

Exploring the relationship between employee engagement and work performance in the food and beverage departments of 5-star hotels

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Abstract

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Research/Project Title Exploring the relationship between employee engagement and work performance in the food and beverage departments of 5-star hotels.		Number of words excluding abstract, references and appendices 13251 words
<p>The author draws inspiration for her dissertation from her experience in the hospitality industry and interests in the themes chosen. From subjective experience working in the industry in two different countries, she had noticed different approaches they took when it comes to employee engagement.</p> <p>This research aims to investigate the relationship between employee engagement and work performance, and if managers are giving importance to emotionally commit their employees. It seeks to do so by two questionnaires: one for food and beverage servers, and another for managers.</p> <p>From this investigation, it was found that managers in this industry have a good understanding of what elements engages their employees. However, it was also brought out that some of these elements are not given importance. Data also suggest that most of the employees' needs aren't being completely met, and not making them fully engaged. From this research, it was also brought out that 'Recognition from the management', 'The team', 'Opportunities to grow' and 'Good communication' were the top four elements that influences the employees' performance levels the most.</p> <p>It can be concluded that more awareness of the triggers of employee engagement is needed for organisations to implement them and create engagement.</p>		
Keywords Employee engagement, work performance, managers, employees, food and beverage departments.		

Declaration of Authenticity



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Declaration:

I hereby declare that this research study is based on the outcome of my own research. I, as the author, declare that this research study is my own composition which has not been previously produced for any other qualification.

The research study was conducted under the supervision of Mr. Claude Scicluna.

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Student's Signature

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Thank you,
Maria Fenech

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1. Introduction

The Maltese islands are quite dependant on the tourism and hospitality industry. As many tourists seek Malta as their traveling destination, competition arises in multiple sectors. Focusing on the hotel industry, specifically 5-star hotels, there must be an excellent level of service and customer satisfaction provided by the hotel in order to live up to its expectations. Apart from this, a hotel having a great reputation in Malta will also make a good name for the country as a destination.

The majority of the 5-star hotels in Malta have multiple food and beverage departments. These departments may include services such as banqueting, room service, restaurant dining, and so on. Such departments play a huge role in the customers' overall experience at the hotel. Being such a customer driven department, it has become vital to not only meet, but exceed the customer's expectations. The human resources of the departments are the key in achieving this, however there are many factors that affect the employees' level of performance in working towards this goal. Another asset of a hotel should be the engagement of their employees. Throughout this research, the author will be exploring the relationship between these two components, specifically in the food and beverage departments of 5-star hotels in Malta and Gozo.

1.1 Research Background

Diving into the research of this dissertation, the author has found many links and factors that make up and effect employee engagement and the employees' work performance. Based on academic literature, employees' performance levels were found to be mostly triggered by motivation, their behaviour, and their training and development (Achim, et al., 2013; Berkovich, 2016; Dlacic, et al. 2020; Ismail, 2019; Kamran, 2018; Li & Bao, 2020; Nethmini & Sanposh, 2011; Phiphadkusolkul, 2012; Rybnicek, et al., 2019; Sanposh, 2011; Setiyani, et al., 2019; Sweis, et al., 2019; Tung-Ju & Yenchun, 2019). Being motivated allows oneself to be driven into achieving goals, and it also acts as a psychological process for an employee to have a sense of direction at work. Influence has also been highlighted in this topic (Sanposh, 2011; Phiphadkusolkul, 2012; Achim, et al., 2013; Kamran, 2018). In this case, any manager has the power to influence their colleagues when it comes to showing motivation and positive behaviour. Creating healthy relationships, giving guidance, showing high energy levels, having a good mood, and taking positive approaches are all ways of influencing (Berkovich, 2016; Li & Bao, 2020). Providing training and development opportunities gives power to the employees, as they are learning and develop their skills to better themselves and reach organisational goals (Nethmini & Ismail, 2019; Sweis, et al., 2019). By

doing so, guest loyalty is also being hindered due to the improved performance of their servers. As the asset of guest loyalty is becoming popular in this industry, employee loyalty should be given this same priority.

Employee engagement is a factor that creates an emotional connection and relationship between one's work and themselves. Hotels should give the bond and relationship between them and their employees great importance. Various studies have shown that having job satisfaction, showing recognition to employees, and building trust are the three main elements to achieve engagement (Afsar, et al., 2018; Feys, et al., 2013; Goswami & Dsilva, 2019; Håvold, et al., 2021; Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2018; Nešić, et al., 2020; Rai, et al., 2018; Tirta & Enrika, 2020; Tran Thi & Tran, 2020). Job satisfaction is a feeling an employee feels when their expectations and needs from a job are met (Tirta & Enrika, 2020). Satisfied employees are said to be more productive, and this satisfaction builds a strong foundation to create loyalty. Simulating recognition with employees will boost their motivation and mood, as they are being recognised for their good job (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2018). Trust is an important condition that must be present between the employee, co-workers, and the organisation. Trust is having mutual expectations being met and is gained by having frequent positive encounters (Håvold, et al., 2021). By receiving these elements, employees will form an attachment with the organisation and the work itself, creating engagement.

1.2 Research Aims and Objectives

The inspiration for this study came from the author's personal experience in the hospitality industry. Having worked in two countries, she has noticed different engagement levels and approaches when it comes to this subject from the foreign country to Malta. She felt the need to investigate this further and incorporate work performance in her study. The purpose and main aim for this study is to identify if managers in the Maltese food and beverage hotel industry are giving importance to emotionally commit their employees to the organisation. Other aims the researcher would like to uncover are; if employees are engaging at their place of work, and what factors influences the employee's work performance. The targeted audiences for this study are food and beverage servers in 5-star hotels and their managers. Two questionnaires will be used: one for the food and beverage servers, and another for their managers. Choosing this method of data collection will allow the researcher to reach her desired aims for this investigation.

1.3 Dissertation Structure

This dissertation starts by the literature review chapter, where the author goes through an intense period of data collection. This chapter is divided into three sections; Employee engagement, Employee work performance, and Emotional commitment. Each of these sections has been further divided into another three sub sections. The flow of the literature review shows the reader how the topics discussed form a chain effect to one another.

Then, the researcher moves on to the methodology chapter, where she explains in depth the research process she took. She discussed the aims of her research and connects them to the reasoning behind the chosen method of research. She explains that the two close-ended questionnaires will mirror each other, meaning that minor changes were made to the questions to make them relevant to the targeted participant (Appendix 1; Appendix 2). This is so she can compare each answer from one questionnaire to another, gaining a different perspective from the two audiences. A sample size of 100 food and beverage servers, and 10 managers was targeted. Ethical considerations were also made clear in this chapter.

The results, analysis and discussion chapter share the empirical findings from the two questionnaires. There was a total of 104 participants from the food and beverage servers' questionnaires, and 10 participants from the managers' questionnaire. Here, a discussion is made by the researcher where she tests and answers her research purpose, aims, and objectives.

2. Literature Review

The literature review has been split into three main headings, each containing three sub-headings of their own. These are; Employee engagement with the sub-headings Job satisfaction, Recognition, and Trust; Employee work performance with the sub-headings Motivation, Behaviour at work, and Training and development; and Emotional commitment with the subheadings Meaningful work, Good relationships, and Teamwork. While conducting research, these specific areas stood out to be the most relevant to the research. It is believed that this literature review will be essential to support the analysis of results further on in the research.

As competitive as the hospitality industry can be, it has become vital for organisations to invest in their employees and their engagement levels, leading to better work performance (Tung-Ju & Yenchun, 2019). Some researchers argue that training, empowerment, and rewards are the three key indicators of work performance (Afsar, et al., 2018). When employees are given opportunities for training, they are rewarded for their good work, and they are empowered, it is more likely that they form a feeling of attachment with the work and organisation as well as increase their drive to perform better (Afsar, et al., 2018). While this was proven to be true, endless other factors have been found that prove to better work performance, as it will be seen in the research below.

Motivation has been one of the topics that stood out the most in the research. Most of the papers found in the different areas researched, have mentioned motivation to be one of the key factors. A clear analysis has been made that each topic correlates to each other, forming a chain effect. If one of these factors is missing or lacks in an organisation, it will have an effect on the others. As this is just an analysis that was made by the author, she is determined to support this by her own analysis for the results of the research.

2.1 Employee engagement

Employee engagement is explained to be a positive psychological state that relates to work and self-realisation (Tung-Ju & Yenchun, 2019). Hoole & Bonnema (2015) defines employee engagement as a positive energetic connection between the job and the employee. Job satisfaction, recognition, and trust were the three topics to be highlighted in various researches about employee engagement. Without and one of these three elements, employee engagement will not be achieved (Afsar, et al., 2018; Feys, et al., 2013; Goswami & Dsilva, 2019; Håvold, et

al., 2021; Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2018; Nešić, et al., 2020; Rai, et al., 2018; Tirta & Enrika, 2020; Tran Thi & Tran, 2020).

2.1.1 Job satisfaction

Tirta & Enrika (2020) explain job satisfaction to be an opinion or feeling an employee feels on their job. This is gained by being satisfied in various factors, such as ones level of education, job title, the type of work one does, the skills gained, salary, work benefits, the environment at work, opportunities of growth, and security. They also express the importance of satisfied employees. They say that these employees are more productive, more loyal to a company or organisation, and they tend to stay with it in times of crisis. Taking another approach, Tran Thi & Tran (2020) brought out that an organisation must meet and exceed their employees' expectations of the job, just as they do with their customers. Needless to say, they mention that the higher the satisfaction, the greater the loyalty will be, and vice versa. Goswami & Dsilva (2019) make a striking point in their research by saying that hospitality organisations must create a culture that puts their employees first, and then their customers. By doing so, job satisfaction will be gained, and then so will customers satisfaction.

Kloutsiniotis & Mihail (2018) discuss job satisfaction in their research. They explain that the employees' needs must be met in order to have job satisfaction. Training and development within a company gives the employees reassurance that they are considered to be an asset to the company and worth investing in. This also portrays that the employer wishes to build a long lasting relationship with their employees. Performance appraisals are an intangible way of communicating to the employee that they are worth investing in and help them grow their skills. Linking to this, an internal marketing policy will result in the same outcomes but will have a more tangible feel to it. In addition, sharing information and being as transparent as possible with the employees will make them feel trusted and respected, and in return reciprocate that feeling. A culture of recognition within an organisation will also stimulate positive feelings in the employee, such as the feeling of being valued. All the points Kloutsiniotis & Mihail (2018) explained will create job satisfaction and a stable ground to build commitment in the employees.

2.1.2 Recognition

As mentioned above by Kloutsiniotis & Mihail (2018), a culture of recognition in an organisation will stimulate positive feelings in the employees. Tirta & Enrika (2020) built on this by saying that it is a way to show appreciation towards their employees for doing a good job. The employees' motivational levels will boost when recognition is shown, as they are being recognised for their efforts they put in their work. Recognition is often linked to rewards. Tirta & Enrika (2020) categorised rewards into two: explicit and implicit. Explicit rewards are those in monetary forms, such as incentives and raises in salaries. On the other hand, implicit rewards are shown in an intangible way, such as compliments and appreciation. Both Rai, et al. (2018) and Tirta & Enrika (2020) also considers recognition to be one of the basic needs of an employee in a place of work. Rai, et al. (2018) adds to this that, unfortunately, many organisations are lacking in. This same research proved that rewards that aren't monetary driven, creates more motivation and increases employee retention. Similarly, Feys, et al. (2013) explains that monetary incentives only increase motivation and satisfaction levels in employees for the short term when compared to other intangible efforts that were mentioned above. They express that communication barriers must be broken down between the employee and the manager so that frequent listening and appreciation is practiced.

