

# A Study Aiming to Identify the Factors that Lead to High Employee Turnover Within the Irish Hospitality Sector

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A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the  
MA in Human Resource Management

**Submitted to the National College of Ireland  
September 2014**

## **Abstract**

The research explores the issues around employee retention and turnover in the hospitality industry. In today's challenging economic environment it is important for organisations to make the most of the human resources that they have. The research focused on finding out why employees choose to leave the organisation.

The research study aimed to obtain responses from a wide variety of workers in the hospitality industry. The research was conducted using primarily quantitative methods that contained qualitative aspects. To collect the data online questionnaires were used.

The research found that the majority of employees left the hospitality industry because of a lack of work-life balance and the long unsocial hours that have to be worked by those employed within the industry. The study recommended that organisations take a total reward approach when rewarding employees in order to get the most out of them and keep them within the organisation.

The research may be of interest to line managers, HR managers and owners of organisations within the industry.

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the great assistance and support I have received from a number of people over the past few years of my academic life. This has been by far the toughest piece of work I have ever written and without the help and support of the following people it would not have been possible.

First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisor Bronwyn McFarlane for guiding me through the process. Without your help and support this would not have been possible. I would also like to thank my friends and family for their continued support.

To the whole MA class for an unforgettable year and in particular the small group of close friends I have made, thanks for everything and well done.

To my Mam and Dad for always supporting every step of the way and for encouraging me in everything I do.

Last but by no means least, Stephanie, thanks for all your help and support and for always believing I would complete what I set out to do. After all these years in college I am finally done.

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# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Anyone who has any experience of working in the hospitality sector will know that very rarely is there a specific department dedicated to Human Resources (HR). This has much to do with the fact that the hospitality sector encompasses a wide range of things from hotels and B & B's, to coffee shops, restaurants, pubs and clubs. Although it is increasingly common for hotels to have dedicated HR departments, it is just not practical for smaller, often family run businesses such as restaurants and pubs to have a dedicated HR team. This is often left to line managers to do along with their other duties. This is still the case now as it was in 1987 when researched conducted by Kelliher and Johnson (cited in Goldsmith, Nickson, Sloan and Wood, 1997) found that less than half of the establishments surveyed had a full-time personnel manager. The two surveys known as the 'Ealing study' and the 'Leeds study' found that the bigger the organisation, the greater the likelihood of there being a HR department in the company.

With these duties falling on line managers, employee turnover and retention strategies can often be overlooked by management and can be an on-going matter.

This chapter introduces the main areas that this research project will examine including the background to the study as well as the justification for carrying out the research. This is followed by the research problem and the research questions that were deemed appropriate by the researcher.

## **1.2 Background and context**

The researcher has worked in the industry for almost 10 years and a number of issues have arisen during his time working in various organisations. The most glaring of these observations was that employee retention was a difficult process for management and employee turnover was increasingly high. Having seen numerous employees begin work in the industry and leave shortly after, the author became interested into why exactly people

were leaving. With these observations in mind it became clear that the issue could be investigated further for the purpose of this research project.

### **1.3 Justification for the research**

Upon deciding the topic for this research paper, the researcher realised that there was a significant gap in the literature. While there are many studies that have been conducted on employee turnover and retention issues within various sectors there is far less literature that examines these issues within the hospitality sector. Having looked further at the literature it became clear that there was virtually no research done that focused specifically on the hospitality sector within Ireland. It would be of interest to find out if the reasons for high employee turnover and poor retention problems in the Irish hospitality sector are similar to the reasons given in other countries such as Australia.

If these problems can be addressed, organisations operating in the hospitality sector could save a considerable amount as they would not have to spend as much filling vacant positions.

This dissertation hopes to extend to the current academic research and literature in the area of retention within the hospitality sector.

### **1.4 Research Problem**

To identify the factors that lead to high employee turnover within the Irish hospitality sector.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

#### **1.5.1 Research Question 1**

What are the factors that cause such a high turnover rate in the hospitality industry?

The hospitality sector is known for having high turnover of employees (Deery and Shaw, 1997). This research aims to find out the main reasons why employees working in this sector leave.

### **1.5.2 Research Question 2**

Does the Irish hospitality industry have the same retention problems as the hospitality industry worldwide?

As already said previously in the paper, retention of employees is an on-going issue within the hospitality industry. The aim here is to establish if it is as big an issue in the Irish industry. Lashley (2001) has researched the cost of turnover in the bar industry indicating that there is a turnover problem but he focused purely on the UK market.

### **1.5.3 Research Question 3**

Does motivation for working in the industry depend on the age profile of the employee?

Deriving from work carried out by Davidson et al. it seems there may be difference between how working in the hospitality sector is viewed depending on the age profile of the employee. This aims to find if there is a generational difference with how employees view work.

### **1.5.4 Research Question 4**

What terms and conditions of employment would lead to better retention rates within the industry?

If employees received better terms and conditions would it improve turnover rates in the industry. Blomme, Van Rheede and Tromp (2010) indicated that the main source of unhappiness for employees in the industry was lack of work life, particularly how the long working hours affected personal relationships.

### **1.5.5 Research Question 5**

To establish the most appropriate methods of retention to ensure that turnover is kept as low as possible.

This final question aims to discover what the best method of retaining employees in the hospitality industry. The results found from this question will be used as a comparison with research conducted by Christensen Hughes and Rog (2008), Blomme et al. (2010) and Solnet et al. (2012).

## **1.6 Significance of the study**

The relevancy of this research paper is to add to the literature on the area of employee turnover and retention in the hospitality sector. This paper will be of interest to human resource managers of hotels around Ireland but will also be of interest to line managers and owners of smaller establishments within the industry who take on the role of HR managers within their organisation.

## **2 Literature Review**

The following chapter outlines the theory behind this research project. It is a review of academic literature relating to this particular area of research.

### **2.1 Introduction**

The Oxford English dictionary defines hospitality as “the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors and strangers”. This is essentially what the hospitality industry does. It is a service industry mostly concerned with food/drink and accommodation. This means that respondents to the questionnaires posed later in this research paper have worked in pubs, clubs coffee shops, restaurants and hotels. The hospitality industry is a wide ranging one and therefore it could be said that a number of issues relating to the industry could be explored. The issues explored here are ones that the researcher feels are worthy of exploring more than others.

Employee turnover and employee retention are two areas of the hospitality area that have gained attention for a number of years now. Thiede (2001) writes about how hard it is to “retain a workforce to cook, clean and serve – especially when the labour market is tight”. She writes this in 2001, the economy is booming, there was a surplus of jobs over people. If someone did not want to work in the hospitality sector they did not have to. If they were already employed within the industry, they could leave and be confident of finding work almost immediately. Thiede is writing about America, North Carolina specifically, but she could well be describing Ireland. Fast forward 10 years and Irelands Celtic Tiger is no longer roaring yet there seems to be the same retention and turnover issues within the hospitality sector. There is very little work available yet there are people leaving the hospitality sector constantly.

## 2.2 Employee Turnover

Turnover of employees is inevitable. Workers get old and retire, they get sick, they get improved job offers or they can be dismissed. This can and often does have serious implications for organisations. The time and money spent replacing lost staff can become quite considerable with costs associated with the process often being greater than the remuneration offered for the role (Cascio, 2006). Armstrong (2012) defines employee turnover as the rate at which employees leave an organisation adding that it can be costly and disruptive to the organisation. It is important that organisations realise turnover will happen, as the sooner they do this they can move to prevent it from happening. One such way of preventing high turnover is to predict employee's intention to quit. Once an organisation knows the reasons why employees want to quit they can take steps to prevent them leaving. Colarelli (1984) developed a method for determining an employee's intention to leave and with this information, organisations can then predict turnover. He used "three items on a five point scale, with 1 representing 'strongly disagree' and 5 representing 'strongly agree';

'I frequently think of quitting my job.'

'I am planning to search for a new job during the next 12 months.'

'If I have my own way, I will be working in this organisation one year from now.'

(Boselie, 2010, p.90)

Using his model, organisations can try to predict if employees intend to leave and if so what the reasons are for this.

The reasons why employees leave organisations can be divided into four categories known as 'pull-type' causes, 'push-type' causes, unavoidable causes and involuntary turnover (Taylor, 2002). Pull-type causes of turnover are usually brought about when another organisation offers a better position. It is not always a salary increase that means it is a better position but the employee may be attracted by more suitable working hours, job security or an improved benefits package (Taylor, 2002). It may also be that the employee wants a new challenge currently not offered at their current

organisation. It seems employees who may be affected most by pull-type causes are those with high ambition who continually look for a challenge and look to improve their CV. Many of the reasons for employees leaving the hospitality industry may well fall into this category as is highlighted later on in this paper when examining work done by Blomme, Van Rheede and Tromp (2010).

Push factors are those that come from the company rather than from outside organisations and are generally caused by an employee's unhappiness with aspects of his current job, whether it is conflict with colleagues or general disagreement with organisational work practices (Taylor, 2002). The final two categories as defined by Taylor (2002) are unavoidable turnover, which is entirely out of the hands of the organisation usually caused by illness or death, and involuntary turnover encompassing redundancies and other situations where employees may have contracts terminated for disciplinary reasons.

Turnover is most likely to occur among key employees and this can have serious consequences for the business (Armstrong, 2012) however Carbery and Cross (2013) argue that not all turnover is bad claiming that with new employees comes fresh ideas and new ways of thinking, thus eliminating the danger of groupthink. Their theory is similar to that of Boselie (2010) who argued low turnover in the United Nations (UN) could be restricting the growth of the organisation and that having a higher employee turnover would allow for flexibility within the organisation.

### **2.3 Retention**

Employee turnover can have positives and negatives but whatever side of the argument you come from it is clear that retaining talent is important regardless of the type of organisation (Bryant & Allen, 2013). Organisations must ensure that employees remain satisfied in their jobs using different rewards and training methods to ensure they remain motivated to continue to work in the organisation and remain loyal to that

same organisation. The Incomes Data Services (IDS) (2004) provides a wide range of solutions that organisations could employ if there was a general turnover problem within the company.

These measures include improving the recruitment procedure to ensure that employees have realistic views of what they will be doing within the company. They may also consider putting in place support mechanisms for employees to avail of during their first few weeks in the company, giving support for personal development as well as paying the market rate. Other options available may be allowing employees to have work-life balance, having attractive benefits packages and finally communicate effectively with staff.

The list above offers far more than just monetary solutions to turnover. Bryant and Allen (2013) agree that financial reasons are way down the list of reasons why employees leave and although when filling in an exit survey an individual might say they left due to the higher wages being offered, one should think that there must be a reason why the individual went looking for a new job in the first place. It could be that the employee felt undervalued. Maybe they felt they were not being challenged enough or maybe there was no real progression path for them to take. These are all reasons that need to be considered by management when examining employee retention.

Ulrich and Brockbank (2005) identified that “binding existing talent to your firm” is vital for the success of any company. They outlined four choices for ‘binding’ talented employees to an organisation. The first stage is to find out why employees are leaving the company. This can be conducted through informal or formal exit interviews. It is important to find out why people are leaving the organisation. The second choice they advise is offering financial inducements to stay. The third option is to offer intrinsic rewards to stay by identifying employees with ambition and giving them challenging work. This will make them feel valued in the organisation while the organisation benefits from having someone who cares about the work they do involved in important projects. The final choice they give is to offer rewards other than financial ones. This can range from telling an



employee how good of a job they are doing to allowing employees have more flexible work hours. The four stages above outline different ways to ensure retention. Similar to that of Bryant and Allen (2013), Ulrich proposes to use both financial and nonfinancial rewards to ensure key employees stay within the organisation.

Mobley (1982) cited in Mobley (1997) claims that there is a need to look past “the satisfaction-turnover relationship toward research on the cognitive and behavioural processes that may occur between satisfaction and actual turnover” (Mobley, 1982, p.122). With this in mind he developed his Intermediate Linkages Model also known as “the employee turnover decision process” (Taylor, 2008, p.441). It contained the following 10 stages which he claimed employees go through when deciding if they should leave their current organisation:

1. Evaluation of existing job.
2. Experienced job satisfaction-dissatisfaction.
3. Thinking of quitting.
4. Evaluation of expected utility of search and cost of quitting.
5. Intention to search for alternatives.
6. Search for alternatives.
7. Evaluation of alternatives.
8. Comparison of alternatives versus present job.
9. Intention to quit/stay
10. Quit/stay

## **2.4 Turnover in the hospitality sector**

Staff turnover in the hospitality industry is acknowledged as being quite high when compared to other industries (Mullins, 2001); however, Deery and Iverson (1997) argue that this is largely untested. They define turnover culture as “the acceptance of turnover as part of the workgroup norm” (Iverson & Deery, 1997, p.71) and that it is normal for employees to believe that turnover behaviour is appropriate. This is partly due to the organisations themselves who in the past number of years have used casual

and part time workers on a much larger scale. According to Davidson, McShane and Barry (2011) 32 per cent of employees working in the hotel industry are casual workers which means they can be paid relatively low wages and have very little rights. This kind of work is not appealing to everyone however it can be appealing to students and young workers who may not be looking for a career in the industry but are happy to work to pay for college or to supplement their present income. Worsfold and Jameson (1991) claim that studies have shown level of pay was the main reason for people to leave the industry however they go on to agree with Davidson et al. (2011) writing that young people with no dependants are more willing to accept low rates of pay if they are not working full time contracts. Christensen and Hughes (2008) added further to this by saying there are a number of other reasons why there is difficulty in retaining staff in this sector such as the low-status of jobs in the industry, the lack of opportunity for promotion and the overall poor working conditions experienced by employees in the industry for example harassment, unsocial working hours and in general poor work life balance. Wasmuth and Davis (1983) cited in Lashley (2001) add further saying that it is the style and priorities of managers that have an influence on whether or not employees leave.

Lashley (2001) found that the way in which people were managed in the workplace had a severe impact on an employee's decision to leave or stay in a particular organisation. Where Deery and Shaw (1997) argue that turnover culture is developed among employees, Lashley (2001) believes that it is in fact the manager who feeds the problem. He writes that if the managers were better skilled at recruiting and selecting staff members and providing proper training and development, they would be more likely to retain staff. The Leeds study conducted by Kelliher and Johnson (1987) (cited in Goldsmith, Nickson, Sloan and Wood, 1997) found that less than half of all personnel managers surveyed had been given formal training. Although this study was conducted some time ago it seems to still hold value when viewed with more up to date material such as Deery (2008) who

shares many of the same ideas about managers not being trained correctly in how to perform the HRM function.

## **2.5 Generational Differences**

As time goes on, the number of 'Generation Y', individuals in the workforce grow and this increase has begun to highlight the differences that exist between these workers and past generations. The Australian Bureau of Statistics as well as most other literature on the subject classifies the generations as the Baby Boomers, 1946-1964; Generation X, 1965-1979; Generation Y, 1980-1994 and Generation Z, 1995-2009. These different generations have obviously grown up in different economic time and have come to have differing values.

Gibson, Greenwood and Murphy (2009) write that Baby Boomers are thought to be loyal but competitive and dedicated while Generation X appear to value work-life balance and like to have fun as well as being very independent. Generation Y is characterised as becoming bored easily but very ambitious as well as being extremely competent with technology.

These generational values are bound to have an effect on how individuals work together in an organisation and why they work in that organisation.

Gibson et al. (2009) found that although the generations have many differences they still rank health and family security as number 1 and 2 when asked what is most important to them. Despite how some generations are stereotyped as being greedy or independent it is interesting to see that all generations hold the same values quite highly and one does not favour wealth over the other. The research conducted by Gibson et al. (2009) shows that work life balance could have a major role to play in the retention of staff.

Davidson et al. (2011) focus on generational change within the hospitality sector. It is clear that different generations have different attitudes towards work and he claims that employee's within the hospitality sector are increasingly being placed into generational groupings. Davidson et al. looked at how the attitudes of different generations can affect intentions to leave. The fact that employees are divided generationally poses significant

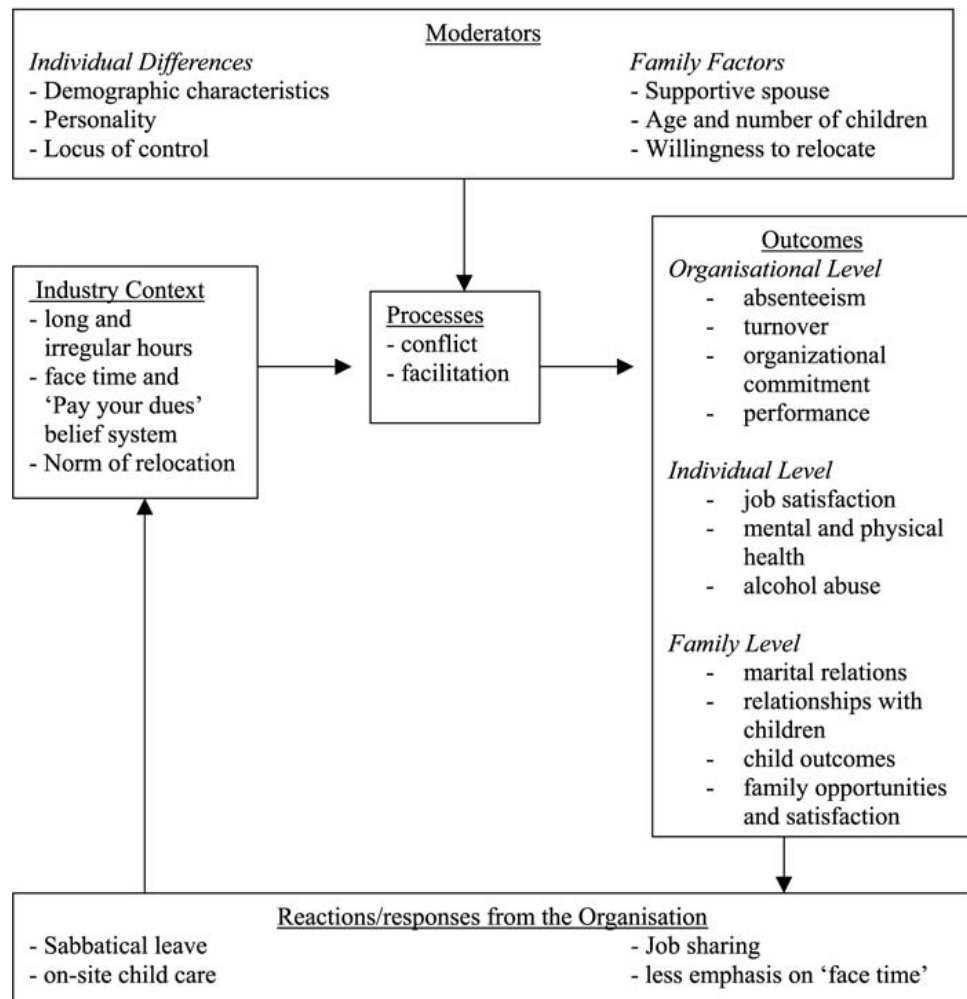
problems for hospitality employers because teamwork plays an important part in the industry due to the high levels of customer service that need to be achieved (Davidson et al., 2011). It was found that the attitude possessed by generation X workers such as politeness towards elders, accepting change and believing promotion was given on merit were lacking in Generation Y workers. These workers believed respect had to be earned even from elders and that it is their right to be promoted. This attitude does not bode well for organisations that need all workers, regardless of generation, to be coordinated to ensure the best customer service possible.

## **2.6 Work-life Balance**

“Achieving a good balance between work and family commitments is a growing concern for contemporary employees and organisations” (Kalliath & Brough, 2008, p.224). The question of work-life balance has become more popular since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and has continued to attract attention (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006) and has become a key issue for employers in the modern era of 24/7 society (Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2010). Duncan (2005) writes that the International Hotel and Restaurant Association (IHRA) is concerned about issues over flexibility over working hours. Advances in technology now mean that employees are often expected to be available to work even if they may not necessarily be at their place of work therefore putting more pressure on the employees home life.

Deery (2008) suggests that the theory of work-life balance is relatively new particularly to the area of hospitality where there are very few studies done on the topic. She suggests that in recent years stress and emotional exhaustion have been topics of discussion in the area and now work-life balance is adding to this area. Work-life balance can be difficult to achieve in any form of employment but particularly in the hospitality industry, which typically consist of working long hours, long days with very little job security as well as doing shift work at irregular or unsocial hours (Blomme et al., 2010). All these factors can lead to conflict between an employees work and family life. Conflict between work life and family life can have a

heavy bearing on an employee's decision to remain within an organisation as ultimately they will become dissatisfied in the job (Deery, 2008). Mulvaney et al. (2006) (cited in Deery 2008) created a model that tries to lessen the effect of work-life balance on and employee's intention to leave.



**Figure 1**

Research of Blomme et al. (2010) agrees with the findings of Deery (2008) saying that employees who stated conflict between work and family life expressed a higher desire to leave the hospitality industry. It appears that the areas of stress, work-life balance and organisation support are very much interlinked with stress often being the cause of work-family conflict. Deery (2008) states that organisations “need to be aware of the signs of employee

stress and have the capacity to provide counselling and stress management” (p.803). . Blomme at al. (2010) also found that organisational support played a role in employee’s intention to quit with employee’s showing a higher intention to quit where less support was shown from the organisation. Thiede (2001) interviewed David Cantando, the General Manager of the Adam Marks hotel as part of her research and he claimed that the correct philosophy can help to combat turnover. He does this by offering flexible working hours or special arrangements for parents. This is obviously very difficult for many of those operating in the industry and quite possibly a bit unrealistic.

## **2.7 Improving Retention within the Hospitality Industry**

This paper has already examined ways of improving retention in the general working environment through reward and in the hospitality industry through improved work-life balance. Christensen Hughes and Rog (2008) looked specifically at how to improve retention within hospitality organisations. They perceive talent management as being of key importance in the retention of employee’s as the labour intensive nature of the hospitality sector industry means it is a large problem. According to Christensen Hughes and Rog (2008) “retention challenges will likely continue to intensify unless these core characteristics are effectively challenged and the employer brand for the industry overall improves” (p.748). They go on to once again highlight the importance of not only pay and monetary benefits but also the importance of skill development and learning, and better work-life balance as suggested by Blomme et al. (2010). Indeed Solnet, Kraji and Kandampully (2012) write that employers should pay close attention to providing learning and growth opportunities for employees as generation Y employees place more value on learning and development than previous generations.

## **2.8 Reward**

When people think of reward for doing work, they normally associate it with some kind of financial reward. While the law in Ireland states that employees must receive a minimum wage for work done, employers often use additional monetary incentives to motivate and reward for a job well done. Various motivational theories including Maslow, Adams and McClelland have all indicated that people can be motivated by more than just money and can be motivated through other incentives. Constructing an employee's terms and conditions of employment to ensure they know how they will be rewarded could turn out to be vital in the retention of staff. Connolly and McGing (2007) found in a study of Dublin hotels, that 97% of respondents said there were both financial and non-financial rewards available for high performers.

### **2.8.1 Financial Reward**

As said in section 2.8 all employees receive a base pay by law but employers may also use contingent pay as a bonus. These contingent awards, usually in the form of bonuses or commissions, generally depend on the employee's performance in the workplace (Chauvin & Ash, 1994). Financial rewards such as vouchers, bonuses, pay increases and tips are common among Dublin hotels (Connolly & McGing, 2007).

Armstrong (2007) warns that when considering contingent pay it is important to distinguish between financial incentives and financial rewards. Incentives provide direct motivation while rewards provide indirect motivation. Direct motivation is telling an employee they will receive a certain amount of money on completion of a certain task such as a sales rep being paid extra when he meets his targets given to him at the start of the month.

Financial rewards as indirect motivators arise when management take retrospective action and decide to reward employees who they believe have performed well recently.

There are many arguments for and against contingent pay and both sides of the argument have valid reasons to believe they are right. Armstrong (2007)

writes that the strongest argument for contingent pay is that it rewards those who contribute most in the workplace rather than paying everyone the same. This discourages employees having an attitude of ‘I’m just here to be paid’ and encourages them to become involved and increase their level of performance within the organisation. A survey on contingent pay conducted by e-reward (2004) found a number of reasons why it was so popular. Some of the reasons included; to recognize and reward better performance, to attract and retain quality staff, to improve the performance of the organisation and to motivate people.

Contingent pay also comes in for a large amount of criticism mainly because it is difficult to manage. “Failures are usually rooted in the implementation and operating processes” (Armstrong, 2007) and it is usually line managers that fail to implement these systems correctly.

### **2.8.2 Non-Financial**

“Non-financial rewards include any rewards which focus on the need people perceive to varying degrees for achievement, recognition, responsibility, influence and personal growth” (Armstrong, 2002). Common non-monetary rewards received by employees in Dublin hotels include employee of the month/ quarter year awards, written and verbal praise, and training (Connolly & McGing, 2007). The power of a manager or supervisor saying thank you can sometimes be forgotten. It can be a great motivator when an employee feels recognised for the work they do. This also costs the company nothing and is the quickest way to recognise the achievements of an employee.

Achievement in itself can also be seen as a powerful non-financial motivator. When employees are given goals that they later fulfil it can bring about a sense of achievement within the employee. This form of non-financial motivator works more so in managerial and sales roles so would be only beneficial to certain departments within the hospitality sector. Frontline employees need to be motivated in different ways.

As Connolly and McGing (2007) found, it is common for Dublin hotels to use employee of the month schemes as a means of non-financial reward.



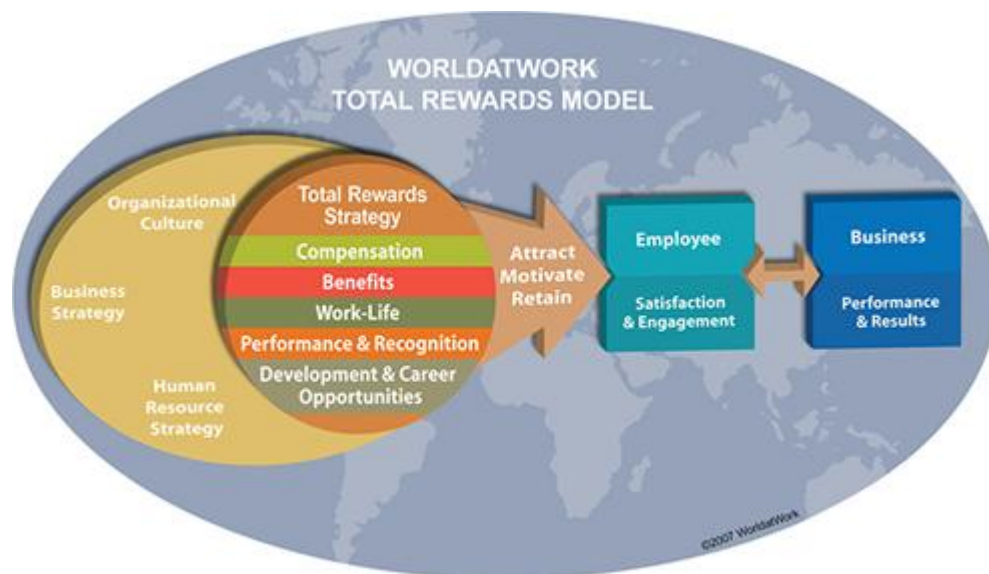
Recognition like this can be one of the most powerful motivators (Armstrong, 2002).

Connolly and McGing (2007) also found that training was provided as a form of non-financial reward within Dublin hotels. In Alderfers ERG theory, one of his key elements is the need for growth among employee. Armstrong (2002) writes that ambitious and determined individuals will seek to grow and improve but eventually the need for growth overcomes all individuals at all levels of organisations.

### 2.8.3 Total Reward

The concept of total reward allows employees to avail of both financial and non-financial rewards in order to only motivate them but also retain them, therefore pushing turnover rates down. It brings together several components of reward such as employee training and development, and combines them with other financial reward types to create an overall better benefits package for employees. Payne, Cook, Horner, Shaub and Boswell (2010) describe the five elements of reward as compensation, benefits, work-life balance, performance and recognition, and development career opportunities. The WorldatWork Total Rewards Model in figure 2 illustrates how this works.

Figure 2



We can see that a total rewards strategy helps to attract motivate and retain staff with the end result being that performance improves. This model could really help organisations in the hospitality sector because as we have seen earlier in this chapter employee retention is an extremely important part of any business but one that organisations in the industry continually fail to master. Total reward combines the impact of two major categories of reward which are tangible rewards such as pay and benefits, and intangible rewards such as learning and development.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed all of the relevant literature on retention and turnover in the hospitality sector as well as other literature that the author feels was relevant to this particular piece of research. It began by looking at employee turnover and the costs that can occur if employee turnover is not monitored and kept as low as possible. A definition of employee turnover was given and Colarrelis (1984) intention to leave model was explored.

This chapter then looked at retention, most notably Ulrich and Brockbanks (2005) theory of “binding existing talent to your firm”. The intermediate linkages model was also explored in this chapter. The chapter then turned to focus specifically on turnover within the hospitality sector. Iverson and Deery (1997) said that the theory of the hospitality sector having quite a high turnover rate is largely untested. Davidson et al. (2011) pointed towards the fact that a large proportion of hospitality workers are casual and therefore often only work while attending college.

Davidson also looked at how different generations can have different attitudes towards the industry. Gibson et al. (2009) also talked about how generational differences affect employee’s perception of work-life balance.

These papers both touched on one of the overarching themes of this paper which is how work-life balance is essential in order to retain staff. Deery also investigates this theory and her views are outlined in the chapter.

The chapter rounds off with a section on reward. It is essential that employees are rewarded for doing a good job but with the generational changes involved in the industry, traditional forms of reward are becoming a thing of the past. This is where the chapter touches on the benefits of total reward and how it can be implemented effectively in many organisations.

## **3 Research methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The aim of this research project is to analyse turnover within the Irish hospitality sector and assess if there is any way that retention can be improved within the sector. When undertaking this research project it was important that the researcher used the most appropriate method of data collection. This ensures that the data collected allows the researcher to answer his proposed questions. When choosing whether to use qualitative or quantitative the researcher must look at the proposed research question and consider exactly what information is needed in order to answer the question.

This chapter will attempt to outline the methodology and research design used in this research project. It will also explain method of data collection used and the reasons that lead to the researcher using this method. The chapter also contains an overview of the various other types of research that could have been used.

### **3.2 Research Philosophy**

Saunders et al. (2009) devised what is known as the research onion (figure 3), to be used when deciding on an appropriate research design, strategy and methodology.

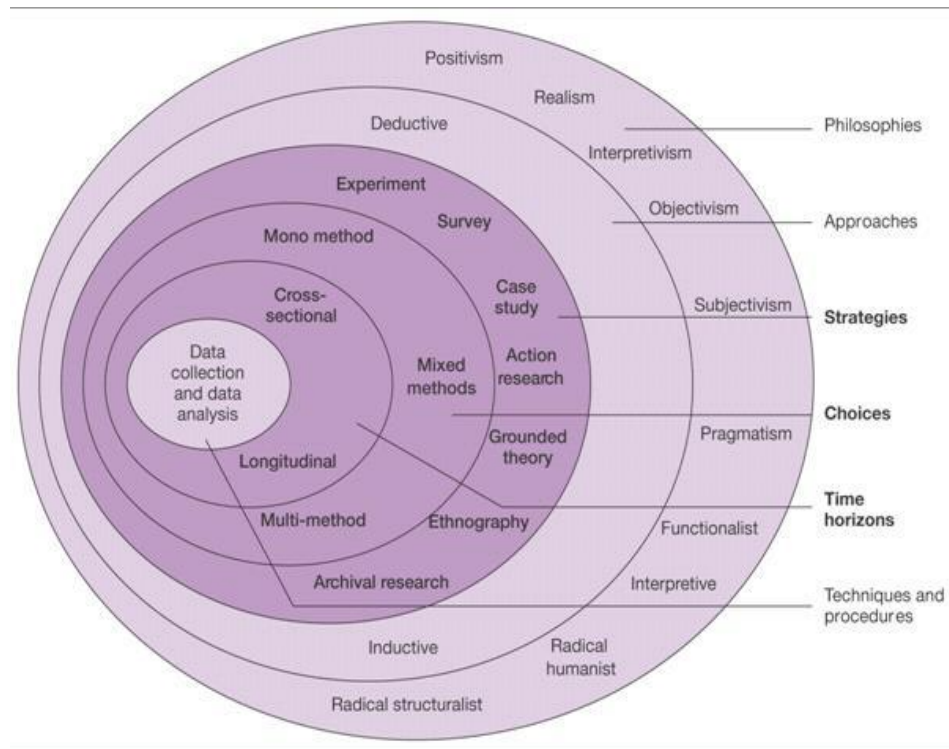


Figure 3

Source: (Saunders et al., 2009)

As the first layer of the onion is peeled the question of which research philosophy to adopt is raised, the second layer brings about the research approach, the research strategy is raised when the third layer is peeled and the fourth layer is the time horizons (Saunders et al., 2009).

When thinking about the research philosophy there are three major ways of thinking known as epistemology, ontology and axiology. Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality while epistemology concerns what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study (Saunders, Lewis & Tornhill, 2009). Each of these has its own individual aspects with objectivism and subjectivism being the aspects of ontology while positivism and realism are the two aspects involved in epistemology.

### 3.3 Research Design and Methodology

The overall plan of how the research will be carried out and as well as what needs to be done in order for it to help answer the proposed research questions is known as the research design (Cameron & Price, 2009).

The researcher of this project used the onion to determine the most appropriate type of research method for this project. Bryman and Bell (2011) give the simplest definition of a research method saying it “is simply a technique for collecting data” (p.40). Given that the hospitality sector is quite a broad industry encompassing restaurants, cafes, pubs, clubs and hotels, it would not have been feasible to conduct interviews as there would not have been time to collect enough data so for this reason an online questionnaire was deemed to be most appropriate. This method allowed the researcher to obtain a variety of answers from a wide cross section. Doing this meant the questionnaire was completed by front line staff as well as managers who had worked in the sector, also known as a cross-sectional design (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Bryman and Bell (2011) support the researcher’s choice of survey research, describing them as comprising of “a cross sectional design in relation to which data are collected predominantly by questionnaire or by structured interview on more than one case and at a single point in time in order to collect a body of quantitative or quantifiable data in connection with two or more variables” (p.56).

Using questionnaires are seen largely as quantitative however for the research project it was feasible to gather qualitative data as well using some open-ended questions as will be seen in section 3.5.

When deciding the type of research methodology to use for this project, other papers written on the area were examined to see what successful methods had previously been used. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used by various researchers bringing about successful results, particularly studies conducted by Connolly and McGing (2007) focusing on the Irish market and Lashley (2001) when examining costs in the UK market. Although the mentioned studies focused on the opinions of managers, supervisors and owners, the researcher deemed it appropriate that he could approach front line employees as well as managers using the same methodology.

### **3.4 Data Collection Method**

Several options were explored by the researcher in terms of what was the most appropriate method for collecting data. Interviews were considered but the amount of data that would be collected would not be sufficient for the questions that the researcher wanted to answer. The researcher looked at both quantitative and qualitative analysis in order to obtain the data and results needed. “Quantitative research collects predominately numerical data and opinion, and often relies on deductive reasoning i.e. finding a relationship between one variable and another, however, qualitative research is carried on assumptions and requires exploration to uncover the nature of a thing or a process” (Horn, 2009). The researcher decided that although questionnaires are traditionally used to collect quantitative data, the opportunity would be used to collect some qualitative data in order to obtain the data necessary to answer the research questions posed in section 1.5. This saw the researcher used a mixed method approach in order obtain the sufficient data. Although the researcher deemed this type of data collection necessary, there has been some criticism of this method with Horn (2009) claiming that it involves too many methods meaning accuracy could be compromised. He goes on to say that, a lengthy process may be involved when it comes to data collection and analysis that could place constraints on the time. Research in the past has used only interviews to collect data on this topic but they have focused on the managerial perspective but for this paper, the researcher wanted to focus on an employee perspective. Although some managers did respond to the questionnaire, a lot more front line staff responded.

“A questionnaire is a standard set of predetermined questions presented to people in the same order” (Cameron & Price, 2009, p.p.334).

An online questionnaire was deemed by the author to be the appropriate method of data collection. This quantitative research method allowed the researcher gather the information needed to answer the research questions proposed in section 1.5. This approach allowed for the gathering of a large volume of information in a timely manner while also ensuring a reasonable

sample size was obtained. This method also eliminated any bias that may have arisen if the researcher had used an interview to collect data for example. Considering the researcher knew many of the respondents, it was quite possible that ‘interviewer effect’ would bring about answer bias. It is important when conducting any kind of research that the data collected be as honest as possible and free from any bias. Because the interviewer knew many of the respondents, it may have caused them to give inaccurate answers if questioned face to face.

When each respondent completed their questionnaire, the answers they submitted were saved. This data was only accessible to the researcher once a username and password were submitted to the online survey creator. Once the researcher obtained enough responses, the survey link was closed and all the answers given by each respondent were exported onto a password protected USB key.

### **3.4.1 Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire was designed using the online software package eSurvey Creator which facilitated the design and distribution of the questionnaire online as well as the collection and collation of results.

The questionnaire was split into several sections spread out over three pages. The first question aimed to find out why employees left the industry. respondents were given a list of answers to choose from, of which they could pick more than one, as well as the option of selecting ‘other’ if their reason for leaving was not listed. They could then fill a text box with their reason.

The next section of the survey contained four subsections under the headings of ‘The job itself’, ‘Remuneration and benefits’, ‘The Company’ and ‘Supervisor/Line management’. Under each heading was a list of statements. Respondent’s answers were collected using a five-point Likert



scale. The values on the scales ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The third section contained several open-ended questions to allow for the gathering of some qualitative data to ensure enough data is collected to answer all research questions. This section also contains a number of simple but effective yes/no answer questions. The researcher deemed the use of qualitative and quantitative techniques to be the most appropriate to increase the validity and reliability of the information that was sought.

The final section was simply to gather some demographical information such as age and gender. This was left until the end of the survey as research has shown that people may be more willing to share this information after they have completed most of the survey. If questions such as age and gender were asked at the beginning of the questionnaire it could put people off participating in the survey in the first place.

### **3.5 Validity and Reliability**

Reliability is concerned with whether the results of the study are repeatable while validity concerns the integrity of the conclusions gathered from the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This was achieved by looking through several published exit interview surveys and using questions similar to those. The researcher decided not to conduct a pilot survey due to the fact that he did not want to risk those taking part in the pilot to decide that they did not want to participate in the real survey. The questionnaire was instead sent numerous times to a research supervisor and other experts in the field of questionnaires and edited until it was up to standard. It was then sent to a number of friends similar to those who would be participating in the survey to see if it was readable and understandable to individuals who may not have experience in HR, for example, it was important that participants would fully understand any terms that may arise such as employee turnover or retention.

### **3.6 Questionnaire Administration**

The questionnaire was a self-administered questionnaire, which was completed by respondents via the internet. Administering the survey this way has many advantages such as better responses to open questions as participants may feel more at ease than when having to answer to a person face to face, as well as being a much quicker and cheaper option (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The disadvantages such as lack of interest and poor responses rates were looked at but it was decided that because many of the participants were known to the researcher these factors were not sufficient to cause concern.

The questionnaire was administered online to participants. The researcher first contacted his sample through any means available to him in order to get a sufficient number of responses. He did what could be called a pre interview with some of the participants which involved him asking them face to face if they would be willing to take part in the survey. If they accepted a note of their email was taken and they were subsequently set a link to the survey. The researcher also called possible participants via telephone to enquire as to whether they would be willing to participate in the survey. Again, if they were willing to do so, a note of their email was taken and a link was then sent. Some possible participants were also contacted via private mail on a number of social media websites. This was because many of the researcher's contacts have moved away after they left the hospitality sector. Once again, they were asked if they were willing to participate and if they were a link was sent directly to them via private mail. The details of other potential participants were obtained from these contacts and the same process was followed again. Finally, there was a self-selection method used. A link to the survey was made available on social network sites asking for anyone who had previously worked in the Irish hospitality industry to take part in the survey.

### **3.7 Population**

A sample is selected from what is known as the population. The population is the “universe of unites from which the sample is to be selected” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.182). The target population for this particular research project was any person, male or female who has previously worked in the hospitality sector in Ireland.

### **3.8 Sample**

This section will define what is meant by a sample as well as outlining what sampling methods was used when conducting the research and how they were decided. The sample is the segment of the population chosen to participate in the survey (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The sample was obtained using contacts the author had built up during his time working in the hospitality industry.

#### **3.8.1 Sample Size**

The literature varies when it comes to the question of how many responses is enough in order to obtain any real data. Saunders et al. (2009) suggest that 30 responses are quite sufficient for statistical analysis while others say that the sample size should be at least 50. For this particular research project there was a sample of 32 respondents. The researcher would have liked to have a greater sample size however time restraints meant this was not possible. The researcher did not set out to have the sample split 50% males and 50% females although it almost did with 53% of participants being female and 47% being male.

The survey did not target any one section of the industry i.e. managers, frontline staff etc. rather it left the survey open to anyone with any experience working in the industry in any capacity. This meant that a much more representative sample of the industry was obtained. With a relatively small sample size it was not possible to obtain equal representation across the various sectors within the industry. The researcher did not make a conscious effort to exclude any one particular group of people.

### **3.8.2 Sampling Technique**

Sampling techniques include probability and non-probability sampling. For this research paper, non-probability sampling was used. “Non-probability sampling provides a range of alternative techniques to select samples based on subjective data” (Saunders et al., 2009). This type of sampling can have its drawbacks as noted by Quinlan (2011) who says that although representative of the population it cannot be used in a statistical sense.

The researcher used several different techniques to obtain a useable sample and they were as follows: purposive sampling, snowball sampling, convenience sampling and self-selection sampling. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to use their judgement to select respondents that will best enable them to answer the research question (Saunders et al., 2009) proposed in section 1.5. The researcher deemed this technique appropriate as they had a number of contacts in the hospitality sector due to their own work in the industry. It was a natural progression for the researcher to use snowball sampling after this. The researcher used his initial contacts to establish contact with others suitable for participation in the survey. Snowball sampling is generally only used for qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011) but in this case, it was appropriate in order to obtain sufficient and accurate data. It could be said that the main technique used here is convenience sampling as the researcher has selected those who easily fit the criteria for participation in the survey.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Bryman and Bell (2011) describe the principles of ethical behaviour as non-harm to participants, consent from the participants and privacy of all those who participated in the survey.

At all times throughout this research paper, it was of utmost importance to conduct the research ethically meaning that extreme care was taken to ensure the privacy of all participants of the survey. Saunders (Saunders et al., 2009, p.183) defines ethics as “the appropriateness of your behaviour in

relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work, or are affected by it”.

Because the researcher knew many of the potential participants personally, online questionnaires were used to ensure there was no interviewer bias could be shown. As all the questionnaires were completed online, it meant that respondents were unidentifiable. When a sufficient number of questionnaires were completed the data was stored on a USB key to ensure all information offered by respondents was accessible only to the author.

### **3.10 Limitations**

It is accepted that quantitative analysis cannot provide as deep an understanding of why people leave the hospitality industry, which is why an effort was made to include some kind of qualitative methods. Companies do use quantitative methods when measuring their own retention problems by way of exit surveys, which is why this method was favoured slightly. Other limitations of this research include the fact that because many of the participants are known to the researcher the sample may be more representative of Dublin rather than of Ireland as a whole although an effort was made to find participants outside of Dublin. As always, time was of importance and therefore the survey link could only stay open for a limited period of time meaning the sample size was limited. The researcher also felt that the literature on the hospitality sector was quite limited and almost non-existent in an Irish context. For this reason, the researcher believes the literature review chapter is missing something.

### **3.11 Bias**

It is important to avoid bias at all stages of the research process. As the researcher has worked in the hospitality industry for a number of years, they may have formed their own opinion on the reasons why employee retention and turnover is such a troublesome issue. Results would be inaccurate if the researcher enforced his own opinions and views on respondents to the questionnaire. This is one reason why online questionnaires were deemed

appropriate rather than face-to-face interviews. Many of the respondents knew the researcher and some have worked with him in the past. It was important that those who did know him did not show any bias by answering the way they think the researcher might want them to.

## 4 Analysis

This chapter will present the data collected from the surveys completed by the 32 respondents. Each question will be presented followed by a description of the findings. Charts and graphs are used to present the results graphically in order to make it easier for the reader to analyse. These findings were used to help answer the research questions presented in section 1.5 of this paper. The data collected from the survey was saved into an excel spread sheet created by eSurvey Creator. To give a better visual representation of the collected data a combination of eSurvey Creator and Microsoft word and excel were used.

### 4.1 Demographics

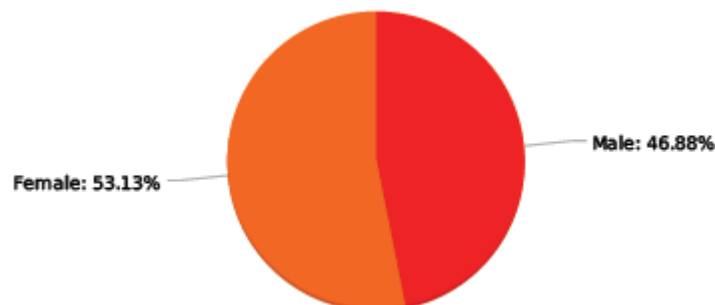
Although demographical data was collected last in the survey for reasons outlined in section 3.4.1 in this section it will be presented first to give the reader a feel for the types of individuals who answered the questionnaire.

#### 4.1.1 Question 16

##### 4.1.1.1 Gender

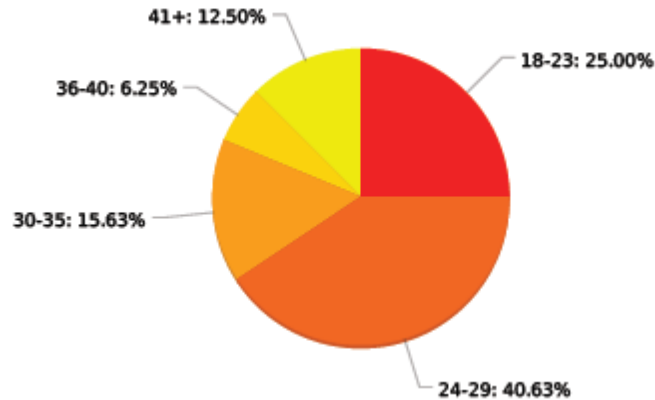
Of the 32 respondents, 15 or 46.9% were male while 17 or 53.1% were female. Although the researcher did not purposely set out to achieve an equal number of responses from each gender, it is as close to a 50/50 split as possible.

Figure 4



## 4.1.2 Question 17

### 4.1.2.1 Age



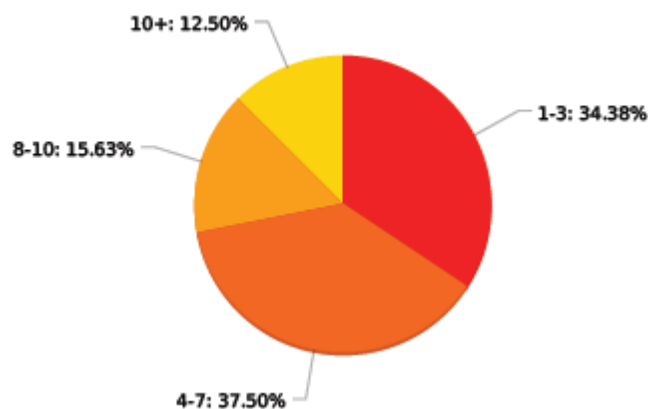
The researcher endeavoured to find a broad age range when distributing the survey in order to help answer research questions revolving around generational differences between workers. The most common age group to complete the survey were 24-29 year olds. Of the 32 respondents, 13 fell into this category, an overall total of 40.6%.

The next most common age grouping was 18-23 with 8 or 25% of respondents being represented in this category.

5 or 15.6% of respondents were aged between 30 and 35 years old. 4 respondents or 12.5% of total respondents were aged 41 or over while just 2 or 6.3% fall into the 36-40 age bracket.

## 4.1.3 Question 18

### 4.1.3.1 Length of service



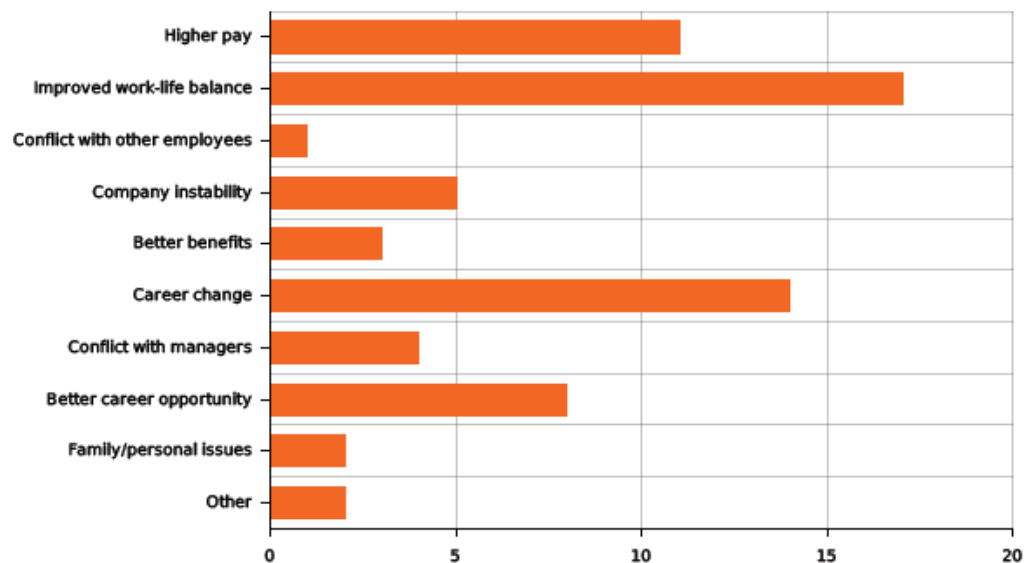


This question asked how long each respondent had spent working in the industry. The most common length of time spent working in the industry was between 4-7 years with 12 out of 32 respondents or 37.5% of respondents answering this way. This was closely followed by 11 respondents or 34.4% of respondents saying they spent between 1 and 3 years in the industry. 5 or 15.6% of respondents spent 8-10 years in the industry while 4 or 12.5% of respondents spent 10 or more years in the industry. None of the 32 respondents spent less than 1 year working in the industry.

## 4.2 Questionnaire

### 4.2.1 Question 1

What were your reasons for leaving the industry?



- 11 (34.4%): Higher pay
  - 17 (53.1%): Improved work-life balance
  - 1 (3.1%): Conflict with other employees
  - 5 (15.6%): Company instability
  - 3 (9.4%): Better benefits
  - 14 (43.8%): Career change
  - 4 (12.5%): Conflict with managers
  - 8 (25.0%): Better career opportunity
  - (0.0%): Closer to home
  - 2 (6.3%): Family/personal issues
  - 2 (6.3%): Other
- Answer(s) from the additional field:**
- better working hours
  - to have a child :)

The first question on the survey was designed to find out the most common reasons why individuals left the hospitality industry. Respondents were given a choice of 10 options from which they could choose as many reasons as they saw fit. Respondents also had the option of choosing ‘other’ and writing their own reason for leaving. The most common answer given, by 53.1% of respondents, was that they left the industry for improved work-life balance. This is similar to the findings of Deery (2008) and Blomme et al (2012) who found that employees who had difficulty obtaining work-life balance were more likely to leave.

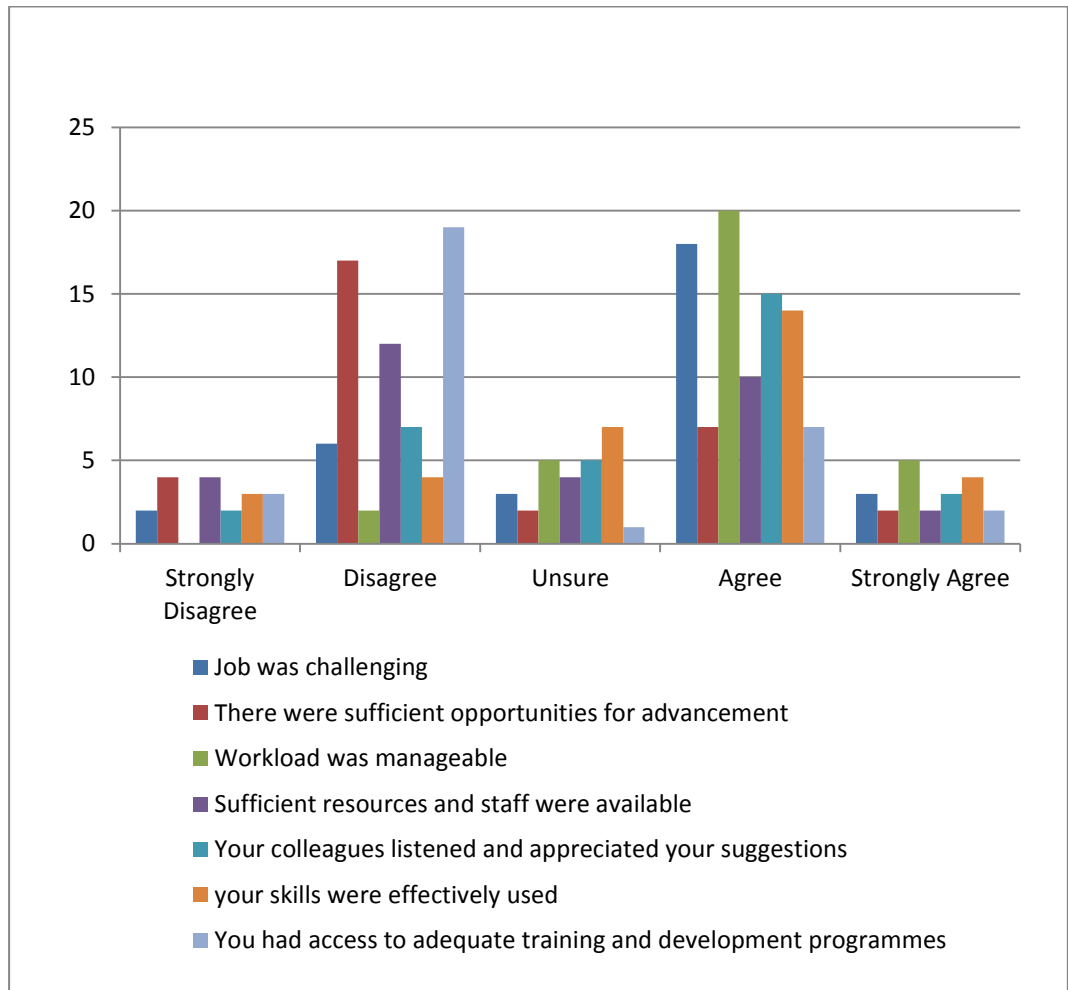
The next most common answer received was a career change with 43.8% of respondents giving this reason for leaving the industry. This is interesting as the most common length of time spent working in the industry was 4-7 years. It seems that after a period of between 4-7 years employees in the industry decide that it is time for a change in career. This brings about the question “what can employers in the industry do to ensure they retain their best most experienced talent?” A similar answer given by 25% of respondents was that they left the industry for a better career opportunity. Again, employers need to be looking at the reasons why they themselves could not offer the employee a better career opportunity such as further training or a chance to move into a management area if possible.

Higher pay was the reason for leaving the industry according to 34.4% of respondents. This piece of data came as a slight surprise to the researcher. It is quite common in countries such as America that service staff in the hospitality sector work for a very small wage and tips makes up a large proportion of the employees take home pay. Compared to these workers, Irish hospitality workers would be fairly well paid. From this researcher's experience of working in the sector, workers in the Irish hospitality sector are well paid and many employees receive even better rates when working unsocial hours such as late nights or Sundays.

Other reasons for leaving the industry given by respondents are likely to be non-specific to the hospitality sector and could be said by employees leaving any job. These include conflict with managers or colleagues, company instability and family reasons.

## 4.2.2 Question 2

### 4.2.2.1 The Job Itself

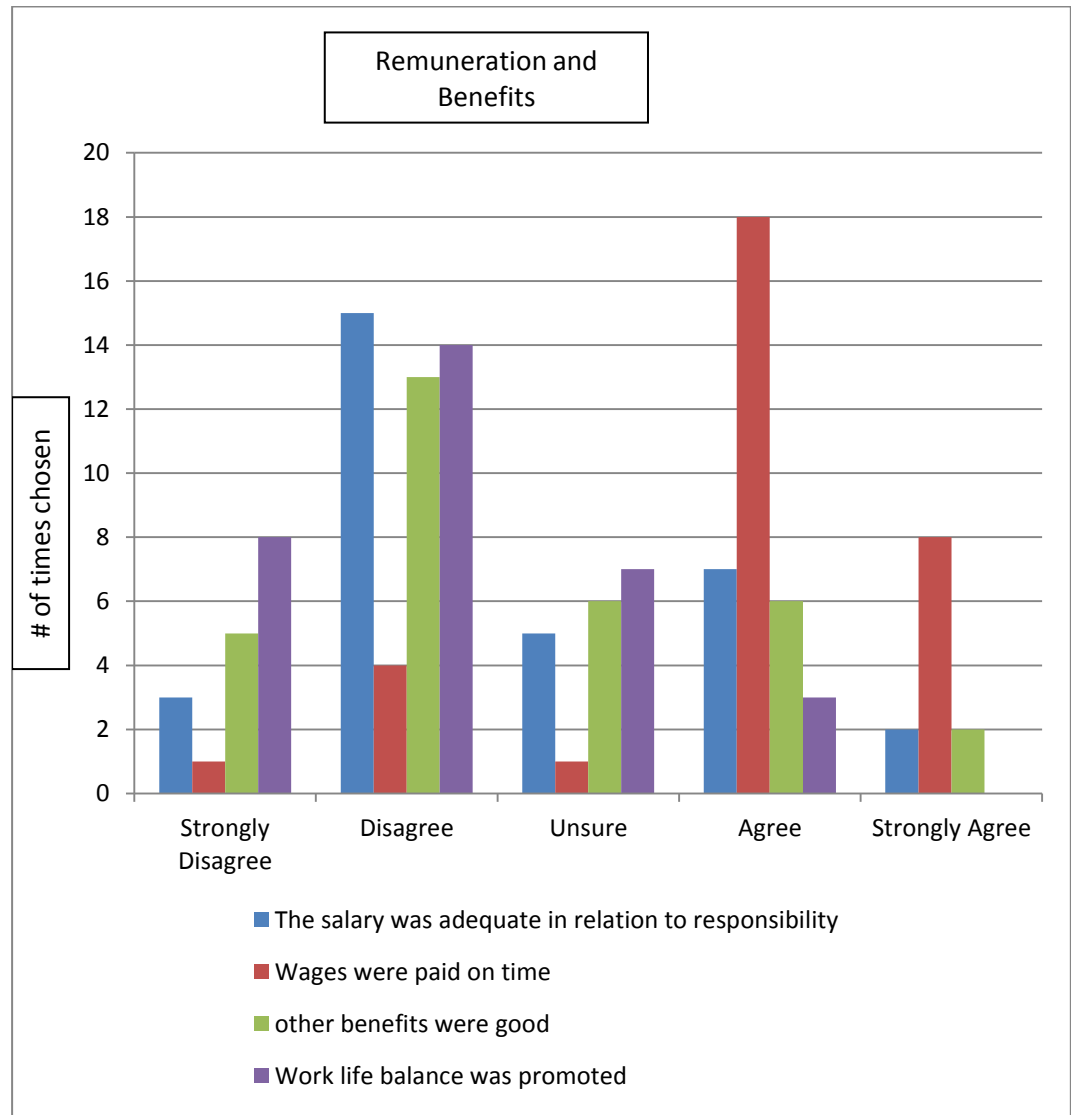


No. of Participants:32	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Unsure	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	Arithmetic Average
Job was challenging	2 6.25%	6 18.75%	3 9.38%	18 56.25%	3 9.38%	3.44
There were sufficient opportunities for advancement	4 12.50%	17 53.13%	2 6.25%	7 21.88%	2 6.25%	2.56
Workload was manageable	0 0	2 6.25%	5 15.63%	20 62.50%	5 15.63%	3.88
Sufficient resources and staff were available	4 12.50%	12 37.50%	4 12.50%	10 31.25%	2 6.25%	2.81
Your colleagues listened and appreciated your suggestions	2 6.25%	7 21.88%	5 15.63%	15 46.88%	3 9.38%	3.31
Your skills were effectively used	3 9.38%	4 12.5%	7 21.88%	14 43.75%	4 12.5%	3.38
You had access to adequate training and development programs	3 9.38%	19 59.38%	1 3.13%	7 21.88%	2 6.25%	2.56

**Table 1**

### 4.2.3 Question 3

#### 4.2.3.1 Remuneration and benefits

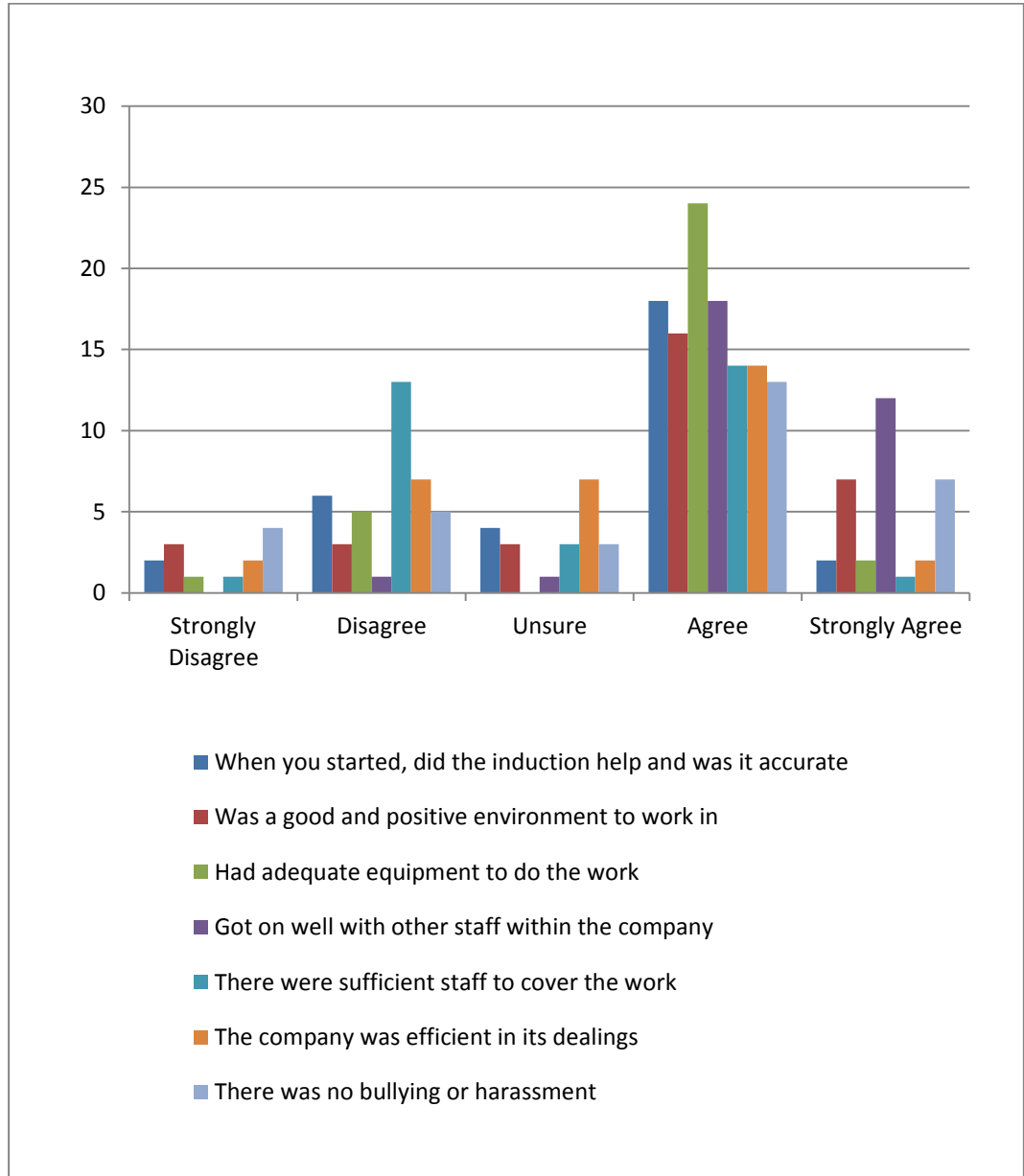


No. of Participants:32	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Unsure	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	Arithmetic Average
The salary was adequate in relation to responsibility	3	15 46.88%	5 15.63%	7 21.88%	2 6.25%	2.69
Wages were paid on time	1 3.13%	4 12.5%	1 3.13%	18 56.25%	8 25%	3.88
Other benefits were good	5 15.63%	13 40.63%	6 18.75%	6 18.75%	2 6.25%	2.59
Work-life balance was promoted and practiced	8 25%	14 43.75%	7 21.88%	3 9.38%	0	2.16

**Table 2**

## 4.2.4 Question 4

### 4.2.4.1 The Company



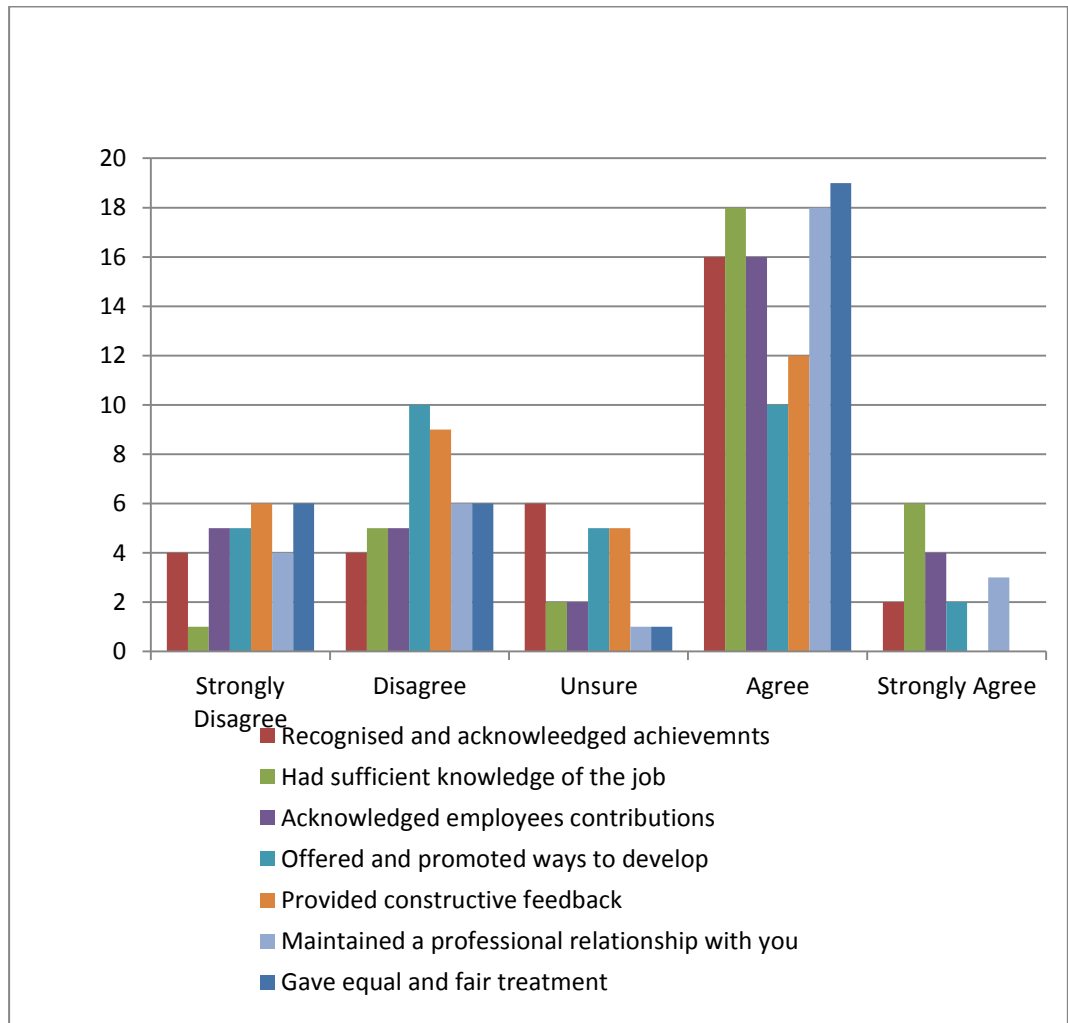


No. of Participants:32	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Unsure	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	Arithmetic Average
When you started, did the induction help and was it accurate	2 6.25%	6 18.75%	4 12.5%	18 56.25	2 6.25%	3.38
Was a good and positive environment to work in	3 9.38%	3 9.38%	3 9.38%	16 50%	7 21.885	3.66
Had adequate equipment to do the work	1 3.13%	5 15.63%	0	24 75%	2 6.25%	3.66
Got on well with other staff within the company	0	1 3.13%	1 3.13%	18 56.25%	12 37.5%	4.28
There were sufficient staff to cover the work	1 3.13%	13 40.63%	3 9.38%	14 43.75%	1 3.13%	3.03
The company was efficient in its dealings	2 6.25%	7 21.88%	7 21.88%	14 43.75%	2 6.25%	3.22
There was no bullying or harassment	4 12.5%	5 15.63%	3 9.38%	13 40.63%	7 21.88%	3.44

**Table 3**

## 4.2.5 Question 5

### 4.2.5.1 Supervisor/Line Manager



No. of Participants:32	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Unsure	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	Arithmetic Average
Had sufficient knowledge of the job	1 3.13%	5 15.63%	2 6.25%	18 56.25%	6 18.75%	3.72
Recognised and acknowledged achievements	4 12.5%	4 12.5%	6 18.75%	16 50%	2 6.25%	3.25
Acknowledged employees contributions	5 15.63%	5 15.63%	2 6.25%	16 50%	4 12.5%	3.28
Offered and promoted ways to develop	5 15.63%	10 31.25%	5 15.63%	10 31.25%	2 6.25%	2.81
Provided constructive feedback	6 18.75%	9 28.13%	5 15.63%	12 37.5%	0	2.72
Maintained a professional relationship with you	4 12.5%	6 18.75%	1 3.13%	18 56.25%	3 9.38%	3.31
Gave equal and fair treatment	6 18.75	6 18.75%	1 3.13%	19 59.38%	0	3.03

**Table 4**

## 4.2.6 Question 6

### 4.2.6.1 Why did you originally choose to work in the industry?

This question was an open question designed to capture some qualitative data. The question asked respondents why they originally chose to work in the industry. As would be expected with open-ended questions the answers given varied greatly but upon analysis it was clear that there were some similar answers among the 32.

11 of the 32 respondents said that they originally began working in the sector as a part time job while attending school or college. 5 people answered that they got into the sector because they needed the money while the same amount said they had limited options at the time and decided to take a job in the industry. Other respondents said that they received job offers from family and took it. Just 3 people surveyed said they had a personal interest in working in the hospitality sector.

#### Answers:

- Limited options at the time
- It was a part-time job while I attended college.
- I needed money
- There was no other work
- Part time job while studying
- Part time job while still in school
- Offered opportunity for my first employment
- Work available
- money
- Part time job
- Father got me job at young age
- Personal interest
- was good for part time work during college
- Tips
- Offered part-time hours
- needed a job
- Available position
- Satisfaction
- Part time job while at school
- Money
- I like the industry and the people and places to meet and see.
- Because i love working with people & hospitality is lots of fun
- Family link
- Offered part time/out of office time hours that suited my family.
- it was a part time job during college
- Liked working with the public
- Had just finished school and was very unsure of what career path I wanted so went into the hospitality industry as I was working in a hotel when I finished school.
- First job offer
- my sister got me into it
- Only work I could get at the time
- part time job while in college
- Money

## 4.2.7 Question 7

### 4.2.7.1 What role(s) did you do in the hospitality sector?

Question 7 of the questionnaire set out to find out what roles the participants in the survey had done in the sector. 50% of those surveyed had worked as bartenders. 25% of those surveyed worked as waiters. Others who participated in the survey worked as chefs and in customer service. There were just 3 former managers who participated in the survey. It was interesting to note that of all the respondents, just one said that they had progressed in the organisation and occupied several roles.

#### Answers:

- Bartending
- I was a bartender and also a waitress depending on the shift I was on for, day or night.
- Waitress/cashier/hostess/deli worker
- Bar
- Customer service
- Bartender
- Worked as a barman
- Bar trade
- waitress
- Bar man
- Barman
- Customer care
- acted as a manager
- Waitress
- Waitress in an Conferences and Events department
- barman
- Waitress
- Manager
- Barman
- Barman
- barman, bartender, waiter, supervisor,
- I started out as a waitress and became captain, manager & room service manager in the span of 3yrs. I trained new staff too.
- Chef
- Cafe staff and also Pub work.
- bar work
- Server and at till
- Chef
- Batman
- waitress
- Bartender
- I was a bar tender and waitress
- Waitress

## 4.2.8 Question 8

### 4.2.8.1 What did you like most about working in the hospitality sector?

Question 8 set out to find what respondents liked most about working in the hospitality sector. 75% of respondents said that they enjoyed the opportunity of meeting new people every day whether it is new staff or new customers and the atmosphere. The social aspect of the industry seems to be quite high in terms of workers enjoying working in the industry. 3 of those surveyed claimed the best thing about the industry was the money while just 2 people surveyed said they liked nothing about the industry.

#### Answers:

- 1
- The thing that I like most about it was the interaction with people everyday, whether they were regulars or people passing by.
- Nothing
- The people
- Talking to people
- Getting to know people.
- I enjoyed the interactions with staff and customers
- atmosphere
- The opportunity to meet different people, and the buzz of a busy night that you get waitressing when it's busy.
- it was a fun environment
- The craic
- Talking to clients
- freindly atmosphere
- Money
- Setting up and catering for a variety of different functions, and ensuring that everything ran smoothly.
- dealing with the customers
- The tips were often generous and the overtime was sufficient.
- Money
- Good atmosphere
- Money
- Events and people.
- Meeting lovely people as clients and staff from all over the world.
- The people
- Flexibility in working hours.
- I loved the customers and staff
- Meeting new people every day
- I didn't like any part of it.
- Socialising
- working and meeting people
- Dealing with all kind of people
- interaction with different people everyday. also knowing the regular customers was great.
- Meeting new people

## 4.2.9 Question 9

### 4.2.9.1 What did you like least about working in the hospitality industry?

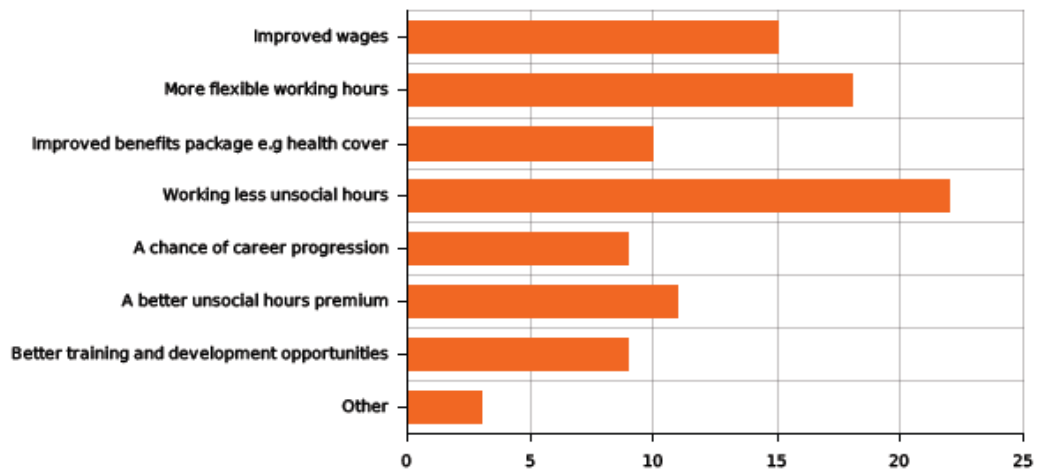
This question set to find out what respondents liked least about working in the industry. 65.6% of people surveyed said that late and unsocial working hours were the biggest downsides of working in the industry. It was interesting to note that although 75% of people said the most enjoyable thing about working on the atmosphere was the people, 21.9% of people said that the people were the worst thing about the industry. 9.4% of those surveyed said that wages were the most unsatisfactory thing about working in the industry.

#### Answers:

- Un-social hours
- I disliked the fact that the company was usually understaffed and as a result we got the brunt of the complaints from customers as we were in the front line. Also the owner of the company would avoid these areas of conflict and left the staff to deal with it.
- Everything
- Pay and hours
- Late nights
- Unsociable hours
- Late hours
- unsocial hours
- everything, wages, hours, some of the people I worked it. lack of respect people have for the role and you.
- very late shifts, on your feet for hours
- Shitty hours
- Long hours
- the hours, while working at into the night
- The atmosphere
- Seeing the happiness a wedding can bring to families lives.
- hours were late
- Unsociable working hours
- People
- Unsocial hours
- Lates
- overly Drunken people and won't leave
- Rude and unreasonable customers.
- The long hours
- When working in the pub industry dealing with drunks.
- meeting new people all the time
- Early hours and it was very physical work
- Unsocialable working hours
- Unsociable hours
- the long hours
- Working weekends and late nights
- being understaffed and the owner of the pub never deal with complaints. she ignored customers and left us in the front line dealing with it
- Low wages

## 4.2.10 Question 10

### 4.2.10.1 Would any of the following make you want to continue working in the industry?



15 (46.9%): Improved wages

18 (56.3%): More flexible working hours

10 (31.3%): Improved benefits package e.g health cover

22 (68.8%): Working less unsocial hours

9 (28.1%): A chance of career progression

11 (34.4%): A better unsocial hours premium

9 (28.1%): Better training and development opportunities

3 (9.4%): Other

Answer(s) from the additional field:

- No
- No
- none of the above



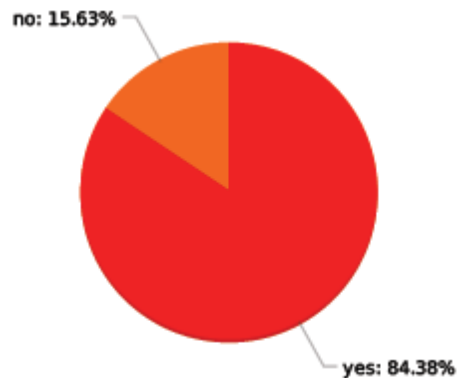
This question gave participants a list of 8 things and asked if any of them would make them return to the industry. Participants could select as many as they felt applied as well as having the option of filling in a text box if they felt something that might help them to stay was not listed. The options included:

- Improved wages
- More flexible working hours
- Improved benefits package
- Working less unsocial hours
- A chance of career progression
- A better unsocial hours premium
- Better training and development opportunities

The most common answer in this question was that working less unsocial hours would make people want to continue working in the industry with 68.8% of respondents saying this. 56.3% of respondents said that hours that are more flexible would make them want to continue working in the industry. 46.9% of respondents said that improved wages would make them stay. The remaining answers all received a similar amount of responses. 31.3% of respondents said that improved benefits would make them stay in the industry while 34% said that a better premium for working unsocial hours would make them stay. 28.1% said that a chance to further their career would make them continue working in the industry while the same percentage said that better training opportunities would make them consider staying. The “other” option received 3 answers with all responses saying that nothing would make them continue working in the hospitality industry.

#### 4.2.11 Question 11

##### 4.2.11.1 Did you enjoy your job?



The next section of the questionnaire was a series of yes or no questions. The first asked respondents did they enjoy their job. 27 or 84.4% of respondents said yes they did enjoy their job while 15.6% said they did not.

#### 4.2.12 Question 12

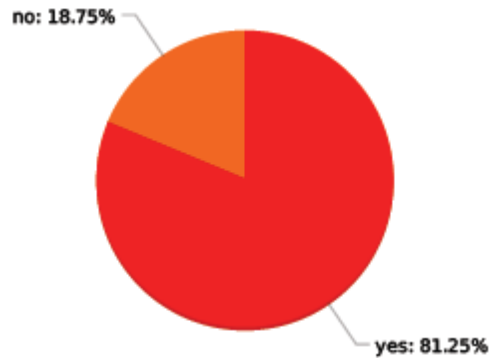
##### 4.2.12.1 Would improved wages make you want to continue working in the industry?



This answer split respondents straight down the middle with 50% saying yes and 50% saying no.

#### 4.2.13 Question 13

##### 4.2.13.1 Would more flexible working hours make you want to continue working in the industry?



81.3% of people surveyed said that flexible working hours would make them want to continue working in the industry. The remainder, 18.2% said that they would not consider working in the industry if they had better flexible hours.

#### 4.2.14 Question 14

##### 4.2.14.1 Would the chance of career progression make you want to stay?

Just over half, 53.1% of respondents said yes, a chance of career progression would make them stay in the industry. 46.9%



#### 4.2.15 Question 15

##### 4.2.15.1 Would better training opportunities make you want to stay in the industry?

This answer was almost an even split with 53.1% of participants saying no, training would not make them want to continue working in the industry.



## **5 Findings**

The following chapter will address some of the key findings from the research and describe how they could be used by industry professionals in order to help reduce turnover within the industry and increase overall employee retention.

### **5.1 Work-life balance**

The first of the research questions aimed to find out why the hospitality industry has such a high turnover rate. Deery and Shaw (1997) said that it is well known that the industry has a poor turnover rate. The survey contained several questions that aimed to find out why the turnover rate within the industry was so bad.

The first question asked respondents what were their reasons for leaving the hospitality industry. At just over 53% the top answer here was for improved work-life balance. As you will see through the course of this section work-life balance and the unsocial hours worked seem to be a major factor in the reason for people leaving the industry. Deery (2008) investigated the issues of work-life balance and found it to have a significant bearing on an employee's decision to leave their job.

Question 9 on the survey was an open-ended question and asked respondents what they liked least about working in the industry. A massive 65.6% of respondents answered that late or unsocial hours were the thing they disliked most about the industry. Already these two questions show that the hours worked by those employed in the industry have a serious effect on the work-life balance of those same employees and in turn causes them to become displeased.

Question 10 asked would certain things such as improved wages, less unsocial hours and so on; make any of the respondents want to continue working in the industry. Again, 68.8% of respondents said that working less unsocial hours would make them want to continue working in the hospitality sector while just over 56% of respondents said that increased flexibility in working hours would make them want to work in the industry again. It is

clear from the findings that the majority of those who participated in the survey, genuinely liked working in the industry ( 84% said they enjoyed their job) but that the hours were just too much to create decent work-life balance.

Question 3 asked if work-life balance was promoted within their organisation. 25% of respondents strongly disagreed that this was the case while 44% disagreed when asked the same question.

Finally, question 13 asked for a simple yes or no answer. It asked would more flexible working hours make you want to continue in the industry. The data collected from this question showed that just over 81% of people who participated in the survey said that they would continue working in the industry had the working hours been more flexible. From the above questions, the author has concluded that hours of work and poor work-life balance are the main factors for people leaving the hospitality industry however there are other. These findings suggest that the IHRA and other similar organisations are right to be worried about the flexibility of working hours, as it seems to be a major factor in the retention of employees. If employees cannot be offered some sort of flexibility then they will leave eventually according to the results of this survey. It was

## **5.2 Wages**

34% of those surveyed said they left the industry for higher pay. 56% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed when asked if the salary they received was adequate in relation to the duties they carried out. It is clear from these answers that wages has a bearing on whether someone leaves a company. It is interesting to note that of 32 respondents; only 3 said that the thing they liked least about working in the industry was the wage they received. This suggests that although employees within the industry may not be happy with the wage they receive it is not enough of a factor on its own to cause them to leave. In question 10, 47% of respondents said that improved wages would make them want to continue working in the industry, this again shows that wages is a factor that determines whether people want to leave the industry. Question 12 asked

the same question but just looked for a yes or no answer and the result was consistent with 50% saying improved wages would make them want to continue working in the industry.

### **5.3 Ireland Compared to the Rest of the World**

Although this research only sampled a small number of actual workers in the industry and is not wholly representative of Ireland, it is quite clear that the industry as a whole shares similar characteristics to other countries, most notably Australia. Margaret Deery carried out numerous studies on the area of turnover and retention within the industry. This research was carried out in Australia.

### **5.4 Training**

Question 1 found that almost 48 % of respondents said they left the industry for a change of career while 25% left the industry for a better opportunity. This suggests that the industry really is not seen as it once was. The industry is being used more and more by students looking to make some money while at college or school and less as a chance to have a career. 53% of those surveyed said that the chance of career progression would make them want to stay in the industry however when asked if better training opportunities would make them want to stay in the industry 53% actually said no. This data is somewhat conflicting but suggests to the author that some respondents who said they would like the chance of career progression want it to just happen instead of having to work for it through training and development opportunities. Question 10 asked a similar question but in a different format. The question asked would any of the following make you want to consider working in the industry. One of the options was 'better training and development opportunities'. Just 28% of respondents chose this option. The data further backs up the suggestion that although over half of the respondents said they would like the chance of career progression, half of those wanted the progression without any extra training or development.

Although it could be suggested that those respondents above did not want to be trained up, the results of several other questions reveal information that could argue against this. 65% of those who responded to the questionnaire either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “there were sufficient opportunities for advancement”. This suggests that employers in the hospitality industry are not doing enough to promote advancement and up skilling. Employers need to be willing to invest in employees in order to get the best from them and ultimately encourage them to stay in the organisation and thus increasing retention.

The data above is backed up quite significantly by the following. Just over 68% of participants either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “you had access to adequate training and development opportunities”. This again shows unwillingness by employers to provide advancement opportunities. It is quite understandable therefore, that people will not continue to work in an industry where there is little chance of advancement.

## **5.5 Age**

Although it was suggested in research conducted by Davidson et al. (2011) that different generations held different views about the industry, this research found no real link with. Quite possibly because there was such a small sample used. Of the respondents who said they worked in the industry for over 10 years all of them were under the age of 35. This disagrees somewhat with the theory that older generations saw the hospitality sector as a career rather than a temporary job. There were a total of four over 41 year olds who participated in the questionnaire. All of these spent between 4 and 7 years in the industry. There were a number of 18-23 year olds who said they spent the same amount of time in the industry. Again, this disagrees with the above theory.



## **6 Discussion and Recommendations**

The data collected from the above research has revealed a number of things to the author. Work-life balance is clearly quite high on the list of reasons why employees leave their organisations. The harsh reality for anyone working in the industry is that unfortunately, late hours, long hours and hours spent working on holidays are simply a characteristic of the industry. These late hours and public holidays are when the majority of organisations make their money. The harsh reality for employers and management in the industry is that the majority of people will eventually get fed up and discontent with these working conditions.

There is however some things employers can do to try and increase retention which in turn saves the organisation money. After analysing the data collected, the author believes that if more employers within the hospitality industry used a total reward approach as a way of motivating their employees they could help increase retention. An overwhelming number of respondents said the hours they had to work were the reason why they quit the industry. Clearly these cannot be completely avoided as it is a characteristic of the industry however adopting a total reward approach would mean that employers try offering some kind of work-life balance. This would obviously cause trouble for HR departments and line managers at first but there are several solutions.

The author has seen a number of solutions implemented quite successfully on a small scale. For full time staff members who are contracted to work weekends, giving them the option of one weekend per month off could be a great way to encourage more people to stay in the industry.

For part time employees who for example are working while studying, they could perhaps be offered an early shift once per month meaning they have one free weekend night per month were they are free to socialise. These may seem like small things but respondents seemed adamant that working hours and poor work-life balance were to blame for them leaving the industry. In a lot of cases there were other reasons but lack of work-life balance was quite high on the agenda.

Having good work-life balance is just one aspect of using a total reward model. Respondents also commented that improved wages or better unsocial hour's premium would make them reconsider leaving the industry. 34% said that a better premium would make them stay while 50% said that an overall better wage would make them stay.

Another part of the total reward model talks about the importance of performance and recognition. This is an area in which it seems many organisations within the hospitality industry seem to be doing quite well. In the survey 50% of respondents agreed that managers or supervisors recognised and acknowledged their achievements while 50% also agreed that employee contributions were recognised.

Further development and career opportunities are also part of using a total reward approach. As can be seen in the previous chapter there was some conflicting data. Organisations should do their best to help employees to develop because at the end of the day the more their employees improve the more they can then bring to the company as a whole. It is hard to allow everyone to grow and develop their own careers in some sections of the hospitality industry. Chefs for example are constantly learning and training how to do new dishes and what could be the latest craze in food. It could be quite easy for these workers to be offered training but if the chef is working in a restaurant working on a small budget that sells largely frozen, semi prepared food there is no actual benefit for them to send their chef on a course to learn about gourmet food. If they did this it may cost them money by sending him on the course but it may cause the chef to want to leave in order further his career. It seems organisations will hedge their bets more often than not and hope they stay without any chance of career advancement. Training opportunities can become harder to come by for others employed in different areas of the industry. Take bar staff for example. They can be sent on many different courses to learn about different wines, spirits cocktails etc. but this will not do much to help further their career; they will simply be a very knowledgeable barman.

Obviously it cannot be all one way traffic in this situation and employees have to want to learn and develop. The promise of development into possible managerial roles for employees may make them consider training if the thought of doing the more labour intensive shift work being left behind motivates them.

## 7 Conclusion

### 7.1 Conclusion

This research project set out to complete several objectives and the researcher believes that this has been achieved. It has explored in depth, the hospitality industry and the problems it has with employee retention and turnover. Various models were examined and the problem has been looked at firstly from an academic viewpoint but then from a practical perspective. It is believed that the proposed research questions were answered.

- Employees leave the hospitality industry because of the hours that need to be worked. **RQ1**
- The Irish hospitality sector has got similar issues to other parts of the world such as Australia. **RQ2**
- No hard evidence exists about motivation for working in the industry depending on age profile; however a number of responses said they joined the industry to support themselves while studying which indirectly points to a younger age group. **RQ3**
- Better work-life balance and premiums for working late shifts should be included in terms and conditions to help improve retention. **RQ4**
- The most appropriate method of retention to ensure turnover is kept as low as possible is to use a total rewards model, offering both financial and non-financial rewards. **RQ5**

Total reward and work-life balance were overarching themes of the research and this is clearly reflected in data collected by the researcher. Work-life balance is being sought by employees in all industries and just because the hospitality sector has different hours to others does not mean that it cannot be achieved.

It is very encouraging to receive answers from the majority of respondents say that they enjoyed working in the industry and that they would consider working in the industry however it is disappointing to see that 18 year olds say the same as those respondents aged 40 and over. It seems that the industry has stayed the same for the most part of the last 30 or so years.

This researcher concludes that it is imperative action be taken by organisations to ensure that this trend does not continue any longer.

## **7.2 Scope for Future Studies**

As mentioned previously, there is a significant gap in the literature surrounding this area, particularly when viewing it in an Irish context. Future research may look to focus in further on work-life balance within the industry and how best it could be achieved. Someone with more time and resources may be able to investigate further, the reasons why employees leave the industry.

## **7.3 Relevance for Employers and Organisations**

This research was carried out for the purpose of completing a Master dissertation in human resource management, however the area of study is of major relevance to employers and organisations within the hospitality sector. The research shows that if correct reward practices are implemented, employee retention can improve significantly. It is of high importance for organisations to develop suitable reward systems and listen to the needs of their employees.

## **7.4 Personal Learning Statement**

The author found this dissertation challenging yet enjoyable and extremely worthwhile. Before undertaking this research project the author had almost ten years' experience working in the hospitality sector in a number of roles both as a frontline worker and more recently in a semi-managerial capacity. The knowledge the author has obtained throughout this research project will only go on to add to his own knowledge of the area and allow him to continue his own professional development whether it be within the hospitality sector or further afield.

In hindsight the author would consider taking a more qualitative approach. He would be interested to get the opinions of managers and owners on how best to implement work-life balance in such a hectic environment.

Interviewing line managers to find out why they feel so many leave the industry would be sure to reveal some interesting viewpoints.

Lastly, I am extremely pleased to have completed this thesis and hope that this will add to the general body of knowledge that exists on the topic of retention within the hospitality sector.

*Stephen Kirwan*

*August 2014*

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# 9 Appendix

## 9.1 Appendix 1 Sample Response

### Hospitality survey

1. What were your reasons for leaving the industry? \*

Number of participants: 1

- (0.0%): Higher pay

- (0.0%): Improved work-life balance

- (0.0%): Conflict with other employees

1 (100.0%): Company instability

- (0.0%): Better benefits

- (0.0%): Career change

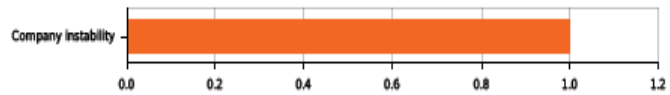
- (0.0%): Conflict with managers

- (0.0%): Better career opportunity

- (0.0%): Closer to home

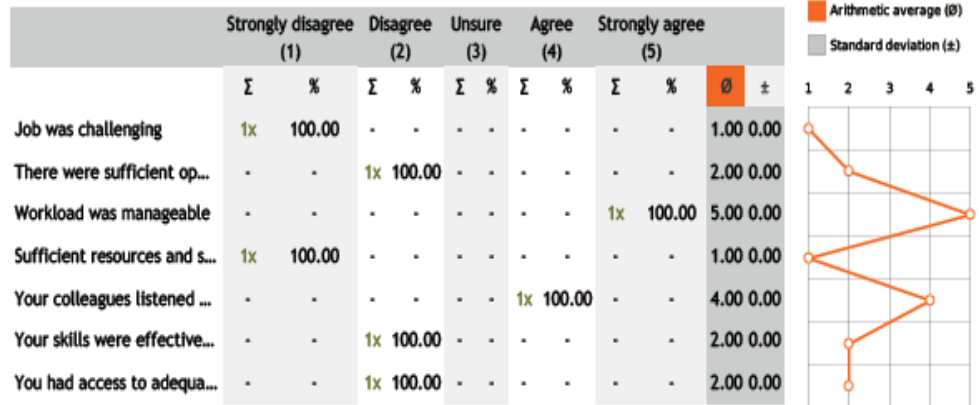
- (0.0%): Family/personal issues

- (0.0%): Other



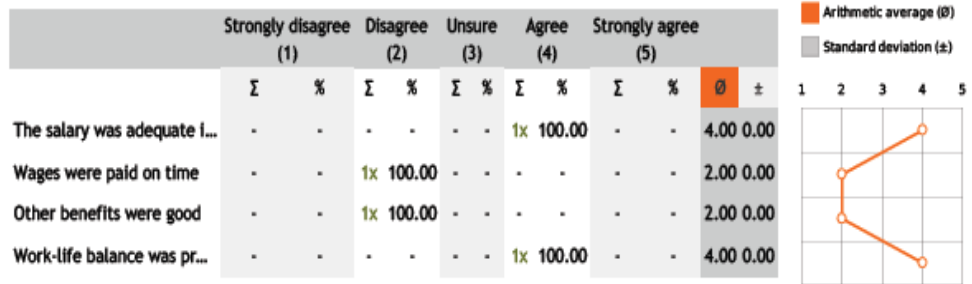
2. The job itself. \*

Number of participants: 1



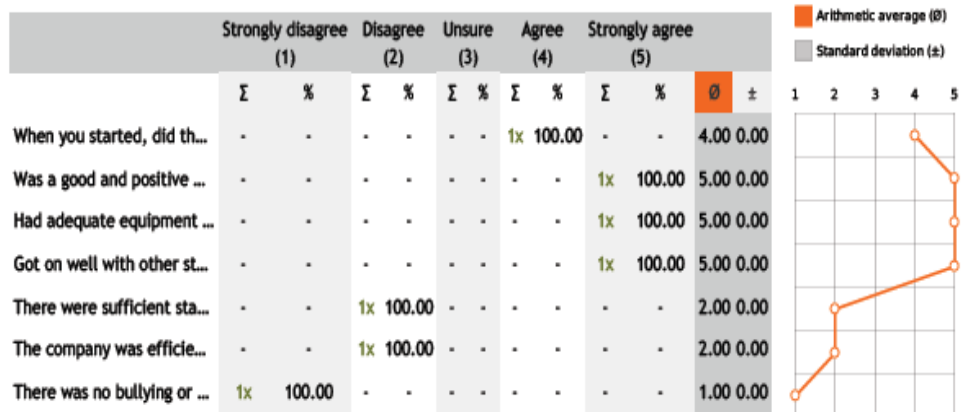
3. Remuneration and benefits \*

Number of participants: 1



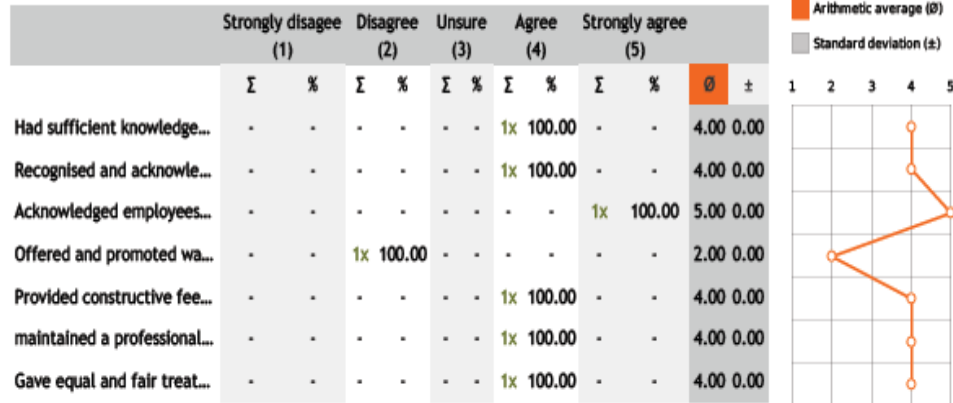
4. The Company \*

Number of participants: 1



5. Supervisor/Line manager \*

Number of participants: 1



6. Why did you originally choose to work in the industry? \*

Number of participants: 1

- It was a part-time job while I attended college.

7. What role(s) did you do in the hospitality sector? \*

Number of participants: 1

- I was a bartender and also a waitress depending on the shift I was on for, day or night.

8. What did you like most about working in the hospitality sector? \*

Number of participants: 1

- The thing that I like most about it was the interaction with people everyday, whether they were regulars or people passing by.

9. What did you like least about working in the hospitality industry? \*

Number of participants: 1

- I disliked the fact that the company was usually understaffed and as a result we got the brunt of the complaints from customers as we were in the front line. Also the owner of the company would avoid these areas of conflict and left the staff to deal with it.

10. Would any of the following make you want to continue working in the industry? \*

Number of participants: 1

1 (100.0%): Improved wages

- (0.0%): More flexible working hours

- (0.0%): Improved benefits package e.g health cover

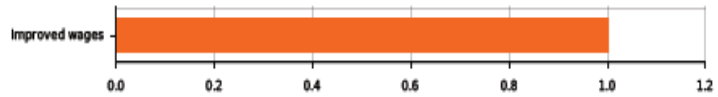
- (0.0%): Working less unsocial hours

- (0.0%): A chance of career progression

- (0.0%): A better unsocial hours premium

- (0.0%): Better training and development opportunities

- (0.0%): Other



11. Did you enjoy your job? \*

Number of participants: 1

1 (100.0%): yes

- (0.0%): no

12. Would improved wages make you want to continue working in the industry? \*

Number of participants: 1

1 (100.0%): yes

- (0.0%): no

13. Would more flexible working hours make you want to continue in the industry? \*

Number of participants: 1

1 (100.0%): yes

- (0.0%): no

14. Would the chance of career progression make you want to stay? \*

Number of participants: 1

1 (100.0%): yes

- (0.0%): no

15. Would better training opportunities make you want to stay in the industry? \*

Number of participants: 1

1 (100.0%): yes

- (0.0%): no

16. Gender \*

Number of participants: 1

- (0.0%): Male

1 (100.0%): Female

17. Age \*

Number of participants: 1

- (0.0%): 18-23

1 (100.0%): 24-29

- (0.0%): 30-35

- (0.0%): 36-40

- (0.0%): 41+

18. Number of years spent working in the industry \*

Number of participants: 1

- (0.0%): less than 1 year

- (0.0%): 1-3

- (0.0%): 4-7

- (0.0%): 8-10

1 (100.0%): 10+

## 9.2 Appendix 2 Sample Questionnaire

### Hospitality survey

#### Page 1

This survey is designed to help investigate retention issues within the Irish hospitality sector. Please answer all questions. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. All information gathered is strictly confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this research project

#### What were your reasons for leaving the industry? \*

please select one or more.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Higher pay
<input type="checkbox"/>	Improved work-life balance
<input type="checkbox"/>	Conflict with other employees
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company instability
<input type="checkbox"/>	Better benefits
<input type="checkbox"/>	Career change
<input type="checkbox"/>	Conflict with managers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Better career opportunity
<input type="checkbox"/>	Closer to home
<input type="checkbox"/>	Family/personal issues
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please state) <input type="text"/>

#### The job itself. \*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
Job was challenging	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There were sufficient opportunities for advancement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workload was manageable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sufficient resources and staff were available	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your colleagues listened and appreciated your suggestions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your skills were effectively used	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You had access to adequate training and development programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### Remuneration and benefits \*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
The salary was adequate in relation to responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wages were paid on time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other benefits were good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work-life balance was promoted and practiced	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**The Company \***

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly
When you started, did the induction help and was it accurate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Was a good and positive environment to work in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Had adequate equipment to do the work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Got on well with other staff within the company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There were sufficient staff to cover the work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The company was efficient in its dealings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There was no bullying or harassment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Supervisor/Line manager \***

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly
Had sufficient knowledge of the job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognised and acknowledged achievements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Acknowledged employees contributions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Offered and promoted ways to develop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provided constructive feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
maintained a professional relationship with you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gave equal and fair treatment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Why did you originally choose to work in the industry? \***

**What role(s) did you do in the hospitality sector? \***

**What did you like most about working in the hospitality sector? \***

**What did you like least about working in the hospitality industry? \***



**Would any of the following make you want to continue working in the industry? \***

please select one or more

Improved wages

More flexible working hours

Improved benefits package e.g health cover

Working less unsocial hours

A chance of career progression

A better unsocial hours premium

Better training and development opportunities

Other (please state)

**Did you enjoy your job? \***

yes

no

**Would improved wages make you want to continue working in the industry? \***

yes

no

**Would more flexible working hours make you want to continue in the industry? \***

yes

no

**Would the chance of career progression make you want to stay? \***

yes

no

**Would better training opportunities make you want to stay in the industry? \***

yes

no

**Gender \***

Male

Female

**Age \***

18-23

24-29

30-35

36-40

41+

**Number of years spent working in the Industry \***

less than 1 year

1-3

4-7

8-10

10+

Thank you for taking the time to complete this short survey on employee exit within the hospitality sector in Ireland.