Exploring Emotional Intelligence In The Hospitality Industry:

Effects On Customer Satisfaction and Employee Performance

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

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Master of Science in Entrepreneurship

By

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Under Supervision of

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and the influence on customer satisfaction and performance of employees within the context of the hospitality sector. Using qualitative research methodology and especially conducting interviews, the research describes how EI impacts various functions of hospitality management. This research suggests that increased levels of EI among members of the organization positively impacts the effectiveness of services, customers' satisfaction, and the organizational environment. Overall, this study contributes to the knowledge of EI in the hospitality environment by underlining its importance in the context of the improvement of interpersonal relations and efficient work of all employees. It also presents several limitations as the research sample is quite small and there is a lack of cultural diversity in most of the cases. Implications for future research include expanding the sample diversity and focusing on different roles within the hospitality industry. Recommendations for the industry include creating a sturdy framework for EI learning and improvement as well as including EI in leadership training and conducting routine assessment of EI.

Authorities should recommend and prescribe standards for EI training providers aiming to set requirements for establishing quality and safe relations at the work environment across the sector. Thus, to foster employees' happiness and maintain their high level of engagement, it is crucial to focus on aspects of EI and constant improvement of the results of assessment and overall performance of the hospitality organizations.

In conclusion, it can be stated that this research has established a great importance of EI in enhancing the level of customer satisfaction as well as the performance of employees in the context of the hospitality sector. It outlines an agenda for further research on the topic and possible interventions to improve employees' EI to benefit organizational development in the sector of services.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The hospitality industry has changed a lot during the past 5-10 years, with new technologies and changing consumer demands and preferences to worldwide outbreaks like COVID-19. The increasing importance placed on personalized guest experiences forces the demand for more in-depth insights concerning customer preferences and behaviors. It is because of this cultural shift that emotional intelligence (EI) has become ever more important for hospitality professionals today (Avdimiotis, 2019). Emotional intelligence refers to the level of facility holdings in recognizing, understanding, and inhibiting one's emotions and that of others (Rechberg, 2020). At present, EI in hospitality allows staff to give out the best class of service, handle customer complaints, provide emotional responses, hence fully creating a feeling of warmth in atmospheres. High-EI employees would modulate their interactions when this is most needed for guests who seek individualized and memorable experiences, improving customer satisfaction and loyalty (Zhu *et al*., 2022). In addition, the pandemic has provided a bit more complexity, like increased health and safety concerns and flexible booking policies, that emotional intelligence helps the staff get over by communicating effectively and reassuring the guests. Therefore, the evolution of this industry has further underlined the need for emotional intelligence that would lead to perfect service delivery and adaptation to change demands.

In other words, the extent to which clients' needs and feelings can be well understood and responded by employees, determines its success. The importance of emotional skills is coordinated under what is referred to as emotional intelligence (EI). Salovey and Mayer (1990) gave the first description of EI in 1990 as a form of thinking that involves the accurate perception and valuation of one's own emotions as well as of others. Furthermore, the study include understanding how to implement the neural and chemical responses associated with various emotions in beneficial ways. EI is a significant case in positions such as those existing within the hospitality industry because performance is largely determined by one's ability to satisfy customers, which, in this case, it will require some interpersonal skills (Salovey and Mayer, 1990).

Emotional intelligence (EI) has been seen as significantly valuable when it comes to interpersonal relations in different sectors particularly those in service delivery where quality delivery all along is central to the success and prosperity of the business. In his 1995 publication, Daniel Goleman stated that EI is significantly important in team work, stress management and enhancing employee satisfaction at the work place. His ideas are really enlightening on how EI is crucial in managing and leading teams in firms.

Day and Carroll (2004) demonstrated that EI positively influences leaders' performance and teams' performance in stressed environments such as the hospitality industry. Similar work in the context of the hospitality industry by Wong and Law (2002) concluded that managers who possessed high levels of EI were also more mature and proficient in handling complaints from clients and staff. This results in more cheerful customers and reduced turnover rates for employees (Wong and Law, 2002).

Nonetheless, despite this awareness of the numerous advantages, the specific relationship between EI and various levels of business in the hospitality field, especially when other cultures are embraced, still remains unclear. Joseph and Newman (2010) said that impact can differ according to the job and the person's proficiency level and, therefore, it is clear that the relation between EI and job performance is not simple and requires more elaborative studies.

Many studies highlight the significance of applying EI in enhancing ways through which individuals work and communicate in organisations, but there are research limitations that need to be addressed, particularly in hospitality-based organisations. Most of the research studies EI, rather in a generic or theoretical approach or how EI applies to the general commerce environment, rather then concentrating on EI impacts in the hospitality industry, in particular sub-cultures and various levels of managerial employment. Moreover, there is not enough empirical literature that investigates how EI is used in practice by the employees of the hospitality industry or whether the training of EI improves the effectiveness in enhancing the employees' job performance. This leaves a big question unanswered:

"How can we nurture EI in a diverse workforce in a way that invariably improves the lot of the staff and creates better situations for the customers?"

It is essential to question so in order to develop the principles of EI training and management applicable in the hospitality environment filled with the intensity and specificity of the hospitality industry.

1.2 Research Questions

This dissertation aims to fill these gaps by addressing the following refined research questions:

1. How does emotional intelligence impact customer satisfaction in the hospitality sector?
2. How does emotional intelligence impact employee performance in the hospitality sector?
3. What are the specific challenges and opportunities in enhancing emotional intelligence among hospitality employees?
4. How do different levels of management in the hospitality industry perceive the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership and team dynamics?
5. What training methods are currently being used in the hospitality sector to improve emotional intelligence, and how effective are they?

To answer these questions, the research presented employed a qualitative research design, utilising interviews and ethnographic observation. This assisted in gaining a rich and deep understanding of various EI factors in the context of the hospitality field. Interviews with hospitality staff (which included participants from various levels of management) were conducted to inquire regarding their perception of the relevance of emotional intelligence as an essential element in the management and delivery of services to the customers. Specifically, ethnographic observation provided an understanding of how EI is employed practically and the difficulties that arise when they work on this skill.

This kind of research is needed at this time when the hospitality industry around the world is going through some serious challenges due to high staff turnover levels, ever-demanding and high-expectation customers, and incredible competition from rivals. Traditional customer service places much emphasis on direct, personal interactions in which the one face-to-face being approached has the tendency to increase customer satisfaction (Froehle, 2006). However, different business models, such as hospitality organisations at airports, might necessitate a unique approach to service. For instance, considering someone going to an airport and ordering food through a QR code and the waitress can simply deliver the food rapidly without really engaging in further interaction. Again, this example might seem a little distinctive, but it might work fine for particular travel needs, as travellers generally

might be in a big hurry and do not have time to spare. Speed and efficiency matter foremost here, and technology can make service lean for such needs. This doesn't mean customer service and emotional intelligence are no longer valid.

Even in the fastest of environments, short but meaningful interactions can enhance customer satisfaction much further. A quick check-in from the staff to ensure the customer is satisfied can show that the establishment does care for the customer's experience without delaying them. This approach shows how emotional intelligence can be tailored into different service models in a way that delivers personalized experience in an efficient use of time (Morrison, 2007). This is important to understand the variations in business models operating in the hospitality industry to create an efficient service strategy. For example, airports and other fast service models, it is speedy and quick; fine dining restaurants are a personification with an aim to provide attentive service by building an experience.

In contrast to this, casual dining restaurants have to play a balancing act between efficiency and personal interaction in response to the customers' choice. It is necessary for the hospitality sector to make adjustments to the service styles according to the context and customer expectations in order to become more satisfying in all contexts (Ekinci, Dawes and Massey, 2008). Hence, following different kinds of business models and from this point creating an awareness of using emotional intelligence accordingly can be quite effective for serving purposes in all hospitality scenarios and imparting customer satisfaction. In this dissertation, the major subject of discussion is emotional intelligence and this work seeks to highlight some of the best practices to be adopted that can enhance the impact of offered training programs, on the staff, customers and overall organisational benefits.

This dissertation, will not only address research gaps but go beyond and emphasize how beneficial filling these gaps can be to the hospitality industry. It will provide a descriptive analysis of the influence of EI on key dynamics influencing organisational performance in the hospitality industry. Thus, by continuing and expanding the theoretical framework and thoroughly utilising the qualitative research method, this research will contribute to the expansion of academic knowledge and develop effective managerial solutions for the issues emerging in the context of the hospitality sector.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Emotional Intelligence can have a significant importance in the hospitality sector as the findings obtained as a result of the studies revealed, where understanding and managing emotions can greatly impact both employee performance and customer satisfaction (Koronios *et al*., 2019). Salovey and Mayer (1990) first described EI as the ability to accurately perceive and appraise one's own emotions and those of others. In the hospitality sector, where interactions with customers are frequent, EI is crucial for creating positive experiences and fostering a supportive work environment.

The following literature review seeks to discuss the ways through which EI can improve performance and customer service in the hospitality industry. It addressess the following questions: In what manner does EI affect customer satisfaction and organisational workers' performance? What are the factors and expectations related to improving the EI of hospitality employees? What is the organisational culture of dealing with EI at varying management levels? What interventions are helpful for the enhancement of EI? The scope of this review is to discuss the findings of the current literature with a focus on the use of EI in the hospitality sector and suggest potential directions for future research and practical implementation.

2.1 Conceptual Framework of Emotional Intelligence

According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), EI can be described as the extent of an individual's capacity to recognise, interpret and regulate emotions. Goleman and Cherniss (2024) later focused on emotional intelligence as a key to success within a person and throughout their career. Goleman's model includes five components, also called the Five to Focus which are self awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. These elements are particularly appropriate in hospitality organisations where the workers are required to deal with social interactions and, therefore, emotional management (Goleman, 1998).

(Bakola and Drigas, 2020).