Organisations can use this powerful tool of recognition to gain the upper hand in the market by growing and retaining the various talents they have (Feys, et al., 2013). Recognition has to be used with attention and fairly, as if it doesn't, a culture of losers and winners may be created between employees. Elevated employee engagement, reduced stress, and a feeling of belonging are hindered in the employee as a result of recognition of positive actions and good work. Improvements in motivation, decreased employee turnover, and improvements in performance are also results of this (Feys, et al., 2013). Both Feys, et al. (2013) and Kloutsiniotis & Mihail (2018) agree that when recognition is practiced frequently, employees tend to show off their efforts, their skills and they manage their tasks better. As this pattern continues, they will also be influenced by this practice and starts showing recognition to their colleagues as well, leading to satisfaction. Empowerment have also been linked with recognition. According to Afsar, et al. (2018), recognition, empowerment, and training are three linked indicators that work towards accomplishing high performance at work. When an organisation gives these three indicators to their employees, the employee will reciprocate the gesture by performing better at work, and forming a greater attachment to the work and organisation (Afsar, et al., 2018).

2.1.3 Trust

Trust is defined as a single psychological condition where one shows vulnerability on the basis of receiving favourable expectations from another (Håvold, et al., 2021; Nešić, et al., 2020). It is said that trust is created by having positive relationships between co-workers, which eventually also leads to engagement and improved performance (Håvold, et al., 2021). Moreover, low levels of trust between an employee and a manager often shows dissatisfaction and low productivity in employees, as well as them not giving the best customer service. Here, trust is highlighted to be an important factor every employee in any industry should have (Håvold, et al., 2021). Similarly, Nešić, et al. (2020) explains that trust is an interaction that requires mutual expectations to be met, as well as the feeling of mutual security. Commitment is also stemmed from trust, as the same authors explain that this element connects trust with employee engagement and high levels of work performance.

A research by Afsar, et al. (2018) mentions that a high quality relationship forms between the manager and the employee when there is trust between the two parties. They explain that when trust is low, an employee feels that the manager is negative, unreliable and unpredictable. Here, employees have very low work performance as they feel that they will be taken advantage of at any moment. They will also lose interest in performing their tasks, and reduce the level of engagement. On the other hand, when trust is high, an employee feels that their manager is positive, reliable and predictable. This feeling instantly triggers motivation within the employee, as well as forming an attachment to the work itself and the organisation. They also make a point that today's hospitality industry carries its share of uncertainties and risks. However, because of high trust, employees will overlook these risks and uncertainties (Afsar, et al., 2018; Tu, et al., 2020).

Kloutsiniotis & Mihail (2018) researched about the relationship between employee attitudes, high performance practices and service quality. They took a unique angle and integrated the role of trust into this relationship. They explain that, as time goes by, trusting the employer is becoming an even more important element to businesses to keep growing. It has also been proven that this trust increases efficiency, effectiveness and the performance levels of an organisation, as well as hindering positive work-related behaviours in the employees. It was proven by these authors that employees are more cooperative, work more, put more effort in their work, and stay with the organisation for longer than others when they have trust in their employer. Kloutsiniotis & Mihail (2018) explain that trust is a very complex subject. When doing their study, they claim that one might think that trust is gained based on the actions, character and words of the manager. In

reality, the employee's trust in their manager is gained by the organisational outcomes they have and by the decisions they take. They also mention that other elements go into the trusting process. When managers share information with them and be transparent, especially during difficult times, it is more likely that employees increase their trust in their managers because there is good communication being practiced. Being given training, space for growth and job security are also important elements employees seek in order to trust their manager more (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2018; Oliveira, et al., 2020; Tu, et al., 2020).

2.2 Employee work performance

Various papers have repetitively linked motivation, employee work behaviour, and training and development to be the major factors to determine employee work performance (Achim, et al., 2013; Berkovich, 2016; Dlacic, et al. 2020; Ismail, 2019; Kamran, 2018; Li & Bao, 2020; Nethmini & Sanposh, 2011; Phiphadkusolkul, 2012; Rybnicek, et al., 2019; Sanposh, 2011; Setiyani, et al., 2019; Sweis, et al., 2019; Tung-Ju & Yenchun, 2019). As it will be discussed in the sub chapters below, these three factors have other aspects that influences them and create a chain effect.

2.2.1 Motivation

Sanposh (2011), Setiyani, et al. (2019) and Sweis, et al. (2019) has explained motivation to be an aimed force that drives a person towards their goals to fulfil them. Achim, et al. (2013) and Phiphadkusolkul (2012) adds to this explanation by saying that motivation is the psychological process that gives direction and purpose to an individual to reach unsatisfied needs. A research by Rybnicek, et al. (2019) used McClelland's (1985) need theory to conduct their research on how one's needs influence their motivation effects. In a few words, McClelland's (1985) theory explains that when the need for affiliation, achievement, and power are activated, employees will get more motivated. Rybnicek, et al. (2019) did a neuroscientific study, taking a reward system approach, to validate this theory. The need for affiliation is when the employee seeks good relationships and creates teamwork at their place of work. The need for achievement will challenge one's self to accomplish difficult but doable goals. The need for power is explained to be quite addictive and the employee will be eager to grow in their job status and be looked up to. High dopamine and serotonin levels are released when these three factors are achieved, so, this link will get addictive to the employee because they want to experience the same rush again. Results showed that when rewards are given time to be set up and matched closely to one's needs, this will trigger a stronger

neural activation that will increase motivation. They also make a point in their findings that monetary rewards should be swapped with others, such as providing a better work atmosphere (Rybnicek, et al., 2019).

Sanposh (2011), Phiphadkusolkul (2012), Achim, et al. (2013), and Kamran (2018) all agree that a motivator, or manager, plays a great role in the influence of this motivation, which can be used to maximise productivity. Managers also have a duty to understand what motivates their employees and improve it. Modern managers should guide their employees towards a goal, and it is important to give the proper knowledge to achieve them (Kamran, 2018). A research by Achim, et al. (2013) discussed that anyone can be motivated by many ways or forms, but not everyone has the ability to motivate others. Adding to Phiphadkusolkul's (2012) research, they say that a leader should analyse their employee's different ways of thinking, their interests, and wishes to further trigger the feeling of desire to want more. Here, the drive function will be activated within the employee, in return benefiting the company and the employee. Going back to the industrial revolution, the idea of motivation revolved around money. It was understood that if an employee works hard, they will be rewarded by money which in return they will be motivated to work to increase production levels. This reasoning was changed by a research called the Hawthorne Studies which was done by Elton Mayo between 1924 to 1932 (Achim, et al., 2013; Rairdon, 2006). This study brought out that money isn't the only motivator. Social factors at work were linked to the employee's output and satisfaction, which meant that increased motivation and performance related to the employee's feelings and attitudes.

Sanposh (2011) stated in his research that motivation can be affected by various factors. Firstly, every individual is different, and they all have different values, needs, and attitudes, which in return will bring unique abilities and internets to their place of work. The job characteristics is another factor that effects the motivation of the employee. Job characteristics in involves various aspects to a work position that influences the challenges and its limitations. The last factor he mentions are organisational practices, which includes managerial practices, rules, reward systems, and human resource policies. He also amplified that managers must look into their factors, and analyse how they are effecting their employees' motivation and performance levels. The work itself, recognition, opportunity for growth, achievement, and responsibility are also factors that affect motivation (Phiphadkusolkul, 2012; Sanposh, 2011). Lack of motivators will lead to dissatisfied employees, and will have negative repercussions of the employee and the company (Sanposh, 2011).

2.2.2 Behaviour at work

Taking both the manager's and the employee's behaviour at work, this factor can influence immensely the employee's performance. Managers who use a transformational leadership style tend to care for the relationships that are being built at work. After creating a healthy relationship with their employees, they will then use that to guide their followers towards goals and keeping them on the right track (Berkovich, 2016). According to Berkovich (2016), these leaders have the upper hand when it comes to influencing their employees. Taking this point further, Berkovich (2016) amplified that these managers are also very mindful of their own behaviour at work. They often show constant high levels of motivation, high levels of productivity, having a good mood, smile, and take a positive approach in everything. After showing these assets, they will most likely transmit them to their employees because of the influence they have on them, leading to motivation and better performance (A. Agarwal, 2014; Berkovich, 2016; Li & Bao, 2020).

Similarly, Tung-Ju & Yenchun (2019) explained that the employees' cognitive processes, feelings and behaviour at work depends on the perceived emotions of their manager. This process is called 'emotional labour'. For a more refined term, emotional labour is when a person's psychological and physical state is accordant with that of another when they are observing the way the other behaviour is perceived and expressed (Tung-Ju & Yenchun, 2019). These researchers also link the topic of motivation into behaviour. They point out that the level of motivation also determines the type of behaviour they show at work, so, when there is negative emotions (like sadness), low motivational levels occur.

De Clercq, et al. (2019) focused on a deeper and more sensitive level of what influences negative behaviours at work. The negative influences that they focused on are having organisational unfairness, dysfunctional management, harassment in the workplace, and cruel work culture. Such factors may seem excessive, but they are a reality in some environments (De Clercq, et al., 2019). These authors expressed that employees that find themselves in this environment feel frustrated, irritable and struggle to complete their job. These employees also feel afraid to speak up, which can create anxiety. In contrast, Li & Bao (2020) focused more on the factors that influence positive behaviours at work. They explain that positive behaviour in employees is rooted by how well they are treated at work, which builds psychological safety. From another approach, Clancy (2019) said that a lack of psychological safety can create an atmosphere that resembles to the one De Clercq, et al. (2019) explains. It should be a must for companies to create a positive,

welcoming and respectful atmosphere, which leads to a psychologically safe environment (Clancy, 2019).

2.2.3 Training and development

Nethmini & Ismail (2019) says that the human resource is the most important and basic resource a company will have. Training and development is said to be the key to reach any organisation's goals. This is a way to further improve of the skills of the employees, improve their attitudes and behaviours, and share knowledge (Khaskhelly & Khoso, 2018; Nethmini & Ismail, 2019; Sweis, et al., 2019). Training and development is also power. Sweis, et al. (2019) defines training and development. They explain that training is the action that improves the employees' skills, knowledge, attitudes, and experience for present results, while development is the action that improves these competencies for the future. Dlacic, et al. (2020) supports this statement by pointing out that employees who are working in an environment that invests in their skills, education and communication will lead to a better service quality, motivation, improved performance, employee satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty.

When employees gain training and have the correct skills, they will feel a sense of power to perform their tasks better (Sweis, et al., 2019). Nethmini & Ismail (2019) dedicated a part of their research to the relationship between training and employee performance. They report that, even though training forms a large part of the level of performance, other factors go in hand with it such as motivation, rewards, organisational culture, work environment, skills, and communication. They also say that training help to solve the gap between the wanted goals and the actual execution of them. Apart from all of this, Khaskhelly & Khoso (2018) claim that skilful and trained employees gives the upper hand to an organisation and gain a competitive advantage. They also claim that management should see training and development as an investment, rather than an expense.

2.3 Emotional commitment

Employee engagement is the employee's emotional commitment to their work and to its goals. Meaningful work, good relationships, and teamwork are the three main elements to be found that make up the most of emotional commitment (Asik-Dizdar & Esen, 2016; Bhatnagar & Aggarwal, 2020; Hoole & Bonnema, 2015; Hurtado Justiniano, et al., 2018; Maximo, et al., 2019; Purayidathil & Villavicencio, 2014; Qamari, et al., 2020; Song, et al., 2017; Tung-Ju & Yenchun, 2019; Van

Wingerden & Van der Stoep, 2018). This emotional aspect in engagement is considered to be crucial in order to achieve employee engagement and great work performance.

2.3.1 Meaningful work

Organisations have taken various approaches to keep their employees engaged in their place of work. Hoole & Bonnema (2015) discussed that monetary rewards have been given to employees to hinder engagement; however, it was discovered that meaningful work has a much better effect on engagement and performance levels. For such an approach to be invested in from organisations, it will require a great deal of research. They must study their employees on what their interests are, what motivates them, and what encourages them to perform in the best way. Needless to say, the employees themselves must be happy in their line of work as well. Without this, meaningful work will not be achieved (Hoole & Bonnema, 2015).

