

Research in **Hospitality Management**



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Research in **Hospitality Management**

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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.

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Editorial

Erwin Losekoot, Editor-in-Chief

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This year, *Research in Hospitality Management* will begin publishing three issues, starting with a special issue on luxury curated by guest editor Andy Heyes. Thank you to all our contributors, reviewers, subscribers, and readers for helping the journal reach this milestone. We can now look forward to an electronic submission platform and being included on scholarly journal listings and ratings.

A year ago in 2020, many employees thought they would be working from home for a few weeks but, more than a year later, we now know better! Researchers are already reflecting on the global COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts. Colleagues from the Academy of International Hospitality Research have already published on this subject. In this issue, hotel management student **Nanda van Leeuwen Boomkamp** and **Nicole Vermolen** reflect on crisis management during the pandemic.

Two other articles also originated in student work, one on sexual harassment in restaurants co-authored by students **Andreea-Stefania Baltag**, **Melanie Bosman**, **Andrea Bravo Wilson**, **Joanne Huismans**, with staff member **Wichard Zwaal**. Another by **Javed Suleri**, **Roos Meijer** and **Edwin Tarus** focuses on customer experience analysis to explore hotel identity.

Two articles focus on research conducted in African countries. From Ghana, **Grace Anthony**, **Ishmael Mensah** and **Eunice Fay Amissah** explore undergraduate student perceptions of careers in hospitality. **Amare Yaekob Chiriko** investigates the economic impact of seasonality on hotels in Aksum, northern Ethiopia.

Hotel Management School (HMS) faculty are well represented in this issue. Design-based education is the focus of **Hanneke Assen**, **Marte Rinck de Boer** and **Macmillian Fernandes**. A local food project in Ooststellingswerf is the subject of an article by **Lucia Tomassini** and **Elena Cavagnaro** with **Simona Staffieri** of the Italian National Institute of Statistics.

Rodney Westerlaken, who is based in NHL Stenden's Bali campus, writes on orphanage tourism, the subject of his recently completed doctoral dissertation. **Elena Cavagnaro** reports on an experimental study with **Clara Amend** that examines nudging people towards more sustainable eating. **Ran Zhang** and **Erwin Losekoot** present a netnographic study of what employees really think about team building. HMS alumnus **Andy Heyes** contributes his point of view on luxury hospitality in an opinion piece. Lastly, **Georges El Hajal** reviews this journal's founding editor Conrad Lashley's latest book, *Slavery and Liberation in Hotels, Restaurants and Bars*.

We are planning a special issue on hospitality and healthcare, drawing on research emerging from the newly formed Hospitality and Healthcare Education Partnership between the five Dutch university hotel schools. We continue to invite submission of regular contributions too, so please do get in touch directly or via our website if you have research to share.

What is luxury hospitality? A need to move towards a scientific understanding

Andy Heyes 

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ABSTRACT: The world of luxury and that of luxury hospitality has been growing for numerous years. From hotels such as the Burj Al Arab in Dubai, The Torch in Doha and The Savoy in London, luxury hospitality and the variety which is now on offer are growing exponentially. Despite the growth of the industry, little research and literature is available to practitioners, scholars and researchers alike to help them better understand the current situation. While there is a little literature on offer, there is a need for more detailed research and analysis to be conducted. This article is a call for research which it is hoped will help to add to the current body of knowledge as well as help to attract future researchers to collaborate on developing new insights. A brief analysis of the current situation and literature is provided along with future tracks and themes which could potentially be a means for research development.

KEYWORDS: comparison, hotels, London, United Arab Emirates

Introduction

The combination of luxury and hospitality is one which has for many years been scrutinised (Heyes & Lashley, 2017). While luxury arguably can be about retail, the mixture between luxury and hospitality has been one which has been visible in society for centuries. While no official definition of a luxury hotel exists (Slattery & Games, 2010), the two concepts have joined together particularly in terms of the tangible and intangible natures of what they offer. A theory of hospitality has been put forward by Lashley and Morrison (2001); however, a theory based on luxury and luxury hospitality does not exist. This article will start to address that.

The non-existent luxury theory

To theorise luxury is not possible, arguably due to the complex nature and the unique aspects which the concept of luxury has to offer. Certain theories around the subject do exist, such as conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899). But to define and theorise luxury is arguably impossible due to the many components of luxury — including that of exclusivity (Chandon et al., 2016), price/expensiveness (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012) and quality (Frank, 1999; Thomas, 2007; Hoffmann & Coste-Marnière, 2012).

To expand upon this, arguably the main element is that luxury is highly personalised, although it is also dependent on an individual's historical and cultural background (Berry, 1994; Choi, 2003; Wiedmann et al., 2007). "The idea of luxury products and services are exceptions to the everyday normalities of life", bringing into context a person's real-life cultural experiences, needs and social backgrounds (Hoffmann & Coste-Marnière, 2012, p. 69). With everyone's lives and personal backgrounds different

to others, it is hard for us as academics and practitioners to move towards a unified definition of "luxury hospitality".

Luxury hospitality

While the world of luxury has usually been associated with that of retail and is often the focus of the academic literature available on the subject, hospitality and the service industry do find their way into the discussion, which means elements of luxury are no doubt apparent. The need for exciting new products (tangibles) delivered with high class service (intangibles) is arguably needed to create memorable experiences for which the hospitality industry is famous (Lashley & Morrison, 2001). Questions could be asked, however, as to how and to what extent these experiences become "luxurious". An increase in quality and even quantity could be argued to be at the forefront of most people's ideas when it comes to luxury — but an excess may not be luxury, particularly in a world increasingly debating sustainability.

From previous literature, it could be interpreted that the worlds of luxury and hospitality have similar meanings associated with them. The quality of the tangible with a mixture of the intangible could arguably help create the overall experience (Mattila, 1999; Sherman, 2007; Slattery, 2012; Heo & Hyun, 2015).

While the turn of the millennium has been suggested to be the start of the "experiential economy" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), it can also be suggested that it was the start of the new luxury period (Mei-Pochter & Nanisch, 2010), where consumers changed their notions of wanting physical goods (tangibles) to what is now considered wanting luxury experiences to express their emotions (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2006; Hoffmann & Coste-Marnière, 2012).

Figure 1 provides a model that looks to identify and explain the current circumstances which revolve around the concepts

of luxury and hospitality. A combination of both tangibles and intangibles can help to create the necessary experience which consumers are looking for.

Research and literature on luxury hospitality has been discussed throughout the past two decades (Sherman, 2007; Heyes & Nadkarni, 2016; Heyes & Lashley, 2017; Hoa & May, 2021; Lee et al., 2021). Further research is, however, needed if we are going to move towards a deeper understanding of luxury hospitality — from both a practical and an academic perspective.

With many graduates of hospitality studies expressing their desire to work in the luxury hospitality industry, arguments have arisen based on whether the current curriculum is sufficient for students to move into a career in luxury hospitality. So, this article is to ask for collaborations into the future development of our understanding of the luxury hospitality industry, and how hospitality education should prepare future managers for this. While it could be suggested that the luxury sector is a relatively small part of the hospitality industry, it is an area of great potential to which a wide range of academic disciplines could be applied, including that of economics, sociology and psychology. Based on my personal experience, gaining access to such establishments and consumers to conduct research or gather teaching resources is challenging (Heyes & Lashley, 2017). However, collectively, it should be possible for hospitality educators to gain a deeper understanding of the term luxury hospitality.

Areas for future research

There are multiple areas for future research in the luxury hospitality industry. Firstly, in regard to human resources. A recently created website (insightandy.co.uk) explores a range of notions which we as researchers can look to investigate and discuss. Such topics could include that of graduate learning and management schemes, and the experience and expertise of faculty members, etc. Similarly, the need to explore the notions of luxury hospitality whether that be from a tangible or intangible perspective is needed. In a realm where “experience” is most important, how best to research this going forward is a big question.

A call for research is provided and needed in these areas. Therefore, a proposal of possible research themes and tracks can be set out as follows:

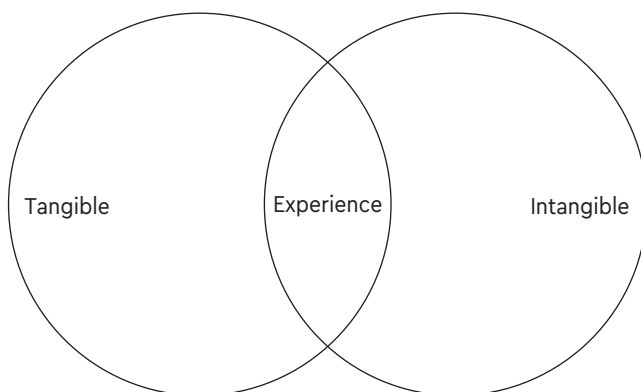


FIGURE 1: The relationship between the tangible and the intangible, a work in progress

1. Service quality in luxury hospitality establishments
2. Human resources in luxury hospitality
3. Luxury hotel schools — what are they?
4. International expansion of luxury hospitality groups — is expansion a way of losing exclusivity?

The above research agendas can assist greatly in identifying tracks to which many researchers can find suitable initiatives and avenues of research.

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The impact of orphanage tourism on Bali

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ABSTRACT: This article deals with the phenomenon of orphanage tourism in Bali, Indonesia. Context is given based on a recent published report by the Dutch government on the impact of orphanage tourism. Findings are derived from larger-scale qualitative research based on child welfare institutions in Bali, Indonesia (50 children, 16 familial caregivers) between 2015 and 2020. Two axial codes (forced attendance and suspicion) of this research are used in this article. Deductions are based on recent literature, prior research and findings. The conclusion of this article is that children in Bali should not be institutionalised for the sake of poverty or education and that a continuous flow of tourists visiting and donating to child welfare institutions means that children have become commodities for such institutions, causing a plethora of problems for children living in these institutions.

KEYWORDS: Bali, impact, orphanage tourism, right to education, underprivileged children

Introduction

Recently, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a report entitled "Investigation of the extent of volunteer travel from the Netherlands to residential care facilities for children in low- and middle-income countries: roles, responsibilities and scope for government action". The aim of the study was to define the extent of orphanage tourism from the Netherlands, to describe the actors involved and to decide what government actions can be taken (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). That orphanage tourism is damaging for children being institutionalised has been addressed by the author's PhD research on the change of perception of submitting children to child welfare institutions in Denpasar, Bali (Westerlaken, 2020). In this research, several children living in child welfare institutions indicated the impact of visitors to the institutions they were living in and parental caregivers neglecting to act, which showed ignorance of the dangers. The fact that children need to entertain guests with the objective of securing the economic situation of the child welfare institutions can be defined as orphanage trafficking as described in the Australian Modern Slavery Act (Government of Australia, 2018). The Act defines it as "the active recruitment of children into orphanages or residential care institutions in developing nations for the purpose of ongoing exploitation, particularly through orphanage tourism" (point 8.4). The introduction of a modern slavery act based on the Australian model is mentioned as one of the possible interventions the Dutch cabinet can take based on the report mentioned above. With this, the Dutch government would consider child trafficking and child exploitation as a form of modern slavery (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). This case study focuses on the impact of orphanage tourism in Bali, Indonesia.

Literature review

Since 2007, Indonesia has been making a shift in policy from a focus on economic, cultural and religious support to institutions for orphaned, neglected or abandoned children to a policy that focuses on strengthening the capacities of the impoverished families to retain their children in the family situation rather than surrender them to residential child welfare institutions (Martin & Sudrajat, 2007; Babington, 2015).

Babington (2015) notes that the increase in the number of child welfare institutions before 2007 mainly resulted from individuals and organisations seeking to take financial advantage of easily obtained government subsidies. Socio-economic hardship among parents or familial caregivers are considered to be the main reason, or a push factor, for placing children in child welfare institutions, even if they come from middle-class families (Irwanto & Kusumaningrum, 2014).

For Bali specifically, the fact that tourism is such an important source of income, running a child welfare institution to gain funding from tourists as an attractive business opportunity for commercial purposes has become a possible scenario (Sudrajat [Save the Children Indonesia], 2017, personal communication).¹ Butler (2011) describes in his podcast that the generosity of holidaymakers intensifies the misery of vulnerable children and that funds are misused to let the child welfare institution's owners' own children study at international universities and buy cars.

According to the Decree of the Minister of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia NO30/HUK/2011, children are to be admitted to a child welfare institution as a last resort (Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2011). The decree is in line with the United Nations Convention of the Rights of

the Child (signed with reservations by Indonesia in 1990) which declares that

the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding (United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, 1990, p. 1).

The Decree of the Minister of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia NO30/HUK/2011 stipulates when children need alternative care, such as placement in a child welfare institution or a substitute family, as follows:

1. The family does not provide appropriate care even with adequate support, neglects, or overlooks their responsibility towards the child.
2. Children who have no family or the whereabouts of their family or relatives is not known.
3. Children who are victims of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation in order to ensure their safety and well-being, where familial care is evidently against their best interest.
4. Children separated from their families due to disaster, either social or natural (Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2011, p. 20).

The 2019 Resolution on the Rights of the Child about the promotion and protection of the rights of children was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 2019 and has been ratified by the Republic of Indonesia. The main focus of the resolution is on children without parental care. The importance of growing up in a family environment, the right to have a family and the unnecessary separation of children from their families shows that children should not be separated from their family due to poverty or lack of resources (Better Care Network, 2019a). The main message is that the resolution urges the strengthening of child welfare and child protection systems and improving current efforts. The resolution further stresses that trafficking and exploitation of children in care facilities has to be prevented. The resolution specifically mentions volunteer programmes in child welfare institutions, specifically in the context of tourism and faith-based missions. The new resolution concludes that children should be supported to stay with or be returned to their families, or where this is not possible, governments should commit to put in place systems that guarantee quality alternative care is provided to all children through family and community-based care (Better Care Network, 2019a). As Better Care Network concludes, "[t]his Resolution's call for institutions to be progressively eliminated gives an unprecedented political, human rights-based imperative for States to transform the way children are cared for and families are supported" (Better Care Network, 2019b).

The organisation Save the Children describes that there is little awareness by governmental social workers in Indonesia of the potential negative effects when children live in a child welfare institution. The governmental social workers view institutionalisation as the best solution for families considered to be *tidak mampu*, in other words, families considered too poor and uneducated to provide proper care, guidance and discipline (Martin, 2013).

Research by Save the Children UK, DEPSOS (*Departemen Sosial* — Indonesian Department of Social Welfare) and UNICEF showed that in a number of institutions, children's chores extended to work that had to be carried out by the children with the objective of contributing to the economic benefit of the

institution (Martin & Sudrajat, 2007). Save the Children, UNICEF and DEPSOS conclude that this work is seen as exploitative and harmful in law (Martin & Sudrajat, 2007).

Richter and Norman (2010) describe orphanage tourism as a form of volunteer tourism characterised by short-term travel to residential care facilities to engage in everyday caregiving or for a short leisure visit, where an emotional connection with needy young children is sold. Child welfare institutions using this practice exploit local poor families and well-meaning foreigners. Poor families are enticed to surrender their children to the child welfare institution and well-meaning foreigners as they think they can make a change in those children's lives, while the actual main objective is to gain money (Mowforth, 2016). Save the Children is worried about the untrained and unskilled number of volunteers in child welfare institutions and calls it a harmful practice and way of building and funding these institutions (Smith, 2016).

Research shows that many children cared for in child welfare institutions are neither parentless nor abandoned by their families. For example, only 8% of the children researched in Denpasar, Bali had no parents alive or known (Westerlaken, 2020). The main reason for placement in a child welfare institution is the economic situation of the parents or the desire for securing an education (Martin & Sudrajat, 2007; Butler, 2011; Martin, 2013). Child welfare institutions actively recruit children to fill quotas, which can often be set by sponsors. For this type of recruitment, child welfare institutions mainly look at educational needs instead of care needs (Martin & Sudrajat, 2007; Martin, 2013; O'Kane, 2016). The key criteria of most of the institutions researched by Save the Children, UNICEF and DEPSOS exposed that the child must be of school age, from a poor family, able to take care of themselves including washing, cooking and carrying out daily chores and willing to abide by the rules of the institutions.

The report by Save the Children, UNICEF and DEPSOS even questions whether institutions are run *by* children or *for* children as care for children is not prioritised and the ratio of staff per child is low. Generally, there is a lack of understanding of the importance of responsible adults providing individual care and attention to children. Life skills that are taught in the institution are in essence crucial to the actual running of the institution, such as cleaning, cooking and washing (Martin & Sudrajat, 2007).

The Decree of the Minister of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia NO30/HUK/2011 is clear on the fact that economic reasons and poverty should not be the main reason for the separation of a child from their family, hence a submission to a child welfare institution should not be permitted based on those grounds (Martin & Sudrajat, 2007; Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2011; Martin, 2013). In contrast, access to education was named as a primary aim for many child welfare institutions in the research done by Save the Children, UNICEF and DEPSOS (Martin & Sudrajat, 2007) and is confirmed by Westerlaken (2020), who discovered that 72% of children living in child welfare institutions in Denpasar, Bali are institutionalised solely for the reason of poverty and education. As their key conclusion, Save the Children, UNICEF and DEPSOS note that children should not have to choose between education and family (Martin & Sudrajat, 2007).

A special provision in the Decree of the Minister of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia NO30/HUK/2011 is made relating to education. If the principal matter faced by the family

is access to education, the child welfare institutions are obliged to facilitate access to education by paying for tuition costs, school supplies and transportation costs. The child welfare institutions are supposed to prevent the placement of children in their institutions based on the purpose of accessing education (Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2011).

Research approach

The research in this article consisted of a qualitative method approach with a general focus on reasons for submission, experiences, feelings and effects of living in a child welfare institution. Based on preliminary field research, a sample group of 50 children and sixteen parents/familial caregivers were interviewed.

Study findings

This report deals with one identified subtopic of the PhD research of the author (violence and force, axial code "forced attendance and suspicion"). Other identified subtopics in this research were "way of submission", "feelings of parents", "reactions of family", "reactions of child", "reason", "religion", "violence and force" and "best choice or not".² Children as well as familial caregivers were asked about their experiences with violence and force (physical, verbal and sexual) in the child welfare institutions, as also described by Irwanto and Kusumaningrum (2014). Several cases of abuse, by staff and tourists, concerning Balinese child welfare institutions in Denpasar, Bali have been discussed in local media in the past five years. In the "violence and force" subtopic, sixteen references were coded in the children's interviews, relating to 1.06% coverage of the interviews, and fifteen references were coded in the familial caregivers' interviews, relating to 3.48% coverage of the interviews.

Identified axial codes are:

1. being beaten;
2. forced attendance;
3. permission to go home;
4. anxiousness; and
5. suspicion.

Two axial codes (forced attendance and suspicion) are used in this article.

Axial code "forced attendance" relates to three conversations. Several children acknowledged disturbance from guests visiting the child welfare institution they lived in. The child welfare institution considers welcoming guests to secure the economic situation of the institution more important than children's welfare.

Komang,³ a fourteen-year-old girl, was asked by her parents to live in a child welfare institution because her parents could no longer afford to send her to school. She narrates:

Komang: *I said yes at that time. I thought it was going to be easy for me to go home whenever I want it [holding back her tears].*

Researcher: *Is it different from your expectations?*

Komang: *Yes, they don't allow me to go home that often. Only for special holidays.*

—

Researcher: *Do you feel that you do not have freedom here? Or do you feel there are too many regulations here?*

Komang: *Yes [crying]. It just too much, especially when guests are coming, I cannot have a good rest. For example, I just came back from school, and guests are coming late, and I don't have time to finish my school assignments.*

Ketut, a sixteen-year-old girl living in the same institute as Komang, also talks about the rules in the institute during the most important holidays in Bali, Galungan and Kuningan.⁴

Researcher: *Are you going home during Galungan/Kuningan?*

Ketut: *Yes, but either Galungan or Kuningan. It depends on the orphanage; they divided us into two groups, based on grade; senior and junior high school. One group is going home during Galungan, the others on Kuningan.*

Researcher: *Is it because they don't want to leave the orphanage empty?*

Ketut: *Yes.*

Researcher: *Why?*

Ketut: *Because we have some guests visiting the orphanage.*

Putu, a seven-year-old boy, does not live in a child welfare institution, though he obtains an education there.

Researcher: *But why are you here?*

Putu: *I am here only for school.*

Researcher: *Is it just for school?*

Putu: *Hmm, if a guest is coming during the weekend, I usually stay here until afternoon.*

—

Researcher: *It is Sunday, but why are you here today?*

Putu: *Because there are some guests here.*

The possibility for people to visit child welfare institutions brings the opportunity for abuse to a higher level. Several (ongoing and unpublished) cases of abuse by staff and visitors at child welfare institutions in the research area are known. In this research, parents were asked about their feelings towards possible violence or force in the child welfare institutions.

Axial code "suspicion" relates to three conversations. The parents of Kadek, a twelve-year-old girl recount:

Researcher: *Do you ever feel anxious by the fact that your child is living in an orphanage?*

Father: *No, because Miss —, who works there, guaranteed that nothing will happen to my child. If I want to bring my child back home for odalan,⁵ I have to submit a letter and the next day she has to come back to the orphanage, so I feel safe, because there is a procedure.*

Mother: *Like my husband said, I feel safe because of that.*

The brother-in-law of Nengah, a thirteen-year-old boy, says:

Researcher: *Did you ever feel suspicious or have you been afraid that Nengah may experience physical violence?*

Brother-in-law: *You know, the purpose is to educate children, of course he is evenly [sic] considered my child as their child. So, if the purpose is for good, then there must be violence, but in case the child is too naughty. But I think it's actually more effective.*

The mother of Wayan, a fourteen-year girl, says:

Researcher: *Were you ever cautious or afraid to surrender your daughter to the orphanage? Maybe because of cases like physical violence?*

Mother: *My daughter is not like that.*

Researcher: *Ok, so it's safe there?*

Mother: *Yes, also there are three caregivers, so it's okay.*

Researcher: *So, you are not afraid?*

Mother: *No.*

The parents of Made, a twenty-year-old woman still living in a child welfare institution while finishing university, recount:

Researcher: *Have you ever had any suspicion or fear that your child may be experiencing violence in the orphanage?*

Mother: *She is in the orphanage, so I don't have any feelings like that.*

Father: *We try to think positive. If our child is kind, then the people around her must be kind too.*

Mother: *Moreover, if she is in the orphanage, even if we as parents are far away from her, at least in the orphanage they have their responsibilities regarding her, right? I am fine with it. She is there, then she is safe.*

Discussion

The results do not point primarily towards hard conclusions on the impact of orphanage tourism, though one should keep in mind that the informants are children, and the interviews were mainly supervised by institution staff. Interpretations can be made based on research outcomes and literature.

The outcomes are divided in two sections: forced attendance, and suspicion. The research discovered several cases of forced attendance. The clearest case is of Komang, a fourteen-year-old girl who chose to be institutionalised in order to be able to continue education, where she feels that the forced attendance when guests are visiting the child welfare institution is disrupting her tasks for school as well as her rest. This qualifies as "ongoing exploitation, particularly through orphanage tourism" as meant in the Australian Modern Slavery Act (2018). The difficulty is that forced attendance is a common practice in most child welfare institutions in Bali and it is difficult to change these practices, especially when there is economic gain. A danger that comes with these practices is the relatively easy possibility for tourists with an ulterior motive to engage with child welfare institutions and groom children for their wants. As mentioned above, several cases of abuse by staff and "tourists" concerning Balinese child welfare institutions in Denpasar, Bali have been discussed in local media in the past five years. Nonetheless, cases are ongoing or solved without involvement of authorities and remain unknown to the general public. The "ostrich syndrome" of parental caregivers as shown in the "suspicion" part of the results is extremely concerning. Though parental caregivers must be aware of the danger of institutionalising their children, based on the interviews, familial caregivers make the choice to not acknowledge cases of physical, verbal and sexual abuse in institutions.

The Decree of the Minister of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia NO30/HUK/2011 stipulates that children are to be submitted to a child welfare institution as a last resort (Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2011). In the field, the opposite can be seen. Many children are still being committed to child welfare institutions for the sake of their education.

Conclusion

The Decree of the Minister of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia NO30/HUK/2011 clearly stipulates that if the issue faced by the family is financial instability, a child welfare institution should provide support through financial assistance and economic empowerment. If the primary issue is access to education, child welfare institutions should facilitate access to education by providing support for tuition costs, school supplies and transportation. Child welfare institutions should prevent children being placed in institutions for the purpose of education (Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2011). The fact that many child welfare institutions are not complying with these rules is perhaps because having a child welfare institution is a lucrative business. For this business, children are needed.

By visiting and donating to child welfare institutions, tourists are (knowingly or unknowingly) keeping a practice alive of children being separated from their families and with that creating possibilities for abuse through institutionalisation, and for psychological problems, separation anxiety and reduced possibilities for success in life. The Dutch report on orphanage tourism concludes the issue well: "Children in residential settings have become commodities for the benefit of parties who earn from caring for children or otherwise have an interest in the maintenance of residential settings" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020, p. vii).

Recommendations

Awareness about the impact of orphanage tourism needs to be raised to a higher level. Parents and familial caretakers in Indonesia need to be educated about the possibilities the Decree of the Minister of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia NO.30/HUK/2011 is giving to ensure children remain in the familial environment, but also to be aware of what their rights and obligations as parent or familial caregiver are. A socialisation programme is needed.

Visitors, volunteers, interns, but also government and (faith-based) NGOs need to understand what a child welfare institution is and how their programmes are executed. Help offered by the abovementioned organisations and individuals often is counterproductive in solving core issues. An awareness campaign is needed. Through financial assistance or economic empowerment, or support towards families in accessing existing social aid programmes, children should not be institutionalized.

Notes

1. Tata Sudrajat, Deputy Director of Program Development Quality and Advocacy at Save the Children Indonesia.
2. Publications on other subtopics are being prepared.
3. All names are fictive. Real names are known by the author.
4. Bali's most important holidays
5. A Balinese temple celebration

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Re-imagining and transforming events: Insights from the Australian events industry

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ABSTRACT: Over the past year, COVID-19 has hit the events industry with unprecedented force, resulting in event cancellations, reduced employment and salary cuts, with most event organisations moving either partially or fully to virtual events. Most challenging is the uncertainty in regard to the way(s) that events will be reshaped and rejuvenated. Our aim in this study is to discover how practitioners interpret the pandemic in relation to events and how events are reimagined and transformed in a pandemic world. Theories relating to transformative experiences and resilience are used to explore the phenomenon. This study contributes a framework based on qualitative insights by event professionals, suggesting the industry should focus on key priorities for event transformation, namely connectivity, meaningful experience design, adaptive capacity and education and, finally, practitioner well-being. Research limitations are discussed, and future research is proposed.

KEYWORDS: event education, event experiences, event industry, human connectivity, meaningful events, transformation

Introduction

COVID-19 struck the events industry with unprecedented force, resulting in the cancellation of events, reduced levels of employment, and salary cuts. The shutdown of businesses as well as event cancellations globally has had a negative impact on the capacity of event companies to function effectively or plan for a sustainable future. While some businesses were able to pivot and diversify their services (Norris et al., 2021), others shut down completely and show no signs of recovery. However, large conference centres offered their space for different industry stakeholders to come together and exchange ideas on food solutions (Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, 2020) while other small business owners offered free webinars to exchange ideas and share knowledge on the road to business recovery (Stayches, 2021).

In Australia, associations and governments launched various programmes to coach business operators and provide strategies for well-being and support. For example, the Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) launched the VTIC industry support hub for its business members (2021), while the Australian government provided financial support to businesses during the latest lockdown stages. However, it has yet to be determined how and when the event industry will recover and be transformed. Academics (Sharma et al., 2021) have called for research in the industry, specifically on how business owners interpret the pandemic impact. Researchers have also suggested that the pandemic has created opportunities for industry transformation (Lew et al., 2020; Sigala, 2020). Questioning the alignment

between the event industry and educational programmes, Arcodia et al. (2020) call for further research on the skills and attributes required by this industry because they claim that there is a disconnect between industry needs and event management curricula. The influence of the pandemic means that event management curricula need to be adapted to a new set of industry needs. Therefore, it is important to explore event managerial views on: (1) how the event impact is translated; (2) the opportunities that have arisen as a result of the pandemic; and (3) the key skills and attributes that are required if the industry is to move forward. It is the purpose of this article to explore managerial perspectives, while also contributing a theoretical framework on the key foci that will reshape the event industry. Accordingly, the structure of our article is as follows: firstly, we use a theoretical framework on transformative and resilience-related theories to help us understand the phenomenon; we then present exploratory findings based on empirical research undertaken. Finally, we design a framework drawn from qualitative data that contributes insights on the theoretical and practical implications for the events industry.

Literature review

Transformation

The concept of transformation dates back to Mezirow (1997) who conceptualised transformative learning theories demonstrating how learning environments can emotionally prepare and change learners' mindsets. Drawing from psychology, Kottler (1997) claimed that consumers may change their worldview

and personally transform via well-planned, customised travel experiences. The link between learning and travel is also reflected in studies by Morgan (2010) who highlighted the influence of cultural elements on the broadening of mindsets. Taking a global focus, Rosenbaum (2015) and Fisk et al. (2016) used transformative service research (TSR) theories to understand global phenomena and contribute to societal well-being. TSR has been applied in contexts such as refugee crises (Nasr & Fisk, 2019) with frameworks designed to improve collaborative and service exchange systems (Previte & Robertson, 2019), while Sedgley et al. (2011) focused on social inclusion and human rights. While researchers have expressed diverse views regarding the primary focus of TSR, all authors emphasise the human element and societal well-being. Indeed, as a result of the pandemic, the protection and prioritisation of the well-being of humans has become the top priority. The need for collaboration among stakeholders has been discussed across the broader hotel and hospitality industry (Melissen et al., 2016). Fisk et al. (2020) calls for interdisciplinary collaboration among academics to exchange ideas and join research teams whose goal is to improve human well-being. Via the newly established platform known as SERVCollab, Fisk et al. (2020) invite researchers to collaborate in order to address global issues such as social inclusion, human suffering and well-being, to name a few.

Human connectivity and experiences

Even prior to the pandemic, Sheldon (2020) had developed a theoretical model demonstrating how human connectivity should be at the forefront of research studies. The theoretical model comprised four key concepts that contribute to transformation: (1) deep human connectivity; (2) engaged contribution; (3) deep environmental connectivity; and (4) self-inquiry. Sheldon (2020) argued that deep connectivity can be achieved when humans are mobile and take part in special events in local communities. This may be possible on the road to recovery from the pandemic as humans have already shown signs of pivoting and adopting innovative practices to protect the environment and remain connected. Indeed, during the pandemic, events that pivoted and turned to virtual platforms, resulted from a human need to connect (Fasheh et al., 2020). This suggests that the design of event experiences should include elements that facilitate human transformation as seen in festival design experiences (Neuhofer et al., 2020) and with engaged contribution in mind (Sheldon, 2020).

The need for transformative experiences was noted long before the pandemic. Pine and Gilmore (2014), pioneers of the experience economy, had already proposed that transformation has become a necessity, claiming we are now in the era of the transformation economy. In a recent study, Neuhofer et al. (2020) found that attendees experienced personal transformation and elements of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) during a festival and under the influence of positive emotions. Further, the surroundings and the various environmental elements, known as servicescape elements (Singleton & Losekoot, 2020), can help to create or influence a transformative experience. Accordingly, there are key elements that facilitate event transformation, and these may also enhance human connectivity. Various authors (Fisk et al., 2020; Neuhofer et al., 2020; Sheldon, 2020) agree that the design of events with the human element as the key focus will facilitate a transformative experience. As the pandemic forced industry disruption (Sigala, 2020), it is important to consider how event practitioners are

adapting to the crisis and the role of technology in the future design of transformative experiences.

Human capacity and technology

In navigating the road to business recovery, consumers quickly adopted technology tools. Arcodia et al. (2020) call for research on the skills required for event curricula programmes in order to train future event managers. With the pandemic impact, event transformation that implemented a range of technology became a necessity. Professional conference organisers were forced to learn new technologies to deliver their business events in order to avoid cancellation (Council for Australian Tourism and Hospitality Education [CAUTHE], 2021; Sustainable Event Alliance, 2021), while mass festivals suffered automatic cancellation. This enforced adaptation meant that employees and employers needed immediate training, thereby adding to the already increased workloads of event managers (Clark et al., 2017). These authors claim that event managers need to engage in ongoing learning in order to keep abreast of technological advancements.

However, with the already increased workloads, the well-being of individuals and businesses is affected; hence, the issue of resilience is now at the forefront of theoretical studies on tourism business recovery (Prayag, 2020; Sigala, 2020). From an industry perspective, in a bibliometric study of 35 articles undertaken by Sharma et al. (2021), the authors contributed a resilience framework that proposes four key factors for recovery: government response, technology innovation, local belongingness, and consumer and employee confidence. Although resilience did not emerge as a new concept resulting from the pandemic, the need for resilience programmes was identified prior to the pandemic, with Prayag (2020) calling for frameworks that addressed issues such as sustainable destination management.

With regard to human capital, Clark et al. (2017) discussed the need to review human issues relating to workloads and the imbalance detected in the events industry. For example, in the hospitality and events industry, managers may run events during weekends or outside working hours with extra human resource input, without receiving extra remuneration. This may lead to personal burnout and stress following the event. Therefore, resilience extends from individual to collective well-being, while also showing care for the environment. With the increase in online seminars on how to survive the pandemic, and the well-being issues that have arisen as a result of COVID-19, understanding how event skills and attributes are changing over time is important (Arcodia et al. 2020).

At the core of these issues lies the need for human well-being and connectivity (Sheldon, 2020). The literature shows that human connectivity should be a priority when designing an event experience, especially given the pre-pandemic trend to include personalised elements. With the pandemic influencing the transformation of events, it is unclear whether practitioners are prepared to maintain the level of transformation or revert to traditional ways of conducting events. There is little evidence of event managers' engagement in the transformed industry and the priorities that need to be considered when adapting to the new reality. This article seeks empirical insights from event managers and businesses, specifically on how they interpret the pandemic and how they see events being reset and reimagined. It is anticipated that these insights will clarify the skills and attributes required to strengthen the link between event

management curricula and industry, as this will guide future event management training programmes in uncertain times of transformation.

Research question

The key research questions are:

1. How do event practitioners interpret the pandemic?
2. How are events reimaged and transformed as a result of the pandemic?

Methodology

This study utilises experience-based approaches (Neuhof et al., 2020) to understand the human perception of how industries are undergoing transformation as a result of the pandemic, with particular focus on the events industry. This research is exploratory and seeks to highlight issues and insights that have arisen over the past year. When exploring a new phenomenon, studies recommend undertaking interpretivist approaches (Losekoot & Hornby, 2019). Qualitative studies seek to understand broad perspectives of phenomena especially in relation to human issues (Creswell & Poth, 2017). For this study, we utilised semi-structured interviews as outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018). A purposive sampling approach was adopted in order to select interviewees who have industry experience and who represent diversity in terms of background, gender and age. This approach allowed the researchers to use their judgement in selecting a sample that is most likely to address the research questions adequately (Robinson, 2014). Zoom was used for the interviews because it is convenient and time-saving, while at the same time enabling in-depth responses to be made (Gray et al., 2020). A thematic analysis was conducted of the data obtained from 16 semi-structured interviews, utilising QSR NVivo software (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). This analysis generated several patterns and exploratory insights.

Analysis and discussion

Most event practitioners agree that the events industry will bounce back post COVID-19. However, in the short to medium term, and even in the longer term, the events industry may look very different. A reshaped industry may have a better outlook, particularly if it is transformed and reimaged, more resilient, and more relevant to the needs of all stakeholders. Flexibility and adaptability arise as key attributes in the transformed industry, while technology will play a role in the future design of transformative experiences. Results also indicate, while skill development remains important, that managing workloads and practitioner well-being still remains an issue. This is an important finding, as it can influence the design of event management curricula. Findings demonstrate that managing heavy workloads forms part of human well-being and this needs to be prioritised and incorporated in future event management curricula.

Forming connections

Findings reveal that despite the challenges of the pandemic humans will always seek to connect. The adaptation of events to virtual platforms was a result of the need for social connection. Virtual elements will remain as a necessary component of events over the next few years until the pandemic is controlled.

Participants commented that events will rejuvenate as humans will always have the need to connect socially. As participant P13 noted: *humans crave social connection and when you don't have it and it's taken away, people go, "oh I actually miss that"*.

In future, the format of events will place stronger emphasis on the client's objectives in order to create social connectivity; therefore, event managers are urged to obtain a clear understanding of these objectives. Extending the notion of social connectivity, P12 noted that humans can feel fulfilled when also caring for the environment. Therefore, apart from connectivity, event managers need to consider issues such as corporate social responsibility when delivering customised event experiences. Connectivity can incorporate environmental goals which enable humans to connect with the environment while learning about key environmental issues. As P12 commented in relation to connectivity goals: *my job is to inspire [clients] so hopefully they [clients] spend their money in meaningful ways. So, there is an educated piece*. The design of meaningful experiences can incorporate the utilisation of local services and educating clients and guests on how to enrich their event experience by including environmental goals. Designing personalised experiences with environmental care in mind enhances human connectivity (Sheldon, 2020).

The forming of virtual connections was a key insight contributed by P6, who runs a sporting event business. P6 commented on the positive strategy of using virtual events as tools to communicate with participants globally. P6 discussed how businesses, who were depending solely on face-to-face events, were suddenly forced to refocus and change their priorities. For example, in some businesses, operational managers adopted consultancy roles in an attempt to help others. However, P6 used the virtual element resulting from the pandemic as a tool to enable his business to make global connections:

Fundamentally, I think these days events are about data, and databases and virtual platforms give you the opportunity to have connections and conversations with your database and participants and the like 24/7, 365 and anywhere in the world...as opposed to just for a few punctuation marks through the year...

Meaningful experiences

When considering event goals and objectives, participant P9 commented on the importance of providing meaningful experiences to event volunteers, as they play a crucial role in the overall attendee experience. According to P9, events offer a sense of belonging (Kerwin et al., 2015) and can impart new skills to volunteers (Muskat & Mair, 2021); therefore, managers should identify motivational goals and incorporate these into the event delivery. However, because not all volunteers know why they wish to volunteer, P9 recommends having a procedure in place. P9 noted: *I have an application form...I ask them [volunteers] what do you want to learn? What do you want to get out of it?* P9 offers a mentoring system for volunteers who are unsure of their individual goals where they are matched with buddies throughout the event. P9 shows flexibility in being willing to change positions with volunteers so they can achieve personal fulfilment. Events then become opportunities for skills building and are enriched with meaningful personal experiences. P9 noted that to achieve skill enhancement and provide a sense of belonging, *volunteer roles need to have meaning for volunteers*.

P2 suggested a different means of achieving meaningful experiences. Given the cancellation of large-scale city events, organisers could design experiences in regional areas over a period of time, thus enhancing profiles which *otherwise may have gone unnoticed*. These customised experiences can include personalised elements that will provide a sense of authenticity. According to P2, the pandemic has opened up new worldviews for managers and customers. She noted: *Look at something different and design for a purpose.*

Examples, including a *beautiful garden lunch and theme* at a boutique winery in a regional area, suggest that experiences are now smaller and include a *purpose to travel*. Where social events might previously have had a particular celebratory purpose, P2 highlighted the need to add value to all types of events. For example, a charity element could be included in the event, as charities have been largely affected by the pandemic and are *desperate at the moment*. By including a charity in smaller events, P2 suggests that events *can change people's mindsets* and gives them the opportunity to contribute to corporate social responsibility causes. Regional wineries can impart information to their guests regarding regional produce, for instance, thus strengthening social connections in a shared learning environment.

Adaptive capacity and education

Recognising the importance of flexibility, P13 remains positive about the rejuvenation of events while admitting that it is up to individual businesses. He commented on the need to adapt businesses and provide solutions to ensure the continuity of events. P13's clients are seeking advice about the organisation of events under the COVID-19 requirements in order to maintain collaborations with partners. Thus, events become a tool to capture new relationships and build on existing partnerships. This can be done if businesses and event professionals are prepared to be flexible and adaptable to situations. P13 reflected: *There will be so many [event] opportunities if we're prepared to make our business relevant, focused and above all, adaptable.*

From being a professional conference organiser responsible for the delivery of face-to-face business events, P8 quickly adapted his business operational model to the delivery of online podcasts. This meant investing in new technology such as speakers, a microphone and subscribing to virtual platforms such as Zoom to interview key event personnel. The desire to connect and engage with people from the industry motivated P8 to invest time in learning how to use new technology tools, simultaneously acquiring new skills. In recognising the importance of technology as a way of adapting quickly to the new situation, P8 commented:

The business event industry has definitely adapted very quickly, especially from the big tech companies that were able to utilise their resources pretty quickly and basically turned it overnight, whereas smaller clients may not have the money or technical expertise, so still trying to adapt...

P8 noted that audiovisual (AV) companies adapted their business models to offer virtual platforms in order to continue to offer customer service. In fact, P8 believes that the number of his business clients has increased, as the time required for planning a conference has been reduced significantly:

Then there's been a myriad companies that have decided that they'll do virtual platforms in order to

service clients...now doing 15 clients a month... it [usually] takes four to six weeks for an event manager to understand what their client wants to get it onsite and get it ready. [Business events] have been able to respond a lot quicker than sporting events.

The importance of adapting events to virtual platforms and learning how to deliver online events was also recognised by P7. Despite her lack of direct knowledge about the delivery of virtual events, P7 leveraged her partnership with an AV company who supported her in her virtual event delivery. P7 soon learnt which platform was the most appropriate for her clients' needs and adapted to an online platform rather than cancelling the event altogether. P7 commented on the result as an opportunity for ongoing learning, flexibility and adaptability. Although P7 discovered that her online-delivery skills were limited, she recognised the importance of event partnerships in helping her adapt to virtual platforms, which in turn enabled her to maintain and continue to service her clients. She stated:

Virtual events and organising a live in-house event are completely different set of skills...I ended up realising my limitations in terms of my technology and audio visual [capacity]...so I worked with an AV company and it went really well.

Self-care and customer well-being

Providing emotional support to staff became a priority for P13 who highlighted the need to ensure staff well-being by maintaining daily communication. Showing care for his own staff meant that staff will also show care for business clients. Maintaining the human connection in his business model assists P13 to strengthen relationships and connections; therefore, he decided to have formal and informal conversations to maintain a sense of business normality. P13 attempted to keep his staff informed about all business decisions while demonstrating genuine interest in their well-being and that of their families.

We run Zoom calls...it's little things like that, remembering birthdays, chatting to them...and keeping communication going...to let them know this is going to happen...literally being positive. If I went and did the whole doom and gloom, then it wouldn't work.

P16 became a business recovery coach in order to provide support to small business owners for the overall well-being of their businesses, which in turn improved personal well-being. As hard as it was to make the difficult decision to let staff go, P16 recognised that it was more important to become resilient and take ownership of key business decisions. His coaching of small businesses gave these owners the confidence to change their financial strategy in order to adapt to the pandemic world. Via Zoom sessions, P16 offered business counselling, encouraging owners to take action to prepare themselves for business recovery. He noted:

Coaching is something I have been doing for years. Just in genuine interest in helping others with the pragmatics of running a business...a lot of business owners know their craft but don't know how to run a business...The advice to businesses is very customised...One thing you have to tell them, there is no silver bullet...Now is the time, while you may not generate any income, what can you do to get your business ready when you do open again?

The emphasis on personal well-being was a key factor for P16. Under normal circumstances and prior to the pandemic, P16 worked long hours in order to deliver successful business events. He now feels that the pandemic presented the opportunity to reset and determine key strategies for ensuring his own well-being. To date, the issue of personal well-being in the events industry has been overlooked; therefore, P16 recommends taking the time to learn effective time-management skills in order to reduce the level of stress experienced when delivering events.

What I would like is resilience training...being able to cope with all the stress that comes with the job. People don't understand the pressure of the job we are put into; how to think on our feet and be resilient. There is a set of skills that people can learn...to understand themselves better...what pressure situations might look like. Resilience is something that can be taught. It's a set of skills that you can understand and use and certainly it's something that we need more of.

Discussion

This exploratory research sought industry insights on the ways that events are reimagined in a pandemic world. The analysis revealed a need for connectivity and the exchange of ideas, together with understanding that customer needs are a priority on the road to recovery from the pandemic. The key concepts that have emerged from the data are: (1) human connectivity will remain strong; (2) meaning-based experiences will become a new design focus; (3) adaptive capacity is required; and (4) self-care and customer well-being have become a priority. Findings demonstrate that the need for human connectivity will always remain strong, as P13 identified. By nature, humans wish to socially connect; however, now the dimension of environmental connection has been added to the design and delivery of events. This is consistent with Sheldon (2020), whose framework for human and environmental connectivity stresses the important role that events play in facilitating those connections. The role of technology in facilitating those connections was also prominent in the findings of Fasheh et al. (2020) who maintained that connectivity can be achieved in times of isolation using virtual platforms.

