

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Hospitality Employment: ‘The Good, The Bad and The Ugly’

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Introduction

Adam Smith in his seminal work ‘the Wealth of Nations’ (1776) advocated the inequality of the labour market by explaining that ‘labour belongs to the labourer’. Even though the common wages of labour depends on the contract between the labour and the master (or known as employer in modern economy), it is not surprising to find that employers had stronger power in this relationship. Adam Smith’s views are still relevant in today’s modern day economy. We no longer rely on the manufacturing sector that was dominant during the 18th century. However, the problems that existed because of the power struggle between employers and workers, that led to poor pay and working conditions is still discussed today in relation to the hospitality sector.

The hospitality sector is one of the largest and fastest growing sectors of the global economy that is highly labour intensive (International Labour Organisation (ILO), no date), and offers varied opportunities for people in diverse sub-sectors (Baum, 2007). The sector has grown from strength to strength and it has continued to be strong and resilient during the economic downturn and a fundamental contributor to the economic recovery creating millions of jobs (United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), 2015). In the United Kingdom (UK), it is the fourth biggest sector in employment terms, whereby in 2014 employment in the UK hospitality sector stood at 2.9 million jobs, representing 8.8 per cent of total UK employment (Oxford Economics, 2015).

Despite the tremendous growth in the hospitality sector, it continues to have a negative image. The sector is considered to be part of the secondary labour market that faces low wages, high turnover, part-time or temporary work, limited promotional opportunity and career development. The sector is also often described as being a busy, fast paced that

requires employees to be flexible and able to adjust to new challenges in order to address ever-growing customer needs, but this is not necessarily negative and can be considered as a pull factor for workers to be interested in this sector (Mkono, 2010). At one end of the sector, hospitality employment faces challenges in response to the characteristics and nature of the sector. Whilst at the other end, the characteristics of the sector attract workers to this sector, creating good employment opportunities. In recent years, a number of studies have highlighted some of the positive elements of hospitality employment. Sadly 'the bad and the ugly' aspects of hospitality employment dominate the literature in this area and outweigh 'the good' which further entrenches the negative image of the sector. Leading from this premise, this chapter firstly describes the characteristics and nature of the sector. This is followed by a discussion on the specific employment practices that can be considered the "good, bad and ugly". Finally, the chapter discusses the workforce characteristic and the challenges faced by the sector.

Characteristics and nature of the hospitality Sector

It is important to recognise how the trend and characteristics of the sector have shaped the types of employment and skills that the sector requires. The hospitality sector generally consists of accommodation and food service activities. The Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) (2007) of economic activities for this sector includes, hotels and similar accommodation; holiday centres and villages; youth hostels, other holiday and other collective accommodation; recreational vehicle parks, trailer parks and camping grounds; other accommodation; licenced and unlicensed restaurants; cafes, take-away food shops and mobile food stands; event catering activities; other food services; licensed clubs, public houses and bars. The definition provided by the People 1st (2013) (the Sector Skills Council for the Hospitality, Leisure, Travel and Tourism industries) is also central to this discussion as the reports developed by People 1st are referred to throughout this chapter. Ten sub-industries make up this sector, including, hotels; restaurants; pubs, bars and nightclubs; food and service management; hospitality services; events; gambling; self-catering accommodations, holiday parks and hostels; visitor attractions; and tourists services. It is the most diverse sector, comprising a range of different industries, but all with their roots in the service sector.

The size of establishments can be considered as one of the key influences on the employment characteristics of the hospitality sector (Lucas, 2004). The hospitality sector continues to be dominated by micro-sized establishments (employing 10 employees or less), and only a small proportion of this sector consists of large organisations. Almost half (46 percent) employ less than five people while only one percent of businesses employ more than 100 people (People 1st, 2013). Therefore, it is important to recognise the importance of the micro/small size organisations for this sector and the challenges that come with it. The reason for this high prevalence of micro-sized and owner-managed establishments can be explained mainly by the low barrier of entry into this sector, whereby relatively less capital and skills are required to set up a business (Hughes, 1992). Consequently, the hospitality sector attracts a large number of unqualified operators whose motivations for entry are often "...cited as a twin desire for greater control over personal working environments and a job that involves social interaction with others" (Wood, 1997: 341).