The high internal drive employees gain when they have a meaningful work results in positive outcomes. Hoole & Bonnema (2015) found out that these employees work very hard, and as a result, they do feel tired. However, this tiredness has nothing to do with burnouts. They can easily strike a healthy balance and adapt to various situations. A philosophical sense of purpose, fulfilment, harmony, and happiness is also experienced by an employee in this state (Asik-Dizdar & Esen, 2016). Zeglat & Janbeik (2019) says that meaningful work unlocks the employee's full work potential, which leads them to their true purpose at work. Having said that, they continue by saying that having a meaningful work will also lead the employee to figure out and understand the purpose in their life. It is said that this concept can be quite underrated, but it is crucial for employees to unlock in order to work towards the organisation's goals (Zeglat & Janbeik, 2019). Zeglat & Janbeik (2019) also found a link between meaningfulness, and work behaviour and performance. Meaningfulness was proven to create a high level of commitment to an organisation with the improvement and increase of the employees' work behaviour and performance.

Bhatnagar & Aggarwal (2020) discussed in their research that a person search for meaningful work ahead of other qualities in a job, such as the hours of work, promotions, job security, and income. They also say that there are six main features that make up meaningful work. First, the employee must be put in the job role at their own free will. Secondly, the employee must be given space to work independently and autonomously. Then, the work given to the employee must be able to provide the worker with opportunities to grow and develop. The fourth feature involves the wage, which must be sufficient enough for the employee's physical welfare. The fifth feature in

meaningful work is that it has to support the moral development of the worker, and the last feature is that the work mustn't be restrictive of responsibilities and freedom from the management. It is said that hindering meaningful work will allow the employee to feel empowered, supported, comfortable, and independent, all leading to engagement and high performance levels (Bhatnagar & Aggarwal, 2020).

2.3.2 Good relationships

Song, et al. (2017) took a unique angle in their study by linking relationships at work, more specifically between an employee and a manager, with voice behaviour. When creating personal relationships with colleagues both on and off work, better trust, interactions and unity is created. This study shows that this kind of relationship opens up to a culture of open minded discussions, decisions made in unity, and voice self-expression (Song, et al., 2017). Both Tung-Ju & Yenchun (2019) and Van Wingerden & Van der Stoep (2018) mention that the relationship between the employee and the manager affects whether the employee expresses their feelings or not. Building a good relationship with the employees will allow the employee to feel more comfortable in expressing their feeling. When feelings and emotions are bottled up, this can result in lack of engagement and reduction in performance levels.

Good relationships at work is of great importance in order to keep productivity levels high (Purayidathil & Villavicencio, 2014; Sanchez-Franco, et al., 2019). When there is unity between the employees, a happy and healthy working environment is created, making everyone feel safe, secure, and comfortable. Having said that, cooperation and communication are skills that would help employees to get along with each other and form a relationship. Purayidathil & Villavicencio (2014) explains that good relationships at work also helps to ease stress and share the workload equally. Every employee in an organisation needs each other to ask for advice, share their feelings, share ideas, give feedback and trust one another. Employees spend a big part of their day together, so, the relationship between each other must be healthy and positive (Maximo, et al., 2019; Purayidathil & Villavicencio, 2014). As the employee feels secure and confident, they will also increase their motivational levels while decreasing the chance of fights and conflicts with others. Purayidathil & Villavicencio (2014) emphasises the importance of good relationships between the manager and their subordinates. All the positive outcomes mentioned above stay the same in this situation. Apart from these, a good, positive and healthy relationship with a manager will inspire the employees to reach a common goal, and above all else, a team is created (Purayidathil & Villavicencio, 2014; Tung-Ju & Yenchun, 2019).

2.3.3 Teamwork

Teamwork is identified to be a group of two or more people who have a common goal or task to fulfil together from the different feelings, actions and thoughts each team member expresses (Qamari, et al., 2020). In a teamwork, every member should carry their fair share of the weight of the task, and also work together to ensure that value, performance and coordination is achieved. Having said that, a team has the ability to overcome any obstacles they might face in achieving their goal or task, while still keeping the same momentum. If there is no sense of teamwork, this will be more challenging to overcome (Qamari, et al., 2020).

A team should have various skills in order to be successful. Having different skills will enable them to be more creative, contribute different ideas, learn from each other, and achieve goals (Hurtado Justiniano, et al., 2018). Teamwork and good relationships are linked to create a sense of belonging to an employee as well, which is one of our human basic needs. Having a group of people who work together harmoniously towards a goal will not only increase their performance, but also motivate and engage the employee (Hurtado Justiniano, et al., 2018; Qamari, et al., 2020).

To sum up this literature review, many authors and researchers have shown many elements that make up employee engagement, work performance, and emotional commitment. These three factors are linked to one another, and they are held together by nine elements. These are: job satisfaction, recognition, trust, motivation, behaviour at work, training and development, meaningful work, relationships, and teamwork. These elements form a chain that if one is lacking, it will have repercussions on the rest. It has become vital for managers to understand these elements and know that engages and emotionally commits their employees to the place of work. If this is not done, employee engagement will not be achieved. Having done this research, it will help the author to link what she has found to the research method of data collection. The information presented in this chapter helps this author in her analysis, and to reach her aims in answering the research questions.

3. Methodology

Employee engagement has become a vital asset to any organisation. The food and beverage industry is constantly in competition as it being challenged with different trends and endless types of establishments. The competitive edge is to foster employee engagement, which will create a ripple effect on endless other benefits, as it was seen in the literature review. The relationship between employee engagement and their performance is believed to have a strong link to each other that will benefit both the employees and the organisation.

The aim of this study is to create a research in the food and beverage departments of 5-star hotels in the Maltese islands to investigate if employee engagement is given priority by the managers of said departments. The author would also like to discover if employees in these departments are engaging, and what influences their performance at work. The target audiences for this research were food and beverage servers and their managers. These two targets were selected as they are the ones that operate in the heart of this type of department, and because the researcher wanted to focus on the front of house human resource.

After identifying the aims of the study, two initial research methods were chosen. These qualitative methods were questionnaires for food and beverage servers, and interviews for their managers. At this stage, the author felt that these two methods would be the best tools to extract the most information out of the two targets. As she was conducting research, she thought it would be best to turn the interview method for the managers to a questionnaire as well. The reason for this change was so that the two questionnaires would be constructed in a way to mirror each other in order to gain a true perspective from both audiences from the same questions. Also, this way will allow the research to gain data from food and beverage departments in 5 star hotels in the Maltese islands as a whole, rather than the hotels being analysed separately.

3.1 Questionnaires

A questionnaire can be both a qualitative and/ or quantitative method of data collection. It contains a set of questions that asks the participant to answer about their opinions, attitudes and/ or experiences on the topic. The design of the questionnaire can be a lengthy process. One must ensure that the questions will answer the aims and objectives of the research being done, including the layout and order of the questions, and also how one will distribute it. Other

components of a questionnaire also involves the decision of the target audience, the sample size, the cleaning of the data gathered, and also their analysis (Bhandari, 2021).

Two main questionnaire methods can be found. These are self-administered and researcher-administered questionnaires. Self-administered questionnaires can be shared online or in a tangible format, all having identical questions to all the participants. They are very cost effective, they are anonymous, and also very easy to distribute. On the other hand, researcher-administered questionnaires are similar to interviews, and they take place in person, on the phone, or even online between two servers. Even though this type of questionnaire takes time, it will ensure that the participants fit the targeted audience, clarifications on questions or answers is easily made, and the response rate is often very high (Bhandari, 2021). For this research, the author will be using online self-administered questionnaires.

The questions can be open-ended and/ or close-ended. Open-ended questions allow the researcher to gain a large range of answers, while close-ended limits them to the provided answers (Bhandari, 2021). For this research, the author will be opting for close-ended questions using ordinal variables, nominal variables, and likert scale rating.

The nature of this research takes place in food and beverage departments in 5-star hotels. Choosing the food and beverage servers of these departments was the natural option to fulfil the first questionnaire and the one of the aims of this research. These employees are the ones that communicates the most with the customers and residents of the hotel. By aiming one of the questionnaires to these employees, the researcher will be able to understand their perspective and answer the research questions in line with her goals. The target audience for the second questionnaire were the managers of these food and beverage departments. This perspective will contrast the answers gained from the first questionnaire, answering if the managers and their employees have the same idea when it comes to employee engagement.

The construction of the close-ended questionnaires was a process that took place as the author was writing the literature review. As she identifies certain gaps in the research, she took note of possible questions for the first questionnaire (Appendix 1). Her next step was to filter the questions and refine them. A set of 16 questions were finalised and appropriate answering methods were chosen. A mix of multiple choice and likert scale answers were given to each question. After the questionnaire for food and beverage servers was finalised, she mirrored each question to the second questionnaire (Appendix 2), making minor changes to direct each question to a manager's

perspective. She then moved on to conduct a pilot study on close friends to ensure the tool was clearly understood. She tested the questionnaire by using an online questionnaire portal called Survey Monkey, which is the same one she would use to share it with the target audience. Here, no changes were made to the original tool. It is believed that these two questionnaires will gain appropriate data to fulfil any gaps in the research. A targeted sample size of 10 managers and 100 food and beverage servers (one manager for ten servers) was calculated in order to have realistic and sufficient data to analyse.

Moving on to the sharing of the tool, the researcher gained various emails from online sources of all the 5-star hotels in the Maltese islands, hoping to get a good response. The email mentions an explanation of the research, the aims of the research, an explanation of the constructed questionnaires, and their respective target audience. The email also stated the approximate time to complete the questionnaire, and it was made clear that all the participants and their responses will be anonymous, kept confidential, and used solely for the purpose of this research. The links to the respective questionnaires were attached in the email, and gratitude and appreciation was expressed. Exactly 24 five star hotels were contacted, two of which agreed to take part and help in the research, one expressed that they cannot take part in the research, and another replied by saying that they didn't have an appropriate food and beverage department to be eligible to take part in the questionnaire. The rest of the 20 hotels, did not reply back to any of the emails. Apart from this method, the researcher also shared both questionnaires using online platforms such as social media. Being an experienced employee in the hospitality sector, the author managed to reach many participants to conduct the questionnaires and reach the targeted sample size. The questionnaires were available for access for three weeks. The food and beverage servers' questionnaire had 104 respondents, while the managers' questionnaire had 10 respondents.

The data was analysed by using Survey Monkey. The software provided various charts that allowed the researcher to analyse and compare the data easily. As it will be seen in the Analysis of Results section below, the researcher started analysing the data by taking the first question from both questionnaires and comparing the answers. She then moved on to the second question from both questionnaires and compared them again. She continues this process for the rest of the questions from both questionnaires, always moving parallel and mirroring the questions to the answers from both questionnaires. This was one of the main reasons the researcher opted to use close-ended questionnaires, so that she can analyse and compare better the answers.

Choosing a close-ended method of questionnaire meant that the answers will be limited to the options given, thus not gathering the true feelings and other opinions the participant might have had. Limited contact information was found and most of the hotels that were contacted weren't helpful towards the research. Having such low response meant that there is a chance that most of the responses were from a low number and of 5-star hotels. It was the aim of the researcher that she would have a sufficient number of responses from a diverse number of the 5-star hotels around the island. However, this cannot be proven as there were many respondents that accessed the link via a social media platform.

3.2 Ethical considerations

This study and its research has been in line with the ethical guidelines advised by the Institute of Tourism Studies for writing a Bachelor dissertation. The following are all the ethical considerations the author has considered throughout the whole research.

The reviewing of the literature has been a process that was compliant with all ethical considerations, including the collection of the data, their storage, the way it was handled, and also its analysis. The literature review was respectful towards their original authors, hence it was carefully cited as per the guidelines given by the institute.

All the participants of the questionnaire were made aware of the aims of the research, its background, and more information about the study (Appendix 1; Appendix 2). By doing so, this allowed the participant to be aware of the nature of the study to answer the questions truthfully. By starting the questionnaire, the participants gave their consent to be part of the study. Additionally, the author stated that all the participants will be anonymous, and the answers will be kept confidential and used solely for the purposes of the research.

The author values and respects all the participants and hotels that accepted to participate and aid in this research. Furthermore, she will keep all the known participants' and hotels' identity confidential to safeguard them, as it was made clear to them.