Findings also revealed that there should be more focus on smaller events where attendees socially connect in smaller contexts that contain authentic elements in order to engage in meaning-based experiences. Indeed, Neuhofer et al. (2020) recommended the PERMA (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishments) model for exploring the types of meanings sought by festival attendees. By understanding the meaningful goals that individuals pursue, event organisers can design experiences accordingly. Further, experiences can be enhanced with meaningful connections by adding personalised elements and touchpoints (Singleton & Losekoot, 2020).

The current study also revealed that, when reimagining events, it is important to consider the meaningful goals set by volunteers themselves. Indeed, earlier work by Mulder et al. (2015) identified the transformational motives of volunteers who engaged in travel-based volunteer experiences. The volunteers at events are a crucial element of the attendee experience; therefore, understanding the types of meanings they pursue will enhance the overall event experience. The inclusion of

meaningfulness in volunteer roles extends the theory by Neuhofer et al. (2020) on transformational design. Therefore, the current study extends the conceptual framework to include meaning-based experiences for volunteers who contribute to the rejuvenation and reimagining of events. The transformations that take place during event experiences are influenced by all players; therefore, the roles and motivations of volunteers should be considered in future studies.

A consistent theme in the interview data was the ability to be flexible and adapt to the pandemic. Research findings demonstrated that adaptation to virtual platforms helped businesses maintain and continue their staff and customer connections while managing their partner relationships. The use of technology to maintain connectivity and exchange ideas showed that industry practitioners and staff who adapt to new ways of thinking and learning new sets of technology skills have better chances of recovering and continuing to deliver services for client event experiences. Findings also showed stronger affiliations with partners who are able to contribute their skill sets in the delivery of virtual events. The role of technology is multifaceted: it rejuvenates events to ensure the viability of business; it allows consumers to connect; and it has become a necessary tool for everyday communication and client management.

Finally, the research contributes key insights on the well-being of event managers and business owners. The role of mentorship, explained by P16, reveals how important it is to maintain self-care and make the tough financial decisions required for stability and survival. Training in resilience is identified as crucial to moving forward in industry. Fisk et al.'s (2020) work on well-being confirms the need for individual and community care. This, of course, has implications for event programme curricula that perhaps do not include resilience training for future event professionals. Incorporating programmes on how to manage event operations as well as training in self-care and well-being should be part of curricula planning. Formal training and education in well-being may positively influence event workforce issues (Muskat & Mair, 2021), while reducing the challenges faced in heavy workloads (Clark et al. 2017). This study contributes a new concept which would benefit event educators when designing curricula and event training programmes. Effective time management and the acquisition of a resilience skill set will ensure that our industry remains positive and strong during event rejuvenation and transformation. The key concepts that are drawn from exploratory industry insights into the way that events can be reimagined are illustrated in Figure 1.

Conclusion and future research

In conclusion, the present study suggests a framework that will assist event practitioners to move forward with event experiences. Human connectivity will always be at the forefront of human needs. Accordingly, event experiences need to be designed with meaningful goals. Event managers will now need to invest time in understanding client needs in order to deliver personalised experiences. Furthermore, for the future of events management, ongoing learning and adaptability to virtual platforms are vital. The acquisition of resilience, as well as technology and time-management skills will go some way to ensure that this industry will be able to navigate a pathway to successful recovery. Because the well-being of consumers and

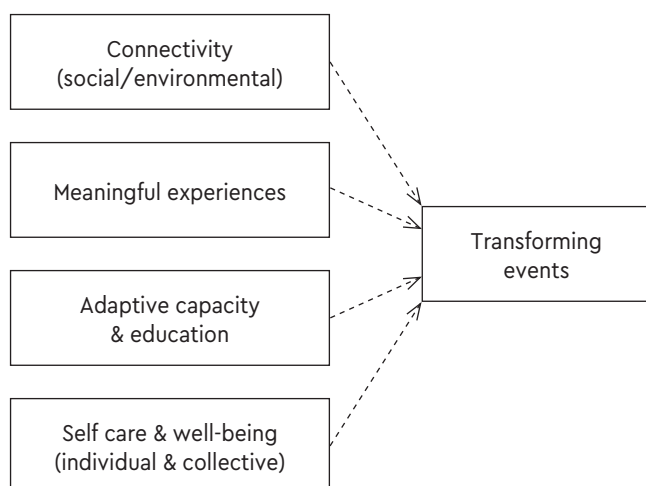


FIGURE 1: Theoretical framework for transforming events

businesses is a priority when making key business decisions, the introduction of mentoring sessions and business coaching may be the ways that business events can survive in the near future.

This study has several limitations. It took the perspective of event practitioners only. Future studies could consider the perspectives of other event stakeholders such as hotel and restaurant managers, customers, food suppliers, risk management personnel, and project specialists. Further, this study was undertaken during the pandemic. It is recommended that longitudinal studies be conducted over the next five to ten years to monitor business transformation on the road to economic recovery. Because technology will also contribute to event transformation, future studies could utilise virtual platforms to monitor client and partner engagement. Finally, quantitative approaches could help to generalise recommendations and industry implications.

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Sexual harassment as perceived and experienced by male and female restaurant employees

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to gain knowledge about sexual harassment as perceived and experienced by male and female restaurant employees. The research was carried out by using an online survey and five interviews. The 137 participants of the survey and the five interviewees are all students at a university of applied sciences in the Netherlands who work or have worked in the restaurant industry. The results indicate that females label more incidents as sexual harassment than males; that females experienced more incidents of sexual harassment from guests than males did; and that sexual harassment negatively affects both females' and males' motivation and well-being. Based on the incidence and impact of sexual harassment, we recommend raising awareness and educating people from an early age regarding sexual harassment and to insist that every restaurant has a proper policy and training programme to prevent and penalise sexual harassment.

KEYWORDS: gender differences, health and safety, restaurant employees, sexual harassment

Introduction: The rationale for the study

The European Commission Code of Practice defines sexual harassment as "[u]nwanted conduct of a sexual nature, or other conduct based on sex, affecting the dignity of women and men at work. This can include unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct" (Gilbert et al., 1998, p. 48). Nowadays, there is an uncomfortable truth that more sexual harassment claims are filed in the restaurant industry than in any other industry (Reedy, 2019). Reedy (2019) found that 90% of the women that worked in a restaurant experienced a form of sexual harassment. Not only women experience forms of sexual harassment, but 70% of men experience this as well. Sexual harassment is a problem because it is happening in the hospitality industry and there is not always appropriate action being taken (Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1991). Even though servers felt uncomfortable and threatened, they sometimes saw it as simply part of the job (McDonald, 2020). It is not only that the guests need to be more respectful, but the entire attitude of the hospitality industry is contributing to the problem (Morgan & Pritchard, 2018). To further investigate the issue, we decided to study sexual harassment as perceived and experienced by restaurant employees with an additional focus on the differences between genders.

Literature review

Working in a restaurant can be a hard and demanding job and it becomes even harder when employees need to deal with sexual harassment from guests. In this literature review, four topics will

be discussed: Labelling sexual harassment, gender differences in perceptions of sexual harassment, reasons for sexual harassment and the normalisation of sexual harassment.

Labelling sexual harassment

Labelling an incident, situation or behaviour as sexual harassment can be done from three perspectives: the actor, the victim, and third-party observers (Giuffre & Williams, 1994). Whether the behaviour is labelled as sexual harassment will depend on the type of behaviour, the (alleged) intention of the harasser, situational factors, and the social context. Because of different perspectives, it could well be that one person identifies a situation as sexual harassment and another person identifies the exact same situation as sympathetic interaction. Particularly in the hospitality industry, where the guest is considered to be king and service staff are expected to make customers happy, it can be challenging to identify and deal with inappropriate guest behaviour (McDonald, 2020). Restaurant employees use different criteria when "drawing the line" and qualifying an incident as sexual harassment. Interpreting communication, including body language, is notoriously difficult and riddled with potential mistakes. Much less ambiguity occurs in situations where sexual harassment is combined with violence (Schneider, 1982).

Gender differences in perceptions of sexual harassment

Although there is progress being made in defining sexual harassment, it is still debated as to whose perspective should be taken when the circumstances surrounding a case of harassment are evaluated (Rotundo et al., 2001). In a legal context, it was

suggested to replace the "reasonable person standard" with the "reasonable woman standard" (Westman, 1992). The reasonable woman standard is an attempt to reflect the feminine viewpoint: whether sexual harassment exists should depend on whether a reasonable woman would interpret the actions as sexual harassment. The purpose in adopting the reasonable woman standard is to change and eliminate prevailing stereotypes, push employers to implement preventive programmes to deal with sexual harassment and make the workplace a safer place for both men and women.

In his meta-analytic review of gender differences in perceptions of sexual harassment, Blumenthal (1998) found that women were more likely to label certain behaviour as sexual harassment than men. Nevertheless, the difference was rather small, particularly for behaviour that involves sexual propositions and sexual coercion. Although these quantitative studies show that a gender difference does exist, these findings and effect sizes are not strong enough to support the "reasonable women standard" to use in court to assess the claims of sexual harassment. The "reasonable victim standard" is suggested as an alternative legal standard that would treat men and women equally when deciding to qualify an incident as sexual harassment or not (Meads, 1993).

Reasons for sexual harassment

The hospitality industry, including the restaurant sector, faces a huge number of cases of sexual harassment and exploitation (Morgen & Pritchard, 2018). The reason for this high number is the toleration of sexual harassment within the hospitality industry. The central rule in the industry is "the guest is always right" and the restaurant employees are often dependent on the tips paid by the guests. This attitude makes it more difficult for the restaurant employees to distinguish an inappropriate conversation from a friendly conversation with the customer or guest. Restaurant employees are expected to use their appearance, friendliness and smile as part of the service they deliver to the customer or guest. Appearance is an important aspect of the hospitality industry because it influences the customers' experience. Therefore, employees are more likely to accept forms of sexual harassment since it is assumed to be part of the job (Morgan & Pritchard, 2018).

The normalisation of sexual harassment

When customers are sexually harassing their servers and use "the power of the tip" or "the customer is always right" attitude to get away with inappropriate behaviour, sexual harassment

is being normalised in restaurants. Therefore, the restaurant employee usually does not know how to react and if they reach out to their manager, the manager does not know how to act, does not believe the employee, or considers the customer's behaviour as normal. As a result of this normalisation, the guest continues to touch or to flirt with the employee because nobody stops them from acting in that way. The customer believes that it is reasonable to sexually harass the employee because the restaurant industry is about making the customer happy. According to McDonald (2020), the employees expect this treatment from customers because it is "part of the job" and they prepare mentally for it to happen. Overall, even if some of the managers act against sexual harassment, the normalisation and the managers' ignorance of this issue still exist in the restaurant industry. Additionally, according to Mathisen et al. (2008), sexual harassment can lead to negative effects on the health and well-being of the employees, which affect motivation and job satisfaction and as a result the staff turnover rate will increase.

In conclusion to this literature review, even if sexual harassment is hard to define because of the different perspectives, women are more likely to label certain incidents as sexual harassment. Sexual exploitation is embedded in the restaurant industry, because of the "customer is always right" attitude and the "power of the tip". A major problem with the restaurant industry is that sexual harassment is normalised and even employees think that it is "part of the job", which leads to negative effects on their health, well-being, motivation and job satisfaction, which may contribute to an increased turnover rate.

Conceptual model

The guest behaviours that are considered sexual harassment include compliments about the server's appearance, sexual remarks, looks or gestures, touching parts of the body, and inappropriate requests. Male and female employees might perceive and label these guest behaviours differently. Their personal experience with incidents of sexual harassment could also be different. Finally, their perception of and experience with incidents of sexual harassment are expected to influence their performance and well-being. The relations between the different concepts are visualised in Figure 1.

Problem statement and research questions

The problem statement for this study is:

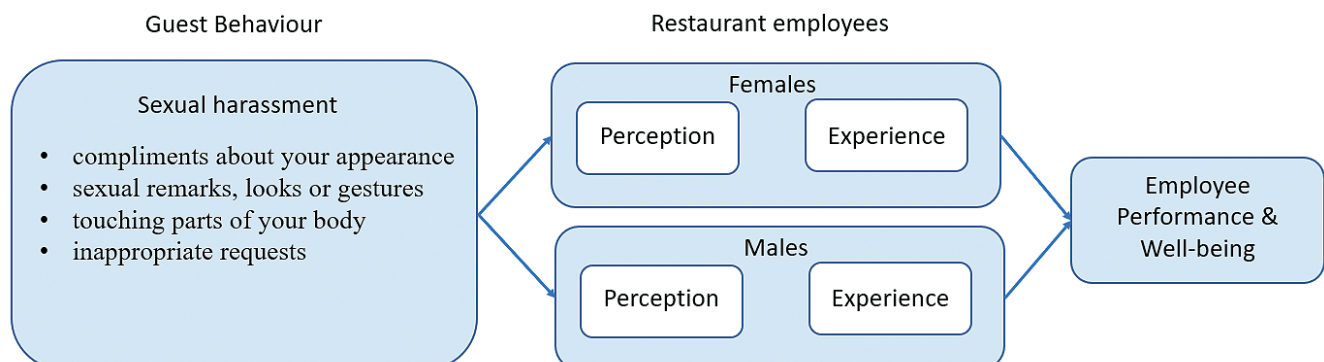


FIGURE 1: Conceptual model

- What are the differences in the perception of and experience with incidents of sexual harassment by male and female restaurant employees?
- Research questions resulting from the problem statement are:
- What are the differences between men and women when it comes to the perception of sexual harassment?
- How often do male and female restaurant employees experience incidents of sexual harassment?
- What are the implications of incidents of sexual harassment?
- How can management prevent or deal with incidents of sexual harassment?

Method

Type of research and instrumentation

The type of research applied is descriptive research (Brotherton, 2015), which is used in this study to measure or observe the perceptions and experiences of a group of people who have worked in a restaurant or are still working in a restaurant. The instrument used to conduct the research was a survey consisting of five different sections. The first section was accepting the GDPR (general data protection regulations), the participation was voluntary and respondents who did not agree with the GDPR rules and regulations could choose to not continue and close the survey. The participants who accepted the GDPR (general data protection regulations) were asked to fill in some general questions about gender, current study programme of the participants and if the participants currently work or have worked in a restaurant. The second section was composed of Likert scale questions. In this section, the participants were asked to assess on a 10-point Likert scale to what extent they considered 25 incidents as representing cases of sexual harassment. These incidents were selected from the literature review and discussions with fellow students who have worked in restaurants. A zero would indicate that the incident was not perceived to demonstrate sexual harassment at all and a ten meant that the participant saw it as a clear form of sexual harassment. The third section of the survey was used to identify if any of the participants ever experienced one of the listed incidents. The fourth section included statements that were answered using a 4-point Likert scale (strongly disagree; disagree; agree; strongly agree). The statements were focused on the restaurant's regulations regarding sexual harassment and on what the participant would do in case of a sexual harassment incident. The fifth and last section was informative and suggested that if the participants had ever faced difficulties regarding sexual harassment, they could contact the GGD (The municipal health organisation for preventive healthcare in the Netherlands). The section also provided the participants with a link to the GGD's website and their phone number.

The survey was pilot tested, and some useful feedback was obtained. The incident about the suggestive signals was explained more clearly. Pictures were added about the question with sexually suggestive visuals, and a full explanation about the GDPR was added.

In addition to the surveys, five interviews were conducted for more in-depth information. The interview consisted of 16 open questions: 4 general questions and 12 questions about the interviewees' perceptions and experiences with sexual harassment. Moreover, the interviews were focused on the interviewees' feelings regarding sexual harassment.

Sampling and data collection

The survey was sent to participants using different methods. One method that was used was contacting people via email. The researchers sent the survey to their contacts and groups from the university. Another method was to use social media channels such as WhatsApp to contact groups of student associations, other university groups or friends who study at the university. At the end of the survey, the researchers asked the participants to forward the survey to other students within the university who work or have worked in the restaurant industry.

The population used for this research was "all the students who are studying at the university and who work or have worked in a restaurant". The population needed to include both female and male students since the research is about the difference in gender. The target sample size was 100 respondents or more. In the end, the survey generated 137 useable responses.

For the interviews, the researchers contacted people they knew would be interested in participating. The identity of the participants was protected and not revealed thereby guaranteeing confidentiality. The qualitative data from the interviews was used to provide an in-depth understanding of the subject and to support the findings of the quantitative survey results.

Ethical considerations

Since sexual harassment is a sensitive topic, ethical considerations are fundamental when collecting data. To prevent possible repercussions, it was key that all respondents gave informed consent when conducting the survey and interview. To achieve this, all respondents were asked for permission to use their data.

In the survey, respondents were informed that the data derived from the survey would be used for research purposes only and that the survey is conducted according to the guidelines of the GDPR laws. The survey is completely anonymous which indicates that the answers that were given could not be traced back to the respondent who answered them.

The same procedure of asking the respondents permission for processing data was completed before the interviews. During the interview, a trigger warning was mentioned before the two more sensitive questions were asked to prevent the respondent from being startled when talking about experiences of sexual harassment. After this trigger warning, the respondent had the opportunity to not answer these questions. At the end of the more sensitive questions, a link to the GGD (The municipal health organisation for preventive healthcare in the Netherlands) was mentioned for support. This link was also provided at the end of the survey.

By handling the subject with care and obtaining informed consent from all respondents, chances of harming participants, individuals or organisations are reduced to a great extent and the ethical implications are properly managed.

Limitations of the research

All research has limitations, which are factors that could influence the results and the outcome of the research. The first limitation is time. Since this research was completed by students, there were other deadlines regarding other subjects which also had to be met. Therefore, there was less time to go into depth with the research. The research is still valuable and useful, although the

constraint in time means it goes less into detail. However, this does not make the research invalid.

The second limitation concerns the data collection process. The interviews were conducted through video calls, because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The topic is sensitive and can be intimate for some interviewees, which is why doing an interview online can make it harder for participants to tell everything and open up about their experiences. On the other hand, the participants had the opportunity to choose their own space where they feel comfortable.

The third limitation is the experience in research. The researchers are students and have less experience with doing research and creating academic papers than experienced researchers.

Results

Sample characteristics

In Table 1, the characteristics of the sample are shown. The researchers obtained a total of 137 respondents, a majority of which is female (76.6%) and 92% enrolled at the hotel management school of the university.

Perception of sexual harassment

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they considered 25 incidents to be examples of sexual harassment. The incidents were selected from the literature and discussions with fellow students that have worked in restaurants. Considering that particular incidents could be perceived by respondents as demonstrating more or less serious forms of sexual harassment they could score each incident from 0 to 10. The results are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 1: Sample characteristics

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	105	76.6%
Male	32	23.4%
Programme		
Hotel Management	126	92%
Other	11	8%
Worked in restaurant?		
Yes	137	100%
No	–	

As shown in Table 2, the incidents most perceived as sexual harassment are: "The guest gives you a pat on the butt" with a score of 8.86; and "The guest asks you about sexual experiences, preferences or fantasies" which scores 8.65. The lowest scoring incidents are: "You have beautiful eyes" (3.92); and "You have a nice smile" (1.93). When looking at the difference in perception between males and females, we notice that females score all incidents higher as indicators of sexual harassment than males do. For 15 of the 25 incidents, females consider the incidents as significantly more serious forms of sexual harassment than males do.

Incidence of sexual harassment

For all 25 incidents, respondents indicated whether they had experienced this behaviour when working as restaurant employees. Results are shown in Table 3.

As shown in Table 3, the most frequently occurring incidents are: The guest says, "You have a nice smile" (97); the guest asks, "Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?" (74); and "The guest is

TABLE 2: Perception of incidents of sexual harassment (N = 137)

Incident of sexual harassment	Overall	Females (n = 105)	Males (n = 32)
The guest gives you a pat on the butt.	8.86	9.03	8.31
The guest asks you about sexual experiences preferences or fantasies.	8.65	8.81	8.13
The guest is sending sexually suggestive signals.	8.45	8.74	7.47
The guest gives you a massage around the neck or shoulders.	8.23	8.60	7.00
The guest says, "You have a nice butt".	8.13	8.40	7.25
The guest tells you a sexual story.	7.99	8.19	7.37
The guest is displaying sexually suggestive visuals.	7.79	8.13	6.66
The guest says, "You look sexy".	7.63	7.93	6.63
The guest grabs your hand.	7.63	7.74	7.25
The guest suggests to come and pick you up at the end of your shift.	7.47	7.59	7.06
The guest is throwing 'kisses' at you.	6.84	7.12	5.91
The guest is telling you dirty jokes.	6.69	6.99	5.72
The guest is looking at you up and down.	6.73	7.10	5.50
The guest is winking at you.	6.03	6.25	5.31
The guest is giving you a hug when leaving.	6.06	6.40	4.94
The guest invites you to go on a date.	6.04	6.41	4.84
The guest wants to dance with you.	6.07	6.40	4.97
The guest asks for your personal phone number.	5.88	6.15	5.00
The guest is standing very close to you.	5.91	6.43	4.22
The guest wants to contact you via social media.	5.61	5.83	4.88
The guest pats you on the back or shoulder.	5.45	5.81	4.28
The guest asks, "Do you have a boyfriend / girlfriend?"	4.31	4.46	3.84
The guest says, "You look nice today".	4.04	4.38	2.91
The guest says, "You have beautiful eyes".	3.92	4.05	3.50
The guest says, "You have a nice smile".	1.93	2.07	1.50

Note: Perception (0 = no sexual harassment; 10 = sexual harassment); Bold = significant difference between genders

looking you up and down" (68). Of these three, the first two were not rated very high on perceived sexual harassment (see Table 2), but the third one (looking you up and down) was rated 7.10 by female employees. The five incidents that were rated 8 or above on perceived sexual harassment have been experienced by 3–16% of the respondents.

All incidents are experienced more frequently by female employees. Since there are more females than males among the respondents, we also looked at the incidence percentage within each gender category. Only three of the 25 incidents are experienced relatively more often among male employees: "The guest is telling you dirty jokes" (37.5%); "The guest asks you about sexual experiences, preferences or fantasies" (15.63%); and "The guest gives you a massage around the neck or shoulders" (3.13%).

Many incidents are experienced exclusively ("You look sexy") or predominantly by female employees, e.g. "The guest suggests to come and pick you up at the end of your shift" (31 females, 1 male), "The guest is throwing 'kisses' at you" (20 females, 1 male) and "The guest invites you to go on a date" (37 females, 1 male). Also, the incident qualified with the highest score for perceived sexual harassment ("The guest gives you a pat on the butt") is almost exclusively experienced by women (17 females, 1 male).

Moreover, the results indicate that 93% of the 137 respondents have experienced one or more incidents of sexual harassment. No incidents of sexual harassment were experienced by 7% of female and 9% of male employees.

Implications of sexual harassment

Respondents were asked to indicate on a 4-point Likert scale to what extent they agreed or disagreed with 14 statements about the response to and consequences of sexual harassment.

As shown in Table 4, respondents most strongly agree with the statement: "In case of sexual harassment, I would always inform my manager" ($M = 3.26$) followed by the statements "Incidents of sexual harassment at work affect my well-being" ($M = 2.72$) and "motivation" ($M = 2.70$). Looking at the last two statements in Table 4, the respondents are not "willing to accept more from a guest when receiving a large tip" ($M = 1.72$) or that "restaurants create the problem of sexual harassment by hiring attractive young female servers" ($M = 1.64$).

In the interviews, the interviewees indicated that the restaurant they work or worked at made enough effort to tackle the problem of sexual harassment. All four interviewees who had experienced sexual harassment noted that when they experienced sexual harassment, they reported it to their managers. The ones that experienced sexual harassment said that this made them feel used and that it negatively influenced their motivation and well-being.

As shown in Table 4, for five out of 14 statements there is a significant difference between females and males. Males more strongly agree with the statements "I am willing to accept more from a guest when receiving a large tip", "Restaurants create the problem of sexual harassment by hiring attractive young female servers", and "I am willing to accept more from an attractive guest than from an unattractive one". Females more strongly agree with the statements "Incidents of sexual harassment at work affect my motivation" and "I feel uncomfortable to speak up to the guest when sexual harassment is happening to me".

TABLE 3: Experienced incidents of sexual harassment (N = 137)

Incident of sexual harassment	Females (n = 105)	Males (n = 32)	Overall
The guest gives you a pat on the butt.	17 (16.19%)	1 (3.13%)	18
The guest asks you about sexual experiences preferences or fantasies.	13 (12.38%)	5 (15.63%)	18
The guest is sending sexually suggestive signals.	18 (17.14%)	4 (12.50%)	22
The guest gives you a massage around the neck or shoulders.	3 (2.86%)	1 (3.13%)	4
The guest says, "You have a nice butt".	18 (17.14%)	3 (9.38%)	21
The guest tells you a sexual story.	14 (13.33%)	3 (9.38%)	17
The guest is displaying sexually suggestive visuals.	14 (13.33%)	2 (6.25%)	16
The guest says, "You look sexy".	14 (13.33%)	0 (0%)	14
The guest grabs your hand.	26 (24.76%)	6 (18.75%)	32
The guest suggests to come and pick you up at the end of your shift.	32 (30.48%)	1 (3.13%)	33
The guest is throwing 'kisses' at you.	20 (19.05%)	1 (3.13%)	21
The guest is telling you dirty jokes.	34 (32.38%)	12 (37.50%)	46
The guest is looking you up and down.	61 (58.10%)	7 (21.88%)	68
The guest is winking at you.	56 (53.33%)	9 (28.13%)	65
The guest is giving you a hug when leaving.	20 (19.05%)	4 (12.50%)	24
The guest invites you to go on a date.	37 (35.24%)	1 (3.13%)	38
The guest wants to dance with you.	24 (22.86%)	5 (15.63%)	29
The guest asks for your personal phone number.	49 (46.67%)	2 (6.25%)	51
The guest is standing very close to you.	55 (52.38%)	7 (21.88%)	62
The guest wants to contact you via social media.	49 (46.67%)	10 (31.25%)	59
The guest pats you on the back or shoulder.	50 (47.62%)	10 (31.25%)	60
The guest asks, "Do you have a boyfriend / girlfriend?"	62 (59.05%)	12 (37.50%)	74
The guest says, "You look nice today".	55 (52.38%)	9 (28.13%)	64
The guest says, "You have beautiful eyes".	59 (56.19%)	4 (12.50%)	63
The guest says, "You have a nice smile".	80 (76.19%)	17 (53.13%)	97

Note: Experience = number of respondents indicating to have experienced the listed incident

TABLE 4: Opinion about statements (N = 137)

Statement	Overall	Females (n = 105)	Males (n = 32)
In case of sexual harassment, I would always inform my manager.	3.26	3.07	3.05
Incidents of sexual harassment at work affect my well-being.	2.72	2.76	2.59
Incidents of sexual harassment at work affect my motivation.	2.70	2.79	2.41
I feel uncomfortable to speak up to the guest when sexual harassment is happening to me.	2.53	2.65	2.16
The restaurant I work/have worked in has a clear policy and protocol for dealing with incidents of sexual harassment.	2.32	2.28	2.47
I am willing to accept more from an attractive guest than from an unattractive one.	2.28	2.20	2.56
The hospitality industry is not a female friendly sector.	2.14	2.16	2.06
I feel uncomfortable to speak up to my superior when sexual harassment is happening to me.	2.09	2.12	1.97
Incidents of sexual harassment at work have made me reconsider my career-choice.	1.80	1.79	1.81
The combination of hospitality alcohol and female servers is asking for problems.	1.88	1.87	1.91
Managers always take the side of the guest.	1.72	1.69	1.84
In the hospitality industry accepting sexual comments by guests is part of the job.	1.74	1.79	1.56
I am willing to accept more from a guest when receiving a large tip.	1.72	1.61	2.06
Restaurants create the problem of sexual harassment by hiring attractive young female servers.	1.64	1.51	2.06

Note: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree; Bold = significant difference between genders

When looking at the interviews, four of the five interviewees answered that they would not cross the line regarding sexual harassment incidents to receive a higher tip. The male interviewee stated that

If guests are touching you in inappropriate ways or asking for your phone number, this is not nice; however, if you know that you are going to get a good tip out of it, like 50 or 100 euros, you are going to suck it up. But you know in the back of your head that you do not like it and you feel disgusted, but you suck it up for the money.

In summary the findings show a substantial difference in perception of sexual harassment between male and female employees, with females considering more guest behaviours as sexual harassment and as more serious forms of harassment. Females also more frequently experience incidents of sexual harassment than their male counterparts. While incidents of sexual harassment negatively affect the well-being and motivation of female staff members, they simultaneously feel uncomfortable to speak up to the guest when those incidents occur. Managerial support in counteracting sexual harassment is indispensable.

Discussion

Perception of sexual harassment

Regarding the perceptions of sexual harassment, the results of the research showed that the incidents "The guest gives you a pat on the butt" and "The guest asks you about your sexual experiences, preferences or fantasies" were perceived as the most explicit incidents of sexual harassment. The incidents "The guest says you have a nice smile" and "The guest says you have beautiful eyes" were perceived least as exemplifying sexual harassment. It seems that incidents are interpreted in different ways by different people. From the interviews, it was concluded

that perceiving sexual harassment depends on how guests say certain things. All these findings align with what was stated in the literature review about the fact that certain situations could lead to someone labelling it as sexual harassment depending on the interpretation of the person affected (McDonald, 2020). When evaluating gender differences in perceptions of sexual harassment, both males and females had the same perception about the previously named incidents being the incidents demonstrating the most or least sexual harassment. However, when the difference between males and females regarding the perception of incidents of sexual harassment is analysed, it becomes clear that females perceive all incidents to be more expressive of sexual harassment than males. In fifteen of the 25 incidents, this difference is statistically significant. The males and females particularly differ in their perception regarding the incidents "The guest is standing very close to you", "The guest is looking you up and down" and "The guest gives you a massage around the neck or shoulders." These findings line up with Blumenthal's (1998) research which found that females are more likely to label certain behaviour as sexual harassment than males.

Experience of sexual harassment

Regarding the experience of sexual harassment, Morgan and Pritchard (2018) mention that more sexual harassment happens to female servers. This is confirmed by the results of the current study which also show that more female restaurant employees experienced incidents of sexual harassment than males. When taking into consideration that more females than males took part in the survey, percentages still show that except for three statements, females experienced more incidents of sexual harassment than males. Also, Reedy (2019) stated that 90% of women and 70% of men that work in restaurants did experience some form of sexual harassment. Looking back at the results, the current study confirms that 93% of women and 91% of men

restaurant employees have experienced one or more incidents of sexual harassment.

Dealing with sexual harassment

Regarding dealing with sexual harassment in the hospitality industry, the literature review indicated a tendency to tolerate incidents of sexual harassment as part of the job (Morgan and Pritchard, 2018). The fact that most respondents of the survey disagreed with the statement "The restaurant I work/have worked at has a clear policy and protocol for dealing with incidents of sexual harassment" shows that there is still much work to be done.

In the literature review, it was found that many managers do not take sexual harassment seriously, do not minimise the problem and tolerate certain kinds of sexual harassment (McDonald, 2020). It is stated that this is a result of guests using their power over a server because of the "power of the tip" or the "guest is always right" rule. This differs from the results of the present study which show that respondents disagree with the statement that "Managers always take the side of the guest". However, this does not take away the fact that sexual harassment, as perceived and experienced by male and female restaurant employees, has an impact on employee performance and well-being. Mathisen et al. (2008) stated that the normalisation and manager's ignorance of sexual harassment can lead to negative effects on the health and well-being of employees, which affects motivation and job satisfaction and as a result makes the staff turnover rate increase. The results indicate that the respondents of the survey mostly agree with the statements "Incidents of sexual harassment at work affect my well-being" and "Incidents of sexual harassment at work affect my motivation".

Conclusion

Regarding the first research question "What are the differences between men and women when it comes to the perception of sexual harassment?", the results show that females score all incidents higher as indicators of sexual harassment than males do. Furthermore, in 15 of the 25 incidents, this difference is statistically significant. We conclude that female restaurant employees qualify more incidents as exemplifying sexual harassment than male employees, and as more serious expressions of sexual harassment.

The second research question about "How often do male and female restaurant employees experience incidents of sexual harassment?" showed that the most frequently occurring incidents of sexual harassment are: the guest saying, "You have a nice smile" (97 times), the guest asking, "Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?" (74 times), and "The guest looking you up and down" (68 times). All incidents are experienced more frequently by female employees and the vast majority of incidents are experienced exclusively or predominantly by female employees.

For the third research question "What are the implications of incidents of sexual harassment?", results show that the respondents strongly agree with the statements: "Incidents of sexual harassment at work affect my well-being" ($M = 2.72$) and "Incidents of sexual harassment at work affect my motivation" ($M = 2.70$). We conclude that incidents of sexual harassment do affect the performance and well-being of restaurant employees.

Regarding the last research question "How can management prevent or deal with incidents of sexual harassment?", respondents indicate that "In case of sexual harassment, I would always inform my manager" ($M = 3.26$) and "The restaurant I work/have worked at has a clear policy and protocol for dealing with incidents of sexual harassment" ($M = 2.32$). It can also be seen that the respondents have difficulty speaking up to the guests ($M = 2.53$) and to their superiors ($M = 2.09$) about incidents of sexual harassment. At the same time, they do not agree that "In the hospitality industry accepting sexual comments by guests is part of the job" ($M = 1.74$), they are not "willing to accept more from a guest when receiving a large tip" ($M = 1.72$) or that "restaurants create the problem of sexual harassment by hiring attractive young female servers" ($M = 1.64$). We can conclude that respondents need more support in how to deal with sexual harassment.

Returning to the problem statement about the differences in the perception of and experience with incidents of sexual harassment by male and female restaurant employees, the results show that there is a different perception of sexual harassment between male and female restaurant employees. The females are more inclined to perceive the listed incidents as sexual harassment than males. Female restaurant employees also experienced more sexual harassment incidents than males.

Recommendations

Awareness about sexual harassment should be raised and people should know that sexual harassment is happening almost on a daily basis. Since the media plays an influential role in shaping opinions in society nowadays, it can be used to raise awareness about this topic. There should also be more education about this topic, starting with children. Children should be taught about sexual harassment to protect them but also to teach them the difference between right and wrong. Teaching children about self-awareness, self-management and social awareness helps to prevent sexual harassment from happening. Finally, to minimise sexual harassment from happening, there should be a policy in restaurants (and all hospitality-related workplaces) about sexual harassment not being tolerated. Employees should be informed about this policy and know that sexual harassment is not accepted. Employees should also be provided with procedures to make a formal charge or complaint. Further research is highly recommended to raise more awareness about the frequency of sexual harassment, the reasons behind it and to find possible solutions for the re-occurring problems.

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Local food consumption and practice theory: A case study on guests' motivations and understanding

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ABSTRACT: This study explores the relationship between guests' perceptions of local food and the motivations leading to its consumption at restaurants. Applying practice theory to consumption studies, the research draws on the "practical turn" in social theories and the renewed interest in "everyday life" and "lifeworld". In doing so, the study uses Schatzki's and Reckwitz's reformulation of *practice* as a routinised set of behaviours interconnected with one another and rooted in a background knowledge made up of understanding, know-how, state of emotion and motivational knowledge. The research is organised as a case study collecting data from 162 potential guests of local restaurants in the municipality of Ooststellingwerf, in the northern Netherlands, via a survey questionnaire. The dataset was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science [SPSS] software, focusing on customers' understanding of "local food" and the factors motivating them to order a local dish at restaurants. The exploratory findings contribute to the understanding of the conceptualisation of "local food" from the consumers' perspective and shed light on the use of practice theory in tourism studies with regard to consumers' pro-sustainability behaviour.

KEYWORDS: consumer behaviour, food consumption; local food; practice theory

Introduction

Despite the increasing academic interest in theorisations and paradigms of local food production and consumption (Blake et al., 2010; Eriksen, 2013; Sundbo, 2013; Sage, 2014), there is still no consensus on a definition of "local food", or shared understanding of its contribution to sustainability in tourism and hospitality (Hall & Mitchell, 2003; Brain, 2012; Higgins-Desbiolles & Wijesinghe, 2019). In academic research, the conceptualisation of local food largely moves between local food as an expression of the local cultural identity and social capital (Hall, 2006; Hall et al., 2008; Sims, 2009; Johnston & Baumann, 2014), and local food as a critical response to a contemporary global mainstream food system that is perceived as having eroded the geographical and social linkages between the dimension of production and the dimension of consumption (Hall & Mitchell, 2000; Montanari, 2009; Boluk et al., 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles & Wijesinghe, 2019). Such conceptualisations share – as a lowest common denominator – the acknowledgment that local food production and consumption is a nexus to sustainability within the frame of Goal 12 of the sustainable development goals (SDGs), envisaged by the United Nations as seeking to "ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns" (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg12>).

With regard to such patterns of sustainable consumption, this research aims to explore consumers' conceptualisations

and definitions of local food, and to understand the relationship between consumers' perceptions of local food and the motivations leading them to consume such food at restaurants. The study therefore seeks to contribute to the understanding of the antecedents and mediators driving the consumption of local food and the extent to which these influence pro-sustainability behaviour. The theoretical frame of the study rests in an application of practice theory approaches to consumption studies. The research draws on literature examining the "practical turn" in social theories (Knorr Cetina et al., 2005) and its link with a renewed interest in "everyday life" and "lifeworld" (Haluza-DeLay, 2008; Røpke, 2009; Halkier et al., 2011; Micheletti & Stolle, 2012; Warde, 2014). Conceptually, this study is driven by Schatzki's (Schatzki, 1996; 1997; Knorr Cetina et al., 2005) and Reckwitz's (Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2005; 2015) reformulation of the concept of *practice* as a routinised set of behaviours interconnected to one another and rooted in a background knowledge consisting of understanding, know-how, state of emotion and motivational knowledge.

The investigation is organised as a case study. Data were collected in 2018 in the Frisian municipality of Ooststellingwerf, in northern Netherlands, using a survey that reached 162 potential guests of local restaurants. The resulting quantitative dataset was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science [SPSS] software, focusing on customers' understandings of "local food" and the factors motivating them to order a local

dish at restaurants. The investigation takes into consideration the influence of food *neophobia* attitudes, and the demographic features of gender and age. Findings suggest that interpersonal relations are the most influential motivational factors and point to the pivotal role of customers' gender and age. Interestingly, the study did not find a significant relation between food neophobia and the choice of a local dish. Finally, and contributing to the development of further knowledge on the conceptualisation and definition of "local food" from the consumers' perspective, the article discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the use of practice theory in tourism studies with regards to consumers' pro-sustainability behaviour.

Local food consumption

The urgent need to address the global challenges of poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, and social and economic injustice underpins the United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs) and provides the context for the contemporary debate rethinking the patterns of food consumption and production (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>). Tourism and hospitality contribute extensively to global food consumption, with 40 million tonnes of food globally consumed by tourists in 2011 (Gössling & Peeters, 2015). The World Travel and Tourism Council (2017) recognises and stresses the pivotal role of the tourism and hospitality industry in motivating consumers to contribute to sustainability through their food consumption choices and their support of local economies. Tourism and hospitality scholars have examined the juncture between food consumption and sustainability from several perspectives, including local food movements and food justice (Brain, 2012; Sage, 2014), the role of the restaurateur as a sustainability pedagogue (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2014) and sustainability facilitator (Higgins-Desbiolles & Wijesinghe, 2019), tourism as a force for gastronomic globalisation and localisation (Hall & Mitchell, 2003), carbon labels in tourism and hospitality (Babakhani et al., 2020), the influence of globalisation on food consumption and local gastronomic identities in tourism (Mak et al., 2012), and food "authenticity" and "locality" as strategies for regional tourism development (Sims, 2009).

Despite the increasing academic debate about paradigms of local food production and consumption, there is still no consensus on a definition of "local food" (Blake et al., 2010; Eriksen, 2013; Sundbo, 2013). In tourism and hospitality studies, the conceptualisation of local food largely moves between local food as an expression of the local cultural identity and social capital (Hall, 2006; Hall et al., 2008; Sims, 2009; Johnston & Baumann, 2014), and local food as a critical response to a mainstream global food system that is perceived as having eroded the geographical and social linkages between the dimension of production and the dimension of consumption (Hall & Mitchell, 2000; Montanari, 2009; Boluk et al., 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles & Wijesinghe, 2019). Notwithstanding the importance of food consumption in the context of tourism and hospitality, little is known about the phenomenon in general. Previous studies have explored consumers' attitude towards local food through the use of alphabet theory (Feldmann & Hamm, 2015), consumer segmentation (Aprile et al., 2016), the theory of planned behaviour (Kumar & Smith, 2018), laddering and word association techniques (Roininen et al., 2006), and grounded theory (Kim et al., 2009). According to Feldmann and Hamm

(2015), these studies based their research on the difficulty of defining the term "local", usually understood in terms of distance – i. e. food that has travelled for a short distance (Holloway et al., 2007) or food that is marketed directly from the producer (Watts et al., 2005). Such understandings of local food become even more challenging when they refer to the variety of ingredients that may comprise a single dish – e.g. from main ingredients such as vegetables, meat and dairy, to spices and seasoning. Focusing on the consumers' role in prompting sustainability through their consumption choices in relation to food, this study aims at developing further knowledge about consumers' perceptions and understandings of local food in tourism and hospitality and focuses therefore on local dishes. It does so by applying social practice theory to consumer behaviour studies in order to explore restaurant guests' motivations towards the choice of a local dish when at a restaurant.

Practice theory

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in applying practice theory to consumption studies, especially with regard to forms of sustainable consumption in daily life (Warde, 2005; 2014; 2015; Haluza-DeLay, 2008; Røpke, 2009; Hargreaves, 2011; Sahakian & Wilhite, 2014). Speaking of "practices" is broadly understood as investigating the individual actions and behaviours that are the building blocks of social phenomena and social life (Reckwitz, 2002; Knorr Cetina et al., 2005). Reckwitz (2002, p. 244) claims that "the turn to practices seems to be tied to an interest in the 'everyday' and 'lifeworld'". The use of social practice theory in this research, therefore, allows the study of consumption to be interwoven with the understanding of everyday practices and routinised activities (Sahakian & Wilhite, 2014). The study investigates guests' conceptualisation of local dishes and their motivations for consuming local food when at a restaurant from a *habitus* perspective. The concept of *habitus* allows the structuring of practices and routines, connecting them to the individual's personal history by making sense of biographical and historical experience as a crucial element in decision-making (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Shove et al. (2012) highlight that habits are practices constantly reproduced by committed practisers; moreover, all habits are practices but, actually, not all practices are habits requiring consistent reiteration.

While theories of practice present a high degree of variation, this study draws on the key features of practice theory as reformulated by Schatzki (1996; 1997). Practices are understood as the core of the social scientific analysis of social order and personal conduct and are presented as the primary entities of the social world, while the society itself is "a field of practices" (Warde, 2014, p. 285). As Reckwitz (2002, p. 249) highlights,

...[a] "practice" (*Praktik*) is a routinised type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, "things" and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.

Practice theory conveys a novel perspective on consumer studies since, in contrast to the main narrative on consumer sovereignty, it puts the emphasis on routine over action and on dispositions over decisions as a frame to better understand consumers' choices and behaviour (Warde, 2014). According

to this perspective, consumer behaviour and decision-making can be understood as a moment within a chain of practices, habits and daily routines connected to each other and for this reason difficult to change (Hargreaves, 2011). Recognising this resistance to change (Wilhite, 2013) is crucial if we are to be successful in addressing one of the key questions of our time, namely how to move such practices towards patterns of sustainable consumption. This study is therefore conceptually driven by Reckwitz's (2002, p. 249) formulation of practice as a "background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge". Investigating the ways in which people understand and order local food when at restaurants, the study interweaves the lens of habits, practices and daily routine with the work of Kim et al. (2009), Kim and Eves (2012) and Mak et al. (2012), exploring tourists' motivations and factors influencing their choice of local food.

Choosing local food at restaurants

This study draws on the work of Kim et al. (2009) and Mak et al. (2012) to explore the factors influencing the consumption of local food at a destination. Kim et al. (2009) identified three main categories: motivational, demographic, and physiological. Kim and Eves (2012) identified five motivational factors: cultural experience, excitement, interpersonal relations, sensory appeal and concern for health, together with physiological factors connected with food neophilia or neophobia (Kim et al., 2009). Mak et al. (2012) identified five sociocultural and physiological factors influencing tourists' food consumption: cultural/religious influences, sociodemographic factors, food-related personality traits, exposure effect/past experience, and motivational factors. Hence, Mak et al. (2012) add cultural/religious influences, food-related personality traits, and exposure effect/past experience to the factors previously identified by Kim et al. (2009). Concerning motivations, a motivational factor not included by the models of either Kim and Eves (2012) or Mak et al. (2012) is support for the local economy (Megicks et al., 2012). Finally, with regard to demographics, Sengel et al. (2015) show that gender is associated with significant differences in the degree of interest in local food.

