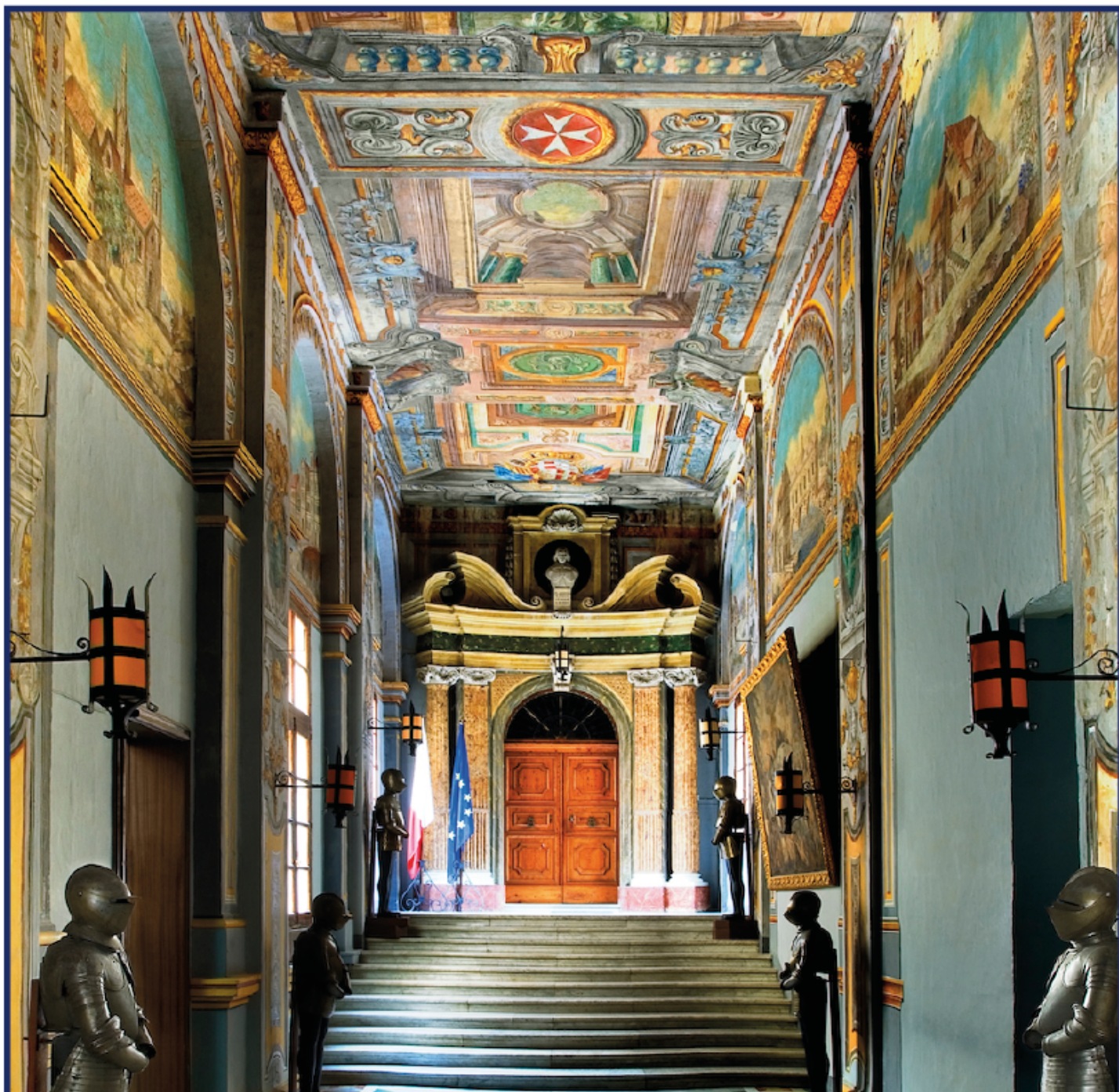


FUTOURISTIC

THE ITS JOURNAL ON HOSPITALITY, TRAVEL, TOURISM AND CULTURE



A NEW PARLIAMENT HOUSE | CLIMATE CHANGE IS EXISTENTIAL | MBA THESIS ABSTRACTS |
HERITAGE & THE PANDEMIC | COOPERAGE: THE ART OF WINE BARREL MAKING | INGRAINING
ECO-EFFICIENCY AS A CORE VALUE IN HOTEL EMPLOYEES THROUGH THE MANAGEMENT
STYLE OF THEIR LEADERS | QUALITY ASSURANCE FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF HOSPITALITY
AND TOURISM EDUCATION | PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR IN MALTA | INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES
PRAISE ITS | DIGITALISATION OF HERITAGE | A MOBILE APP TO TEACH ABOUT COCKTAILS



welcome

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The First Anniversary of FUTOURISTIC

A message from the Editor-in-Chief



It has been exactly one year since the launch of Futouristic. The Institute's journal on Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Culture was well received by readers who provided encouraging feedback. A positive response on the content

fills the editorial board, and whoever is involved in this venture, with enthusiasm to continue publishing useful content which facilitates dialogue between policymakers, private stakeholders, scholars, and higher education institutions. Since the inaugural issues, 28 articles have been published covering an array of topics ranging from innovation in culinary arts, environmental tourism, e-learning in Tourism, policymaking to strategy and multidisciplinary collaborations set up by ITS.

There is still a great deal of topics to present and positive provocations to create among our readers – all this with the aim to continue creating awareness on ITS' indefatigable work to develop, operate, and promote excellence and innovation in tourism education.

Once again, it is my pleasure to bring to you the third issue of Futouristic. The collection of papers and articles presented here strikes a balance between the work produced by academics who are either directly or indirectly involved with

ITS and the research work produced by students as part of their learning journeys within the institute.

Let me walk you quickly through what we are offering in this issue.

The leading paper is by Prof. Godfrey Pirotta who presents an assessment of the first one hundred years of Malta governing itself since 2021 marked the first centenary from the promulgation of the so-called Self-Government Constitution when the British coloniser gave the Maltese ruling class some autonomy in terms of strictly local and non-military matters.

In December 2021, the Institute of Tourism Studies reached another important milestone with nine of its students graduating with an MBA in International Hospitality Management in academic affiliation with the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management. From the cohort, Damien Peplow, Yanica Gauci, Charles Micallef and Lydia Xuereb are presenting an overview of their research work herein.

Another area, besides the master's programmes, where ITS has invested strategically over the past couple of years is sustainable tourism. Geoffrey Lipman, President of SUNx Malta is interviewed on climate friendly travel. Lipman refers to one of his late friends, Maurice Strong, who was a key figure in the field of environmental protection and who has developed the United Nations 'Green and Clean' roadmap.

With the Covid-19 pandemic still making the headlines, causing significant economic and social disruption, Futouristic is publishing the first of a series of papers and articles on the impact of the pandemic on our tourism industry. Veronica Barbara discusses how national and international heritage has been affected by the COVID 19-pandemic. Barbara writes that despite the hardships brought about by the pandemic, modern conservation techniques allowed for a continued sustainable preservation of cultural heritage. Heritage Malta is one memory organisation that has been investing heavily in digital technologies, and not just in response to the pandemic. Tony Cassar, the head of the digitisation unit of HM explains some of the work that is being done to preserve and interpret better the rich heritage under the responsibility of organisation.

The pandemic has also inspired ITS lecturer Richard Pons to reach out to his students with an innovative digital mobile app based on the popular Rummy game to help them learn and recall the ingredients and recipes of cocktails. In addition, wine lovers will certainly appreciate Aaron Rizzo's detailed explanation of the skill involved in cooperage, or wine barrel making.

ITS senior lecturer Kevin Ellul explains the importance of quality assurance in hospitality and tourism education.

In this issue of Futouristic we share some outstanding research work from our students. Martin Bonnici exploits his photography skills to propose photographic tours. Daniela Aquilina studies the potential of food as an integral aspect of tours, and Ema-Sinead Zammit shares the results of her research on eco-efficiency in hotels.

ITS has plans to upgrade this journal with a stronger online presence and become a reference point for tourism-related academic research. More details on this will be announced in the up-coming issue. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy this one.

Glen Farrugia
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 ITS CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER –
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INSTITUTE OF TOURISM STUDIES
IN ACADEMIC AFFILIATION WITH THE
 EMIRATES ACADEMY OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

Futouristic is the official journal of the Institute of Tourism Studies (Malta). The aim of this publication is to promote academic research and innovation at ITS not just with the partners and stakeholders in the tourism industry but also society at large. Therefore, ITS fulfills its mission to be at the forefront of this vital industry with its contribution that goes beyond the training of the workforce.

Futouristic is free of charge and is distributed to all stakeholders in the Maltese travel, tourism, hospitality and higher educational sectors.

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Submissions for publication are welcome. The Editorial Policy and the House Style are available on request.

A New Parliament House

WORDS BY PROF. GODFREY PIROTTA

The Tapestry Chamber today, with Members of the Maltese Parliament rather than tourists and visitors, holding a commemorative sitting



In 1921 Britain granted Malta its first Responsible Government Constitution which also provided for a bi-cameral legislature: a Legislative Assembly and a Senate. The legislative Assembly was to consist of 32 members elected from eight electoral districts and the Senate of seven members directly elected by voters and ten special members elected from within the clergy, the nobility, the Chamber of Commerce, university graduates and the Trades Union Council. The problem at the time was as to where these two separate Houses could be housed. Former Councils of Government used to hold their sittings in the Tapestry Chamber in the Governor's Palace. Both Houses saw this chamber as their natural meeting place as the opulent Flemish Tapestries that adorned its walls not only preserved a link with the past but lent dignity to the new experiment about to be launched.

The Gobelins tapestries, which decorate the walls of the chamber, had been acquired by Grand Master Ramon Perellos de Roccaful in 1710 and had been manufactured in Paris, France. They were part of a series known as the Les Anciennes Indes depicting life in the so-called New World based on the works of Dutch artists Frans Post and Albert Eckhout. These tapestries still hang in this chamber today and as they are the only surviving complete set in the world, they are unique.

But there were complications. First the expected frequent use of this chamber by the two Houses of the Legislature posed a serious danger for their preservation. Second, the 1921 Constitution also laid down the obligation, in certain circumstances, for the holding of joint sessions between Senate and Legislative Assembly thereby making the issue of space more acute.¹ The Tapestry Chamber was too small for this purpose and consequently when the two Chambers were obliged to sit at similar times two different halls had to be used. On such occasions the Senate used the Tapestry Chamber while the Legislative Assembly made use of the Armoury. In the case of some joint sittings between the two Chambers the Armoury was used. Third, the chamber was too small to accommodate the elected members,



The Prince of Wales (future king Edward VIII) with Maltese and British officials in the main courtyard of The Palace, Valletta, after the opening of the first session of the Maltese Parliament, 1st November 1921.

the press and the 'strangers.' The aim of this article is to explain, mainly with reference to Parliamentary debates, the evolution of this issue and its subsequent outcomes.

FACING UP TO THE ISSUE

The need for a proper Parliamentary House was evident when the two Houses met in a joint sitting for the opening of Parliament by the Governor. For this auspicious occasion the sitting was held in the Hall of St Michael and St George in the Governor's Palace. The issue of finding adequate accommodation for the two Houses was one of the items raised by the Governor in his Speech from the Throne: the issue of finding adequate space which would allow both Chambers to carry out their work properly, he told members, was a pressing one.² The current chamber could only meet their requirements if the two Chambers managed to come to some mutual agreement about its use.

He urged members to consider whether each House should have its own Chamber or indeed whether Senate and Assembly should meet in separate buildings reminding them, however, of the need to keep costs constantly in view. How true the Governor's warning was can be seen from Gerald Strickland's sarcastic comment, some months later, when the Legislative Assembly passed, in February 1922, a resolution calling for establishment of a Parliamentary library. He remarked that the only space available for a library was on Mr. Speakers' desk.³ It was also Strickland who had complained that lack of space to accommodate strangers was undermining the true role of House. 'The heart and soul of responsible government,' he told the House, 'is publicity. The electors should know what is being done;.....[they] are entitled to know what takes place in this House.'⁴ He suggested, therefore, that in future sittings should be held in the Hall of St

Michael and St George and he pressed the government to approach the authorities for permission to use this hall. He was supported by Enrico Mizzi who argued, however, that the House should not give up its control over the Tapestry Chamber.

Ten months later the issue was raised again by Giovanni Adami, a back-bencher, who suggested that the government could try to acquire, for use as a Parliamentary House, one of the existing Auberge's currently held by the British military authorities. It was a suggestion that would be strongly pursued though with little success. Joseph Howard, as Head of Ministry, argued that what was required was a resolution of the House stating clearly which buildings members thought the government should acquire and promised that his Cabinet would do its best to acquire them.⁵

During the sitting of January 30, 1922

Strickland proposed that the House should make 'a humble address' to the Governor asking him to obtain the assent of the Imperial authorities for the use of Castille as a Parliament House. He argued for a 'humble address' because he believed that if the matter was not approached with care and courtesy, it would inevitably fail. Enrico Mizzi, however, successfully pushed through an amendment which called for the appointment of a Commission made up of MPs to draft the address. He wanted the Governor to support their case insisting that Castille belonged to the civil government.

This Commission eventually held two meetings and a Report outlining the address to be made to the Governor was placed on the Table of the House on February 14, 1922.⁶ The dilemma facing MPs was that they did not wish, by their address, to appear ready to surrender rights over buildings which they held to be for the use of the civil government. At the same time, they wanted to demonstrate their readiness to be flexible and although they were adamant that the Auberge de Castille belonged to the civil authorities, they were prepared to come to some sort of arrangement with the military services for its use.

In the meantime, Members of the Senate were also actively searching for a place to serve as a Senate House. Thus, in October 1921, they held an informal and private meeting at the Auberge de France⁷ to see if it could be adapted for their use. But even here matters did not really move forward.

1924-27 MORE OF THE SAME

But by the time the 1924 elections had come around little progress had been achieved. On the question of the transfer to the Auberge de Castille the Speaker informed Parliament that following a visit to the auberge accompanied by the President of the Senate and other

Ministers he was happy to report that the Great Hall was both longer and larger than their present chamber.⁸ However, such a transfer depended on the willingness of the military to hand over the building. Nevertheless, by the end of February 1925, the matter had not been resolved. In May 1925 the Head of Ministry rose to move a Motion calling for the setting up of a Joint Select Committee of both Houses 'to consider and report on the advisability, or otherwise, of moving the Imperial Authorities to hand over to the Civil Government the Auberge de Castille for use principally as a Parliament Building' in exchange for other buildings.⁹ The military authorities, according to correspondence through the Governor, appeared willing to oblige as long as the signal station was allowed to remain on top of the building. However, Senate members had already indicated that they were not willing to give up the Tapestry Chamber and this made negotiations with the British authorities virtually impossible.¹⁰ This led the Prime

Minister to declare that the matter was the concern of parliament and not that of the government and withdrew his membership of the Select Committee.¹¹ The Senate's amendment was, nonetheless, accepted by the Legislative Assembly.¹²

The Report of the Joint Select Committee failed to break new ground: it claimed that it could not proceed with its work before it could be ascertained whether the military authorities were prepared to accept other premises other than those in the Palace which, apparently they weren't.¹³ The fact was that the existing facilities were poor to say the least. The Speaker described the existing facilities as a 'proper disgrace' while the PM had claimed that they lacked even 'the ordinary amenities of life,' describing how Ministers very often had to carry out important duties in the corridor and how on one occasion he was forced to use the Governor's butler room so that he could deal with some urgent business that had come up.¹⁴



Indian on Horseback tapestry by Gobelin

The Legislative Assembly discussed the issue again in February 1926, when the Speaker gave a blow by blow account of the difficulties facing the House in the execution of its business. A visit to the Castille, he said, had convinced him that the building was not only big enough to provide the facilities required by Parliament but could also accommodate a number of government departments. It was his decided opinion, that while retaining hold of the Tapestry Chamber they should concede the military other facilities within the Palace. Should the Senate hold on to its position, then the Legislative Assembly should, if necessary, proceed with the matter on its own. The PM concurred with this view and a motion for the appointment of a new Committee was moved by Augustus Bartolo which was appointed at a later sitting.¹⁵

The Committee reported back in the middle of March but it failed to break new ground.¹⁶ Its Report reiterated the generally accepted view that the Auberge de Castille was suited for a House of Parliament but also members' reluctance to cede any other building to the military. They proposed, instead the appointment of yet another Joint Select Committee to inquire into and report upon the 'best means of making provision for the Sittings of Parliament and the general conduct of its business.' However, it was not until March 22 that a Motion calling for the setting up of a Joint Select Committee could be moved and debated. The motion was moved by the PM and seconded by Bartolo who expressed the hope that every individual member of the House, 'who feels for the dignity of the new status' that Malta had attained, should help the Committee to achieve its aim.¹⁷

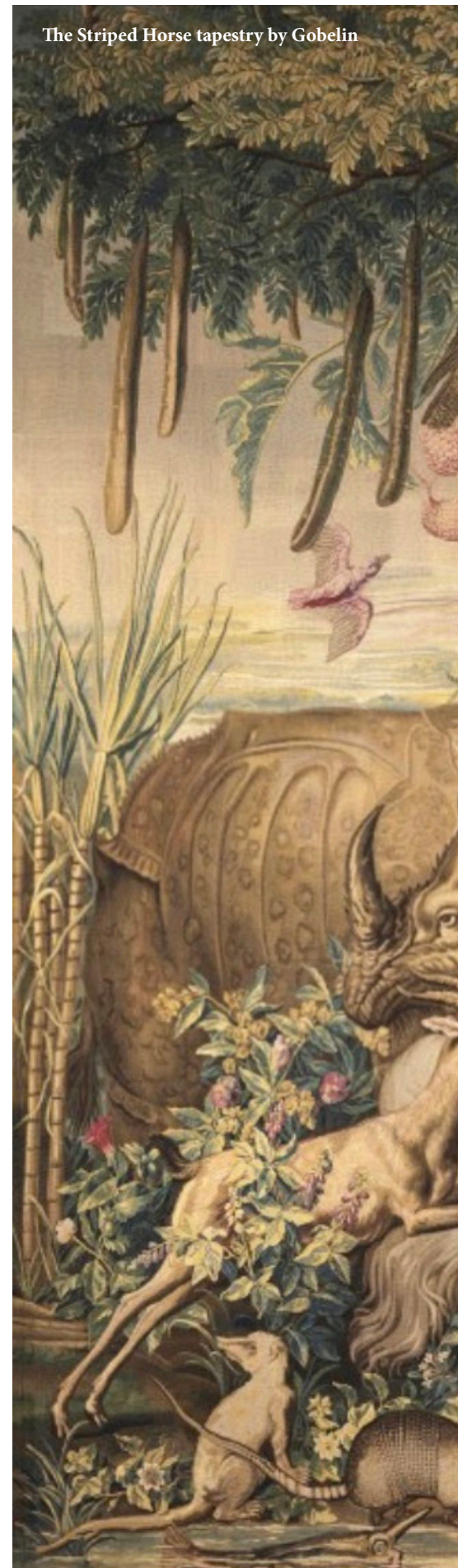
But there the matter rested for, by October 1926, the Committee had made little headway on its work. The PM stated that as the Committee had not reached any conclusion he would be proposing that a sum of money be voted in order

so that the Assembly may transfer to the Auberge de France.¹⁸ The Government, as Bartolo pointed out, by stating that it was preparing to bring before the House a vote of expenditure of this sort had also indicated that it had come to a unilateral decision over the transfer of the House to the Auberge de France. This led Strickland to ask the Head of Ministry whether the Cabinet or the Head of Ministry had committed themselves to the transfer of Parliament without the consent of the House? Here the Speaker revealed that the Committee had conducted a number of inspections of possible sites which could be used as a Parliament House.¹⁹

The Report of the Committee, which was finally laid on the Table of the House by Mr. Speaker on December 6, 1926 concluded that the only building capable of providing the required space and facilities was the Auberge de France. While pointing to a number of drawbacks, such as the closeness of the Hall to other buildings, the noise from the streets, and the fact that the debates, 'especially if they are of a heated character, would be audible from the streets and from the buildings in the vicinity,'²⁰ it believed that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. The Senate was to continue using the Tapestry Chamber but the Legislative Assembly was to reserve the right to make use of that Chamber whenever it was deemed necessary. A plan showing the proposed alterations was also laid on the Table of the House.

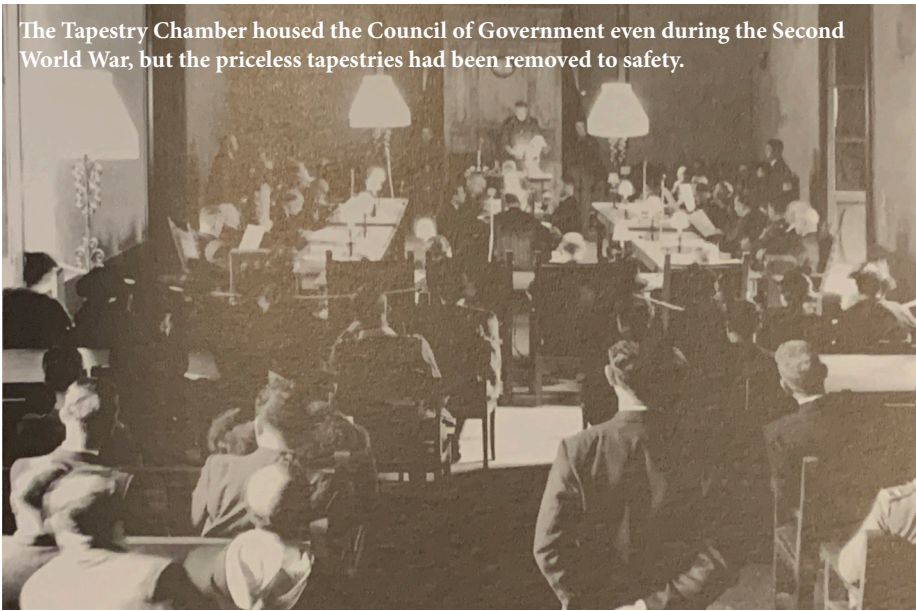
A week later the Head of Ministry presented a resolution in Parliament to this effect.²¹ He stressed again the expediency of not giving up the Tapestry Chamber and recommended that Parliament should now act as advised in the Report of the Joint Committee.²² Strickland rejected the Motion for, in his view, the Castille was the only building 'where with dignity, or even common respect for the position of the legislators of this country, any transfer of any sort

The Striped Horse tapestry by Gobelin





The Tapestry Chamber housed the Council of Government even during the Second World War, but the priceless tapestries had been removed to safety.



should be contemplated.' The Report itself, he said, made it clear that the Auberge de France had too many drawbacks and was not fit for the purpose. Strickland's remarks provoked heated debate. New sites were suggested. For example, there were those who suggested building a new Parliament House over or in place of the Main Guard, situated right across from the Governor's Palace. Even Carlo Mallia, a member of the Cabinet, now argued that the choice of the Auberge de France was not a happy one claiming that it was merely a temporary solution and that he would be voting against the motion. Prof. Galea, the technical expert on the Committee, explained the advantages of moving to this building but admitted that he could not give his assurance that the drawbacks could be entirely eliminated. But after a back-bencher proposed that the debate should be adjourned until 'efficient means be found for eliminating the drawbacks' the motion was adjourned.

ANOTHER ATTEMPT

In the 1927 elections the ruling party was defeated and a coalition government composed of Strickland's Constitutional Party and Boffa's Labour Party took power. Six years of debate had failed to bring about a resolution of the matter and the issue was to remain dormant until 1929. It

was clear that there was no prospect that the Auberge de Castille would be handed over to the civil authorities. In response to a question by the Leader of the Opposition, Strickland noted that his Government was planning to 'take steps towards the establishment of Houses of Parliament over the Casino San Giorgio, the back of the Main Guard and the Garrison Library.'²³ He agreed with Ugo Mifsud's point that the issue of choosing a site for a Parliament House was one which devolved exclusively on both Houses of Parliament rather than the Executive. He therefore moved for the appointment of yet another Select Committee of the House to consider the question and invited Mifsud to nominate its members, which he declined to do.²⁴ Consequently, once again the matter was dropped.

However, on February 15, 1929, Strickland laid on the Table of the House the opinion of the Public Works Department on the proposed building of a Parliament House on the Main Guard site. The two Houses of Parliament were to be accommodated on the first floor while the offices were to be fitted in the space between the two Houses and the staircase below. The papers also included 'rough sketches'²⁵ showing how the existing buildings were to be incorporated into the scheme.

The estimated cost of the building was £60,000.²⁶ But it was in April 1929 that Strickland finally moved, in the Legislative Assembly, the Motion that 'in the opinion of this House the site opposite the Palace in St George's Square is the most suitable for a Parliament House.'²⁷ Three reasons were provided: that it was near the main offices of government; that it was in the centre of town; and that it was easily accessible to the residence of the Head of Ministry at the Auberge de Aragon. The Opposition was not impressed reminding the Government that all parties were agreed that the present Council Chamber should remain in the hands of the Maltese Parliament. Ugo Mifsud wanted the matter to be referred to a Select Committee. Mifsud's colleague, Carlo Mallia, while wishing the whole matter thrown out on the basis of lack of funds, suggested that one should explore the idea of building a second floor on the Auberge de Aragon.²⁸ But the project was financially beyond the means of the Government and the matter dropped.²⁹

A NEW PARLIAMENT HALL

In 1947 Britain restored self-government to Malta under what became known as the MacMichael Constitution. The Senate was abolished and Parliament was now to be a one single chamber. This Constitution somewhat mitigated the accommodation problems being faced by Malta's parliamentarians. Indeed, it was during the debate on the 1974/5 General Estimates that the issue came up again for debate. The Prime Minister, Dom Mintoff, told the House that it was his hope that within a short period of time the entire first floor of the Palace will be used to House all the offices connected with Parliament and the Governor-General. The government's intention, he said, was to transfer Parliament from the Tapestry Chamber to the Armoury so that the tapestries would be protected. In the 1920s one of these tapestries was damaged when a member threw an inkpot at another member hitting the tapestries. The tapestries, he

said, should be open for viewing by the public rather than locked away and since Parliament will remain in the Palace there would be no break with tradition.³⁰

The Opposition opposed the proposed transfer. The Leader of the Opposition, however, stressed the need for better lighting, furniture, public address system and seating. He certainly hoped that their present desks, which were little better than school desks, would not be transferred to a new Chamber. The matter came up again for discussion almost a year later. In response to questions the Prime Minister informed members that that very same evening the Swedish Government had tabled a Motion in its own Parliament to provide for the cost of the new furniture for the new House of Representatives in Malta.³¹ The local architects were Richard England and Michael Ellul, Head of Antiquities.

On August 13, 1976, on the very last day that Parliament was to sit before it was dissolved and elections called, the new House of Parliament was inaugurated. It was opened by Sir Anthony Mamo, President of the Republic, in what he himself described as a 'short and solemn ceremony.' He was followed by Mr. Belding, from the Swedish Embassy in Rome. He noted that two renowned Swedish architects and two foremen had assisted with the project. Another distinguished guest was Sig. Colombo, at the time President of the Italian Senate. The proceedings were wound-up by Mr. Attard Bezzina, Speaker of the House, who outlined how after six decades, a new chamber had finally come into being. The Opposition, however, did not attend the ceremony claiming that, coming as it did on the very last sitting of Parliament, the ceremony was nothing but a partisan act to gain electoral advantage.

FINAL ACT

The idea of building a completely new Parliament began to circulate after 1987.

Property was acquired for the purpose in Castille Place but nothing came of it. But in 2004 the idea resurfaced once again when the Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi floated the government's idea of building a New Parliament House on the ruins of the Opera House.

This however, provoked a torrent of public opposition. In 2009, the government unveiled the architectural plans prepared by Renzo Piano for the regeneration of City Gate and the Opera House and which also included plans for a new Parliament House.

Despite the protests against the plans the government pressed on with the project. The new Parliament House was inaugurated on May 4, 2011 by Prime Minister Joseph Muscat ending a saga that had begun in 1921.

Following short speeches by the Prime Minister and Anġlu Farrugia, Speaker of the House, the keys to the new building were handed to the latter by the Commissioner of Police.

REFERENCES

¹On several occasions, in the period 1921-32, whenever a joint sitting was required, the two Chambers had to make use of the Armoury in the Palace for their sitting.

²Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Joint Sitting of 3 Nov. 1921.

³Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 17 Nov. 1922.

⁴Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 5 Jan. 1922

⁵ It has to be remembered that during this period most of the big buildings in Malta were in the hands of the British services given their view that Malta was merely a fortress.

⁶Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 14 Feb, 1922.

⁷ The Auberge de France was situated where the General Workers' Union Building now stands. It was one of the buildings destroyed during the war.

⁸Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 24 Nov. 1924.

⁹Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 4 May 1925.

¹⁰ Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 14 May 1925,

¹¹Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 28 May 1925.

¹²Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 15 Jun. 1925.

¹³Actually most of the Palace was for the use of the Governor and the military services. Apart from the Tapestry Chamber few rooms belonged to Parliament. For MPs, holding to what they had obtained was a matter of principle.

¹⁴Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 15 Dec. 1925.

¹⁵ Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 23 Feb. 1926.

¹⁶Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 16 Mar. 1926.

¹⁷ Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 22 Mar. 1926.

¹⁸ Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 25 Oct. 1926.

¹⁹Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 8 Nov. 1926.

²⁰ Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 6 Dec. 1926.

²¹Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 13 Dec, 1926.

²²Ibid.,

²³Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Sitting of 21 Jan. 1929.

²⁵These were in fact far more than rough sketches.

²⁶ Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Sitting of 31 Jan. 1929.

²⁷Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Sitting of 4 Apr. 1929

²⁸Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Sitting of 4 Apr. 1929

²⁹Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Sitting of 16 Apr. 1929.

³⁰Debates of the House of Representatives, 27 Mar. 1974.

³¹Debates of the House of Representatives, 17 Mar. 1975.

Climate Change is Existential

IF WE DON'T FIX IT, IT WILL FIX US

Geoffrey Lipman - co-founder at the SUNx Program, President of SUNx Malta and co-ordinator and main lecturer of the Institute of Tourism Studies' Climate Friendly Diploma was interviewed by Mark Bibby Jackson, Diploma graduate, writer and climate change activist





It is typical of the man that the first thing that Geoffrey Lipman mentions in our interview is his good friend the late Maurice Strong.

"He gave me and so many others like me the inspiration to act," says Lipman.

Strong created the UN "Green and Clean" Roadmap, which is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement, as well as launching both the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). He also played a leading role, as Secretary General of the two trailblazing Earth Summits at Stockholm in 1972 and Rio in 1992, as well as creating an Earth Charter between People and Planet.

"No other person played such a consistent global leadership role," says Lipman. "He saw tourism as a catalyst for positive change because it touches so many people and communities."

DASH 2 ZERO

In many ways Lipman has carried the torch that Strong left behind in what he sees as a DASH 2 Zero; a travel and tourism related response to the Race to Zero, launched by the UK Presidency in 2020.

"The Race to Zero calls for halving carbon emissions by 2030 and Net Zero by 2050," he explains. "Our DASH looks to 2030 for Net Zero Carbon – with an earlier target which we believe is possible if there is a collective resolve and incorporating offsetting which still has a grand debate underway."

A keen rugby player in his youth, for Lipman there is one massive elephant in the room that has to be tackled head on if travel and tourism is to make a meaningful contribution to meeting its Paris goals.

“If big governments, big aviation, big finance and big oil were really committed then that issue could be overcome. The technology is there with systems that turn household waste and the like into SAF. The market is clearly there. Now we just need to scale

”

“There is a big question mark around aviation with limited access to non-fossil fuel propulsion,” he says, repeating his longstanding call for a Kennedy-style ‘Moonshot’ to solve the problem. “If big governments, big aviation, big finance and big oil were really committed then that issue could be overcome. The technology is there with systems that turn household waste and the like into SAF. The market is clearly there. Now we just need to scale.”

Lipman is encouraged by announcements such as Airbus’ plans to introduce hydrogen planes by 2035, but feels that such deadlines are already too late.

“Most important is to start now – the scientists say that it’s the next few years that will be critical,” he says. “And in the three decades to 2050 we must move to real zero greenhouse gas – not just the 75% that’s carbon.”

Lipman has spent his whole career working in the travel and tourism sector. He spent twenty years working with The International Air Transport Association (IATA) – “from tearoom to Executive Director”. Then, he became the first President of The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) before joining The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), becoming the Assistant Secretary General.

In 2015 with the support of Maurice Strong, he established a non-profit NGO.

SUNX PROGRAM

“We called it SUN – the Strong Universal Network – in honour of Maurice,” he says. “And added the x to remind ourselves that the Climate Crisis is eXistential.”

That is the key principle behind the SUNx Program is that climate change is existential – if we don’t fix it, it will fix us. And the travel and tourism sector needs to address this through making travel more climate friendly.

“Climate Friendly Travel integrates at the core, the SDGs and their 2030 targets with the Paris 1.5 Climate targets,” he explains. “We don’t see this only in terms of the metrics, important though they are, but very much the mindset. If people are committed to the concept they will get to the numbers in their own way. And we will be there to guide and support them, through our Registry, SDG 17 Partners and Strong Climate Champions.”

In 2019, he signed a five-year agreement with the Government of Malta to create the SUNx Malta Program.

“Without Malta we couldn’t have done anything,” he says. “They had the strategic vision through my friend Leslie Vella to see that there was a need to address the climate travel sector intersect long before it became fashionable.

They have a long climate action history – being the country that first put the issue on the agenda of the UN General Assembly as far back as 1987. They also have a big tourism vision as a beautiful and friendly destination.”

GRETA THUNBERG GENERATION

If this all sounds a bit like an old man’s club, then nothing could be further from the truth. Although Lipman himself might be embarking on the final chapter of his illustrious career, he is keen to emphasize the key role he often refers to as the Greta Thunberg generation has to play in solving the problems that his generation has

caused.

“Because it’s their world we are destroying,” he says. “Or as Greta Thunberg said, ‘It’s your mess that we will have to clean up’. So, we want to get as much of Climate Friendly Travel into their positive thinking as possible. And we want them to be activists for change in our sector. We are training them for that and encouraging them.”

This is why so many of the projects started by SUNx Malta have a focus on youth. These include the first ever diploma on climate friendly travel, the inaugural SEYS Youth Summit held earlier this year, the recent Summer School, and perhaps most importantly, creating a global cadre of Climate Champions that Lipman hopes will help those in travel and tourism change the way that the sector works for good.

CLIMATE FRIENDLY TRAVEL REGISTRY

Lipman hopes that these Champions will work for major travel companies, organisations and communities who will sign up for the Climate Friendly Travel Registry, which he believes is an essential component if the sector is to achieve its Paris goals. He encourages all within the sector to sign up.

“Join the Climate Friendly Travel Registry and unlock a lot of free help to prepare your unique climate and sustainability programs and our targeted links with the UN Climate and SDG programs, which really operate quite separately from the tourism world we are used to.”

SUNx Malta has recently signed the

Glasgow Declaration, believing that it is key for the sector to work together as a whole.

We’re talking about the existential challenge facing humanity. The scale is massive. Billions of travellers, with hundreds of thousands of companies and communities.

GLASGOW DECLARATION

“We are talking about the existential challenge facing humanity. The scale is massive. Billions of travellers, with hundreds of thousands of companies and communities. It will take many organisations to make this happen,” he says.

“We will cooperate with anyone, which is why we signed the Glasgow Declaration and are offering our Registry for measurement and tracking of performance.

At SUNx Malta, we will just keep following our strategy of helping communities and companies to transform to Climate Friendly Travel, in the spirit of Maurice Strong and with a “Plan for our Kids.”

Overall, despite much of the press

speculation that Glasgow COP 26 represented a last chance for the climate, Lipman believes that in reality it was part of a long process that stretches back to the work that Strong started back in Stockholm in 1972.

“It’s another in a long line of “last chances” which we have heard about for many years – at least since the 2009 Copenhagen COP,” he says. “This one just has more hype than previous ones – the UK are good at that kind of thing.”

That is not to say that he is underestimating the urgent need to redress the existential threat facing mankind.

LEAVING A LEGACY

“There is no doubt the window for real action is closing, so our big leaders need to take the tough actions, like switching from fossil fuel energy to renewables as soon as possible – and stopping the insane oil exploration subsidies,” he says.

With time running out on my interview as well, I have time for just one last question. Having dedicated SUNx to Maurice Strong what would Lipman like his own legacy to be? His response is typically self-effacing.

“That I made a small contribution to my grandkids surviving and being able to travel easily in a climate friendly way,” he says. “And for people who knew me to say he was a decent guy trying to do the right things.”

A decent guy doing the right things, now who could ask for a better epithet than that. Not that Lipman has any intention of giving up the fight for the future of the planet any time soon.

MBA

THESIS ABSTRACTS



The first cohort of the students have graduated in the Master of Business Administration in International Hospitality Management. The programme was delivered by ITS in academic affiliation with the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management between 2019 and 2021. Futouristic is publishing the extended abstract of some of the theses successfully submitted by some of these MBA students.



The Perception on the Introduction of Hospitality as a Vocational Subject in Compulsory Education

RESEARCH BY YANICA GAUCI
SUPERVISOR: ANDREW DEBATTISTA



The purpose of the research is to establish the perceptions of hospitality educators in secondary schools and staff at the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS), and the perceptions of personnel within the industry, towards the introduction of hospitality as a vocational subject in secondary schools. Current literature on vocational education reveals the history and journey of vocational education in Malta and the vocational educational strategy used in different European countries. The concept of

perception and the perception of students, educators, the general public, and the labour market were addressed. However, all of these studies were held on general VET courses, rather than on a specific programme. This study aims to reduce the gap in literature which focuses on the programme of vocational and applied hospitality being implemented in obligatory education in Malta.

By adopting a qualitative narrative inquiry methodology, three focus groups were assembled, with participants being secondary schools educators, post-secondary institutions staff and those working within the industry. The use of thematic narrative analysis aided the researcher to develop eight themes illustrated in Figure 1, which disclosed the characteristics of the hospitality programme and ultimately revealed the needed perceptions from the participants.

Considering the findings and discussions evaluated in the study, the research questions were addressed entirely and comprehensively. The perceptions of the three sectors were gathered and valued. The expected and anticipated impact on post-secondary education and the industry should one

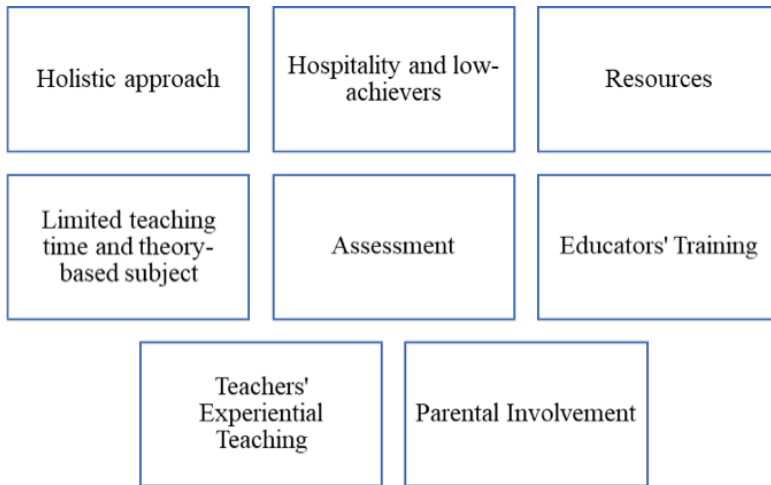
introduce the subject, were investigated. Ways and means on how academia and industry can come together to meet and exceed the expectations of future employees and the future market were also targeted.

From this study, it was delineated that the introduction of the vocational subject of Hospitality in obligatory education is of utmost importance to the Maltese economy and the Hospitality and Tourism industry, since the Maltese GDP has a high dependence on the sector as observed in statistics issued by the National Statistics Office (NSO, 2021).

Figure 2 shows the perceptions of the participants on the subject, which offers students the opportunity to gain soft skills through the lessons conducted in class, through on-the-job training, additional courses including the food handling license, the assessment, and also through the different challenges and projects organised yearly. However, it is evident that educators do not have enough time to teach the subject content practically and educators tend to focus their lessons on the assessment rather than a holistic approach.

Through this study, it was recorded that teachers, despite having the teaching

Figure 1



qualifications as per regular teacher call within the Public Service, require intense training in the different fields that the industry is composed of, especially training in practical operations. According to narratives from all sectors of this study, if the issue is not imminently targeted, it will have repercussions on the programme, including a decrease in students selecting the subject to study, a wrong perception of the subject from student and parent and unprepared yet qualified future employees.