4. Results, Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter, the findings from the two questionnaires have been presented and analysed. Are managers in the Maltese hospitality industry giving importance to emotionally commit their employees to the organisation? This is the main research question the researcher would like to answer. Other questions she'd like answered are if employees are engaging at their place of work, and what influences the employee's performance. Aiming one questionnaire to food and beverage servers, and another to managers allowed the researcher to compare the different answers and perspectives from the two target audiences. By doing so, the researcher believes that she has managed to fulfil her aims in answering them in the best way possible.

4.1 Results from the two questionnaires

Close-ended questions were constructed to make these two questionnaires. As it can be seen in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, these two questionnaires were designed to mirror each other in the questions and answer choices. From this design, the researcher will be able to gain and compare the perspective from both audiences when answering the same questions. Minor changes were made to alter the question and answer choice to make sense to the respective audience. The online questionnaires were shared by email to 5-star hotels across Malta and Gozo, and through sharing on social media platforms.

A total of 104 respondents have been gathered from the food and beverage servers, while 10 respondents from the managers' questionnaires have been gathered. The data will be presented as follows. Data with the same question and answer choices will be combined in one chart so that a clear comparison can be made. The rest of the questions that mirror each other but have different wording and answer choices will be shown in separate labelled charts. These will be placed next to each other so that a clear comparison can still be made. Each figure will be labelled and numbered, together with a description.

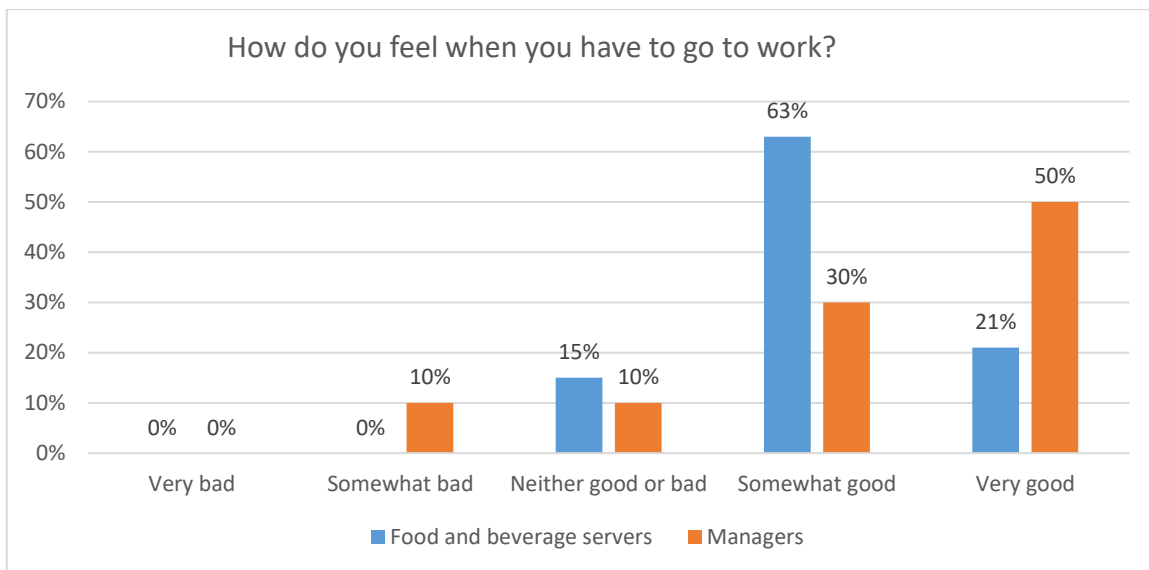


Figure 1. The feeling towards going to work.

From the first Figure, we can see the results of the participants when they were asked how they felt when they have to go to work. The data gathered varied from the two questionnaires. Most of the food and beverage servers felt 'Somewhat good', while 21% felt 'Very good'. On the other hand, half of the managers felt 'Very good', and another 30% felt 'Somewhat good'. Low ratings for the other feelings were selected from both audiences, which indicates that most of the participants feel good about going to work.

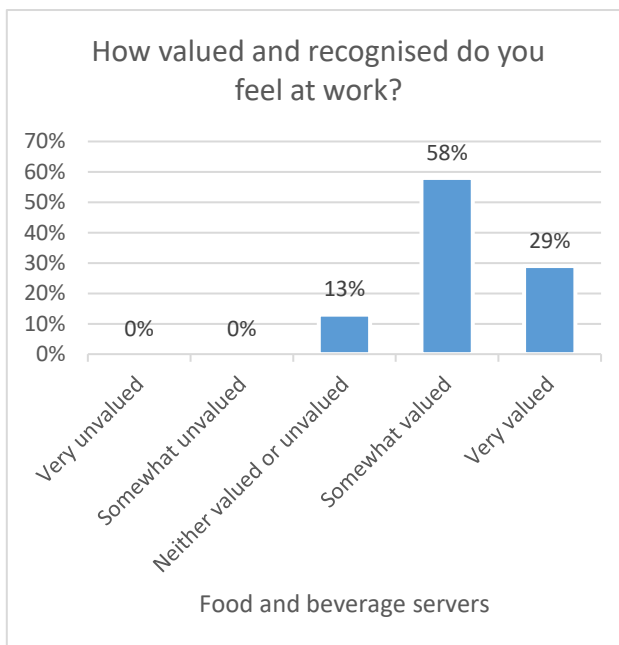


Figure 2. Are employees recognised?



Figure 3. Do managers show recognition?

Based on the gathered data (Figure 2), more than half of the food and beverage servers feel 'Somewhat valued' in their department. The rest of the data resulted in 'Very valued' at 29%, following with the feeling 'Neither valued or unvalued' at 13%. Such information means that even though a large number of participants feel valued, there are still 14 respondents that doesn't share this feeling and recognition. When the managers were asked if they show recognition to their employees (Figure 3), the results showed a tie between 'Sometimes' and 'Always'.

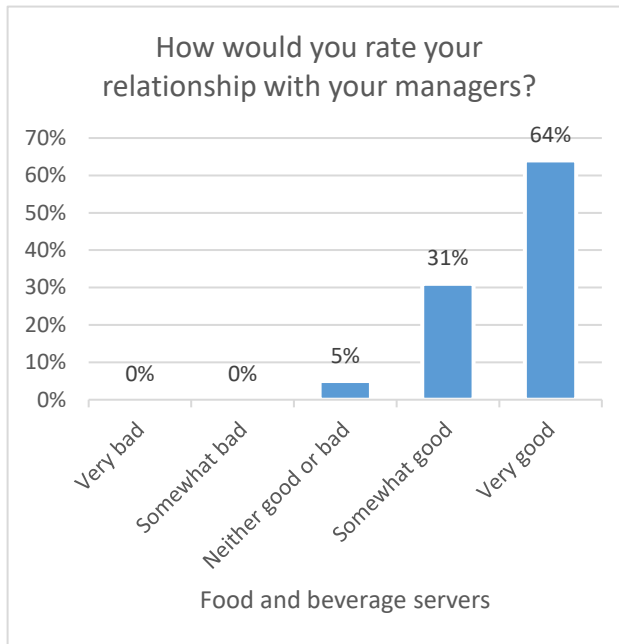


Figure 4. The relationship with managers.

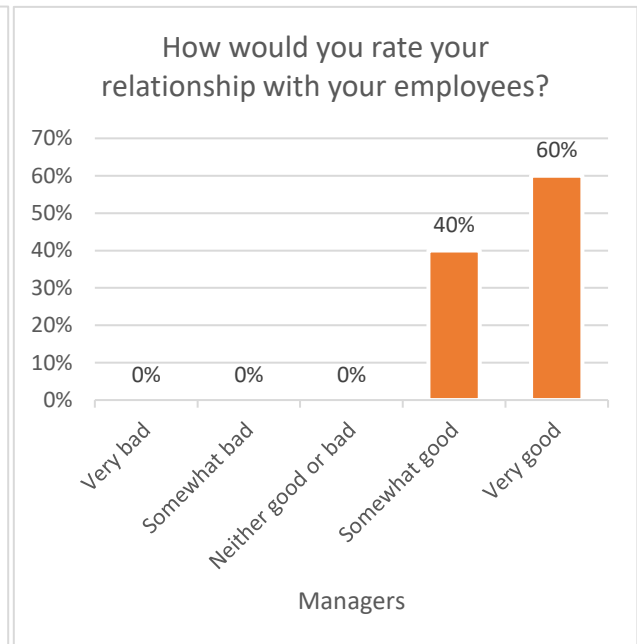


Figure 5. The relationship with employees.

From Figures 4 and 5, it seems like the responses are quite similar. Both participants think that the relationship between them is mostly 'Very good', followed by 'Somewhat good'. Only 5 respondents from Figure 4 think that the relationship is 'Neither good or bad'. From the data presented, the impression is given that there is quite a good level of a positive relationship between the managers and their employees.

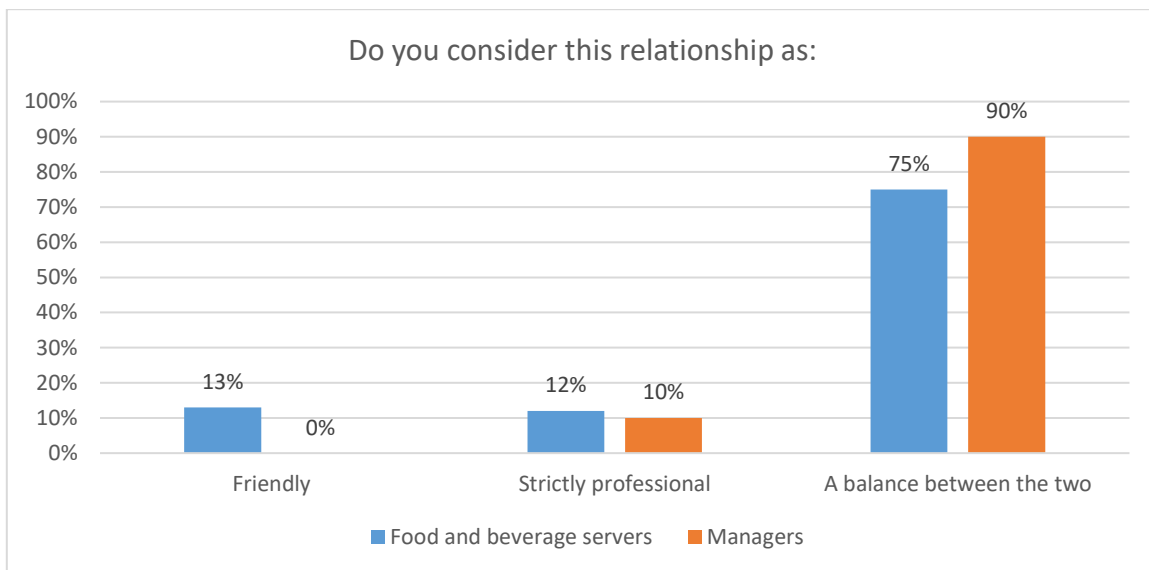


Figure 6. What type of relationship does the employee and the manager have with each other?

Following the previous question, both the food and beverage servers and the managers were asked to rate their relationship (Figure 6). It seems like most of the participants from both audiences think that their relationship is a balance between being friendly and professional. A low rating was brought out from both audiences that think that their relationship is 'Strictly professional'. Ranking in the middle, some of the food and beverage servers think that this relationship is 'Friendly', while none of the managers think this. This Figure shows the impression that there is a good balance in the relationship between the two target audiences.

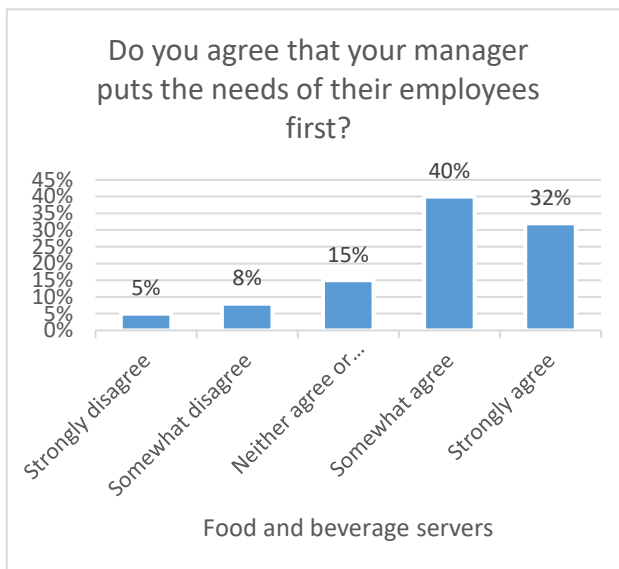


Figure 7. Are employees being put first?

