

## **Exploring waiters' occupational identity and turnover intention: A qualitative study focusing on Michelin-starred restaurants in London**

### **Abstract**

Occupational identity is under-researched in the waiting sector, but understanding the occupational framework that relates to employee turnover intention in restaurants is important for enhancing employee retention. The aim of this study is to build better comprehension of waiters' occupational identities in relation to turnover, concentrating on identifying the factors that influence occupational identity construction, and its consequences, in terms of employee turnover intention. This research applied a qualitative methodology, using 11 detailed interviews with a range of relevant professionals, as well as 3 focus groups of waiters, each with 18 respondents. The majority of the respondents were invited from Michelin-starred restaurants in London, UK. When the qualitative data was analysed, the themes of self-concept, employer branding, reactance stereotype and work interaction emerged, all of which were seen to influence the construction of occupational identity, and impact employee turnover intention. Findings of this study are expected to make theoretical and managerial contributions.

**Keywords:** occupational identity; employer branding; self-concept; work interaction; reactance stereotype; employee turnover intention; waiters; restaurant.

## 1. Introduction

Although restaurants employ a high number (1.5 million) of employees across the UK, accounting for 4.5% of total UK employment (Statista, 2019), this figure masks the relatively high degree of job dissatisfaction (Birkin, 2019) and employee turnover (more than 32%), with an operating cost of 51.1%, the highest since 2007 (Kik et al., 2019). Both factors combine to influence business productivity (Ayodele et al., 2020). The UK Restaurant Industry Forecast (2020) stresses that employers must concentrate on recruiting and retaining employees, to improve or maintain productivity (Girdhari, 2019). In their search to maintain success within the workplace, more and more organisations are adopting a tactical framework that includes both human resources and marketing (Gregorka et al., 2020; Moroko and Uncles, 2008), so that restaurateurs can appeal to, and incentivise, those personnel. However, only a few organisations (e.g. Marriott Hotels and Pizza Hut) have identified the benefits that a strong organisation-employee relationship can generate, not only in terms of employee retention, but also in promotion of the organisation to others (Born and Kang, 2015).

There has been a considerable amount of research in domains ranging from occupational identity (Roitenberg, 2020), employee turnover intention (Zopiatis et al., 2014) and reactance stereotype (Hoyt et al., 2010) to, more recently, employer branding (Chhabra and Sharma, 2014). They have attempted to comprehend and define how companies, or the individuals behind the brands (McAlexander et al., 2002; Torres and Kline, 2013), can construct deeper, more engaged relationships with employees, which could be converted into success. However, Gupta (2017) indicates that such relationships (companies-employees) are unlikely to be maintained for employers, without a more accurate comprehension of when and why employees react negatively or favourably to the organisations' relationship-building efforts. Constructional experience assertions are not currently reflected in waiters' own motives, and little is known about how these assertions affect employment retention in the hospitality business.

The current paper is one of the first studies to investigate the factors that influence occupational identity construction in waiters. This study investigates Michelin-starred restaurants in London. In order to avoid restaurant settings that may be suffering

from quality-related problems, or that have little commitment to retaining staff (both issues that in themselves may influence work identity and turnover); this work centres on Michelin restaurants. These restaurants constitute settings in which professional standards are relatively high and in which waiters constitute the elite or 'la crème de la crème' of their occupation. As such, they are particularly informative cases for this study (Ottenbacher and Harrington, 2007; Palmer et al., 2010).

The paper is structured to first consider classic and contemporary research within the relevant sociological literature. Consequently, this study expands on discussions regarding the nature of occupational identity (which proposes that various factors influence construction of occupational identity), and considers the consequences of such relationships in the workplace. Thereafter, the research method approach is discussed and results presented, concluding with a discussion of the research findings and theoretical implications of occupational identity, and their consequences for organisations seeking employee retention.

## **2. Literature review**

Central to this literature review is a discussion of what is meant by the term 'occupational identity', and how this related theme intersects with the hospitality industry; in particular, the role of waiting staff. Thus, in addition to addressing relevant fields of scholarly literature, this section will critique multiple interpretations of these terms.

Recently, due to the emergence of cooking shows and reality shows featuring professional chefs and/or amateur chefs, the restaurant sector has become more open to the public 'gaze'. Previously, the professional kitchen exemplified the enigma of the 'backstage', as defined by Goffman (1959), whereas nowadays the kitchen has become the stage; thus confirming Goffman's concept of a bifurcation of the public and private spheres. In recent years, however, this backstage aspect has received increased scrutiny from the media, which has brought it more to front-stage. What is meant by this is that there has been augmented media reporting of Michelin-starred restaurants, as well as a burgeoning trend for chef biographies (e.g. Newkey-Burden, 2009), which have transported restaurant workers into the public eye, including the waiting staff.

Not only has the media given attention to restaurants, but the doors of the restaurants have also been opened to academic research. For example, Sukhu et al. (2017) and Sehara and Sevcikova (2011) have largely focused on the purely professional aspects of chefs' and waiters' jobs (e.g. staff performance or training). However, little attention has been paid to waiters' sense of self or their occupational identities: Woods (1995) suggests that the vast majority of sociological studies (Dane and Brummel, 2014; Ostreng, 2001) have focused on the professional aspects of restaurant workers' jobs and, furthermore, have tended to focus on food (and drink) service staff by and large, as opposed to waiting in particular. Fine (1996:1) states that "for all their potential allure, restaurants have rarely been studied sociologically". More attention should be given to the waiting staff and their role and wellbeing in the industry.

Moreover, of the sociological work that does exist, there has been a tendency to focus more on chefs than on waiters (Ariza-Montes et al., 2018; Paules, 1991). This is possibly explained on the basis that the food was considered to be of primary importance in establishing a reputable restaurant, with less importance given to the service side of the sector. Wildes (2007) is an exception in the field. She draws attention to the stigma attached to the occupational identity of the waiter. Results show that people who had previously worked in the food service industry at some point in their lives were able to cope better with any job thereafter. Alternatively, Fine (1996: 16), focuses on a "dynamic self-conscious aesthetic to define waiters' occupational identity". In managing research into restaurants and trade school cooking programmes, Fine (1985, 1996) reveals that teachers and staff are socialised into aesthetic obligation, creating a mutual emphasis on immaculate appearance, in an effort to create 'aesthetically satisfying objects', which are demanded as a basic requirement of the hospitality sector.

Most studies have been inclined to focus on the restaurant industry in general, and have tended not to consider waiting as a sub-sector in its own right (Shigihara, 2014). Furthermore, investigations have concentrated purely on the operational aspects of waiters' jobs, but have not looked at waiters' identities outside the workplace. For the reason set out in the introduction, it is therefore necessary to

shed scholarly light on this previously neglected aspect of the industry: high employee turnover.

In this current research, the term 'occupation' is important, because it focuses on the characteristics of waiters' identities, their participation in workplace activities, as well as their membership of work groups. Consequently, this study uses the term 'occupational identity' to refer to how various forces specific to the workplace combine to construct workers' identities.