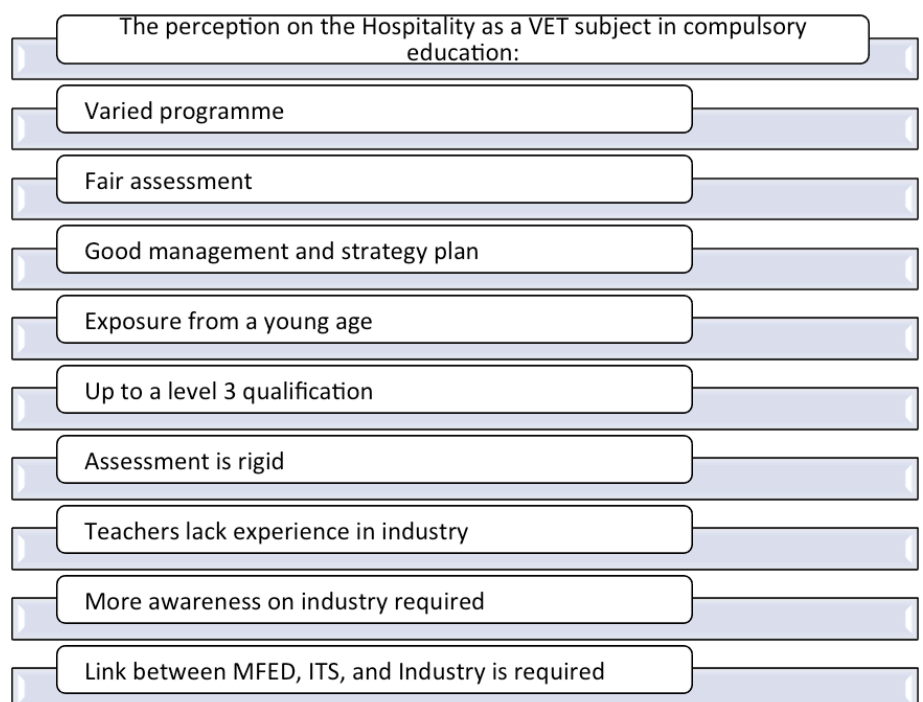
This study revealed that the programme is offering the opportunity to students to learn the skills, knowledge, and competencies required to work within the Hospitality industry from a young age. In fact, since its conception, the Institute of Tourism Studies has drastically increased its student intake, by precisely 136% from the scholastic year 2018 to the scholastic year 2020. This is a clear indication that exposure to the subject and the industry from a young age is bearing its fruit, where students are furthering their studies in Hospitality and Tourism and seeing the industry as an opportunity to build and progress with a career. However, as indicated by the literature, narratives of this study confirmed that low-achieving students and students coming from the lower strand of the social class, tend to choose the subject in higher numbers as there is still the perception that Hospitality is for the non-academics

or high-flyers. Narratives from all sectors agreed that a national marketing campaign is required to expose the true picture of the industry, showing the skills, responsibilities, attitude, experience, and qualifications required to work in a hospitality environment. The subject is varied, offering content in different operations, however, it is too focused on hotel and restaurant operations. As suggested by participants, it would be ideal to upgrade the subject according to the needs of the industry and include content that is currently in high market demand such as

diving, hospitality on superyachts, and service in aviation. This research revealed that the subject is well managed and that the strategic plan on the way forward is fit for purpose. Nevertheless, more collaboration between the Ministry for Education, post-secondary institutions, and the industry are required to ensure the programme is updated according to the needs of the industry, with minimal impact on the educators and the students.

The vocational subjects allow those students who flourish in showing their talent in an applied way, rather than in an academic way, and therefore one must ensure that the programmes offered are of high quality, tailor-made for the needs of the students, and with a fair and valid assessment. The collaboration of post-secondary institutions and the industry is essential to ensure the programme is in line with industrial expectations. The perception of the stakeholders, the labour market, and the general public should all be considered before reviewing a policy or a strategy, so that the programme offered meets the needs of the economy and the industry, but above all, the needs of the students opting to study the subject.

Figure 2



Camping tourism as a possible addition to the Malta tourism portfolio

RESEARCH BY CHARLES MICALLEF
SUPERVISOR: DR. JOSEPH GEORGE MALLIA



Camping tourism is a subcategory of adventure tourism and is acknowledged as a growing market-segment worldwide. Despite its increasing importance in various parts of the world, camping tourism is still in its infancy in Malta and has a negligible presence, not evident in documents produced by the local relevant authorities. This study identifies a significant gap in

adequate facilities for camping tourism. It has therefore been established that no adequate camping facilities of the client-expected standard are available in Malta for both the inbound and domestic camping markets. This study may contribute to the possibility of adding camping tourism to the Malta tourism portfolio as it investigates what camping tourism travellers expect when travelling to Malta and to how these demands may be met.

Keywords: camping, camping tourism, camping in Malta, campsites.

INTRODUCTION

Mikulić et al., (2017) classified camping tourism as one of the fastest-growing tourism industry segments (Lowry, 2017). Adventure tourism, of which camping tourism is a sub-type, is seen as an additional diversification within the tourism sector that can help spread tourist-numbers more evenly throughout the year (Camilleri, n.d.).

This study primarily looks at the crucial factors that influence the camping tourist and how the camping tourist makes certain decisions. It investigates the motivational factors and environmental approach of campers when choosing camping tourism.

The main objective of this research is to address the following question: What are camping tourism travellers' perceptions, and expectations when they travel to Malta?

METHODOLOGY

The study's primary research question, whether Malta could be a destination for camping tourism, was spurred by the author's observation of several camper vans from Austria, Germany, France and the Netherlands in various campsites in Sicily. This was investigated through a questionnaire targeted at camping tourists which had open-ended questions, closed-ended questions and a combination of both.

Since the research subjects are not based

Figure 1
Participants' response on camping in Malta

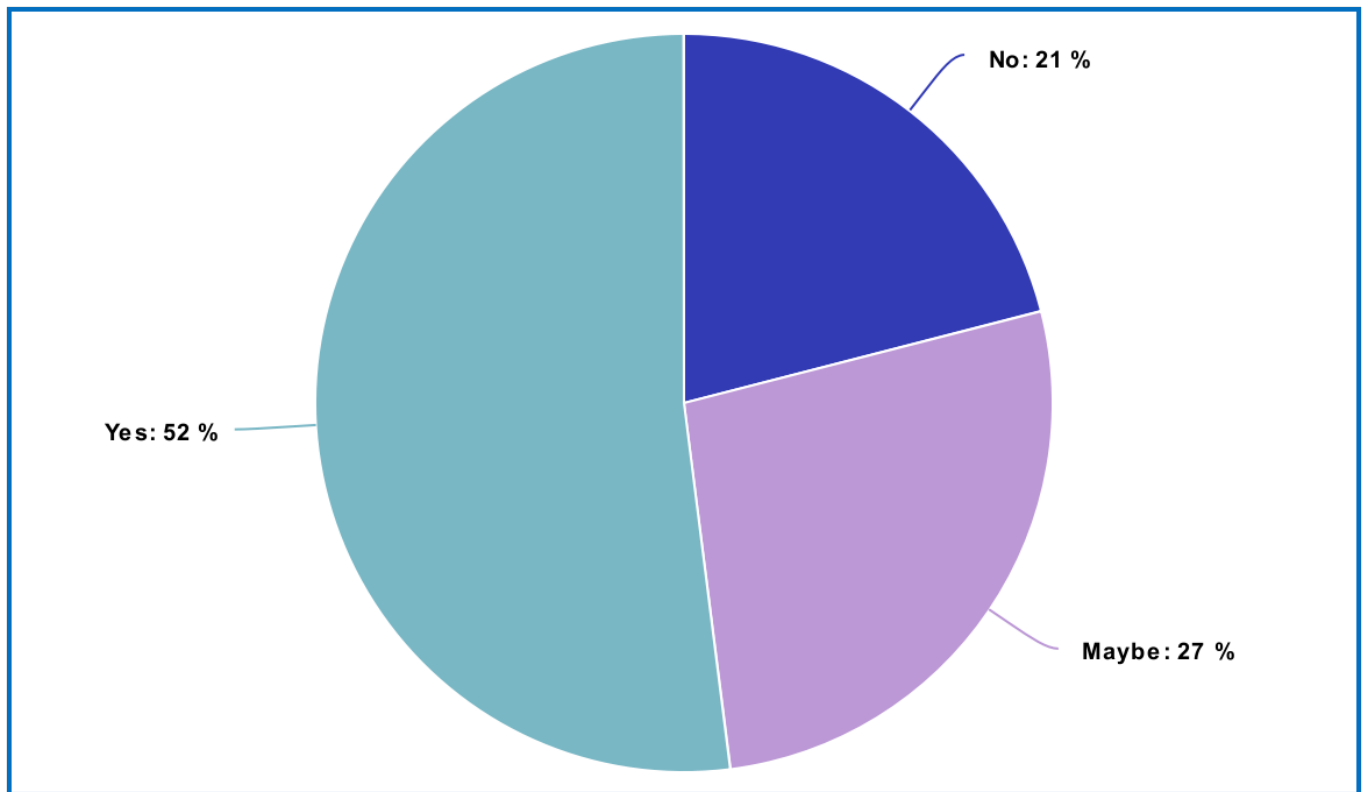
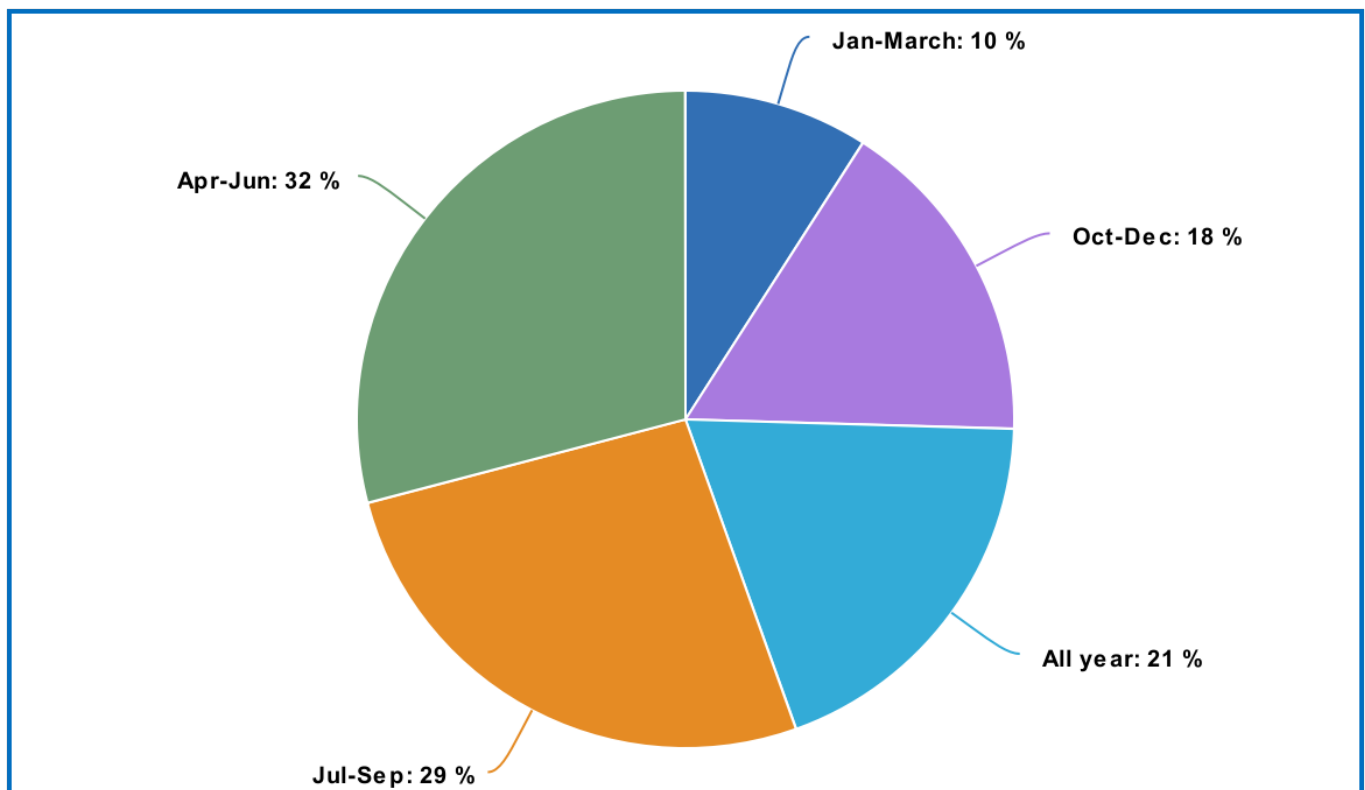


Figure 2
Periods of the year preferred for camping trips



in Malta, Facebook Groups was the choice of platform where people sharing the same interests meet. The questionnaire was formulated on Google Forms and posted on specific groups on Facebook. It was offered in four languages: English, Italian, French and German and used to collect relative data from foreign camping enthusiasts.

The approach adopted in this study is qualitative since understanding the camping community concerns and needs requires a qualitative assessment rather than merely data-based information. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the basic features of the data collected, displayed in charts and discussed accordingly. Results were analysed based on respondents' demography, preferences

of camping accommodation, campsite facilities, and choice of destination.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A directly relevant question for the study is whether the respondents would consider a camping holiday in Malta. 53% of respondents acknowledged that they would consider Malta as a camping destination. 27% said that they would 'maybe' consider it, whilst 21% said they would not consider a camping holiday in Malta.

Respondents taking camping trips outside their country of residence stand at 78%, where trips are usually for more than seven days. The most extended trips lasting over 28 days of travelling

outside the country of residence. Hence, camping tourists seem to be inclined to travel outbound and not merely engage in domestic tourism. Statistics of overnight camping stays in Europe seem to support this high percentage of camping trips. The camping take-up of overall overnight stays in Europe is 15.4% (Cеровic, Cvelic-Bonifacic, Grudic Kvasic, 2014). Nights spent at a campsite within the EU accounted for 12% of all tourist accommodation within the EU in 2017 (ec. Europa. EU, n.d.). As shown in Figure 2, the most popular period for travelling is the April to June quarter followed by the summer months of July to September at 29%.

The October to March period is preferred by the > 61 years of age bracket at 18%.

Table 1
Participants' preference of the type of camping trips

	1		2		3		4		5		Mean
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
Camper / Caravan	46	12.2%	13	3.4%	29	7.7%	17	4.5%	273	72.2%	4.21
Tent	80	50.0%	23	14.4%	31	19.4%	16	10.0%	10	6.3%	2.08
Glamping	50	35.7%	20	14.3%	38	27.1%	23	16.4%	9	6.4%	2.44
Static caravan / mobile home at campsite	52	29.7%	29	16.6%	31	17.7%	35	20.0%	28	16.0%	2.76
Other	23	31.9%	12	16.7%	19	26.4%	3	4.2%	15	20.8%	2.65

This is understandable since this age bracket comprises mostly of retired people who would opt to go on their holidays in the leaner months of the travel industry. Such results might augur well because Malta has a temperate climate, and certain Europeans are known to travel out of their country in the Winter period in search of warmer temperatures.

The fact that camping tourism is not concentrated around the peak summer months supports Camilleri (n.d.), in her study on adventure tourism (of which camping tourism is a sub-type) in Gozo, where she states that it is seen as a diversification in tourism which can help spread tourists more evenly throughout the year.

From the data collected, campers and caravans are the most preferred type of camping accommodation used by travellers in camping tourism as shown in Table 1.

Camping tourism is based on the flexible, temporary, and mobile forms of accommodation through tents, mobile homes, and recreational vehicles (Blichfeldt and Mikkelsen, 2016; Prideaux, 2019). Such a high preference for caravans and campers could be attributed to the fact that campers and caravans offer a significant amount of comfort for the traveller.

Campsites are the most popular choice with the respondents as to where to set up camp at 61%. A campsite is an open space in a rural area, usually having trees providing shade and offering a range of services from basic sanitary facilities to restaurants, pools and spas. A sense of security is provided since campsites are enclosed, and entrance to the campsite is controlled. This seems to tally with the fact that the respondents gave a high score to safety as a consideration when choosing their destination for a camping holiday. Wild camping represents 29% of the respondents' preference as to where

they would prefer to set up camp. Aires and Sostas represent only 10% preference of the respondents. These are spots usually used for short stays whilst touring, and offer electricity supply and basic sanitary facilities. These types of camping spots could be considered in Malta as they might have the least possible impact on the environment, taking a minimum amount of area to accommodate several users.

This study suggests that a potential market of camping tourism can be added to the Malta tourism portfolio if adequate camping facilities are provided to the camping tourist. Most respondents are willing to consider a camping trip to Malta whilst touring nearby Sicily or southern Italy. The common concern for both those who would and those who would not consider a camping trip to Malta was facilities. These were analysed and discussed within the presently available camping facilities. The concept of glamping (upscale camping) was also addressed since it is currently of increasing interest in the tourism industry.

CONCLUSION

This study has addressed an omitted area of research in the local tourism sphere by generating new perspectives on camping tourists' expectations should they travel to Malta. This information should be of great interest for those entities responsible or interested in facilitating this aspect of sustainable tourism development.

A major concern of potential camping tourists is the lack of local facilities. Hence, the study concludes by recommending future studies on identifying areas to be used as potential campsites of international standards. Furthermore, results of this study can encourage the relevant authorities and potential investors to pursue camping tourism as an environmental and sustainable touristic niche product through formulation

of policies, provision of facilities and marketing the island as a camping destination.

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The Perspectives of Front-Line Hospitality Employees on Emotional Labour and Authenticity

RESEARCH BY DAMIEN PELOW
SUPERVISOR: ING. DAVID J. DINGLI



with guests are expected to always serve their guests with a genuine smile. However, for several reasons such as stress, family issues, personality traits, inauthenticity, or financial instability to mention a few, service with a smile is not always the desired result. Inner emotions need to be masked; what is displayed on the outside might not necessarily reflect what is felt within.

Hospitality related skills can be taught; yet can everyone be hospitable? Emotional labour needs to be supported by training. Regularly providing authentic services is a mental struggle these employees go through daily. The mental efforts required by front-line hospitality employees within some of the top 5* hotels in Malta are investigated.

The emotions one displays between one guest and another alters, with hardly any time between such interactions to prepare oneself, depending on the situation one finds him/herself in.

Guaranteeing service with a smile is one of the biggest challenges service organisations face in the 21st century. Front-line hospitality employees who are in direct contact

The difference in feelings felt within and what is portrayed on the outside is known as emotional dissonance.

Repetitively delivering top service within the hospitality sector may be achieved by having passionate hospitable employees, however, passion alone is not enough.

Repetitive smiles may cause inauthentic interactions with guests, which over time may lead to disheartened employees that no longer remain genuine in their daily encounters with guests.

Specific traits are essential for a successful front-line hospitality employee. Ideally one should be

positive, a good team player, a good communicator, high in extraversion and low in neuroticism, and should willingly offer warm & welcoming services to their guests. These qualities will help motivate them along with their daily duties, which in return may lead to guest satisfaction, repeat business & profits for the hotel investors.

Success needs to be shared amongst all employee levels, but results in this study prove otherwise. Front-line hospitality employees in 5 * hotels in Malta are not being rewarded sufficiently for the emotional work they go through daily.

Bonuses and commissions could motivate employees who are in direct contact with the guests regularly. Rewarding entire shifts rather than individual employees may create a more collective effort when teamwork is essential for guest satisfaction to be achieved, like in food & beverage service encounters.

Hotel owners need to appreciate their front-line employees. They should treat them as their key assets, and invest in them, as it is these employees who are in direct contact with the hotel guests.

Front-line employees need to be looked at as a venture capital for the future, where unlike tangible objects which depreciate over time, the right human capital, if invested in, will add value to hotels.

One's own emotions need to be at ease before one can offer a genuine service to his / her guests. If an employee, regardless if he / she is a Maltese grown up, or a 16-year-old student who is starting his / her first job to earn some pocket money, or a Third Country National, must be emotionally stable when providing a service to others.

In the case of a student, if he / she is

worried about an issue, then the levels of genuine service will be poor. Similarly, if an employee struggles to have his / her salary last till the end of the month. Exceeding a guests' expectations cannot be achieved by having employees forced to do something, as this will never lead to outstanding service.

Genuine service needs to be the norm because someone wants to do it on his / her own initiative, as explained in Mark Twain's autobiography, by Smith H.E & Griffin B. (2015):

"Work like you don't need the money. Dance like no one is watching. And love like you've never been hurt"

To achieve this form of authentic service amongst front-line hospitality employees, investment in human capital is required. Authentic services will never be achieved if such employees are perceived by their managers as easily replaceable individuals.

Hiring front-line hospitality employees through recruitment agencies in the top Maltese 5* hotels is becoming a norm. These agencies are filling up jobs for the short-term and are not providing long-term solutions for front-line employees.