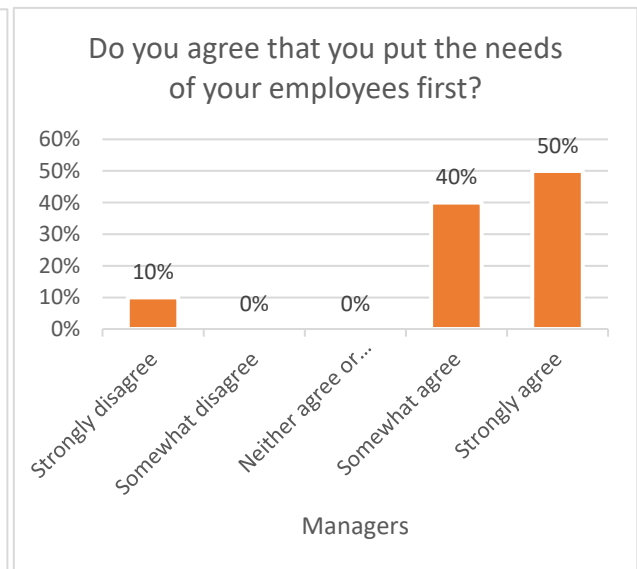


Figure 8. Are managers putting employees first?

The questions for figures 7 and 8 were targeted to see if the needs of the employees are being put first. In Figure 7, it can be seen that there is a diverse of responses from all the categories. Both the food and beverage servers and the managers agree equally that the employee is being put first. 50% of the managers 'Strongly agree' with this, while a lower percentage from the employees was selected for this choice. 10% of the managers 'Strongly disagree', which gave a worrying impression. The rest of the servers' answers also gave a worrying impression that they are not feeling valued.

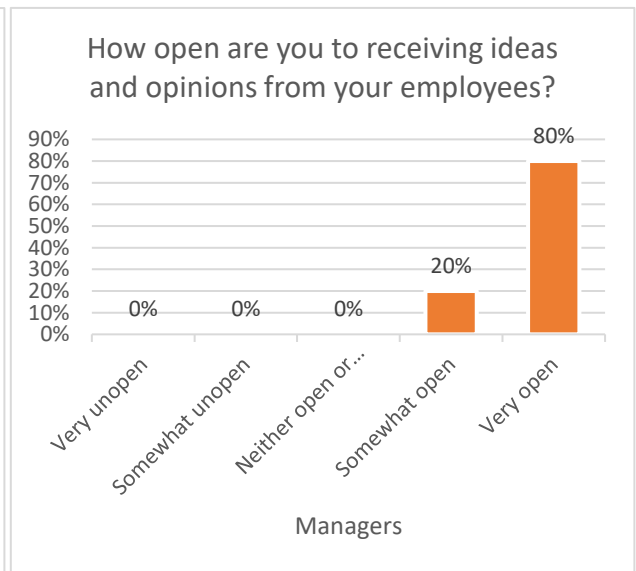
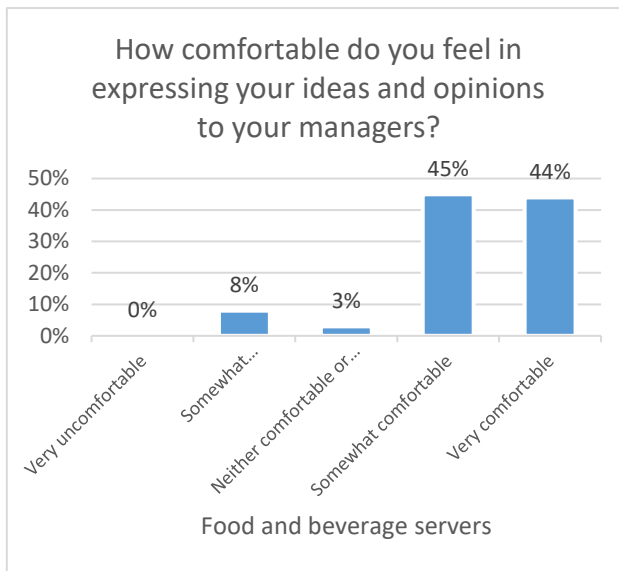


Figure 9. Comfort level when sharing ideas. Figure 10. Openness level when receiving ideas.

When comparing these results (Figure 9; Figure 10), it can be seen that the managers are quite open to receiving ideas and opinions, and most of the employees do feel comfortable in expressing ideas and opinions to their managers. However, the data from Figure 9 also suggests that there is a low percentage of food and beverage servers that aren't that comfortable.

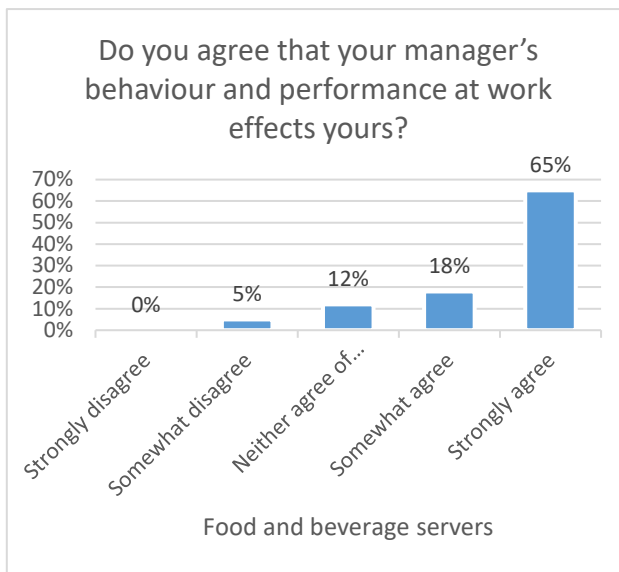


Figure 11. Manager's behaviour and its effects. Figure 12. Manager's behaviour and its effects.

Based on the participants' response, Figure 11 suggests that the participants agree that their manager's behaviour and performance effects theirs. With a low score, these participants also disagree with this. Looking at Figure 12, the managers' scores resulted in 100% strong agreement that their own behaviour and performance effects their employees'.

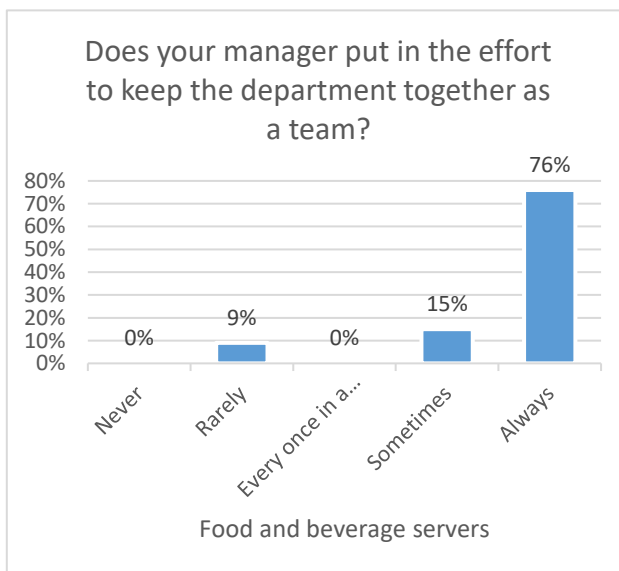


Figure 13. Keeping the department as a team. Figure 14. Keeping the department as a team.

Based on the gathered data in Figure 13, 76% of the participants think that their managers 'Always' puts in the effort to keep the department together as a team, while 15% thinks 'Sometimes'. A low percentage also showed that this 'Rarely' happens. On the other hand, Figure 14 shows that 100% of the managers think that it is of great importance to keep the department together as a team.

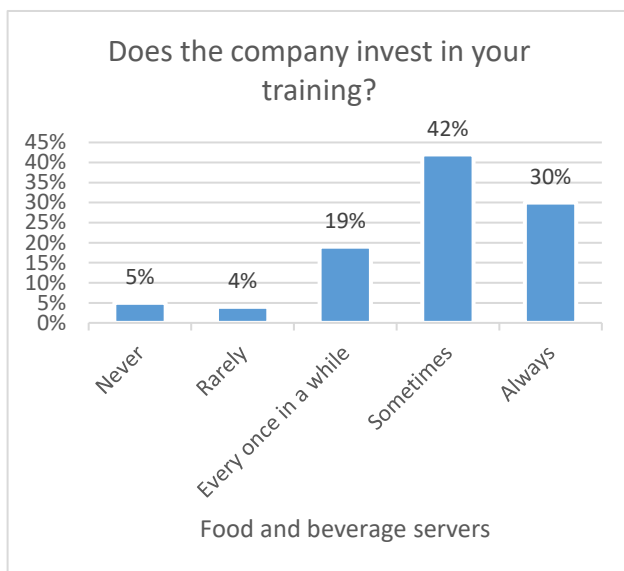


Figure 15. Investment in training.



Figure 16. Investment in training.

Figure 15 presents data that is quite varied. Most of the participants think that the company 'Sometimes' invests in their training, followed by 30% thinking 'Always'. 19% of the respondents suggested that this happens 'Every once in a while', with the lowest rating for 'Never' and 'Rarely'. Figure 16 shows an equal rating of 40% for both 'Sometimes' and 'Every once in a while' when managers were asked if they push for training for their employees. 30% of these participants answered 'Always'.

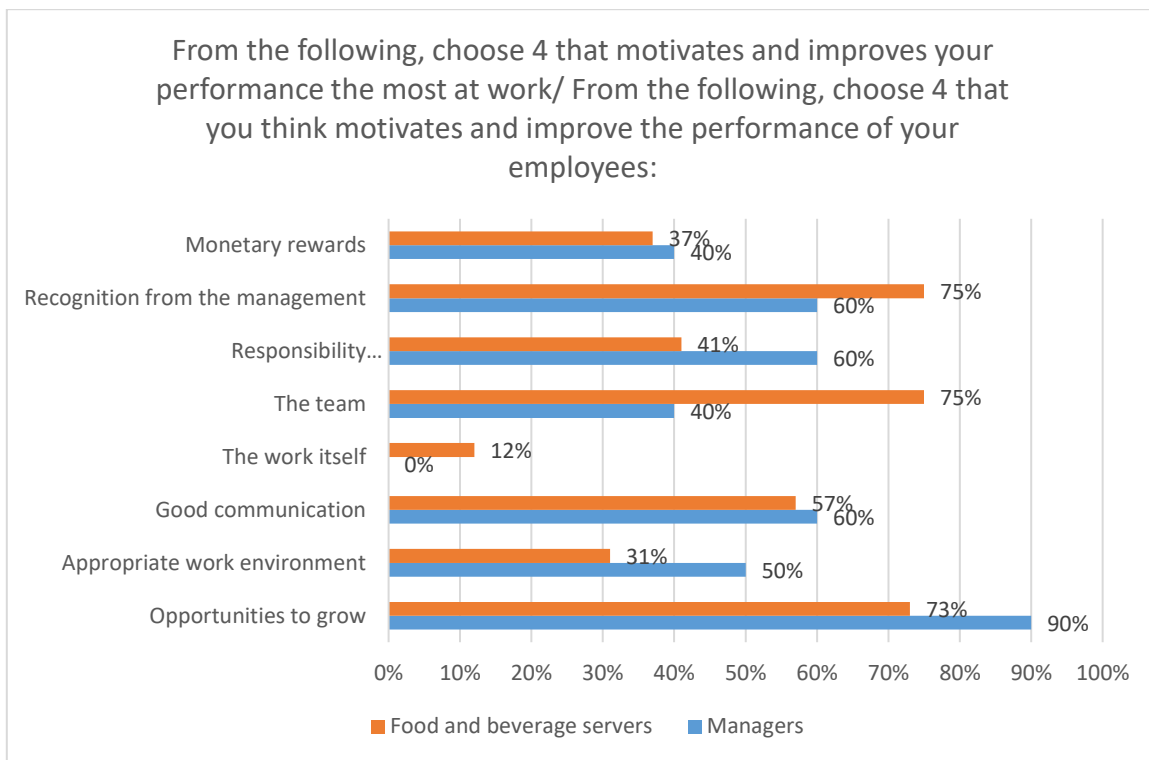


Figure 17. The elements that improves motivation and performance the most.