### **Occupational Identity**

The term occupational identity, as a research topic, has attracted much attention from researchers (e.g. Kahn et al., 2018; Schwartz, 1987) during the last few decades, mainly because 'work' as a life domain is for the most part fundamental to identity construction. Additionally, since researchers believe that identity is formed by relationships with others, everyday professional interactions are also central to the formation of individual occupational identities, and these will similarly extend into everyday life (Mahadevan and Mayer, 2017).

The contractedness of occupational identity is the first of these themes to which many academics have paid attention (e.g. Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016). Occupational identity construction encompasses mending, reinforcing, reviewing, preserving, or developing identities that already exist (Rubin and Babbie, 2016; Snow and Anderson, 1987). Therefore, instead of seeing the construction of identity as a simple process of adopting a work position, occupational identity is an interactive and complex procedure (Gonzalez et al., 2018; Pratt et al., 2006). Individuals not only react to external stimuli in developing positive identities, but are also active agents in constructing socially authenticated occupational identities which present features that they believe to be most important for their self-concept. Occupational identity comprises a series of agentic tactics that people utilise to positively generate a sense of their identity in each context. Ibarra (1999) argues that occupational identity is constructed when individuals respond to threats or divergences from their identities. Waiting employees need to respond to threats, such as the stereotype, or a desire for social validity.

Studies of occupational identity have concentrated on people's difficulties in forming work identities; for example, during a period of adjustment to occupational changes (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010), people may miss the comfort and security of their previous jobs. Although identities may develop out of stigmatised job roles (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016), it is evident that certain jobs are more widely stigmatised, while others have a great deal of social capital attached to them. Identities are constantly at risk of being undermined because of unappealing jobs, and the integrity of occupational identities may be violated (Pratt et al., 2006). Additionally, the same authors, Pratt et al. (2006) observe that, instead of developing aspects of identity into a proper occupational identity, practitioners actively adapt their occupational identity, to successfully gain a feeling of integrity. Another way of establishing an adequate occupational identity is to copy individuals within the public sphere with whom one identifies on a more private or fundamental level: this is a model advanced by Ibarra (1999).

Furthermore, Selenko et al., 2018, state that people are capable of keeping an authentic identity during the course of adaptation and experimentation within the organisation that employs them. However, other academics have shown that, when a job inhibits the ability to create an intelligible sense of self in the workplace, there is the chance that it can be harmful to one's identity (Costas and Fleming, 2009). As a consequence, some staff who start a new job experience a sense of not identifying with their work role. These people are caught between their existing identity and an occupational identity which they regard as unfamiliar (Corlett et al., 2017). This may happen to waiting staff in some cases; on starting, they may realise that it is not the right career for them, and this could be another reason for the high turnover.

The second theme centres on the value placed on work roles, a subject to which academics have also paid significant attention. According to Ashforth and Kreiner (1999: 417), occupational identity is "the set of central, distinctive components that are generated from one's history of occupational participation". Hirschi (2012: 4) refers to it as "the clear perception of occupational interests, abilities, goals, and values, and the structure of the meaning that links these self-perceptions to career roles".

The problem arises when people do not have clarity regarding all of these concepts. It means that these domains (interests, abilities, goals, and values) do not match the job expectation (Hirschi, 2012). To cope with this issue, researchers (e.g. Bauman, 2004; Mannerstrom et al., 2017) have identified several ideas that contribute to the construction of occupational identity. Firstly, individuals tend to evaluate themselves, and are evaluated by others, according to the work they perform (Delanty, 1995; Jenkins, 1996; Bauman, 2004). This implies a connection between their work role and the formation of occupational identity. As a consequence, this can be a motivation for the individual to find the right job. Secondly, occupational titles have an impact on the skills of their holders and how they are perceived by others (Collinson, 2004). These roles and titles are of course defined by the individuals involved and the others with whom they interact. Thirdly, self-concept is affected both by the occupational peer group (Cooley, 1983) and by the 'audience'; that is, the customers (Mead, 1934). Cameron and Spreitzer (2011) have summarised this theme by saying that the three main stages of analysing occupational identity are the individual, the workplace, and the societal level: the individual, because this relates to what an individual believes about their job; the workplace level represents the context; and the social level is the relationship between the individual and the external (e.g. the customers) and internal groups (e.g. work colleagues) (Cameron and Spreitzer, 2011; Cooper et al., 2017).

Whereas the first theme looks at how identities are constructed by external circumstances, the third theme looks at theories of a more active identity construction process. Individuals are restricted by the inflexible rules and policies imposed on them by the hospitality industry. Therefore, it is important to understand how these are also responsible for shaping identity. In most situations, industry management tends to omit the strategic integration of individual identities formed outside the workplace. In its place, restaurant managers prefer to develop a one-standard organism, completely overlooking the agency and creative potential of the individual (Cameron, 2001). To summarise, waiters' occupational identities are not narrowly defined by the work that they do, but rather extend to incorporate more intangible categories, such as: values, agency, and the social and professional conditioning of identity. In the next section, the effect of occupational identities is studied, in terms of the current literature.

## **Consequences of Occupational Identity**

Recent research shows that occupational identity can provide people with a notion of purpose and meaning (Hofhuis, et al., 2016) and can have an effect on a person's response to the politics of organisations; for example, they may identify more powerfully with their job rather than with their organisation, and may leave the organisation if no congruence exists between their occupational skills and the work (Witt et al., 2002; Baldry et al., 2007). Conversely, greater commitment to an organisation and work engagement, as well as a dependable performance, can be stimulated by a strong occupational identity (Walsh and Gordon 2008). Also, people who possess a robust occupational identity are not so susceptible to stress in situations which are uncertain, because their own notion of professionalism is not easily endangered (Newman et al., 2020).

Through construction of a positive occupational identity, personnel exhibit a drop in turnover intention, because they become more dedicated to their profession (Haslam, 2004). On the other hand, if there is an unfavourable comparison to other professions, the waiter's occupational identity is damaged. Regrettably, the maintenance of a positive stereotype for this profession is a constant challenge. Consequently, occupational identity is a more prominent issue for waiters than for other practitioners.

Globally, the social stereotype and status of waiters are still changing. Since the profession was established, waiters have been derided as 'semi-professionals' (Jensen and Muhr, 2020), as they have not been able to achieve the acceptable criteria or traits used to define 'prestigious' or 'full' professionals, such as doctors and lawyers. Waiters are still responding to 'stereotype problems', even in developed economies (Mars and Nicod, 2019).

Leung et al.'s (2008) assessment of research from Western countries (Xie and Paik, 2019) shows that it is challenging for staff to gain support for their service programme, and to recruit and retain employees, if the public has an unfavourable view of the profession.



