

FUTOURISTIC

THE ITS JOURNAL ON HOSPITALITY, TRAVEL, TOURISM AND CULTURE



OPEN ACCESS RESEARCH | **EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY** | EVALUATING ENTOMOPHAGY | **SUSTAINABILITY COMPONENTS** | MALTESE CHRISTMAS DECORATION | **ROBOTS AND AI** | SCUBA DIVING TRAINING INDUSTRY | **FORAGING IN THE MALTESE ARCHIPELAGO** | ITS EVENTS | **TRADITIONAL VS. ONLINE TRAVEL AGENCIES** | MALTA'S DESTINATION MANAGEMENT COMPANIES | **EMPLOYEES' ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY KNOWLEDGE** | FRONT OFFICE EMPLOYEES | **WOMEN'S NARRATIVES** | FOOD ALLERGY | **ORGANIC FARMING**

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On the Cover
Lippija Tower, located in L-Imġarr, perched on the edge of a cliff overlooking Gnejna Bay. Taken at night, the image beautifully aligns the Milky Way behind the tower, creating a striking and celestial backdrop. The photo, by MemMinquxa, took part in Wiki Loves Monuments 2024. CC-BY-SA-4.0



A message from the Editor-in-Chief

I am pleased to introduce the 9th issue of the *Futuristic Journal* which will positively provoke the readership and stakeholders in Tourism and Hospitality to reevaluate traditional models employed in this sector. The content will offer insights into pressing topics shaping this industry – from sustainability and cultural preservation to the integration of artificial intelligence – the collection of articles which is being presented here showcases a spectrum of important research and perspectives. As Editor-in-Chief, it is my pleasure to guide you through the key highlights of this edition, which underscores the industry's capacity to adapt and thrive amidst constant change.

One common thread uniting the articles in this issue is the ever-growing pursuit of balance between technological innovation and sustainable practices. In an industry very intertwined with environmental, cultural, and economic systems, this equilibrium is not merely desirable but at this point essential. The hospitality sector faces mounting pressure to minimize its ecological footprint while delivering exceptional guest experiences. Simultaneously, technological innovations such as artificial intelligence, robots, and advanced data analytics are reshaping service delivery and operational efficiency.

The shift towards sustainability is evident in the hospitality industry's focus on green practices. As we read in the previous issues of this journal, we continue to see how hotels are adopting renewable

energy systems, reducing water and waste, and aligning operations with global sustainability goals. This movement is also mirrored in the culinary arts, where the exploration of sustainable food sources like entomophagy (insect consumption) demonstrates innovative responses to resource scarcity – this, however, remains underestimated for what I feel are cultural and social confounders.

Cultural preservation also plays a critical role in sustainable tourism. Highlighting women's contributions to Maltese history, foraging traditions, and the unique heritage of scuba diving reflect efforts to safeguard and celebrate intangible cultural assets. These practices not only enhance destination appeal but also foster a sense of community and identity. Technological advancements complement these sustainable efforts. Artificial intelligence and robotics offer opportunities to fill labour gaps, enhance service quality, and increase operational efficiency. However, the integration of such technologies must be thoughtful, ensuring that the human touch remains central to guest experiences. This balance is particularly crucial in the luxury segment, where personalization and emotional connections are indispensable.

As this issue illustrates, innovation and sustainability are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they are synergistic forces driving the future of tourism and hospitality. By embracing both, the industry can build a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable ecosystem.

The articles in this issue provide a multifaceted view of the challenges and innovations shaping the sector. Starting with Sharona Frendo's article entitled *Motivating Factors within the Front Office Employees in Malta's Five-Star Hotels*. The content of this piece delves into employee motivation, emphasizing the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic factors in enhancing performance and satisfaction. Strategies like recognition, team building, and career development demonstrate the critical role of effective management in driving employee engagement. Stephania Abela Tickle gives us a taste of Maltese foraging throughout local history in her *Foraging in the Maltese Archipelago: A Comparison of Its Use Between the Past and Present*. Here she explores the evolution of foraging practices in Malta, this piece highlights the interplay between tradition and modernity. It underscores the need to preserve cultural knowledge while promoting sustainable practices and local biodiversity.

The Executive Editor of this journal also honours us with a short but important article which celebrates the inclusion of women's stories in Maltese history, advocating for a holistic representation of the past. It aligns with broader efforts to promote gender equality and enrich cultural narratives. *The Advantages and Disadvantages of Traditional Travel Agencies vs. Online Travel Agencies* by Kayleigh Portelli offers insights into the changing dynamics of travel intermediaries. It emphasizes the importance of blending

personalized service with technological convenience to meet diverse traveller needs.

A very interesting article, and one which readers might find rather surprising is Dorika-Maria Busuttil's study entitled *Evaluating Entomophagy as the Future of Food in Malta*. This innovative study explores the potential of edible insects as a sustainable food source. Addressing cultural and psychological barriers, it advocates for education and awareness to drive acceptance of entomophagy. More conventional topics but still of paramount importance are Liam Falzon's and John Cutajar which discuss the role of DMCs in corporate events, in fact, this article examines challenges such as limited offerings and noise pollution while underscores the need for strategic marketing and innovative approaches to enhance Malta's competitiveness and a roadmap for sustainable hotel operations, highlighting renewable energy, waste reduction, and stakeholder collaboration.

Measuring Employees' Environmental and Sustainability Knowledge in a Local 4-Star Hotel by Maya Vella is another article which investigates the gaps in sustainability knowledge, this research emphasizes the importance of education and training. It calls for greater awareness of global goals such as the SDGs to align industry practices with environmental priorities. Clayton Gauci's piece entitled *An Examination*

of Attitudes Toward Robots and AI in the Hospitality Industry explores the potential of AI and robotics to address labour shortages while maintaining service quality. It stresses the need for strategic implementation to balance efficiency with the human touch. And finally, Damien Xuereb advocates a need for a 'reinvention' of Scuba Diving training with a critical approach towards the traditional diving certification models. Xuereb's research proposes innovation in training methods to enhance safety and knowledge in this industry. It calls for a focus on quality, mentorship, and sustainability to revitalize this very important sector. David Pace's in-depth look at organic food sheds new light on this trendy subject and reveals that not everything is positive on that front.

The 9th issue of *Futuristic Journal* exemplifies the diversity and dynamism of tourism and hospitality research. By addressing sustainability, innovation, and cultural preservation, these articles offer valuable perspectives for navigating the complexities of the modern tourism and hospitality landscape. As the industry continues to evolve, embracing these themes will be essential to achieving long-term success and resilience. As we did with the previous issues, this edition aims at inspiring dialogue, innovation, and action among our readers as the future of tourism and the balance which needs to be struck to achieve sustainability is a shared responsibility.

Glen Farrugia

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

The views expressed in Futuristic do not reflect the views of the Board of Governors or of the Management or the Editorial Board of the Institute of the Tourism Studies but only that of the individual authors.

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ITS launches its open access repository (OAR)

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

ITS has reached another important milestone in its efforts to nurture a research culture at the Institute with the launch of its open access repository (OAR) that will disseminate research by its alumni and academics with the rest of society and also internationally. For this purpose, ITS has chosen the solution by Scholastica HQ, an American company that has vast experience in this sector.

The OAR is accessible at:
www.its.edu/mt/oar

Using the Scholastica platform for publishing school dissertations and journals offers multiple benefits that enhance the efficacy, accessibility, and impact of the institution's academic publishing which is now established with its academic journal *Futouristic*. Scholastica provides easy-to-integrate peer review, production, and open-access (OA) journal hosting solutions, allowing the Institute to expedite its entire publishing workflow from submission through publication, which further supports both the OAR and future evolutions of this journal. Mr Cilia was assisted by Ms Celine Farrugia in developing and maintaining the repository.

Futouristic spoke to Christopher Cilia, the Manager at the ITS Library, about the benefits of the OAR to students, academics and the outside community.

How is the online repository going to complement other library services at ITS?

"The online repository will complement existing library services by providing immediate digital access to academic

resources, expanding the availability of dissertations, theses, and journals beyond the physical library's constraints. This digital addition will enhance resource accessibility for both on-campus and remote users, supporting ITS's mission to promote scholarly research and knowledge-sharing."

As the librarian, can you compare the demand for physical publications to online sources?

"In recent years, there has been a marked shift in demand from physical publications to digital sources, particularly among students and researchers who value quick access to materials. Online sources offer convenience, immediate availability, and enhanced searchability, making them highly preferred. While physical copies still hold value for in-depth study and archival purposes, online access correlates better with the current academic and research trends."

How is the online repository going to be updated?

"The online repository will be updated systematically as new dissertations, theses, and journals are submitted and published. The Scholastica platform provides tools to streamline the publication process, facilitating regular updates and allowing administrators to easily manage the addition of new content. This ensures that the repository remains current and continues to meet the evolving research requirements of the ITS community."

What kind of content will be available?

"The repository will include a diverse array

of academic content, such as student dissertations, faculty research papers, peer-reviewed journal articles, and other scholarly publications relevant to ITS's academic disciplines. Additionally, it can support special collections or thematic content as required, providing a comprehensive repository that reflects the institution's academic output."

What other services does the library provide to students and academics to do research?

"Besides access to publications, the library offers research assistance, database access, interlibrary loan services, citation management seminars, and guidance on research methodology. These services support students and faculty in locating, accessing, and utilizing resources effectively, enhancing their research capabilities."

Anything else you would like to add?

"Implementing Scholastica's platform could position ITS as a leader in digital publishing within academia, increasing the visibility and accessibility of its scholarly output. Additionally, it supports ITS's sustainability objectives by reducing reliance on printed materials and enhancing ITS's academic reputation by showcasing research achievements on a broader scale. By adopting Scholastica's publishing solutions, ITS can offer a robust, accessible, and efficient platform that will benefit the entire academic community, fostering research, collaboration, and knowledge dissemination."

Master's

MASTERS (MQF 7)
June 12, 2023 CEST

Foraging in the Maltese Archipelago: A Comparison of Its Use Between the Past and Present

Stephania Abela Tickle

A country's heritage can be interpreted from different perspectives, from narratives of battles to its history of food and foraging!

Abstract

Bachelor's

UNDERGRADUATE (MQF 6)
October 09, 2024 CEST

Dark Tourism Management: Facing and Addressing Ethical Issues.

Aiden Assak

This study aims to explore the ethical challenges of managing dark tourism sites in Malta, an important topic due to the increased popularity of these naturally sensitive sites.

Abstract

Bachelor's

UNDERGRADUATE (MQF 6)
September 23, 2024 CEST

Analysis of Near-Misses in Scuba Diving and Their Effect on Divers Safety Behaviours

Akadamuz Grebnik

This research explores the occurrence of near-miss situation in scuba diving industry, aiming to identify the extent of such situations and the effect on divers behaviour during and after.

Abstract

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The online repository will be updated systematically as new dissertations, theses, and journals are submitted and published. The Scholastica platform provides tools to streamline the publication process, facilitating regular updates and allowing administrators to easily manage the addition of new content.

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<p>Bachelor's Degree</p> <p>UNDERGRADUATE (MQF 6) May 15, 2024 CEST</p> <p>How Michelin Guide Recommendations Are Affecting the Restaurant Industry in Malta?</p> <p>Miguel Farrugia</p> <p>This research study was conducted in order to evaluate how Michelin Guide Recommendations are affecting the restaurant industry in Malta.</p> <p>Abstract</p>	<p>Bachelor's Degree</p> <p>UNDERGRADUATE (MQF 6) May 10, 2024 CEST</p> <p>The Value of the Traditional Travel Agencies in the Digital Age in Malta</p> <p>Gabrielle Hilli</p> <p>This research examines Maltese traditional travel agencies' digital customer experience techniques.</p> <p>Abstract</p>	<p>Bachelor's Degree</p> <p>UNDERGRADUATE (MQF 6) May 06, 2024 CEST</p> <p>Addressing Staff Shortage in Five Star Hotels in Malta by Employing Robots</p> <p>Clayton Gausi</p> <p>The hospitality industry worldwide is dealing with the problem of staff shortage. In Malta, we are also witnessing the same problems.</p> <p>Abstract</p>	<p>Bachelor's Degree</p> <p>UNDERGRADUATE (MQF 6) May 06, 2024 CEST</p> <p>Verbal Harassment Within the Front Office Department of Local Four-Star Hotels</p> <p>Nikita Micallef</p> <p>Verbal harassment is regarded as the language used by someone towards another person causing psychological or emotional harm/distress during which a person can be mocked, ridiculed, and humiliated.</p> <p>Abstract</p>
<p>Bachelor's Degree</p> <p>UNDERGRADUATE (MQF 6) May 05, 2024 CEST</p> <p>Reinventing the Scuba Diving Training Industry.</p> <p>Damien Xuereb</p> <p>The diving training industry is based on a pyramid qualification model. The dominant players in the market account to most new diver training and certifications</p> <p>Abstract</p>	<p>Bachelor's Degree</p> <p>UNDERGRADUATE (MQF 6) March 11, 2024 CEST</p> <p>Front Desk: How Training and Development Can Increase Productivity and Reduce Stress</p> <p>Jemimah Olajumoke Ijetemi Jetson</p> <p>This research paper aims to determine whether or not training and development programs assist reduce the symptoms of stress while simultaneously increasing productivity</p> <p>Abstract</p>	<p>Master's Degree</p> <p>MASTERS (MQF 7) June 14, 2023 CEST</p> <p>Digital Technology as an Interpretative Tool to Recreate Interest in and Appreciation of the Maltese Chapels</p> <p>Vanessa Della Naucci</p> <p>The Maltese chapels are an essential cultural and religious heritage that has been overlooked and at times neglected over the years</p> <p>Abstract</p>	<p>Master's Degree</p> <p>MASTERS (MQF 7) June 12, 2023 CEST</p> <p>Foraging in the Maltese Archipelago: A Comparison of Its Use Between the Past and Present</p> <p>Stephania Abela Tickle</p> <p>A country's heritage can be interpreted from different perspectives, from narratives of battles to its history of food and foraging!</p> <p>Abstract</p>
<p>Master's Degree</p> <p>MASTERS (MQF 7) June 05, 2023 CEST</p> <p>Heritage Interpretation for Children in the 21st Century: The Case of How We Can Interpret Heritage Differently to Our Younger Audience</p> <p>Georgette Farrugia</p> <p>Heritage Interpretation for Children in the 21st Century: the case of how we can interpret our heritage differently to our</p>	<p>Master's Degree</p> <p>MASTERS (MQF 7) June 05, 2023 CEST</p> <p>Developing a Historical Library's Identity Through Heritage Interpretation.</p> <p>Christopher Gilla</p> <p>National Libraries serve locals and visitors from all around the world. These organisations are solely responsible for preserving and safeguarding national book treasures and unpublished documents and</p>	<p>Master's Degree</p> <p>MASTERS (MQF 7) June 05, 2023 CEST</p> <p>Malta During the First World War: Beyond the Nurse of the Mediterranean</p> <p>Kevin Cassar</p> <p>This thesis is concerned with the interpretation of the experience of the First World War in Malta</p> <p>Abstract</p>	<p>Master's Degree</p> <p>MASTERS (MQF 7) June 05, 2023 CEST</p> <p>History in Scale: Military Dioramas as an Interpretation Device Within a Museum</p> <p>Ivan Cocker</p> <p>History in Scale: Military Dioramas as an Interpretation Device within a Museum</p> <p>Abstract</p>

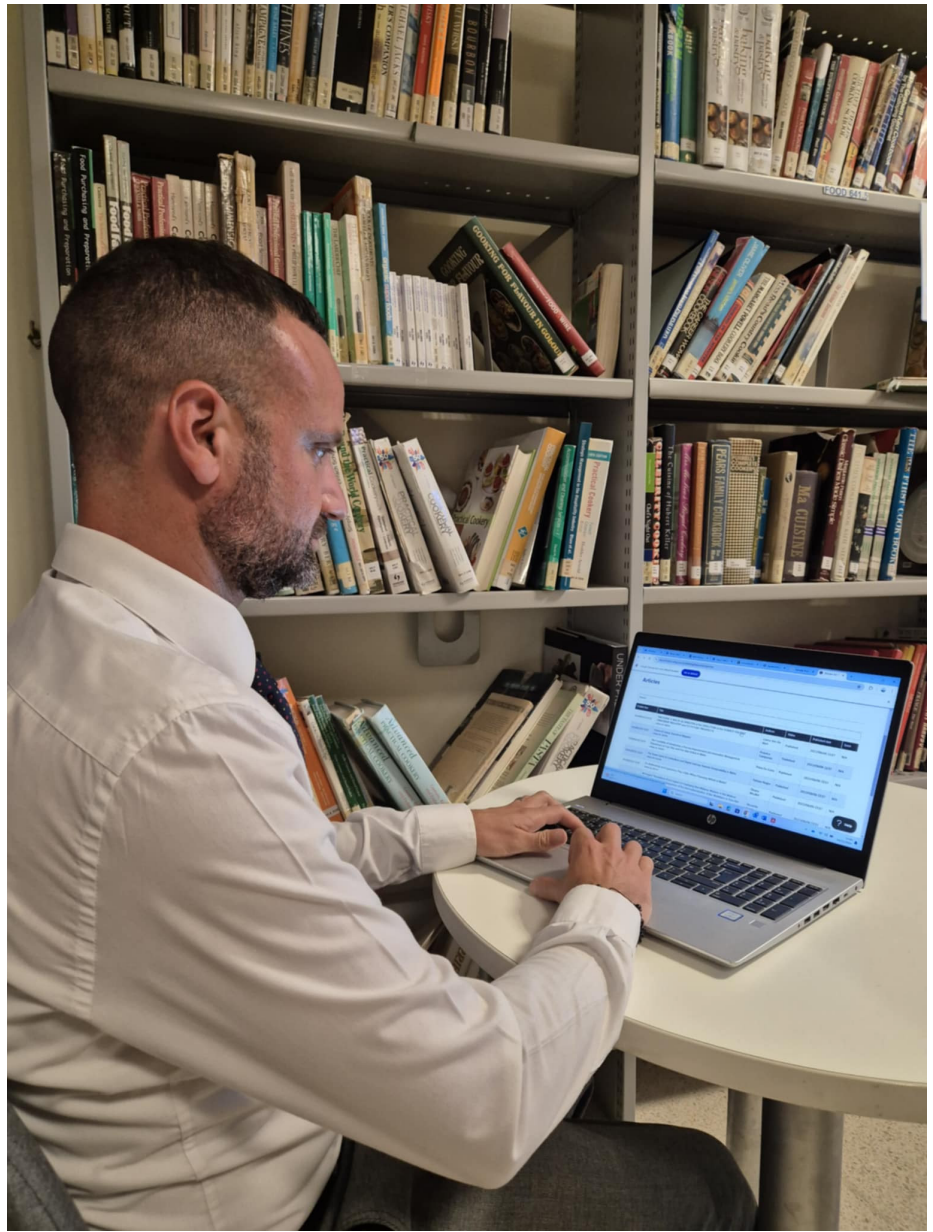
WHY INSTITUTE OF TOURISM STUDIES CHOSE SCHOLASTICA TO HOST ITS OPEN ACCESS REPOSITORY

Scholastica (www.scholasticahq.com) offers a platform designed to simplify the publishing of open access (OA) journals by providing tools and services for the entire publishing lifecycle. The platform enables journals to create and host websites without needing coding or web development expertise. The websites are user-friendly and optimised for online reading, with a responsive design that adapts to various devices. They include site-wide search, mobile-friendly pages, social media integration, RSS feeds, and blog options.