This figure (Figure 17) aims to identify what motivates and improve performance levels in the employees. Food and beverage servers chose the following as their top four (in descending order): 'Recognition from the management', 'The team', 'Opportunities to grow' and 'Good communication'. The managers chose the following as their top four (in descending order): 'Opportunities to grow', 'Recognition from the management', 'Responsibility and involvement' and 'Good communication'.

Some common answers can be spotted between both audiences, however different opinions are also presented. 'The work itself' had the least score from both audiences, followed by 'Monetary rewards' as the second least score. 'Appropriate work environment' also wasn't chosen by neither audience, having the third least score. The fourth least score for the food and beverage servers' was 'Responsibility and involvement', while the managers' was 'The team'.

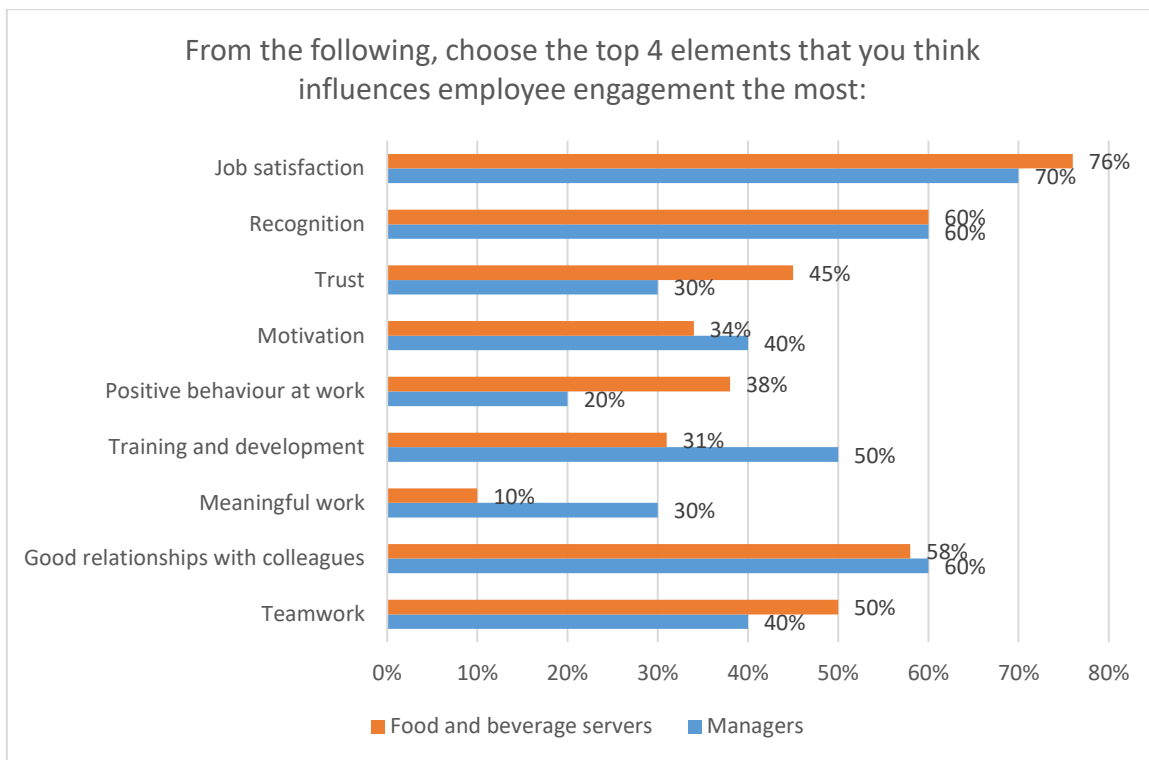


Figure 18. The elements that influences employee engagement the most.

This figure (Figure 18) aims to identify the top four elements that both target audiences think influences employee engagement the most. The food and beverage servers chose the following as their top four elements (in descending order): 'Job satisfaction', 'Recognition', 'Good relationships with colleagues', and 'Teamwork'. The managers chose the following as their top four elements (in descending order): 'Job satisfaction', 'Recognition', 'Good relationships with colleagues', and 'Training and development'.

For the food and beverage servers, 'Trust', 'Positive behaviour at work', 'Motivation', 'Training and development' and 'Meaningful work' were the least ranked in descending order. For managers, 'Motivation', 'Teamwork', 'Trust', 'Meaningful work', and 'Positive behaviour at work' were the least ranked in descending order.

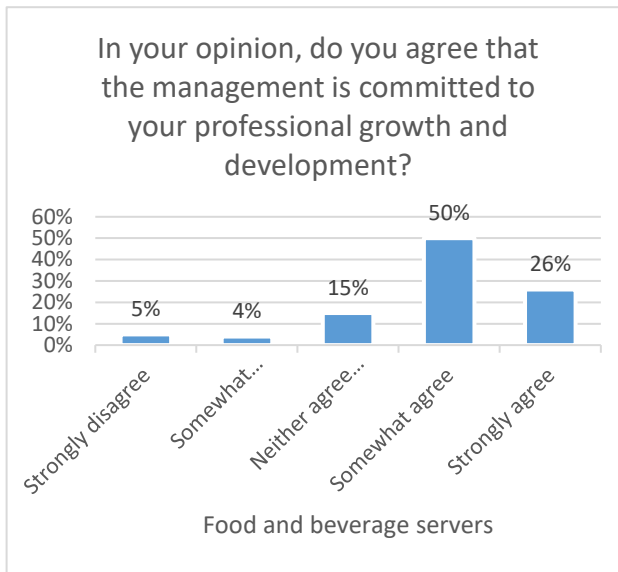


Figure 19. The level of commitment in growth. Figure 20. The level of commitment in growth.

Based on the results, it can be seen that there is a mix of responses from both questions. Figure 19 shows that half of the respondents 'Somewhat agree' that the management is committed to their professional growth and development, while 26% 'Strongly agree'. 15% of the respondents feel neutral with the statement, and the rest seems to disagree. Looking at Figure 20, it can be seen that more than half of the managers are 'Very committed' to their employees' professional growth and development, with 20% feeling 'Somewhat committed'. An equal 10% is scored for feeling neutral and for 'Somewhat committed'.

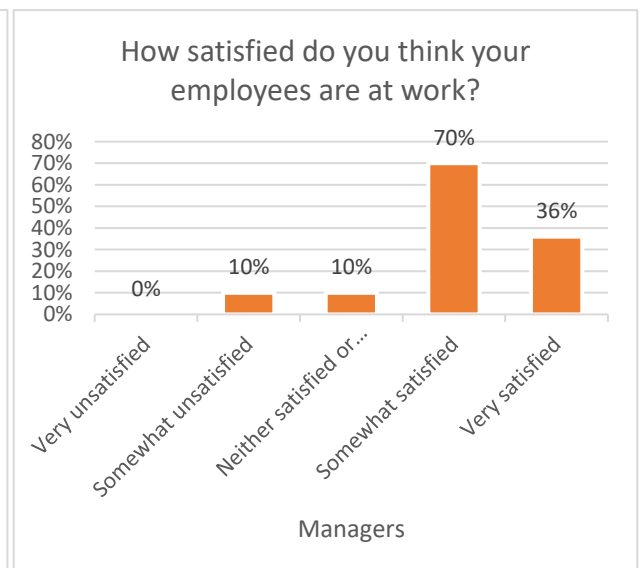
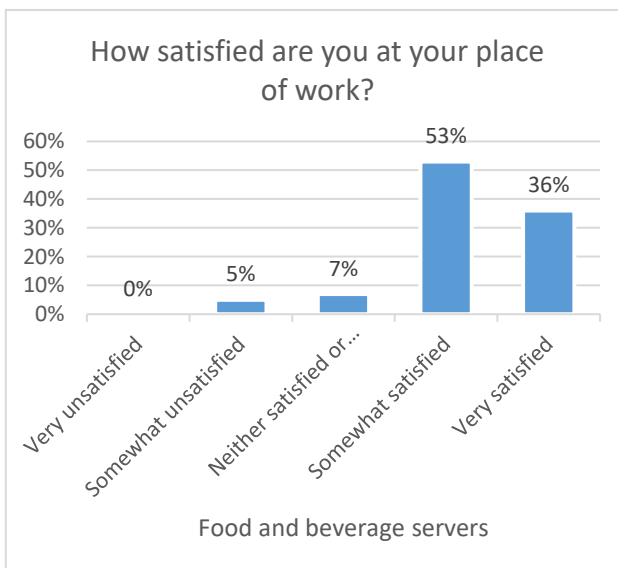


Figure 21. Level of satisfaction at work.

Figure 22. Level of satisfaction at work.

According to the statistical data shown in Figure 21, food and beverage servers mostly feel 'Somewhat satisfied' at their place of work, followed by the feeling of 'Very satisfied'. Some of these servers also feel 'Neither satisfied or unsatisfied', and with the lowest percentage, some feel 'Somewhat dissatisfied'. From the statistical data shown in Figure 22, most of the managers think that their employees are 'Somewhat satisfied', followed by 'Very satisfied'. An equal percentage of the rest of the managers think that they are 'Neither satisfied or unsatisfied' and 'Somewhat dissatisfied'.

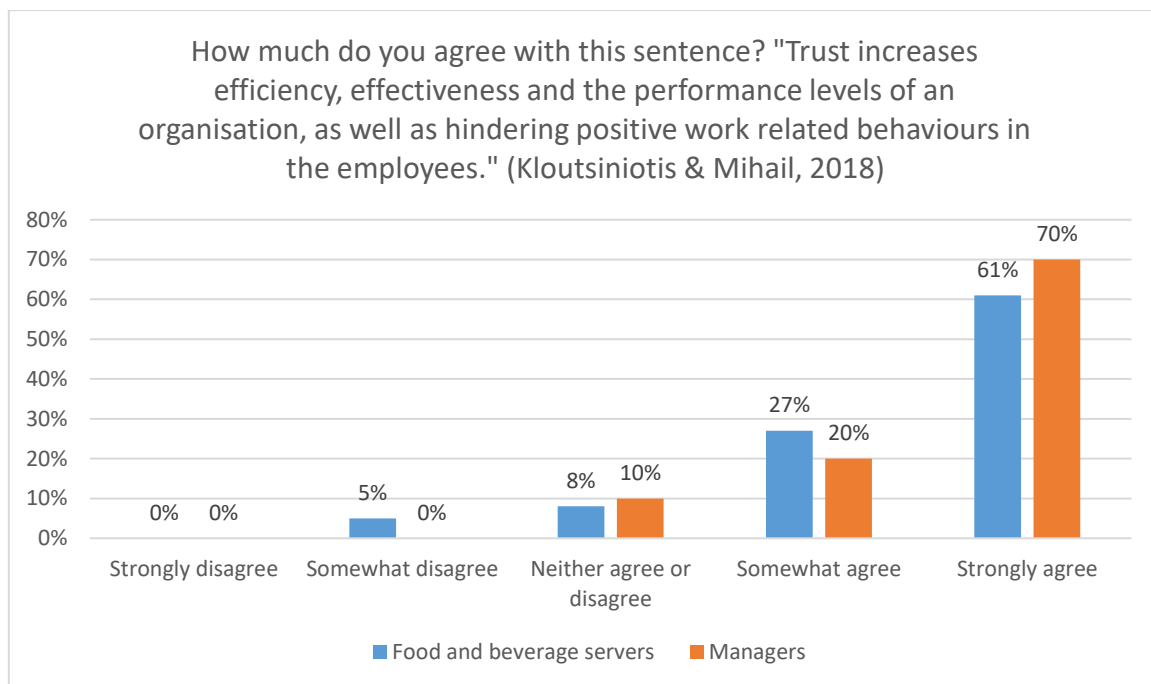


Figure 23. The agreement with a statement by Kloutsiniotis & Mihail (2018).