Successful careers in hospitality should exist at different levels, and such careers should not only include managerial positions, but also front-line career paths. This would benefit future hospitality students.

Local teenagers who join the hospitality industry at young ages acquire skills and traits, however the majority of these individuals do not retain their job as front-liners within hospitality in the future.

Front-line hospitality jobs are not seen as careers. Customer skills learnt are subsequently being relocated to other

professions, leaving continual disparities in customer care in these 5* hotels.

Apart from the physical fatigue these employees go through, this study is aimed at raising more awareness on the mental efforts front-line hospitality employees experience during their daily interactions with guests. The following recommendations and suggestions were attained to illuminate what may be done in the future to lift these jobs into prosperous careers:

- Strong connections between the Hospitality Industry and Hospitality Institutions
- Prioritise Customer Care
- Services are as important as Tangible Products
- Training Solutions
- Emotional Displays included in Educational Systems
- Upselling Monetary Schemes
- Recruitment Processes

The intention of this paper was aimed at understanding service with a smile from the perspectives of front-line hospitality employees.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the advances in technology are proving that there is a reduced need of direct contact between individuals, where working from home is becoming a new norm. Less individuals in the future might wish to be around people.

An appreciation of the mental efforts on this topic is essential in this day and age for the success of the hospitality industry.

Everyone might be able to put on a smile, but not everyone has the same mental resilience to do it genuinely and repetitively. Passionate, hospitable and genuine employees deserve to be recognised and rewarded accordingly.

The Implementation of Emotional Intelligence among Management Teams in 5-star Hotels in Malta

RESEARCH BY LYDIA XUEREB
SUPERVISOR: ING. DAVID J. DINGLI



come without challenges. After consulting with various hotel managers in Malta, the researcher discussed several issues with them. Some of the topics mentioned were high employee turnover, training and development skills required for both new employees and other long-standing staff members, job satisfaction, and job performance – all of which require the company's time, money, and expertise.

organisational effectiveness (Srivastava, 2013). Such insights have raised the interest of the researcher in investigating EI in further detail.

Research on emotional intelligence (EI) in the hospitality industry in Malta is close to non-existent. This study is designed to determine the level of awareness of and interest in EI among management personnel of five-star hotels in Malta and whether they are developing emotional intelligence skills in their organisation. Additionally, it aims to assess the level of EI among the management personnel of the same star segment with a validated and reliable assessment tool. As EI within the hospitality industry has not been widely investigated, this research offers results that are valuable to academic and industry perspectives through a mixed methodology approach.

This study involved conducting 11 one-to-one interviews with management personnel and using the EQ-i 2.0 emotional intelligence assessment

A leading segment of the island's tourism industry is that of hoteliers, who welcome tourists from every part of the globe. To the best of their abilities, they strive to accommodate guests with the highest level of service, though this does not

After further research, it was found that several of these elements, such as leaders, management, job performance, job satisfaction, and employee turnover may be significantly affected by emotional intelligence (EI; Gholipour Soleimani and Einolahzadeh, 2017; Shehu and Isa, 2017; Spry, 2016; Trevino II, 2020; Wolfe and Kim, 2013). It can thus be argued that EI plays a significant role in achieving

tool with 22 managers and general managers of five-star hotels in Malta. The EI model used for this research is the revised version of Reuven Bar-On's EQ-i.

The overall data analysis results suggest a mixed level of EI awareness among the management teams of five-star hotels, ranging from incognizant to knowledgeable; however, all the participants showed interest and engagement during the interviews, suggesting that management teams are interested in EI and its competencies. Moreover, although EI training development programmes were not common practice in these five-star hotels, this study revealed that a small number had been implementing EI training among their staff.

The EQ-i 2.0 assessment tool also determined a mixed level of EI scores among the management teams, which varied from low-range to high-range quartiles. Interestingly, management personnel with the lowest to middle EI scores were also incognizant of EI; conversely, those with the middle to highest EI scores also had EI awareness and were implementing EI skills.

EI awareness is necessary for effective leadership. As leaders in a high-demanding, service-based industry, hospitality management must recognise and manage their strengths and weaknesses to meet challenging requirements and lead others within an organisation.

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

EI has become a topic of vast and developing interest worldwide and is concerned with how we identify, perceive, manage, and understand emotions. People with a high level of EI are conscious of how they are feeling,

what their emotions mean, and how their emotions affect others.

Emotionally intelligent persons are highly conscious of their emotional states – whether they are experiencing both positive or negative feelings such as sadness and frustration – and can recognise and handle them.

They are very tuned in to the emotions that others experience. Understandably, sensitivity to emotional signals both from within oneself and their social setting could make one a better colleague and leader.

SOME THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The researcher has identified that EI increases team performance, trust between staff, staff retention, communication, and interpersonal skills. This is because social and emotional skills and the corresponding competencies of EI account for effective leadership (Viriyavidhayavongs and Jiamsuchon, 2001).

A service-based industry such as hospitality is dynamic; hence, staff and management need to be sharp, regularly trained, and well prepared for anything that comes their way. Hospitality has been growing year after year, and one cannot expect it to grow unless the people managing it do not grow along with it. EI literature has indicated that emotional intelligence helps people grow and educate themselves to improve their emotional and social skills, from which management, staff, guests, and companies would benefit.

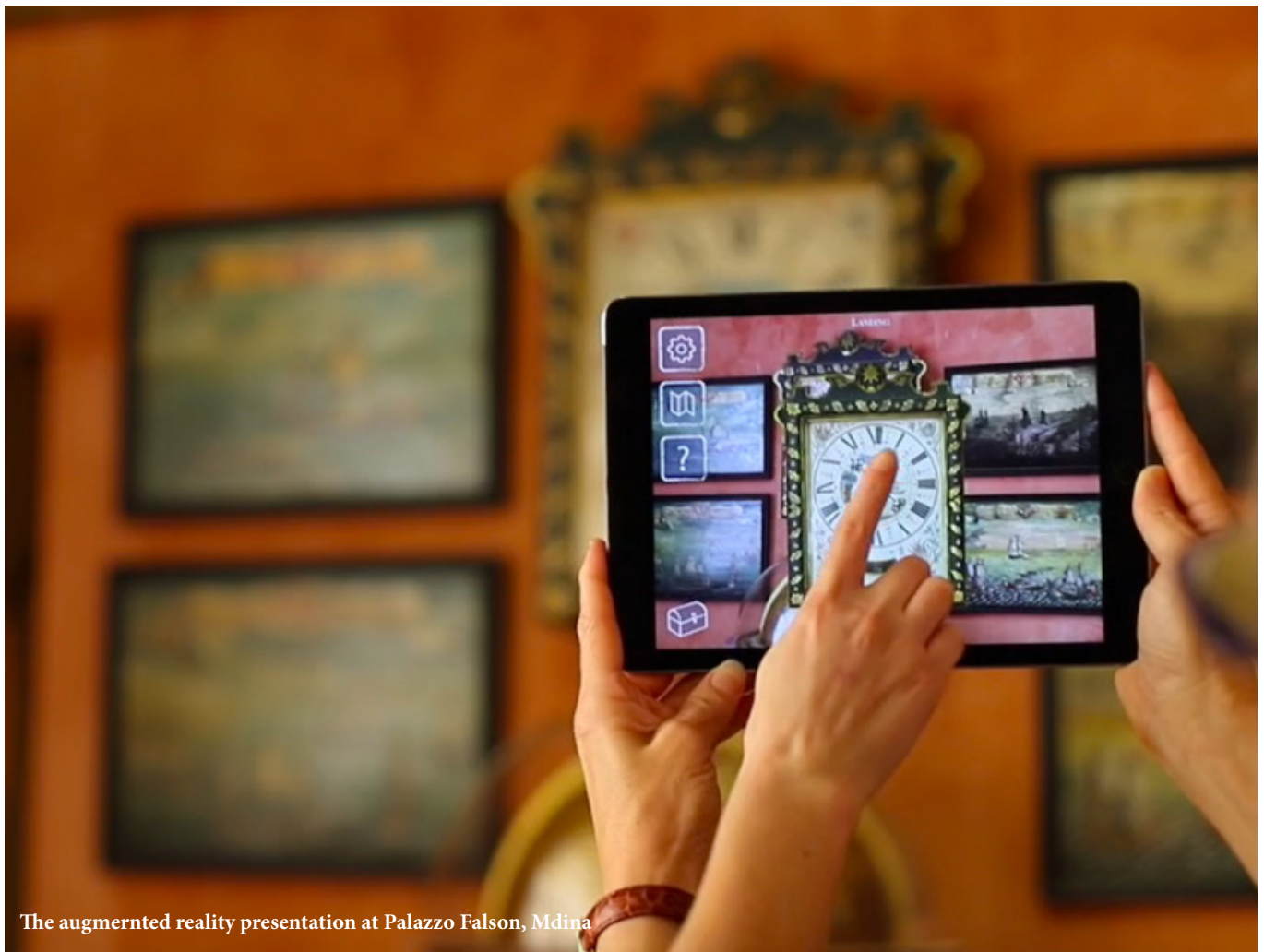
This research sheds light on emotional intelligence awareness and training within management teams in five-star hotels in Malta and provides insight into how EI can be measured.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to determine EI's level of interest and awareness within management and to assess whether EI skills were being developed among management teams in five-star hotels in Malta. Based on a qualitative analysis conducted through one-to-one interviews with management personnel, it became evident that not all five-star hotels were aware of the notion of EI; hence, it can be concluded that not all of them were directly developing the EI skills of their management teams. The varied EI scores resulting from the questionnaires reflected the qualitative analysis of the interviews. This is because participants with none to very little awareness of EI scored low- to mid-range quartiles, while those with a level of EI awareness scored mid- to high-range quartiles, with some also reaching the leadership gold bar. The t-test indicated that the difference in male and female EI scores was insignificant.

The results also indicated that the management teams developing EI skills in their organisations were aware of the benefits and increased leadership abilities and sought to continue to include EI training. In contrast, management teams who had not been initially aware of the notion of EI before being contacted by the researcher were interested in including it as part of their EI development training. They also believed that administering EI assessment to both management and staff would be the best option for a company because everyone – and not only management – can benefit from an EI assessment and its implications.

The research clearly illustrates the need for EI awareness and implementation within five-star hotels in Malta and elicits the question of the availability of EI coaches and practitioners in Malta to provide organisations with professional EI training development.



The augmented reality presentation at Palazzo Falson, Mdina

What we lost and what we found – the story of heritage and the pandemic

WORDS BY VERONICA BARBARA
VISITING LECTURER AT ITS

If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that the future is unpredictable and unsure. Even the things we had been taking for granted for ages, such as kissing our loved

ones and heading for the office in the morning, became out of bounds for such a long time that we almost forgot what they felt like.

The closure of museums due to the

pandemic has been a sad consequence that has proved a setback to many heritage institutions. Not only did it cause a marked decrease in funds, but it also brought extra expenditure in order to adhere to new regulations (Lipski

2021). In an official communication, the Metropolitan Museum estimated a loss of at least \$100 million during its closure and its aftermath throughout 2021 (Christiansen 2020). And yet, museum management teams across the globe realised that this was the perfect opportunity to look back at what they were doing and take their time to update their operations and look at new potential business models (de Jong & Grit 2021), that complement (and not conflict with) the mission of heritage interpretation.

Whereas, in a normal situation one would try to close the museum for as little as possible to do refurbishment works and the like, everyone was facing the prospect of months with museum doors barred and museum workers having, at face value, very little to do. This led to the realisation that, perhaps, it was an ideal opportunity to spend more time on back-office work and to evaluate existing approaches, rethink contemporary notions, and draft new strategies.

Among the many challenges, audiences were discussed internally, to identify

who the audiences were before the pandemic, who could be the audiences now, and who might be the audiences after all the turmoil is over. It is not just a matter of coping during this situation and 'inventing' tasks for staff, but rather involves having a very serious discussion on how to tackle the sector after the pandemic is over. It will be a new world, with an increased focus on health and hygiene. Public expenditure will change, with many groups having barely anything to spend and a handful of others having been able to spend so little they actually have a lot of money to splurge. Individuals' needs and yearnings will be different, with a wish to travel and explore but with a certain hesitation. Everything will change and be, different from anything we have experienced before.

In a situation where travel was practically impossible, and even now when tourism has started to wake up but is a far cry from what we had before, Maltese museums have had to learn to diversify potential audiences and, have started to look at locals as visitors on an equal par with foreign ones.

Locals have also been rediscovering local heritage – many friends of mine whom I do not know as regular museum visitors have opted to check sites and museums out. Some wanted to enact the role of tourists, a role they could not fulfil abroad as they would usually do in normal circumstances. Others visited out of boredom, not having anywhere better to go without the village feasts and other similar summer activities.

Have our heritage institutions responded well to this reaction on the part of the Maltese population, particularly of parents who were at a loss what to do with their children, considering they had spent long months with very little activities to engage them.

In October 2020 Heritage Malta planned a series of events ('Babies take over Fort St Angelo', 'Art at the Fort' and 'Rock at the Fort') with the fort closed to the public and open only to pre-booked parents/guardians and their young children. The events were to include a private tour of the site and an age-appropriate activity, providing a safe activity to do during a time when parents with babies and young

Cardiff in lockdown



children were barely showing their faces out of the house. Unfortunately, due to increased mitigation measures, these activities had to be cancelled, and online workshops were organized instead.

There is so much that can be done, and a quick look at many institutions abroad can offer some interesting examples. Some focused on research and collection of material, especially oral history and experiences of the pandemic itself. Cardiff Story Museum organised 'Cardiff in Lockdown' – a photography project that will make sure that the pandemic is adequately represented for posterity. Other museums opted to go through their reserve collections and explore new possibilities of interpretation and reinterpretation.

A serious self-check is in order to analyse what has been done so far, what has been working but cannot do so any longer in the circumstances, and what never actually worked so should be discarded. It is not always easy to let go of what one would have been used

to for so many years, but unless such a step is taken the discipline of heritage interpretation cannot resurface strong, resilient, and relevant to contemporary society.

One of the most common responses to the pandemic for numerous heritage institutions was going online. Locally, Heritage Malta launched its Virtual Underwater Museum and live streamed the 2020 Spring Equinox sunrise on its Facebook page. Palazzo Falson organised a series of virtual children's workshops with crafts and storytelling, while the National Library of Malta turned its scheduled programme of onsite lectures into online documentaries.

Going digital was one of the ways in which heritage professionals wanted to ensure their artefacts and sites were still present in people's lives but it was not simply about offering the same service virtually. There was an emphasis on free access and public streaming, to make sure one could reach as many sectors of society as possible, including those

that were, are, and will be for the time experiencing dire financial constraints due to unemployment and business loss caused by the pandemic. The Manoel Theatre streamed on their Facebook page past performances and concerts free of charge, with a note for those who wish to give a donation, although this was not compulsory. With this reality in mind, many international academic journals also decided to offer free access to publications for a couple of months.

The heritage sector took it upon itself to try and give people things to do when they could not go out, as well as offering ideas to think about when people were only thinking about the virus and social restrictions. We have also realized that often people do not need much encouragement to take over heritage and do something with it.

A very good example is the reproduction of classical masterpieces by individuals at home. Some took up the task with whatever came at hand and in a rather humorous vein. Others made huge

The augmented reality presentation at Palazzo Falson, Mdina



efforts with make-up, clothing and photo retouching to produce artistic pieces in their own right. It went viral on social media last year and one does not have to wonder why.

As Christiansen (2020) mentions, not to be overlooked either is the need of keeping staff motivated in such uncertain times when regulations are constantly changing and where people's list of priorities does not include heritage. One way to respond is to try to be useful in the present circumstance, which is what Tate Modern (UK) did when it opened its doors as a vaccination centre. Though heavily criticized by anti-vax movements, this action showed that heritage institutions can also take up a more social role and respond to the needs of the community, especially in difficult situations.

Once we, as heritage interpreters, accept that balance can be restored, discussions on reinventing the world of heritage interpretation become a necessity and not a luxury, as it has been considered by many in the past.

What do people need now?

Self-healing, socialising, feeling the warmth of those around them, optimism for a better tomorrow, a break from hearing about diseases and deaths... These are needed much more than education at the moment.

We need to ask a very important question: are heritage interpreters ready and fully equipped to see to these needs or will they remain oblivious and sell themselves in the traditional and perhaps out-dated role of solely educators and keepers of a nation's heritage?

We are lucky that, unlike in times of war, the conservation of material heritage is not under threat by the current pandemic. We can still restore and protect artefacts and sites, even more so with less and less visitors and more time to deal with reserve

collections. What is under threat now is the relationship between people and material heritage through months characterised by lack of access (Lipski 2021, de Jong & Grit 2021). This relationship not only needs to be kept but also strengthened and modified.

Ultimately, we need to decide upon and make a public declaration towards change – to recognise the need and embrace it. The need has been present for some time but perhaps the pandemic brought the necessity at our door at an accelerated pace (de Jong & Grit 2021). We should not miss the boat.

Museum curators and other professional interpreters should ask themselves not only where they are at the moment, but also where they want their institution to be in the future. They should identify what is essential to have and to give to the community, and check whether they are truly equipped with what they need in order to achieve this goal.

They should discuss in depth how the institution should operate, to work hand in hand with all stakeholders, ensuring that heritage interpretation is not only present but that it takes on an important and beneficial role in the lives of people.

Only this way can we truly update ourselves, be open to new ideas and concepts, and ultimately not simply keep our heads afloat during these unstable times, but be there to help those who might have started slowly falling down and don't know what to grasp onto.

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Cooperage: The art of wine barrel making

RESEARCH BY AARON RIZZO

SENIOR LECTURER IN FOOD AND BEVERAGE SERVICE, FOOD AND BEVERAGE MANAGEMENT, AND WINE STUDIES AT ITS

This feature is a step-by-step guide to making barrels for cooperage—the art of making barrels. Different criteria are required by different winemakers to purchase barrels depending upon the style of wines being produced. Therefore, a cooper must meet the requirements depending upon the aromas and flavours of the wine. The origins of the wood will also be explained according to the forest regions of France and the different toasting levels available.

Cooperage is known as the practical skill and craftsmanship to make barrels. The cooper is the person responsible in making the barrel by heating the wood with fire, so the inner staves can be bent and made flexible to shape the required barrel. (Wikipedia, 2020) Such craftsmanship is an art-form and a skill that contributes to beneficial effects,

aromas and flavours to the wine. There are many different sizes and shapes of barrels (also known as casks) which depend on the cultural aspect of the wine producing region and the style of wine to be produced by the winemaker. Barrels or casks are used for the maturation of several different styles of wines, and for the fermentation of some white wines.

When maturing wine in a barrel, there is a slow oxidation process known as micro-oxygenation. (Kelley, 2016) Wood absorbs oxygen at very small doses so the wine flavours will develop oak flavours known as secondary aromas and flavours. The fruit will develop a dried fruit character with oaky aromas of sweet spices like cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves and vanilla (derived from vanillin found in oak).