Key features of Scholastica's platform include easy customisation using a simple editing tool for website creation. The platform is optimised for online reading, discoverability and search engine indexing. It has a mobile-friendly design ensuring accessibility across devices. The platform also facilitates automatic generation of metadata in HTML and XML (JATS standard), including references, funding information, DOIs, ORCID, ROR IDs and CRediT roles. Scholastica simplifies archiving and indexing with integrations with archives and indexes. A built-in analytics suite tracks readership metrics, such as page views and downloads, and public metrics pages offer transparency with page views, downloads, and reader location data. They also allow integration of Altmetric badges.

Scholastica helps journals reach a wider audience through search optimisation, mobile-friendly design and rich machine-readable metadata. The platform generates metadata that facilitates crawling by Google Scholar. It also provides insights into readership through its analytics suite.

The platform is easy to use, with no setup fees and ready for immediate use, including free PDF back issue imports. It is a fully hosted solution, managing all software needs and technical support, such as maintenance, updates and backups. Scholastica prioritises data security, metadata enrichment, archiving, and indexing, adhering to current industry standards.



ITS Library Manager Christopher Cilia working on the new online research repository. This repository is a joint project between the ITS Library and the ITS Academic Research and Publications Board (ARPB).

<p>Master's Degree</p> <p>MASTER'S (MQF 7) June 05, 2023 CEST</p> <p>Heritage Interpretation for Children in the 21st Century: The Case of How We Can Interpret Heritage Differently to Our Younger Audience Georgette Farrugia</p> <p>Heritage Interpretation for Children in the 21st Century: the case of how we can interpret our heritage differently to our younger audience.</p> <p>Abstract</p>	<p>Master's Degree</p> <p>MASTER'S (MQF 7) June 05, 2023 CEST</p> <p>Developing a Historical Library's Identity Through Heritage Interpretation. Christopher Cilia</p> <p>National libraries serve locals and visitors from all around the world. These organisations are solely responsible for preserving and safeguarding national book treasures and unpublished documents and manuscripts</p> <p>Abstract</p>	<p>Master's Degree</p> <p>MASTER'S (MQF 7) June 05, 2023 CEST</p> <p>Malta During the First World War: Beyond the Nurse of the Mediterranean Kevin Cassar</p> <p>This thesis is concerned with the interpretation of the experience of the First World War in Malta</p> <p>Abstract</p>	<p>Master's Degree</p> <p>MASTER'S (MQF 7) June 05, 2023 CEST</p> <p>History in Scale: Military Dioramas as an Interpretation Device Within a Museum Ivan Cocker</p> <p>History in Scale: Military Dioramas as an Interpretation Device within a Museum</p> <p>Abstract</p>
<p>Master's Degree</p> <p>MASTER'S (MQF 7) May 31, 2023 CEST</p> <p>The Maltese Wall Clock, Locally Known as L-Arloġġ tal-Lira 1750-1900: Interpretation and Conservation Joanne Vella</p> <p>The Maltese Wall Clock, popularly known as l-Arloġġ tal lira is an intrinsic element of Maltese cultural heritage. It manifests the skilled craftsmanship of Maltese artists</p> <p>Abstract</p>	<p>Master's Degree</p> <p>MASTER'S (MQF 7) September 12, 2022 CEST</p> <p>Timeshare in Malta: An Analysis of the Evolution of the Shared Holiday Ownership Industry and Its Future Prospects. Coline Van De Mark</p> <p>The aim of this study was to understand how timeshare developed in Malta, to establish its current life cycle stage, and make predictions on its prospects.</p> <p>Abstract</p>	<p>Master's Degree</p> <p>MASTER'S (MQF 7) August 31, 2022 CEST</p> <p>Heritage Interpretation in a Migration Museum in Malta and its Role in a Changing Society Anna Azzopardi</p> <p>Maltese cultural heritage has been shaped by all settlers, colonizers, migrants and refugees who have been moving to and from this island over the millennia.</p> <p>Abstract</p>	<p>Master's Degree</p> <p>MASTER'S (MQF 7) August 31, 2022 CEST</p> <p>The Integrity of Gluten-Free Meals in the Maltese Food Service Industry Jimmy Aquilina</p> <p>Celiac allergy is apprehension for individuals that cannot consume gluten.</p> <p>Abstract</p>

Scholastica also aims to provide an optimal reading experience, offering options to publish articles in issues or on a rolling basis. The sites have easy navigation, visually appealing article display, PDF search functionality, easy access to supplemental files and citation downloads in BibTex format. Scholastica also caters to arXiv overlay journals by integrating with arXiv, enabling submissions directly from arXiv with article pages linking to final versions.

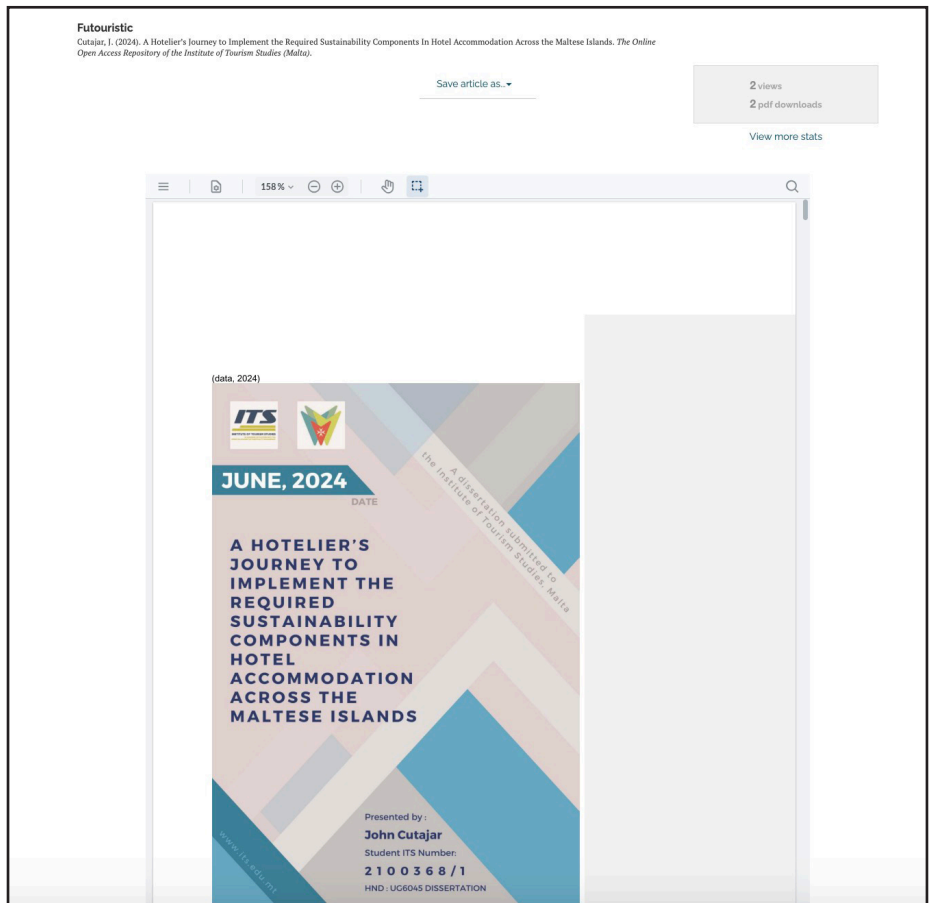
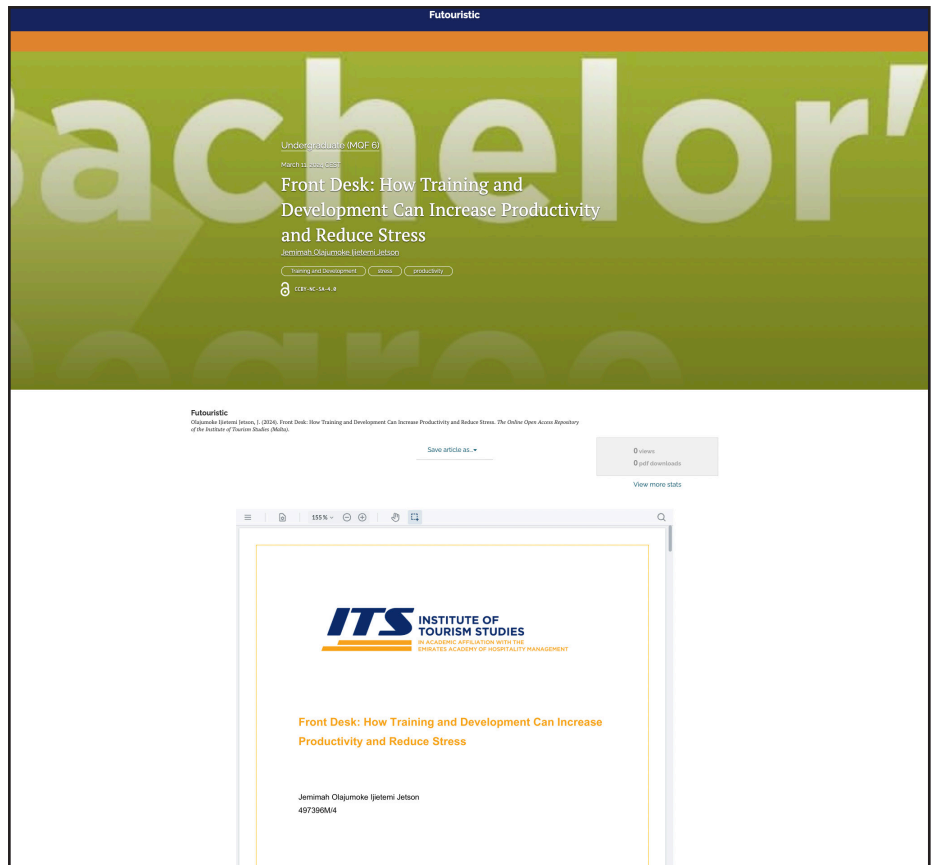
Integrations with other services include Crossref DOI registration, DOAJ indexing, Portico archiving, PMC and PubMed indexing, Altmetric badge display, and ROR institutional ID integration.

The platform can be used independently or integrated with Scholastica's peer review and production services for a streamlined workflow. The peer review system simplifies manuscript submission and tracking. Integration enables the direct transfer of manuscripts and metadata, eliminating manual data entry. Scholastica automatically generates comprehensive machine-readable metadata for journals using their production or hosting platform. The platform enables flexible publishing, with options to publish content as soon as ready or compile rolling articles into issues at any time. Scholastica says it is committed to supporting journals in meeting open access mandates like Plan S.

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The platform is optimised for online reading, discoverability and search engine indexing.

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Factors Influencing Employee Productivity – The Case of Five-Star Hotels in Malta

BY SARAH GRECH MCCORMICK
MBA IN INTERNATIONAL HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

This MBA thesis explores the various elements that affect employee productivity within five-star hotels in Malta. The research aims to identify hotel, job, and employee-related factors that have the greatest impact on productivity. It also investigates the productivity initiatives implemented by these hotels and how they have managed productivity during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining questionnaires with hotel employees and interviews with Human Resource managers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review begins by discussing two key theories of motivation and productivity: **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs** and **Vroom's Expectancy Theory**. Maslow's theory, developed in 1943, outlines five levels of employee needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualisation. This theory suggests that an employee's motivation and productivity are tied to the fulfillment of their needs. The management team of hospitality businesses can use this theory to understand the importance of motivating employees by creating initiatives to satisfy unmet or

developing needs, and by creating support systems to help employees manage stress. Vroom's Expectancy Theory, established in 1964, posits that motivation is based on an individual's perception of the link between effort, performance, and reward. Both theories provide a framework for understanding and enhancing employee motivation and productivity.

The study identifies three categories of factors influencing employee productivity: hotel-related, employee-related, and job-related factors. Hotel-related factors include management

support, training culture, organisational climate, and environmental dynamism. Management support was identified as essential, with research indicating that employees are more productive when they feel supported by their supervisors and managers. Organisational climate has also been identified as a key factor, with several researchers finding that a positive organisational climate can result in increased employee productivity and performance. A study by Sethibe (2018) found that while organisational innovativeness has a significant influence on employee productivity, organisational climate has a stronger impact.

Employee-related factors include proactivity, adaptability, intrinsic motivation, skill flexibility, commitment, and skill level. Intrinsic motivation is discussed as involving high levels of autonomy and a sense of enjoyment from work. Research suggests that employees with intrinsic motivation are more productive because they find their job interesting or rewarding. Skill flexibility is defined as the ability to implement acquired skills across different work activities. Commitment, although important, was noted to have a weaker effect on productivity than other factors.

Job-related factors include the job environment, job communication, and job autonomy. The job environment was found to impact employee satisfaction and productivity, with factors such as lighting, sound, and equipment having either positive or negative effects. Communication skills, especially listening, writing and speaking skills, are described as being essential for employee performance. Studies have also shown that participative decision-making and job autonomy can help empower employees and increase their productivity. However, it is acknowledged that participative decision making may not always be appropriate, particularly when tasks are complex or situations involve a high level of independence.

The literature review also explores the impact of Covid-19 on human resource management practices. It notes the need for hotels to adapt to new challenges, such

as using technology and robot service. It stresses the importance of adapting management approaches to maintain employee motivation, engagement, and performance.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, utilising both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This approach involves the distribution of questionnaires to five-star hotel employees and the conduction of interviews with Human Resource managers. The quantitative data, gathered through questionnaires, is analysed using statistical methods to generalise the findings to the target population. The qualitative data, gathered through semi-structured interviews, is analysed to explore and understand the research problem more deeply. This combination provides both a broad overview and a detailed insight into the factors affecting employee productivity.

The target sample for the quantitative part of the study included employees at various levels within five-star hotels in Malta. A non-probability random sampling method was used, with convenience sampling to gather data. The target sample size was around 100, although the study acknowledges the limited time available to collect questionnaires may result in a smaller sample size that may result in potential biases. For the qualitative part, the target sample consisted of six Human Resource Managers from different five-star hotels in Malta. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the participants were HR managers or had a background in HR,.

The quantitative data was collected using a close-ended questionnaire with a Likert scale. The questionnaire was adapted from Diamantidis and Chatzoglou's (2019) journal and included statements about hotel, job, and employee-related factors. The questionnaire was assessed for content validity, underwent a pilot test, and used Cronbach's α reliability test to ensure internal consistency. The qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for flexibility in gathering more detailed information. The

interview questions aimed to gain a deeper understanding of employee productivity in five-star hotels and the initiatives implemented to improve productivity.

DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data analysis includes descriptive statistics (such as bar graphs and percentages) and correlation analysis. The bar graphs visually represent the distribution of scores for each statement, while the correlation analysis measures the relationship between the variables. The aim is to assess the relationships between the hotel-related, job-related, and employee-related factors.

The qualitative data was analysed by identifying recurring themes, language, beliefs, and opinions from the interview transcripts. This process provides insights into the perspectives of the HR managers and their approaches to improving employee productivity.

The research tested twelve hypotheses based on the relationships between the factors studied. The first seven hypotheses (H1-H7) explored the relationships between factors within each of the main categories (hotel, job and employee-related). The final five hypotheses explored the relationships between different categories (H8-H12). For example, H1 looked at whether hotel-related factors were related to each other, and H8 looked at whether hotel-related factors were related to job and employee-related factors.

The results from the questionnaires showed that management support, organisational climate, and proactivity were the strongest factors impacting employee productivity, with commitment being the weakest. The correlation analysis, found in tables throughout the research findings, reveals the relationships between these factors. The qualitative analysis found that all HR managers were familiar with the term 'employee productivity', and that it was a daily part of their work.

DISCUSSION

The discussion section delves into the findings, comparing them to previous studies and drawing conclusions about their implications. The qualitative findings



Photo by Liliana Drew on Pexels.com

indicate that HR managers understand the importance of employee productivity, viewing it as essential for hotel success. They also implement various initiatives to enhance it, such as providing flexible hours, remote work options, and opportunities for employees to experience the hotel's outlets and services. The HR managers use various methods to generate new ideas, including networking with other hotels, brainstorming, and using employee feedback. Most managers also reported using methods to measure productivity,

including labour management systems and measuring revenue and guest satisfaction levels. They also generally believed that HR, supervisors and the management team are all responsible for employee productivity.

The quantitative results showed that hotel employees generally agreed that factors such as management support and organisational climate strongly impact their productivity. Job-related factors, such as the job environment and job communication, were also noted as impacting productivity.

The employee-related factor of proactivity was found to have a strong relationship with other factors. Conversely, commitment was found to have a weaker relationship with the other factors.

The analysis of the findings confirmed all twelve hypotheses. For instance, there was a strong correlation between hotel-related factors, such as management support, training culture, organisational climate and environmental dynamism. Also, hotel related factors were found to be related



to job and employee-related factors. The study's conclusion is that the findings support the importance of addressing a range of factors to enhance employee productivity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study provides several recommendations for hotel managers to improve employee productivity. It suggests that managers should support employees in job-related activities, enhance their skills through training and development, and

cultivate a healthy organizational climate. It also emphasizes the need for hotels to use employee feedback, encourage teamwork and create a positive work environment. The research suggests creating a more proactive workforce by providing opportunities for employee participation and solutions to work-related issues.

The study recommends further research, including a focus on lower-starred hotels and other hospitality establishments. It suggests further exploration into the relationship between commitment and employee productivity and an investigation of the strong correlations found between proactivity and adaptability.

In summary, this research provides a comprehensive investigation into the factors influencing employee productivity in five-star hotels in Malta. It underscores the importance of a holistic approach that considers hotel, job, and employee-related factors and the need for effective human resources management strategies. It also highlights the need for continuous research and adaptation to improve employee productivity within the hospitality sector.

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“

The quantitative results showed that hotel employees generally agreed that factors such as management support and organisational climate strongly impact their productivity.

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Evaluating Entomophagy as the future of food in Malta

BY DORIKA-MARIA BUSUTTIL
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This dissertation studies the potential of entomophagy (the practice of eating insects) as a sustainable food source in Malta, examining both the factors that influence its adoption and the perspectives of local food producers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review begins by highlighting the history of entomophagy, noting that insects have been a food source for humans for thousands of years. It cites paleontological research indicating that early humans consumed insects due to their nutritional qualities. Several societies have historically practiced entomophagy, such as Native Americans who ate June beetles and cicadas, and ancient Romans and Greeks who consumed beetle larvae. Religious texts, including the Bible, have also mentioned the consumption of locusts. The practice of entomophagy has seen a resurgence more recently, with the Netherlands promoting insect farming for edible purposes. The review also notes that cultural beliefs, including religious, ethical, and environmental concerns, shape food habits.

The review details the role of insects in entomophagy, emphasising their nutritional profile, which includes high levels of protein, lipids, vitamins, and minerals. Insects are presented as a sustainable alternative to traditional livestock, with a lower environmental impact. The dissertation goes on to investigate edible insects as a nourishing food option, noting the nutritional variability depending on the species, feeding, and developmental stage of the insect. Insects are rich in protein, vitamins, and minerals, contributing to sustainable food systems. The document also considers the potential for insect-based diets to reduce the risks of zoonotic diseases, in light of the

COVID-19 pandemic. The nutritional value of insects is further explored, with a comparison of the energy content of different processed insect species. It also details the nutrient value of different edible insects such as cockroaches, beetles, flies, bees, wasps, ants, termites, caterpillars, dragonflies, and grasshoppers.

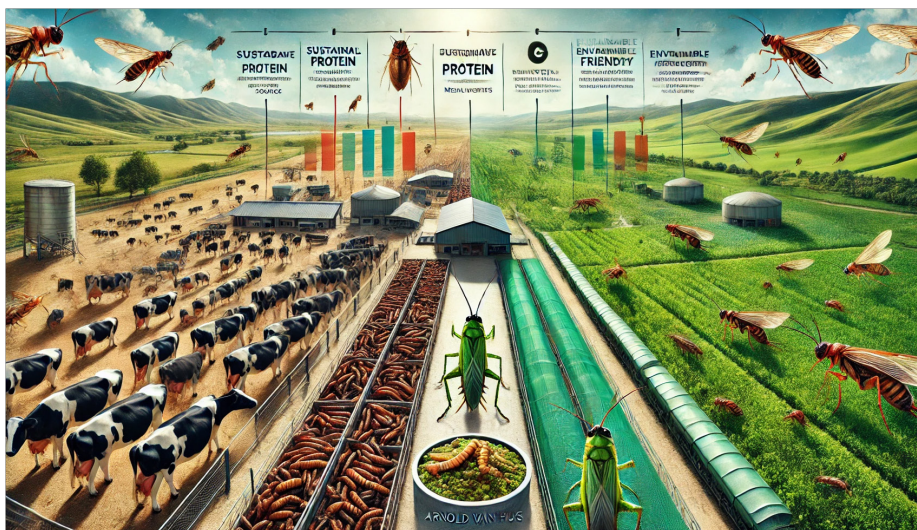
The literature review addresses concerns and considerations related to consuming insects, including allergenic, chemical, environmental, and microbiological hazards. It highlights the presence of tropomyosin, a protein that can cause allergic reactions, especially in people with seafood allergies. The document mentions heavy metals, toxins, mycotoxins, and pesticide residues, along with the risks of bacteria and fungi such as *Bacillus*, *Clostridium*, *Staphylococcus*, *Aspergillus*, and *Penicillium* being found in insects. It goes on to explore consumer acceptance of entomophagy, noting the influence of social and cultural norms, as well as issues such as entomophobia and food neophobia. It references research on peer pressure and professional guidance on entomophagy. It also notes research on consumer acceptance

and the need for additional research in developing countries, along with the influence of factors such as age, education, income, and psychological factors. The review includes information on the cultural exploration of entomophagy in the Western world, noting how some historical figures, like Charles Darwin, also consumed insects.

The review also presents the regulatory framework governing the use of insects for food security in the EU. It explains the Novel Food Regulation (EU) 2015/2283, which allows for the introduction of new foods into the EU market, while also protecting consumers. The review also includes a section on insect farming, outlining the purposes and current status of this practice, and discussing authorized insect species and future expansion and sustainability challenges. Finally, it focuses on insect farming in Malta, highlighting the current situation and future prospects. The review concludes that edible insects offer a complex solution to global food demand, however safety, environmental, and regulatory concerns need to be addressed.



Image by Mateus S. Figueiredo on Wikimedia Commons.



METHODOLOGY

The dissertation employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research. The quantitative method includes a structured questionnaire to assess the attitudes of the Maltese public towards entomophagy. The questionnaire was distributed online through social media and consists of 29 questions, including multiple-choice and Likert scale questions. The aim was to collect data from a sample of 300 respondents. The qualitative method includes interviews with seven food producers, including hotel and restaurant chefs, and a research and development chef, as well as interviews with a local insect farmer. The interviews were designed to gather insights on the feasibility and challenges of integrating insects into culinary practices. Qualitative data analysis involved transcribing the audio-recorded interviews and using thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and report patterns in the data.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis includes the results of the online survey and the interviews with the food producers and an insect farmer. The survey responses were analyzed to determine the demographics, awareness, and acceptance of entomophagy among the Maltese population. The survey found that while many respondents were aware of entomophagy, there was low acceptance of it, as only 7% of respondents were willing to include insects in their diet. The most prominent themes affecting acceptance included disgust, unfamiliarity, and cost. The survey also explored the influence of media,

social circles, and education campaigns on attitudes towards insect consumption. The data analysis of the interviews revealed a mixed but cautious view about the future of entomophagy in Malta. Chefs expressed their willingness to experiment with insect-based products if they proved to be cost-effective and sustainable. However, they also highlighted the cultural opposition and the need for education and awareness campaigns to encourage the adoption of entomophagy. The analysis of the interview with the local insect farmer details the potential benefits of insect farming in Malta, highlighting the nutritional value of insects and their environmental benefits compared to traditional livestock. The farmer also discussed the challenges in producing and marketing insect-based products, including public skepticism and the need for a regulatory framework.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The discussion highlights the cultural and psychological barriers that hinder the acceptance of entomophagy in Malta. It underscores the need for education, awareness campaigns, and incorporating insects into familiar dishes to overcome psychological barriers and to promote the nutritional and environmental benefits of insect consumption. The dissertation also notes the potential for local insect farming to contribute to food security and sustainability, highlighting the need for government support and investment in research. The recommendations include launching educational initiatives to raise public awareness, creating non-governmental

organizations (NGOs) to promote sustainable food practices, and offering incentives to farmers who produce insect based food. It also suggests incorporating insect based food into culinary schools' curriculum and organizing masterclasses for the public to show different cooking techniques. The study concludes that the future of entomophagy in Malta depends on overcoming cultural obstacles and implementing effective educational campaigns. It calls for collaborative efforts between NGOs, government officials, and schools to promote acceptance of insect-based cuisine, contributing to the future food security.

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A Hotelier's Journey To Implement The Required Sustainability Components In Hotel Accommodation Across The Maltese Islands

BY JOHN CUTAJAR
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The research investigates effective strategies and technologies for building and operating sustainable hotels, aiming to minimise environmental impact while maximising economic viability and guest satisfaction. The study uses a qualitative approach, drawing on interviews with various stakeholders, to analyse the complexities of achieving sustainability in the specific context of the Maltese Islands.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research examines the concept of green hotels within the Maltese context, focusing on environmental, social, and economic aspects. It explores how factors such as renewable energy, technological

advancements, and efficient systems contribute to sustainability. The study also recognises that European and United Nations policies, local government initiatives, environmental pressure groups, and political direction all play a role in shaping the success of green hotels. The literature review also highlights the importance of aligning economic goals with environmental practices, advocating for a balance between increased investments and profitability, while promoting a commitment to sustainable methods.

The literature emphasizes the need to address the unique sustainability challenges that Malta faces, including its limited land area, high population density, and scarce

natural resources. It acknowledges the significant contribution of the tourism sector to Malta's economy, while also recognising the negative impacts of tourism, such as resource depletion, pollution, and waste problems. The literature review underscores the importance of ethical and ecologically sensitive corporate practices in the hospitality industry and seeks to provide guidance to hoteliers committed to sustainable practices.

The study emphasizes the importance of research in the early stages of hotel development. It can help developers to understand the best practices in sustainability, leading to enhanced efficiency in later stages. The research also notes

the shift in priorities after the COVID-19 pandemic, with increased interest in the health and well-being of the spaces we occupy. Furthermore, the literature review highlights the need for innovative solutions and technologies, including advancements in renewable energy systems, smart building technologies, green infrastructure, sustainable materials, and flexible spaces. Research in this area also helps developers to identify and mitigate potential environmental, regulatory, financial, and reputational risks during the early stages of projects. Finally, the literature review also acknowledges the importance of understanding stakeholder expectations, preferences, and concerns regarding sustainability projects.

GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

The literature review identifies several gaps in existing research, noting a lack of context-specific data related to sustainability practices in the Maltese hotel industry. It highlights that most existing studies focus on larger European regions with more established sustainable development programs. The review also notes the need for the Maltese government to revise its national sustainable development policies and implement specific targets and indicators. Additionally, the literature points to a scarcity of empirical studies that document the practical experiences of hoteliers implementing sustainability components. It argues for more qualitative research to provide deeper insights into the challenges faced by the Maltese hospitality sector. The research aims to fill these gaps by analysing sustainability practices, economic savings, and social cohesion, while outlining challenges faced by hoteliers.

METHODOLOGY

The study uses a qualitative research method to explore the experiences of Maltese hoteliers who implement

sustainability practices. It employs in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including government officials, engineers, waste management professionals, and energy and water consultants. The interviews are semi-structured, allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences, challenges, and strategies. The questions cover a range of topics, including the influence of government policies, technical and engineering challenges, waste management strategies, stakeholder collaboration, and success stories. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed to provide a detailed analysis of the various perspectives. The selection of interviewees was

helping hotels to reduce electricity bills and their carbon footprint. However, the research notes that spatial challenges and financial constraints can hinder the implementation of such systems.

Water management is another key area, with the study emphasizing the importance of reducing bottled water usage and adopting small-scale reverse osmosis (RO) systems. The research also notes the potential of rainwater harvesting to provide an alternative water source, reducing reliance on municipal supplies. Furthermore, the study promotes the use of low-flow fixtures, such as dual-flush toilets and low-flow shower heads, to reduce water consumption.

Waste reduction strategies are also analysed, with the research highlighting the importance of managing food waste, separating waste streams, and implementing recycling programs. It suggests that effective waste management can lead to operational efficiencies and cost reductions. The use of technology in enhancing sustainability is another area, with the study recommending the use of LED lighting, smart irrigation systems, and energy-efficient heating and cooling systems. It also emphasizes the importance of smart water management systems to track water usage.

The literature emphasizes the need to address the unique sustainability challenges that Malta faces, including its limited land area, high population density, and scarce natural resources.

purposeful, ensuring that those interviewed had relevant experience in sustainability within the tourism sector.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis presents the findings from the interviews, detailing the various aspects of sustainability implementation in hotels. The study highlights the significance of renewable energy systems, particularly solar power, due to the abundance of sunshine on the Maltese Islands. It notes that photovoltaic (PV) panels and solar water heaters are the most common applications,

The data analysis further explores the human-centric aspects of sustainability, highlighting the need for educated management, staff, and guests. It stresses the importance of training programs to engage staff in sustainability practices and providing information to guests so that they cooperate with these efforts. The study also emphasizes the role of collaboration between stakeholders and governmental authorities. The analysis provides examples of these strategies and includes an analysis of the potential savings to be made.

DUAL FLUSH TOILET SYSTEMS

CALCULATED SAVINGS

- Normal toilet water usage: 22.7 litres per flush
- Dual flush toilet water usage: 6 litres for a full flush and 3 litres for a half flush
- The average flushes per day per room: 5 flushes
- Percentage of full flushes: 30 % full flushes and 70% half flushes
- Days in a year: 365 days

From the above assumptions the following calculations for a normal toilet resulted in the following:



- Daily water usage per room: 22.7 litres of water x 5 flushes = 113 litres
- Annual water usage per room: 113 litres x 365 days = 41,427.5 litres
- Annual water usage for 20 rooms: 41,427.5 litres x 20 = 828,550 litres

From the above assumptions, the following calculations for a Dual-Flush toilet resulted in the following:

- Full flushes: 6 litres x 1.5 flushes = 9 litres
- Half flushes: 3 litres x 3.5 flushes = 10.5 litres
- Total: 9 litres + 10.5 litres = 19.5 litres
- Annual water usage per room: 19.5 litres x 365 days = 7,117.50 litres
- Annual water usage for 20 rooms: 7,117.50 litres x 20 = 142,350 litres

These calculations show the following savings:

- Annual savings per room: 41,427.50 litres – 7,117.50 litres = 34,310 litres
- Annual savings for 20 rooms: 828,550 litres – 142,350 litres = **686,200 litres**

LOW FLOW SHOWER HEADS

CALCULATED SAVINGS

(A) Determining the water usage per shower

- (i) Old shower heads: 36 litres/minute
- (ii) Low-flow shower heads: 10 litres/minute

(B) Assume average shower duration: 10 minutes

(C) Calculate water usage per shower:

- (i) Old shower heads: 36 litres/minute x 10 minutes = 360 litres
- (ii) Low-flow shower heads: 10 litres/minute x 10 minutes = 100 litres

(D) Calculate daily water usage per room:

- (i) Old shower heads: 360 litres
- (ii) Low-flow shower heads: 100 litres

(E) Calculate annual water usage per room:



- (i) Old shower heads: 360 litres/day x 365 days = 131,400 litres per year
- (ii) Low-flow shower heads: 100 litres/day x 365 days = 36,500 litres per year

(F) Calculate annual water usage for 20 rooms:

- (i) Old shower heads: 131,400 litres per year x 20 rooms = 2,628,000 litres/year
- (ii) Low-flow shower heads: 36,500 litres per year x 20 rooms = 730,000 litres/ year

(G) Calculate annual water savings for 20-room hotels:

- (i) 2,628,000 litres/year – 730,000 litres/year = **1,898,000 litres/year in savings.**

DISCUSSION

The discussion of the study underscores the complex nature of sustainability within the hotel sector of the Maltese islands. It highlights the significance of integrating sustainable practices to address environmental concerns, meet societal expectations, and achieve economic benefits. The analysis shows that sustainability practices can provide a competitive advantage to hotel owners, leading to cost savings, improved brand reputation, and enhanced guest satisfaction. However, the study acknowledges that challenges remain, including a lack of standardized metrics to assess performance, and the need for greater collaboration

among stakeholders. The study notes that the Maltese government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), aiming to improve cooperation and promote sustainability practices in the tourism industry.

The study also discusses the historical context of Malta’s development, noting the shift from a focus on economic growth to a more balanced approach that considers environmental and social factors. It discusses the evolution of the Maltese tourism sector, from the “sun, sea, and sand” model to the promotion of cultural heritage and sustainable tourism. It further

notes that the increase in tourist arrivals has had an impact on the environment, leading to a need to control the rate of tourist influx.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research makes several recommendations for the Maltese hotel industry.

It stresses the need for governmental bodies and stakeholders to coordinate their efforts to elevate sustainability initiatives.



It highlights the importance of renewable energy systems, water management techniques, waste reduction strategies, and technological advancements.

The study also advocates for the integration

ENERGY EFFICIENT LIGHTING - LED'S

CALCULATED SAVINGS

- 1. Energy Consumption:**
 - (i) Incandescent bulbs: Typically use about 60 watts.
 - (ii) LED bulbs: Use about 10 watts for the same light output.
- 2. Usage:**
 - (i) Assume each room has 10 bulbs, and each bulb is used for 5 hours per day.
- 3. Energy Cost:**
 - (i) Average cost of commercial electricity in Malta: Euro 0.15/kWh
- 4. Annual Energy Consumption:**
 - (i) Incandescent bulbs: 60 watts x 10 bulbs x 5 hours/day x 365 days/year = 1,095,000 watt-hours/year = 1095 kWh/year
- 5. Annual Energy Consumption:**
 - (i) LED bulbs: 10 watts x 10 bulbs x 5 hours/day x 365 days/year = 182,500 watt-hours/year = 182.5 kWh/year
- 6. Annual Energy Cost:**
 - (i) Incandescent bulbs: 1095kWh/year x Euro 0.15/kWh = Euro 164.25 per room.
 - (ii) LED bulbs: 182.5kWh/year x Euro 0.15/kWh = Euro 27.37 per room.
- 7. Total Savings:**
 - (i) Per Room: Euro 164.25 - Euro 27.37 = Euro 136.88
 - (ii) For 20 rooms: Euro 136.88 x 20 = **Euro 2737.60 per year**

ELIMINATION OF BOTTLED WATER

CALCULATED SAVINGS

Savings.
Every bottle manufactured would consume 3 litres of water to manufacture.

The annual quantity of water required to produce the plastic bottles that would be needed, if an RO system is not in place, would be:

2 bottles per room a day x 20 rooms x 365 days = 14600 bottles.

The water required to manufacture these 500ml plastic bottles would be:



14600 x 3 litres for each bottle = 43,800 litres of water.

A manufacturing plant producing plastic bottles would also be using a substantial amount of energy to manufacture various other fossil fuels.

Savings. The cost savings to the 20-room hotel that installs the RO system will be: 14600 bottles x Euro 0.50 (cost per bottle) = Euro 7,300 per year

Savings. Fewer deliveries to property would involve less fuel for delivery trucks and less congestion on roads. Such an operation would eliminate 52 weekly deliveries to the property in question.

Savings. The elimination of staffing levels to man the arrival of deliveries, storage, placement in rooms daily, and disposal of empty bottles.

of human-centric practices, including training, education, and guest engagement.

The study also recommends that the government provides incentives for sustainable practices.

The study suggests that the waste management regulations need to be updated and improved.

Finally, the study also stresses the importance of a balance between the needs of the hospitality industry, the environment and the Maltese people.

In conclusion, this research provides a valuable contribution to the understanding of sustainable hotel operations on the

Maltese Islands. It demonstrates that implementing sustainable solutions is not only beneficial to the environment, but also enhances operational efficiency, and profitability, thus creating a positive impact on the Maltese Islands and local communities.

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The front cover of the book (Photo by Melvin Bugeja).

The past, present and future of the quintessential Maltese Christmas decoration: the Crib

BY MARTIN DEBATTISTA
SENIOR ACADEMIC AND EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF FUTOURISTIC

Melvin Bugeja is an ITS alumnus who has graduated with a Master of Arts in Heritage Interpretation in December 2023. His passion for Maltese culture, especially traditional Maltese celebrations, led him to research the Maltese crib for this thesis. This has just been published as a book co-authored with Prof. Simon Mercieca of the University of Malta to enhance our knowledge about this Christian tradition with old roots in our country.

Mr Bugeja's interest is deeply rooted in his family traditions, from his childhood days when his father, as an active member of the the M.U.S.U.E.M (Society for Christine Doctrine), would always decorate their home with a medium-sized crib, adorned with locally sourced Italian-style plastic *pasturi* and Palestinian landscape scenery. This continued in his adulthood, not only with home decorations but also undertaking a significant project, i.e. producing approximately 160

papier-mâché nativity scenes annually for distribution to children at a Christian Centre in his local community. Given this profound personal connection, it became a natural choice to explore the tradition of crib building as the central theme of his thesis.

The book is divided into six chapters, with a strong historical foundation, an analysis of contemporary crib building practices and exhibition, a discussion of the research data,



The inside of the book (Photo by Melvin Bugeja).

an account of the transition from the family crib to the artistic crib, and the influence of the Neapolitan crib among other themes.

Futuristic has interviewed the author about his interest in the subject which has come to fruition in the book, which is also available at the ITS library.

WHAT FINDINGS IN YOUR THESIS DID YOU FIND MOST UNEXPECTED?

“During my research, I unexpectedly encountered a renewed interest in the Neapolitan crib. These cribs, characterized by their large and artistic figurines, are typically acquired from Naples and Sicily and can be quite expensive. I identified two distinct groups among the few individuals who own Neapolitan cribs:

Wealthy families: These families can afford to purchase expensive figurines outright and often commission foreign artists to create custom-made Neapolitan cribs. They also employ foreign restorers to maintain their collections, treating their cribs as valuable art pieces, akin to paintings and sculptures. These cribs are typically displayed year-round.

Middle-class individuals: These individuals gradually acquire figurines over time, often making significant sacrifices to achieve their goal. One such individual, a carpenter by trade, meticulously constructed his own Neapolitan crib and purchase all the statuettes over a period of 20 years.

Both individuals graciously allowed me to examine their collections under the condition of anonymity.

Another encouraging finding was the resurgence of female participation in crib building. While nuns from the Missionary Sisters of Jesus of Nazareth in Żejtun and members of the Society of Christian Doctrine were instrumental in creating notable cribs in the past, female involvement declined in the following decade. However, my research indicates a renewed interest among both young and middle-aged women.

One notable example is the secretary of a prominent local crib association, who has also been appointed as the General Secretary of the world renowned International Friends of the Crib Federation.

Her dedication to promoting and preserving the crib tradition worldwide is commendable.”

HOW HAS THE TRADITION OF THE CRIB CHANGED OVER TIME IN MALTA? HOW DOES IT COMPARE TO YOUR CHILDHOOD FOR EXAMPLE?

“The materials used in crib building have undergone significant changes since my childhood. While cork and Maltese rustic stone were once popular, papier-mâché reigned supreme throughout the 20th century. This technique involved extensive use of glue (both homemade flour glue and rabbit-skin glue) and time-consuming drying processes. Crib structures were often reinforced with chicken wire, and lighting was limited to festoon lights, providing even illumination but lacking the ability to highlight specific areas. Figurines were primarily imported from Italy or locally crafted from plaster at the Society of Christian Doctrine. Clay was also commonly used to create the *pasturi* (figurines) and were mass produced from specific moulds. When the crib was finished, more often than not, it was quite heavy as it

had to be crafted on plywood or triply wood bases.

Today, polystyrene (jablo) and XPS foam have become the preferred materials. These lightweight and easily manipulated materials allow for the creation of intricate caverns, sheds, and architectural structures, including chapels and baroque buildings, often incorporating Maltese or foreign architectural elements. PVC glue and hot glue are commonly used with these materials.

The advent of LED lighting has revolutionized crib illumination. LEDs provide focused lighting, allowing for the highlighting of specific areas like the nativity grotto, while emitting minimal heat, significantly reducing fire hazards.

The choice of figurines has also evolved. While imported figurines from Italy and Spain remain popular, many experienced crib builders are now commissioning both local and international artists to create custom-made figurines, leading to greater creativity and individuality in crib design.

This shift in the choice of materials and applied techniques has transformed the perception of cribs. No longer merely seasonal displays, many cribs are now considered works of art, carefully preserved and often displayed year-round."

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE THESIS AND THE BOOK?

"As my research progressed, I discovered the chosen theme to be far more extensive than initially anticipated. The wealth of information available presented a significant challenge, given the word count limitations imposed by the thesis guidelines. The subsequent book, published after the thesis submission, delves deeper into the subject without the constraints of word count restrictions. It includes expanded details in various chapters and incorporates a visual element with numerous photographs taken from my collections, throughout my research and during the book's production. I am grateful to my tutor, Professor Simon Mercieca, for providing access to the late Joseph Muscat's extensive photo archive. Mr. Muscat, a member of the Christian Doctrine and a prominent historian of

Maltese crib-building, sadly passed away before I could interview him. The book is dedicated to his memory.

The book's cover features two significant photographs. The front cover showcases the oldest surviving crib in Malta, located in the Monastery of the Benedictine nuns in Mdina. The back cover features a detail from the crib permanently displayed at the Franciscan convent in Valletta."

WHAT IS THE MAIN CONTRIBUTION OF THE BOOK TOWARDS MALTESE CULTURE?

"In addition to exploring the historical influences on Maltese crib-building, including Sicilian and revealing our French influences as well, the thesis focused on the significant developments within the past 20 years. The research highlighted advancements in techniques, a diversification of styles and landscapes, and the utilization of new materials, leading to increased creativity in crib construction.

However, the study also revealed a concerning decline in younger generations' interest in crib building. This trend poses a potential threat to the long-term preservation of this art form. While the number of crib exhibitions is increasing, these events often feature the work of the same established artists.

Interviews conducted for this research consistently emphasized the critical role of education in addressing this issue. Incorporating traditional crib-building into school curricula is crucial for fostering interest and ensuring the continuity of this cultural tradition among future generations. This, in essence, is the central message of this project."

HOW HAS TECHNOLOGY CHANGE OVER TIME IMPACTED THE PRODUCTION AND DISPLAY OF CRIBS?

"Technological advancements have recently begun to significantly impact two key aspects of crib building.

Traditionally, Maltese mechanical cribs featured basic movements, such as rotating windmills and a few moving figurines, powered by electric motors and intricate engineering. Lighting effects were limited, often involving a simple dimming and

brightening to simulate day and night. Music was introduced in the 1980s using rudimentary cassette players.

However, modern technology has revolutionized these cribs. Contemporary 'presepisti' (crib makers) utilise advanced electronics and software to create incredibly realistic and immersive experiences for viewers.

The integration of electronic devices and modules allows for unprecedented levels of sophistication. Mechanical cribs now feature intricate sequences of synchronized figurine movements, coordinated with specialized lighting, narrated music, and special effects such as rain and fog, creating a truly captivating and engaging experience.

Another emerging technology with the potential to significantly impact crib building is 3D printing. While ethical considerations regarding the use of 3D printing to replicate existing works must be carefully addressed (with the permission of the artist or their estate), this technology offers several advantages.

3D printing allows for greater flexibility in creating figurines of various sizes and levels of detail. For example, I observed a winning entry in a recent national crib competition where the artist sculpted figures approximately 20cm tall and then used 3D printing to create miniature versions, achieving remarkable detail in figurines just 3cm in height.

Due to its versatility and creative potential, in my opinion, 3D printing is poised to become a pivotal factor in the future of crib building in Malta, following the significant impact of XPS foam in recent years."

WHAT MAKES THE MALTESE CRIB PECULIAR / DIFFERENT FROM THE CRIBS IN OTHER COUNTRIES?

"The traditional Maltese crib, popularized by the Society of Christian Doctrine during the 20th century, stands out for its accessibility. Founded by St. George Preca, the society aimed to democratize the Nativity scene by distributing affordable cribs featuring locally made clay figurines (known as 'tas-sold', meaning 'one penny') or plaster figures to every household. This initiative

Crib by Reuben Pullicino, figurines by Jesmond Micallef



fostered greater devotion to the Nativity and emphasized the true meaning of Christmas.

In contrast, in countries like Sicily and Naples, cribs were often elaborate and expensive works of art, featuring large, highly artistic figurines primarily accessible to wealthy families or displayed in churches.

While the traditional grotto continued to be disseminated by the society, Maltese crib building evolved throughout the 20th century. The Palestinian landscape gradually transformed into a distinctly Maltese setting, incorporating local farmhouses and buildings. Figurines also became more intricate, often depicting figures in traditional late 19th-century Maltese attire.

However, I am concerned about the growing influence of Italian and Spanish crib-building styles. The frequent visits of renowned foreign *'presepisti'* and artisans, invited by local crib societies, are contributing to a shift away from the unique characteristics of the Maltese crib. While exploring diverse styles is valuable, preserving the unique aesthetics and traditions of our own Maltese crib-building heritage should remain a paramount objective."

WHAT FUTURE DO YOU SEE FOR THE CRIB IN MALTA?

"While attendance at crib exhibitions is steadily increasing, there is a concerning lack of younger participants among the exhibitors themselves. Despite the widespread public interest in viewing these

exhibitions, my questionnaire revealed a significant lack of interest among younger generations in actively engaging in crib-building.

However, the growing participation of women in this traditionally male-dominated field offers a glimmer of hope for the future of crib-building. The questionnaire also demonstrated unanimous agreement on the importance of preserving this cultural tradition and passing it on to future generations.

My interviews with veteran *'presepisti'* revealed their unwavering commitment to preserving this art form. While the task may seem daunting, a collaborative effort involving the state and educational institutions to integrate crib-building into school curricula can effectively cultivate interest among younger generations and ensure the continuity of this cherished tradition."

DO YOU HAVE ANY ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS TO MAKE?

"I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to this challenging yet immensely rewarding journey. I am indebted to the numerous *'presepisti'* and *'pasturara'* (figurine makers) who participated in my interviews, the presidents and secretaries of the various crib associations across the islands, the Institute's management, my course coordinator, all my lecturers, especially

Mr. Martin Debattista for inviting me to contribute to this journal. I am also deeply grateful to my friends and family for their unwavering support, and most importantly, to my tutor and co-author, Professor Simon Mercieca, for his invaluable guidance. I am indebted to all those who helped make this dream a reality.

Following a lecture I delivered lately at a seminar organized by a local crib association in Gozo, I received an intriguing phone call from a friend. He urged me to continue my research, suggesting that there might be further avenues to explore. And indeed, there may be more to come..."

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3D printing is poised to become a pivotal factor in the future of crib building in Malta.

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Image by Travelarz.

An Examination of Attitudes Toward Robots and AI in the Hospitality Industry

BY CLAYTON GAUCI
BACHELOR IN INTERNATIONAL HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT (HONS)

This research paper explores the potential impact of robots and artificial intelligence (AI) in the hospitality industry, particularly within the context of five-star hotels in Malta. It examines the benefits and drawbacks of incorporating these technologies into the hospitality industry, taking into account the perspectives of both hotel managers and customers. The author used a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data to provide a holistic understanding of this evolving landscape.

The research highlights a significant labour shortage in the hospitality industry,

particularly in Malta, which is a global issue exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, many hospitality workers left the industry to pursue employment in other sectors that offer more attractive salaries and working conditions, such as gaming, banking and financial services.

This exodus of workers has left hotels struggling to fill vacancies and maintain high service standards, especially in the luxury hospitality sector.

The potential of robots and AI to address this staffing gap is a central theme of this paper. While robots have long been used in

manufacturing, their application in service industries is relatively recent. This research highlights instances in countries like China and Japan, where robots have been successfully implemented in hotels, even achieving the distinction of creating the first fully automated hotel, the Henn-na Hotel in Japan. Notably, the COVID-19 pandemic has further spurred the adoption of robots in some hotels for tasks like room service and luggage delivery.

Despite the potential benefits of robots and AI in hospitality, the research acknowledges existing challenges and concerns surrounding their implementation. A key concern is the potential impact on customer

experience. While robots offer efficiency and consistency in service delivery, they may lack the personalisation and human touch that guests value, particularly in a five-star setting. The research highlights a degree of contradiction in customer perceptions. Some customers appreciate the convenience and reduced risk of infection associated with robot service, particularly in the wake of the pandemic. Others express a preference for human interaction, highlighting the need to carefully consider the types of services best suited for automation to ensure robots enhance, rather than detract from, the guest experience.

The research also explores the implications of robots and AI for hotel employees. While some fear robots will displace human workers, others see the potential for collaboration and the creation of new roles. The study emphasises the importance of training and upskilling employees to work alongside these technologies, ensuring they are equipped to thrive in an evolving work environment.

THE FINDINGS

The study's findings indicate that managers in the hospitality industry, particularly in Malta, are cautiously considering the adoption of robots and AI. While they recognise the potential benefits of these technologies for managing daily operations and streamlining processes, they also express concerns about the impact on the personalised service expected in a five-star hotel. This sentiment is echoed by survey respondents, many of whom believe that human interaction is irreplaceable in the hospitality industry. The research reveals that the human touch provided by staff is considered a key factor in creating a memorable holiday experience, a sentiment shared by both hotel managers and survey participants.

Despite this hesitation, the study reveals a willingness among some managers to investigate the potential of robots in specific departments, particularly housekeeping and room service. This trend aligns with those observed in other countries, where robots are increasingly used for repetitive or physically demanding tasks.

The research concludes that Malta, while not yet fully prepared to embrace robots and AI in five-star hotels, exhibits signs of cautious optimism. The survey results, while contradictory, are encouraging. They suggest that the industry is beginning to contemplate the role of robots and AI in shaping the future of hospitality. Coupled with the willingness of some managers to explore the potential of these technologies, it appears that the industry may be on the cusp of change.

The study emphasises that the successful integration of robots and AI in hospitality depends on several key factors:

- Guest perception: Understanding and addressing guest concerns regarding the impact of robots on the service experience is paramount.
- Employee training: Preparing employees to work alongside robots and AI through training and upskilling is essential.
- Strategic implementation: Carefully selecting tasks and departments best suited for automation can enhance efficiency without compromising the human touch.
- Learning from other markets: Observing and learning from the experiences of countries like Japan, China, and the United States, which have higher rates of robot adoption in the hospitality industry, can offer valuable insights.

This research underscores the importance of embracing innovation while carefully considering the human element in the hospitality industry. By striking a balance between technological advancements and the human touch, the industry can navigate the challenges of staff shortages, evolving guest expectations, and the increasingly digital nature of service delivery.

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This research underscores the importance of embracing innovation while carefully considering the human element in the hospitality industry.

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Reinventing the Scuba Diving Training Industry:

A quantitative assessment of the current business offering and emerging need of change



BY DAMIAN XUERE B
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN DIVING SAFETY MANAGEMENT

This dissertation critiques the established pyramid qualification model dominated by a few major diving training agencies, which has remained largely unchanged since the 1970s, other than the addition of technical diving and online lectures. The researcher, a director of a consulting firm and a partner in an engineering firm, brings both industry and academic perspectives to the analysis. The research is supervised by Dr. Simon Caruana, academic manager at ITS.

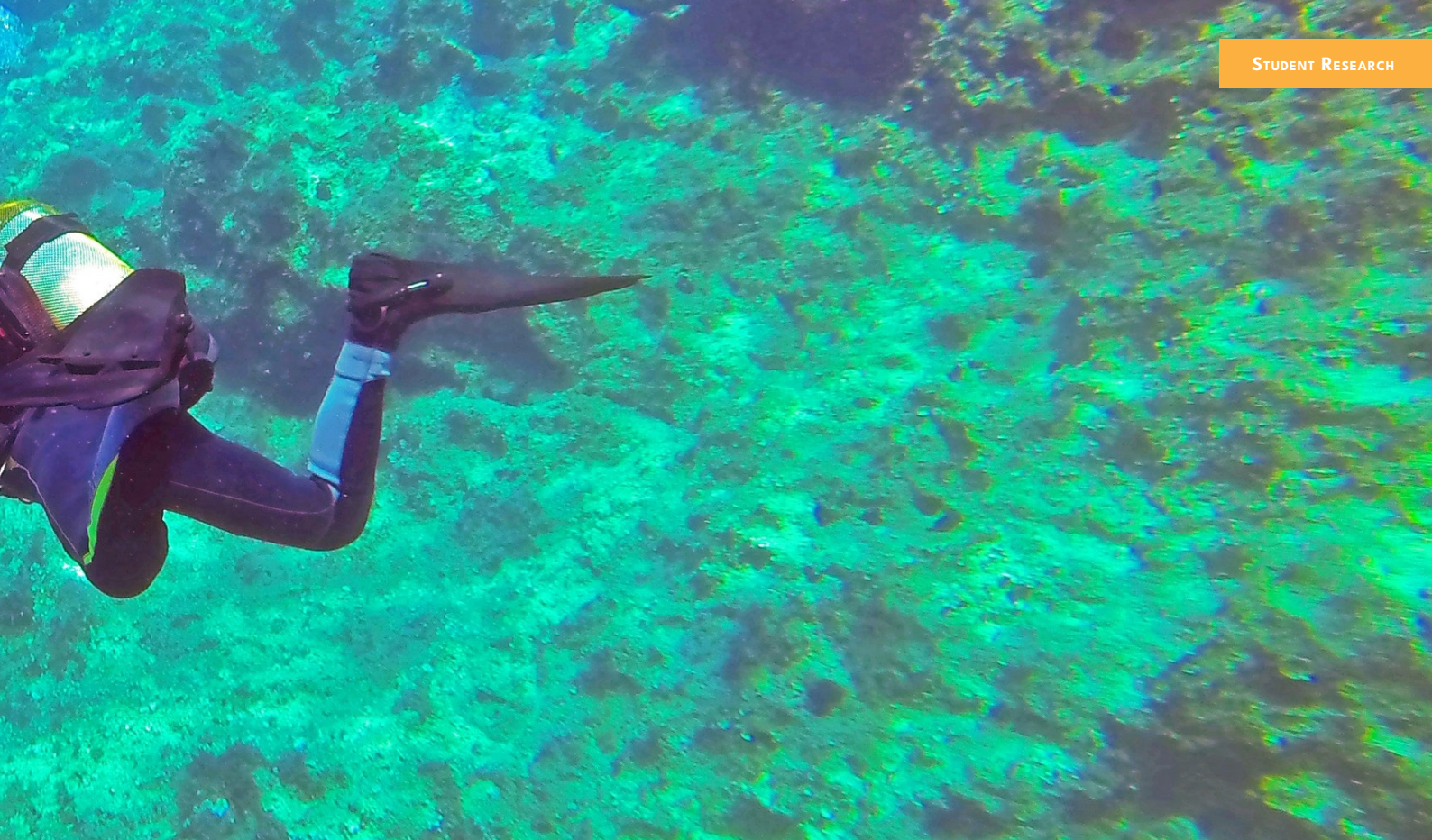
The core argument is that a lack of innovation and a disproportionate distribution of revenue are leading to decreased participation and, consequently, compromised safety within the industry. The study utilises descriptive statistics to explore cause and effect, aiming to challenge the existing model and propose a new approach to dive training.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review of the dissertation uses McCarthy's (1960) 4P model, encompassing Product, Price, Place, and Promotion, as its framework for assessing the marketing mix within the dive training industry. The review acknowledges that the 4P model has been successfully applied across various industries. To understand the market dynamics, the author also employs Google Gemini's AI to analyse the 4Ps. The AI generated results which are a reflection of the current industry practices, with core text that is PADI-driven. The analysis reveals conventional approaches such as streamlining the certification process through online modules, diversifying training methods, offering flexible payment options, and establishing training centres in popular destinations. These are generally considered to be run-of-the-mill approaches, not demonstrating real innovation. The author notes anecdotal evidence suggesting a decline in scuba diving training uptake

globally. The industry is seen as aging, with a decreasing number of new divers entering the sport. Additionally, the training model has become fragmented with smaller 'specialisations' being offered to increase revenue, a model that has been widely criticised.

Certification equivalencies and the rise of new training institutes indicate a lack of innovation within the industry. The publication of global training standards for recreational scuba diving such as ISO 24802-1:2014 puts the current business model into question. The minimum specifications outlined in the ISO standards show that training agencies should use philosophies such as minimum viable product (MVP), Agile and Lean, although this has not happened in the diving industry yet. Fragmentation in the industry has led to a proliferation of micro dive centres, which are unable to provide the level of safety and quality needed. The



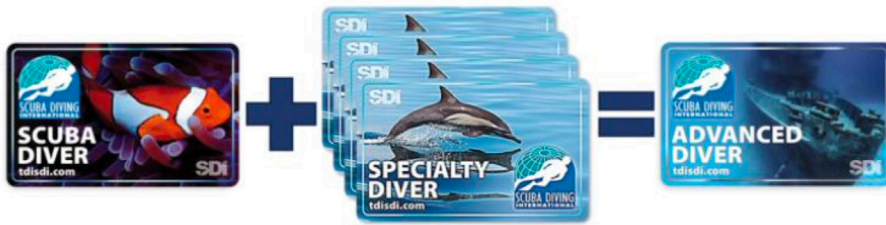
push to compress courses into the shortest time possible has led to a decline in quality, and this approach is moving away from the philosophy of safety. The lack of quality and low margins also lead to fewer instructors taking up the job.