The researcher took a sentence about trust in a place of work by Kloutsiniotis & Mihail (2018) from the literature review chapter, and quoted it in the questionnaires. When the participants were asked if they agree with the sentence, it seems like most of the participants agree with it. There were also some responses that feel neutral about it and others that 'Somewhat disagree' with it.

4.2 Discussion

As the results have been presented in the sub-chapter above, a discussion and analysis will be done below by the researcher. Her aim for this dissertation is to answer if managers in the Maltese hospitality industry are giving importance to emotionally commit their employees to the organisation. She also hopes to see if employees are engaging in their place of work, and what effects their performance.

The question shown in Figure 1 was quite important for the researcher. She wanted to gather the feeling of the respondents when it came to how they felt when they had to go to work. This indicates whether the employee is feeling happy or sad at work. It seems like only a small number of the food and beverage servers feel very good about going to work. The majority of them feel somewhat good about this. While this isn't a negative response, the impression is given that the employee isn't entirely happy. From the managers' perspective, most of them feel very good about going to work, which should help to reflect the same feeling to their employees. As Berkovich (2016) said, leaders, in this case the managers, have the power to influence their employees. Some of these managers feel somewhat good about going to work. In this case, good influence can still be made, but it may not have a great impact. The researcher was worried to see that a very low number of managers feel 'Somewhat bad' about going to work. Even though this is a small number, this will affect their performance and influence negatively their employees.

According to research done in the 'Employee engagement' chapter in the literature review, the feeling of recognition and being valued is a priceless asset an organisation can use to achieve engagement (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2018). According to the statistical data gathered, most of the food and beverage servers feel somewhat valued. Such answer may suggest that value and recognition is being shown at work, but the employee still feels it's not being shown enough. Others feel very valued, which makes them a step closer to being engaged at work. A small number of respondents showed that they don't feel valued or unvalued at work. This may show that they aren't being shown appreciation, making them lacking in this basic need (Rai, et al., 2018; Tirta & Enrika, 2020). The results obtained from the managers do mirror the results of the employees. Half of the managers said that they always show recognition, while the other half said that they sometimes do this. This reflected on the employees' response. This suggests that the managers who shows recognition always made a positive impact on their employees. However, this also suggests that the ones that sometimes show recognition made an impact in a contrasting way. As

most of the employees do feel valued overall, there may be other factors that impacts the way they feel.

Based on the collected data, both the food and beverage servers and their managers mostly think that they have a very good relationship with each other. Following the literature research done in the 'Emotional commitment' chapter, a good, positive and healthy relationship between a manager and their employees cultivates a feeling of happiness, security, confidence, motivation, and unity. When this is accomplished, better work performance and engagement will be hindered (Maximo, et al., 2019; Purayidathil & Villavicencio, 2014). A lower number of managers and servers felt that this relationship is somewhat good, indicating that there may be space for improvement. And even lower number of servers expressed that their relationship with their manager is neutral. For these respondents, this means that they may not feel happy, making them lack in engagement and performance levels.

Following these responses, the researcher followed up by asking them how they considered their relationship to be. Both the managers and the servers in this study mostly considered their relationship to be a balance between friendly and professional. Song, et al. (2017) expressed that creating personal relationships with colleagues both when working and when not, leads to better interactions, more trust, better discussions, and unity. Little of the responses from both audiences chose to describe their relationship as strictly professional, while only a small number of the food and beverage servers chose friendly. Having a friendly relationship can have a positive impact, but having a strictly professional relationship may cause the employee to hold back when expressing feelings and emotions, leading to lack of engagement and low performance levels (Tung-Ju & Yenchun, 2019; Van Wingerden & Van der Stoep, 2018).

It's a well-known expression that customers' needs and expectations must be met and exceeded for them to be satisfied. When it comes to an organisation's employees, the same must be done (Tran Thi & Tran, 2020). It is said it's important for organisations to put their employees first, and then their customers" (Goswami & Dsilva, 2019). When the employee's needs are met, job satisfaction is gained, which leads to customer satisfaction. This is because a better and more passionate service is being delivered to the guest (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2018). Based on the gathered data, it looks like some of the food and beverage servers strongly agree that their needs are being put first. The rest of the responses vary from somewhat agree all the way through strongly disagree in descending order. The impression here is that some of these employees feel that their needs are almost met, while the ones of others are being neglected. On the other

hand, most of the managers strongly agree that they put the needs of their employees first, others somewhat agree, and a low percentage strongly disagree. Based on these results, it seems that the managers' efforts to put their employees' needs first might not be communicated well with their employees, and the others who aren't giving them importance are impacting negatively.

According to the statistical data, most of the food and beverage employees feel comfortable in expressing ideas and opinions to their managers. A small percentage feel somewhat uncomfortable and neutral on the scenario. Such low number shouldn't be neglected, as this means that there are employees that do not feel comfortable in sharing ideas and opinions. Such restrictions and bottled up feelings can lead to lack of engagement and low performance levels (Tung-Ju & Yenchun, 2019; Van Wingerden & Van der Stoep, 2018). Most managers feel very open in receiving ideas and opinion, while a small percentage feel somewhat open. Could this small percentage impact their employees' ability to approach them and share?

As discussed before, managers have the power to influence others (Berkovich, 2016). The researcher asked the employees if their manager's behaviour and performance at work effected theirs. Most of the participants strongly agreed with this question. Others responded from somewhat agree till somewhat disagree in descending order. This means that some of these employees think that there are other factors that effects their behaviour and performance, other than that of their managers'. Looking at the managers' outcomes, they all responded that they strongly agree that their behaviour and performance impacted their employees'. This gives the impression that the mangers are very mindful on how they act and perform around their employees.

The outcomes of the questionnaire seems to indicate that most of the food and beverage servers think that their manager always puts in the effort to keep the department together as a team. Others think that they sometimes do, while the lowest percentage think that they rarely do so. To contrast this, all the managers seem to strongly agree that it is of great importance to keep the department together as a team. These results suggest that there is a team present in these departments. This might also suggest that some of the servers don't feel a sense of teamwork as others do. As Hurtado Justiniano, et al. (2018) and Qamari, et al. (2020) said, a team creates a sense of belonging to an employee, harmony at work, increased performance, motivation and engagement.

Training is an action that improve an employee's knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviour, and experience (Sweis, et al., 2019). An organisation who has a culture of investing in their employees' training and development, will lead to better service from the employees, improves their motivation, their performance, their satisfaction, and engagement (Dlagic, et al., 2020). Food and beverage servers seem to think that their place of work only sometimes invests in their training, others think that they always do. Another percentage seems to think that they invest in their training every once in a while, and low responses think that they never or rarely do. Having such a diverse range of responses can be quite difficult to assess. Breaking this down, while there is a high response rate that receive training, there is still a good number of responses that seem to be lacking in this. To gain the managers' perspective, the researcher asked them if they push for their employees' training to be offered. From the statistical data, it looks like an equal amount of participants responded 'Every once in a while' and 'Sometimes'. These answers seem to reflect of the employees' answers to their question. The rest of the managers responded that they always push for training, which seemed to have reflected the same answer of the servers'.

While formulating a questionnaire question, the researcher gathered various elements from the literature review that were said to motivate and improve the performance of an employee at work. She wanted to test these out in the Maltese hospitality industry and answer one of her sub-research questions: 'What influences employees' performance?'. When asking the food and beverage servers to choose four of these elements, they chose: 'Recognition from the management', 'The team', 'Opportunities to grow' and 'Good communication'. Looking at the bigger picture, it looks like all the eight elements influences employees' performance, but some more than others. To answer this question according to the gathered data, and taking a 50% and above response rate, 'Recognition from the management', 'The team', 'Opportunities to grow' and 'Good communication' are what influences the employees' performance the most.

When asking the managers what they thought motivates and improves the performance of their employees, they chose the following four elements: 'Opportunities to grow', 'Recognition from the management', 'Responsibility and involvement' and 'Good communication'. 'The work itself' seem to gain the least score from both questionnaires out of all eight elements. Some common responses can be noticed between the two target audiences; however, it is important for managers to know what motivates their employees and what improves their performance. This way, they can practice these elements to build engagement.

Similar to the question above, the researcher gathered nine elements that were researched to influence employee engagement the most. She integrated these elements into a question, and

asked the food and beverage servers and the managers to choose the four elements that they thought influenced employee engagement the most.

The food and beverage servers chose 'Job satisfaction', 'Recognition', 'Good relationships with colleagues', and 'Teamwork' as their top four. The managers chose 'Job satisfaction', 'Recognition', 'Good relationships with colleagues', and 'Training and development' as their top four.

It is believed that the food and beverage servers are the ones that truly knows what engages them. Having said that and taking the 50% and above response rate from their response, 'Job satisfaction', 'Recognition', 'Good relationships with colleagues', and 'Teamwork' were found to be the most elements that influences employee engagement. When comparing the responses from the two target audiences, it seems like the managers got a lot of common ratings with those of the servers. This puts the managers on the right track in understanding what elements they need to focus on to improve employee engagement in their department.

Based in the collected data, most of food and beverage servers somewhat agree that the management is committed to your professional growth and development, others seem to strongly agree with this. The rest of the responses varied from neutral to strongly disagree. Having such different reaction to the question looked like the employees mostly feel that their professional growth and development isn't being given the importance that it needs. The managers were asked a similar question, and they mostly answered that the management is very committed to this. Others' choices varied from neutral to somewhat disagree. This suggests that a small percentage of these managers know that the personal growth and development of the employees is being neglected by the management. The highest score from the managers was 'Very committed', but the servers scored this quite low. This contrast between the two targeted audiences gave the impression that the management isn't on the same page as most of their employees.

As mentioned in one of these paragraphs, the employees' needs and expectations must be met and exceeded to achieve job satisfaction (Tran Thi & Tran, 2020). The researcher asked a direct question to the food and beverage servers to see if they are satisfied at their place of work. The feeling of somewhat satisfied seems to be the most popular answer, with very satisfied following it. Others felt neutral and somewhat dissatisfied. Here, the impression is given that some of the servers are fully satisfied a work, however the rest of the employees feel the need for improvement. When the managers were asked if they thought their employees were satisfied at work, their answers were almost identical to the ones on the employees. This gives an indication that the managers have an idea of their employees' feelings.

"Trust increases efficiency, effectiveness and the performance levels of an organisation, as well as hindering positive work related behaviours in the employees." (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2018).

This quote was taken from the author's literature review, and she asked both targeted audiences if they agreed with it to test Kloutsiniotis & Mihail (2018)'s findings. Similar responses were obtained from the questionnaires, most of the participants seem to agree with this finding, while a small percentage feel neutral or somewhat disagree with it. Here, the impression is given that the participants do feel that trust increases efficiency, effectiveness, performance levels, and positive work behaviours of an organisation. However, the data may also suggest that the participants feel that there may be other factors than just trust that effects these results.

The main research question wanted to uncover if managers in the Maltese hospitality industry are giving importance to emotionally commit their employees to the organisation. Emotional commitment is the feeling and employee gets when they are engaged in their work. This element drives them to achieve organisational goals and to care for their values. As it was discussed, Figure 18 brought out the four elements that seemed to engage the employees the most. Comparing the managers' response to their employees', it seemed like the managers had a good idea of what commits their employees, but further awareness is needed in this case. Other responses from the managers gave the impression that they work towards showing recognition, creating a good relationship with their employees, putting the needs of their employees first, being open to receiving ideas and opinions from them, keeping the department as a team, and providing opportunities for professional growth and development for their employees. Training seemed to be the element that lacked the most, and both the food and beverage servers and the managers seemed to think that training needs to be pushed for more. Based on this gathered data, it looks like managers in the Maltese hospitality industry may know what direction to take to gain emotional commitment, however these elements needs to be focused on and given importance.