The rationale for the current piece of research is similar to research on job and organisational embeddedness (Kim, 2018; Ng and Feldman, 2007), which happens when employer brand plays an important role in the construction of occupational identity. Both organisational and job embeddedness partly relate to the degree to which the job and organisation are consistent with other areas of the life of an individual, which include career goals and personal values. Richardson and James (2017) discovered that the individuals who are less likely to leave their organisations are those who are more embedded in their jobs. Hence, the logic embedded in this study's reasoning is comparable to that of organisational and job embeddedness; in other words, people will be more likely to pursue inclusion within organisations which offer work consistent with the positions available in their wider profession (Ashforth et al., 2017). Accordingly, various proposals have been put forward (in relation to accepting a desired mode of occupational identity), to enable restaurants to decrease their employee turnover. These recommendations include employees having membership within their occupations, in order to achieve their separate occupational identities; consequently, they see an increase of their organisation's support of the roles linked to their personal occupational identities, and this is more likely to result in a decrease of their turnover intentions.

The above recommendations speak to some organisational guidelines, as well as to the personality characteristics of the employees. However, they do not consider the role of employees' concerns (e.g., interpersonal conflict, low motivation, job satisfaction, performance issues or poor job fit), on the construction of occupational identity. For example, Nam et al., (2020) remarked on the potential impact of selection practices and/or training on occupational identity. However, the matter of interactions between organisations, as well as membership and occupational training, could be important contributors to the construction of occupational identity; this is not addressed directly in their research. The current study considered these factors, as they can result in challenges to employees' occupational identities, leading to construct understandings (Richardson and James, 2017), and creating opportunities for reflection by employees (Coghlan and Weiler, 2018).

Furthermore, the results of Perez and Mirabella's (2013) quantitative survey, which has increased comprehension of the process of turnover issues within the

environment of restaurant operations, show that the provision of 'supervisory support' decreases workers' negative emotions and increases their positive experiences of interactional justice, thus leading to a decrease in turnover intention. Hence, to assist workers in reducing negative sentiments, the advice was that restaurant managers should offer support and guidance by dealing with employees ethically and fairly, and showing understanding of the desires and requirements of employees on the frontline. When employees who encounter problems in the workplace are supported, managers may have a considerable role in reducing turnover intention. Furthermore, Lam and Chen (2012) indicated the requirement to further investigate employee-employer relations and their impact on occupational identity, so as to inform support strategies.

The objective of the current research is to explore the effect of situational and organisational factors on the construction of occupational identity, in order to identify key factors that could impact turnover. The study develops previous enquiries into this field by the use of qualitative methods. This allows for a far deeper investigation into the construction of occupational identity, compared to previous studies which have mostly relied on quantitative assessment through surveys. Qualitative methods allow the participants' full range of views and feelings to be ascertained (Creswell, 2013; Peterson, 1994). Here, the use of in-depth interviews with a variety of relevant professionals, followed up by focus groups consisting solely of waiters, provide deeper insights, thereby enhancing the literature on occupational identity.

### **3. Method and analysis**

Qualitative methods were used to identify factors that impact on occupational identity, and their links to employee turnover intention. Following the suggestions of Palmer and Gallagher (2007), the two research methods selected were semi-structured interviews conducted face-to-face, followed by focus groups. Initial analysis of the interviews was used to help specify the main topics to be included in the focus groups.

## **Procedure**

In the autumn of 2019, the author conducted 11 qualitative interviews with hospitality academics, managers and employers with different roles within the restaurant industry in London. These were followed by 3 focus groups (18 people, with 6 people per group) which included waiters based in London only. Interviews and focus groups were conducted by a researcher with 12 years of experience in hospitality field operations. The ethical guidelines of London Middlesex University were followed throughout.

**Interviews:** The interview participants were recruited by snowball sampling, in accordance with which one of the researchers used her ex-colleagues' hospitality labour networks to enlist initial participants, who in turn were asked to suggest potential future interviewees from amongst their friends and colleagues; the only inclusion criteria being people with experience in the field, in different jobs, but with full knowledge of the role of the waiter. Thus, the interviews involved hospitality lecturers, partners and restaurant managers, and also included some waiters, to enable the investigator to collect a broad range of behavioural and attitudinal data relevant to the topic being studied (Hussain et al., 2020). Of the 11 participants, 3 were women and 8 were men, all between 22 and 50 years old (Table 1). Interviews lasted from 50–90 minutes. As this study attempts to identify major themes and antecedents of occupational identity among hospitality employees, emphasis was placed on heterogeneity across various professional and demographic segments. Interviews were carried out until no additional relevant information was obtained, and the main, derived themes became repetitive. Some indicative questions used were:

- What is your understanding of occupational identity?
- How would you describe the occupational identity within your organisation?
- What do you think are the key factors that influence and help to construct occupational identity in the workplace?
- Do you identify your career perspective with your individual identity? For example, goals, abilities, occupational interests and meanings. Can you explain this further?
- Do you agree with this statement (definition of occupational identity)? Why?

**Focus groups:** were conducted after initial analysis of the interview data, so as to probe in more depth the topics identified as important in the interviews. The focus groups aimed to gather information about feelings, attitudes, beliefs, reactions and experiences from waiters in particular.

Participants in the first two focus groups were Michelin-starred waiters, who were recruited from the field, via the researcher's network of contacts. The third focus group comprised waiting staff from the restaurant of a 4\* hotel; all of the participants were recruited via snowball sampling.

Focus groups lasted between 55–60 minutes. All focus groups used the same three open-ended questions, which were developed based on existing literature, and from the interviews on work identity:

1. What is your understanding of occupational identity in restaurants?
2. What do you think are the key factors that influence and help to construct occupational identity in the restaurant?
3. Do you identify your career perspective with yourself?

Topics which had been identified as ambiguous or unclear in the interviews, and which needed further elaboration, were revisited. During the focus groups, inconsistent statements were used to stimulate discussion, and charts served as visual prompts. Participants were encouraged to ask questions and were offered a summary of the research results. 12 men and 6 women participated in the focus groups (Table 2). The average age of participants was 24 (ranging from 17–51 years): the majority were between 24 and 31 years of age. Two-thirds of the participants were not married and almost half had no dependants living with them in the UK. Of the married respondents, one had a family living abroad and three had families in London. Focus groups were continued until saturation of data was reached in the 3<sup>rd</sup> focus group.

### **Data Analysis:**

All interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. A professional language editor was consulted, to ensure the accuracy of the quotations presented in the paper. To ensure participants' anonymity, all the interview tapes, once recorded, were destroyed. The data were coded (Appendix 1), analysed

thematically, and categorised using Nvivo computer software. Categorisation helped to identify core issues and to capture and classify the variety of topics mentioned. All names were changed before analysis, and are thus fictitious, only reflecting the gender, job and age of the participants. In order to distinguish between focus group participants and interviewees, 'FG' or 'INT', respectively, were also attached.