The literature review highlights several critical issues within the existing dive training model, including a focus on minimum standards, a lack of quality assurance, and an over-reliance on e-learning. The current training process consists of theoretical chapters and practical skills sessions, with instructors often limited to delivering minimum standards of education. The number of dives required to achieve confidence varies greatly, yet the industry focuses on simply meeting the minimum requirements rather than ensuring true proficiency. The research proposes radical changes including making all learning materials freely available and offering three new training programs:

Sports Diver, Technical Diver, and Dive Professional. It also proposes a move away from short courses and towards a mentoring method with pay-as-you-go options, skill-by-skill testing, and a continuous improvement model. Dive professionals should become the focus of the new business model, with higher levels of quality, audits, and continuous improvement documentation. The study suggests that good instruction and safe diving require significantly more training than the minimum standards proposed by the training agencies.

Regarding 'Price,' the dissertation argues that training limits are determined by individual agencies and the World Recreational Scuba Training Council (WRSTC), leading to a lack of competition and a training cartel. The standardisation of training procedures limits differentiation to only marketing and e-learning materials. The standardisation creates interoperability,

with students switching agencies and mutual recognition between agencies. Training is structured as a pyramid scheme: 'Want to go deeper? Pay more'. Courses comprise of the same components: theory, confined water practice, and open water training. The price of courses varies very little, with agencies charging about €100 for certification. The author notes that quality assurance is lacking and that current training practices are often ripped off from other training agencies. There is little client management beyond mailshots and the training agencies have become vulnerable to market disruption. The author suggests a larger focus on the instructor and that a financially resilient industry relies on independent instructors. The new pricing model includes an ongoing subscription for e-learning materials, with fees kicking in from the exam onwards, along with a mentor system where students have access to an instructor for as long as the subscription is paid. The dissertation



Specialisation stackup to achieve an advanced diver certification

proposes that training materials and skill development programmes are wrongly priced and positioned.

In terms of 'Place,' the research suggests that the training agency is becoming irrelevant with instructor quality being the main differentiator. The study notes that despite branding efforts, recreational divers do not recognise agency brands. What really affects safety is the individual instructor. The dissertation proposes that instructors are key differentiators in the training business, validating that when it comes to choosing a dive training programme, the instructor is key. Dive centres have refocused on high-quality training and specialisation, with 'place' being the most important of the 4Ps. The technical agencies, such as GUE and TDI, are seen as having a better approach to training through their promotion of rigidity. The training agencies view instructors as training clients, with little interest other than selling courses to them. The agencies do not audit instructors for quality, teaching standards, or academic contributions, and only consider success based on the sales of certifications. The dissertation suggests that governments need to take a lead on regulation as self-regulation is insufficient when profit is the main driver. Measuring skill through numbers is also incorrect.

With regards to 'Promotion,' the research points towards the need to make diving more accessible, inclusive, and appealing to younger generations. The study highlights the importance of the environmental, social, and health benefits of diving. The study notes that few studies have assessed the health benefits of scuba diving, despite the positive effect on human mental health.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology adopts a postpositivist approach, aiming to empirically test the proposed theories. The research method reduces the ideas into a "small, discrete set of ideas to test" using variables that constitute hypotheses and research questions. This allows a "careful observation and measurement of the objective reality". The study uses a quantitative research method and a Likert-type four scale, multi-item questionnaire distributed amongst diving professionals. The questionnaire, consisting of 28 items, was divided into sections focusing on Demographics, Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. The sample size was calculated based on an estimated population of 200,000 diving professionals, and the study aimed for a 95% confidence interval. The target population included individuals within the diving industry, with internet access, and irrespective of demographic variables. The research used an online data collection method and did not have specific control over who completed the survey. The instrument was refined through discussions with academics and instructor trainers, and the survey was piloted with a group of dive professionals. The questionnaire was distributed through social media networks aimed at diving professionals. The study took precautions to reduce potential biases, including those related to location, age, and low response rates.

RESULTS

The results of the survey include participation from 379 diving professionals. The demographic data indicates a bias towards middle age in the diving industry. The majority of participants have 1000+ dives and the survey also showed that

Technical Diving Instructors account to 50% of the responses of Diving Instructors in the key working band 41-60. The sample collected responses from a variety of locations globally, including the US, Malta, Italy, Germany and the UK.

The analysis of the 'Product' section reveals a consensus that the current training model does not offer enough training hours. While there is a correlation between increased training hours and skill-by-skill certification, the relationship is weak. There was also a mild agreement with the statement that the current pyramid model is repetitive. The analysis of 'Place' highlights that instructors are central to the diving industry, while training agencies are becoming irrelevant. A weak relationship was found between using various learning materials and endorsement of instructor quality. The 'Price' analysis revealed that while there is no strong agreement towards a subscription-based model, there is a strong correlation between long-term mentoring and increased diver commitment. The study also found that the diving industry limits quality due to the low price of training, and there is no strong support for more government regulation. The study did confirm that there is too much competition and that instructors are underpaid. The analysis of 'Promotion' shows that professionals strongly believe that diving should be promoted as a sustainable activity. There is a weak positive linear relationship between promoting diving as a sustainable activity and offering volunteering opportunities. The respondents also agreed with the idea that diving should become affordable for young people and be offered as a sport in schools.

Product

“Good instruction and safe diving require significantly more training than the minimum standards proposed by the training agencies.”

Price

“Training materials and skill development programmes are wrongly priced and positioned.”

Place

“Training and skills are dependent on the instructor, less so on the dive centre. The training agency has no bearing.”

Promotion

“The diving population is aging hence it is becoming less attractive to younger generations.”

The 4Ps applied to the current diving market

The conclusions of the dissertation indicate that there is traction for a change in the diving training industry, particularly in relation to the ‘Product’ and ‘Place’. There is agreement about the need for more training hours, and the instructor, rather than the training agency is the central focus for good training. The study indicates that diving materials may become obsolete and that ISO standards may make the current training model irrelevant. It is also suggested that training agencies should do more to retain instructors, and that independent professionals will find a problem with dive centre certifications in the future. With regards to price, the study suggests a more profitable instructor-led model of business promotion and that long-term student mentoring will result in more committed divers. The study also highlights the importance of promoting diving as a sustainable activity and making it more affordable and accessible to younger

generations. There is also consensus that accessibility needs to improve.

The recommendations from the dissertation focus on the need for a radical shift in the current training model, moving away from the pyramid scheme, and toward skill-based assessment and subscription-based training. The study calls for a change in the focus to quality of education and instructor development. It suggests the need to explore subscription-based services, different price points, financial models for both training agencies and instructors, and ways to improve quality through regulatory measures and standardisation.

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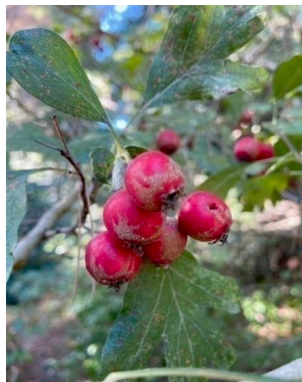
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Foraging in the Maltese Archipelago: A comparison of its use between the past and present

BY STEPHANIA ABELA TICKLE
MASTER OF ARTS IN HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

This master's thesis explores the practice of foraging within the Maltese Islands, comparing historical practices with contemporary approaches to understand how oral and traditional foraging practices shape the local population. The research investigates the passion for foraging among locals, the influence of modern technology on cross-cultural understanding, and the preservation of cultural heritage. It addresses the gap in knowledge regarding foraged food, aiming to document existing practices, recall past knowledge, and understand how this knowledge has evolved. The research also evaluates the sustainability of current foraging practices and considers the need for educational programmes to preserve cultural heritage.

The literature review reveals a scarcity of information on foraging practices in Malta, particularly regarding the culinary uses of foraged foods. While there is an abundance of literature on Maltese history, especially on the Knights of St. John and the British periods, there is very little information on foraging. This lack of knowledge extends to the socio-economic aspects of the Maltese population, particularly concerning food and foraged resources. Historical accounts show that honey was one of Malta's few exports during the Roman Empire, with wild thyme honey harvested during the Feast of St. Anne. The islands also had an abundance of fish and game, with rabbit dishes being a popular part of the cuisine. The study notes the importance of wild thyme, which is now protected by law, and the historical use of Maltese honey, exported during the Roman era. Furthermore, the research shows that there is a tradition of using herbs for



The step-by-step process of making jam from picking the fruit and the conservation of the fruit's stone for propagation

medicinal purposes. The first known Maltese sweets recipe book, which demonstrates the frequent use of honey, dates to 1748, and it is generally attributed to Michele Mercieca.

Despite the rich biodiversity of the Maltese Islands, with over 2000 species of plants and fungi, and over 4000 species of insects, there is limited documentation of their uses for food, medicine, or other purposes. There is also a lack of specialised books on foraging in the Maltese Islands, with only one notable guidebook by Friends of the Earth Malta (FoE). More readily available literature tends to focus on medical uses

for foraged plants and herbs, rather than for food. The MEMORJA project, an initiative by the National Archives of Malta to archive oral and visual recollections of the past, has not yet included any records of foraging. Recent publications, such as the three volumes by Dr Steve Borg, offer insights into the lives of the Maltese people, including their food and hardships, although they do not focus primarily on foraging. The researcher references international foraging literature which promotes the practice of incorporating foraged ingredients into daily lifestyles. In comparison, foraging knowledge is not readily available on the



Making carob flour

Maltese Islands. The legal framework surrounding foraging differs greatly from other countries, with Maltese laws not specifically addressing the uprooting of plants. There are over 10,000 hunting licenses in Malta, and this contributes to debates between hunters and conservationists. Subsistence fishing, defined as fishing for personal consumption, is still permitted in Malta. The existing literature suggests a decline in foraging knowledge, which the study aims to address.

The research adopted a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews with 20 participants, including farmers, authors, entrepreneurs, and housewives, all with a passion for foraging. The qualitative approach was chosen to gather detailed insights into the participants' experiences and interpretations of foraging, placing emphasis on varying perspectives and values. The interviews aimed to create a collaborative dialogue, allowing participants to freely express their thoughts and memories. A set of

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The most popular foraged items seem to include nettles, capers, snails, borage, bay leaves, carob, fennel, prickly pear, wild spinach, rocket, and quince.

semi-structured interview questions was used to ensure consistency, but with the flexibility to explore topics further when needed. The interviews, conducted between November 2022 and March 2023, were recorded to preserve the data for analysis. The qualitative method was chosen to fully explore human behaviour patterns and processes in relation to foraging. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview data, with codes assigned based on the

most relevant information to the research, and themes developed directly from the participants' statements. Ethical considerations were prioritised, with all participants provided with information sheets, consent forms, and assurances of anonymity.

The data analysis revealed four primary themes: the passion for foraging, the evolution of foraging over time, barriers to foraging, and the impact of commodification and consumerism. The study found that some participants had varying understandings of the term 'foraging,' with some viewing it as solely gathering wild plants, excluding hunting and fishing. Hunting is an

important aspect of foraging, with many participants expressing a strong connection to this practice, despite the strict laws and regulations in place. The study shows that while some view hunting as a tradition, others perceive it as a threat to birds and the environment. Participants also noted the impact of changing hunting laws, with some expressing frustration over the restrictions. The research also highlights the influence



The researcher conducting a nature walk where the history and carob foraging practices are explained as an experiment for this thesis

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The study also found that there is a strong emphasis on the use of local produce and traditional ingredients in both cooking and foraging.

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Chicken mushroom from a site at the limits of Rabat

of modern consumerism on traditional foraging practices, with participants noting a decline in awareness and knowledge of foraging and a lack of time as a barrier. The study also found that there is a strong emphasis on the use of local produce and traditional ingredients in both cooking and foraging. The most popular foraged items seem to include nettles, capers, snails, borage, bay leaves, carob, fennel, prickly pear, wild spinach, rocket, and quince. The lack of knowledge sharing among foragers was also found to be a significant barrier, with some foragers reluctant to share information due to fear of misuse or abuse. There is also some integration of traditional knowledge with modern information through online searches. The research notes an absence of mushroom foraging in Malta due to a lack of information. In addition, foraging for animal byproducts such as rennet and blood was found to be

less common, with most families no longer making cheese at home. Fishing is still a popular foraging activity in Malta, although it has become more of a leisure activity than a necessity for survival.

The study concludes that foraging, while once a necessity, is now more of a pastime that connects people with nature and cultural heritage. However, there are a number of challenges, including a lack of knowledge sharing, an aging population with fading memories, and a younger generation with a focus on certain foraged items. The research recommends the establishment of an interpretation centre to share information and conduct workshops in collaboration with NGOs and ERA. It is also suggested that nature walks be organised to provide first-hand knowledge of edible plants. The research highlights the need to include information on edible

plants in existing legislation to guide people on what they can and cannot forage. Furthermore, education on conservation is needed to promote responsible hunting, in line with the existing laws and regulations. The researcher recommends that the Institute of Tourism Studies include modules that educate young chefs on local foraged produce. The study also recommends the further investigation of hunting travel programs within the EU, which could help control animal populations and encourage sustainable hunting practices.

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Thyme

ITS Events Timeline

This timeline highlights key events at our Institute, covering the period from the previous issue to the current one. It includes new partnerships, academic inaugurations, and international expansions, all of which underscore our dedication to excellence, growth, and innovation in tourism and hospitality education.

4 AUGUST

ITS & Kobe International University Sign Agreement to Enhance Academic Collaboration

The Institute of Tourism Studies and Kobe International University (KIU) launched a 2+2 Bachelor's Degree in International Hospitality Management. Students will spend two years in Japan and two in Malta, gaining global exposure through a joint curriculum and rigorous admission process.



30 SEPTEMBER

Institute of Tourism Studies Welcomes 2024-2025 Academic Year with Record Number of New Students

The Institute of Tourism Studies launched the 2024-2025 academic year on 27th September with Freshers' activities and an Opening Ceremony on 30th September. Applications rose by 17%, with growth across all programmes. During the Opening Ceremony, speakers highlighted the importance of academic and practical training for future industry success.



27 SEPTEMBER

ITS & ALECSO Sign a Memorandum of Understanding to Enhance Hospitality and Tourism Education in the Middle East

The Institute of Tourism Studies and ALECSO signed an MoU to enhance tourism education in the Middle East. The partnership includes dual degree programmes, faculty exchanges, and curriculum development, aiming to improve education and elevate professionals in the tourism sector.



9 OCTOBER

ITS and SfCE Sign a Memorandum of Understanding Supporting VET Hospitality Education for Catholic Church Schools in Malta

The Institute of Tourism Studies and the Secretariat for Catholic Education (SfCE) signed an MoU to enhance VET Hospitality education in Catholic schools. The collaboration offers students practical industry exposure and aligns with the SEC syllabus, fostering skill development for future careers.



12 OCTOBER

Institute of Tourism Studies and Shanghai Institute of Tourism Sign a Cooperation Agreement to Establish a Culture Exchange Centre

The Institute of Tourism Studies and Shanghai Institute of Tourism (SIT) established the “China-Europe Tourism and Food Culture Exchange Centre”. This five-year initiative promotes cultural exchange, educational collaboration, and research, focusing on tourism and culinary education between China and Europe.



2 DECEMBER

ITS Graduation 2024 Celebrates Milestone in Sustainable Tourism Education

On 2nd December 2024, the Institute of Tourism Studies celebrated the graduation of 300 students, from Foundation to Master's level. Highlights included 44 graduates in the Diploma in Climate-Friendly Travel. Minister Ian Borg praised their role in Malta's tourism growth.



14 OCTOBER

ITS Launches Academic Year 2024-2025 at Malta International School in China

The Institute of Tourism Studies inaugurated the 2024-2025 academic year at Malta International School (MIS) in Shanghai, in collaboration with the Shanghai Industrial and Commercial Polytechnic (SICP). Thirty-nine students enrolled in a two-year Higher National Diploma, focusing on Events or Food and Beverage Management.





The advantages and disadvantages of traditional travel agencies Vs. online travel agencies

KAYLEIGH PORTELLI
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This undergraduate dissertation explores the evolving dynamics within the travel industry, focusing on the competition and coexistence of traditional travel agencies (TTAs) and online travel agencies (OTAs). The research employs a mixed-methods approach to understand both the service providers' and travellers' perspectives, with a specific focus on the Maltese population.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review establishes the background of the research by defining travel agencies as key intermediaries that arrange travel for clients, including flights, accommodation, and other amenities. It acknowledges the historical dominance of TTAs, while highlighting the significant expansion of OTAs due to the internet, which offers travellers greater access to information, quicker responses, and often lower prices. The literature review also notes that, in contrast to the accessibility of OTAs, TTAs provide superior customer service that is more personalised. This section of the study looks at the customer's decision-making process, which is influenced by diverse factors, including personal preferences, brand loyalty, and the value of a product. The review

explains how customers progress from the awareness of various options to a focused consideration and then a final decision. This process includes both utilitarian and hedonic considerations. The role of the internet in streamlining the decision-making process is also considered.

The study goes on to define and characterise TTAs, noting how they have been the traditional intermediaries in the travel industry, offering expertise through face-to-face interactions. Despite the rise of technology, TTAs continue to provide unique value. The review also considers how TTAs have started to use technology to remain competitive. The review analyses the advantages of using TTAs, which include expertise, individualised service, and access to information, while also acknowledging that TTAs face challenges due to today's culture, which values convenience and quick access. The literature review then delves into the world of OTAs, noting that they operate as third-party distributors using either an agent or merchant model. OTAs have become prominent in the tourism market because they offer accessibility, free information, and advanced search functions. The section ends with a balanced look at the advantages and

disadvantages of OTAs, with a focus on the convenience they offer whilst highlighting drawbacks such as the lack of human interaction.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology chapter explains the research design and data collection techniques that were used. The researcher chose a mixed-methods approach that combined both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to allow for a deep understanding of the research topic from diverse perspectives. The methods included semi-structured interviews with managers or directors of TTAs and questionnaires that were distributed to Maltese travellers aged 40-70 who had used both TTAs and OTAs. The interviews allowed for an in-depth understanding of the TTAs and their operations. The questionnaires were used to obtain information from the travellers themselves about their experiences and preferences when using both TTAs and OTAs. The researcher collected primary data for this study to obtain original insights and perspectives from the Maltese travellers. However, secondary data was used for the literature review chapter. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive analysis,

and the qualitative data was analysed using content analysis. A pilot study was conducted to assess the research tools before the data collection process was started. The study also followed ethical considerations throughout to ensure it was carried out responsibly and respectfully, having obtained prior approval from the institute's ethics committee. Finally, the methodology chapter explores the limitations of the study which included, the personal biases of the researcher, the lack of recent literature on TTAs, the difficulty of obtaining feedback from OTAs and the challenge of ensuring unbiased feedback from the respondents.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis section presents the results of the interviews and the questionnaires. The interviews with the three TTA representatives revealed the following common themes: TTAs provide the advantage of face-to-face interaction which is an important part of planning complex holidays or finding first-hand information about visa requirements. The managers also emphasized that TTAs offer a personalised experience and enhanced security. There were different responses regarding the impact of OTAs on TTAs. One participant noted that customers were now more intrigued by the possibility of planning their own holidays, another stated that OTAs do not affect their business since they have a good clientele base. Another participant stated that customers were more demanding and ask for more detailed information. Regarding the use of printed brochures, one manager stated that printed brochures were an added cost, while also being a must-have, because many customers in Malta still prefer the tangible experience of viewing a brochure.