Another question the researcher wanted answered was if employees are engaging at their place of work. Many positive outcomes have been brought out from the statistics shown in this chapter. This gives the impression that some of the food and beverage servers who took this questionnaire may be engaging in their place of work. However, from various results it looks like some of the employees aren't entirely happy at their place of work. The answers of 'Somewhat good', 'Somewhat valued', 'Somewhat agree', 'Somewhat comfortable', 'Sometimes', and 'Somewhat satisfied' were the ones who got the most scores. The questions for these answers were based

on getting the employees opinion when it comes to their level of satisfaction. This suggests that most of the employees' needs aren't being met. When this happens, the employee might not feel happy, secure, motivated, and confident, making them lacking in employee engagement.

What influences employees' performance? This question was answered through one of the questionnaires' question. Eight elements were brought out from the literature review, and these were said to be the most influential when it came to the employees' performance levels. Testing these out, 'Recognition from the management', 'The team', 'Opportunities to grow' and 'Good communication' were the top four elements that influences the employees' performance levels the most. Such elements are important for every individual in an organisation to know. These are the elements that needs to be worked on to improve performance to reach the ultimate goal, employee engagement.

5. Final Arguments

Tourism and the hospitality industry in Malta are very important as they generate a large part of its economy. Having said that, competition is always arising in this industry. Having local competition challenges these organisations to work towards being the best. Focusing on the 5-star hotel industry, these companies already have a high level of standard to live up to. An excellent level of service is a must in order to meet and exceed their guests' needs and expectations. The food and beverage departments of these hotels have an important role as they are the ones who are constantly meeting the hotel's residents.

The employees of these departments must have a good level of satisfaction and their needs must be met. This must be done to provide an excellent service. Employee engagement creates better performance and an emotional commitment to an organisation and its goals. Having this edge puts an organisation in a competitive advantage in an industry with different trends arising, endless choice and different types of establishments.

The aim of this investigation was to make a research on the Maltese 5-star hotels and their food and beverage departments and explore the relationship between employee engagement and work performance in this department. The main research question aims to answer if managers in these food and beverage departments in 5-star hotels are giving importance to emotionally commit their employees. Other questions she wanted answered were: if employees are engaging at work, and what influences their performance at work.

5.1 Conclusions

Aiming the two questionnaires to food and beverage servers and their managers allowed the researcher to gain different perspectives on the subject and find out if the two targeted audiences are on the same page.

Managers in the Maltese hospitality industry seems to be on the right track when it comes to understanding what engages their employees. Based on the comparisons done in the analysis of results, the impression is given that the managers are aware of the key elements to emotionally commit their employees to their place of work. However, these elements may not all be

implemented, and they need to be given more priority. This conclusion came from the results gathered from the food and beverage servers.

Based on the gathered data, it seems like the food and beverage servers feel happy, valued, comfortable in sharing ideas and opinions, and satisfied at their place of work. However, these results were mostly expressed with the word 'somewhat' behind them. This gives the impression that, even though the employees seem happy, they are not fully satisfied. Other responses expressed poorer feelings, which continued to justify this impression. It's important to note that a percentage of employees gave feedback that seemed like they are very satisfied at their place of work, indicating a strong possibility of employee engagement in these food and beverage outlets.

The elements of 'Recognition from the management', 'The team', 'Opportunities to grow' and 'Good communication' came out to be the most influential on the employees' performance levels. Such elements need to be made aware to the Maltese hotel industry to implement them to further improve performance levels. Having high performance levels in a organisation leads to employees to commit to their purpose and goals. Better results and excellent service is also given, together with better creativity and higher standards.

It can be clearly seen that training and development isn't being given the importance that it deserves. Investing in the employee's training will help them develop their skills and knowledge levels. This will make the employee feel more confident in performing their tasks, while hindering improved motivation, performance, satisfaction, and engagement.

It can be concluded that the aims for this investigation have been met. Many employees gave the impression that they are moving in the direction of engaging in their place of work. Certain unknown factors seem to be getting in the way of achieving complete satisfaction and engagement. Employee engagement is achieved by having a chain of element that is whole. Have one of these elements being missing, the chain will not be complete, therefore lacking in commitment. Having the managers understand fully their employees and what factors to use to build engagement should be considered as an asset to hotel businesses.

5.2 Recommendations

One of the aims the researcher had for the responses of the questionnaire was that she wanted to gather a good sum of responses from different 5-star hotels around the island. Having personally contacted the hotels, it was seen that not many hotels replied back, or agreed to take part in the research. While respecting their decision, the author can't be certain that the number of respondents came from different hotels. Apart from this, the researcher put her efforts to promote the questionnaires through social media platforms. Through this effort, the researcher got most of her responses. The researcher was also hopeful to get a lot more responses than the 100 food and beverage servers and 10 managers that were targeted. In the future, the researcher aims to add another effort to the data collection process. She aims to visit hotels and communicate her desires better personally and ethically.

While analysing the data, the author found that some of the questions could have been rearranged so that the results would flow and connect to one another better. Such issue wasn't noticed in the pilot study, therefore this cannot be fixed prior to distributing the questionnaire. Open-ended questionnaire should have been given more thought to be included as well. Through this same period, the author realised that some questions might have gotten more information by using open-ended questions. This way, she could have gathered the respondents' emotions better.

Future research in this area is always needed. Other angles that could have been taken in relation to the methods used can be focus groups with the food and beverage employees. Taking a small number of people from different 5-star hotels would ensure that the data gathered would analyse these hotels as a whole. Such discussions can also gather the true feelings, emotions, and expressions from the participants. Interviews can also be done on managers to get this same result. A more specific research can also be done by analysing the departments separately. This way, a better comparison between the employee and the manager can be done in order to identify the gaps better.

Future research can also take different perspectives and branch out to different topics. A question that rose to the author while doing her research was to see if the employees are performing to the hotel's expectations. Managers can also be the main audience for another research. Solely focusing on this participant may shed light to other factors that may interfere or improve the workplace environment. As it was mentioned in the findings, training and development seems to

be lacking in importance. Directing research to this matter may uncover why this is happening, and what can be done to include this in an organisation's culture.

More studies on this subject, specifically in the Maltese islands should always be encouraged to keep updated and stay relevant. The more light is shed on the subject, the more organisations and managers can implement this knowledge and apply it to their place of work. Present and future managers hold the power to work on these themes and enhance them to further better and take care of the employees in the hospitality industry of this island.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 :

Questionnaire to food and beverage servers:

Introduction to the questionnaire:

My name is Maria Fenech and I am currently studying for a Bachelor in International Hospitality Management (Hons) and the Institute of Tourism Studies. I am conducting research for my thesis, which aims to explore the relationship between employee engagement and work performance in food and beverage outlets of 5-star hotels. This questionnaire will help to gather data in this regard, so your participation is highly appreciated!

There are 16 closed ended questions to be answered as truthfully as possible, which should take less than 5 minutes. The answers in this questionnaire will be kept confidential and will be used for this research only. Also, please note that this questionnaire is only aimed for servers within food and beverage outlets in 5-star hotels.

The questionnaire:

1. What is your age group?

- ☐ 16-20
- ☐ 21-30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50
- ☐ 50+

2. How long have you been working for the company?

- ☐ Less than a year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-6 years
- ☐ 7-9 years
- ☐ 10 years and over

3. How do you feel when you have to go to work?

- ☐ Very bad
- ☐ Somewhat bad

- Neither good or bad
- Somewhat good
- Very good

4. How valued and recognised do you feel at work?

- Very unvalued
- Somewhat unvalued
- Neither valued or unvalued
- Somewhat valued
- Very valued

5. How would you rate your relationship with your managers?

- Very bad
- Somewhat bad
- Neither good or bad
- Somewhat good
- Very good

6. Do you consider this relationship as:

- Friendly
- Strictly professional
- A balance between the two

7. Do you agree that your manager puts the needs of their employees first?

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

8. How comfortable do you feel in expressing your ideas and opinions to your managers?

- Very uncomfortable
- Somewhat uncomfortable
- Neither comfortable or uncomfortable
- Somewhat comfortable

- Very comfortable

9. Do you agree that your manager's behaviour and performance at work effects yours?

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

10. Does your manager put in the effort to keep the department together as a team?

- Never
- Rarely
- Every once in a while
- Sometimes
- Always

11. Does the company invest in your training?

- Never
- Rarely
- Every once in a while
- Sometimes
- Always

12. Form the following, choose 4 that motivates and improves your performance the most at work:

- Monetary rewards
- Recognition from the management
- Responsibility and involvement
- The team
- The work itself
- Good communication
- Appropriate work environment
- Opportunities to grow

13. From the following, choose the top 4 elements that you think influences employee engagement the most:

- Job satisfaction
- Recognition
- Trust
- Motivation
- Positive behaviour at work
- Training and development
- Meaningful work
- Good relationships with colleagues
- Teamwork

14. In your opinion, do you agree that the management is committed to your professional growth development?

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

15. How satisfied are you at your place of work?

- Very unsatisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Neither satisfied or unsatisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied

16. How much do you agree with this sentence?

'Trust increases efficiency, effectiveness and the performance levels of an organisation, as well as hindering positive work related behaviours in the employees.' (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2018)

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

Appendix 2 :

Questionnaire to managers:

Introduction to the questionnaire:

My name is Maria Fenech and I am currently studying for a Bachelor in International Hospitality Management (Hons) and the Institute of Tourism Studies. I am conducting research for my thesis, which aims to explore the relationship between employee engagement and work performance in food and beverage outlets of 5-star hotels. This questionnaire will help to gather data in this regard, so your participation is highly appreciated!

There are 16 closed ended questions to be answered as truthfully as possible, which should take less than 5 minutes. The answers in this questionnaire will be kept confidential and will be used for this research only. Also, please note that this questionnaire is only aimed for managers within food and beverage outlets in 5-star hotels.

The questionnaire:

1. What is your age group?

- ☐ 16-20
- ☐ 21-30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50
- ☐ 50+

2. How long have you been working for the company?

- ☐ Less than a year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-6 years
- ☐ 7-9 years
- ☐ 10 years and over

3. How do you feel when you have to go to work?

- ☐ Very bad
- ☐ Somewhat bad
- ☐ Neither good or bad
- ☐ Somewhat good

- Very good

4. How often do you show recognition to your employees at work?

- Never
- Rarely
- Every once in a while
- Sometimes
- Always

5. How would you rate your relationship with your employees?

- Very bad
- Somewhat bad
- Neither good or bad
- Somewhat good
- Very good

6. Do you consider this relationship as:

- Friendly
- Strictly professional
- A balance between the two

7. Do you agree that you put the needs of your employees first?

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

8. How open are you to receiving ideas and opinions from your employees?

- Very unopen
- Somewhat unopen
- Neither open or unopen
- Somewhat open
- Very open

9. Do you agree that your behaviour and performance at work affect your employees'?

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree or disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

10. Do you agree that it is of great importance to keep the department together as a team?

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree or disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

11. How much do you push for training to be offered to your employees?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Every once in a while
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Always

12. From the following, choose 4 that you think motivates and improve the performance of your employees:

- ☐ Monetary rewards
- ☐ Recognition from the management
- ☐ Responsibility and involvement
- ☐ The team
- ☐ The work itself
- ☐ Good communication
- ☐ Appropriate work environment
- ☐ Opportunities to grow

13. From the following, choose the top 4 elements that you think influences employee engagement the most:

- ☐ Job satisfaction

- Recognition
- Trust
- Motivation
- Positive behaviour at work
- Training and development
- Meaningful work
- Good relationships with colleagues
- Teamwork

14. What's the level of commitment from the management to ensure employees' professional growth and development for the future?

- Very uncommitted
- Somewhat uncommitted
- Neither committed or uncommitted
- Somewhat committed
- Very committed

15. How satisfied do you think your employees are at work?

- Very unsatisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Neither satisfied or unsatisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied

16. How much do you agree with this sentence?

'Trust increases efficiency, effectiveness and the performance levels of an organisation, as well as hindering positive work related behaviours in the employees.' (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2018)

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree