critical part of employee engagement, which in turn promotes better performance, employee retention and well-being. Employees are more likely to engage and contribute when there is an open communication culture (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development [CIPD], 2020). Good employee communication will help employees to understand their organisation's purpose and strategy, to identify with the company values, and to develop a sense of belonging by understanding how they contribute to the wider purpose of the company. Kim and Jang (2018) approach it from a different perspective and describe how an employee's satisfaction with the communication from the company side, including the company's communication about different aspects within the company, leads to organisational communication satisfaction. According to Kim and Jang (2018), this is of great importance, especially with employees working in key communication roles or in high service encounter roles.

Velentzas and Broni (2014, p. 117) define communication as "the meaningful exchange of information between two or a group of people", which they further define to be shared in an oral or written manner. The elements linked to this exchange of information are the sender, the message, and the receiver. In a world which is becoming increasingly more digital, the receiver does not need to be present at the moment the sender is sharing the message, and the process of communication is complete when the receiver has understood the message. This is in line with the statement of Braimah (2016, p. 4) that "[c]ommunication has been defined…as the process whereby people within an organization give and receive messages". How well the receiver understands the message depends upon the quality of internal and external communication. This article first considers how communication is constructed, before investigating the process of internal communication.

Verbal and non-verbal communication

The first distinction to be made in communication is the way that we communicate. According to the Mehrabian ratio "7–38–55", 7% of our communication is linked to verbal expression, 38% of the message consists of a vocal component, and the remaining 55% of the message is supported by facial (non-verbal) expressions (Amsel, 2019). Although the "7–38–55" ratio has come in for some criticism, it is a good acknowledgement of the fact that communication takes place mainly non-verbally.

Jung and Yoon (2011) propose that non-verbal communication is a type of communication in which body language and facial expression are used instead of spoken word. Body language and facial expressions can be divided into four categories: physical appearance; proxemics, paralanguage; and kinesics. Next, we continue defining internal communication.

Internal communication

The rise of social media has made communication something of a global obsession. What is perhaps not so apparent is the growth and value of internal communication (the discipline where employers, employees and colleagues share information and talk to each other). Effective communication is vital to ensure that there is mutual understanding between management and staff (Sylvester, 2020).

Braimah (2016, p. 13) uses Narteh's (2012) definition of internal communication: "the effective dissemination of information among employees". ElSamen and Alshurideh (2012, p. 86) used Lovelock's definition of internal communication as "all forms of communication from management to employees in service organization". Çoban and Perçin (2011) see effective internal communication as a required part of the internal marketing within a company. The element which all these definitions have in common is that all authors see internal communication as important. In this, ElSamen and Alshurideh (2012) and Braimah (2016) both refer to statements made by Lovelock (1999), indicating the value of internal communication as being a vital tool in internal marketing, and "it helps the management to ensure service delivery with high satisfactory level and build employee trust, respect and loyalty" (Lovelock & Wright, 1999, p. 248).

Internal marketing

Grönroos (1982) was one of the first authors to define internal marketing, and Lings (2004, p. 9) used the following definition "

> [t]he internal marketing concept holds that an organization's internal market of employees can be influenced most effectively and hence motivated to customer consciousness, market orientation and sales mindedness by a marketing-like internal approach and by applying marketing-like activities internally.

According to Rafiq and Ahmed (2000), internal marketing consists of five steps to be taken in order. Internal marketing is an approach linked to strategic marketing aiming to smooth an organisational change on either a corporate and/or functional level on the employee's side. In this, motivating and aligning staff is vital while it ensures employee motivation, which in the end has a high impact on customer satisfaction. Taking the relevance of internal marketing to another level is done in the following notion. Çoban and Perçin (2011, p. 205) refer to a definition by Berry (1981) that internal marketing is "viewing employees as internal customers, viewing jobs as internal products that satisfy the needs and wants of these internal customers while addressing the objectives of the organization. The fundamental tool for achieving employee satisfaction in this approach is to treat employees as customers". Here the relevance is shown for a company to invest in communication and, more specifically, to clarify why to start treating this aspect as internal marketing.

ElSamen and Alshurideh (2012, p. 85) indicate that internal marketing is seen as the effort made by a service firm "to provide all members of the organization with a clear understanding of the corporate mission and objectives and with the training, motivation, and evaluation to achieve the desired objectives". When comparing several internal marketing frameworks with each other, a summary of the frameworks including a link to external aspects is best shown in the model of Lings (2004, p.16).

Figure 1 builds upon Kotler's notion from 1994 concerning the service triangle, which consists of 1) the external marketing through the relationship between the company and the customer, 2) the interactive marketing by means of the relationship between employees and customers, and 3) the internal marketing constructed due to the relationship between

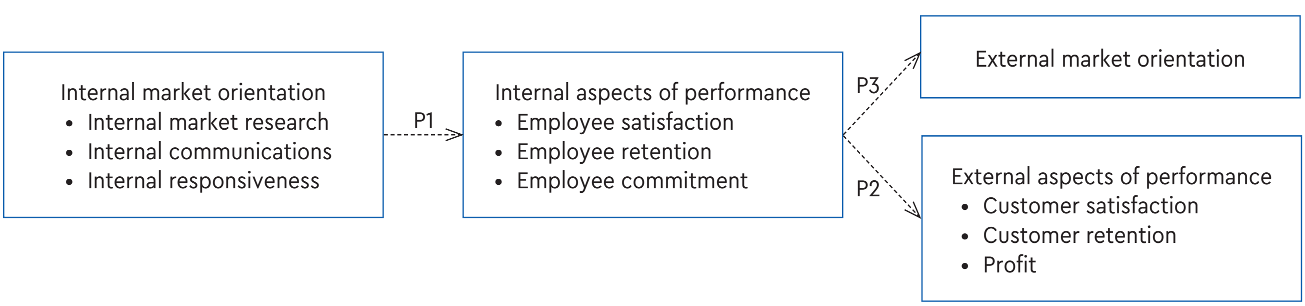

FIGURE 1. Proposed relationships between internal market orientation, external market orientation and internal and external aspects of organisational performance

the company and employees (Lings, 2004). Braimah (2016) takes this latter part a step further by indicating that when executed in an effective way, internal marketing will lead, besides other things, to an effective sharing of information among hotel employees. Once employees receive this information, which can be seen as an internal service provided by co-workers, employee satisfaction will increase. This, according to Tag-Eldeen and El-Said (2011), helps to satisfy external customers by delivering quality service. Once internal communication is established, the next step is the effect of external communication.

External communication

Here, external communication refers to the communication process between the employee and the guest, also defined as interactive marketing by Lings (2004). As indicated earlier in this article, communication consists of verbal and non-verbal components. Enabling an employee to deliver the information correctly to a guest, interactive marketing needs to be established by means of external communication. In this, the tone of the message and its relevance is important in which the former is referred to as message framing and the latter as message relevance (Lee & Oh, 2014).

Message framing is related to how the information is presented to the guest, either positively or negatively. This message becomes persuasive when the other components of the message support the message itself that results in more effective communication (Lee & Oh, 2014). Warren et al. (2017) add that the level of persuasiveness depends on how credible and trustworthy the employee is perceived to be by the guest. The relevance of the message is linked to how the focus point of the message fits the guest's perception of the content shared. Adding to both of the credibility elements linked to persuasive communication, demonstrating expertise and trustworthiness, there is a third element, namely goodwill. An employee who transfers responsiveness, empathy, and understanding is working according the social exchange framework, as described by Warren et al. (2017). Understanding what external communication entails, in a nutshell, helps to recognise the effects external communication can have on, for example, customer satisfaction.

Using external communication to increase customer satisfaction

In general, first external marketing takes place, in which the company communicates with the guest before the guest comes into contact with an employee of the company, and at which point interactive marketing occurs. In the process of external communication, also called interactive marketing, customer satisfaction is positively influenced when the employee maintains eye-contact with the guest, smiles, nods, and speaks with a high energy level, as discussed by Muralidhar et al. (2017). This is supported by Jung and Yoon (2011), who noted that there is a positive relationship between demonstrated non-verbal cues and a customer's satisfaction. Muralidhar et al. (2017) state that non-verbal communication is proven to be an important element in forming first impressions.

According to Kueh and Bagul (2013, p. 127),

> nonverbal communication is divided into kinesics such as body movements, body orientation, eye contact, nodding, hand shaking, and smiling; proxemics, such as the distance and relative posture between the speaker and the listener during a communication process; paralanguage such as vocal qualities or verbal cues; and physical appearance such as physical attractiveness and appropriate clothing.

In the research of Jung and Yoon (2011), it is stated that non-verbal communication has a substantial influence on how the guest assesses the service quality received. The largest influence comes from kinesics.

Understanding the effect of internal marketing and non-verbal communication on the customer's service experience are important starting points for developing a communication plan that starts with determining the audience, according to Newman (2016). From that point onwards, it is easier to determine what is already known about that specific audience, such as their present knowledge about the company, how the audience will respond, or how the relationship with them is. In this, the audience can be both the customer and the employee, so this requires a communication plan involving all parties (Newman, 2016). Furthermore, Newman (2016) emphasises the importance of sharing considerable changes in a company with each audience in different ways, such as spoken, written or visual communications via different channels depending on which channel is appropriate for which message to which audience. Each person in the audience has a different preference for receiving information as well as the type of learning (Newman, 2016).

Consumer perception

Yüksel and Cengiz (2008) suggest that in reality customer satisfaction depends on three dimensions: outcome, procedure, and interaction. The outcome in this context relates to how the customer benefits from the encounter, while the procedure refers to an organisation's rules and regulations to guide the customer's encounter, and lastly, the interaction invokes the communication with and treatment of the customer during the encounter (Yüksel & Cengiz, 2018).

This is in line with the definition about customer satisfaction, which Jung and Yoon (2011, p. 544) cite from Howard and Sheth (1969), that it "is a condition in which a purchaser recognizes that he or she has been rewarded in return for his or her consideration". Turning a satisfied customer into a loyal customer is, according to Xu et al. (2017), linked to how an employee deals with their emotions as well as fostering a deep interpersonal contact between a customer and an employee. Especially in the service industry, the behaviour in terms of professional, social, and communication skills, and personality of front-line service employees are the elements upon which guests evaluate the service encounter and the impression left by the company (Muralidhar et al., 2017).

For example, when a potential customer is choosing a hotel, the customer's choice is influenced by cognitive attributes (brand name, price), affective attributes (excitement, comfort), and sensory attributes (overall atmosphere and room quality) (Kim & Perdue, 2013). Though, in the end, it is the staff performance which determines the customer satisfaction (Çoban & Perçin, 2011).

Research approach

We considered a number of possible research methods and decided that semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were the best method to collect details and sensitive data about the phenomena being investigated for this article. With this in mind, five front-office team employees with different types of contracts and length of work experience, but whom could all be considered to be "expert respondents", were interviewed using a semi-structured research instrument. The research instrument contained 16 open-ended questions focused on the hotels switch to a new revenue management system.

The scope and focus of the face-to-face interviews were related to the communication process taking place between front-office employees and the hotel customer, about the introduction of the new revenue system affecting room rates, as well as the communication between employees and customers regarding the different prices set for the hotel rooms.

Finally, we attempt to assess how customer satisfaction was impacted by the revenue changes and customer acceptance of these changes, through front desk employees' customer service actions. The following section reviews the data collected from the interviews and gives an insight into the value of internal and external communication.

Study findings

Five "expert" respondents who were all members of the front-office team were selected for their detailed knowledge of the subject area and experience in dealing with the phenomenon of discussing room rate changes with hotel guests. The following data is structured according to the research instrument interview questions. Although only five respondents were interviewed, the responses were detailed and interesting due to the fact that each "expert respondent" has dealt extensively with the phenomena that forms the basis of this research (translations are from Dutch to English).

How information was shared about a new strategy

As shared by Sylvester (2020), it is important that there is a collective understanding between staff and management which is fostered by effective communication. This relates to the internal marketing executed in a company and is seen as the effort made by the service company to make staff understand the company's objectives (ElSamen & Alshurideh, 2012). Newman (2016) points out that effective internal marketing is built upon the communication plan constructed, for which the basis first lies in determining the audience with whom the message is to be shared. A key issue for this research is how the information about the new revenue strategy was shared by the company with the employees who would be most likely to have to deal with the impact of the new revenue strategy. The data illustrates how such information was shared with employees and which in fact is the basis for the collective understanding. The results show that 40% of the respondents had received information about the changing price strategy "in a meeting", that 40% had received information about the price changes during a "training session", and finally that 20% had not been informed of the new strategy. Examples of comments include:

> RESI0001: *...informed by headquarters, I was invited for a kick-off meeting/presentation...An explanation given during kick-off meeting/presentation.*
>
> RESI0002: *Well, just that we were getting a new system, I went to a course where they explained the system.*

The data demonstrates a reasonable effort to get information out to employees who would most be affected by the change to the revenue management strategy, and that 80% of the respondents had been informed either at a meeting or in a training session.

What information was shared about a new strategy

The desired outcome of sharing the correct information with the customer is established by at least providing employees with training. In addition to this, ElSamen and Alshurideh (2012) indicate motivation and evaluation to be of importance. Braimah (2016) emphasises the fact that internal marketing influences information sharing among employees as well. Both are closely associated with the next question: "What kind of information had been shared with them?". Again, the importance of internal communication is clearly illustrated in that 80% of the expert respondents had received an explanation and/or training, although in the case of 20% of the respondents there was no formal training or information given.

The interview data shows that 60% were told about and received training for the new system, 20% received a basic explanation and, as before, 20% respondents were not informed. The data shows that there was a mixture of methods used by the hotel to inform the front desk employees. Three were informed via a presentation after being informed about the change of pricing system. One respondent thought that the communication was not that good and said:

> RESI0002: *However, the communication now is better, now that we are working with it, there are some teething troubles. And I think that communication is not as good.*

However, one of the respondents said that although the information about the new system is good in itself, there are areas where the front desk employees found the information lacking and did not know how the system worked in a particular situation. This is an area that needs to be addressed by the management as good internal information will allow employees to give better customer service. As one respondent put it:

> RESI0003: *I think that is good in itself. Clear information is given, only sometimes...there are certain things where you just do not know how it works, because you do not have enough information.*

This response is also reflected in the following quote where one respondent gives an example of why the room prices change, and this will in some way be communicated to the customer:

> RESI0004: *Yes, you know, based on demand and supply, I think. And also, what the market is doing, and also, what the stakeholders, or at least the owners, expect us to gain concerning revenue. I think that, yes, it depends on a lot of elements.*

Communicating price changes to customers

Continuing with the theme of information that the respondents received regarding the new pricing strategy, this information provides the respondents with a basis from which they can respond to customers when communicating the new hotel room rates. When internal marketing is executed correctly, employee satisfaction will increase, which in turn has a significant effect on the level of quality service offered to customers (Tag-Eldeen & El-Said, 2011). Establishing interactive marketing is the next step and requires external communication that permits the employee to deliver the correct information to the customer (Lee & Oh, 2014).

The question is: Does the respondent pay *more attention to the customer when communicating the price change*? The interview data shows that only one respondent directly communicates the room rate, while 80% of the respondents first listen to the customers' requirements.

Warren et al. (2017) refer this to the social exchange framework that starts with making sure that the relevance of the information fits the message according to the customer's perception. Stated differently, first listen to what a customer has to say, as supported by literature, before framing the message

> RESI0002: *I first always listen to the wishes of the customer, what do they want. Then I am telling them the rate which I have seen in the PMS, with, well, either the refundable or non-refundable rate. And then I am awaiting what the response of the customer is.*

Dealing with guest complaints

Once the hotel room rate is communicated to a customer, there might be resistance from the customer about this. Overcoming a customer's resistance requires expertise and trustworthiness to be demonstrated by the employee in the interactive marketing with the customer (Warren et al., 2017). However, this begins with the external communication first started from the company to the customer in order to attract the customer. Then, interactive marketing can take place in which non-verbal communicating has a vital role, according to Muralidhar et al. (2017). While this is difficult to establish when communicating with customers via phone or e-mail, the value of the communication plan becomes apparent. Newman (2016) suggested to first determine who the audience is and what the audience already knows about the company. Therefore, we continue with the interview question about how the respondents deal with a customer complaining about a hotel room rate.

Only 20% of respondents reported empathising with the customer first, and 40% started with listening. Finally, 40% of respondents indicated that it was not their call to make to adjust the hotel room rate. As indicated by Yüksel and Cengiz (2008), one of the dimensions actually influencing customer satisfaction is interaction, referring to how the employee treats and communicates with the customer in the encounter. Another dimension refers to the procedures set by the company, which is linked to the rules and regulations of the organisation. In the end, the customer is evaluating the conversation between the employee and him based on the following elements in the employee's behaviour: professional, social, and communicative (Muralidhar et al., 2017).

> RESI0004: *I always tell the customer to not book anything when they indicate that they find the rate too high, then I say: "Well I do understand that, but still". And often they then ask as well like during weekdays you are cheaper…or more expensive during the weekend, how is this possible?" Then I explain this in a friendly way."*
>
> RESI0005: *Yes, always. I have never had an argument with a customer who said, "well, this is too expensive, I cannot agree with what you are offering now". But yes, you do sense when customers do not approve, they then say to search further. But no, no extreme things, I always remain friendly. But no, I do not go with the customer and lower the rate."*

Sometimes it is not possible for front desk employees to give discounts for rooms and they have to be direct with customers, as the following quote demonstrates, a polite but direct response.

> RESI0002: *If the customer then says, yes this is too expensive, I want a discount of say €50.00, then I say, directly that that is not going to happen. That is just not possible.*

Employee knowledge about pricing influences customer's perception of cost

As Muralidhar et al. (2017) suggest, the behaviour in terms of professional, social, communication skills, and personality of front-line service employees are the elements upon which customers often evaluate the service encounter and with that the impression left by the company. The data illustrates that a critical factor in this research is price communication and all the respondents agree that prior knowledge about the room rate pricing strategy gives an advantage when communicating with customers.

Interestingly, this shows that internal communication is more important than first thought, as the data suggests a high level of employee knowledge and understanding of the changes to prices, and how this can influence customers' acceptance of new room rates. One of the respondents explained:

> RESI0003: *Yes, you do try to listen first to what the customer actually wants, if they want, let's say, breakfast with it or a package. Or that there is a specific reason for the visit. Because then you can always offer the x-special or something like that. So that you do look at what the customer wants.*

The data shows that listening to the customer and explaining clearly helps customers understand the pricing system and improves their perception of prices. The same respondent continued with a clear example of this:

> RESI0003: *In general, customers do understand it as long as you explain it clearly that the rate is lower due to the fact that they cannot cancel the booking anymore. With credit cards, guests do not want to give the details or do not have a credit card, but they want to book the non-refundable rate or something like that.*

Also, good staff training can help with customer service, giving staff the confidence to deal with customers expecting different prices. The quote below is an excellent illustration of this:

> RESI0001: As *an example, last week package-x was available, and a customer wanted to book this and says: "Uhm €110.00? I thought €89.00?" And I said, "yes madam, you are right, that is what you have seen". At first I agree with her, so no discussion. But, this is a "from" rate. You now choose this room type, and this specific date, and then the rate can deviate. If you would like more information about that, I can show you. Well in this way I am trying to assist these people and she in the end also booked the room.*

Furthermore, it seems that online travel agencies (OTAs) can complicate issues around booking prices. See the quotation below:

> RESI0004: *Yes, when I explain it clearly to the customer, then they often do understand it. But it is often as well the case that guests think they have booked a*

specific price, like including breakfast, but then the communication via the online travel agencies is not clear. That is not our fault, this is external noise.

Conclusion

The data from this study illustrates the importance of internal communication when making price changes and, in this particular case, making sure that the employees who face the customers are well informed and, if needed, trained to understand the revenue management price changes. The data from this study shows that changes to revenue management, in this case room rates, can sometimes cause difficulties for the front desk employees when faced with questions relating to the room rates from customers.

This study shows the importance of using internal communication to assist the affected employees to support the management changes, in this case in revenue management. However, it must be said that one limitation of this study is the small number of respondents, although they were considered "expert respondents" and the in-depth interviews drew out considerable and valuable data. Therefore, it is recommended that a wider ranging study, possibly with the theme of change management, will need to be conducted to explore this issue further as this could show that internal communication has a much larger impact on both employee and customer satisfaction than previously thought.

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Research in Hospitality Management 2020, 10(2): 75–83
https://doi.org/10.1080/22243534.2020.1869464

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2020
Research in Hospitality Management

Students motives for choosing between an individual test or a group assignment

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ABSTRACT: Two studies were conducted to determine students' motives for choosing between an individual test or a group assignment. The first study used a 20-item questionnaire to investigate the motivational profile of 139 hotel school students. Results showed that students with a high degree of self-efficacy are more likely to choose the individual test, while students who are more extrinsically motivated are more inclined to choose the group assignment. In the second study, 49 students were specifically questioned regarding their choice of the individual test or group assignment. For this study, a questionnaire was used which consisted of 32 statements. Results showed no significant differences between the groups regarding motivational profile, study style, or attitude toward assessment. However, a significant difference does occur regarding final scores and pass rates of the two assessment formats. Further research is indicated to investigate why such allegedly equivalent formats can generate such significantly different results.

KEYWORDS: assessment format, autonomy, extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, task value

Introduction — Context and rationale

This research was conducted at the Stenden Hotel Management School, which is one of the programmes offered at NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. One of the second-year modules of the programme is called Hospitality Operations Design. The module consists of three units: Service Concepts & Operations (6EC); Revenue Management (3EC); and Business Statistics (3EC). This study is focused on the first unit: Service Concepts & Operations. There are two options for students to complete this unit of the module: students can do the module assignment, or they can choose to do a test. The assignment is a group assessment, and the test is an individual assessment.

The assignment consists of five parts. The objective of the assignment is to study an existing hospitality organisation, with a focus on quality and quality improvement. In part A, students need to describe and visualise the service marketing concept of the company they chose. Part B is about operations improvement and quality management, including analysing operational issues, designing processes, managing processes and managing quality. Part C is about designing a research project to support managerial decision-making. In part D, students need to show their skills in project management by making a network diagram. And in the last part (E), students have to make a conceptual model or mind map in order to visualise all the knowledge they have gained.

The test in Operations Design covers the same areas and theory as applied in the assignment. The type of test is a short-answer test and consists of 20 questions, with three questions about services marketing, 14 questions about operations management and three questions about research design. Example questions about service marketing are "What is the relation between the service marketing concept and the service blueprint?", or "The flower of services includes the core product/service and the supplementary services. Give an example of two supplementary services that you think are important and related to a fast-food restaurant and briefly explain your example". In the part about operations management, a flowchart is given, and students need to describe the type of process and layout type and explain the transformed and transforming resources. In the last part, research design, questions are presented such as "In order to study employee satisfaction, a group of employees is chosen. What kind of sampling method gives all employees an equal chance to be chosen if we do not need to consider sub-groups of employees?" The total score of the test is 100 points and each question is worth five points. The passing score of both assessment methods is 55 points. Historical data show that the pass rate of the assignment (85%) is much higher compared to the pass rate of the test (58%) (NHL Stenden University, 2019).

Regardless of the assessment method they choose, the students follow the same programme and workshops. Therefore, it is assumed that the knowledge obtained during this module will not differ. In total, there were eight workshops in the module related to unit 1, addressing the following topics: Operations Management; Segmentation & Service Concepts; Value Proposition & Service Blueprint; Quality & Quality Management Systems; Operations Improvement & Improvement Techniques; Improvement Approaches; Process Design; Job Design; and Project Management.

Assessment plays an important role in shaping students' way of studying and learning. Assessments have the potential to motivate students and hence influence their learning in a number of ways. Successful completion of an assessment may be rewarding for some students, while having some control over the process of assessment may be motivating for others (Seale et al., 2000). Assessments allow students to demonstrate their abilities and knowledge. Assessments could be beneficial for students because they provide them with information about their study progress and when they pass assessments, this could be motivating. When students can choose their own assessment method, they have some control over their learning process by choosing the assessment method which fits them best in meeting their educational goals. The purpose of this study was to find out how students' motivation influences the choice of a particular assessment method.

Literature review

Motivation

Motivation can be divided into two types, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Researchers have found that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have different effects on behaviour. Intrinsic motivation is defined as doing something out of personal interest and pleasure (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Someone is driven by interest in a subject area and derives pleasure from understanding certain concepts, theories or topics or mastering particular skills, not by external pressure or rewards (Eisenberger et al., 1999). At an operational level, intrinsic motivation leads to task persistence (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008). This means that people see the task as a challenge to learn more, among other things, and therefore they will continue to work on a task for longer.

Extrinsic motivation means doing an activity that will lead to a tangible reward or outcome provided by an external agency (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation means focusing on rewards and doing things that other people consider important (Corpus et al., 2009). In the academic context, this means that people want to receive high marks, study for the test, and strictly adhere to guidelines in the course syllabus and criteria on the grading sheet. The three motivational constructs that play key roles in learning are autonomy, self-efficacy and task value (Neuville et al., 2007).

Autonomy

Autonomy is essential to the nature of motivation and is seen as the basis for both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Experiencing autonomy is expected to lead to a higher degree of motivation. Autonomy in education means that learners can make their own decisions related to their learning and will be held responsible for those decisions and for the implementation of them (Wermke & Salokangas, 2015). According to Littlewood (1997), an autonomous learner should be able but also willing to be autonomous. Benson and Voller (1997) combine all the definitions and describe an autonomous learner as someone who has the opportunity to study entirely on their own, is totally self-regulated, self-directed and is not dependent on others.

Experiencing autonomy is expected to lead to a higher degree of motivation. When the autonomy of a learner increases, so will their educational achievements. When a student is autonomous and participates and engages, they will have a greater opportunity to align their educational learning with their specific interests (Dupont et al., 2014). This allows the student to find or produce meaning within learning and hence be more motivated in the process. The degree of autonomy affects how and how much students will learn (Vansteenkiste et al., 2012).

Self-efficacy

According to Campbell (2011), students' achievement and achievement-related choices are often determined by two factors, self-efficacy and task value. Self-effcacy is defined as an individual's belief in their ability to complete a task in a specific situation, which affects the choice of activities, effort, and persistence of that individual (Van der Bijl & Shortridge-Baggett, 2001). General self-efficacy refers to our overall belief in our ability to succeed. Schunk (1995) stated that self-efficacy can help predict motivation and performance. Students who believe they can perform a certain task are more likely to find their study interesting, important and useful. Self-efficacy may be a factor that influences persistence. People who feel successful have been found to work harder (Bandura, 1994). People are motivated to act if they believe there are positive outcomes. Motivation and self-efficacy are closely related, but self-efficacy is based on an individual's belief in their own capacity to achieve, while motivation is based on the individual's desire to achieve. Students with a higher self-efficacy score tend to have a higher motivation to study and consequently achieve higher academic results (Pajares, 1996).

Task value

Task value refers to students' perceptions of the interest, usefulness, importance and cost of a task (Neuville et al., 2007). Tibbetts et al. (2015) argued that it is important to consider how individuals perceive and value a task, and identified four subjective task values. The first one is intrinsic value, which means the perceived importance of a task because of its inherent enjoyment. Intrinsic task value differs from intrinsic motivation because task value refers to the student's evaluation of how interesting, how important, and how useful the task itself is (Al-Harthy & Aldhafri, 2014). The second one is attainment value, which means that students attach themselves to the task as it relates to their conception of their identity and ideals or their competence in a given domain. The next one is utility value, that is, accomplishing future goals which are relevant for someone determine the value of a task. And the last one, cost value, takes into consideration the negative aspects of engaging in a task. Students' motivation to learn and make achievement-related decisions is dependent upon these two components: expectations for achievement; and value attributed to the task.

Motivation will be affected positively when students understand the importance of tasks and realise that the content is relevant (Martin & Collie, 2016). According to Cunningham (2013), students will not be motivated if a task is not challenging. An increase in intrinsic, attainment, or utility value will lead to greater motivation in an academic task. Conversely, if these perceived task values decrease, individuals may be less likely to pursue the task (Tibbetts et al., 2015).

Assessment format

Assessment and student learning are two inseparable elements in higher education. Assessment plays an important role in shaping students' study behaviour and learning. Assessments have the potential to motivate students and hence influence their learning in a number of ways. Successful completion of an assessment may be rewarding for some students, while having some control over the process of assessment may be motivating for others (Seale et al., 2000). Assessments allow students to demonstrate their abilities and knowledge, and could be beneficial for students because they provides them with information about their study progress, and when they pass assessments, this could be motivating. When students can choose their own assessment method, they have some control about their learning process and could choose the assessment method which fits best with their educational goals.

It has been argued that motivation influences students' study and learning behaviours. Entwistle et al. (1974) suggest that a student who is extrinsically motivated focuses on satisfactory completion of the course. This can lead to a surface approach to learning with inflexible learning outcomes which cannot easily be transferred to other contexts. In contrast, a student who is intrinsically motivated is interested in the subject area and personally engaged with the tasks. This can lead to a deep approach to learning with flexible learning outcomes which can be transferred to other contexts. The two studies reported in this article focus on two types of assessment, an individual short-answer test, and a group assignment. Tests are generally more structured than assignments and therefore tend to be less flexible. With an assignment, students are able to regulate their own process, managing time, approach and possible content (Biggs & Tang, 2011). According to Van Berkel et al. (2017), assignments do stimulate self-management among students since students need to define the product at least partly by themselves.

Harlen and Deakin Crick (2003) reviewed the impact of assessments on students' motivation for learning and concluded that assessment can impact the learner's willingness, desire, and capacity to learn. Brookhart and Durkin (2003) found that tests were associated with lower student self-efficacy, compared to assignments. Furthermore, Brookhart and Durkin (2003) suggest that cooperating on a group assignment tends to give students a sense of competence, relatedness, and autonomy.

Conceptual model

As described in the literature review, student motivation is expected to be influenced by autonomy, self-efficacy and task value. The resulting motivation can be primarily intrinsic or extrinsic. The student's motivation is expected to subsequently influence the choice of assessment format and their preference for either an individual test or a group assignment. The conceptual model in Figure 1 maps all the variables and their mutual relationships.

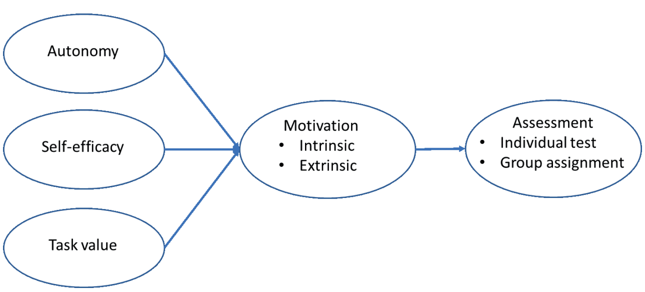

FIGURE 1. Conceptual model: The drivers of motivation and preferred assessment format

Problem statement and research questions

The problem statement of this research is "Why do students choose either the individual test or the group assignment?" Research questions have been formulated in order to investigate and find an answer to the problem statement.

- RQ1: What is the relationship between the three factors (autonomy, self-efficacy, task value) and students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation?
- RQ2: What is the relationship between motivation and preferred assessment format?
- RQ3: What attitude do students hold regarding the two assessment formats?
- RQ4: Do the different assessment formats lead to different study behaviour and study results?

Method

Type of research

Two studies were carried out. In study 1, a correlational design was used to investigate the impact of three drivers on students' intrinsic or extrinsic motivation and the relationship between motivation and preferred assessment format. In study 2, the rationale for choosing the individual test or group assignment was further investigated using a survey approach and six interviews.

Instrumentation

Study 1

A questionnaire was used to study if students' motivation to choose an assessment method was influenced by autonomy, self-efficacy and task value. The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements which are linked to the factors that could influence the students' motivation to choose a particular assessment method. A five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" was employed for all statements.

Study 2

The second study further investigated the students' choices of and attitudes towards individual or group assessment. For this study, a questionnaire was used which consisted of 32 statements. A five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" was employed for most of the items. The survey also included some multiple-choice questions where respondents could choose two or more options from a list of answers. Furthermore, a focus group session was conducted to collect background information which was used in the interpretation of the findings.

Sampling

Study 1

In total, 176 students were enrolled in the Hospitality Operations Design module during the module period in which the data were collected. The questionnaire was administered only once and not all students were present at the time. A total of 139 questionnaires were completed and collected for this study.

Study 2

The sample for this study consisted of 49 students out of the 57 students following the Hospitality Operations Design module in module period 2 of academic year 2019–2020.

Furthermore, a semi-structured group interview was conducted with six of the 49 students. These students were selected based on their chosen assessment format. Three of them had chosen the individual test and the other three the group assignment.

Data collection procedure

Study 1

The questionnaire was distributed and collected in several ways. Most students (70%) completed it during one of the lectures in the module. The rest of them were contacted in person or were contacted via email and received the questionnaire digitally. In all cases, students received instruction about the questionnaire before completing it. Completing the questionnaire took a maximum of 15 minutes.

Study 2

The second questionnaire was administered during two lectures in the module. The questionnaire was handed out personally and the students received instruction about the questionnaire before completing it. Completing the questionnaire took a maximum of 15 minutes.

The students participating in the group interview received a personal invitation. The participants and researcher made an appointment and arranged for a suitable location. The group interview was recorded and took approximately 30 minutes.

Planned data analyses

The statistical package SPSS 26 was used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics are used to report the sample characteristics and the mean and standard deviation for all statements in the survey. To identify the quality of the motivational factors, a reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha was conducted. Relationships between the independent and dependent variables were tested using correlation analysis. Finally, regression analysis was used to predict the choice of assessment format.

Ethical issues

All participants were informed that the results of the questionnaire would be processed anonymously and that all the information provided by them is confidential and would only be used for research purposes. Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis.

Results

Sample characteristics

As shown in Table 1, most students in both studies were Dutch, female and chose the group assignment. The samples in both studies were similar with regard to the choice of assessment format.

Chi-square tests showed that none of the variables linked to study style listed in Table 2 is significantly related to the choice of assessment format.

Student motivation

Student motivation was measured using a questionnaire with 20 statements grouped into five clusters with three independent factors (autonomy, self-efficacy, task value) and two dependent factors (intrinsic and extrinsic motivation). The outcome of the reliability analysis per dimension is shown in Table 3. All dimensions have acceptable alphas above 0.70.

TABLE 1. Sample characteristics

	Study 1 *n* **(%)**	**Study 2** *n* **(%)**
Age		
16–19	80 (58)	13 (27)
20–24	53 (38)	33 (67)
25–29	6 (4)	3 (6)
Gender		
Male	49 (35)	16 (33)
Female	90 (65)	33 (67)
Nationality		
Dutch	107 (77)	46 (94)
Non-Dutch	32 (23)	3 (6)
Assessment format		
Individual test	39 (28)	13 (27)
Group assignment	100 (72)	36 (73)
Total	139 (100)	49 (100)

As shown in Table 3, all motivation factors score above 3.3. When testing for differences between the groups that opted for the individual test and group assignment, no significant differences were detected.

As shown in Table 4, there are three significant correlations. Intrinsic motivation is significantly correlated with both autonomy and self-efficacy, and both of these drivers are significantly correlated with each other as well. These results indicate that intrinsic motivation increases when the degree of autonomy and/or the degree of self-efficacy increases. None of the other correlations is significant.