EI is grounded in different theories amongst which is Salovey and Mayer's Four Branch Model, which describes the abilities of perceiving, applying, comprehending, and regulating emotions. Particularly, this model is based on the cognitive mechanism and their usage in the framework of EI (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). The model by Goleman is tied to the emotional competence which lays the foundation for the explanation of how EI can be grown and used in the workplace.
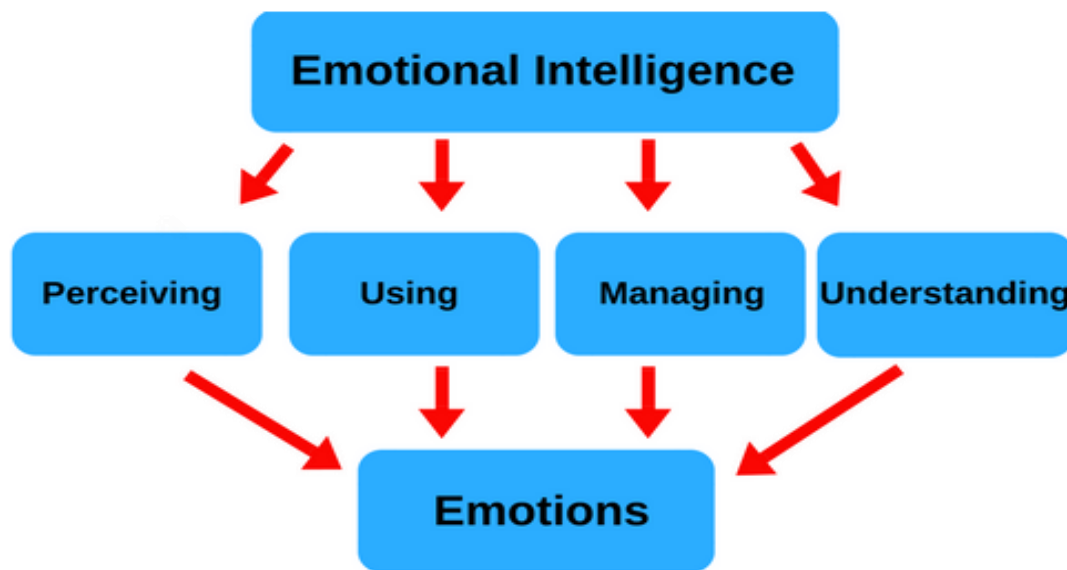
(Packt Publishing, 2024)

Organised in the system of the hospitality industry, EI is effective in communicative interactions, the choice of conflict solving strategies, and stress management. It is imperative to note that high EI really facilitates the handling of emotional activities in organisations through enhancing performance and clients' satisfaction among the employees. Especially, knowledge of the conceptual structure of EI is useful in establishing areas that require training and development attention.

Bar-On (2006) proposed the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) as one of the self-report tools aimed at measuring different aspects of people's emotional and social lives. This tool has been applied in research to measure the correlation between EI and other areas of performance and health. The Emotional Quotient Inventory, developed by Reuven Bar-On in 2006, is the first comprehensive, empirically developed self-report instrument for estimating a

range of emotional and social functional competencies. The EQ-i measures the construct of EI via five composite scales: intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, adaptability, and general mood, including 15 subscales (Wood, Parker and Keefer, 2009). It has already been extensively used for research investigating the relationship between EI and different facets of performance, health and well-being. Despite its wide range of applications, the EQ-i has a number of shortcomings. Chief among them is the fact that it is based on self-reporting and thus, subject to bias, especially social desirability and inaccurate assessment of self. That means a person may respond with overestimations of abilities or answer in socially acceptable ways rather than telling the truth. This can affect validity and reliability. Furthermore, the criticism of the EQ-i has been in relation to the instrument's rather too broad definition of EI. It includes a huge range of characteristics and behaviours, most of which rub against other psychological constructs like personality traits (Groves, McEnrue and Shen, 2008).

Within the hospitality industry, the EQ-i has been applied to determine how emotional intelligence relates to some significant work-related outcomes, such as work performance, quality of service delivered to customers, and wellbeing. An increased EI of hospitality workers was related to better interactions with customers and an increased rate of satisfaction with their jobs alongside better team relationships (Karimi *et al*., 2018). It has been shown, for example, that those staff with higher levels of EI are more resistant and thus, more efficient in their management of the hospitality industry's stressful environment, which is in turn bound to reduce staff turnover and enhance overall performance. Moreover, the application of EQ-i usage in leadership development training has been used within the hospitality industry itself. It is in the pursuit of supporting and rendering effective leadership that developing the emotional intelligence of managers within organizations would help create a positive work culture, raise staff engagement, and thus, improve employee and organizational outcomes (Wolfe, Phillips and Asperin, 2014). While EQ-i is not without flaws, it certainly is an excellent instrument for emotional intelligence measurement and development within the hospitality industry.

2.2 Emotional Intelligence and Customer Satisfaction

Most of the hospitality organisations might have the ambition of achieving client satisfaction at a higher degree with assistance of developing emotional intelligence which is getting more and more recognised as crucial in the process of good relationships and coping with key strategies effectively at work and in our personal lives. As a real-world example explained in Stein and Book (2011), the results of an industry survey revealed that the most

desired qualities on the staff that business owners would like to hire is called by them as "being responsive to customers, dealing with them effectively, and talking and writing in a relevant way." In another saying, the core skills are associated with numerous of the scales of EI (Stein and Book, 2011). Existing research indicates that high levels of EI mean that employees tend to address customers' concerns more effectively, deal with complaints well and build adequate perception. Wong and Law (2002) observed that managers who possessed high EI were more appropriate when handling complaints from customers, thus, improving customers' satisfaction and loyalty towards the firm. The capacity to meet and address the emotional requirements of the customers is among the vital conditions required to succeed in the current competitive environment.

In the study by Prentice and King (2011), the authors looked at the influence of EI on casino frontline service employees. They also established that superb attending to customers' needs was directly related to the higher levels of employees' EI. It is equally important to understand the customer and be able to control one's own feelings during periods of great stress when service is being delivered.

Actually, EI helps hospitality employees to identify and meet customers' emotional needs, thus, giving appropriate care and consideration. This may not only serve the purpose of increasing the level of satisfaction among the customers but also lead to customer retention and favourable 'word-of-mouth' (Marcos and Coelho, 2022). This research reveals that programs aimed at cultivating EI talents can meaningfully affect customers' experiences and corporate performance.

According to Daus and Ashkanasy (2005), EI is helpful in enhancing the quality of the service and customer retention due to the proper handling of the interactions between the firm and its customers. In addition, Zeidner, Matthews and Roberts (2004) conducted research that also reinforces the opinion that the promotion of EI training aids employees considerably in managing stressful customer relations.

Further, Chaudhry and Usman (2011) claimed that passionate workers with high EI may be able to understand the customer's emotional demands for services and respond effectively to such needs. They inferred that their findings proposed that EI training can enhance the levels of customer service performance in the hospitality sector.

Another factor to consider is how EI can handle clients, particularly those considered as difficult. EI can allow employees to become composed and use their skills in diffusing any incidences that may have the potential of becoming tense into successful experiences (Stanley, 2012). This skill is crucial in any organization particularly the industry of hospitality since the ultimate aim is to satisfy the customer. Thus, successfully regulating one's own feelings and perceiving the feelings of other individuals will allow the employees to exceed the expectations of consumers.

Another function of EI is related to the strategy of establishing permanent client relations. High EI enables the workers to build friendly relations with customers, which in turn leads to repeat business. These employees are able to understand signals coming from customers and in return make the customers feel that they are valued. This is a customized service that goes a long way in building customer satisfaction and can be made to set a business above other similar business (Zeidner, Matthews and Roberts 2004).

EI skills can also be taught within a training program for the selected type of customer service, as there may be special customer relations cases that the trained people will be prepared to solve. For instance, debriefing tasks can be very useful since the staff have to enact or replay various circumstances involving customers' anger or even joy. Thus, the interactions provide what employees need to implement when dealing with real-life issues of customer service or facing real-life problematic situations (Chaudhry and Usman, 2011).

Consequently, it is evident that the use of EI enhances customer satisfaction concerning the services offered by the hospitality sector and fosters team cohesion within the setting (Stoyanova-Bozhkova, Paskova and Buhalis, 2022). Thus, having a high EI allows the teams to integrate and cooperate closely, which is crucial in terms of providing customers with impeccable service. If employees can combine their strengths with other employees, then they can complement each other in ensuring the provision of good service delivery by responding to emerging problems on a one-stop basis. This methodology not only has the added advantage of enhancing the satisfaction of the customers but also benefits the staff's work environment.

Furthermore, EI helps to establish pleasant conditions in the field of hospitality and makes guests' impressions positive. For this reason, using EI in the workplace can help employees make the atmosphere welcoming and assure clients that they are valued. This

ambience is essential in organisations that render hospitality related services as the customer feels the environment and the tone of the company besides the services offered.

To sum up, the positive impact of using EI on customer service practices is vast in the long term. Overall, organisations that invest in EI training in their company courses can experience major enhancements in customer satisfaction ratings (Bardzil and Slaski, 2003), boosts in customer loyalty, and word-of-mouth recognition. Thus, the described benefits can contribute to increased revenue and a better position in the competitive environment within the hospitality sphere. Therefore, EI can be described as an essential factor in delivering services to hospitality businesses' customers. Thus, EI assist workers to regulate their emotions and comprehend others' emotions, as well as improve customer relations and service quality and build long-lasting relationships with customers. Therefore, ensuring that their employees receive training in EI can enhance performance, thus, delivering good results on the business side and ensuring customer satisfaction.