Wines with oak will normally have a smoky and toasty aroma due to its level of toasting or heating applied to the

barrel. In Bordeaux, France, aromas of cedar wood and tobacco complexity evolve in the wine. The slow oxidation process will impart lots of tertiary aromas of coffee, toffee, caramel, chocolate and nuts (almonds, marzipan, hazelnuts, and walnuts). (Kelley, 2016) For this process of maturation to take place, a cellar is required, either below the ground (called cave) or temperature controlled at ground level (called chai). The temperature must be cool and constant between 10 to 15 degrees Celsius, all year round, from January to December. There must be no drastic fluctuations of temperature as this will speed up the maturation process and the wine will not be able to age for a long period of time. Humidity levels must be kept between 60 – 70%. Less than 60% would heat up the cellar and speed up the maturation process whilst more than 70% would develop unwanted mould and bacteria which could spoil the wine. Bottles fitted with cork must be placed in a horizontal



Tamara Malaniy via Unsplash

position to keep the cork moist and avoid shrinkage and oxidation. Strong lights must be avoided as light can create a lot of heat, and no vibrations are wanted in a cellar as this could disturb its sediment (dead yeast that forms in the bottle after fermentation). (Morgan, 1999)

The winemaker will purchase barrels for the style of wine being produced according to different criteria which mainly depend on four factors:

1. The size of the barrel: there are many different shapes and sizes of barrels. The reason being the surface ratio effect on the wine. Smaller oak barrels will have a greater effect on the wine as the surface ratio effect is larger. The larger the barrel, the less surface ratio effect on the wine, but the slower the micro-oxygenation process. The most common used in most wine producing regions is the French oak barrique (also known as the Bordelaise) which is used in the Bordeaux region for the maturation of fine investment red

wines. The barrique has a capacity of 225 litres producing 300 bottles of wines, equivalent to 25 cases. There is also the large sized Tonneau with the capacity of four barriques of 900 litres capacity. In the Burgundy wine region, it is called pièce (also known as Bourguigone) with a capacity of 228 litres. An American oak hogshead has a capacity of 300 litres and is widely used in New World countries of USA and Australia. The large sized puncheon has an even bigger size of 500 litres. Even larger is the demi-muid barrel of 600 litres, and the largest of all is the foudre, the standard size being 2000 litres reaching up to 12000 litres. Such large barrels are widely used in Italy (called botte) for both the fermentation and maturation of most Italian wines. (Kelley, 2016)

2. The origin of the barrel: most wine barrels are commonly of European (*Quercus robur*) or American (*Quercus Alba*) oak origin. The most common oak in Europe comes from the various French forests which are classified into different

regions across the country. The most commonly known forests are from Nevers, Allier, Bertranges, Vosges, Tronçais, and Limousin,. Normally, the French oak is more robust than American oak with a finer grain. The French oak is manually cut by an axe whilst American oak is cut by a saw, so there is less wastage of trees to make one American oak barrel. French oak imparts more aromas of vanilla, cedar wood and tobacco whilst American oak provides a sweeter taste and coconut sweet spices. Most winemakers either use French or American oak or a combination of both barrels for an acquired taste or style, or for cost reasons (as American oak is cheaper than French oak). (Nadale Corporation, 2019)

3. The level of toasting: coopers give different levels of toasting to the barrels by placing a fire in the barrel to toast the inner staves. Different levels are used normally at low toasted (LT), medium toasted (MT) or highly toasted (HT). (Stock, 2019)



Oak barrels in various stages of construction (Goode, 2018)



Assembling the barrel to the shape of a rose (Goode, 2018)



A fire is created to bend the staves and for toasting (Goode, 2018)

4. The age: the newer the oak barrel, the more pronounced flavours will be imparted to the wines including more spiciness and toastiness. The older the oak barrel, the less influence the flavour on the wine. Normally an oak barrel has a lifespan of about four years after which there is risk of cross contamination by bacteria. Therefore, such 5-year-old barrels are either used for marketing purposes or sold to a whisky producer in Scotland for the maturation of cask for finished Scotch whisky.

Premium wines are normally made with new oak barrels as the costs of production can be justified by their high selling price. However, it is the belief of most winemakers that oaky aromas can overpower wine aromas. So the winemaker has to take a decision whether to use oak or not, and to consider the above-mentioned factors. (Nadalie Corporation, 2019) (Kelley, 2016) (Goode, 2018) (Morgan, 1999) (Sogg, 2001) (Stock, 2019)

There are oak alternatives which imitate the micro-oxygenation process such as oak chips or oak staves but will have a very slight influence on the wine and are normally used for wines that are sold at a cheaper price and for entry level style of wines. (Stock, 2019)

The author has visited a tonnellerie (a company making barrels) called Nadalie which is located in the Bordeaux region of France. The oak wood is selected from the French national forestry office keeping all rules and regulations in line with national procedures. The process of making a barrel will be explained in a step-by-step guide of 13 stages, as follows:

STAGE 1: NATURAL CUTTING, SPLITTING AND SEASONING OF THE WOOD

The wood is given an air-drying, natural maturation process starting from the forest and then transported outside the

grounds of tonnellerie Nadalie. The natural climatic factors will affect the maturation of the wood and therefore are crucial in the creation of potential aromas and flavours of the wine. The French oak is split using an axe producing a finer grain which contributes to the fine oaky aromas. The staves are produced and left to season outside in the air and exposed to sun, rain, and wind conditions for at least two years. Such conditions will change the wood and release the required complex flavours. This will discard any unwanted tannins (the mouth drying sensation) and therefore reduces its harshness creating aromatic characters in the wine.

STAGE 2: SELECTING THE STAVES: SHORTENING, JOINTING AND FITTING

The master cooper carefully selects each stave by precise visual inspection to produce a barrel. Each and every stave is trimmed on both ends to create a barrique of 225 litres which is then shortened to 95cm. The stave is then given a shape equivalent to a concave (inside) and convex (outside) – a process called dolage. The jointing process will ensure that every edge of every stave will have its desired angle to be joined with the other staves. The fitting process will ensure all staves are sorted into a special machine fitting the staves with the circumference of the barrel. Every barrel needs a stave 9cm wide to drill a bung hole. At this stage, every cask is numbered individually for the identification of the cask.

STAGE 3: ASSEMBLING TO A ROSE

Every cask is assembled together, individually, in the shape of a rose by the use of a special machine. The staves of the barrel must be levelled with the use of a hammer tapping on the ends of the staves.

STAGE 4: BENDING

The cask is placed over a fire. Since a fire has quite a hot temperature, water

is applied to soften the wood that will cause the staves to bend and shape by the cooper using a windlass. This process is done until the required shape of the staves is bent.

STAGE 5: TOASTING

The barrel is toasted by placing it again in the fire at high temperature depending on the winemakers' requests on the level of toasting required. The minimum time required to create an LT (low toasted barrel) is of 20 minutes. This level of toasting will create those smoky and sweet spicy secondary aromas in the wine.

STAGE 6: TRIMMING

This process involves the cutting of a groove or croze at the end of the staves to insert the head part of the cask. The chamfering of the end of the staves is done at this stage (beveling the edges). The drilling of the bung hole is done at this stage in the 9cm width stave.

STAGE 7: PREPARING THE HEADS

The heads must be sorted according to size, length and width, and assembled with strips of reed between each head. To ensure that all heads are properly aligned, a laser machine is used to ensure assembling precision. (Nadalie Corporation, 2019)

STAGE 8: CUTTING THE HEADS

The heads are cut and chamfering takes place (beveling the edges to a rounded edge) to be aligned with the staves of the barrel.

STAGE 9: SETTING THE HEADS

A mixture of flour and water is placed in the groove or croze so the heads can be fitted in. This is done using special tools. A tire-fond is used to pull the head from the top part and a tapping-fond is used to

lift the head into the croze from the bung hole. The identification numbers, origin, and toasting of the barrel are stamped on the chime (the head part of the barrel) for traceability.

STAGE 10: TESTING AND REPAIRING THE BARREL

Every cask is tested by filling in the barrel with approximately 10 to 15 litres of hot water (normally between 80 – 100 degrees) and with compressed air to increase the pressure inside the cask. The cask is then rolled to observe or discover any leakages and cracks that can be repaired by the cooper. If the barrel does not leak, then it can proceed to the hooping stage.

STAGE 11: POLISHING OF BARREL AND SETTING THE HOOPS (Nadalie Corporation, 2019)

Every barrel is polished using a sanding machine to give the exterior part a fine polish. The heads and the tops of the chimes (the top parts of the staves) have to be polished or sanded physically by a cooper using a very tight sanded grain. Hoops (which have been galvanized to avoid corrosion) are then fitted onto the barrel with a special hydraulic machine. (Sogg, 2001)

STAGE 12: BARREL MARKING AND LOGOS

The markings on the barrel are according to the customer requirements (the winemakers who purchase the barrels) which normally display the origin of the wood forest, the level of toasting required and any other specifications that the winemaker requires. However, a plaque made of brass with logo is nailed onto the barrel showing the cooper who made the barrel. (Nadalie Corporation, 2019)

STAGE 13: PACKING AND LOADING

The finished barrel is wrapped tightly according to strict packaging regulations

with all information required by the customer clearly visible. The packaged barrels are stored in a suitable temperature warehouse to be prepared for shipping to the customer or winemaker. (Nadalie Corporation, 2019)

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Ingraining Eco-Efficiency as a Core Value in Hotel Employees through the Management style of their Leaders

RESEARCH BY EMA-SINEAD ZAMMIT (B.A. IHM)

It is a commonly known fact that hotels have a direct negative impact on the environment. Hotels bring about the displacement of natural inhabitants, generate waste, use up a lot of water and produce many other types of pollution. This puts pressure on fossil fuel usage, sewage systems and other aspects of infrastructure, and take up a substantial amount of space among countless other issues (Hossan,

2014). In the Mediterranean, tourism infrastructure and activity often have irreversible effects on natural areas rich in biodiversity, particularly those near the coast. This results in habitat deterioration of both terrestrial and aquatic plant and animal communities, as reported by the European Environment Agency in 2015 and again in 2020.

Being the most common demographic of

tourists in Malta, Europeans in particular are responsible for raising the demands and supply of accommodation services. Compared to the average Maltese resident, statistics show that each tourist consumes three or four times more water daily and produce double the municipal solid waste (European Environmental Agency, 2015). Undoubtedly, such disturbing statistics should act as a global wake-up call to leaders within the hospitality industry, as

the phenomenon presents both national and international concerns.

AIM & SCOPE

This dissertation concerns the issue of the lack of eco-efficient responsibility adopted by hotels in Malta and abroad. Throughout the study, hotels are viewed as a place of work rather than a service to guests. The aim of the study is to answer the following research question:

How can hotel managers use their influence and style of management to instill the values of eco- efficiency within their subordinates?

The scope is to move away from nonspecific and overlooked policies that have not been proven to be effective and adopt a functionalist approach that promotes the threading of eco-efficiency goals and innovations through the foundations of existing frameworks. The dissertation seeks to find the ideal leadership styles adopted by hotel managers to reach these goals, adding value to the human resources, the business, and the natural environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & ANALYSIS

The aim requires tackling the topic from a multidisciplinary and holistic approach, to avoid vulnerabilities and inconsistencies that may result from partial or biased research. Therefore, to satisfy this requirement, three different research methods were used to answer the research question: two semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and desk research. Both local and international sources have allowed the findings to be relevant beyond borders.

Qualitative interviews with two industry experts were chosen as a research method to countercheck, fill the gaps found in the literature review, and enrich the existing data. One interviewee represented the Finnish hospitality industry while the other represented the local hospitality industry. The analysis proved that the interviewees' responses were infrequently identical,

but similar to what was deduced from the literature, thus adding value to the research found. One may note that formal training is still highly valued and embedded in the Maltese industry while the Finnish industry has turned to specific alternatives to traditional policies. Finally, both interviewees assert that management is responsible for influencing staff members through knowledge, behaviour, commitment, resources, and tools they offer.

The questionnaire was distributed to 105 employees of hotels based in Malta. The aim was to get an insight of hotel employees concerning the issue of eco-efficiency at their workplace and to understand the gap between environmentally conscious hotel employees and otherwise.

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

It was found that the transformational leadership style is ideal for ingraining core values in employees, as both the literature and empirical research have confirmed this. The management style should accommodate the eco-efficiency goals of the business.

Additionally, continuous training and teaching efforts are necessary to keep employees motivated. It is recommended that monthly formal training is executed by professional educators and environmental experts and should be delivered to employees and managers alike. For managers to be drivers of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), they must first be equipped with the knowledge of eco-efficiency and the soft skills required to communicate the efforts towards eco-efficiency. Hotel managers, human resource executives and sustainable development specialists must be called upon to infuse the task of educating and committing subordinates and reaching the business goals. The role of the human resource management must evolve from a passive administrative role to become a champion for the employee and a strategic change

partner (Bharwani & Butt, 2012).

Finally, upon recruitment, managers must foster a strong awareness and sensitivity towards sustainability actions with all employees. We live in a democratic polity; keeping citizens informed is the obligation of the government since dissemination of information is the foundation of the system. Apart from sharing knowledge, managers must equip their subordinates with the skills, values and motivation to engage them as 'part of the problem'. After all, the leadership skills we gain through our involvement in societal and environmental impact initiatives develop us into good leaders in the workplace and help raise the profiles of the businesses we represent in the community. Additionally, one must remember that hospitality revolves around the guest. By preserving the natural environment through eco-efficient work, the employees are preserving the touristic destination and thus, adding value to the guest experience.

It was revealed that hotel managers should use innovative tools such as environmental programs and leadership agendas (as drawn from the literature) that directly tackle issues of eco-efficiency. Such tools should include measurable goals with detailed solutions and should be updated according to the needs and resources of the hotel and the environmental situation. For optimum effectiveness, the programme should be used daily to ingrain the goals within employees. A professional development programme that provides the critical mass to translate awareness of sustainability issues into action can be a solution. Such a programme needs to be designed keeping in mind the need to increase knowledge and leadership skills relative to eco-efficiency among various 'multipliers' in society, such as NGO staff, community workers and company managers. The programme should feature content to clarify the theory of eco-efficiency and community outreach to provide practical learning situations for employees and services for the community.



Characteristics of Quality Assurance from the viewpoint of Hospitality and Tourism Education

WORDS BY KEVIN ELLUL

SENIOR LECTURER II IN FOOD PREPARATION AND PRODUCTION AT ITS

Good quality assurance practices within a culture of continuous evolving educational system are currently playing an important part more than ever. Students are observing and understanding the role of quality assurance as an improvement process which will eventually benefit them.

To be able to value what they are learning, students need to verify important factors within their learning environment. These factors vary from lecturers' professionalism, diversity of lecturing aids, different assessment styles used for their work, and opportunities that are awaiting in the future when they graduate from the same educational institution where

they are currently studying. Learning ethos are a true example of what quality assurance can lead to within an educational institution from a student's perspective. For students, learning ethos are all those factors which are related to the input they are giving their respective programme of study.

Over the years, tourism and hospitality education in Malta has been through continuous changes. These led to holistic reform processes, affiliations with other institutions and universities, introduction of new courses and upgrading currently running courses to higher levels. This was a prime factor which directly contributed to institutions enrolling more students to study both locally and internationally. This situation offered many more learning opportunities to students and also opened new horizons for

academic and non-academic staff for increased mobility to other educational institutions both locally and abroad (Trowler, 2010). This change also created more learning spaces and led tourism and hospitality educational institutions to work in a closer relationship with the working industry. Having such an educational scenario in place, provided an opportunity to tourism and hospitality educational institutions to increase their tuition fees and give a better input to societal necessities.

The continuous application and increased importance given to quality assurance processes in education, provided an opportunity to all stakeholders involved in educational institutions to be more transparent and to show their quality levels through auditing processes.

Systems scrutiny which is performed from time to time according to the set and required standards both from local regulators such as the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) and educational regulative bodies in the European Union such as Cedefop (the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training), contribute towards better growth of vocational education in European countries. Learning is a process by which an individual assimilates data, concepts and principles which will thus gain information, knowledge, skills and capabilities. Learning may take place in formal, non-formal, or in-formal situations (Cedefop, 2014).

It is important to remember that the students of today are going to be the workforce of the future and one way quality can be measured is to analyse the students' final destinations a few years after their studies. This idea of good quality educational systems is used by educational institutions when the quality in education is put on the agenda for discussion both at local and international educational level. Quality is generally related to constant processes through which standard operating procedures and policies are followed, verified

and validated to reach the necessary standardized levels. This does not mean that with such methodology in education, all students are going to be the same, but with such a system in place students' learning, lecturing and also quality will be improved accordingly.

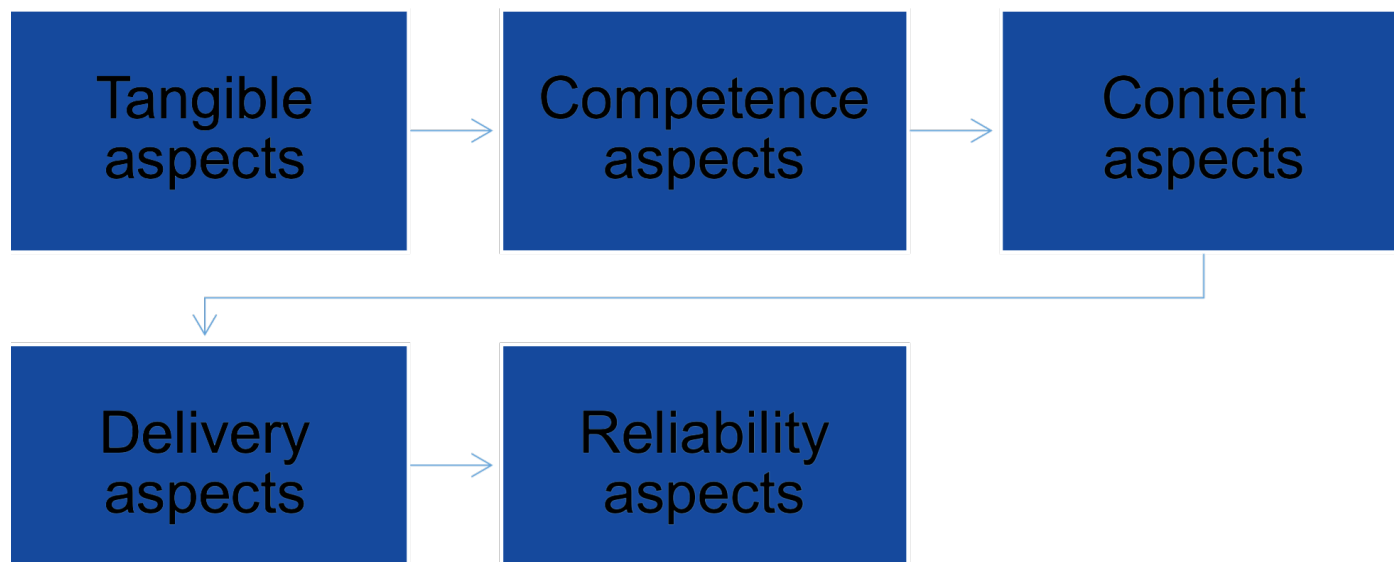
Different stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality educational systems have different ideas and views about any purposely tailor made and defined quality systems which is specifically designed for their respective areas.

It seems that within the educational area if all is well planned, aims, objectives and figures are reached and everything is running smoothly without any problems! This is not actually the case, especially in the education area where everything is evolving in a rapid way. The main goals of an educational institution can be accessible through the institution's mission statement, the quality of programmes offered and their learning outcomes. Learning is not just reading books, but must be backed by experiences and practical work which contribute to a better understanding of what is being taught in theory (Karttunen, 2014). The lecturing quality of an educational institution is also connected

to the level of programmes offered and the resources and tools available to reach modules learning outcomes within different modules / units. When students are given a top priority in educational systems, then quality as an ongoing process can be properly audited, verified and validated to gauge their impact on student's welfare in their learning and assessment.

Quality is a valuable factor that contributes directly to the concept of responsibility. A lot of changes are taking place in the educational sector including the vocational area as well. Such changes are due to the fact that students demands have changed and they are also questioning what they are being taught (Mendez-Vilas, 2011). This means that value for money is the key factor for educational institutions and this means clear transparent account-able processes to all stakeholders, the general public, the government as the main sponsor (if not a private institution) and most importantly students. Quality can be measured by the results obtained from students who are also being supported in their studies with stipends paid by the government which also helps in motivating students towards their studies and commit themselves in their personal growth.

Quality assurance aspects and symptomatics in tourism and hospitality education





QUALITY ASSURANCE WITHIN THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY EDUCATION AREA

Quality assurance can be best described as a well-planned and structured ongoing process in terms of quality upkeep and upgrading. Quality assurance can be viewed as an asset in keeping quality processes in tourism and hospitality education running smoothly. It also leaves room for improvement where necessary, to better achieve an effective quality system for the benefit of all stakeholders especially students. Today, most students are more informed about what they are going to learn, and they have already researched what they are going to learn. This puts more pressure on the learning style that is going to be used, which needs to be based on a student-centred approach (Li, 2012).

Quality assurance is based on specific policies, processes and also procedures that ensure the study programmes running by the educational institutions are kept at highest levels. When such

quality assurance systems are in place within educational institutions, systems guarantee a responsibility concerning the issue of public resources used in such government educational institutions.

Through quality assurance management and planned assessment, high levels of quality achievements can be realised, which also help educational institutions management to attain more confidence from key stakeholders when intended results are reached. Nowadays new approaches are adapted in quality assurance, such as the increased importance and weight given to external auditing and scrutiny.

DIMENSIONAL FEATURES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY EDUCATION

Tourism and hospitality education have an important role in the educational sector as they offer another dimension of excellence in education to quality assurance. Such institutions running a quality assurance system in place with

a healthy quality culture, are increasing standards and principles to contribute in the attainment of excellence in lecturing and learning as a continuously developing quality process. Quality in education can be measured and verified if it is reaching the required standards, by the knowledge of and successful results attained by the respective students. Quality assurance should not have just one obligation, but multiple commitments to be effective holistically within an educational institution.