Building on the above, this exploration of guests' understandings of local food and their motivations to order local dishes when at restaurants combines the use of practice theory with an exploration of guests' motivational factors – i.e. sensory appeal, interpersonal relations, local support and cultural experience, as well as food neophobia and demographic factors, i.e. gender and age (Kim et al., 2009; Kim & Eves, 2012; Mak et al., 2012; Megicks et al., 2012; Sengel et al., 2015). While practice theory focuses on chained sets of habits and routinised behaviours underpinning actions and decisions, the attention on motivational factors makes it possible to explore guests' drivers for the choice of local dishes. In short, Reckwitz's (2002, p. 249) formulation of practice as a "background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge" is used in conjunction with the motivational factors influencing tourists' local food consumption identified by Kim and Eves (2012) and Mak et al. (2012). In this way, the study explores the role of habits and practices with regard to the choice of local dishes at restaurants and the motivational factors underpinning this choice.

Research design

The investigation is organised as a case study. Data were collected in 2018 in the Frisian municipality of Ooststellingwerf, in northern Netherlands, using a 36-question survey questionnaire that reached 162 potential guests of local restaurants. The resulting quantitative dataset was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science [SPSS] software to construct a model, focusing on customers' understandings of "local food", "local dish", and motivational factors in ordering a local dish at restaurants. The investigation takes into consideration the influence of food neophobia attitudes, and the demographic features of gender and age.

The questionnaire opened with a question about the restaurants the respondents had visited in Ooststellingwerf and how often they dine out there. Subsequently, four questions were related to the respondents' understanding of local food and local dishes, and one sought to ascertain the likelihood of them choosing a dish in a restaurant prepared with local ingredients if it were offered on the menu. In order to measure the motivational factors, the dimensions of cultural experience, interpersonal relations and sensory appeal were used (Kim & Eves, 2012). A question was added about supporting the local economy (Megicks et al., 2012). Then, the questionnaire explored a physiological factor, i.e. the participants' attitude towards unknown food through questions based on the food neophobia scale (FNS) developed by Pliner and Hobden (1992). The use of a six-point Likert-type scale allowed the respondents to indicate how strongly they disagreed or agreed with the statements (Saunders et al., 2000). The questionnaire ended with three demographic questions (on gender, age and place of residence) (Kim et al., 2009).

The population for this research were the current and potential guests of the restaurants in Ooststellingwerf, a Friesland municipality in northern Netherlands. "Guests" included both local and non-local residents, with the former being current and potential guests living in Ooststellingwerf and the latter being those living outside the municipality. The sampling population were the locals and non-locals who were actually in Ooststellingwerf at the locations and times where and when the questionnaire was distributed. The sample was selected based on the non-probability approach and with the strategy of convenience sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The respondents were approached on the streets, at a campsite and at various restaurants. A link to the digital version of the questionnaire was shared on the internet by the employees of the restaurants with potential participants. In addition, the questionnaire was posted on the municipality's Facebook page. The duration of the data collection period was around five weeks from the beginning of June until mid-July 2018. Ultimately, a total of 162 current and potential guests of restaurants in Ooststellingwerf completed and returned the questionnaire.

The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software was used to analyse the collected data. Table 1 summarises the research design and presents an overview of the factors, dimensions, items and data analysis. A binary variable was computed, considering the median value as a discriminator. This was used as the dependent variable in logistic regression models to verify the influence of motivational, physiological and demographic factors on the choice of local food.

TABLE 1: Set of independent variables

Factor	Dimension	Item/category	Description
Sensory appeal	Motivational	<i>It is important to me that the local dish I eat tastes good.</i> <i>It is important to me that the local dish I eat looks nice.</i>	Two single items were measured using a seven-point Likert-type range scale that allowed the respondents to indicate how strongly they disagreed or agreed with the statements. They were synthesised with the mean value, and a binary variable was computed, considering the median value as a discriminator.
Interpersonal relations		<i>I like to talk to everybody about my choice for a local dish.</i> <i>Tasting a local dish enables me to have an enjoyable time with friends and/or family.</i>	Two single items were measured using a seven-point Likert-type range scale that allowed the respondents to indicate how strongly they disagreed or agreed with the statements. They were synthesised with the mean value, and a binary variable was computed, considering the median value as a discriminator.
Local support		<i>I choose a local dish because it supports local producers.</i> <i>I choose a local dish because I know where it comes from.</i> <i>I choose a local dish because it is processed in Ooststellingwerf.</i> <i>I choose a local dish because it is farmed (produced) in Ooststellingwerf.</i>	Four single items were measured using a seven-point Likert-type range scale that allowed the respondents to indicate how strongly they disagreed or agreed with the statements. They were synthesised with the mean value, and a binary variable was computed, considering the median value as a discriminator.
Cultural experience		<i>A local dish allows me to discover something new.</i> <i>Tasting a local dish in its traditional setting is a special experience.</i> <i>Experiencing a local dish makes me see the things that I do not normally see.</i> <i>Experiencing a local dish enables me to learn what local ingredients taste like.</i> <i>A local dish offers an opportunity to understand local cultures.</i> <i>Tasting a local dish is an authentic experience.</i> <i>Experiencing a local dish gives me an opportunity to increase my knowledge about different cultures.</i> <i>Experiencing a local dish helps me see how other people live.</i>	Eight single items were measured using a seven-point Likert-type range scale that allowed the respondents to indicate how strongly they disagreed or agreed with the statements. They were synthesised with the mean value, and a binary variable was computed, considering the median value as a discriminator.
Food neophobia	Physiological	<i>I like dishes from different countries.</i> <i>I am sampling new and different dishes.</i> <i>I will eat almost anything.</i> <i>At dinner parties, I will try a new dish.</i> <i>I like to try new ethnic restaurants.</i>	Four single items were measured using a seven-point Likert-type range scale that allowed the respondents to indicate how strongly they disagreed or agreed with the statements. They were synthesised with the mean value, and a binary variable was computed, considering the median value as a discriminator.
Gender		Male/female	
Age	Demographic	Under 24 years 25–34 years 35–44 years 45–54 years Above 55 years	
Residence		Local/non-local residence	The place of residence was asked in order to determine whether the respondent was a local or non-local resident.

The goodness of fit of the logistic models was tested using the Hosmer-Lemeshow (HL) test, which is especially suitable in the case of small sample sizes. If the HL test statistic is not significant, the model fit is acceptable (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). When the HL goodness of fit test was carried out for the logistic regression model, the resulting *p* value of 0.71 indicates that the model fits the data well.

Findings

This section presents and discusses the exploratory findings of this research. The results about the participants' understanding of local food will be reported and discussed as well as the most influential factors for the choice of a local dish at a restaurant (respectively: interpersonal relations, gender and age group). Each one of these key findings will be presented and discussed in the following paragraphs.

The understanding of local food

In this study, the understanding of local food is examined using the term "local dish" and through three dimensions: the geographical origin of local ingredients (farmed and processed), the respondent's opinion about the name of the dish, and how many local ingredients a dish must contain to be called local. Most of the respondents believed that in order for an ingredient to be referred to as "local" it should be farmed and processed in Friesland (respectively 59% and 62%) or, more strictly, in Ooststellingwerf (25% and 21%). A few respondents choose the option "other" and remarked that the ingredients should be farmed and processed in the north of the Netherlands. Most respondents answered that a local dish must contain 60% local ingredients (39%). This amount is closely followed by 80% local ingredients (36%). Just 6% of the respondents answered that a local dish must contain 20% local ingredients. The last question for the understanding of a local dish referred to the name of this dish. The majority of the respondents believed that a local dish should have a name that shows that the ingredients are produced locally (49%). The next largest group of respondents answered that the name did not matter to them (30%), while the least popular answer was that the dish should have a traditional name (21%).

These research findings reveal that respondents believe that local ingredients should be farmed and processed within the Friesland province, or even within the Ooststellingwerf municipality itself. Moreover, a few respondents mentioned that they were not aware of the geographical location of the place where they were, but they knew that they were in Friesland. Notwithstanding, the respondents' understanding of local food and – by extension – of a "local dish" aligns with Feldmann and Hamm's (2015) observation that "local" is usually understood in terms of distance, as food that has travelled for a short distance (Holloway et al., 2007). According to the literature, the most common geographical distance for local food ranges between 16 km and 48 km (Feldmann & Hamm, 2015, p. 156): "the most frequently found definition of local food referred to distances (i.e. miles or kilometres). The specifications ranged from 10 to 30 miles". With regard to the context of this study, it should be noted that the maximum distance within the territory of the Ooststellingwerf municipality is roughly 24 km, and within the territory of the Friesland province it is roughly 50 km. Moreover, Ooststellingwerf municipality is at the centre of the three provinces constituting northern Netherlands. This means that all the respondents' replies are consistent with the most common geographical distance identified by Feldmann and Hamm (2015) with regard to the understanding of local food. Nevertheless, with regard to such correspondence, it should also be noted that the geographical characteristics and the whole dimension of this part of the Netherlands actually facilitated the consistency between the respondents' replies and the most common geographical distance identified by Feldmann and Hamm (2015).

Most respondents, meanwhile, agreed that a local dish must contain either 60 or 80 per cent of local ingredients. Surprisingly, 10% of the respondents believed that the dish must consist of 100% local ingredients. It is questionable, however, whether they took into account the presence of spices and other ingredients that cannot reasonably be sourced locally.

Due to the lack of an official definition and regulation through standardised labels, not only is it difficult for consumers to identify local products, but there is also no guarantee that

products labeled as local also fulfill consumers' expectations. The absence of one universal definition of "local" makes it all but impossible to create a standardised label for local food (Feldmann & Hamm, 2015, p. 155).

This broad and relative understanding of the concept of "local food" seems to imply that the choice of local food is actually driven more by the context and motivational factors (Kim & Eves, 2012; Mak et al., 2012). In this study, the respondents' understanding of local food is largely grounded in the geographical proximity of the ingredients comprising the dish, both in terms of farming and processing. Such an understanding of local food, however, is not consistent with the findings identifying "interpersonal relations" as the most significant motivational factor for ordering a local dish at a restaurant. The motivational factors of "local support" and "cultural experience" would appear to align more closely with the prominence that respondents afforded to the "local" dimension in ordering a local dish at a restaurant, but the logistic regressions for those factors in our study were not significant. Practice theory, however, helps to interpret such dissonance between a theoretical understanding of local food as predominantly farmed and processed within a short distance and its choice at the restaurant. The following section will present the findings and discuss the guests' interest in "interpersonal interaction" as a habit for social relations and convivial interactions while ordering a local dish at a restaurant. As Reckwitz (2002, p. 249) highlights "a 'practice' (*Praktik*) is a routinised type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another... states of emotion and motivational knowledge". Hence, this study values guests' habits together with the emotional and social relations grounded in the convivial social dimension prompted by choosing a local dish at a restaurant.

Motivational factors

In this section, for each factor – i. e. sensory appeal, interpersonal relations, local support, cultural experience – the regression coefficient B , odds ratio $\text{Exp}(B)$ and p value are noted in brackets. The odds ratio, an exponentiation of the B coefficient, measures the strength of the statistical association between two variables: in the present case, motivational, physiological and demographic factors, and the choice of local food.

Interpersonal relations

All other variables held constant, respondents scoring higher on the dimension of "interpersonal relations" were 3.160 times more likely to choose local food than respondents scoring lower ($B = 1.151$; $\text{Exp}(B) = 3.160$; $p < 0.05$). There was a significant positive correlation between the factor of "interpersonal relations" and the choice for a local dish: the higher the score for interpersonal relations, the higher the likelihood for a choice of a local dish. This result is in line with the statement by Mak et al. (2012, p. 933) stressing how local food can have a social function and that it can strengthen relations: "[food] might serve as an interpersonal motivator as meals taken on holiday have a social function including building new social relations and strengthening social bonds". The findings of this study therefore confirm the role played by emotional and social relations with regard to local food consumption (Mak et al., 2012; Feldmann & Hamm, 2015). This study, however, does not reveal a significant relationship between the other motivational factors – i. e. sensory appeal, local support, cultural experience – and the choice for a local

dish, nor does it show a significant relationship between the physiological factor of food neophobia and the choice of a local dish at a restaurant (Kim et al., 2009).

Practice theory makes it possible to interpret such results through the lens of everyday practices and routinised activities, from a habitus perspective (Sahakian & Wilhite, 2014). The concept of habitus articulates practices and routines, connects them to the individual's personal history, and makes sense of the biographical experience as a crucial element in decision-making (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Hence, the significance of the "interpersonal relations" factor can be interpreted as a habitus for emotional and social relations that guests seek by choosing a local dish at a restaurant. As Mak et al. (2012) highlight, the choice for a local dish at a restaurant fulfils a social function by building new social relations and strengthening social bonds via the interaction prompted in choosing a local dish at a restaurant. Since practice theory interprets social life as a set of repeated behaviours, speaking of "practices" means exploring patterns of individual behaviours and actions as building blocks of social phenomena (Warde, 2005), in this study referred to as local food consumption.

Demographic factors

Demographic factors have previously been shown to influence the consumption of local food (Kim et al., 2009). In this study, the more significant demographic factors influencing the choice of a local dish at a restaurant are gender and age.

Gender

According to the statistical analysis, "female" respondents were 2.524 times more likely to choose local food than "male" respondents ($B = 0.926$; $\text{Exp}(B) = 2.524$; $p < 0.05$). This confirms the findings of other studies on food consumption and consumers' behaviour that identify gender as an influencing factor for the consumption of local food, and specifically women as having a stronger interest in local food (Kim et al., 2009; Mak et al., 2012; Feldmann & Hamm, 2015; Sengel et al., 2015). As explained by Kim et al. (2009), this is not unusual; according to the literature, women care more about the safety and healthiness of food and this care and interest can also be connected to their choice for local food (Kim et al., 2009; Mak et al., 2012; Feldmann & Hamm, 2015; Sengel et al., 2015). In this study, we interpret women's choice of a local dish at a restaurant as part of their habits and routines on food choice. Hence, we discuss women's stronger interest in local food as a behaviour that is part of a chain of practices and habits women embody with regard to food choice. Practice theory helps to frame such daily routines as connected to each other (Hargreaves, 2011) and as rooted in "a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 249).

Age

The findings suggest that respondents aged 45–54 years are 11.316 times more likely to choose local food than respondents under 24 years ($B = 2.426$; $\text{Exp}(B) = 11.316$; $p < 0.05$). Hence, the statistical analysis reveals that age has a significant positive relationship with the choice for a local dish: older people choose a local dish more often than younger people. This result confirms both the study of Feldmann and Hamm (2015), discussing how older people are more supportive towards local food, and that of

Kim et al. (2009), revealing how age influences the consumption of local food. Mak et al. (2012, p. 932) highlight that "[e]lder interviewees and interviewees with higher education levels were found to be more concerned about health and had a stronger desire to understand and experience foreign cultures through local food consumption". Moreover, Feldmann & Hamm (2015, p. 156) stress that "the preference of older people for local products was due to their deeper roots in their home region and was a reaction to the preference of younger consumers for processed convenience food". Such an explanation chimes with the idea that the choice of a local dish is part of a set of habits and routinised behaviours grounded in "'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 249).

Conclusion

This study investigated local food consumption from the guests' perspective, examining their understanding of local food, and their motivations for the choice of local dishes when at a restaurant. Practice theory was used to interpret the choice for a local dish as a practice connected to a chain of habits and routinised activities. This novel use of practice theory in a study on the consumption of local food allows individual practices to be foregrounded as crucial in the study of consumers' behaviour and social phenomena (Reckwitz, 2002; Knorr Cetina et al., 2005). The results suggest that – despite the elusiveness of a definition of local food – the understanding of local food is consistently framed mainly in terms of a high percentage of ingredients being locally produced and processed (Kim et al., 2009; Kim & Eves; Mak et al., 2012; Feldmann & Hamm, 2015). In addition, it is striking, that the results in respect to the motivational factors identify a predominant significance of "interpersonal relations". Here, again, the use of practice theory helps to frame the enhancement of the emotional and social relations prompted by the choice of a local dish at a restaurant as a social and convivial practice. Overall, therefore, the findings shed light on the role played by local food in questioning the mainstream global food system where the geographical and social linkages between production and consumption are lost (Hall & Mitchell, 2000; Boluk et al., 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles & Wijesinghe, 2019).

Despite the increasing academic debate and interest in paradigms of local food consumption and production (Blake et al., 2010; Eriksen, 2013; Sundbo, 2013) and in the juncture between food consumption and sustainability in tourism and hospitality studies (Hall & Mitchell, 2003; Brain, 2012; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2014; Sage, 2014; World Travel & Tourism Council, 2017; Higgins-Desbiolles & Wijesinghe, 2019; Babakhani et al., 2020), little is known about the phenomenon of local food consumption in the context of tourism and hospitality. This study contributes to filling this gap by developing further theoretical and practical knowledge. With regard to its theoretical contribution, the novelty of this study lies in applying a theoretical framework grounded in practice theory, and the "practical turn" in social theories, to investigate local food consumption within the context of tourism and hospitality studies (Knorr Cetina et al., 2005). On a practical level, our study emphasises the importance of the social dimension of local food production and consumption that remains focused on human

beings, their practices, habits and interest in the enhancement of their emotional and social relations.

Despite the contributions of these findings, a number of limitations should be noted. First, the understanding of local food consumption can be affected by a wide and heterogeneous range of factors, which were impossible to incorporate fully in this study. That said, our study does not seek for universality but to identify novel lines of investigation and theoretical frameworks for the study of local food consumption in the tourism and hospitality context. Future research should investigate the relationship between local food and practice theories through other methodological approaches, possibly also qualitative, and by enlarging the sample of participants. Future studies should also explore other geographical contexts, both inside and outside Europe. Additionally, we advocate for further critical research on the link between guests' perceptions of local food and their choice for a local dish when at a restaurant, as well as on the ethical dimension of local food consumption.

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Undergraduate hospitality students' perceptions of careers in the industry: The Ghanaian context

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ABSTRACT: The study examined undergraduate students' perceptions about careers in the hospitality industry in Ghana. Students were sampled from traditional and technical public universities through a stratified random sampling technique. With a sample size of 1 341, exploratory factor analysis, t-test and one-way analysis of variance were employed to analyse the data. The findings show that career attractiveness, prestige and mobility and the nature of hospitality careers were the main constructs of students' perceptions about careers in the hospitality industry. Also, undergraduate students were generally indifferent about careers in the industry. Specifically, students perceived careers in the industry to offer opportunities to meet new people, but this was also stressful. Implications for educators and industry practitioners are presented.

KEYWORDS: careers, Ghana, hospitality industry, industry experience, perceptions, undergraduate students

Introduction

The hospitality industry employs 10% of the global work force (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2018) and contributes considerably to the gross domestic product (GDP) of many countries. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has dwindled the fortunes of the industry, it has been forecast to recover within the shortest possible time, although operations in the industry will not be the same for some time (Gössling et al., 2020). For the industry to achieve the much-needed bounce back, staff will be a vital component. This is because, like all service industries, human resources are an indispensable agent for success (Lee et al., 2008). For staff to be able to achieve this role of improving the industry, there is a need for these staff members to possess the right knowledge, skills and attitude (Anthony et al., 2019). Higher learning programmes in the hospitality discipline is one of the many avenues through which such knowledge and skills can be acquired.

Very few graduates from hospitality programmes have been reported to pursue careers in the industry after completing the hospitality programmes (Blomme et al., 2009; Richardson & Butler, 2012; Mohammed & Rashid, 2016), even though careers in the industry have been perceived to be readily available (Lu & Adler, 2009). In cases where higher numbers of students have expressed interest in hospitality careers, this has been realised to be an intention rather than reality (Getz, 1994). Varied reasons can be identified for the lack of students' interest in hospitality careers in Ghana, of which unfavourable perception is one such reason (Amissah et al., 2019).

Studies have reported differences in how careers in the hospitality industry have been perceived. Careers in the industry have been perceived to be characterised by high employee turnover, high attrition rates, irregular working hours which affect family life, poor work security, poor progression, low status, and having a high physical demand (Roney & Öztin, 2007; Richardson & Butler, 2012; Wan et al., 2014). Careers in the industry have also been perceived to be interesting, challenging, never boring, offering opportunities to meet new people, always on the move and rewarding (Barron & Maxwell, 1993). These differences in perception about careers in the industry have been said to vary among students based on the students' academic level, status and exposure to industry experience (Chan et al., 2002).

Students' perceptions of hospitality careers could be positive, negative or neutral. For instance, hospitality students have perceived careers negatively in an industry characterised by low wages (Richardson & Butler, 2012; Neequaye & Armoo, 2014), poor work environments, boredom and poor work hours (Selçuk et al., 2013). Students have also endorsed the industry as providing opportunities for career development (Neequaye & Armoo, 2014). When students' perception of the industry is negative, it can negatively affect their choice of hospitality careers, and vice versa.

The hospitality industry in Ghana is rated as performing below its potential capacity (Frimpong-Bonsu, 2015). This may be partly attributed to the unavailability of qualified personnel to render the services required in the industry (Ministry of Tourism, 2013). Also, hospitality graduates often choose careers in industries other than the hospitality industry (Wong & Liu, 2010; Qiu et al.,

2017), and had no intention of choosing careers in the industry (Amissah et al., 2019). However, it is not clear what factors underpin the perceptions that students have about careers in the hospitality industry as well as how Ghanaian hospitality students generally perceive careers in the industry. This study therefore seeks to answer the following questions:

- a. What factors underpin students' perceptions about careers in the industry?
- b. How do students perceive careers in the hospitality industry?
- c. What are the differences in students' perceptions about careers in the industry based on sociodemographic characteristics and industry experience?

Significance of the study

The perceptions of students with regard to careers in the industry for which they are being trained are very important (Barron & Maxwell, 1993; Akin Aksu & Deniz Köksal, 2005; Roney & Öztin, 2007). This is because students who have positive perceptions of careers in the hospitality industry are more likely to choose careers in the industry. This is because students will generally want to pursue careers they perceive as good and favourable to their needs. Also, the study will inform both educators and hospitality industry managers about how prospective employees perceive careers in the industry. For educators, those perceptions that are not consistent with the industry may be altered through orientation and classroom discussions. On the part of industry managers, the findings of the study will enable them to understand and manage the myriad perceptions that students have about careers in the industry, thereby reducing the turnover/attrition rates.

Literature review

Students' perceptions of hospitality careers

Differences in perception of students with regard to careers in the hospitality industry have long been documented. For instance, Kelley-Patterson and George (2001) reported differences in the perception of students with industry experience and those without industry experience. Lee (2008) further asserts that students exposed to industry-based learning have a better understanding of and more realistic expectations from the industry. Barron et al. (2007) reported through a qualitative study that students with industry experience perceived careers in the industry as being full of exciting and interesting experiences. However, students with industry experience also generally perceived careers in the hospitality industry to be characterised by a low salary, long working hours which hinder social life and perceived high job insecurity. In a recent study in Turkey, Turanligil and Altıntaş (2018) sampled 204 students in Anadolu University and analysed their perceptions and expectations of the industry. The findings reported, among other things, that there were generally no statistically significant differences in the perceptions of students with industry experience and those without industry experience. It was also evident from the findings that a majority (79.2%) of the students acquired industry experience from hotels.

The perceptions students have of careers in the industry have been reported to differ based on academic level. Generally, first-year students have been reported to have a more positive perception of careers in the industry compared to continuing students. Barron and Maxwell (1993), for instance, reported that

students in their first year have a more positive perception of careers in the industry compared to continuing students and those who have experienced work life in the industry. Getz (1994) conducted a longitudinal study in Scotland and reported that over 14 years students have become more negative in their perceptions of careers in the industry. Earlier, West and Jameson (1990) established the negativity that students studying hospitality develop for the industry through contact with jobs of the industry either as they progress through the academic levels or when employed in the industry.

It is important to note that the perceptions that students have about the industry may be unrealistic (Chen et al., 2000), and this may affect their overall perceptions about careers in the industry. This is because if these unrealistic expectations are not met, students or graduates can become disappointed and, hence, have negative feelings towards careers in the industry. These negative thoughts may be modified or changed through interaction on career issues with educators or career counsellors in the learning environment.

Also, students' perceptions about careers in the hospitality industry can be positive, negative or indifferent. Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000) reported that students perceived careers in the industry to be stressful, characterised by hours of long work, poor working environments, unfair promotion practices, coupled with low remuneration, among others. Similarly, Birdir (as cited in Roney & Öztin, 2007) also noted the poor salary for careers in the industry. In Malaysia, Richardson and Butler (2012) reported that undergraduate hospitality and tourism students perceived careers in the industry to offer low wages, have poor work-life balance, and poor staff and manager relationships. These negative perceptions made students prefer careers in industries other than the industry they had been trained for. This is due to the belief that other industries offer higher remuneration than they could ever receive in the hospitality industry. The industry is also stigmatised as providing poor professional standards (Gu et al., 2007).

Alanzeh (2014) reported that 82% of students studying hotel management and food and beverage service in the Aqaba Economic Zone of Jordan wished to work in the industry after graduation. This willingness to work in the industry can be attributed to the positive perceptions that these students had about careers in the industry. Lu and Adler (2009) investigated the career goals and expectations of Chinese hospitality students. A description of the background characteristics of the students showed that about 65% of the students ended up pursuing tourism and hospitality programmes because of their low entrance exam grades. However, 68% of the respondents had plans to take up careers in the tourism industry. The most common reason cited by these students for wanting to work in the industry was the readily available opportunities for employment and career development. This means that most students in this study perceived the tourism industry to offer career opportunities and development. However, 32% of these students did not want careers in the hospitality and tourism industry due to a lack of personal interest in such careers.

In another study, Grobelna (2017) surveyed Polish and Spanish students in a study to investigate their perceptions of job-related motivators when choosing careers in the tourism and hospitality industry. In general, the findings showed that tourism and hospitality careers do not provide the factors that these students consider acceptable in a career. The study sampled one

institution from each of the two countries and this was identified by the author as a limitation in the study because such findings cannot be generalised to represent the overall perceptions of students about the industry in both countries. Wen et al. (2018) reported that students in China perceived compensation and promotion opportunities in the industry as being below what they expected in a career.

More so, Selçuk et al. (2013) confirmed that students from Ataturk University in Turkey perceived the industry to offer jobs which are not interesting (63%). Also, students (80%) perceived the industry to have poor working hours which do not conform to a regular lifestyle. For these and other negative reasons, more than half of the student respondents in this study concluded that it is a big mistake to be involved in tourism as a career preference. Again, Selçuk et al. (2013) reported that students perceived careers in the industry to be servile in nature, with an insufficient salary in relation to workload.

Roney and Ötzin's (2007) findings showed that, in general, students were indifferent or neutral in their perception towards the industry in Turkey, although some students perceived that the industry would afford them the opportunity to meet new people and probably be able to network. Although students may have poor expectations from the industry, students found to have willingly chosen the hospitality programme were more willing and therefore wanted to choose careers in the industry after graduation (Akin Aksu & Deniz Köksal, 2005). Again in Turkey, Turanlıgil and Altıntaş (2018) reported negative perceptions among tourism and hotel management students. Poor treatment of these students by the industry players, especially during internships, was identified as a probable cause of this negative perception.

One study of great relevance to the present study was by Neequaye and Armoo (2014), which sought to find out the factors used by Ghanaian students in determining career options in the tourism and hospitality industry. The findings showed that students were not sure that careers in the industry were secure, readily available and with a reasonable workload. However, as revealed by the study, most students strongly perceived the industry to provide personal career development. It was further reported that students perceived salary levels in the hospitality industry to be low, as compared to careers in other industries, although students' perception about the salary was the least of the factors influencing their perception about the industry. This finding is striking because, in a developing country like Ghana, one might expect monetary reward for work done to be of great importance. However, students in Neequaye and Armoo's study may have rated salary the least important factor influencing their choice of career because most of them were being provided for by their parents or guardians and therefore might not acknowledge the importance of remuneration at that stage of their lives.

Another study that has a bearing on the present study is one by Amissah et al. (2019). In that study, the authors sought to explore students' perceptions of careers in the hospitality and tourism industry in Ghana. The study, however, sampled 441 students from the hospitality and tourism department of the University of Cape Coast, which the authors stressed limited the generalisability of the findings from the study across the population of hospitality and tourism students in Ghana. Findings from Amissah et al. (2019) showed that students perceived careers in the industry unfavourably, as only 33% of

these students intended to choose careers in the industry after graduation. The study further reported that female students perceived careers in the hospitality and tourism industry more favourably than their male counterparts, as a significant difference was recorded with gender and perception of careers in the industry. The study also identified a non-significant difference in perceptions of students based on industry work experience.

From the above literature, it is evident that most studies have reported negative perceptions from students with regard to careers in the hospitality industry. The negative perceptions are irrespective of country: China, Malaysia, Scotland, Turkey, or Ghana, among others. Also, the literature highlighted negative perceptions like poor remuneration, promotion practices, work and social life balance, work overload, and staff-manager relationships, among others. However, some studies also reported positive perceptions among students. The positive perceptions had to do with availability of career development, opportunities to meet new people, and readily available jobs. Furthermore, some of the studies have reported neutral (neither positive nor negative) perceptions of students towards careers in the industry. It may be concluded that negative perceptions of hospitality careers may result in low or no interest in careers, while positive perceptions may mean a high interest in and strong choice for hospitality careers.

Research methods

The study was quantitative and descriptive in design. It sought to describe students' perceptions of careers in the hospitality industry. To arrive at a sample size, a list of all public universities offering hospitality programmes in Ghana was developed. These institutions were then grouped under the three regional zones based on their location (northern, middle and southern). The purposive sampling method was then used to select both traditional and technical universities from each zone. For example, one university was selected from the northern zone, as it was the only public technical university in the area that offered a hospitality programme at the time of data collection. In the middle zone, there were three traditional public universities and two technical universities which offer hospitality management programmes. One traditional and one technical university were purposively selected, each from the two regions that make up the middle zone. In the southern zone, there were five public technical universities and two traditional public universities, all offering hospitality programmes. One traditional university and three other technical universities were selected purposively considering the regional distributions of the universities. The universities selected were those that have offered the hospitality programme for at least five years and have produced graduates who are working in the industry.

A stratified random sampling technique was used to select students from each academic level (first to fourth year). Fifty per cent of students in each academic level were randomly sampled using student class lists. The total population was 3 340 students; fifty per cent of students in each level were selected to ensure representativeness. Class lists of students at each level were used. The lottery method was used to randomly select half of the students. The class lists for each class were already numbered. This made it easier for the random selection of respondents, as numbers randomly picked were assigned to the

corresponding student names. The estimated sample size for the study was 1 670.

Survey instrument

A questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was administered by the researchers with the help of field assistants. It was divided into two parts. Part A required undergraduate students to show the extent of their agreement to statements on perceptions of careers in the hospitality industry on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. The statements on perceptions of careers in the hospitality industry were negatively worded, which means that agreeing to a statement denotes a negative perception. Thus, a low mean denotes positive perception. Some of the statements were reworded to make them simpler for students to understand and also to fit the Ghanaian context.

Part B required respondents to respond to questions on their sociodemographic and university characteristics. The data collection tool was validated by two experts in the area of study and a pre-test of the instrument was done, with undergraduate students at two universities not included in the actual data collection. The pre-testing of the survey instrument also offered the opportunity to rephrase some of the questions. For example, the perception statement "careers in the industry are inflexible, so there is less time for family life" was rephrased to read: "careers in the industry offer less time for family". Also, through the pre-testing, responses about the marital status of the respondents, which included responses about being divorced or widowed, were excluded.

The main field work started in November 2018. Because of the wide geographical space to be covered in this research, field assistants were contacted and recruited from the various university campuses. The field assistants were mainly teaching assistants from the selected universities. In all, seven field assistants were contacted with the help of lecturers at the universities. Permission was sought from the various hospitality departments and lecturers. After data collection, 1 341 of the questionnaires were found to be suitable for quantitative analysis. The usable response rate, therefore, was 80.25%.

Each questionnaire was checked by the researchers to ensure that it was correctly completed and important information provided. The quantitative data collected were coded into Statistical Product for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Descriptive statistics mainly in the form of frequencies, percentages and means were used to describe the background characteristics of students. A *t*-test and one-way analysis of variance (anova) was employed to examine differences in students' perceptions of careers in the hospitality industry.

Results and discussion

Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents

Respondents were mainly females (92.20%) and were mostly between the ages 20 and 29 years (66.50%). Christians (82.90%) were in the majority and most students (89%) were single. First-year students made up the largest number of respondents (46.40%), while seniors were the least (7.30%). Also, students from the technical universities (79.60%) dominated. This is because there are more technical universities offering the hospitality programmes publically in the country than traditional universities.

Industry experience of respondents

The majority of respondents in this study had some work experience in the hospitality industry. Seventy per cent (70%) of the respondents had had experience in the industry through internships (48.60%) or full-time employment (31%). This implies that internships, as alluded to by Farmaki (2018), are one of the readily available means by which students gain industry experience. Some of the students (31.60%) are working in the hotel sector. Also, as shown in Table 1, about 45% of the students who had had some industry experience had worked for fewer than six months, with those having industry experience of five years or more being the fewest (6.90%).

Students' perceptions of hospitality careers prior to exploratory factor analysis

To measure students' perception about careers in the hospitality industry, 24-item perception statements were used. Using a five-point Likert scale, all perception questions were negatively worded. In this way, a low mean represents a disagreement with the statements describing perceptions about careers in the hospitality industry. This generally means that a low mean denotes a positive perception, while a higher mean implies a negative perception. The scale used was also tested for its reliability. Cronbach's alpha of the scale (0.87) revealed that it was a good one to have effectively measured students' perceptions of careers in the hospitality. Appendix A shows all the 24 perception statements with their respective means and standard deviations.

Dimensions of students' perceptions of careers in the hospitality industry

Factor analysis was carried out to reduce the 24-item perception statements that students responded to. This analysis also ensured the grouping of the perceptions under strongly correlated constructs. Principal component analysis was employed with varimax rotation, which resulted in the reduction of the 24 items to 15. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sample adequacy was 0.92, with a Bartlett's test of sphericity of 7191.01 ($p < 0.001$).

Table 4 shows the 15 perception items generated from the factor analysis, which were grouped under three constructs. These were career attractiveness, career prestige/mobility, and

TABLE 1: Industry experience background of respondents

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	Frequency	Percentage
Hospitality industry experience	1 341		
Experienced		939	70.00
Inexperienced		402	30.00
Means of experience acquisition	939		
Internship		456	48.50
Full-time employment		291	31.00
Part-time employment		87	9.30
Voluntary work		92	9.80
Other		13	1.40
Duration of experience	939		
Less than 6 months		417	44.40
6 months – less than a year		165	17.60
1–2 years		190	20.20
3–4 years		102	10.90
5 years and more		65	6.90

nature of careers in the hospitality industry. Career attractiveness was measured by the following items with their respective factor loadings: limited opportunity to meet new people (0.72), poor networking opportunities (0.70), uninteresting experiences (0.62), poor career development (0.61), lack of opportunity for

further education (0.54), and limited use of academic knowledge and skills (0.51). Career prestige/mobility consisted of items like difficulty of movement to other careers, career of low intellectual challenge, low entry positions for graduates, and a career that is not prestigious. The factor loadings of these perceptions ranged from 0.50 to 0.69.

Finally, items like low remuneration (0.61), stressful career (0.69), low regard of career by society (0.51), careers that offer less time for family life (0.56), and social life (0.51) were grouped under nature of career. In all, the variables explained 50.32% of students' perceptions of careers in the hospitality industry. Career attractiveness (Factor I) explained 29.14% of students' perceptions of careers in the hospitality industry. Career prestige/mobility (Factor II) also explained 12.55%, while nature of career (Factor III) explained 8.63% of students' perceptions of hospitality careers (Table 3).

Under the career attractiveness construct (Factor I), perception of limited opportunity to meet people had the highest factor loading (0.72). This was followed by perception of poor networking opportunity in hospitality careers (0.70). Limited use of academic knowledge and skills had the least factor loading (0.51) under Factor I. Low entry positions for graduates (0.69) and difficulty of movement to other careers (0.63) were the two perceptions that had the highest loading under Factor II (career prestige/mobility). For Factor III, stressful careers (0.69) and low remuneration paid for careers (0.61) in the industry were the perceptions that were highly loaded under the nature of career construct.

Undergraduate students' perceptions of careers in the hospitality industry

People's perceptions about careers could be influenced by a number of factors. These perceptions may be positive or negative. Perceptions can also change based on exposure to reality or through social interactions. This notwithstanding,

TABLE 2: Dimensions of students' perceptions of careers in the hospitality industry

Factor	Perception	Loadings	Eigen values	%
1	Career attractiveness			
	Limited opportunity to meet people	0.72		
	Poor networking opportunity	0.70		
	Offers uninteresting experiences	0.62	6.87	29.14
	Lack of opportunity for further education	0.54		
	Poor career development	0.61		
Limited use of academic knowledge and skills	0.51			
2	Career prestige/mobility			
	Difficulty of movement to other careers	0.63		
	Low intellectual challenge	0.53		
	Low entry positions for graduates	0.69	2.81	12.55
Not prestigious	0.50			
3	Nature of career			
	Low remuneration	0.61		
	Stressful	0.69		
	Low regard by society	0.51	1.80	8.63
	Offers less time for family	0.56		
	Offers less time for social life	0.51		
Total variance explained				50.32

Keyser-Meyer-Olkin test = 0.922; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 7191.01; $p < 0.001$

TABLE 3: Respondents' perceptions of careers in the hospitality industry

Perception	Strongly disagree % (n)	Disagree % (n)	Neutral % (n)	Agree % (n)	Strongly agree % (n)	Mean	Standard deviation
Career attractiveness							
Limited opportunity to meet people	49.90 (669)	23.70 (318)	10.40 (139)	8.10 (108)	8 (107)	2.01	1.28
Poor networking opportunity	34.60 (464)	28.90 (387)	15.40 (207)	13.90 (186)	7.20 (97)	2.30	1.27
Offers uninteresting experiences	37.20 (499)	28.60 (384)	14.40 (193)	11.70 (157)	8 (107)	2.25	1.29
Lack of opportunity for further education	42.20 (566)	25.60 (343)	12.10 (162)	11.20 (150)	8.90 (120)	2.19	1.33
Poor career development	37.40 (502)	30.10 (403)	16.20 (217)	10.70 (144)	5.60 (75)	2.17	1.20
Limited use of academic knowledge and skills	43.30 (581)	27.00 (362)	11.20 (150)	9.50 (127)	9 (121)	2.14	1.31
Category total	40.77	27.32	13.28	10.85	7.78	2.18	1.28
Prestige/mobility of career							
Difficulty of movement to other careers	25.70 (344)	29.90 (401)	20.40 (274)	14.90 (200)	9.10 (122)	2.52	1.27
Low intellectual challenge	19.20 (257)	28.10 (376)	21.30 (285)	20.10 (270)	11.30 (152)	2.76	1.28
Low entry positions for graduates	19.80 (265)	19.10 (256)	18.90 (254)	21.40 (287)	20.80 (279)	3.04	1.42
Not prestigious career	22.30 (299)	24.70 (331)	28.50 (382)	15.10 (202)	9.50 (127)	2.65	1.24
Category total	21.75	25.45	22.28	17.88	12.68	2.74	1.30
Nature of career							
Low remuneration	22.80 (306)	18.20 (244)	17 (228)	20.10 (269)	21.90 (294)	3.00	1.47
Stressful	9.90 (133)	11.20 (150)	17.40 (233)	29.80 (399)	31.80 (426)	3.62	1.30
Low regard by society	26.70 (358)	19.20 (258)	15.60 (209)	19.20 (258)	19.20 (258)	2.85	1.48
Offers less time for family life	15.30 (205)	15.90 (213)	17 (228)	26.40 (354)	25.40 (341)	3.31	1.40
Offers less time for social life	17.70 (237)	21.60 (290)	19.20 (257)	24.50 (328)	17.10 (229)	3.02	1.36
Category total	18.48	17.20	17.22	24	23.08	3.16	1.40
Overall mean total	27.00	23.32	17.59	17.58	14.51	2.69	1.33

perceptions are important in decision-making. Results in Table 3 indicate that undergraduate hospitality students in Ghana were generally indifferent about careers in the hospitality industry, with an overall mean of 2.69 and a standard deviation of 1.33. This implies that the students were neither positive nor negative in their perception about careers in the industry. Similarly, Roney and Ötzin (2007) reported indifferent perceptions of students about careers in the industry in Turkey. On the contrary, Turanligil and Altıntaş (2018) and Amissah et al. (2019) found that hospitality and tourism students in Anadolu University and University of Cape Coast in Turkey and Ghana respectively had negative perceptions about careers in the industry. However, Barron et al. (2007) reported positive perceptions of careers in the hospitality industry by students in United Kingdom. It can also be noted that the above studies with contrary findings to this did not represent the general students' perception of careers in the industry in those countries.

Also, students disagreed that careers in the industry are not attractive (category mean = 2.18). Students were of the view that careers in the industry are attractive and offered the opportunity to meet new people (mean = 2.01), apply academic knowledge and skills (mean = 2.14), develop their careers (mean = 2.17), further their education (mean = 2.19), network with others (mean = 2.30), and be exposed to interesting experiences (mean = 2.25).

Moreover, as indicated in Table 3, students were neutral in their responses about the prestige/mobility features of careers in the industry (category mean = 2.74). Students neither agreed nor disagreed that there are difficulties in moving from hospitality careers to other careers (mean = 2.52). Students were also indifferent about the prestige of careers in the industry (mean = 2.65). Meanwhile, careers in the industry have been noted as being about servitude (Selçuk et al., 2013), which makes people feel ashamed of working especially in small establishments. Students were also not sure whether the entry positions for graduates in the industry was low (mean = 3.04).

Furthermore, students were indifferent to most of the items relating to the nature of careers in the hospitality industry (category mean = 3.16). They were neutral in their responses about the remuneration (mean = 3.00), time available for family (mean = 3.31), and social life (mean = 3.02). They, however, agreed that careers in the industry are stressful (mean = 3.62). Similar to this finding, Richardson and Butler (2012), reported negative perceptions among students in Malaysia about the nature of hospitality careers in general. It can be observed from Table 3 that most students disagreed with the assertion that there is limited opportunity to meet new people in the industry, as indicated by a lowest mean of 2.01, while they generally agreed that careers in the industry are stressful in nature (mean = 3.62).

Students were certain that pursuing careers in the industry provided the opportunity to meet new people. Similarly, Roney and Ötzin (2007) reported that students in Turkey perceived careers in the hospitality industry as providing good opportunities to meet new people all the time. Students were, however, convinced that careers in the industry were stressful (mean = 3.62). Studies by Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000), Richardson and Butler (2012), and Selçuk et al. (2013) also showed that students had negative perceptions about the nature of careers in the hospitality industry. Students in this

study, however, were indifferent about the nature of careers in the hospitality industry (category mean = 3.16).

In Table 3, percentages of students' disagreement and agreement to the negatively worded perception statements are also presented. The scale of five is presented. Neutral perceptions were necessary to allow students who neither disagree nor agree to perception statements to select them. About 68% of the students showed disagreement with the negative statements measuring the attractiveness of careers in the industry. This means that more than half of the students perceived careers in the industry to be attractive. Approximately 13% of the students were not sure whether careers in the industry were attractive or not. With regard to the prestige/mobility of careers in the industry, 47% of students perceived careers in the industry to be mobile or prestigious, while a little above 30% of the students were in agreement that careers in the industry are low in prestige or mobility.

Table 3 further indicates that 47% of students perceived careers in the industry to be poor in nature. Forty-two per cent of students were of the view that careers in the industry offer poor salaries, while 41% of the students strongly disagreed or disagreed. Furthermore, most students (61.60%) perceived careers in the industry to be stressful, as compared to 21% of students who thought otherwise. The overall total shows that about 50% of the students perceived careers in the industry positively. A further description of students' agreement/disagreement with each perception statement in percentages and means is presented in Table 3.

Differences in perceptions of hospitality careers among different categories of students

Factors that influence peoples' perceptions are varied. They include biological and social factors, although the social environment has been identified as the most common source of perception formation (Bandura, 1986; Lawer, 2015). Perceptions have been reported to vary extensively among different categories of students. These include differences based on academic level (Barron & Maxwell, 1993), and industry experience (Kelley-Patterson & George, 2001; Kim & Park, 2013), among others.

Differences in students' perceptions of hospitality careers by sociodemographic characteristics

In Table 4, it can be concluded that males and females do not differ in their perceptions about careers in the hospitality industry, although males were generally more indifferent (total mean = 2.72) than females (total mean = 2.69). Specifically, males and females disagreed with the negatively worded statements measuring the attractiveness of careers in the industry. This means that both males and females perceived careers in the industry to be attractive. They were neutral in their responses about the prestige/mobility of careers in the industry (mean = 2.80, 2.74), as well as the nature of careers in the industry (mean = 3.14, 3.16 for males and females respectively).