Dominance of small businesses in this sector automatically leads to unavoidable challenges in relation to lack of career path for staff, informal approaches to employment practices in relation to recruitment, performance appraisal and training. However, employment practices

in small organisations does not necessarily mean it is bad, just different to formal approaches used by large organisations, as highlighted by Cobble and Merrill (2009: 159): *“...employee-employer relations may be personal and collaborative rather than adversarial, formalised and highlight bureaucratic. The employment relationship is not the classic one described by Marx, nor is it even the conventional us-versus-them world view that often prevails in large bureaucratically-run enterprise”*.

Authors such as Lockyer and Scholarious (2004) advocated that there are best practices that can be captured from the informal approaches used by smaller businesses in the hospitality especially in relation to employee recruitment. Even though the sector is dominated by small industries, a significant proportion of the workforce (42%) is employed by large organisations that employ more than 250 employees (People 1st, 2013). Therefore the best way forward in terms of the impact it can have on the workforce is to focus on larger employers to ensure that they recognise their responsibility in delivering good practices and the part they play in portraying the image of the sector.

The main growth of the hospitality sector over the period of 1998-2014 in the UK appeared to be in the licensed and unlicensed restaurants and cafes, food service activities and hotels and similar accommodation (Oxford Economics, 2015), which are typically small businesses employing fewer than 10 staff. There has been a noticeable decline in event catering, public house and bars and licenced clubs. Public houses owner blamed the cheaper availability of alcohol in supermarkets and off licenses, smoking ban and the trend towards wine drinking as a few of the factors contributing to the decline in the trade (Hickman, 2011). However, according to People 1st (2013) the decline over recent years in the pubs, bars and nightclubs workforce is beginning to stabilise as many of these businesses continue to diversify their offering.

The employment relationship in this sector embodies a triadic power relationship between employers, workers and customers, whereby the customer directly impinges how workers carry out their work, which in turn has implications for the rules of employment (Lucas, 2004). This can be challenging as the customer expectations can be viewed as evolving, complex and demanding (Duncan, Scott and Baum, 2013). The focus of hospitality sector, and is likely to continue to be, is in exceeding customers' expectations. Therefore, providing the highest level of service is one of the greatest challenges facing these employees especially as they have to manage emotions and provide a friendly service at all times. This can be stressful and emotionally draining. Hochschild (1983:7) first describe this as emotional labour by defining it as “the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” which is “sold for wage and therefore has exchange value”. Emotional labour amongst hospitality and employees has been well documented, as employees are expected to express feelings such as enthusiasm, friendliness and cheerfulness despite negative emotions that they may experience (Pizam, 2004; Wong and Wang, 2009; Shani, Uriely, Reichel and Ginsburg, 2014).

The sector is arguably very labour intensive and despite the advancement in technology, approaches used to substitute labour with technology in this sector is limited. Its productivity is reported as being significantly less than comparable sectors such as construction, manufacturing and retailing (People 1st, 2015b). The factors blamed for this low productivity level include, the lack of sufficient skills; high staff turnover that deviates training investment; poor staff retention and poor career path or progression. The sector has often been associated with high staff turnover and there is continuous debate in this area on whether it is

good or bad. The latest report by People 1st (2013) noted that the labour turnover rate across the hospitality and tourism sector continues to fall with the latest data showing a turnover rate of 20%, a significant fall from 31% for the whole sector in 2009. This could be as a result of the aftermath of recession, where employees are reluctant to move jobs. However, People 1st (2013) argues that employers are beginning to recognise the problems of staff turnover in terms of the cost to the business and are trying to introduce initiatives to retain their staff.