The most important commitment towards quality assurance are learning procedures, continuity in enhancing programmes of studies, opening more doors for new learning opportunities, opportunities for creating more awareness about quality, continuous professional development programmes for staff, providing more trust to academic staff mobility and students' exchanges which also aid in upgrading certification. Quality assurance also offers transparency and accountability of the educational institution to all stakeholders involved including the students', the

general public and the government. This can be achieved by making the stakeholders aware of the activities taking place in such institutions, by providing the relevant information through social media, websites, periodicals, journals and public consultation. It is important that lectures are delivered in a well-structured learning ambience which will help provide a better future workforce (Arulsamy, 2014).

JUSTIFICATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

When quality is mentioned, people automatically start thinking about standards, control, performance and achievements. Standards can be regarded as measurable outcome indicators. Sometimes the application of such standards can be very challenging due to the fact that educational institutions are continuously evolving. When there is a change in situations and standards, these may be seen as out of context, as standards can create problems and doubts in the quality processes in place. This can be seen as a process in ensuring that minimum quality

requirements are met and also in surpassing curriculums' minimum criteria it sets the specific learning outcomes and programme goals. According to the European Association of Universities (2013) it is important that students provide the required constructive feedback through various data collecting tools so that the educational institution will be in a position to better enhance quality assurance processes accordingly.

Quality assurance can be seen from the perspective of the regulatory bodies in tourism and hospitality educational institutions. From the introduction of quality assurance in educational institutions, the same institutions are revealing more of what is going on internally, and what systems and policies are in place to achieve total transparency in the running of the Institution. This is opening the way for students to be more multi-skilled according to what the working industry is demanding. By using a thematic based curriculum, more students are given the opportunity to study and be successful in their studies and at a later stage when they graduate

as this will result in more options to choose from in the future.

Quality assurance must be the responsibility of everyone involved in education particularly the academics who are the front liners facing students' in their daily academic needs. The greatest challenge of all is getting educators and policy-makers to understand that piecemeal reforms cannot meet current educational needs. Quality assurance acts as a control mechanism which proves and demonstrates that things are done accurately within the required standardised parameters sets. Education from a lecturer-centred approach to student-centred approach is the way forward, keeping in mind the most important factor: not leaving any student behind (Aslan & Reigeluth, 2015).

EMPHASIS ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality assurance in tourism and hospitality education, is a strategy which motivates the improvement of standards and the upkeeping of such processes especially when it comes to designing



of new courses. It is also an important factor in the lecturing and learning process, which must be supported by a proper communication structure.

Quality assurance must also be at the heart of every staff member, backed up with constructive external feedback from external stakeholders such as employers and students who are part of the ongoing process, that is the educational system.

The most important factors for educational institutions nowadays are the attainment of three goals: developing student into competent individuals, equipping them with the right tools to have a decent and professional career, developing student competences to higher levels and instigating in them a sense of reflecting and learning from past experiences (Schneckenberg, Ehlers and Adelsberger, 2011).

Approaches to quality assurance depend upon the educational system quality assurance culture in place and who really has ownership of the quality assurance processes for the benefit and support of the educational institution holistically (ibid). Forces within tourism and hospitality educational institutions that directly affect the impact of quality assurance are management, academics, pedagogical attributes and future employment. From a management point of view, the focus is on the implementation of policies and procedures in place, and the management must be the key player of such system. From a pedagogical aspect, the continuous development of academic staff in new lecturing styles, assessment methods, and student support skills is of paramount importance.

Various approaches lead the best outcomes of having a quality assurance system in place. Peer assessment is one approach towards quality assurance which aims to examine rigorously the quality state of tourism and hospitality education institutions and other programmes offered within educational institutions. A student's approach measures variables within the students' fora during their studies and after they graduate

Quality assurance must also be at the heart of every staff member, backed up with constructive external feedback from external stakeholders

from the institution. Students' learning is changing every day in the way they learn, how they respond to feedback and how they think about their future (Gosper & Ifenthaler, 2014). The importance of a total quality management within a quality assurance system in place works best in a system of stakeholders who are participative, orientated towards students' aims and objectives, structural education and also synchronisation within all processes involved in quality assurance.

QUALITY ASSURANCE FROM AN EXTERNAL POINT OF VIEW

The need for building up quality assurance systems in educational institutions led to the creation of external

systems to start evaluating lecturing and learning processes within the education fora.

External quality assurance mechanisms can be described as those criteria which holistically and in a standardized manner assess the educational institutions quality assurance systems in place if these are kept to the required standards.

Quality assurance is often viewed as a procedure or guidelines for maintaining standards (O' Sullivan, 2017). These standards include programme accreditation, various types of assessments and also intensive external auditing.

External quality assurance is the process which totally covers quality related assessment processes, which are performed by external bodies from the same institutions to be audited (ibid). Main factors affected by a quality assurance system in place are the enhancement of quality within tourism and hospitality educational institutions, information on standards and quality that are derived from various sources such as websites, recognition of programmes of study, transparency on standards reached and probity procedures. External quality assurance observation can vary from educational institutions' auditing, monitoring of standards set, and assessment practices in place.

QUALITY ASSURANCE FROM AN INTERNAL POINT OF VIEW

Apart from external quality assurance in educational institutions, the development of internal quality assurance systems in place also helped in the harmonisation of keeping in line with quality assurance standards set. These two elements provide greater stability in tourism and hospitality education institutions,

lecturing and learning processes.

Internal quality assurance is bound with the study programmes policies and internal procedures to make sure that the set outcomes are achieved within the quality assurance standards. Quality assurance should not only depend on external quality assurance reviews, but on internal quality assurance processes where in educational institutions, internal evaluation and improving processes should be in place. New approaches in quality assurance are both exciting and challenging. This is due the fact that they offer new and enhanced opportunities for students to learn by challenging them, and has implications for institutional infrastructure, learning and lecturing (Gosper & Ifenthaler, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Quality assurance systems are in place in tourism and hospitality educational institutions to improve quality with the main aim to reach students' needs.

This aim is reached with an organised, anticipatory and educative actions in place. System and also students' assessment, positive attitude, systematic procedures like auditing and responsibility towards standards are all vital important factors for a successful quality assurance system which offers validation and transparency to all stakeholders involved.

Students should be allocated the right resources and environment so that they can fully participate in their programme of study (Bowden, Abhayawansa & Bahtsevanoglou, 2015). If students don't have the right study environment they may drop out of courses, will not react positively to learning and the chances that they will start resisting learning will increase (Stoddard & Standard-Examiner, 2012).

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Digitisation:

An unparalleled opportunity to ensure a future for our past

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Who would have imagined, just a few years back, the

possibility of having whole museums and countless historical sites stored in our personal devices, waiting for us to click on a button and watch their priceless contents unfold on our screens? But that is, indeed, the uncanny, yet wonderful, reality we are

living in today, thanks to digitisation.

This process of converting physical information, oral traditions and living expressions into a computer-based format is the way forward for the cultural sector. It

transcends time and space, bringing research and knowledge to our fingertips wherever we are and whenever we want, defying all natural disasters and human foul play that threaten our cultural heritage ... even defying deadly pandemics which bring the flow of daily life to a grinding halt.

Through digitisation, Heritage Malta is taking an unparalleled opportunity to live up to its motto of ensuring a future for our past. As the national cultural heritage agency, responsible for the preservation and interpretation of our national patrimony, Heritage Malta is fully aware of the great advances in digital tools and technology, and of the fact that these advances have placed it at an important milestone in its existence.

As technology moves forward by leaps and bounds, Heritage Malta has acknowledged and made good use of the tools that allow it to reach out to a broader audience more than ever before. Our agency has embraced digitisation, conscious of its remarkable power to break cultural, economic and geographical barriers and to make our national collections accessible to both locals and foreigners in the comfort of their homes.

In its endeavours to be the national leader in digitisation and an active player on a European scale, Heritage Malta is implementing a strategic digital policy, whereby it is endorsing and harnessing the power of digital technology and new approaches in museology to increase access, improve interpretation and create visitor-centric experiences. This plan ensures that Heritage Malta remains a relevant, valid and leading national cultural heritage agency. Through its digital strategy, Heritage Malta has moved digitisation from an activity handled differently in each museum or site to a single, central and integrated unit that meets both the agency's internal needs and external expectations.

In line with this strategy, Heritage Malta – aided by the EEA (European Economic Area) Norwegian Grants – some months ago set

up its newest unit, namely the Digitisation Department, whose task is to digitise the cultural and natural heritage assets entrusted to Heritage Malta for the widest possible use by current and future generations. By managing and supervising the latest state-of-the-art equipment in the industry, the Digitisation Department is fast becoming one of the leading departments in the institution.

The goals outlining the mission of this young department include protecting and enhancing the value of all Heritage Malta digital assets through coordinated digital asset management; raising awareness and increasing the use of Heritage Malta's digital resources within and outside the organisation; cultivating an internal culture that embraces digitisation and the sharing of Heritage Malta collections, research and expertise; establishing business goals and implementing business strategies that support a digital Heritage Malta.

The Digitisation Department covers both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, thus facilitating the work of scholars and researchers worldwide, while opening new possibilities to educators in every setting. The digitisation of these assets is aimed at the protection, long-term storage and provision of wider access to our cultural content.

Well aware that its digitisation strategy is a long-term strategic project that requires significant financial and human resources, Heritage Malta is placing its digitisation programme at the very centre of its core and is sustaining it through different support mechanisms.

First and foremost, the national cultural agency is investing in the Digitisation Department staff through training and tools that enhance their competencies and supplement their efforts with the knowledge and skills offered by colleagues in related organisations engaged in similar work. This is being achieved through close collaboration with academic institutions locally and abroad.

Secondly, Heritage Malta is investing heavily to secure sufficient resources for the Digitisation Department and ensure excellent quality in the final product through the latest equipment on the market. These resources cover all related fields, such as photography, videography, 3D laser scanning, photogrammetry and, most importantly, a Collections Management System (CMS) which enables not only the cataloguing of artefacts but also of every conservation intervention conducted over time.

One of the first tasks entrusted to the department was the digitisation of thousands of artefacts housed within the Malta Maritime Museum, which is currently closed for a major overhaul. The Maritime Museum project has received around €2 million in funding from the EEA Norway Grants, half of which have gone towards civil works entailed in the project, with the other half used for the setting up of the digitisation studios.

The major role of digitisation was highlighted during the months when the Covid-19 pandemic forced the agency first to close its doors entirely to the public and later to restrict admissions and opening hours. During that period, Heritage Malta was able to remain loyal to its mission by making cultural heritage accessible to the public virtually through digitisation, thus transforming a difficult situation into an exciting opportunity.

More recently, our Digitisation Department ensured a more intimate and enhanced encounter with the 13 Old Master paintings of the 'Masterpieces at MUŻA' exhibition, through a virtual tour which may be enjoyed even further with the use of a Virtual Reality headset.

Digitisation has undoubtedly given birth to a new era and Heritage Malta will surely remain at the forefront as a catalyst for creativity and discovery, quenching humanity's yearning for knowledge through the wonders of technology.

Prestigious International Universities Praise ITS and ITS Students

Throughout the past years, the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) has made a number of agreements with top international Universities and Institutions. In 2017, thanks to these collaborations, ITS started offering its first level 6 Bachelor Degree courses.

In collaboration with Institut Paul Bocuse of Lyon, France, ITS offers the Bachelor Degree in Culinary Arts; and the Bachelor Degree in International Hospitality Management is offered in collaboration with the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, of Helsinki, Finland. In addition, in 2018, the ITS launched its first Master's Degree, the MBA in International Hospitality Management which is offered in academic affiliation with The Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management.

Chef Maxime Moise from Institut Paul Bocuse (IPB) stated that "ITS students are among the best achievers during their academic experience at IPB. The

Institute's management is extremely happy to collaborate with ITS as it is one of the international high calibre institutions in the field of tourism, hospitality and related areas of studies."

Haaga-Helia Vice President, Jouni Ahonen, stated that "Haaga-Helia has been privileged to work with ITS for several years. ITS has always been dedicated to first-class hospitality education. We have become to know ITS students as hard-working and professional. They have the skills, knowledge and attitude to serve the hospitality and tourism industry in Malta and all over the world."

The first ITS Master's Degree students graduated during the graduation ceremony 2021, held on the 14th of December 2021. For this occasion, EAHM Managing Director, Jeroen Greven, was present and stated that "It has been a pleasure to work with an institution like ITS, that is so dedicated to quality and so forward-thinking. We look forward to working together for many years to come.



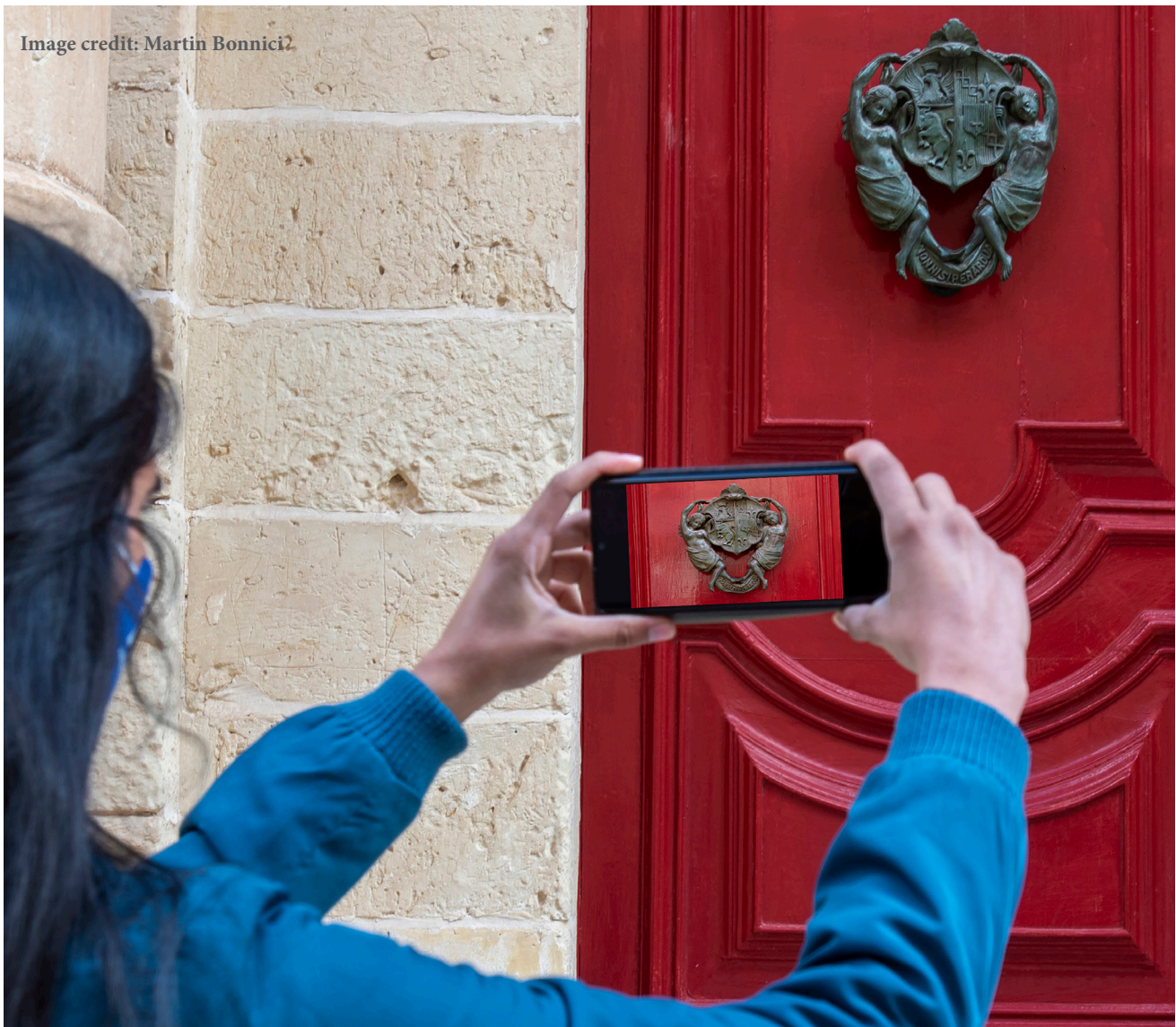


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A Sense of Place: Photography Tour in Malta



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Although a “Sense of Place” has different meanings to different people, it can easily be explored in a photography tour. The researcher was looking to bridge the gap between intangible feelings by turning them into the tangible expression of photography.

In the “Sense of Place Photography Tour”, the group will learn how to identify a location in such a way that they connect with it in an individually meaningful way. The researcher set out to explain a number of techniques taking approximately 20 to 30 minutes and subsequently, showing the group a standard way of shooting to simplify this process. Over the next four hours, the researcher would spend individual time with each member of the group slowly revealing technical pointers and reaffirming techniques via repetitive methods and positive reinforcement.

“A Sense of Place Photography Tour” has to be like a tide that ebbs and flows in a fluid motion. The idea is to help a group reach their innermost feelings and interpret them into visual communication. The student will be able to capture parts of a niche, destination, cultural and creative tourism expressing them via photography.

WHAT IS A SENSE OF PLACE?

The idea of a “place” is a broad term which can be described as the meanings held about a particular place and “how people evaluate it based on those meanings” (Amsden, Stedman & Kruger, 2010, p.33). However, according to the literature, “a sense of place” is a much deeper concept which involves a range of experiences and emotions.

Derrett (2003, p. 51) discusses the strong emotional connection to a place

and the sensory impact this can have on the experience of it. He explores the way place can provide a “physical manifestation and better understanding of the relationships between residents, their environment, their neighbours, and visitors.” A sense of place draws together the social, cultural, historical, sensory, and natural elements of a place (Larson, De Freitas & Hicks, 2013). Even though they are experienced on a personal level, when these elements are encountered together, they create a shared experience and emotional connection.

Campo et al. (2014, p. 155) discuss the concept of “spirit of a locality” which involves attachment, bonding and ancestral connections in exploring the sense of place. A sense of place has a strong temporal aspect and many studies have explored the impact of time and history when discussing this concept (Campelo et al., 2014; Derrett, 2003). This is particularly relevant to Malta as visitors feel that they can experience places from the past as well as enjoying the warmth of a modern coastal Mediterranean destination.

Oren, Shani & Poria (2021) discuss the significance of cultural tourism and note that there have been an increasing number of visits to heritage sites since the 1980’s. Malta offers a number of sites rich in cultural tourism. When tourists visit a place like Vittoriosa (Birgu), they could feel that they have trodden in the same footsteps as the Hospitaller Knights. It draws them into the history of that area. These sites offer a depth of emotional attachment to the location whether it is a natural, built-up (urban), historical or museum setting. Thus, it can facilitate a mutual experience that lends itself to a better understanding of place.

EXPLORING “A SENSE OF PLACE”

In terms of historical and cultural qualities, it is useful to examine the

concept of a sense of place. When talking about a sense of place, there is a more cathartic feeling of spirituality expressed by individuals - that special feeling of becoming one with the location and/or the surroundings. In comparable experiences within historical settings, it can be argued that this place gives a feeling of a point in time when life was more uncomplicated (Jepson & Sharpley, 2014).

Physical activity such as walking, will foster a greater sense of intimacy in a given location. In the cultural tourism context based on arts aesthetics, learning on-site is a more valuable experience and it is more engaging for most groups travelling within any environment (Jepson & Sharpley, 2014). Exploring through the visual art of photography whilst visiting locations will enable a group to connect with a sense of place, and help in learning how to communicate what they see and feel through their cameras and present this to others.

In the specific photographic context of a tour, the group will create their visual story and the sense of place becomes their own. For example, does the community in Mdina look similar in comparison to a place of work at the Wignacourt Museum, or even on the outskirts of Rabat?

Each location has a dramatically different feel and function. The tours will occur in a relatively small area and yet the group will be walking through different spaces which demonstrate how much each community changes. Some communities seem to have more resources, while some work as custodians of a cultural artistic history and yet others will be rural. These differences directly contribute to a vibrant tapestry of that sense of place, each strand and thread tell their own story. Amsden, Stedman & Kruger (2010) discuss the connection of community through the interaction with others and

Rabat Street
Image credit: Martin Bonnici



walking tours with an experienced guide helps foster this. A sense of place can be forged through the many activities and experiences in any given location.

ARCHITECTURAL SENSE OF PLACE

In Malta, historical buildings, street plans and the unique patterns they create add to the strong sense of place while modern buildings lack the same charm and uniformity. In Mdina, local globigerina stone has been used to construct many buildings. This type of stone creates a particular feel, especially in the morning and or the afternoon, as the honey-coloured light falls on the buildings. Although there are a number of architectural differences, the stone with its sandy tones help to set a mood. The Mdina palaces, some framed in baroque architecture decorated with the coats of arms of various families, help to exude a unique atmosphere.

