

# FUTOURISTIC

THE ITS JOURNAL ON HOSPITALITY, TRAVEL, TOURISM AND CULTURE



QUALITY, INNOVATION AND TRUST | HISTORICAL OVERVIEW | TAXATION ON UNHEALTHY FOOD PRODUCTS | 100% CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT | HOLISTIC POTENTIAL OF SIĠĠIEWI | REAL-LIFE FEMALE DRAMAS IN EARLY MODERN BIRGU | MEDIEVAL MAYHEM IN MDINA | MILITARY WEAPONS | FISHING IN MARSAXLOKK | ITS EVENTS | A GRADUATION | L-ARLOĠĠ TAL-LIRA | MALTESE VALLEYS | LABELLING AND MARKETING OF A GROUP OF FOOD PRODUCTS | MALTESE WINE

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**On the Cover**  
Sunset at Ras id-Dawwara cliffs, a scenic walker's paradise, with a breathtaking view of the uninhabited island of Filfa. Photo by Joseph Amodio of Studio Selinus, finalist of Wiki Loves Earth 2023.



## *A message from the Editor-in-Chief*

**T**he eighth issue of Futuristic presents another smorgasbord of research articles, studies, abstracts and news that attest the commitment of the Institute to present the best in hospitality, culinary, tour guiding and sustainability research that is the backbone of ITS courses from Diploma to Masters' level.

The selection of writings found in this edition demonstrate the wide variety of research being performed at the Institute; a testimony to the culture that is being developed on its way to becoming a vocational university.

In this issue, senior lecturer, Charlotte Geronomi writes about the importance and problems of continuous assessment, and the reasons why it provides a more rounded education for the students, while senior lecturer, David Pace, who lectures on Food Science subjects critiques the labelling and marketing of food products from the point of view of a person suffering from a nut allergy. This has important ramifications as many culinary outlets are becoming increasingly aware of allergies and food intolerances of their patrons.

Higher National Diploma student Martina Galea examines the value and feasibility of local valleys as a rural tourism products and interviewed several officials who provided a wealth of data on how valley areas can be improved in a sustainable manner and marketed as tourist attractions.

A mainstay of the academic year is the Academic Excellent Symposium that aims to highlight the best students' research projects. This year it was organised on the 15th March by Academic Manager, Ruth Azzopardi and Tour Guide Coordinator, Tara Darmanin, and highlighted a variety of final research projects in the Tour Guiding and the Masters of Heritage Interpretation courses.

This year, thesis and long essays were extremely varied and included historical, cultural, military, feminist and entrepreneurial research and provided an interesting morning of presentations that showcased the Institute's best work.

Tour guiding student Joanne Vella takes us on an informative journey regarding the origin, evolution and craftsmanship of the so-called *L-Arlogg tal-Lira* and attempts to demonstrate its importance as one of the more beautiful examples of local heritage.

Nigel Grech, another tour guiding student presented a strategic and tactical analysis of the weapons used by attacking and defending forces during World War Two entitled "Military weapons deployed in Malta during the Second World War". It turned out to be a fascinating project with a unique perspective that displays the wide variety of research taking place at the Institute. The same goes for Giacomo Muscat's entertaining project called "Medieval Mayhem in Mdina during the 15th century

Malta" where as part of his tour guiding project, suggested enacting life during that era, focusing on the drama and power struggles between the noble families living at that time that were easily as complex and convoluted as those presented in the popular fantasy series, *Game of Thrones*.

Feminism was touched upon in two final tour guiding project, one entitled "Exploring the importance of fisheries in Marsaxlokk" by Althea Mifsud and another by Roberta Mifsud called "Linking real-life female dramas in Early Modern Birgu to costumed enactments".

Turning to the Masters in Heritage Interpretation students, the second cohort of students successfully graduated this year and presented their interesting thesis. Mr. Paul Spiteri analysed five industrial heritage company sites and interpreted their value and significance in terms of post-industrial heritage to determine what could be adapted and work as visitor centres. He also delved into the ways company tours are executed and interpreted, and can be made more accessible and engaging via innovative approaches to digitalisation and through company websites.

Hiking and trekking in Siggiewi was the subject of a research project by Karl Aquilina who analysed "The Holistic Potential of Siggiewi and its environs from an Environmental and Cultural perspective as a hiking tourist destination" and provided data

regarding a trekking tour that highlights the cultural and natural attractions of the town of Siggiewi.

Stevie Sammut, an International Hospitality Management student presents a fascinating examination of the local wine industry in the thesis "Persuading Maltese Wine Consumers to Purchase and Consume Local Wines Particularly within Maltese Fine Dining Restaurants" and attempts to answer two important questions regarding consumer preferences, the consumption of local Maltese wines and the role of sommeliers in the promotion of such wines.

One of the most important achievements of the Institute was the extension of scope that was granted by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority after many years of fulfilling academic obligations and rigorous quality assurance exercises. The full ramifications of this extension can be found in an interview with ITS CEO Profs. Glen Farrugia.

Last but not least, well done to all the Kulinarja 2014 participants and winners who made ITS proud!

*Glen Farrugia*  
**Editor-in-Chief &  
ITS Chief Operating Officer -  
Academia**

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Futuristic 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 to the partners and stakeholders in the tourism industry but also to 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.

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

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ISBN: - 978-99957-1-961-6  
978-99957-1-962-3

# Countless Achievements Elevated Status

Institute of Tourism Studies Malta  
Self-Accrediting Status up to MQF/EQF Level 7

turizmu

edukazzjoni

Malta  
Further & Higher  
Education Authority

The announcement of self-accreditation up to MQF/EQF Level 7 for ITS was presided by the ITS CEO Mr Pierre Fenech (on the podium); the CEO of the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority Dr Roseanne Cuschieri; the Minister for Tourism and Public Cleanliness the Hon. Clayton Bartolo; and the Hon. Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation the Hon. Clifton Grima, amongst others.

## Quality, innovation and trust: Why ITS has reached a pivotal milestone with its extension of scope to MQF/EQF Level 7

BY MARTIN DEBATTISTA  
SENIOR LECTURER AT ITS AND EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF FUTOURISTIC

A process that took years was finally concluded in April 2024 when ITS announced that the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) had granted the institute an extension of its scope to start self-accrediting courses and programmes up to MQF/EQF Level 7 (Master's).

"The attainment of the extension of scope is a pivotal milestone for ITS as it recognises our institution's capacity to maintain high academic standards while fostering innovation in tourism and hospitality education," explains Prof. Glen Farrugia,

the Chief Operating Officer Academia at ITS. "This new status as a self-accrediting institution up to MQF/EQF level 7, not only enhances our autonomy in curriculum development but also positions ITS as a leader in higher education within the tourism and hospitality sector globally. The decision to grant ITS the extension of scope reflects trust in our academic governance and the quality of our programs, providing us with greater agility in responding to the evolving needs of the industry".

The extension of scope was granted following a rigorous external quality assurance and programme audit reports

conducted by the MFHEA, through foreign independent and international peer review panels. Prof. Farrugia reveals how this process included a thorough evaluation of the institute's institutional governance, academic rigor, faculty qualifications, research capabilities, and student support systems. "ITS excelled particularly in areas such as industry collaboration, where our strong partnerships have facilitated practical learning opportunities, employability for our graduates, and accreditation processes. Additionally, our commitment to continuous improvement and stakeholder feedback was highlighted as a strength during the audit".

With the authorisation to also self-accredit MQF Level 6 and 7 study programmes, ITS is well equipped to address a diverse range of student needs and the evolving demands of the tourism and hospitality industry. Despite already offering Bachelor's Degrees (MQF Level 6) and Master's Degrees (MQF Level 7) since 2017, these programmes previously required approval by MFHEA at all stages, from design to review. Self-accreditation will therefore render the design, implementation and review of current and new courses and programmes faster but not at the expense of quality assurance. This extension opens numerous opportunities for ITS to expand and diversify its academic offerings.

Prof. Farrugia revealed that "We are in the process of designing several new courses and programmes with a number of specialisations that leverage our enhanced accreditation status. In the short to medium term, we plan to introduce specialised Master's programmes in areas such as Sustainable Tourism and Digital Tourism, which are aligned with current industry demands and future trends. These programs aim to equip our students with advanced skills and comprehensive knowledge to lead in a competitive marketplace."

With the responsibility of self-accreditation, ITS is committed to upholding the highest quality assurance standards. It has established robust internal mechanisms, including periodic programme reviews, enhanced faculty development, and comprehensive student feedback systems. The institute's Internal Quality Assurance Committee is tasked with overseeing these processes, ensuring that all programmes consistently meet and exceed the educational standards set forth by the MFHEA as well as international benchmarks.

The ITS Training School is also expected to benefit significantly from this extension of scope. It will allow the institute to integrate more advanced and specialised training modules in the most effective and efficient way, closely aligned with our higher academic programmes. This integration will facilitate a seamless transition for student

educational mobility by moving from vocational training to academic degrees and onwards to postgraduate studies, creating a comprehensive educational pathway that supports lifelong learning and career advancement in tourism.

"This is a transformative time for ITS, and we are excited about the future. While we are extremely satisfied with such achievement and all the opportunities this will bring forward, our focus should remain on providing exceptional education and training that meets the needs of our students and the demands of the global tourism industry. We are committed to fostering an environment of academic excellence, innovation, and sustainability, ensuring that ITS continues to be at the forefront of tourism education both locally and internationally," concluded the COO Academia at ITS.

In the meantime, ITS has launched its prospectus for the Academic Year 2024-2025. This is available in printed format from the reception at the campus and online from the ITS website at [www.its.edu.mt](http://www.its.edu.mt)

**WHAT OPPORTUNITIES DOES THIS EXTENSION OF SCOPE PROVIDE TO ITS? ARE THERE ANY COURSES AND/OR PROGRAMMES BEING DISCUSSED/ DESIGNED TO EXPLOIT THIS OPPORTUNITY IN THE SHORT/MEDIUM TERM?**

This extension opens numerous opportunities for ITS to expand and diversify its academic offerings. We are in the process of designing several new courses and programmes with a number of specialisations that leverage our enhanced accreditation status. In the short to medium term, we plan to introduce specialised Master's programmes in areas such as Sustainable Tourism and Digital Tourism, which are aligned with current industry demands and future trends. These programmes aim to equip our students with advanced skills and comprehensive knowledge to lead in a competitive marketplace.



**ITS excelled particularly in areas such as industry collaboration, where our strong partnerships have facilitated practical learning opportunities, employability for our graduates, and accreditation processes.**





The extended self-accreditation will certainly expand the academic horizons for ITS.

**TO OBTAIN THE EXTENSION OF SCOPE, MFHEA CONDUCTED A RIGOROUS EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROGRAMME AUDIT OF ITS. WHAT KIND OF RIGOUR WAS IMPLEMENTED? WHICH AREAS DID ITS EXCEL IN?**

To achieve the extension of scope, ITS underwent a rigorous institutional and programme audit by foreign experts appointed by MFHEA. This process included a thorough evaluation of our institutional governance, academic

rigor, faculty qualifications, research capabilities, and student support systems. ITS excelled particularly in areas such as industry collaboration, where our strong partnerships have facilitated practical learning opportunities, employability for our graduates, and accreditation processes. Additionally, our commitment to continuous improvement and stakeholder feedback was highlighted as a strength during the audit.

**SELF-ACCREDITATION MEANS THAT FROM NOW ONWARDS ITS DOES NOT NEED TO APPLY WITH MFHEA TO REVIEW ITS PROGRAMMES FROM MQF LEVEL 7 DOWNWARDS. HOW WILL ITS ENSURE THE NECESSARY QUALITY ASSURANCE OF ITS PROGRAMMES NOW THAT OVERSIGHT AND ACCREDITATION IS INTERNAL?**

With the responsibility of self-accreditation, ITS is committed to upholding the highest quality assurance standards. We have established robust internal mechanisms, including periodic programme reviews, enhanced faculty development, and comprehensive student feedback systems. Our Internal Quality Assurance Committee is tasked with overseeing these processes, ensuring that all programmes consistently meet and exceed educational standards set forth by MFHEA but also by international benchmarks.

**WHAT ARE THE ENVISAGED AFFORDANCES TO THE ITS TRAINING SCHOOL?**

The ITS Training School will significantly benefit from this extension of scope. It will allow us to integrate more advanced and specialised training modules in the most effective and efficient way, closely aligned with our higher academic programmes. This integration will facilitate a seamless transition for student educational mobility by moving from vocational training to academic degrees and onwards to postgraduate studies, creating a comprehensive educational pathway that supports lifelong learning and career advancement in tourism.

**ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?**

This is a transformative time for ITS, and we are excited about the future. While we are extremely satisfied with such achievement and all the opportunities this will bring forward, our focus should remain on providing exceptional education and training that meets the needs of our students and the demands of the global tourism industry. We are committed to fostering an environment of academic excellence, innovation, and sustainability, ensuring that ITS continues to be at the forefront of tourism education both locally and internationally.

## Elevated Status Achieved: ITS Attains Self-Accrediting up to MQF Level 7 and Expands Academic Scope

In a significant milestone for the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), the institution has received an extension of scope from the Malta Further & Higher Education Authority (MFHEA). This means that ITS upgraded its previous MQF level 5 self-accrediting status up to the Master's Degree level (MQF Level 7). This achievement underscores ITS's commitment to delivering excellence in higher education and solidifies its position as a leading educational institution.

The extension of scope was granted following a rigorous External Quality Assurance and Programme Audit reports conducted by the MFHEA, through foreign independent and international peer review panels. This accreditation reflects ITS's dedication to meeting and exceeding stringent criteria for academic excellence.

The extension of scope represents a significant achievement for ITS, validating not only its dedication to providing high-

quality education but also enabling ITS to expand its academic offerings. With the authorisation to self-accredit MQF Level 6 and 7 study programmes, ITS is well-equipped to address a diverse range of student needs and the evolving demands of the tourism and hospitality industry. Despite already offering Bachelor's Degrees (MQF Level 6) and Master's Degrees (MQF Level 7) since 2017, these programmes previously required approval by MFHEA.

ITS CEO, Pierre Fenech, expressed his enthusiasm regarding this accreditation extension, remarking, "We are immensely proud to receive the extension of scope from the MFHEA. It is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team, who have worked to transform a previously negative result, overturning it into such a positive outcome. This milestone reaffirms our steadfast commitment to excellence and further solidifies our position as a leading institution in Malta and beyond."

Information about the ITS study programmes is available online - these include a range of specialisation directly

and indirectly related to the Tourism and Hospitality industry. The programme portfolio aims at attracting students seeking all levels of education and professional development in various disciplines within the sector. Whether in events management, culinary arts, hospitality management and sustainable tourism, among others, students are guaranteed high-level study programmes leading them to a successful career within the industry.

ITS looks forward to continuing its mission of providing quality learning to achieve excellence in tourism contributing to the development of skilled professionals in the tourism and hospitality sector.



**This is a transformative time for ITS, and we are excited about the future.**



Malta Qualifications Framework	
8	Doctoral Degree
7	Master's Degree Post-graduate Diploma Post-graduate Certificate
6	Bachelor's Degree
5	Undergraduate Diploma Undergraduate Certificate VET Higher Diploma Foundation Degree
4	MATSEC Matriculation Certificate (Advanced & Intermediate) VET Diploma
3	General Education MATSEC Secondary Education Certificate Grades 1-5 VET Level 3
2	General Education MATSEC Secondary Education Certificate Grades 6-7 VET Level 2
1	General Education School Leaving Certificate VET Level 1

A	Introductory Level A
B	Introductory Level B



The Bortex factory in 1975

# Historical Overview of Industrial Manufacturing Heritage from 1960 to Contemporary times: Interpretive approaches to connect with audiences in physical and virtual domains in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

BY PAUL SPITERI  
MASTER OF ARTS IN HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

**T**he concept of cultural, industrial manufacturing heritage means different things to different groups of scholars and to the public, whether the subject is factories, workers, and social living. However, all these aspects can be integrated into cultural tourism. Changes associated with urban growth and the way of life is an area of interpretation as many tourists are curious about the working lives of their hosts.

After the Second World War, Malta's industrial landscape was profoundly transformed by the rise of industrial estates,

and industrial heritage approaches are required to connect with audiences, both if the factories are visited physically and, if not possible, visited digitally on company websites, as these are visible only from the exterior while on coach tours. The study analysis five company sites and interprets their value and significance in terms of post-industrial heritage. It looks at what works with existing visitor's centres, and how sites where company tours are executed and interpreted can be made more accessible and engaging via innovative approaches to digitalisation and through company websites.

## CASE STUDIES

The case studies capture historical timelines from the 1960s to date, owner and worker perceptions of industrial management and working life, factory blueprints and their location in the industrial estate, machinery, and production. Following this approach, the study applies the principles of interpretation practically in order to explore how this can engage different audiences through storytelling and "bell ringing" and link with visitors' knowledge, like global brand names and their perception of the de-industrialisation of their industrial heritage back home.

This research aimed to document heritage from the recent past before memory of it is lost. Through the five case studies of more than half a century chosen from five main industrial sectors, it generated insights into the industrial physical and intangible heritage that will engage with the broadest range of visitors possible through physical visits to manufacturers and their factories passer-by commentaries on guided tours, and virtually through online website encounters.

Following oral history interviews from eight protagonists in the textile and clothing manufacturing industries prior at the Heritage Malta, memoirs were recorded into transcripts which in turn served as documents and archives retaining industrial heritage material of the manufacturing factories which closed their operations forever.

Similarly, oral history interviews were carried out, additionally with five protagonists, with the owner of the Bortex factory and the Gagliardi fine tailoring brand globally and managed successfully from Malta; with engineers and toolmakers at the Kirkop electronic factory from television capacitors and components more than a half a century ago which is the most

avant garde semiconductors under ST Microelectronics; the curator at the Farsons Brewhouse. A nouveau-art showcase and a Brewery Experience; a director of Magro Brothers who for ten years offered tourists a tomato canning, and local cheese making culinary sensory walk-through, and finally presenting the Managing Director of the Toly factory, a family run industry specialising in beauty plastic packaging with lacquering global brand names. These factories have documented narratives and records that can be interpreted for an eventual eco-museum which is in the offing.