The growth in the sector means, there is a continued need for new staff. People 1st (2013) reported that 16% of employers in this sector had a vacancy compared to 12% across the UK economy. In terms of vacancies that they considered hard to fill, 6% of the employers have these vacancies, slightly higher than the UK average of 4%. There are significant variations in job postings by occupation, with the highest numbers of roles available for restaurant managers and a variety of chef occupations. Acknowledging the diverse characteristics of the sector, the next two sections focus specifically on aspects of hospitality employment that could be considered “good, bad and ugly”.

Employment in the hospitality sector: “the bad and the ugly”

Hospitality employment is repeatedly characterised as low paid, low skilled, part-time and seasonal, with poor management and lacking a clear career path (Walmsley, 2004). Authors such as Karatepe and Uludag (2007) and Wong and Ko (2009) describe the long and unsociable hours faced by hospitality employees to be non-conducive for a healthy work-life balance. All these factors and the negative image of this sector can be considered to be the main contributing factors to the high staff turnover and poor retention in the sector.

Hospitality is Britain’s fourth-largest sector, worth more than £60bn a year (Oxford Economics, 2015), but it is concerning that the sector has continued to be identified as the lowest paid sector in the UK. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2013) reported that the accommodation and food service sector had the lowest gross weekly earnings of £316 for full-time employees compared to the average for all sectors and services of £518. Low pay dominates this sector and it was placed under the Trade Boards as far back as the 1940s, and sadly is still recognised as being low paid even after 15 years since the National Minimum Wage (NMW) was implemented. Discussion regarding wages rarely venture beyond this as the focus tends to be on wages at the lower end of the occupational spectrum, even though there is great variation depending on the occupations (Walmsley, 2015). The high proportion of micro-or small-sized firms in the hospitality sector, and the lower skills associated with this sector can partly explain reason for the low pay experienced by the workers. The low pay is also further entrenched by the type of employees that is attracted to this sector such as young, women and migrant workers.

In order to tackle low pay in the UK, the latest initiative that has been introduced by the government is Living Wage. Living wage, is an hourly rate promoted by the Living Wage Foundation (LWF) to encourage employers to pay above the legally binding minimum wage (Gov.UK, 2015). The living wage is determined by the LWF based on the amount an individual needs to earn to cover the basic costs of living and because living costs vary in different parts of the country. Currently the living wage is on voluntary basis, but by April 2016 this will be compulsory for all employees above 25 years of age and companies will be required to pay a minimum of £7.20 an hour and this will rise to £9 an hour by 2020. Similar to when the NMW was introduced, the hospitality sector along with retail and support services have been identified as sectors that will be hit hard by this new rate.

Smaller businesses are also expected to be hit harder than larger companies and as overwhelming majority of the hospitality sector is small businesses, and this is worrying for the employers. British Hospitality Association (BHA) (2015) have already expressed their concern as a quarter of the hospitality workforce is on the minimum wage and a significant further proportion earn between the NMW and the new 'Living Wage' rate, so the introduction of the Living Wage will have considerable impact on this sector, especially when the costs of maintaining differentials are also taken into account. Similar arguments were presented by BHA when the NMW was introduced, and since its introduction, there is consensus notion of the limited impact it has had on the sector (Adam-Smith, Norris and Williams, 2003). The NMW was accommodated by the employers without much changes to their employment practices, hence according to Adam-Smith et al., (2003) one should not overstate the importance of the effect statutory intervention on employment relationship.

Given the diverse size and characteristics of the sector, the types of employment in this sector is varied ranging from unskilled porter to highly skilled manager, and depending on the types of customers it serves and also the type of workers required. However the majority of staff employed in the sector are generally regarded as semi-or unskilled (Lucas 2004; Riley 2011). Past employers' survey found that employers in the hospitality sector only value generic skills such as ability to follow instructions, willingness to learn, and ability to be flexible and adaptive (Hospitality Training Foundation (HtF), 2000). Employers were also found to be sceptical of qualifications, as they did not view these as a guarantee of the skills they require from the employees. However, in recent years the sector has been placing more emphasis on soft skills and have recognised the additional skills that are needed, and have problems recruiting (People 1st, 2013).