Research clearly indicates that emotional intelligence improves hospitality client service. Studies have shown that employees who present a high level of emotional intelligence have better relationships with clients, which leads to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty. However, there are also more nuanced perspectives in the literature. Other study has found varied degrees of success in EI based on business culture, individual differences among employees, and contextual factors in customer interactions. To this end, critics can argue that EI alone will not create exceptional service because it needs to be wielded with technical skill and systemic support. There are problems of measurement and implementation of effective EI training, apart from questions over its long-term financial return and cultural variations. Even with these nuances, one cannot deny that EI as overwhelming evidence supports maintains positive customer relations and helps team cohesion for improved service delivery and better retention rates (Jung and Yoon, 2016). Further research into these complexities could significantly enhance strategies for maximizing the effect of EI in hospitality settings.

2.3 Emotional Intelligence and Employee Performance

A lot of researches have discussed the connection between EI and performance of the employees, and there may be a majority in agreement among these conclusions that a positive correlation exists between the two elements. Day and Carroll (2004) confirmed that EI is positively related to individual and group performance, it being the case for high stress work

setting such as the hospitality industry. Thus, high EI is useful in stress management, relationship building, and interpersonal teamwork among employees.

Joseph and Newman (2010) studied the meta-analysis of EI and job performance and pointed out that EI is an important correlate of performance in the job that involves emotional labour, for instance, hospitality industry jobs. EI should affect job performance through job satisfaction, stress and its impact on organizational commitment, according to their model.

Earlier research done on EI training has indicated that it has the potential to increase employee performance. Lee and Ok (2013) studied the test on service orientation of hotel employees and revealed that learning through EI based training resulted in improvements in service delivery and job performance. Integrated results indicated that employees trained in EI were more responsible for understanding customers' needs, controlling their own feelings, and collaborating with other members.

Moreover, Carmeli (2003) reported the correlated factor is that employees with a high perceived EI incurred a lower level of burnout and higher job satisfaction, hence, deriving higher organisational performance. This supports the assumption on how EI can foster a greater throughput in the workplace meaning increased performance by employees.

The competency that involves regulating one's emotions and deciphering the emotions of others increases effective communication and decreases conflict within the workplace. Because of this, there will be improved working relations among the employees and thus, increase production. Thus, involvement in EI training enables hospitality organisations to promote the performance of employees, decrease turnover rates, and enhance the organisational climate (Jung and Yoon, 2016).

Miao, Humphrey and Qian (2017) conducted studies that confirmed that there is a significant relationship between EI and performance as well as work satisfaction among the people working in an organisation that demands them to practice emotional labour. They agree that EI can be used to increase employee performance outcomes in the hospitality industry.

2.4 Challenges and Opportunities in Enhancing EI

Promoting awareness of and attention to EI among personnel in the hospitality industry offers a number of potential benefits and difficulties. It is essential to establish that one of the primary issues lies in the sharp heterogeneity of the staff within the hospitality industry. This

research proposed that there are differences between employees in terms of their cultural and educational background, which affects their EI. Novelli and de Souza (2024) admitted there is a problem in trying to link leadership styles with emotional intelligence, this is because of the need to introduce new training interventions that will be unique to the cultures of different organisations.

Still, there exists a lot of potential in the application of EI to train and develop staff and employees. Educational measures that contribute to the thorough training using theoretical and practical implications, presented to improve self-estimation, empathy, and skills to cooperate with other people, may help to keep and strengthen control over employees' emotions and improve their communication with customers. Several other forms of training that can be given to employees include cross-cultural training to enable them to work in a diverse environment (Hasan, 2022).

Easing the difficulties of EI training for the hospitality industry through technology, such as web-based tutorials, virtual training, and applications on employees' smart devices, can be other formative ways to deliver training. These tools can enable delivery of EI skills in a manner that is engaging and fun, allowing the employees to practice the skills in a simulated environment. Clarke (2010) also found that the best way to apply EI training is, if it is a constant process integrated into actual practice. Also, the inclusion of feedback mechanisms as well as the application of real-life situations can further complement the EI training plans.

Moreover, Druskat, Sala, and Mount (2006) identified that if the organisational culture incorporates values for assessing EI and fosters its engagement, there will be an enhancement of the endurance of improved performance by employees and the organisation's responsiveness, also known as customer service. This also relates to not only offering training but also promoting EI behaviours in response to the organisational policies and leaders' actions.

By considering the challenges and by capitalising on the opportunities, hospitality organisations can come up with an idea of an emotionally intelligent workforce. This, in turn, can result in better satisfaction of the customer needs, an increase in productivity in employees and thereby growth in business.

2.5 Perception of EI in Leadership and Team Dynamics

The understanding of EI differs depending on the level of hierarchy in the hospitality environment. As Lee and Madera (2019) analysed in a systematic literature review concerning emotional labour in hospitality, EI plays a significant role in leadership and between teams. They found out that those organisations whose leaders register high EI are more capable when it gets to the act of managing teams, creating and maintaining a healthy work culture and elucidating organizational objectives.

Regarding the management level, the concept of EI is vital in addressing interpersonal communication conflict and organisational decision-making processes. For managers with high EI, because they can effectively regulate themselves and others' emotions, the team's cohesiveness and performance will also be high. They also know how to encourage and develop their individuals, which is rather crucial in the competitive ambience of the hospitality industry.

Another factor that affects the dynamics or work of the teams is the EI of the various team members. Essentially, organizations that show a high level of collective EI within their teams will be apt in handling interpersonal issues and will foster team cohesion. The consequence of this is enhanced efficiency in the teams and a healthier climate of work among employees. Managers can implement emotional intelligence and create awareness concerning EI in a workplace by demonstrating the EI behaviours and availing resources to their subordinates (Deb *et al*., 2023).

A book evaluation of "Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence" by Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002), expounds how leaders who use EI can improve the collaboration and engagement amongst employees, something that is crucial in the hospitality business (Yunker and Yunker, 2002). This is in concordance with the works done by Cherniss (2001) touching on the factor of EI in leadership and overall organisational performance.

Therefore, reviewing the literature on comparing various leadership models with the inclusion of EI, it can be concluded that transformational and servant leadership are especially beneficial for the hospitality industry (Bavik, 2020). These styles focus more on social aspects such as understanding other people's feelings and needs, developing rapport with subordinates, and self-control, which are crucial in a diverse workplace environment, especially when delivering customer services.

Combined with this, Groves *et al*. (2008) noted that it is possible to increase the efficiency of the leadership by increasing the EI of the manager who leads a specific group of workers. This is essential given the fact that the hospitality industry involves dealing with people most of the time, and the working conditions can be very stressful.

2.6 Effective Training Methods for EI

Training techniques for the improvement of EI within the hospitality industry are discussed in the literature, and these strategies are not at an equal or sufficient level in terms of their effectiveness and which specific aspects of EI they address. Some of the methods of training that are currently being applied are workshops, coaching and mentoring, and e-learning modules. These methods aim to embed fundamental EI competencies like self-awareness, empathy, and social skills into the individual.

The existing studies reveal that roleplays and simulations as a way of training are the most effective for enhancing EI. These techniques enable people to exercise their EI skills in specific incidents, get feedback, and then decompose all the experiences. According to Lee and Ok (2013), the implementation of experiential learning resulted in positive changes in the degree of service orientation and job performance among personnel working in hospitality industry such as in a hotel.

Coaching and mentoring are also some of the recommended strategies that can be used to enhance one's EI. Motivational sessions might sometimes involve the determination of the employee's strengths and areas of deficit in EI, and the establishment of goals and approaches of enhancing EI. Many of the mentoring programs can longer term support and directions for the use of EI skills in the workplace (Chen and Wang, 2019).

Currently, e-learning modules and online courses represent flexible and easy-to-implement training methods. These tools can facilitate effective EI training, which can be fun, informative and self-paced, giving employees the ability to learn at their own pace. Virtual reality simulations and mobile applications are also effective in giving learners realistic and firsthand exposure to training (Sayed, Proches and Sayed, 2021).

Based on the findings of this research, it could, therefore, be recommended that organisations embrace a holistic approach to optimise the delivery of EI training in hospitality organisations. For SMEs within the hospitality industry, there are numerous barriers to the

execution of a holistic approach to EI training, primarily of a financial nature. SMEs normally have smaller budgets and therefore, can rarely afford to invest in all-encompassing trainings. Furthermore, the small budget of SMEs usually does not enable them to invest in any resources and can also lack the time and personnel for organizing related training initiatives. In this regard, the SMEs can target only those modules of EI training that ensure minimum cost and allocate efficiency (Lehmann *et al.*, 2021). These may include online courses, workshops, or even customized solutions targeting the needs of the organization. Accessible choices may consist of external aids like industry associations or government training resources. Furthermore, incorporating the principles of EI within already existing structures and operations of training, or even in everyday activities, may be resource-incentive in effectively utilizing the available resources for bringing forth emotional awareness without any extra cost. Although integrating EI training into SMEs in the hospitality sector is a strategic and phased approach itself, needing to align with business objectives and available resources, it will ultimately counter challenges of financial inability to implement this training effectively (Ramos *et al.*, 2021). This involves integration and training, immediate and constant feedback, and the setting of organisational objectives for instructional training. Thus, making a proper approach to the development of EI training helps organisations increase their employee performance, improve the quality of customer service, and ensure organisational success in the long run.

Furthermore, Groves *et al.* (2008) also observed that employees who are trained in EI proactively learn and complete the organizational leadership development training programs because the organizations equip them with what they require actually in their occupations.

In addition, Kirk, Schutte and Hine (2008) propose that mindfulness integration in EI can additionally improve the effectiveness of the topic. Thus, mindfulness can contribute to enhancing self-awareness and other elements of value for EI.

Hence, it can be stated that EI is significant to performance and customer satisfaction within the hospitality industry. Emotional intelligence has been deemed critical for creating and providing superior customer service, enhancing people's performance, and cultivating a healthy climate and culture at work. Thus, there are numerous prospects for incorporating EI into their organisation's training and development programs and implementation with consideration for a diverse workforce.