The thesis also attempted to clarify what industrial manufacturing heritage is, what is meant by the industrial revolution and manufacturing processes, and what is industrial archaeology and industrial landscapes as distinct from urban estates. This research, therefore, captures the reports of a handful of companies, of whom one opened a visitor's centre as a tourist and community attraction. The study explored new avenues to link the past of the manufacturing sector to the present and identify educational approaches, including technical information and how academics can involve interpreters, the companies, and authorities, given the new digital age media and actual factory visits, physical or virtual.

## RESULTS

Analysis of research findings revealed a variety of themes while the interviews revealed themes worth revealing that stir provocations including Tilden's principles of heritage interpretation. The historical case studies are a product of testimonials of the players and appear in the case study findings. The research revealed that there were thematic stories that stemmed from the interviews. These are some examples of entertaining narratives that illuminate various aspects of work, life and its curiosities.

The appendix includes anecdotes resulting from the questionnaires. The themes vary from experiences to architecture, health and safety. All these themes can be light-hearted comments that can go into the interpreters' narrations. The idea is to make the stories more engaging during scenic tours. As an integral part of the thesis are examples for further future research. Digitalisation archiving also formed part of the interviews presented by the author. The other modes of archiving were experienced by the author during the research.

Research results indicate that for an eco-museum to succeed, enablers need tools for creating industrial awareness; innovation



Salvatore Borg, the owner of Bortex (photo credit Bortex website).



Farsons first brewery in Hamrun – (photo credit Farsons plc)

available is necessary for visitor satisfaction; cooperation strategies with stakeholders are vital for attracting visitors; museum space needs to be found and a national focus required to draw visitors' attention.

The study also revealed that the eco-museum would need marketing and advocacy strategies to effectively seek financial support over the medium to long term. In the meantime, it proposes organizing temporary exhibitions and scenic tours to sites equipped with visitor experience, display halls using different artefacts, hospitality, shopping and dining experiences to promote a niche in industrial heritage tourism sites, in combination with the traditional crowd-pulling historical and cultural assets, given that all industrial and tourism in Malta and Gozo are in close proximity to each other.

Malta has made significant strides throughout the last century in tourism museums, Industrial Manufacturing Heritage can also add value to Malta's tourism product and create an extra niche for the enjoyment of our rich history and traditions towards what is contemporary today becomes heritage for the future.

There is scope for further research and development of an eco-museum in Europe which concerns a whole territory which would provide a unique dispersed industrial heritage trail. Documentation and technology is thereby essential in using QR codes to provide an innovative tool to those who would like to learn about our manufacturing heritage.

Keywords: Industrial heritage tourism, eco-museum, industrial revolution, oral history, collective memories and narratives

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**The study explored new avenues to link the past of the manufacturing sector to the present and identify educational approaches, including technical information and how academics can involve interpreters, the companies, and authorities, given the new digital age media and actual factory visits, physical or virtual.**



# A critical review on the potential introduction of taxation on unhealthy food products in Malta and the impact that may leave on Fast food Outlets.

BY RODRICK ATTARD GHILLER  
LECTURER IN FOOD PREPARATION

The aim of this study is to analyse the impact of the introduction of a tax on unhealthy food products on fast-food outlets in Malta. The research also attempts to find the kind of strategies the same outlets would be ready to implement if a similar tax were to be introduced, and also how those residing in Malta would react to the changes elicited.

The study focuses on the fast-food outlets whose main menus are based entirely on junk food, and where the main income is derived from unhealthy products. One of the objectives of the study was to forecast, through analysis, the reactions to such taxation. Another objective was to foresee what changes can be implemented by fast food entrepreneurs. This study will take a step further to try to comprehend the consumer's role once this measure has been introduced.

To answer these questions, secondary data related to the subject was examined, mainly focusing on the current situation in Malta; namely: the local rate of obesity, local food consumption, the local taxation system and fast-food outlets. This study also examined countries where such taxes had been introduced and the impact that was subsequently felt by fast-food outlets.

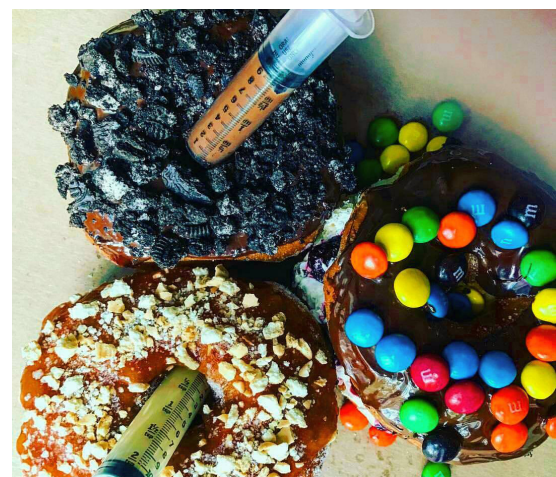
A qualitative research methodology was implemented by conducting semi-structured interviews with nine fast food outlet owners and a questionnaire distributed online to subjects residing in Malta. This provided feedback from both owners and customers.

The primary goal of this research was to determine the impact of a tax on unhealthy food in Malta on fast-food outlets. The researcher also looked into what kind of strategies fast-food owners would be willing to implement and how customers would react to these changes.

To investigate all this, the researcher conducted extensive research on the kind of foods that are considered unhealthy and would therefore constitute the appropriate foodstuffs for taxation. This determined that foods containing a high amount of salt, sugar, and fat, such as junk food, processed meats and soft drinks would undoubtedly be taxed if such a tax were to be imposed.

The collection of data on eating habits and obesity was conducted to better understand their relationship and the current situation on the island. Based on the findings of the study, Malta has the highest rate of obesity in Europe and one of the highest in the world. It was also discovered that Maltese citizens are among the most frequent diners in restaurants in the world. The findings related to this study may put more pressure on the government to implement such a tax.

In countries where a tax on unhealthy products was introduced, there was an impact on food service outlets, especially those outlets whose concept is based on junk food. In fact, it was determined that wherever this taxation was adopted, most of the food outlets were obliged to increase their prices on such items. As predicted, the outcome of this was a decrease in demand.



## METHODOLOGY

To investigate this matter, a questionnaire was distributed to the general public and the researcher received 167 responses which is a sufficient sample size. To obtain responses from fast-food outlet owners, however, 9 interviews were conducted with owners of various fast-food outlets throughout Malta.

## FINDINGS

According to the questionnaire, the respondents' favourite fast-food outlet constitutes franchises, with 47 (28.14%) respondents choosing this option, whereas the second favourite are pizzerias, with 41 (24.55%) responses. Thirty-nine respondents (39) preferred take-away outlets (23.35%), while the rest were the following: bistros 15 (8.98%), 6 (3.59%) others, with the majority mentioning healthy fast-food outlets such as Eatwell and Sushi Bars. Five (2.99%) respondents preferred the snack bar, while pastizzerias are less popular, with only 4 (2.40%) preferring this option, noting that 2 respondents stated none of them.

## DATA COLLECTION



Photo credit: formulate-health.com



Photo Credit: Clemens v. Vogelsang

It was also noted that currently the majority of those residing in Malta who visit fast-food outlets will automatically choose unhealthy food items.

Regarding the general public, who are the primary customers of these outlets, it can be concluded that 60% of the 167 participants in the poll are opposed to the implementation of this tax, while 40% are in favour, with the latter citing health concerns and those opposed citing financial ones.

This study concludes that, while the majority of respondents are opposed to the tax, 90% of the same respondents would continue to use fast-food outlets depending on the strategies that the same outlets are willing to impose.

In fact, it has been discovered that Maltese people use these outlets due to their hectic lifestyles. The researcher can therefore conclude that Maltese citizens are ready to switch to a healthy lifestyle if a tax were to be imposed and more than half of those residing in Malta would begin to consume healthy food rather than an unhealthy variant. This study also found that a large percentage of these customers, more than 77%, are unwilling to pay a higher price for unhealthy food products.

According to the findings of this investigation, none of the fast-food restaurant owners interviewed support the imposition of this tax, and if it were imposed, their business would suffer if they adhered to the same culinary concept and simply raised prices. These interviews also revealed that the majority of outlets are currently experiencing financial difficulties as a result of recent events and are not prepared for a new tax.

This study also concluded that only half of the outlets interviewed had a strategy in

place if a tax were imposed, while the other half would continue to operate as usual while raising their prices, which, according to secondary data, is not good for business. It can be concluded that nearly half of these outlets are prepared to add more healthy items to their menu if the tax were implemented in Malta. An intriguing point is that only one owner would be willing to completely change the idea of his outlet to a healthy one.

To summarise, a tax levied on unhealthy food products in Malta would have a financial impact on fast food outlets. This, in turn, may foster a change within the current food consumption mentality of those who live here. Through the analysis of the research and the outcome of the findings, it is clear that the tax would have a negative impact on outlets, particularly those that have no strategies put in place to mitigate such a tax.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the completion of the research and analysis and discussion of the findings, the researcher proposes the implementation of the following main recommendations, so that if a tax on unhealthy food is implemented, fast food outlets could be able to manage it appropriately.

The main recommendations are that prior to the introduction of this tax, an outlet must have a plan in mind, and not merely resort to raising prices. This is due to the findings that indicate that those residing in Malta are not ready to pay higher prices, but instead seem prepared to change their eating habits.

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# The Way Forward: 100% Continuous Assessment

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## ASSESSMENT PATTERNS

Locally, Malta's colonial past meant that the British model was followed very closely in both educational and examination systems (Sultana et al., 1997; Zammit Ciantar, 1996). However, the political change in 1964, initiated several revolutionary reforms that have been going through ever since. The past decade has been extremely significant mainly due to the introduction of measures and reforms, including those affecting assessment (Cutajar, 2007). Whilst these practices were traditionally based on examinations, 21st century needs have shifted the emphasis from memory to application, and to soft skills such as teamwork and communication. Since these skills are seen as a prerequisite

for employment, a necessitated change has been noted not only in the way the curriculum is taught but also how it is assessed (Said Pace, 2021). Compulsory education has moved from 100 per cent summative assessment to a combination of continuous and summative assessments (Cilia, 2019). Similarly, this proposal is also being considered for post-secondary learners (Bonnici, 2019).

## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The common and exhaustive definitions of summative and formative assessment methods respectively either measure students' achievement at end of module or enhance student learning through continuous feedback (Byram and Hu,

2013; Trotter, 2006). However, Hernández (2012) and Nitko (1995) argue that the difference between methods can be vague when assessment is carried out without considering the intended impact or when used merely as a steppingstone to the next academic goal (Cross and O'Loughlin, 2013). Additionally, Popkova (2018) states that, unlike in the primary and secondary sector where schools are required to follow the national curriculum, post-secondary institutions set their own requirements to which students' knowledge, competencies, and skills should be developed. Consequently, this makes the distribution of standardised tests highly problematic (Strauss, 2014) and assessment through one-off final exams ineffective (Weimer,

2016). Therefore, post-secondary assessment methods should be comprehensive enough to cater for different educational needs whilst also providing assessment reliability. In fact, various researchers have agreed that this is best guaranteed through continuous assessment (Beagley and Capaldi, 2016; González, Jareño, and López, 2015; Khanna, Brack and Finken, 2013).

#### **PURPOSE**

To support the needs of the changing working life, curricula are being renewed worldwide with the European Union even setting recommendations of standards to higher education institutions, including the need of continuous assessment when assessing technical and practical skills (EFCE, 2012; Moltzahn and Wittstock, 2002). Similarly, Pietikäinen and Karinen (2016) suggest that applying continuous assessment in the form of tasks carried out throughout the whole module rather than an end of module exam helps guide students towards deeper learning. Additionally, Entwistle and Peterson (2004) state that assessment choice plays an important role in quality learning and so, lecturers need to support their students' learning through assessment methods that encourage reflection, critical thinking, and conceptual understanding.

Continuous assessment can also be used as a tool to communicate the intended learning outcomes to students, which can increase their deep-learning motivation (Biggs and Tang, 2007) whilst enhancing high-level engagement in diverting students from memorising and describing towards explaining, relating, and applying (Weinstein, 2019). Continuous assessment makes this possible because learning is divided into smaller parts that occur evenly throughout the module rather than during a concentrated assessment period. This assessment method also provides lecturers with feedback from their students'

learning throughout the course and therefore, any difficulties can be reviewed immediately. In fact, Walde (2016) looks at this as an evaluation on the effectiveness of the teaching strategies in relation to the curriculum because it assesses the curriculum as implemented in the classroom, thus allowing lecturers to make any changes as dictated by their students' needs.

#### **CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT METHODS**

Lecturers are faced with numerous methods of assessment that can be used to obtain information about student achievement and learning progress. This can often cause confusion; in fact, Alausa (2004) identifies

Whereas research concerned with continuous assessment implementation in post-secondary institutions offering theoretical curricula have not escaped researchers' attention, studies on this application in post-secondary institutions offering hands-on practical modules are scarce, with only a few studies investigating such approaches for the assessment of practical modules. This is unfortunate because assessment is important for all students mainly because it informs students about what they should be learning and how they should be learning it. Therefore, assessment tasks need to be constructed with that in mind and in doing so, the


assessment will fulfil two essential requirements: measuring competence and improving the learning process.

According to the Federation for Industry Sector Skills and Standards (2014), lecturers can use written (online or paper-based) assessment tasks to assess theoretical or technical knowledge, observations (directly or virtually) to assess performance, practical assessment through the production of a project or work portfolio and an oral assessment to assess theoretical or technical knowledge whilst also understanding professional discussion.

Similarly, the International Labour Organisation (2017)

notes that through continuous assessment, the learning progress of students can be monitored continuously because it allows assessors to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individuals whilst providing them with required support to improve their learning and helps to identify students that are falling behind, thus introducing appropriate support measures.

Regardless of the assessment method chosen, one thing is certain - although they matter, grades certainly do not have the biggest impact on student learning since



**Using continuous assessment methods such as portfolios, observational exercises, discussions, role plays, and presentations can aid lecturers in periodically finding out what their students know, understand, and can do.**

the chosen assessment methods as the major issue associated with assessing learners. Similarly, Harden and Cairncross (2006) note that the assessment of practical skills is often neglected with unsatisfactory assessment instruments generally being the contributing factor. However, Plessiss and Prouty (2007), argue that using continuous assessment methods such as portfolios, observational exercises, discussions, role plays, and presentations can aid lecturers in periodically finding out what their students know, understand, and can do.



A theory class at ITS

they only provide students with very little information as to how they can improve or demonstrate their learning (Hattie, 2016). In fact, written and in-person feedback that is specific to the task at hand has the greatest impact on improving learning outcomes (Soden, 2011) and when done well, it has a powerful influence on student learning (Bransford, Brown and Cocking, 2001). Further research also suggests that spending more time on constructive feedback increases student learning (Marzano, Pickering and Pollock, 2001).

#### CHALLENGES

Involving lecturers in curriculum design and development is more likely to make the curriculum challenging, thus creating positive curriculum interactions. However, seeing that assessment clearly influences students' work,

the question whether to do 'assessment of learning' or 'assessment for learning' has frequently been raised. The increased implementation of continuous assessment as the preferred method of assessment has resulted in much discussion about its demerits. In fact, Doherty and Dockrell (2011) note that such assessments can have a debilitating effect on the students' learning process.

Torrance (2012) adds that the emerging problem is that such assessment patterns are being reduced to regular classroom tests that are used for monitoring students' progress or as feedback techniques to improve grade and test results, with many other researchers (Bennett, 2011; Klenowski, 2009; Hargreaves, 2013; OECD, 2020; Swaffield, 2011) sharing this criticism.

Similarly, Marshall and Drummond (2006) also explored the way in which lecturers enact continuous assessment and concluded that although some practices embody the 'spirit' of such assessment; others merely conform to the 'letter'. Indeed, they suggest that whilst the former can help prepare for future learning, the latter is merely a tool for judging student performance.

Reibel (2021) also notes that without attention, lecturers may create continuous assessment that reflect their own personal values and experiences or provide biased feedback to students. This form of lecturer bias in continuous assessment can inform practice and policy development, stifle student growth, enforce discriminatory policies, and socially isolate students. Whilst it is an educator's professional duty to judge student performance fairly and accurately, inaccurate judgments do occur and they have the potential of not only altering student grades, but to distort a student's self-concept, or reduce opportunities to learn (Cohen and Steele, 2002). Similarly, Wood and Graham (2010) note that lecturer gender, race, socioeconomic class, and ethnicity bias could also lead to a misrepresentation of student performance which can activate stereotypes that lead lecturers towards the use of discriminatory performance evaluations.

Although CA assessment can be of concern for many lecturers, it is believed that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, and a cautious approach to design and development of assessment methods, as well as the sharing of responsibility amongst module lecturers, will benefit both the student and the lecturer. Nonetheless, there will always be concerns connected with any assessment approach, and no approach will become a one-fits-all solution.

#### CONCLUSION

Not only does continuous assessment give students a better chance of achieving their full potential, but it offers students a better-rounded education because they are continuously showing learning achievement. In fact, lecturers can capture their students' full performance during which they are able to comprehensively assess students' progress. This approach also gives lecturers

enough time to provide constructive feedback, thus correcting any issues as they arise. Here lecturers are at the centre of the assessment where they are properly involved in the education of their students and not simply giving lectures and marking exams at the end of a module. This popularity with continuous assessment has led to an increased spread of negative comments towards summative assessment because students and lecturers often question the need to assess the work of an entire semester with a single assessment. Indeed, the generally positive comments regarding CA suggest that it would be worthwhile to implement, and one from which students and lecturers can benefit. In fact, to ensure students are actively learning rather than cramming everything towards the end of the semester, this assessment method could be further implemented with students on other courses.

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# The Holistic Potential of Siggiewi and its environs from an Environmental and Cultural perspective as a trekking tourist destination

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**H**iking in Malta is not considered the most common touristic of activities although it is becoming more popular as Malta has a lot to offer hikers. It was this idea that served as a catalyst to this study.

More specifically, this study sought to explore the potential of Siggiewi as a hiking destination from the perspective of hikers. This has of course been influenced by the

student's passion for the Natural realm, hiking trails, and the author's ancestral village of Siggiewi. Literature pertaining to these three facets of the study was sought to build upon what was already known about hiking in Malta. The researcher then wanted to evaluate the opinions of hikers through a focus group session in order to evaluate qualitatively the varied opinions on the subject.