People 1st (2013) identified that the skills that are currently difficult to recruit can be grouped into three areas job-specific skills, which include culinary skills for chefs; inter-personal skills or softer skills such as communication, customer service and team working; and management and leadership skills. Customer handling skills was reported as the most commonly needed improvement and the top skills concern for the future, followed by management and leadership. However, Lashley (2009) argued against the simplistic approach of identifying the skills need as he highlighted that there are different skill clusters within each skills that employers seek, and each operates under different labour market conditions that needs to be considered. With the greater emphasis now being placed on soft skills, there needs to be strengthening of the conceptualisation of soft skills to determine if they are worthy of the 'skilled' label (Hurrell, Scholorious and Thompson, 2013).

The hospitality sector is notorious for its reputation as a poor trainer (Pratten, 2003). People 1st (2013) however argues that employers in this sector spend a substantial amount of money on training mainly because of the high number of staff that needs to be trained in an ongoing cycle of replacement, but fail to reap the benefits as the staff do not remain in the organisation long enough to be proficient. This leads to employers' reluctance to invest in training for their workers beyond induction, as they are unlikely to reap the benefits if the trained workers do not stay with them long enough. The persistent problem of recruitment and retention has also been well explored in studies relating to hospitality sector (e.g. Ohlin and West, 1994; Iverson and Deery, 1997). The constant challenge faced by the employers is the recruitment of the right calibre and skilled staff, particularly in finding candidates who have been trained in the specific skills the kitchen requires, and this problem may be perpetuated by the negative perception held of the sector in terms of low pay and long hours. This suggests that the hospitality sector needs to undertake a more active recruitment policy.

On the contrary, recruitment methods are far from being actively pursued. Studies such as Lockyer and Scholarios (2004) highlighted the general lack of systematic selection procedures for the hotel sector, particularly in smaller hotels, and Lashley and Chapman (1999) have blamed the poor quality of recruitment practices as the main cause of high staff turnover in the sector.

Lately, large hotels have also come under attack accused for exploiting their workers mainly their housekeeping staff (Roberts, 2015). These hotels deny responsibility for the working conditions of these employees who works in their hotels as cleaning is outsourced. Even though, the hotels do not accept responsibility for the working conditions of staff employed by their sub-contractors in the hotels, this further clouds the image of this sector especially when the headline of the article in Guardian by Roberts (2015) was “Britain’s hotel workers – bullied, underpaid and with few rights”. The reliance on sub-contractors to deliver services in the hospitality sector has been growing year by year in an attempt by companies to reduce costs. Companies find that by outsourcing they are able to ‘... leverage vendor competencies in highly specific areas while also eliminating the distraction of having to manage peripheral functions’ (Davidson, McPhail and Barry, 2010: 502). It is however worrying when hotels loses control in areas that could be considered the heart of the services such as housekeeping.

Past studies such as Rainnie (1989) highlighted a concerning view that owner managers of small firms were aware of the potential trade-off between high labour turnover and higher wages. This group employed disadvantaged or marginal labour groups who would be more stable in employment terms at low pay levels. As argued by Lucas and Wood (2000), the excess supply of marginal workers drawn from groups of society such as women, young workers, casual employees, students, part-timers and migrant workers have little bargaining power and this further drives down the pay in this sector. Authors such as Sachdev and Wilkinson (1998) have also argued that the skills required to work in the hospitality sector is seriously undervalued and that has contributed to the depression of pay in this sector. Recent studies however have highlighted the importance of soft skills in the hospitality sector that should not be undervalued (e.g. Burns, 1997; Warhurst & Nickson, 2007).

Considering the bad press faced by this sector, it has continued to grow globally, and supported the UK economy during recession. Therefore it would be important to highlight the aspects of employment that can be considered to be good and attractive to potential employees.

Employment in the hospitality sector: ‘the good’

The core UK hospitality sector had seen employment rising steadily since the late 1990s, up until the onset of the recession in 2008-09 (Oxford Economics, 2015). However, the hospitality sector was still identified as one of the main drivers of the UK economy throughout the economic downturn (People 1st, 2015a). People join the sector mainly because of its accommodating characteristics, and wide range of jobs available and the diverse human capital requirements (Szivas, Riley and Airey, 2003). This suggests that the sector has “... attractive opportunities, and it not just the occupation many will follow in the absence of anything else” (Janta, Ladkin, Brown and Lugosi, 2011: 1008).