However, there were significant differences in perceptions about hospitality careers between Christians (total mean = 2.72) and Muslims (total mean = 2.47) at $p \leq 0.05$. As further indicated in Table 5, Muslims generally disagreed (total mean = 2.47) with the negative statements describing careers in the industry, but Christians were indifferent (total mean = 2.72). This means that Muslims had a positive perception about careers in the industry, while Christians were indifferent in their perceptions

TABLE 4: Differences in perceptions of hospitality careers by sociodemographic characteristics

Characteristic	n	Perception of hospitality career			
		Career attractiveness Mean	Career prestige/mobility Mean	Nature of career Mean	Total Mean
Gender					
Male	104	2.24	2.80	3.14	2.72
Female	1 237	2.17	2.74	3.16	2.69
Mean difference		0.07	0.06	0.02	0.03
p-value		0.46	0.48	0.81	0.60
Religion					
Christian	1 112	2.17	2.77	3.22	2.72
Muslim	229	2.19	2.64	2.58	2.47
Mean difference		0.02	0.13	0.64	0.25
p-value		0.75	0.04	<0.001	<0.001
Marital status					
Single	1 202	2.16	2.72	3.14	2.67
Married	139	2.30	2.93	3.36	2.86
Mean difference		0.14	0.21	0.22	0.19
p-value		0.08	0.01	0.01	<0.001
Age (years)					
<30	1 227	2.14	2.71	3.12	2.66
≥30	114	2.57	3.07	3.54	3.06
Mean difference		0.43	0.36	0.42	0.40
p-value		<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Academic level					
First year students	622	2.08	2.66	3.07	2.60
Continuing students	719	2.26	2.82	3.24	2.77
Mean difference		0.18	0.16	0.17	0.17
p-value		<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001

Note: Scale: 1: Strongly disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly agree ($p \leq 0.05$)

of careers in the industry. Muslims may have had a positive perception about careers in the industry because, generally, fewer Muslims, especially females, pursue careers in the industry in Ghana. Therefore, those few Muslims who have enrolled in the hospitality programmes should have a positive predisposition towards careers in the industry.

Christian and Muslim students were, however, not different in their perception about the attractiveness of careers in the industry ($p = 0.75$). They were both neutral about the prestige/

mobility and nature of careers in the industry, although the difference in perception was significantly different between the two groups of students ($p = 0.04$ and <0.001 respectively). For example, Christians had a more neutral response to the prestige/mobility (mean = 2.77) and nature of careers in the industry (mean = 3.22) than Muslims (mean = 2.64, 2.58).

Findings from the study further pointed to significant differences in the perceptions of single and married respondents ($p < 0.001$) about careers in the industry. Except for perceptions

TABLE 5: Differences in students' perceptions of careers by industry experience

Category	n	Perception of career by industry experience			
		Career attractiveness Mean	Career prestige/mobility Mean	Nature of career Mean	Total Mean
Industry experience					
Experience	939	2.22	2.71	3.15	2.69
Inexperience	402	2.07	2.73	3.19	2.66
Mean difference		0.15	0.02	0.04	0.03
p-value		<0.001	0.67	0.37	0.20
Means of experience acquisition					
Internship	456	2.31	2.80	3.29	2.80
Appointment	470	2.14	2.71	3.10	2.65
Mean difference		0.17	0.09	0.19	0.15
p-value		<0.001	0.18	<0.001	<0.001
Duration of industry experience					
<1 year	582	2.20	2.75	3.17	2.71
≥1 year	357	2.26	2.75	3.10	2.70
Mean difference		0.06	0.00	0.07	0.01
p-value		0.32	0.94	0.21	0.93

Scale: 1: Strongly disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly agree ($p \leq 0.05$)

about the attractiveness of careers in the industry, all other perceptions among students based on their marital status were significantly different. For instance, students who were married were more neutral in how they perceived careers in the industry (total mean = 2.86), when compared to single students (total mean = 2.67). The nature of careers in the industry (mean diff. = 0.22, $p = 0.01$) had the highest mean difference. Those who were married reported family life conflict issues with careers in the industry (Richardson & Butler, 2012), especially for females (Magableh, 2005), and this is likely to be one of the reasons accounting for the difference among the single and married respondents in this study.

There were variations in perceptions of students from the different age categories with respect to careers in the industry. Respondents were regrouped into two different age categories: those under 30 years old and those 30 years old and over. Respondents were regrouped into these categories because it was evident from the data that students were mostly aged between 20 and 29, while the rest were 30 years and older. It can be observed from Table 4 that there was a significant difference in the perceptions about careers in the industry between the two student groups. Students under 30 years old had a more favourable perception about careers in the industry than those who were 30 years and older ($p < 0.001$). Specifically, students under 30 years disagreed that careers in the industry were not attractive, but students 30 years and older were not sure whether careers in the industry were attractive or not ($p < 0.001$).

Previously, Barron and Maxwell (1993) reported that first-year students have more positive perceptions about careers in the industry than other year groups. Also, Getz (1994) stressed that the longer the time students spend in school and the industry, the less positive their perceptions about the industry becomes. This seems to be the case in this study, as first-years in this study had more favourable perceptions about careers in the industry (total mean = 2.60) than continuing students (total mean = 2.77). Both first-year and continuing students perceived careers in the industry to be attractive (mean = 2.08 and 2.26 respectively). The two categories of students were, however, indifferent in their perceptions about prestige/mobility and the nature of careers in the industry, although the mean differences in their perceptions were significant ($p < 0.001$).

Differences in perceptions of hospitality careers by students with industry experience

Lee (2008) asserted that when people have industry experience, they have a more realistic perception of and expectations from the hospitality industry. In another study by Kim and Park (2013), students were reported to have developed negative perceptions about hospitality careers after experiencing work life in the industry. Previously, Kelley-Patterson and George (2001) had reported differences in perceptions of students who had industry experience and those without industry experience. However, from Table 5, there was, generally, no significant difference in perceptions of students who had experienced careers in the industry and those who had not ($p = 0.20$). This finding is in congruence with a finding by Turanligil and Altıntaş (2018) in Turkey, where both students with industry experience and those without experience generally had similar perceptions of the industry.

Both categories of students only differed significantly in their perceptions about the attractiveness of careers in the industry ($p < 0.001$). Students with industry experience disagreed more with the perception that careers in the industry are unattractive (mean = 2.22), as compared to those without industry experience (mean = 2.07). The two groups of students were neutral in their responses about the prestige/mobility of careers in the industry as well as the nature of careers in the industry.

From the preceding findings, further analysis was conducted to ascertain whether differences exist in the perceptions of students based on the means by which they had gained industry experience. For this purpose, students were placed into two groups: those who gained industry experience through internships, and those who experienced the industry through appointment (employment). Table 5 indicates that except for career prestige/mobility, there were variations in the perceptions of students depending on how they acquired industry experience. In general terms, there was a significant difference in the perception of students based on how they acquired experience in the industry. Specifically, students who had acquired industry experience through internships were more indifferent in their responses (total mean = 2.80) than students who had experienced the industry by appointment (total mean = 2.65).

The more indifferent standpoint of students who had experienced careers in the industry through internships can be attributed to the generally poor treatment meted out to students on internships. Students on internships are generally considered as trainees and are therefore made to do all the odd jobs in the industry. More so, it is generally believed that the longer a phenomenon is experienced, the more realistic the perception that is formed about that phenomenon. If this assertion holds true, it can be concluded that students who had experienced careers in the industry for one year or more had a most realistic perception about careers in the industry. Referring to Table 5, we see that there were no statistically significant differences in students' perception to the duration of industry experience acquisition. Both categories of students were neither positive nor negative in perception about careers in the industry.

Conclusions and recommendations

Three factors emerged as the dimensions of undergraduate students' perceptions of careers in the hospitality industry of Ghana. These are career attractiveness, career prestige/mobility, and the nature of the career. Generally, students were indifferent about careers in the hospitality industry. Sixty-eight per cent of undergraduate students perceived careers in the industry as attractive. About 74% of students perceived careers in the industry to afford the opportunity to meet new people. This implies that there is a need to develop high social skills in students to ensure they make the best out of this opportunity, mainly by managing the relationships formed with the people they meet. On the contrary, 61.60% of the students perceived careers in the industry as stressful. Juxtaposing this perception of students about careers in the industry with the new career concept where employees are concerned about their freedom, personal growth, and interest rather the needs of the organisation (Gössling et al., 2020), it can be said that students with this new career orientation will not want to pursue stressful careers in the hospitality industry in the future.

Also, there were statistically significant differences in perceptions of students about hospitality careers based on their religion, marital status, age, academic level, and the means by which industry experience was acquired. Muslims had a more favourable perception of careers in the industry than Christians. Careers in the industry are characterised by the service of certain foods and alcohol, which the Islamic religion does not accept. This may mean that Muslims in Ghana would not want to choose hospitality programmes and careers. However, the few Muslims who will want to choose the hospitality programme and careers must have very good perceptions about careers in the industry to want to do so.

Although single and married students were indifferent in their perceptions about careers in the industry, career prestige/mobility and the nature of careers were the two perception dimensions that recorded significant variations between these two groups of students. It can be observed from the findings that students who were not married perceived careers in the industry more favourably than those who were married. This is because careers in the industry have been perceived as being inflexible, which affects the time available for family life, especially for women (Richardson & Butler, 2012). Similarly, students 30 years and over had a less favourable perception about careers in the industry than students under 30 years. Perceptions of students aged 30 and over and married students are similar. This is the case because students over 30 years are likely to be married, therefore their poor perception about careers in the industry. It can therefore be concluded that hospitality careers are perceived less favourably by older and married students because careers in the industry are inflexible, which affects time for family life.

Again, first-year students had a more favourable perception about careers in the industry than continuing students. Some studies had reported similar findings (e.g. Barron & Maxwell, 1993; Getz, 1994) and concluded that the longer students stay in the hospitality programme, the less positive their perceptions become about careers in the industry. This could be due to the realities that students encounter about careers in the industry during the period on the programme. Among other things, students who had acquired industry experience by internships had the more indifferent perception about careers in the industry than those who had experienced work life in the industry through other means. Students on internships are likely to be overburdened with all the odd tasks, and this makes them form a poor perception about careers in the industry.

It is recommended that hospitality educators expose students to the unique characteristics of careers in the hospitality industry. Educators can do this by highlighting the positive aspects of careers in the industry to students during classroom interactions. Stronger collaboration between universities and the industry is necessary to ensure students become more exposed to careers in the industry through planned and supervised internships and field trips, among others.

Suggestions for further studies

This study was quantitative in nature, and did not interrogate possible reasons for the marked differences in the perceptions of some categories of students. It is therefore suggested that a qualitative study be conducted to explore the reasons for the differences and similarities in perception among the different categories of students.

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Appendix A

TABLE 1A: Students' perceptions of hospitality careers prior to exploratory factor analysis

Perception of hospitality careers	Mean	Standard deviation	Scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha)
Careers in the industry do not provide high remuneration	3.00	1.47	0.87
Careers in the industry are stressful	3.62	1.30	
Careers in the industry are lowly regarded by the society		1.48	
There are unfair promotional practices in the industry	2.91	1.30	
Careers in the industry offer limited opportunity to meet new people	2.01	1.28	
Careers in the industry do not provide good networking opportunities	2.30	1.27	
Careers in the industry offer less time for family	3.31	1.40	
The industry does not offer interesting experiences	2.25	1.29	
Careers in the industry provide less time for social life	3.02	1.36	
The working environment in the industry is not safe	2.49	1.29	
There is lack of opportunity for further education when working in the industry	2.20	1.33	
Jobs in the industry are not readily available	2.61	1.36	
There is poor opportunity for career development in the hospitality industry	2.17	1.20	
The working relationship between managers and employees is generally poor in the industry	2.76	1.32	
Careers in the industry are not secure	2.79	1.29	
Working in the industry is not intellectually challenging	2.52	1.27	
Careers in the industry are gender discriminatory	2.56	1.36	
Working in the industry provides poor opportunity to use academic knowledge and skills acquired in school	2.14	1.31	
Careers in the industry results in difficulty in movement to other careers	2.76	1.28	
Careers in the industry have low entry positions for graduates	3.04	1.42	
Careers in the industry are characterised by long and odd working hours	2.37	1.30	
Professional standards are poor in the hospitality industry	2.53	1.28	
Careers in the hospitality industry are characterised by excessive workload	3.35	1.69	
Careers in the industry are not prestigious	2.65	1.24	
Total	2.72	1.34	

Exploring hotel identity by focusing on customer experience analysis

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ABSTRACT: Changing customer demands in the 21st century have led hotels to rethink their way of doing business. While most hotels operate with an internal focus, it is essential to examine interactions from the customer's perspective. This study explored what makes a hotel's identity through a customer experience analysis by interviewing nine customers using semi-structured interviews. The data was processed based on open, axial, and selective coding. The following themes emerged: the customer journey, hotel performance, physical and non-physical components, buying behaviour, and customer engagement. The findings show that guests reported positively about both hotels used in this study, and most of them stated that the overall experience exceeded their expectations. The determining factors in this outcome were the spacious rooms, unique interior design, and product quality. The hotel staff's excellent and personalised service mainly made most of their experience an exceptional stay. The study concluded that boutique-style hotels create a unique experience which could be a determinant for return guests.

KEYWORDS: customer satisfaction, guest service, hotel performance, service quality

Introduction

Understanding customer experience and the customer journey over time is critical for any type of business. Customers interact with firms through various touchpoints in multiple channels (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Hence, customer experience is more than the result of one single touchpoint; it is the total sum of the customers' interaction process with a firm (Verhoef et al., 2009). With this, the importance of understanding the customer journey is stressed, but it proves to be a complex subject to research. Two customers can follow the same steps, procedures, and journey and still *feel* as if it was a different experience. Customer experience reflects the customer journey through all interactions with the firm – pre-consumption, consumption, and post-consumption (Kandampully & Solnet, 2015). For the hospitality industry, customer experience is not only derived from food and beverages, hotel rooms, or the facilities offered. The customer experience covers all supporting features and processes that are part of the customer journey: the on- and off-line interaction, amenities, ambiance, employee expertise, and more. Customer experience management is regarded as a difficult task for hospitality firms.

The changing customer demands in the twenty-first century have led firms to rethink their way of doing business. Profound changes in technology, social media, consumer lifestyles, and buying behaviour highlight the need for companies to adapt to their customers' new mindset and to re-evaluate the customer experience (Kandampully et al., 2015). The increased demand from customers for superior and personalised service underlines the importance of exploring the customer journey.

While internal communication is vital to ensure mutual understanding among employees (Sylvester, 2020), it is important to examine interactions from the customer's point of view. Based on a customer experience analysis and the company values, opportunities can be prioritised (Temkin, 2010). Exploring the customer experience based on the customer journey will help to shape a firm's identity and to identify opportunities and challenges in the future. The research gives an insight into understanding and managing customer experience in the hospitality industry, and the focus of this study is on hotel identity through the use of a customer experience analysis.

The main question that guided the study was: How can using customer experience analysis highlight the identity of two hotels?

The sub-questions were:

- SQ1: What do the guests of the hotel report regarding the service provided during their customer journey?
- SQ2: Which aspects do the guests feel influence their decision-making process?
- SQ3: How do the guests of the hotel feel about the hotel performance?
- SQ4: How do guests experience the hotel during their stay?

Academic literature

Customer experience

To create a customer experience analysis, the topic of customer experience is first highlighted. Customer experience is both the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). A

successful brand shapes customers' experiences by embedding the fundamental value proposition in every feature (ibid.). Most researchers state that the overall customer experience is a multidimensional construction that involves emotional, psychological, and social components (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). This is confirmed by the Marketing Science Institute, where customer experience is described as consisting of emotional, physical, social, and economic elements that mark the customer's direct or indirect interaction with a (set of) market actor(s) (de Keyser et al., 2015).

Another important factor under the subject of customer experience is that the experience is subject to the consumers' perception and view, meaning that customer experience is inherently personal and unique to each customer (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Helkkula et al., 2012). Customer experience consists of individual contact between the firm and the customer at distinct points in the experience called touchpoints (Homburg et al., 2015). Not only is customer experience subject to what products and services a company offers, the overall customer experience is above all built through the sum of various touchpoints during different phases of the customer journey (Verhoef et al., 2009). This involves a multidimensional construction that consists of emotional, social, personal, physical, and economic factors (de Keyser et al., 2015).

The customer journey

When consuming a good or service, the customer experiences interactions with an organisation or business. This customer experience life cycle consists of every interaction with an organisation. This journey can be separated into different phases: pre-, during, and post-consumption. The customer journey, therefore, consists of different stages with several, multichannel touchpoints involved. The orchestration of each of the business processes involved should be in place to provide a seamless customer journey (Hunt, 2012). Businesses need to achieve accurate visibility and understanding of the path the customer is taking to fully encounter the complexity of managing customer experience. Also, a practice to examine interaction with the customer is the customer journey map, which includes the wider pathway customers might have taken pre-, during, and post-consumption (Davey, 2019). The customer journey mapping process engages stakeholders and encourages consideration from the customers' point of view. Collectively, the customer journey map will help visualise and structure the process a customer goes through while interacting with a firm (Bitner et al., 2008).

Customer experience in the hospitality industry

In the hospitality industry, superior customer experience is essential in gaining customer loyalty and in achieving a competitive advantage (Kandampully et al., 2018). Although limited research has been done on the combination of the topic of hospitality and the topic of customer experience management, the available research shows that it is important to balance the facet of service quality with other factors, such as price, aesthetics, ambiance, product quality, location, assortment and other elements that influence the hospitality experience pre-, during, and post-consumption (Ryu & Jang, 2008; Johnson et al., 2009). Others examine the role that employees, business procedures, and the outlook of the firm

play in customer experience in the hospitality industry (Morgan et al., 2008).

Researchers and managers have pointed out that customer experience management is particularly important for the hospitality industry (Kandampully et al., 2015) because of the extensive customer-employee relationship and the service aspects which are integral to the hospitality experience (Kandampully et al., 2018). The experience that customers have with hospitality firms consists of relatively longer interactions, which provides unique opportunities for businesses to create a truly positive and lasting experience through the whole customer journey (Kandampully et al., 2018). It can be stated that the employee contributes to the creation of memorable experiences and that the employee-customer relationship adds to the customer experience (Bharwani & Jauhari, 2013; McColl-Kennedy, et al., 2015). As shown by research, for hospitality practices, service is an essential component to ensure that customers perceive value, and some state that it is the most critical asset to build long-term relationships and business sustainability (Kandampully et al., 2018).

Besides factors such as price, ambiance, and product quality that influence customer experience, customer experience is, in the hospitality industry, mostly created by the frequent and intimate interactions between customer and employee. Employees may guarantee customer commitment and customer loyalty (Bharwani & Jauhari, 2013) and may thereby be viewed as the primary drivers in creating a positive customer experience (He et al., 2011). Today's consumers do not buy products or services – their purchase decisions revolve around buying an experience (McKinsey, 2017).

The importance of analysing customer experience

Leading companies have to understand that they are in the customer experience business, and they have to understand that *how* an organisation delivers its product is beginning to be as important as *what* it delivers (McKinsey, 2017). Many researchers stress the essential position of customer experience and the connection it has with creating customer value and engagement. Moreover, customer experience may be viewed as the root of both customer value and customer engagement (de Keyser et al., 2015). In the IBM 2010 Global CEO study, 88 per cent of the CEOs stated that getting closer to customers was a top priority for their business. Many leaders see opportunities through the right analysis of customer needs, wants, and desires to improve customer engagement and retention (Hunt, 2012).

Firms recognise this critical role across all industry sectors: today's technology-driven, digitally advanced customers expect personalised experiences at every point of interaction. Nowadays, 89 per cent of companies expect to compete primarily based on customer experience, and it is now one of the key strategies adopted by leading hospitality firms such as Marriott, Hilton, and Starbucks (Sorofman & McLellan, 2014). 80% of the firms believe that the experience they provide is superior, while only 8% of the customers described the experience as such (Bain & Company, 2015). With such disparity, the need is urgent: customers have more choices than ever and will choose another product or service unless improvements and considerations are made (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Correctly analysing the customer experience will not only give firms insight into how to improve customer engagement, but it will also approach the subject from the customer's point of view and will identify

gaps and opportunities in the current situation. Furthermore, a customer experience analysis will provide relevant and accurate information, which will help to anticipate and make better business decisions for the future (Davey, 2019).

In conclusion, this review underlines the importance of customer experience, the visualisation of customer experience, the link to the hospitality industry, and its relevance. Customer experience has proven to be a multidimensional construction that involves many components, such as emotional, social, and physical facets. Other researchers stress the important point that customer experience is inherent to one's personal preferences. Researchers agree that customer experience consists of different stages, with several, multichannel touchpoints, business components, and personal factors involved. Mapping the customer experience gives a firm insight into the structure and process a customer goes through while interacting with a firm. The customer journey will serve as a basis that will give insight from the outside in, providing businesses with the opportunity to research customer experience and build long-lasting customer relationships through the touchpoints.

Although many businesses now recognise the importance of managing customer experience, research has proven that there is a great disparity between the view customers have of a firm's customer service and the way firms see their own customer service. This highlights the importance of exploring and analysing customer experience. Customer experience is seen as the root of both customer value and customer engagement. In the hospitality industry, providing a superior customer experience may be considered essential in the process of gaining customer loyalty, given the fact that hospitality firms have relatively

longer interactions with customers. Customer service, and thus the relationship between employee and customer, has proven to be one of the primary drivers for customer satisfaction and customer engagement.

Conceptual model

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model of different components (phases) that will help to establish the customer experience analysis. The key concepts for this research are shown in phases 2 and 3, in bold. Phase 2, the customer journey map, is a tool to help visualise and build on the customer experience analysis. To map the customer journey, the left section (phase 1) shows what steps need to be taken first. As described in the literature review, the customer journey consists of three phases, namely pre-, during, and post-consumption. These sections show different factors (per consumption phase) that could influence the customer journey and experience in the hospitality business. These variables related to the hospitality industry are based on emotional, social, psychological, physical, personal, and economic components derived from the literature review. These components and variables are used as a basis for the interview. Lastly, phase 3 consists of extracting the customer experience analysis. The conceptual model is constructed as a guideline for this research article, based on the literature review.

Methodology

To scrutinise the topic, we took an interpretive stance which is based on a naturalistic approach of data collection such as

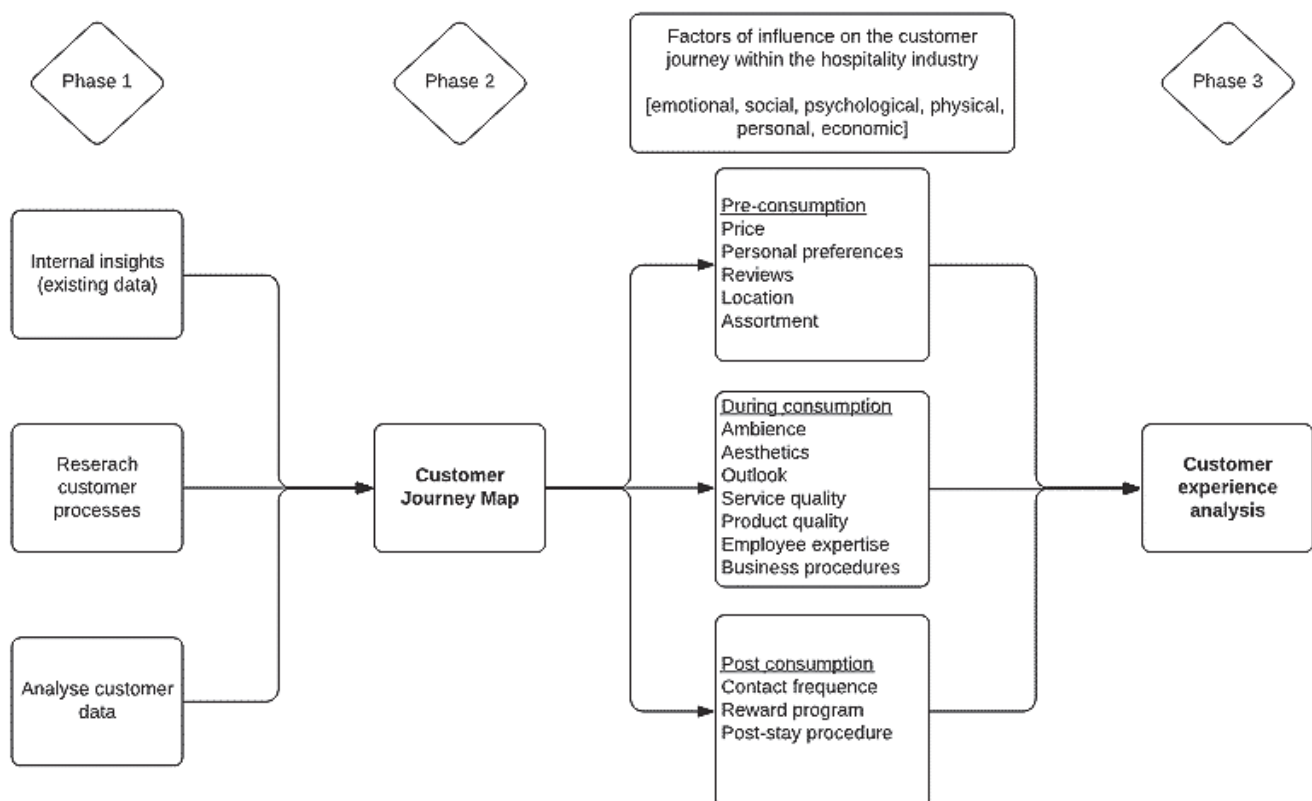


FIGURE 1. The customer experience analysis process

interviews and observations. Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were the best method to collect details and sensitive data about the tendencies being explored in this study. Nine guests from two hotels were interviewed. Due to reaching a certain level of saturation in the theory and coding process, we decided that a total of nine interviews was enough. No new information or codes were found while conducting and coding the last interviews. In each hotel, the interviewees were selected based on the set criteria and willingness to participate. The criteria were that the guests should have different nationalities, a different purpose of stay and that the stay was for at least three nights. These criteria gave different perspectives on the questions and added more value to the outcome of the interview. To process interviews, a coding process was used to analyse the outcomes. Three different stages of coding: open, axial, and selective coding were adapted. For the coding process, one interview was coded on paper first. After this, ATLAS.ti was used to process and code all the interviews.

Findings: Customer journey

The first theme that was found concerning the first research question is the customer journey. The guests from both hotels reported several touchpoints pre-, during and post-consumption, which can be divided into the following subthemes: hotel procedures (with a focus on guest contact), guest service, and employee expertise, all about service quality.

Hotel procedures – guest contact

Well-arranged guest contact during the different procedures the guest goes through during the stay is important. For example, the pre-arrival procedure could set the tone for the rest of their stay. The following was reported about the guest contact and service: *They [staff] know who we are..., so it's very easy. They know us already. So, we just arrive, check-in, it takes two minutes* (BC5). This comment suggests that the staff is informed and provides a quick and personal service, which the guests prefer. This can also be concluded from the following: *It seems every email was meant to make sure I'll be OK and happy there. Which I think again is something that a lot of the time is not done* (TE7).

On the other hand, one guest stated that *It was fine, but I think it could have been less. I received five or six emails I think, and for me, one or two would be enough* (BC2). This shows that different people prefer a different approach. While one guest enjoys extended service and contact, another could be fine with only the necessary information. It can be concluded that although a different approach is desired per person, the overall contact and service during the hotel procedures are perceived as positive: *When having contact via email; it always went well, and the communication was clear* (TE4).

Guest service

During the customer journey (the stay) of the guest, the service offered seems to be positively received. One of the guests stated that the service provided was *above and beyond* (TE7), and *more than what I expected* (BC1). Several guests mentioned that the service offered was done with a personal touch: *I travel a lot and I experience that personal service is highly valued here* (TE4), and *you made everyone feel absolutely at home* (TE4). That the personal service has a positive effect on the stay can

be concluded from the following statement: *Even if the service was less, I would still be happy here, you know, but, they do more* (BC1). The guests perceive the personal service as a *brilliant touch* (TE7) and experience it as *if I was a friend who was staying* (BC2).

Gold standard service from the staff. Top class. Seriously. I've stayed in many hotels, and I don't think I've been made to feel as welcome as I did here. And it was just no matter what, you'd do everything you could, and again, that's the standard (TE7).

Employee expertise

The guests reported about the expertise of the staff during their stay. *You all seem to get the balance right; it's finding out from the guest almost immediately how we prefer to be called and how to be treated* (TE8). This statement suggests that the employees are aware of what the guests' needs and wants are. This finding is also supported by the following: *they have a great personal integrity* (TE9), and *you [employees] would come over and have a chat...but then you would also know when I was doing some work* (TE8). The expertise of the staff seems to have a positive influence on the overall experience of the guests, even if requests could not be granted, *they made you accept the things you don't like...That makes them of great value* (TE9).

Findings: Hotel performance

Themes that emerged on hotel performance were processes, amenities, and business features of both hotels. Guests noticed the hotel performance through the following subthemes: hotel procedures (with a focus on process quality) and product quality.

Hotel procedures – process quality

The subtheme here focuses on the quality of hotel processes rather than the guest contact's service quality as described above. Guests would describe the process before arrival as *super quick and easy* and stated that *I like the fact of pre-registering... that made the arrival super quick* (BC1). Another guest also stated that the arrival process was quick and smooth:

Everything was clear. I think there was like this pre-check procedure, which is great because I have travelled a lot in my job...it's small, but when you do it so often it's time-consuming...It's early, it's late. If you've already done a lot of that work and you can just basically hand over your credit card or get your key within, I think it was like less than, five minutes (TE8).

Other hotel procedures such as the checkout and the mail contact were described as *great. Easy. Takes two minutes* (BC5), and *very, very simple, you know, painless, very good, no problem* (TE9). Overall, it can be stated that the guests notice a quick and easy process during all contact points and procedures along with their stay at both the hotels. The opinion on this is positive, which can be concluded from a guest who reported that *it [the procedures] has all been great, I think it is really good* (BC1).

Product quality

Hotel performance was measured by statements of the guests about the products offered in the room, and the design. Guests of both hotels described the products in the hotel room as *outstanding* (TE3), even *better than what I have in my own*

house (BC5), and *high quality* (BC1). The experience with the products in the room was positive: *great bed, great linen, even the shampoo: there has been a lot of thought put into it* (TE4), and one guest stated that it was the *best bed I've ever slept in* (BC5). Overall, the quality of the room is very high and clearly guests are impressed by the hotel's room design: *It's a small kitchen, but it's high quality and everything is there. So, I am impressed by what's provided in the room* (BC1).

Findings: Physical and non-physical components

An important theme that was found covers the variable of the physical and non-physical components of the hotel. The interviewees reported on the facilities on site, the location, the ambiance, and their overall hotel experience on their stay.

Facilities

Both hotels offer different facilities such as wellness studios, gyms, and bars and restaurants. Guests of both hotels reported that the gym was *exactly what I needed* (TE8), and *of a really good standard* (BC1). Hotel 1 has a restaurant where guests can enjoy a drink or have dinner. One guest reported that *it was nice food, but it didn't meet the same expectations as the hotel* (BC1). On the other hand, it was stated that *the food's great. Service is great* (BC5). It seems that the restaurant faces some trouble keeping the food quality at a consistent level or it might be the case that the guests had different expectations. Hotel 2 does not have a restaurant but offers breakfast and has a bar on-site for guests to enjoy a drink. *I had everything I needed. A bar downstairs so I could watch the football game and have a couple of beers* (TE7). Another guest stated that *the facilities were one of the reasons I chose the hotel* (TE8). It could be concluded that the guest satisfaction regarding the facilities fluctuates, depending on personal preferences and expectations.

Location

A physical component that stood out was the location of both hotels. Reported by several guests was the accessibility of Hotel 1: *I think that in Amsterdam, in terms of accessibility, there is no better place* (TE4), and *great transportation links, very good location* (TE8). For Hotel 2, it was mentioned that *it is a unique spot, with the terrace located right on the water, you just don't have that in the centre of Amsterdam* (BC6). Both hotels are located just outside the city centre of Amsterdam and the guests have a positive feeling about this. *It is nice and quiet and tucked away from the business of the centre and it is also close enough to do whatever I want to do* (BC1). Also, someone stated that *I think it is good that it is outside the city centre because it can be quite busy. But you can get there with such ease* (TE7). In conclusion, guests prefer both hotels due to their location, described as *being out of it, without being out of it, if that makes any sense* (TE7).

Physical and emotional components

How guests experience the physical and non-physical elements of both hotels was found through statements about the ambiance (emotional components) and the outlook (physical appearance). The guests immediately noticed the eye for detail:

The smell when you enter! It smells so good everywhere. And it's not just the smell. It is the overall theme that comes back in everything you see. It is supposed to be

like that: the scent matches the interior; it matches the hotel room; it matches the wooden doors, and it also matches the lighting (TE4).

In addition to this, it was stated that *everything is beautiful and great. You can feel it is decorated with style* (BC5), and *I was under the impression everything was hand-picked. That they're not supposed to be the standard, same-as-every-hotel sort of furniture* (TE8). The boutique-style of the hotels made the guests feel at home. *It feels welcome and open, but at the same time the feeling of having enough privacy of your own home* (BC1). Another description was that *it feels warm, but not unprofessional. It just fits with what you would wish as a guest* (TE3). Others described the atmosphere as *cozy* (BC5), *chilled* (TE7), *comfortable* (TE8), *luxurious but warm* (BC2), and as *being at a friend's house, without having to see the friend* (TE7). Overall, both hotels were made to feel like a home away from home, and *that is exactly what it feels like* (TE7).

Findings: Buying behaviour and customer engagement

The last theme that emerged from the interviews was the guests' buying behaviour and (customer) engagement. Choosing the right hotel is not an easy task. There is a thin line between finding and creating the right match between the customer's wishes and the hotel's offerings since expectations do not always match the experience. The following subthemes discuss the interviewees' overall guest experience, their preferences regarding their hotel choice, and areas that leave room for improvement.

Guest experience

An overall positive experience adds to customer engagement and has a positive influence on the guests' buying behaviour. At both hotels, the guests reported a positive experience. *It more than matched my expectations, it really did* (TE8), and *it is better than my expectations, the room as well. And the staff: they go beyond what I expected* (BC1). For the guests, the little things made the stay special. *When there's a package, they always offer to take it up to my room. You know, things that they don't need to do* (BC1). Two separate guests mentioned that Hotel 1 is and forever will be *the best place to stay in Amsterdam* (TE8/TE7). *There's nowhere else I'd stay now in Amsterdam. Hotel 1 just adds to the experience* (TE7). The overall positive guest experience ensured that all interviewees would stay again at both hotels.

Guests' preferences

Apart from an exceptional service level and product quality, different preferences regarding the guests' hotel choice were reported. Both hotels are one of a kind and operate a unique concept. *It is quite a niche hotel in terms of its own place, it's very cool and boutique-y* (TE8), and *it doesn't feel like a big crazy hotel like the Marriott. I really like that it's not like that. It's more boutique* (BC1). The preference of the guests lies with a boutique-style, spaciouly set up hotel just outside the city centre, with a personal service touch. For some, it is a personal preference, but it can be concluded that in comparison to other hotels, Hotel 1 and Hotel 2 exceed the expectations. *Arriving at this hotel was a change in my life because it was like: "finally what I need". Honestly, I would not change anything* (BC5). And

it's a nicer experience than, I would say, just about any hotel I've stayed in, to be honest (TE7).

When asked what the decisive factor was, the guests reported: *that all the details add up (TE4), the personal touch (TE3), value for money (BC2), and the space and amenities in the room (BC5).* What made a difference to all guests was the service and the staff. As one of the guests reported: *As lovely as the hotel is, without you guys there, it just wouldn't be what it is (TE7).*

Something to improve for Hotel 1 is the breakfast. *It would be nice to have a slight change in breakfast every other week. But this is probably only from a long-stay point of view (TE8).* Another guest reported that *I miss the breakfast. I would love an à la carte breakfast menu to choose from (TE3).* However, most guests were satisfied with the hotel performance and stated that *there's nothing that I see could be improved. I would go for the easy one and say: a swimming pool. Only because it would be nice (TE7).*

Discussion

This part explains the research questions – “How can using customer experience analysis highlight the identity of two hotels?” To find the answer, four possible areas were investigated – service during the customer journey, the decision-making process, hotel performance, and guest experience. The results will be critically compared with the literature, followed by some recommendations for the practice and further research.

What do the guests of hotels report about the service provided during their customer journey?

According to the guests concerning the touchpoints of their stay, employees can play an important role in establishing a great customer experience in a hospitality business (Morgan et al., 2008) and staff can make a distinct difference. It was found that the service at both hotels is perceived as if the employees are there to make the guests feel welcome, comfortable and, most importantly, at home. Not only did the guests give a positive report on the top-class service that exceeded their expectations during the stay, but also on arrival and check-out. The staff is well informed and takes care of the guest as soon as he or she walks in and even after the moment of checking out. How an organisation delivers its product is beginning to be as important as what it delivers (McKinsey, 2017). In line with this are the clear statements about the service standard. At both hotels, service is a number one priority and that is what stood out for the guests as well. However, not only service makes the guest's stay exceptional, within the hospitality businesses there is a unique opportunity to create a true and lasting experience throughout the whole customer journey because of the relatively long and extensive customer-employee relationship (Kandampully et al., 2018). The two hotels pay close attention to this and therefore it is the combination of providing excellent guest service with great employee expertise at all contact points that makes the guests feel at ease and more than welcome. The staff has the right balance and integrity to provide the best service to each guest.

Which aspects do the guests of hotels feel influence their decision-making process?

The guests reported on the overall experience at both hotels and the preferences regarding the hotel of choice. That employees can guarantee customer commitment and customer loyalty (Bharwani & Jauhari, 2013) is confirmed by guests of both hotels; the primary driver to return to the hotel is the excellent service that was provided by the staff. All guests reported that the overall experience exceeded the expectations they had beforehand. Regarding what made the guests choose the hotel in the first place, it was reported that the unique interior and boutique-style attracted the guests. With this, the location and spacious (apartment) hotel rooms added to the experience and fitted the wishes of both the long-stay business guest and the short-stay leisure guest. With the increased demand from consumers for personalised and superior service (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) it is not a surprise that guests reported the employees and the personal touch to be one of the most important facets of both hotels. The personal service given to each guest and during each stay makes both hotels unique. Nonetheless, every experience is subject to the guest's perception and view (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Helkkula et al., 2012), and it could be concluded that the guest satisfaction regarding the overall stay depends on personal preferences and expectations. Nevertheless, the combination of all hotel elements made the stay of all guests one to come back for. The guests prefer the boutique-style, spacious apartments as much as the location just outside the city centre and the personal service provided by the staff. For some it was a personal preference, but overall, one can conclude that both hotels exceeded the expectations and the hotel experiences guests had in the past. As stated by He et al. (2011), the employees may be viewed as the primary drivers in creating the overall positive guest experience. Without the staff, the hotels would not be what they are.

How do the guests of hotels feel about the hotel performance?

Hotel performance was investigated in terms of the hotel processes, amenities, and business features. Guests of both hotels reported that the arrival procedure was quick and well managed. The staff is well prepared and educated, which makes the process flow smoothly. Every business process should be in place to provide a seamless customer journey (Hunt, 2012). As one of the guests stated, it can often be time-consuming if these processes take too long. However, at both hotels, the standard processes before, during, and after the stay are flawlessly arranged to make sure the guests experience the – sometimes time-consuming and boring – procedures as quick and easy. Besides this, the high-quality products in the hotel room and the attention to detail is the secret to a good customer experience (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Not only is customer experience subject to what products and services a company offer, it is built through the sum of various touchpoints during different phases of the customer journey (Verhoef et al., 2009). The extra attention that is paid to the check-in procedure (e.g. the option to pre-register) and the room amenities (high quality and attention to detail) makes that guest expectations are exceeded in this area. Overall, the process of the guests' experience in both hotels appears clear, quick, and easy. In combination with high-quality products, the amenities provided in the room and the attention to detail, one can conclude that the guests experienced excellent hotel performance.

How do guests experience hotels during their stay?

The guests reported on the facilities, location, and ambiance. The facilities, such as the gym, wellness studio, and restaurants/bars at both hotels are of good quality and for most guests exactly what was expected and needed. Nevertheless, the guest satisfaction for the restaurant at one hotel fluctuates as the guests already had high expectations from what was experienced in the hotel. Thus, not all experiences at the restaurant matched the expectations. It is important to analyse the customer experience since many companies believe they provide excellent service, while most customers do not describe or experience it as such (Bain & Company, 2015). Therewith, researchers stressed the essential position of customer experience and the connection it has with creating customer value and engagement. To create customer value, the total construction of emotional and physical factors should be in place (de Keyser et al., 2015). For both hotels, this construction consists of having excellent procedures and great guest service. Moreover, it works because these standards and values are embedded in all hotel elements (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). The unique interior design and ambiance suit the location of each hotel, and vice versa. The physical and emotional components match, giving guests a warm and home-like feeling, which is exactly what the hotel was meant to feel like. The fact that both hotels are located just outside the city centre adds to this as well. Hotels are perfect for a weekend getaway close enough to the city centre for guests to explore or when guests are looking for a place to stay a little bit longer with everything within reach but just outside the bustle of Amsterdam.

Limitations

Due to COVID-19, both hotels experienced lower occupancy. As a result, six interviews were held with long-stay (21-day stay or longer) business guests, one returning business guest, and only two short-stay leisure guests. The long-stay guests could have been biased since they had stayed at the hotel for a longer time. In addition, only one female was among the interviewees. Males could interpret some situations or questions differently, therefore the outcome could have been different if more females were interviewed. Another limitation was in conducting the interview; it was not possible to meet guests in person. All interviews were held via Teams, which did not allow the interviewer to read non-verbal body communication which direct face-to-face interviews could have provided.

Conclusion and recommendations

The findings of this study advocate the following: providing excellent guest service is embedded in all aspects of the hotels, and integrity runs like a golden thread through the employees' work values. Finding the right balance and providing tailor-made service for each guest is not a simple task. However, at both hotels, this is executed with great expertise. The properties are niche, boutique-style hotels and offer a unique interior with high-quality products and facilities, which makes for a magnificent stay. Nowadays, guests seek new experiences, unique places, extraordinary services, and for hotel businesses, outstanding design and a lot of spaciousness in the hotel and the hotel rooms. This does not only speak to the imagination of the millennial looking for a perfect weekend getaway with

friends, but also to businesses who seek a place to stay for their employees. The hotel style and design add to the experience of the guests and the fact that the hotel is considered medium in size adds to the homely feeling the guests so much appreciate. With this, it seems important to create the same level of service, product quality, and design throughout all facets concerning the hotel. Creating a great customer experience is only possible when the hotel DNA seamlessly runs through all hotel elements. It should therefore be considered to apply this to all hotel facilities where improvement on the overall quality is necessary. For guests, the staff prove to be the essential component to ensure engagement and satisfaction. Having the right balance for both leisure and business guests makes the hotel the perfect place to stay. It is the combination of having apartment hotel rooms with quality products and facilities while providing excellent service at all times that makes the experience exceed the expectations of all guests, every time.

Since the guests perceive both hotels highly positively, this study recommends that both hotels continue the business practice based upon the present work ethic. Secondly, it is advised for future extensions to continue to build hotels in the same size and range. Guests reported greatly enjoying the personalised service and the boutique style, which most likely is directly connected to the size and number of rooms. To guarantee the same experience in the future, it is advised not to exceed the number of 100 rooms. Lastly, the guests reported that they did not have the same expectations as the hotel. Therefore, it is advised to create clear standard operation procedures (SOPs) to create accurate visibility and understanding of the service and quality standards that need to be achieved across all hotel elements and facilities. This research is only based on nine interviews and the sample group was not as diverse as it could potentially be. Therefore, for further research, it is recommended to create a more diverse sample group to find additional information on the research topic at the same hotels. It might be good to conduct further research in larger hotels with a different scale and size.

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Can social norms motivate Thermomix® users to eat sustainably?

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ABSTRACT: Modern food systems, but especially animal farming, are found to be the leading driver of global climate change, accounting for 30% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. Simultaneously, diets high in animal proteins cause serious health issues worldwide, including premature death, and will force health insurance companies to face significantly increasing costs. Therefore, an urgent transformation towards sustainable dietary choices is required by increasing plant-based diets while decreasing animal proteins. This will create environmental, social, and economic value. By applying value orientation and nudging theory, this research proposes (1) a positive impact of social norms on sustainable behaviour, (2) which is increased by self-transcendence values. These hypotheses were analysed using ordered logit models based on survey data obtained from users of a recipe website. Findings suggest that although a self-transcendence value orientation enhances sustainable dietary choices, social norm nudges are ineffective.