In study 2, the study motivation was measured with a four-item scale (Table 5).

As shown in Table 5, students who choose the group assignment indicate they study to develop themselves, while students who prefer the individual test indicate that they study because they have to.

The choice of assessment format

Testing for differences showed no significant difference in difficulty of making the decision (Table 6) between the two groups ($t_{(47)} = 0.948$; $p = 0.348$).

To test the relationship between the motivational factors and the choice of assessment format, a logistic regression analysis was performed. The intrinsic and extrinsic motivation variables were considered as independent variables, and the students' choice of assessment format as a dependent variable.

The regression analysis showed that there are two statistically significant relations, namely between assessment format and the extrinsic motivation and self-efficacy variables. Extrinsically motivated students are more likely to choose the group assignment, while the odds that a student with a high degree of self-efficacy chooses the individual test is 1.622 times greater than the chance that they choose the group assignment.

Students who chose the individual test scored higher on "I can decide by myself when to study", "I rather work on my own than in a team", and "There are too many group assignments in the curriculum".

Students who preferred the group assignment scored higher on "I have a higher chance of passing", "I can have influence on the end product", "The work can be divided with others", "I

TABLE 2. Study style (n = 49)

	Individual test *n* **(%)**	**Group assignment** *n* **(%)**
When do you study?		
End of the module	10 (77)	26 (72)
Entire module	3 (23)	10 (28)
Which study method do you prefer?		
Learning by doing	6 (46)	13 (36)
Learning from theories	7 (54)	23 (64)
How do you like to study?		
By yourself	12 (92)	25 (69)
Together with others	1 (8)	11 (31)
How would you qualify your study style?		
Deep learning	8 (62)	19 (53)
Superficial learning	5 (38)	17 (47)
How are your study results so far?		
I passed all modules	5 (39)	13 (36)
I have one or two resits	6 (46)	19 (53)
I have more than two resits	2 (15)	4 (11)
What is your average score?		
<5.5	2 (15%)	3 (8%)
<6.5	4 (31%)	9 (25%)
Around 7	6 (46%)	20 (56%)
>7.5	1 (8%)	4 (11%)

can apply the theory into practice", "I can learn from my fellow students", and "My friends liked it" (Table 7).

Attitude towards individual and group assessment

Looking at opinions about assessment formats (Table 8), no significant differences were detected between the two groups. Regarding the attitude toward assessment (Table 9), significant differences occur on two items: "Most of what I learned for a test I will not remember six months later" and "Assessments stimulate the learning process". On both items, the students who selected the group assignment scored higher than the ones who preferred the individual test.

As shown in Table 10, 27% of the students would like an equal amount of individual and group assessments. A majority of the students (51%) put more emphasis on group assessments, while 11 subjects (22%) put more weight on individual assessments.

Final scores and pass rates for individual test and group assignment

When looking at the distribution of scores for the two groups (Figure 2), results show that the mean score obtained on the group assignment ($M = 6.54$) is significantly higher than the mean score on the individual test ($M = 5.34$) ($t_{(47)} = 4.576$; $p > 0.001$).

There is a significant relationship between assessment format and passing or failing chi-square = 12.411; df = 1; $p > 0.001$). The pass rate for the group assignment is significantly higher than for the individual test (Table 11).

Discussion

The main question for the current study is: Why do students choose either the individual test or the group assignment? In order to find an answer to that question, three potential lines of explanation were investigated: motivational profile; study style; and competence profile. In this section, the findings will be discussed, followed by some suggestions for the practice of assessments and for further research.

The relationship between the three drivers (autonomy, self-efficacy, task value) and students intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

The data analysis showed that students' intrinsic motivation is positively influenced by both autonomy and self-efficacy. This is in line with prior research (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and might be explained by the mechanism that when a student experiences

TABLE 3. Descriptive statistics and reliability of each dimension ($n = 139$)

	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha	Individual test	Group assignment	Mean	SD
Intrinsic motivation	4	0.836	3.74	3.72	3.73	0.72
Extrinsic motivation	4	0.723	3.06	3.42	3.32	0.89
Autonomy	6	0.738	3.76	3.77	3.77	0.58
Self-efficacy	2	0.856	4.14	3.84	3.92	0.83
Task value	3	0.741	3.72	3.53	3.59	0.79

TABLE 4. Correlation between the motivational factors

	Intrinsic motivation	Extrinsic motivation	Autonomy	Self-efficacy
Extrinsic motivation	−0.036			
Autonomy	0.362**	−0.165		
Self-efficacy	0.359**	−0.011	0.333**	
Task value	0.076	−0.06	0.113	0.014

TABLE 5. Descriptive statistics study motivation (study 2; $n = 49$)

	Individual test	Group assignment	Overall	SD	*t*-test?
	$n = 13$	$n = 36$			
I study because I would like to develop myself	3.69	4.39	4.2	0.82	$t_{(47)} = -2.823$; $p = 0.007$
I study because I need to get a degree	4.15	3.78	3.88	0.99	
I study because I like it is interesting	3.38	3.69	3.61	0.79	
I study because I have to do it	4.15	3.33	3.55	1.21	$t_{(47)} = 2.178$; $p = 0.034$

more autonomy, there is a greater opportunity to align their learning activities with their specific personal interests. Autonomy allows them to create a meaningful learning process and hence be more intrinsically motivated. Autonomy was also provided by having the opportunity to make a choice between two assessment methods, allowing them to regulate their own learning process.

According to Schunk (1995), students that score high on self-efficacy and who believe they can perform a certain task are more likely to find their study interesting, important and useful. People who feel competent to do the task have been found to show more persistence and to work harder (Bandura, 1994). These conclusions are confirmed by the results of the current study which showed that students with a high degree

TABLE 6. Deciding about assessment format (n = 49)

	Individual test	Group assignment
Do you like the fact that you could choose between two assessment formats?	10 (77)	34 (94)
Have you considered both assessment formats?	9 (69)	23 (64)
Did you consult other students when making a decision?	5 (39)	21 (58)
How much time did it take to make a decision?		
A few seconds	0 (0)	11 (31)
A couple of minutes	4 (31)	15 (42)
A couple of hours	6 (46)	3 (8)
One or more days	3 (23)	7 (19)
How difficult was it for you to make a decision about either of the two options?	M = 4.85	M = 4.17

Note: reported is the frequency and % of the "yes" responses

TABLE 7. Reason for choosing the assessment format (n = 49)

	Individual test	Group assignment	Mean	SD	*t*-test
I can decide by myself when to study	4.31	3.44	3.67	1.05	$t_{(47)} = -2.707$; $p = 0.009$
I rather work on my own than in a team	4.15	2.50	2.94	1.16	$t_{(47)} = -7.292$; $p > 0.001$
There are too many group assignments in the curriculum	3.08	2.39	2.57	1.04	$t_{(47)} = -2.116$; $p = 0.040$
I have a better chance of passing	3.38	4.31	4.06	0.80	$t_{(47)} = -4.094$; $p > 0.001$
The work can be divided with others	1.69	4.22	3.55	1.40	$t_{(47)} = -9.332$; $p > 0.001$
I can have an influence on the end product	3.38	4.19	3.98	0.95	$t_{(47)} = -2.290$; $p = 0.036$
I can learn from my fellow students	2.15	4.00	3.51	1.21	$t_{(47)} = -6.371$; $p > 0.001$
I can apply the theory in practice	2.85	3.81	3.55	1.02	$t_{(47)} = -3.162$; $p = 0.003$
My friends liked it	1.77	2.61	2.39	1.24	$t_{(47)} = -2.181$; $p = 0.034$
I think it is more efficient	4.15	4.00	4.04	0.64	n.s.
It better matches my learning style	4.00	4.06	4.04	0.89	n.s.
I won't have to deal with freeloaders	3.77	3.31	3.43	1.19	n.s.
I want the score to reflect my individual performance	3.08	3.25	3.2	1.08	n.s.
I want to demonstrate my individual achievements	3.15	2.86	2.94	1.01	n.s.
I won't have to deal with other classmates	3.31	2.67	2.84	1.11	n.s.
I think working in teams decreases my study results	2.69	2.83	2.8	1.21	n.s.
The majority of the group chose this	1.85	2.53	2.35	1.30	n.s.

TABLE 8. Opinions about the two assessment formats (n = 49)

	Individual test	Group assignment	Mean	SD
I think that both assessment formats are equivalent	2.62	3.25	3.08	1.08
I think that both assessment formats have a similar pass rate	2.23	2.67	2.55	1.1
I think that both assessment formats require an equal amount of study time	2.69	2.83	2.8	0.87
I think I would earn the same score on both formats	2.85	2.69	2.73	1.06
I think that both assessment formats have an equal difficulty level	2.77	3.06	2.98	1.01
I would choose the same format again next time	4.15	3.69	3.82	1.03
I would recommend the format I chose to other students	3.54	3.92	3.82	0.81

TABLE 9. Attitude towards assessment

	Individual test	Group assignment	Mean	SD	*t*-test
Most of what I learned for a test I will not remember six months later	3.31	3.97	3.8	1.04	$t_{(47)} = -2.038$; $p = 0.047$
Assessments stimulate the learning process	3.23	3.83	3.67	0.83	$t_{(47)} = -2.358$; $p = 0.023$
Assessments provide information about my strengths and weaknesses	3.31	3.5	3.45	0.79	
If a subject isn't tested, I will not spend any time on it	3.69	3.33	3.43	1.21	
Assessments only represent a small part of what I have learned	3.31	3.06	3.12	1.03	
I learn a lot from taking a test	3.31	2.78	2.92	0.98	
Competencies are tested better with tests than assignments	3.08	2.5	2.65	1.07	

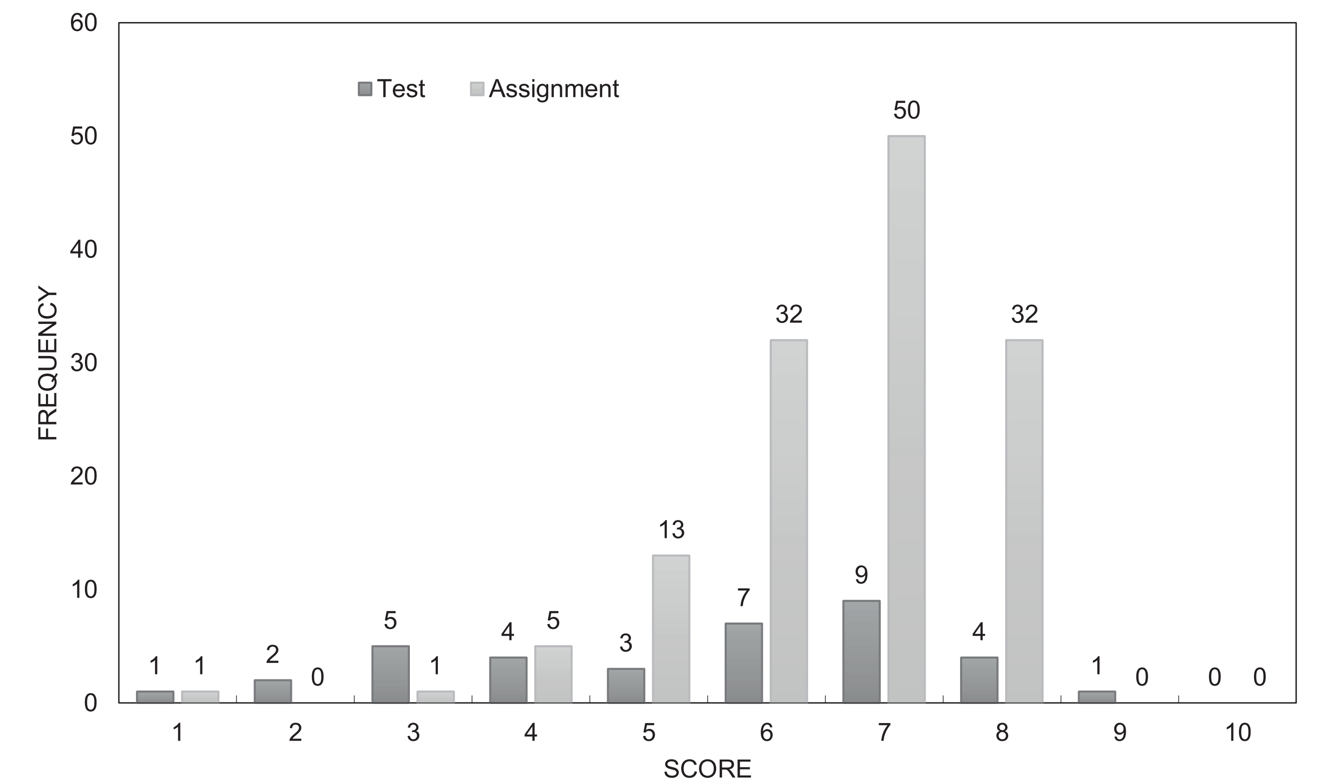

FIGURE 2. Scores for Individual Test or Group Assignment

of self-efficacy are more intrinsically motivated and more likely to choose the individual test, while students who are more extrinsically motivated are more inclined to choose the group assignment.

The third motivational factor — task value — had no significant relationships with either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. This could have been caused by the students' perception of the relevance and importance of the module, but this would require additional research.

The relationship between motivation, study style and preferred assessment format

The data analysis showed that students are more likely to choose the individual test when they have a high degree of self-efficacy.

TABLE 10. Preferred mix of individual and group assessment (n = 49)

Individual	Group	Freq.	%
50	50	13	27
40	60	9	18
35	65	1	2
30	70	7	14
20	80	5	10
15	85	1	2

TABLE 11. Pass rate – individual test and group assignment (n = 170)

	Individual test *n* (%)	Group assignment *n* (%)	Total *n* (%)
Fail	15 (42)	20 (15)	35 (21)
Pass	21 (58)	114 (85)	135 (79)
Total	36 (100)	134 (100)	170 (100)

The odds that a student with a high degree of self-efficacy chooses the individual test is 1.622 times greater than the chance that they choose the assignment. This is in contrast with the study of Brookhart and Durkin (2003) who found that tests were associated with lower student self-efficacy, compared to group assignments.

Our study suggests that the individual test is associated more with intrinsic motivation, while the group assignments would be more appealing for students with an extrinsic motivation. Entwistle et al. (1974) suggest that a student who is extrinsically motivated focuses on satisfactory completion of the course and would demonstrate a surface approach to learning. This is not supported by the findings of our study, which does not show any significant differences in study style between the two assessment formats.

Reasons for choosing either the individual test or the group assignment

The students who chose the individual test indicated that they would rather work on their own than in a team. Choosing the individual test as the assessment format allows them to decide for themselves when they are going to study. During the interviews, one of the students stated, *I would like to schedule my study time myself and be independent of others*. They think that there are already too many group assignments in the curriculum and like the fact that they do not have to deal with others. In addition, students also chose the test to make sure that their final result is only based on individual performance and not influenced by other students.

On the other hand, students who chose the group assignment as assessment format really liked the fact that they could put the theory into practice. One of the students stated, *applying the theory to a company motivates me because it makes the assignment more valuable and meaningful*. By putting the theory into practice, students understand and remember what they have learned. Students tend to forget the theory they have learned for a test when they do not have to apply it. Furthermore, students like to work in groups because the work can be divided and because working in groups enables them to learn from each other. During the interviews, a student stated, *I chose the assignment because I like to work with other students, and I think I can learn from them. Together we have more knowledge than each of us would have alone*. Lastly, students also think that the chances of passing the group assignment are higher than the chances of passing the individual test.

The attitude students hold regarding assessment

Most of the students liked the fact that they could choose between two assessment formats. During the interview a student stated, *it allows us to choose an assessment format which fits our study style and it makes you feel more responsible for the end product*. However, some students did not like that they had to choose a format themselves because they felt insecure about their decision, especially the students who chose the test. This insecurity is also caused by other students. The majority of students opted for the group assignment, assuming the pass rate of the group assignment would be higher. Because of this, students who chose the individual test started to doubt their decision. The results also showed that the majority of the students did consider both assessment formats and that the majority consulted other students before making the decision.

Furthermore, the data analysis showed that students from the group assignment choice believe that assessments stimulate their learning process; They have multiple deadlines compared with the individual test group. The assignment group is asked to hand in parts of their assignment for feedback and "in-between" assessment. The test group only has one deadline at the end of the module. One of the students stated in the interview, *in-between assessments are motivating*. It could be said that the "in-between" assessments of the group assignment stimulate the students to study more regularly.

Almost all students prefer a mix of individual and group assessment. The majority of the students put more emphasis on group assessment. This can also be explained because of the fact that the majority of the students preferred the group assignment over the individual test.

Differential results of the two assessment formats

The final grades from both the group assignment and the individual test were collected and analysed. This analysis showed that the pass rate of the assignment is significantly higher compared to the pass rate of the test. It was assumed that students from the individual test group were mostly students with above average study results. However, the study did not find any relationship between the choice of assessment method and prior study results. In addition, the lower pass rate of the group who took the individual test does not support the idea that these would be the "better" students. These findings do raise the question about the equivalence of the two assessment formats. Further research is needed to investigate whether the differences in results might be attributed to the difference between reproduction and application (Bloom, 1956).

Further research should also check to what extend students cooperate when preparing for the individual test or split the group assignment into a set of individual tasks. Teamwork needs to be carefully monitored including the impact of group size on team performance. Further research might also include a mix of group and individual assessment as a third assessment format.

The impact of different assessment formats on study behaviour and study results

The data analysis showed that there is no relationship between the different assessment formats and several indicators of study behaviour, so it seems the different assessment formats do not have much impact on the study behaviour of the students. However, the principle of constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011) states that the assessment format and the coherence between the tests in a programme, the educational activities offered, and the educational concept are interrelated. In the interview, students stated that the composition of the group was an important factor when making a choice of assessment format. It was also assumed that students who chose the group assignment would study more regularly during the entire module, while students who chose the individual test would do most of the studying only at the end of the module. The results of the data analysis did not confirm this assumption. Further research into the impact of different assessment formats on study behaviour is recommended. Research on the impact of group composition and how students operate in a group could deliver valuable and interesting information.

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Research in Hospitality Management 2020, 10(2): 85–89
https://doi.org/10.1080/22243534.2020.1869461

RHM
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Barriers to the success of female leaders in the hospitality industry

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ABSTRACT: This research analyses gender equality in the hospitality industry in the United Kingdom and Ireland. In particular, this quantitative study focuses on women who could potentially occupy a senior management position, and therefore the aim of this research is to identify the main factors that influence female employees' choice in a non-senior managerial role to advance in their career. With this intention, a sample of 515 women was selected to complete an online questionnaire. Not all the findings are in line with the previous literature, e.g. most factors identified as a barrier for women's career progression are not considered as such by most women in this study. On the other hand, different techniques that are recognised as beneficial for women career advancement are in line with the female employees' thoughts. Hospitality businesses are advised to put into action the constructive methods derived from the findings of this study, such as flexible working hours and talent development programmes, in order to increase gender equality as well as to create more opportunities for women who want to reach senior management positions.

KEYWORDS: career advancement, gender equality, obstacles for women, senior management positions

Introduction

The hospitality industry has faced many changes about women in leadership and gender equality over the years. Compared to the past, when men mainly dominated the hospitality industry, nowadays one can notice that gender equality is more balanced in the industry, and more women apply for leadership and managerial roles (HospitalityNet, 2019). Despite this, gender equality remains a trending topic and a point of attention, particularly for the hospitality industry, which mainly focuses on female leaders (Cornell University, 2018). Since gender diversity has a positive impact on a companies' performance (Weisskopf & Bacci, 2019), organisations should ensure they are working to reduce the gender gap and reach a situation of gender balance, specifically concentrating on the number of women occupying operational positions and those in executive roles. The international hospitality firm used in this research, highly recognised for the diversity of its employees, has acknowledged the existence of gender inequality, having female employees as a minority when considering senior management positions, such as general manager, directors, and head of departments. Karmarkar (2018) states that most hotels do not adopt enough measures to encourage the recognition of women in hotels, and for this reason most female employees occupy roles in operational departments rather than senior positions. Although most hospitality organisations are strongly focused on and committed to creating a flexible and balanced work environment to facilitate women to pursue their career path, different forms of discrimination towards them are still present; this clearly represents a barrier to their career progression (Karmarkar, 2018). Since the company in question aims at achieving 50/50 gender equality within the next few years, one should analyse the current situation to provide the right solution to reach the objective. The company, at present, records a high gender difference among the candidates applying for senior management positions. Specifically, from September 2018 to November 2019, out of 1 945 applicants who applied for senior management roles, only 23% were female. Consequently, by sending a questionnaire to current female employees occupying a non-senior managerial position who have the possibility to advance within the organisation, this research attempts to identify the obstacles for women's advancement, the potential methods for their progression, and women's perception of gender equality in their workplace. This research aims to pinpoint the main factors that prevent female hotel workers from applying for senior management roles.

Gender equality in the hospitality industry

Nowadays, gender equality is considered a sensitive topic, and therefore most industries, including the hospitality industry, are taking action by committing to achieve a gender balance. Colaianni (2019) noticed that the biggest disparity between male and female employees occurs at high level roles, such as senior management positions. Broadly speaking, women occupy more than half of the global workforce of the hospitality industry; however, most of them are employed in entry-level positions (Wayne & Steinfeld, 2017). Within the hospitality industry, only 26% of top management roles are occupied by women, a percentage that decreases to 20% when excluding human resources positions (Muller-Heyndyk, 2018). Likewise, according to The Castell Project (2019), only 11% of women are in leadership roles in the hotel industry, when considering positions such as directors, presidents, partners, principals, and CEOs. Muller-Heyndyk (2018) noted that employers struggle when recruiting females into senior management positions. In addition, the progression in the industry is considered to be more challenging for women who want to reach senior positions. As Remington and Kitterlin-Lynch (2018) also affirmed, there are several studies that show there are gender inequalities in the hospitality industry. For instance, women have fewer opportunities to advance in their career or to be promoted to a more senior position. Additionally, not all employees prioritise their job over family and personal obligations in order to grow in their career. Explicitly, male employees tend to be more "available" when it comes to committing to spend more time on their job responsibilities than women; in this way, women employees are at a disadvantage since they will have to prioritise those commitments that men are able to put in second place. This is an example that notably shows gender inequality (Arthrell et al., 2019). Krivkovich et al. (2018) added that most companies are taking action by trying to close the gender gap regarding hiring and promotions and ensuring the creation of an inclusive environment where both men and women feel supported.

Main obstacles to women's career advancement to senior positions in the hotel business

Even though both male and female employees are promoted based on their performance, there is still a gender gap related to career advancement, where women are at a disadvantage (Baum, 2013). To explain, although men and women are equally qualified, men are favoured since biased employers give more importance to the "responsibility for capital" (Baum, 2013, p. 15), which they associate male employees with, than "responsibility for people" (Baum, 2013, p. 15), which they link women to. Arlotta (2019) found that career opportunities for women who want to reach a senior position are limited in the hospitality industry. Specifically, Lake (2018) affirmed that some of the reasons why these possibilities are limited for women are: (1) unconscious bias (categorising based on stereotyping); (2) poor management of potential talents; and (3) insufficient confidence in women who look for a promotion. According to Faizan et al. (2018), there are multiple reasons why women have fewer chances to reach senior managerial roles. Examples are responsibilities at home, less experience, and few managerial skills. On the other hand, Narayanan (2017) identified organisational, social, and individual factors that influence women's career progression. The five organisational factors that were recognised are (1) recruitment procedures, (2) lack of mentors and models, (3) evaluation systems, (4) development/promotion policies, and (5) male power and the role of women (Narayanan, 2017). The social factors which were identified include family responsibilities and gender stereotypes. Family responsibilities are considered as a barrier since they reduce the opportunity for training, development, and a potential relocation for career advancement. Also, having irregular working hours due to domestic responsibilities might result in low commitment to the job from women; for this reason, some organisations are hesitant to have women who have family or caring responsibilities in senior management positions (Narayanan, 2017). Furthermore, gender stereotypes were identified as an obstacle because women are generally perceived as having fewer leadership skills than men or they are considered incapable of performing in organisations where males dominate. Regarding the individual factors, Narayanan (2017) stated men and women portray different personality traits, which can result in having a positive or negative impact on the success of their career progression. Ghali and Olichon (2008) found that women are more likely to lack self-confidence and self-esteem than men. The lack of these characteristics was identified as one reason why women, although qualified, do not apply for a senior role, and therefore do not develop their career (Narayanan, 2017). Other barriers that impede women's possibility of career progression are the lack of female role models, family responsibilities, and discrimination (Crafts & Thompson, 2007). In accordance with Broughton and Miller (2009), one of the main barriers is the "glass ceiling", a term coined by Marilyn Loden (Vargas, 2018) that reflects the phenomenon of having invisible obstacles such as cultural bias and gender stereotypes which impede the advancement of some groups in a company. The Glass Ceiling Commission (founded in the USA) stated that this phenomenon still occurs in companies which tend to prevent women or other minority groups from progressing to senior management level roles (Broughton & Miller, 2009). If women feel they have equal opportunity to progress, they will be more likely to be more satisfied with their job, and therefore to stay longer with their company (Huang et al., 2019).

Potential methods to foster women's progression in the hospitality business

Different methods that can help women to advance in their career were identified. Making women aware of the types of obstacles and impediments they could face during their career is a solution that will help female leaders developing strategies to succeed in dealing with certain challenges (Zhong et al., 2013). Also, Zhong et al. (2013) suggested that it could be important to provide women with female role models to encourage them to value their skills and competences, as well as to make them more motivated and get inspiration to succeed. A work-life balance was also identified as a relevant issue, particularly for women in the hospitality industry. Thus, Segovia-Pérez et al. (2019) claimed that the use of technology such as videoconferencing or working from home as well as the implementation of flexible working hours should be increased in order to help women balance their work and family responsibilities. Providing mentorship opportunities to all employees to prepare them for occupying management roles in the future is considered a significant method to encourage gender equality and women's career progression. Equally important, employers are advised to consider internal candidates' promotion when a leadership position becomes vacant, as well as implementing family leave policies which will prevent women from leaving the company (SiteMinder, 2019). Additionally, as stated by Segovia-Pérez et al. (2019), companies are encouraged to involve women in talent development programmes to increase their networking among other women. To continue, hotel organisations are expected to provide women with the right environment and opportunity to use their skills and competences since those are perceived as effective for the industry. Marinakou (2014) noticed that women's traits and characteristics represent a success factor for the business. Arun (2015) affirmed that currently there is an increase in the number of women in key management roles, and that in the future the need for females occupying top senior roles will increase in the hospitality industry. Also, according to some managers' viewpoints, there will be several opportunities for women to be employed in departments where men are the majority (Arun, 2015). For this reason, organisations should incorporate training and mentorship programmes to help women develop their interests, but also to update them with the latest technologies to allow more flexibility in the workplace (Boone, 2019).

Research approach

Since the purpose of the research was to identify the main factors that influence the choice of female employees occupying non-senior managerial roles to advance their career, the following aim and research questions were formulated to achieve the goal of the study.

Aim

The aim of this study is to illustrate the main reasons and factors that prevent female employees currently occupying non-senior managerial positions from applying for senior management roles. The research was performed for an internationally known hospitality company to contribute to identifying the main reason why gender inequality is present among senior management positions.

Research questions

1. What are the most frequent obstacles that prevent women who occupy non-senior managerial positions from progressing career-wise?
2. What are the most common methods that foster women's career advancements?
3. How often is gender equality a reason for women not to apply for senior management positions?

Method

This study was carried out by means of descriptive research since the aim was to provide further information about the most common factors that are influencing women's decisions to apply for senior management positions. For collecting the data, a quantitative research method was used, and a survey in the form of an online questionnaire was developed as an instrument. The questionnaires were sent out to 515 female employees occupying a non-senior management position throughout the different properties of the researched hotel in the UK and Ireland. A total of 145 people answered the questionnaire. Participants were asked to rate the items of each question on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data (Sharma, 2019). Specifically, the following methods were applied: the mode was used to identify the data with the highest frequency; the mean showed an average of all outcomes; and the standard deviation was used to see how much the data was close to the average.

TABLE 1. Respondents per position type

	Frequency	%
Assistant head of department	30	20.7%
Head of department	58	40.0%
Assistant HR manager	3	2.1%
HR manager	5	3.4%
Senior HR manager	4	2.8%
HR business partner	1	0.7%
Director	21	14.5%
Deputy manager	2	1.4%
Other	21	14.5%

Findings

In order to identify the main factors that influence the choice of female employees occupying non-senior managerial roles to advance their career, the main elements that were analysed are the following: (1) obstacles that women encounter; (2) the most common methods fostering women's career advancement; and (3) the way gender equality prevents women's career progression based on their own experience. Table 1 shows the group of employees who filled out the surveys, depicting the number of respondents per position type.

Obstacles for women's career advancement

To identify potential obstacles that represent an impediment for women to advance in their careers, participants were asked to rate each item from 1 to 5. Table 2 shows that most respondents do not consider the items identified as obstacles to their career. Particularly, recruitment procedures have the least influence on women's career advancement (mean = 2.38), while family responsibilities are considered a barrier more than all other factors by most respondents (mean = 2.99). The standard deviation confirms these results: recruitment procedures present the lowest standard deviation (1.06) and family responsibilities the highest (1.34). As a result, one can confirm that the most frequent obstacles preventing female employees from advancing in their careers are family obligations. Most items that several researchers have identified as obstacles for women's progression are not the same as the answers given in this study. For instance, Narayanan (2017) identifies recruitment procedures, lack of mentors/models, development/promotion policies, and male power as barriers, but in this study most respondents did not recognise them as obstacles for their career advancement. More discrepancies with the literature were found since the collected results regarding the evaluation system, the number of years of experience in the field, gender stereotype cultural bias, and lack of self-confidence are not in line with the findings of Narayanan (2017), Faizan et al. (2018), Broughton and Miller (2009), and Ghali and Olichon (2008) respectively. On the other hand, "family responsibilities" is the only element considered to be a potential career obstacle by women, as a

TABLE 2. Factors that represent obstacles for women's career advancement

	Recruitment procedures	Lack of mentors	Evaluation systems	Promotions	Male power	Family responsibilities	Experience in the field	Gender stereotype	Cultural bias	Lack of self-confidence
Mean	2.386	2.690	2.634	2.593	2.717	2.993	2.648	2.579	2.538	2.738
Mode	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000
Std. deviation	1.068	1.256	1.104	1.158	1.246	1.341	1.121	1.194	1.143	1.242

higher number of respondents agreed with the statement. Crafts and Thompson (2007) state that family obligations have an influence on women's career progression. It is worth noting that although "family responsibilities" was recognised as the most frequent obstacle for female employees, at the same time, the remaining 50% of respondents did not perceive it as a barrier to their advancement.

Methods to foster women's career advancement

According to the results, all suggested methods are considered beneficial and useful to encourage women's career progression. These techniques are: (1) being aware of potential obstacles; (2) having female role models; (3) receiving mentorship; (4) being involved in development programmes; (5) doing more networking; (6) using technology (e.g. working from home); (7) having flexible working hours; (8) having family leave policies; and (9) the opportunity to apply personal skills. Table 3 shows that the mode for most items is 4 and 5, which means that respondents agree or strongly agree that these methods would be beneficial for their career progression. The techniques that were identified as most valuable are the possibility of increasing the awareness of impediments and obstacles that women employees could face, followed by the opportunity of applying their personal skills/competencies, as well as having the chance to take part in development programmes. As a matter of fact, the lowest standard deviation belongs to the awareness of obstacle (SD = 0.940), while the highest (SD = 1.19) relates to female role models (see Table 3). This figure indicates that not many respondents believe that having female role models increases their opportunity to advance to a senior managerial position. Consequently, one can state that the most common methods and techniques that foster the career advancement of women are the following: implementing flexible working hours; being aware of potential obstacles women could face; being involved in talent development programmes; and having more opportunities to apply personal skills and competencies. These findings are in line with the thoughts of different authors who believe these methods are beneficial for women's progression to higher roles. For example, Segovia-Pérez et al. (2019) declare that women should be allowed to have more flexible working hours to find their work-life balance. Also, female employees think they could benefit from being aware of impediments they might face in their career. This is in congruence with the literature. According to Zhong et al. (2013), if women knew about potential barriers, they would consequently be able to put different strategies into action to cope with challenges. Additionally, as Segovia-Pérez et al. (2019) state, by involving women in talent development programmes, they will have more opportunities to network with other women. This reflects the answers of female employees as they agree that these programmes could be advantageous to their career progress. Lastly, based on the opinion of Marinakou (2014), women's qualities should be more valued as they are recognised to be a success factor for the business, particularly for the hospitality industry. Indeed, this statement agrees with what respondents answered because they believe that by having the possibility to practise their skills and capabilities, they will bring meaningful value to the company.

Women perception of gender equality

Table 4 shows that most women employees agree that there is gender balance in their workplace (mode = 4), and they do not feel there are less opportunities for them to be promoted compared to men (mode = 2). To explain, even though Remington and Kitterlin-Lynch (2018) assert that there are gender inequalities in the work environment, current female employees perceived that there is a gender balance in their workplace. More specifically, 79% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they perceive an equal gender balance in their workplaces. Additionally, 66% of women disagree or strongly disagree with the fact that they experience fewer opportunities than men of being promoted to a higher role. On the other hand, Remington and Kitterlin-Lynch (2018) state that women employees have fewer opportunities of advancing in their career or of being promoted to a higher position. On the other hand, 63% of female employees perceive that career progression to a senior position can be more challenging for them, and 58% of them also feel at a disadvantage compared to male employees when they have to prioritise external commitments (such as family obligations) over work commitments. These statements are in line with the thoughts of Muller-Heyndyk (2018), as well as Arthrell et al. (2019), who recognise that career advancement to a senior position is more challenging for women, and that employees usually tend to prioritise their job over personal obligations in order to grow their careers. Thus, women are at a disadvantage compared to men, as they might have family obligations to prioritise over

TABLE 3. Methods to foster women's career advancement

	Awareness of obstacles	Female role models	Receiving mentorship	Talent development programs	More networking	Use of technologies	Flexible working hours	Family leave policies	Opportunities of applying skills
Mean	3.586	3.655	3.938	3.979	3.883	3.600	3.931	3.759	3.821
Mode	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4
Std. deviation	0.940	1.198	1.069	1.024	1.003	1.175	1.103	1.144	0.969

TABLE 4: Women perception of gender equality

	Perception of gender balance in the workplace	Advancement more challenging for women	Women at a disadvantage compared to men	Less opportunities to be promoted than men
Mean	3.517	3.297	3.186	2.676
Mode	4	4	4	2
Std. deviation	1.242	1.253	1.269	1.230

work. Thus, according to the findings, most of the times women consider gender equality a reason for not applying or for not being able to advance to a senior management position.