The questionnaire results indicated that most of the respondents were in the 40-49 age range. The questionnaires showed that respondents used TTAs for carefully planned packages and specific types of holidays. The importance of personalized customer service was also a strong reason for booking through TTAs. The respondents stated that they booked through OTAs mainly for prices, simple booking processes, and convenience. The data also revealed that respondents required most help with finding accommodation and planning itineraries. The importance of reliable information when booking through

TTAs was noted, whereas, the importance of convenience and price were highlighted for OTAs. The level of trust in OTAs was varied, with many respondents noting that they "somewhat trust" the information provided. Issues encountered when using both TTAs and OTAs mostly revolved around accommodation and the accuracy of the information provided. Finally, the majority of the respondents said that they generally preferred OTAs. Many respondents added that their preference depended on the type of holiday.

DISCUSSION

The discussion section analyses and triangulates the results from the interviews and questionnaires with the findings from the literature review. It notes how the questionnaire responses show that customers book through OTAs due to competitive pricing, convenience, and accessibility, which aligns with the existing literature. While the respondents value information from TTAs, they are more sceptical about the information provided by OTAs. While the respondents agree that visually appealing websites are important, they do not necessarily determine the final booking decision. The findings indicated that travellers are shifting towards OTAs, however, the interviewees stated that their TTAs continued to succeed, suggesting that they may have adjusted the services they offer.

The importance of the personal contact offered by TTAs was discussed in the light of the communication difficulties that might arise with OTAs. The level of service provided by TTAs was shown to be an added benefit for customers. The study also notes that the respondents trust the information provided by TTAs, and that they valued price transparency. The study concludes that despite the convenience offered by OTAs, TTAs still offer distinct advantages like face-to-face interaction, and expertise, and it notes that any negative experience with either a TTA or an OTA affects customer retention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that TTAs and OTAs should continue to improve their services to remain competitive in the market. TTAs must focus on their strengths, such as personalised service and expertise, while also developing online visibility. OTAs, on the other hand, must prioritize enhancing customer service and providing reliable, accurate information. The researcher suggests that future research should explore technological advancements, the use of sustainable practices, and marketing

strategies employed by travel agencies. In conclusion, this research provides a detailed look at the dynamics between TTAs and OTAs within the travel industry, specifically within the context of Maltese travellers. The study highlights the importance of a multi-faceted approach in understanding the factors that influence customer preferences in a constantly changing travel market. The study's validity and reliability are supported using a mixed-methods approach, triangulation methods, and by the adherence to ethical research protocols.

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The Saluting Battery at the Upper Barracca, Valletta.

Malta's Destination Management Companies

BY LIAM FALZON
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This research investigates the challenges faced by Malta-based Destination Management Companies (DMCs) within the corporate events industry. The study explores the role of DMCs in Malta's tourism sector, their contribution to the local economy, and the difficulties they encounter. It also aims to propose strategies to mitigate these challenges and assess the competitiveness and future of DMCs in Malta.

The **literature review** begins by defining a Destination Management Company as a stand-alone hospitality and tourism organisation that has qualified personnel and resources to manage events such as meetings, team-building activities and incentive trips. The review also highlights the significance of destination marketing, particularly the importance of a favourable destination image for attracting corporate events. It outlines the steps that Destination

Management Organisations (DMOs) or DMCs should take in destination branding, including identifying unique selling points, creating persuasive messages, developing a positioning statement, and establishing a visual identity. The review notes that towns and cities are often the preferred locations for corporate events due to their facilities and transport options. Various business event categories are considered, including corporate meetings, awards ceremonies, incentive travel and governmental events, all with distinct goals and formats.

The importance of planning corporate hospitality events is explored, emphasising the need to define event objectives and select the right hosts and guests to achieve successful outcomes. The literature review also addresses the environmental and economic costs associated with corporate events, noting the impact of travel on the environment and the potential for underutilised conference centres to waste public funding. Furthermore, it explores the Quality Assured Seal for DMCs in Malta, highlighting its role in enhancing the professionalism and competitiveness of the sector.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the study is based on a qualitative approach, employing semi-structured interviews and participant observations. The researcher conducted interviews with managing directors of two DMCs and personnel from two hospitality service companies. These interviews aimed to gather in-depth perspectives on the challenges faced by DMCs, the operational aspects of corporate event organisation, and the relationships between DMCs and hospitality service companies. Participant observations were conducted at three corporate events organised by DMCs, which allowed for first-hand insights into the practical challenges encountered during event execution. The researcher also performed a pilot study to test the interview questions, and adjust them accordingly to obtain more detailed responses. The data were analysed using thematic analysis, a method for identifying patterns and meanings within a dataset, which facilitated the identification of recurring

themes relating to the challenges faced by DMCs. Triangulation was employed, comparing the findings of interviews, observations, and the literature review, to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the subject. The researcher also addressed ethical considerations, obtaining consent and ensuring the anonymity of participants. Limitations of the study were also recognised, including the researcher's dual role as an observer and host during events, which could have impacted their observations.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis is presented by first analysing results from the semi-structured interviews with the managing directors of two DMCs, and the sales, events and venue personnel of two hospitality service companies. One of the DMCs focused

high-end hotel brands. The significant effort that DMCs have to make when presenting options to clients is also noted, with many proposals being discarded. However, Malta is also viewed as a competitive destination due to its use of English, unique selling points, and reasonable prices. The hospitality service companies noted the importance of accessibility, well-organised facilities, parking and efficient public transport. Data from observations of three corporate events revealed issues including a lack of client adherence to the DMC's proposed plans, and timing and logistical problems.

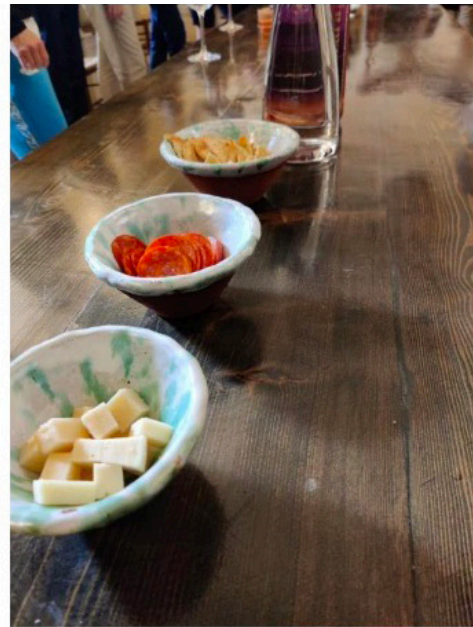
DISCUSSION

The discussion section consolidates the findings from interviews and observations and connects them to the existing literature. Effective destination marketing is deemed crucial for attracting international corporations, and the study highlights challenges such as communication problems, budget and time constraints, and supplier management issues, all of which can affect the outcome of corporate events. The need for skilled and dedicated team members, strong supplier relationships, and effective communication strategies was highlighted as essential for addressing such challenges. Despite a contradictory discussion on the pricing levels of Malta compared to the quality of service, there was consensus on the island's competitive advantages such as its reduced travel distance and English-speaking environment. The benefits that Malta derives from hosting corporate events include

the delegates spending money in the local markets, as well as boosting investments in infrastructure. However, the economic, environmental and labour costs were also addressed as a consequence of hosting such events, such as increased air travel,

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The review notes that towns and cities are often the preferred locations for corporate events due to their facilities and transport options.

exclusively on corporate events in Malta, while the other operated in multiple destinations. Challenges identified included the limited scope of product offerings in Malta, noise pollution stemming from urban development, and the absence of



A visit at tal-Massar Vineyard.

and the need for DMCs to invest more in labour due to a lack of local personnel in the industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations drawn from the study include the need for skilled and dedicated team members, effective communication, maintaining strong supplier relationships and trust within partnerships. The author also suggests the need for

innovative business ideas, good marketing intelligence and digital advertising to further enhance the competitiveness of Malta-based DMCs. The study concludes that the future of DMCs in Malta depends on the ability to address various challenges, including attracting young personnel, penetrating unique markets, and promoting cooperation within the tourism industry. Additionally the study highlights the importance of thorough analysis of data, such as through thematic

analysis, and the usefulness of triangulating data to draw robust conclusions.

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Measuring Employees' Environmental and Sustainability Knowledge in a Local 4 Star Hotel

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This dissertation investigates the level of environmental and sustainability knowledge among hotel employees in a four-star hotel in Malta. The research aims to identify any gaps in their understanding, which can be used to better educate employees within the hospitality industry about sustainability and to assist in achieving EU targets. The research employs a case study of the chosen hotel, questionnaires for lower-level employees, and a focus group with heads of department.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study acknowledges the global concern for environmental health and the formulation of strategies to protect the natural environment. It highlights the importance of educating hotel employees about sustainability, especially in the hospitality industry, which is considered a wasteful sector. The literature review emphasizes that the European Union (EU) is putting pressure on countries to adopt sustainable practices, making it essential to establish the level of knowledge among hotel employees to achieve EU targets.

The literature review identifies a research gap, noting that many studies have focused on the hotel industry in specific cities, rather than on one specific hotel. This study aims to fill that gap by focusing on one four-star hotel, which can serve as a benchmark for future research because there are several four-star hotels in Malta of similar size. The study also addresses the lack of understanding of corporate social responsibility and environmental awareness among managers. It seeks to measure

employees' knowledge to help implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Agenda 2030, and Agenda 2050.

The literature review explores various aspects of sustainability in hotels, including corporate social responsibility, sustainability management, and environmental awareness. It includes the definition of sustainability from the Brundtland Report: "development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The review also highlights the importance of sustainability education in hotel operations. Past research in Macau found that hotels adopt green strategies for cost savings, government laws, and consumer demands. Similarly, a study in Turkey revealed that employees with higher education levels are more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviours. Additionally, studies in Pakistan and Malaysia highlight the impact of leadership styles and environmental management practices on employees' eco-friendly behaviour.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a mixed-methods approach, combining a case study, questionnaires, and a focus group. The questionnaire, designed for lower-level employees, included questions about their knowledge of environmental issues, while the focus group gathered information from the upper management. The questionnaire employed binomial questions (yes/no and true/false) to allow for qualitative analysis. The data from both the questionnaires and focus group was analyzed qualitatively. This combination of methods aimed to provide

a comprehensive view of environmental knowledge and behaviours within the hotel.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data collection methods included a case study, questionnaires and a focus group.

A **case study** was carried out on the selected four-star hotel, which was established in 1976, with significant renovations made in 2021. The objective of the case study was to discover what the hotel is currently doing to operate in a sustainable way and how it can improve. The hotel aims to reduce electricity consumption by 5%, water consumption by 3%, and mixed waste by 5%. The hotel separates waste, avoids single-use plastics, uses a water reservoir, and participates in the Beverage Container Refund Scheme (BCRS). The case study also identifies challenges such as the lack of space for solar panels and recommends solutions such as a reverse osmosis plant, water tap extensions, and the adoption of Eco-Certification.

72 questionnaires were distributed to entry-level employees, with 62 being returned. The results indicated that 46.77% of respondents were between 25-34 years old, with an even split of male and female respondents. Most of the respondents were educated on environmental issues and are Nepalese, Indian, or Hungarian. Key findings from the questionnaire data are that:

Most respondents who were educated on the environment in school also demonstrate behaviours leading to energy saving.

54.84% knew that solar energy is the most used renewable energy in Malta.

Paceville hotels. Photo by Jose A on Flickr.



74.19% knew that fossil fuels are the main contributor to global warming.

74.19% knew the three pillars of sustainability are environmental, social, and economic.

79% knew that the ozone layer protects Earth from ultraviolet radiation.

87% knew that the largest sources of marine pollution are plastics, oil spills and nutrient runoff.

Focus Group: 9 heads of department were invited to the focus group and 8 attended. The findings of the focus group were that:

Only one participant was educated on the environment in school.

All participants knew that solar energy is the most used renewable energy in Malta.

All participants knew that fossil fuels are the main contributor to global warming.

All participants knew the three pillars of sustainability are environmental, social, and economic.

All participants knew that the ozone layer protects the Earth from ultraviolet radiation.

All participants believed all hotels should be Eco-Certified, with inspections every few years.

Most participants were aware of environmental management.

Most managers thought they used self-servant leadership styles and

DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals several key points.

- **Discrepancies in knowledge:** While a higher percentage of entry-level employees were educated on the environment in schools than managers, the managers demonstrated better knowledge when answering general

knowledge questions. This may be because of the differences in school syllabi across nations, as most managers were Maltese and most entry level employees were not.

- **Behavioural differences:** Entry-level employees were more likely to purchase recyclable products and engage in environmentally friendly activities than the managers, which contradicts some of the literature.
- **Importance of management commitment:** The managers displayed a high commitment to sustainable practices, but better guidance is needed to lead their staff by implementing these practices themselves first.
- **Environmental management:** Hotel managers showed a high awareness of environmental management, which is similar to the findings of other studies.

Preluna Towers in Sliema. Photo by Speedyground on Flickr.



- **Impact of sustainability initiatives:** All focus group participants believed that acting on environmental issues would improve the hotel's competitive advantage.
- **Employee involvement:** The managers acknowledged the importance of involving entry-level employees in the process of making the hotel greener.
- **Need for Eco-Certification:** All participants believed that all hotels on the Maltese Islands should be Eco-Certified.
- **Economic considerations:** Participants discussed the economic advantages and disadvantages of acting on environmental issues, noting that it can depend on the size of the hotel.
- **CSR:** All members of the focus group agreed that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is important to the hotel.

The study also found that most employees were not aware of Agenda 2030, Agenda 2050, or the SDGs. These are important areas to promote amongst hotel employees, perhaps through campaigns and educational seminars. Entry-level employees showed a considerable knowledge of the environment and sustainability, whereas the managers showed an exceptional level of knowledge, although both had minimal awareness of the 2030 and 2050 Agendas and the SDGs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Further Research:** The study recommends that more research is carried out in other hotels of a similar size to validate these results. It also suggests comparing results with three- and four-star hotels that are not Eco-Certified.
- **Education and Training:** The study suggests that the hotel can increase its efforts to educate its staff on the SDGs and the 2030 and 2050 Agendas. The state can organize campaigns

and advertisements to educate staff effectively on a national level. It is recommended that hotel staff are better informed about the natural environment and sustainable practices. This could be done by organising more frequent training sessions.

- **Government Involvement:** The State should increase its efforts to educate hotel staff on the natural environment and sustainable practices. There should also be an increased focus on including these topics in the school syllabi.
- **Eco-Certification:** Hotels should seek Eco-Certification, and inspections should follow every few years to ensure standards are maintained.
- **Practical Measures:** The hotel should consider investing in reverse osmosis plants, water tap extensions, and other measures to further reduce its environmental impact. The hotel should promote their sustainability policy on the website.

Spinola Bay at night. Photo by Lucian Nicu on Flickr



- **Community Engagement:** The hotel can organize community clean-up events and other activities to increase engagement with staff and consumers.

In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the environmental knowledge and behaviours of hotel employees in Malta. It highlights the importance of education and training, and the need for greater awareness of the 2030 and 2050 Agendas and the SDGs.

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It is recommended that hotel staff are better informed about the natural environment and sustainable practices.

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Motivating Factors within the Front Office Employees in Malta's Five-Star hotels

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This dissertation investigates the motivating factors for front office employees within Malta's five-star hotels, aiming to understand what drives these employees to perform at high levels.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review begins by defining motivation as the psychological process that directs behaviour and provides purpose. It also notes that motivation is an internal drive to meet a need and achieve goals. The importance of motivation in the hospitality industry is emphasized due to its direct impact on productivity, customer service, and employee retention. The literature review also explores key motivational theories: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which proposes a pyramid of human needs from physiological to self-actualization; McGregor's Theory X and Y, which contrasts authoritative and participative management styles; the Expectancy Theory, which emphasizes the link between effort, performance, and rewards; and the Incentive Theory, which

suggests that external rewards influence behaviour. The review also discusses the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and how working conditions, employee engagement and motivational strategies impact motivation. It establishes that effective employee motivation requires a balance between these internal and external factors. The literature review concludes by emphasising the importance of understanding motivational factors to ensure a positive and productive work environment within the hospitality sector.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this study is a mixed-methods approach, involving both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. The first methodological approach included semi-structured interviews with front office managers from four renowned five-star hotels in Malta. These interviews aimed to gather managerial perspectives on motivation, including strategies, and techniques used. The managers were asked a series of open-ended questions relating to recognition

and reward, feedback and performance, employee feedback, career development, work environment, team building, work-life balance, communication, and how they handle challenging times.

The second methodological approach involved online surveys distributed to front office employees working in the same hotels. The surveys aimed to understand employee perceptions of motivation, their experience within their work environment, and the effectiveness of motivational strategies used. The survey included demographic questions as well as closed-ended questions with Likert-scale rating statements and open-ended questions about motivational strategies. A pilot study was conducted to test the feasibility and effectiveness of these research methods, refining both interview questions and survey questions to improve clarity and conciseness. Ethical considerations, such as anonymity and informed consent, were prioritized throughout both methods. The limitations included email communication difficulties with hotels and a lower than

expected survey response rate, which led to the addition of a miscellaneous survey. The method of analysis involved qualitative content analysis of interview responses to identify recurring themes, and quantitative statistical analysis of the survey data to give an overview of the data, and these were integrated to provide a complete overview.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis section presents the findings from both the interviews and the surveys. The interviews revealed that managers from all four hotels use similar motivational strategies including monthly reward schemes, employee recognition programs, team building activities, feedback sessions, and open communication practices. Managers emphasized the importance of regular feedback sessions, yearly appraisals, and initiatives to support career development within the company. They described their work environments as generally positive, emphasizing teamwork and mutual respect. Furthermore, hotels were seen to have some kind of team building outside of work such as dinners or outings. The analysis also found that the four hotels are good at implementing a two way communication process such as feedback surveys and open communication. The analysis of the survey data indicated that the majority of employees feel motivated at work and agree with the statements regarding opportunities for growth, recognition, and appreciation. Most participants preferred a balance of both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits, showing that employees are motivated both by personal development and external rewards. The majority of respondents also felt motivated by their direct management. The analysis of the open-ended questions in the survey showed that the motivating factors at each of the four hotels included personal development plans, monetary benefits, and recognition, and that these were seen to impact employee performance positively.

DISCUSSION

The discussion section connects the results from the data analysis to the literature review. The study found that the hotels are implementing many motivating strategies,

such as awards, which align with the Expectancy Theory and McGregor's Theory Y, and with the Incentive Theory, showing that when an employee's effort is rewarded, they will be more motivated to work hard and succeed. Furthermore, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is seen as a basis for much of the motivation found in the participating hotels, as most strive to meet both basic and higher level needs of their employees. The analysis also found that career development is greatly enhanced by a positive working environment and good working conditions, making the employees feel comfortable and confident in their roles.

The main research question was answered through a triangulation of the data obtained with the literature review, showing that the motivating factors in Malta's Five-Star Hotels consist of accountability, recognition, teamwork, social opportunities, training and development, and fair compensation. Finally, it was determined that a balance of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation will enhance employee satisfaction and performance and that this is being implemented in the participating hotels. The analysis and discussion of this study proves that the results support the information found in the literature review and that the participating five-star hotels are prioritising employee motivation.