This literature review has focused on the awareness of EI in the hospitality sector and understanding the state of research and best practices. Consequently, the present review adds to the academic literature and presents efficient training approaches to help hospitality organisations. Future research might focus on the consequences of EI in terms of the customers, employees, and the organisation's performance and try to invent new ways of EI for training and development.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter confers the methodology used to study the relationship between EI and the influence on customer satisfaction and performance of employees within the context of the hospitality industry. This chapter has information about research design of the study, to give information on research design, methodological approach, the method of data collection, research sample, information about the interviews as well as the ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

3.1 Research Design

The qualitative research design is selected for this study and the reason behind the selection of qualitative research design because it is suitable for this study, interconnect and complex interaction of the relationship between EI and the influence on customer satisfaction and performance of employees within the context of the hospitality industry, as well as the findings obtained in this field required a deep understanding and evaluation. Another reason for choosing qualitative research design for this study are the research findings of previous scholars like Salovey and Mayer (1990), Goleman (1998), and Bar-On (2006) who have used qualitative research in defining emotional intelligence. These researches used qualitative research design which provided very useful information when dealing with the effect of EI and the influence on customer satisfaction and performance of employees within the context of the hospitality industry. On the other hand, quantitative research design contains mathematical data which is not suitable to show the effect of EI and the influence on customer satisfaction and performance of employees. Quantitative approaches frequently focus on measuring variables and evaluating hypotheses, but they may fail to give the full insights required to grasp the complexities of EI in the hospitality context.

3.2 Methodological Approach

The rationale applied to the study can be best used to classify this work under the methodological approach taken in other studies concerning emotional intelligence. In a similar fashion, this research intends to join the conversation and advance knowledge by presenting recommendations on the usage of emotional intelligence within the hospitality field. The qualitative research method was used here because it can provide details of the participants'

experiences as well as perceptions regarding emotional intelligence in an organizational context. This aspect also makes it easier to make amendments and to capture new inputs and directions as the research is in progress hence covering all aspects of the research topic.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

Interviews were semi-structured, and the interviews were carried out by the researcher who participated in observations with extra questions, if necessary. The interviews were carried out both at the participant's workplace and through internet calls in the periods when this was inconceivable. It allowed participants to be comfortable and provided several ways they could participate in the activity. Data collection involves the use of different techniques, which makes the data more credible and valid in the entire process (Sayed, Proches and Sayed, 2021). The chosen type of interview, semi-structured, was aimed at collecting as much detailed information concerning participants' emotions and views on EI as possible. This format of asking questions was particularly useful for getting more detailed answers as well as ensuring that follow-up questions were as open as possible as a way of allowing the interview to explore interesting or emergent themes that may have been discovered from the interview. Interviews were strengthened by observations to understand real-life experiences in the practical use of the learned EI components at the workplace.

3.4 Research Sample

The participants were selected systematically and were drawn from different areas of operations within the hospitality industry ranging from managers, team leaders, chefs, coordinators, bartenders, and so on. Large age ranges and diverse experiences of the subjects were incorporated into the sample to be able to have a general discussion of EI. Specifically, ten participants were involved in the study; all of them had direct contact with customers at work. This diversity was ensured to make sure that the study had a diverse type of data that would help enrich the study's data.

The targeting criteria were based on their experience and the positions they held in the business of hospitality where they had direct customer interface. This focus made sure that the participants had the right information on how EI influences both customers' satisfaction and the employees' performance. The variability of roles and experiences in participants also enabled the localization of various views concerning the research study to a certain extent.

3.5 Interview Details

It is seen that interviewees were from different positions in the hospitality industry, so the perception was rich. The interviews consisted of answerable questions without any pre-set recommendations, so the participants were able to provide their experience on the use of EI. When recruiting the participants for the interview, the participants were told that they could freely express themselves. Pre-testing was also done on the questions developed to see how helpful these were in ushering in detailed responses. Pertaining to the ethical aspects of the interviews, all questions including the right of the participant to keep their identity anonymous and to withdraw their consent at any one time were answered accordingly.

3.6 Research Instrument

The questions were all conversational and general in form so as to elicit the respondents' more expansive views and a history of how they felt about emotional intelligence. All of these questions were formulated with reference to the research objectives and in accordance with patterns that were highlighted by the literature as some of the pertinent areas of concern in relation to emotional intelligence in the context of the hospitality industry. Before the interviews, participants were informed that they should express their views freely. Pilot testing was conducted to refine the questions and ensure they were well-suited to gain detailed responses.

The questions asked during the interview included questions regarding the participants' work role demands, personal beliefs about competence, and the presence of EI in the workplace. The questions also related to levels of customer satisfaction and employee performance, as well as possible difficulties that participants met on the way to increasing the level of EI of the staff. This made it easy to guarantee that all sections of the research had been addressed by the research question.

3.7 Data Collection Process

Online and in person interviews were taken in place by using voice recording apps, the content of the interviews was audio recorded and transcribed. The transcribed interviews were saved with a code given consisted of a letter and all the data were stored as anonymized under password-protected computer only accessible to the lead researcher.

Such a process made it possible to make records of all aspects of the interviews to be used for analysis. Content analysis was implemented to analyse the transcriptions given in the study; the data was analysed thematically with multiple runs done to enhance accuracy and inclusiveness. Thus, the process made it possible to determine thematic and foundational areas associated with the formation of EI in the context of the hospitality industry.

Data analysis was carried out in two stages, data reduction and data display; specifically, the data were coded to pinpoint the main themes and subthemes. These themes were then grouped into overarching headings that were used to give an overview of the gathered data. Coding and analysis were cyclical so as to guarantee that all the themes being discussed had been identified.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The participants were read and explained the research purpose, anonymity, data protection and their right to withdraw from the study and they were happy with it and they agreed with it on the day before the interview proceeded (see Appendix A for Consent Form). Each participant's consent was asked to allow for audio recording conversations in order to obtain written documents later on. Participants' consent was recorded in the audio recording just before starting to ask interview questions (see Appendix B for interview questions), to make sure that they understood they were under study, as well as the use of their data. Participants were informed with a label of coding given after each interview completed composed of a letter such as "Participant A", "Participant B", and so on. Each recorded interviews were saved and stored under these codes and transcribed. Participants were also given some information on how the data collected would be used, and the participants also got a chance to review their interviews in transcripts form and gave their approval.

The participants' identities were concealed during the study, and all documents were kept secure. It was possible to effectively apply the measures that would allow keeping to ethical standards of the study as well as to guarantee the rights and privacy of participants.

3.9 Limitations

The following were the limitations observed in this research. Hence, the study employs a qualitative research approach, and the specific sample source may restrict the broader application of the study's results. In the same manner, the researcher perceived both the non-

verbal aspects of the participants and their inability to maintain eye contact during online interviews as difficulties of the technique, transcription mistakes were also named as a potential problem. Nevertheless, the study contributes to the knowledge of the effects of emotional intelligence on customer satisfaction and employee productivity in the hospitality context. All the interviews were done in Ireland, no research was done in other countries so the results might not be very generalised. Cultural differences can influence the way emotional intelligence is perceived and practiced. For instance, if the study were to be carried out in Turkey, the dynamics of the contact and focus on affective self and interactional processes could be configured differently as a result of cultural differences in courtesy. This research uses a qualitative research paradigm with a particular sample origin in the hospitality industry in Ireland. This specific context may limit the generalizability of the findings from this study across other contexts of the hospitality business and in other industries.

This methodology section aims to explicate details on the research design, data collection, analysis, and courses of ethical considerations followed in this study. These methods have been selected with reference to the objectives of the study and backed by other related studies. This chapter sets the background knowledge of how this study illustrates the various outcomes of emotional intelligence. Due to careful selection of participants, and due to the proper methods of collecting and analysing the data, this study presented detailed and profound findings connected to the usage of EI in the framework of hospitality.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

This chapter provide the detail of the interviews conducted with the hospitality industry professionals and also provide the detail information about the relationship between EI and the influence on customer satisfaction and performance of employees within the context of the hospitality industry. In hospitality industry it is important to improve the emotional self-regulations because it is very helpful to assess the others' emotions and deal them in a good way (Chen and Wang, 2019).

Each section covers a broad area or topic of interest that arose from the questions that were asked in the interviews. The study starts by describing the roles and responsibilities of the participants in the area of hospitality, as well as their definitions of the term and their perceived importance of EI. Section three describes the relationship between EI and customer satisfaction, section four examines the link between EI and employee performance, and five discusses issues in promoting EI, ways of enhancing EI, and how EI enhances leadership.

4.1 Roles and Responsibilities in the Hospitality Sector

The respondents of this research are workers in the hospitality industry and restaurant owners, theatre managers, bartenders, and private dining waiters. These roles include a wide variety of tasks that are considered crucial for the functioning of companies in the hospitality industry.

- **Restaurant Owners**: Supervising all aspects of the creation of their restaurants with a focus on achieving the best level of customer satisfaction and effective utilization of people and other organizational assets.

- **Theatre Managers:** Being responsible for the organizational issues of theatres such as booking of other shows, employees, and customers while maintaining the flow of events and their satisfactory results.

- **Bartenders:** Since customers are needed to be dealt with great devotion, they ensure that customers are served efficiently and at the same time, manage the manner well in which customers are handled.