As tourist groups walk through the main gate in Mdina they feel a sense of history. Walking across the stone bridge to the baroque city gate is one thing, but seeing the place where the old medieval gate used to be demands an explanation. Then walking through the richly decorated carved homage to Grand Master de Vilhena, is both regal and gives a sense of importance to that specific location. As the group pass through the city gate there are carved reliefs of legendary historical scenes, saints, and Latin inscriptions (Ebejer, 2013).

In a paper on cultural and creative tourism in Portugal, Carvalho, Ferreira and Figueira (2016) discuss the ways in which creative tourism is also a form of cultural tourism. The researcher strongly believes that this will relate directly to the Sense of Place Photography Tour.

DILEMMAS

It is clear that the tourism sector brings a number of benefits to Malta. In discussing a sense of place and the popularity of

tourism in various destinations, some issues of concern have been highlighted. For example, Foxell and de Trafford (2010, p. 156) note that Malta, a country of 400,000 people can receive up to a million tourists per year, placing a strain on infrastructure and fragile heritage sites. These figures have increased substantially since then. In considering this, questions must be asked about overcrowding and the negative impact on a sense of place this may have. In other Mediterranean destinations, tourism has taken over so much that local residents are increasingly pushed out of the city which changes the character of that area (Minoia, 2017).

The advantages and disadvantages of guided tours have also been explored. Zillinger, Jonasson and Adolfsen (2012) have discussed the herd-like and stereotyped image of guided tours. However, they acknowledge the benefits that guided tours provide, such as an introduction to an area as well as access to the best or most interesting locations of a city within a short space of time.

Cultural and niche tourism can assist in countering some of these problems. An experienced guide can assist in controlling numbers and corral tourists to help them in obtaining the maximum benefit from their visit while protecting vulnerable or fragile historic sites. Guides can also introduce visitors to new locations and suggest places to explore or visit outside the tour.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The researcher made use of an online questionnaire consisting of 14 targeted questions to find out who would be interested in taking such a tour. Information about the age and demographic characteristics and the profession of the interested participants were also recorded. The outcome of the questionnaire assisted the researcher to ascertain the target demographic and location of the audience most

likely to partake in the "Sense of Place Photography Tour" in Malta.

AGE GROUPS

Regarding age, the researcher wanted to get an idea what age groups would be interested in the "Sense of Place Photography Tour" of Malta.

The survey respondents revealed that the age group from 35 to 44 (35.17 %) were the most interested in doing the "Sense of place photography" tour. The age groups of 45 to 54 (22.07%) and 55 to 64 (17.93%) placed second and third probably due to a number of reasons including financial and family stability. The survey was also shared on Facebook.

SOCIAL MEDIA

When asking about social media, the researcher tried to determine which platforms are most commonly used by the respondents. Facebook was the most commonly used followed by Instagram.

This indicates that participants engaging on social media, would share images from the "Sense of Place Photography Tour" with some or all of the people within their group on social media. They may be proud of their images and promote the connection they feel to the area where the tour was held.

The questions about Social Media Platforms produced some interesting results. It revealed that an older audience was more likely to use Facebook and Instagram. It is likely that a number of images from the tour would be shared on these platforms. Facebook is generally more personal and could include stories of travels and experiences.

Instagram tends to be more location and experience based with little or no story attached. The advantage of Instagram is the high volume of uses for the platform. In a lot of instances, connections on Instagram tend to be outside of one's

social circle.

Of the platforms in the survey LinkedIn tends to be the most conservative, it is usually used for business purposes and images shared on this platform seem to be more business oriented.

DO YOU LIKE PHOTOGRAPHY?

As 93% of participants surveyed indicate that they like photography it could mean that the right kind of tour would be very popular. There will always be a lot of variants such as overly hot days or wet weather. Most people on social media tend to share their photos. A good number of people find locations by seeing new locations on other people's pages.

The survey has also uncovered a number of people that indicate that they do not like photography. This was not a surprise.

WOULD YOU CONSIDER A PHOTO TOUR IN MALTA?

Question nine indicated that 81% of participants surveyed would consider doing a photo tour in Malta. This opens possibilities to explore the various types of photo tours that could be offered locally.

SHOOT LIKE A PHOTOJOURNALIST?

This question indicates the openness of survey participants in learning photography that the researcher specialises in, both as a photojournalist and also as someone who has been conducting these type of photo tours for over a decade outside of Malta.

Photojournalism is about storytelling, this works well for people in general. Learning this craft is best done on site in various locations which is precisely what this "Sense of Place Photography Tour" intends to do.

Taking photos like a photojournalist is more than simply pointing and shooting. Learners need to be open to take in all

aspects of life around them in any location and must think about what they want to convey and how the final images will look. This style of tour and photography workshop is hands on and practical, and needs to be done on location.

WORKSHOP AND WALKING TOUR

80.5% of the participants indicated that they would attend a workshop/walking tour. In the experience of the researcher there needs to be a very delicate balance between distance covered and the ease of the walking. If the tour is too long or strenuous, participants focus on being tired rather than learning.

There are several options that could be explored. Tours could be graded for beginners, intermediate and advanced learners. For example, Mdina and Rabat are gentle on the feet and both are rich locations for photographers and tourists in general.

Valletta could have an A and a B tour. The B tour could circle the city exploring the streets. The Valletta streets can be taxing in hot weather, people who are physically able would be more likely to attend such a tour and photography workshop.

BUSINESS OR PERSONAL?

Most survey participants (89.3%) indicated that they would do the "Sense of Place Photography Tour" for personal reasons. In general, leisure is the most common reason for travel. However, business travel is also a huge market.

In Melbourne, Australia, the researcher was conducting photography tours and workshops. At the end of each workshop the researcher would hand out a short questionnaire. Approximately 30% of participants were in Melbourne for business reasons. They had a short period of time to do some sight-seeing, so they came to the researcher to view and photograph sites of interest. Of these

business tourists, several also looked for the researcher knowing he is in Malta, revealing that they would also do his workshop in Malta.

PHONE OR CAMERA?

Most survey participants (81%) indicated that they take more photos with their phone. Although this is not surprising, the researcher feels that there could be a very good opening for tours aimed at phone photography. This is less about taking photos for high-end purposes and more about capturing a location quickly and effectively.

This type of photography can lead tourists into trouble very quickly. In certain areas one is not allowed to take photos. For example, in an art exhibition, photographing work can breach copyright. Also, Photography can be banned for security reasons. In phone photography, one needs to take into consideration the ethics and the rules about taking photos in public and private spaces.

It is the experience of the researcher that a very large number of people attend photography tours to access good locations and learn how to photograph them quickly.

TOUR DESCRIPTION

The Sense of Place photography Tour is a four-hour long photography tour. During this time, the group will explore a combination of intangible, emotional and visual connections to a place, learning photographic skills enabling them to express the elicited emotions in the form of digital visual images.

During the tour, the researcher will instruct the group on what to look for in their surroundings to assist them develop a visual narrative. The locations will be the Mdina Streets, the Wignacourt Museum and the walk from the Wignacourt Museum to the Buskett.

Due to the terrain, the group will need to be physically mobile enough to cope when walking on uneven ground. The researcher will conduct this tour in the morning to get the best quality of light. Even in overcast weather the light still has a special quality about it and may elicit different feelings within the photographers.

The French baroque architecture of the Vilhena Palace really sets a visual tone. Mdina, like many places in Malta has various piazzas and each one is different exuding a special character. As the group walks through the city of Mdina, the changes in locations will allow the participants to find different aspects of the medieval city. These changes are enough to keep them engaged for hours.

When looking at the architecture between Mdina, the Wignacourt Museum and Saint Paul's Grotto, there are numerous differences. Each of these will have a profound effect on the development of the sense of place for the group. The Wignacourt Museum was built at the end of the 1600s and early 1700's and constructed to house the chaplains of the Order of Saint John to take care of the Saint Paul's Grotto. The group will be using this space to shoot various interiors. The curios and art pieces housed within the facility will tell a story of their own. In this space, the researcher will show the group the function of art and its relationship to the sense of place photography tour.

Each painting and curio will speak to various members of the group in different ways. This is where the most interesting part of the sense of place plays out. In such a small area, items visually explored by the group will help express parts of the visual narrative. There will also be "Coats of Arms" and other historical identity marks, but they will differ from what the group has seen in Mdina. Each component has its own ambiance, and this will help group members connect to the space

around them. Such differences will show up in the images that the group will take with their cameras.

As participants move through different environments, the attachments to a sense of place will fall into different categories. Some will have strong feelings of connection to history, others will have a physical attachment to the art and for others it will be the influence of the countryside. Because of the need to be

observant and engaged, each member of the group will tap into their own subjective relationship to and complex study of the area. This will need to be digested and processed relatively quickly so any member of the group can act fast to take the photos they want. At times, a group will take a photo because it feels right with no other explanation needed and at other times, the group will connect to something specific within a scene. Each of these feelings are an equal and a valid connection



St. Paul's Grotto in Rabat
Image credit: Martin Bonnici



Wignacourt Museum in Rabat
Image credit: Martin Bonnici



to a sense of place. Photos may produce a different feeling after each individual group member has the time to look at and edit their images.

In the Sense of Place Photography Tour of Malta, the group will produce a series of photos that can either stand alone or be compiled to recount a specific story. That story will live with them as a memory of Malta, but also as a visual journey into their own version of a sense of place.

Some of the survey results were not regarded as surprising to the researcher. In question 1 the most common age group was 35 to 44. This age group usually has the resources to travel and is young enough to tackle all types of terrain.

In question 14, 81% of questionnaire participants indicated that they use their phones to take photos. This opens the possibility to explore tours specifically aimed at smart-phone photography.

PHOTOGRAPHY TOURS IN MALTA

Exploring the literature regarding a sense of place has had an impact on the researcher. This will assist in guiding tours around various locations and helping participants take an opaque emotion and turn it into a tangible visual expression. This introduces the possibility for many different locations and variables within photography tours.

It should be noted that most of the survey questions focused on aspects of tourism which are not connected to sense of place, and this is very important. If certain aspects are not addressed in the planning phase, such the level of interest shown by the participants, what type of equipment they have and how much walking they can do, participants may find that the tour is too difficult and/or dislike the location for the wrong reasons. This will distract them from connecting to the locations they are touring. An evaluation after the course led the the researcher to add a question about connection to place and obtain more specific information about the feeling of a sense of place from tour participants directly. This may assist with planning tours in future.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Sense of Place photo Tour has many levels of potential. Such a tour will promote Malta in a unique way. After conducting similar workshops in Melbourne Australia since 2006, the city experienced exposure from thousands of people that came through the researcher's business. This is invaluable to any city because such a tour can gain exposure through the eyes and real experiences of photo tour participants rather than through advertising. In addition, participants that joined the researcher's tours in Melbourne, went to other tours and knew how to photograph each location properly.

When the researcher moved to Malta, he offered photo walks to up to five participants. The emphasis was specifically on how to take photos like a photojournalist. It was not a tour but a way to develop a technical skill in lovely surroundings.

The evolution of the photo tours in Melbourne and the technical photo walks in Malta will be combined into the Sense of Place photo tour. There is a constant balance

of technical, historical and emotional information going on that allow the participant to explore their own feelings and how they will express these through their cameras.

One interesting outcome of the survey that the researcher had not considered was the possibility of using smartphone photography. This would be much less technical and limited, but participants would still be able to explore their surroundings as they go through various locations.

The researcher intends to offer tours of varying duration. For example, Valletta is a great tour location, but only for those with a better level of fitness. This presents the opportunity for an A, B and a C tour. The A tour being more physical with longer distances covered whilst the C tour could be managed by anyone.

The Future Of Photographic Tours

The researcher envisions great potential in various forms of photo walks and tours in Malta. Some will cater for professional and serious amateurs, and others will cater for tourists who want to visit some good locations and take trophy images for their social media pages.

There is a wide scope for this type of photography tour, and it can be adapted to suit any needs and situations. It is possible to coordinate with other tour operators, as well as collaborating with businesses that want different experiences for their staff such as team building.

Two issues could potentially damage the photographic tour industry. Unregulated tourism from rogue operators and those offering tours without professional photography experience. Maintaining professionalism is a key component. One thing is certain. Malta offers many unique locations and opportunities for various versions of a Sense of Place Photography Tour to flourish.

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Do tourists who visit Malta expect traditional local food tasting to be included in guided tours, or is it just a nice add on?

RESEARCH BY DANIELA AQUILINA
HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN TOURIST GUIDING
EDITED BY DAVID PACE

The concept of 'food, or culinary, tourism', defined by the World Food Travel Association as "the act of travelling for a taste of place in order to get a sense of place" (www.worldfoodtravel.org) is undoubtedly a growing part of the global tourism story. This was echoed by Carmina Fandos Herrera, a senior lecturer in marketing at the University of Zaragoza, in the UNWTO Global report on Food Tourism, when she said that 'Gastronomic tourism is an emerging phenomenon that is being developed as a new tourism product due, inter alia, to the fact that according to the specialized literature (among others, Quan and Wang, 2004) over a third of tourist spending is devoted to food. Therefore, the cuisine of the destination is an aspect of utmost importance in the quality of the holiday experience".

While it is hard to deny the growing importance of food in driving the expectations of tourists on a global level,

the tourism offering, and more specifically the provision of guided tour products, has traditionally been built on the premise of visual experiences, around attractions, with other aspects taking on diminished, or supporting, roles. This has meant that the provision of culinary aspects, in terms of the overall tourist experience, has tended to be very niche.

However, times are changing and altering consumer expectations suggest a shift in focus away from a visual bias to a more immersive experience where hearing, touch, smell, and taste are just as important as sight. This is a view supported by Guzman and Canizares (2012), who suggest that tourists no longer want to have holidays that only stimulated them visually but want experiences that stimulate all their senses. Applying this to the Maltese context, are we seeing this perceived shift in focus?

How much importance do inbound tourists to Malta give to local cuisine sampling when booking guided tours?

Is it a must, or just a nice thing to have this

included?

Furthermore, when it comes to interpreting the needs and preferences of these inbound tourists, are the Maltese tour-operators meeting these expectations?

Are they catering to the past or to the future of tourism?

As the owner of a local artisan business, specialized in the production of traditional Maltese food and chocolate, my vision is to marry the cultural and gastronomic aspects that Malta has to offer and create unique guided tour experiences that allow tourists to both witness and taste Malta's history, traditions and culture.

The underlying purpose of the question being put forward, is to determine if the changes in tourist expectations and behaviours are significant enough to allow the transformation of the student's ideas into a sustainable business. The research is also intended to help understand the demand, from inbound tourists to Malta, for



Photo Credit: Ofelia94 via Wikimedia Commons

cultural food tours as well as what is being supplied in terms of a culinary experience. This will help to determine both the potential market size for such tours as well as the feasibility of providing them.

On a micro level, the data gathered in researching the question will also provide useful information on the demographics of those who would have an interest in cultural food tours, as well as giving an indication as to whether they would be willing to spend to engage in such experiences, amongst other things. All this data will eventually contribute to the creation of unique experiences that are designed around meeting and exceeding user expectations.

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

In obtaining the data to answer the question, a determined sampling frame was chosen with potential end users of culinary tours (tourists) and suppliers of tours in Malta (local tour operators) being targeted. In aiming for a representative sample of the potential market, the

probability sampling questionnaire method was used, to target a larger amount of people from different countries, age groups and family orientations, with two different sets of questions being developed to better understand the demands from the incoming tourists as well as the supply side aspects experienced by local tour operators.

The Tourist survey asked questions about specific tourist experiences in Malta and the general tourist preferences in relation to culinary experiences.

The Tour Operator questionnaire consisted of 9 questions and focused on two aspects: namely gathering data on the users of guided tour services in Malta and their preferences in relation to culinary experiences.

Because of the questionnaires had to be shared through social media (Facebook), in the form of Google forms, as physical interaction was not possible.

In ensuring that a representative sample

of the incoming tourist market in Malta was captured in the process, information on Inbound Tourism from the National Statistics Office – Malta (NSO) was used as a guideline. This information was limited to the year 2019 and was obtained from the NSO's website (www.nso.gov.mt). It should be noted that the 2019 data was used because the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that 2020 was severely limited in terms of tourist arrivals.

According to the National Statistics Office (release of the 3rd February 2021) 2019 nearly 55% of inbound tourists to Malta (1,259,974) came from four European countries; namely the UK, France, Italy and Germany. The UK, which has always had a strong connection to Malta due to historical influences, was the largest market with 23.6%, followed by Italy with 14.3%, France with 8.7% and Germany with 7.7%. Therefore, considering this information, the sample focused on these four major markets with respondents outside of these markets being classed in an 'Others' category.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS

A total of 105 people responded to the Tourist questionnaire while 17 individuals/companies replied to the Tour Operator survey. This meant that the targets for responses were both met and exceeded.

Analysing the demographic data, nearly 86% of those who responded to the tourist questionnaire were between the ages of 25 - 64, with more than 54% being in the 'millennials' category (25-44). When comparing our survey to the NSO statistics (February 2021) we see a very strong correlation between the two with the NSO reporting that about 70% of inbound visitors to Malta during the period January to December 2019 fell within the 25-64 age group with the 24-44 age category being the largest at about 40%.

Furthermore, more than 80% of those surveyed identified as either being married or in a relationship. In terms of nationality, just over 71% of those that responded were from the four major Maltese incoming tourism markets, 54.3% of respondents being from the UK, while around 29% were from other countries.

In terms of tourist experience of the Maltese market, just under half of respondents have visited Malta with only 38% of those having taken a guided tour of the Island. Of those who participated in a guided tour, just under 53% listed the desire to see tourist attractions as the primary reason for their decision with about 21% mentioning that their decision in taking the tour was mainly for the experience. More than 50% of those who did not take a guided tour when on the Island said that they preferred to explore alone.

When questioned about their general preferences, in relation to culinary experience, nearly 60% responded that they would travel to certain holiday

destinations for the culinary offering while just under 84% said that they would be eager to try new food while they were on holiday. Despite these results, only 27.6% said that they had been on a culinary tour while on holiday while around 75% of respondents were ready to pay for the opportunity to add a traditional local food tasting culinary tour experience to their itinerary. Of those who were not ready to pay extra for the chance to sample the local cuisine, just over half said that they still expected it to be included in their tour. 56% of respondents mentioned a positive culinary experience as being a reason to travel back to a particular destination highlighting the importance of food in the decision-making process.

On the other hand, the results of the tour operator survey suggest that most tour operator customers (76.5%) were between the ages of 45-64 with only about 47% of clients being from Malta's four largest incoming tourist markets. Furthermore, just over 47% of customers were identified as couples with another 47% identified as groups (others).

In terms of the most important factors for customers in booking a tour, nearly 60% of tour operators felt that the clients were after the experience while around

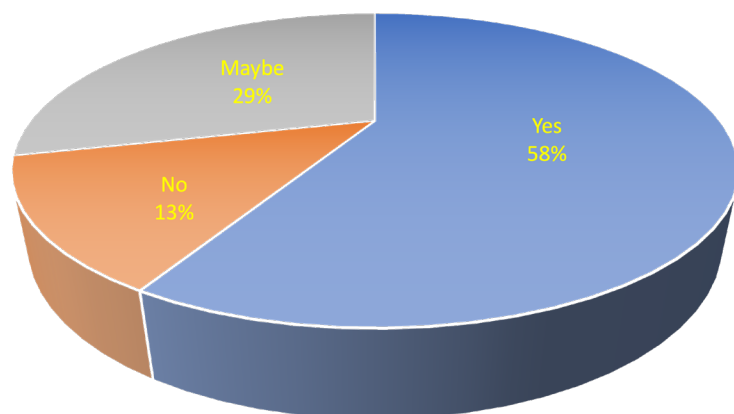
30% booked the tours to see the local attractions. About three quarters of respondents said that clients preferred mixed urban and rural tours

As far as culinary expectations are concerned 10 of the 17 respondents said that customers would sometimes request culinary tours with another 4 saying that this was a more frequent occurrence. Nearly 60% of those surveyed felt that their clients do not expect food tasting on their tours and over 88% charged any food tasting as part of their tour rather than offering it at a separate cost. So, what can we deduce from this information?

While more than 54% of those surveyed in our tourist questionnaire, and 40% of all incoming tourists to Malta in 2019, were in the 25-44-year age group, mainly millennials, the results of the tour operators survey suggest that this age group only accounted for about 12% of the tour operator clientele, with the bulk of tour operator clients being in the 45-64-year-old category.