The study concludes that employee motivation is crucial for maintaining and improving performance in the hospitality sector. The findings of the study emphasize the importance of both extrinsic and intrinsic factors in motivating employees, and that a blend of recognition, rewards, development, and a positive work environment is essential for maintaining a motivated workforce.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are that hotels should continue to focus on implementing motivational strategies that provide a balance of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators for the employees. Additionally, the study suggests that further research should investigate the reasons why Maltese people are not choosing hospitality as a career and how generational differences

impact management styles and their understanding of motivation. The study recommends further research in the form of longitudinal studies, to assess the long-term impact of motivational strategies. The evaluation of this research concluded that the study is reliable as recurring themes were found in the data, and valid, since the findings are aligned with prominent motivational theories. However it also notes that further research is needed with more hotels and employees in order to be more reliable.

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"Dames de Malte se faisant visite" (Maltese women paying a visit)
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A Shift in Maltese Historiography: Highlighting Women's Narratives

MARTIN DEBATTISTA
SENIOR ACADEMIC AT ITS AND EXECUTIVE EDITOR - FUTOURISTIC

“**D**iscovering Women's History In Malta” edited by Prof. Yosanne Vella, an academic at the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta, is one of the first attempts at highlighting the role of women in Maltese history, which so far has been mostly written by men.

In her introduction to the book, Prof. Vella describes her personal journey in advocating for the inclusion of women in Maltese history. Drawing upon Vella's own reflections, this piece examines the challenges she faced and the progress made in integrating women's experiences into mainstream historical narratives in Malta.

Vella contends that women's history should not be relegated to the margins or solely focused on exceptional figures. Instead, she emphasizes the need to incorporate the experiences of women from all walks of life into mainstream historical accounts. This integration, she argues, is not a

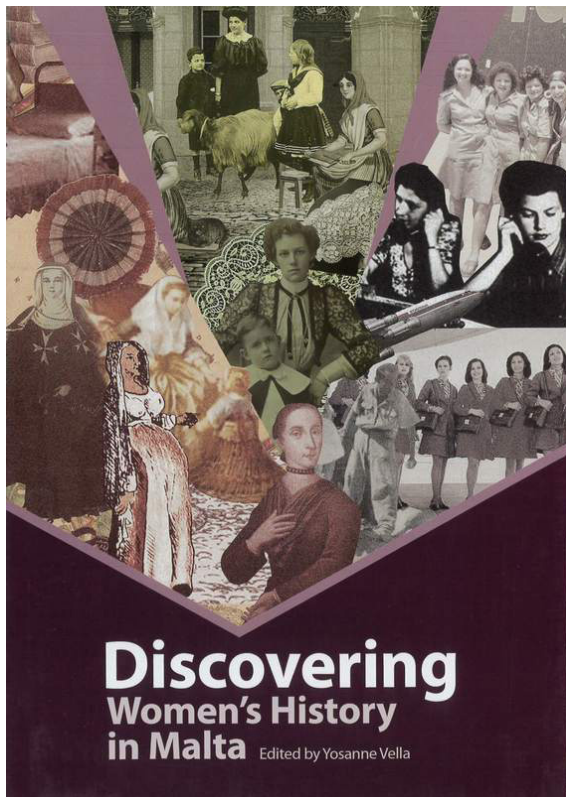
mere addition to existing narratives but a fundamental shift that can reshape the understanding of Malta's past. Vella criticizes the traditional focus on government, wars, politics, and economics as the sole subjects worthy of historical significance, arguing that factors like gender, social class, ethnicity, religion, and race shape historical interpretation.

Vella observes that the historical narratives in Malta have been predominantly shaped by white upper-class men, often clerics, resulting in the exclusion of women's experiences. She dedicated over two decades to researching and publishing works on women's history, particularly focusing on the 18th century. Her involvement with the UK's Women's History Network (WHN) and the International Federation for Research in Women's History provided further impetus for her work. However, Vella notes a sense of isolation in her pursuit within Malta, leading her to

declare in 2002 that the story of Maltese women remained largely unwritten.

Recognising the importance of education in raising awareness, Vella advocated for the inclusion of women's history in textbooks, worksheets, and classroom activities. She believed that this integration could only occur after historians undertook the necessary research to uncover and document women's contributions to Maltese history. Vella delivered a keynote speech at the WHN conference in 2016, focusing on strategies for incorporating women's history into educational settings.

By 2022, Vella observed a positive shift in the Maltese historical landscape with the emergence of women historians. The appointment of Simone Azzopardi as the first full-time woman historian at the Faculty of Arts, University of Malta, marked a significant milestone. Vella acknowledges that history is an interpretation based on evidence and not absolute truth. The



The cover of the book

presence of diverse perspectives, including those of women historians, enriches the understanding of the past by offering different interpretations. She emphasises the importance of considering multiple viewpoints to gain a more comprehensive and reliable understanding of Malta's history, particularly recognizing women's contributions as half of the population.

DETAILS OF MALTESE WOMEN IN HISTORY

Catherina Scappi founded the **Hospitaletto delle donne** in Valletta during the 17th century. Her motivation originated from a compassionate desire to provide care for "poor infirm women who have no means and cannot be cared for in their own homes." Scappi's hospital served a dual purpose: it was an act of piety intended to please God and it also served a practical function by helping to control the spread of disease in Valletta. The hospital operated

as both a hospital-hospice and a missionary hospital, offering medical care alongside spiritual guidance to women nearing the end of their lives.

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By 2022, Vella observed a positive shift in the Maltese historical landscape with the emergence of women historians.”

Rosa de Antonelli lived as a *libertina* (a freed slave) in the 18th century. She achieved a comfortable level of "financial status" later in life. Her will provides fascinating details about her life and priorities. It includes detailed instructions for her funeral proceedings and provisions for the care of her soul in the afterlife. In the later stages of her life, she became a Tertiary Nun of the Dominican Order and bequeathed a significant sum to the Dominican nuns in Valletta. Her story highlights the possibility of social mobility and agency that was available to some enslaved women.

Mrs. Anna Kilburn defied social expectations by operating a fashion shop at 271, Strada Reale in Valletta as early as 1816. In addition to fashionable attire, she also sold books from her shop. Her success as a businesswoman in the male-dominated 19th-century workforce highlights her determination and entrepreneurial spirit.

Mrs. Le Grand also achieved success as a businesswoman during this period. In 1836, she was the proprietor of one of Valletta's most highly regarded shops, situated opposite St John's Church. Her business, known as "Madame Le Grand's Milliners and Dressmakers," specialized in millinery and dressmaking. **Mrs. Le Grand's** story, like **Mrs. Kilburn's**, showcases the entrepreneurial spirit and skills possessed by women who were able to overcome societal constraints and excel in their chosen fields.

Henrietta Chevalier's story is one of courage and compassion. As a newly widowed woman who found herself in Rome when World War II broke out, she bravely chose to resist the Fascist regime. Working with a clandestine Vatican-run operation, **Chevalier** risked her life to work against the Fascists. She was part of the "Rome Escape Line," a network which helped thousands of Jews and Allied airmen escape capture by the Nazis.



Caterina Scappi

Dr. Irene Condachi's contributions to public health in Malta were significant. As the first full-time Senior Medical Officer (SMO) in Malta, she undertook extensive work, often under challenging conditions, during World War II. Her responsibilities included personally examining thousands of school children and overseeing their healthcare.

Dr. Condachi is credited with successfully eradicating Scabies from schools. Her efforts and dedication led to the expansion of the School Medical System (SMS) staff in recognition of the value of her work.

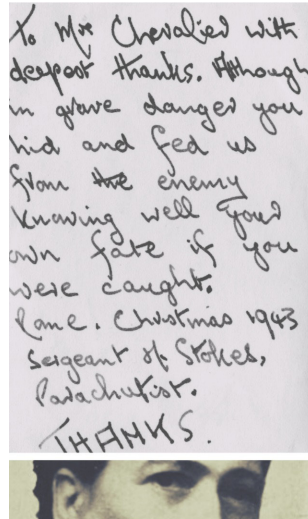
Mary Ellul, affectionately known as "Mary Man," was a figure of local legend. She was described as a "fabled, fearful, towering figure" whose appearance was considered more masculine than feminine. **Mary Ellul** was renowned for her strength and bravery, particularly during World War II when she was known for rescuing people from the



Mary Ellul



Isabelle Borg (photo from her website)



Henrietta Chevalier



rubble after air raids. Tragically, her heroic actions went largely unnoticed and she died unsung and forgotten.

Isabelle Borg (1959-2010) was a contemporary Maltese artist who incorporated her training and experiences abroad into her art. Her work frequently challenged traditional artistic norms and conveyed strong feminist messages. For instance, her painting "The Standing Nude" subverted the typical objectification of the female form in art by depicting only a pair of shoes and challenged the voyeuristic "peepshow" effect often found in Western art. **Borg** utilized her art as a platform for bold statements and critiques of societal expectations placed upon women.



Irene Condachi

Boosting the attractiveness of flights by implementing food allergy and intolerance strategies on board an aircraft

BY MARTINA SAMBUGARO
BACHELOR IN INTERNATIONAL HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT (HONS)

This dissertation by Martina Sambugaro, submitted in May 2024, investigates the possibility of “Boosting the attractiveness of flights by implementing food allergy and intolerance strategies on board an aircraft”. The study aims to identify ways that airlines can better accommodate passengers with food allergies and intolerances, thereby increasing customer satisfaction and making air travel more appealing. The dissertation specifically focuses on reactions to peanuts, eggs, gluten, and lactose, as they are among the most common food allergens. The research is intended to benefit airports,

airlines, researchers, and passengers by promoting a better understanding of the subject and providing practical strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review examines existing regulations and guidelines regarding the management of food allergies and intolerances in air travel. It identifies a significant issue: the lack of a specific, mandatory, common practice for airlines worldwide. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) suggests that allergen-sensitive passengers should be proactive in preventing reactions and prepared for

emergencies. IATA also notes that airlines should adhere to guidelines from the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and their own governments, which vary from state to state. EU regulation No. 1169/2011 mandates that all food products, including those sold on board aircraft, must clearly label allergens such as gluten, eggs, peanuts, and lactose. The European Centre for Allergy Research Foundation (ECARF) awards a seal of quality to airlines that demonstrate allergy-friendly practices, including providing allergen-free meals and training staff. The literature review also addresses the risk of In-Flight Medical Events



Image by LSG Skychefs on Wikimedia Commons

Gluten	Eggs	Peanuts	Lactose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following a gluten-free diet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoiding the allergen • Opting for vegan options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoiding the allergen • Always having an EpiPen® handy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following a lactose-free diet • Purchasing and orally taking lactase enzymes • Opting for vegan options

Solutions to avoid feeling sick from food allergens

They said that passengers should be able to request special meals during both online and physical check-in. The interviewees described that when a passenger discloses a strong food allergy at check-in, the airline agent asks for details, alerts supervisors, and makes notes in the system. Most of the interviewees felt that airlines were not doing enough to handle food allergies and intolerances. One interviewee admitted that they were not trained to handle allergen-sensitive passengers.

A SWOT analysis showed the internal and external factors related to the implementation of food allergy and intolerance strategies on board an aircraft. The potential strengths include increased customer satisfaction, higher retention, and positive feedback. The opportunities include a rise in sales, flights, and revenue. Weaknesses include increased operational costs, higher responsibilities and customer expectations. Threats include increased competition and legal complications due to errors or accidents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The dissertation provides a range of recommendations for airlines and passengers based on the analysis of the data. For airlines, it recommends that they should train cabin crew in first aid, and the recognition and handling of food allergy reactions. Airlines should also include clear and easily understandable FAQs on their official websites. It is also recommended to

consult with dietitians and allergists when developing in-flight menus. The dissertation also suggests having dedicated seating areas for allergen-sensitive passengers. The study recommends that airlines should ask about food allergies at all points of the journey, from booking to boarding. Clear menus with all ingredients and potential allergens on the website is also recommended. It was recommended that airlines should carry emergency medication such as an EpiPen and regularly check their expiry dates. The study recommends obtaining the ECARF seal of quality. It also advises airlines to ensure strict hygiene and cleanliness on flights. The study also recommends that airlines should make public announcements when requested by an allergen-sensitive passenger. Finally, airlines are recommended to send questionnaires to collect feedback from passengers to improve their services.

For allergen-sensitive passengers, it recommends they research airlines before booking and read the FAQ section. Passengers should also advise airlines about their allergy as early as possible and during every phase of their travel. They should also bring their own food if permitted and carry all the needed medication, including a second EpiPen. Wipes should be carried to clean seats and tray tables. Passengers are also recommended to inform nearby passengers and staff of their condition. An emergency plan and the nearest hospital at the destination should also be identified

beforehand. Finally, it is recommended that passengers complete questionnaires to provide feedback on their experience.

The study concludes that an international authority such as IATA or ICAO should create and publish a common mandatory practice for all airlines regarding the handling of food allergies and intolerances. This would benefit airlines, employees, and passengers and would ensure safety and comfort for allergen-sensitive passengers. The author also acknowledged that further research should be carried out to find the number of passengers flying daily worldwide, to find long term cures for food allergies, and to find out which airlines have obtained the ECARF seal of quality.

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A SWOT analysis showed the internal and external factors related to the implementation of food allergy and intolerance strategies on board an aircraft.

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Organic Farming: Does it provide safer food than Conventional farming? (Part 1)

BY DAVID PACE
SENIOR LECTURER AT ITS

INTRODUCTION

The rise of organic farming was a direct byproduct of the Green Revolution that led to a massive increase of agriculture production worldwide using new technology, modern farming techniques, better hybrid seeds, fertilisers and pesticides.

This modernisation led to increases in agricultural yields and food production, but the rise of environmentalism in the 1960s influenced by cautionary tales of industrial and domestic pollution started to make people aware of the dangers of agrichemical additives to farmland. This led to the rise of organic food that promised

safer and healthier produce free of chemical additives.

This review (the first part being published in this issue) aims to sift through the literature in an attempt to answer the question of whether organic farming produces safer and healthier food, and evaluate the most recent evidence in this area in order to compare the benefits of organic farming with conventional farming.

This will be attempted by systematically examining the factors that are thought to effect both organic and conventional farming, and the differences that exist

between them. Such factors include health and safety issues of industrial and organic farming based on fertiliser and pesticide additives, and microbial and chemical agents; environmental impacts, yield and taste.

In this age of increasing health and environmental awareness, it is important that the customer is provided precise knowledge regarding the safety of organic farming and organic food. Customers today are much more discerning and it is important that they are also provided correct information on whether the cost of organic food justifies the benefits it provides.



Organic farming has increased nine-fold between 1999 and 2022 (figure 1) showing that consumers are steadily accepting the idea of safer and healthier food grown without poisonous and polluting pesticides, which has always been the way organic food has been marketed (Latacz-Lohmann & Foster, 1997; Baker et al., 2004; de Magistris & Gracia, 2008; Dettmann, 2008 and Pearson et al., 2011).

The US registered the highest increase in organic food production with a growth of 11.5% and 170 countries reported some form of organic food production growth (Research Institute of Organic Agriculture, 2015). Germany is the biggest European consumer of organic food and has a market share of 32% (GrantThornton, 2012). Irrespective of the continuous growth of organic farming worldwide, estimated to reach 16% by 2020 (TechSci Research, 2015), there is scientific consensus that organic farming production will never surpass conventional farming in output and feed the

world (Bielo, 2012; Halwell, 2016; Feedstuffs Foodlink, 2013; Willer 2016).

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) quotes the higher price of organic food as the main stumbling block against its competitiveness with respect of conventional food. Organic food production reflects more closely the real cost of growing produce because the use of chemicals is substituted by intensive management and labour costs (OFRF, 2015).

The simplest definition of organic food is that: “grown without the use of pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, genetically modified organisms, or ionizing radiation” (Organic.org, 2016). In the case of animal products including dairy products, eggs, meat and poultry; these must be grown without growth hormones or antibiotics (*ibid.*).

It is also important to realise that main reasons behind the production of organic food is sustainable agriculture (organic

farming) (Rigby & Cáceres, 2001; Horrigan et al., 2002; Pretty & Hine, 2001; Tilman et al., 2002; Spiertz, 2010; Beddington et al., 2012 and Poincelot, 2012.) and green consumption (Lockie et al., 2002; Foster et al., 2007; Thøgersen, 2010 and Peattie, 2010). A short discussion of these concepts will provide an invaluable insight why organic food is popular among certain sections of society. This will also provide some understanding of the different attitudes and perceptions of consumers towards organic food.

THE DANGERS OF INDUSTRIAL FARMING

Intensive farming or industrial agriculture is a post-war system of farming based on massive single-crop farms and animal production facilities. It requires huge amounts of water and soil, and is very energy intensive using up large quantities of fossil fuels. The result is high agricultural output and high environmental degradation in the form of air, water and chemical pollution, soil depletion, monoculture and

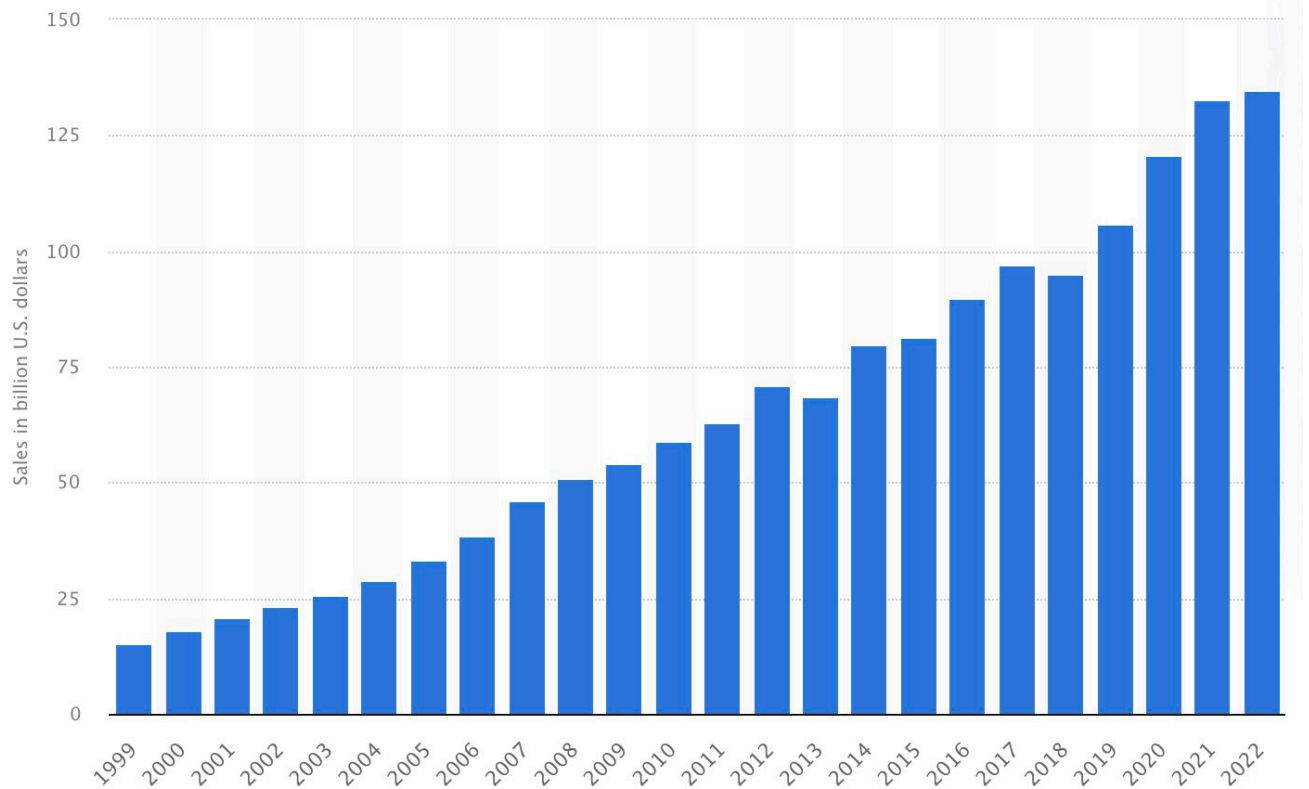


Figure 1. Organic farming worldwide has increased nine-fold between 1999 and 2022

eutrophication that leads to the destruction of aquatic and marine biota (Kimbrell, 2002).