**<<<Table 1>>>**

**<<<Table 2>>>**

The interview and focus group transcripts were thoroughly examined, using thematic analysis, to identify a framework of the participants' perspective on occupational identity and the external factors that may affect it. Thematic analysis is an inductive method for qualitative data analysis, in the sense that themes emerge from the data rather than being imposed upon it by the investigator. In accordance with thematic analysis procedure, transcripts were analysed, to assemble and categorise text segments representing specific themes or patterns that emerged from the participants' accounts (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Fossey et al., 2002). The identification of themes involved "careful reading and re-reading of the data" (Rice and Ezzy, 1999, p. 258), and emerging themes that were important for the description of the phenomenon under investigation became the categories for analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). It should be noted that, since the purpose of the analysis was to explore and reveal a wide range of themes around the subject matter, the results described in the subsequent section are not reported in relative frequency, as such reporting could be misleading (Pope et al., 2000). In line with this methodological approach, quantification of themes and/or quotations is unnecessary, since the main contribution of the study lies in its internal rather than external validity. To minimise researcher bias, the three principal investigators each undertook a separate, independent analysis of the data, and then compared and contrasted their evaluation, and agreed on the themes, in line with the investigator triangulation process (Decrop, 1999; Denzin, 1978). Triangulation is "a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different

sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell and Miller, 2000: 126).

#### **4. Findings of the qualitative study**

Thematic analysis revealed four aspects (employer branding, self-concept, work interaction, and reactance stereotype) that are important in the construction of occupational identity, and which influence employee turnover intention. In line with prior literature, all interviewees highlighted the significance of developing and sustaining a favourable occupational identity (Appendix 1). Respondents who stressed the worth of a positive occupational identity observed how it influenced waiters’ views of the role and the organisation’s team, and emphasised its principal influence on attracting and retaining waiters, in competitive markets. The points of interest of this work are addressed below in more detail.

**Occupational identity** - study findings were consistent with previous definitions of occupational identity; namely, “the clear perception of occupational interests, abilities, goals, and values, and the structure of the meaning that links these self-perceptions to career roles” (Hirschi, 2012: 4). Respondents indicated the significance of goals, values and abilities, as exemplified by this interviewee:

*“I think the occupational identity will be very much driven by an interest for food, for great quality food, for great quality service, and by sharing that interest with people, with the community of people who work in that place and have the same goals.”*  
(Partner, 50 years old, INT).

This quote indicates that a shared interest in great quality food and service represents an important common denominator across waiting staff, and that this is an important component of occupational identity within this career role. Likewise, concerning values, one waiter added:

*“... and is basically taking care of people. I think people see it differently right here, like caring about what being a waiter is, so you have to be polite, you have to be extra, I don’t know ... you have to be nice to everyone, you have to be lovely to*

*people in your restaurant, so identity is being responsible to people, being polite and being efficient; thanks [to] the identity, at least for me” (Waiter 1, 25 years old, INT).*

It therefore seems that another important element to take into account is respect for others. Other quotes shed further light on this, emphasising not only the importance of politeness and friendliness, but linking these explicitly to other characteristics of occupational identity. For instance, one respondent was of the view that being friendly is integral to demonstrating a passion for the job:

*“They are the face of the business and the person taking care of most of the guests. I mean, should be friendly, ‘cause if you are not friendly with the person from your face, they think maybe he's not working with passion ... you have to be hard working. You have to do a lot [of] things and constantly think about different things you need to do ... No, I think you need to be first of all professional, keep the standards, ... Good training ... good relationship with management” (Chef, 35 years old, INT).*

Thus, several facets of the career role appear related to the employee's self-perceived goals and values, in accordance with Hirschi's (2012) definition of occupational identity. Specifically, maintaining a friendly, polite outlook seems integral to being perceived as professional and working to a high standard in a fast-paced, multi-tasking career role.

### **Aspects of occupational identity**

The following section describes the key aspects of waiters' experiences that were identified in the qualitative data as being key factors in the construction of occupational identity.

### **Employer branding**

Employer branding has become as essential as services or goods in the marketplace, and symbolises an organisation's status as an employer (Rao and Patnaik, 2016). Furthermore, the employer brand represents the identity of the business as an employer, encompasses the business's behaviour, values and policies, and influences recruitment and retainment of the company's current and potential employees (e.g. Alshathry et al., 2017). The success of every organisation

is highly contingent upon the performance of its employees. Attracting and retaining talented people has become a challenging task for organisations (Gupta et al., 2014). Previous research points to a relationship between occupational identity and employer branding (Highhouse et al., 2007; Wallace et al., 2014).

In line with this, the current data provided strong support for such a relationship as well as interesting insights into how occupational identity is influenced by employer branding. For instance, one respondent stated:

*“To believe in the company you work for, to identify yourself with goals of the company you work for, because that creates respect and you also feel respected yourself and feel valued as well”* (Dining groups and events manager, 40 years old, INT).

This quote demonstrates that employer branding can influence and enhance the self-esteem of staff, allowing them to *“feel respected and... valued”*. This is in accordance with previous work (Highhouse et al., 2007; Van Riel and Fomburn, 2007), who stressed that employer branding, within which employees’ occupational identities are shaped, has an influence on personnel and their approach to the job. Respondents in focus groups stated:

*“... for me, what I love about this job and this restaurant is the fact that you cross the door and you feel like home ... You’re gonna be with your family ... You know that the day is just gonna get better because you’re with people you trust and who understand”* (Waiter, FG 2).

This highlights an intimate role for the employer brand in creating a work environment that makes employees feel comfortable in their job, and able to look forward to their working day with enthusiasm. Obviously, this particular waiter’s relationship with their employer’s brand is favourable; however, other employees reported a very negative relationship instead, as demonstrated below:

*“I like to achieve goals, because I am competitive, and it motivates me. No, I have got different goals; restaurants - the only thing they want is to get money, and keep the*



*guests happy. What I want is to feel comfortable and relaxed in my workplace.”* (Waiter, FG 3).

Thus, and in contrast to the previous quote, an employer brand that is perceived by the employee as simply a money-making enterprise will create discomfort in the workforce. This is because the goals of the employee are not aligned with those presented by the brand, again highlighting the importance of employees’ self-perceived goals and values, as discussed in the previous section.

From a different perspective, other respondents highlighted the company’s responsibility to have a well-defined brand that clearly presents the values it stands for, as this will facilitate recruitment of employees who share those values, and will thus feel comfortable and ‘at home’ in the work environment:

*“... it’s incredibly important to be very clear about the values the organisation stands for ... and these values will need to define how the organisation recruits waiters, so that the organisation gets the type of waiter that goes very well with its values and creates a strong sense of belonging”.* (Partner, 50 years old, INT).

Given that a strong sense of ‘belonging’ would likely decrease staff turnover, promoting a strong employer brand would seem to be a useful strategy for addressing the problem of turnover. However, the comments from our respondents suggested that there are not many restaurants where this is applied. Overall, findings supported the notion that employer branding is an important factor in occupational identity construction (Wallace et al., 2014; Wilden et al., 2010).

### **Self-concept**

Findings also demonstrated that self-concept is as an important component of occupational identity, in line with previous work (Stryker and Burke, 2000; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Interviewees made numerous remarks about career choice being an extension of their self-concept, and that employees cultivate their sense of self and self-worth through their work (Holland, 1973; Super, 1951).

For instance, one respondent stated:

*“Well, I’ve been doing that [waiting] for the past 12 years and I’ve been passionate about what I’ve been doing. I always wanted to learn new things. I would like to be a perfectionist person and hospitality I love ... [I] believe in customer service”* (Dining groups and events manager, 40 years old, INT).