- **Private Dining Waiters:** Coordinating with the events and make sure that the food and beverages that are being served are to the satisfaction of the guests.
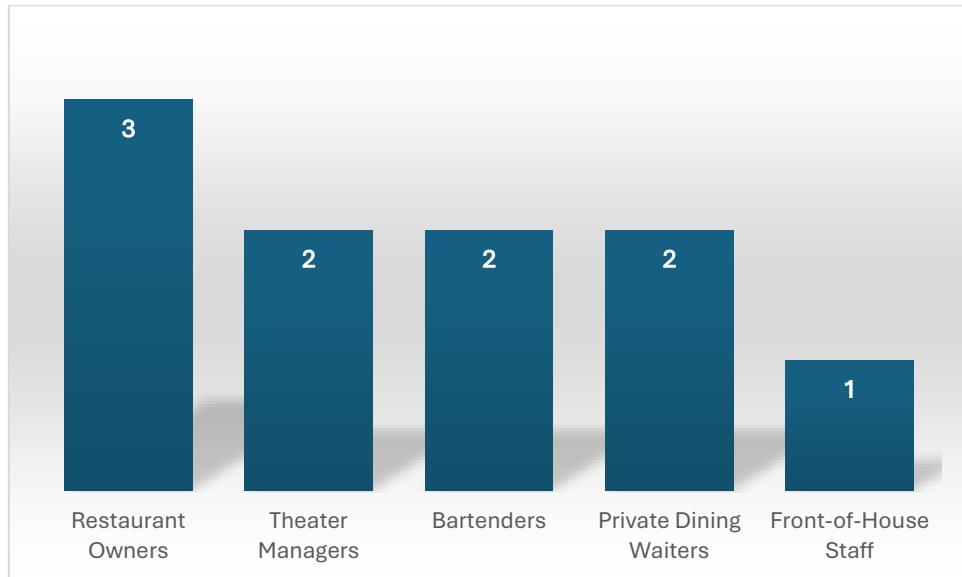
This bar chart displays the number of participants in various roles within the hospitality sector, highlighting the diversity of job positions involved in the study.

The stated responsibilities demonstrated importance of EI and requirement of a strong understanding of emotional intelligence. In front-line positions, EI assists employees to regulate their feelings and recognise the sentiments of the client which improves service delivery and customers' satisfaction. For instance, recognising and meeting the customers' needs before they bring them up improves their experience and increases their loyalty. Moreover, while working in a management position, EI is essential when dealing with interpersonal conflicts, as well as in creating satisfactory working relationships within the group and promoting the enhancement of the efficiency of the employees. Managers who are able to address the emotions of their subordinates are assets to an organisation because they retain employees and provide excellent service (Chen and Wang, 2019).
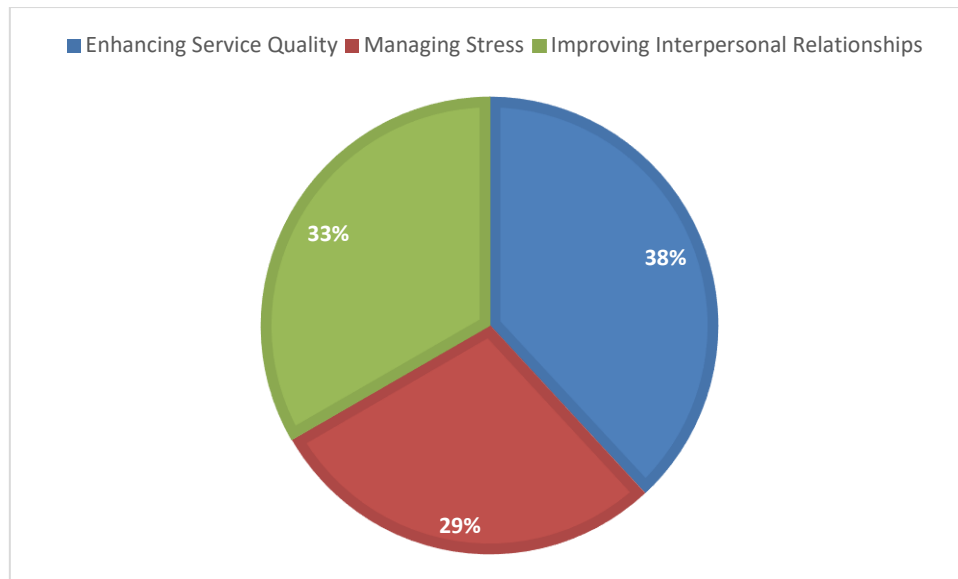
This pie chart illustrates the percentage of participants who mentioned the importance of emotional intelligence in enhancing service quality, managing stress, and improving interpersonal relationships in their roles.

Participants generally agree that EI includes managing and understanding both one's own emotions and those of others. Participant C described emotional intelligence as being able to kind of handle own emotions and kind of knowing the best way to approach a person or issue that having and kind of base off their reactions in that situation. According to participant A, EI meaning is described as '…I believe that emotional intelligence means understanding and managing your emotions when it is crucial for resolving conflict'.

4.2 Understanding Emotional Intelligence

The study established that participants had different definitions of what it means to be emotionally intelligent, although patterns could be noted. EI is often defined as an individual's capacity to appreciate feelings in himself or herself, as well as feelings in other individuals (Deb *et al*., 2023). This comprises knowledge concerning emotional characteristics, stress levels, and understanding other people.

Participants highlighted several reasons why EI is important in their roles within the hospitality sector:

- **Managing emotions**: Self-regulation could be defined as the capacity that measures someone's ability to maintain self-control and cool head in emotionally charged situations.

- **Understanding others:** Appreciation of the feelings that people have towards a company's products or services as well as the people working in that company.

- **Enhancing service quality**: Thus, through the regulations of their own emotions and the customers' emotions, hospitality professionals are capable of rendering excellent services. For instance, a man or woman who is cool-headed will be in a position to manage aggressive customers better than his or her counterpart who is not so cool-headed; thus, making all customers happy (Deb *et al.*, 2023).

- **Managing stress:** EI is useful for staff to cope with the stress likely to be experienced in such places as restaurants during peak hours or during a live show. This is a big advantage of having to maintain service quality by having the ability to remain cool under pressure.

- **Improving interpersonal relationships:** It helps to build sound relationships with the customers and among employees. Cordial relations, thus, result in better relations in the premises and a harmonious, healthy workplace.

Participant Role	Definition of EI
Restaurant Owner	Managing and understanding emotions, empathy
Theater Manager	Handling stress, understanding others' emotions
Bartender	Staying composed, managing emotions in stressful situations
Private Dining Waiter	Recognizing and responding to customers' emotions
Front-of-House Staff	Enhancing service quality, fostering relationships

The reaction of all participants was generally similar, and they also provided a new perspective stating that EI is an essential concept in the hospitality industry affecting customer and employees' satisfaction. Participant D explicitly stated that is important because, as he mentioned, one of the major components of their job at the pub and restaurant is how to interact with customers and other employees, so it would be nice if one is able to attempt to comprehend people and, indeed, to communicate with them. Participant D interpreted the significance of EI

in customer and employee satisfaction in the hospitality sector as '…I think it's important because one of the main parts of working in a pub and restaurant would be kind of communication with customers and staff, so it's kind of important to be able to just try to understand people and kind of yeah, just be able to communicate with them. It's pretty important'.

Participant E confirmed that, to be emotionally intelligent in one's role is quite significant and that is because if the one is sort of, making decisions that are slightly hasty, without thinking properly, issues may arise. So, it could be risky and a sensitive situation that one must be very watchful and be keen on everything. Participant E: '…it is quite important, because if you make sort of decisions that are too quick, you don't think about it. Stuff could go wrong and it's very important to be conscientious, you have to be very alert and aware of what's going on'.

4.3 Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Customer Satisfaction

The present research elucidates positive customer experiences such as that EI has a pivotal role in the context of customers' satisfaction. People provided many instances of how high EI results in a good experience for a client and a return on the investment. For example, it can be useful to learn a customer's disposition and providing service to match their emotional behaviour can change a negative encounter to a positive one (Darvishmotevali, Altinay and De Vita, 2018).

For example, Participant H said they listened and positioned themselves in a friendly and attentive manner and a customer whom they interacted with complimented the place and said they would like to come back again. Participant H: '…people expect an experience, and that's what brings them back. And I think we have a good record on that'. However, the other reasons that bring customers back are apart from satisfying services, may be the free vouchers or discounts to encourage them to come back, or the quality of the product, the business location, or previous experience. Other counter factors may also be such as the environment and character of the place, the special offers or coupon code, or even word of mouth from friends or relatives. One of the respondents made an aligning comment with the study of Hasan, N. S. (2022), which said that going the extra mile when one is able to fulfilled a customer's needs before he or she asks, makes the customer happy.

Intuitive foresight of the customers' needs is a general approach of hospitality workers in order to apply EI in customer service. Often, customers' expectations are exceeded through this kind of proactive service approach, which results in the delivery of an exceptional experience that the customers cannot forget (Jung and Yoon, 2016).

There are several behaviour strategies that the participants adopt in order to promote proactive service. Some of the strategies mentioned are closely watching customers' actions and signs that they are giving out about their needs, asking questions that have no fixed answers to understand their preferences, and giving recommendations. For instance, an action that perceives a guest scanning the environment in search of help, will bring help to the table before the guest asks for it (Hasan, 2022).

When service is delivering an emotional response corresponding to the customer's feelings and needs, then customer representatives of hospitality organisation can provide a pleasant atmosphere. On one hand, it contributes to increased satisfaction of a customer and their subsequent repeat patronage, which is the primary requirement for the success of any business in hospitality.
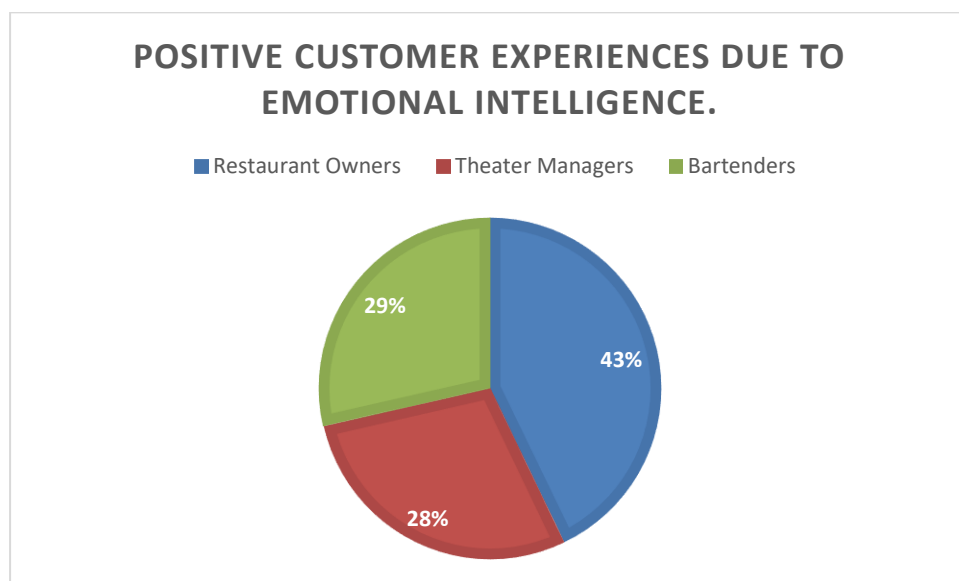
This pie chart shows the percentage of the number of participants who provided examples of how emotional intelligence led to positive customer experiences, such as through friendly service, proactive approaches, and personalized recommendations.