The hospitality sector has often been described as having the highest levels of turnover in the UK experiencing a turnover rate of 20% in recent year and has a much younger workforce than average (Michel, 2014). This is expected as the sector relies on high numbers of students, overseas visitors, and people temporarily working whilst between jobs. For many

establishments the seasonal take-up of student workers is desirable, as the establishments do not want staff to stay on for a prolonged period. They want staff during busy periods and do not need them during the quiet winter season. More importantly, flexible hours also make these jobs particularly attractive to students who can juggle education with their jobs. As highlighted by Lucas (2004), there is as a coincidence of needs between employers and students, which creates a 'win-win' situation for both groups.

The sector relies mainly on core staff, full-time, part-time, and increasingly using casual and outsourced staff in an attempt to minimise labour cost. The Travel and Tourism Survey (2014) in the UK found that around one third of staff working in guest houses, hotels, restaurants and pubs are employed on zero hours contracts, well over 60% of these staff regularly work 20 hours or more and with more than three quarters of these routinely employed for 40 hours per week. This demonstrates a regular income to this group of workers and this arrangement may suit group of workers, such as students and women workers with childcare responsibilities. Davidson, McPhail and Barry (2011: 511) propose that in light of the increasing use of casual and agency workers in the sector, there could be "... the emergence of a dual labour market where there is likely to be considerable competition for the best people, with human resource management concentrating on talent management and recruitment" of core staff. They argue that these staff are likely to see improvements in pay, benefits, and working conditions.

Studies such as Mkono (2010: 857) also attempted to defend careers in the hospitality, describing the portrayal of hospitality work in past studies as being unbalanced and "...has seemed to suggest that hospitality employees and managers never enjoy their work; that they are constantly trying to escape its drudgery". There is a significant proportion of hospitality workers and managers who choose to work in the sector for decades and sometimes for their whole working lives who are often overlooked by researchers. Mkono (2010) found that the Zimbabwean hotel managers liked their career and the reasons for this included, the interaction they have with people from various countries; cultures, and lifestyles; working in a 'nice' environment; perks; challenging and stimulating work; glamour/prestige; the global nature of the sector and associated mobility; opportunities for networking with various groups of people; growth opportunities; dynamic and exciting nature of the sector; ability to apply individual creativity; and finally working with a diverse workforce.

Other studies highlighted enjoyable and positive attributes of working in the hospitality sector which include intrinsic rewards associated with helping customers, sense of accomplishment on completion of challenging task (Weaver, 2009). Authors such as Harbourne (1995: 37), also strongly argued against the bad image of the hospitality sector:

"...there is a tremendous amount of job satisfaction, skill levels are high, and as for unsocial hours – well, that is just a term dreamt up by people working nine to five who cannot conceive of the benefits of travelling to work before the rush hour and having free time during the daylight hours of the afternoon".

He found that the main sources of satisfaction for the workers were from opportunities to meet people, teamwork with colleague, workplace atmosphere, degree of control workers had over the way they perform their jobs.

Contributing to this discussion, Riley, Ladkin, and Szivas (2002) identified a number of characteristics that makes employment in hospitality sector attractive. Firstly, the sector

accommodates people of variety of skill. Secondly, the constant fluctuation in consumer demand would mean lack of routine for the workers as improvisation and flexibility is seen to be an important parts of the job. Thirdly, the boundaries between work and leisure time are often obscured whereby it is argued that the working hours can constitute leisure when customers, many of whom are friends or acquaintances are entertained. Some workers may also spend their leisure time at workplace. Fourthly, a large proportion of the job in this sector has direct contact with customers and it is an attractive feature for workers who likes dealing with customers. Finally, the flexible nature of the employment to match the fluctuations in the seasonal and periodically tourism demand can be argued to suit certain type of workers such as students and women workers who can fit the jobs around their education for the former and childcare duties for the latter.