## **THE TOUR**

Siggiewi is one of those villages in Malta which still manages to hold on to some aspects of its rustic and traditional setting against the onslaught of modern development. Beyond the confines of the urban space, Siggiewi is also (comparatively) blessed with extensive countryside which is easily reached through the myriad of pathways that circulate through this area. Several natural and man-made aspects can



be observed in Siġġiewi such as resident and migratory birds, geologic formations, and historic places of interest. These aspects easily lend themselves to an itinerary which attracts people interested in history and natural attractions.

The historical site relate to the extensive history of Siġġiewi, which goes back to the early 15th century. Historical sites involved in this study included the old village core, the Old Church ruins of Siġġiewi, and a wayside chapel. These stops not only offer attractive scenery but also help the visitor understand Siġġiewi's history; a preeminent example of the development of the Maltese urban-rural space since at least, medieval times.

Whereas on the natural side, visitors will get the chance to visit sites beyond the urban space through hiking. Trekking through Siġġiewi, one may get the chance

to visit geologic formations which show faulting, part of the geologic process which formed the Maltese archipelago. In the same area, visitors also have a chance of encountering feathered residents, such as the melodious Blue Rock Thrush which is easier to identify through its call rather than sighting it.

To collect all these aspects in relation to the study's question, a hiking itinerary was set up to show what that Siġġiewi is a viable option. The trail chosen sought primarily to access sites which either fall in the above-mentioned categories, but also considers the safety of the path and the logistical factors which influenced the choice of passage. The logistical aspects, namely distances, terrain type and elevation change were also taken in consideration to assess the hike's viability.

## THE STUDY

Part of evaluating this activity's viability involved asking potential participants what their thoughts were regarding hiking in Malta. A group of hikers from local trekking groups were asked to join a focus group session. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The participants were asked several relevant questions that initiated a discussion and responses were recorded and assessed for themes.

Principally, participants believed that hiking in Siġġiewi offers attractive options and is a good medium of awareness, especially for the younger generations. It unanimously agreed that hiking in Malta, such as in Siġġiewi faces several obstacles including restricted pathways, fragmented countryside, and the absence of enforcement. These were cited as the main reasons that discouraged hiking.



Siggiewi parish church (Photo by Mike Finn on Flickr)

Such arguments are mirrored in the local literature, which listed the opaque state of regulations and the unhindered abuses on the countryside as the detractors of hiking in Malta.

### CONCLUSION

This study succeeded in acquiring perceptions of hikers on the viability of Siggiewi as a hiking destination. By no means can this research be considered exhaustive, but a resonance of perceptions

that agreed with the literature was noted. Through this perspective, the validity of hiking in Siggiewi was seen as an attractive proposition. In the study participants were keener on well-conserved and well-regulated pathways, though they did mention that this might not always be the case for the area of Siggiewi. Increasing awareness about trails and their maintenance was also seen as beneficial for the conservation and ownership of the hiked areas.

The study would be more effective if it considered the opinions of other stakeholders encountered in hiking such as farmers, landowners, hunters/trappers, and residents. The opinion of these stakeholders would help in developing an effective and sustainable product if they are examined holistically. But evaluating perceptions is just one step, more input could take the form of reviewing and amending the related legislation (especially in relation to access), pathway



infrastructure, and the enforcement of conservation.

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Roberta Briffa at Couvre Porte, Birgu (Photo credit: Roberta Briffa)

# Linking real-life female dramas in Early Modern Birgu to costumed enactments

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**R**esearch on women's lives in Malta is on the rise, however, to date a study that focuses on female narratives specifically linked to the town of Birgu in early modern times is lacking.

The long essay starts by examining what has been written about women in early modern Birgu and proceeds by describing the methods of inquiry adopted to gather data for this study. A qualitative research method sought to explore the challenges faced by females of different social status during the period under study. Data was examined through a systematic approach based on bibliographic research of secondary sources.

Various historical books, past dissertations and peer reviewed scholarly papers and articles sourced from respectable online repositories were consulted. Four females; a witch, a nun, a married woman, and a prostitute living in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were

identified and chosen as case studies. The question guiding this research is "Can the real-life dramas of some women in early modern Birgu be dramatized and used to inform people on the lives and times of some past females?"

## HISTORY

The Knights of the Order of St John established themselves in Birgu in June 1530, transforming it into a fully-fledged fortified city in less than forty years. In honour of the role Birgu played in the victory of the Great Siege in 1565, the city was given the name of "Citta Vittoriosa".

In 1571 the Knights moved to Valletta, but Birgu remained the base of the Order's fleet up to the end of the eighteenth century and was therefore an active hub of maritime activity. During the hospitaller period it became the centre of trade, commerce, and entrepreneurship in Malta. Women were inevitably part of this effervescent scene

and were involved in different scenarios at different levels in the city's economic and cultural growth. The responsibility of women in Hospitaller Malta went beyond the traditional notions of domestic work, homemaking, and childbearing.

Publications reveal that some women gainfully ran taverns, owned mills, knitted socks, and even managed quarries and blacksmith shops. Female migrants mostly from the hinterlands, the South of Italy and beyond moved to Birgu in search of a better life, indicating that opportunities for women in the harbour district during this period increased.

Thus, the literature review section is split into chapters exploring witchcraft, female religious and married life, working women and female attire. Works by Carmel Cassar and Amanda Schembri provided useful information about witchcraft, which was considered a religious crime and fell under



On the streets of Birgu (Photo credit: Roberta Briffa)

the jurisdiction of the Roman Inquisition. Stories on female religious orders were mainly sourced from works by Christine Muscat and Nadette Xuereb.

The spiritual marriage, (*matrimonium spirituale*) in counter reformation Europe was perceived as the highest status for women. Publications by Giovanni Bonello, Carmel Cassar and Victor Bonnici offered insights on married life during the period under study. Works by Joan Abela, Emmanuel Buttigieg, Christine Muscat and Yosanne Vella were consulted to source information on working women. Information regarding female period costumes for enactments was primarily sourced from *Costume in Malta* by Nicholas de Piro and Vicky Ann Cremona.

In the last decade of the sixteenth century a certain Joanna was earning a living through prostitution, and Isabetta Caruana was an elderly woman who was accused of witchcraft. In the mid-seventeenth century, Maria de Dominici was an artistically talented tertiary nun, and Elizabetta Testaferrata Moscati Dorell was an unhappily married woman living in Birgu in the eighteenth century. The objective of this chapter was to create awareness about notable female narratives in a male centred society and shed light on the challenges faced by women of different social status in the past.

## ANALYSIS

The research and analysis chapter organizes the findings into different sections which identify the diverse experiences some women lived through from the 16th to the 18th centuries, while exploring the linked

locations in Birgu. Much has been written about the history of Birgu. Literature on female life in early modern Birgu is growing but still limited. This section addresses snapshots of real-life-dramas of four tenacious women who lived in early modern Birgu. The protagonists of this study lived in different epochs and hailed from different walks of life.

This study merges select biographies of early modern women with a study on period female clothes and drama. An animated costumed tour based on this research offers a creative, informative, and captivating experience where elements of our cultural and historical heritage can be revisited and shared through drama.

The tour that compliments this essay will entice schools, travel agents, the Birgu Local Council, Heritage Malta, and other organizations to consider theatrical historical tours focused on female narratives. It can be offered as an addendum to the classical Birgu tour, or as a unique stand-alone 1.5-hour animated tour. Such a theatrical guided tour offers an alternative perspective of life in Hospitaller Birgu in an engaging dramatised way. The costumes worn by the actresses and the guide during the tour, seek to adhere to the type of clothes worn by women at the time when the stories happened.

Due to the word count limitations, the essay focuses on four case studies only, however during the ensuing guided tour, several documented female narratives are recounted on linked locations or in the vicinity, for both educational and entertaining purposes. Consequently, narratives do not follow a chronological order, but that of the tour itinerary that logistically worked best.

When we're looking at the past, we're looking at people like us who often faced challenges and responded to them with the knowledge and skills that they had within their social, economic, and political environment. Whether its witchcraft, religious matters, married life, or the working environment, both men and women dealt with daily life hurdles, sometimes successfully and sometimes less so. This long essay seeks to raise awareness on the need to delve further into women's histories in the oldest maritime

city in Malta's Grand Harbour. It seeks to achieve this goal by merging history and drama, and creating enactments that aim to portray female experiences and provoke thought. The current historical enactments on offer largely pertain to knight investitures and military parades. Historical enactments focusing on female narratives are lacking. Considering this, the additional market strategy promotes tourism, attracts visitors to Birgu, and ultimately informs about what it was like to be a woman living in the harbour area in Hospitaller times, in an animated way.

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# Medieval Mayhem in Mdina during 15<sup>th</sup> Century Malta

BY GIACOMO MUSCAT  
HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN TOURIST GUIDING

Fascinated by both the Game of Thrones (GOT) TV series and the Medieval period, an obvious question kept besieging and battering my mind resulting in the central proposed research question: In what ways can a real dramatized 15th Century “Game of Thrones” exist in Mdina?

To answer the above, resulted in a further two sub-specific questions that became the objective of this research which ultimately sums up the title and main research question of this study:

Where in Mdina can places of interest, real local characters and events be linked to emulate and recreate the dramatic power struggles and turbulence from Game of Thrones?

How desirable and commercially feasible is a speciality niche tour in costume that focuses on a real-life medieval Game of Thrones?

The objective was achieved by examining available literature during a particular chaotic 10-year period in Malta’s medieval history, also using general medieval history for context, as well as questionnaires to assess feasibility.

Research showed the below three ingredients were what attracted audiences to GOT:

## 1. UNPREDICTABILITY

One of the top features of GOT is the masterly woven yet unpredictable storyline. To keep up with all the plotlines is enjoyably hard work, which keeps viewers on the edge, unable to second guess what’s going to happen next or who’s going to die!

## 2. RELATABILITY

The complexity of the characters challenges the conventional notions of “good” and “bad”. Similar to real life, no-one is purely bad or good, as sometimes the circumstances dictate certain choices not accepted in today’s society yet acceptable in a totally different context back then during medieval times.

## 3. ESCAPISM

The audience wants to feel the emotions which are not often experienced in ordinary lives (and without any real consequences) such as brawls and fights resolved with the tip of a sword or dagger; wielding power over life and death; accepting infidelity as the norm in marriage; embracing superstition; and experiencing extreme desperation, whilst danger and death loom constantly.

Although 15<sup>th</sup> century Malta itself, (back then considered a “fief” and just another “part” of Sicily) is too small to be a parallel to the world of GOT, the research showed it nonetheless possessed the desired ingredients as described above.

## MARKETING MDINA

Medieval Mdina is relatable, even though the characters chosen from this city do not belong to the *crème de la crème* of power such as kings, princes, and dominating nobles of Westeros. Instead, they’re found much lower down the feudal food chain like small landowners, local nobles, galley captains and knights. Their lives are nonetheless still full of intense political intrigue, social manoeuvring and infidelity during peacetime as well as witnessing gruesome deaths, involvement in sieges and battles during war time.

Yet could this be feasibly turned into a desired themed and dramatized medieval tour?

This brings up the next set of vital questions that could be showstoppers:

- Is there a demand-related reason why a tour of this kind has not already been created?
- Would GOT fans also be interested in a medieval tour based on real local characters in Mdina, or is too niche?

To determine whether this proposed tour is a serious business proposition or better destined to remain like GOT, a “fantasy”, special consideration was given on the 4P’s of Kotler’s “Marketing Mix”.

The mix was integrated in the survey involving 107 participants, composed of both males and females, in a diversified age group. The 12



Photo by Eva Darron on Unsplash

questions forming the survey were sequenced along the 4P's: promotion, place, product and price.

Half of the participants were GOT fans, and despite the initial fears that the proposed tour would not be as attractive, the majority replied in the affirmative. Also encouraging was that many participants believed that a number of their friends and relatives would also be interested, potentially giving the tour a wider audience.

Not surprisingly, almost 80% said they would definitely travel to Mdina for a tour, and the majority preferred a tour off the beaten track. It's important to note that the survey was conducted with a majority of locals, with a small portion of foreign nationals participating. However, research revealed Mdina is likely the second most visited place in Malta after Valletta. Mdina presents many relevant Medieval locations to relate the story, as well as actual GOT filming sites.

Regarding the structure of the tour, while both history and entertainment were selected, an equal mixture of both was preferred, as almost 72% of participants highlighted the importance of a balanced tour. The fact that entertainment is crucial, and half were GOT fans, also seems to have influenced the option of a guide portraying a character, with most opting for a "Corsair", much to my delight!

However, it was noted that around 14% of participants expressed discomfort with a guide dressed in character as this would put the spotlight on them.



Giacomo Muscat bringing the narrow and quite streets of Mdina to life (Photo credit: Giacomo Muscat)

The participants also highlighted the issue of going too niche, with a majority of circa 59% favouring a mixture of both general medieval history and piracy.

Lastly, the ultimate question that would decide if this tour was sellable. In terms of price, the result was satisfactory with 84% of respondents willing to pay €20 for the tour. However, attempting to increase the price over €20 was not welcomed.

#### CONCLUSION

Although research showed that enough historical data exists to create such a tour and that is also feasible as a business proposition, the extent of its scalability and frequency is yet to be determined since only a few foreign nationals responded to the questionnaire,

thus creating a question mark of the commercial scalability of the tour.

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The Spitfire Mk IXe at the Malta Aviation Museum  
(Photo by Alan Wilson on Flickr).



# Military Weapons Deployed in Malta During the Second World War

NIGEL GRECH  
HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN TOURIST GUIDING

The Second World War introduced the Maltese Islands to a new and brutal mechanized siege. The concept of the older ground-based siege warfare made way for a threat from the air and sea.

The aim of this long essay is to provide a strategic and tactical assessment of the numerous weapons deployed from both attacking and defending forces. The research examines the type of weapons used and effect they had. The logistics of bringing the numerous armaments and munitions to the island are also discussed,

and the way Malta had to shift from the defensive to the offensive during the war. This also had an effect on the struggles endured by the aerial fighter planes, and the arrival of the more advanced ones and their effects are also examined. Finally, in terms of surface attacks, the preparations against a ground assault are also investigated.

These findings culminate into a better understanding of why certain weapons and tactics were deployed, and how they affected the strategic standing of Malta. Various literature material was examined, accompanied by interviews with experts

who filled in the gaps and provided invaluable information regarding the conclusions of the assessments.

Historically, Malta was no stranger to war. Having participated in conflicts both on land and sea since ancient times. However, the advent of military aircraft introduced the islands to a new form of siege warfare. This aerial siege rendered the great walls built for land and naval combat obsolete, as aircraft can bypass them by flying higher and deploy their payload behind the defensive walls. The central focus in terms of weapons were aircraft and guns.



A 40mm Bofors anti-aircraft gun and its crew keep watch as a destroyer enters Malta's Grand Harbour, 8th January 1942.

## AIR POWER

This study examined the logistics of bringing such assets to the island through numerous naval convoys mainly from Britain. These convoys had to pass a fiery gauntlet of enemy submarines, aircraft, and warships. Of equal importance were the types of weapons brought to Malta. Land-based guns assisted by the guns of warships stationed in port, were the primary means of defence for a long time.

When Italy entered the conflict on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1940, one of Mussolini's first courses of action was to attack Malta from the air. At this point the islands were ill-prepared to offer a formidable defence. By the first enemy raid on June 11<sup>th</sup>, Malta's sole defence was based on a little over 100 guns ranging from the light Lewis Machine Guns and 40mm Bofors, large calibre guns such as the 4.5-inch guns and the massive coastal 9.2-inch MK X's used only for anti-shipping purposes. The prospect of surface combat

was not neglected as these guns could depress enough to engage ground/naval targets with the appropriate ammunition.

The study also examined the manpower required to operate these guns. Manning these guns were not only military personnel, but also civilian dockyard workers who manned some of the 40mm Bofors. This was due to a lack of trained artillery crews present on the islands. Valuable information regarding conscription was gained from interviews of experts in the field. Conscription was introduced to the local Maltese but focused more on the acquisition of skilled labourers to work in maintenance roles in dockyards. Farmers were also conscripted to aid; however, farming was prioritised to boost food production.

The gunners of Malta proved vital as many of the authors and interviewees in this study agree. The guns played a major role

during the defence of carrier HMS *Illustrious* in Grand Harbour in January of 1941. This coincided with the arrival of the German Luftwaffe to the siege. The Germans brought in numerous advanced aircraft which rained devastation on the Cottonera area where the carrier was docked for urgent repairs. Although British aircraft were participating in the defence, the guns were the main defensive assets that repelled the raiders due to the use of box-barrage tactics.

Aircraft took centre stage in the conflict both for offensive and defensive purposes. At the start of the conflict, only 3 outdated WW1-era biplanes were operational for the defenders against an armada of more advanced Italian fighters and bombers. The study found that even though severely outnumbered and outclassed, the obsolete biplanes managed to score some hits and at times even deter bombers away. Their only advantage was their double-wing design, giving them a much better turning

An RAF Beaufighter fighter-bomber with Mdina in the background.



rate than monoplanes. By late June, Hawker Hurricanes started to arrive in limited numbers. These were also underpowered when compared to other aircraft of the time such as the German BF-109E but were on par with their Italian adversaries.

By the end of March 1942, the formidable Supermarine Spitfire was being deployed to Malta. But as this study assessed, it was the Hawker Hurricane that was the true saviour of Malta, going up against superior enemy aircraft while being vastly outnumbered for two whole years.

#### FUEL SHORTAGES

The study identified key aspects in how Malta managed to hold against overwhelming odds. One important detail was the fuel shortages suffered by both sides. The Axis forces stationed in Sicily faced fuel shortages on multiple occasions. Many of the fighters escorting bombers were given just enough fuel to reach Malta and return to Sicily. This meant that dogfighting time for the attackers was

severely limited. Malta's fighters were also suffering from fuel shortages but being the defenders and supported with ground-based radar, they had more dogfighting time.

The study also found out about experimental weapons being deployed. German rocket-assisted bunker busters were used twice in Malta. One targeting a bastion in Floriana and another targeting a dugout hangar in Ta' Qali. The Floriana attack was the first ever use of such a weapon on British territory. The Germans also deployed the radio-controlled Fritz X bomb during the HMS Illustrious raids in January 1941. This may also be the first combat deployment of this class of weapon. The only ever surface incursion attempted was during July of 1941 where an Italian commando unit also utilised exotic assets such as a human-guided torpedo to try and destroy Allied vessels in Grand Harbour.