This quote clearly indicates that, by allowing self-concept to be realised and developed (*“I always wanted to learn new things. I would like to be a perfectionist person”*), working in the hospitality field provides fulfilment. Similarly, another respondent stated:

*“For me, it’s quite different and for different reasons. It’s something that I always wanted to do ... but obviously, in identifying myself, I couldn’t be what I am as a waitress if I wasn’t me. So, I identify my career with myself”* (Waiter 1, 25 years old, INT).

This quote clearly suggests that alignment with self-concept is of high importance for an employee’s occupational identity.

Thus, as well as employer branding, the data suggests that self-concept is an important contributor to occupational identity. This is of practical significance: we have seen that job fulfilment and a sense of feeling ‘at home’ in the workplace are influenced by the extent to which an employee identifies with his/her job, and with the values of the employer brand.

### **Workplace Interactions**

Isbell (2008) states that interaction in the workplace is a key process by which a person learns the responsibilities, actions and conduct requirements of an occupation. Through interaction with other employees, who demonstrate the norms and values of the occupation, the person develops their occupational identity (Blais et al., 2006; Cohen, 1981; Creasia and Parker, 2007; Hardy and Conway, 1988; Haynes et al., 2004; Lai and Lim 2012; Leddy, 1998; Tappen et al., 1998). This was seen in the data collected here. The importance of interaction in the workplace was stated by interviewees; for example:

*“To be a waiter or a waitress gives people a great chance to polish themselves as individuals, because they interact with people from different walks of life ... and secondly, to interact with the superiors of the restaurant ... it helps them develop”.* (Restaurant manager, 40 years old, INT).

This manager emphasises the importance of workplace interactions in relation to developing the occupational identity of staff (*“... it helps them develop”*), highlighting the varied nature of these interactions and the role of interactions with superiors. As noted above, a particularly important element is interaction with other employees, as seen in the following quote:

*“... people need to relate to their peers and feel part of a group, and feel that they can talk to their group about things that matter to them ... that’s a sense of identity that is absolutely central to motivation”* (Partner, 50 years old, INT).

This quote emphasises the role and importance of workplace interactions with a peer group of colleagues, for developing an individual’s occupational identity.

### **Stereotype Reactance**

Stereotyping describes the simplified perception of a person or group, which involves downplaying individual differences and exaggerating commonalities (Horton et al., 2014; Nadler and Clark, 2011). In response, individuals can demonstrate ‘stereotype reactance’; the tendency to behave in a manner that is in opposition to the stereotype (Bargh et al., 1996; Logel et al., 2009). Findings from interviews suggested that workplace identity formation is influenced by stereotype reactance. For instance, one respondent referred to the link:

*“If someone comes with a negative idea about us, it really influences me positively, in stimulating me to work harder to show them that the idea that they have of us, it is completely wrong”* (Waiter 1, 25 years old, INT).

Similarly, while referring to society’s opinion about the profession, another interviewee stated:

*“... for me it was, I am going to prove to people that being a waiter is nothing to be ashamed of. I am happy that I am not the only one who has the same feelings as me.”* (Dining groups and events manager, 40 years old, INT).

In contrast, several interviewees supported the view that stereotyping of waiters by society has a negative impact, undermining job satisfaction and increasing the likelihood of leaving the profession:

*“It is not good; people look at us like someone without qualifications and very basic general knowledge.”* (Waiter, FG 2).

Similarly, others members of the focus groups reported:

*“It [stereotyping] has a negative impact and that is why no-one wants to have this profession in the long-term”* (Waiter, FG 1).

Thus, stereotyping appears to be an important factor in the formation of a waiter’s occupational identity. Some individuals react positively to it, while for others it can influence their decision to leave the job.

### **Consequences of occupational identity for turnover intention**

The literature suggests that a favourable occupational identity has positive outcomes, including reduced employee turnover. Employee turnover intention is a deliberate and conscious readiness to leave the company. High turnover undermines organisational efficiency and productivity (Gustafson, 2002; Karatepe and Ngeche, 2012, Agoi, 2015), and increases training, selection, and recruitment costs (Morrell et al., 2004). Furthermore, employee morale may be impacted by turnover (Morrell et al., 2004).

Thus, studying the factors that influence turnover intention is an important focus for management researchers. Empirical studies have established that employee turnover is lessened by an increased degree of work engagement (Saks, 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Additionally, Cole and Bruch (2006) noted that perceptions of robust

organisational identification and organisational commitment may impact employees' turnover intentions in specific situations, varying according to their level of responsibility within the workplace. Analysis of our data provided strong support for the notion that workplace identity is a critical determinant of turnover intention, as demonstrated by the following quotes:

*“Organisations recruit people, not only based on skill but also on values, and make sure that they get a certain number of people into the organisation that they know will fit ... I think it may also be important not to talk about them as waiters anymore ... why call them waiters? ... People working in Michelin-starred restaurants, they're not really waiters, they provide service to the customers which goes well beyond serving dishes ... it's a highly skilled job. So, I think restaurants need to recognise that they have to offer a development programme to the waiting staff. And if they do that, they manage to keep the people much longer than in a traditional waiting job.”* (Partner, 50 years old, INT).

This quote suggests a link between workplace identity (*“why call them waiters?... it's a highly skilled job”*) and the ability of an organisation to retain staff. In this regard, it also emphasises the need for organisations to recognise the importance of supporting the formation of a favourable occupational identity amongst employees, by offering development opportunities.

Several studies have demonstrated that work engagement is positively related to commitment to continue working with one's firm (Harter et al., 2002; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Other interviewees provided evidence that work engagement is influenced by occupational identity, as follows:

*“... I think career perspective is the most important and keeps people learning ... So, I will say first of all, a sense of belonging ... so that's why recruitment is very important, because you have to understand what type of people you have at the moment, and who may be a good addition to the team...”* (Partner, 50 years old, INT).

*“... for example, having a good environment, good philosophy at work, getting*

*themselves engaged, getting them across exposure to other departments, and having obviously the right money is very important, and giving them a vision to develop ... It's very important that you identify with the job and that you are allowed to be yourself"* (Marketing and Sales Manager, 53 years old, INT).

These quotes indicate the importance of considering occupational identity (including the factors of employer branding, self-concept and workplace interactions outlined above) for building a team of engaged employees who are less likely to depart from the job role.

## **5. Discussion and Conclusion**

The current research aimed to identify the factors that affect the construction of occupational identity, and its consequences for waiters' turnover intention within the restaurant industry, using qualitative methods. The comprehensive literature review presented here was used as a solid grounding for the qualitative data collection. The study findings suggested that the process of waiters' occupational identity construction is affected by the following four factors, which emerged as themes in the data analysis: stereotype reactance; self-concept; work interaction; and employer brand. Further, the data pointed to a relationship between occupational identity and turnover intention, suggesting that individuals for whom the occupational identity construction experience fails to materialise are more likely to leave the role. Findings accord with, and add useful detail to, the existing literature, which has practical implications.