Conclusion

All in all, by identifying the obstacles for women's advancement, potential methods for their progression, as well as women's perception of gender equality in their workplace, this study has been able to determine the main factors influencing the choices of female employees occupying a non-senior managerial position to advance in their careers. Although the women in this study perceive gender equality in their workplace, they still feel that the opportunity to advance career-wise is more challenging for them than for male employees. For this reason, since one of the main obstacles impeding women's progression is represented by family responsibilities, companies are advised to put different techniques into practice. Examples are the implementation of more flexible working hours and giving women employees the opportunity to use their skills and take part in talent development programmes to increase their possibility of career advancement to a senior managerial position.

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Research in Hospitality Management 2020, 10(2): 91–96
https://doi.org/10.1080/22243534.2020.1869463

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Learners' experience and expectations during and post COVID-19 in higher education

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ABSTRACT: COVID-19 has turned the tables on every part of our lives, as hardly any sector is left without a profound impact, including the higher education sector. During this pandemic, the higher education sector has been obliged to deliver education virtually. This article has two purposes: firstly, to highlight how students grade their virtual learning experience during COVID-19, and secondly, to what extent they would like to (partially) continue learning virtually, even after social distancing. In this study, a quantitative method is applied, using the non-probability volunteer sampling method. Responses from 265 people were collected from different Dutch academic universities as well as universities of applied sciences. This study illustrates that a larger number (70%) of the students grade the virtual learning experience as sufficient and better, and that the majority would like to partially follow virtual lessons even after social distancing. Hence, it is recommended for educational institutions to seriously start preparing an online learning programme for the upcoming study year (2020/2021) and consider virtual learning to be a steady part of their future curriculum.

KEYWORDS: blended learning, hybrid learning, interactive learning, online learning, virtual learning

Introduction

There was a notion that in the 21st century digitalisation would bring the whole world together and consequently the world would become a real global village. However, no one ever foresaw the SARS-CoV-2 virus (COVID-19) and its influence on modern society. The first report of a case was in Wuhan in China, a city home to 11 million people. That eventually resulted in an ongoing pandemic (Hu et al., 2020). This pandemic is thought to have developed from bats as the original host and was subsequently transmitted to humans via another animal host, possibly at a wet market for live animal trading (Guo et al., 2020). It has changed the world in many dimensions as the impact of the coronavirus sweeps across the markets (Jones et al., 2020).

The virus has left a deep impact on almost all sectors; one of them being the higher education sector. Digitalisation, internationalisation, and massive open online courses (MOOCs) have been determinedly addressing topics in higher education for decades. Nevertheless, COVID-19 has made one thing firm, namely that we have to adopt new norms in our education sector — virtual learning or online learning is and will continue to be the order of the day. For the immediate future, we do not know how long this pandemic will last; nonetheless, one thing is apparent — we will take this experience with us and merge or embed virtual learning proportionally into our regular education curriculums.

Virtual learning is a good alternative for classical classroom learning as it focuses on both classroom and virtual learning environments (Leask, 2004). This study defines virtual learning as a flexible learning experience using virtual lectures. Students have the possibility to study independently of place and time (Wich et al., 2020). Virtual learning may facilitate higher education to new student markets through off-campus, offshore, or distance education (Gray et al., 2010). Above all, we should not ignore that our learners have been wholly synchronised to digital technologies — it is a fully assimilated feature of their lives (Green & Hannon, 2007). Considering the rising concern regarding COVID-19, many universities in the Netherlands and in the world have either postponed, restricted, or cancelled all campus activities, including workshops and conferences. Furthermore, they have swiftly moved various courses and programmes from face-to-face (classical classroom learning) to online learning (virtual learning).

This study aims to identify the experience of higher education learners during COVID-19 and to determine whether they would prefer virtual education to continue after social distancing. In other words: Would they prefer to continue using classical learning ways, or would they accept an online learning environment after social distancing? Previous research has shown no proof that online learning matches the needs of learners and their learning outcomes. This study will use the following working definition: Blended learning is a fusion of online and offline; it is a motivating, encouraging method in higher education (Wich et al., 2020). The main problem that can occur (or is occurring) is that virtual learning is fully dependent on technology and the user's technological skills. Diverse technological issues can cause different problems such as no optimal wi-fi, electricity, or broadband. The assumption has been made that educational institutions' infrastructure and technology platform as well as educators' technological skills could be the major limitation to introducing virtual learning on campuses. However, that assumption is not backed up by any solid finding.

To fully answer the research question and provide corresponding recommendations, students from different higher educational institutions in the Netherlands are investigated. This study has the following problem statement:

To what extent can virtual learning play a role in higher education and what are the possibilities to embed virtual learning in the curriculum?

Research objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To determine the learners' virtual learning experience during COVID-19;
- To determine to what extent learners would like to (partially) continue virtual learning; and
- To establish to what extent virtual learning could be a part of the higher education curriculum.

The following survey questions will guide to meet these objectives:

(1) SQ1: How would you grade your virtual learning experience?
(2) SQ2: To what extent (%) would you like to (partially) continue this way of education after social distancing?

Literature review

The coronavirus is transferrable and causes respiratory tract disease in humans, which has a potential public health impact (Hu et al., 2020). It was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, Hubei province in China, and has resulted in an ongoing pandemic. As of 20 August 2020, it is affecting 213 countries and territories around the world and two international conveyances. Around the world more than 22.5 million cases have been reported, resulting in more than 791 201 deaths, whereas more than 15.31 million people have recovered (Worldometer, 2020). In other words, human beings around the world are at war with an invisible enemy which is destroying them (Suleri & Suleri, 2020).

The impact of the coronavirus is sweeping the markets (Jones et al., 2020). It will not be wrong to say that life has changed in almost every sector and new norms have been introduced in each society according to their circumstances and needs. Every sector first introduced ad hoc policies which have become the new norms for them. Like other sectors, higher education is a victim of this virus and educational institutions have faced many challenges such as interactive lessons, assessment, evaluation, attendance tracking, dropout rate, international students, travel restrictions, and psychological help. Notwithstanding these constraints, this study will find out how students grade their virtual learning experience.

Virtual teaching and learning are not new terms anymore for any university. It shows it is a good substitute for classical learning as it focuses on both classroom and virtual learning environments (Leask, 2004). Massive open online courses (MOOCs) have taken the future of higher education to an entirely new level (Rumbley & Altbach, 2016). During the COVID-19 pandemic, higher educational institutions have experienced and are still experiencing virtual learning in a different dimension. Virtual learning can be put into diverse categories: online support (discussion board, web forum available to get support on some topics), asynchronous (lessons do not take place in real-time, nonetheless content is provided regularly, and coaches are assigned to provide digital support), synchronous (real-time with a live coach with a pre-set time to log-in to the online education environment and members can communicate directly with the teacher as well as with other group members) and hybrid (a combination of online and in-person interaction). Students of NHL Stenden (Hanze and Erasmus campuses) who participated in this study experienced one of the abovementioned modes of education during the pandemic. Though in P3 (educational period three — March 2020) many universities struggled to adjust their education style and experimented with different virtual software and possibilities such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and intranet. I was teaching in NHL Stenden and Hanze University of Applied Sciences and noticed that some of the educators had difficulty switching everything to virtual mode; nevertheless, in P4, universities found a functional way to deliver education effectively. Similarly, students were struggling in the beginning; however, they adopted the new mode of education reasonably well.

Nonetheless, we should acknowledge that this sudden change in the mode of education has raised many challenges and concerns. No doubt, virtual education offers many benefits, but then again, the shift to the virtual environment has brought up important questions for educational institutions about their ability to deal with the existing technological infrastructure. There is a fear it can widen the existing inequalities if all measures are not well thought out (Gyamerah, 2020). Consider, for example, the students who may not be given the same opportunities by different educators, while being held to the same learning expectations. Thus, educational institutions should ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all as well as reduce inequality (UNESCO, 2020). Another possible concern is that the teachers will be under immense pressure to catch up and hence will not be able to properly focus on developing the skills of their students (Buckler et al., 2020). Noticeably, teachers with advanced skills and creativity can continue their support in student development and inspire student knowledge (Rabiman et al., 2020).

There are a few other legitimate concerns that universities should address: How will higher education institutes address the issue of those students who are underprivileged and do not have a computer and/or internet facility at home? How are they designing and making it possible to teach practical education? Likewise: How would they compensate for those courses which cannot be taught virtually? Maintaining the quality of education would be a big challenge to face in the coming time. Besides, the virus may affect the admission of international students for the coming academic season (Bothwell, 2020). This can lead to adverse effects on the learning and psychological health of students (Kafka, 2020). International students are not only worried about their safety and health, but also have a huge disquiet for the well-being of their families (Zhai & Du, 2020). Possibly, an educational institution can adapt to flexible online teaching procedures to facilitate learning. Moreover, educational institutions should emphasise on online security by working together with the service providers to create a provision of psych-social support for ensuring comprehensive virtual learning (Azzi-Huck & Shmis, 2020).

Furthermore, there are many other concerns raised during this contagion, such as software applications, schedules, interactive lessons, grades, attendance, fee payments, and registration. Nevertheless, as this falls beyond the scope of this study, I will not focus on these subjects in detail. Based on the highlighted literature review and despite the emphasised constraints during COVID-19, this study will find out how students grade their virtual learning experience and to what extent they would (partially) like to continue, even after social distancing. Explicitly, what is the future of online learning?

Blended learning is a fusion of online and offline. It is a motivating and encouraging method in higher education (Wich et al., 2020). It is a mixture of different modes of delivering teaching (Procter, 2003). Moreover, it involves the combination of two fields of concern: education and educational technology (Chew et al., 2008). Various traditional courses are changing into hybrid courses (Suleri & Suleri, 2019) as blended learning aligns better with the learner-centred approach and provides a variety of ways for learning (Coelen, 2013). This method proved to be efficient and easily applicable (Meyer & Brunn, 2016, cited in Wich et al., 2020). It has been noticed during COVID-19 that online learning is used as an effective tool in higher education in the Netherlands and other parts of the world as well.

Considering the unpredictability of COVID-19, blended learning could be a good solution for the upcoming academic year (2020/2021). To launch an online programme effectively, higher educational institutions should take a few factors in account: the development of a community for learners and learning (the students' sense of belonging to a community/group of learners which may inspire peer learning); tutor presence (engaging students and providing regular office hours either virtually via Microsoft Teams or Zoom, or in-person); the structure of student learning (weekly structure to the online resources/activities and the expectations for online learning each week); a facility for inclusive learning (higher educational institutions should consider learning support programmes); and planning and preparation (adopt a proactive rather than a reactive pedagogical approach for processes to fit together for a successful e-learning experience) (Su, 2020).

Through online learning, e-networking can be formed which is a form of social networking and mélange life, both online and offline. It is one of the latest inclinations of social networking. We can multiply knowledge in a network setting, as every person can contribute interesting ideas and good practices. It enhances group cohesion and leads the group towards collective actions and progress (Wich et al., 2020). Therefore, this study will find out how students would like to continue their virtual learning and meeting even after social distancing.

Conceptual model

The conceptual model in Figure 1 exemplifies students' virtual learning experience during COVID-19 and to what extent they would (partially) like to continue learning virtually after social distancing, which sooner or later influences online learning at higher education.

Method

To investigate the topic, I took a positivist philosophical stance, which is an independent and neutral role for developing observable and measurable research. The quantitative survey method was applied to determine the students' experience with virtual learning in higher education during and after COVID-19. A deductive and exploratory strategy was adopted to collect standardised data from a sizeable population. In this study, the non-probability volunteer sampling method was used because of the time and cost factors; thus, the participants were volunteers.

The questionnaire was based on the research aim and the survey questions were created by the author by using a Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). The survey link was shared with several groups from NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences (UAS) Leeuwarden, Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen, Erasmus University Rotterdam, and other Dutch universities. Before distributing the survey, a pilot study was carried out with a few students who confirmed the clarity of the questionnaire. The survey was created in Survey Monkey, which allowed sending the questionnaire to respondents through the internet via a web link. Survey Monkey can track responses in real-time and transfer the data into another file format for further data analysis. 265 responses were collected and transferred from Survey Monkey to SPSS. The data will only be used for this study and not be given to other parties. Participation in the questionnaire was on voluntary bases and the data was collected anonymously.

It is important to note that the data was collected during the summer holidays in July 2020, which led to more reluctance from learners to fill in the survey. Hence, apart from the named universities, the other low responses are clustered at other Dutch universities. Nevertheless, the results can still be used to make valid recommendations.

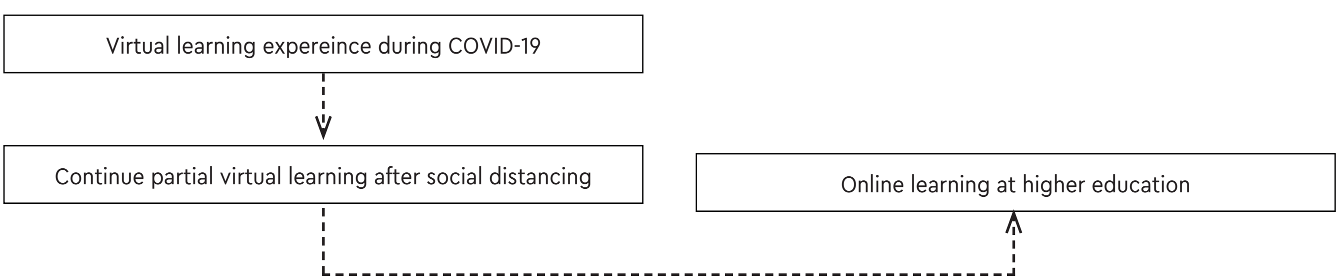

FIGURE 1. Online learning at higher education (Suleri, 2020)

Results

First of all, the demographics and other main characteristics of the respondents were highlighted. Subsequently, a *t*-test and an ANOVA test were performed to measure how male and female students grade the virtual learning experience and to what extent they would prefer to continue (partial) virtual learning after social distancing.

As Table 1 shows, a total of 265 students participated in this study; 28% of the respondents were male and 76% female, showing that female students are noteworthy participants.

The data were mainly collected from NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences Leeuwarden (42%), Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen (15%), Erasmus University Rotterdam (29%), and a few other Dutch universities (14%). This means that a sizeable chunk of the data was collected from NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences Leeuwarden.

Respondents were asked how they would grade their virtual learning experience. Only 30% of the respondents experienced it as insufficient, whereas 70% of respondents were content and graded it as sufficient or higher. This demonstrates that most of the learners responded positively to their virtual learning experience.

TABLE 1: Characteristics of the respondents involved in this study (N = 265)

Characteristics	*n*	%
Gender		
Male	74	28
Female	190	76
Institution name		
NHL Stenden (UAS)	110	42
Hanze (UAS)	40	15
Erasmus University	78	29
Other universities & UAS	37	14
Grade virtual learning experience		
Very low	14	5.5
Low	65	24.4
Sufficient	110	41.4
Good	60	22.6
Very good	17	6.4
Continue learning after COVID-19		
0–25 %	100	37.6
26–50%	77	28.9
51–75%	65	24.4
76–100%	24	9.0

To the question of to what extent (%) the students would like to (partially) continue this way of education after social distancing, 33% of the respondents would like to receive virtual education for 50% {of the time?} and more, 29% would like to receive virtual education for 26–50% {of the time?}, whereas only 38% would like to receive education virtually for less than 25% {of the time?}. Thus, as specified here, the majority of the learners responded positively to continue their virtual learning experience, even after social distancing.

Effect of gender

Table 2 presents an independent sample *t*-test which was conducted to examine the gender differences in the experience of virtual learning during COVID-19 in higher educational institutions in the Netherlands. Levene's test for equality of variances showed no violations, $p = 0.264$. The results indicate that males graded their virtual learning experience higher ($M = 0.01$, SD = 1.066) than females ($M = 3.00$, SD = 0.92) states $t(262) = 0.10$, $p < 0.92$, Cohen's $d = 0.01$. Cohen suggested that $d = 0.01$ is a very small effect size, hence the difference is trivial.

Table 3 presents an independent sample *t*-test which was conducted to examine gender differences in continuing partial virtual learning after social distancing among higher educational institutions in the Netherlands. Levene's test for equality of variances showed no violations, $p = 0.18$. The result indicates that males ($M = 1.82$, SD = 0.87) are less willing to continue the same way after social distancing than females ($M = 2.14$, SD = 1.03) states $t(262) = -2.36$, $p < 0.02$, Cohen's $d = 0.33$. Cohen suggested that $d = 0.33$ is a small effect size, therefore the difference is insignificant.

Effect of universities

An ANOVA test was conducted to examine how the different Dutch university students would grade their virtual learning experience during COVID-19 (Table 4). As the test for equality of variances showed, at a 95% confidence level, there is no significant difference among the experience of students of different universities with virtual learning during COVID-19. It states $F(3,261) = 0.29$, $p < 0.833$. This indicates that the majority of university students were content with their virtual learning and graded it as sufficient.

Table 5 presents the outcome of an ANOVA test for examining to what extent the students at different Dutch universities would like to continue virtual learning after social distancing. The test for equality of variances showed at a 95% confidence level that there is no significant difference among the students

TABLE 2. Comparing gender with virtual learning experience (N = 265)

How would you grade your virtual learning experience?	*n*	Mean	SD	*t-test*
Male	74	3.01	1.07	$t(262) = 0.10$, $p = 0.92$, $d = 0.01$
Female	190	3.00	0.92	

$p < 0.05$

TABLE 3: Comparing gender with continuing partial virtual learning after COVID-19 (N = 265)

To what extent (%) would you like to (partially) continue this way of education after social distancing?	*n*	Mean	SD	*t-test*
Male	74	1.82	0.87	$t(262) = -2.36$, $p = 0.02$, $d = 0.33$
Female	190	2.14	1.03	

$p < 0.05$

TABLE 4. Comparing students from different universities about how they would grade the virtual learning experience ($N = 265$)

University	n	Mean	SD	F
NHL Stenden	110	3.05	0.89	$F(3,261) = 0.29$, $p = 0.83$
Hanze	40	2.98	0.18	
Erasmus	78	2.92	0.10	
Other Dutch	37	3.05	0.19	

$p < 0.05$

TABLE 5. Comparing students from different universities regarding to what extent they would to like to continue virtual learning after social distancing ($N = 265$)

University	n	Mean	SD	F
NHL Stenden	110	2.06	1.04	$F(3,261) = 0.15$, $p = 0.98$
Hanze	40	2.08	0.94	
Erasmus	78	2.01	0.90	
Other Dutch	37	2.05	1.10	

$p < 0.05$

at different universities regarding to what extent they want to continue virtual learning after social distancing. It states $F(3,261) = 0.15$, $p < 0.98$. This shows the majority of all students would like to continue their virtual learning experience even after social distancing.

A post-hoc test was not performed because there was no significant difference among universities.

Discussion

How would you grade your virtual learning experience?

One of the objectives of this study was to find out how the learners graded their virtual learning experience during COVID-19. The findings of this study reveal that 70% of respondents were content and graded it as sufficient or higher, whereas only 30% of respondents graded it as insufficient. The outcome of this study is aligned with previous research which states that the virtual learning method is shown to be efficient and easily applicable (Meyer & Brunn, 2016, cited in Wich et al., 2020), and it is a motivating and encouraging method in higher education (Wich et al., 2020).

To what extent (%) would you like to (partially) continue this way of education after social distancing?

Another aim of this study was to find out to what extent (%) students would you like to (partially) continue this way of education after social distancing. 33% of respondents would like to receive future virtual education for 50% of the time or more, 29% would like to receive virtual education for 26–50% of the time, whereas only 38% would like to receive education virtually for less than 25% of the time. This indicates that a large number of the learners responded positively to partially continue their virtual learning experience after social distancing. This is in line with a previous study which shows blended learning as a motivating and encouraging method in higher education (Wich et al., 2020). To sum up, in the upcoming academic year (2020/2021), universities can adapt to blended learning and it could be a good solution (Su, 2020). Thus, this study reveals that educational institutions should seriously start preparing online programmes for the coming study years, and should consider virtual learning as a steady part of their future curriculum.

Comparing students from different universities regarding how they would grade virtual learning experience

This study also aimed to find out if there was any difference between students' approaches from different universities. As an ANOVA test reveals, there is no significant difference among the students at different universities in how they grade their virtual learning experience during COVID-19. This shows that the majority of the students were satisfied and graded it as sufficient. Now it is the responsibility of the educational institutions to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education as well as to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2020).

Comparing students from different universities about the extent to which they would like to continue virtual learning after social distancing

One other aspect of this study was to find out if there is any difference between students' approaches from different universities. An ANOVA test reveals that there is no significant difference among different university students on how they grade their virtual learning experience during COVID-19. This designates that a large number of the students were satisfied and graded it as sufficient. Now, it is the educational institutions' responsibility to ensure that in the upcoming academic years they can adapt to blended learning (Su, 2020).

Limitations

There were some limitations during this study which might have influenced the results. As the survey was rolled out just before the summer break, I decided to design a short and concise instrument. The volunteer sampling method granted me easy and low-cost access to data. Nonetheless, the sampling technique involved a bias, which must be considered as some respondents chose to take part in this study and others did not. Additionally, there was an uneven number of responses across the universities.

Conclusion and recommendations

The purpose of this study was to find out how students grade their virtual learning experience and to what extent they would like to continue receiving educational support virtually, even after social distancing. 265 students participated in this study and the majority of the participants were female students (76%). Furthermore, the data was mainly collected from NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences Leeuwarden, Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen, Erasmus University Rotterdam, and a few other Dutch universities. A sizable amount of the data was collected from NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences Leeuwarden (42%). The outcomes of this study confirm that a substantial chunk of students (70%) graded their virtual learning experience as sufficient or better. This suggests that students would positively accept it if higher educational institutions would like to continue delivering education virtually. Additionally, this study reveals that a generous number of students (62%) would like to continue receiving partial virtual lessons even after social distancing. This shows that students are willing to receive some form of online/e-learning education in the future. Now it is the responsibility of the educational institution to manage its programme accordingly and meet the desired expectations of the learners.

Keeping a conclusion in view, this study recommends that universities meet the expectation of most students by continuing to deliver virtual education during and after COVID-19. Notwithstanding, it is a good time for higher educational institutions to switch the education paradigm and give the virtual part of education a permanent place in their academic programmes. Online/e-learning should be an essential form of education from now on in higher education. This study has led me to believe that education should be more inclusive and can be improved for anyone in any setting. Bear in mind, suitable changes to the programme cannot be continued without a capable educator handling it.

This study was carried out at academic universities and universities of applied sciences using data that was collected from the students only. In order to get a comprehensive picture of virtual learning in higher education, data in further research could be obtained from the educators too.

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Research in Hospitality Management 2020, 10(2): 97–105
https://doi.org/10.1080/22243534.2020.1869468

RHM
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Hospitality
Management

Customer behavioural analysis: The impact of internet addiction, interpersonal competencies and service orientation on customers' online complaint behaviour

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ABSTRACT: Customers share their service experiences on social media. However, prior research has not investigated the role of customers' traits on their complaining behaviour. This study focuses on a hospitality setting to explore relationships among customers' interpersonal competencies, internet addiction, service orientation, and their online complaining behaviours. The findings identify differences based on customers' service orientation. Customers' internet addiction, interpersonal competencies, and an escalating service failure continuum do not influence complaining behaviours when their service orientation is low; however, these factors influence complaining behaviours when their service orientation is high. Results also show differences in complaining behaviours when exposed to technical service failures versus functional service failures. The findings highlight the importance of service orientation as a tool for hospitality organisations to achieve higher service performance and even competitive advantage.

KEYWORDS: internet addiction, interpersonal competency, online complaining behaviour, service orientation

Introduction

Customer behaviour analysis is a critical element for business organisations because it offers them insights into customers' willingness to pay, and their purchase intentions and satisfaction (or dissatisfaction). Traditional segmentation approaches focus primarily on demographics as predictors of customers' behaviour. However, behavioural characteristics are gaining importance as predictors of customers' decisions as they relate to customer complaining behaviour on social media (SM) after experiencing a service failure (Israeli et al., 2019b). This study's main objective is to evaluate how customers' behavioural characteristics, mainly *interpersonal competencies*, *service orientation*, and *internet addiction*, impact their tendency to communicate aggressive "electronic word of mouth" (eWOM) messages after experiencing a service failure. The next section includes a review of customers' behavioural characteristics and their social media (SM) complaining styles. The section also characterises service failures and service recovery. The third section presents the study design, data collection, and findings. Finally, discussions of findings, conclusions, and suggestions for future research are provided.

Literature review

Digital communication has rapidly transformed the way people converse. With the prevalence of SM, a growing proportion of human communication has shifted from the traditional face-to-face environment to the online environment (Jenkins-Guarnieri et al., 2013). Since 2004, various types of social media, such as Facebook, have been structured as communication platforms (Gerson et al., 2016). People rely on SM before they make purchase decisions in the pre-consumption stage and share their experience on SM after they encounter a product or a service in the post-consumption stage.

When people post their reviews, their traits play an important role in generating their message as personality characteristics influence social behaviour and interpersonal relationships (Jenkins-Guarnieri et al., 2013). Prior research has identified that individual differences, including psychological factors and personality traits, may account for different behavioural consequences (Kim et al., 2013). Even though the "Big Five" personality traits have been repeatedly examined in relation to customer SM behaviour (Gerson et al., 2016), other trait variables have received little attention. This study examines the effects of three underexplored, yet important, trait variables — *interpersonal competency*, *service orientation*, and *internet addiction* — in generating reviews on SM after customers have unpleasant service experiences.

Interpersonal competencies

Interpersonal competency refers to the skills that are necessary to interact effectively with others for communication such as oral presentation, telephone communication, conflict management, and negotiating skills (Holland & Baird, 1968; Sisson & Adams, 2013). The construct of interpersonal competency originates from the competency model, which is a descriptive tool that identifies the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviours needed to perform an expected task effectively in an organisation (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999).

The topic of competencies has been extensively applied in education to prepare students for professional careers and by industry practitioners to prepare employees for proficiency in the workforce. Additionally, the development of interpersonal competencies in the hospitality industry has been gaining attention since the 1980s (Zopiatis, 2010). Employees are viewed as the most valuable assets in the industry; thus, scholars have explored the requirements needed to perform successfully in a hospitality organisation (Sisson & Adams, 2013). For instance, Lee et al.'s (2019) study identified the importance of job competencies in event management professions.

In addition, the value of interpersonal competency has also been identified in technological interactions. Prior research supports the relationship between online social behaviour and interpersonal competency (Jenkins-Guarnieri et al., 2012). For instance, Valkenburg and Peter (2008) found that increased online interpersonal communication is related to higher levels of real-world social competence. Jenkins-Guarnieri et al. (2012) also found that the attachment style, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness were related to Facebook users' interpersonal competencies. Further, Mazer et al. (2007) observed that self-disclosure, as one communication hallmark of interpersonal competence, is positively related to Facebook use.

As noted previously, there is a strong literature base investigating the role of personality; however, scant research has explored the relationship between interpersonal competency and SM use, especially in the context of customers' complaint behaviours. Since interpersonal competency is an important factor that contributes to customers' online behaviour, more empirical support is needed to better understand the relationship between interpersonal competence and SM use as a way of venting complaints.

Service orientation

Service orientation is defined as either an individual's trait or an organisation's climate. As an individual personality variable (Lytle et al., 1998), service orientation is a trait that refers to the person's disposition to be helpful, thoughtful, considerate, and cooperative (Hogan et al., 1984). As a subset of an organisation's climate, service orientation refers to the service events, practices, and procedures in the organisation that pursue service excellence (Bowen & Schneider, 1988). Additionally, Lytle and colleagues (1998) viewed service orientation as internal design characteristics that can be integrated into the organisational structure, climate, and culture.

Prior research has emphasised the importance of service orientation in the organisational climate, leading to better performance and the sustainability of the organisation. Service orientation is an important antecedent for the viability of the service business to provide quality service and customer satisfaction (Kim et al., 2005). In general, a positive relationship is expected between the service orientation programme and employee satisfaction (ibid.). In addition, customers tend to receive a better quality of service when employees are satisfied with their organisation (ibid.). Service orientation as an organisation's culture influences both employees' job satisfaction (ibid.) and success of the business (Homburg et al., 2002; Lytle, & Timmerman, 2006). For example, Brown et al. (2002) revealed that the employee's customer orientation process plays a key role in expanding and enhancing a service organisation's ability to meet market changes.

Even though prior research has identified service orientation as an individual trait or an organisational design variable, service orientation as a trait has not been explored in the context of SM use. Service orientation's position as a trait may play a significant role when customers post their experiences on SM (Homburg et al., 2002). Thus, this study explores the impact of service orientation on customers' complaint behaviour. That is, service orientation will be examined to determine if this trait variable plays a significant role in customers' posts about unpleasant service consumption experiences.

Internet addiction

"Internet addiction occurs when a person has lost control of his/her Internet use and keeps using the Internet excessively until it negatively affects his/her life" (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014, p. 351). The extent of this addiction can be measured with Young's internet addiction scale (1998). Research on the influence of internet addiction on customer SM behaviour has been limited (e.g., Hsiao et al., 2013; Israeli et al., 2017). In the context of hospitality management, previous studies suggest that internet addiction is a predictor of customers' intentions to communicate negative eWOM on SM. Israeli et al. (2019a) showed that internet addiction is a consistent predictor of older customers' intention to communicate negative eWOM messages when faced with a service failure. For young customers, the predictors of aggressive eWOM were inconsistent.

Service failures

Service failures occur when customers are dissatisfied with a company's goods and/or services. Technical and functional are the two main categories of service failures (Grönroos, 1994). Failure severity explains the magnitude of the service failure, which can range from major to minor (McCollough et al., 2000). The failure event should be followed with a rectification process to provide an effective service recovery (McCollough & Bharadwaj, 1992). Silber et al. (2009) detailed restaurant service failures and recovery options, arguing that it is crucial for service providers to find the most suitable recovery for every failure.

When responding to service failures, different recovery strategies can be implemented, including tangible recoveries such as compensation (a technical recovery), and/or intangible recoveries such as an apology (a functional recovery; Homburg & Furst, 2005). A customer's post-service failure satisfaction could be higher if the appropriate recovery strategies are used to address the failure (McCollough & Bharadwaj, 1992). However, if poor service recovery strategies are used, customer dissatisfaction could worsen, generating a *double deviation effect* (Bitner et al., 1990). Thus, proper customer complaint handling is essential for service managers to sustain their customers' satisfaction and loyalty (Liao, 2007).

Escalating service failure continuum

Service failure events can be characterised according to three main categories or classifications: type (*technical*, *functional*), severity (*minor*, *major*), and recovery (*recovered*, *unrecovered*; Israeli et al., 2019b). Previous research (Homburg & Furst, 2005; Israeli et al., 2017; Israeli et al., 2019a; Israeli et al., 2019b; Silber et al., 2009) has shown that the least severe case includes a minor technical service failure, which is recovered according to the customer's expectations. This case is considered the least severe because it will have the smallest reduction in the customer's willingness to return (WTR) (Silber et al., 2009). The most severe case consists of a major functional failure which is not recovered. This event will have an adverse effect on customers' WTR.

In general, technical failures are perceived as less severe than functional (Silber et al., 2009), minor failures have less harmful outcomes than major ones, and recovered failures are less severe than unrecovered ones. To conceptualise a continuum of service failure events, Israeli et al. (2017) constructed the escalating service failure continuum, which is an ordinal severity continuum ranging from the least severe to the most severe cases mentioned above. Two separate escalating service failure continuums are constructed, one for technical failures and one for functional failures. Each continuum progresses from the least severe to the most severe as follows: (1) minor technical (or functional) failure recovered with both technical and functional recoveries; (2) minor technical (or functional) failure recovered with functional recovery; (3) minor technical (or functional) failure recovered with technical recovery; (4) major technical (or functional) failure recovered with both technical and functional recoveries; (5) major technical (or functional) failure recovered with functional recovery; (6) major technical (or functional) failure recovered with technical recovery; (7) minor technical (or functional) failure with no recovery; and (8) major technical (or functional) failure with no recovery.

Customer social media complaining behaviour

Consumer-generated eWOM on SM is the main tool for these individuals to communicate their impressions of a service event. Via the SM eWOM, they specifically describe details about service failures and recovery processes (Prescott, 2006; Sparks et al., 2016). The complaining process was described by Grégoire and colleagues (2015) with three categories for customers' communication on social media — the "good", the "bad" and the "ugly." In the two categories of negative communications, they identified different types of negative eWOM communications. The "bad" category includes *badmouthing* over SM without contacting the firm directly. The second communication is called *tattling* and it refers to messages of customers who look for assistance by complaining to a third party (e.g. the Better Business Bureau or other consumer agencies). The "ugly" category includes *spite* messages that spread negative comments to get revenge or punish the provider. The last message type is *feeding the vultures*, which occurs when a customer's negative eWOM gets enough publicity that competitors take advantage of the message and influence customers' decisions.

Methodology

This study evaluated participants' *interpersonal competencies*, *service orientation* and *internet addiction*. Participants were randomly presented with common restaurant service failure scenarios which were ordered on an escalating service failure continuum (Israeli et al., 2017) and included a service failure (functional or technical) with a level of severity (major or minor), which was followed by a recovery action (no recovery, technical recovery, functional recovery, or both technical and functional recoveries). Finally, participants were asked to report their negative eWOM intentions.

Study hypotheses

This study evaluates service orientation using the scale developed by Hogan et al.'s (1984) study. Interpersonal competencies were evaluated with the scale developed by Holland and Baird (1968). Internet addiction was evaluated with Young's internet addiction test (1998). The negative eWOM intentions included in this study were based on Grégoire et al. (2015) and ranged from "bad" (*badmouthing* or *tattling*) to "ugly" (*spite* or *feeding the vultures*) eWOM communication categories.

The first set of hypotheses focus on technical failures (food preparation) and they use the escalating service failure continuum for technical failures. The hypotheses also assume that service orientation is a parsimonious variable with the greatest explanatory power for negative eWOM intentions. The assumption is that customers with a high service orientation will have a better understanding of service encounters and service failures, and therefore, will be more prone to respond to failures via eWOM communications. Therefore, our hypotheses (H1.A–H1.D) state:

H1.A. Service-oriented and non-service-oriented customers will demonstrate different negative *badmouthing* eWOM intentions as their internet addiction increases and their interpersonal competencies decrease.

H1.B. Service-oriented and non-service-oriented customers will demonstrate different negative *tattling* eWOM intentions as their internet addiction increases and their interpersonal competencies decrease.

H1.C. Service-oriented and non-service-oriented customers will demonstrate different negative *spite* eWOM intentions as their internet addiction increases and their interpersonal competencies decrease.

H1.D. Service-oriented and non-service-oriented customers will demonstrate different negative *feeding the vultures* eWOM intentions as their internet addiction increases and their interpersonal competencies decrease.

Similar to the above hypotheses, the next set of hypotheses focus on functional failures (a waiter's behaviour) and they use the escalating service failure continuum for functional failures. Same as the technical failures, the hypotheses also assume that service orientation is a parsimonious variable with the greatest explanatory power for negative eWOM intentions. The assumption is that customers with a high service orientation will have a better understanding of service encounters and service failures, and therefore, will be more prone to respond to failures via eWOM communications. Therefore, the hypotheses (H2.A–H2.D) state:

H2.A. Service-oriented and non-service-oriented customers will demonstrate different negative *badmouthing* eWOM intentions as their internet addiction increases and their interpersonal competencies decrease.