The research of weapons deployed in Malta during WW2 was vast. The aim of this long

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**The study identified key aspects in how Malta managed to hold against overwhelming odds.**

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The Italian Savoia Marchetti SM79 bomber was a frequent visitor to Malta.



essay was to assess the type of weapons and tactics used in Malta. This aim paints a clearer picture as how Malta managed to hold back such a formidable force during the entire conflict. The focused subjects of this research were mainly aircraft and guns due to the limitations of a long essay. This can be further expanded into other categories of weapons such as small arms and tanks.

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# Exploring the importance of fishing in Marsaxlokk

BY ALTHEA MIFSUD  
HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN TOURIST GUIDING

**M**arsaxlokk is recognised by many as the largest fishing village in Malta. However, not many people realise the huge impact fishing has had on this village. In this long essay research, I disembarked on a journey to discover the diverse impacts fishing methods had and still have on the fishing community by focusing mainly on the social, cultural, economic and culinary aspects of the village. Other secondary focal points were exploring the importance of technology in fishing and how fish farming affects fishing and fishermen. From researching a body of literature to the interpretation of the results obtained from face-to-face interviews with people involved directly or indirectly in this trade, a lot of different findings were uncovered, some which were expected whilst others were a surprising.

## MARSAXLOKK'S DEVELOPMENT

Marsaxlokk has been inhabited for thousands of years and the remains at the *Tas-Silġ* complex, situated about 1km away from the centre of the village is definite proof of this. Over the span of the years, people have refrained from living in coastal areas due to prominent corsair attacks. Things started to change over the last two centuries, when fishermen from nearby villages such as iż-Żejtun, iż-Żurrieq and Luqa began to slowly settle in Marsaxlokk.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the government started to heavily invest and develop Marsaxlokk Bay to accommodate fishermen. This is clearly evident from the censuses held in 1967 and 1985, where there was an increase of 1000 people residing in Marsaxlokk. Some of the investments incorporated included a new slipway and provision of safe anchorage for larger fishing boats, a flat area to dry fishing nets, and the opening of a District Fisheries Office with a store selling fishing gear.

## SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Religion and fishing methods in Marsaxlokk mutually influenced each other over time. In the past, fishing affected the village's feast date. The latter was originally celebrated in May before 1918. It was then moved to mid-June upon the discovery of the dorado's financial potential. The date was shifted once again to when it is celebrated today, which is either on the fifth week of July or the first week of August. This shift was probably prompted due to the tuna and swordfish potential which started to be exploited (tuna and swordfish season is open from May till August).

The dorado season, open from August till December, is extremely important for fishermen. A meaningful religious tradition occurs annually at the beginning of the season; a tradition which commenced around 1967. Before departing to cast fish aggregating devices (*kannizzati*), fishing vessels equipped with the necessary fishing gear were blessed by the parish priest. This still goes on and strong religious beliefs are also reflected on fishing crafts since a substantial number bear names from the Holy Bible.

Fishermen have always contributed financially to the church. In the past, they contributed a third of their profits to the church, a tradition locally known as the *Terz tal-Madonna*. Even though the amount donated has differed, this tradition is still practiced today. Fishing also had other social effects on the village. Sports activities like waterpolo and football clubs struggled to assemble enough players for games due to the majority working out at sea!

## WOMEN: "THE PILLARS OF THE FAMILY"

Women have played a significant role in Marsaxlokk throughout the years, with some locals even defining them as "the pillars of the family". This is because when fishermen are out at sea, sometimes for days, women

take care of the children. Additionally, they take care of their household finances and the necessary paperwork. Women also helped fishermen fix nets and sell the catch. As stated explicitly by a fisherman, he is grateful for his wife as he would never be capable of selling his catch. By helping, women bring home money to pay for all fishermen's expenses including wages. This was also highlighted by one of the fish hawkers interviewed as she stated she is extremely satisfied that thanks to her job, she is able to get her wage, her husband's as well as other fishermen who possibly contribute to respective fishing endeavours.

## FISH GASTRONOMY

In the fisherman's household, fish is incorporated in the family's diet by using unwanted or unpresentable fish such as half-eaten fish (as it would be eaten by other fish or dolphins). The fisherman's wife stated a fried half-eaten fish is extremely tasty



since it has a saltier flavour. Sometimes she prepares rissoles with swordfish caviar. However, caviar is more likely to be sold due to its high market value. The households' favourite dish is the traditional fish soup (*aljotta*) which is consumed all year, including on hot summer days. The flavour is enhanced by adding parts of fish which are typically discarded by customers such as the liver, bones and caviar.

*Aljotta* is also found on the majority of the restaurants' menus in Marsaxlokk. According to the restaurant owner interviewed, the fishing method adapted by fishermen and the location from which the fish is caught affects the flavour of fish. Moreover, fishermen must be careful how they treat fish as soon as it is caught. Preferably they should try to keep it as fresh as possible and apply ice indirectly as otherwise the ice might burn the scales and the fish would not be presentable to clients.

Given all of the above findings, it has been shown that fishing is still an important trade and forms the identity of Marsaxlokk despite its decline, as it has paved the way to other economic activities such as restaurants and open markets whose economic importance is becoming just as relevant as fishing itself.

Technology such as VHF, GPS and satellite phones also proved to be of great help not only for fishermen's expeditions but also their safety.

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Althea Mifsud - Fisherman, Marsaxlokk, Malta" (Photo by John Haslam on Flickr)

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Fishing boats at Marsaxlokk (Photo by ahisgett on Flickr)

# ITS Events Timeline

The below timeline highlights significant events from the previous issue to the present. It features a number of student competitions, campus events, new partnerships, and academic achievements, including the extension of scope and the launch of our latest prospectus. These milestones demonstrate our dedication to excellence, growth, and innovation in tourism and hospitality education.

## 19 JAN

### ITS Students to Represent Malta in Prestigious Pastry Competition

ITS students represented Malta at the Juniors Pastry World Cup in Rimini, Italy. Led by lecturer Jimmy Aquilina, the team included students Abigail Micallef and Henrica Galea. Mentors and sponsors were crucial in their months-long preparation for this esteemed competition.



## 14 MAR

### ITS and Ethiopian Airlines Aviation University Sign MoU

ITS and Ethiopian Airlines Aviation University signed a Memorandum of Understanding during a trade mission organised by Trade Malta and the Maltese Embassy in Addis Ababa. This partnership aims to enhance academic cooperation in Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality, fostering exchange programmes and collaborative research initiatives.



## 31 JAN

### ITS and MSAA Launch Screen Arts Centre

ITS and MSAA signed an agreement to establish the "Screen Arts Centre" at ITS, focusing on filmmaking education. This initiative aims to offer comprehensive programme. Backed by the Ministry for Tourism, the collaboration highlights Malta's commitment to becoming a premier film production destination.



## 18 MAR

### Second Open Doors Event

ITS held its second Open Doors event for prospective students and families to explore the diverse study programmes through demonstrations and presentations. The event included interactions with lecturers, current students, and support services, providing a comprehensive overview of ITS's educational opportunities and campus life.



## 14-23 APR

### ITS Students Excel in Various Competitions

ITS students have excelled in multiple prestigious competitions. At Kulinarja 2024, they secured 5 Gold Medals, 3 Bronze Medals, 5 Merit awards, and several trophies. The students who took part in this year's Kulinarja include Zachary Azzopardi, Neil Peresso, Daniela Pisani, Keith Casha, Andrea Cremona, Stanley Godsent, Ylenia Farrugia, Skye Ihuomah, Zak Camenzuli, and Christa De Giovanni. While, Selenor Spiteri showcased her cocktail-making skills at the 18th G&T Cup in Slovenia, competing against 41 participants. Additionally, Sophie Diacono, Sevion Grech, and Zachary Azzopardi competed in the International Contest 'Bartolomeo Scappi' in Italy, covering Pastry, Bartending, Tourist Destination, and Front Office sections. These achievements highlight the students' dedication and the support from their mentors and lecturers.



## 25 MAR

### ITS Launches Skills Pass for Tourism and Hospitality Industry

ITS launched the Skills Pass, a government-initiated verification process recognising skilled workers in Malta's tourism and hospitality sector. Developed through extensive stakeholder consultation, the Skills Pass includes online training, assessments, and interviews, ensuring high standards.



## 9 APR

### ITS Achieves Extension of Scope to Master's Level

ITS received an extension of scope from the Malta Further & Higher Education Authority (MFHEA), allowing it to self-accredit programmes up to the Master's Degree level (MQF Level 7). This milestone, granted after rigorous quality assurance reviews, underscores ITS's commitment to academic excellence and expanding its educational offerings.



## 24 APR

### ITS Launches New Prospectus for Upcoming Academic Year

ITS has released its latest prospectus, featuring study programmes from Foundation Level (MQF Level 2) to Master's Degree (MQF Level 7), following an extension of scope from MFHEA. The prospectus includes Culinary Arts, International Hospitality Management, and more. Career guidance officers attended the launch event to learn about these offerings.





Left to right: Mr Massimo Casabianca, DAN Lecturer, Ms Vania Sessa DAN Lecturer, Mr Paul Tickle, Ms Audrey Farrugia, Mr Raymond Arce, Mr Tiit Krutob BSc DSM graduates, Professor Alessandro Marroni DAN Foundation CEO and Lecturer, Dr Simon Caruana Senior Manager ITS and Lecturer, Mr Guy Thomas DAN Lecturer  
Photo: Arkadiusz Srebnik.

The first cohort of graduands in BSc. Dive Safety Management in December 2023.

# A Graduation, a Milestone

BY SIMON CARUANA  
SENIOR LECTURER AT ITS

The 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2023 will be remembered as the first time that the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) celebrated the graduation ceremony for the Bachelor of Science in Diving Safety Management.

This program, so far unique in the world, is pegged at MQF/EQF level 6 and provides a pathway for further studies. The program is the result of the long-standing agreement that exists between ITS and Divers Alert Network (DAN) Foundation chaired by Professor Alessandro Marroni.

## A BRIEF BACKGROUND

Work on this academic program started in 2017 when ITS represented by the CEO Mr Pierre Fenech and DAN represented by Prof. Alessandro Marroni, formalized their collaboration by the setting up of the International School of Diving Safety and Medicine (ISDSM) under which all current and future diving safety courses will be set up, designed and managed. The

setting up of the programme was largely undertaken by Dr Simon Caruana and Prof. Glen Farrugia from ITS and Mr Massimo Casabianca and Ms Vania Sessa from DAN.

The main challenge was to identify the areas of study that were to make up the course and go beyond the 'traditional' content that is normally associated with them if one takes a purely utilitarian view. Indeed, for each area, further knowledge, skills, and competences were identified and incorporated within the program to ensure that the persons reading for this degree will be able to meet the current and future challenges that were identified by the development team. The result was a program that includes within its curriculum the following areas:

1. Advanced medicine, first aid techniques and research
2. Principles of hyperbaric medicine
3. Law and legislation with respect to diving practices, diving equipment and safety

4. Workplace safety, fire safety and hazard and risk identification and assessment
5. Marine protection and sustainability within the diving industry
6. Aspects of recreational, technical and free diving.
7. Scientific diving and research techniques
8. Aspects of management (human resources, policies, marketing and use of digital tools)

One must add work placements that enable students to gain valuable experience within the industry and include a research project (dissertation) that permits students to explore an area of interest in detail, contributing towards the generation of new knowledge in the field of diving safety.

On the other hand, it was recognized that many of the students enrolled were diving professionals with years of experience and

therefore an exercise was carried out to ensure that such qualifications and experience were given due consideration through the 'Recognition for Prior Learning' (RPL) scheme. All the evidence provided by students was rigorously assessed and where the required standards were achieved duly accredited.

Our students can not only carry out the typical tasks associated with the industry such as the management of a diving resort, but they can also act as diving safety officers at any organization that requires scuba diving to be done ensuring that all the diving safety protocols are adhered to. In fact, some have also been approached to take up an audit function, whereby they can go and inspect various premises and advise resort operators accordingly.

This placed further challenges on the development team in that it had to try and find the best possible specialists to share some of the knowledge and expertise with our students. The use of blended learning facilitated this as many of these academic specialists reside all over the globe including the United Kingdom, South Africa, Italy, United Arab Emirates and Italy. Some often change locality due to their work on oceanic oil platforms and this does occasionally create additional challenges, particularly regarding online connectivity, but these past years the ITS-DAN academic support team learned to be resilient and managed to deal with such situations.

The course has a significant practical element. Many of the study units require students to carry out practical tasks. These may range from actual diving to diving simulations, dive site and dive centre visits to practical first aid and fire safety exercises simulating real-life situations that may be encountered during diving activities (recreational or otherwise).



ITS students practicing using specialized equipment at the ITS Qala Centre supervised by Dr Riccardo Pelliccia and Mr Massimo Pieri (centre, left).

“  
**it is a course that may challenge many of the common perceptions within the diving community and make it view the sector with a more objective view**

In 2021, ITS inaugurated the ISDSM research centre situated on the ITS Gozo premises in Qala in the presence of the Ministers of Tourism and Gozo respectively, underlying the support that this initiative was given by the government of Malta.

The research centre primarily serves to organize and carry out all the practical components required by the course. The Qala premises are ideal in that they also incorporate a small teaching hostel whereby foreign students and lecturers can stay overnight preparing the logistics of the practical days more manageable.

To this end, one cannot forget the constant support provided by Mr Jesmond Borg, the administrator of the ITS Gozo Centre. In the meantime, works have commenced on the new ITS campus based in Kalkara that will also incorporate a shallow pool, a small but deeper pool designed specifically for certain diving activities and a small teaching hyperbaric unit. These will not only enhance the student experience of the current course,

but will enable ISDSM to develop a series of short specialized courses that will allow existing diving practitioners to add on to their existing knowledge and expertise.

ITS students recording data under water as part of their BSc. In Dive Safety Management programme.



## WAY FORWARD

This development has also attracted the interest of other parties. Indeed, by 2026 the plan is to establish a permanent research and innovation capacities building in the Blue Economy sector. This is one of the outcomes ITS being part of the BCThubs project (<https://bcthubs.eu/>) that has the aim to support underwater cultural heritage, scientific research and tourism valorization. The other Maltese partners in this initiative proposed ITS to house the permanent research hub given the investment being done in the field.

Moreover, ISDSM has embarked on a series of agreements to advance the research opportunities. The most significant is an agreement with the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), the world's leading diving training organization having over 73% of diving certifications worldwide.

At ISDSM we are confident that with this and other agreements we can reach one of the aims that had been set, namely becoming a world-wide research centre of excellence in diving safety and the blue economy in general.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The course is now in its fourth year, and this provides an opportunity to reflect upon the outcomes of the course itself.

Despite the challenges associated with the launch of a degree programme that is somewhat unique, the aim behind the course itself was achieved. That is, to provide practitioners with consolidated knowledge and skills that would enable them to occupy roles related to diving safety such as diving safety officers. The academic team is currently reviewing course content and structure with the aim

of consolidating it further and based upon the feedback received, add further material that is relevant to diving safety but also to the sector. One example would be leading qualified divers that may have mobility problems. This is an area that requires specific safety considerations, at the same time, it is a diver category that is increasing its share in the market itself.

Prospective students need to be aware that it is a course that may challenge many of the common perceptions within the diving community and make it view the sector with a more objective view whether regarding existing diving practices, risk assessment and diving safety protocols. The result will provide students with the ability to take more informed decisions resulting in a higher level of safety and mitigation of risk.



Microbubble flow measurement during a dive (with another prototype being tested in the process)



The prototype taken for a dive

**Malta boasts a very strong diving sector in tourism and I firmly believe that this course will be beneficial to furthering my career successfully.**

(Shaun Cardona 2<sup>nd</sup> yr student)

**It is not just diving, it involves instruction, procedures, health, standards and legal aspects tied to this very popular sport.**

Audrey Farrugia (Graduate Class 2023)

# The Maltese Wall Clock, locally known as *L-Arlogg tal-Lira* 1750-1900: Interpretation and Conservation

BY JOANNE VELLA (HND IN TOUR GUIDING)  
SUPERVISED BY DR CHRISTINE JONES

## ABSTRACT

**T**he Maltese Wall Clock, popularly known as *L-Arlogg tal-lira* is Malta's archetypal clock, a true emblem of Maltese heritage. It is a bespoke Maltese creation that has survived for hundreds of years. Its production commenced in the 17th century, but its form, aesthetics and mechanism were improved and enriched in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Maltese Wall Clock as it is known today, bears little resemblance to the earliest surviving specimens. Indeed, the wall clocks manufactured in the 17th century looked simple and rustic. They had large square cases without the pediment and bracket.

The Maltese Wall Clock manifests the skilled craftsmanship of Maltese artists incorporating painting, gilding, timekeeping, and woodwork. Three artisans were involved in the making of a Maltese Wall Clock: the gilder/painter, the cabinet maker and the clockmaker. It was not customary for the artisans to sign their work, and it is therefore difficult to discover who these skilful individuals were. Dating the clocks is also a challenge.

Typically found in the residences of the upper classes, it served as a status symbol for the wealthy residents of Malta, mainly the Grand Master of the Order of St John, elite knights, wealthy families, and clergymen. Common folk could not afford to have one. When found in a private home, it occupied a place in the most decorated room of the house, the *sala grande* or hall. It was a custom-made product made according to the purchaser's wishes. No

clock is like the other, yet all have similar characteristics that unequivocally brand them as Maltese clocks.

Most surviving Maltese Wall Clocks were acquired by bequest or purchase and are presently found in private houses that are not accessible to visitors. A small number are located in museums that are open to the public. These clocks are presented to visitors as decorative objects with little or no accompanying information. By being relocated to a museum and exhibited as a work of art they have been decontextualised, divorced from the families that commissioned them and deprived of the narratives that animated them. The current heritage interpretation of the *Arlogg tal-lira* in museums is that of an inanimate object. Museums have the role of showcasing and protecting heritage but also to interpret it in the best possible way. Heritage Interpretation's main purpose is to unveil significance and connections through the use of authentic artifacts, and it must spark curiosity, attention, and interest.