For successful occupational identity construction, findings suggested that a conscious manifestation and realisation of self-concept is important and this is in line with previous work (Beudaert et al., 2016). Work interaction was also seen to be an important contributor; the data suggested that interactions amongst peers might be particularly beneficial, and that organisations might thus be encouraged to provide opportunities and a working environment to facilitate this. It was also found that stereotype reactance can influence waiters' occupational identity construction; for some individuals, stereotype reactance can be positive, stimulating the formation of a strong occupational identity, while in others it can undermine their satisfaction with the role. Another factor influencing identity construction was seen to be employer

branding. Participants made frequent reference to the employer brand, particularly in relation to the perceived values of the organisation. Participants also highlighted the importance of a well-defined brand that clearly presents the employer's values. Findings suggested that employees, who perceived that their own values were well aligned with those of the company, were much more comfortable and enthusiastic in their work environment. This supports the theoretical arguments presented in previous work (Coghlan & Weiler, 2018), and points to a robust connection between employer branding and occupational identity construction.

This research study is one of the first to explore in detail the factors influencing the construction of waiters' occupational identity, and its relationship with employee turnover intention. In terms of practical steps towards promoting a positive occupational identity in their workplaces, findings suggest that companies should aim to recruit people whose self-concept aligns with the job role, and who have a positive reactance to stereotype. Companies should also present a clear set of values that employees can identify with, and also foster positive workplace interactions amongst employees. Findings pointed to the importance of perceived identification with organisational values, as well as employer commitment to staff. This highlights the importance of offering development opportunities to staff, to demonstrate this commitment.

The consequences of occupational identity for turnover intention were supported by the current findings, and this offers insights into how the high rates of turnover among waiters in the restaurant industry might be addressed. Given that occupational identity seems to exert a significant influence on turnover intention, greater consideration by stakeholders of the factors that can promote the formation of waiters' occupational identity would be beneficial.

The findings of this study suggest that occupational identity influences work fulfilment. Occupational identity might thus be a less visible, but more fundamental, factor influencing waiter retention. If a waiter identifies himself (or herself) as professional, and is proud of being a waiter, then he (or she) may feel more fulfilled in his or her job, and would therefore not be predisposed to quit, even within an environment of poor organisation and remuneration.

From the data, we saw that the level of employer commitment could act as an important factor in facilitating the formation of a positive occupational identity, and thus influence turnover intention. As one of the waiters mentioned in the interviews, the occupation is considered by many as a 'stop-gap' job. Consequently, this perception influenced their decision to leave the profession, which underlines the potential value of offering professional development opportunities, in order to enhance waiters' satisfaction with the job role.

This supports and builds on previous findings: Perez and Mirabella's (2013) quantitative study showed that better supervisory support decreases waiters' negative emotions and turnover intention. The current results suggest that such support should incorporate discussions around, and provision for, employees' personal and professional development. This might help to counter stereotyping and address negative perceptions of the job role, indicated as being problematic by some participants.

### **Managerial and Academic Implications**

The findings of this research provide insight into the factors and circumstances required for meaningful identity construction to occur amongst waiters. The current research also highlights the importance of this, with regard to job satisfaction and turnover intention. In particular, it suggests that, in order for waiters to achieve a meaningful work identity, they should be prepared to move into a phase of construction by being willing to change their existing narrative of the self. Also, waiters need to throw themselves into their work, interacting intensively with managers, peers and organisations, and putting in the required effort. Organisations can facilitate this, if they offer the requisite opportunities and provide a stimulating environment in which waiters can construct a new self-concept and effective work identity. An organic community can be developed via group activities that enhance interactions both with peers and management. Presenting opportunities for reflection would also be useful; for example, to encourage personal development through reflection on one's individual values, development goals and needs, how these align with employer brand, and also reactance to stereotyping. These measures would likely help to reduce employee turnover. This must be approached carefully however, in order to give employees sufficient time to adapt their self-concept. A forced (or too



rapid) transition could result in frustration and alienation, thereby leading to adverse effects (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017). It is also important to increase honest and regular communication between employer and employee concerning the employee experience and the employee's personal development goals, so that concerns can be addressed by the management and actions to support an individual's development put in place. This would help to ensure that the waiter feels that his/her role, personal needs, and opinions are valued by the employer; thus improving self-esteem and sense of worth. By showing they value the role of waiters within the company, and by recognising the personal development needs of waiters, management could change how waitering is perceived: as noted above, this could help mitigate negative stereotyping of the role. One interesting suggestion raised by an interviewee was to change the job title of 'waiters', at least in the high-end establishments under study here, thereby offering recognition that the demands of the role in these environments could merit a different job title. How the role is perceived is important, as the current findings suggest that stereotype reactance plays a central role in influencing identity construction and turnover intention. However, the implementation of such a suggestion would require careful consultation and input from employees, in line with the suggestions above.

Based on previous and current findings, we present the following conceptual framework (Figure 1) as a basis for future explorations. It is important to note that, while these relationships were suggested by the current data, causality cannot be inferred based on the current study. Further empirical investigations are required to test for causality in these relationships.

<<<Figure 1>>>

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Firstly, irrespective of the methods used for researching the construction of waiters' occupational identity and its consequences, it is essential to take into consideration and acknowledge the western-centric focus of this study (Mars and Nicod, 2019). The majority of participants were young and living in London; this means that their perceived opinions and experiences need to be considered in relation to their socio-demographic profile; thus, the results may only be representative of the specific

characteristics of this localised population. Consequently, the results of the study should be generalised with caution, and future research at other locations is needed, to explore different views and consider the contextual factors that impact occupational identity. Also, this study included only 29 participants in the focus groups and these were drawn solely from Michelin-starred restaurants and hotel restaurants: the scope of the sample and findings is therefore limited by this. It is likely that the opinions and attitudes of the current study population might not be generalisable to waiters working in other settings beyond the 'high-end'. Future research should aim for a larger sample that encompasses a broader array of establishments. The inclusion (in the interviews) of other relevant professionals, across a range of professions, helped to broaden the scope of the current study. Nevertheless, further work is needed to explore whether or not the study findings are also applicable to individuals working in other business settings. Future research might also investigate waiters' occupational identity construction by using longitudinal data collection methods, to study how the process evolves over time, and to consider the effects of other factors that might be important, such as working patterns, shift duration and timing. The current research focused on the construction of waiters' occupational identity and, although other relevant parties were included in the interviews, future research should take a still broader view, recognising that identity construction will only be sustained if all relevant parties work collectively towards attaining construction outcomes that are positive.

The use of qualitative methodology is a strength of this study, allowing questions to be explored in-depth. However, the use of interpreters in two interviews possibly increased the risk of misunderstandings. Further, Church (1982) suggests that participants' emotional experiences and expressions are less aroused in a non-native tongue, the latter being the case for the majority of the participants. Finally, the interpretation of the current data was subject to researcher bias and this should be recognised as a methodological constraint. However, by use of investigator triangulation procedures for the data analysis, reasonable steps were taken to reduce this (Palacios, 2010).