H2.B. Service-oriented and non-service-oriented customers will demonstrate different negative *tattling* eWOM intentions as their internet addiction increases and their interpersonal competencies decrease.

H2.C. Service-oriented and non-service-oriented customers will demonstrate different negative *spite* eWOM intentions as their internet addiction increases and their interpersonal competencies decrease.

H2.D. Service-oriented and non-service-oriented customers will demonstrate different negative *feeding the vultures* eWOM intentions as their internet addiction increases and their interpersonal competencies decrease.

Study design

This study was conducted to explore how participants' *interpersonal competencies*, *internet addiction*, and *service orientation* influence their eWOM behaviours after experiencing different types of a service failure. The study was based on a 2 x 2 × 4 between-subjects experimental design using a combination of scenarios including service failure type (functional vs technical), service severity (major vs minor), and recovery effort (both technical and functional recovery, only technical recovery, only functional recovery, not recovery) following Israeli and colleagues' (2017) escalating service failure continuum.

Data collection

Data were collected from a self-administered online survey using Qualtrics in March 2019. Before launching the actual survey, three experts verified the design of the study and reviewed the survey questions based on the following criteria: (1) clarity in wording; (2) relevance of the items; (3) use of standard English; (4) absence of biased words and phrases; (5) formatting of items; and (6) clarity of the instructions (Fowler & Cosenza, 2009). A preliminary test was then conducted with 30 undergraduate students at a Midwestern university in the USA to ensure the clarity of the survey questions and to check whether the sixteen different scenario-based conditions worked as intended. For the actual survey, undergraduate students in one Midwestern university were recruited to participate in the study. They were provided with extra credit in the class to increase their participation in the survey. Participation in the survey was voluntary. The focus on young millennial college students was motivated by the fact that they are one of the largest segments of the population of future consumers and SM users (Lenhart, 2009).

Survey development

The online, self-administered survey included six parts. The first part asked participants' demographic information, including gender, age, ethnicity, education, and their previous work experiences. The second part measured respondents' addictive internet behaviours based on Young's (1998) internet addiction test. The third section included sixteen different scenario-based conditions from Israeli and colleagues' (2017) escalating service failure continuum. Among these 16 scenarios, each respondent was exposed to only one randomly assigned scenario. In the fourth part, manipulation check and realism check questions were asked. In the fifth section, participants' eWOM behaviours — *badmouthing*, *tattling*, *spite*, and *feeding the vultures* — were measured based on Grégoire and colleagues' (2015) study. In the last section, participants' service orientation was evaluated by eliciting the likelihood to select a career in service-oriented and non-service-oriented industry sectors. Interpersonal competency was measured using the scale developed by Holland and Baird (1968).

Four attention check questions (e.g. "Please click strongly agree to proceed with the survey") were included in the survey to ensure respondents read each question before they selected their responses. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (e.g. 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 5 = "Strongly agree").

Results

Demographic descriptive information

The total sample contained 298 individuals, with 269 after cases were removed ($n = 29$). For the technical failure condition, there were 130 cases and 14 were removed due to missing data, incorrect answers to the validity check questions, or outliers on

TABLE 1. Demographic and main variable characteristics by service failure type and service orientation group ($N = 269$)

Variables	Technical ($N = 116$)		Functional ($N = 153$)	
	Non-service-oriented ($n = 45$)	Service-oriented ($n = 71$)	Non-service-oriented ($n = 64$)	Service-oriented ($n = 89$)
	M (SD) OR n (%)			
Demographics				
Age	20.29 (1.70)	20.55 (2.04)	20.53 (2.25)	20.18 (1.93)
Sex				
Male	30 (66.7)	24 (33.8)	36 (56.3)	28 (31.5)
Female	15 (33.3)	47 (66.2)	28 (43.8)	61 (68.5)
Work experience				
<6 months	14 (31.1)	19 (26.8)	13 (20.3)	14 (15.7)
6 months–1 year	6 (13.3)	22 (31.0)	18 (28.1)	26 (29.2)
1 year–2 years	11 (24.4)	12 (16.9)	7 (10.9)	26 (29.2)
2 years–3 years	6 (13.3)	7 (9.9)	8 (12.5)	9 (10.1)
>3 years	8 (17.8)	11 (15.5)	18 (28.1)	14 (15.7)
Course delivery method				
Traditional	19 (42.2)	30 (42.3)	26 (40.6)	36 (40.4)
Online	26 (57.8)	41 (57.7)	38 (59.4)	53 (59.6)
Independent variables				
ESFC				
1	3 (6.7)	11 (15.5)	9 (14.1)	15 (16.9)
2	13 (28.9)	17 (23.9)	13 (20.3)	19 (21.3)
3	7 (15.6)	7 (9.9)	6 (9.4)	13 (14.6)
4	10 (22.2)	11 (15.5)	21 (32.8)	20 (22.5)
5	7 (15.6)	9 (12.7)	6 (9.4)	10 (11.2)
6	5 (11.1)	16 (22.5)	9 (14.1)	12 (13.5)
IAT				
Low	27 (60.0)	31 (43.7)	29 (45.3)	47 (52.8)
High	18 (40.0)	40 (56.3)	35 (54.7)	42 (47.2)
ICS				
Low	25 (55.6)	32 (45.1)	30 (46.9)	39 (43.8)
High	20 (44.4)	39 (54.9)	34 (53.1)	50 (56.2)
Dependent variables				
Badmouthing	1.82 (1.11)	1.49 (.97)	1.89 (1.10)	1.80 (1.04)
Tattling	1.60 (.78)	1.56 (.97)	2.00 (1.22)	1.92 (1.13)
Spite	1.71 (.94)	1.80 (1.19)	1.88 (1.11)	2.11 (1.39)
Feeding the vultures	1.93 (1.03)	2.31 (1.28)	1.91 (1.09)	2.40 (1.30)

the main variables of interest ($N = 116$). Of this group, 45 were in the "not service-oriented" group and 71 were in the "service-oriented" group. For the functional failure condition, there were 168 cases and 15 were removed for the same reasons noted above ($N = 153$). Of this group, 64 were in the "not service-oriented" group and 89 were in the "service-oriented" group. Sample demographics are listed in Table 1.

Regression results

For technical (ESFC-T) and functional (ESFC-F) failures, there were two sets of multiple regression analyses, with four models in each set (i.e. 16 total). The four models contained different dependent variables (DVs): (1) *Badmouthing*, (2) *Tattling*, (3) *Spite*, and (4) *Feeding the vultures*. All models had the same independent variables (IVs): (1) Internet addition test (IAT) Group (Low vs. High), (2) Interpersonal competency scale (ICS) Group (Low vs. High), and (3) Service failure scenario (ESFC-T). Thus, the first set of regressions for the escalating service failure continuum — technical (ESFC-T) and the second set of regressions for the escalating service failure continuum — functional (ESFC-F) all contained the same IVs predicting four different DVs. An a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power 3 (Power = 0.80, $\alpha = 0.05$; Faul et al., 2007). The minimum total sample size to detect a medium effect (Cohen, 1988) was 77.

The data were screened for outliers using residual diagnostics. Large studentised residuals (i.e. > +3.0) indicate poor prediction of *Y* for each case. No cases were flagged with extreme studentised residuals or Cook's D values. Mahalanobis distance and leverage values were also consulted, with no cases having extreme values. Thus, there were no outliers indicated for the regression models. Before examining the models, the assumptions of multiple regression were investigated. Independence and linearity were upheld using residual scatterplots of *Y* and . Using scatterplots of the IVs and DVs, homoscedasticity was confirmed with the spread of values remaining constant for all values of X. In addition, the errors were normally distributed by viewing histograms of the standardised residuals. Examination of correlation matrices of the IVs confirmed that multicollinearity was not present. Other indices of multicollinearity had similar conclusions (i.e. tolerances, variance inflation factors [VIFs], and collinearity diagnostics).

Technical failure — Non-service-oriented and service-oriented

The eight regression analyses below contain four models in each group (i.e. four for non-service-oriented and four for service-oriented). The same predictors were included in all the models: (1) IAT group (low vs high), (2) ICS group (low vs high), and (3) ESFC-T. Each set of four models contained different DVs: (1) *badmouthing*, (2) *tattling*, (3) *spite*, and (4) *feeding the vultures*. The results are presented for each DV, containing both the non-service-oriented and service-oriented group regression information (Tables 2 & 3).

For non-service-oriented, the IVs did not provide a statistically significant explanation of variance in *badmouthing* in the overall model ($p > 0.05$). Additionally, none of the individual

TABLE 2. Non-service-oriented and service-oriented correlations — technical failure

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(1) IAT	–	−0.274	−0.129	0.036	0.143	0.163	0.045
(2) ICS	0.002	–	−0.088	0.109	−0.320*	−0.352*	−0.165
(3) ESFC-T	−0.032	0.027	–	0.226	0.304*	0.104	0.021
(4) Badmouthing	0.292*	−0.217	0.255*	–	0.567***	0.472**	0.467**
(5) Tattling	0.416***	−0.262*	0.194	0.632***	–	0.658***	0.506***
(6) Spite	0.129	−0.218	0.323**	0.596***	0.662***	–	0.408**
(7) Feeding the vultures	0.269*	−0.121	0.160	0.463***	0.443***	0.454***	–

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$; The non-service-oriented group correlations are contained in the upper half of the matrix. The service-oriented group correlations are contained in the lower half of the matrix.

TABLE 3. Non-service-oriented and service-oriented multiple regressions — technical failure

DVs	IVs	Non-Service-oriented						Service-oriented					
		B	β	*t*	R^2	R^2_{adj}	*F*(df = 3,41)	B	β	*t*	R^2	R^2_{adj}	*F*(df = 3,67)
Badmouthing					0.061	-0.008	0.882				0.225	0.190	6.486**
	IAT	0.070	0.031	0.194				0.603	0.311	2.888**			
	ICS	0.293	0.132	0.832				−0.375	−0.194	−1.804			
	ESFC-T	0.168	0.227	1.475				0.168	0.315	2.930**			
Tattling					0.232	0.176	4.131*				0.300	0.268	9.561***
	IAT	0.239	0.152	1.053				0.783	0.405	3.956***			
	ICS	−0.432	−0.278	−1.938				−0.529	−0.274	−2.679**			
	ESFC-T	0.169	0.324	2.332*				0.142	0.267	2.605*			
Spite					0.168	0.108	2.769*				0.185	0.149	5.074**
	IAT	0.216	0.113	0.757				0.413	0.173	1.572			
	ICS	−0.672	−0.358	−2.395*				−0.501	−0.211	−1.909			
	ESFC-T	0.037	0.059	0.410				0.225	0.344	3.116**			
Vultures					0.014	−0.058	0.196				0.127	0.088	3.243*
	IAT	0.047	0.023	0.140				0.732	0.285	2.497*			
	ICS	−0.228	−0.111	−0.682				−0.362	−0.141	−1.238			
	ESFC-T	−0.001	−0.002	−0.013				0.121	0.172	1.502			

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$; B = the unstandardised regression coefficient; β = beta, the standardised regression coefficient.

TABLE 4. Non-service-oriented and service-oriented correlations — functional failure

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(1) IAT	–	0.088	−0.164	−0.013	0.025	−0.094	0.019
(2) ICS	−0.118	–	−0.025	0.004	0.134	−0.085	−0.009
(3) ESFC-F	−0.117	0.140	–	−0.083	−0.153	−0.011	−0.200
(4) Badmouthing	−0.017	−0.210*	0.067	–	0.575***	0.699***	0.421**
(5) Tattling	−0.023	−0.098	0.174	0.497***	--	0.461***	0.519***
(6) Spite	0.145	−0.224*	0.217*	0.357**	0.499***	–	0.604***
(7) Feeding the vultures	0.227*	−0.002	0.142	0.317**	0.466***	0.623***	–

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$. The non-service-oriented group correlations are contained in the upper half of the matrix. The service-oriented group correlations are contained in the lower half of the matrix.

TABLE 5. Non-service-oriented and service-oriented multiple regressions — functional failure

DVs	IVs	Non-service-oriented						Service-oriented					
		B	β	*t*	R^2	R^2_{adj}	*F*(df = 3,60)	B	β	*t*	R^2	R^2_{adj}	*F*(df = 3,85)
Badmouthing					0.007	−0.043	0.133				0.057	0.024	1.726
	IAT	0.037	0.017	0.127				0.008	0.004	0.036			
	ICS	−0.085	−0.039	−0.300				−0.494	−0.238	−2.221*			
	ESFC-F	−0.047	−0.068	−0.524				−0.005	−0.008	−0.070			
Tattling					0.032	−0.017	0.655				0.021	−0.013	0.621
	IAT	0.055	0.022	0.174				0.107	0.048	0.438			
	ICS	0.307	0.126	0.990				−0.213	−0.094	−0.861			
	ESFC-F	−0.089	−0.117	−0.911				0.081	0.118	1.078			
Spite					0.011	−0.038	0.222				0.161	0.131	5.419**
	IAT	−0.147	−0.067	−0.512				0.550	0.199	1.985*			
	ICS	−0.159	−0.072	−0.562				−0.716	−0.258	−2.551*			
	ESFC-F	0.009	0.013	0.097				0.230	0.274	2.713**			
Vultures					0.045	−0.002	0.952				0.085	0.052	2.622
	IAT	0.003	0.002	0.012				0.677	0.261	2.485*			
	ICS	0.071	0.032	0.256				0.007	0.003	0.027			
	ESFC-F	−0.143	−0.210	−1.646				0.127	0.160	1.519			

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$; B = the unstandardised regression coefficient; β = Beta, the standardised regression coefficient.

predictors were statistically significant in the model ($p > 0.05$ for all). For service-oriented, the IVs provided a statistically significant explanation of variance in *badmouthing* ($R^2 = 0.225$, $F(3, 67) = 6.486$, $p < 0.01$). Combined, 22.5% of the variance in *badmouthing* was accounted for by the predictors. Of the IVs, IAT and ESFC-T were statistically significant in the model. The strongest predictor was ESFC-T (B = 0.168, β = 0.315, $p < 0.01$) followed by IAT (B = 0.603, β = 0.311, $p < 0.01$). The positive coefficients suggest that as ESFC-T and IAT increase, there is a stronger likelihood of *badmouthing*.

For non-service-oriented, the IVs provided a statistically significant explanation of variance in *tattling* ($R^2 = 0.232$, $F(3, 41) = 4.131$, $p < 0.05$). Combined, 23.2% of the variance in *tattling* was accounted for by the predictors. Of the IVs, one was statistically significant in the model. ESFC-T (B = 0.169, β = 0.324, $p < 0.05$) was significantly predicting of *tattling*. The positive coefficient suggests that as ESFC-T increases, there is a stronger likelihood of *tattling*. For service-oriented, the IVs provided a statistically significant explanation of variance in tattling ($R^2 = 0.300$, $F(3, 67) = 9.561$, $p < 0.001$). Combined, 30.0% of the variance in *tattling* was accounted for by the predictors. Of the IVs, all three were statistically significant in the model. The strongest predictor was IAT (B = 0.783, β = 0.405, $p < 0.001$) followed by ICS (B = -0.529, β = −0.274, $p < 0.01$), with ESFC-T (B = 0.142, β = 0.267, $p < 0.05$) as the weakest. The positive coefficients suggest that as IAT and ESFC-T increase, there is a stronger likelihood of *tattling*. The negative coefficient suggests that those with lower ICS are more likely to tattle.

For non-service-oriented, the IVs provided a statistically significant explanation of variance in *spite* ($R^2 = 0.168$, $F(3, 41) = 2.769$, $p < 0.05$). Combined, 16.8% of the variance in *spite* was accounted for by the predictors. Of the IVs, one was statistically significant in the model. ICS (B = −0.672, β = −0.358, $p < 0.05$) was significantly predicting of *spite*. The negative coefficient suggests that those with lower ICS are more likely to display *spite*. For service-oriented, the IVs provided a statistically significant explanation of variance in *spite* ($R^2 = 0.185$, $F(3, 67) = 5.074$, $p < 0.01$). Combined, 18.5% of the variance in *spite* was accounted for by the predictors. Of the IVs, one was statistically significant in the model. ESFC-T (B = 0.225, β = 0.344, $p < 0.01$) was the significant predictor of the DV. The positive coefficient suggests that as ESFC-T increases, there is a stronger likelihood of *spite*.

For non-service-oriented, the IVs did not provide a statistically significant explanation of variance in *feeding the vultures* in the overall model ($p > 0.05$). Additionally, none of the individual predictors were statistically significant in the model ($p > 0.05$ for all). For service-oriented, the IVs provided a statistically significant explanation of variance in *feeding the vultures* ($R^2 = 0.127$, $F(3, 67) = 3.243$, $p < 0.05$). Combined, 12.7% of the variance in *feeding the vultures* was accounted for by the predictors. Of the IVs, one was statistically significant in the model. IAT (B = 0.732, β = 0.285, $p < 0.05$) was the significant predictor of the DV. The positive coefficient suggests that those with higher IAT are more likely to *feed the vultures*.

Functional failure — non-service-oriented and service-oriented

Same as above, the eight regression analyses below contain four models in each group (i.e. four for non-service-oriented and four for service-oriented). The same predictors were included in all the models: (1) IAT group (low vs high), (2) ICS group (low vs high), and (3) ESFC-F. Each set of four models contained different DVs: (1) *badmouthing*, (2) *tattling*, (3) *spite*, and (4) *feeding the vultures*. The results are presented for each DV (below), containing both the non-service-oriented and service-oriented group regression information (Tables 4 & 5).

For non-service-oriented, the IVs did not provide a statistically significant explanation of variance in *badmouthing* in the overall model ($p > 0.05$). Additionally, none of the individual predictors were statistically significant in the model ($p > 0.05$ for all). For service-oriented, the IVs did not provide a statistically significant explanation of variance in *badmouthing* in the overall model ($p > 0.05$).

For non-service-oriented, the IVs did not provide a statistically significant explanation of variance in *tattling* in the overall model ($p > 0.05$). Additionally, none of the individual predictors were statistically significant in the model ($p > 0.05$ for all). For service-oriented, the IVs did not provide a statistically significant explanation of variance in *tattling* in the overall model ($p > 0.05$). Additionally, none of the individual predictors were statistically significant in the model ($p > 0.05$ for all).

For non-service-oriented, the IVs did not provide a statistically significant explanation of variance in *spite* in the overall model ($p > 0.05$). Additionally, none of the individual predictors were statistically significant in the model ($p > 0.05$ for all). For service-oriented, the IVs provided a statistically significant explanation of variance in Spite ($R^2 = 0.161$, $F(3, 85) = 5.419$, $p < 0.01$). Combined, 16.1% of the variance in *spite* was accounted for by the predictors. Of the IVs, all three were statistically significant in the model. The strongest predictor was ESFC-F ($B = 0.230$, $\beta = 0.274$, $p < 0.01$) followed by ICS ($B = -0.716$, $\beta = -0.258$, $p < 0.05$), with IAT ($B = 0.550$, $\beta = 0.199$, $p < 0.05$) as the weakest. The negative coefficient suggests that those with lower ICS are more likely to display *spite*. The positive coefficients suggest that as IAT and ESFC-F increase, there is a stronger likelihood of displaying *spite*.

For non-service-oriented, the IVs did not provide a statistically significant explanation of variance in *feeding the vultures* in the overall model ($p > 0.05$). Additionally, none of the individual predictors were statistically significant in the model ($p > 0.05$ for all). For service-oriented, the IVs did not provide a statistically significant explanation of variance in *feeding the vultures* in the overall model ($p > 0.05$).

Discussion

At the aggregate level, the findings show a marked difference between service-oriented and non-service-oriented participants with respect to their negative eWOM intentions following a service failure. In general, none of the IVs (IAT, ICS, ESFC-T/F) were identified as predictors of non-service-oriented participants' intentions for communicating negative eWOM following a service failure (with the exception of ICS being a predictor of *spite* in technical failures). On the other hand, at least one IV (IAT, ICS, ESFC-T/F) was identified as a predictor of service-oriented participants' intentions of communicating negative eWOM following any type of service failure (with the exception of no IVs as significant predictors of *tattling* in functional failures).

The differences between participants' negative eWOM intentions based on their service orientations supports the initial research design decision to conduct two separate analyses. The findings suggest that people with no service orientation could not identify any type of service failure regardless of their internet addiction level or if they had low or high interpersonal competencies.

The service-oriented participants' group demonstrated interesting differences in complaining behaviour between technical and functional failure scenario groups. For technical failures, *badmouthing* was triggered by IAT and ESFC-F, and *tattling* was triggered by all IVs (IAT, ICS, ESFC-T). *Spite* was triggered by ESFC-F and *feeding the vultures* was triggered by IAT. For functional failures, *badmouthing* was triggered only by ICS and no IVs were predictors of *tattling*. *Spite* was triggered by all IVs (IAT, ICS, ESFC-T) and *feeding the vultures* was triggered by IAT.

There are two notable observations. First, the data suggest that there is a general difference between technical and functional failures regarding the predictors of negative eWOM. In technical service failures, IAT, ICS, and ESFC-T were predictors of the "bad" eWOM responses, but they generally did not predict the "ugly" eWOM responses. On the other hand, in functional service failures, IAT, ICS, and ESFC-T were predictors of the "ugly" *spite* eWOM response, but they generally did not predict the "bad" eWOM responses. The second observation highlights that internet addiction is a predictor of the most extreme negative eWOM — *feeding the vultures* — for both technical and functional service failure types.

Limitations, future directions, and conclusions

This study has a few limitations. The first limitation involves the sample population and size. To allow generalisation of the findings, future research should replicate the analysis in different populations and service sectors with specific service failure scenarios.

One central finding of this study is that non-service-oriented customers are potentially unable to identify many of the service failures they experience in a restaurant setting. Prior research consistently shows that employees with service orientations allow their organisations to achieve higher service performance and even competitive advantage (Yen et al., 2016). However, there is no recent research on customers' interpretations of their service encounter based on their own personal service orientation. The current findings raise questions about the capabilities of all customers to accurately interpret their service encounters. The findings suggest that students with service orientation can be more perceptive customers. It is also possible that students with service training may also become those employees that Yen et al. (2016) identified as the ones who will allow their organisations to achieve higher service performance and even competitive advantage. Therefore, these findings highlight the need for future research on the outcomes of interactions between service providers with low and high service orientations and customers with low and high service orientations. These future studies should specifically identify the negative eWOM outcomes of technical and functional service failures.

Another interesting finding highlighted the difference in service-oriented customers' negative eWOM intentions for technical and functional failures. The data suggest that for technical failures customers tend to respond with less negative ("bad") eWOMs, and for functional failures, they tend to respond with more negative ("ugly") eWOMs. This finding corresponds with the observation of Silber et al. (2009) who measured customers' willingness to return and repeat purchase from a restaurant following a service failure. The main finding was that customers are willing to forgive technical failures, but they do not forgive functional failures. The reason why customers interpret technical and functional failures differently should be further investigated. Also, possible recovery actions that can promote customers' forgiveness should be explored.

Finally, another finding in this study revealed that internet addiction predicts the ugliest eWOM (*feeding the vultures*) for service-oriented customers in both technical and functional service failures. This finding is consistent with previous research. For example, Israeli et al. (2019b) demonstrated how internet addiction triggers *feeding the vultures* eWOM among older customers in service failures. Given the current reality, in which internet addiction may be on the rise, it is increasingly important to investigate how service organisations should interact online and face to face with customers to moderate their negative eWOM intentions.

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Research in Hospitality Management 2020, 10(2): 107–115
https://doi.org/10.1080/22243534.2020.1869465

RHM
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Lobbyscape: A framework about the effect of hotel lobbies' atmospheric elements on customer satisfaction

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to present a new conceptual model about the "lobbyscape" (i.e. the "servicescape" of hotel lobbies or foyers). A review of the existing literature, along with the authors' expertise, provided four dimensions and 25 atmospheric elements for the "ASAP (aesthetics, space, atmosphere and physiological conditions) Lobbyscape Model". The atmospheric elements' effect on customer satisfaction with their stay was carried out through a survey questionnaire to customers of four- and five-star hotels in Athens, providing 277 valid responses. The results of the survey demonstrated that for the vast majority of hotel guests, the effect of each of the 25 atmospheric elements is quite or absolutely important for the satisfaction they get from their stay. As a new framework for further understanding of the hotel lobbies' effect on customer satisfaction, the lobbyscape concept could provide significant opportunities to increase sales, contribute to the overall quality of customer service, and be considered as a vital part of the overall hotel services' perceived value.

KEYWORDS: hotels, hospitality management, lobby, marketing, servicescape

Introduction

From the advent of 15th century, hotels in central Paris — i.e. *hôtel particuliers*, where aristocrat homeowners were renting rooms for a short stay to other aristocrats (Anand, 2017) — until the 18th century, the hotel lobby was usually nothing more than a spacious foyer, decorated with lavish paintings, elegant furniture, a hand-knotted rug, and primarily served as a "space to pass through" for hotel guests (Paradigm Design, 2017). From the late 18th century — where, mainly in London, the hotel concept was shaped into the form we all are familiar with nowadays — the foyer also began to change. Hence, the hotel foyer eventually became the centre of hotels' social interaction, a "place to see and be seen" (Carmichael, 2018, n.p.). However, in modern times, there are cases where this area's importance has been neglected by the architectural designers, where the social meaning is nearly lost, or where a lobby is somehow no more than a hotel's "dead space". Nowadays, this trend is gradually reversing, and according to Jacob (as cited in Carmichael, 2018, n.p.), the lobby becomes exciting once again, "a place where things can happen", an extension of urban life, with ample seating areas, a gift shop, an art gallery, a bar, etc. According to Kazmi (2012), people simply do not want to feel isolated, and the modern lobby/foyer includes the answer to this "loneliness on the journey" phobia, being for travellers "a place to stay connected" with other people by sharing food, drink, stories, and memories.

According to the servicescape concept (as defined by Bitner, 1992), the impact of the environment in which the provision of a service takes place is particularly crucial for customers' and employees' emotions and behaviour, as well as for the perceived value of this service by the customers. After all, physical evidence is one of "the 7Ps" of the modern marketing mix, gaining a special significance as a component of each "hotel product" (Middleton et al., 2009). Also, according to environmental psychology, the environment is not just a "silent witness" to human actions, but instead is an integral part of the plot (Moser & Uzzell, 2003). Keeping this in mind, the environment's effect on customers and employees in the hotel industry is an issue of considerable research interest. In particular, it is observed that the hotel lobby acts as the primary "setting" for hotel services (except for the rooms themselves). It is the focal point of contact where customers understand that during their trip they are eventually "in" the hotel they have chosen to stay in. It is the place where the front-of-house hotel employees greet the customers and provide the pre-agreed access to the hotel's services. Also, the hotel lobby functions as the hotel's main seating area, meeting place, lounge, info-point, as well as the brand's "aesthetic ambassador". In general, the hotel foyer is a place tightly connected to the hotel's culture, regularly communicating subliminal messages to its users. This area is also influenced by the people who act and interact within it (employees, guests, visitors), their ethics, principles, cultural and social values, habits, aesthetics, and various activities. According to Getzels (as cited in Moser & Uzzell, 2003, p. 420), "our vision of human nature finds expression in the buildings we construct, and these constructions in turn do their silent yet irresistible work of telling us who we are and what we must do".

In the case of hotel lobbies or foyers, the area and its aesthetic elements, the customers, and the employees are all perceived as parts of a holistic complex that act and interact with and within this environment.

This article aims to approach and explore the "lobbyscape" concept as the servicescape of hotel lobbies, and to test a new conceptual model (aesthetics, space, atmosphere and physiological conditions (ASAP) Lobbyscape Model) on four- and five-star hotels' lobbies. The objectives of the study are, therefore, to provide a new perspective on the hotel foyers' role and importance in customer satisfaction with their stay, to identify the vital atmospheric elements of the lobbyscape, and to develop a reliable measurement tool of the effect of four- and five-star hotels' lobbyscape on customer satisfaction with their stay.

The following section highlights the importance of "physical evidence" in the modern marketing mix, which leads us to the servicescape concept. Previous studies on the hotel and lobby servicescape are reviewed, as well as the relation between servicescape and customer satisfaction. The subsequent section explains each step of the conceptual approach and exploratory research methodology about the ASAP Lobbyscape Model, and then the results of the data analysis are presented. Finally, managerial implications, limitations of the study, and directions for future research are also discussed.

Literature review

The modern marketing mix in tourism

According to Middleton et al. (2009), the main variables that express in practice the strategic decisions that marketing managers in each organisation must take concerning the provision of products and services and customer satisfaction are collectively known as "the marketing mix". Traditionally, the marketing mix was described by McCarthy in the 1960s as "the 4Ps" (product, price, promotion, place). As this approach was considered quite producer-oriented, Ps as Cs were redefined to reflect the terms from a consumer-oriented perspective (product⟶customer value, price⟶cost, promotion⟶communication, place⟶convenience). In the tourism sector, the idea that every business should plan and organise marketing actions based on the customer — the very nature of the provision of tourism services — finds immediate application in the expanded marketing mix. As formulated by Booms and Bitner (1982), the marketing mix acquired three more Ps: people (the participants in the provision of services), process (the procedure), and physical evidence (the environmental elements where products and services are produced, offered, consumed, and ultimately evaluated by the customers). Bitner (1992) defined the physical environment where services are offered, provided, and consumed using the term "servicescape".

The concept of servicescape

Especially for service companies, Bitner (1992) used the term "servicescape" to describe a conceptual framework for the effect of the physical surroundings on customers and employees. Since the early 1980s, marketing theorists have pointed to the environment's potential to influence people's behaviour by making an impression, with the phenomenon being particularly evident in service providers such as hotels, restaurants, banks, and hospitals. In the case of hotels — where the production and consumption of the "product" happen in the same place — the prospective customers seek from the hotel environment various "cues" that can help them formulate their purchasing decision. According to Rapoport (as cited in Bitner, 1992), the environment is full of such "signals", and their effect on a business's communication of intentions and identity can be quite strong. Bitner (1992) categorises the hotel as interpersonal services, where customers and employees are both present and react in the servicescape. Bitner's servicescape model has at one end the servicescape's environmental dimensions and elements and at the other end, the basic approaches concerning people's resulting behaviour. According to environmental psychology, these approaches are mainly categorised as a) approach, which includes all "positive" behaviours, e.g. a person's willingness to stay longer in a place, to spend more money/to consume more there, and b) avoidance, where the corresponding opposites of "positive" behaviours are included, e.g. a person's desire to leave a place, to not spend any money/to not consume more there. Moreover, even after the "positive" consumer's decision to "stay and spend" at a hotel, the servicescape elements continue to influence and encourage this individual's goal. For example, a hotel lounge with cosy décor and warm lighting, proper air conditioning and temperature, pleasant area scent, understandable signage, and atmospheric music will affect a guest's mood enough to stop for a coffee there before leaving for a visit to the city, while extremely minimal décor with cold bright lighting, too hot or too cold in the room, lack of instantly accessible price menu, loud music, and overcrowding could discourage this person's initial mood for in-house consumption. According to Countryman and Jang (2006), a hotel has many servicescapes, and the lobby/foyer is considered one of the most important due to its strong impact on shaping first impressions on customers and visitors. Knutson (as cited in Countryman & Jang, 2006) argues that it is usually easier to meet or exceed customer expectations when the first impressions are positive. Thus, the servicescape (Bitner, 1992) consists of a complex mixture of environmental elements that affect peoples' perception and behaviour. In particular, the servicescape's environmental dimensions include all the spatial factors that a hotel can control to influence the action of customers and employees in an area. These factors include countless options in terms of aesthetics, lighting, colours, textures, fragrances, furniture design and layout. Bitner recognised three environmental dimensions — consisting of specific atmospheric elements: a) ambient conditions; b) spatial layout and functionality; and c) signs, symbols, and artifacts. Various subsequent research about the impact of servicescapes on customers and employees adapted these dimensions accordingly and measured the atmospheric elements' effects for different sectors (e.g. in retail stores, hotels, restaurants, and casinos).

During the literature review, it has been noticed that atmospherics, servicescape, and generally the environmental elements' effects on customers have been of great concern to international research in recent years. Most of the papers published to date focus mainly on retail stores and the restaurant industry, while applied research about these issues in the hospitality industry is still relatively limited.

Previous studies on the hotel and lobby servicescape

As early as 1956, Ruesch and Kees (as cited in Bitner, 1992) wrote about "object language", meaning the non-verbal communication between people and environmental elements. According to this view, hotel lobbies' atmospheric elements may send messages to potential customers (i.e. the target groups to which a hotel is addressed), but also to potential employees (i.e. the professionals who could be employed in the future). In particular, these messages can directly refer to a hotel's classification, average overnight accommodation price, service quality, employees' expected behaviour and appearance, guests' age group and interests, etc. Regarding the contribution of the servicescape to a hotel's overall image, a survey conducted by Durna et al. (2015) on 410 hotel customers proved that servicescape elements have an indirect positive effect on customer behaviour — especially on positive word-of-mouth and customer return visits — through the hotels' overall image. It is worth noting that in Durna et al.'s (2015) research, servicescape was distinguished by a) substantive staging of servicescape (SSoS) — mainly concerning the environmental dimensions of servicescape, and in b) communicative staging of servicescape (CSoS) — mainly related to the behaviour and appearance of employees. Alfakhri et al. (2018) proposed "hotelscape" as a holistic approach to the hotels' servicescape concept. Their survey was conducted through semi-structured interviews with 37 cosmopolitan Saudi Arabian consumers. According to these authors, the concept of hotelscape focuses on the role of aesthetics and design as strategic marketing tools, and can directly affect consumption, positive word-of-mouth, return visits, and customer loyalty. It is noted that in a hotelscape, the design is perceived as a two-part concept: aesthetic and functional. Regarding the research on environmental dimensions and atmospheric elements focusing on hotel lobbies, Countryman (2001) relied on the idea that the design of a hotel and its foyer are essential factors in attracting customers and creating value, so the environment and the atmosphere of the lobby should be considered as an integral part of the marketing strategy. Thus, Countryman developed a series of scales to assess the atmospheric elements of the hotel lobby. His research used a scenario approach, where four hotel lobbies and two photos for each of them (front desk and seating area) were selected. According to the scenario, all respondents were supposedly attending a conference in one of the four hotels, and they were asked to evaluate the different lobbies' atmospheric elements (as seen in the photos). The results showed that lighting, colours, furnishings, signage, and appropriateness were the most statistically significant atmospheric elements in predicting the overall impression a hotel lobby gives. In a later paper, Countryman and Jang (2006) studied the effect of customer impressions on the following atmospheric elements: colours, style, lighting, layout, furnishings. The results showed that the atmospheric elements that most influence the customers' overall impression of a hotel lobby are: a) colours; b) style; and c) lighting. Furthermore, in another study by Naqshbandi and Munir (2011) on the effect of hotel lobbies' atmospheric elements on customer impressions, a similar scenario approach (photos of hotel lobbies) and an adaptation of Countryman and Jang scales were used. The sample was convention and boutique hotel customers from Indonesia and Malaysia. This research has shown that "lighting" is the atmospheric element with the highest impact on convention and boutique hotels.