The primary purpose of this study is to use heritage interpretation strategies to grant the Maltese Wall Clock its merited importance as a bespoke component of Maltese heritage. Eight clocks feature in this study, four of which are found in historic house museums, and another four in museum galleries and religious buildings. The author interviewed owners of Maltese wall clocks and museum administrators in quest of family stories, memories, personal experiences and anecdotes associated with the clocks. This research seeks to uncover the relationship between some clocks in museum collections

and their families to create an effective form of interpretation that will enable visitors to engage with the clock and learn about its unique history. Reuniting the clocks with their family narratives can effectively inform, engage, and provoke visitors.

This research revealed a prevalent lack of information that compromises the clocks' interpretation. An in-depth inquiry showed that in most cases museum personnel did not possess any written records or documentation pertaining to the clocks. This vacuum was addressed through semi-structured interviews with key informants and subsequent bibliographic research aimed at retrieving and recording the background histories of eight *Arlogg tal-lira*. This information needs to be woven into the current sterile interpretation of the clocks to inform and entertain visitors and communicate the uniqueness of Maltese wall clocks and their importance and value as heirlooms of Maltese heritage.

This study flagged up the importance of rethinking through the heritage interpretation of Maltese clocks in museums. Originally manufactured to adorn the private households of well-to-do families, Maltese clocks represent the histories of noble Maltese families. Reuniting the Maltese clocks with their family histories, and relevant anecdotes and human experiences can inform and entertain viewers, it can also stimulate interest and excitement. The journey embarked upon to achieve this was challenging but rewarding. The results of this research exposed a wealth of information on the *Arlogg tal-Lira* that provided a human dimension that brought the clocks to life.



This investigation uncovered the significance of these clocks to guardians at museums. Some individuals were willing to share their experiences, memoirs, emotions, and sentiments about the clocks. It was revealed how family collections of antiques were acquired through bartering. The descendant of a dental surgeon recounted how her grandfather would receive antiques as payment for his dental services. Another participant recalls how his uncle used the Maltese wall clock at their house as a hiding place for forbidden items such as cigarettes. Others discuss their family history and provenance of their inherited possessions. Other anecdotes reveal different informal methods of purchasing antiques in the past from fairs, street traders or by offering to take someone else's unwanted items.

These real-life stories are what bring the clocks alive and what need to be documented and shared with viewers before memories fade. Stories can be recorded

and integrated into the interpretation of museum exhibits. Narratives play a very important role in heritage interpretation. People learn more through narratives than through facts. Stories help in information building and help people to understand better the objects' cultural value. When one of the participants opened the clock to show me the pictures that had been stuck to the inner part of the clock by his uncle, the picture that stood out was that of a beautiful lady with an open hand. She appears to be drawing viewers towards her. Her image metaphorically represents the journey this research pursued. Behind the faces of the *Arloggi tal-Lira* lie beautiful, hidden human stories waiting to draw viewers closer to the unique Maltese wall hung clocks.

#### KEYWORDS:

Maltese Wall Clock, L-Arlogg tal-Lira, Interpretation, Conservation, Cultural Heritage, Cultural Identity, Family Heirlooms

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(Photo by author)



The back of this clock is artistically decorated (Photo by author)



The mechanism inside the Arlogg tal-Lira (Photo by author)





A Maltese clock at Palazzo Falson, Mdina (Photo by author)



A Maltese clock at MUŻA, Valletta (Photo by author).



The Maltese clock at Casa Bernard, Rabat (Photo by author).

# Exploring the Potential of Maltese Valleys as a Rural Touristic Product

RESEARCH PROJECT BY MARTINA GALEA  
WORDS BY DAVID PACE

## INTRODUCTION

**T**he Maltese islands are a very popular tourist destination attracting different visitors from every part of the world. There are various reasons why tourists come to Malta. However, the main types of tourists are those related to history and culture, sun, beaches, food, and entertainment.

Agriculture's importance and effects extend far beyond just growing food for local consumption. Instead, this sector plays a significant role in preserving rural landscapes, biodiversity, and providing a cleaner and safer environment.

Rural areas, make up 30% of the EU's population and account for 80% of its territory, have seen an overall increase in employment, but they continue to lag behind cities and towns in many ways. (European Economic and Social Committee, 2022).

The agricultural industries continue to be essential for the rural economy, contributing to roughly 40 million jobs across the EU, with the CAP helping to reduce poverty and improve the livelihoods of farmers.

Tourism is considered as one of the main contributors to the Maltese economy, both in terms of GDP and economy. Strategically, the tourism industry is focused in bringing more visitors during off-peak times and attracting high-quality visitors.

Following the reports generated by the National Statistical Office (NSO) for 2022, the local Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was €16,870.3 million, an increase of €1,868.4 million, or 12.5%, from 2021. The GDP increased by 6.9% in volume. (NSO, 2022). This demonstrates the significance of tourism and its potential for a nation like the Maltese Islands, which is characterized by many rural areas. It is possible to view rural tourism in the Maltese Islands as a potential new market for growing the number of visitors to Malta particularly during shoulder months. Rural tourism is complex and consists of several different niches. This essay will focus on valleys being one of the most popular local natural environments.

The Maltese archipelago consists of three main inhabited islands: mainland Malta, which is 27 km long, Gozo, which is 14.5 km long, and Comino (3.5Km<sup>2</sup>). The islands' numerous dry river valley systems called

*widien* (singular = *wied*) is a Semitic word similar to the *wadi* of the North African dry river valleys. The islands have a primarily ephemeral freshwater hydrology system that is driven by a particular climate and geology.

The annual total precipitation averages 553.1 mm, with high evapotranspiration rates of 70-80% of the annual precipitation. The stratigraphy of the islands is karstic, mainly composed of limestone, with variations provided by two relatively thin strata: one of Greensand and the other of Blue Clay, which is the only rock with a relatively impermeable lithology. Springs that form naturally from this impermeable outcrop rise to more frequent intermittent flows in the upper reaches of the watercourses. The islands' past tectonic activity and fluvial erosional process were the main drivers towards the formation of the surface water drainage network. The contrasting valley formations provide different habitat settings for a wide array of aquatic, semi-aquatic, and terrestrial flora and fauna, with almost half of the 1,306 higher plant species recorded found within valleys.

## RESEARCH AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESIS (AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS)

The main reason valleys were selected for this study was the abundance of rural



A coastline walk (Photo by David Pace)

tourism-related attractions in Malta including the natural features, the Maltese way of life, the traditional cuisine, and the cultural identity. In addition, there are supplementary motivations such as examining how various parties involved in rural tourism perceive the potential of the valleys. The fact that there is still much to be done, even if some valleys are being rebuilt, was another factor. Valleys are significant due to their ecological and geological functions and because they might be a top destination for travellers seeking a closeness to nature. The major goal of this study is to ascertain whether valleys can help Malta's rural tourist industry grow. The following table features the main research questions.

#### LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH:

Time limitations and the breadth of the subject were the main limitations and influenced the choice of subjects covered. Additionally, most of the information researched was either outdated as locally or not relevant to this study. This is due to the fact that not a lot of work has been done on local Rural Tourism. The temporary nature of surface hydrology in valleys, their small size and the increasing human impact is making many of these valleys less visually appealing than permanent river systems found on mainland Europe and larger Mediterranean islands with permanent freshwater sources.

QUESTION TYPE	QUESTIONS
Primary Question	Can rural valleys in Malta be a touristic product?
Secondary Questions	Can Maltese valleys be part of a rural tourism strategy? – What measures can be implemented to enhance local valley's potential in attracting tourists?

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

##### DEFINITIONS OF RURAL TOURISM

For a better understanding of this study, a general definition of rural tourism needs to be established. Lane (1994) described rural tourism as "tourism which takes place in the countryside".

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines rural tourism as "a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's experience is associated to a wide range of items generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle/culture, fishing, and sightseeing" (WTO, 2019). Rural tourism often occurs in small communities or rural areas where visitors can experience the way of life and their culture. This can provide economic benefits to rural areas and promote sustainable development while preserving natural and cultural heritage. Ultimately, the idea of rural or countryside areas can be distinguished in several ways depending on

the varied traits that a country may have.

Rural tourism belongs to the group of industries whose development starts as a by-product of the primary activities and culminates in complex forms of expression that exist today and are highly beneficial to the populace and society. (Rosalina, Dupre, Wang, 2021)

Rural areas can range from well-serviced villages close to urban areas to isolated, sparsely populated areas with limited access to basic services, and they can also have several different traits, geographies and various cultures. (OECD, 2023)

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the ideal criterion for defining a rural region is "at the local level, a population density of 150 inhabitants per square kilometre." At the regional level, geographic units are

divided into the following three categories based on the percentage of population that lives in rural areas: mostly rural regions (50%), significantly rural regions (15–50%), and predominantly urbanized regions (15%) (TourismNotes, 2018-2023).

The EEA terms rural tourism as the pursuits of individuals who travel and stay in rural places for less than a year continuously for leisure, business, or other purposes (without resorting to mass tourism) and excluding the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited. (Eurostat, 2017).

According to the World Tourism Organization, rural tourism has a significant potential to promote local economic development and social transformation. This is because it complements other economic activities, contributes to GDP and job opportunities, and helps to spread demand over a broader geographic area and time-period, thus reducing seasonality (WTO, 2019).

Additionally, there needs to be more focus on helping to promote rural tourism, which, via effective marketing and a variety of other forms of assistance, can increase the potential, diversity, and allure of the industry's distinctive products as well as their capitalization. (Pato & Kastenholz, 2017).

Fundamentally, rural tourism and agricultural tourism are undertakings that generate different revenues, hence presenting fresh

opportunities for rural advancement. The amplifying consequence in tourism can be understood by examining the composition of tourism expenditure and its influence on the economy. (Randelli & Martellozzo, 2019)

#### TYPES AND FORMS OF RURAL TOURISM

According to Overstay Tonight (2021), Heritage tourism, Ecotourism, and Agritourism are the most common attractions niches associated with rural tourism.

Therefore, it covers a wide variety of tourism forms that range from green tourism to historical tourism as described in the table below.

#### PROS AND CONS OF RURAL TOURISM

Tourism in rural areas has the potential to enhance the local economy, particularly through the creation of new jobs. Furthermore, the upsurge in demand for local products and services required by tourists may lead to economic diversification in the host region. This is extremely important locally, considering its reliance on mass tourism.

Rural tourism also has a positive impact on society by promoting an appreciation for regional cuisine, handicrafts, and cultural heritage. Tourism in rural areas can also lead to pluriactivity, which refers to the situation where an individual or a family engages in multiple occupations to sustain

their earnings. It will additionally assist in the preservation of natural environment, and it has grown to be an increasingly significant method of safeguarding cultural assets. The preservation of nature, just like the protection of landscapes, is a prominent objective of contemporary governments. Nonetheless, it comes at a high cost. Rural tourism has the potential to monetize the conservation of nature (OCDE, 1994).

Nevertheless, there are various negative aspects of rural tourism as some of the attractions are found in delicate natural environments. There are also social downsides, as this development may attract large crowds that could impact the community's way of life. Due to the introduction of new ideas, traditions and values could also change.

Moreover, environmental costs may arise from increased vehicle pollution, greater use of air conditioning and other emission-generating equipment. In the same way that an abundance of tourists can disturb the environment, they can also trespass on the structured and organized social and cultural realm of rural communities (OCDE, 1994).

#### RURAL TOURISM IN MALTA:

From the point of view of the Malta Rural Development Programme (National), it is the smallest country of the EU 28 (0.005% of the total EU 28 area). It has no lakes, mountains, or rivers, and all locations lie along a

TYPE OF TOURISM	
HERITAGE TOURISM	Heritage tourism describes leisure travel with the primary goal of engaging with historical sites and traditions.
ECOTOURISM	Ecotourism involves travelling to natural areas to take in the scenery and the local species. Ecotourism can be active, when participants engage in outdoor recreation or adventure travel activities, or passive, where spectators tend to be merely observers of nature. Nature conservation is a main characteristic of this type of tourism.
AGRITOURISM	Agritourism, is the act of going to a working farm or other agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness activity for leisure, education, or active participation in the farm's or operation's activities. It involves participating in a variety of farm-related activities, such as farmers' markets, petting zoos, roadside stands, and pick-your-own farms; staying the night on a farm or ranch or making other types of farm visits; and going to festivals, museums, and other places of interest with a farming theme.
ADVENTURE TOURISM	Adventure Tourism is another form of tourism that usually takes place in rural areas, particularly those rich in geographical and geological attractions such as rivers, lakes, hills, mountains and caves where active minded tourists can indulge in canoeing, white-water rafting, fishing, abseiling, hiking, mountaineering and potholing.
	Overstay Tonight (2021)

continuum from urban to rural. The Maltese Islands have 68 localities, 46 categorised as rural (32 in Malta and 14 in Gozo). Ninety-one percent (91%) of the territory and 64% of the inhabitants of the Islands live in rural areas (The European Agricultural Funds For Rural Development, 2013-2022).

Malta's Rural Development Programme has identified the following five themes that have emerged from discussions with rural stakeholders & potential beneficiaries over the past years (The European Agricultural Funds For Rural Development, 2013-2022):

- Maltese quality produce.
- Wider rural economy & quality of life.
- Landscape & environment.
- Water, waste & energy.
- Sustainable livestock.

The potential for increasing employment in rural regions and village centres is being explored with the goal of diversifying agricultural activity while maintaining the integrity of natural areas. Significant areas of focus for development include marketing and quality assurance, which are essential to ensure the long-term sustainability of agriculture and rural areas. The RDP for 2014-2020 seeks to address the challenges facing rural regions in Malta. The five priorities aim to facilitate the effective use of EU support to address the key issues that are currently hindering the development of a sustainable agricultural and rural economy in an integrated manner (The European Agricultural Funds For Rural Development, 2013- 2022).

While 85% of respondents in all member nations gave the rural landscape a positive rating, Malta's response percentage is only 58%. The proportion of Maltese who have an unfavourable opinion of the countryside landscape which has increased by 3 points from two years ago (Maltatoday, 2022).

## RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The major goal of the study is to determine whether Malta's rural tourism industry might benefit from the Maltese Valleys. The analysis of the data obtained from in-person interviews is presented and analysed together with the literature review.

## INTERVIEWS

The interview subjects included stakeholders from the Malta Tourism Authority (Stakeholder 1), Ambjent Malta (Stakeholder 2), a Local Farmer (Stakeholder 3) and a Destination Management Company Representative (Stakeholder 4)

### MALTA TOURISM AUTHORITY

Malta Tourism Authority was the first stakeholder contacted for an interview. The MTA's duty is varied but an important part is developing and maintaining relationships with other tourism stakeholders. This entails attracting tourists to the Islands while closely collaborating with partners from the private sector. Importantly, the MTA is there to support the development of the sector's human resources, guarantee the highest standards and quality of the Islands' travel and tourism offerings, and promote relationships with regional and global media.

To understand the stakeholders' perspectives on rural tourism, the same questions were put to the private stakeholders. All participants in the interview regarded Malta as a promising rural tourist destination. Regarding rural valleys as a touristic product, The Malta Tourism Authority explained that all natural and man-made resources which make up the Maltese Islands can be 'considered a tourist product.'

The MTA representative believes that all valleys hold exceptional attractions that are advertised extensively overseas and used very frequently as part of the visual advertising campaigns to attract tourism from all of Malta's geographical source markets. They also stated that the Maltese islands have several rural valleys which are important for the overall tourism experience, such as, Wied iż-Żurrieq, Wied il-Mielaħ in Għarb, Gozo, Wied il-Għasri in Għasri Gozo, Wied il-Għasel in Mosta and Wied Bingemma.

The MTA representative stated that today more than ever, tourists look for rural landscapes, valleys and the countryside, and all activities associated with this environment. Valleys are therefore important because they allow certain types of tourism to be practised. These include walking & trekking, hiking, mountain biking, foraging in the countryside, painting holidays, and even staying in

agrotourism types of accommodation. The MTA understands that the rural environment is valued as such and is a very important aspect in the mix which makes up a healthy and balanced tourism destination offer.

With regards to the extent rural valleys are advertised locally and abroad, MTA replied that Malta's rural valleys also feature strongly in many YouTube videos, TV documentaries and other filming productions which are commissioned specifically by the Authority to promote Malta overseas. MTA do not necessarily promote rural valleys in isolation, but they are often depicted to feature an attraction they may hold, be it historical (e.g. a way-side medieval chapel), natural (e.g. a natural arch or flora and fauna) or activities derived from them (e.g. walking and trekking, rock climbing, diving, etc).

Some valleys such as Wied iż-Żurrieq which leads to the Blue Grotto, a natural arch that is a major attraction, particularly the boat rides, often promoted and included as part of the 'South excursion', combining visits to the Hagar Qim and Mnajdra Temples with a stop at Wied iż-Żurrieq. The latter being an extremely popular swimming spot and diving area with the Um El Faroud wreck submerged under the water and advertised as such.

Another attraction that was mentioned by MTA was Wied il-Mielaħ in Għarb which has an arch resembling the famous Azure Window which collapsed. This led to the arch of Wied il-Mielaħ becoming more popular and is advertised extensively.

Wied il-Għasri was also mentioned as another 'hero image' in destination marketing terms with its indented coastline and spectacular valley and cliff. Finally, Wied Bingemma was mentioned as the home to the Victoria Lines, emphasizing its popularity for walking and trekking which are an important feature of colonial military architecture.

### AMBJENT MALTA

This conversation primarily discussed Malta as a rural touristic product. According to Ambjent Malta's Chief Scientific Officer, the island has an abundance of potential tourism niches such as eco-tourism, cultural/religious



with chapels, the oldest medieval chapels in Malta and valleys such as Wied il-Lunzjata (Gozo), Wied il-Luq, Buskett and Wied Rini, Baħrija. Natural walks, trail running and trekking whilst viewing natural features were also mentioned.

The Chief Scientific Officer went on to mention geomorphology such as deep gorge valleys found at Wied Babu and Wied tax-Xlendi, collapsed cave structures such as the mouth of Wied tad-Dwejra, coastal arch at Wied il-Mielajħ. Rural landscapes and agricultural areas such as Wied tal-Baħrija and Wied tal-Gnejna were also specified. Regarding bird watching, The Chief Scientific Officer stated that valleys are important corridors for several bird species including migrating birds.