KEYWORDS: celebrity recommendation nudge, nudging, online food platform, sustainable behaviour, sustainable food

Introduction

Being responsible for 30% of the world's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, contemporary food systems are one of the leading drivers of global climate change (Willett et al., 2019). Particularly under scrutiny is the contribution of animal farming to global GHG emissions and other environmental problems, such as water pollution and nitrogen emissions (Willett et al., 2019). Simultaneously, diets high in animal proteins cause serious health issues worldwide, including premature death, (Boeing et al., 2012; Willett et al., 2019). An increase in diet-related diseases not only leads to individuals' suffering, but also to significantly increasing costs of health care (Lang et al., 2011). Therefore, a transition towards dietary choices where plant-based food intake is increased and animal protein intake decreased is necessary to achieve a more sustainable food system (Tilman & Clark, 2014; Springmann et al., 2016; Poore & Nemecek, 2018; Willett et al., 2019). However, changing eating habits has been proven to be particularly challenging (Simon, 1997; Greger & Stone, 2018; Willett et al., 2019). Eating habits are connected with a person's identity, weakening the power of disincentives such as taxes (Byerly et al., 2018; Willett et al., 2019). Moreover, mechanisms such as bounded rationality and cognitive dissonance weaken the effect of information campaigns promoting eating habits that are healthy both for people and planet, but are not generally common. Thus, innovative, consumer-oriented but ethically sound interventions to encourage sustainable diets in the food and beverage (F&B) domain need further exploration.

In particular, more sustainable food choices can be enabled through behaviourally informed interventions such as "nudges"

(Byerly et al., 2018; Willett et al., 2019). Nudges capitalise on bounded rationality by drawing attention to specific information. Moreover, nudges take into account the individual's value orientation and can therefore be aligned with a person's identity (Verplanken & Holland, 2002; De Groot et al., 2013). Nudges make a specific value orientation more salient to an individual in a given situation, and value orientations in turn influence the strength of an individual's goals (i.e. self-, other- or nature-benefiting). Goals, in their turn, influence behavioural choices. Alongside influencing the salience of individual values, nudges can affect the perceived importance and likelihood of different potential behavioural consequences, and thus impact the individual's choice (Verplanken & Holland, 2002; De Groot et al., 2013). Nudging is widely applied in brick-and-mortar settings where people make food choices, such as retailers and restaurants. Yet, very limited research has been done in the online environment, while online shopping has dramatically increased in recent years (Clement, 2019). This includes sites offering recipes, such as Cookidoo® or Rezeptwelt.de operated by Thermomix® that constitute the experimental environment for this research.

The purpose of this research is to foster our understanding of how to nudge people into changing their food consumption habits in the longer term and, thus, support the transition towards sustainable food production. The aim of the research is twofold. It explores the effectiveness of different nudges to incentivise consumers to choose more sustainable and healthy food in an online environment. Secondly, it evaluates the moderating effect of value orientations on food choices in the same online environment. The research question being explored

in this article is: "What is the impact of nudges on the choice for a more sustainable recipe by Thermomix® users who differ in prioritised values?" – where "sustainable" refers both to the planet's and people's health and is operationalised as a recipe without animal proteins. Therefore, this research contributes to innovations for web-based F&B offers, while considering ethics through the investigation of nudging towards a more sustainable and healthier diet.

The rest of this article is structured as follows: First, a literature review on sustainability in diet, nudging theory, and the influence of value orientations will be conducted. Then, the methodology used to derive an answer to this article's research question will be outlined, followed by a presentation of the analysed results. Lastly, the results will be discussed, and conclusions will be drawn, including the research's recommendations, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Literature review

This section reviews the literature on a sustainable diet. The effect of different nudges on sustainable behavioural choices (and in particular towards a sustainable diet) and on value orientations as moderators of the impact of nudges on sustainable behaviour is outlined.

Sustainable diet definition

Sustainability requires value creation in an economic, social, and environmental dimension (Elkington, 2002; Cavagnaro & Curiel, 2012). Consequently, a sustainable diet should (1) benefit human health, (2) (at least) decrease environmental impact, while (3) providing a financial incentive. Although scholars disagree about the definition of a sustainable diet, there is a building consensus that it should reduce (or even eliminate) animal-based ingredients and increase plant-based ones (e.g. Reinders et al., 2017; Poore & Nemecek, 2018; Willett et al., 2019). In the following, "sustainable diet" is used to refer to a diet low in animal-based ingredients and high in plant-based ingredients.

Firstly, evidence shows that a sustainable diet enhances human health (e.g. by reducing obesity) while preventing or even reversing diet-related chronic diseases, such as diabetes, various kinds of cancer, and heart disease (Lang et al., 2011; Boeing et al., 2012; Greger & Stone, 2018).

Secondly, the environmental impact of meat and dairy is high. For example, meat and dairy consumption accounts for 24% of the European environmental impact (Tukker et al., 2009). On a global scale and considering 2010 as a reference year, replacing animal-based with plant-based proteins would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than ten billion metric tonnes per year, decrease used land by 55%, and scarcity-weighted freshwater withdrawals by 87% (Poore & Nemecek, 2018). Therefore, by reducing negative impacts on the planet, the transformation towards a sustainable diet creates environmental value (ibid.).

Last but not least, a sustainable diet also provides financial incentives to various stakeholders. More specifically, a diet high in meat consumption can be on average US\$750 per year per person more expensive than a comparable plant-based diet (Flynn & Schiff, 2015). Besides, health insurances worldwide face significantly increasing costs due to obesity, one of the consequences of a growing animal-based food intake. These costs could be mitigated by a plant-based diet (Lang et al.,

2011). In sum, a sustainable diet creates social (i.e. better health), environmental, as well as economic value, especially in the longer term.

Nudging sustainable diet choices

Vegetarians or flexitarians (i.e. people who seldom consume meat) represent around 5% to 20% of the global population, with 5% of Europeans holding the smallest share (Statista Research Department, 2018). These figures highlight the need to provoke a change in consumer dietary choices. Literature suggests that bounded rationality negatively influences sustainable dietary choices (Simon, 1997). Bounded rationality proposes that individuals do not possess the information (e.g. the environmental impact caused by a certain food product) or mental capacity needed to make rational decisions, nor the willingness to put much effort into weighing the total costs and benefits of each product they buy. Therefore, people often make decisions not out of calculated self-interest, but for other reasons, such as social norms (ibid.).

Moreover, eating habits are connected with a person's identity, weakening the power of disincentives such as taxes. Thus, innovative, consumer-oriented and ethically sound interventions to encourage sustainable diets in the food and beverage (F&B) domain need further exploration. In particular, nudges capitalise on bounded rationality by drawing attention to specific information (Byerly et al., 2018; Willett et al., 2019). As people not only respond to information, incentives, or persuasion, but also to how these are communicated and framed, nudging theory can be applied to motivate sustainable consumption behaviour (Kahneman et al., 1991; Kamenica, 2012; Lehner et al., 2016). A nudge is any aspect of the decision environment "that alters people's behaviour in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives" (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, p. 8). Nudges avoid invoking an economic decision frame, are human-centred (i.e. move people towards "better" decisions), and voluntary (i.e. transparent) (Tams, 2018).

Nudges can take different forms, such as defaults. Defaults present an option as the status quo so that individuals have to opt out to behave unsustainably (Tams, 2018). Default nudges are not applied in this research, because they would imply the exclusion from the recipe platform of less sustainable recipes, i.e. those including meat. In this study's context, excluding meat recipes equals forbidding a specific option and contradicts the definition of a nudge. Moreover, it would harm the user's freedom of choice, which has ethical implications (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Blumenthal-Barby & Burroughs, 2012). This study therefore opts for nudges that capitalise on saliency by making an option more visible than others (e.g. placing sustainable food at eye level), or by exploiting people's tendency to look at the behaviour of others by using social norms (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Tams, 2018). Social norms are described as "rules and standards that are understood by members of a group and that guide and/or constrain social behaviour without the force of laws" (Cialdini & Trost, 1998, p. 152). Because humans are social beings, social norms influence behaviour by making a specific (e.g. sustainable) choice salient and visible to the individual, and, thus, increasing the moral benefit from engaging in sustainable behaviour (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). In conclusion, this research will focus primarily on social proof heuristics and indirectly on saliency by presenting a sustainable recipe for

which (1) the percentage of other users who chose this recipe or (2) a recommendation by a celebrity to choose this recipe is displayed.

Nudge 1: Descriptive normative information

The first nudge applied in this research provides information about descriptive norms to the user. Descriptive norms are a type of social norm that show how most users behave in the same situation (i.e. how many users cooked the same recipe). When individuals are confronted with different options, descriptive norms offer a decisional shortcut by informing the individual about the likely effective behaviour, i.e. the option chosen by the majority (Cialdini et al., 1991). Social norms, therefore, align with bounded rationality (Kallgren & Wood, 1986; Cialdini, 1988; Millar & Tesser, 1989). The effectiveness of a social norm nudge is decreased when descriptive normative information is not provided (Goldstein et al., 2008). Therefore, the nudge designed for this study shows the number of users who already chose to cook the sustainable recipe. Moreover, the individual's likelihood to be influenced by descriptive norms is higher when norms are presented in a setting comparable to the one that the individual is currently occupying and when they refer to individuals sharing that same setting (Goldstein et al., 2008). Hence, displaying the nudge in the same setting where participants choose a recipe (i.e. Thermomix® online platform) will further increase the likelihood of the nudge's impact on a sustainable choice. Thus, for the above reasons, the first hypothesis is:

- Hypothesis 1: Sustainable recipes for which a nudge in the form of descriptive normative information is introduced are more likely to be cooked than recipes for which no such nudge is introduced.

Nudge 2: Celebrity recommendation

The second nudge used in this research also capitalises on people's tendency to look at others' behaviour, and thus to act according to social norms (Cialdini, 1988). However, rather than displaying descriptive normative information and following a strategy that has been proven successful in traditional and digital marketing, this nudge shows a recommendation by a role-model or celebrity (Wansink et al., 2012; Wheeler, 2013; Wansink & Love, 2014; Qureshi & Malik, 2017). By having social ambassadors embody communicated norms, this type of nudge adopts a rather personal approach and uses emotions (Wheeler, 2013). Therefore, and particularly for promoting sustainable diets, the credibility of the "ambassador" is essential to ensure the success of the nudge (Sternthal et al., 1978). Interestingly, this type of nudge has been tested in restaurants in the form of a chef's recommendation or menu of the day (Van Trijp & Van Amstel, 2012; Wansink & Love, 2014). Although van Trijp and van Amstel (2012) found support for behavioural adoption of a recommended vegetarian dish, they called for further research in real-life settings.

People's tendency to imitate other people's behaviour and especially that of a well-known, credible person leads to this research's second hypothesis:

- Hypothesis 2: Sustainable recipes for which a nudge in the form of a celebrity recommendation is introduced are more likely to be cooked than recipes for which no such nudge is introduced.

Influence of nudging on users strong in self-transcendence values

Although nudges do not aim at changing the individual's value system, but instead focus on enabling specific behaviour by advantageously framing the problem, they are capable of activating certain values or motives of the targeted individual (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Lehner et al., 2016). Based on goal-framing theory, individuals may be motivated to participate in pro-environmental behaviour for three main reasons or goals: hedonic, gain, and normative. Hedonic goals improve people's feelings in a particular situation; gain goals focus on personal resources, such as saving money and time; and normative goals focus on the appropriateness of actions, such as helping others and protecting the environment. Normative goals enhance, while hedonic and gain goals weaken sustainable behaviour (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007; Steg et al., 2014).

Values, defined as "desirable goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives" (Schwartz, 1992, p. 21), impact the extent to which hedonic, gain, and normative goals are accessible or salient in a particular situation. Values, therefore, determine the probability that a particular goal will be the individual's focus in a given situation (Steg et al., 2014). In the context of sustainable behaviour, two main categories of values have been distinguished: self-enhancement (i.e. concerning one's interests) and self-transcendence (i.e. concerning collective interests) values (Dietz et al., 2005; Steg & De Groot, 2012). Self-enhancement values cluster in two different value orientations: hedonic and egoistic. Hedonic values lead to hedonic goals, while egoistic values lead to gain goals. Self-transcendence values also cluster into two different value orientations: altruistic and biospheric. Both the altruistic and the biospheric value orientations lead to normative goals and, thus, positively influence pro-sustainable choices. Specifically, altruistic values reflect a concern for others' welfare and are conducive of pro-social behaviour. Biospheric values reflect a concern for the environment for its own sake and lead to pro-environmental behaviour (Stern et al., 1993; De Groot & Steg, 2008; Steg et al., 2011).

However, even people strong in biospheric values do not always behave pro-environmentally. Nudges might activate self-transcendence values or make these more salient (Verplanken & Holland, 2002; Lindenberg & Steg, 2013; Van den Broek et al., 2017). However, Steg et al. (2014) and Delmas and Lessem (2014) argue that nudges capitalising on extrinsic motivation and focusing on enhancing hedonic or gain goals can disincentivise individuals strong in self-transcendence values to engage in sustainable behaviour. These individuals are intrinsically motivated by altruism or nature's intrinsic worth, so the extrinsic incentive is incongruent with their values (Van den Broek et al., 2017). Therefore, nudges which avoid invoking extrinsic, hedonic, or gain motives are likely to be more effective for respondents with high self-transcendence values (Tams, 2018).

Based on the above (Verplanken & Holland, 2002; De Groot et al., 2013), the following hypotheses are derived:

- Hypothesis 3a: Sustainable recipes for which a nudge in the form of descriptive normative information is introduced are more likely to be cooked by users strong in self-transcendence values than by users low in self-transcendence values.

- Hypothesis 3b: Sustainable recipes for which a nudge in the form of a celebrity recommendation is introduced are more likely to be cooked by users strong in self-transcendence values than by users low in self-transcendence values.

Methods

This section describes the data collection and analysis procedures and outlines how the study complies with research ethics.

Data collection

To test the hypotheses and answer the research question, a quantitative research approach combined with a single-case study was chosen. The case chosen for this research is the international company, Vorwerk International Strecker and Co., and in particular its division Thermomix®, which is a multi-functional cooking machine. Thermomix® has approximately ten million users in 16 countries, either via the subscription-based recipe platform Cookidoo® or the free recipe community platform. The device promotes fresh cooking instead of ready meals and aims to support a healthy consumption of vegetables by its users. However, more than half of the main dishes cooked by Cookidoo® subscribers in Germany are meat-based recipes. This makes this geographical area an interesting one to research. Recognising the possibility of improving its sustainable value creation, Cookidoo® expressed its willingness to participate in this research and granted access to the platform.

To collect data on how Thermomix® users assess or expect themselves to be influenced by different nudges as well as their value orientations, a questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire consisted of (1) the sustainable recipe with *Nudge 1* ("Cooked by more than 15 000 Thermomix® users in Germany"), or *Nudge 2* ("Recommended by Gourmet Chef Siegfried Kröpfl"), or neither nudge; (2) an answering scale of 16 value portraits to calculate the four value orientations (Schmidt et al., 2007; Bouman et al., 2018); (3) questions on demographics and other characteristics to control for confounding effects; and (4) space to leave comments.

TABLE 1: Variables

Dependent variable	
Recipe choice	Ranges from 1 to 4, with 1 representing that the user will definitely not choose the recipe, and 4 representing that the user will definitely choose the recipe.
Independent variables	
Nudge 1	Dummy variable equalling 1 for the recipe including the descriptive normative information, and 0 for the recipe without either nudge, to test Hypotheses 1 and 3a.
Nudge 2	Dummy variable equalling 1 for the recipe including the celebrity recommendation, and 0 for the recipe without either nudge, to test Hypotheses 2 and 3b.
Self-transcendence	The mean of the respondent's chosen scores of the altruistic and biospheric values (Bouman et al., 2018).
Self-transcendence Nudge 1	Interaction of the self-transcendence value orientation and Nudge 1 to test Hypothesis 3a.
Self-transcendence Nudge 2	Interaction of the self-transcendence value orientation and Nudge 2 to test Hypothesis 3b.
Control variables	
Gender	Dummy variable equalling 1 for female, and 0 otherwise.
Age	(1) ≤30 years; (2) 31 to 40 years; (3) 41 to 50 years; (4) 51 to 60 years; (5) Older than 60 years, (.) No answer.
Usage frequency	(0) Never; (1) Less than once per week; (2) 1–2 times per week; (3) 3–5 times per week; (4) More than 5 times per week; (5) Daily; (6) Several times per day; (.) I do not know. Highly frequent users might be more likely to engage in adoption than non-frequent users (Delmas & Lessem, 2014).
Vegan diet	Dummy variable equalling 1 for a vegan or vegetarian respondent, who will be more likely to choose the recipe even without either of the nudges (Delmas & Lessem, 2014), and 0 otherwise. Respondents indicating that they mainly eat vegetarian or are dairy intolerant were included as vegetarian or vegan.

Data analysis

Data from a total of 1 960 respondents, of which 1 436 were complete, was obtained. Responses from users that did not actively choose the recipes were excluded since they do not represent this research's target group. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and ordered logit models, testing the relationships for all hypotheses (Figure 1). Qualitative findings (comments section) were thematically analysed.

Variables

See Table 1.

Robustness checks

The value scales' internal consistency, group differences in variables, as well as assumptions for the chosen analysis technique were tested to enhance the results' reliability (Gillham, 2008). Firstly, the internal consistency of the value scales' items is verified by using Cronbach's alpha for each value orientation (Table 2).

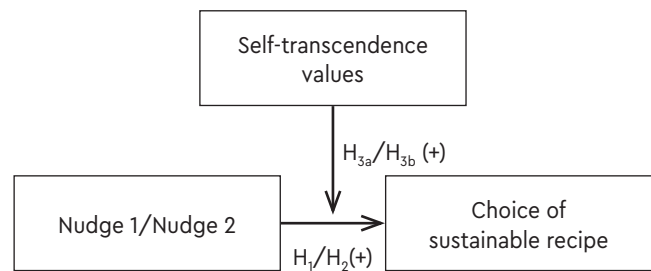


FIGURE 1: Conceptual framework of relationships

TABLE 2: Cronbach's alpha per value orientation

Value orientation	Cronbach's alpha
Biospheric values	α H 0.86
Altruistic values	α H 0.75
Hedonic values	α H 0.77
Egoistic values	α H 0.82

To determine differences in value orientations between the three conditions, one-way ANOVAs were used. No statistically significant differences were found for both biospheric ($F(2, 1445) = 1.29, p = 0.28$) and altruistic ($F(2, 1445) = 2.64, p = 0.07$) value orientations. However, the ANOVAs showed statistically significant differences between the three conditions for the hedonic ($F(2, 1445) = 14.87, p < 0.001$) and egoistic ($F(2, 1445) = 21.06, p < 0.001$) value orientation. The Tukey post-hoc test revealed that the Nudge 1 condition has a weaker hedonic ($-0.29 \pm 0.06, p < 0.001$) and egoistic ($-0.36 \pm 0.06, p < 0.001$) value orientation than the No Nudge condition, whereas the Nudge 2 condition has a stronger hedonic ($0.26 \pm 0.06, p < 0.001$) and egoistic ($-0.33 \pm 0.06, p < 0.001$) value orientation than the Nudge 1 condition. In addition, no statistically significant differences were found between the Nudge 2 and No Nudge conditions for hedonic or egoistic values. Therefore, the population slightly differs in hedonic and egoistic values.

Moreover, a biospheric value orientation could be assumed to have a greater influence on pro-environmental behaviour, while a hedonic value orientation could influence the recipe choice more strongly because of the influence of taste. Therefore, the group differences between the recipe choice and the interaction of each value orientation with the Nudge 1 and Nudge 2 dummy variable have been determined. The conducted two-way ANOVAs revealed that none of the interaction terms showed statistically significant differences. However, significant differences were determined between the mean biospheric value orientation for each recipe choice considering the Nudge 1 and No Nudge conditions ($F(1, 874) = 15.92, p < 0.001$), as well as the Nudge 2 and No Nudge conditions ($F(1, 976) = 11.29, p < 0.001$). Because a statistically significant difference between the mean altruistic value orientation for each recipe choice ($F(1, 874) = 6.25, p = 0.01$) has been found considering the Nudge 1 and No Nudge conditions, although not for the Nudge 2 and No Nudge conditions, support is provided for using both biospheric and altruistic values as the independent variable to consistently test Hypotheses 3a and 3b.

Besides, group differences in the control variables between the Nudge 1, Nudge 2, and No Nudge conditions have been tested using the nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test (Kruskal & Wallis, 1952; Leon, 1998). The test revealed no statistically significant differences in mean ranks between the conditions for gender (chi-square with ties = 5.01 with 2 df, $p = 0.08$) or vegan diet (chi-square with ties = 3.57 with 2 df, $p = 0.17$). On the other hand, significant differences in mean ranks between the three conditions have been found for age (chi-square with ties = 38.74 with 2 df, $p < 0.001$) and usage frequency (chi-square with ties = 8.63 with 2 df, $p = 0.01$). A follow-up Dunn's test (Dunn, 1964) revealed that the age is lower in mean rank for the Nudge 1 condition compared to the No Nudge condition, and higher for the Nudge 2 condition compared to the other two conditions. Lastly, the usage frequency is lower in mean rank for the Nudge 1 and Nudge 2 conditions compared to the No Nudge condition, whereas no statistically significant difference has been found between the Nudge 1 and Nudge 2 conditions. Consequently, the population slightly differs in age and usage frequency, but not in gender or type of diet. Nonetheless, it was controlled for all four characteristics in the applied models (see below) to increase the results' reliability.

Furthermore, in order to test the robustness of the chosen analysis models, the parallel lines assumption for each variable of the ordered logit models has been tested by a Brant test (Williams, 2006). Some variables violated the parallel lines assumption, which confirmed that this assumption is not easily met (Williams, 2016). Therefore, other robustness checks were conducted. On the one hand, both the likelihood ratio test – between the ordered and the generalised logit models – and the Akaike Information Criterion suggested that the generalised logit models fit the data better (see Appendix B, Table B1). On the other hand, the Bayesian Information Criterion provided decisive support for the ordered logit model (see Appendix B, Table B1). Therefore, the coefficients were compared between both types of models for each hypothesis model. Because no significant differences could be observed in the size and direction of the coefficients in their effect, nor their statistical significance, the more parsimonious ordered logit model was chosen to test the hypotheses. Lastly, it was controlled for heteroskedasticity by comparing differences between normal and robust standard errors.

Models applied

Based on the robustness checks conducted, the following ordered logit models were applied to test the hypotheses.

Model 1

$$P(\text{RecipeChoice}_i > j) = \frac{\exp(\alpha_j + \text{Nudge1}_{1j} + \text{Gender}_i\beta_{2j} + \text{Age}_i\beta_{3j} + \text{UsageFrequency}_{i4j} + \text{VeganDiet}_i\beta_{5j})}{1 + [\exp(\alpha_j + \text{Nudge1}_{1j} + \text{Gender}_i\beta_{2j} + \text{Age}_i\beta_{3j} + \text{UsageFrequency}_{i4j} + \text{VeganDiet}_i\beta_{5j})]} \\ j = 1, 2, 3, 4$$

Model 2

$$P(\text{RecipeChoice}_i > j) = \frac{\exp(\alpha_j + \text{Nudge2}_{1j} + \text{Gender}_i\beta_{2j} + \text{Age}_i\beta_{3j} + \text{UsageFrequency}_{i4j} + \text{VeganDiet}_i\beta_{5j})}{1 + [\exp(\alpha_j + \text{Nudge2}_{1j} + \text{Gender}_i\beta_{2j} + \text{Age}_i\beta_{3j} + \text{UsageFrequency}_{i4j} + \text{VeganDiet}_i\beta_{5j})]} \\ j = 1, 2, 3, 4$$

Model 3a

$$P(\text{RecipeChoice}_i > j) = \frac{\exp(\alpha_j + \text{SelfTranscendence}_{i1j} + \text{Nudge1}_{1j} + \text{SelfTranscendence}_{i2j} * \text{Nudge1}_{1j} + \text{Gender}_i\beta_{4j} + \text{Age}_i\beta_{5j} + \text{UsageFrequency}_{i6j} + \text{VeganDiet}_i\beta_{7j})}{1 + [\exp(\alpha_j + \text{SelfTranscendence}_{i1j} + \text{Nudge1}_{1j} + \text{SelfTranscendence}_{i2j} * \text{Nudge1}_{1j} + \text{Gender}_i\beta_{4j} + \text{Age}_i\beta_{5j} + \text{UsageFrequency}_{i6j} + \text{VeganDiet}_i\beta_{7j})]} \\ j = 1, 2, 3, 4$$

Model 3b

$$P(\text{RecipeChoice}_i > j) = \frac{\exp(\alpha_j + \text{SelfTranscendence}_{i1j} + \text{Nudge2}_{1j} + \text{SelfTranscendence}_{i2j} * \text{Nudge2}_{1j} + \text{Gender}_i\beta_{4j} + \text{Age}_i\beta_{5j} + \text{UsageFrequency}_{i6j} + \text{VeganDiet}_i\beta_{7j})}{1 + [\exp(\alpha_j + \text{Nudge2}_{1j} + \text{Gender}_i\beta_{2j} + \text{Age}_i\beta_{3j} + \text{UsageFrequency}_{i4j} + \text{VeganDiet}_i\beta_{5j})]} \\ j = 1, 2, 3, 4$$

Code of conduct

This research complies with the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (KNAW et al., 2018). In addition, an ethical review was conducted where necessary (KNAW et al., 2018). Consent to use Siegfried Kröpfl's name as the celebrity recommendation nudge was provided by Thermomix® (see Appendix C). In addition, respondents were given the choice to participate and drop out of the questionnaire process at any time, and the data was obtained and analysed anonymously.

Results

In the following, the results of this research's data analysis are presented. First, the variables' descriptive statistics are outlined, followed by the results of the ordered logit models which test the proposed hypotheses.

Descriptive statistics

Overall, 1 960 respondents answered how likely they would be to choose to cook the sustainable recipe presented to them. However, only 73% of these completed the survey (see Appendix C, Table C1 for all summary statistics). In total, 407 completed observations were obtained for the No Nudge condition, 462 for the Nudge 1 condition, and 567 for the Nudge 2 condition. Regarding the distribution of the likelihood of cooking the recipe, the majority chose to probably not cook the recipe, followed by the choice to probably cook the recipe, in all three variations – showing a relatively normal distribution (Figure 2). In addition, both nudges are slightly negatively correlated with the choice for the recipe (see Appendix D, Table D1 and Appendix E, Table E1). Consequently, nudged respondents are less likely to cook the recipe. On the other hand, as indicated by the respondents' comments, only three responded that they were missing meat or fish in the recipe, whereas the majority did not like one or more of the ingredients or perceived the recipe as too complicated (Appendix F; Table F1). Lastly, as expected, users with a higher self-transcendence value orientation, female users (in the case of Nudge 2), older users, higher-frequency users, and vegans or

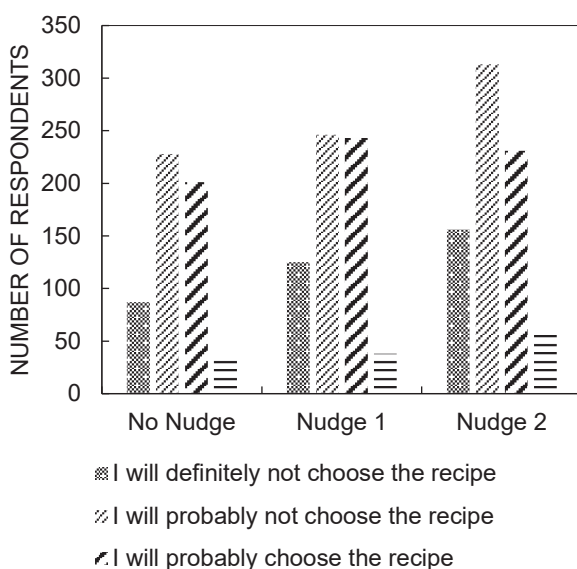


FIGURE 2: Frequencies of recipe choice by nudge type

vegetarians are more likely to cook the recipe (see Appendix D, Table D1 and Appendix E, Table E1).

Regression results

In this section, the regression models testing Hypotheses 1, 2, 3a, and 3b as defined in the methodology section are presented. As seen in Figure 3, the predicted probabilities of not cooking the recipe are higher, and cooking the recipe lower, for the recipe including the descriptive normative information. Although the dummy's coefficient for Nudge 1 is negative, it is not statistically significant (Table 3, Model 1). Therefore, the hypothesis that sustainable recipes for which a nudge in the form of descriptive normative information is introduced are more likely to be cooked than sustainable recipes for which no such nudge is introduced is not supported by the analysed data. Besides, both age (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003) and vegan or vegetarian users (Delmas & Lessem, 2014) positively affect the likelihood of choosing the sustainable recipe, whereas female users (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003) and usage frequency do not support the expected effects (Delmas & Lessem, 2014).

A similar effect to the first hypothesis test was found for the celebrity recommendation nudge. On the one hand, the predicted probabilities of not cooking the recipe are higher and cooking the recipe lower for the recipe including the celebrity recommendation (Figure 4). On the other hand, the coefficient of the dummy variable for Nudge 2 shows a stronger effect compared to the one for Nudge 1, while being statistically significant (see Table 3, Model 2). Therefore, rejecting the second hypothesis, sustainable recipes for which a nudge in the form of a celebrity recommendation is introduced are less likely to be cooked than sustainable recipes for which no such nudge is introduced. In addition, as for Model 1, age (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003) and vegan or vegetarian users (Delmas & Lessem, 2014) positively affect the likelihood of choosing the sustainable recipe, whereas female users (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003) and usage frequency (Delmas & Lessem, 2014) have positive signs as expected, but are statistically insignificant.

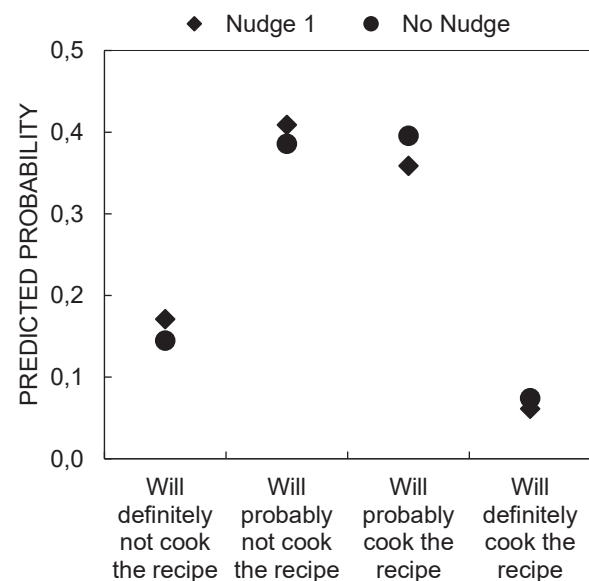


FIGURE 3: Predicted probabilities of recipe choice with and without descriptive normative information

TABLE 3: Regression output of Models 1, 2, 3a, and 3b

	Model 1 recipe choice	Model 2 recipe choice	Model 3 recipe choice	Model 4 recipe choice
Nudge 1	-0.20 (0.14)		0.56 (1.05)	
Gender	-0.40 (0.29)	0.09 (0.29)	-0.43 (0.28)	0.02 (0.29)
Age	0.28** (0.09)	0.37*** (0.09)	0.25** (0.09)	0.33*** (0.09)
Usage frequency	0.02 (0.07)	0.09 (0.06)	0.00 (0.07)	0.08 (0.06)
Vegan diet	0.68* (0.23)	0.47* (0.21)	0.35 (0.23)	0.35 (0.21)
Nudge 2		-0.30* (0.14)		0.16 (0.98)
Self-transcendence			0.40* (0.16)	0.37* (0.16)
Self-transcendence x Nudge 1			-0.16 (0.22)	
Self-transcendence x Nudge 2				-0.09 (0.21)
Cut 1	-1.20** (0.46)	-0.23 (0.45)	0.50 (0.88)	1.28 (0.87)
Cut 2	0.70 (0.46)	1.80*** (0.45)	2.42** (0.89)	3.33*** (0.88)
Cut 3	3.10*** (0.46)	4.07*** (0.46)	4.84*** (0.90)	5.62*** (0.90)
Observations	694	769	694	769

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

As predicted by Model 1, the coefficient of the dummy variable for the first nudge is statistically insignificant, but positive (see Table 3, Model 3a). Interestingly, users high in self-transcendence values are more likely to choose the recipe than users low in these values, therefore partly supporting Hypothesis 3a (see Table 3, Model 3a). Comparing this effect for the recipe with

descriptive normative information versus without, Figure 5 shows a lower effect of self-transcendence values on the likelihood of cooking the former. On the other hand, the coefficient of the interaction between the dummy variable for Nudge 1 and self-transcendence value orientation is negative and statistically insignificant (see Table 3, Model 3a). This outcome, as seen in Figure 5, suggests that users higher in self-transcendence values are less likely to choose to cook the recipe including the descriptive normative information. Regarding the control variables, except for the gender coefficient, all coefficients have positive signs, but only age statistically affects the predicted probability (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003).

The predicted effects of this model are similar to the previous one. A self-transcendence value orientation positively and statistically significantly influences the likelihood that users choose to cook the recipe; however, the effect is slightly weaker (see Table 3, Model 3b). The effect of a celebrity recommendation nudge is positive but smaller than the effect of a descriptive normative information nudge, and also statistically insignificant (see Table 3, Model 3b). Moreover, the coefficient of the interaction term between the dummy variable for Nudge 2 and self-transcendence value orientation is negative; thus, the effect of self-transcendence values on the likelihood of cooking the recipe including the celebrity recommendation nudge is weakened (as seen in Figure 6). However, this effect is statistically insignificant (see Table 3, Model 3b). Consequently, hypothesis 3b is only partially supported. Finally, all the control variables show positive effects, but only age statistically affects the predicted probability, as in Model 3a (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003)

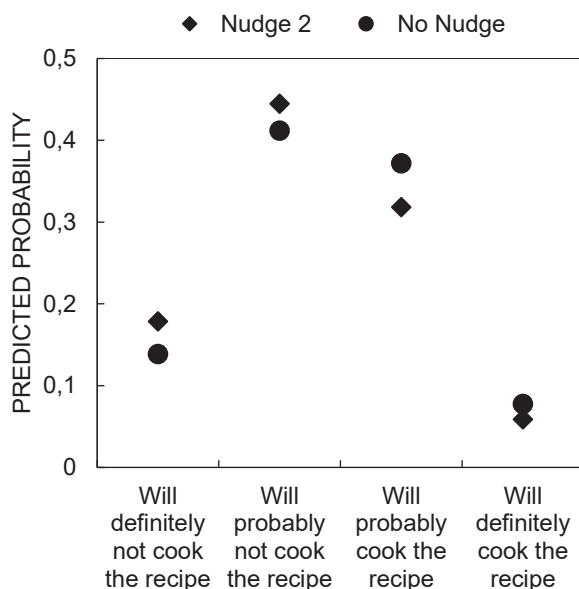


FIGURE 4: Predicted probabilities of recipe choice with and without celebrity recommendation

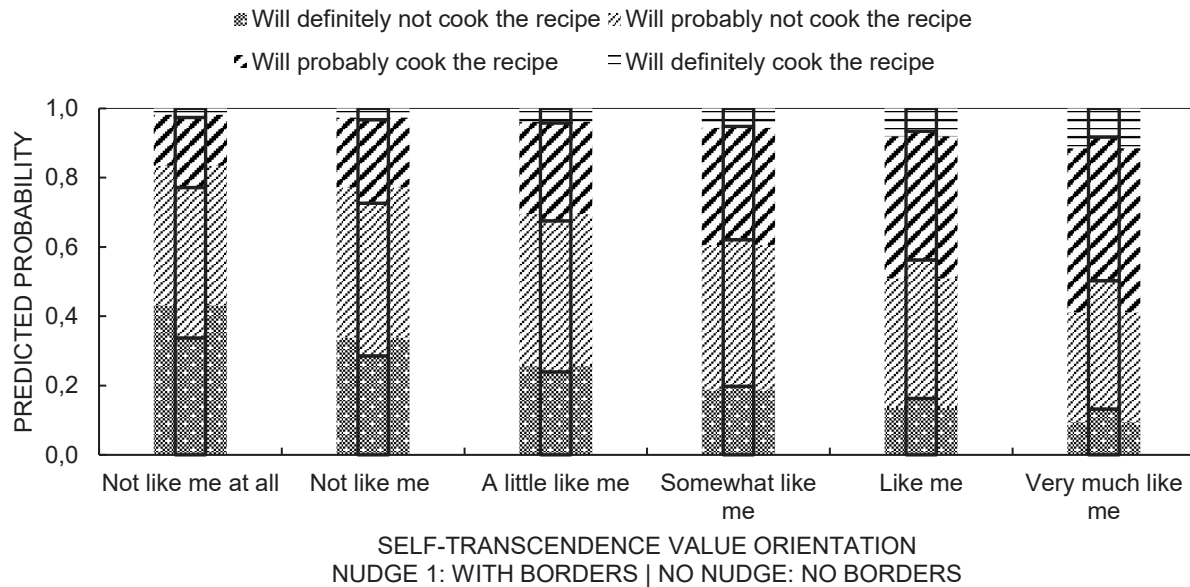


FIGURE 5: Predicted probabilities of recipe choice with and without descriptive normative information for different levels of self-transcendence value orientation

Discussion, recommendations, and limitations

The research question "What is the impact of recipe nudges on Thermomix® users differing in prioritised values in choosing for a more sustainable diet?" could be answered through the research that has been conducted.

Firstly, sustainable recipes for which a nudge in the form of descriptive normative information (Nudge 1) or a celebrity recommendation (Nudge 2) is introduced are not more but less likely to be cooked than sustainable recipes for which no such nudge is introduced. This finding contradicts existing literature on social norms that, as noted above, focuses on offline environments (e.g. Sternthal et al., 1978; Kallgren & Wood, 1986;

Cialdini, 1988; Millar & Tesser, 1989; Cialdini et al., 1991; Van Trijp & Van Amstel, 2012; Wansink & Love, 2014). Therefore, a possible explanation for the ineffectiveness of the tested social norm nudges is the different context, i.e. the online environment. The point is that an online recipe platform presents a vast choice of different recipes and therefore users can easily choose another (sustainable or non-sustainable) recipe instead of the nudged one. On the contrary, guests in a brick-and-mortar setting such as a restaurant have a limited choice of dishes and may thus be more easily influenced by nudges.

The analysis of the comments shows that only three respondents were missing meat or fish in the nudged recipe, showing that the majority's choice to not cook the recipe was

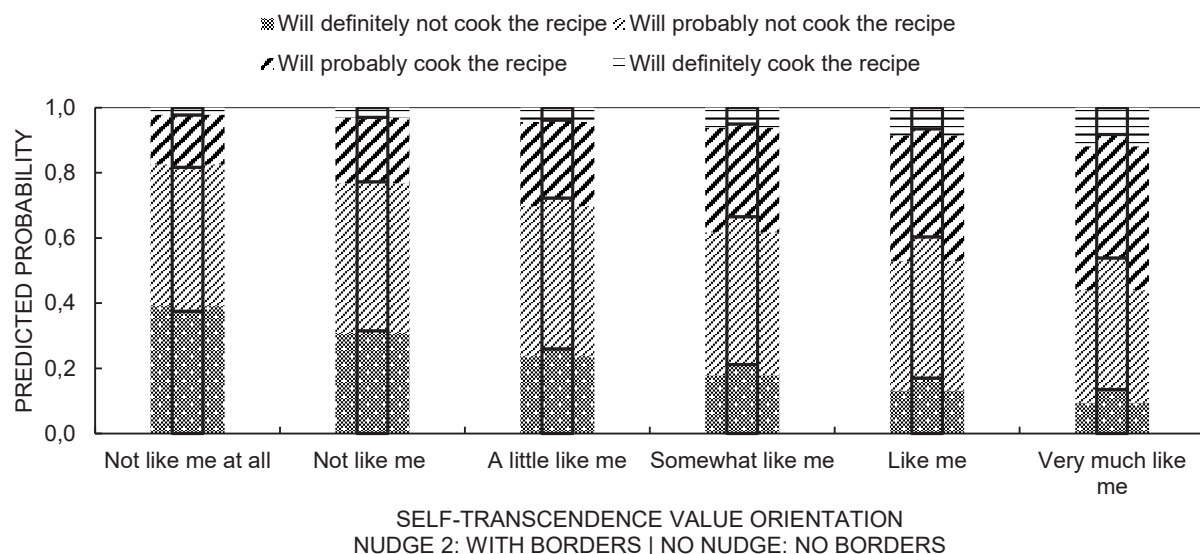


FIGURE 6: Predicted probabilities of recipe choice with and without celebrity recommendation for different levels of self-transcendence value orientation

primarily influenced by taste, convenience or other dietary restrictions. Consequently, these findings could reflect the importance of such hedonic values in choosing a particular recipe and engaging in pro-sustainable behaviour (Steg et al., 2014). Rather than being in conflict with it, strong hedonic values could also complement a self-transcendence value orientation (Steg et al., 2014). According to the research's thematic analysis, hedonic reasons of taste or other individual preferences could have prevailed and outperformed the social norm nudges (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007; Steg et al., 2014). This proposition could be undermined by the robustness checks conducted on differences in value orientations between the three conditions and recipe responses. On the one hand, the Nudge 1 condition was found to have a weaker hedonic value orientation compared to the No Nudge condition, which could explain the negative effect of the descriptive normative information on the sustainable recipe choice (see Table 3). On the other hand, no statistically significant difference has been found between the mean hedonic values of the Nudge 2 and No Nudge condition, nor for the interaction between the effects of Nudge 1 or Nudge 2 versus No Nudge and a hedonic value orientation on a sustainable recipe choice. Therefore, no evidence for an influence of a hedonic value orientation on the negative effect of both nudges on sustainable behaviour is provided. Overall, it can be concluded that users are willing to choose a sustainable recipe; however, taste and other factors must be individually controlled for, which is supported by research on user-customised nudges (Nelson & Garst, 2005; Updegraff et al., 2007; Dijkstra, 2008).

Secondly, it could be confirmed that users stronger in self-transcendence values are more likely to choose a sustainable recipe. However, this effect is not increased by displaying descriptive normative information nor a celebrity recommendation. Therefore, although users who have stronger biospheric and altruistic values are more likely to cook a sustainable recipe, they are not further influenced by social norms. Contrary to previous research, social norm nudges could not strengthen normative goals and thereby could also not weaken hedonic and gain goals (Steg et al., 2014). On the other hand, users with stronger normative goals choose the sustainable recipe, also without one of the nudges. Thus, social norms could ultimately cause a heterogeneous response by users with a strong self-transcendence value orientation, as their moral benefit from engaging becomes lower compared to users with a weak self-transcendence value orientation (Schultz et al., 2007). Consequently, the former may be less motivated to choose a sustainable recipe including a social norm nudge, compared to a recipe without this type of nudge (Schultz et al., 2007). Because it could be assumed that users high in self-transcendence values are more intrinsically motivated when choosing a sustainable recipe, they do not need (and therefore react negatively to) extrinsic motivations. A similar result has also been found by Giebelhausen and Chun (2017). Therefore, the behaviour of users high in self-transcendence values could potentially be influenced by other kinds of nudges than social norms, such as sustainability ratings (Delmas & Lessem, 2014). Since taste is a highly subjective and strongly influencing factor when it comes to food choice, further exploration into effective decision architectures must be conducted to enhance understandings of sustainable dietary choices.

This research's findings also constitute practical contributions. First, managers and policymakers must pay special attention

to the context in which the nudge is presented. Comparing this research to previous findings, behaviour on nudges differs between the physical and digital environment. Consequently, new and more effective ways to nudge pro-sustainable behaviour on online platforms must be found and carefully analysed. Second, it is paramount to examine the hedonic values involved, such as taste, when aiming to nudge sustainable dietary choice. The digital environment holds a significant advantage for this recommendation, because user data can be tracked and analysed. Therefore, sustainable recipes can be customised to the tastes and preferences of previously cooked recipes by the user. Then, social norm nudges can be displayed on the customised sustainable recipe to promote engagement. Last but not least, practitioners should also consider users' differing value orientations, which influence their behaviour upon nudges. Again, the user's previous behaviour can be analysed by examining previously cooked recipes. Because self-transcendence values are positively correlated with vegetarian or vegan users (see Appendix D and Appendix E), it can be assumed that users cooking sustainable recipes are more likely to have distinct self-transcendence values. Thus, if the user regularly cooks sustainable recipes, they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated due to a possibly stronger self-transcendence value orientation. Hence, displaying a sustainable rating of the recipe may be more effective in further promoting their sustainable dietary behaviour.

This research has limitations in its statistical, survey, and ethical design. First, the interpretation of the quantitative results found is limited since qualitative responses indicate other explanations. Also, the respondent's characteristics cannot be entirely controlled for and no longitudinal data was obtained, which limits the insights into a habitual change in sustainable dietary choice. Besides, possible differences in value orientations might result from differences in origin (Schwartz, 1992; Goldstein et al., 2008). Second, respondents in Germany may have been unaware of the Austrian chef, Siegfried Kröpfl, who was chosen for the celebrity recommendation nudge. Furthermore, respondents may have dropped out because of the time-consuming questions on value orientations, although recognised as less complicated (Cavagnaro & Staffieri, 2014). Third, ethical limitations concern the use of social norm nudges. Since this research found that the sustainable recipe without a social norm nudge was chosen relatively more frequently, it must be ensured that the nudge is not doing people and planet more harm than good (Blumenthal-Barby & Burroughs, 2012). Moreover, the descriptive normative information nudge is hypothetical, and because sustainable behaviour is often less frequent, the type of nudge in itself could raise limitations.