On the face of it, Millennials do not seem to be really interested in consuming what the tour operators are selling. But why is there such a lack of interest in the

Would you travel to a certain holiday destination for its culinary offering?



Maltese guided tour offering, from this group of people?

The evidence collected suggests that the younger generations are disinterested in ‘participating’ in activities that will enhance their holiday experiences. In fact, Matthew Stone, an associate professor at California State University, Chico, and lead WFTA researcher, suggests that “Millennials are more likely than older age groups to attend food festivals, take cooking classes and participate in food/beverage tours while traveling”. Furthermore, this does not only extend to culinary activities. According to a study conducted by the World Food Travel Association (WFTA), culinary travelers are more likely than others to visit historical and cultural attractions, shop, take tours, attend concerts, go to sporting events etc. This is further supported by the research. Looking at the reasons why visitors did not go on a guided tour, 52% said that they preferred to explore on their own while on holiday with only 12% mentioning cost as the principal factor. Knowing that more than half of the tourists surveyed are in the 25-44 age category, it can safely be assumed that a significant number of people in this age group prefer to make their own itinerary when exploring a country rather than following a pre-set experience. This suggests that the age

group is still getting the most from its touristic experience but not through the tour operators.

The fact that the 25-44-year age group generally prefer to do things alone is not surprising. In a world where the younger generations are very tech savvy and where information is available at the touch of a button, it is more likely that the person will research material and be able to create their own touristic experiences very effectively. In fact, we have seen this happen in other parts of the tourism industry, such as the travel agency business, where the viability of that business model has been severely impaired by the ability of end users to book tickets online from the comfort of their own homes. This may also explain why current tour operator clientele fall within the older age brackets, i.e. 45+, as they are more used to the ‘traditional’ way of going on holiday; where everything is planned for them and where there is less risk of things going wrong.

Interestingly tour operators noted that nearly 53% of their customers came from countries other than Malta’s four major European markets. While we would need more data to understand why this is the case, one possible reason could be that tourists from the major European hubs

may come to Malta on a shorter duration visit, as opposed to those coming from longer haul destinations, thus they do not have the time to participate guided tours. Other possible reasons may centre on demographics or economic circumstances.

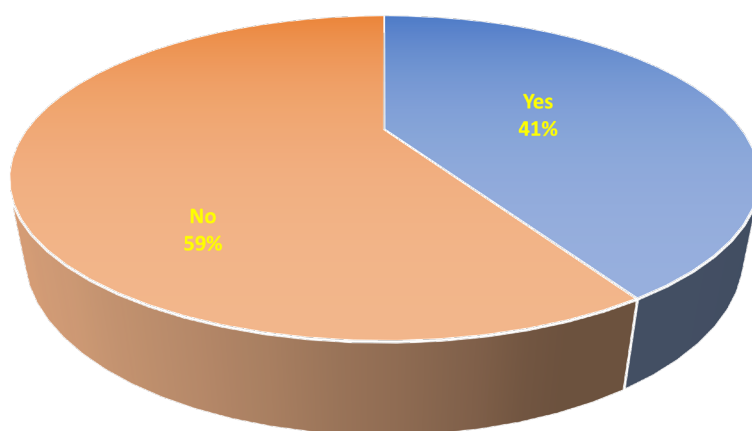
So, if participation in experiencing a place is not what is keeping the younger generations away from the guided tour market, the only plausible explanation that we are left with is that they are not being stimulated by what they are being offered. So is this a missed opportunity for the tour operators?

If we go back to the results of our tour operator survey, we see that the respondents noted that, in their opinion, nearly 88% of clients booked tours for, either the ‘tour experience’ (59%) or for the attractions (29%).

Knowing that these clients predominantly fall in the 45-64-year age group and that their expectation may be skewed towards the more ‘traditional’ way of having holidays, which are more scripted and organised, it is no surprise that the visual stimulation of visiting attractions plays an important role in the decision to take a tour in the first place. In fact, this result is even more pronounced in the tourist survey where 53% of those who took a guided tour did so to see the attractions. However, when it comes to user experience, things are not so clear. While the tour operators believe that the tourists are booking guided tours for the experience that such tours provide, the survey shows that only 21% of tourists that booked a tour in Malta identified this as being the primary motivator for making the booking.

The reality is that ‘experience’ is a very broad concept. What may be a good, or fulfilling, experience for one set of people many not necessarily be a good experience for another group of people. Our research clearly highlights this. So,

Do clients expect food tasting on their tours?





Furthermore, the fact that 59% of the operators surveyed said that their clients do not expect food tasting on their tours while a significant portion of tourists said they did, shows that there is a mismatch between what the consumers actually want and what they are getting.



while the tour operators may think that that they provide an experience that all tourists will appreciate, what they are doing is attracting a segment of the population that is comfortable with the model being offered and losing another segment that is not; a case of the supplier leading the consumer rather than it being the other way around.

It is important to expand on the meaning of the 'traditional way of doing holidays' in Malta. Traditionally, the Maltese tourism product revolved around its history, with the visual stimulation being the focal point of a tourist's experience; what Guzman and Canizares, referred to as the visual bias. The guided tour industry was no different with its offering usually taking the form of a rigid menu of packages that didn't really leave much room for user customization.

These tours tended to offer a combination of urban and rural experiences built to show off as much of Malta's diversity in a limited time frame and centred on urban settings like Vittoriosa (Birgu), Mdina and Valletta, cities with historic significance, as well as rural locations in places like Buskett. If we look at what the tour operators are currently offering their clients, this still seems to be the default model with very few operators, such as Merill, Diar il-Bniet and Taste History by Heritage Malta, offering something different.

In a way this is very surprising as a significant percentage of the tour operators surveyed admitted that there is demand from their customers for non-visual offerings in the form of other more immersive experiences, such as culinary tours. Furthermore, most of the tourists surveyed indicated that they would travel to certain destinations for their culinary offerings, are eager to try new foods while on holiday and are ready to pay extra to add a traditional local food tasting experience to their itinerary. So,

while the consumers are demanding these new types of experiences the industry hasn't really mobilized to meet the demand. Not that this is exclusively an issue for the Maltese market. The fact that more than 72% of tourists surveyed have never been on a culinary tour when on holiday suggests that this may be more of a global supply issue.

One possible reason why the tour guide industry is not adjusting its offerings to meet these changing demands from the consumers is that they may not be picking up the signals that the market is sending. It seems like the industry still considers demand for things like food tourism to be the exception rather than the rule, a niche rather than mainstream. This is further emphasized by the way most tour operators will include a charge for any food tasting on the tours as part of the total package even though consumers are ready to pay extra for it.

Furthermore, the fact that 59% of the operators surveyed said that their clients do not expect food tasting on their tours while a significant portion of tourists said they did, shows that there is a mismatch between what the consumers actually want and what they are getting. What the industry is saying today may make sense in terms of the demographics of their current customer base, but they would be wise to remember that the 25-44-year olds' of today are the 45-64-year olds of tomorrow.

It is interesting to note that more than 56% of tourists surveyed mentioned that a positive culinary experience would encourage them to go revisit the destination. This result is actually quite significant for the development of the Maltese tourism industry.

If the strategy is built to encourage people to see Malta, the likelihood is that they will visit only once, to see the sights, but if the strategy is to encourage tourists to experience Malta, then there

is a greater chance that they will come back. This view is echoed by several scholars such as Kozak and Rimmington, 2000 and Operman, 2000.

CONCLUSION

If we go back to our original question, i.e. “do tourists who visit Malta expect local traditional food tasting to be included in guided tours, or is it a nice add on?”, the simple answer, in terms of tourist response, is that it depends. For some, the expectation exists and is interwoven in the fulfilment of their touristic experience while for others it is just a nice add on.

The fact that there is no definitive answer is not surprising. After all we are trying to assess, and comment on, human behaviour, which rarely leads to conclusive answers. Any number of factors, such as age, nationality, marital status, economic standing, and past experiences, will shape an individual's expectations and experiences.

However, by answering the question from the point of view of the tour guides, in terms of how they interpret what the tourists want, then we see that the research has revealed some very interesting insights; both in terms of current practices as well as what the guided tour industry needs to do to remain relevant in terms of the Maltese tourism offering.

At this stage, it is important to point out that while our data sample size (105) may be small, especially when comparing tourists surveyed to the entire Maltese incoming tourist population, the responses obtained from the two questionnaires show some very clear trends allowing some rational

conclusions.

From the research three main points have been highlighted.

The first is that while the data clearly shows that there is Tourist demand for immersive experiences, such as food tasting, to form a part of the overall holiday



To remain relevant, the guided tour industry needs to evolve to be attractive to all the age groups.

experience; the tour guide industry does not appear to be supplying the tours that meet this demand. It seems that the guided tour industry still considers things like food tasting as either niche or a supporting act to the main event.

The analysis of the tourist preferences does not suggest this, particularly regarding the under 45-year-olds. There seems to be a disconnect between what the consumers want and what the industry thinks the consumers want. To survive, the guided tour industry needs to start listening to its customers' and the model needs to move from being supplier-driven to one that is consumer-driven.

Secondly, the current guided tour offering clearly doesn't appeal to everyone, with consumers tending to be in the over 45s

age category. To remain relevant, the guided tour industry needs to evolve to be attractive to all the age groups. There needs to be a shift in the focus of the offering, from the 'traditional' visual stimulation approach to one that allows the consumer a more immersive experience that appeals to all senses. This will not remove the need of traditional tours, but there will always be consumers who are looking for something specific, so it is a case of enhancing the offering rather than replacing it. While the traditional tour offerings have been popular with the mass tourism sector in the past, the habits of consumers are clearly changing and so must those of the guided tour industry.

A small number of operators have started embracing a more modern approach although there is still a long way to go.

Finally, in today's world the consumers, and especially the millennials and younger generations, demand choice. We see it in every aspect of life, such as in that way people consume various forms of media, and tourism is no different. The analysis suggests that a growing segment of tourists who visit Malta want to be able to choose the outcomes of their holiday experiences and if they are not given the choice they will go and explore by themselves. The traditional one size fits all approach, that has been adopted by the guided tour industry for so long, is less likely to work as time goes on. This also extends to the way that people pay for their experiences. Our analysis clearly suggests that tourists are happy to pay extra for things that they enjoy doing although the guided tour industry still seems to favour an all-inclusive price approach. By offering the tourists 'choice', the tour operators should be able to open new opportunities, both in terms of customer engagement as well as revenue generation.



PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF CONCLUSIONS

Having said all of this, how can I take the lessons that have been learned from this research and apply them in the design and execution of relevant guided tour experiences for my own business?

As I mentioned at the start of this discussion, my vision is to marry the cultural and gastronomic aspects that Malta has to offer and create unique guided tour experiences that allow tourists to both witness and taste Malta's history, traditions and culture.

The main focus of the tour is to provide a more immersive experience that brings balance between the historical and culinary aspects of the offering. It is designed to appeal to all the senses. How does this work on a practical level?

If we take something as basic as a loaf of bread as an example, while the tourist can learn about how to make bread and is able to taste and smell it, he or she will also be able to learn about the historical and spiritual significance of bread in Maltese history and culture. In this way the consumer experience is enhanced both in terms of knowledge as well as sensory stimulus. The ability to make these connections will also be a unique feature of the tour as I will be drawing on my experiences both as a tour guide as well as a qualified chef.

Furthermore, the tour is designed to be flexible in terms of giving the participants a choice of what activities they want to partake in. In this way it caters to all types of people and meets the different expectations that one would expect in a tour group.

The tour will also include a few original touches that are not found in any other tours on the Island, such as having access to exclusive locations, in order to make it a truly memorable experience that people

will remember and possibly return to at some point in the future. It is these little add-ons that will transform the tour into an experience.

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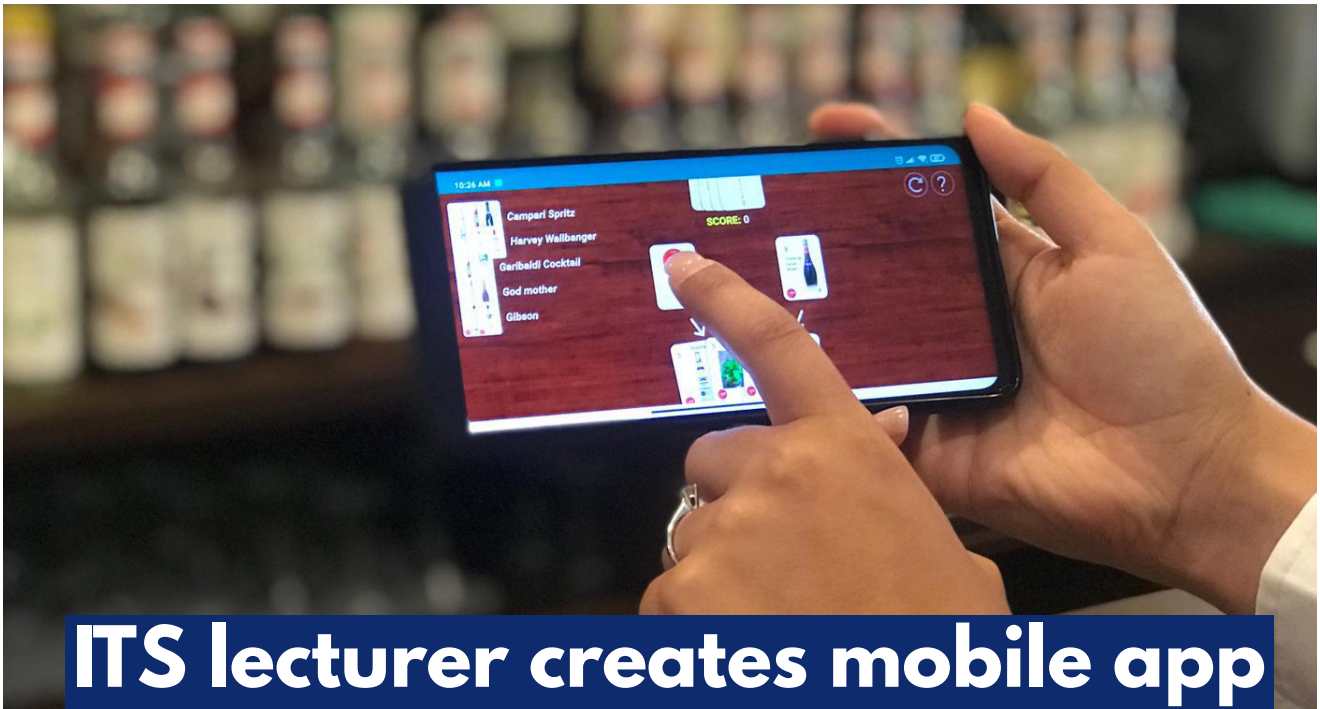
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ITS lecturer creates mobile app to teach about cocktails

WORDS BY MARTIN DEBATTISTA

How do you respond as an educator to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic when your practical classes are cancelled and you can only meet them online? A game may not be the first thing that comes to mind, compared to the traditional online meeting, online forum, and using a Virtual Learning Environment.

ITS lecturer Richard Pons came up with the idea of creating an educational game based on rummy to train his students in the recall of cocktail ingredients and recipes. Within a few weeks of brainstorming, development and testing, the game Bevicurious rummy was born and made available as an app for Android.

"Playing games is never a waste of time if it keeps your mind stimulated and active, and as long as you spend the right amount of time. However, with this game you are playing and actually learning over 45 international cocktails," explained to Futouristics Mr Pons. "Basically, the the app will deal 20 random

cards - 10 for itself and 10 for the player, and an arrow will indicate whose turn it is to pick a card. If the card is useful to create a recipe it will go to the side, and then the player discards a card from your deck hand. The player needs to try to keep the right cards to form a recipe, so that he uses all the cards. Once the cards are finished the app will add the remaining cards in the hands of the losing player and whoever reaches 100 points will lose the game."

The students have received the game very well and there are plans to improve it with experience and feedback of the students. "I have ideas for competitions related to this game during summer and during the academic year we can organise a Bevicurious rummy tournament on campus. The aim remains the same: learning by having fun," concluded Mr Pons.

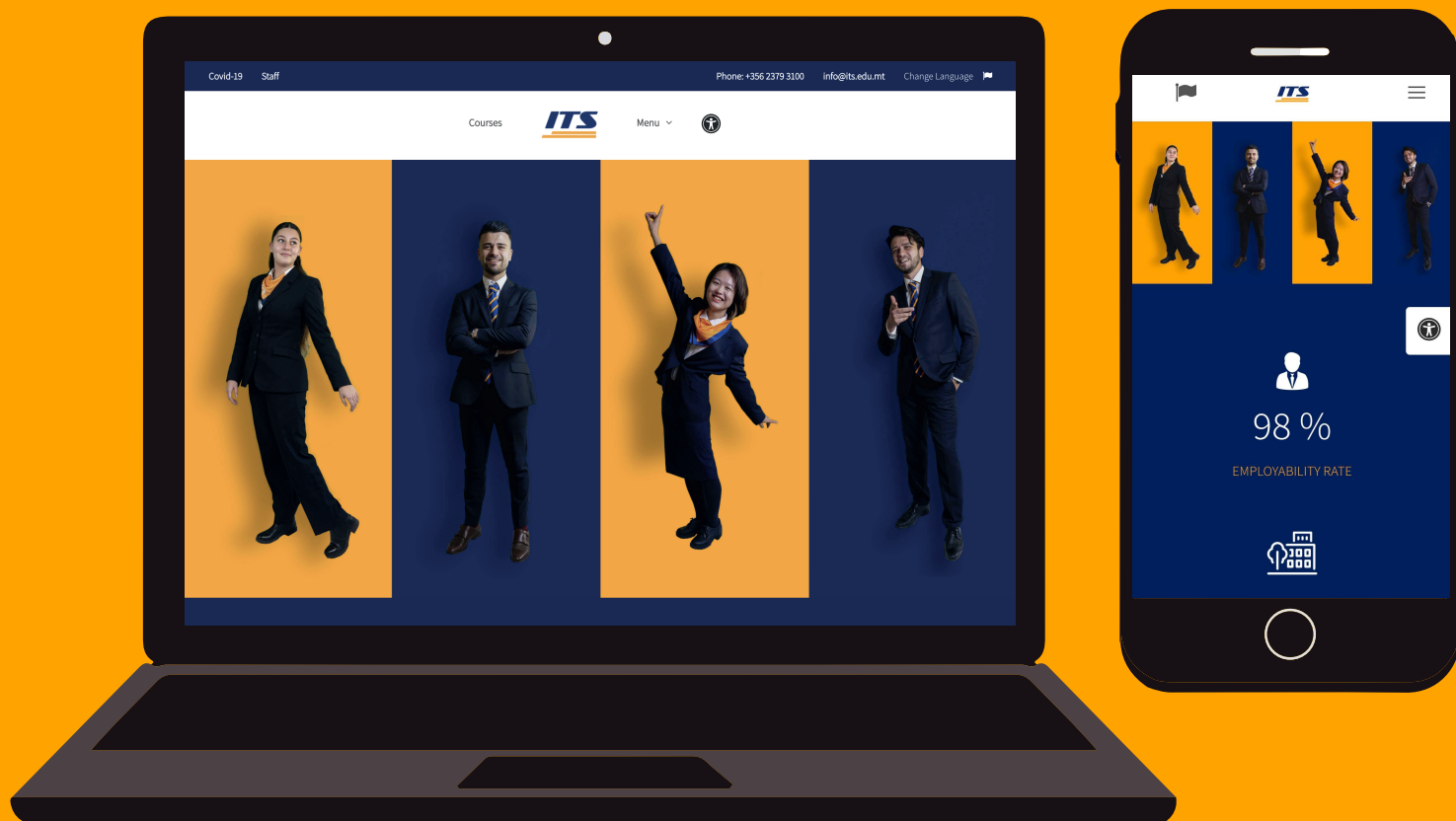
Luke Bjorn Scerri, who is also interested in beverages and bartending, was responsible

for the technical development of the app game. He explained that "since it is a card game, it is very lightweight and therefore, the minimum specs are significantly less than those of the cheapest Android phone available on the market. It can be played on an Android tablet, but the cards will appear in the same size as they would on a phone."

The core logic of Bevicurious Rummy has been developed in JavaScript, this part of the code is responsible for moving the cards around on the screen to their appropriate places. The app also makes use of CSS and HTML since it is actually a website embedded in an app.

"I would like to say that it was an overall nice learning experience to develop and launch this app on the Google Play Store apart from setting up the website," added Mr Scerri.

Bevicurious Rummy is available from the Google Play Store, it is just 16MB to download and requires Android 4.4 and later.



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