When asked what measures can be implemented to enhance local valley's potential in attracting tourists, the Chief Scientific Officer responded that conservation, rehabilitation, improving the accessibility for low-impact activities such as nature walks, jogging, and cycling activities and carrying out capacity exercises in valleys that are already being extensively visited for natural walks such as Wied il-Għasel are of utmost importance in enhancing valley's natural and infrastructural features.

Advertising interesting valleys which feature historical/cultural factors and identify and implement official heritage/natural trail routes were also mentioned.

#### **LOCAL FARMER**

A local farmer believes that rural tourism provides a good opportunity to educate the

public and tourists about agriculture and ecology, help revitalize rural economies and preserve agricultural and cultural heritage. He also mentioned that watercourses in Malta are generally surrounded by fields or natural habitats, therefore agricultural land is one of the main access points to certain valleys. The farmer expressed that if farmers are given the right tools and incentives (such as funds, guidance, and education) agricultural land next to valleys/watercourses can be transformed into a 'small cottage' with a network of farmers that will collaborate to deliver a range of activities such as the conservation of crops, wild relatives/heirlooms, sustainable livestock agriculture and bee-keeping activities. The farmer stated that these activities will help farmers generate a revenue from increased output and in return they will provide visitors with a range of experiences. On the other hand, the farmer emphasised that one should consider the negative impact associated with these activities such as noise pollution, light pollution and increase the pressure on endangered/protected species.

The farmer said that to explore the possibility of having a rural tourism strategy, he believes that several consultation meetings should be held to discuss this opportunity with different stakeholders. Thus, the stakeholders will be given the opportunity to discuss the possibility of having an action plan and management plans that will determine sustainable measures associated with eco-tourism and valley management and financial contribution of stakeholders.

When asked what measures can be implemented to enhance the local valley's potential in attracting tourist, the farmer said that together with the relevant stakeholders they can review the current state of the water courses/ valleys and the surrounding land, environmental impact assessment and assessing the potential market to identify the key opportunities associated with this concept.

To enhance the local valley's potential, the farmer believes that trails should be developed/built in agricultural land, especially in abandoned agriculture land. The scope of natural trails in agricultural land situated next to valley's is to provide access to visitors while ensuring that valuable ecological features are not affected in a negative manner.

He stated that encouraging farmers to switch to sustainable practices such as: organic farming, integrated pest management and communicating the benefits of these measures including the value-added products and addressing the needs of several niche markets, all of which will enhance the valleys.

#### **DESTINATION MANAGEMENT COMPANY (DMC)**

The DMC representative was the last stakeholder interviewed. He believes that rural tourism is not exactly the prime reason why an incoming tourist might choose Malta as a destination. However, it is recently being considered and promoted on tourist agendas. The representative stated that a rural lifestyle is part of the Maltese cultural identity that creates products quintessentially made in Malta, such as the production of honey from apiculture, cheeselets from sheep milk and many more, which influence traditional food and the natural environment.

With regards to rural valleys in Malta being a touristic product, the representative replied that rural valleys can be considered as a touristic product if well-constructed and developed programmes are put into place focused on products that are derived from these valleys or picturesque country walks. Having said that, the representative stressed on achieving a balance between all the activities as most of the soil surrounding

these valleys is fertile and one would not want to boost tourism and risk damaging the environment as sustainability is the key in such programmes.

The representative firmly believes that including Maltese valleys as part of the rural tourism strategy is an important part of sustainable tourism since this can directly contribute to the conservation and restoration of the physical landscape and will enhance the products that are derived from these same rural valleys.

## CONCLUSION

Malta is getting attention for its rural tourism. MTA is working to promote rural tourism in both Malta and Gozo. In addition, Ambjent Malta is putting forth a lot of effort to maintain valleys.

The farmer suggested promoting sustainable techniques and he emphasized the need to acknowledge the downsides linked to these endeavours namely, noise and light pollution, trampling and the potential threats to vulnerable fauna and flora.

Although it's crucial to preserve the rural areas' natural features, valleys cannot serve as Malta's only rural tourism attraction. Agrotourism, village activities, regional cuisine, and all other cultural components will therefore contribute to an increase in tourism in Malta when combined as a rural tourism package. To be successful, all the stakeholders must cooperate since, if one of them succeeds, Malta benefits, either directly or indirectly, which in turn contributes to the creation of rural tourism in areas which lie on the tourism periphery bringing prosperity to outlying areas.

On the other hand, the DMC representative opined that the incorporation of Maltese valleys into the rural tourism plan is a crucial aspect of sustainable tourism, as it can considerably help in conserving and reviving the natural landscape, while augmenting the goods and services originating from these rural areas.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Education is the major force that can help rural tourism in Malta succeed. An essential part of what needs to be done is

educating the locals about the rural tourist experiences Malta has to offer. This might be accomplished through TV shows, social media, and advertisements.

In addition to locals, private stakeholders that interact with tourists directly must have the chance to receive training to provide the greatest experience to rural visitors to Malta. This may be accomplished through short courses that would prepare business owners to welcome rural tourists. Lack of consultation or participation in any decision that directly affects private stakeholders' enterprises has frequently led to concerns from the private stakeholder community. By expanding the involvement of both the government stakeholders and the private stakeholders, this might be improved.

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# A Critique of the labelling and marketing of a group of food products from the viewpoint of an individual suffering from a nut allergy

BY DAVID PACE  
SENIOR LECTURER AT ITS

Individuals with food allergies must navigate a maze of obstacles to protect themselves from the dangers of food products and additives that may endanger their lives. Theirs can be a tense and stressful life that continues to add difficulties to people who already have a serious problem to deal with on a day-to-day basis.

One of the biggest problems for food hypersensitive (FHS) individuals is the morass of food labelling and marketing that has made it impossible for those with IgE-mediated food allergies (that can be life-threatening), to shop in a supermarket or dine in a restaurant without feeling worried.

Today, pre-cautionary labelling has taken over the food industry as it is not covered by food safety and food labelling legislation, as can be clearly seen in Table 1 (Barnett J *et al.* 2011, pg.970). This places the onus on the allergic individual who must navigate through a complex labelling system with care. One slip may result in an allergic reaction which in the case of peanut- allergic individuals, can result in fatal anaphylactic shock.

The main problem with Peanut and Tree nut allergies is that they are true allergies mediated by at least 12 IgE proteins including: Ara h1, Ara h7, Ara h2 (5 subtypes), Ara h8, Ara h3, Ara h Agglutinin, Ara h4, Ara h LTP, Ara h5, Ara h Oleosin, Ara h6 and Ara h TI (Joneja, 2008).

FHS individuals may be allergic to one or more of these peanut proteins that can only be detected by means of immunoassay testing that target specific antibodies. The most common tests are the RAST (Radioallergosorbent test) and ELISA (Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay). RAST tests the blood for specific allergen-related antibodies to identify specific allergy triggers; while ELISA measures the number of allergen-specific antibodies in the blood and is even more specific and accurate to the extent that it has practically superseded RAST as the test of choice (Blood Testing for Allergies, 2013)

Such tests have helped reveal the complex nature of peanut protein reactions and why the range of threshold sensitivities

**Table 1** Legislation, requirements and recommendations for labelling of packaged foods in Europe. This study was conducted in UK and specific UK guidance and legislation is therefore provided where it differs from the rest of Europe

	EU	UK specific
Legislation or requirements for specific labelling of allergenic foods	<p>EU Labelling Directive (Directive 2000/13/EC) Specifically refers to allergenic foods. Requires manufacturers to declare all ingredients in prepackaged foods with very few exceptions</p> <p>The European Directives for labelling rules (2003/89/EC and 2006/142/EC) ensure that retailers and manufacturers provide a full list of ingredients on their prepacked food packaging to help consumers with a food allergy identify ingredients that they should avoid</p> <p>Directive 2007/68/EC lists all 14 allergenic foods that must be clearly labelled wherever they are used as ingredients in prepacked food or food supplied to mass caterers. Brings all of the food allergens that must be labelled (and the exemptions) into one place</p> <p>Regulation (EC) No 415/2009 provides an extension to the temporary exemption from labelling egg albumin as a fining agent for wine and lysozyme used in wine and for milk casein used as a fining agent for wine</p>	<p>UK Legislation is necessary to provide enforcement powers of the EU legislation. The following UK legislation therefore applies:-</p> <p>The Food Labelling (Declaration of Allergens) Regulations 2008, implements the provisions of Directive 2007/68/EC into UK Law</p> <p>The Food Labelling (Declaration of Allergens) (England) Regulation 2009 implements the amendment made by Regulation (EC) No. 415/2009 into UK Law</p>
Relevant requirements under Food Law	EU General Food Law (Regulation (EC) No 178/2002) imposes general obligations to provide safe food and requires Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 food businesses are required to implement procedures to prevent unsafe foods	Food Safety Act 1990 (as amended) makes it an offence to falsely describe or present food. In particular for food labelling to be false or likely to mislead as to the nature, substance or quality of the food (Section 15)
Individual food allergens that must be labelled when used as ingredients in prepacked foods and food sold to mass caterers	<p><i>Allergenic sources and products of those sources:</i></p> <p>Fish</p> <p>Eggs</p> <p>Crustaceans</p> <p>Cereals containing gluten (i.e. Wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt, kamut or their hybridized strains)</p> <p>Peanuts</p> <p>Soybeans</p> <p>Milk</p> <p>Nuts (i.e. almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashews, pecan nuts, Brazil nuts, pistachio nuts, macadamia nuts and Queensland nuts)</p> <p>Celery</p> <p>Mustard</p> <p>Sesame seeds</p> <p>Sulphur dioxide and sulphites at concentrations of more than 10 mg/kg or 10 mg/l expressed as SO<sub>2</sub></p> <p>Lupin</p> <p>Molluscs</p>	
How should allergens be declared?	<p>Must be declared in ingredient list</p> <p>In addition may be included in a voluntary allergy advice box</p>	
Law or code that regulates font size and legibility	No	No

**Table 1** (Continued)

	EU	UK specific
Voluntary advisory labels		The Food Standards Agency's Guidance on Allergen and Miscellaneous Labelling Provisions (2009) suggests advisory labelling e.g. allergy information box, is placed in the same field of vision as ingredients list. If advisory labelling is provided, then this must be accurate and not misleading and include all food allergens listed in the ingredients list <a href="http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/allergenlabelguidance09.pdf">http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/allergenlabelguidance09.pdf</a>
'May contain' addressed in food safety law or food labelling law?	No	No

**Table 1** How pre-cautionary labelling has taken over the food industry

can vary so much between individuals from 100µg up to 1g of peanut protein (Wensing *et al.* 2002, pg. 919).

This has an added impact on the individual's level of trust of food labels and introduces greater uncertainty that varies according to the individual's allergic severity. An individual with a higher tolerance to peanut and nut allergy may take greater risks, which do not decrease the risk of severely adverse reactions such as anaphylactic shock that can be life threatening (Muraro *et al.*, 2021).

### “MAY CONTAIN”

Proper labelling is one of the lynchpins of the food manufacturing industry. It has revolutionised food production and made it easier for consumers to be aware of what they are buying and eating. It is also one of the main pillars of the *Codex Alimentarius* and entails that the food industry: “ensure(s) that consumers have clear and easily understood information, by way of labelling and other appropriate means, to enable them to protect their food from contamination and growth/survival of foodborne pathogens by storing, handling and preparing it correctly.” (General Principles of Food Hygiene, pg. 4)

Once, peanut and tree nut allergies started appearing on US and European markets, warnings on labels concerning allergic products became essential to protect consumers from severe reactions. Sadly, labels have also become an important shield for the food manufacturing business to hide behind as protection from damaging litigation by obfuscating the very labelling that was intended to help FHS consumers. This has created several problems for such individuals who must choose between products that provide different types of warnings concerning allergic products that maybe unclear, all-encompassing and sometimes downright ridiculous (Barnett *et al.*, 2011).

A label on a food package usually lists the name, ingredients, nutritive and calorific values and allergy and precautionary advice. One of the most common catch-all phrases is the “*May Contain Label*” (MCL). There

**Table 2** Products included in the Product choice reasoning task

Product description	Branded or supermarket own	Type of food	Allergen advisory labelling information	Anticipated dilemma
<b>'High Risk' category foods</b>				
Sesame and pumpkin seed Flat breads	Branded	Biscuit/cracker	'This product has been made in a bakery that handles nuts (no peanuts)'	Product has a precautionary warning about nuts but not necessarily the ones to which the participant is allergic
Wasabi bean mix	Branded	Savoury snack	'Contains soya' 'This product may contain traces of other nuts and seeds'	An unfamiliar product therefore decisions have to be made from scratch
Cantonese curry cook-in-sauce	Branded	Cook-in-sauce	'Contains celery, produced on a line which handles sesame'	This is normally a high-risk food category, for those with nut allergies; however, this product does not contain nuts or have contamination risk and therefore there is no nut warning on the label
Vanilla ice cream with chocolate sauce	Branded	Ice-cream	No allergy or may contain advice	This is normally a high-risk food category, for those with nut allergies; however, this product does not contain nuts or have a contamination risk and therefore there is no nut warning on the label
Oat-based break fast cereal	Branded	Breakfast cereal	'Not suitable for peanut allergy sufferers. May contain traces of other nuts'	The label suggests the product is not suitable for nut allergy sufferers but other cereal products of the same brand are well known as not containing nuts and do not have such a warning
Cake bars	Branded	Cake	No warning but ingredient list states 'hazelnut paste'	Nuts are present as a minor ingredient at the bottom of the ingredients list, which is hard to find. There is no allergy advice box, so the consumer has to look through the ingredients list and then decide whether or not the product is suitable for them
Own brand freshly baked chocolate chip cookies	Supermarket own	Biscuit/cracker	'This product may contain traces of nuts or seeds'	This product is normally a high-risk product for those with nut allergies, with 'may contain nuts' warning (this is general and only pertains to bakery goods sold loose in general – not specific to this product)
Dairy-free chocolate snack bar with puffed rice	Branded	Chocolate	No allergy advice	There is no nut information on the label although chocolate is usually considered a high-risk food category for those with nut allergies. However, this is a 'free from' product in respect of other allergies
Chocolate buttons	Branded	Chocolate	'Contains milk'	This is normally a high-risk food category for those with nut allergies, but this particular product does not contain nuts or have a contamination risk and therefore there is no nut warning on the label

**Table 2** (Continued)

Product description	Branded or supermarket own	Type of food	Allergen advisory labelling information	Anticipated dilemma
<b>'Low Risk' category foods</b>				
Cheese and onion crisps	Branded	Crisps	'Made in a bakery handling nut (not peanut)'	This product category is often safe for those with nut allergies but this particular product contains a nut warning
Macaroni cheese	Branded	Canned meal	'May contain egg'	This is a tinned food and therefore a low-risk category food for allergen cross-contamination. Will the individual's look for the allergy labelling?
Cauliflower cheese ready meal	Supermarket own	Ready meal	Recipe: no nuts; Ingredients: cannot guarantee nut free; Factory: before being prepared for manufacture of this product, the equipment was previously used to make products containing nuts	Although it is a low allergen risk food category, as it is a supermarket own product it has the standard allergy warning format which states it cannot be guaranteed nut free
Yoghurt coated fruit snack	Branded	Dried fruit snack	'This product is made in a factory which also handles nuts'	This product category is generally considered low allergen risk but it is labelled with a nut warning

**Table 2** More variations on the "may contain" labelling marketing strategy that continues to make life difficult for peanut-allergy sufferers.

are several variations on this theme that make this type of label very versatile and widely used as can be seen by the following variations below:

- *May contain traces of (or may contain)*
- *Made on the same equipment (or manufactured on shared equipment with products containing*
- *. . . or processed on equipment that makes products containing . . .)*
- *Made in the same factory (or manufactured in a facility that also processes . . . or made in the same premises as . . . or produced in a plant which manufactures products containing . . .)*
- *Made on the same production line (or manufactured on a line that processes . . .)*
- *May be present (Zurzolo et al., 2011, pg. 307)*

A supermarket survey of 20,000 products revealed that 17% of the products sported precautionary labelling and used 25 variations of "may contain" labelling (Pieretti et al., 2009, pg. 337). It also emerged that 90% of the products that contained warnings of this type contained no peanut or protein residues in levels that were harmful (*ibid*, pg.337). A worrying aspect was that consumers were aware of the proliferation of warnings and as many had not suffered any reactions with the products, they were ready to ignore the warnings and risk reactions (Hefle et al., pg.174)

Another survey of a number of patients with nut allergies reported that products labelled "not suitable for nut allergy sufferers" or "may contain nuts" are more likely to be avoided than those stating, "may contain traces of nuts" or "cannot guarantee nut free" (Noimark, Gardner & Warner, pg. 501).

This must be examined by analysing some of the strategies FHS individuals allergic to peanuts and tree nuts use to disregard the "may contain" message. Some argued that it was not possible to avoid all products containing such labelling because this would result in too restricted a diet. Others suspected the motivation behind the label's message source, regarding it

as a ploy to protect the manufacturer's interests against litigation. Another reason was that certain statements were regarded as representing levels of risk. For example, they regarded "may contain nuts" as a stronger warning than "may contain traces of nuts". There was also the "implausible label" that applied the "may contain peanuts" to products actually made of peanuts (Photo 1) or products that could not contain peanuts! (Barnett et al., pg.3 – 5)

As an individual with a peanut allergy, the "may contain" message on the label can be a hindrance rather than a help. There is the so-called "Trust issue" that can manifest itself in different ways in an FHS individuals' thinking. The author has a tendency to purchase products that are European, Australian or American, which usually have well-worded and professionally written labels in good English rather than buying foreign brands that tend to have more colourful labels and are sometimes written in incorrect English.

There is also the question of the brand name itself. A famous brand name that is always purchased by the author and provides high-quality food products will have a higher "Trust Value" than a product of a lesser-known brand. There are also products that have been certified by the author and individuals that buy it. For example, the author likes to purchase a brand of Nestle Asparagus Soup that has "May contain nuts" on the label. This product never elicited a reaction and so has been deemed safe.

**NUT-FREE LIFE**

Certain products, namely baked goods, chocolate and Ethnic foodstuffs usually contain peanuts and nuts, and most are deemed off-limits by peanut-allergic individuals. This continues to restrict the diet even though it has been suggested that "consumers may be following unnecessarily restricted diets by heeding "may contain" labels" (Ibid., pg.8) This may be so, but many consumers base their choices on a "better safe than sorry" policy.