Regarding the recent research on the hotel servicescape concept, Lockwood and Pyun (2019; 2020) also considered useful the application of stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory in the hotel industry. They also argued that servicescape in four- and five-star hotels is more important than in hotels of a lower star grading. Lockwood and Pyun's research was expanded to investigate the effect of these stimuli on customer mood and behaviour, based on the SOR theory and the Mehrabian-Russell model. Moreover, the same authors' research about the customers' responses to the hotel servicescape found strong relationships between the "aesthetic quality", customers' "arousal" and "propensity to spend", and also between the "spaciousness", customers' "pleasure" and "favourable behaviours".

Regarding the SOR theory and the Mehrabian-Russell model, Mehrabian and Russell (as cited in Lockwood & Pyun, 2019) developed a theoretical model for understanding the environmental impact on customer behaviour, which consists of three parts. According to this model, the customer's emotional state functions as an intermediary between the influence of the environment (environmental stimuli) and human behaviour (behavioural responses).

Hotel servicescape and customer satisfaction

In international literature, a direct relationship (Lam et al., 2011) or an indirect relationship (Lin, 2016) has been shown between the servicescape and customer satisfaction. Regarding the indirect relationship between these variables, the term visual servicescape aesthetics comprehension and appreciation (VSACA) refers to a person's understanding, assessment, and definition of the servicescape concept through simultaneous cognitive and emotional processing of visual cues within the servicescape (Lin, 2016). Lin's (2016) research on the effect of the hotel lobby's VSACA on customers demonstrated the indirect effect on satisfaction through perceived perceptual experience quality (PPEQ) and pleasure. In general, Lin's research supports the notion that appearance is the central channel for shaping relationships between the servicescape and hotel customers. Furthermore, a survey by Ariffin et al. (2013) of 403 hotel guests in Malaysia demonstrated the positive effect of hotel hospitality (i.e. the style in which hotel services are provided) on customer satisfaction, and the positive moderating effect of the hotel servicescape (i.e. the style of the environment in which these hotel services are provided) in the relationship between the two variables. In other words, the more "hospitable" a hotel's service is, the more satisfied the customers will be with this hotel's overall services. Also, the more attractive a hotel's servicescape is, the stronger the effect of hotel hospitality will be on guest satisfaction. In general, the combination of servicescape and personalised, quality customer service proves to be a significant competitive advantage for a modern hotel. Regarding the direct relationship between servicescape and customer satisfaction, the research by Lam et al. (2011) on the effect of a casino servicescape on customer satisfaction, intention to revisit, and desire to stay proved that customers are more satisfied when they gamble in an attractive environment. Moreover, satisfaction affects their decision to revisit the same casino. In that study, the distinction between affective satisfaction (i.e. a strong or weak positive emotion that a visitor experiences when being in a specific place) and cognitive satisfaction (i.e. a visitor's assessment that a specific place ultimately meets his/her initial expectations) is quite interesting. Concerning this distinction, different results emerged regarding the servicescape's dimensions. For example, while the "ambience" dimension showed a significant positive effect on customers' cognitive satisfaction, its effect on affective satisfaction was not significant. Similarly, the "interior décor" dimension showed a strong effect on affective satisfaction, while it did not appear to affect cognitive satisfaction. Finally, Choi and Kandampully's (2019) research about the servicescape's impact on luxury four- and five-star hotel customers was also based on SOR theory, where customer satisfaction served as the organism aspect. The results of this study proved that "social" and "room design" atmospheric elements influence customer satisfaction, which in turn affects customer "willingness to suggest" and "word-of-mouth".

ASAP Lobbyscape Model

In this article, "lobbyscape" is defined as the servicescape of a hotel's lobby or foyer, and the "ASAP Lobbyscape Model has been developed as a new conceptual framework about hotel lobbies' environmental dimensions and atmospheric elements.

Figure 1 shows the model's environmental dimensions and the atmospheric elements corresponding to each dimension. Also, Table 1 includes the fundamental studies — in combination with the authors' professional expertise — by which the environmental dimensions and atmospheric elements of the ASAP Lobbyscape Model emerged.

So, the environmental dimensions and atmospheric elements of the ASAP Lobbyscape Model are as follows:

- **A** — aesthetics: architecture/style, colours, curtains, carpets, furniture, equipment (e.g. PCs, TV monitors, info kiosks), ornaments, statues, vases, artifacts, accessories, pictures, photos, paintings, flowers and plants, fabrics, signs and labels, flooring design, flooring material, employee appearance, employee uniforms
- **S** — space/functionality: layout, furniture positioning, equipment access, and usage
- **A** — atmosphere/ambience: lighting, music, scent
- **P** — physiological conditions: temperature, noise, humidity, air quality

Moreover, the conceptual approach of the ASAP Lobbyscape Model is based on the SOR theory and the Mehrabian-Russell model. According to this, the environmental dimensions and atmospheric elements of the lobbyscape theoretically function as environmental stimuli (first part). These stimuli may affect the emotional states of customers and employees while they are present in the lobby area (second part), and these emotions could lead to specific behavioural responses (third part). The following empirical research focuses on testing and verifying the importance of lobbyscape atmospheric elements on customer satisfaction, a research hypothesis that is related to the first relationship of the theoretical model (environmental stimuli⟶satisfaction) described above. The research results will measure the importance of each atmospheric element on customer satisfaction, eventually justifying or not their importance in the ASAP Lobbyscape Model as environmental stimuli.

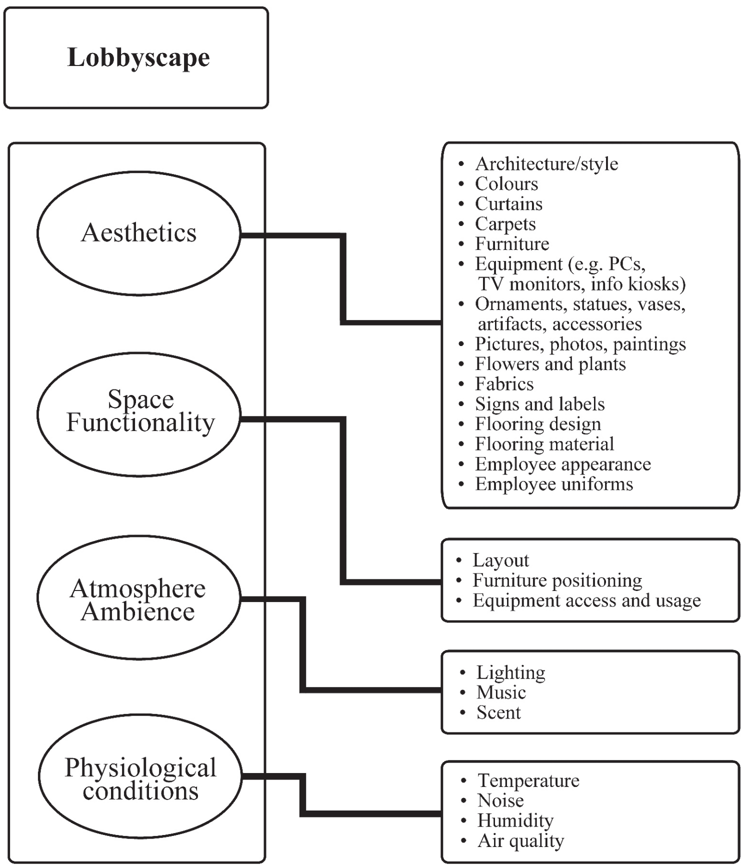

FIGURE 1. The ASAP Lobbyscape Model

TABLE 1. Comparative analysis of the "servicescape", "lobby servicescape", "hotel servicescape", and "lobbyscape" notions

Field	"servicescape"	"lobby servicescape"	"hotel servicescape"	"lobbyscape"
Authors	Bitner (1992)	Countryman {& Jang?} (2006)	Lockwood & Pyun (2020)	Pytharoulakis & Zouni (2020)
Title	Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customers and Employees	An atmospheric scale for the evaluation of hotel lobbies	Developing a scale measuring customers' servicescape perceptions in upscale hotels	Lobbyscape: A framework about the effect of hotel lobbies' atmospheric elements on customer satisfaction
Research population		Customers (university faculty and staff)	Customers of upscale luxury hotels in London	Customers in four- and five-star hotels in Athens
Environmental dimensions and atmospheric elements	Ambient conditions •Temperature •Air quality •Noise •Music •Odour etc. Space/Function •Layout •Equipment •Furnishings etc. Signs, symbols & artifacts •Signage •Personal artifacts •Style of décor etc.	Ambience •Lighting •Cleanliness Design •Layout •Total space •Architecture/style •Colours and colour combinations •Building materials •Textures/patterns •Accessories •Furnishings •Signage Social •Appropriateness	Aesthetic quality •The pictures and photos on display •The style of the ornaments •The fabrics used •The use of flowers and plants •The style of the furniture used •The flooring design •The design of the hotel's exterior Functionality •The height of the tables and chairs •The space between furniture •The practicality of flooring Atmosphere •The artificial lighting •Background music •The amount of natural light •Noise levels Spaciousness •The amount of free space in the hotel •The feeling of spaciousness Physiological conditions •Temperature •Humidity	Aesthetics •Architecture/style •Colours •Curtains •Carpets •Furniture •Equipment (e.g. PCs, TV monitors, info kiosks) •Ornaments, statues, vases, artifacts, accessories •Pictures, photos, paintings •Flowers and plants •Fabrics •Signs and labels •Flooring design •Flooring material •Employee appearance •Employee uniforms Space/Functionality •Layout •Furniture positioning •Equipment access and usage Atmosphere/Ambience •Lighting •Music •Scent Physiological conditions •Temperature •Noise •Humidity •Air quality

Methodology

Based on its nature and objective, the present survey is an exploratory study, the findings of which could be used as a future "guiding basis" for determining descriptive and interpretive research hypotheses (Dimitriadi, 2000).

- Question: How important are the hotel lobbies' environmental dimensions and atmospheric elements for customer satisfaction?
- Hypothesis (H): The hotel lobbies' atmospheric elements are important for customer satisfaction with their stay.

The type of primary data collected in a survey is directly related to the form of the questions used. For the present study, a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions was used to collect the quantitative data, enabling statistical analysis. The target population was defined as the total number of actual and potential tourists who have already stayed or could stay at least one night in the future in a four- or five-star hotel in Athens. Due to the exploratory nature of this research — and also because full lists of all actual and potential hotel guests were not be available — the survey was conducted with a non-random sample of the population, through the method of purposeful sampling. To achieve consistency in this initial survey, the questionnaire was distributed in Greek and addressed to individuals with permanent residence in Greece and guests of four- and five-star hotels in Athens. In other words, in order to test the effect of lobbyscape elements on customer satisfaction, a primary survey using a questionnaire was conducted with Greek guests of four- and five-star hotels in Athens. The "lobbyscape" was operationalised as an independent construct variable (IV) consisting of 25 items or atmospheric elements (see Table 2), where "customer satisfaction" was operationalised as a dependent variable (DV). Figure 2 depicts our research model.

Questionnaire development

The first part of the two-part questionnaire included Likert-type scales measuring the effect of the lobbyscape's atmospheric elements on customer satisfaction. According to the literature review, the effect of a servicescape on customers' emotional states and behavioural responses was measured in several

TABLE 2. The 25 lobbyscape items (atmospheric elements)

Variable	Label
Dimension A — aesthetics	
I01	Architecture/style of the lobby
I02	Colours of the lobby
I03	Curtains of the lobby
I04	Carpets of the lobby
I05	Furniture of the lobby
I06	Equipment of the lobby (e.g. PCs, TV monitors, info kiosks)
I07	Ornaments, statues, vases, artifacts, accessories of the lobby
I08	Pictures, photos, paintings of the lobby
I09	Flowers and plants of the lobby
I10	Fabrics of the lobby
I11	Signs and labels of the lobby
I12	Flooring design of the lobby
I13	Flooring material of the lobby
I14	Employee appearance in the lobby
I15	Employee uniforms in the lobby
Dimension S — space/functionality	
I16	Layout of the lobby
I17	Furniture positioning in the lobby
I18	Equipment access and usage in the lobby
Dimension A — atmosphere/ambience	
I19	Lighting of the lobby
I20	Music of the lobby
I21	Scent of the lobby
Dimension P — physiological conditions	
I22	Temperature of the lobby
I23	Noise of the lobby
I24	Humidity of the lobby
I25	Air quality of the lobby

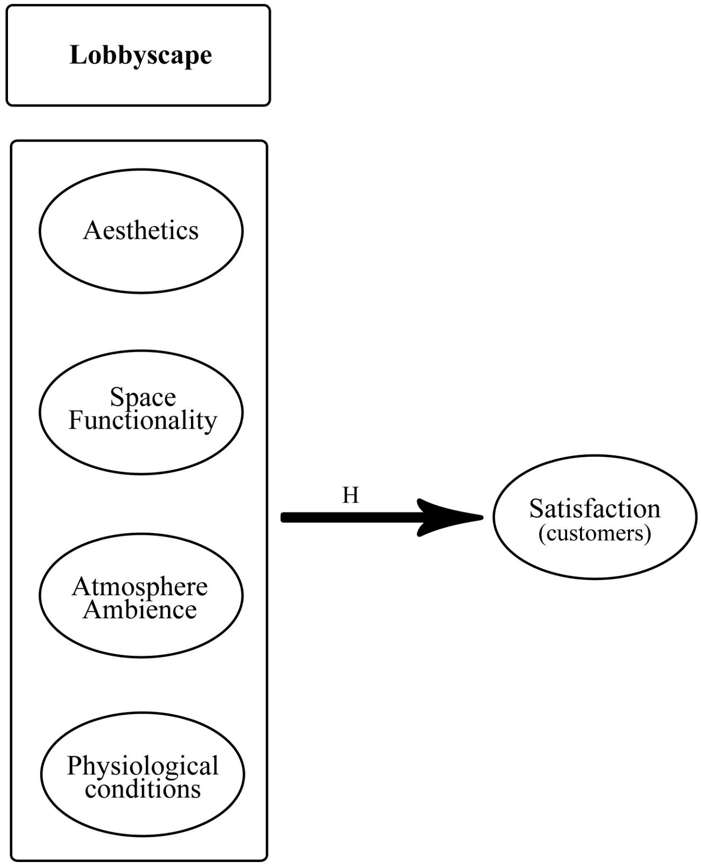

FIGURE 2. Lobbyscape's effect on customer satisfaction (hypothesis)

studies by 5-point or 7-point Likert or Likert-type scales. This was the same for the degree of agreement (Kearney et al., 2012; Lee & Li, 2014), and the degree of satisfaction (Lin, 2016; Lockwood & Pyun, 2020). For this present study, it was considered appropriate to use a 5-point Likert-type scale, measuring the degree of importance (where 1 = "not at all important" to 5 = "absolutely important"). In particular, the respondents were asked about the degree of importance that each of the 25 lobbyscape's atmospheric elements had on their satisfaction with their stay. The second part of the two-part questionnaire included basic demographic data questions (country of residence, sex, age, marital status).

Pilot study

Before launching the survey, a pilot test was performed to evaluate the content and usability of the questionnaire as a reliable research tool. In particular, questionnaires were distributed to tourism management and marketing scholars, front office employees with many years of hospitality experience, as well as to frequent travellers and hotel guests. Upon completion of these questionnaires, comments and reviews for the whole process were gathered from the participants. According to the pilot test, no significant problems were identified regarding the duration of the questionnaire completion, the questions' wording and understanding, and the ease of use of the online platform (Google Form). Then, as the pilot test demonstrated the validity and reliability of the questionnaires, the questionnaire was finalised for the survey.

Questionnaire administration

For the survey, online communication was used to contact potential respondents from the target population. Relevant posts were promoted on Facebook and Instagram, where audience targeting was achieved through advertising with specific criteria, such as: Location: Greece; Demographics: men and women of all ages; Interests: tourism and hospitality in general, international hotel brands, various four- and five-star hotels in Athens.

Before the data analysis, 153 cases were found to be incomplete, so they were removed as invalid from a total of 430 completed questionnaires. Thus, the findings were based on 277 valid cases of hotel customers who live permanently in Greece and had at some point stayed in four- and five-star hotels in Athens during the past five years. Based on the type and objectives of the present study, the expected response rate, population characteristics, and quality of the data collected, the sample size (277 cases) was considered sufficient to draw statistically significant conclusions reflecting the target population.

Results

Demographic characteristics

All the people who participated in the survey with valid questionnaires (277 respondents; 100%) had at some point stayed in a four- or five-star hotel in Athens in the past five years, and all (100%) live permanently in Greece. The majority of respondents (69%) were women, and 31% of them were men. The age group with the highest participation in the survey was between 40 and

49 years old (37%) — Generation X, while 28% of the individuals were between 30 and 39 years old — millennials or Generation Y. 22% of all respondents were between 50 and 59 years old — also Generation X, while Generation Z is represented by 11% of the participants, who were between 18 and 29 years old. A small percentage of baby boomers (1%) between 60 and 69 years old also took part in the survey. Regarding the marital status of the participants, 48% were married with children, 12% were married, 16% were in a relationship, while 24% of the total cases were single.

Effect of lobby atmospheric elements on customer satisfaction

Regarding the potential effect of the lobbyscape's atmospheric elements on customer satisfaction, results reveal that the degree of importance that customers generally attach to these elements is indeed very high. The vast majority of customers consider each of the 25 atmospheric elements as "quite important" or "absolutely important" for the satisfaction they get from their stay. Also, median and mode are equal in most of the 25 items, which indicates the normal distribution of responses. Also, the relatively low standard deviation that occurs is an indication that customers' opinions do not differ significantly from each other and agree on the degree of importance attributed to the 25 lobbyscape atmospheric elements for their satisfaction with their stay. Finally, the validity of the results is enhanced by the low standard error of the mean for all items, which means that in a possible repetition of this research, the results would be relatively similar.

- Hypothesis (H): The atmospheric elements of the hotel lobby are important for the customers' satisfaction with their stay.
  H: l01-l25⟶Satisfaction

Regarding this hypothesis' statistical control, the criterion taken into account for the H acceptance or rejection is the data measures of central tendency. In particular, if an item's mode is equal to or greater than 3 — "moderately important", it is considered that the H is supported by the research findings for this item. Conversely, if an item's mode is less than 3, the H is not supported, and in this case, the H0 hypothesis will be accepted ("this atmospheric element is not important for the customers' satisfaction with their stay"). According to the above criterion, the H test results are presented in Table 3.

According to the survey's findings, the initial hypothesis is eventually supported in all the atmospheric elements of the ASAP Lobbyscape Model.

In conclusion, the vast majority of hotel guests in four- and five-star hotels in Athens believe that all 25 lobbyscape atmospheric elements are "quite important" or "absolutely important" for the satisfaction they get from their stay. In other words, it is proven that for the vast majority of hotel guests in four- and five-star hotels in Athens, the effect of each of the 25 atmospheric elements of the lobby is quite or absolutely important for their satisfaction with their stay.

Reliability of the scale

At this point, it is considered possible to test the scale's reliability from the survey data, mainly due to a sufficient sample size ($N = 277$) in comparison to the number of the items (25 items). The reliability of the scale was calculated based on the Cronbach's alpha reliability factor (Dimitriadi, 2000). Tables 4 to 7 present the results of the Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis.

As shown in the Tables, the results about the scale reliability are entirely satisfactory. Cronbach's alpha = 0.939, meaning that the 25 lobbyscape atmospheric elements consist of a reliable scale. Also, the "Corrected item-total correlation" column does not contain negative values, meaning that all questions were correctly worded. As far as the possibility that any items should be excluded from the scale, in the "Corrected item-total correlation" column all values are > 0.3, and in the "Cronbach's alpha if item deleted" column, it is observed that there is no

TABLE 3. Hypothesis test results for ASAP Lobbyscape items

Item	Mode	Value label	Hypothesis	Result
l01 Architecture/style of the lobby	4	quite important	l01 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l02 Colours of the lobby	4	quite important	l02 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l03 Curtains of the lobby	4	quite important	l03 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l04 Carpets of the lobby	4	quite important	l04 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l05 Furniture of the lobby	5	absolutely important	l05 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l06 Equipment of the lobby (e.g. PCs, TV monitors, info kiosks)	5	absolutely important	l06 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l07 Ornaments, statues, vases, artifacts, accessories of the lobby	4	quite important	l07 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l08 Pictures, photos, paintings of the lobby	4	quite important	l08 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l09 Flowers and plants of the lobby	5	absolutely important	l09 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l10 Fabrics of the lobby	4	quite important	l10 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l11 Signs and labels of the lobby	4	quite important	l11 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l12 Flooring design of the lobby	4	quite important	l12 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l13 Flooring material of the lobby	4	quite important	l13 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l14 Employee appearance in the lobby	5	absolutely important	l14 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l15 Employee uniforms in the lobby	5	absolutely important	l15 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l16 Layout of the lobby	5	absolutely important	l16 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l17 Furniture positioning in the lobby	4	quite important	l17 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l18 Equipment access and usage in the lobby	5	absolutely important	l18 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l19 Lighting of the lobby	5	absolutely important	l19 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l20 Music of the lobby	5	absolutely important	l20 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l21 Scent of the lobby	5	absolutely important	l21 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l22 Temperature of the lobby	5	absolutely important	l22 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l23 Noise of the lobby	5	absolutely important	l23 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l24 Humidity of the lobby	5	absolutely important	l24 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported
l25 Air quality of the lobby	5	absolutely important	l25 ⟶ Satisfaction	H: Supported

TABLE 4. Case processing summary

Case processing summary		*N*	%
Cases	Valid	277	100
	Excluded*	0	0
	Total	277	100

*Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure

TABLE 5. Reliability statistics

Reliability statistics		*N*
Cronbach's alpha	Cronbach's alpha based on standardised Items	
0.939	0.939	25

TABLE 6. Scale statistics

Mean	Variance	Standard deviation	*N*
104.92	186.718	13.664	25

dramatic change in the reliability index if any question is deleted. Therefore, it is not recommended to remove or exclude any items, and the accuracy of the ASAP Lobbyscape Model scale with all the 25 items is confirmed. Also, the value $104.92/25 = 4.1968$ shows that the hotel guests consider the overall effect of the lobbyscape as quite important for their satisfaction with their stay.

In conclusion, the ASAP Lobbyscape Model is considered as suitable to reflect the effect of hotel lobbies' atmospheric elements on customers' satisfaction with their stay.

Implementations

The usefulness of this article's findings arises from the possibilities of their practical application in the hotel industry. Keeping this in mind, the design process of a hotel foyer or lobby nowadays should take into consideration several aspects beyond the general concept of its architecture and design ("artistic statement"), while various "quality-and-money-making" parameters should also be implemented. The design and management of a hotel lobby's atmospheric elements provide unique opportunities for hotel organisations. The lobby/foyer area may become an easily accessible field for each hotel's market research ("Who are my clients and how do they behave in the lobby? What do my target groups desire?"), and it could affect the customers' perceptions about the augmented value of the hotel product offered ("How much are my customers affected by the lobby's atmospheric elements and amenities?"). In other words, creating a hotel's augmented product should be based on the "added value" and "competitive advantage" concepts, where aesthetics could play a vital role — especially in four- and five-star hotels.

Based on all of the above, lobbyscape management could provide significant opportunities to increase sales, to contribute to the overall quality of customer service, and to help so that lobby aesthetics will be considered a part of the hotel's overall perceived value. This research's findings should be taken into account by architects, designers, general managers, and front office managers in any cases of designing new hotel buildings, renovating old buildings with a change of use, or renovating active hotel units. These findings may also contribute to the design and implementation of marketing strategies in modern hotels by marketing managers, particularly in actions aimed at increasing a) positive online reviews and ratings from

TABLE 7. Item-total statistics

	Scale mean if item deleted	Scale variance if item deleted	Corrected item-total correlation	Squared multiple correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
I01	100.64	174.385	0.588	0.582	0.936
I02	100.74	172.396	0.607	0.642	0.936
I03	101.04	167.564	0.701	0.677	0.935
I04	100.95	170.316	0.660	0.574	0.935
I05	100.42	176.781	0.554	0.580	0.937
I06	100.53	177.728	0.426	0.342	0.938
I07	101.12	169.323	0.610	0.631	0.936
I08	101.12	169.190	0.641	0.630	0.936
I09	100.96	169.151	0.611	0.522	0.936
I10	100.95	166.501	0.771	0.663	0.934
I11	100.84	171.467	0.570	0.443	0.937
I12	101.27	166.711	0.735	0.681	0.934
I13	101.15	166.977	0.704	0.647	0.935
I14	100.35	176.591	0.530	0.639	0.937
I15	100.44	174.769	0.570	0.690	0.937
I16	100.59	174.380	0.608	0.524	0.936
I17	100.92	169.809	0.687	0.607	0.935
I18	100.59	175.098	0.538	0.513	0.937
I19	100.55	172.908	0.634	0.579	0.936
I20	100.84	172.100	0.531	0.433	0.937
I21	100.27	177.452	0.519	0.434	0.937
I22	100.45	175.937	0.559	0.552	0.937
I23	100.41	176.352	0.499	0.565	0.937
I24	100.58	174.034	0.515	0.613	0.937
I25	100.39	175.086	0.551	0.559	0.937

customers (word-of-mouth), b) repeat visits, and c) more consumption in the hotel (propensity to spend) through total quality programmes related to the front office department in upselling techniques of supplementary products and services to accommodation (e.g. promotion of hotel's bars and restaurants, spas, tour packages). Finally, the study's findings could be used by the front office department to improve the communication processes of front-of-house employees with customers, and even to improve the customers' mood while waiting at the front desk for check-in, reducing the perceived subjective time of waiting that customers experience in a queue through the lobby's atmospheric elements and amenities.

Limitations

Regarding the inclusion of only closed questions, this choice did not provide the opportunity for qualitative data gathering from the respondents. Regarding the biased error resulting from the individuals' voluntary participation in the survey, it should be kept in mind that there is indeed a self-selection bias because each respondent could voluntarily agree or refuse to participate.

As a reference for future research on the lobbyscape topic, it is advisable to apply comparative research to four- and five-star hotel customers in other capital cities of the world (e.g. London, New York, Paris), as well as to other hotel categories concerning different star gradings and concepts (e.g. three-star hotels, boutique hotels, resorts vs. city hotels). Also, the conceptual framework "ASAP Lobbyscape Model" could be expanded a) by exploring the relationship between the lobbyscape's atmospheric elements and the front-of-house employees' satisfaction from work, b) by investigating in more depth the spectrum of customers' emotional states (e.g. pleasure and arousal) resulting from the lobbyscape stimuli, as well as c) their resulting behavioural responses (e.g. repeat visits, word-of-mouth, propensity to spend).

Conclusion

As a general conclusion from theoretical and empirical research, the hotel lobby environment and its effect on customer satisfaction is indeed an issue worth exploring in depth. A literature review and the authors' professional expertise led to the "lobbyscape" term's definition and the conceptual approach of a new servicescape model for high-rating hotel lobbies (ASAP Lobbyscape Model). According to the survey findings, the effect of all 25 lobbyscape atmospheric elements — as included in ASAP Lobbyscape Model — is of great importance for the guests. This research indicates that the 25 atmospheric elements proposed here have a highly significant effect on guests' satisfaction with their stay at various high-rating hotels in Athens.

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Research in Hospitality Management 2020, 10(2): 117–121
https://doi.org/10.1080/22243534.2020.1869459

RHM
2020
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The art of retaining volunteers

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ABSTRACT: This article is part of an ongoing research project into motivation and retention of volunteers at festivals and events. The overall project is conducted in collaboration with "Muskelsvindfonden", which is a Danish foundation that runs several large festivals in the Danish festival market. The overall research project spans from 2017 to 2020 and aims to answer questions of future motivational drivers for volunteers at festivals and events in the Danish market. The results suggest that there are three overall motivational drivers which seem to motivate the volunteers at the festivals arranged by Muskelsvindfonden: 1) Directed towards the community that one enters as a volunteer; 2) The personal gain that one achieves as a volunteer, where elements of self-realisation becomes prominent; and 3) The element of contributing to a worthy cause, namely the purpose-driven motivational factors.

KEYWORDS: events, festivals, motivation, retention, volunteers

Introduction

This article is part of a three-year research project about volunteerism and motivation. The focus of the research project is to shed light on a research area that so far has gained scant interest from the research community around the world. Whereas there is an abundant amount of research related to motivation and volunteerism in general, very little research with a focus on volunteers at festivals and events exist. The project was initiated in March of 2017 and completed in August 2020. The project was done in a close collaboration with the Danish NGO "Muskelsvindfonden" (more information on this NGO will follow later in the article), and the overall aim was thus to investigate how to motivate and retain volunteers at Muskelsvindfonden. Lead researcher Henrik S. Pahus and his team of research assistants, Maria Kjærgaard, Mia Hurtigkarl and Christoffer Kamronn from the R&D department at Dania Academy conducted the research for this article.

Before discussing the findings of the project, it is important to present the reader with some of the background information that set the overall conditions. Firstly, it should be mentioned that the research project was conducted in collaboration with an external company. Working with an external company as a partner in the research process is an integrated part of how we conduct research projects at universities of applied science in Denmark. It is important to stress, however, that the company involved had no authority in terms of affecting the results of the research, nor did they possess intellectual rights. Their role was to make sure that the research produced was transferable in a real-life setting, and that the results of the project can be applied to the specific line of business in which it is conducted.

The company involved in this research project is "Muskelsvindfonden" (The foundation for muscular dystrophy – hereafter known only as Muskelsvindfonden). Their primary purpose is to arrange a wide range of concerts throughout Denmark, with the purpose of generating funds for research into muscular dystrophy (www.muskelsvindfonden.dk) They rely primarily on volunteers to run their concerts and thus employ over 1 300 volunteers during the festival season (more information can be found at https://muskelsvindfonden.dk/bliv-frivillig/)

Literature review

Before embarking on the project, a literature review was conducted in order to clarify the existing knowledge within this field. It uncovered that even though it was possible to find a sufficient amount of research about volunteerism and motivation in general, little research had been done about volunteerism and motivation at festivals and events (Cuskelly, 2017). The most relevant research in this field had been done on "Austin City Limits Festival" in Austin, Texas on their group of volunteers (Bachman et al., 2014; 2016; 2017). Their primary focus was to examine the relationship between volunteer motivation and self-concept theory. The researcher had the option, as part of this research project, to visit the festival in 2018 and participate as a volunteer. The latter activity helped greatly in understanding some of the differences that exist in motivational behaviour across cultures, and also why it was difficult to use research done on volunteer motivation from another culture (especially one as different as the American one) in a Danish context (This element will not be elaborated further, as it requires a whole new article.). The research done by Bachman et al. (2014) helped to guide the development of the question frame. However, the focus in their research was too narrowly focused on the connection between self-concept theory and motivation for this study to use their results in detail.

Since doing the literature review in August/September 2017, the amount of new academic research dealing with the issue of motivation and retaining volunteers at festivals and events has not increased significantly. Among some of the most relevant research in this field, Cho et al. (2018) examined the volunteerism and motivation of Generation Z at several youth festivals in Florida during 2018. Their focus was, however, more related to understanding Generation Z people and their specific motivation for choosing to work as volunteers, rather than an overall focus on motivation and retention of volunteers at festivals and events (Cho et al., 2018).

In addition to Cho et al. (2018), Zievinger and Swint (2018) conducted a survey among volunteers at the Cultural Capital in Leuwarden in 2018. One of their focus areas was the retention of volunteers, and among their conclusions they found no correlation between motivation and retention. However, they point out several limitations to their study that might have affected their outcome. The direct connection between motivation and retention, that Zievinger and Swint (2018) address, might be an interesting topic to develop in a future project. Overall, therefore, this is still a field that requires more attention in terms of research.

Methodology

The research paradigm in this project is rooted in the pragmatic worldview, and the overall research design is exploratory sequential mixed methods (Creswell, 2018). This brought about the following process.

After having completed the literature review, a question frame was developed for conducting the qualitative interviews. This built on a previous satisfaction analysis that Muskelsvindfonden had conducted with their volunteers in 2017.

In June and July 2018, the research team held semi-structured interviews with 26 volunteers at festival sites around Denmark (all of the festivals visited were run by Muskelsvindfonden). The questions were aimed at exploring the reasons why people become volunteers (motivation), and subsequently the reason why they stay on as volunteers (retention). In addition to this, an observational analysis was done based on a predefined observational frame on the different festivals mentioned above. Even though the overall research design in this project followed a mixed-methods approach, the results in this article stem primarily from the qualitative interviews and observations. As pointed out below, the quantitative survey was used to create personas (a persona is a representation of a specific segment of volunteers) for Muskelsvindfonden, but that is beyond the scope of this article. By only using the qualitative sources to explain a broad contextual concept, such as the motivational drivers in this article, the research design applied here is predominantly based in grounded theory design. However, the purpose was not to formulate a theory, which is usually connected with grounded theory, but to explain and elaborate on the motivational drivers. Additionally, elements of the ethnographic research design were used, as the culture, language and behaviours of the volunteers are included to support the motivational drives. This will become obvious when reading about the three motivational drives that will unfold in this article.

Subsequently, we then did a quantitative survey with 150 respondents, which was distributed in 2019 to volunteers. The purpose of the quantitative analysis was to support the creation of volunteer personas, and will thus not be included in this article. Finally, five semi-structured interviews were conducted with respondents from Generation Z (born 1997 to 2012) in December 2019 to add their unique perspective to the overall research. The reason that we specifically focused on the volunteers from Generation Z was that this was of particular interest to Muskelsvindfonden, and that similar research has pointed out some of the challenges of motivating volunteers from Generation Z (Cho et al., 2018).

The three motivational drivers — Results

The initiation of this research project followed a series of informal talks and interviews with key members of the management team from Muskelsvindfonden. Collectively, they raised concerns regarding the future motivation and retention of their volunteers, and how this would affect the possibilities to generate future revenue. Alongside the vast majority of festivals and events in Denmark, Muskelsvindfonden rely heavily on the contribution of their volunteers, and like other similar institutions, they had encountered difficulties in attracting volunteers. Thus, they had a great interest in understanding the motivational drives of the volunteers.

The interviews were done at different locations in June and July 2018:

- Grøn Koncert: Roughly translated as "Green Concert". This is the main event arranged by Muskelsvindfonden. It is hosted in six different locations throughout Denmark each summer, and is attended by approximately 200 000 people.
- Circus Summarum: A children's festival in two different locations in Denmark.
- Roskilde Festival: One of the biggest festivals in Europe.

In total, we interviewed 26 people.

Selection of the interview persons was greatly aided by Muskelsvindfonden. As an inspiration for developing the question frame, we were allowed access to the quantitative satisfaction survey that Muskelsvindfonden had done the previous year with all their volunteers. In addition to helping us formulate the questions for the question frame, this quantitative survey also helped us understand the basic demographic and geographic setup of the volunteers. Having segmented the respondents, we then asked Muskelsvindfonden to locate the relevant volunteers so that we could conduct our interviews. We chose to conduct the interviews "on-site" at the festival venue. This gave some challenges, of course (in one of our interviews, you can, for example, hear a delivery truck reversing into the tent where we were conducting the interview), however, it also allowed us to meet the respondents in their "natural setting", and not in some secluded room after the festival had taken place. This also helped us to conduct observational analysis of the work site of the volunteers, which helped us to better contextualise the answers we got from the interviews.