Meat production is particularly damaging towards the environment being dependent on the production of fodder for livestock. This makes animal husbandry extremely resource intensive as it involves feeding animals instead of humans. Intensive animal agriculture is particularly damaging to the environment creating high concentrations of animal waste that is full of nitrates and other eutrophication inducing chemicals that contribute to severe water pollution (UNEP, 2016). The extensive use of antibiotics in animal feed is also a problem that is being currently felt worldwide as bacteria become progressively more resistant due to antibiotic overuse (Witte, 1998; Barton, 2000; Wegener & Henrik, 2003; Lovine et al., 2004; Wallinga & Burch, 2013 and Heinzerling, 2014).

The consumption of meat also causes a lot of medical problems. Animal fat contains cholesterol and triglycerides that cause major chronic ailments such as

cardiovascular diseases (Hu et al., 2001; Siri-Tarino et al., 2010a; Siri-Tarino et al., 2010b and Astrup et al., 2011) and several forms of cancer (Larsson & Wolk, 2006; Le Marchand, Loic, et al., 1994; Chao, Ann, et al., 2005; Sandhu et al., 2001 and Larsson and Wolk, 2006). This led to the classification of red meat as a carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the cancer agency of the World Health Organisation (WHO) (Simon, 2015).

Heavy use of pesticides in intensive farming has also been associated with higher cancer risks (Bassil, K. L., et al., 2007; Infante-Rivard and Weichenthal, 2007; Webster et al., 2002; Waddell et al., 2001 and Fryzek et al., 1997). There is also some evidence of endocrine (Colborn et al., 2003; McKinlay et al., 2008; Ejaz et al., 2004; Nicolopoulou-Stamati & Pitsos, 2001; Mnif et al., 2011; Preda et al., 2012 and Mesnage et al., 2014) and reproductive involvement, (Bretveld et al., 2006; Pflieger-Bruss et al., 2004 and Rupnik, 2007); while the effects of pesticides on wildlife have been widely documented (Hayes et al., 2002a, Lavado et al., 2004,

Reeder et al., 2005; Isenring, 2010; Guitart et al., 2010; Kohler & Triebkorn, 2013 and Ogada, 2014).

THE ORGANIC CHOICE

Many of studies have been used to increase the popularity of organic food based on the ideals of sustainability and greener agriculture (Lockie, 2006) and fit in neatly with the psychological makeup of many people who are into the “New Age ideal” of “healthy living and eating” (Beharrell & Crockett, 1992)

It is an ideal based on the special connection some people think they have with nature that supplies a purpose in life and helps them reconnect with nature (Pilgrim and Pretty 2010). Campbell (2005, pg.11) suggests that the Romantic world-view based on the special connection between man and nature is replacing the idea of God as the divine force (Taylor, 1989). This unites humankind, nature and the Universe as one and results in nature becoming sacred and animals being revered. It also rejects the idea of human superiority over the animal

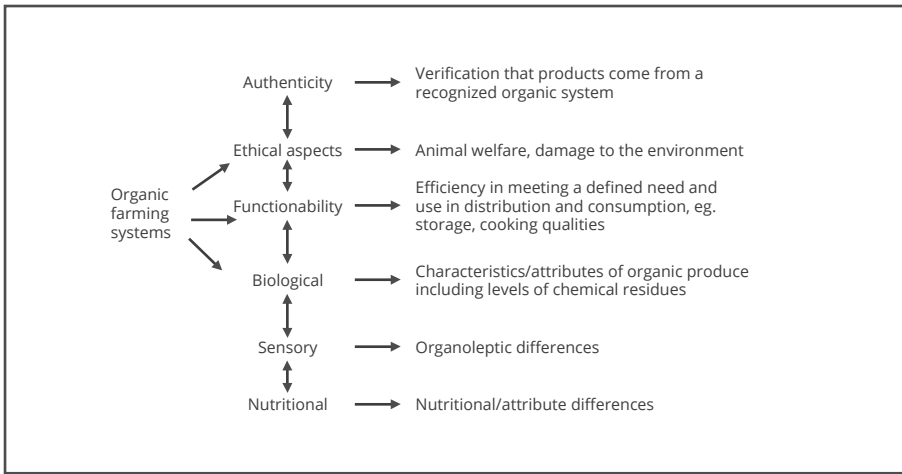


Figure 2. Different attributes prescribed to organic food that attract people towards its consumption (Beharrell & Crockett, 1992)

kingdom as exemplified by the Holy Bible (Verdonk 2009). This has a profound effect on the way animals are viewed and treated, and subsequently on people’s food practices which have become more meaningful and moral. (Campbell 2005, pg.11).

Figure 2 (Beharrell & Crockett, 1992) shows the different attributes prescribed to organic food that attract people towards its consumption (Organic Farming Food Quality and Acceptability: A Conceptual Framework (Beharrell & Crockett, 1992)). To these, one must also add socio-economic factors such as being female with a disposable income, and having children of a certain age (Davis et al., 1995; Smith et al., 2009; Smith, 2010 and Shashikiran & Madhavaiah, 2015). Higher income families are more inclined to visit organic speciality shops (Thompson & Kidwell, 1998); families with children prefer to purchase organic apples (Loureiro et al., 2001); subjects with strong environmental values and awareness were more inclined to buy organic food (Grunert & Juhl, 1995); education was inversely correlated with organic purchases and females were more likely to buy organic produce (Byrne et al, 1992); white, college-educated, middle-to-higher income shoppers more likely to purchase organic food (Ott, 1990) and females of less than 32 years with a college degree or higher, who regarded themselves as liberal and did not regularly attend religious institutions were the most likely to buy organic foods on a regular basis (Onyango et al., 2007).

Schwartz (1992) values theory describes such a value as “a desirable transsituational

goal varying in importance, which serves as a guiding principle in life...” and many New Age and Environmentalists actually consume organic food as part of “a guiding principle in life”. The value here may take the role of belief if the subject is taken very seriously (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2004; Rokeach 1973; Beharrell & Crockett, 1992 and Ten Eyck, 2004).

Describing organic consumption “as a guiding principle in life” attributes a sense of belief or, at least, an ideology to the consumer. Roger Cohen describes how “organic” has been an ideology for quite some time based on “the romantic back-to-nature obsession of an upper middle class able to afford it”. He coins the term affluent narcissism to describe it (Cohen, 2012). Brian Honerman of the O’Neill Institute describes the organic food movement as being based on pseudo-science also criticizing the ideological strains that characterises their advocacy (Honormann, 2014). Alroe & Noe even go as far as describing the organic movement as an ideology and a religion (Alroe & Noe, 2008).

The description of the organic movement as a quasi-religious movement may explain how adherents can get into radical consumerism exemplified by the activities of certain branches of the organic movement (vegan, vegetarian, and raw food movements and animal activists – all of which share the organic ideology to different degrees). This can also be applied to the Slow Food movement, Fair Trade activists and against multinational companies’ products (Micheletti, 2009).



Vegetarianism is more accepting of organic consumerism mostly due to the fact that the controlled use of pesticides and artificial fertilisers are important to the dietary concerns of vegetarians.





This is an area ripe for further research, particularly the relationship between New Age beliefs, radical environmentalism and consumerism, and whether organic farming and food consumption play an important role in defining such ideologies.

At first glance, the Vegan movement with its emphasis on eliminating all animal agriculture may not seem to be compatible with organic farming. But not eating meat means a greater reliance on organic crop

farming and in fact, vegan organic gardening exists and was first coined as a term by Geoffrey Rudd to “denote a clear distinction between conventional chemical based systems and organic ones based on animal manures” (O’Brien, 1986, pg. 9).

Vegetarianism is more accepting of organic consumerism mostly due to the fact that the controlled use of pesticides and artificial fertilisers are important to the dietary concerns of vegetarians (Fox & Ward, 2008).

More extreme forms of vegetarianism such as ovo, lacto and lacto-ovo vegetarians are closer to the vegan spectrum of food choices, and also tend to refuse to eat anything that has animal content.

According to the website rawfoodlife.com (Allan Ross, 2016): “A raw foodist is someone that eats 75-100% live, nutritionally-dense organic uncooked and unprocessed food (and drinks pure, live water), enjoying delicious meals that optimize your health by alkalizing your body.” So the raw food movement very much depends on the availability of organic food because it’s *raison d’être* is based on eating clean, healthy food raw that is free from chemicals to keep it’s valuable enzymes, oxidants and vitamins from denaturing by cooking, making the food healthier and more nutritious (Graham, 2011)

Slow food also has a great affinity with organic food as it is defined by three interconnected principles of good food, clean production and accessible prices and conditions (fair trade) (Slowfood.com, 2015). These are principles shared by the International Federation of Organic Movements (IFOAM) of health, ecology, fairness and care (IFOAM 2007). The Slow Food movement originated in the Emiglio-Romana region of Italy and was prompted by the preservation of traditional and regional cuisine, and the preservation of artisal and historical techniques tied directly to specific Italian regions, many of which have their own cuisine and wine. Many of these areas are characterised by small farms specialising in providing food and drink for organic cuisine and wine.

Slow food, vegetarianism and veganism also emphasize short food supply chains to decrease the distance between producers and consumers, minimising contamination of the purity of the produce. Such chains are characterised by farming collectives, farming markets and shops, community-supported agriculture and solidarity purchase groups (Kneafsey et al., 2013). It is also the hallmark of local organic production and so there is a great affinity between all the subsequent food preference types described. Such groups may have a very strong local identity,

be protective of their historical and artisanal techniques and skills, and may even receive funding from EU regional funding sources such as the ERDF (European Network for Rural Development),

INTERREG (European Territorial Cooperation) and ENPI (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument).

Organic food activism is usually associated with the above and may become part of radical environmentalism that can resort to more violent and extreme forms of actions including boycotting (Stolle et al., 2005) and eco-terrorism (Walters, 2006). The psychological implications are that they are reacting as if protecting a religious or spiritual belief rather than a simple food production system (Haught, 2013).

Physicians have even coined a new term for organic food faddists who will not eat food they consider impure due to its herbicide, pesticide and artificial chemicals—*orthorexia nervosa* (Sanchez & Rios, 2005). People suffering from this condition will also refuse to eat food produced by techniques they do not approve in keeping and killing animals. This obsessive condition also highlights the danger of people becoming fanatical organic food consumers because research has shown that diet becomes the main part of their lives and may result in the loss of social relationships (Holden, 1990).

Organic consumers usually counter these accusations of being fanatical by quoting one of the founders of environmentalism, Rachel Carson who comments that there is: *“a strong tendency to brand as fanatics or cultists all who are so perverse as to demand that their food be free of insect poisons.”*

(Carson, 1962, p. 178). Some researchers refer to organic consumers’ passion rather than fanaticism as an attempt to protect their moral values against the pressures of society (van Otterloo, 1983, Gusfield, 1992 and Schosler et al., 2013). Such values being based on a life of harmony, mental peace and happiness away from a wasteful and consumption-ridden civilisation. (Hamilton et al., 1995).

The dangers of industrial agriculture have already been described and are regarded as one of the main reasons why the demand for organic food continues to grow

beliefs by ‘self-persuasion’ (Aronson, 1999) and do not actually need direct attempts to convince them. This basically views organic food consumption and environmental beliefs as the right thing to do.

Several other factors also influence consumers in buying organic products. Stern et al. 1985 had already suggested that buying costly organic products may be influenced by trend factors. Such purchases are also the trademark of the financial elite who style themselves as the guardians of the environment and display their purchases as symbols of wealth.

Lockie et al., 2002 performed focus groups to determine the motivations behind organic food consumption and mentions why many participants regarded organic consumers as ‘greenies’, ‘health nuts’ and ‘yuppies’. This suggested that many regarded organic consumers as more interested in fashion rather than the nutritive value of the food. This is corroborated by RoitnerSchrobesberger et al., 2008 study that lists the attraction of organic food as a new and fashionable product as one of the three main attractions of organic food (pg. 203).

The degree of ‘trendiness’ seems to vary according to country. In a study by Kihlberg & Risvik, 2007, it was

determined that the Norwegians are the most traditional and least trendy, the Danes were the most trendy, and the Swedes somewhere in between with regards the consumption of organic foods. It would be interesting to study any correlation between trendiness and specific age groups and different ethnic groups; and the consumption of organic food as a fashion statement.

Organic food is also regarded as inspiring a sustainable lifestyle and this is also cited as a factor contributing to the purchase

“**not all is rosy on the organic front and although there is a media bias in its portrayal as a safe and sustainable alternative to industrial farming, some are starting to realise that research reveals a different picture.**”

(Daniells, 2014; Smithers, 2014; Prupis, 2015; Mathews, 2015 and Faber, 2016).

The environmental connection with organic food has been reported in many studies (Stern & Dietz, 1994; Thøgersen, 1995; Karp, 1996; Schultz & Zelezny, 1999 and Thøgersen, 1999) and suggests that purchasing organic food is regarded as a pro-environmental type of behaviour (Thøgersen, 2006). This opens a path to organic food beliefs that proposes that pro-environment consumers reinforce their



Image by Jean-Louis SERVAIS from Pixabay

of organic food. In fact, many consumers describe themselves as “green” (Seyfang, 2006; Thøgersen, 2005; Black & Cherrier, 2010; Verain et al., 2012 and Gilg et al., 2005) which implies that they have knowledge of sustainability and are ready to take some action to change their lifestyles. Sustainable lifestyles are based on sustainable consumption that requires the purchase of products and services that do not harm the environment, society, and the economy (UNESCO, 2016).

There are a number of stumbling blocks against the development of a sustainable lifestyle based on organic food and green consumption. The most obvious is whether organic food actually does inspire a sustainable lifestyle. Lower crop yields, high greenhouse gas emissions from composting, groundwater contamination, minimisation of ploughing and tilling and the exclusion of GMOs do not contribute to making organic farming more sustainable.

Lower crop yields increase the requirements for more land, while compost heaps release methane, nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide, all of which are greenhouse gases that contribute more to climate change than artificial fertilisers (But Now You Know, 2015). Such compost heaps, particularly if they consist of manure and are spread into the soil before planting result in an increase of down-leaching of nitrates that contaminate groundwater. Regular plowing and tilling are environmentally advantageous. Both processes limit erosion, fertiliser and pesticide runoff and decrease CO₂ emissions from tilling (Peigné & Girardin, 2004).

Social issues such as peer-pressure (Zuberi, 2016) and peer-group affirmation (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006) regarding organic food consumption influence the development of a green lifestyle. Without any peers, consumers do not feel the need to change their lifestyles to accommodate a greener way of life. It seems that people need like-minded neighbours to become more

motivated to adopt a sustainable lifestyle (Miller and Bentley, 2012).

There are also a number of psychological factors that influence green consumption. The Perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE) refers to how effective is one consumer's environmental impact. If it is high, the consumer probably exhibits a higher level of green consumerism and so is more apt to buy organic (Tucker, 1980).

Another factor is self-efficacy based on an individual's ability to partake of green consumption (Schwepker & Cornwell, 1991), considering some people are addicted to junk and unhealthy food, and find it very difficult to change their diets to healthier foods (Hsieh, 2004). A consumer who believes in his or her ability to make a change by taking up green consumption by buying more organic food, will be more effective in developing a sustainable lifestyle (Sparks & Shepard, 1992 and Gupta & Ogden 2009).

The role of social responsibility is also quite important dependent on the individual's moral responsibility in doing his or her part (Tucker, 1980; Schwepker & Cornwell, 1991; Mainieri et al., 1997; Moisaner, 2007 and Mazar & Zhong, 2010). The same applies to the interaction of price, quality and brand loyalty. All of which affect the purchase of organic food (M. Schuhwerk & LefkoffHagius, 1995; Shrum et al., 1995; Krystallis & Chryssohoidis, 2005 and Pivato et al., 2008).

The way organic consumers tend to regard governments and authorities as not doing enough to support the introduction of organic farming is another factor (Dubgaard & Holst, 1994; Trewavas, 2001; Wheeler, 2008 and Cranfield et al., 2010) can influence and even change the general behaviour of consumers from a non-sustainable to a sustainable one (Mutlu, 2007; Terlau & Hirsch, 2015; Annunziata & Vecchio, 2016).

Power and Mont, 2012 maintain that governmental policies are not aimed at fighting unsustainable consumption but just promote the consumption of organic products. This is a sweeping statement, and some countries are trying to gear social norms towards the acceptance of more sustainable consumption. The main problem towards attaining this is the high cost of organic food (Tregear et al., 1994; Batte et al., 2007; Zepeda & Jinghan, 2007 and Voon et al., 2011), the lower yields of organic farming (House of Lords Select Committee on European Communities, 1999, Travawas, 2001 Seufort et al., 2012 and FAO.org, 2016) and the conflicting evidence on the safety of organic produce (Dangour et al., 2009; Dangour et al., 2010; Winter & David, 2007; Magkos et al., 2006 and Woese et al., 1997).

In a world dominated by media, it is obvious that this will have an effect on consumer behaviour regarding organic food. The printed medium seems to be quite agreeable to the idea of organic food and must have a major influence on the purchase of such products. An important study by Stewart Lockie (2006) analysed a large number of articles and news stories from major US and Australian newspapers

between January 1996 and December 2002 on a variety of terms including organic food and organic agriculture. The study revealed that articles and stories regarding organic food emphasized the following:

- Its status as one of the fastest growing agricultural sectors that can only continue to grow.
- Its superior flavour and freshness make it a high quality and fashionable product that is enjoyed by celebrities and high-class restaurants.
- Its lack of chemicals such as pesticides, fertilizers and GMOs make it a natural alternative to industrially grown foods that have been the subject of many food scares. iv. A panacea for environmental degradation caused by industrial farming and GMOs.
- A protector of farming communities, the poor farmer and traditional food products and cuisines.
- An industry that offers products that can be dangerous to consumers but controls and manipulates such public fears.
- A subject of scientific controversy concerning the real risks and benefits of organic food and farming.

The last two points are particularly important to the subject of this paper and show that not all is rosy on the organic front and although there is a media bias in its portrayal as a safe and sustainable alternative to industrial farming, some are starting to realise that research reveals a different picture.

Stay updated with part 2 of this article in the next issue of Futuristic.

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Organic food is also regarded as inspiring a sustainable lifestyle and this is also cited as a factor contributing to the purchase of organic food.



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