Consideration of pay in the hospitality sector often starts with a negative observation and this is highlighted as a main concern as it has been argued that a large part of the jobs in the sector is dominated by low pay. However, caution has to be taken when condemning the sector for low pay, as the full remuneration package instead of just basic pay, should be reviewed as jobs in this sector have access to non-monetary and informal rewards. Authors such as Alpert (1986)), Wood (1997) and Riley et al., (2002) argue that in some occupations basic pay is often supplemented by fringe benefits such as food and lodging, tips and ‘fiddles’ and this should not be ignored. Larger hotels were found to provide free staff uniforms (and sometime dry cleaning), free meals whilst on duties and discounts, including overnight stays, pension, sick pay schemes, private medical insurance and discounts on gym membership (Nickson, 2013). However, Lucas (2004) highlighted that workers in the hospitality sector enjoyed fewer benefits compared with other sectors.

Considering there areas of good, bad and ugly practices in the sector, it is important to now review the workforce characteristics and challenges the sector needs to be aware of in relation to employment.

Workforce characteristics and challenges

Supply and demand for labour in the UK has undergone major changes in the recent decades. This mainly accelerated as the result of the government policy in the 1980s to promote labour market deregulation and encouraged flexible work in an attempt to boost economic growth and increase efficiency. On the demand side, there has been a dramatic rise in flexible and temporary employment, often at the expense of more stable jobs as employers keep their core workforces lean while seeking to resource in response to peaks in demand (Recruitment and Employment Confederation, 2015). On the supply side, the increase in female and youth labour force participation, coupled with a growing migrant and multi-cultural population, has led to an increasingly diverse workforce.

The hospitality sector relies heavily upon the numerical flexibility of their workforce to overcome the problem of demand fluctuation, and young, female and migrant workers tends to fulfil this needs of the sector. During the 1980s, involvement of young and women workers in the British hospitality sector increased due in part to the expansion of the fast food industry (Reiter, 1996; Lucas and Ralston, 1997). This trend continued to rise and the flexible nature of employment particularly for bar and waiting staff, also attracted women returnees who need to work part-time to fit in with family demands and students who have to complement employment with their full-time education commitment (Hakim 1996; Lucas and Ralston 1997; Curtis and Lucas 2001).

Currently 34% of the hospitality workforce are under 25, compared to 12% across the economy (People 1st, 2015a). These workers consisted mostly of young people combining further and higher education studies with working at weekends and evenings. This trend however is now considered worrying because of the demographic changes currently faced in the EU with the decreasing number of young people. The demographic trends projected over the long term by the European Commission (2015) revealed that Europe is ‘turning increasingly grey’ in the coming decades and by 2030 the EU working age population will have shrunk by 13 million. Fotakis and Peschner (2015: 39) highlighted the severity of this demographic changes in EU:

“During the next 20 years, the developed world will experience the massive exit of the ‘baby-boom’ generation which is already under way. Although the incoming generations are better educated, which is a positive development in terms of employment perspectives, they are considerably smaller in size.”

For the hospitality sector that has seen high growth in recent years and with a prediction that this sector would require almost 524,000 more staff by 2020, this is an alarming news as this sector has traditionally targeted and employed younger workers, and this might no longer be a sustainable recruitment strategy (People 1st, 2015a). The ongoing struggle to attract UK workers will continue to increase the need for migrants. The sector has historically relied heavily on migrant workers mainly to take hard-to-fill vacancies. Migrant workers are also attracted to these jobs, as their relative pay is higher than what is offered in their home countries and some consider these jobs a way to improve their language skills that would help them progress in their career. However, according to Janta et. al., (2011) even migrant workers plan to eventually move out of this sector because of the poor working conditions, supporting the notion proposed by Szivas and Riley’s (1999, p. 748) that “... tourism employment might play the role of ‘any port in a storm’; ‘a refuge sector’ or as Wildes (2007:7) accurately described “a mere stopover to something better”. In short, some authors such as Lucas (2004) argue that workers only remain in the sector out of fear of unemployment and the most talented workers will leave the sector for other sectors.