To conclude, this qualitative study of occupational identity sheds light on some critical aspects or antecedents and consequences of occupational identity

construction in waiters, and has some potentially useful implications for hospitality management: findings suggest actions that could lead to improved staff retention. The findings also provide a useful starting point for further scholarship into occupational identity construction: future studies are needed, in order to better explore situational factors and differences between various industry, occupational and socio-demographic (including age and experience) segments, beyond the scope of the current paper.

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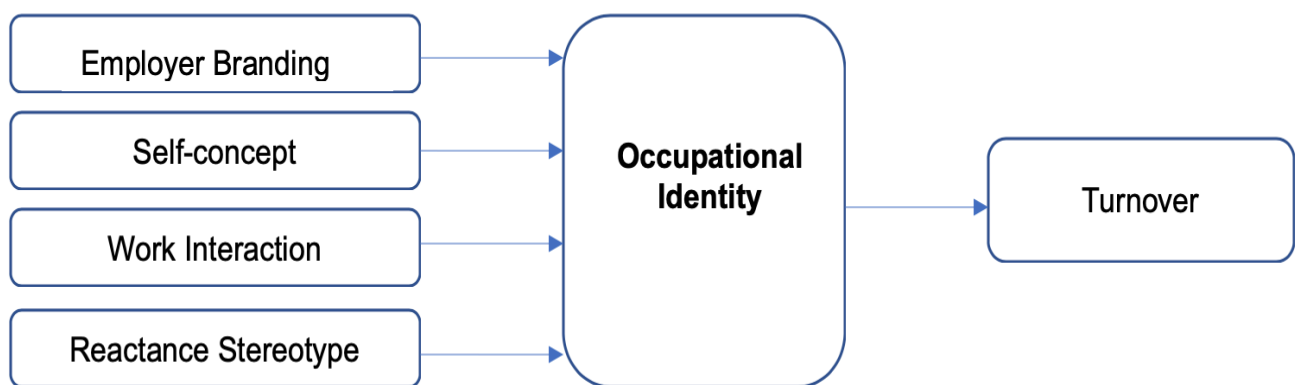


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## Figures and Tables

**Figure 1:** Conceptual framework proposed.



**Table 1: The details of in-depth interviews with waiters/lecturers/managers and partners**

**Interview duration: approximately 45-60 minutes**

<b>Interview Date</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Interviewee position</b>
16.07.2017	5* Hotel	Restaurant Manager
17.07.2017	4* Hotel	Deputy General Manager
18.07.2017	Restaurant Recommended in the Michelin Restaurants Guide	Marketing and Sales Manager
19.07.2017	Restaurant Recommended in the Michelin Restaurants Guide	Main Chef
19.07.2017	Restaurant Recommended in the Michelin Restaurants Guide	Waiter
21.07.2017	Global Travel and Hospitality Company	Vice President, Sales
28.07.2017	5* Hotel	Dining Groups and Events Manager
01/08/2017	University	Associate Professor in Hospitality
05.08.2017	4* Hotel	Waitress
12.08.2017	College	Lecturer in Hospitality and

		European Coordinator Erasmus +
19.08.2017	Marketing and Business Strategy Consultant Company	Partner
<b>Topics discussed</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussion of waiter's profile and identity</li> <li>- Discussion of the key factors that influence the construct of waiters' occupational identity</li> <li>- Discussion of the factor named as the one that is most influential in the construction of waiters' occupational identity</li> <li>- Discussion of the understanding of work engagement</li> <li>- Discussion of how restaurants could reduce employee mobility or turnover</li> </ul>		

Source: The researchers

**Table 2: Focus group respondents**

<b>Interview date</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Interviewee occupations</b>	<b>Age range</b>	<b>Interview approx. length</b>
28.08.2017	6	Waiting staff of restaurant I Recommended in the Michelin Restaurants Guide	20-25	60 min.
30.08.2017	6	Waiting staff of restaurant II Recommended in the Michelin Restaurants Guide	20-26	55 min.
01.09.2017	6	Waiting staff of the restaurant in the 4* hotel	22-38	60 min.
<b>Topics discussed</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The understanding of waiters' occupational identity</li> <li>- The understanding of work engagement</li> <li>- Discussion of the impact of occupational identity on work engagement and turnover</li> <li>- The evaluation of the relationship between occupational identity and its aspects</li> <li>- Discussion of the most salient factor that influences the construction of occupational identity</li> <li>- Discussion of the type of waiters' values, in line with the organisation's objectives, goals and values</li> <li>- The influence of the interaction with peers, managers and customers on developing waiters' occupational identity</li> <li>- Discussion of society's stereotyping of the waiting occupational group</li> <li>- Discussion of the relationship of 'who they are' with 'what they are'</li> </ul>				

Source: The researchers

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Coding data

<b>Occupational Identity</b>			
<b>What is your understanding of the occupational identity of waiters working in restaurants?</b>			
Groups and Events Manager, Dining, 40 years old	For her, OI was not related to her job. She was young when she started work as a waiter and, for her, the most important thing was the travel and constantly learning and being rewarded straightaway by her tips. Also, when she was looking for a job, the salary was not important. She was looking for travel and a prestigious working environment. She didn't have a waiter's identity; she was looking for fun things to do: a social life; travel; doing things differently and independently.... being rewarded straightaway.	<b>Being rewarded, Fun, Prestigious, Salary, Social, Travel.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OI is not related to my job.</li> <li>• I didn't choose this profession for the salary.</li> <li>• I chose this job for travel/ prestigious restaurant/social life/ fun/being rewarded straightaway.</li> </ul>
Partner, 50 years old	I think the occupational identity will be very much driven by a passion for food, for great quality food, for great quality service, and for sharing that passion with people, and with the community of people who work in that place.	<b>Passion for food, Good social skills, Team worker.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am driven by a passion for food.</li> <li>• I am driven by great quality service.</li> <li>• I share this passion for food and great quality service delivery with my peers.</li> </ul>
Marketing and Sales Manager, 53 years old	I think what they want is to give a good service; to offer the best they can do for people joining for lunch, dinner, drinks, whatever it is ... because they represent the company and they want to do their best to represent that company. ...so yeah, you see occupational identity as part of, or linked with, their organisational identity as well...in this context, yes.	<b>'Can do' attitude, Company image, Company representative, Employer brand.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I want to give a good service.</li> <li>• I represent the company.</li> <li>• I want to do the best to represent the company.</li> <li>• I identify with the company.</li> </ul>

<p>Hospitality lecturer, 50 years old</p>	<p>It is a special kind of work; it allows you to (like?) yourself.... you have to love.... as a waiter, OK? But sometimes, you know, it's a special kind of pressure, because you know they're carrying the capacity of the customers; they work in conditions that are sometimes a bit tense. But I think it is a great port. And for me, personally, it was a great curriculum vitae, because you understand, OK, the customers, their way, little by little... and besides, because you are working with customers from different cultures, countries and so on.</p>	<p><b>Pressure, Tense, Personal development (Customer understanding development. Customer diversity).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>You have to love to be a waiter.</b></li> <li>• <b>My job has a lot of pressure, dealing with people/ working conditions.</b></li> </ul>
<p>Waitress, 30 years old</p>	<p>It has to be a bit intuitive as well; so, if you're taking an order, you should go an extra mile, like farther, like for example, you have to be able to guess a little bit what the customer wants.</p>	<p><b>Personal development (Intuition, Go the extra mile. Read the clues).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>You have to have intuition.</b></li> <li>• <b>You have to go the extra mile with customers.</b></li> </ul>
<p>Vice-president, Sales, 45 years old</p>	<p>Identity: I suppose I have a very similar view to that of the general public; a waiter, whose primary job is to serve food, right? But also, the way in which the current view is also of an entertainer in many ways..... you know, you do maybe a story around the food or... it's entertaining, or you present the wine and so on...</p>	<p><b>Entertainer.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>My job is to wait for food.</b></li> <li>• <b>Part of my job is being an entertainer.</b></li> </ul>