A non-exhaustive list of products that contain or may contain peanuts and nuts is the following:

Peanut and nut free sellers 20 Food Allergy Conscious Brands - <a href="https://foodallergymom.com/2023/08/22/20-food-allergy-conscious-brands/">https://foodallergymom.com/2023/08/22/20-food-allergy-conscious-brands/</a>	Peanut and nut free recipe sites Nut Free Recipes - <a href="https://www.eatingwell.com/recipes/18051/dietary-restrictions/nut-free/">https://www.eatingwell.com/recipes/18051/dietary-restrictions/nut-free/</a>
Nut free Snack Boxes - <a href="https://www.etsy.com/market/nut_free_snack_box">https://www.etsy.com/market/nut_free_snack_box</a>	50+Nut free Snacks for Schools - <a href="https://holleygrainger.com/nut-free-snacks/">https://holleygrainger.com/nut-free-snacks/</a>
Nut Free Chocolate Products - <a href="https://libereat.com/2022/01/top-10-nut-free-chocolate/">https://libereat.com/2022/01/top-10-nut-free-chocolate/</a>	18 Nut Free Desserts - <a href="https://www.allrecipes.com/gallery/nut-free-desserts/">https://www.allrecipes.com/gallery/nut-free-desserts/</a>
Nut Free Sweets – Sweets for Everyone <a href="https://www.intolerantgourmand.com/bg/recipe/w/741-sweets-for-everyone-vegan-gluten-free-nut-free.html">https://www.intolerantgourmand.com/bg/recipe/w/741-sweets-for-everyone-vegan-gluten-free-nut-free.html</a>	Nine Nut Free Recipes - <a href="http://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/nut-free">http://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/nut-free</a>
Does not contain peanuts - Nut Free Baking Kits & Mixes - <a href="https://www.target.com/c/baking-kits-mixes-staples-pantry-grocery/does-not-contain-peanuts/-/N-5xt11Zra41v">https://www.target.com/c/baking-kits-mixes-staples-pantry-grocery/does-not-contain-peanuts/-/N-5xt11Zra41v</a>	Peanut Free and Nut Free Recipes - <a href="https://www.ambitiouskitchen.com/nut-free-recipes/">https://www.ambitiouskitchen.com/nut-free-recipes/</a>
Nut Free Candies - <a href="https://allcitycandy.com/collections/nut-free-candies">https://allcitycandy.com/collections/nut-free-candies</a>	Nut Free Recipes and Information - <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/diets/nut_free">http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/diets/nut_free</a>
Callie's Nut Free Bake Sale - <a href="http://calliesnutfreetreats.com/">http://calliesnutfreetreats.com/</a>	Recipes without Nuts - <a href="https://www.homechef.com/recipes/without-nuts-free">https://www.homechef.com/recipes/without-nuts-free</a>
Peanut Free Snacks for School - <a href="https://www.parents.com/health/allergies/food/peanut-free-snacks-for-school/">https://www.parents.com/health/allergies/food/peanut-free-snacks-for-school/</a>	Asian Nut Free Recipes - <a href="http://allrecipes.asia/recipes/nut-free-recipes.aspx">http://allrecipes.asia/recipes/nut-free-recipes.aspx</a>
50+ Amazing Nut Free Bakes Goods - <a href="https://www.ambitiouskitchen.com/nut-free-baked-goods/">https://www.ambitiouskitchen.com/nut-free-baked-goods/</a>	Nut-Free Lunchbox Recipes - <a href="https://bakeplaysmile.com/nut-free-lunch-box-recipes">https://bakeplaysmile.com/nut-free-lunch-box-recipes</a>
Nut Free Asian Food - <a href="https://nutfreewok.com/category/recipes/">https://nutfreewok.com/category/recipes/</a>	Nut Free Recipes - <a href="https://cleananddelicious.com/recipes/diet/nut-free/">https://cleananddelicious.com/recipes/diet/nut-free/</a>

Table 3 A list of sites that advertise and sell peanut-free products online and those that provide recipes that are nut free.

**CONTAIN PEANUT:**

- Arachic oil
- Arachis
- Arachis hypogaea
- Artificial nuts
- Beer nuts
- Boiled peanuts
- Cold pressed, extruded, or expelled peanut oil
- Crushed nuts, crushed peanuts Dry roasted peanuts
- Earth nuts
- Goober peas
- Goobers
- Ground nuts, ground peanuts Hydrolyzed peanut protein
- Hypogaic acid
- Mandelonas
- Mixed nuts
- Monkey nuts
- Nuts flavoured
- Nut pieces
- Nutmeat
- Peanuts, peanut butter, peanut butter chips, peanut butter morsels
- Peanut flour

- Peanut paste
- Peanuts sauce, peanut syrup Spanish peanuts
- Virginia peanuts

**MAY CONTAIN PEANUTS:**

- Artificial flavouring
- Baked goods
- Chili
- Chocolate Crumb toppings
- Ethnic foods: African, Asian, Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, Thai, Vietnamese, Mexican Fried foods
- Flavouring
- Graham cracker crust
- Hydrolyzed plant protein
- Hydrolyzed vegetable protein
- Candy, Marzipan and nougat
- Mole sauce
- Natural flavouring

(Food Allergy Resources, October 2009)

Considering the number of foodstuffs that cannot be consumed by peanut-allergic individuals and the problems created by labelling, diets are becoming very restrictive

for these people. There is also the fact that allergen-free foodstuffs are more expensive than normal foodstuffs as shown in this excerpt: "Products made without Gluten, Wheat, Eggs, Dairy, Soy, Peanuts, Tree Nuts, Yeast, Casein, Corn and many other allergens or ingredients causing digestive issues are costly to not only produce, but to manufacture, package, warehouse, market and promote." (The Examiner, 14 June 2010) This undoubtedly creates problems for individuals on a fixed income.

There is a wealth of sites on the Internet that offer specific purchasing information to peanut- allergy individuals. Such sites provide extensive lists of food stores in specific geographical areas that sell nut-free products. There are also sites that advertise and sell peanut-free products online and those that provide recipes that are nut free. (See Table 3)

#### PEANUTS AND CROSS-REACTIVITY

Peanuts belong to the Legume genus that also hosts beans and peas. Some work has been done on cross-reactivity between peanuts, peas and soybeans all of which happen to contain the protein globulin vicillin of which major heat-stable peanut allergens Ara h1 and Ara h2 are members.

In a study of 22 of 32 Double-blind, placebo-controlled food challenge (DBPCFC) peanut allergic individuals were shown to be allergic to peanuts, peas and soybeans (Bock & Atkins, pg. 902). This has been corroborated by further studies including Jensen et al., pg. 1973 - 74 and Verma, Alok Kumar & Sandeep, pg. 30.

In another study, 40 of 60 individuals allergic to peanuts were shown to be allergic to a variety of tree nuts including pistachios and cashews (Jansen et al., pg. 257) Work has also been done on the Lupine, a flowering-plant of the legume family with edible seeds used to make a type of flour. A study concluded that: "The frequency of positive challenge test responses also seems to indicate that the cross-allergy to lupine is a major risk for persons allergic to peanuts. The inclusion of lupine flour in wheat flour at an accepted proportion of 10% could

provide a large quantity of allergens. This flour improver is not subject to labelling and can be considered as a dangerous hidden allergen." (Moneret-Vautrin et al., pg. 887)

#### CONCLUSION

Although there are clear guidelines on what labels should contain in the form of allergens as explained in the Clear Food Labelling Guide (clearlabelling.pdf, pg.4): "Ingredient listing information should always include the following major food allergens, or products derived from them that may also cause problems, where they have been used in the manufacture of the food. Do not take advantage of exemptions for compound ingredients, carryover additives or processing aids for these ingredients:

- Peanuts;
- Tree nuts (almond, brazil, cashew, chestnut, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecan, pine nuts, pistachio, walnut);
- Sesame seeds;
- Cows' milk;
- Egg;
- Fish;
- Crustacea, molluscs, shellfish;
- Soya;
- Sulphite (in concentration of 10mg per kg or more);
- Cereals containing gluten (wheat, barley, oats, rye, spelt or their hybridised strains) in accordance with both UK and EU legislation; it is still not enough to provide allergy sufferers peace of mind.

Helping in the understanding of food labels is a good step, but it is not enough even though: "*Legislation is now in place (Directive 2003/89/EC and implementing Regulations in the UK) requiring that where specified allergenic foods or their derivatives are used as ingredients in pre- packed foods, the relevant allergenic food is indicated on the labelling.*" (Guidance on Allergen Management and Consumer Information, pg. 12)

The studies reviewed coupled with the personal experiences of the author as a peanut-allergic individual and other individuals surveyed in this paper, have highlighted clearly the uncertainty

ambiguous labelling elicits in the minds of such individuals. This ambiguity is fuelled by "catch- all" labelling statements which creates an uncertain mind-set in peanut and nut allergy sufferers. This forces some individuals to invest in special diet products and restrict their diet too much.

This entails changes in the law as described by the British Food Standards Agency: "Labelling rules in European Directives 2003/89/EC and 2006/142/EC ensure that all consumers are given comprehensive ingredient listing information and make it easier for people with food allergies to identify ingredients they need to avoid. However, following implementation of the Food Information for Consumers Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011, allergen labelling rules will be changing in December 2014.

The new regulation, which was published in October 2011, will build on current allergen labelling provisions for pre-packed foods and will introduce a new requirement for allergen information to be provided for foods sold non-packed or pre-packed for direct sale. The three-year transition period allows businesses to make the necessary changes to their processes and labelling designs in order to meet the provisions laid out in the legislation." (Food Allergen Labelling - Food labelling rules to change - from 13 December 2014)

Finally, one solution is to offer tax rebates to manufacturers if they invest or increase the production of allergen-free food products. This will cause prices of such commodities to fall making them more affordable to allergen sufferers.

Alternatively, allergen-free food products could be provided by the National Health Service at a subsidised rate. This will ease the financial burden on low-income families with allergy-prone members and decrease the incidence of allergic reactions among the populace, relieving pressure on hospitals and health centres.

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# Persuading Maltese Wine Consumers to Purchase and Consume Local Wines Particularly within Maltese Fine Dining Restaurants

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## KEYWORDS

Maltese wines, Maltese fine-dining restaurants, sustainability

## INTRODUCTION

The Maltese wine industry has developed drastically throughout the years. Maltese viticulture dates back thousands of years, with the Phoenicians being the ambassadors

of viticulture within the Maltese islands (Michelin Guide, 2020) (Wagner, 2002). Although it is assumed that vines were planted in Malta as soon as it was properly established, the Knights of St. John laid the groundwork for the modern wine industry back in 1530, when they were ceded to the Maltese Islands by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V of Spain (Michelin

Guide, 2020). After two centuries of Arab control, the Knights sent vine cuttings from Europe to revive the remaining vineyards. After the Turkish invasion was defeated in 1565 and the Order of St. John took control, viticulture thrived once more, and the Island started making its own wine and even exporting part of it (Wagner, 2002). As a result, the cultivation of grapes was reduced



(Photo by Jay Wennington on Unsplash)

to their use as fresh fruit for the table and winemaking ceased altogether, leaving the Island completely dependent on the importation of produce from Greece and Sicily. However, vine-growing began in both Islands around 1870, and twenty years later there were sizable vineyards in numerous locations within the Maltese islands (Wagner, 2002). Additionally, their vineyards started a new, prosperous phase.

Nowadays, a good presence of local wineries may be found in Malta and Gozo (Rizzo, 2019), all of which are constantly thriving to improve the quality of local wines (Ripard, 2009 & MALTACEOS, 2021). However, the perception of local wines is still negative with the locals, as some consumers are still apprehensive when buying local wines as they are seen as inferior products to foreign wine.

The CEO of Marsovin winery, one of the most dominant wineries in Malta, which started off in 1919, outlines such issues in

an interview with the *Times of Malta* (local newspaper), stating that Maltese consumers are passing through a learning phase which shall change their perception of local wines in the near future (Ripard, 2009). The CEO states that “in the meantime, his target market will be open minded Maltese consumers and collectors of high-end wines” (Ripard, 2009). Local wineries are constantly encouraging consumers to try out local wines once again, hoping that attitudes towards local wines change (MALTACEOS, 2021).

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The central research question will therefore focus on how Maltese people can be persuaded to purchase and consume local Maltese wines particularly within fine dining restaurants.

The two sub-objectives are:

What are the main factors that affect consumer preferences towards choosing a local wine?

What type of training can be given to servers or sommeliers to promote local wines to the Maltese public?

The sub-research questions will support the central research question to investigate the factors affecting consumer preferences towards local wines and the training (from an HR point of view) which will focus on servers or sommeliers to promote local wines to the Maltese customers.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Attitudes are people's favourable or negative feelings about people, events, items, or behaviour, which represent a set of preferences for the latter and produce positive or negative purchase intentions (Blackwell, et al., 2006). Previous research indicates that personal attitude is the major deciding element in how people intend to conduct themselves in a particular way. Moreover, it also indicates the positive or negative subjective appraisal of such behaviour (Castillo, et al., 2021).

Prior research within the marketing field within the food and beverage industry, indicates that the attitude towards a particular product impacts consumption intention significantly (Tomic Maksan, et al., 2019; Bianchi & Mortimer, 2015). Along similar lines, several studies have confirmed that attitudes and perceptions toward local products correspond favourably with purchasing intention (Jianlin, et al., 2010; Cabuk, et al., 2014). That is, the more positive people's attitudes towards local products, the more likely it is that they will buy such products.

Previous local journals have shared their opinion with regards to the attitudes and perception of Maltese people towards local foods and wines. In an interview with a journalist of a local newspaper, Mr Delicata (owner of Delicata Winery - one of the largest wineries in Malta) urged locals to choose Maltese wine and food, as by doing so, farmers and producers will strive to continuously improve the quality of local products (Malta Independent, 2010). Furthermore, Mr Delicata pointed out that in Malta it seems that local food and wine are second rate compared to foreign products (Malta Independent, 2010). Hence, due to the negative attitudes and perceptions locals have towards Maltese wine, the intention to buy local wines is relatively lower than that of foreign wines.

Wine is recognized as one of the oldest beverages created by mankind and has ever since evolved into the popular beverage that it is today (Castaldo, et al., 2019). It is now regarded as a combination of art and science, which incorporates elements such as creativity and technology (Bisson, et al., 2002) in order to meet specific consumer preferences (Bianco, et al., 2013). The process of purchasing a wine is affected by many variables and factors. Such factors vary, depending on the consumer and the product itself (Brata, et al., 2022). Furthermore, factors affecting consumer preferences might differ depending on from where the local wine is bought, whether it is the on-trade or off-trade market.

On-trade refers to on-premises drinking (restaurants, hotels, bars, and nightclubs),

whereas off-trade refers to businesses that sell alcohol for use away from the premises (off-licences, shops, supermarkets) (Pomarici, et al., 2012). The restaurants fall under the Ho.re.ca channel, where consumers satisfy their preferences with guidance from intermediaries such as sommeliers, and fulfil their experimentation needs from a variety of wines which the restaurant distributes (Pomarici, et al., 2012).

A study conducted by Gustafson, et al., (2016) claimed that knowledge and preference are separable, and that knowledge assisted the transfer of product information to customer expectations for product quality. Prior studies outlined the impact that higher subjective wine knowledge has within the decision-making process of ordering wine, showcasing that people with greater wine knowledge tend to rely more on extrinsic characteristics such as expert ratings and wine labels (Robertson, et al., 2018). Consumer product knowledge has been linked to wine sales and receptivity to marketing efforts (Canziani, et al., 2018).

As mentioned earlier, the CEO of Marsovin winery outlined that the locals are still going through a learning phase which shall change their attitudes and perception towards local wines (MALTACEOS, 2021). Hence, due to the lack of product knowledge the locals have on local wines, wine sales and receptivity to marketing efforts are still negative compared to foreign wines due to several factors one of which is place of origin. Customers' past wine knowledge, for example, has been found to be positively associated with consumers' hedonic evaluations and purchase of red wines in particular (Cliff, et al., 2016).

By satisfying the demands of customers when they dine out, the wine business may benefit from the massive rise of restaurants (Gultek, et al., 2005). Scepticism from the general public and wine distributors may be the most difficult aspect for wineries to overcome, even if the wines have won numerous awards at several wine competitions (Dodd & Gustafson, 1997). Restaurants can be crucial in overcoming this issue for various reasons. Firstly,

the presence of a local wine brand on a restaurant's wine list, especially within a fine dining restaurant, might reassure customers that the wine has been approved as a high-quality product by the restaurant (Gultek, et al., 2005). Customers who try local wines at restaurants may have a positive experience which can lead to additional future purchases within restaurants or retail shops. Hence, regions or countries such as Malta, who are trying to widen their distribution network and change attitudes towards local wines can benefit greatly from the restaurant market.

Secondly, especially within fine-dining and Michelin star restaurants, options to purchase wines by the glass are usually greater than in other restaurants, and so, this will allow a customer to try a local wine by the glass rather than having to buy a whole bottle without knowing anything about the region, terroir or winery which produces the specific wine. Thirdly, by having local wines on wine lists, an opportunity to showcase local wines with tourists arises, having the opportunity to pass knowledge regarding Maltese wines to people coming from all over the world (Gultek, et al., 2005). Therefore, restaurants can act as possible distribution channels which can be a crucial point of sale for the local wine industry, which in turn can be crucial in helping develop respect for the Maltese wine industry.

Restaurants within countries with an established heritage towards wine such as in Italy, France, and Spain, have their wine list dominated by local wines whereas small countries (Cholette & Castaldi, 2005) such as Malta and Cyprus have their wine list dominated by imported wines. This greatly impacts the sustainability of local wines, where in developed countries such as France and Italy, wineries are supported massively by their restaurants who act as their distribution channels (Cholette & Castaldi, 2005), whereas in Malta, wine lists are dominated by imported wines, which do not support local wineries and farmers to further develop the quality of local wines. Since overseas exportation isn't within the target market of local wineries, it is crucial for wineries to maintain growth

within the domestic market (Thorsen & Hall, 2001). With the new addition of the Michelin green star icon which took off in 2020, restaurants are now interested more than ever in sustainability (Michelin Guide, 2021). The Michelin Green Star is an annual accolade that recognizes restaurants that are at the forefront of the industry in terms of sustainable operations. They hold themselves responsible for both their environmental and ethical standards, and they collaborate with sustainable manufacturers and suppliers to prevent waste and limit or even eliminate the use of plastic and other non-recyclable materials in their supply chain (Michelin Guide, 2021). Hence, showcasing local wine has now become crucial for fine dining restaurants aiming to achieve the green star.