Future research

Based on this research's limitations, future research could explore the importance of hedonic values on sustainable dietary behaviour. On the one hand, respondents could be asked to choose how likely they would be to cook the recipe given that they like the recipe's ingredients and procedure, which would eliminate hedonic differences and, thus, control for these in advance. Nonetheless, this could raise other limitations, such as the respondent's limited mental capacity to imagine that they hypothetically like the recipe. On the other hand, if the company under observation can enable a user-customised survey, the

sustainable recipe in the questionnaire could be customised to the user's previous behaviour. In addition, this could also open new areas of insight by not only customising the recipe, but also the type of nudge, depending on the user's value orientation and intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. However, such a context is not always realisable, so future research could capitalise on the limitations of quantitative research by conducting interviews with users and experts instead. As a consequence, further insights could be gained into what nudge, e.g. social norm or sustainability rating (Hoogland et al., 2007; Engels et al., 2010), would be most effective to promote pro-sustainable dietary behaviour, and how human values impact the effectiveness of different nudges.

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APPENDIX A: Questionnaire Design

Let's make the Thermomix and its recipes FUTURE-PROOF!

RISOTTO WITH ASPARAGUS AND CHARD

Please take a look at the recipe below and answer the following question.

Condition 1



RECIPE OF THE DAY

08.04.2019

★★★★★ (Cooked by more than 15.000 Thermomix Users in Germany)

Risotto with Asparagus and Chard

Condition 2



RECIPE OF THE DAY

08.04.2019

★★★★★ (Cooked by more than 15.000 Thermomix Users in Germany)

Risotto with Asparagus and Chard

Condition 3



RECIPE OF THE DAY

08.04.2019

★★★★★ (Cooked by more than 15.000 Thermomix Users in Germany)

Risotto with Asparagus and Chard

INGREDIENTS

Serving size: 4 portions

Difficulty: easy

Preparation time: 25m

Total time: 45m

Carrot and ginger juice

150 g of carrots, in pieces

40g onions

2 slices of ginger, fresh root (2 mm)

15 g of olive oil

45 g white wine

1 tsp paprika powder, sweet

1 tsp salt

½ vegetable broth cube (for 0.5 l)

250 g carrot juice (from the bottle)

Risotto

100 g onions, quartered

30 g of olive oil

250 g risotto rice (e.g. Arborio)

100 g white wine 650 g of water, hot

1 tsp salt, a little more to taste

3 pinches of black pepper, ground, a little more to taste

1 ½-2 vegetable broth cubes (each 0.5 l)

1 tbsp margarine

6 pieces of cherry tomatoes

250 g green asparagus, lower third peeled, woody ends removed, in pieces (1 cm)

75 g of chard leaves, stems removed, in strips (5 mm)

4 stalks fresh parsley, plucked and chopped leaves

How likely would you be to choose to cook the risotto with asparagus and chard?

☐ I will **definitely not** cook this recipe

☐ I will **probably not** cook this recipe

☐ I will **probably** cook this recipe

☐ I will **definitely** cook this recipe

If you will not cook this recipe, why not?

YOUR VALUES

To be able to customise the following answers to you, please indicate your gender.

☐ Female

☐ Male

How similar is this person to you? Please differentiate between *very much like me*, *like me*, *somewhat like me*, *a little like me*, *not like me*, and *not like me at all*.

Values (E-SVS; Steg et al., 2012)	Portraits (E-PVQ; Bouman et al., 2018)	Portraits in German (Translation by Schmidt et al., 2007; here, the male version is presented)
WEALTH: material possessions, money	It is important to [him/her] to have money and possessions.	Es ist ihm wichtig, reich zu sein. Er möchte viel Geld und teure Sachen besitzen.
EQUALITY: equal opportunities for all	It is important to [him/her] that every person has equal opportunities.	Er glaubt, dass es wichtig ist, dass alle Menschen in der Welt gleich behandelt werden. Er denkt, dass jeder Mensch im Leben gleiche Chancen haben soll.
GRATIFICATION FOR ONESELF: doing pleasant things	It is important to [him/her] to do things [he/she] enjoys.	Er sucht nach jeder Möglichkeit, Spaß zu haben. Es ist ihm wichtig, Dinge zu tun, die ihm Freude bereiten.
PREVENTING POLLUTION: protecting natural resources	It is important to [him/her] to prevent environmental pollution.	<i>Es ist ihm wichtig, Umweltverschmutzung zu verhindern. Er möchte die natürlichen Ressourcen schützen.</i> (Not translated by Schmidt et al., 2007; directly translated from Bouman et al., 2018, and includes the description of the value from the SVS to imitate the other translations)
AUTHORITY: the right to lead or command	It is important to [him/her] to have authority over others.	Es ist ihm wichtig, die Führung zu übernehmen und anderen zu sagen, was sie tun sollen. Er möchte, dass die anderen tun, was er sagt.
HELPFUL: working for the welfare of others	It is important to [him/her] to be helpful to others.	Es ist ihm sehr wichtig, den Menschen in seinem Umfeld zu helfen. Er möchte sich um ihr Wohlbefinden kümmern.
ENJOYING LIFE: food, sex, leisure time, etc.	It is important to [him/her] to enjoy the life's pleasures.	Es ist ihm wichtig, die Freuden des Lebens zu genießen. Er „verwöhnt“ sich gerne selbst.
PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT: preserving nature	It is important to [him/her] to protect the environment.	Er ist fest davon überzeugt, dass die Menschen sich für die Natur einsetzen sollten. Es ist ihm wichtig, sich um die Umwelt zu kümmern.
AMBITIOUS: hardworking, striving to perform	It is important to [him/her] to work hard and be ambitious.	Es ist ihm wichtig, ehrgeizig zu sein. Er möchte zeigen, wie fähig er ist.
A WORLD AT PEACE: free of war and conflict	It is important to [him/her] that there is no war or conflict.	Er glaubt, dass die Völker der Welt in Harmonie zusammenleben sollten. Es ist ihm wichtig, den Frieden zwischen allen Gruppen der Welt zu fördern.
PLEASURE: enjoyment, fulfillment of desires	It is important to [him/her] to have fun.	Er möchte das Leben richtig genießen. Es ist ihm wichtig, Spaß zu haben.
RESPECT FOR THE EARTH: live in harmony with other species	It is important to [him/her] to respect nature.	<i>Es ist ihm wichtig, die Natur zu respektieren. Er glaubt, dass die Menschen in Harmonie mit anderen Arten zusammenleben sollten.</i> (Not translated by Schmidt et al., 2007; directly translated from Bouman et al., 2018, and includes the description of the value from the SVS to imitate the other translations)
INFLUENTIAL: having an impact on people and event	It is important to [him/her] to be influential.	Es ist ihm wichtig, im Leben vorwärts zu kommen. Er strebt danach, besser zu sein als andere.
SOCIAL JUSTICE: correcting injustice, care for the weak	It is important to [him/her] to take care of those who are worse off.	Er möchte, dass jeder gerecht behandelt wird, sogar Leute, die er nicht kennt. Es ist ihm wichtig, die Schwachen in der Gesellschaft zu beschützen.
UNITY WITH NATURE: fitting into nature	It is important to [him/her] to be in unity with nature.	Es ist ihm wichtig, sich der Natur anzupassen und zu ihr zu passen. Er glaubt, dass die Menschen die Natur nicht verändern sollten.
SOCIAL POWER: control over others, dominance	It is important to [him/her] to have control over others' actions.	Er möchte immer derjenige sein, der die Entscheidungen trifft. Er ist gerne in der Führungsposition.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

To be able to control for other influences, we need some additional information about yourself.

1. Your age

- ☐ Younger than 30 years
☐ 31 to 40 years
☐ 41 to 50 years
☐ 51 to 60 years
☐ Older than 60 years
☐ No answer

2. How often do you usually use the Thermomix®?

- ☐ Never
☐ Less than once per week
☐ 1–2 times per week
☐ 3–5 times per week
☐ More than 5 times per week
☐ Daily

3. Do you usually choose the recipes?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

4. Do you follow a strict diet?

- ☐ I eat everything
☐ Vegetarian
☐ Vegan
☐ Other

Other diet, allergies and/or intolerances (please indicate):

APPENDIX B: Model robustness checks

TABLE B1: Results of model robustness checks

Test	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3a	Model 3b
Δ likelihood ratio				
LR $\chi^2(2)$	9.60	0.00	9.56	7.60
Probability > χ^2	0.01	–	0.01	0.02
Δ AIC	–5.60	0.00	–5.56	–3.60
Δ BIC	3.48	0.00	3.52	5.69

APPENDIX C: Summary statistics

TABLE C1: Summary statistics of model variable

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Recipe choice	1 960	2.29	0.85	1	4
Nudge 1	1 204	0.54	0.50	0	1
Nudge 2	1 308	0.58	0.49	0	1
Self-transcendence	1 448	4.76	0.73	1	6
Gender	1 937	0.94	0.23	0	1
Age	1 164	2.92	0.80	2	4
Usage frequency	1 436	4.44	1.16	1	6
Vegan diet	1 436	0.11	0.31	0	1

APPENDIX D: Correlation matrix Nudge 1

TABLE D1: Correlation matrix for descriptive normative information nudge

Variable	Recipe choice	Nudge 1	Self-transcendence	Gender	Age	Usage frequency	Vegan diet
Recipe choice	1.00						
Nudge 1	–0.05	1.00					
Self-transcendence	0.13	–0.05	1.00				
Gender	–0.05	0.08	0.02	1.00			
Age	0.11	0.14	0.14	0.02	1.00		
Usage frequency	0.04	0.08	0.12	0.06	0.10	1.00	
Vegan diet	0.10	–0.08	0.14	0.01	0.01	0.05	1.00

APPENDIX E: Correlation matrix Nudge 2

TABLE E1: Correlation matrix for celebrity recommendation nudge

Variable	Recipe choice	Nudge 2	Self-transcendence	Gender	Age	Usage frequency	Vegan diet
Recipe choice	1.00						
Nudge 2	–0.08	1.00					
Self-transcendence	0.14	–0.05	1.00				
Gender	0.01	0.04	0.05	1.00			
Age	0.16	–0.07	0.17	0.02	1.00		
Usage frequency	0.09	0.04	0.10	0.03	0.11	1.00	
Vegan diet	0.10	–0.02	0.19	–0.05	0.04	0.04	1.00

APPENDIX F: Qualitative results of recipe choice

TABLE F1: Qualitative results of recipe choice

Variable	Recipe choice comment					Total
Recipe choice	1	2	3	4	5	
Definitely not cook the recipe	243	62	0	8	6	319
Probably not cook the recipe	350	153	3	8	5	519
Probably cook the recipe	11	5	0	0	0	16
Definitely cook the recipe	5	6	0	0	0	11
Total	609	226	3	16	11	865

Comment 1: Doesn't like ingredients, too exotic, not suitable for children, includes alcohol

Comment 2: Too tricky, challenging to get ingredient(s), too expensive ingredients, too few amounts of ingredients/rest has to be thrown away, doesn't know an ingredient

Comment 3: No meat, no fish

Comment 4: Visuals, description, no procedure shown

Comment 5: Diet, intolerance

How hotels suffer from and deal with the economic effects of tourism seasonality: A case study of Aksum, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this study is to assess the economic costs of tourism seasonality on hotels, and strategies for addressing these costs by taking Aksum, northern Ethiopia, as a research context. Semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data from 14 hotel managers in Aksum town and the data were analysed using thematic analysis. Findings from the study showed that seasonality causes large occupancy drops during off-months and brings about a considerable drop in hotels' revenue. However, in terms of recruitment and staff-related costs, hotels in Aksum do not concede serious economic costs and this is mainly attributed to their size. Study results also revealed that increasing supply of additional hotel products in peak season and diversifying products that cater to local markets are the major strategies for addressing tourism seasonality. The study offers an important theoretical contribution as it presents the economic costs of tourism seasonality on small hotels, and the major ways of overcoming it in a developing-destination context.

KEYWORDS: economic consequences, low season, peak season, response strategies, thematic analysis

Introduction

Tourism is a service-sector economic activity that depends on tourist visits to destinations of interest (Pearce, 1989; Witt & Moutinho, 1995; United Nations World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO], 2018). Among various attributes inherent in tourism, seasonality often stands out as its unique, most representative, and main defining feature (Butler, 2001; Fernández-Morales, 2003; Chung, 2009) and a major challenge it faces (Allcock, 1989; Butler, 2000; Higham & Hinch, 2002). With the exception of a few destinations where demand is not variable according to clearly defined seasonal patterns (Butler, 2001), almost all destinations experience temporal fluctuation in the flow of tourists (BarOn, 1972; Hylleberg, 1992), although peripheral and coastal destinations tend to suffer more (Butler, 2001; Fernández-Morales, 2003). The seasonality of tourism brings significant economic costs to destinations, making most business outlets, including hotels, concede serious losses and in response devise strategies to mitigate the impacts (BarOn, 1975; Allcock, 1989).

Since the initial two-volume works by BarOn (1972; 1973) — widely regarded as the first enquiry into the subject — seasonality has been examined in a number of disciplines including economics (Dagum, 1997) and sociology (Rose, 1993), in addition to tourism and hospitality. Despite the considerable attention it drew from academia and policymakers, seasonality remains one of the least understood aspects in tourism literature (Butler, 2001; Jang, 2004), with research outputs lacking a sound theoretical framework (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005).

Though several definitions have been used to operationalise the theme of seasonality, no generally agreed-upon one so far exists in reference to tourism (Hylleberg, 1992; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005; Þórhallsdóttir & Ólafsson, 2017; Chen et al., 2019). According to Butler (1994), seasonality is a temporal imbalance in the phenomena of tourism manifested in fluctuation in such dimensions as numbers of visitors, expenditure of visitors, traffic on highways and other forms of transportation, employment, and admissions to attraction. While BarOn (1975) viewed seasonality as recurring each year with more or less the same timing and scale, Allock (1989) argues that such a concentration occurs in relatively short periods of the year. A slightly firmer assessment by Holloway (1994) states that seasonality of tourist flow not only varies within a year but also within a month, a week, or even a single day. It can hence be summed up that though seasonality of tourism involves irregularity in tourist flow across time, it is itself a regular feature in tourism (Witt & Moutinho, 1995; Fernández-Morales, 2003; Vergori, 2017; Sáez-Fernández et al., 2020).

Some definitions of seasonality indicate the underlying causes of it in tourism. For example, Holloway (1994) explained seasonality as being caused by weather, the calendar, and the timing of decisions by different agents of the economy. Although many causes of seasonality in tourism have been researched (e.g. BarOn, 1975; Hartmann, 1986; Butler, 1994; Baum & Hagen, 1999; Lundtorp et al., 1999; Frechtling, 1996; Xie, 2020), two of them appear repeatedly in most discussions in the literature: natural and institutional factors and/or pull and push factors.

Natural seasonality is caused by such climatic factors as sunlight, snowfall, rainfall, extreme temperature, and daylight weather, while institutional seasonality stems from religious, social, cultural, and ethnic factors (BarOn, 1975; Hartmann, 1986; Butler, 1994). While natural factors make a certain water-based destination or ski resort be preferred or avoided (depending on season of the year), institutional factors like pilgrimages, public and school holidays compel visitations to be undertaken at a certain time or to a certain place (Frechtling, 1996). Lundtorp et al. (1999) viewed these factors from a different angle, classifying them as "push" (holidays, inertia and tradition, social pressure and fashion, and access) or "pull" (climate and sporting seasons). In addition to these two, a third category comprising social pressure, a mega sporting event, and inertia of travellers has been discussed by Butler (1994). Findings have recently emerged that economic determinants also affect the seasonal concentration of tourism (Xie, 2020). While these studies have shed light on conceptualising seasonality causes, they have been criticised for failing to specify whether these factors are deterministic or stochastic in nature (Ridderstaat & Nijkamp, 2013).

Researchers in tourism seasonality have also largely focused on traditional and mature destinations in Europe, the Caribbean and Asia (UNWTO, 2018), making study outputs from developing non-traditional destinations rare (Ridderstaat & Nijkamp, 2013). Even when traditional destinations become settings of seasonality research, generic destination level approaches are often pursued instead of analysing it specifically in the context of tourism business outlets such as hotels (Galloway, 2008). The studies also put little focus on the supply perspective, concentrating largely on the wide range of seasonality references from the demand point of view (Saló et al., 2012).

This study assesses economic effects caused by tourism seasonality on hotels in Aksum, Ethiopia. One of the prime destinations on the Ethiopian Historic Route, Aksum is famed for obelisks, the Stelae Park, the Church of Mary of Zion — believed to have housed the Ark of the Covenant — and the Mary Zion celebration (*Lonely Planet*, 2016; Ethiopian Tourism Organisation [ETO], 2019). There are 14 star-rated tourist standard and over 35 budget hotels in the town, in addition to more than 400 tourism and hospitality business outlets including pensions, restaurants, cafés, and bars (Tigray Culture and Tourism Bureau, 2018). Though research findings reveal that tourism in Aksum is characterised by high seasonality (Chiriko & Addis, 2015), specific discussion on the perspectives of industry practitioners like hoteliers is rather limited. The current study aspires to fill the gap in this regard. Its objective is two-fold: (1) to assess the economic consequences of tourism seasonality on hotels; and (2) to examine hotels' strategies to ease the challenges of seasonality.

Theoretical considerations

Economic consequences of tourism seasonality on hotels

The economic effects of tourism seasonality have been widely researched in the literature (e.g. Ball, 1988; Mourdoukoutas, 1988; Krakover, 2000; Commons & Page, 2001; Goulding et al., 2004; Jang, 2004), beside environmental and sociocultural effects (Witt & Moutinho, 1995; Butler, 2001). The hotel sector specifically is characterised by variation in guest arrivals and customers, presenting them with a challenge of adopting

changing strategies across seasons. Although positive impacts of tourism seasonality are evident from economic aspects (e.g. maintenance of buildings, temporary part-time jobs) (Murphy, 1985; Witt & Moutinho, 1995; Mill & Morrison, 1998; Þórhallsdóttir & Ólafsson, 2017) and an ecological point of view (e.g. recovery of the environment and maintenance of attractions), the economic costs that hotel endure due to seasonality of tourism often outweigh the benefits. These costs can be categorised into two broad categories: effects on revenue, and effects on investment.

In terms of revenue, hotels lose a lot as they concede substantial drop in demand for such facilities as rooms and food services, while the basic costs of these amenities remain fixed across seasons (Soesilo & Mings, 1986). Cooper et al. (2005) noted that, due to the perishable nature of hotel products, the economic values of items like rooms would lose value rapidly. The other aspect of seasonality affecting hotel revenue is associated with employment. Owing to seasonal variation in their guest arrivals, hotels would have to put in place different approaches in peak and/or low seasons. They have to either recruit employees on a seasonal basis and repeatedly have additional costs for training the workers every peak season (Cooper et al., 2005), or hire full-time staff at full potential levels of the peak season and bear the cost during low-income periods (Yacoumis, 1980), leaving their economic status in jeopardy (Szivas et al., 2003). As Commons and Page (2001) pointed out, hoteliers often face shortages of casual workers in high seasons and are compelled to seek seasonal workers beyond the local area. This raises recruitment costs and reduces remuneration packages for those workers, resulting in a lack of commitment by workers (Goulding et al., 2004). In addition to this, hotels have to deal with the consequences of increased price pressures that result from rises in transportation and supply costs (Commons & Page, 2001). The eventual effects of tourism seasonality lead to under- or over-utilisation of resources in hotels (Commons & Page, 2001; Jang, 2004; Chen et al., 2019).

Tourism seasonality also impacts a hotel's return on investment. According to Mathieson and Wall (1982), seasonality drains commercial sector lenders' confidence in hotel investors due to instabilities in revenues. Investment in hotel sectors is often viewed as unsafe over perceived risk in return on investment (Goulding et al., 2004). Seasonal variations in tourist flows also cause budget management challenges in cash flows to hotel investments as planning proves challenging (Commons & Page, 2001).

It can be summed up that the major economic costs of seasonality of tourist flows fall into revenue and investment-related categories. It has to be stressed, however, that these costs are often interrelated, one causing the other (Vrkljan et al., 2019).

How do hotels manage seasonality impacts?

While destination-level strategies of addressing tourism seasonality are well established in the literature (e.g. Owens, 1994; Jeffrey & Barden, 1999; Weaver & Oppermann, 2000; Getz & Nilsson 2004; Getz et al., 2004; Postma & Schmuecker, 2017), specific studies on approaches pursued by hotels in managing seasonality appear limited (Phelps, 1988; Postma & Schmuecker, 2017). Whereas the major impacts of tourism seasonality on hotels are economic in nature (Commons & Page, 2001), most strategies adopted by hotels to tackle them involve marketing

actions (Chung, 2009). Cost reduction tactics are often the preferred option. To reduce operational costs and increase yield, hotels engage in service-level differentiations of reducing opening times in low season (Goulding et al., 2004; Alshuqaiqi & Omar, 2019). The strategies of extending peak seasons by developing a tourism product, promoting a pricing differentiation model, and multiple-use schemes, recommended by BarOn (1975), work well for hotels. Witt and Moutinho (1995) pointed out that promotional pricing in the form of discounts or free offers could help to increase length of stay during off seasons. It is noted by Chung (2009) that pricing differentiation is only implemented to offset the traditional seasonal fluctuations, not to maximise profit. The role of group booking offers for specific niche markets such as retirees also reinforces visitation in low periods, which could be done by aligning with tour operators or travel agents to sell a particular product/service (Jeffrey & Barden, 1999).

A market diversification effort has also been identified by Witt and Moutinho (1995), which could mean designing marketing campaigns to attract different markets in different seasons. Market diversification activities of hotels could be further enhanced by product diversification to attract local customers to increase business in low periods (e.g. the introduction or development of festivals and events) (Jang, 2004). According to Jeffrey and Barden (1999) and Goulding et al. (2004), hotels might benefit from combining a tourist facility with local amenities as this helps to expand the operational season. Hotels can also create new or alternative sources of demand for their existing products and facilities by targeting such markets as business travellers, or incentive and conference market travellers, as these groups possess the willingness and ability to travel in off-peak seasons (McEniff, 1992; Vergori, 2017).

The strategies of promotional pricing, market diversification and product diversification are inherently outward facing in their nature. In terms of cost management, hotels often pursue an inward-facing approach. This involves financial planning and budgeting to manage fluctuating operational costs (Jeffrey & Barden, 1999; Chiriko, 2021). However, few hotels face the worst-case scenario of a complete closure of business in the off season in an effort to reduce operational costs (Butler, 2001). Whether outward or inward facing, hotel establishments adopt what strategies they believe suit the destination they are operating in as there is a lack of longitudinal studies to evaluate the impacts of such strategies over an extended time period (Baum & Hagen, 1999; Sáez-Fernández et al., 2020).

Study methodology

The current study adopted a qualitative approach that involved semi-structured interviews with 14 hotel general managers in Aksum town. Qualitative research techniques offer researchers flexibility benefits and allow the subjects being studied to give much richer answers to questions put forward to them by those conducting the enquiry. Qualitative techniques also yield valuable insights which might have been missed by other quantitative methods, and hence encourage researchers to gradually frame the topic throughout the study process (Neuman, 2007). Interviews are favoured in qualitative studies for their benefit in organising schedules and building and planning a thematic guide to listening and intervention strategies, which enable the researcher to produce an understanding of a topic

defined by a study framework (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Berg, 2007). Additional flexibility advantages can be obtained from semi-structured interviews as they assume predefined interview guide questions, while allowing the interviewer to deviate from the plan to investigate specific themes (Neuman, 2007). The economic costs of tourism seasonality on hotels in terms of effect on revenue, recruitment and payment decisions and investments, and the consequential strategies adopted by hotels to solve the problem can be better analysed using responses from semi-structured interview with subjects.

The sample size of interviewees was determined by examining all the 14 star-classified tourist standard hotels in Aksum town (Tigray Culture and Tourism Bureau, 2018). General managers were preferred to departmental managers for the interviews because of their expertise, experience and decision-making powers (Brymer, 1987). Before conducting the interviews, guide questions were prepared in alignment with the study objectives and additional items were incorporated for further probing. Interviewees were asked to state and explain the economic costs they suffered due to seasonality of tourist flow to Aksum. They were free to discuss all possible economic consequences in as many terms and points as possible. Moderation was done by the researcher for interviewees to focus on economic consequences only (not social or environmental impacts) and effects only caused by tourism seasonality (not other factors). Interviews on the reactionary strategies adopted by hotels also followed the same procedure.

After audio recording on digital recording apparatus, the interviews were transcribed. Appropriate punctuation marks and signs were used while writing the transcripts to indicate the hesitations, interruptions in speech, emphases and emotions of interviewees (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The written transcript was then edited for grammar and punctuation, and some words and phrases that were perceived to complicate the data analysis procedure were cleaned up. The cleaned up transcript was analysed using thematic analysis. Defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) as a type of qualitative analysis used to analyse classifications and present themes that relate to the data under study, thematic analysis helps to clarify data in great detail and deals with diverse subjects via interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998). Its extra benefits in allowing the researcher to explain interrelated concepts and compare them with the replicated data make it among the preferred qualitative data analytic techniques in the social sciences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are also experiences of using thematic analysis in tourism and hospitality studies (Lee et al., 2016; Chiriko, 2021). Based on recommendations from Braun and Clarke (2006) and Boyatzis (1998), the first coding templates which were developed from tourism seasonality literature were coded using NVivo10 software. The codes which emerged from the data were grouped into themes, considering possible associations among them.

Results and discussion

Regarding interviewee backgrounds, all participants were male and eleven of them (78.5%) were aged between 30 and 45 years. All of them had a college diploma in hotel management training, and twelve interviewees (85.7%) had hotel experience of at least five years. Thirteen of the interviewees had been in the industry for at least five years and the majority of the hotels (64.2%) they managed fell into the medium-level category (i.e. 25–99 rooms).

Seasonality impacts

Interviewees emphasised the loss of hotel revenue as a negative impact of tourism seasonality. As raised by all interview participants, loss of revenue happens in many forms, with a drop in occupancy being the most frequently stated effect. It is evident that when tourist arrival numbers drop in low seasons, the implications for hotel occupancy are immediate as leisure tourists represent the largest share of hotels guests (Capó Parrilla et al., 2007). According to Vrkljan et al. (2019), seasonality hits business performance of hotels hard with a huge decrease in their occupancy. This was clearly explained by Participant 1:

For a few months, we operate at 20% occupancy and even lower. Business goes down severely and the only people entering the most rooms are house attendants who go there for cleaning purposes. On very rare occasions, we sometimes get deserted to the extent that no staying guests pays a visit to our hotel.

Peak and low seasons are often identified by destinations (UNWTO, 2018) and in the case of Aksum, low season comes at the end of February and carries on through to August, after peak months which feature *Enkutatash* (Ethiopian New Year) in September, the *Meskel* celebration (the founding of the True Cross) in September, the Mary of Zion festival in November, and Christmas and Ethiopian Epiphany in January (Chiriko & Addis, 2015; Lonely Planet, 2016; ETO, 2019). Seasonality, however, is not just limited to peak and off seasons, with variations occurring between months, weeks and days (Holloway, 1994). In contrary to this, hotels in Aksum do not experience such variation. Participant 4 described this, saying:

Once the low season sets in, there is not that big a difference between days and weeks, let alone months. Room occupancy may go up for a few days, but that is due to government or business-related guests, not tourists. The variation in room occupancy in low season is more or less consistent, even more consistent than the change we observe in high seasons.

It is evident that tourism seasonality will degrade hotels' revenue base as rooms comprise the biggest share of their income (Hales, 2005). The loss could be manifested in many ways, from covering off-season fixed costs (Soesilo & Mings, 1986) to settling the payroll of full-time staff that were recruited to cater to higher demands in the peak season (Yacoumis, 1980; Cooper et al., 2005; Morse & Smith, 2015; Vrkljan et al., 2019). Hotels in Aksum witnessed these difficulties, as stressed by Participant 2:

Much of our revenue is not from guests that visit us year-long. We have to rely on five to six months of high season revenue to cover the costs for the rest of the year. We lose as much 60% of hotel revenue compared to high season; the room revenue is almost incomparable. Except for business-related guests and Ethiopian diaspora coming in July, the majority of our rooms remain unsold. We find ourselves having to carry on with occasional income from events like catering café and restaurants.

Staff salaries are among the many fixed costs hotels are compelled to cover for almost of half of the year despite a substantial drop in revenue in off seasons (Morse & Smith, 2015), with utilities and miscellaneous costs also falling under this category of overheads. While the problems of employee wages are consistent with what seasonality literature holds, the latter

does not seem to be a major issue for Aksum hotels. Participant 5 described:

Staff salary is our biggest cost in off-season as we don't mainly adopt casual worker strategies for high seasons. We employ a very few casual staff for a limited number of days which involve event crowds. Salary cuts or employee lay-offs are never among our cost-reduction strategies. Other overheads like staff uniform do not represent significant share of our costs as items are purchased on a permanent basis.

Recruitment issues are often discussed in theoretical and empirical seasonality literature as having a detrimental effect on hotel performance (Cooper et al., 2005; Pegg et al., 2012; Morse & Smith, 2015; Vrkljan et al., 2019). These issues mainly pertain to increased staffing costs (Goulding et al., 2004; Pegg et al., 2012) and training of casual staff (Commons & Page, 2001). However, this was not experienced by hotels in Aksum as reflected by Participant 7:

Because the share of casual staff during peak seasons is low, the resulting cost of training is also minimal. We don't hence find ourselves at the losing side in our bargain with potential recruits regarding salary and other benefits. All we do is we decide in advance the optimal level of casual staff we need for a particular season, and go ahead with our operation, subject to budget constraints.

Such a minimal cost of staffing and training could be attributed to the hotel's small size as larger hotels often tend to suffer more, given the huge recruitment overheads they bear, particularly in peak season (Morse & Smith, 2015).

Analysis of the economic cost of tourism seasonality on hotels reveal two major results. First, the impact on occupancy rates and room revenue is detrimental, confirming theoretical and empirical pieces of evidence that portray seasonality as having a direct negative economic impact on hotels. Second, in terms of recruitment and staff-related costs, the cost born by hotels in Aksum is not that serious, owing mainly to their size.

Managing seasonality

Interview participants reported that they put due consideration into tourism seasonality while making their annual and strategic plans. They acknowledged that the issue of seasonality has become an integral part of their hotel operation, underlining that specific details are developed to manage the worst-case scenario possibilities in low seasons. This was acknowledged by Participant 6:

There has not been a single year in which we operated consistently without tourist seasonality. There are several things we take into consideration while developing our yearly and extended strategic plans. On top of the list is of course seasonality. We have to plan how to make the most out of it in high months, while strategising vigilantly to ease economic pressures during low-season periods.

The result is in conformity with findings from Postma and Schmucker (2017) that accommodation providers customarily consider seasonality all too often, a common practice among tourist standard hotels who would have to proactively or reactively address various issues including seasonality (Brymer, 1987).

It was also stressed by the participants that the key tool for the hotels is to make the most of the peak season that is often reinforced by increasing supply during intense touristic months. This involves expanding the capacities of the basic hotel facilities and services on a temporary basis. The major supply expansion tools are illustrated by Participant 8:

As a hotel located in a destination where tourism seasonality persists, we have to make the maximum revenue in peak months, of course without considerably increasing costs on a permanent basis. We hire standard tents for local guests and some of our extra storage rooms are turned into guest rooms. We also hire coaches to cater for the increased shuttle needs of our guests, while our contracts for food and beverage ingredients contain clauses that state extra purchase options.

The findings support the advantage that small hotels have in flexible and cost-effective operations (Vrkljan et al., 2019), although the permanent expansion of facilities may lead to a problem of underutilisation of the facilities in the off-peak periods (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005). This is in line with the practice of offering complementary services or themed offers to expand the operational season (Goulding et al., 2004).

Interviewees also underlined that part of supply expansion comprises product diversification that normally caters to local markets, which are typically active in low touristic periods (Commons & Page, 2001; Alshuqaiqi & Omar, 2019). Such a practice is commonly used in hotels in Aksum as explained by Participant 9:

Provision of on-premises and off-premises catering stands among our primary revenue sources in off-seasons as tourist flow goes down. Setting out for wedding ceremonies, company and government meetings become our priorities as these activities significantly contribute to our survival in low periods as a hotel. We also provide considerable discount for event organisers for them to stage such events as music concerts, theatre and movies in our hotels.

These findings confirm the underlying management strategies in tourism literature that state that alternative income sources like catering and local events are among the primary tools utilised by accommodation providers to compensate in part for loss of revenue during off-season (Goulding et al., 2004; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005; Pegg et al., 2012; Morse & Smith, 2015; Postma & Schmuecker, 2017; Vrkljan et al., 2019).

The practice of price variation across seasons was also raised by interviewees as this addresses both periods in terms of revenue management. Participants acknowledged that room rates and extra recreational package prices are revised upwards in specific weeks of the event seasons, like the Mary of Zion Celebration, and weekends of high periods, while low season sees significant discount for the major hotel facilities and services, as evidenced by Participant 3:

For major events of the high season, almost all of our rooms are booked out well in advance where we offer a discount for block reservations. The remaining rooms, which are not pre-booked, are also sold for the same rates. We also raise the prices of our major recreational services including swimming pools, gyms and playgrounds. We provide considerable discounts in low season on our rooms, sometimes as much as 60%.

The results back pieces of literature in hospitality that present seasonal pricing as a traditional way of dissecting the year into blocks and charging prices accordingly (for high season and low season), and price fencing in which customers who book ahead rather than at the last minute are offered discounts (Brymer, 1987).

Contrary to empirical evidence in the literature that shows a reduction of supply including the complete closure of businesses and restructuring of supply as a commonly utilised cost-reduction mechanism of addressing seasonality during low season (Weaver & Oppermann, 2000; Vrkljan et al., 2019), hotels in Aksum appear not to be practising these, focusing instead on alternative sources of income. This was evident in the study results:

What we supply depends on the needs of our guests who come to us mostly through tour operators based in Addis Ababa [capital of Ethiopia]. Hence, we do not normally intend to reduce or restructure our supplies. Closing the hotel is not a good option either. All we opt for is to manage things in low season in the best possible way so that our performance would not be degraded considerably (Participant 10).

Participants also stated some innovative ways of drawing business in low season, in addition to the marketing efforts discussed above. These include packaging familiarisation tours for operators, sponsoring artists, footballers, athletes and other celebrities for a visit in low season, and a discounted package on special occasions like Valentine's Day, as explained by Participant 11:

We invite local and national celebrities, sponsoring all costs to promote our hotel. On special occasions like Valentine's Day, Fathers' Day, Mothers' Day, we offer discounts, as much as 60% of room rates. You know, a lot of people are interested in days like these. Our local customers in Aksum are well aware of the marketing strategies we adopt to fight seasonality and they present to us requests of special packages for whatever gatherings they conduct

To conclude, the majority of strategies and mechanisms employed by hotels in Aksum to address tourism seasonality conforms to traditional guest attraction and revenue management tools discussed commonly in tourism and hospitality studies. As some cost-reduction mechanisms like complete business closure and supply restructuring in low seasons are perceived unsuitable to hotels in Aksum, they are replaced by innovative product development and marketing practices (Chiriko, 2020) that target special markets and occasions.

Conclusion

The current study showed that tourism seasonality causes a considerable economic effect on hotels located in the study area. It unfolded that substantial drops in room occupancy are experienced by hotels in low season, though variation of room sales within the low season does not happen, in contrast to what is common at many destinations (Holloway, 1994). Consequently, hotels are subject to significant loss of revenue in low periods as they have to cover off season fixed costs and payroll of full-time staff that were recruited to cater to higher demands in peak season. However, in terms of recruitment and staff-related costs, hotels in Aksum do not find this to be a major issue and this is

mainly attributed to their size. Study findings also reveal that increasing supplies in peak season and diversifying products that cater to local markets are among the major strategies for addressing tourism seasonality. It was also found that these efforts are supplemented with seasonal price variation, price fencing and other innovative practices.

The study offers an important theoretical contribution as it presents the economic cost of tourism seasonality on small hotels and the major ways of dealing with it in a developing destination setting. It also presents detailed perspectives of hoteliers by analysing the economic consequences and response strategies of dealing with tourism seasonality using a qualitative study methodology. The study recommends that hotels in the study area put in place innovative ways of addressing tourism seasonality by thoroughly examining the phenomenon based on time series data on guest arrivals. However, it is not without limitations. First, the methodological rigour is restricted to qualitative tools to include the viewpoints of hotel managers. Second, the perspectives of only hoteliers have been included in the study. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct enquiries into tourism seasonality by exploring its impacts on other tourism and hospitality service outlets including restaurants, pensions and other accommodation providers.

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Moving to design-based education in hotel management school: proof of success and beyond — a research journey

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ABSTRACT: NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences adopted the innovative educational concept design-based education (DBE) in 2018. The Hotel Management School is one of the programmes that introduced a DBE curriculum. It is important to explore to what extent DBE is successfully implemented and to monitor the long-term impact of DBE on students, lecturers and the industry. The purpose of the current article is to position a longitudinal research journey in which stakeholders' personal and social experiences and perceptions are the starting point for the research focus. Using educational design research, the current research aims to contribute to the four intended impact areas: knowledge, personal development, system development and product development.

KEYWORDS: accompanying research, design thinking, educational design research, game changers, hospitality management education, innovative education

Introduction

NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences is an international multi-campus university with over 24 000 students, offering associate, bachelors and master's degree programmes across 14 academies. The university's ambition is to help students become inquiry capable, critical, innovative, reflective and 'worldly-wise' professionals who work collaboratively across the boundaries of their own disciplines. In order to achieve this ambition, the university adopted a new educational concept, design-based education (DBE). Each programme is required to develop a DBE curriculum.

DBE is an innovative learner-oriented approach to teaching and learning that supports students as they learn to cope with the real, complex and rapidly changing world. DBE is based on self-directed, contextual, constructive and collaborative learning principles (Assen, 2018; Geitz & Sinia, 2017). It empowers the methodology of the triological learning process between education, research and industry. DBE enables students to align their learning processes with complex real-life issues offered by and derived from the international professional hospitality industry (Geitz & Sinia, 2017) and to direct their own learning processes. These real-life issues are the starting point for learning. Students learn collaboratively in so-called "ateliers" (open physical and virtual learning spaces), via iterative design thinking processes, to construct meaningful and innovative solutions for the issues. The university identified multi-disciplinary collaboration, the international and intercultural context, design thinking, personal leadership and a sustainable education as key aspects of DBE (Bakker & Sinia, 2019).

Hotel Management School

The Hotel Management School (HMS) is one of the university programmes that started with the development and implementation of DBE. After more than 30 years of experience with problem-based learning (PBL), Stenden HMS adopted the new DBE educational concept. Although PBL and DBE share the same fundamental learning principles of being self-directed, contextual, constructive and collaborative learning (Assen, 2018), the transition to DBE asks for stakeholders to change to another "mode of thinking" (Postareff et al., 2007).

The mission of HMS is to assist students to become future proof game changers in the global hospitality industry and beyond. Game changers strategically anticipate change and have a positive impact on tomorrow's world (HMS, 2020). The HMS premises include atelier spaces sponsored by industry partners to visualise our rootedness in the real world. Ateliers are learning and working spaces where students, lecturers and industry professionals come together on a regular basis. Students work on interdisciplinary complex real-life hospitality industry issues, the so-called "design challenges". In the first year, the commercial on-campus training hotel Notiz Hotel and restaurant Wannee offer these challenges. In the second and third year, the challenges are also offered by external industry partners and, in year four, students work on managerial challenges during their internships to prove their professional competences.

Students, lecturers and industry professionals have various roles in DBE. The role of students in DBE is to construct knowledge with others. In DBE, students are expected to become active learners who construct knowledge collaboratively with other students, educators and industry professionals in ateliers

(Assen, 2018). Lecturers take the role of *facilitator* and *activator* of students' individual and collaborative learning processes. In an atelier, the facilitator engages, encourages, motivates and challenges students to apply various learning strategies to solve the design challenges. In a homegroup, the activator creates a safe learning environment where students feel comfortable to voice their views and concerns. Activators support students to evaluate and reflect on learning processes either individually or collaboratively. In addition, the activator and facilitator provide students with timely formative feedback on their personal and professional development. As experts, lecturers provide knowledge and skills which are supportive to create appropriate solutions for design challenges. These so called "expert sessions" are provided just in time and on demand. Industry professionals present real-life design challenges, provide feedback and are partners in the learning process. Students engage with industry partners to further explore the practical elements of the design challenge and seek inputs towards sustained solutions.

DBE would be mainly offered on campus, at the faculty – if it were not for COVID-19. In February 2020, around 100 first-year students started with DBE, followed by a cohort of around 600 students in September 2020. Unfortunately, five weeks after the start of the programme in March 2020, all educational activities turned into online education due to COVID-19. In September 2020, a larger group of new students encountered a blended programme. Ateliers were partly offered on campus and online, with all other educational activities online.

Research journey

To achieve high-quality education, each university programme is required to demonstrate successful implementation of DBE (Bakker & Sinia, 2019). Therefore, it is pivotal to explore and understand what HMS intends to attain with DBE (intended curriculum) and what they deliver and realise with DBE (implemented curriculum). In other words, does the HMS "do what it should do?". Hence, it is worthwhile to monitor the long-term effects and implications of DBE on students, lecturers and industry professionals.

The purpose of this article is to present our longitudinal accompanying research (AR) project at the HMS which started in September 2020. According to the principle of dialogical learning, we follow the DBE development and implementation process in close contact with all stakeholders. We follow the transfer of the new educational concept and policy into practice, its outcome as well as drivers and constraints for success – to further curriculum innovation and to inform policy decisions on educational quality assurance.

The article is divided into three sections. In the first section, we open a window (Gottlieb, 1981) onto multiple stakeholders' perceptions and expressions involved in the DBE curriculum in February and September 2020. The presented narratives attempt to uncover their personal and social experiences and impressions of the DBE curriculum. The narratives describe the current situation and inform our research focus. The second section elaborates on our vision of how research can contribute to successful implementation of DBE. Finally, the third section explains the rationale, design and goals of this research.

Narratives experiences of DBE at the HMS

What follows are narratives of DBE experiences from students', lecturers' and industry professionals' perspectives. Interviews with stakeholders and evaluation reports are used to develop the narratives. We invite the reader to look through the window that sheds light on different realities. The window opens a new context, to the new ateliers, and through the windows we shed light on the first steps into DBE. It provides reflective moments for learning.

Students' narratives

Studying in a DBE learning environment is a joyful though shadowed experience. Students feel excitement and uncertainty as two sides of the same coin: interesting learning opportunities, on the one hand, and tension about proper performance in an educational experience that is totally new to them, on the other. They appreciate the connection of learning with real-world operational and managerial hospitality issues – no longer is learning separated from what their hearts beat for, from their passion: the hospitality practice. *Learning is no longer just from a book, and that is what I like*, says Bella. And Nika experienced *that we learn without noticing it*. They are enthusiastic about creating ideas and feel valued as innovators, though in this regard, Vincent raises an interesting thought that goes along with his positive evaluations: *It is great to work on a problem within the school, but sometimes I have the feeling that they make use of us to optimise the school or procedures within the school and that doesn't feel always right*.

Students see opportunities to develop competences needed in their future professions in hospitality: responsibility, flexibility, perseverance, delegating, teamwork, communication with the client and team members, finding own ways to become knowledgeable, the importance of doing research before acting, and starting to think for oneself and learn that one's own ideas can be challenged and replaced by better ideas. It is combined with struggle: it is not easy at all to *take the driver's seat position* (Remco), to become self-directed. Struggling with peers with different motivation levels, engagement and maturity, and struggling with feedback given by lecturers and industry professionals were some of the struggles encountered. Tom, for instance, felt uncomfortable about the *sort of cryptic answer* he received from a facilitator to *decipher* [an answer] *for yourself*, about experts answering emails too late or giving contradictory feedback. Tiemen thinks that *teachers do not always understand what you are asking and even though you think it is a pretty easy question*. Moreover, Vincent felt confused that the client started to ask about the possible profit coming from the idea while *we were talking about efficiency in the housekeeping department*.

Isis respectfully comments on the position of lecturers and industry professionals when she states that *I heard that the experts had the same questions as we are now coping with*. But, at the end, what counts is that we *pass*, and it is the lecturers that decide scores on professional products, defending of assignments and accountability reports. Despite partnership in real-world learning, much appreciated staff support and own responsibility for learning, a *power relation*, as Tim says, cannot be disregarded.