<p>Restaurant Manager, 40 years old</p>	<p>The philosophy of a restaurant builds the identity of a leader or the team. If there's no philosophy and you're just serving food and drinks, then that place would not have a philosophy or, say, a bit of ambience.....so, identity is built on the philosophy of the place itself, built by a leader or by myself, or whoever is the manager... and that is translated by the team who, in turn, do the job of delivering quality service. But also, it's how you do that as well.... So, identity is all about personal development also. There has to be personal development in it. So how do you become a better human or better professional? If you are already a freshman, or a sommelier or supervisor, then you become a manager, with the tool of engaging with people, upselling or organising bookings, and having new ideas in place, and discussing new ideas in briefings and handovers. That is engagement, and ....it has to be an engaging team, to build a team and identity... for the place, the team and the manager. Everything is one, rather than fragmented.... people working fragmentarily. It has to be one fluid movement... going in the same direction. And that happens only when you have a philosophy behind it, and that alone builds the identity of the team, of the place, and of the restaurant, completely.</p>	<p><b>Restaurant Philosophy Personal development, (better human nature, better professional engagement with people, upselling, having new ideas, engaging the team), People working fragmentarily/ multitasking, Company standard (same direction).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The philosophy of the restaurant constructs my waiter's identity.</b></li> <li>• <b>Waiter's identity is all about personal development.</b></li> <li>• <b>I construct my occupational identity by becoming a better human and a better professional.</b></li> <li>• <b>Managers have to have the tool of engaging with people, upselling or organising bookings and having new ideas, discussing new ideas in briefings.</b></li> <li>• <b>Managers have to engage the team to build a team identity.</b></li> <li>• <b>I am required to multitask.</b></li> <li>• <b>We all have to go in the same direction.</b></li> <li>• <b>You only build the identity of the team and the organisation if there is philosophy behind it.</b></li> </ul>
<p>General Manager, 45 years old</p>	<p>They have a sense of belonging, pride, achievement, and they want to make it occur, because they are very passionate about food, and they want to grow with the industry.....it's an easy way for people to find a job, where you can learn in the field, on operation; you don't need to have done</p>	<p><b>Sense of belonging, Pride, Achievement, Passionate about food, Personal.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>I have a sense of belonging/ pride/ achievement in job/organization/sector</b></li> <li>• <b>You only have a sense of belonging if you are very</b></li> </ul>

	it before. Basically it's easy if you are able to progress with it, but the problem is, if you are a little bit too shy...they don't realise that it is a very tough job and you need many skills to do it, but people will go more easily to that group of waiters.	<b>Development: grow with the industry, learn in the field, Social skills: not to be shy, Multitask: tough job, Many skills needed to do it.</b>	<p><b>passionate about food and want to grow with the industry.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is an easy job as you are able to progress with it.</li> <li>• There is a problem if you are a shy person.</li> <li>• It is a very tough job.</li> <li>• You need many skills to do it.</li> </ul>
Waiter, 32 years old	You need to have a passion for the profession and, if you do not have this feeling, you will leave soon.	<b>(Passion for the profession), Turnover.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you don't have a passion for the profession, you will leave soon.</li> </ul>
Chef, 35 years old	My perception about waiters' O.I. is that they are professionals with social skills and are willing to help.	<b>Professionals, Social skills, Willing to help.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waiter's occupational identity is being professional, having social skills and being willing to help.</li> </ul>
Waiter, focus group 1	I think the profile actually varies, depending on the country. Right now, in London... people.... they need to find anyone, and here's so many restaurants, and hospitality is a massive field where you can work so many.... and <b>is basically taking care of people</b> , I think people see it differently right here, like actually caring about what being a waiter is, so actually you have to be polite, you have to be extra I don't know... you have to be nice to everyone, you have to be lovely to people in your restaurant, so identity is being responsible to people, being polite and being efficient. That's the identity, at least for me..... No, I think people in this country use these jobs	<b>Caring, Extra mile, Lovely to people, Being responsible, Polite, Efficient, Culture, Salary.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The main waiter's skill is to take care of people.</li> <li>• You have to be polite/go the extra mile/be responsible/ be efficient.</li> <li>• It is a job as a form of paying their bills and for students.</li> <li>• This is a stopover job.</li> </ul>

	<p>as... a form to pay their bills and ...for students...like from 20 to 27 (or less?). Then they tend to have another job...to grow in a different field...it's like a stopover(se)...something that you do...that's what I make of it...Yeah, from my point of view, I'm 26 now...and it is true (another person), it's difficult for someone to find work because it's not a profession that they want to work in. (unclear, as all speaking at the same time) (first interviewee). Can't people in this country study hospitality? Because, in Spain, it's actually so necessary, because of the tourism there. I think in Spain people who actually want to work in hospitality are made to specialise in that field. We're not here... 'cause everybody here is seeking to be the best professional ever, everybody wants to work in the city, and have, I don't know, £40,000 per year, so that's not gonna happen.</p>		
Waiter, focus group 2	<p>A person who serves food, a very friendly person, a hard worker with a large memory, and has to put away any problems and smile all the time.</p>	<p><b>People driven, Hard worker, Efficient, Being professional.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Waiter is a person with social skills, efficient, intelligent and hard worker.</b></li> </ul>
Waiter, focus group 3	<p>They are the face of the business. And the person taking care of most of the guests. I mean, should be friendly, 'cause if you are not friendly with the person from your face, they think maybe he's not working with passion.... You have to be hard-working. You have to do a lot of things and constantly think about different things you need to do.... No, I think you need to be first of all professional, keep the standards.... Good training.... good relationship with management and me as a waiter.... if I'm doing</p>	<p><b>Business image, Caring people, Feedback, Good relationship with management, Good training, Hard-working, Keep the standard, Multi-task.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Waiters are the face of the business.</b></li> <li>• <b>The person to take care of most of the guests.</b></li> <li>• <b>Waiter is a person with social skills, hard worker, multi-tasking job.</b></li> <li>• <b>You have to be first of all professional, keep the standard.</b></li> </ul>

	<p>something wrong, I need to be corrected, or find a polite way to give the same feedback from me to the management... this is where we're playing the same way, yes? Back.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>You need a good training.</b></li><li>• <b>You need a good relationship with management.</b></li><li>• <b>Managers have to constantly give you constructive feedback.</b></li></ul>
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