A number of studies have found that employers preferred migrant workers to British workers mainly because of their better work ethics, a positive attitude towards work and higher skill level (Devine, Baum, Hearn and Devine, 2007; Lyon and Sulcova, 2009; Janta et al., 2011). However, these studies also noted some of the challenges posed in managing migrant workers. These include managing the working relationship between local and migrant workers to be mindful of cultural differences, communication concerns between migrant workers and local workers and customers, and local workers feeling threatened by the presence of migrant workers in terms of their job security. Baum (2012) also further highlighted the challenges in terms of the role that employees played in conveying destination image. Using the example of Ireland, he emphasised that an intangible conflict may, exist between the image engendered by the new multicultural workforce and the traditional emphasis Ireland has placed on the friendliness of Irish people as part of their tourism destination marketing campaign.

Even though a numbers of studies have shown the benefits migrant workers bring to the sector, it is concerning to think that as long as the migrant workers are able to fill these vacancies, employers do not see the necessity to change their practices to improve working conditions in the sector. Sadly, migrant workers may indirectly help to continue entrench certain employment practices that are favourable to employers (Janta et al., 2011) and as

Baum (2007, p. 1394) exerts "...the widespread recruitment and use of migrant labour in the tourism industry of developed countries has acted to the detriment of real change within the sector's workplace". However, the changing face of EU's demographics in terms of the falling number of young people also could mean that the sector may have to reconsider its employment strategy. Employing older workers, women with children, or improve retention can be approaches that need to be seriously considered. Recruiting outside Europe is an option, but that can only happen if significant political changes to allowed greater migration into the UK, particularly for what are deemed to be lower skilled roles (People 1st, 2015a)

Conclusions

The changes in the demographics of the EU population is fundamental in future directions of employment in the hospitality sector. With the decrease in the number of young workers that this sector heavily rely on, there has to be more creative way of recruiting staff and managing the flexibility that is required in order to attract women to return back to work and pursue their career after periods of childcare. The sector needs to recognise the changing landscape of the labour market and be proactive in developing recruitment and retention strategy that would create a sustainable workforce. What is worrying is the continuous bad press received by this sector for over the past decade in terms of its pay and working conditions. Hospitality scholars have continued to highlight the negative image of sector. Jobs in the hospitality sector are associated with low pay, unsocial hours, low job security, low skilled and limited promotional opportunity and career development, which is seen to contribute towards high turnover rates.

The recruitment and retention challenges for this sector will likely continue to intensify unless the core characteristics of the sector are effectively challenged and the employer brand for the sector overall improves (Hughes and Rog, 2008). Image of a sector can be argued to be a key labour market player, as it may attract suitable workers to the sector but also has the power to deter suitable workers and attract the unsuitable workers (Riley et al., 2002). Historically the service element of hotel work has been blamed for the low image of the sector (Corcoran and Johnson, 1974). Despite some of the poor working conditions in the sector, satisfaction and attractiveness motivate individuals to take up jobs in the sector (Janta et al., 2011) making it the world's largest sector in terms of employment.

Although the projected image of the sector may not be as accurate, it is crucial, as it can play a key role on recruitment of new and retention of existing employee (Baum, 2006). It is promising to see a few studies lately that started attempting to highlight positive features of this sector, rather than dwelling on the negative image of the sector. The jobs in the sector is seen to be fast pace, sociable, flexible and require certain types of skill set that is suited to some people. It is important to celebrate aspects of employment that continue to attract a large workforce to this sector and highlight factors that contribute towards employees remaining in this sector.

It is fair to say that enough has been written and said about the hardships of working in the hospitality sector, and too little has been said about the favourable side of working in this sector. There are key essence of this sector that creates a buzz and charm that should not be side-lined and more research is needed in reviewing the projected image of the sector to ensure a well-balanced perspective. If 'the good' outweighs 'the bad and the ugly' the sector can continue to attract quality workers and develop future leaders for this sector.

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