Atelier facilitators' narratives

Atelier facilitators experience the interaction in the atelier sessions as positive. The energy level and commitment of students while working on a real-life issue is clear for all to see. Initial apprehensions are overcome as the facilitators get oriented on the job to the practical work in the ateliers. Facilitators witness the DBE educational approach in real life and feel more confident after the first period. The atelier sessions are viewed as flexible and student owned, making them more suitable for the varied set of student interests and goals. The sessions allow for students to work collaboratively and learn in a socially rich set-up. This allows for ideas to be built and the transfer of knowledge. As shared by one of the facilitators, *students' own input and creativity are increased*. The support and collaboration from atelier coordinators are highlighted as key contribution factors to managing work outcomes.

Facilitators remark on improvement points for themselves in the new roles and share an uneasiness in regard to managing student expectations as they move through the ateliers. Facilitators experience that students' focus on researching the problems is limited, and this becomes a drawback in their work together. Several design challenges were not seen as supporting students' learning and others were viewed as lacking definition and scope. Having very few physical atelier sessions, the facilitators suggest considering the impact of the online environment and administrative tasks on their preparation time and workload for atelier sessions. Several facilitators, managing up to three atelier groups, find their connection and rapport with students being restricted, as illustrated in the following comments: *It was not just about understanding and getting in charge of the DBE process and each week's content for my first time, or the new time-consuming online environment that we have to cope with, but it was about the workload itself as well.*

Activators' narratives

I enjoyed the flexibility that it [the activator role] has offered the students as well as the ownership of their learning destiny. As most activators find their way around the new curriculum along with the students, the practical need of the diverse student groups for an activator seems to come up. Different tracks have different needs and expectations from the regular trajectory students. As activators are also scheduled to join atelier sessions, it is viewed as helpful to observe the students working and to plan suitable conversations as an activator. Activators and students initially struggle to build an understanding of the value of the role of the activator. However, after the initial rapport and trust building, the activator role is viewed as highly supportive in the students' learning journey. The flexibility and openness in the content and coverage of the activator session is much appreciated; however, it would be helpful to identify and define core content. This would ensure even coverage of development activities across the multiple student groups.

Experts' narratives

Experts express much satisfaction and higher engagement from students when their subject expertise helps the students connect practical and theoretical knowledge to their solutions on the design challenge. This is illustrated by the comment: *I enjoyed our sessions and many students gave me a quite positive feedback about them. I tried to apply theory into practice as much as I could per group, and I am happy that*

the students appreciated it. Compared to the old curriculum, experts find themselves reaching out to fellow colleagues for their expertise to ask for support and suggestions. This is supportive and helps align the work of several colleagues on the same subject expertise.

As shared by an expert, *the starting point about the role of the expert was not clear for both the expert and the students.* Experts experience inconsistent and sometime contradictory descriptions of their role in the new curriculum. They perceive a decline in the value of their subject expertise. The reduction in interactive moments with the students in the new curriculum compared to the old curriculum is shared as a reason for concern. Specifically, experts find it difficult to engage students during the online sessions. Sessions are sometimes experienced as non-productive due to large groups of students and a limited time for interaction. Experts find that the "lecture format for all" is not in line with just-in-time and demand-driven sessions. As shared by a participant, *there is lack of interaction from the students and few questions from their end. I am still struggling with how to work on implementing DBE and not teaching, while students do not know what to ask for.* Additionally, experts find that only a handful of students are highly active through the whole session online and several just leave the class as they feel the topic is not interesting for them or it has no test/assessment attached.

Industry professionals' narratives

DBE also requires a different approach from on-campus industry professionals. The changing role of those staff is reflected in the change of their job titles from practical instructors to practical facilitators. They are expected to provide students with real-life design challenges. Instead of instructing students, the focus is now on facilitating students' learning processes and supporting students to develop professional products related to their design challenges. The practical facilitators are aware that they are a critical factor in the success of the DBE concept. In addition, facilitators are expected to promote the link between education and practice. They are expected to connect with atelier facilitators. Practical facilitators experience the change in their role as both a motivating and a challenging task. They perceive DBE as a radical implementation. Although facilitators perceive that students have a lack of understanding of DBE aims and purpose, they experience that students are much more motivated and curious than students in the old PBL curriculum. In DBE, students are more enabled to integrate theory and practice. Facilitators receive many more in-depth questions about the design challenges and therefore they are involved in the development of solutions for these challenges. For instance, facilitators participate as assessors when students present their prototypes. In other words, facilitators feel more connection between theory and practice.

Most practice facilitators experience the connection between theory and practice as very positive; however, this connection also causes an increased work pressure. The work pressure is for three reasons. Firstly, the way the scheduling and organisation around the deployment of students has changed. Students no longer spend two weeks in a row in a practice department of the on-campus training hotel. Instead, they are only in the department for one or two days in a row. This makes it more difficult to build up a bond and gain insight into the student's development. Consequently, industry professionals perceive

that students feel less connection with the department. Therefore, the distance between practice facilitator and student seems greater than before. Secondly, helping students to solve design challenges from practice requires other skills than instructing students in practice. Facilitators find it difficult to motivate students to construct knowledge without the facilitators' instruction. The following statement of a facilitator indicates the "struggle" of facilitators: *When students ask a question, they expect an answer and not a (counter)-question. I see that students then become restless.* In addition, as one of the facilitators mentioned: *I have no time to answer all the questions of students.* As a response, the learning and development department of the hotel organised expert sessions in which information and instructions are provided. Thirdly, the lack of calibration between atelier facilitators and practical facilitators is perceived as a concern, specifically, the communication between atelier and practical facilitators along with the assessment method. In addition, the assessment role is a source of increased work pressure for the practice facilitators.

The above stakeholders' narratives enable appreciation and awareness of the challenges and successes that accompany the implementing of DBE. The narratives show that change is like a bumpy road paved with pleasure and inspiration accompanied with abundant questions and encounters with one's professional shyness to act (*handelsverlegenheid* in Dutch). Although DBE and PBL are both based on the same learning principles (self-directed, contextual, constructive and collaborative learning), it seems that DBE requires adjustment in actions from students, lecturers and involved industry professionals. The narratives demonstrate that, although stakeholders appreciate DBE, they struggle with their role. It seems they feel a discrepancy between the desired outcomes and the realised outcomes of the implemented DBE curriculum.

Implementation of DBE: Proof of success and beyond

Proof of success is essential to further innovation, to monitor the quality of implementation, and to contribute to informed quality control, accreditation and public funding of educational programmes. The decision on how NHL Stenden programmes produce evidence is left to the different programmes. This gives us as researchers and lecturers the opportunity to design a practice-based research project supportive of the envisioned Stenden HMS learning and working environment and culture. We follow a plea for "slow research" by former NHL Stenden Professor of Sustainable Educational Concepts, Gerry Geitz (2020). She emphasised holistic and dialogical investigations of curriculum design and practice within the context of explicated intended outcomes. This would avoid quick interventions as it aims at non-judgemental sensemaking insights in the practice and impact of the design as well as constant monitoring of educational quality. We believe that slow research moves beyond a managerialism-based "what works" research focus (Biesta, 2010a; 2010b; 2019) – rather common and expected by third parties.

In a large historical review study on implementation research into education innovation, Century and Cassata (2016) identify five clustered reasons for researching innovation:

- (1) "inform innovation design and development";
- (2) "understand whether (and to what extent) the innovation achieves desired outcomes for the target population";

- (3) "understand relationships between influential factors, innovation enactment and outcomes";
- (4) "improve innovation design, use and support in practice settings"; and
- (5) "develop theory" (p. 174).

They notice that "fidelity of implementation" while looking into successful implementation of intentions, and research "describing implementation as conducted" (p. 190, emphasis in original) investigated with quantitative measures and analysis methods which prevail in implementation research. These quantifying approaches, justified with the assumption to produce objective scientific evidence needed for governmental and institutional policy making and school improvement, however, is not without bias (Gopalan et al., 2020). Century and Cassata (2016) problematise these quantifying approaches because they seem to ignore complexity and "wickedness" (as in "wicked problems") that define innovation in education. Therefore, they propose new ways to investigate the implementation of education innovation stating that "[n]ew innovation designs and associated analytic approaches that accounts for this complexity may provide much-needed insight into what it truly takes to realize lasting educational change" (Century & Cassata, 2016, p. 203).

Considering the above, we decided that our research project must contribute to both policy and practice from a constructive dialogical and sometimes dialectic perspective to further our curriculum innovation. The research should have a well-balanced design with well-chosen (quantitative and qualitative) methods to create added value, acknowledging the needs of stakeholders and their participation, the complexity of the innovation, and the specific features of the new educational concept. Therefore, the project must strengthen the conceptualisation of the learning principles underpinning the DBE educational vision and deliver practice-based theoretical support for sustainable DBE implementation. In addition, the project should deliver managerial information on organisational performance regarding successful implementation. To prove successful implementation, observable and measurable indicators are needed to identify to what extent students (stakeholders) develop themselves as inquiry capable, critical, innovative reflective and worldly-wise learners/professionals. In addition, the project should give space to students, lecturers and industry partners to cooperate as communities of learners. Within the communities, the learners collect shared narratives and engage in critical reflective dialogue to enable professional development.

Rationale, goals and design of accompanying research (AR)

We decided to combine the principles of accompanying research (AR) (Kämäräinen et al., 2014; Christensen et al., 2016) with educational design research (EDR) (Plomp & Nieveen, 2013) for our project design. AR and EDR give us the possibility to conduct slow and participative research with stakeholders to meet the intended research output and contributions. On the one hand, AR is attached to "policy context" with "pilot projects or innovative initiatives" integrating "functions like process consultancy, implementation research and evaluation research" (Kämäräinen et al., 2014, p. 5). On the other hand, AR creates "participative design process[es]" (Kämäräinen et al., 2014, p. 7) in which researchers and a variety of participants can collaborate in designing, developing, implementing, and

researching an innovation process or product, each of them with different but supplemental perspectives. While researching and working together, collective professional learning can take place. In her research on collective learning of teams in educational innovation, Lodders (2013) concludes that individual and organisational performance and adaptability in innovation processes benefit from weaving it with social learning, with a practice in which the individual learns within the social setting of the innovating team. We expect that via AR, roles will get blurred: practitioners become researchers supported by researching practitioners moving beyond a merely reflective practitioner position. Consequently, they are entering a position of lecturers as researchers and, if possible, "transformative intellectuals" (Giroux, 1988), who are important key actors for sustainable educational innovation (De Boer, 2015). Therefore, it is important to realise that research is not just a parallel process but integrated in and decisive for the implementation process. Christensen et al. (2016, p. 130) emphasise the importance of the special AR research-practice relationship for practice improvement, arguing that the researcher

is involved as a significant and intentional stimulator of the development of practice. Affecting the research context is approached not as a methodological problem, but rather as the whole idea behind doing the research.

Connecting accompanying research with educational design research

We think that a connection of AR with educational design research (EDR) (Plomp & Nieveen, 2013) is logical and beneficial. AR and EDR share rootedness in participatory research methodologies and EDR is aligned with the DBE approach to the curriculum. Plomp and Nieveen (2013, p. 16) define EDR in the context of development studies as

the systematic analysis, design and evaluation of educational interventions with the dual aim of generating research-based solutions for complex problems in educational practice, and advancing knowledge about the characteristics of these interventions and processes of designing and developing them.

In case of validation studies, they define it as "the study of educational interventions with the purpose to develop or validate theories about such processes and how these can be designed" (p. 16). EDR aims at designing interventions

in educational settings through iterative processes while proceeding through four consecutive phases (Plomp & Nieveen, 2013). It is process-oriented (with a focus on understanding and improving), utility-oriented (practice-driven) and theory-oriented (based on a conceptual framework) (Van den Akker et al., 2006). Furthermore, EDR has a clear user and practitioner orientation as various users and practitioners in educational settings (lecturers, students, industry professionals, management) are actively and collectively involved in the research process. Consequently, designed or developed interventions are relevant and practical in their educational context and based on a shared vision (Plomp & Nieveen, 2013).

We adopt the EDR phase-based planning to achieve results in four intended impact areas: knowledge development; system development; personal development; and product development (Grevén & Andriessen, 2019). We expect that these four development areas will foster a constructive, flexible and inclusive research journey inseparable from Stenden HMS striving to implement and sustain a high-quality design-based education programme. Table 1 provides an overview of the four impact areas.

Final thoughts

In this article, we presented our longitudinal accompanying research combined with education design research and argued that research must be integrated in DBE development and implementation. The project will enable the creation of an HMS community of practice full of collective learning in which researching practitioners will improve their educational practice and professionalism while providing necessary evidence of success for policy makers.

Complexity and dynamics characterise the start of curriculum and research implementation. Despite our long-standing tradition in the social constructivist problem-based learning approach to the curriculum, the turn to DBE comes with challenges. We opened a few windows to the initial experiences of stakeholders in their new roles. We are hopeful that our research unfolds multifaceted narratives about DBE development and implementation and the learning of its stakeholders. The intended curriculum as presented in policy documents and the implemented curriculum in practice will give much food for thought and inspiration.

TABLE 1: Intended impact areas

Knowledge development	System development	Personal development	Product development
Researching	Changing	Learning	Designing
The impact of theoretical support for sustainable DBE. It includes critical exploring and strengthening of the learning principles underpinning the educational vision for DBE; exploring students' learning and well-being; exploring lecturers' and industry partners' experiences and perceptions. As a result, effective, observable and measurable indicators could be identified.	The impact on the way system development could be structured and on rules, regulations, policies and ways of working. The information regarding organisational performance might lead to changes in the systems (curriculum design, facilitation strategies, learning outcomes etc.).	Through an inquisitive dialogue, stakeholders' social learning takes place. Practitioners develop a shared vision of DBE and based on this vision design appropriate interventions for an optimal learning environment, learner experience and well-being.	The impact on product development refers to concrete output of this research (guides, tools for students, educators and industry professionals) that support creating an optimal DBE learning environment.

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How do employees really feel about team building? An exploratory netnographic investigation

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ABSTRACT: This study explored employees' attitudes towards team-building events. Anonymous qualitative data were obtained using netnography and analysed through an interpretive content analysis approach. The data analysis yielded sixteen codes and five main themes, on the basis of which employees' attitudes were modelled into eight categories, represented on a two-dimensional coordinate system along two axes (attitudinal and behavioural): true believers, go with the flow, rational thinkers, pragmatists, saboteurs, political dropouts, honest opt-outs, and absentees with genuine reasons. Theoretical and practical implications of the findings are discussed both in general terms and for hospitality enterprises.

KEYWORDS: behavioural tendency, employee attitude, management, netnography, team-building activities

Introduction

The hospitality industry is labour intensive (Gröschl & Barrows, 2003; Zhang, 2020) and employees play a key role in determining the success of hospitality enterprises (Cheng, 2011). As such, hospitality managers seek to ensure that staff can function in effective and cohesive teams at work. Team-building exercises and interventions are often used by hotels to help achieve better teamwork (Tews et al., 2013; Han et al., 2016). Team-building interventions are high-interaction activities designed to help work teams improve performance, better meet team goals and accomplish work tasks (Klein et al., 2009). Key components of team building include goal setting, role-clarification, problem-solving, and building trust and cohesion among team members (Salas et al., 2008). For the hospitality industry as well as other labour-intensive sectors, the importance of team effectiveness and team building can hardly be exaggerated. Using qualitative (Rushmer, 1997), quantitative (Mazany et al., 1995; Gibson, 2001), and meta-analytical methods (Klein et al., 2009), researchers have shown that proper team-building interventions could result in potential improvements for employees and teams on cognitive, affective, and process outcomes.

When properly designed and implemented, team building can greatly help organisations. However, in practice, not all team-building interventions are methodically designed and properly implemented. Companies conduct a wide array of activities in the name of team building. From simple socialising with drinks in a bar to extreme sports like go-karting in the mud, team building could take on almost any form. As long as something is a team-based activity and somehow the manager believes in or approves of it, it could be performed in the name

of a team-building intervention. There have been multiple incidents documented where misguided team-building attempts resulted in non-productive or even counterproductive outcomes (Alberty, 2008; Lopez, 2010).

So, how do employees really feel about team building? Not what they tell their manager during or right after the team-building event; not what they say in the anonymous but mandatory evaluation survey which does not ask the name of the employee but does ask age, gender, department, nationality, and a whole lot of other identifying information. What do employees genuinely think and feel about team-building events in which they participated?

On the one hand, there are beautiful testimonials given by team-building clients to team-building facilitators which says employees love team building; there are published papers and articles which claim that employees overwhelmingly and resoundingly want team building (Symanowitz, 2013). On the other hand, a quick Google search would reveal that on internet forums and discussion boards employees complain about the team-building events that they are subjected to, calling such events ghastly, useless, and ridiculous (Hotson, 2016; Green, 2018). There is clearly a gap, or at least, a potential gap between what some managers and some team-building facilitators claim about team building on the one hand and how some employees really feel about team building on the other. The objective of this study is to address this question and thereby fill a gap in the understanding of academics and managers.

This question will be addressed using an exploratory netnographic approach. Netnography, a variant form of ethnography, also sometimes referred to as web-scraping, is a data collection process in which researchers collect user-posted

or user-generated content on the internet relating to a specific topic (Kozinets, 2002; Amatulli et al., 2019). A key strength of this method is that, compared to more traditional data collection methods, it diminishes the potential of social desirability bias (Amatulli et al., 2019), which is of key importance considering that the objective of this study is to explore people's genuine feelings and opinions regarding a topic that is potentially sociopolitically sensitive. In this article, relevant literature and previous research findings on team-building interventions are outlined. We then describe in greater detail the usage of netnography as the chosen research method and how it was used in this study, and finally, key findings and their implications are presented.

Literature review

Team building defined

Organisations conduct a variety of activities for the sake of and in the name of team building (Miller, 2007; Klein et al., 2009). Such activities range from simple team-based games played by employees (obstacle courses, orienteering, tower building, puzzles, etc.) to systematic, long-term interventions and processes aimed at improving team effectiveness (Salas et al., 1999). Consequently, the term "team building" has been used to refer to a myriad of activities, games, interventions, and processes. Team building, as defined in the human resource management and organisational behaviour literature, refers to high-interaction activities designed to enable work teams to better achieve results, meet team goals, and accomplish work tasks (Klein et al., 2009; Robbins & Judge, 2017). Key components of team-building interventions are role clarification (i.e. employees analyse their own roles and the roles of other employees in the team in order for discrepancies, ambiguities, and disagreements in perceptions to be identified and solved), goal-setting (i.e. team members identify, clarify, and set goals towards which they direct their effort at work), problem-solving (i.e. employees systematically identify and discuss solutions to task-related or process-related work issues), and interpersonal relations (i.e. interactive, group-based activities aimed at building trust and increasing team cohesion). In terms of time duration, a team-building intervention could be a single, stand-alone session of an hour or so (Miller, 2007) or a process which takes weeks or months (Buller & Bell, 1986).

Types of team-building activities and interventions

There are different typologies when it comes to team-building activities and interventions. The traditional, more academic typology involves four main focuses of team building: role clarification, goal setting, problem-solving, and interpersonal relations (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Research shows that most team-building events typically focus on one or two of these aforementioned components, instead of incorporating all four in the same team-building event or intervention (Klein et al., 2009). In addition to the traditional four, empirical research shows that in practice team building tends to involve indoor fun activities, outdoor fun activities, socialisation, assessments, and work issues (Kriek, 2007; Zhang, 2017). Finally, commercially published how-to books add to this list with another typology: creativity and problem-solving activities, trust cohesiveness and teamwork activities, motivation games, and communication exercises (Mackin, 2007; Miller, 2007).

Team building in hospitality

Research has shown that team-building activities are implemented by hospitality enterprises. Tews et al.'s (2013) study demonstrated that incorporating some team-building activities at work had a favourable impact on hospitality employees' work performance. However, their study also showed that manager support for workplace fun had a negative impact on performance. Han et al.'s (2016) research showed that implementing workplace fun, an element or a type of team building, enhanced trust, group cohesion, interpersonal citizenship behaviour, and team performance among hotel employees. Zhang's (2017) investigation examined what hotel employees desired as team-building activities and found that socialising was the most preferred, whereas outdoor fun was the least preferred type of team-building activity. Hospitality researchers have shown through their studies that team building is very relevant for hotel staff and it will continue to be as hotels and hospitality enterprises seek to facilitate and build effective teams and teamwork. Moreover, research has indicated that employees do have their own preferences and opinions about team building.

Effectiveness of team building

Much research effort has been directed at measuring the effectiveness of team-building interventions. A large number of descriptive, correlational, causal, and meta-analytical studies have been published on this subject (Salas et al., 1999; Klein et al., 2009; Martin et al., 2009). Research took into account the four main types of team building (role clarification, goal setting, problem-solving, and interpersonal relations), four main types of outcomes (cognitive, affective, process, and performance), as well as potential moderating variables (e.g., employee demographics, team size, duration of team-building intervention). Despite all this work, research has not been able to be conclusive regarding team building's effect on objectively measured performance outcomes. However, research does point to the positive effects of team building on affective improvement (i.e. attitudinal and perceptual improvements such as increased satisfaction, commitment, or engagement).

Employee attitudes towards team building

Research effort in measuring employees' attitudes towards team building, compared to that aiming at measuring team building's effectiveness, is relatively limited, which is not necessarily surprising for two main reasons. First, as it is usually an organisation's management that organises team-building events and interventions (either directly or through outsourced team-building facilitators), employees may simply be required to attend. Their attitudes towards team building (i.e. whether they want to participate or not and whether they are enthusiastic about it or not) may not be viewed by the management as their most significant consideration. Second, as team-building events do involve costs, it is of more apparent importance for management and researchers to examine the effectiveness of team building in order to gauge the return on investment. Employees' attitudes towards team building, even when measured, are usually measured after the team-building event as part of the general effort in measuring team building's effects or effectiveness overall (Bragg & Andrews, 1973; Mitchell, 1986; Bushe & Coetzer, 1995; Gibson, 2001; Huang et al., 2002). Research focusing on accurately measuring employees' global

attitudes towards team-building interventions is still lacking and it is this gap that the present research seeks to address.

This is due to several important reasons. Firstly, employees' attitudes towards team-building interventions matter. Not only can such attitudes explain and partially predict employees' behavioural tendencies (Harrison et al., 2006; Robbins & Judge, 2017) in participating in and making contributions to team-building events, they can also provide useful directions for the management to better design the organisation's future team outings and team-building interventions. As such, forming an understanding of how employees view team-building activities would be both theoretically interesting and practically beneficial.

Secondly, research has demonstrated that there tend to be significant gaps in terms of perceptions, attitudes, and desired behaviours between employees and management (Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Su, 2010). Gaps exist between what employees perceive to be effective influence behaviours and what managers view as effective influence behaviours that employees can use (Falbe & Yukl, 1992). Research has also shown that while employees may view friendliness as a form of behaviour which is pleasant towards the manager, managers might in fact view such efforts negatively as ingratulatory flattery (Su, 2010). In brief, in the employee-manager relationship, numerous gaps may exist which may cause miscommunication, misunderstanding, and even conflicts. Consequently, the potential gap between employee and management attitudes towards team building is particularly worthy of exploration. Therefore, the objective of this study is to explore, through a qualitative research approach, employees' general attitudes towards their companies' team-building interventions.

Method

Data collection and sampling

This study used netnography with a purposive sample in order to obtain the necessary qualitative data to address the research question. For the purpose of this study, netnography, or a variant form of ethnographic research approach applied in cyberspace (Kozinets, 2002; Amatulli et al., 2019), was appropriate as we were particularly interested in anonymous and/or pseudonymous postings on the internet which arguably more honestly reflected people's experiences, overall attitudes, and future behavioural tendencies regarding corporate team-building activities. The use of anonymous and/or pseudonymous internet user-generated content enabled the researchers to avoid social desirability bias, which tends to occur in self-reported data, especially on sensitive topics or topics that involve sociopolitical risks.

Different combinations of search keywords were used including "team building", "team outing", "company team-building activities", "corporate team-building events", "discussion forums", and the auto-generated variants of these keywords by Google to identify internet postings which would fulfil the search criteria. The thousands of postings found were further filtered to fulfil the inclusion criteria – posts must be open to public view without the need for registration or logging in and posts were made anonymously and/or pseudonymously so that posters' identities were not publicly known. Ultimately, a total of 104 postings were included in the data analysis, with short postings including just one or two sentences and long ones containing several paragraphs of text. Only posts in English were considered for inclusion.

Analytical approach

The qualitative textual data was analysed by performing content analysis. Specifically, the general process of reading, interpreting, coding, grouping, structuring, and modelling was applied (Verhoeven, 2008; Brotherton, 2015;). As the main focus was to let employees' attitudes regarding team building surface from the raw data, this interpretive approach was used instead of a more quantitative approach to qualitative analysis (e.g. analysing frequencies and creating word clouds). We performed the analysis independently first in order to fully explore the data without each other's perspectives and findings so as to not interfere in each other's analysis and exploration. This went as far as the structuring step. The modelling step was jointly performed after we had had the opportunity to review and fully discuss each other's analysis. As such, the final model reflected the analysis, consensus and opinions of both of us.

Results

Upon repeated reading of the collected posts, 16 initial codes were created in the process of interpreting the data (Table 1 for the codes and a paraphrased version of the original text on which each code was based).

The 16 codes were further linked to create five main themes:¹

- (1) Employee attitude (codes 3, 10, 13);
- (2) Employee behaviour (codes 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 14, 16);
- (3) Sociopolitical concerns (codes 1, 12);
- (4) Perceived misconceptions by management (codes 2, 7, 15); and
- (5) Effectiveness (codes 8, 9, 10).

These five themes fully encompass the 16 codes, and they function as the basis for creating a model which illustrates employees' overall attitudes towards team-building events in this study.

We elected to use a two-dimensional coordinate system to model the key findings. The horizontal axis represents employees' attitudinal dimension, while the vertical axis is behavioural, representing employees' participation tendencies. As such, employees with different attitudes and behavioural tendencies regarding team-building activities and events can be positioned into the four quadrants in this two-dimensional coordinate system (Figure 1).

Employees were placed in eight main categories on the basis of their overall attitude towards team building and their behavioural intentions in terms of participation. The figure is visually self-explanatory – that is, there are employees who like team-building events (positive attitude) and those who dislike them (negative attitude); there are employees who choose to participate in team-building events (participate) and those who choose to stay away (avoid). Employees in three of the four quadrants can be further sub-categorised on the basis of their beliefs or perceptions regarding team-building effectiveness. Below, each of the eight categories is linked with the codes and the themes.

Category 1: True believers

Employees in this category have highly positive attitudes about team-building events and they always participate in such events. They also believe that all employees should join such events. They view team building as something effective and useful (codes 7 and 13; themes 1 and 4). They state that employees

TABLE 1: Codes and paraphrased sample texts

Codes	Paraphrased meaning units
(1) Sociopolitical concerns	If I were to not attend, I might as well put "trouble-maker" on my forehead for all to see.
(2) Misconceptions by management (regarding team building)	My manager does not get team building. They force us to play games for one afternoon to compensate for poor management throughout the whole year.
(3) Team-building games versus team-building process	To really promote team effectiveness, the management needs to come up with a process, instead of making us play outdoor games once per year.
(4) Depends on manager	If you really don't like it, talk to your manager, share your concerns. But whether or not you should do so depends on your manager.
(5) Depends on type of work	I sit in the office 40 hours per week. Any opportunity for me to get out of the office is a good day. I don't care what we do. I just want to get out of my office.
(6) Depends on stage of career development	I was so happy to get my first job that I did not mind going on team-building days, as long as I get my pay at the end of month to pay my bills.
(7) Effectiveness of team building	I did enjoy this team-building event we had last year, it was a good laugh, although I don't think it changed anything for anyone at work.
(8) Unproductive	Useless, just useless.
(9) Counter-productive	I can honestly say that the team-building events I had to join were a significant contributing factor for me to quit one of my previous jobs.
(10) Boredom versus anger	It is not the boredom that I worry about. It is that I get angry at the stupidity and meaningless of the situation.
(11) Coping strategies	Since I cannot get out of going, I just show up and use it as a networking opportunity.
(12) Compulsory versus volunteer participation	My manager tells me – yes, it is compulsory. It is under "any other duties as assigned".
(13) Positive attitude	I like team building; I believe it is very beneficial to the team; which is why all successful companies do it.
(14) Rational decision-making	I find team-building days irrelevant. But I will go as long as it does have something to do with my work and as long as it takes place during working hours.
(15) Questionable and misguided team-building content	They took away our phones and then made us reveal very private information so that we were vulnerable in front of each other in order for us to build team cohesiveness.
(16) Manipulation and sabotage	When I attend a team-building event, my only goal is to create cock-ups in order to sabotage it.

who do not join team-building events are wrong and are troublemakers. Overall, these employees are extremely positive about team-building events. They are the true believers.

Category 2: Go with the flow

Employees in this category are generally positive about team-building events and they participate in them to a large extent. However, these employees do not necessarily view team building to be effective in terms of improving employees' work performance and productivity (code 7; theme 4). They tend to argue that team-building activities are fun to join and are enjoyable but do not experience such events as improving things at work. They simply go with the flow.

Category 3: Rational thinkers

Employees in this category have a somewhat negative view of team-building events. This may be because they have had unpleasant experiences with previous team outings and have been subject to poorly designed team-building interventions with questionable content (code 15). These employees approach team building from a more rational point view. They see it as part of work. Employees in this category generally do not believe that team-building events and team outings are effective in improving employees' work performance and productivity. They tend to choose to attend team outings and events if the contents of such events are work-related and they take place during working hours. These employees have sociopolitical concerns if they choose not to attend (code 1; theme 3). These are rational, logical, and professional people.

Category 4: Pragmatists

Employees in this category, like rational thinkers, have a generally negative view of team-building events. They also do not believe that team-building events are effective in terms of improving employees' work performance and productivity. However, they do choose to attend these events. They make practical use of them and take pragmatic advantage of such events for other personal or professional gains (code 11; theme 2). They might go to the team outing to promote their projects or to network with upper management while placing little attention on the team-building activities themselves. These are the political, utilitarian-minded pragmatists.

Category 5: Saboteurs

Employees in this category have a negative attitude towards team-building events and team outings. They do not believe team-building events have any positive effect on any attitudinal, perceptual, cognitive, process, or performance outcomes. They see it as a waste of time. They might, due to previous negative experiences with team building (codes 9, 12, 15; themes 2 and 5), harbour resentment and even anger towards team-building activities. They do choose to attend instead of excusing themselves specifically to spoil and sabotage the events (code 16).

Category 6: Political dropouts

Employees in this category have a negative attitude towards team-building events and team outings. They do not believe team-building events have any significant positive effect on employees' work performance and productivity. These employees may have some sociopolitical concerns (code 1)

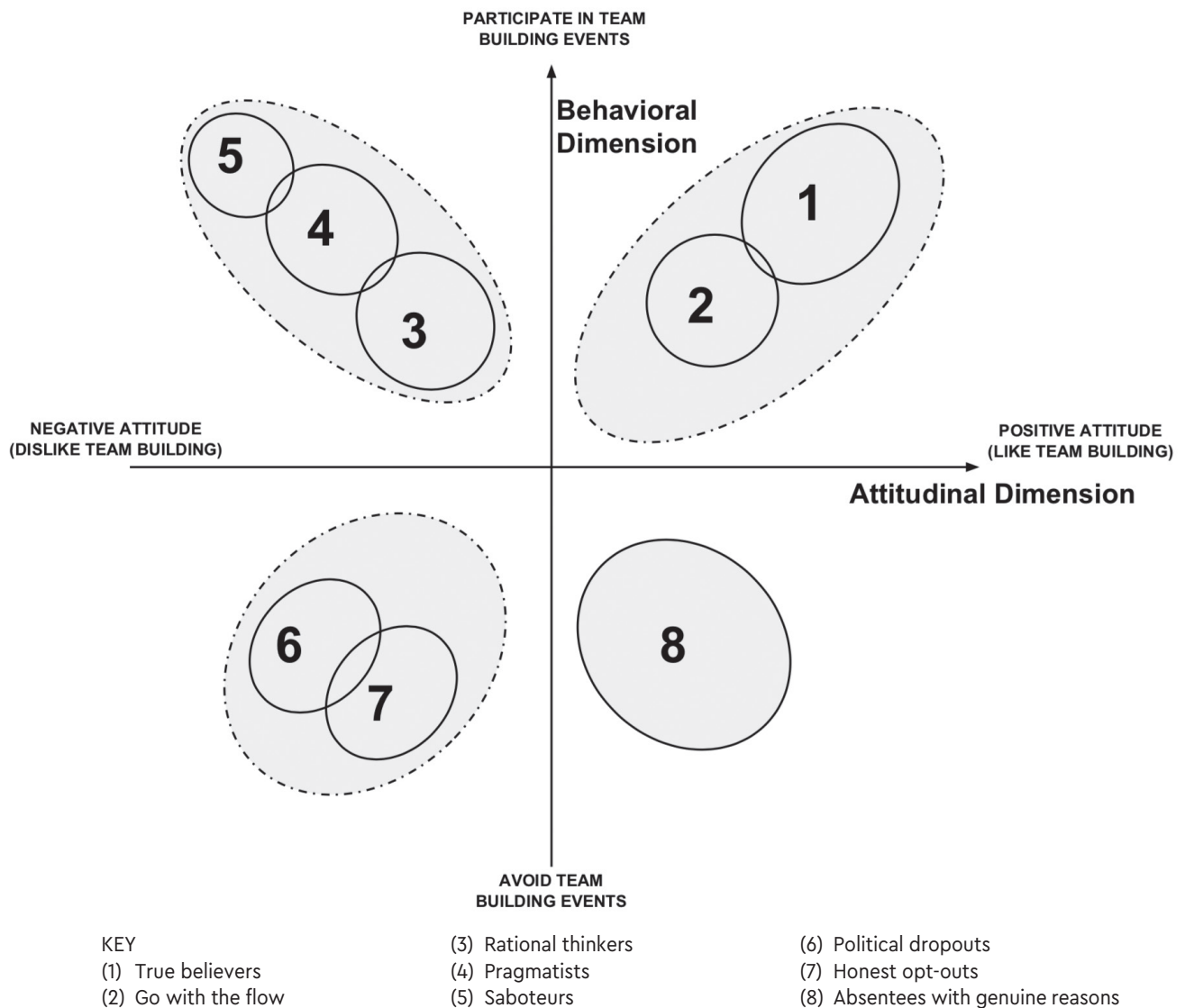


FIGURE 1: Model showing employees with different attitudes towards team building

regarding not attending team-building events so they would try to come up with convincing and legitimate-sounding reasons or excuses so that they can skip team-building events and team outings (code 11).

Category 7: Honest opt-outs

Employees in this category are very similar to political dropouts. The crucial difference is that these employees do not make the effort to come up with excuses. They tend to simply decline to participate outright. These may be older employees close to retirement (code 6). They are no longer interested in career advancements and promotions. So, they are much less constrained by the potential sociopolitical risks (code 1) associated with declining to join team outings.

Category 8: Absentees with genuine reasons

Employees in this category have generally positive attitudes towards team-building activities and team outings (code 7; themes 1, 2, 4). They may or may not believe in the effectiveness

of team building in improving employees' work performance and productivity, but they do find most team-building activities enjoyable. When they do not attend, it is because they have legitimate reasons, not excuses, for their absence. It could be because of a schedule conflict, an upcoming deadline, or other personal or family reasons.

Discussion

The findings make several contributions to theory and research on team-building interventions. First and foremost, the findings show that some employees may hold highly negative views towards team-building events and activities. This finding stands in contrast to the claim that employees resoundingly *want* team-building activities from their firms (Symanowitz, 2013). The netnographic data that underpinned this study clearly indicated that some employees strongly dislike team-building activities. In fact, not only do some employees resist and avoid team-building events, but they also actually develop well thought-out tactics

and strategies to cope with or avoid team-building events (e.g. rational thinkers, pragmatists, and political dropouts). Some go even further and set out to sabotage team-building events (e.g. saboteurs). These findings do seem to challenge the dominant discourse that employees want team building. When improperly done, team building perhaps does more to divide the team than to unite it, and certainly, not all employees want team-building events from their employers.

Second, the intention of and the motive behind organising team-building interventions is to facilitate better work performance and higher productivity (Klein et al., 2009; Robbins & Judge, 2017). Researchers and managers must recognise that having the right intention is not enough and that the effect of team-building events could be not only unproductive, but actually counter-productive to the realisation of the organisation's very intentions. As some research has shown, hotel managers' support for workplace fun had an adverse impact on employees' sales performance (Tews et al., 2013), indicating the possibility that team building may have unexpected counter-productive effects among employees. In terms of the findings of this study, of the eight categories of employees, six can be categorised as believing team-building activities to be ineffective (i.e. go with the flow, rational thinkers, pragmatists, saboteurs, political dropouts, and honest opt-outs). Of course, with this study being an exploratory qualitative one, six out of eight categories do not necessarily mean a numerical majority in employee numbers. However, the existence of these categories of employees points to the importance of further examining whether or not and to what extent the intention behind organising team-building events is fulfilled.

Finally, while much research effort has been directed at measuring the effectiveness of team-building interventions (e.g. Salas et al., 1999; Klein et al., 2009), researchers and management ought to carefully and systematically examine employees' opinions about and their desires or preferences for team-building activities. These findings, showing a wide spectrum of employee attitudes, from eager participation to avoidance and even sabotage, are an indication that there may still be much that is unknown regarding employees' opinions about and their preferences for team-building events. The complexity of employees' attitudes towards team building is compounded by the fact that team-building events can be compulsory and by the sociopolitical risks associated with not attending, even when the team-building event is not mandatory. As such, a more systematic research approach focusing on tapping into employees' honest and unfiltered opinions regarding team building will be valuable for management.

Conclusions and implications

Using netnography, this study explored employees' attitudes towards team-building activities. The findings reveal a wide range of attitudinal beliefs and behavioural tendencies. On the basis of netnographic data, 16 codes and five themes were created. Furthermore, employees were placed into eight categories along two axes (i.e. attitudinal and behavioural): true believers, go with the flow, rational thinkers, pragmatists, saboteurs, political dropouts, honest opt-outs, and absentees with genuine reasons.

The findings of this study have several practical implications for managers, employees, and team-building facilitators. First,

for managers and team-building organisers, it is important to keep in mind that those employees who participate in the team-building activities and events may have a wide range of different attitudes and behavioural tendencies which can manifest themselves in surprising ways during the events. It would be naïve and incorrect to presume that all present are there because they embrace the team building that is to take place. Among the employees who indicate that they tend to participate in team-building events, this study found they have different motives, reasons, and attitudes. The "true believers" are there wholeheartedly; the "pragmatists" are there with ulterior motives to benefit themselves and to advance their own careers; and the "saboteurs" are there to create mayhem and distractions. Managers and team-building facilitators ought to recognise this and be prepared for it.

Second, managers and team-building facilitators should also recognise that those employees who are not present at team-building events have different reasons and motives as well. Recognising that not all absence is equal is challenging. This is because those who are absent are obviously not present. The negative sociopolitical consequences that befall those who do not participate in team-building events may be particularly likely to impact on the "honest opt-outs". This is due to the fact that they may be too forthcoming in speaking the truth, whereas the "political dropouts" may be more diplomatic and considerate in presenting a well-thought-out excuse. It is important that managers and team-building organisers keep in mind that employees who choose not to attend team-building events have different reasons and motives, and that their absence should perhaps be treated differently.

Third, for industries such as the hospitality industry where there is a shared conviction that employees are a key to success, management ought to pay attention to and devise ways to understand how employees really feel about team-building interventions and activities. As discussed in this article, not participating in team building or expressing negative views about team building is associated with potential sociopolitical risks, which could make employees hesitate to inform the management their true opinions regarding team building. Consequently, managers should arrange ways to elicit honest responses from employees. For instance, after a team-building event, the hotel's management might administer an anonymous survey to gather employees' opinions and feedback. However, the issue is that employees might still feel that their responses could be linked to them personally and used against them. For example, even if the survey does not include the employee's name, other demographic and organisational factors that are measured might easily reveal the respondent's identity. Consequently, employees would not necessarily be fully assured of the "anonymous" nature of the survey. A practical suggestion this study could put forth is that if the organisation's intention is to gain employees' true opinions and feedback, anonymity should be fully guaranteed by excluding any potentially identifying items from the survey.

Finally, regarding misconceptions concerning the perceived effectiveness of team-building activities, employees, managers, and possibly team-building facilitators can all benefit from more accurate and empirically based information. A number of the employees included in this sample complain that their managers are misguided about team-building events and team-building effectiveness, while at the same time some of them also exhibit

misconceptions themselves. For instance, “true believers” are of the opinion that team building is good, and it is beneficial and effective for team performance. They also tend to advocate that all employees should participate in team building and those who do not are “anti-team”. These views could also be considered rather extreme and unsubstantiated. Research has not been conclusive that all types of team building are effective for all types of outcomes (Klein et al., 2009). On the other hand, “saboteurs” also hold misguided beliefs regarding team building. They are the opposite of the “true believers” and tend to hold an extreme and negative view of team building and behave in accordance with that negative view during team-building events. Research on team building needs to be much more nuanced than employees, managers, and possibly team-building facilitators perhaps realise. Research should take into account different types of team-building interventions, different types of outcomes measured, time duration of team building, team size, lasting effect of outcome, subjective self-report outcomes versus objective outcomes, type of team, etc. Practitioners, employees, and managers, however, tend to oversimplify. Moreover, it would appear that it is those who are on the extreme ends of the attitudinal and behavioural spectrums also tend to oversimplify (e.g. true believers, saboteurs). Those whose views are more moderate do seem to be more nuanced (e.g. rational thinkers, pragmatists, go with the flow). By having a more nuanced view, employees, managers, and team-building practitioners may find more common ground on the topic of team building, and also avoid unnecessary conflicts, which would, hopefully, truly facilitate team effectiveness in the long term.

Potential limitations and future research

As with any research, this study has its limitations, both in terms of the method (netnography) and the actual process followed in this study. Netnography as a method is no longer new and is increasingly being used by established researchers, but as Mkono et al. (2013, p. 69) state “netnography remains outside of the mainstream”. The number of postings on sites such as Facebook, TripAdvisor and Twitter make them a valuable resource for academics (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2012; Mkono, 2012). Although the comments used in netnography are posted in a public forum and therefore research ethics assumes the poster is happy for their comments to be read and used, the method does not enable the researcher to explicitly obtain informed consent. However, Langer and Beckman (2005) make a distinction between a genuinely “public” forum which is open to all and a “private” discussion group – they suggest a researcher should identify themselves as a researcher before actively participating in any online discussions.

Also, there is little opportunity to clarify the meaning or the intention of the poster – it remains an interpretive process and is therefore open to error. There is also little opportunity to confirm the authenticity or truthfulness of postings. As Rageh et al. (2013, p. 134) point out, “in online contexts, participants might be more likely to present an identity that is significantly different to their ‘real’ identities, which could possibly undermine the trustworthiness of the data collected”. Belz and Baumbach (2010) therefore suggest that netnography is best used in triangulation with other evidence and approaches. In terms of specific limitations of this particular study, it has only used qualitative approaches, and follow-up quantitative studies would

clearly help strengthen the proposed model. The focus of this study was employees, but it would also be helpful to understand the (unfiltered) motivations and experiences of management with regard to team building. As discussed in the Method section, social desirability bias may force respondents to be unrealistically positive, but the opportunity to post anonymously may also pressurise or at least facilitate respondents to be unnecessarily negative (“trolling” is the term often used online for unnecessarily negative contributions).

We, the researchers in this study, are from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and as such considered ourselves sensitive to cultural aspects of team building and criticising management efforts, but it is also very likely that there is a cultural aspect to people’s attitudes to work-based team-building activities. Without wishing to resort to stereotypes, it may well be that some cultures are much more comfortable sharing personal information and participating in team-building activities than others. In a world where an increasingly global training elite deliver such interventions, it would be well to clarify cultural expectations of team-building events.

While 104 postings were included, the fact that some were as short as a few lines while others were several paragraphs in length could influence the analysis and conclusions. An opportunity to do in-depth interviews with employees in each of the identified categories would be very valuable, as might a large-scale survey using the eight categories. Notwithstanding these very valid limitations, this research still contributes to the understanding of employee attitudes to the increasing use of team-building activities in organisations.

Note

1. Codes 10 and 12 are each linked to two themes. The boredom, frustration, and anger of employees regarding team-building events (code 10) are related to their overall attitudes towards team building (theme 1) as well as theme 5: offering potential explanations as to why team building may not have its intended effects on employees. The voluntary versus compulsory participation in team building (code 12) is linked to and reflective of employees’ behavioural patterns (theme 2) and it also represents the sociopolitical risks associated with (not attending) team-building events (theme 3).

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Crisis management: The response of a small Dutch hospitality company during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to explore how a small Dutch hospitality company responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and hence create an understanding of how hospitality businesses can potentially use this knowledge when facing similar crises in the future. This study is based on exploratory research and used interviews to collect primary data. Five themes were found: initial crisis response, operational expenses, health scare, marketing, and crisis impact. It is seen that crisis management was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, where reactive strategies were key for survival. Immediate actions were taken and implementing change was seen as easier due to the small size of the company. Further, operational expenses were adjusted to the changed demand and a favourable reputation helped to rebuild customers' trust, where marketing initiatives were seen as important to reach customers. Finally, the impact of COVID-19 can strengthen organisational efficiency when handled well. Research about the impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry is limited, therefore further research is recommended on the long-term crisis response and the crisis consequences as well as the attitude of owners and employees of the hospitality industry during the COVID-19 pandemic.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, crisis management, crisis response, hospitality management

Introduction

This study will focus on a small hospitality company, Everyday Bread & Coffee (EB&C), during the COVID-19 pandemic. EB&C has two eating establishments in Zwolle and Hattem, the Netherlands. This company provides table service and is known for serving coffee from professional baristas and the sale of their own formulated bread and pastries. Due to the closedown of the on-premises dining areas, EB&C was forced to change their way of operating and chose to stay open during the COVID-19 pandemic by temporarily adjusting their company to an off-premises-only business, where food sales and food delivery became the main business. Most of the time, small hospitality companies do not have the financial strength to survive when closing down their entire business for an unknown period (Bartik et al., 2020). Therefore, it is crucial that small eating establishments change their way of operating in order to generate profit and to stay in business. EB&C responded immediately to the crisis and adjusted their way of operating. This company serves as an example for other owners and hospitality employees of small hospitality companies when facing a similar crisis in the future.

Academic literature

Crisis management in the hospitality industry

The hospitality industry is one of the most vulnerable industries to crisis (Albattat & Mat Som, 2019). Crisis preparedness is

lacking in many organisations that do not see the importance of planning for unforeseen situations (Pecujlija & Cosic, 2019). Tse et al. (2006) found that nearly all restaurants in Hong Kong did not have a crisis plan before the SARS 2003 outbreak.

Albattat and Mat Som (2019) state that it is important for a hospitality company to be well prepared for a crisis because the hospitality industry is a year-round one and highly sensitive to the negative impact of a crisis since guests and employees are a part of the product itself. Coombs (2014) outlines a three-stage model for crisis management: the pre-crisis, the crisis event itself, and the post-crisis. At the stage of the crisis event itself, the "during-crisis" response of a company is to seek for outcomes related to reducing the negative impact of the crisis on the organisation. At this stage, different elements are important, like the initial crisis response and reputation management (Coombs, 2014). Pecujlija and Cosic (2019) state that the consequences of a crisis may look like a failure, but an organisation can succeed in coping with the crisis. Also, it is stated that organisational responses to a crisis may lead to positive organisational changes and improve organisational efficiency. Coombs (2014) reports that the response can lead to a more substantial reputation, a more powerful brand, and changes to an organisation that make it a safer place to work.

Bartik et al. (2020) researched small business owners during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that businesses are responding in various ways, but also highlights that the duration of the crisis is not yet known. In addition, Alves et al. (2020),

found that small companies show advantages in terms of high flexibility and their prompt reaction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The initial crisis response

An essential topic concerning crisis management is the initial crisis response of a restaurant and thereby the way the restaurant changes operational expenses during a long-term crisis (Coombs, 2014). Alonso-Almeida and Bremser (2013) studied a small sample of restaurants in Madrid, Spain, one year after the global economic crisis in 2008, and found that proactive and reactive strategies were used. In a proactive strategy, a company foresees a crisis by taking steps before the crisis occurs. With a reactive strategy, a restaurant responds after the incident has occurred (Brzozowski & Cucculelli, 2016). According to Alonso-Almeida et al. (2015), reactive strategies are the first strategy a company takes as an initial crisis response because they are expected to ensure a company's survival. During the COVID-19 outbreak, restaurant managers have been various ideas to minimise their running expenses as a reactive strategy. According to Tse et al. (2006), restaurants did this by minimising their running expenses, cutting costs and reducing investments during the SARS outbreak. However, Kukanja and Planinc (2013) found that food and beverage establishments that relied heavily on cost-cutting experienced a decline in their competitive advantage during a financial crisis. Heavy cost-cutting led to lower organisational performance which negatively impacted a company's turnover (Kukanja & Planinc, 2013). In addition, restaurants could make use of government assistance to lower organisational costs. In the Netherlands, the Dutch government is offering financial help during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Temporary Emergency Bridging Measure for Sustained Employment provides employers with financial support to pay their employees' wages. Further, hospitality companies who have been affected by the coronavirus measures can get a reimbursement of €4 000 (Netherlands Chamber of Commerce, 2020).

Health scare

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the immediate focus of restaurants is on cost-reducing practices and securing income during the unexpected closure of the on-site dining areas. However, restaurants need to guarantee their guests that their product is safe and clean to increase revenue and long-term guest loyalty (Hebeler, 2020). According to Seo et al. (2014), a crisis can shape the consumers' perceptions and influence reputational threats even long after the crisis occurred. Reputation management can be of high value, where a company can have a favourable or unfavourable reputation (Coombs, 2014). Good hygiene practices reassure guests that restaurants are clean and safe to visit, which increases a restaurant's reputation and guest loyalty (Lo et al., 2006). Choi et al. (2018) investigated the consumers' restaurant selection behaviour and found that consumers intentionally choose to dine at a restaurant that has better food safety practices.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2020), it is unlikely that people contract COVID-19 from food or food packaging, but it is also said that there is no clear evidence to date. According to Jain (2020), customers will be avoiding ordering food and dining out after the COVID-19 pandemic has disappeared due to social distancing and the health scare.

According to the vice president of the National Restaurant Association (2020), the most significant obstacle restaurants have to face will be convincing guests to feel safe about dining out again. Seo et al. (2014) found that a food crisis may have long-term negative consequences for a restaurant. The WHO (2020) states that restaurant owners and managers should produce written guidance for staff on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and implement good staff hygiene practices like food safety management systems based on hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP). HACCP is a tool that can be used to reduce the risk of food safety failures (Jawed et al., 2020). Jawed et al. (2020) also state that the HACCP tool is limited, and more food safety tools are needed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Next, the WHO (2020) states that restaurants should follow social distancing measures in the work environment. Jain (2020) states that in the post-COVID-19 world, social distancing will be the norm and the restaurant industry has to reinvent itself altogether, and sit-down restaurants will suffer the most.

Marketing

An aspect of crisis management is protecting the reputational assets of a company. Overcoming the health scare of COVID-19 in order to maintain a favourable reputation can be enhanced with the help of marketing. According to Kirtiş and Karahan (2011), marketing plays a vital role in surviving and staying profitable during a crisis. During a long-term crisis, it is very important that restaurants use marketing strategies to reach customers (Tse et al., 2006). According to Lo et al. (2006), the marketing of restaurants primarily focuses on local customers during a crisis. Also, Mair et al. (2014) state the importance of relationship marketing with local and loyal customers. Tomassini and Cavagnaro (2020) suggest that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the local community becomes even more important. Customer loyalty is considered as the most crucial part of relationship marketing as loyal customers are more profitable than winning a new customer (Sarwari, 2018). According to Lee et al. (2010), the use of social media or mobile applications can create a more efficient and effective tool to reach current and new customers, which can lead to increased revenue and an improvement in customer relationships.

Conclusion of academic literature review

In times of a crisis like COVID-19, it is necessary for hospitality companies to apply crisis management to minimise losses. In addition, it can even lead to positive organisational changes if handled well. Furthermore, there are three stages analysed within crisis management: pre-crisis, during the crisis, and post-crisis stage. A more in-depth insight is given in the during-crisis response stage, where the initial crisis response and the reputation of a company are further analysed. The initial crisis response is mainly focused on changing the operation and the operational expenses and is connected to proactive and reactive strategies. In a company, cost reduction is seen as an essential aspect during a crisis, where companies cut costs most of the time, hold back on investments, and apply for government assistance. As for the reputation of a company, an insight is given into the customers' fear of getting infected and the importance of marketing. Restaurants have to face a long-term health scare due to COVID-19, with customers avoiding dining out, which will change future operations. Restaurants can decrease the negative spill-over effect of COVID-19 in their operations as customers are

more likely to choose a restaurant with a favourable reputation for high health standards and food safety practices. In addition, a company can change its marketing strategy to the changing demands caused by COVID-19. The importance of customer relationship management is noted and in which the local and loyal customer becomes even more important.

Research approach

This research aimed to explore how a small hospitality company responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Netherlands. Therefore, this study has the purpose of understanding behaviour and gaining knowledge of the opinions of owners, managers and employees of EB&C of how they perceive operating during the COVID-19 pandemic. To guide this research to a more specific aim, the following problem statement was composed: "Crisis management: How does a small Dutch hospitality company respond to the COVID-19 pandemic?" Since not much research has been written about COVID-19 in the restaurant industry, this exploratory research through interviews was conducted to build a picture based on the ideas and stories of owners and employees that enlightened this research with new insights.

Study findings

In total, four interviews were held with two employees and two owners of both restaurant locations of EB&C. All interviews were held within the same time frame during the COVID-19 pandemic, i.e. three to four months after the announcement of the on-premises dining area closure. During the selective coding process, five themes were found: the initial crisis response, operational expenses, health scare, marketing, and the crisis impact. The most relevant results for answering the research questions were analysed with an SQC structure, where four themes (initial crisis response, operational expenses, health scare, and marketing) were divided into subthemes and supported with quotes from the interviews. The fifth theme, crisis impact, with the subthemes: positive and negative consequences and the attitude of the owner/employee, were new findings concerning COVID-19.

Initial crisis response

The initial crisis response is the first response EB&C took after the onset of the crisis. The initial crisis response is shown through different aspects which can be divided into two subthemes: unforeseen crisis, and situation handling. All the interviewees reported that they did not foresee a crisis like COVID-19 and there were no steps taken in advance. The interviewees state that they felt *powerless and overwhelmed; it was a total shock; and it was like a storm that came over us from the first day till now, and it goes so quickly*. One interviewee stated that *big companies have a crisis plan, but we as [a] small company did not and then you also do not expect something like this could happen*. This indicates that EB&C did not have a crisis plan due to the small size of the company and that the impact of COVID-19 was not expected to reach this business. In contrast, there were steps taken before the announcement of the closure of the on-premises dining areas by the Dutch government. The interviewees stated that *a week before we discussed some delivery options and possibilities because we saw, you know, something coming. But we were not sure what was coming*. This

indicates that EB&C did not take steps before the crisis occurred but did during the crisis event itself. Another subtheme of the initial crisis response is how EB&C handled the crisis situation in their operations. All interviewees stated that they reacted directly and stayed open during this crisis outbreak.

In addition, certain measures were taken within the organisation. One employee state that *we changed the store, so it is better to work for us. We also had to work here, and it also had to be safe for us too*.

Operational expenses

The expenses of EB&C changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Reducing operational costs can be the first step taken in lowering organisational expenses. When questions arose on how costs were reduced during the crisis, all interviewees agreed that costs were cut on staff. One owner said that *we had to considerably save on payroll because that is the highest cost*. With cost reduction in other areas of the operation, some disagreements were seen. One interviewee stated that they decreased stock levels *and did not spend much money on that*.

External financial support

In times of crisis, companies can apply for external financial support to help with survival. One owner perceived the help as disappointing: *it sucks that we are not getting any financial support whatsoever*. It is seen that EB&C can make use of government support, but that the owners perceive the external financial support differently. One owner was disappointed by the help and another owner was thankful for the help, even though it was not sure that financial support would be given. Employees did not actively notice the government support in the business.

Health scare

Due to the health risk caused by COVID-19, customers' behaviour can be influenced and different elements in an operation can be changed to win back customers' trust. The health scare theme can be divided into four subthemes: the customer perspective, sense of safety, food safety, and social distancing.

Customer perspective

The perspective of a customer is seen as important for winning back customers' trust. An interviewee stated that making a crisis plan before COVID-19 happened would not have made a difference since that would not have changed the customers' perspective: *we can't influence the customers. So, even if we changed everything or made a plan beforehand, it would not have changed the customer*.

Sense of safety

Different measures were taken to create a sense of safety for employees and customers in the organisation, as one interviewee reported: *as long as everyone is healthy; we check that on a regular basis*. It is seen that safety measures were used to maintain a sense of safety for the customers as well as for the employees, where employees feel safe to come to work and customers are not afraid to visit the company. Furthermore, it was noticed that the sense of safety could be connected to the trust customers have in the company.

Food safety

EB&C took several measures to guarantee food safety, especially during the crisis. This changed the operation: *In the beginning, we put all our bread in plastic, wore gloves, and sanitised our hands constantly and we got it everywhere. And we wash our hands like a thousand times a day. So, people need to have a little bit of faith.* Additionally, this interviewee stated that *we had to do it to show to our customers, hey, we are being careful, and we are taking all the measures that are necessary.* This indicates that extra food safety measures had to be taken to visually show customers that the operation was safe.

Social distancing

Social distancing is seen as an important safety measure during this crisis. The owners and employees report that keeping the 1.5-metre distance is a challenge in the workplace. *We have a small place over here. Keeping your distances is harder. We do try. Well, a lot of times keeping the distances does not work.* It is seen that keeping a distance between employees could not always be maintained since this interferes with performing the job. However, the one-and-a-half metre distance between employees and the customers is seen as important, where several measures were taken to ensure this.

Marketing

Different marketing aspects were adjusted or maintained as the importance of marketing was seen in EB&C during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sales promotions and relationship management were the two main subthemes detected from the marketing theme.

Sales promotions

All the interviewees agreed that sales promotions are effective in times of crisis and help to reach customers. All the interviewees stated that social media are actively used to let customers know that their company is not closed during the crisis outbreak: *We do a lot more on social media. Through social media, we inform people what we were open or promoted our new pastry line. And it works.* It was seen that the way of promotion changed during this crisis, with social media used to reach customers right away. Another interviewee added that besides social media, local influencers were used for promoting products. It was seen that different marketing tools like social media, social influencers, and word of mouth were used and helped with reaching and attracting customers during the crisis.

Relationship management

In the subtheme of relationship management, two types of customers can be seen: loyal and local customers. Furthermore, it was seen that local buying is promoted during the COVID-19 pandemic: *People here in the surroundings are promoting local buying, so I think we also got new business from people here in the neighbourhood.* This all shows that the support of local and loyal customers was needed during the crisis and became even more important than before the crisis.

Conclusion

It was seen that the owners and employees of EB&C did not foresee that COVID-19 could affect the normal way of operating, besides which the small size of the company was given as a reason why there was no crisis plan before a crisis occurred. This

is in accordance with the finding of Tse et al. (2006) who state that most small restaurants do not have a crisis plan. Therefore, it can be concluded that proactive strategies were not taken (Brzozowski & Cucculelli, 2016). However, reactive strategies were seen since all participants stated that immediate actions were taken after the crisis started. EB&C chose to keep the company open and improved the business to attract customers. Alternatives to normal operations were implemented, like food delivery. In addition, new investments in the company were done to keep customers interested, and strict safety measures were taken to actively show customers that EB&C was taking COVID-19 seriously. This is in line with the theory of Alonso-Almeida et al. (2015) which states that reactive strategies are the first strategy taken to ensure a company's survival. Besides, it is noticed that due to the small size of EB&C, implementing change is seen as easier. This is in line with the findings of Alves et al. (2020), where more flexibility and prompt reactions were reported in small companies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, it was seen that the operational expenses of EB&C changed due to the crisis. All the participants reported a payroll reduction since this was the highest cost in their operation and fewer employees were needed during the crisis. Kujanja and Planinc (2013) state that cost-cutting leads to lowering the organisational performance. This is in contrast with the findings of this research, since EB&C cut costs to improve organisational performance by adjusting the number of staff to a more efficient way of working that suited the new safety measures. Since the on-site dining area closure, fewer staff were needed for table service. Besides, the restaurant was changed to a store where products were sold to-go, and food was delivered. This also had an impact on the stock cost, since this was adjusted to the new demand. For these changes, investments were made, and costs were mainly saved on staffing. This contradicts the finding of Kujanja and Planinc (2013), since cost-cutting on staff and adjusting the stock cost to the new demand, had a positive impact on the company's turnover, which even led to the opening of a new restaurant location.

Further, EB&C made use of government assistance during the first weeks of the on-premises dining area closure. According to Tse et al. (2006), government assistance can help with cost reduction, but results show that this help is perceived differently by the owners and employees, where the employees did not actively notice the help and the owners were not sure if they would get the financial support, in addition to the fact that it had to be paid back. It can be concluded that government support does not reduce costs in an operation during a crisis. According to the participants, the sense of safety is mainly with the perception of the customers. This is in line with the findings of Seo et al. (2014), who state that a crisis shapes the customers' perception and can lead to a reputational threat. According to Coombs (2014), a favourable reputation is linked to attracting more customers. In line with this statement, the owners and employees believe that their favourable reputation helps with convincing the customers that EB&C is clean and safe from COVID-19. It is seen that the sense of safety can be connected to the trust customers have in EB&C.

In addition, the participants were critical of the negative impact of the media. A negative spill-over effect can be seen (Seo et al., 2014). Owners, employees and customers were not immediately infected by COVID-19 when they visited EB&C, but the chances of infection are increased in public spaces.

Therefore, all restaurants were associated with the chance of getting infected with the COVID-19 virus and were affected by negative publicity. Nevertheless, it is reported that owners and employees did not notice that people were scared to come to EB&C. It was seen that safety measures, like wearing gloves and keeping distance, were used to maintain a sense of safety for employees and customers. This contradicts the statement of Jain (2020), who reported that customers will be avoiding ordering food and dining out after the COVID-19 pandemic. The results show that the owners and employees expect that EB&C will be fully booked after they are allowed to open the on-site dining areas and that the focus will be on maintaining safety instead of convincing customers to come dine again.

In addition, food safety measures were taken to visually show customers that EB&C follows strict hygiene rules. This finding is in accordance with those of Choi et al. (2018) who found that customers are more likely to visit a hospitality company that has good food safety practices. By actively showing that EB&C is following food safety measures, the sense of safety is created. Further, Jain (2020) states that in the post-COVID-19 world, social distancing will be the norm. It is seen that social distancing between employees cannot always be maintained, but measures are taken to ensure the one-and-a-half-metre distance between employees and customers, with the table setup and strict rules. The owners and employees of EB&C report that marketing was effective for reaching customers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ways of promotion changed, where messages became more storytelling. Social media, local influencers, and word of mouth from the local community were used to promote new products and to inform customers that EB&C was open during the pandemic. This can be connected to the research of Kirtiş and Karahan (2011) and Tse et al. (2006), who both report the importance of marketing to reach customers and stay profitable during a crisis. Further, Kirtiş and Karahan (2011) claim that social media is the most convenient marketing tool to target specific segments of society. This can be questioned since in this research word of mouth was seen as more effective in reaching the local community.

Sarwari (2018) indicates that loyal customers are crucial and more profitable than winning a new one. The participants report that loyal customers are important since they gave their support from the beginning of the crisis. Besides, Lo et al. (2006) found that marketing initiatives of restaurants primarily focus on local customers during a crisis. This is seen in EB&C where the use of local influencers was made to reach customers from the neighbourhood. Further, Tomassini and Cavnaro (2020) state that the local community becomes more important during the COVID-19 pandemic. In EB&C, it is seen that the local community supported local businesses. This support already existed and increased during the pandemic.

One of the negative consequences is that EB&C lost turnover at the beginning of the crisis. In addition, changing the operations to new safety standards changed the quality of the service. The original concept of the company could not be carried out and had to be adjusted, which gave an unsatisfied feeling to the owners and employees. In addition, it is stated that at the beginning of the crisis, customers were friendly, but that their behaviour changed after two months. They were seen as becoming impatient and did not obey the rules anymore, whereas the owners and employees had to be stricter about the safety rules. According to Coombs (2014), this response can

lead to a safer place to work. As owners and employees report, being strict ensures the safety of customers and themselves. As for the positive consequences of COVID-19 on EB&C, the owners report that they have learned a lot about their own company and identified new ideas on how to run the company and how to constantly improve even without the dining areas. Furthermore, the changed operations made work easier for the employees since tables do not have to be served, and work is done more efficiently than before the crisis occurred, with the same turnover. The turnover was expected to decrease, but instead, people bought desserts and savouries more than before, and products were sold out every day at the beginning of the crisis. Also, new customers were seen during the crisis. All in all, the changes were perceived as positive by the customers and this all led to the opening of a third location of EB&C. These findings are in line with the statement of Pecujlija and Cosic (2019) that suggest that an organisation can succeed in coping with the negative consequences of a crisis and this may strengthen organisational efficiency.

With the findings of this research, the problem statement "Crisis management: How does a small Dutch hospitality company respond to the COVID-19 pandemic?" can be answered. It is seen that crisis management is implemented in a small Dutch hospitality company during the COVID-19 pandemic, where reactive strategies are key to surviving the crisis. Immediate actions were taken since operations had to be adjusted to the changed demand caused by the pandemic. Implementing change is seen as easier due to the flexibility of a small company. Further, the stock was adjusted, costs were mainly cut on payroll, and investments within the company were done to attract customers. In addition, government support was available but did not contribute to cost reduction. In addition, a favourable reputation can help to overcome the fact that consumers are scared to visit an operation due to the risk of getting infected. Even so, the sense of safety is mainly with the perception of the customers themselves, and to show visually that food safety and social distancing measures are followed. This can help to gain the customers' trust and enhance a sense of safety for customers and employees. Further, strict measures were needed to ensure safety for the customers as well as for the staff. In addition, customers were reached by the use of social media, local influencers, and word of mouth. The importance of local and loyal customers is seen since their support was needed during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is seen that positive and negative consequences of COVID-19 led to more safety and a positive contribution to organisational efficiency. Though positive and negative consequences of COVID-19 may vary, the attitude of owners and employees is seen as important for survival. Being positive and thinking in possibilities not problems can contribute to the immediate response of an organisation.

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A preliminary evaluation of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic could have on female employability in the tourism and hospitality sectors in Italy

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ABSTRACT: The article focuses on the analysis of preliminary data regarding the challenges that female employability in the tourism and hospitality sectors in Italy has faced and will continue to experience as a result of the economic impact of the COVID-19 lockdown. A review of the literature shows the precarious nature of the female employability opportunities that were already inherent in the industry. The research surveyed 54 male and female employees in the tourism and hospitality sectors regarding perceptions and expectations of work security and future job opportunities. The results revealed that no significant differences were found regarding job opportunity expectations between male and female respondents in general. The gaps in expectations became significant, however, when household, pressure obligations such as childcare, care of relatives or household duties are taken into consideration. These expectations seem to be less for the male respondents. These preliminary results suggest a need for governmental policies to aid in the provision of household support.

KEYWORDS: crisis, expectations, female workforce, lockdown

Introduction

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reported that during the first quarter of 2020 \$195 billion were lost in export revenues from international tourism, and there were 180 million fewer arrivals as compared to the same period of last year (-44% of international tourist arrival). According to the UNWTO's current scenarios, international tourist arrivals could decline between 58% and 78% in 2020, which would translate into a loss of up to \$1 trillion in international tourism receipts (UNWTO, 2020). The International Air Transport Association's (IATA) figures confirm this drop off, reporting an 80% fall in flights by early April (IATA, 2020). The World Travel and Tourism Council calculates that over 100 million jobs in tourism and travel are currently at risk. In 2019, the tourism sector in Europe grew by 4%. This trend has been halted by the COVID-19 crisis and, from January to April 2020, international tourist arrivals showed a 44% decrease. Despite the fact that the EU Commission established the reopening of internal borders from 15 June 2020, the drop in tourist arrivals was inevitable for Italy as well, with an impact also on the "collateral" sectors, since the expenditure of foreign tourists represents an important item not only for hotels and tourist facilities, but also for restaurants and shops. Italy, a country which owes about 13% of GDP to tourism, welcomed a very small portion of international tourists in the

2020 holiday season. According to ENIT (the Italian agency for tourism), international visitors staying overnight should decrease by 49% (equal to 31 million visitors) and the country will return to pre-COVID-19 levels in 2023. The country will have to face a big challenge: according to the data relating to the balance of payments, in Italy the revenue from international travel in 2019 reached €44.3 billion, equal to 41 per cent of services exports and about 8 per cent of total GDP. In 2019, the expenditure of foreign travellers in Italy had continued to increase at a sustained rate (6.2 per cent), driven by tourists from European countries and North America. While Italy's industrial production may restart quickly as confinement measures are lifted, tourism and many consumer-related services are projected to recover more gradually, having a negative effect on the aggregate demand in the economy. These negative impacts will also have an impact on the labour market opportunities of employees of different categories working in tourism and hospitality businesses.

Globally, women represent the majority of the workforce in tourism: in 2019, women were 54% of people employed in tourism (UNWTO, 2019). Across the world, women make up most workers in the tourism industry, though they tend to be clustered in low-skilled jobs. Women are more likely to be entrepreneurs in tourism than in other sectors of the economy, thanks to lower entry barriers, yet they are still not the majority of the self-employed workforce in the sector (International

Labour Organization [ILO], 2020). When women build their enterprises, however, these businesses are mainly small. Given the high percentage of female employment in tourism, especially in low-skilled activities, women are likely to be hit the most by job losses (UNWTO, 2019). Since most women in the tourism sector are employed in low-skilled or informal work, they are going to feel the economic shock to tourism caused by COVID-19 quickest and hardest (UNWTO, 2019). Globally, the April 2020 data released by the World Travel and Tourism Council showed that 100 million people were at immediate risk of losing their jobs globally. A third of them were directly employed in travel and tourism; 60% of them were women. This could mean that currently up to 20 million women working in the industry could be unemployed and without an income.

Literature

Figueroa-Domecq et al. (2015), Morgan and Pritchard (2019), and Rivera Mateos (2018) evidenced the scarce literature on tourism gender research. Tourism gender research remains marginal to tourism enquiry. The job market in the tourism sector is often characterised by a combination of poor wages, job insecurity and long working hours (Back et al., 2011). The tourism industry seems to provide lower quality employment opportunities as well, when compared to other industries (García-Pozo et al., 2012; Lacher & Oh, 2012; Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015). At a global level, most of the tourism workforce is female, though they also display a low labour mobility (Marchante et al., 2007), a high degree of occupational segregation (Campos-Soria et al., 2011), and a high level of gender wage discrimination (García-Pozo et al., 2014). Furthermore, working in the tourism sector is often associated with disadvantageous pay and working conditions, shift work, lack of training opportunities and gender discrimination (Ladkin, 2011). In the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries, women represent 55.9% of the tourism workforce, even though they work in worse conditions than their male counterparts (Stacey, 2015).

Literature shows that tourism is a highly gendered industry (Kinnaird et al., 1994; Kinnaird & Hall, 1996; Rinaldi & Salerno, 2020) and that women are mostly employed in unskilled, low-paid jobs. Due to gender stereotyping and discrimination, women indeed tend to be employed in jobs such as cooking, cleaning and hospitality. As happens in many other business sectors, even in tourism there is both horizontal and vertical gender segregation of the labour market (Santos & Varejão, 2007). Horizontally, women are placed in different occupations with respect to men, being employed in jobs like waitresses, flight attendants, cleaners and travel agency salespersons, while men are employed as pilots, gardeners, drivers and construction workers. Vertically, in the tourism sector the typical gender pyramid is quite common: women are employed in lower levels and occupations with few career development opportunities, while men dominate key managerial positions (Muñoz-Bullón, 2009; Boone et al., 2013). Indeed, many women are located at the base of the pyramid, being employed in low-paid, part-time jobs, and very few of them reach the top (Richter, 1995). As the literature underlines, the tourism sector (like most industries) shows a gender gap in many areas, such as salary (Levy & Lerch, 1991; Cukier, 1996; Fleming, 2015; Casado-Díaz & Simon, 2016) or job opportunities (Seager, 2003; Rinaldi & Salerno, 2020), just

to mention a few. In tourism, even recruitment practices are influenced by gender roles, as noted in a feminist analysis of "ideal tourism worker" discourse (Costa et al., 2017). Carvalho et al. (2018) found in their study that in order to increase credibility, top female managers of tourism organisations perform in a gender-neutral way that is embedded with male identities.

In this sector, the literature shows both vertical and horizontal segregation and a consistent leadership gap (Kogovsek & Kogovsek, 2015; Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015). As for the topic of women's under-representation in leadership positions in the tourism sector, the literature is quite scarce (Boone et al., 2013; Costa et al., 2017). In general, there is a lack of literature using a feminist approach on the horizontal and vertical segregation of women in the tourism sector (Brandth & Haugen, 2005; Lacher & Oh, 2012; Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015; Pritchard, 2018). Some studies focus on the inefficiency of the recruitment processes (Doherty & Manfredi, 2001), on the low educational levels of women (Burrell et al., 1997), on the difficult equilibrium between work and family life (Ng & Pine, 2003), and on the legal framework that allows different contract opportunities for men and women (Doherty & Manfredi, 2001). Tourism employees are expected to work long and unsocial hours (Blomme et al., 2010). Flexible work times may increase gender inequalities in paid employment, as there is a tendency to construct temporal flexibility as inherently different for men and women, and as something that is used by women specifically to balance work and family (Sullivan & Smithson, 2007; Brumley, 2014).

Methodology

The tourism industry is one of the most affected sectors of the economy worldwide at the moment because of measures taken by governments in order to stem the spread of the virus. Some OECD estimates on the COVID-19 impact point to a 60% decline in international tourism in 2020 in the present situation (OECD, 2020a). One of the countries where this is felt most is Italy. Due to the severe impact of the pandemic, the country has had to adhere to a strict lockdown. The lockdown started to be gradually eased in June of 2020 and then restarted in October.

This study focuses on analysing preliminary results of the possible impact that the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 has had on the opportunities for employment between genders in the Italian tourism and hospitality industries. The objective is to identify whether there are differences between genders in the Italian tourism employees' confidence in their future job prospects. This could give an indication whether the negative impact of the virus outbreak on the industry could differently affect the employability of men and women. Furthermore, the study tries to identify to what extent age and education level can further reinforce or mitigate the potential job disparities between Italian tourism industry employees.

The instrument used for the data collection was an online survey developed on Google Forms. The survey was then distributed via social media (LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook) to respondents that are employed or have recently been employed in the tourism industry via the Italian Managers' Association (ManagerItalia) to their members working in the tourism sector. The data was collected between 17 June and 28 June 2020. A total of 54 responses were gathered, for an estimated population of 120 members, at a confidence level of 95%. From these respondents 70.4 % were female, 27.8% were

male and the rest (1.9%) declined to indicate gender. 84% of the respondents' age was between 31 and 64 years old, with only 18% between 18 and 30 and the rest above 65 years old. All the respondents had at least a high school diploma (29.6%), followed by respondents with an undergraduate degree (44.45%) and a post-graduate degree (25.9%). Finally, 63.5% of the respondents were employed at the time.

In this context, two hypotheses were identified:

Hypothesis 1: Since female tourist workers are mostly employed in part-time, low-skilled, worst-paid jobs, their perception about the future might be less optimistic.

Hypothesis 2: Among the unemployed, since during the pandemic, Italian schools and kindergartens were closed, women had to take care of kids, the elderly and ill people, we expect that they could believe that finding or keeping a job in the tourism sector could be more difficult.

The methodology specifically included:

- A descriptive statistical analysis of the sample and of the features of the collected data set on the current and future job perspectives in the Italian tourism industry;
- A correlation analysis with independent variables of gender, age and education level and the dependent variable of job prospects; and
- A statistical comparison of the differences in perception of job security in the short term between genders in the context of household obligations.

Discussion

A recent OECD report includes tourism among the sectors that will be hit the most by the coronavirus crisis (OECD, 2020b). With this research, the goal was to analyse the perspectives of the Italian workers in the field of tourism, trying at the same time to assess whether their gender could affect the forecasts.

Under the first hypothesis, Italian female and male workers in tourism were asked what the probability was of keeping their job in the following six months. As a whole, 47.6% of female and male respondents believed that they would be able to maintain their professional position in the following six months, while only 30.9% answered that they were afraid about losing their job (Figure 1).

When we tried to verify the influence of the gender of the respondents on the answers using a Spearman correlation, despite our hypothesis, results were quite counterintuitive. Indeed, the job prospects seem not to be affected by gender (Table 1). 69% of the respondents were not concerned or very slightly concerned regarding the prospects of losing their employment in the next six months.

Under hypothesis 2, we also asked the unemployed whether there was the possibility for them of finding an occupation in the tourism sector in the coming six months. What we found is that among the unemployed (both female and male) the chances of finding a job were perceived as quite low: most of them (67.9%) answered that it would be highly unlikely (Figure 2).

Related to hypothesis 2, the question was asked whether the respondents perceived that their family obligations such as taking care of children, the elderly or chronically sick would have a major impact on their ability to maintain their employment in the next six months. In this case, the Mann-Whitney U test indicated that there are indeed differences in perceptions between the female and male respondents. As the data in Table 2 shows, the female respondents are slightly more concerned about their job security when taking into account familial obligations.

TABLE 1: Spearman correlation factors influencing jobs prospects for employed people in tourism (N = 54)

Job prospects		Spearman's rho		
		Gender	Age	Education
Gender	Correlation coefficient	1.000	0.485**	0.216
	Sig. (2-tailed)	–	<0.001	0.116
	N	54	54	54
Age	Correlation coefficient	0.485**	1.000	0.316*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001	–	0.020
	N	54	54	54
Education	Correlation coefficient	0.216	0.316*	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.116	0.020	–
	N	54	54	54

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

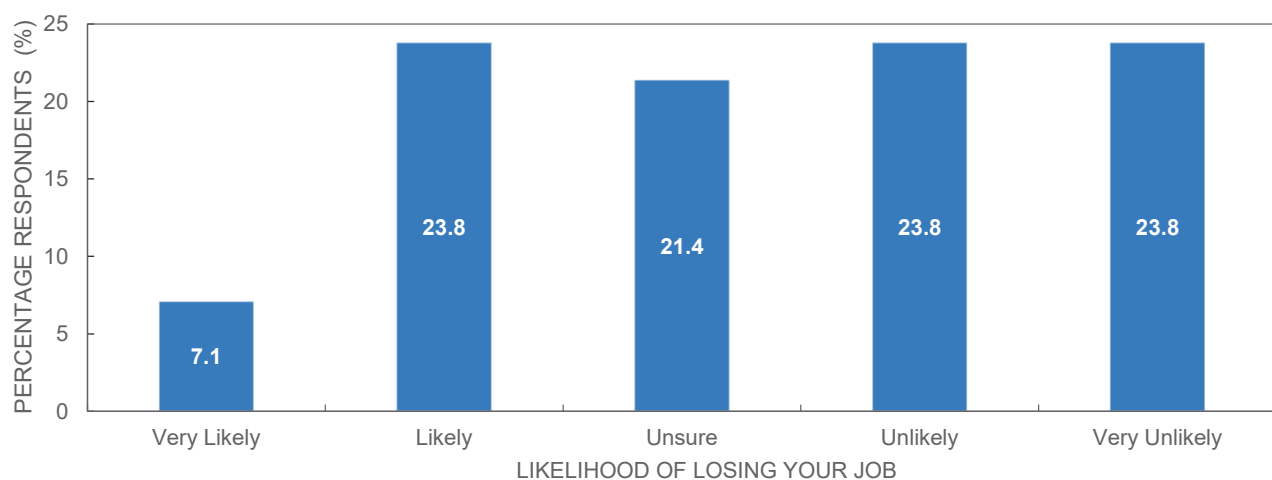


FIGURE 1: What is the possibility of losing your job in tourism in the next six months? (Employed people)

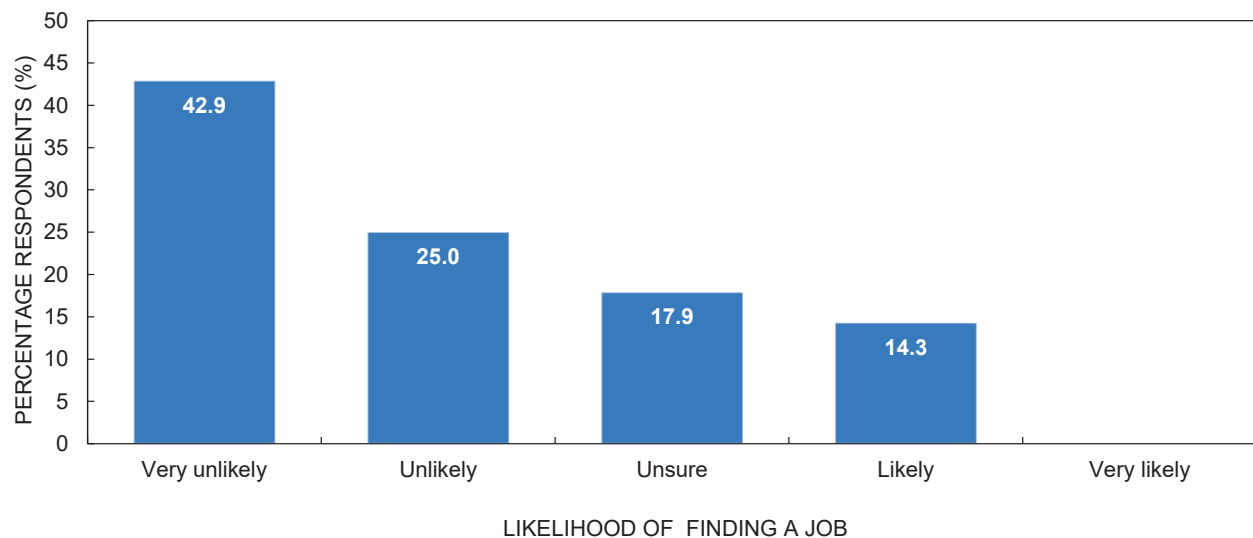


FIGURE 2: What is the possibility of finding a job in the tourism sector in the next six months? (Unemployed people)

TABLE 2: Mann-Whitney test on gender differences in perceptions regarding job security for the next six months with family obligations

Ranks	Gender ^a	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Job prospects for employers with family obligations	M	13	21.77	283.00
	F	30	22.10	663.00
Total		43		
Mann-Whitney U	192.000			
Wilcoxon W	283.000			
Z	-0.082			
Asymp. significance (2-tailed)	0.035			
Exact significance [2*(1-tailed sig.)]	0.048 ^b			

^aGrouping variable: gender

^bNot corrected for ties

In this case, part of the second hypothesis is confirmed, specifically that the female respondents currently employed feel more at risk about job security than their male counterparts. While this result is to be expected and is not necessarily a result of the COVID-19 lockdown, it does suggest that this could be a barrier to entry of female employees in the industry.

This is also suggested by Table 3 which shows a higher percentage of female employees not actively seeking employment when compared to their male counterparts. The data does suggest that the female respondents — due to household commitments — have to some extent withdrawn from the tourism sector workforce. At the time of data collection during the second half of June, the schools and other higher education institutions were still closed in Italy.

Conclusion

As indicated by the literature, the economic impact of the COVID-19 lockdown will not be equally spread among genders, especially in the tourism industry. The article seeks to understand whether this is reflected in the opinions and experiences of employees in various positions in the Italian tourism industry.

TABLE 3: Gender comparison regarding active seeking of employment in tourism

If not employed, are you actively seeking employment?		No	Yes	Total
Gender F	Number	8	9	17
	Per cent	47.1%	52.9%	100%
M	Number	3	8	11
	Per cent	27.3%	72.7%	100%
Other	Number	1	0	1
	Per cent	100%	0%	100%
Total	Count	12	17	29
	Per cent	41.4%	58.6%	100%

The research showed that there are no real differences in job opportunities based on gender. This becomes apparent when certain obligations from the employees' households are investigated. In this case, the home pressure such as taking care of children or the elderly does contribute to an increased exclusion of the female workforce. While this effect needs to be further investigated as the economic crisis unfolds, it represents a policy signal in an effort to redress the damages inflicted on this vital industry for Italian economic growth.

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Slavery and Liberation in Hotels, Restaurants and Bars

Conrad Lashley (Ed.), 2021. 1st edition. London: Routledge. 208 pages. eBook ISBN: 9780367855383.
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Conrad Lashley is a well-known expert, researcher and published author in the fields of hospitality. In his latest edited book, entitled *Slavery and Liberation in Hotels, Restaurants and Bars*, Conrad tackles a very complex subject matter very much relevant in today's world. Lashley was able to distil such complex thoughts and ideas into uncomplicated, easily understood and well-connected sections.

Published in 2021 by Routledge of the Taylor and Francis Group, the book has 11 chapters offering the reader an in-depth journey from ancient slavery to today's neo-slavery and labour exploitation in the hospitality industry, and presents a way for the liberation of these neo slaves. The book also offers critical and analytical models from Brazil, Europe, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. This publication's target market is students, hospitality professionals, human resource practitioners, and all those who seek to learn more about contemporary forms of human bondage.

From the European involvement in the slave trade and slavery to today's human trafficking and Europe's modern slavery, the world is paying increased attention to the development of neo-slavery. In the introductory chapter, Lashley invites all people managers to learn the importance of asking the question, "What is it like not to be me?", and apply it as a guiding principle in their dealings with others. The first and second chapters, written by Conrad Lashley, explore different ways to outline various ethical and moral positions to assess employees' managerial actions. As labour costs remain pretty significant in the hospitality and service industry, managers always look for ways to reduce these costs. To increase returns, many owners of hospitality service organisations adopt policies that result in direct slavery or wage rates that contribute to a state of neo-slavery. The author describes why over one million slaves currently exist across contemporary Europe, and millions more work and get paid at neo-slave rates. Chapter two also explores human trafficking patterns, modern slavery and the beneficiaries among today's elite. Helpless and vulnerable populations remain exposed to coercion and exploitation. Hospitality establishments continue to be indirectly implicated as they unknowingly are the venue for sexual exploitation or employ slave labour through subcontractors or outsourced services.

Chapter three, co-written by Roseane Barcellos Marques and Conrad Lashley, reflects the historical background of modern slavery in Brazil. Chapter four, co-written by Erwin van der Graaf and Conrad Lashley, details experiences concerning sex trafficking in hospitality establishments in the Netherlands and elaborates on the steps taken to sensitise hoteliers to detect potential exploitation. As human trafficking across Europe is on

the rise, chapter five examines the nature of human trafficking and details actions taken by the hotels to oppose all forms of human trafficking and modern slavery. Chapters six and seven establish a link between neoliberalism and the "cancer of inequality" (Lashley, 2020, p. 87) as the rich hoard their extra wealth while exploiting the poor. The author also demonstrates a clear link between neoliberalism's policies and the slave-like conditions many workers endure.

Driven by the concern for improving working conditions, hospitality managers use employee empowerment initiatives to create a liberating experience. Nevertheless, Lashley argues in chapter eight that while some benefits are offered to employees, these initiatives remain management inspired and aimed at service improvement and operational profitability. Ultimately, employee empowerment initiatives are judged by how employees will experience these changes and influence the organisational culture. Despite the low wages and neo-slave-like state of so many front-line employees in the hospitality industry, membership in trade unions remains below average. The author finds this fact striking and discusses the many external and internal reasons. The low membership rate remains paradoxical as these low-paid employees continue to be the weakest because their bargaining power is weak. The author suggests that hospitality employers' opposition has actively discouraged trade union membership.

Chapters nine and ten explore worker cooperatives, their formation and operation, and provides international examples. Worker cooperatives can boost economic activity and lead to job creation as long as they get the necessary cultural and political support. "Divide and rule" has always been a well-used strategy that the rich few use to oppress and dominate the many. The author concludes chapter eleven by describing how the oppressed can resist injustice via trade unions and political parties with ethical objections to all forms of exploitation.

On the other hand, pro-rich political parties continue to push policies at the expense of vulnerable populations. As a result, inequality is more significant than ever; the rich are becoming richer, while the poor are becoming poorer. Lashley argues all is not lost; there is still hope to resist and push change as long as stakeholders clearly understand "the forces at work and the mechanism employed to keep things the way they are" (Lashley, 2020, p. 186).

Throughout his book, Lashley remains eloquent in using a transdisciplinary approach; he combines historical journalism with socio-economic and political research to present a full review of slavery, neo-slavery and liberation in the hospitality industry. The book exposes what has been primarily unspoken and a taboo in the employment aspect of the hospitality

industry. It presents a broad economic, cultural and sociopolitical backdrop for practices that have haunted and still haunt the industry. The book does not exaggerate the details of the state of neo-slavery in the hospitality industry. The ordeal that the authors describe is, if anything, understated but loudly speaks for itself.

For this reviewer, the book is fascinating and informative, co-written by four authors who are experts in hospitality and tourism, economics, sociology, governance, and management. The book appeals to academics (with more than 161 references in the bibliography) and critical practitioners (with concrete and specific examples and practical advice and recommendations for the hospitality industry). Models, figures and tables throughout the text help the reader understand and visualise the concepts being presented.

Overall, this is a thought-provoking book that students, academics and practitioners will appreciate and value worldwide, even though some readers might feel the text is written from a culturally "European" perspective. Reading the book is very instructive; students will see that working in hotels, restaurants, and bars is not as rosy as the industry and their schools sometimes portray. Behind the employees' hospitableness and bright smile sometimes lies a lot of sadness, misery and oppression. The editor is to be commended on shedding light on important issues that concern us all.

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Research in Hospitality Management

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Journal article

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Chapter in edited book

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