When choosing which wine to buy, multiple studies confirmed that region of origin has an important role within the decision-making process (Orth, et al., 2005 & Jaeger, et al., 2009). Results from previous empirical research points out that region of origin is one of the main factors which showcases quality (Defrancesco, et al., 2017 & Gallenti, et al., 2019). Since Malta is a newly developing wine industry, one of the biggest threats facing the industry is the number of imported wines which are available within the market, with old world countries such as France and Italy continuously dominating the supplies in emerging wine industries.

Malta implemented the wine quality scheme framework in 2007, based on the EU system for quality wines, allowing winemakers and local wine producers to mark certified products as DOK or IGT wines in accordance with EU and local rules (Zammit, 2019). DOK stands for *Denominazzjoni ta' Origini Kontrollata* (controlled denomination of origin) while IGT stands for *Indikazzjoni Geografika Tipika* (typical geographic origin). The 'Maltese Islands' IGT is a wine made from grapes grown on the Maltese islands, using a production technique that limits grape output per hectare to achieve greater quality than table wines. The DOK 'Malta' and DOK 'Gozo' are wines that attain a higher quality even from the IGT wines through stricter yields per hectare, methods of cultivation and the use of only the most





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suitable grape varieties (Agrikoltura, 2022). The grapes for such wines have to be produced exclusively in Malta and Gozo respectively (Agrikoltura, 2022).

Within the wine sector, consumer perception regarding sustainable wines appears to be commonly associated with phrases such as organic and local (Zucca, et al., 2009). Sustainable wine is traditionally regarded as higher quality because no pesticides and fertilizers are used (both of which are considered harmful to health) in the vineyard (Bergthoef & Dodds, 2013). From prior research, several studies have proven that consumers are now more than ever interested in ethical, social and environmentally friendly dimensions of producing wine (Sogari et al., 2013; Defrancesco, et al., 2017 & Boncinelli F, et al., 2019). In reality, sustainability elements are credibility traits since consumers cannot evaluate whether or not a wine is made using sustainable processes.

The first organic wine produced in Malta was Marnisi, which is a Bordeaux blend (cabernet sauvignon, merlot and cabernet franc) produced by Marsovin Winery coming from a single estate situated in Marsaxlokk (Made in Malta, 2020). In 2013, Marsovin started a three-year process to introduce organic processes within the vinification stage which led them to produce the first premium wine labelled as “organic wine” in 2016. Marnisi continued to succeed by achieving rewards within this prestigious international competition three years in a row (Made in Malta, 2020). The organic conversion process began with the implementation of organic farming procedures at the Marnisi Estate in the south of Malta, which has the greatest expanse of organically farmed vines in the Maltese Islands, totalling 2.8 hectares (The Malta Chamber, 2018). Marsovin’s viticulturists participated in a completely separate set of methods to nurture their vines in order to have organically grown

grapes. Following the successful vineyard conversion phase, the harvested grapes were carried to the winery, where an alternative winemaking strategy was applied to focus on the usage of a particular list of organic vinification components (The Malta Chamber, 2018).

Previous studies conducted by Gallenti, et al., 2019 have identified price as a determining factor in the decision-making process of ordering wine. According to Mueller, et al., 2010, the higher the selling price of the wine, the more likely it will appeal to customers, and the lower the price, the less likely it will meet the consumers’ likings. Previous studies aimed to identify the factors affecting consumer choices when purchasing wine found that customers are willing to pay more for organic wines when compared to other sustainable certifications found on wine labels (Stanco & Lerro, 2020). Price is also seen as a major motivator in purchasing and repurchasing, as is appreciating a particular variety of wine or wanting to sample one (Robertson, et al., 2018). The frequent correlation of wines with low price-poor quality and high price-good quality emphasizes the fact that for customers, the price/quality ratio is more essential than the price itself (Oczkowski & Doucouliagos, 2015).

The wine label is regarded as one of the most important influencing factors in customer purchasing decisions (Celhay & Remuad, 2018) (Van Tondor & Mulder, 2015). In circumstances where wine cannot be easily tasted, such as supermarkets, brand names remain essential assets for communicating quality and evoking certain knowledge systems (Kelley & Hyde, 2015). The information displayed on the label, in the form of graphics and language, influences the decision to purchase a bottle of wine. Chrea, et al., (2011) discovered that hedonic liking of wine labels was predictive of customer preference, highlighting the significance of attractive wine labels. For these reasons, wineries tend to leave the labelling stage in the hands of established artists.

Consumer preferences may vary depending on the customer segment the consumer

falls under. A previous study conducted by Duarte, et al., (2010), illustrated that consumer choice on styles of wine vary depending on which segment the consumer falls under. The study categorized three customer segments being; infrequent, enthusiast and convivial wine drinkers (Duarte, et al., 2010).

Choosing the style of wine at a fine dining restaurant is another determinant factor. Wine is categorized into 9 main styles from previous research which are: sparkling wine, light bodied white, full-bodied white, aromatic white, Rose, light bodied red, medium bodied red, full bodied red and dessert wine (Puckette, 2022) The style of wine chosen may be affected by personal likings, previous experiences, weather, occasion, suggestions from knowledgeable servers such as sommeliers and wine and food pairing amongst other factors (Deroover, et al., 2021).

The major role of a sommelier within a fine dining restaurant is to pass his knowledge to customers to ensure that the wine being chosen meets their liking; and to guide customers in purchasing decisions, intrinsic cues such as aromas, flavours, grape varieties and colour are utilized (Preszler & Schmit, 2009). In order for the sommelier to promote local wines and local wineries, he has to be given intense training on local wines to ensure that his/her knowledge gained from such training can be passed to the restaurants' customers.

There are several courses suitable for food and beverage servers, sommeliers and wine importers to further improve their knowledge on wine provided by ITS, Malta Bartending Academy (MBA) or L-Universita ta' Malta such as: *WSET Intermediate (ITS)*, *WSET Advanced (ITS)*, *HND in Sommellerie (ITS)*, *award in wines of the Maltese Islands (ITS)*, *award in wines MQF level 3 beginners course (MBA)*, *wine advanced course (MBA)*, *wine regions course (MBA)*, *wine and food service course (MBA)* and *the art of winemaking (L-Universita ta' Malta)* (L-Universita ta' Malta, n.d., Institute of Tourism Studies, 2021 & Malta Bartending Academy, 2020). Having mentioned all these courses, only


one course would be beneficial for food and beverage servers and sommeliers to improve their knowledge on Maltese wines which is the *Award in Wines of the Maltese Islands* conducted by ITS (Institute of Tourism Studies, 2021). The other courses mentioned are all based on renowned and established wine countries such as France, Italy, Spain, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa while one course is more suitable for wine enthusiasts seeking to produce their own wine (the art of winemaking - L-Universita ta' Malta).

A good relationship between restaurants, hotels and local wineries is crucial to promote local wines. By having a good relationship with each other, establishments are able to provide off-the-job training to their servers where they will have the opportunity to visit various wineries with the main aim being to better understand how local wines are made and even have a tasting (Alonso & Liu, 2011).

In order to manage to persuade local customers to purchase local wines, the sommelier/server has to have good knowledge on local wines which can be narrated to the customers prior ordering wine (Chocarro & Cortinas, 2013). Previous research suggests that wine revenue increased by 24% when a sommelier recommends specific wines to his/her customers (Hilger, Rafert, & Villas-Boas, 2011). The sommelier has to cohort with the chef to constantly come up with food and local wine pairings which could be recommended to customers, which will benefit the business and the Maltese wine industry (Green, 2003). Furthermore, local wineries and restaurants should join forces to come up with food and wine events with the aim to change the perception of local wines when compared to foreign wines. The above-mentioned are upselling techniques which shall add an incentive to local customers in trying local wines rather than foreign brands within fine dining restaurants.



**The major role of a sommelier within a fine dining restaurant is to pass his knowledge to customers to ensure that the wine being chosen meets their liking**



#### METHODOLOGY

This research sought to identify how Maltese people can be persuaded to opt for local wines within Maltese fine-dining restaurants. Two sub-research questions in cohesion with the central research question are:

What are the main factors that affect consumer preferences towards choosing a local wine?

What type of training can be given to servers or sommeliers to promote local wines to the Maltese public?

A mixed methodology approach with a questionnaire to collect data from consumers and observation of three fine dining restaurants was chosen. The two methodological approaches provided triangulation.

In pursuance of the study, observations were chosen as the second primary data collection method. Observations were chosen over other tools as the author could grasp a better idea of what the Maltese respondents answered on the survey by dining in Maltese fine dining restaurants and analyse the restaurant from a customer's perspective. By doing so, the author could triangulate between both tools utilized to come up with the best conclusion for such research study.

To pursue the observations, three restaurants regarded as fine dining establishments were chosen. Having one restaurant being a Michelin star restaurant and the other two being a Michelin-guide restaurants, the author confirms that such restaurants classify as fine-dining establishments. Different days were chosen to conduct the observations to ensure that the author is observing the attitude of Maltese consumers not just on weekends and weekdays, which made the observations more realistic.

A total of 98 surveys were sent with a response rate percentage of 67.35%. The total amount of responses gathered is sufficient to provide a detailed analysis of the survey questions. The survey had a total of 15 questions with three demographic questions to understand the respondents' background.

A total of 34 respondents (51.5%) were female whilst a total of 32 participants (48.5%) were males.

From the 66 respondents, a total of 25 fall under the 18-25 category, 13 respondents fall under the 26-35 category, 12 respondents fall under the 36-45 category and 16 respondents fall under the 46+ category.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As primary research, the author asked the survey participants how knowledgeable they rate themselves from 1-5 on local Maltese wines (Q4). Only 6 respondents view themselves very knowledgeable and only 8 respondents view themselves as knowledgeable on local wines, leaving the majority of the respondents not as knowledgeable on local wines. The positive

aspect from this is that the participants accept the fact that they are not as knowledgeable, which might leave them open to change and to become more knowledgeable.

The second main factor affecting consumers when purchasing local wines is the perception of the region of origin. Several studies confirmed that attitudes and perceptions toward local products correspond favourably with purchasing intention. The majority agreed that local wines improved drastically in terms of quality throughout the years. However, 15 responded that local wines are still considered as inferior products when compared to foreign wines. Such answer correlates to what was stated in the interview that locals are still going through a learning phase which shall change their attitudes and perceptions towards local wines (MALTACEOS, 2021).

During the observations conducted, the author sought to acknowledge the attitudes of Maltese consumers when selecting a wine from a wine list. From two restaurants, the author concluded that the majority of the customers on that dinner service base their option on previous experiences while for the other restaurant, the author specified that Most of the Maltese consumers on the particular dinner service order wine by selecting a specific wine from the wine list without any assistance.

As mentioned previously, quality is a pertinent factor which effects the decision-making process when ordering wine. Studies state that the least knowledgeable consumer evaluates quality in terms of brand, alcohol percentage and food pairing, while the knowledgeable consumer evaluates quality based on alcohol percentage, region of origin and grape variety (Brata, et al., 2022). One of the survey questions aimed to identify how the respondents rate the quality of local Maltese wines from 1-5 (figure 7). A total of 57.6% gave Maltese wines a 4/5 while only 4 respondents gave a 5/5. 19 respondents gave Maltese 3/5 and only 5 respondents gave Maltese wines a 2/5. From such ratings provided, the author can visualize that from

the participants, the majority see Maltese wines as decent quality wines but not superior to foreign ones.

Apart from the previous pertinent factors mentioned above, secondary data proved that price, country of origin, wine labels as well as wine quality are all variable factors effecting the decision-making process of consumers within fine-dining restaurants (Orth, Wolf-McGarry, & Dodd, 2005). Sherman & Tuten, (2011) revealed that appearance and attractiveness of the label is a pertinent factor in the consumption and purchase processes of wine. As part of the primary data collected, Q9 aimed to identify whether these factors mentioned above affect the respondents in the decision-making process. From the results gathered from the survey, a majority of 71.2% agreed that these factors are pertinent factors when choosing wine. A total of 19.7% voted "not sure" and only 9.1% disagree.

In cohesion of Q9 which was aimed to identify whether the pertinent factors mentioned affect the decision-making process of the respondents when ordering wines in fine-dining restaurants in Malta, Q10 aimed to identify which of these variable factors affect the decision-making process the most. From the responses gathered, it seems that the most pertinent factor is price with a total of 42 votes. Quality gathered 36 votes, style of wine gathered 33 votes, customer's knowledge gathered 26 votes, region of origin gathered 23 votes and lastly labelling gathered only five votes. Even though from secondary data, all the five choices given are proved to have a causal effect on the decision-making process, by collecting primary data the researcher could identify which of the factors affect the decision-making process of Maltese when dining at local fine-dining restaurants most.

Q4 of the survey aimed to identify how the respondents rate their knowledge of Maltese wine. From the results, only 6 respondents rated their knowledge a 5/5 and only 8 respondents rated their knowledge a 4/5, leaving the majority rating their Maltese wine knowledge at 3/5 rating or less. Hence, the author sees a great



opportunity to persuade less knowledgeable locals to have a knowledgeable sommelier recommending Maltese wine to meet the customers' likings.

A majority of 60.6% answered that sommeliers/wine servers are not trained enough while 27.3% of the respondents are not sure, leaving only 12.1% of the respondents thinking that sommeliers/wine servers in Maltese fine-dining restaurants are trained enough and have profound knowledge on local wine production.

To answer the central research question, a triangulation approach was taken between secondary data, the observations, and the results from the surveys. By having local wines on wine lists, an opportunity to showcase local wines with locals and tourists arises, having the opportunity to pass knowledge regarding Maltese wines to people coming from all over the world (Gultek, et al., 2005). Hence, Q11 of the survey aimed to identify the perception of Maltese consumers in fine dining restaurants with regards to local wines

availability. From the answers gathered, a total of 41.5% stated that a small selection of local wines are available on wine lists and another 41.5% answered that the majority of wine lists are dominated by foreign wines. Only 13.8% of the respondents believe that there is a vast selection of local wines within fine dining restaurants.

During the observation conducted, the researcher aimed to identify and correlate the data gathered from the surveys with what was actually found within the fine dining restaurants observed. The observer aimed to identify the percentage of local wines percentage availability when compared to foreign wines. "Restaurant X" and "Restaurant Y" were both given a 20%-80% when comparing local to foreign wines availability while "Restaurant Z" was given a 30%-70%.

Hence, the author acknowledges that in order to persuade local consumers to consume Maltese wines in fine dining restaurants, more wines have to be available by bottle or by glass.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results gathered from the triangulation approach taken from the literature review to the survey and observations conducted gave the author profound knowledge on how Maltese consumers can be persuaded to opt for Maltese wines within fine dining restaurants. The author managed to identify the pertinent factors which have a causal effect on the decision-making process of the consumers. By doing so, the survey aimed to identify and acknowledge which of these factors influence the customers the most. Price, quality, style of wine, customer's knowledge and region of origin were amongst the most variable factors affecting the decision-making process of Maltese consumers within local fine-dining restaurants.

With regards to the second sub research question, the author first identified all the courses provided locally regarding wines in the literature review. Furthermore, the author had gone through the syllabus of each course to identify which courses provide information regarding Maltese

wines. From the research conducted, it seems that the only appropriate course would be "Award in Wines of the Maltese Islands" provided by the Institute of Tourism Studies. The researcher then aimed to identify the perception of the respondents regarding the knowledge that the sommeliers working within Maltese fine dining restaurants have. A total of 60.6% answered that the sommeliers are not trained enough while only 12.1% of the respondents think that the sommeliers are well trained and knowledgeable on local wine production. This is a gap which needs to be filled.

From the observations and surveys, it seems that the availability of local wine by bottles and by glass is inferior to that provided by foreign wines. From the triangulation approach taken, the author can identify that to persuade Maltese wines within Maltese fine-dining restaurants, more quality Maltese wines need to be available both by bottle and glass. Having a good variety of local wines by the glass encourages Maltese consumers to taste wines by ordering a glass first before opting for a full bottle. By having such options available, persuading locals to try local wine might be easier.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to persuade Maltese consumers in opting for Maltese wines within local fine dining restaurants, the author aimed to identify what are the factors that affect the decision-making process within fine dining restaurants and what training could be given to sommeliers to promote Maltese wines to the local public.

The price is given utmost importance in such a scenario and that within such fine dining establishments, an agreement is reached between the wineries and the restaurants to buy the wine at a good price which shall reflect the selling price of the wine list. By doing so, Maltese consumers may be even more tempted to opt for local wine since it would be at a better price than a foreign wine. And by doing so, the sustainability of the Maltese wines and wineries will benefit as well.

Sommeliers in Maltese fine dining restaurants conduct the course "Award in wines of the Maltese Islands". In this training, the sommelier could use his/her knowledge to narrate it to the customers, with the aim to upsell Maltese wine to Maltese consumers. As found in the research, the Maltese consumers are not as knowledgeable about Maltese wines.

Staff are constantly trained by going to the Maltese wineries with the restaurant's team to gather in-depth knowledge on the local wine industry. In order to persuade customers to buy local wines, the sommelier has to be able to pass his/her knowledge and educate the consumers. Hence, by having such experience and training provided, the chances of persuading locals to opt for a Maltese wine rather than a foreign wine increases.

Have a greater availability of local wines within specific restaurants both by the glass and bottles. As observed during the research, the availability of local wines is not great in some restaurants. Hence, increasing the availability of local wines in such restaurants will aid as quality guaranteed for some consumers, which will be beneficial in improving and further sustaining the local wine industry.

More availability of local wines by the glass. By doing so, the sommelier can upsell a glass of local wine to consumers to start with rather than opting for a whole bottle immediately. Hence, the Maltese consumer can taste the wine without committing to a full bottle and not being sure if the wine meets his/her liking.

Future studies may seek to identify the perception of foreigners who are living in Malta regarding local wines. For this particular study, the niche target audience were only Maltese consumers. However, foreigners living in Malta and tourists also have a crucial impact on the sustainability of the Maltese wine industry.

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