Overall, we found three distinctive motivational drivers — *community, self-realisation* and *purpose*. I will define them below and try to focus on how they affect the motivation and retention of the volunteers (Figure 1).

Community (us)

This notion of family was a dominant theme among the volunteers we interviewed. Through the relations that they build with other volunteers during the summer, several highlighted the new "family" they gained as volunteers. This became especially evident in the internal language that developed

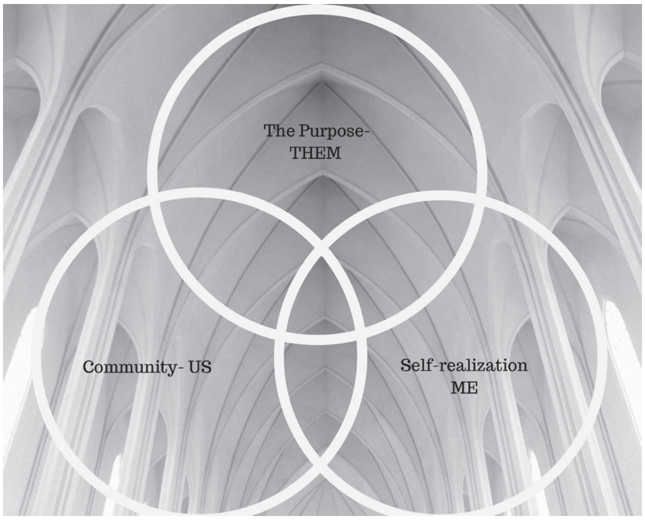

FIGURE 1. Motivational drivers

among volunteers. Like rituals and traditions can set the frame for the perception of community among the volunteers (see below), so can the internal language help to define your relation to Muskelsvindfonden and your fellow volunteers. Specific terms and phrases helped to create the sensation of being part of something special and unique, and through the linguistic discourse, a large amount of the volunteers identified themselves as part of the "family"/group.

Maria, a 25-year-old volunteer on community:

> *It's so unique. Different — in a positive way. It's kind of like a family where people are extremely open and accommodating. It's a whole different culture that you enter. There are some who may suffer a shock, because it's really open and you get close really fast.*

Christoffer, a 28-year-old volunteer, spoke on the most important part of being a volunteer:

> *Community — the family that is created when you eat together, work together, set records together. Community above all, and the way that Muskelsvindfonden takes it seriously. If that does not hold first place, then it is definitely a close second. When we are good friends, when we smile together, when we have a great time together, and when we can do that 100% together, then we can also work together in unison.*

In addition to the notion of family rituals, traditions and stories also played a huge role in retaining and motivating the volunteers. A way of feeling like an integrated part of the community was through the many traditions and rituals that would occur during the period you were a volunteer. Each team at the festival had its own traditions and rituals, which helped to bind them together and to create a sense of unity among the members. Several of the volunteers emphasised this as a way of distinguishing different work functions. Some wore specific clothing of their own choice that marked them as part of a specific group/work function, while others had a specific song that was only sung by the members of that particular group/work function. While the "festival family" and the "traditions" as mentioned above were attached to something specific (your team on the festival, for example), several expressed that you also had an important bond with all the other volunteers at the specific festival. Thus, this kind of affiliation is connected to the festival in general.

Parties and socialising outside the festival was also a recurring topic. Even though the most important part of forming a community happened while the volunteers were active in their voluntary work, several also emphasised that a crucial element in maintaining a sense of community happened outside of the festival — Christmas parties, Eftersluk (the name of a specific party arranged by the festival during the autumn), and other formal and informal social events.

Self-realisation (me)

As with community in the previous section, self-realisation as a motivational drive unfolded itself in a variety of ways. The most prominent motivational factor was, however, the notion of escapism, and how it affected the volunteers throughout their work. The element of escapism among the volunteers at Muskelsvindfonden can be divided into two distinctive variables, which motivate differently, but are still connected by the urge to escape *into a new reality*, as Csikszentmihalyi (1990) discovered in his research on *Flow*.

One of the ways to experience escapism as a volunteer is that you seek "to go into something", and live out the experience of being a volunteer. This was especially clear when looking at the volunteers at the "Circus Summarum" event[1] where several of the respondents emphasised the ability to immerse themselves in a "childlike universe" and the possibility to rediscover the joys of "childhood" once again. They would dress as characters from children shows, and the whole festival place was built accordingly. I have dubbed this "intro-realisation" as it pertains to a person's desire to escape into an experience and to "live out" the experience. In a sense, it bears resemblance to the current trend of cosplay where participants dress as fictional characters and meet at various events.

The opposite of "intro-realisation" was the option to "get away from something". Whereas the previous element of going into something was primarily expressed by volunteers from the Circus Summarum festival, this "getting away" was something that volunteers from all the different types of festivals expressed clearly. The driving force here was the option to do things that differed from your everyday life. Some of the respondents who worked in an office in their everyday jobs found profound joy in the option to "work with their hands", and to "use their bodies in manual work". Peter, a 54-year-old male volunteer at Circus Summarum, and head of an IT firm, expressed it in the following way:

> *In my daily job, I work at an IT company where things are very hectic and so I think it is great to spend a few weeks of summer vacation to turn off the brain, because you don't think much of anything else when you're here other than what you are supposed to do. So that's kind of why I'm here.*

I have dubbed this type of escapism as "extro-realisation", which in many ways is related to the work done by Stenseng et al. (2012). More on this relation will follow in the discussion part of this article.

Besides escapism, several other elements concerning self-realisation were prominent:

- The creation of something impossible (soldier stories): This part is strongly connected with the affiliation element previously mentioned under the community dimension — being part

of something bigger. In this case, however, the motivation comes by achieving something that appears impossible. An example of this is the building of the festival scenes, which has to be done in an extremely short amount of time. The feeling of achieving this with one's group generated high levels of motivation for several of our respondents.
- Self-development: Through your job as a volunteer, you develop new competencies, which can be used after the event is over. These may be tangible competencies, like doing electricity jobs, or learning how to use a drill, but also learning more broad competencies like social skills and accepting others (this is closely related to the Ryan & Deci, 2000 "competency" term, which will be presented in the discussion section).
- Satisfaction of egotistic needs: Unlike many of the other elements, this is solely focused upon achieving satisfaction and fulfilment for oneself through the work as a volunteer. Among other things, the need for others to see one as "a decent person" was a primary motivator.

Purpose (them)

The final element that the volunteers highlighted in our research was the need for them to have a sense of purpose in their tasks. In a recent survey, PwC (2019) concluded that only about 1/3 of employees felt connected to their company's overall purpose. Their conclusion is that while most companies emphasise the importance of purpose (mission statements, vision statements, etc.), this does not affect the majority of the employees in terms of increased motivation. It is important to stress, however, that the term "purpose" has a dual meaning when talking about motivation of volunteers in this type of organisation.

One is the official company purpose that was addressed in the survey by PwC (2019). Muskelsvindfonden is an NGO that has an overall aim of collecting funds to support research into muscular dystrophy. Roughly translated to English their overall purpose statement is encapsulated in the phrase "room for difference" (*Plads til forskelle* in Danish). Interestingly, very few volunteers actually knew about the official company purpose when directly asked. This is in alignment with the conclusion from the survey conducted by PwC (2019). A large number of the volunteers did, however, list a lack of knowledge about the overall purpose as a demotivator.

The other type of purpose was the more informal one, which might be fostered by the organisation, but in the case of the interviewees seemed to stem from several other sources. Three elements were dominant in the interviews that we conducted.

1. The personal connection: You know someone who is afflicted by muscular dystrophy, and that is why you become a volunteer. Several of the volunteers also emphasised, that getting to know someone with the disease (for example, by meeting them during their work as a volunteer) was a substantial retention factor.
2. Giving something back (charity): Instead of going around with a collection box on Sundays, or donating on your smartphone, this is seen as a way to help the overall cause. Quite a few volunteers at Roskilde festival in Copenhagen especially emphasised this as a substantial form of motivation.
3. What you get for the money raised at the festivals: As previously mentioned, the money raised at the festivals goes to support people afflicted by muscular dystrophy. Among other things, it is used to support research, and to run holiday resorts specifically for people with muscular dystrophy. This was also mentioned as highly motivating, with specific stories of how the volunteers had experience of how the money that they generated was put to work.

What became evident during our analysis was that even though very few initially found the purpose (either the official or the unofficial ones) as having an impact on becoming and remaining volunteers, this became more important as a retention and motivation factor the longer they worked as volunteers. Maja, a 23-year-old volunteer at "Grøn Koncert" sums it up like this:

> *I have many of them [people with muscular disorders] in my circle of friends now, but got to know them through this. We do not make money for anything invisible. We can talk directly to the afflicted and hear what a difference it makes to them. We get to put a face to it, and I think it creates goodwill to put in a little extra when we know what the money goes to. It gives a lot of motivation, although we also work for each other.*

Interestingly, the managerial staff we talked to before conducting the interviews were convinced that purpose was the main motivational drive of their volunteers. Although important to our respondents, it was, however, the least mentioned of the three motivational drivers mentioned in this article.

Discussion

As stated earlier, the amount of research into the motivation and retention of volunteers at festivals and events is limited. This article has therefore looked into related theories that might help to better understand the findings of my research. These theories are directed at understanding motivation and retention through the prism of intrinsic motivation, which for the most part was what the volunteers themselves adhered to.

Community

In their seminal work on motivation, Ryan and Deci (2000) developed the theory of self-determination. Their overall focus was on how intrinsic factors motivate people and they proposed that people are generally motivated by three innate factors:
- Competence: concerns our need to develop new skills and abilities;
- Autonomy: concerns our need to act independently; and
- Relatedness: concerns our need to engage with other people in social contexts.

During the analysis of our interviews, and the subsequent quantitative questionnaire, it became clear that there was a close relation between the urge for community that the volunteers sought and the element of *relatedness* that hails from the research by Ryan and Deci (2000). In their research, they proposed that the need for *relatedness* inherently stems from our relation to our parents, and thus the notion of "family" — both in the biological, but certainly also in the figurative sense — is something that can promote and sustain intrinsic motivation.

Similarly, the volunteers at Muskelsvindfonden sought the relation of a "festival family" that they could return to every year, but also as an entity that transcended the five weeks that most of them spend as volunteers. Several emphasised that the close-knit family bonds that they formed during the festival would remain long after the festival had ended. Through the parties and social activities that happened during off-season, many remained connected to the "festival family", which also drew them back as volunteers to a certain degree in the following years.

Ryan and Deci's (2000) element of competence were also something that several of the volunteers accentuated. In future studies, the connection between this notion of competency alongside Banduras' theory on self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) could be interesting to investigate among volunteers at festivals and events.

Self-realisation

The way escapism unfolded during our interviews is strongly connected to the research done by Csikszentmihalyi (1990). He formulated the theory of *Flow* in which he argues that intrinsic motivation can be seen as a direct result of a person's ability to immerse oneself, or to lose oneself in the task one is performing. By doing so they would, according to Csikszentmihalyi, enter a state of *Flow,* which he describes as follows:

In our studies, we found that every flow activity, whether it involved competition, chance, or any other dimension of experience, had this in common: It provided a sense of discovery, a creative feeling of transporting the person *into a new reality*. It pushed the person to higher levels of performance and led to previously undreamed-of states of consciousness. In short, it transformed the self by making it more complex. In this growth of the self lies the key to flow activities. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 74 emphasis added)

Even though Csikszentmihalyi never specifically mentioned escapism in his book, there is a clear connection between his notion of *Flow* and how the volunteers at Muskelsvindfonden perceived escapism in their functions as volunteers. Either by "escaping" the everyday life (extro-realisation), or by immersing oneself 100% into the experience (intro-realisation), the volunteers were "transported into a new reality", using Csikszentmihalyi's own words.

Building on the work done by Higgins (1998), Stenseng et al. (2012) proposed a similar division of escapism into two different, but connected variables. They suggested that the participant could divide escapism into self-expansion and self-suppression, which in turn could affect the outcome of the experience of participation in a given activity. While there is little connection between the terms suggested by Stenseng et. al (2012) (self-expansion vs self-suppression) and the terms defined in this article (intro-realisation vs extro-realisation), it could be interesting to further investigate the effect of intro-realisation and extro-realisation as done by Stenseng et. al. (2012). That would, however, warrant a whole new study and is thus beyond the scope of this article.

Purpose

As previously pointed out, the official purpose statement from Muskelsvindfonden motivated few. Rather, they found meaning in the more informal, inner-driven purposes that arose as part of their volunteering duties.

Being an Auschwitz survivor, and later the founder of logotherapy, Professor of Neurology and Psychiatry, Victor Frankl emphasised the importance of meaning and purpose in motivation:

> Let me explain why I have employed the term "logotherapy" as the name for my theory. Logos is a Greek word which denotes "meaning". Logotherapy, or, as it has been called by some authors, "The Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy", focuses on the meaning of human existence as well as on man's search for such a meaning. According to logotherapy, this striving to find a meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force in man. (Frankl, 1956, 56)

Albeit not the primary motivational drive for a majority of the volunteers, purpose does appear as something that holds relevance for several of the volunteers that we interviewed. Especially the notion of "giving something back" held great value, and as opposed to the rather impersonal act of giving to charity by donating 10 euros via an app, several expressed a great appreciation of being able to see the importance of what their work as volunteers contributed to. In contrast to the formal purpose of the organisation, this related much more to the notion of purpose as described by Victor Frankl above.

Note

1. Circus Summarum is a children's festival based on famous characters from Danish television.

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Travellers' top comments during the COVID-19 pandemic in Botswana

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ABSTRACT: This article is an appraisal of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in Botswana. The article outlines literature in the context of impacts and reactions to the pandemic. The rest of the article builds upon the comments retrieved from TripAdvisor as the pandemic unfolds. Using text mining, a rapid assessment of travellers' reflections of the pandemic on TripAdvisor is provided. The findings demonstrate the limited use of themes such as fear and anxiety or trip disruptions that can be associated with the pandemic, among travellers, who had stayed at varied accommodation facilities in the country. Instead, most of the travellers provided compliments, recommendations and revisit intentions, gave narrations of their trip experiences, game viewing and hunting experiences and were impressed with the location and overall appeal of the facilities. Such findings to some extent allay the uncertainties associated with travel in the country during the pandemic. The findings also emphasise the importance of accommodation facility attributes such as location, even during a crisis.

KEYWORDS: Botswana, COVID-19, reviews, text mining, TripAdvisor

Introduction and literature review

The emergence of COVID-19 has presented unprecedented pressure and circumstances on the tourism and hospitality industry worldwide. COVID-19 is the name given to a severe acute respiratory infection that started in Wuhan, China in 2019 (Chen et al., 2020). The infection is caused by a novel coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2 that is transmittable by respiratory droplets or person-to-person contact (World Health Organisation, 2020a). As of 10 November 2020, there were over 50.5 million confirmed infections and over 1.2 million deaths arising from the disease (World Health Organisation, 2020b).

The emergence of the virus has inadvertently impacted the tourism industry. Both the supply and the demand side have been affected. For instance, globally, revenues have sharply declined due to the closure of accommodation, catering and leisure facilities, while travellers face restrictions on travel and border crossings (Uğur & Akbıyık, 2020). In China, Chen et al. (2020) reviewed the key themes and changes over time of COVID-19 and tourism in 499 Chinese newspaper articles. Concerns about the impacts of COVID-19 on tourism, on people's sentiments, on the control of tourism activities and cultural venues, national command and local responses, tourism disputes and solutions, corporate self-improvement strategies, the role of the hospitality industry, government assistance and post-crisis tourism products emerged as the key themes discussed in the newspapers. Hoque et al. (2020) also studied the effects of coronavirus on the tourism industry in China. They highlighted the effect of the coronavirus on travel agencies and airlines, indicating that close to 75% of luxury travel agency customers suspended their tickets for travel to Southeast Asian countries and regions (Hoque et al., 2020). In India, the pandemic's effects are visible on the country's inbound, outbound, domestic, adventure travel, business travel and cruise sectors (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2020).

International travel is almost totally suspended, while domestic tourism is negatively affected by lockdown restrictions (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020). This toll is severely felt in Botswana, a developing country in southern Africa. Although Botswana has strong macroeconomic fundamentals, the economy is expected to contract by an estimated 13.1 per cent due to COVID-19, with an expected 32.2 % contraction specifically in the trade, hotel and restaurant sector (United Nations Botswana, 2020). Significant unemployment is expected due to major economic contraction (ibid.).

Botswana was, however, swift with its response to the pandemic (United Nations Botswana, 2020). The country closed its international borders on 24 March 2020 (ibid.). The first confirmed COVID-19 case was reported on 30 March 2020, after which a state of emergency was declared, and an initial 28-day lockdown introduced from 2 April (ibid.). Movement countrywide during the state of emergency was restricted through the issuance of special permits granted to essential services workers and individuals under special conditions (Botswana COVID-19 Taskforce, 2020a). The permit for essential workers was valid for five days after which a new application would be made. Permits were granted to individuals for permission to access health facilities, banks, and any other essential services. These were valid for four hours.

From 8 May 2020, an additional permit (the pink permit) applied for by employers for their employees was introduced for movement from one village or town to the other (Botswana COVID-19 Taskforce, 2020b). To partially re-open and exit lockdown, the country later introduced zonal permits required for travel across the nine COVID-19 zones, which are areas demarcated across the country in response to the pandemic. Movement across the zones is granted upon application for a special permit as an individual, an informal business operator or as a company/government official (Government of Botswana, 2020a). However, movement within each zone from 22 May did not require a permit (Botswana COVID-19 Taskforce, 2020d).

In July and August 2020, Botswana Tourism Organisation, the national tourism organisation, embarked on the Re-Discover Botswana Expedition, a campaign that promoted domestic tourism during the crisis (Government of Botswana, 2020b). As a result, many tourist facilities have opened for domestic travel (Botswana Tourism Organisation, 2020). An increased interest in domestic travel was also observed during the country's Independence holidays celebrated at the end of September with over 10 000 local visitors visiting the key tourism centres in the north-east (*Xinhua News*, 2020).

International destinations have also slowly begun to open (United Nations Botswana, 2020). India is gradually unlocking its economic activities (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2020). To resume tourism activities, the government in India has initiated check-ins with relevant Covid-negative reports and have encouraged minimum day stays (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2020). Countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iceland are also easing travel restrictions for international tourism (OECD, 2020). Botswana is also easing international travel restrictions, resuming with air travel at the Sir Seretse Khama International Airport in Gaborone, Kasane International Airport and Maun International Airport from 9 November 2020 (*Daily News*, 2020). Travellers will be expected to abide by strict health and screening measures as implemented at all ports of entry (Dickens et al., 2020).

Despite the increasing breadth of publications dedicated to COVID-19 and tourism that have emerged over a short period of time, the extent of knowledge generated is largely based on impacts on the supply side and most are from developed nations. There is limited literature on the demand side, particularly with reference to travellers' reactions to the pandemic. One of these few studies is by Abd-Alrazaq et al. (2020). The study analysed 167 073 tweets to identify the top concerns of Twitter users about COVID-19. The authors identified 12 topics, which were grouped into four main themes: the origin of the virus; its sources; its impact on people, countries, and the economy; and ways of mitigating the risk of infection. Hong et al. (2020) also measured tourists' satisfaction with bed-and-breakfast facilities, pre- and post-COVID-19. Their study was restricted to China. Tourists visiting bed-and-breakfast facilities in China were concerned with natural and safe experiences, preferring the rooms to be scattered, the use of split air conditioning, the provision of places or items for cleaning and disinfection (Hong et al., 2020). Safety has long been studied as an indispensable and important attribute that influences tourist satisfaction (Kõvári & Zimányi, 2010). Amid the pandemic, tourists' requirements for safety are prominent.

Another study by Uğur and Akbıyık (2020), using text mining, revealed the effects of COVID-19 on global tourism in the light of travellers' and travel planners' comments on TripAdvisor. The main topic discussed between 30 December and 26 April was "trip cancellation", in 40.81% of the cases, followed by "travel insurance" and "coronavirus". Although their analysis was limited to Asia, Europe and the United States, it revealed the importance of travel insurance in light of the crisis. This present article is therefore an application of the suggestion by Uğur and Akbıyık (2020), who contend that such research is still anecdotal in COVID-19 literature. The article is also important from a developing country perspective since crisis-related research is limited in these contexts (Chen et al., 2020). As such, the data set, the time, and the location of the study are of relevance to COVID-19 and tourism literature.

The article focuses on the earliest period of the pandemic in Botswana, from the time the country declared a state of emergency in March 2020 and the initial nationwide lockdown was initiated, to November 2020 when international air travel resumed. The dataset retrieved from TripAdvisor captures the views and reactions of travellers across the country during this time.

Research method

The purpose of this article is to provide a rapid review of travellers' comments on TripAdvisor as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds in Botswana. Text mining was selected as the research method, based on its usefulness for discovering meaningful patterns in data generated from customer reviews (Berezina et al., 2016).

Sample and data

The three keywords (coronavirus, corona virus, covid) from Uğur and Akbıyık (2020) were modified to five: coronavirus, corona, covid, pandemic and virus. All reviews containing the five keywords on TripAdvisor.com were retrieved for analysis. The keywords were specifically applied to Botswana. Botswana is one of Africa's famous wildlife destinations for the "Big Five". In 2017, the country was named the winner of the World Travel and Tourism Council Tourism for Tomorrow Destination Award (Travindy, 2017). It was also named the best Travel Destination for 2016 (*Africa Geographic*, 2015).

TripAdvisor is the world's largest travel website and the world's largest online travel community (TripAdvisor, n.d.). The site is useful for user-generated content (UGC) and has been used elsewhere for studies on hotel assessment (Molinillo et al., 2016) and hotel customer satisfaction (Berezina et al., 2016), to mention a few. The website allows travellers to post reviews on flights, hotels, cruises, and other tourism services. The platform contains more than 730 million user reviews and opinions from over eight million listings of restaurants, hotels, vacation rentals and attractions (Lock, 2019).

Text mining was applied to reviews retrieved from a webpage on TripAdvisor for Botswana (https://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g293766-Botswana-Vacations.html). By 17 November (the last day of data collection), there were 344 816 reviews from 885 facilities and properties.

Text mining

Text mining is an iterative process which begins with the collection of a textual data set (Uğur & Akbıyık, 2020). In this case, text was obtained from the webpages that displayed review comments containing five keywords. Reviews were restricted to those posted in 2020, and specifically those with a date of stay between March (when Botswana closed it borders to international travel) to November, when air travel resumed.

The reviews were retrieved manually by copying and pasting them onto word documents. Each review was then exported to QDA Miner version 6, a software package used for text mining, and labelled as a case. The cases were subjected to further text mining using a filtration process. Sentences were used as the unit of analysis. In all, 33 reviews from 22 facilities were analysed. A total of 284 sentences was specifically appraised. Although a small corpus of reviews was generated, it provides a useful point of departure for future studies on the topic in the country and elsewhere.

Following Egresi et al.'s (2020) suggestion, each sentence was then coded manually, because words are often misspelt or shortened and are therefore not identified by the software or the software fails to interpret the real meaning of the sentences. The process of coding, where descriptive labels are attached to each sentence, was based on the author's intuition (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017) and interpretative ability. The frequency of codes developed were displayed using chart and bubble diagram analysis. Lastly, coding occurrences where the relationships between one or more codes are established (Uğur & Akbıyık, 2020) and visualised (Egresi et al., 2020) were carried out. The results are displayed using a 2D concept map and network graphs for link analysis.

Findings

Descriptive statistics

A total of 33 TripAdvisor reviews were retrieved between March and November 2020. Although five keywords (coronavirus, corona, covid, pandemic, and virus) were applied to the TripAdvisor Botswana site, only reviews from accommodation facilities contained these keywords.

In all, the reviews were retrieved from 22 facilities (eight hotels, four specialty lodgings, four lodges, four camping grounds, one cottage and one bed and breakfast). Two hundred and eighty-four sentences were used in the analysis. The sentences were written by reviewers staying in lodges (22%), at camping grounds (19%), specialty lodging facilities (19%), at the bed and breakfast facility (19%), hotels (17%) and at the cottage (4%).

The sentences were written by reviewers who were travelling as a family (40%), on business (13%) and as couples (11%). The rest (36%) did not indicate the purpose of their visit. It is also assumed that most of the travellers were domestic travellers as international air travel to and from Botswana only resumed on 9 November 2020. Eighteen codes were extracted from the data set — highlighted in Figure 1.

The code with the highest number of sentences was "compliments, recommendations and revisit intentions". This code was developed from sentences such as: *I will not hesitate to stay*

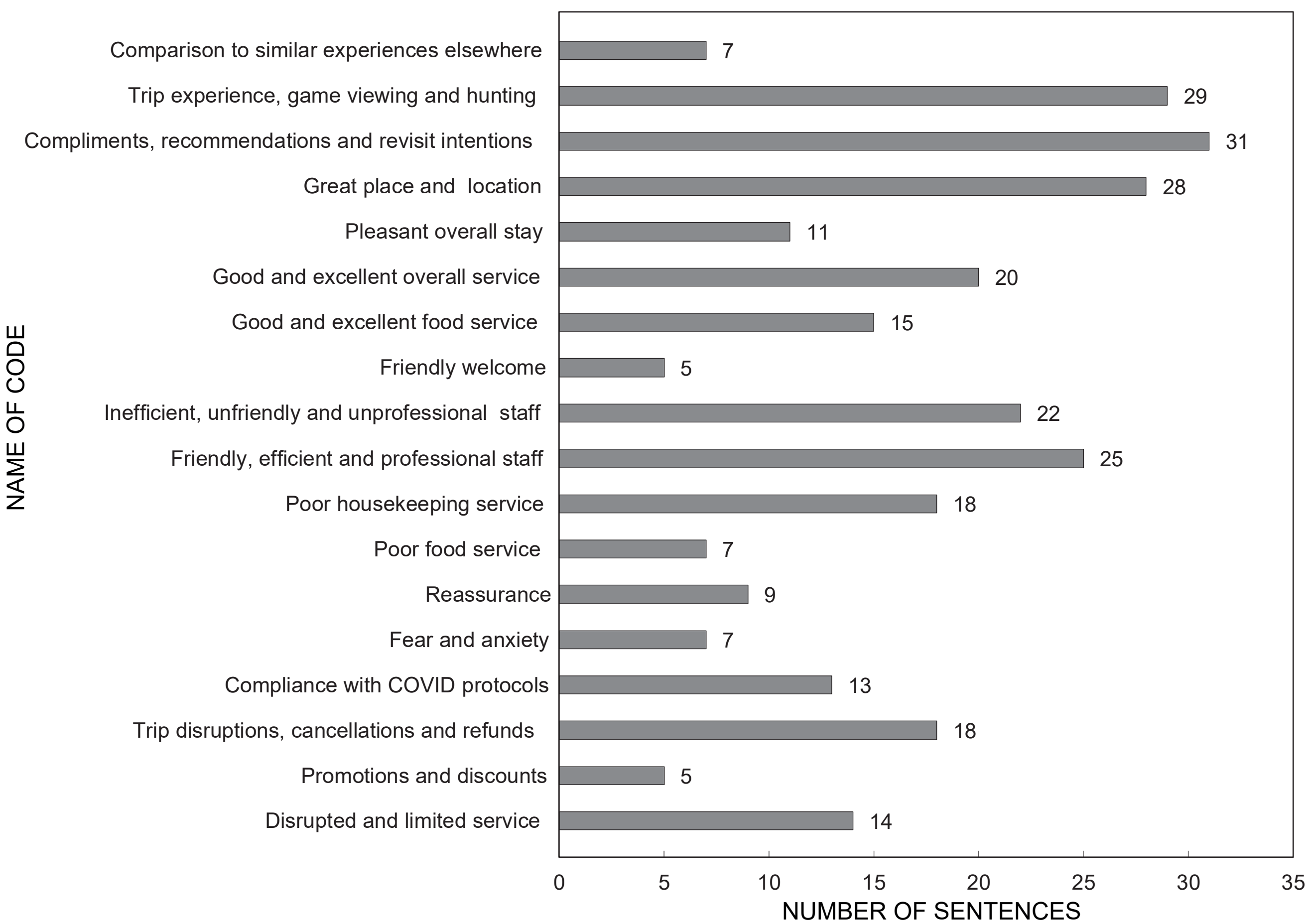

FIGURE 1. Sentence frequency by code

there again during this pandemic; *I recommend everyone to visit*; *ohh I enjoyed the boat cruise*; *Hopefully I can visit again when the floods return*; *Will definitely return happily*; *I hope to come back with more family and friends*. Thirty-nine per cent of the sentences used to develop the code were from lodges, followed by hotels (29%), camping grounds (13%), specialty lodgings (13%), the cottage (3%) and the bed and breakfast facility (3%).

The code "trip experience, game viewing and hunting" had the second highest frequency of sentences (at 29). The code was developed from sentences such as: *I'd never seen a leopard before in my life and we also found a pride of 12 lions one morning*; *We saw our only leopard of the trip our first evening (a gorgeous female with cubs likely stashed nearby)*; *We watched from the lodge deck with hippos frolicking, ellies passing, several species of antelope coming and going, crocs swimming by and birds galore carrying on as the light rain eventually* [gave] *way to clearing skies*; *we also had the visit of a beautiful deadly snake (puff adder)*. Most of these sentences were extracted from specialty lodgings (45%), lodges (24%) and camping grounds (24%).

The code "great place and location" had 28 sentences. It was developed from sentences like *location is good because of its proximity city centre, one can just cross and buy something at nearby shops after work*; *The Hotel is located in the heart of the city which is a perfect location*; *the lodge was great*; *A delightful, exclusive resort right on the Limpopo River*; *The location and property is well situated on the riverbank with amazing views of wildlife*. The code was prominent among reviewers who stayed at camping grounds (29%) and at lodges (25%).

Other codes such as "friendly and efficient staff", "inefficient, unfriendly and unprofessional staff", and "good and excellent overall service" had 25, 22 and 20 sentences respectively. The rest of the codes had less than 20 sentences each. The sentences detailed travel experiences from mostly August (78 sentences, 27%), March (73 sentences, 26%) and October (63 sentences, 22%) (Figure 2).

A word cloud visualising the frequency of the codes in the sentences is also illustrated as Figure 3. The codes with greater prominence are in larger fonts (Uğur & Akbıyık, 2020). In this case, "compliments, recommendations and revisit intentions" had the highest frequency, followed by "trip experience, game viewing and hunting" and "great place and location".

Link analysis

The relationships among the codes were computed using the coding co-occurrence function in QDA Miner. The results are displayed using a 2D concept map (Figure 4) and link analysis (Figures 5–7).

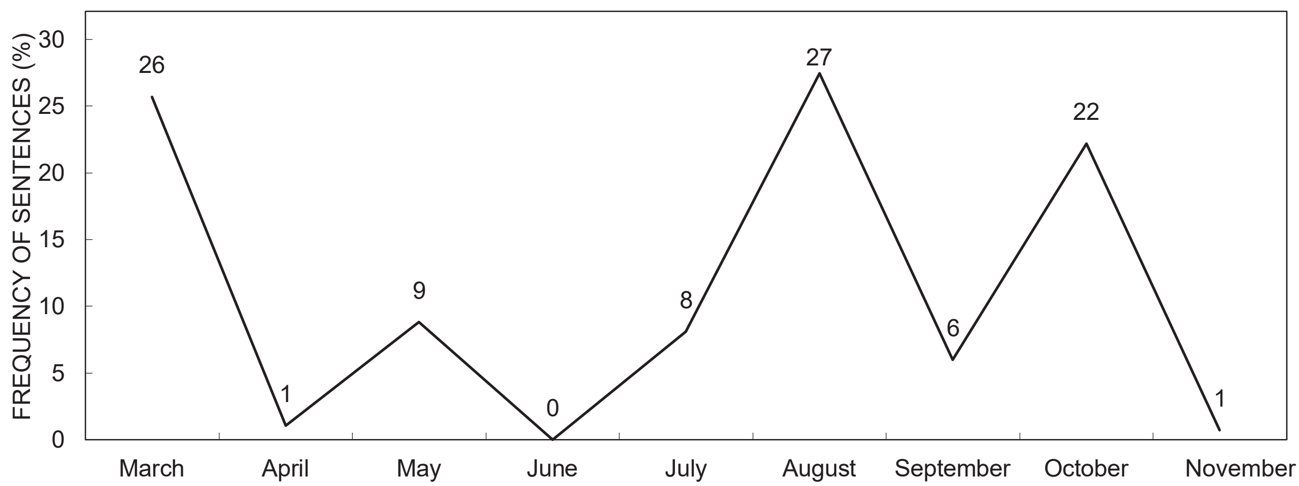

FIGURE 2. Sentence frequency by date of stay (%)

FIGURE 3. Word cloud of the most frequent codes

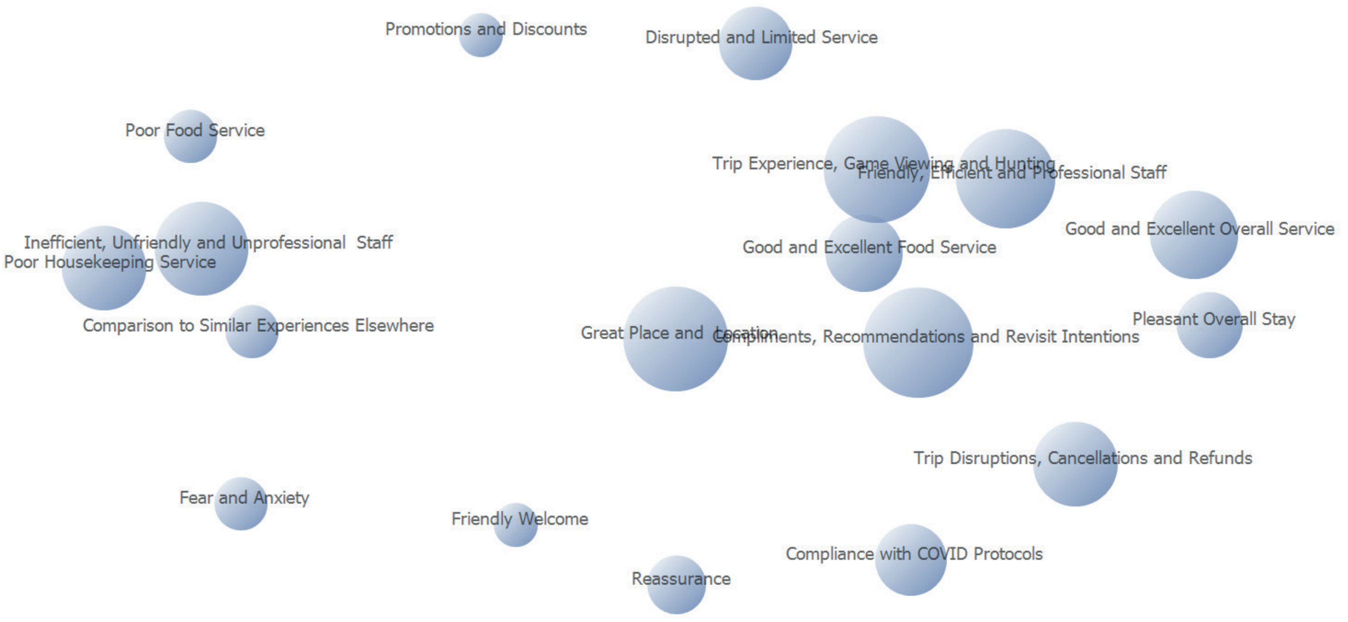

FIGURE 4. Results displayed as a 2D concept map.