Participants generally agreed that emotional intelligence significantly impacts customer satisfaction. Both participants B and C stressed that recognizing and managing customers'

feelings improve their experience. Both participants D and E pointed out that high EI enables one to cope with stress and deal with hasty customers so as to offer satisfactory services. Participants F, G, H, I, and J mentioned that customer service offered with the support of EI is a kind of anticipation of the customer satisfaction. This includes memorable experiences, which is created by the service-dominated sector aided by components such as an environment and promotions.

4.4 Challenges in Developing Emotional Intelligence

The possible barriers include a lack of interest in EI training from the employees. Some of the staff may not see the need to undertake EI training or may have certain beliefs that it is an unimportant aspect, again due to their lack of knowledge of the advantages of the training. Such resistance can be a result of poor or little knowledge of ways that EI can enhance one's job performance and customer satisfaction in general (Jung and Yoon, 2016).

Again, there is a very small number of known EI training programs, as a remarkable portion of the employee population does not take training in this area. Most hospitality businesses are not privileged to have well-defined training frameworks for enhancing the EI competencies of their personnel. This gap means that informal ways are used to teach the skills which in most cases may not be enough to impart the skills well (Koronios *et al*., 2019).

Most of the participants stated that overcoming initial resistance to training is challenging as some colleagues do not value EI or its relevance to their roles. Participant E emphasized the challenge of ensuring that all employees understand and follow through with EI training and initiatives. Participant E: '… I think this comes down to a chain of command. I mean, I feel like if staff needed to be trained or if staff needed a bit of extra help, for example, it would be very simple just to say to someone who's above you. For example, my manager. It would be very easy for me to say I think such and such a person would benefit from a bit of extra training, or they would benefit from, you know, going over the basics. So, it's very important that you have that chain of people that you can communicate to what exactly your problems are. And again, like I said before, just for them to be able to fix it as quickly as possible'. Moreover, Participant F pointed out that without proper support from management and structured programs, developing EI among staff remains a significant challenge.

4.5 Strategies for Developing Emotional Intelligence

Nevertheless, it is possible to define successful strategies for the improvement of EI within the scope of the hospitality businesses. One such strategy is peer mentoring where the skilled employees will help to train the young ones on how to apply the EI principles across the social interfaces that include customers and subordinates.

Another strategy is a role-play exercise. Such exercises help the employee to carry out different exercises that simulate events that need high EI skills such as working with strict customers or mediating between two warring teams. That is why, reproducing these scenarios, an employee learns the necessary EI skills without damaging the organizational structure (Lim, 2017).

Participants shared several strategies for developing emotional intelligence within the hospitality industry. Mentoring by experienced employees to new staff to ensure that they share and apply the EI principles when dealing with customers and juniors, was mentioned by Participant A: '… we implemented regular training sessions, which includes sessions on empathy and active listening, which significantly they include our customer feedback scores we tell them (new staff) to be very calm and composed while dealing with them, so these are the ways we can say some of the techniques which we are using in order to develop emotional intelligence of our employees'. Specifically, Participant E designed a checklist system to increase efficiency and decrease stress so as to raise the team's levels of EI. While these strategies offer real-life possibilities for honing and increasing one's EI, it leads to better relations with customers and creates a stronger and more unified staff.

4.6 Emotional Intelligence in Leadership

The above findings imply the role and necessity of emotional intelligence for leadership positions in the hospitality sector. Workers with high EI is considered to have improved capacity to handle relations with customers and other employees in the organization. From this position, they can be able to feel what the staff is going through, know what they need and even attend to those needs with a positive attitude thus promoting a good working environment (Lim, 2017).

There are several activities that leaders can engage in, in the integration and implementation of EI in their practices. Promising daily stand-up meetings where leaders go

around to meet their teams, deal with any emotional or operational concerns and set the positive tone for the day. Thus, regular meetings can be effective in the development of mutual trust and communication within the team.

The participants gave different insights on the topic of EI within the hospitality sector in regards to leadership. Participant A underlined that when dealing with interpersonal conflict between workers or between a worker and a customer, it is crucial to consider emotions, because if it does not happen, people might have problems in their feelings and a well working team might deteriorate. Participant B stated that, specifically, while having high EI, leaders are in a better position to manage relations with both customers and employees, foster healthy relations within the organisation, and make efficient decisions. To enhance the work climate and conditions for employees and the delivery of their tasks with enhanced efficiency and effectiveness, based on the understanding of other people and themselves, that is why Participant C mentioned that emotional intelligence is paramount.

Hence, the incorporation of EI into leadership activities introduces positive changes and improvement of performance among employees, alongside improvement of the fulfilment of the customer needs and satisfaction levels (Lam, Cheung and Lugosi, 2021).

4.7 Integration of Emotional Intelligence in Daily Operations

Emotional intelligence can be applied to organizational processes starting from operational administration up to organizational administration. Some of the ways through which this can be done include the integration of EI principles into the kind of activities and managerial processes that people perform. One can be illustrated by the application of EI in handling customers' complaints whereby through EI, the manager can identify with the customer's grievances and comprehend their emotional status besides providing the appropriate remedies to the issues at hand (Lam *et al*., 2021).

For instance, Participant A said that the stand-up activities that occur daily involve EI discussions, possibly with respect to a specific event or a requirement for a particular type of emotion, as well as occasions EI tutorial sessions are conducted when needed. When focusing on the aspect of training, Participant B underlined that role-play activities and real-life examples should be employed to foster EI at the workplace, especially concerning the customers' issues and conflicts. Participant C also said that a daily feedback meeting is held to discuss staff performance; it helps to improve and boost their EI enabling the organization to

provide support to its employees. These practices revealed how organizations are trying to integrate EI into everyday managerial and operational processes so that the workers and customers can reap the fruit of EI in delivering organizational service.

Special tasks that are known to demand skills in EI include exercising control and leadership on team issues and dealing with conflicts can be considered as other critical activities. For instance, a manager who realizes the emotional conditions of the subordinates can help in solving disputes in a way befitting of all the individuals involved. The major advantage of this approach is that it solves the current problem as well as enhances the team's unity and esprit de corps.

Operational Activity	EI Application	Outcome
Handling customer complaints	Empathizing with customer concerns, finding practical solutions	Improved customer satisfaction, problem resolution
Managing team dynamics	Mediating conflicts, understanding team emotions	Strengthened team cohesion, morale
Daily stand-up meetings	Checking in with teams, addressing emotional issues	Built trust, open communication

In summary, the incorporation of EI in operation enables a growing workplace that is competent in interaction and achieving customer sympathy, thus contributing to the improvement of performance.

4.8 Misconceptions about Emotional Intelligence

The following are some of the common myths that most people in the hospitality industry may have in this regard. Some of the myths include suggesting that EI ought to be classified as dysfunctional or exaggerated, claim that it does not contribute much to every business. Some employees and managers may lack appreciation of EI as being a valuable component of working in an organization and could see it as being irrelevant compared to technical competence or organizational productivity (Lee and Ok, 2012).

Among the perceptions enumerated below, participants highlighted the following misunderstandings of EI within the hospitality industry. As noted by Participant C, there are workers and managers who do not appreciate EI over general intelligence, leading to unsuitable treatment of customers. Thus, Participant D pointed out that EI is often seen only on a personal level, and not as an activity that is practiced collectively. Participant I mentioned that customers often disrespect workers in the hospitality industry by taking it as low calibre jobs since they are working in the service line. Participant J stated that specifically regarding employees' EI, it is believed that it does not apply in the case of employees who are in the back of the house, although individuals' EI affects team dynamics and internal communication.

For these reasons, companies can enhance awareness about the importance of EI as a tool through training and internal and external communication. Education through examples of how EI can be applied and can boost customers' satisfaction, employee productivity, and organizational effectiveness can be of significant value in the process (Sayed *et al*., 2021). Thus, by promoting the concerns of the organization, firms can develop a culture of work environment, which encourages the staff to manage theirs and others' emotions effectively (Lee and Ok, 2012).

4.9 Training Programs and Measures

As part of enhancing the EI of the individuals concerned, it is clearly understood that some of the hospitality companies apply structured and unstructured trainings. Organizational learning might entail more systematized activities such as organized training that offers group sessions, and courses that seek to train EI competencies. Several programmes and initiatives to enhance the EI of the staff were also described by the participants in training in the hospitality industry. Participant B stated that it is very relevant for on-the-job training that involves activities such as peer mentoring and role play to help new employees improve their EI. Participant C noted that unlike in the training programs presented, feedback meetings to discuss the staff matters and emotional adaptation are conducted though not formal. Participant D agreed that there was no formal training being done on EI, but plainly said that feedback from other people could enable employees to better their EI.

The assessing impact increases with the understanding that it is important to know whether or not EI training is working as directed. As said, the customer feedback is effective for assessing the efficiency of the EI training on service quality. Improvements to the position

on customer satisfaction may point to successful training (Prentice, Dominique Lopes and Wang, 2020).

Training Program	Description	Assessment Method
Structured Workshops	Courses on empathy, self-awareness, emotional regulation	Customer feedback, performance reviews
Interactive Role-Playing	Group discussions, scenario simulations	Observational assessments, feedback sessions
Informal Feedback Sessions	Regular debriefs and open communication	Continuous improvement tracking

Benefits of EI training for persons at the workplace included in the following relevant sections. In order to optimize the effectiveness of corporate training in the sphere of EI, organisations in hospitality industry need to conduct periodic evaluations of the efficacy, it can mean that changes may required.

4.10 Advantages of Emotional Intelligence Training

There are a lot of benefits that are related to EI training for organisations in the hospitality sector. Customer satisfaction enhancement is one of them amongst the biggest advantages that can be achieved. High EI which means that the employees can be more effective when dealing with customers as this will increase their satisfaction and hence loyalty.

The following are some of the responses that point at the benefits of EI training. Participant A stated that due to EI training customers give higher scores to the company whereas, the retention rate of the employees is also good but more attention should be paid to attend the complaints made by the customers. Thus, as Participant D noted that from the training of emotional intelligence, the staff were able to achieve more satisfactory customer service thus creating increased customer gratification and loyalty. Combined, all these considerations lend credence to the proposal that EI training brings value in enhanced customer relations, increased team cohesiveness as well as better employee turnover.

Improved interpersonal skills after the EI training can enable that an employee to express him or herself effectively, solve conflicts easier, and offer support so that the employees can work together as a team with efficiency. Furthermore, organizing EI training can lower the turnover rate by enhancing the relations between workers and mid-level managers (Amissah, Blankson-Stiles-Ocran and Mensah, 2022).

4.11 EI in Recruitment and Selection

In this research, the respective EI attributes will be examined in the context of recruitment and selection decisions in order to achieve the development of an emotionally intelligent workforce. Tracing EI with regards to recruitment can encompass the use of questions on the behavioural patterns. It has the capacity to display how the write up links with a candidate's performance such as questions that test the applicant's skills at managing own emotions when responding to others. Concerning the implications of the findings, participants stressed that it is imperative to diagnose EI to guarantee that the applicants have the required levels of emotional literacy for work with customers and in teamwork. Specifically, Participant A pointed out that their institution applies the EI assessments within the selection procedure. Participant B particularly stressed the assessment of self-estimations and communication abilities. Participant C highlighted the aspect of empathy and emotional self-regulation during interviews as the changes that were observed. These are all effective approaches in developing a capable workforce for the provision of quality services and nurturing staff.

Hiring decisions that indicate the use of EI include questions that ask the potential employees to give real-life examples of a situation in which they faced a difficult customer or a conflict with fellow workers. This practical example helps to assess their skills in the field of EI, based on their responses. Also, personality tests for further staff selection to measure empathy, and the ability to regulate emotions as the features of EI (Amissah *et al*., 2022).

4.12 Linking Findings to Literature

Emotional intelligence is considered to be relevant to improving communication with others and organizational outcomes based on the findings of this research and according to EI literature. For instance, in Goleman's books and articles on EI, he points out the necessity of the characteristics of leaders and employees.

The results endorse theoretical postulations regarding a correlation between enhanced customer satisfaction as well as employee performance and EI. To the body of knowledge, this research affirms the practicality of using EI in the development of solutions in the hospitality industry, thus adding to the knowledge that EI can be an important resource for business organizations. This study is relevant to EI within the hospitality industry's context and provides a reference and foundation for subsequent scholarly investigations and practical implementations (Yan, 2018).

4.13 Practical Implications

The implications for several organisations in the industry of hospitality arising out of the conclusion of this research, would be aesthetic. The adaptation of EI into the training and education processes, leadership concepts, and organizational functioning results in increase in the levels of customer satisfaction and employee productivity. Organizations ought to establish structured EI training systems and incorporate the assessment of EI into the employment procedures (Yan, 2018).

4.14 Consideration of Limitations

The sample size is small and the source of data may have interviewer bias. The study may not apply to all hospitality businesses and since it was carried out qualitatively, some of the analysis may involve the perception of the researcher and therefore not be very precise. These are somewhat restricted and their reliability and validity may be highly questionable. But these are limitations that future research could address, for instance by using larger samples, a more diverse sample, or by using additional quantitative methods alongside qualitative ones.

Therefore, in this study, it is recognized the aforementioned limitations and presents a clear understanding of research boundaries coupled with research recommendations that can be useful to other studies. Consequently, this study has pointed out that it is highly critical to adopt the concept of EI in the hospitality business as it leads to the satisfaction of customers and the improvement of the efficiency of the employees in their businesses.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The aim of this discussion chapter is to integrate the findings of this study with the existing literature on emotional intelligence and its influence on customer satisfaction and worker performance in the hospitality industry. This chapter will provide a review of the study's contributions and lack of it in relation to prior literature, new perspectives, and implications of the study to several shareholders involving policymakers, organizations, employees, and patrons. The chapter will also discuss the research limitations as well as the future research of the study.

According to this study's findings it has been ascertained that EI positively influence customer satisfaction and worker efficiency in the hospitality sector. This is significant in the hospitality business since handling customers' emotions and their expectation levels is critical in delivering satisfactory services. Based on the results of the research, this research argues that greater levels of EI among hospitality employees enhances customer satisfaction. According to the participants of this study it is suggested that workers with a high level of EI have more consciousness about the customers' emotions, which is effective in improving the quality of the services. This supports our study which shows that while people with high EI are able to cope with stress, they are also better suited for the job and thus are productive, resulting in better job performances.

Emotional intelligence or EI, has been taken as a crucial attribute in the hospitality sector that affects both customers and employees. From this study, it is apparent that adopting EI into every-day activities and training can be hugely rewarding. This work also elicits the importance of EI in increasing proactive service behaviours. High EI helps the employees to know what the customers require and attending to those needs before they get to become concerns. Moreover, the importance of training concentrated on the enhancement of EI is also emphasized in the context of the presented study (Alipour *et al*., 2021). To the conventional training tools like workshops and seminars, there are new technologies that can be incorporated. This creates realistic training scenarios in which a person can develop their EI competence. Another key finding is the integration of EI into leadership development initiatives, because most leadership development initiatives do not contain sufficient information about EI. Emotional intelligence as a crucial component of successful management, makes it easier to cope with people, conflicts, and create a comfortable working

atmosphere. This aligns with the research by Mishra, Mishra and Singh (2019) who also revealed that leaders with high emotional intelligence more positively boost team impact and productivity. Therefore, by integrating EI in leadership development programs, organisations will enhance their leadership pipeline with great performers who concurrently build high performance supportive and stress-resilient working environments (Nguyen, 2018). This study also highlights some challenges faced by the organisations during the implementation and management of acquisition training specifically when addressing employees' resistance to attend emotional intelligence training. This resistance can be effectively addressed by promoting the need for EI training among individuals and organizations for improved performance and enhanced organizational effectiveness. To overcome this resistance, it is recommended to share success stories and show that EI training is useful, for example, by portraying pictures of satisfied customers or happy employees which indicate that after the training they do not face any difficulties at work anymore. Moreover, linking EI training with other related programs focused on improving the employees' well-being may raise people's interest in training and make them better engaged. Another important issue that arose from the study is the cultural modification of EI programs. In light of the fact that the hospitality sector is becoming increasingly internationalized, training programs in EI should consider culture as well. This cultural sensitivity helps in the provision of training to different workforce populations in the conduct recognized suitable for their reception of training.

These findings also hit a positive relationship among EI and workers' performances. Since, high EI employees are well equipped to deal with stress, establish good interpersonal relationships besides maintaining good interpersonal relations at the workplace, and improving their performance. Therefore, the discovery of this study contributes further understanding of how core factors matters when it comes to dealing with a variety of customer situations and addressing employees' stress and burnout. As highlighted by Kim and Agrusa (2011), various factors helped in reducing the effect of job stress by employees, bringing about the positive impacts on the hospitality firms and employees emotionally and psychologically, most of which related to employees' coping styles which are a function of their EI. This is in support of the observation made by Koronios et al. (2019), showing that hospitality industries require a more formal facet of EI training programs. However, the study also revealed the strategies that helped the development of EI in the selected hospitality employees. Thus, the respondents identified peer mentoring, role-playing and practice sessions, as well as feedback conversations as the means that can help to strengthen EI. These strategies are supported by the theories in

experiential learning and EI training as highlighted in the literature like Lee and Ok (2013) who stated that there was an improvement in the service orientation and job performance among individuals who underwent EI-based training.

The study recommends that the hospitality industry should embrace effective EI training programs in its organization. While analysing a learning model that incorporates educational theories for hospitality curriculum in Völker, Blal and Mortillaro (2023), the authors note that including EI training into professional hospitality and vocational education programmes can enhance employee performance. Organizations ought to use these findings to develop inclusive EI educational sessions that not only concern customer relations but also intra-organizational team productivity and leadership (Komlósi, 2013). Thus, organisations can increase customer satisfaction, decrease the turnover of their employees and gain higher performance levels. Employers in the hospitality industry stand to benefit from workers with high levels of EI because they are able to maintain balance, interact well with others, and efficiently carry out their responsibilities in the workplace. Self-directed reflection regarding employees' EI levels, as well as request to receive feedback, should be promoted. Based on the principles of cross-level examination, Mishra *et al*. (2019) established that the level of emotional intelligence links transformational leadership to team performance.

Consequently, there are a number of ways that decision makers might feel they could help in promoting EI training in the hospitality industry, including ensuring sources of funding for training. At the same time, they can create requirements for the EI training and establish the standards for learning to have unity and competence in the sphere (Goleman, 1995). Alipour *et al*. (2021) discovered that program environmental stimuli heavily influence the behaviours of service employees through EI. It is therefore important for policymakers to use this information to assess the efficacy of existing workplace culture and develop new laws and policies. This will foster creation of healthy working cultures in organizations leading to the overall improvement of the lives of employees and the quality-of-service delivery to customers. The benefits are clearly seen by customers who have to deal with employees that possess high levels of EI and have been trained to offer tactful service. This gives the overall impression of creating favourable customer satisfaction and would encourage loyalty in the hospitality establishment. Concerning the effect of emotional intelligence on organizational stress and attachment, Rathore (2015) highlighted that the idea of EI may help to decrease levels of stress, as well as to intensify employee commitment. Consumers receive services from employees that are

outfitted with the essential instruments to handle their own emotions as well as being passionate about the tasks they are performing which results in better, more regular quality service delivery.

While the study gives useful insights into the influence of EI on customer satisfaction and staff performance, it does have several shortcomings that must be addressed. The sample size was small, and the research was done in a unique cultural setting, thus the findings' generalizability may be limited. Future studies should include bigger, more varied samples and investigate the influence of EI in other cultural contexts. While the study provides useful information about the impact of EI on customer satisfaction and staff productivity, it does have drawbacks. Furthermore, the moderated mediation model advanced by Wen, Huang and Hou (2019) demonstrated that perceived organisational assistance further magnifies the positive relationship amongst emotional intelligence and work satisfaction. In this discussion chapter, the study has bridged the gaps in existing literature on the role of EI in the hospitality industry with emphasis on similarities with existing information as well as additional contributions made by the present study. This research supports the fact that EI leads to customer satisfaction and employee performance and prescribes specific strategies for increasing EI in the hospitality industry (Choi, Mohammad and Kim, 2019). The analysed challenges can be effectively managed, and the opportunities for EI development may be enhanced to improve service quality, employee health, and organisational performance. Therefore, it is recommended that future work makes use of the presented evidence to depth analysis the nuances of EI across various contexts and to improve practical approaches for training and measuring this construct.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

This study is focused at analysing the role that EI has in customer satisfaction and employee performance in the hospitality industry. According to the studies, both these functions are positively influenced by EI; the results show that high levels of EI regarding employees in the hospitality sector results in overall improved performance of services and organizational relations. It has brought out a new perspective to EI, especially in the hospitality industries following the research done. Traditionally, EI has been investigated in larger contexts like in different industries but the present study has more concentrated on the effect of EI in hospitality industry. It has also demonstrated the importance of EI for customer interactions and the ability to deal with stress that may result from work pressures. The study describes the effect of EI in enhancing interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution, skills that are relevant in managing organisations in the hospitality sector.

Despite the important findings, this research has some limitations. The research sample was comparatively small, and all the participants completed interviews from Ireland, and so it might be difficult to generalize the results. This relatively constrained sample could be developed by selecting participants from more diverse cultures to cover all the potential effects of EI. This way, more comprehensive information regarding the impact of EI on different roles and positions might be provided. The interviews were particularly relevant for this research because they provided the means for a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and viewpoints. Retention of workforce was one of the findings of this research, this not only for the benefit of customers but also the overall working environment by decreasing turnover rates due to the supportive nature of the employees. These points underscore the value of EI training that does not only improve customer experience but also employee experience. Also, research confirmed that individuals with high EI were better suited to respond to evolving customer requirements and provided a higher performance in conditions of high stress which is another reason why EI needs to be developed in the hospitality sector.

The findings of this research are beneficial to several groups of people such as managers, human resource professionals, and government bodies involved in the formulation of policies for the hospitality industry. In the case of managers and HR professionals, EI can

be a useful concept applied at the organizational level to guide hiring and development to employ and promote people with adequate EI skills to deal with customers. These findings could be helpful to formulating authority and credence for EI training across the industry as a means of enhancing service delivery and staff satisfaction at workplaces. It helps increase customer satisfaction, enhance morale and lower turnover levels among workers. The use of regular EI assessment is a way to enhance training program effectiveness and placing corrections if needed. Furthermore, enhanced and supportive working conditions that embrace emotional expressions can result in a positive organizational culture for the employees and consequently customers.

Thus, it is suggested that future study can extend the present study by incorporating a more diverse sample. This will give a wider picture of how EI influences the various aspects of the hospitality industry irrespective of the culture or organization. Hospitality organizations should ensure that their employees receive proper training in EI, along with incorporating the same in the leadership development process to promote the use of EI in the organization. Therefore, the outcomes of this study illustrate that emotional intelligence has a substantial influence on customer satisfaction and employees' performance in the hospitality sector. Through the elimination of the recognized limitations and the incorporation of the outlined suggestions, the subsequent research and the actual business practices might contribute to improvements in the understanding and application of EI with the primary focus on the optimization of service quality and organizational efficiency.

6.2 Recommendations

However, the present research proved the significance of emotional intelligence in the hospitality sector and its effects on customer satisfaction and employee performance, there are some recommendations:

➢ The limitations could be addressed in next studies to improve the generalizability of findings, diversification of sample and participants from different cultures would enhance the study's generalisability of EI outcomes in the hospitality sector across the globe.

➢ It is essential for hospitality organizations to start programs which focus more on the areas such as awareness, impulse control, drive, sympathy and interpersonal relations at the workplace of the employees. These skills can be attained through role-play, peer

coaching and randomized acting out of real-life situations. Also, incorporating the analysis of EI within the leadership development education will enhance the managers' understanding of their employees and enhance organizational performance and lower turnover.

➢ It is crucial that policy makers should start working on setting standards for training EI across the hospitality industry. EI competency standards should be developed and implemented for adoption in professional development programs to enhance service delivery and personal workers' welfare in the hospitality industry. Moreover, more funding and resources for implementing EI training programs ensure the small businesses in the hospitality industries to be capable of adopting the programs themselves.

➢ EI practices should be incorporated into the business activities and culture of the hospitality organizations. Employees' feedback, daily meetings and how conflicts should be solved should embrace EI elements to support emotionally intelligent workforce culture. Improving emotional intelligence relationships in employees ultimately means that better customer relationships will be facilitated and the work environment will be much more harmonious. Thus, it is evident that this study has shown a positive influence of EI on customers' satisfaction and employees' performance within the hospitality sector.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Consent Form & Acknowledgement

Exploring Emotional Intelligence in The Hospitality Industry: Effects On Customer Satisfaction and Employee Performance

Dear Participant,

I would like to invite you to participate in a semi-structured interview for my dissertation research with the topic "Exploring Emotional Intelligence in The Hospitality Industry: Effects on Customer Satisfaction and Employee Performance". In the interview, you will be asked open-ended questions about your view of emotional intelligence in the hospitality industry. The questions are related to the importance of emotional intelligence on customer satisfaction and employee performance in hospitality industry, challenges or opportunities of developing emotional intelligence skills such as trainings and advantages. This interview is one of the requirements for the completion of my dissertation in MSc. in Entrepreneurship at the National College of Ireland.

The focus of this study is to investigate how different the approach of diverse types and levels of employees working in hospitality industry, in emotional intelligence, to understand its importance to sustainability and productivity and influenced factors of activities by Emotional intelligence in hospitality business. The findings of this study are intended to be useful to several groups of people such as managers, human resource professionals, and government bodies involved in the formulation of policies for the hospitality industry.

The interview is estimated to take 15-25 minutes. Interviews will be recorded through the voice recording tool through phone. All personal data will be kept confidential, and this consent form will be saved and kept securely. The interview recording will be labelled with a code by giving a letter like these examples of "Participant A", "Participant B", and so on. The code details generated to label your interview will be shared with you at the end, with the

completion of your interview. The audio recording will be used to create a transcription of the interview and will be saved with the code name given and all these data will be stored as anonymized at computer protected with password only accessible to the lead researcher.

In order to meet completion of course requirements, a report of this study will be generated, and this report may be submitted for publication by keeping all the data anonymized. None of the individuals of participants in this interview will be identifiable. Audio recording of your interview, transcription data and consent form will be retained and managed in accordance with the National College of Ireland (NCI) data retention policy and deleted after 5 years.

Attendance in this study is voluntary. You are not expected to disclose any sensitive information, and you can reject any question if you do not want to answer. You can quit from the research at any point during the interview for any reason without penalty. You can also choose to withdraw up to a week after your interview by emailing the lead researcher (me) via the contact details provided below and providing your code number, at which point your data will be deleted.

Should you have any concerns or need clarification at any point, you may ask the lead researcher or reach out to me through the following email: x22222855@student.ncirl.ie

Thank you,

Mine Guney
Lead Researcher

Consent Form

Exploring Emotional Intelligence in The Hospitality Industry: Effects On Customer Satisfaction and Employee Performance

Thank you for listening and/or reading the consent form acknowledgement above for this study. Please sign below for your consent for participation of this interview.

I confirm that I was read (by researcher) / I have read, the above consent acknowledgement. I understood, I agree, and I am happy to participate.

Participant Signature: _____
Date   : _____

Appendix B. Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) Can you describe your role and responsibilities in the hospitality sector?

2) How do you define your view of emotional intelligence, and why is it important in your role?

3) Do you believe emotional intelligence impact customer satisfaction within the hospitality industry?

4) Do you think emotional intelligence influences the performance of employees in your team or department based on your experience?

5) What are some specific challenges you have faced in developing emotional intelligence for employees in the hospitality industry?

6) Can you give any examples of the triumph or an opportunity that you created to develop the emotional intelligence of your team?

7) What is your personal feeling about the issue of emotional intelligence in leadership at your hospitality business? (if in leadership role)

8) What do you see done or have you done to incorporate emotional intelligence into leadership and team activities?

9) How would you rate the integration of emotional intelligence in the daily running of operations from the manager to the top management at your organization?

10) What are some of the common misconceptions about emotional intelligence you have noticed from the hospitality industry?

11) Could you describe any training programs or measures on the issue taken in regard to improving the emotional intelligence for the employees in the hospitality industry?

12) How do you assess whether the training on emotional intelligence has impacted the behaviours of employees and satisfied customers?

13) Can you elaborate with examples what advantages your group or business has with emotional intelligence training? (if applicable)

14) How are attributes such as emotional intelligence being inculcated through the recruitment and selection process linked with hospitality jobs?