A concept map is a graphic representation of the proximity values calculated on codes or cases using multidimensional scaling (MDS) (Provalis Research, 2020). In this article, each circle represents a code and the size of the circle is proportional to the frequency of the code among the cases. The distance between pairs of codes shows how likely it is that the codes appear together or tend to occur together (Egresi et al., 2020). Conversely, codes that are located further from each other are independent from each other.

The 2D concept map (Figure 4) shows that the code "trip experience, game viewing and hunting" is in close proximity with "friendly, efficient and professional staff", "good and excellent food service" and "compliments, recommendations and revisit intentions". Similary, the code "poor housekeeping service" is closly associated with "inefficient, unfriendly and unprofessional staff".

To further explore the relationships among the codes, link analysis using network graphs was specifically conducted on the three codes with the highest frequency of occurrence among the cases; "compliments, recommendations and revisit intentions", "trip experience, game viewing and hunting", and "great place and location". The results are displayed in Figures 5, 6 and 7 respectively.

Figure 5 illustrates the proximity of four codes to "compliments, recommendations and revisit intentions". The code was associated with "good and excellent food service" (0.458), "good and excellent overall service" (0.417), "friendly, efficient and professional staff" (0.400) and because of it being a "great place and location" (0.393).

In Figure 6, the code "trip experience, game viewing and hunting" was closely associated with "friendly, efficient and professional staff" (0.800), "good and excellent food service" (0.500), "compliments, recommendations and revisit intentions" (0.385) and "great place and location" (0.348).

Figure 7 shows that "great place and location" was closely associated with "trip experience, game viewing and hunting" (0.348), "friendly, efficient and professional staff" (0.304), "compliments, recommendations and revisit intentions" (0.393) and "good and excellent food service" (0.364).

Overall, the closest proximity observed from the three network graphs was with "trip experience, game viewing and hunting" and "friendly, efficient and professional staff" (0.800).

Discussion of main findings

Text mining was used in this study to examine the comments that were posted on TripAdvisor by travellers in Botswana as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds. The reviews were restricted to dates of stay between March when Botswana closed its international borders and mid-November 2020, a few days after international air travel to the major tourist destinations in the country (Gaborone, Kasane and Maun) had resumed. Sentences extracted from stays in March, August and September were higher in number than in other months. The fluctuations correspond to the lockdown measures that were introduced. At the end of March, Botswana had closed all international borders and had introduced a country-wide lockdown, with extreme social distancing measures. Travel was restricted to essential services workers. By 7 May, however, the country had begun easing social distancing restrictions in a phased manner (United Nations Botswana, 2020). Travel resumed but was limited and strictly controlled by the issuance of travel permits (outside specific zones). As the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases plummeted, two lockdowns were introduced for the Greater Gaborone COVID-19 Zone (where most of the cases were recorded) between 13 and 17 June and from 30 July to 14 August 2020 (Botswana COVID-19 Taskforce, 2020c). This meant that between April and early August, the number of travellers were fewer than those from mid-August onwards. Because the reviews for November were collected up to 17 November, the results are fewer as they are from an incomplete month. Otherwise, a higher number of reviews would have been expected for all the days of November, since international air travel to key destinations had resumed by 9 November 2020.

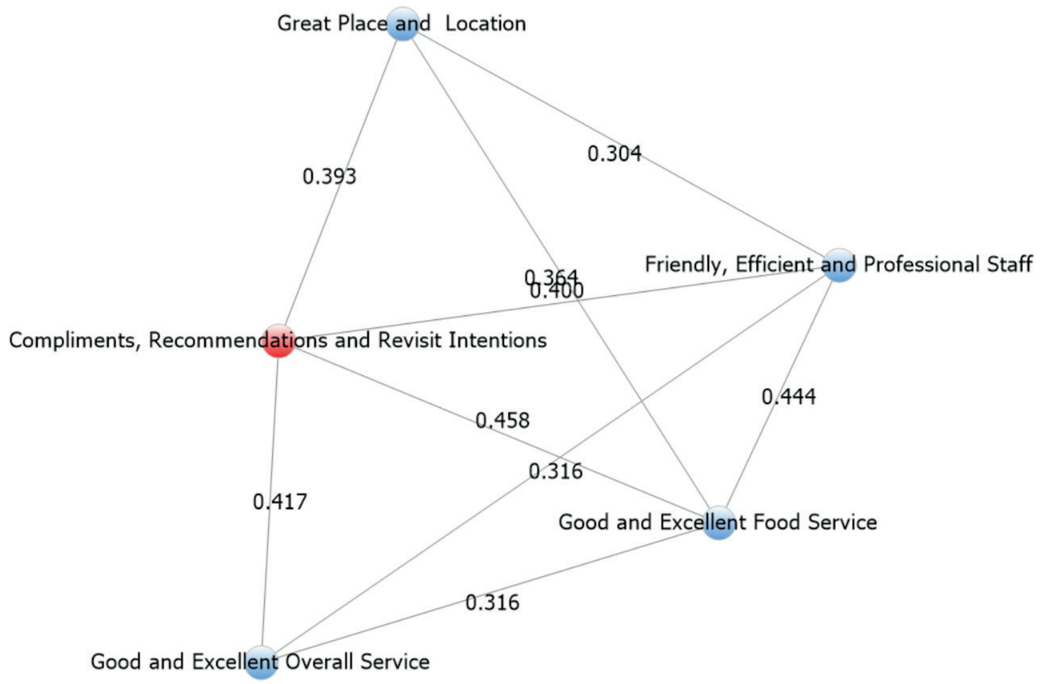

FIGURE 5. Link analysis to "compliments, recommendations and revisit intentions"

FIGURE 6. Link analysis to "trip experience, game viewing and hunting"

To a large extent, the reviewers described their appreciation of the stay, indicating they would recommend the facility and revisit in future, as expressed in the code "compliments, recommendations and revisit intentions", which had the highest frequency. Codes such as "fear and anxiety", "disrupted and limited service", "compliance with covid protocols" and "trip disruptions, cancellations and refunds" which could be directly linked to the pandemic had some of the lowest frequencies. This finding contradicts Uğur and Akbıyık's (2020) study, where 40.81% of travellers commented on cancelling their travel or flights in response to the pandemic. Although travellers in Botswana did comment on cancellations and trip disruptions, this was limited to the earliest periods of the pandemic. This was the time when the first cases of confirmed SARS-CoV-2 were announced and a state of emergency declared, because 44% of the sentences in the code "trip disruptions, cancellations and refunds" were recorded for stays in March. However, the presence of the code "trip disruptions, cancellations and refunds" at the onset of the pandemic in Botswana also resonates with extant literature on the immediate impact of the virus on travel (e.g. Nicola et al., 2020).

FIGURE 7. Link analysis to great place and location

The code "compliments, recommendations and revisit intentions" occurred in close proximity with other codes, as indicated in Figure 5. The proximity values imply that reviewers were appreciative and would recommend or revisit the facility because of the "good and excellent food service", "good and excellent overall service", "friendly, efficient and professional staff" and because of the facility being a "great place and location". Such a finding implies that accommodation managers in Botswana should maintain or enhance these factors which may have served an important role during the pre-covid era. However, these factors are equally important during the COVID-19 period and will continue playing an essential role to travellers post-covid when travel is fully resuscitated.

The other main finding from this study worth noting was the code "trip experience, game viewing and hunting". The code received the second highest mentions from the reviewers. Most of the sentences (45%) used to develop this code were retrieved from specialty lodges in Maun and Kasane, key tourism centres for wildlife-based travel. The network graph shows that "trip experience, game viewing and hunting" was closely associated with "friendly, efficient and professional staff". This finding is important in the context of key wildlife-based attractions where service and the ultimate experience is reliant on knowledgeable, friendly, and efficient guides, for instance. This finding supports the study by Huang et al. (2010) where tourist satisfaction with guiding service positively affected their satisfaction of the tour service. In essence, tour guides have been found to play a significant role in transforming tourists into repeat customers (Weiler & Black, 2016).

Even during a crisis as in this case, the attribute of location, which is key in hotel selection (Egresi et al., 2020), was also emphasised through the code "great place and location". Since this code was closely associated with the "trip experience, game viewing and hunting", and "compliments, recommendations and revisit intentions", for instance, this finding implies that travellers are seeking locations that offer the best experience, especially with game viewing and hunting, even during the pandemic. They will also recommend these places when satisfied.

Conclusion and recommendations for further study

The findings from this study raise several key theoretical and managerial implications in the wake of COVID-19. Firstly, the article has demonstrated that online reviews can reliably be used to understand travellers' reflections during a crisis using text mining. Furthermore, instead of reviews that are filled with the undesirable impacts of COVID-19, such as fear or scaremongering (Ogbodo et al., 2020) or trip cancellations (Uğur & Akbıyık, 2020) or the origin of the virus and its sources (Abd-Alrazaq et al., 2020), this article is filled with more positive and generalised comments on travel in Botswana. Comments specific to COVID-19 such as trip disruptions and limited service or fear and anxiety were very limited. The article to some extent allays the uncertainties of travelling in Botswana during the pandemic. Such a finding is important for Botswana because of its reliance on regional and international tourism markets (Statistics Botswana, 2020).

However, the findings from this article are based on a limited corpus of reviews that were generated using five keywords over a short period of time. A more comprehensive study can be undertaken by possibly including more keywords or broadening the study to include more African countries. Because Africa has felt less impacts in terms of the number of fatalities recorded from the virus than in Europe or the USA, for instance (Ozili, 2020), it may be worthwhile to provide a wider picture of reactions from travellers across the continent. This is necessary given the importance of tourism to most African countries and the reassurance that is required to allay the uncertainties associated with travel during the pandemic.

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Research in Hospitality Management 2020, 10(2): 131–136
https://doi.org/10.1080/22243534.2020.1869460

RHM
2020
Research in Hospitality Management

Human trafficking in the hospitality industry in the Netherlands

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ABSTRACT: This article explores the level of preparedness of front office (FO) employees to recognise and react to human trafficking (HT). The information used for this research was based on relevant literature related to the subject. Also, data for this study were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with eight respondents working for hotels (international hotel groups) in the area of Amsterdam in the FO department. The interviews were transcribed and coded for further analysis. Considering the results, the respondents suggested that a supportive company culture and open communication seemed to be related to their "freedom to act". The HT prevention policy seems to be adequately implemented, and training is provided. Nevertheless, respondents have identified additional needs related to refresher training and its contents. Lastly, respondents stated they were unaware of the availability of a HT checklist. They have obtained knowledge of HT signs through training and feel they are, up to a certain level point, able to recognise a victim.

KEYWORDS: company culture, front office employees, human trafficking, training, victim

Introduction

Human trafficking is a worldwide problem, and the fastest growing form of organised crime (Van der Graaf, 2018). The trafficking of human beings (THB) is defined as:

> The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments and benefits to achieve the consent of a person, having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (Europol, 2016, p. 5).

Whereas traffickers previously used visible locations for sexual exploitations, like brothels and sex clubs, they have shifted to more invisible locations, like hotels and home prostitution (Van der Graaf, 2018). Therefore, the hospitality industry became involved in the combat against human trafficking. As a consequence, organisations arose like "End Child Prostitution and Trafficking" — ECPAT, which is a worldwide non-profit company advising and supporting hotels in their combat against child trafficking and sexual exploitation of children (ECPAT International, 2020). Also, many hotels have developed prevention policies and have started collaborating with ECPAT and have become members of "The Code" (2020). In cooperation with these NGOs, trainings and tools were developed.

In the Netherlands, human trafficking has also become a difficult crime to combat since there are barely any accusations made by victims. The estimate of the total annual victims in the Netherlands is between 5 000 and 7 500, while the number of accusations made are 668 (Nationaal Raporteur Mensenhandel [NRM], 2019).

Although hospitality businesses have started to take actions, it has not stopped the traffickers from using hotels. In December 2019, a few hotel chains in the Netherlands were accused of acting as facilitators of sex trafficking by 13 former victims (Hodal, 2019). Whether the hotels willingly let the traffickers use their rooms for beneficial reasons or because the employees simply did not recognise the crime, these hotels were accused of "negligence" (Hodal, 2019).

The hospitality company discussed in this article has developed a human trafficking (HT) prevention policy and has made it compulsory for its properties to train and inform the employees about human trafficking. The hospitality company started a collaboration with ECPAT and became member of "The Code". ECPAT provided training, both online and face-to-face, and tools such as a signal chart, an informative movie "Please Disturb", and e-learning tutorials (Defence for Children, 2017; 2020) to the hotels. Although the hospitality company has developed a prevention strategy, cases of human trafficking are still reported in the hotels.

The hospitality company is unaware if front office (FO) employees feel free, encouraged and educated to address their suspicions regarding HT incidents to their (direct) managers. There is also no clear insight into the perceived effectiveness of the (online) training provided and in the abilities of FO employees to recognise a victim of human trafficking. In order to explore these perceptions and to gain clarity into the FO employees' identification abilities, the following problem statement was developed:

- How do front office employees working for the hospitality company's managed hotels in the area of Amsterdam perceive their level of preparedness to recognise and report human trafficking in their hotel?

The importance of company culture in implementing human trafficking prevention policies

An organisational culture, or company culture, covers both the tangible norms, the formal rules and hierarchy that have been set up by the company, and intangible norms, like shared understandings, beliefs and values that are shared by the people working for the organisation (Alvesson, 2012).

In the hospitality industry, there are some cultural beliefs and attitudes that might influence the existence, implementation and enforcement of HT prevention strategies. As a consequence, it also might influence the level of preparedness of the employees.

First of all, the hospitality industry is a service-oriented business, and this is also what makes the industry vulnerable to human traffickers (Biesenthal et al., 2019). The hotel employees have a service-oriented attitude, and might feel uncomfortable questioning someone's identity since this might harm someone's feeling of privacy and negatively influence the experienced service level (Van der Graaf, 2018). Moreover, most hotels demand that their employees deliver the best service at all costs, which could mean not forcing guests to provide personal information against their will.

Both this service-oriented attitude of employees and the lack of guidance, or even prohibition against asking questions by their direct managers, might negatively influence their ability to recognise HT. Moreover, when an employee is able to recognise a victim, but the manager is not supportive, they might feel they have no one to go to with their doubts (Paraskevas & Brookes, 2018). This service-oriented culture increases a hotel's risk to be misused as a facilitator of HT, and also might negatively impact the preparedness of hotel employees to recognise and report HT (Paraskevas & Brookes, 2018).

In some cases, financial targets were perceived as more important than moral decisions by the management. In the latter case, employees were not empowered and encouraged to report suspicious situations. In fact, previous research has shown that in some situations employees lost their job after prioritising a moral decision over a financial one (Paraskevas & Brookes, 2018). This customer- and sales-oriented culture might encourage the employees to look away, and they might perceive they do not have the freedom to act upon suspicious situations (Paraskevas & Brookes, 2018).

Another important factor is the attitudes and beliefs of the hotel's management (Alvesson, 2012). Many managers believe that human trafficking is an issue in the hospitality industry, but that it does not concern their own hotel (Cavagnaro, 2017). As a probable consequence, the employees could lack awareness, knowledge and skills, which could result in increased risks for hotels to become possible facilitators of HT (Paraskevas & Brookes, 2018).

Company culture and managerial support seem to be related to whether a hotel has developed, implemented, and enforced a HT prevention policy. They also determine whether or not awareness and knowledge have been provided to the employees, and if the employees have a perceived "freedom to act", e.g. to share and report possible HT-related suspicions. The level of preparedness of employees might therefore be related to a certain company culture.

Prevention of human trafficking training: e-learning versus traditional training

Nowadays, hotels worldwide have adopted online training as a medium to educate and train their employees. The implementation of e-learning rapidly surpassed the previously, commonly used in-class training, which is also the case for hotels' HT prevention strategies (Kimiloglue et al., 2017). Reasons for this are related to the fact that online learning in general has many advantages (Kimiloglue et al., 2017).

The main advantages of e-learning are employee commitment and motivation, convenience and accessibility, customisation and outsourcing, and cost effectiveness (Kimiloglue et al., 2017). For these reasons, many companies might choose to implement e-learning programmes. Although the use of e-learning in an HT prevention strategy seems to be the most popular choice, the implementation of the developed e-learning has not been scientifically evaluated. There are also disadvantages to online training related to personal barriers in employees and barriers by the organisation. Therefore, it might be questionable if or up to which level the use of e-learning in HT prevention strategies has been effective.

There are hotels that have chosen to provide traditional, in-class HT prevention training to their employees. Previous research has shown that traditional training was perceived as more effective than e-learning, since a larger amount and deeper level of knowledge was provided (Baker & Unni, 2018).

A lot of research has evaluated in-class HT prevention training. This training was provided by BEST alliance in the United States (Business Ending Slavery & Trafficking [BEST], 2020). For this research, Conte et al. (2014) evaluated hotel employee participants after following training on human trafficking. The main topics of the training were creating awareness, which people are involved, the (legal) risks for hotels, prevention strategies and indicators specific to labour trafficking. In this research, the participant's beliefs, knowledge and attitude regarding THB were compared both before and after attending the training. The research indicated that the training positively influenced the beliefs, knowledge and attitudes of the participants. One of the changes showed that due to an increase in awareness and knowledge, the participants' willingness to train their employees increased. 89% of the participants expressed their intentions to start organising THB training in their hotels (Conte et al., 2014). In this situation, knowledge and attitude seem to be related to the willingness to educate and provide training (support) to their employees (Conte et al., 2014).

Although this research has shown that (in-class) training has a positive effect on the knowledge, attitude and beliefs of the participants, this does not undermine the possible effects of online learning related to HT prevention effectiveness. It seems that both e-learning and in-class training have a positive effect on the behaviour of the participants. However, there is not enough research to support this statement. Next to that, the content of the training should be evaluated further in order to be able to indicate which information is essential in increasing the skills and knowledge of the participants.

The signs: How to recognise a victim of human trafficking in hotels

To prevent human trafficking, employees must be taught how to recognise a victim. A key component in this process is that the employee needs to be aware of the signs of a victim (National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2020). In order to test an employee's knowledge and to develop a relevant checklist, several checklists with characteristics of a victim or situation of human have been analysed.

First of all, in the Netherlands, the NRM (2019) did research regarding the characteristics of the victims of sexual exploitation. One of their findings was that 97% of the total number of national victims is female (*n* = 1 319). Furthermore, the average age of the victims is 22.9 years, and of the 1 357 national victims, 410 are minors (30%) (NRM, 2019). The nationality of all the reported victims in the Netherlands was Dutch (NRM, 2019). However, the checklist of the KHN shown in Table 1 describes that East European identity or appearance is one of the victim's indicators in a hotel (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland (KHN), 2019). Furthermore, although the NRM (2019) has indicated that minors represent 30% of all victims in the Netherlands, this is not included in the checklist that was developed by the KHN (2019). These contradictions may lead to questions regarding the reliability of the checklist shown in Box 1 1.

Over the past few years, several checklists have been developed by different NGOs. For the purpose of this research project, the checklists prepared by the National Human Trafficking Hotline (2020) and Polaris Project (2012) were consulted and reviewed. Although there are some similar signs presented in each list, there are also indicators that differ. The differences seem to be mainly related to (1) the country or region the list is developed for, and (2) whether the list is applicable to multiple contexts or specifically designed for employees of a certain profession (National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2020; Polaris Project, 2012). The differences in the checklists may indicate that each country or even regions within the same nation might need to look at different signals. Consequently, it may not be wise for hospitality companies in different geographical areas to refer to a standard checklist.

To continue, due to many discrepancies in checklists, it is unclear which list is most reliable. However, with the help of a reliable checklist, hotels could create and communicate more information to their employees on how to recognise a human trafficking case. Without knowledge of the signs of human trafficking, an employee would not be prepared to recognise it (Polaris Project, 2019). Although a checklist could be provided on its own, knowledge and skills would increase even more when blended with (online) training, so the employee would not only be instructed on how to recognise a victim or situation, but also on how to react on it (Benicke & Kyndt, 2019). Accompanied by a supportive company culture and HT prevention training, a clear checklist could be a powerful tool.

BOX 1. Signs to reasonably suspect illegal prostitution (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland (KHN), 2019)

Signs to reasonably suspect illegal prostitution

- Female guest
- East European appearance and/or identity
- Female guest between 18 and 30 years old
- Wants a room for several days or a week
- A room for a woman on her own
- The booking comes in via a hotel system from one of the East European countries
- Pay extra attention to bookings from Eastern Europe (customer, mail extension, credit card details)
- A person books a room, but does not stay in it him- or herself
- A person asks someone else to book a room, as she says she does not speak Dutch or English

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to explore and define the level of preparedness in terms of ability and knowledge that front office employees working for managed hotels belonging to an international hotel chain in the area of Amsterdam in the Netherlands perceive that they possess to recognise and intervene in a situation of human trafficking. As part of the general purpose of this project, the researcher collected the opinions of front office employees regarding the training they have received and the support that they receive from their direct managers when reporting or responding to suspicious behaviour of hotel guests.

Furthermore, this research aims to provide the hospitality company with an indication of the current abilities and additional needs in terms of support and training of the FO employees. Since HT is still happening in the hospitality company's hotels, it is relevant to obtain further knowledge regarding the abilities of the employees and implementation of the HT prevention policies in the hospitality company's hotels in the Netherlands. Therefore, the following problem statement and research questions have been developed.

Problem statement

"How do front office employees working for the hospitality company's hotels in the area of Amsterdam perceive their level of preparedness to recognise and report human trafficking in their hotel?"

Research questions

1. How do front office employees perceive the support from their managers in terms of their freedom to act and receive knowledge and skills related to the prevention of human trafficking?
2. How do front office employees perceive the current form of HT prevention training, both e-learning and in-class, that they have received?
3. How are the FO employees able to recognise a victim of human trafficking?

Method

This research followed an exploratory design, and since there are limited resources and research done regarding the topic "human trafficking in the hospitality industry", this research aimed to explore and collect further information (Boeije & Rokesina, 2014). As data collection, a qualitative research method was used, and semi-structured, open-ended interview questions were developed based on the literature research. The population of this research consisted of the workforce of front office employees working for one of the six economy brand hotels of the hospitality company located in Amsterdam. The estimated workforce of FO employees is 72, and eight of these employees were interviewed using a purposive sampling method (Boeije & Rokesina, 2014). The interviews were recorded, transcribed, analysed and translated into English from the original Dutch. To analyse the data, an inductive data analysis method was used, and the transcripts were coded to explore if there were any connections between the answers of the participants.

Findings

The findings of this research are described, discussed and compared to the literature. The findings are divided in three themes related to the research questions. First, company culture is discussed, followed by human trafficking prevention training, and lastly, the signs of a victim.

Company culture

First of all, the respondents were asked questions related to their company culture. As discussed earlier in the literature, hotel employees in general have a service-oriented attitude and might find it difficult to question someone's identity or other personal information, since they do not want to harm someone's privacy (Van der Graaf, 2018). Respondent 2 (R2) mentioned the struggle between her sense of hospitality and her responsibility for the safety of her guests, especially in situations when it is not always so clear, which supported the research of Van der Graaf (2018). Respondent 2 explained:

> *Regardless of the situation, I think it's a very difficult subject to determine where your hospitality ends and which signals will help you to recognise this.*

The respondents were asked questions regarding their perceived freedom to act, based on the research of Paraskevas and Brookes (2018). They described that some employees were experiencing negative consequences in their jobs after sharing their suspicions. The participants mentioned that they recognised that they had the freedom to act and that they always reported their suspicions, which seemed to be related to the open communication within the team. For instance, Respondent 1 explained:

> *Well, we have very accessible communication with each other. I can always go to the duty manager to say "hey, I have seen this and this" and then I know that they will look at it themselves and if they think, "no that is not the case", they will explain to me why not and if it is, we will look further if they think so too.*

It seemed that Respondent 1 felt motivated due to the open communication she experienced, which is similar to the responses of many other participants. Although the open communication that was mentioned by the interviewees can neither support nor undermine the findings of Paraskevas and Brookes (2018), it seems that they have a perceived freedom to act due to a supportive team and management. The support they received seemed to have (positively) influenced the willingness to share any thoughts with their colleagues or managers.

According to Alvesson (2012), the attitudes and beliefs of the hotel management are an important factor in the development and implementation of a company's policy. This does not only include the support in terms of freedom to act, but also in providing knowledge and skills to employees to make them able to recognise human trafficking (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Hollis et al., 2013; Paraskevas & Brookes, 2018).

> *One of the interviewees (Respondent 2) mentioned: And I also notice that this can be a bit different from one GM to another. At least that's my experience in that.*

It seemed that in Respondent 2's perception the implementation and awareness of the current policy can differ per general manager, which supports the findings of Alvesson (2012). This seemed to be supported by the response by R.5, in which he explained that his general manager is very involved in the prevention of human trafficking, which resulted in regular training. He mentioned:

> *Yes, we have a GM that is very much on top of that... at the moment only the e-learning, but it is every six months. Every six months you are obliged to do that training and of course it's always the same training, but I think it's one of the good training in the sense of clear signals.*

All respondents stated that they have participated in at least one training session, however, one of the interviewees mentioned that over the last eight years she has been working for the hotel, she has only received two training sessions. Although this is in line with the company's policy, employees mentioned that the re-occurrence of the training would be important to maintain and/or improve their skills. One participant (R.5) mentioned that he is obligated to participate in a HT prevention programme every six months. He explained: *I feel confident to recognise it... sure, very handy these training sessions but it is so present in our minds that we are constantly working on it.* It seemed that re-occurrence of the training might improve one's confidence and abilities to recognise a victim. This should be taken into consideration by the hotel's management.

Human trafficking prevention training

The second research question, "How do front office employees perceive the current form of HT prevention training, both e-learning and in-class, that they have received?", is discussed. After analysing the results and the literature, it seemed that although employees were positive about the online training they received, they missed the human interaction of traditional training which would allow them to ask for further questions and/or explanations.

First, the participants were asked questions regarding the e-learning they had participated in. It appears that most respondents perceived the e-learning as "clear", "very handy" and "helpful". For instance, Respondent 3 explained:

> *Very handy, especially for people who have never seen it themselves, who do not know what the situation is or what the danger is...It just helps you recognise certain situations, especially emotions, especially actions...without that training, I think I would not have recognised many suspicious situations.*

Although not all employees might participate in online training nor share similar opinions regarding the effects, this interviewee saw the training as valuable. It clearly seems that he felt that the e-learning was an effective training tool. The e-learning might influence his abilities to recognise and react to human trafficking. Moreover, the abilities of employees to recognise human trafficking might also have been influenced by participation in in-class training. Respondent 2 and R.7 perceived the e-learning to be helpful too. They stated that the e-learning played an important role in forming a basic knowledge level regarding the prevention of human trafficking.

Although the use of e-learning has many advantages, there is also a downside. As discussed by Kimiloglue et al. (2017), one of the disadvantages is that users experienced a personal barrier like "limited social interaction". One of the respondents stated that this was the reason why she was in favour of an in-class learning method or a "blended learning" method. One of the respondents explained that she felt that (human) responsiveness during training could be more effective. Respondent 4 explained:

> *I think that there is a difference. Look, with e-learning you will also receive an explanation if you do not understand it, but if you are in the classroom you can request an explanation from a person who gives the presentation, and he can explain it in a way, because if you don't understand it, then maybe you can ask another question and then they explain it again and then you might think, oh yes, now I get it.*

It seems that the interaction offered by in-class training is a strong component that the online training method is not able to offer; this element determines an important difference between in-class and online learning. The statements of the interviewees in favour of the implementation of an in-class- or blended-learning method support the research of Conte et al. (2014), in which they evaluated the effect of a traditional in-class training, and the suggestion could be identified as a need for further development of an effective human trafficking prevention strategy.

Although the e-learning has been perceived as "helpful" and "useful" in the process of recognising human trafficking, further research should be done to assess the effectiveness of the online training methods in HT prevention.

The signs of a victim

The last research question, "How are the FO employees able to recognise a victim of human trafficking?", is related to the signs of a victim. The results reveal that the FO employees are able to recognise a victim of HT to a certain extent, thanks to what they have learned in their online training. However, they seem to be not completely confident in their abilities to recognise a victim, and it appeared that they were not aware of the existence of a signal chart related to the signs of HT. Although all participants were able to identify all signs, some felt unsure of their abilities when a real situation happened. For example, Respondent 1 mentioned:

> *In training, it is natural, then you are so careful that you know what you are doing, and you get a few options between which you can choose, and you think, yes, I recognised all the signs in the e-learning and selected the right options, but of course you do not have those options in a real situation, you click on that, but of course you do not have those options.*

It is unclear if more employees share the same perception as Respondent 1. However, the fact that she perceived the e-learning as not a fair representation of a realistic incident made her feel insecure of her abilities to recognise a victim. Also, R.7 mentioned: *The e-learning and all other training are a kind of basis for you, but not everything.*

The abilities of an employee to recognise the signs of human trafficking could influence the prevention of human trafficking in a hotel. Therefore, it would be wise to do further research regarding the effectiveness of the online training provided.

Employees were also asked questions about the signs given by a victim. All participants mentioned that they have learned about the characteristics of a victim via an e-learning training session that they followed. However, they stated that they were unaware of the availability of a signal chart that could assist them in the recognition phase. Respondent 2, for instance, responded with surprise in her voice:

> *No, that is not, eh, no, in any case not in the back office, no…No, basically there is nothing available, so the only thing we have, what we actually had internally, is that there is training for every employee and the signals are displayed there.*

Although all interviewees stated that they had no knowledge of a signal chart, it is unclear if this would be the case for all FO employees. Respondent 2, however, suggested that a signal chart might be something to implement (*or what you say about that signal card*). She might perceive the checklist as valuable; nevertheless, since there is no signal chart in use, it might be unclear if this would influence the abilities of the employees to recognise a victim.

Not all respondents experienced the unavailability of a signal chart as a problem since they felt confident that they had learned the signs in the training (e-learning). For instance, R.5 stated:

> *Because we get that training every six months, it sticks well. The moment a gentleman comes in with a younger lady, everyone, no matter who's standing or where that guy's walking, calls are going to ring right away, because we're so trained in it. Because you're just going to pay attention to that.*

The fact that there was no awareness of the availability of a checklist makes it hard to identify if this would influence the participant's abilities and confidence, and if a checklist would add any extra value to his identification skills.

Conclusion

To conclude, in general the participants stated that they felt prepared to be able to recognise human trafficking, but only up to a certain extent. Firstly, the perceived preparedness might be linked to the company culture. The respondents mentioned the importance of a supportive company culture which might stimulate them to share their suspicions and may lead to a perceived freedom to act. It seems that the level of support experienced might have affected their confidence in their abilities or perceived level of preparedness. Although they feel supported by their team, and human trafficking is discussed occasionally, it appears that the respondents feel that they are still lacking some knowledge, skills and/or confidence in order to be fully prepared to recognise and report a suspected human trafficking case. Also, the respondents seem to be unaware of the existence of a signal chart, which indicates that no such checklist had been implemented in the hotels they work for.

Lastly, the participants are aware that they would not be able to recognise all kinds of HT situations, and therefore respondents gave some suggestions to provide training more regularly in order to improve their knowledge and skills. Although these suggestions have not all been supported by the literature, they might be valuable for hotels to review and might indicate a need for further research.

Recommendations for further research

For future research, the contents of the training should be taken into consideration. At the moment, only research regarding the training method has been done, however, clear insights regarding the contents of both digital and in-class training seem to be missing. Also, to be able to measure the current level of preparedness of FO employees, quantitative research may need to be done to obtain more data. Lastly, correlational research that may indicate the influence of the availability of a signal chart on the confidence level of an employee to recognise a HT case is strongly recommended.

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Research in Hospitality Management 2020, 10(2): 137–147
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Hospitality
Management

Perspectives on hospitality industry trade unionism in the UK and beyond

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ABSTRACT: The study of traditional industrial relations institutions in the hospitality industry (such as trade unions) is somewhat in the doldrums. This is, perhaps, unsurprising, given that the sector has historically never had high union membership. This article briefly explores the general influence of trade unions today in terms of overall membership and the concept of union density. The observed decline in the numerical (membership) strength of unions and their influence is clearly attributable to the — albeit uneven — pursuit of conservative economic policies over the last half-century. Membership of trade unions in the hospitality industry has also remained low but not collapsed completely. Extant explanations for the absence of union activity in an industry notorious for its poor conditions of employment are recounted and, employing secondary data from a number of sources, an effort is made to contextualise the present state of trade union membership and activity in the hospitality sector.

KEYWORDS: Europe, hospitality industry, trade unionism, United Kingdom

Introduction

The activities of trade unions in the hospitality and the wider tourism industries have not, in recent years, attracted very much attention from researchers active in those fields. A specialist journal, the *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality and Tourism*, first published in 2002, carries only one article with the phrase "trade union(s)" in its title (as of 2020) (Lowery et al., 2019). In hospitality, the most recent extended synthesis and overview of trade union engagement in the sector appears to be the now dated account of Wood (1997), although Lucas (2009) offers a later and economical overview of most key issues as do Bergene et al. (2014) to some degree. Other reviews of "human resource management" in tourism and hospitality have either ignored trade unions altogether (e.g. Baum et al., 2016; Madera et al., 2017) or commented upon them only transiently, usually in terms that point to the strength of aviation industry unions, while deprecating the failure of unions in general to adapt to representing the interest of workers in other tourism sectors and/or highlighting employer resistance to unions both, notably, in hospitality (e.g. Baum, 2007; 2015). It is perhaps worth noting that across the tourism sector, most contemporary, and indeed critical, studies of trade unionism have been produced by scholars working in the mainstream of industrial relations and human resource management and published in correspondingly specialist journals rather than journals dealing with travel, tourism, hospitality and services in general (e.g. Blyton et al., 2001; Byford & Wong, 2016; Curley & Royle, 2013; Royle, 2002a; 2002b; 2006; 2010; Taylor & Moore, 2015; but see also Bashir & Nasir, 2013, and Puczkó & Rátz, 2011). An exception to this is an emerging strand of "critical hospitality studies", but as yet the literature is limited in quantity (e.g. Williamson et al., 2017).

The purpose of this article is to: (a) briefly examine the recent contexts in which trade unions have been required to operate; (b) employ publicly available secondary data to attempt some insight into the current status of trade unions in the hospitality industry; (c) revisit accounts conventionally advanced in the past for low unionisation in the hospitality industry; and (d) comment on the contemporary relevance to the hospitality sector of these accounts. In the case of (c), a qualifying observation is required, namely that most studies of trade unionism in hospitality have what might be termed an "Anglo-Saxon" bias. That is, they have originated in and focus predominantly on English-speaking countries, especially the UK and USA. In the case of (b), limited data and comment will be provided on various trading blocs, but the main focus of analysis is the European Union (EU), from which the UK was preparing to depart at the time of writing (December 2019), Here, *general* data is readily available, especially in terms of measurement of union density (the latter defined as the number of employees who are trade union members as a proportion of a wider population, for example all workers in an industry or sector, or the workforce more widely) and is drawn from diverse sources but principally the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2019) and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019) statistical databases (ILOSTAT and OECD.Stat) and various reports of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) (e.g. 2012; 2018) who make use of the European Union's statistics database, Eurostat. OECD.Stat employs ILOSTAT data but does have some additional information, though only pertaining to its 36 member countries. Other sources employed are cited as and when appropriate in the text. Extensive data on trade union membership and density in hospitality in the EU is much less readily available, the most recent publicly available estimates apparently being for 2011/12 (Eurofound, 2012). Nevertheless, given the recent neglect of industrial relations in the hospitality sector, what follows serves as a useful literary and data update.

The context of trade union activity

The 1980s saw the growing influence of neo-conservative economic and social policies particularly associated with the Thatcher governments of the UK (1979–1990) and Reagan administrations in America (1981–1989) but spreading, with various degrees of application to many other capitalist and emerging capitalist countries. One application of these policies derived from a perceived imbalance of power between employers and trade unions in favour of the latter, an imbalance that politicians on the right saw as something to be legislatively corrected. They proceeded accordingly, and since the 1980s, the success of these policies has profoundly influenced the climate in which trade unions operate as is clearly indicated by the decline in trade union density in most countries.

For example, in OECD countries, McCarthy (2017) observes that, in 1985, 30% of workers were trade union members compared to 17% in 2017. The share of workers covered by collective agreements fell from 45% in 1985 to 33% in 2015. In an examination of 32 European countries since 2000, Vandaele (2019) notes a significant drop in trade union density which is especially pronounced among eastern European states. OECD and ILO data employed in the present article suggests that for the European Union, overall density is in the region of 26% compared to 35% in 2000/2001. In the case of some countries, decline in union membership has been precipitous, but a very small degree of caution is required in making such an assertion for, as Crouch (2017) observes, the 1980s represented the apogee of both trade union membership and political strength. Nevertheless, the statistics are telling (Table 1). The ILO has 188 country members (the figure rises if including overseas dependencies and territories) and currently lists the trade union density of 98 countries (approximately 52% of ILO membership) with variable audit dates between 2005 and 2016, with the majority (60%) having audit dates in 2015 and 2016 and only five (5%) having an audit date earlier than 2010. The vulgar mean value of trade union density (TUD) for these 98 countries was 22.3%. Seven countries had a TUD in excess of 50% and a further six of between 40–49.9%. The country with the highest trade union density was Iceland (90.4%) and the lowest was the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela at 0.2% (Table 2). Data can always be sliced in different ways though due care must be taken not only with the slicing process, but with subsequent interpretation (Koens & Wood, 2017). A sometimes-useful means of comparing labour data is to examine global and regional voluntary economic organisations like the OECD and the European Union as shown in Table 3. Despite the decline in economically developed countries of TUD since the 1980s, "rich" country groupings such as the OECD and EU still demonstrate higher density (24.9% and 26.2%) than is the case for country groupings with poorer and/or emerging economies, for example ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) (10%) and MERCOSUR (the southern common market of South America) (16.6%). There are numerous voluntary political, economic and trade organisations on the African continent, some with overlapping membership, and co-operative developments are dynamic and ongoing. The ILO offers statistics for only 15 countries in Africa, cutting across existing voluntary organisational boundaries. The lowest TUD recorded is 1.5% (Uganda) and the highest 43.2% (Egypt). The mean value for these fifteen countries is 21%. These figures confirm assertions made earlier in this article — namely that trade union density in general is indeed in long-term decline.

TABLE 1: Decline in trade union density in selected countries 1980s–2010s

Country	According to Crouch, 2017		According to ILO, 2019*	
	Density 1980s (%)	Density 2010s (%)	Year	Density %
Australia	49	17	2016	15
Austria	67	27	2016	27
Bulgaria	66	17	2016	14#
Czech Republic	64	13	2016	11
Estonia	66	7	2015	5
France	20	8	2015	8
Germany	33	18	2016	17†
Hungary	83	11	2016	9
Japan	35	18	2016	17
Latvia	46	13	2015	13
Lithuania	31	9	2016	8
New Zealand	59	19	2015	18
Russia	67	13	2015	31
Slovakia	67	13	2014	12
Slovenia	67	13	2016	20
UK	50	26	2016	24
USA	23	11	2016	10

*ILO or related figure, rounded

#European Trade Union Institute, 2016; Visser, 2019

†Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019

The impact of the global decline in trade union membership on such membership in hospitality is not immediately obvious. The relative absence of academic interest — past and present — in hospitality trade unionism may in part be related to the limited impact hospitality trade unions have always had historically within the sector, despite the persistently low pay and poor conditions of employment found therein. In the UK context, Dronfield and Soto (1980) note that the history of hotel industry trade union organisation prior to 1945 was one of failure, with membership never exceeding 2 000. From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, overall union "density" in hospitality varied somewhat, with estimates of 6% (Byrne, 1986), 3% (in 1990) (Price, 1994), 10% (1993) (Labour Research, 1995), and 8% (Labour Research, 1996). Recent commentaries suggest little has changed. According to Runge (2017, p. 12),

> [t]rade union levels in the food and beverage services remains minimal. Union membership density has declined from 5.9% in 2004 to 3.7% in 2015, whilst the proportion of those whose pay and conditions are affected by collective bargaining agreements has fallen from 8.8% to 6%.

The UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2019) suggests that accommodation and food services density is 3.3% for 2018, which would be a slight improvement on the preceding two years (Table 4).

The situation is not radically different in other English-speaking countries. In Australia, trade union density in the accommodation and food sectors fell from 19.3% in 1994 to 2.4% in 2016 (Parliament of Australia, 2018). In 2016, the same figure for 2016 in New Zealand was 5.9% (Ryall & Blumenfeld, 2017), although there is some evidence that prior to the 1990s trade unions in NZ thrived in the hotel sector (Williamson & Harris, 2019). The

TABLE 2: Overall trade union density (ILO, 2019) in 97 selected countries

Density >9.9% *N* = 26	Density 10%–19.9% *N* = 27	Density 20%–29.9% *N* = 23	Density 30%–39.9% *N* = 8	Density 40%–40.9% *N* = 6	Density >50% *N* = 7
Belize	Albania	Argentina	Armenia	China	Cuba
Cambodia	Australia	Austria	Bolivia	Cyprus	Denmark
Cameroon	Brazil	Bermuda	Bosnia & Herzegovina	Egypt	Finland
Colombia	Chile	Canada	Italy	Kazakhstan	Iceland
Estonia	Costa Rica	Croatia	Luxembourg	Sierra Leone	Malta
Ethiopia	Czech Republic	Ghana	Niger	Ukraine	Norway
France	Dominican Republic	Hong Kong, China	Taiwan		Sweden
Guatemala	El Salvador	Ireland	Russian Federation		
Hungary	Greece	Israel			
Indonesia	India	Macedonia (former			
Lesotho	Japan	Yugoslav Republic)			
Lithuania	Laos	Mauritius			
Malawi	Latvia	Moldova			
Malaysia	Mexico	Montenegro			
Myanmar	Namibia	Romania			
Pakistan	Netherlands	Senegal			
Paraguay	New Zealand	Serbia			
Peru	Panama	Singapore			
Philippines	Poland	Slovenia			
Saint Vincent & the	Samoa	South Africa			
Grenadines	Slovakia	Tanzania			
Seychelles	South Korea	Tunisia			
Thailand	Sri Lanka	United Kingdom			
Turkey	Switzerland	Zambia			
Uganda	Trinidad & Tobago				
Venezuela	United States				
Zimbabwe	Vietnam				

TABLE 3. Mean trade union density of selected associations of countries into voluntary political, economic and trade organizations

Organization	Members (*n*)	Density (%)
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)	10	10.0
European Union (EU)	28	26.2
Group of Twenty (G20) ex-EU	19*	19.7
Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD)	36	24.9
Southern Common Market (Mercosur)	12**	16.6
Mean		19.48

*The G20 has 19 country members plus the European Union (EU). The figures here exclude the EU data to avoid double counting as several members of the EU are individual members of the G20.
**Mercosur has four active members, one suspended member (Venezuela) and seven active associate members. Information for Uruguay was obtained from Cassoni, Allen and Labadie (2004: 443) which gave a density of 22% compared to 24% and Superveille (2014) reported for the end of 2013.

TABLE 4. UK trade union membership and density in the accommodation and food service sector 1995* and 2005–2017

Year	Members (*n*)	Density %	Density % of all employees	Year	Members (*n*)	Density %	Density % of all employees
1995*	77 000	7.9	32.2	2011	47 000	3.6	25.8
2005	45 000		28.3	2012	48 000	3.5	25.8
2006	60 000	5.6	28	2013	57 000	4.2	25.4
2007	55 000	4.9	27.7	2014	49 000	3.5	24.7
2008	58 000	5.3	27.3	2015	51 000	3.5	24.4
2009	48 000	3.9	27.1	2016	40 000	2.5	23.3
2010	47 000	3.8	26.4	2017	44 000	2.9	22.9

*The figures for 1995 are shown because this appears to be the peak year for trade union membership in the sector. Data in this table is sourced from UK Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (2014) and UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2018). The figure for 2018 is 3.3% implying a figure for membership of around 57,420 based on total employment of 1,740,000. (UK Department of Business, Energy and Skills, 2019; UK Office for National Statistics, 2019a). An arbitrary comparison with two other English speaking countries reveals that union density in the accommodation and food services sector of Australia was 2.4% in 2016 down from 19.3% in 1994 (Parliament of Australia, 2018). In New Zealand, density is cited at 5.9%, also for 2016 (Ryall & Blumenfeld, 2017).

USA presents a slightly — though only slightly — different picture. Some US commentators have detected a renaissance in hospitality trade unionism. Sherwyn and Wagner (2011, p. 3) note that a strong union presence is found in "great hotels" in many large American cities, adding that "the hospitality industry is now a priority, if not the holy grail for the future of the labour movement". Similarly, LaVan and Katz (2012, p. 73) assert of the USA that "[m]anagement/union relationships in the hospitality sector are in a current state of revitalization". Yet union density overall in the USA is one of the lowest of all developed countries at 10.5% in 2018. Publicly available US labour statistics are difficult to disentangle. Accommodation and food services consists of two subsectors — accommodation, and food services and drinking places. Union density for both subsectors is given as 2.3% overall, but in the individual subsectors the TUDs are specified as 8.3% and 1.3% respectively (US Department of Labour Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2019a; 2019b; 2019c). By these standards, unionisation in the accommodation sector can be argued to be buoyant in comparative terms even though 90%+ of workers remain non-unionised.

Data for union density in hospitality in the European Union is dated. Key sources are the periodic analyses of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) (e.g. 2012; 2018) who employ a variety of statistics collected by various EU organisations and social partners, including Eurostat. The most recent useful Eurofound data is for 2012. In a later report, Eurofound (2018, p. 22) made the following observation:

> ...as most of the trade unions included in the study have a domain which is not aligned with the sectoral definition used in this study, they had problems providing membership figures distinguishing members from HORECA [hotels, restaurants and cafés] from other activities such as contract catering. As a result, sectoral density figures cannot be provided.

This comment reflects both the limited extent of trade union membership in hospitality and the fact that most members in the industry belong to general unions, a point we shall return to later in this article. In the meantime, the Eurofound (2012) data reveals a picture of hospitality trade unionism in the EU little at variance with the patterns already discussed (Table 5). There are five countries with a density of less than 1%, all former satrapies of the Soviet Union (Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia) and five countries with a density of 1–5% (Bulgaria, France, Germany, Latvia and the United Kingdom). Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and Spain all have densities in the 5–15% range and three countries are in the 15–30% range (Greece, Luxembourg and Malta). Seven countries have a density in excess of 30% — these are Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Slovenia and Sweden. For the most part, EU countries with high overall trade union density have relatively high density for hospitality services trade unions. Beyond this, it is difficult to make further generalisations about the data. Qualitatively, and having established the context of the general decline in global trade union influence, further useful insights can be provided by considering the "industry specific" reasons advanced for explaining trade unionism's lack of success in hospitality.

Accounting for limited trade unionism in the hospitality sector

Previous analyses of trade unionism in the hospitality industry have explained their limited success in terms of three groups of factors: (a) geographical and cultural separation of the hospitality workforce from other groups of workers; (b) employer hostility to trade unionism; and (c) the attitudes and policies of trade unions themselves to recruitment of workers in the sector. Each of these is considered briefly in turn.

Geographical and cultural separation

Early analyses of trade unions in hospitality by Saunders (1981) and Riley (1985) argued for the importance of socio-geographic imperatives in understanding the sector. Riley suggests that the development of UK accommodation services up until the end of the Second World War inevitably followed travel patterns, industry growth thereby taking place principally in London, semirural and coastal areas, effectively isolating hospitality workers from urban industrial unionism with its emphasis on solidarity, opposition to management and a view of society predicated on conflict between social classes (interestingly, hospitality trade unionism as a facet of class conflict has attracted little analytic attention, an important exception being Piso, 1999). Geographical separation was complemented by cultural separation. Many of the larger hotels that emerged in the nineteenth century were oriented to servicing aristocratic and haute bourgeois clients and thus embraced many of the

TABLE 5: EU trade union density in the hotel, restaurant and catering (HORECA) sector 2012 (2011 data)

Country	Horeca density %	Overall density %	Country	Horeca density %	Overall density %
Austria	5–15	28	Italy	30+	36
Belgium	30+	55	Latvia	1–5	14
Bulgaria	1–5	20 1.	Lithuania	<1	10
Croatia	Not a member in 2011	Not a member in 2011	Luxembourg	15–30	35 2.
Cyprus	30+	49	Malta	15–30	53
Czech Republic	<1	16	Netherlands	5–15	19
Denmark	30+	66	Poland	<1	14
Estonia	<1	7	Portugal	5–15	19
Finland	30+	67	Romania	5–15	31
France	1–5	8	Slovakia	<1	14
Germany	1–5	18	Slovenia	30+	23
Greece	15–30	23	Spain	5–15	17
Hungary	5–15	12 2.	Sweden	30+	68
Ireland	Not supplied	35	United Kingdom	1–5	26

Adapted from Eurofound (2012: 27)

standards of domestic service and servitude, including the practice of staff living in, long hours of work and employees' close contact with management and guests. Saunders (1981) argued that the gradual decline of domestic service coincided with the first significant growth of the hospitality industry and saw a significant transfer of labour from domestic service to the sector. This view has enjoyed more recent, if partial support, from Coates (2015), who observes that European working-class women formed the bulk of the servant class, and domestic service remained until the 1930s the largest occupational category after coal mining. In the view of Riley (1985), the persistence of a domestic service ethos helped explain the individual rewards culture evident in many British hotels and revealed in numerous studies up until the 1990s (e.g. Johnson, 1983; Mars & Nicod, 1984). This culture arose in the absence of collective bargaining and saw "core" workers of particular value to management able to negotiate their own reward packages within limits, which, if Riley (1985) is to be believed, encouraged a conservative individualism on the part of many in the workforce, one aspect of which was a view that service employment is not necessarily compatible with trade unionism (see also Macfarlane, 1982a; 1982b; Wood & Pedlar, 1978). Such views resonate with the oft-quoted observation of George Orwell (1933, p. 55) in *Down and Out in Paris and London*:

The moral is, never be sorry for a waiter. Sometimes when you sit in a restaurant, still stuffing yourself half an hour after closing time, you feel that the tired waiter at your side must surely be despising you. But he is not. He is not thinking as he looks at you, "What an overfed lout"; he is thinking, "One day, when I have saved enough money, I shall be able to imitate that man." He is ministering to a kind of pleasure he thoroughly understands and admires. And that is why waiters are seldom Socialists, have no effective trade union, and will work twelve hours a day — they work fifteen hours, seven days a week, in many cafés. They are snobs, and they find the servile nature of their work rather congenial.

All of the above said, it has to be noted, however, that both in general and in the specific case of hospitality, it is largely the case that people have a positive view of the potential of trade unions (Lucas, 2009; Tait, 2017), although Macaulay and Wood (1992) observed that their respondents, while expressing such views, were sceptical of unions' ability to achieve very much in the light of employer hostility, to which discussion now turns.

Employer hostility to trade unions

The longstanding and visceral hostility of hospitality industry employers to trade unions is a well-documented feature of the sector and persists today. Nearly sixty years ago, the UK Commission on Industrial Relations (CIR) (1971, para 171) observed that "trade union growth in hotels…has mainly come about through the use of industrial action, and recognition of a trade union has usually been obtained when an hotel has been involved in an industrial dispute". The author of a more contemporary and journalistic piece on UK hotel trade unionism observed that

> [t]he sector is often referred to as the Bermuda triangle of union organizing. No collective agreement has been signed since the 1980s. Any attempt to unionize can lead to wholesale outsourcing of a department, job cuts and repercussions. (Roberts, 2015, n.p.)

The seminal work of Tony Royle (e.g. 2002a; 2002b; 2006; 2010; Royle & Urano, 2012) on the anti-union behaviour of employers in the fast food restaurant sector in general, and McDonald's in particular, is also detailed and compelling.

Some forty-five years ago, in a UK Hotel and Catering Economic Development Committee report, the director general of the National Economic Development Office (1975, p. ix) was moved to note that some representatives of the employers' organisation, the then British Hoteliers, Restaurateurs and Caterers' Association (now UK Hospitality), dissented from its key findings, including encouragement to join a trade union. The employers, he wrote, "cannot accept that management should be expected to do more than respect the right of staff to join a trade union". Lord (Charles) Forte (1986, p. 123), a giant of the twentieth century UK hotel industry wrote: "I do not recognise or approve of the concept of two sides of industry", also arguing that trade union activity can subvert management communications with staff and that union tactics can on occasion be underhand and akin to bullying. Forte's analysis was certainly asymmetrical and perhaps self-serving: hotel and hospitality companies have frequently employed similar tactics. Indeed, in one account, Forte's own company arguably did just that in the well-documented strike at the Sheffield Grosvenor Hotel (Wood & Pedlar, 1978). Anti-union sentiment persists. In a post on a well-known industry website, hospitalitynet, Mitchell (2007, n.p.) offered the following advice:

It is possible to "union proof" your property to a great degree. By following a few simple pro-employee rules…you will be able to demonstrate that a union is not needed at your property. Remember: it is far easier to prevent union organizing from getting started in the first place than it is to campaign against a union once organizing has started.

This is a milder example of the usually legal but ethically questionable techniques employed by management to discourage trade unions in hospitality (see Wood, 1997; and for more recent insights into such management-union relationships, including some fascinating historical studies, Basnyat et al., 2017; Cobble, 1991; Garb, 2014; Park, 2004; Raspadori, 2015; Soni-Sinha, 2012; Waddoups, 2000). Also worthy of note here is managers' support of their owners' ideologies. Some evidence suggests that in the past a simplistic ethos prevailed in which "good" managers created a positive working environment, obviating the need for a trade union presence, and workers agitating for union membership were labelled as "troublemakers". In unionised hotels, it was additionally not unusual for managers to deny that a union presence impinged upon the management of their unit (Aslan & Wood, 1993; Croney, 1988) which, if true, makes managerial opposition to unions even more difficult to understand.

Trade union attitudes and behaviours in hospitality worker recruitment

Previous research has noted that, historically, trade unions have shown limited interest in organising the hospitality industry (Wood, 1997). One reason for this is that processes of recruitment and retention of members in the hospitality sector can be a formidable economic and administrative challenge given the geographical dispersal of employees (traditional industrial unionism was plant or factory based with members accordingly concentrated, often in large numbers, in well-defined geographical areas); the predominance of small businesses; and the structure and operation of the workforce (with its large numbers of part-time, casual and highly mobile personnel) (Byrne, 1986; Wood, 1997). In a number of countries, including the UK, developments since the 1980s have included a significant, widespread, extension of the role of employment agencies in supplying workers to the hospitality sector. The industry has embraced the strategic outsourcing of labour with vigour (e.g. Gannon et al., 2010; Knox, 2010). A similar enthusiasm for zero-hour contracts (where employees are not guaranteed work and are paid only for work carried out) has contributed to a labour market landscape that would have been largely unfamiliar to those researching trade union activity a generation or so ago. In the UK, only 4% of hotel and restaurant sector employers used zero-hour contracts in 2004 — by 2011 this was 19% (Pyper & McGuinness, 2014) and this figure appears to have since held constant at around 20% (Pyper & McGuiness, 2018). *The Independent* newspaper revealed in 2013 that in the UK, 90% of McDonald's employees were employed on zero-hour contracts (Hall, 2013).

The institutional history and character of trade unions has also been advanced as an element contributing to their limited engagement with the hospitality industry, at least in the UK. Most unions prior to the 1990s were primarily focused upon public and private extractive and/or heavy and/or manufacturing industries, and with government services. Private sector services and some services in the public sector did not attract equal interest. As observed earlier, many hospitality workers are members of "general" unions and these organisations have rarely made special provision or created special strategies for the systematic mass recruitment of hospitality workers (Johnson & Mignot, 1982; see also Tables 6 & 7). For part-time workers in particular, limited earnings have not always made expenditure on union dues an attractive proposition. Only in the 1980s did the GMB union, (parent of the then Hotel and Catering Workers' Union), campaign to ensure that part-timers were incorporated within the collective bargaining process (Byrne, 1986). Further, unions at this time were largely patriarchal organisations (the number of women who have led trade unions in the UK can be counted on the fingers of two hands and the UK Trade Union Congress did not get its first female leader until 2013; yet, as of 2019, 55% of all trade union members were women). Mars and Mitchell (1976) aired the somewhat suspect view that women were more sceptical of the benefits of trade union membership and less likely to act collectively than men. Yet Gabriel (1988, p. 84) reported at least implicit sexism when he observed that some of the women trade union members that he studied felt that grievances against their managers "were compounded by a feeling that they were entirely ignored by the union" (more recent and interrogative research has confirmed that trade unions have not been immune to sexist and racist thinking and behaviour within their ranks, e.g. Alberti, 2016; Soni-Sinha, 2012; Tapia et al., 2017; Wills, 2005).

Some perspectives on hospitality trade unionism today

The foregoing narrative indicates that early research into limited trade union membership and activity in hospitality sought for causes in the particular characteristics of the sector. The absence of contemporary research makes it difficult to assert which, if any, of these characteristics are dominant or relevant today. One UK perspective favours the view that the generic economic and social circumstances under which trade unions have to operate are equally or more important than specific industry factors in influencing trade union engagement and success. Such an approach implicitly accepts both the decline in trade union membership, power and influence, and recognition of concomitant changes in unions' priorities. Indeed, in 2019, and even in the light of occasional upticks in union enrolments in recent years, the precipitous overall decline in all union membership is matched only by the fact that unions have in effect retreated substantially from private business and industry. The proportion of public sector employees belonging to a trade union was 52.5% in 2018 compared to 13.2% in the private sector (UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2019). The modern trade union member is more likely to be a woman than a man and is likely to be older rather than younger with all that that implies for future membership extinction (some 77% of union members are 35 or over and only 4.4% are in the 16–24 category; yet in hotels in 2017, 67% of employees were aged 16–39) (UK Trades Union Congress, 2018). Employment

TABLE 6. Main UK hospitality trade unions and membership (Byrne, 1986)

Union	Membership 1986
Hotel and Catering Workers' Union (a division of the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trade Union, the GMB)	33 000
The TGWU (Transport and General Workers' Union – after subsequent mergers it is now known as Unite the Union)	12 000
The Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW)	6 500 in 1984
National Union of Railwaymen (NUR, now the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, or RMT)	5 000 in 1984
Total	56 500

TABLE 7. Sectoral trade unions hospitality and tourism (UK) as recommended by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) (2019: 38–43)

Employment category	Recommended unions
Airlines and airports (cabin crew)	Association of Flight Attendants; Unite
Airlines and airports (ground staff)	GMB; Unite
Airline pilots	British Air Line Pilots' Association
Catering	Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union; GMB; Transport Salaried Staffs' Association; Unite; Union of Shop, Distributive & Allied Workers
Food production/processing	Bakers, Food & Allied Workers' Union; GMB; Unite, Union of Shop, Distributive & Allied Workers
Hotels	GMB; Transport Salaried Staffs' Association; Unite the Union
Shipping and ferries	GMB; National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers
Travel trade	Transport Salaried Staffs' Association

status and workplace size are also critical predictors of union membership. Employees are more likely to be trade union members if they hold permanent and full-time jobs (around 52% of all hospitality industry jobs are part-time as of early 2019) (UK Office for National Statistics, 2019; 2019a). In 2018, 30.6% of employees in larger workplaces belonged to a trade union compared to only 15.2% in workplaces with fewer than 50 people. In 2018, there were 186 000 UK hospitality SMEs (small- and medium-sized enterprises employing fewer than 250 employees). Within the economy as a whole, micro-businesses (employing 0–9 people) numbered 5.4 million and accounted for 96% of all businesses (Rhodes, 2018), so it is not unreasonable to assume that the majority of hospitality workplaces are small in size and scope.

New forms of cultural stratification have thus seemingly emerged within trade unionism, between public and private sectors, men and women, younger and older workers, and SMEs and larger businesses, trends mostly, though not comprehensively, confirmed in a magisterial review of evidence by Schnabel (2013). This is also true to some degree of geographical separation. Lucas (2009, p. 51) acknowledges that low trade union membership in hospitality is an "enduring reality", but offers the view that

> [t]rade unions' best chance of success in such highly unfertile territory is to target their efforts on employers that can be persuaded of their legitimacy and secure adequate levels of recruitment to ensure the most cost-effective gains.

In the light of past and present knowledge of the extremes to which hotel and other hospitality operators will go to discourage trade unionism, this might be deemed a somewhat eccentric view. In reality, what appears to have happened is a different kind of targeting. Stewardship of limited resources by trade unions has seemingly created a focused, rather than universal approach to recruitment of workers, with that focus being on major cities. Big wins in big cities can thus be presented as a triumph even though they are, in reality, somewhat little wins. For example, the Unite Here union in New York was reported in 2015 as "about to ratify an extraordinary agreement through to 2026 between its members and the major hotel chains (around 71% of the city's hotel rooms)" (Roberts, 2015, n.p.; see also Bergene et al., 2014).

A similar if less extensive strategy can be inferred from the activities of Unite the Union, the UK's second largest general union who have a hotel workers' division that appears to be focused primarily on London (see http://www.hotelworkers.org.uk/?q=node/213; http://www.hotelworkers.org.uk/; http://www.restaurantworkers.co.uk/417041292; also Unite the Union, 2016). The first of the above referenced websites states that

> [t]he Hotel Workers Branch is part of Unite the Union, the UK's biggest and strongest general Union. With a membership presence in over 80 London Hotels, we are at the forefront of the struggle to protect workers' rights and improve conditions in the hospitality sector.

Given the localisation of the union's activity, this is a bold claim, not least in that estimates in recent years suggest that London accounts for only around 20% of UK hospitality industry employment (Oxford Economics, 2015). Other targeted activities by Unite the Union include prosecution of a long-standing dispute with the InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) (again, principally in London, see Unite the Union, 2018) and an emphasis on "fair" tipping. A particular source of contention in the UK in recent years has been the (continuing) practice of employers raiding (or procuring entirely) employees' tips. The addition of an "optional" service charge to customer bills in restaurants, which then goes straight to the employer's pocket, is just one of many egregious sector practices that are permitted by law (see also https://unitetheunion.org/campaigns/fair-tips-for-waiting-staff/). It is, however, interesting to note that the general practice of tipping is implicitly accepted in a way that it was not in earlier decades (Byrne, 1986; Wood, 1997). Depending on one's perspective, this may evidence realism on the part of unions or an acceptance of what is perceived to be employees' acquisitiveness.

Employer hostility to trade unions continues to be a feature of the hospitality industry. At the turn of the present century, Hoque (1999; 2000) claimed that the introduction of human resource management (HRM) practices into UK hotels was having a largely positive effect on industrial relations, but his study, like many before, was based on a relatively small sample of corporately owned hotels at a time when, as noted by Nickson and Wood (2000), 80% of UK hotel businesses were SMEs. This said, there is little doubt that today corporate branded hotel groups usually evidence significant philosophical commitments to sound HRM practice. However, Croney's (1988) early research was warningly suggestive of a gap between positive corporate commitment to what we now call HRM policy and the following of that policy at the level of the hotel (and indeed restaurant) unit. In other words, even before the success of neo-conservative politics from the 1980s onwards, the hospitality sector looked very much like what many other industries were to become, i.e. openly hostile to trade unions at the "ground" level. Simply put, commitment to HRM practises does not automatically, if ever, incorporate a role for trade union involvement in industrial relations. Indeed, the history of HRM is arguably the history of employer strategies to disarm and reduce workers' influences on employment practices (Thompson, 2011). In the last twenty years, the development of "asset light" approaches to hotel management — present much earlier in the restaurant industry in the form of franchising (the asset light model in hotels involves the use of leases, franchises and management contracts to obviate the need for corporate ownership) — has made the relationship between brand owner and operator even more precarious (Gannon et al., 2010; van Ginneken et al., 2016). Roberts (2015, n.p.) quotes a regional organiser of the UK Unite the Union as saying:

> The decline in manufacturing has taken with it an understanding of industrial relations on the part of employers. Now, hotels and restaurants are property-based franchises belonging to hedge funds and private equity firms: they own the brand and the building but have little concern for employees; the shareholder comes first.

Finally, here, we earlier noted the view that some success in unionisation comes about only as a result of industrial disputes, particularly strike action. The Eurofound (2012) organisation collected data for 26 EU countries and found that 12 (46%) reported no disputes or conflicts at all; 4 (15%) reported threats of conflict/disputes that had been averted as a result of mediation; 4 (15%) reported one dispute/conflict; and that 5 (19%) reported two or more such events (Table 8). The evidential power of these figures is limited, but the low levels of industrial conflict that they suggest is consistent with the explanations often advanced for the absence of unionism in hospitality.

TABLE 8: EU conflict and industrial action in the HORECA sector (Eurofound, 2012); origins of data not explicitly stated but appears to cover the first decade of the century

Country	Conflicts and disputes	Country	Conflicts and disputes
Austria	Category 1	Italy	Category 1
Belgium	Category 2	Latvia	Category 1
Bulgaria	Category 1	Lithuania	Category 1
Croatia	Not a member at the time	Luxembourg	Category 1
Cyprus	Category 2	Malta	Category 1
Czech Republic	Category 2	Netherlands	Category 1
Denmark	Category 4	Poland	Category 4
Estonia	Category 1	Portugal	Category 4
Finland	Category 2	Romania	Category 4
France	Category 3	Slovakia	Category 1
Germany	Category 3	Slovenia	Category 4
Greece	No information supplied	Spain	Category 4
Hungary	Category 1	Sweden	Category 3
Ireland	Category 3	United Kingdom	Category 1

Category 1 = no reported conflicts or industrial actions; Category 2 = dispute or threat of action averted by mediation; Category 3 = single action; Category 4 = two or more actions

A superficial and unscientific 20-page Google investigation of strike activity in the industry since 2010 reveals further limited examples. In 2018, Marriott in the USA faced multiple-city disputes and strike action, the Unite Here union being the employee representative organisation (McCracken, 2019; Philip, 2018; Schaefers, 2018). In Paris, also in 2018, Hyatt faced a dispute over outsourcing (Cailhol & Kristanadjaja, 2018) and in Accra, Ghana, the Mövenpick hotel faced a dispute over alleged racist treatment of some of its staff in early 2019 (Shaban, 2019). In the UK, there were rare strike occurrences in September 2017 and October 2018. In 2017, as reported in the national press, staff in two branches of McDonald's went on strike over pay and contractual terms (specifically, in the case of the latter, the use of zero-hour contracts) (Kollewe & Slawson, 2017). In 2018, staff in two Brighton branches of JD Wetherspoon's bar chain (with 37 000 employees and 1 000 outlets) went on strike, citing low pay, difficult working conditions and company policies — specifically the absence of sick pay. Interestingly, in pressing their case, employees had joined not one of the mighty unions which has interests in the hospitality sector, but the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union (BFAWU), which markets itself as the only independent union in the UK food industry and has a small membership of around 20 000 (McGrath, 2018). This union was also involved in the McDonald's strike. While these reports suggest activity in the hospitality sector in pursuit of workers' rights, they are not numerous and must therefore be treated with appropriate caution.

Concluding remarks

A number of provisional inferences can be drawn from the material considered in this article. First, the overall decline in trade union membership and influence is clearly engendered by the conservative economic and social policies implemented across the globe to varying degrees in the last fifty years or so. Secondly, the long-term attrition of union membership has occurred even in light of the evidence that trade unions in general continue to create a wage premium (i.e. union members are better paid than non-union members, see for example, Bryson, 2014). Third, the hospitality sector, which for the reasons recounted here has never had a tradition of trade unionism and therefore begins from a low base, appears not to be as proportionately (negatively) affected as might be expected from the overall diminution in union membership. Yet, and finally, despite some minimal evidence of recent industrial conflict and advances by trade unions in the sector in the USA and UK, it does not seem likely that there will be any significant change in the near future.

This said, trade unions and their supporters remain (perhaps falsely) optimistic for their future capacity for growth and influence. For example, a report by Tait (2017, p. 5) for the politically left-leaning British Fabian Society noted that "despite the long-term decline of trade union membership, trade unions are still the UK's largest voluntary movement", going on to report a survey in which 59% of respondents accepted that trade unions were necessary to protect working conditions (this survey was of the UK private sector where decline in trade union membership has been greatest, as it has been in many countries). International trade union associations also continue to flourish (for example, in Europe one of the most important such organisations for tourism and hospitality is the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (https://www.effat.org/).

In the narrower UK context, the nation's departure from the European Union in 2020 has been strongly linked to nationalistic fervour energised by the perception that immigration to the UK (notably from the EU) is too high and too disruptive to the social and economic fabric. Recent governments have also promoted (though not yet significantly acted upon) stricter regulation of immigration, including a significant reduction in low-skill employment. Utilising 2017 Labour Force Survey data, the UK Trade Union Congress (2018, p. 8) note that "the majority of employees in the hotel sector are from the UK (62 per cent). However, this is a much smaller majority than across all employees, where around 83 per cent are from the UK". Any monitoring of specialist online news reports certainly reveals employer fears about the impact of a decline in foreign workers on sourcing employees.

The investigation — even secondary investigation — of industrial relations in the hospitality industry is necessarily messy and given to a lack of completeness. Given the claims made for the economic importance of the sector, by the sector itself as well as academic advocates on its behalf (e.g. Slattery, 2012), it is perhaps somewhat surprising that in recent times, researchers have not paid more attention to the important structural aspects of employment in hospitality. Instead, what appears to have occurred is a modish commitment to examining often marginal "human resource management" interventions in the sector. Yet, examination and review of the institutional aspects of industrial relations, including trade unionism, remains important to an understanding of the wider context of employment in the hospitality sector and indeed to the politics of the sector, as this article has sought to illustrate.

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VOLUME 10(2) 2020

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