

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

MASTER'S THESIS

**THE IMPACT OF WORK ENVIRONMENT ON ENGAGEMENT OF
EMPLOYEES:**

THE CASE OF CONSCIOUS HOTELS

AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HRM- Human Resource Management

CAQDAS- Computer- Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

INTRODUCTION

We are living in a world where our job has a direct impact on our well-being, happiness and a quality of life. Average person is working 40 hours per week, 160 hours per month. That means one third of our day we spend with our colleagues, usually in an office, surrounded by a work environment. Now the question is does the work environment affect us? Does it have the power to make one third of our day better? Could it even make us more engaged at work?

This thesis is based as a case study on my half year internship in Conscious Hotels in Amsterdam. It was during 2019 and early 2020 and the interviews were held after that during the corona crisis. In this thesis I want to find out if the work environment has an influence on the engagement of the employees of the reservation department of Conscious Hotels.

Much of what has been written about employee engagement has been published by consulting companies only (Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2011). In 2004, Robinson, Perryman & Hayday commented that it is surprising how little academic and empirical research has been done on employee engagement. Moreover, Slåtten and Mehmetoglu (2011) state that there is a need for research which focuses on employee engagement in the hospitality industry.

Schaufeli (2013) makes an important point that modern organizations require more work to be done by fewer people and that companies need employees who are willing to invest into their jobs also psychologically. And this is what employee engagement is all about.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. First theoretical chapter where I will introduce employee engagement and work environment. Second chapter where I will provide some specifics of the hotel industry and some more detailed information about the hotel industry and the environment of customer service specifics of the Netherlands. In the third chapter I will describe my research methods with the findings.

In the theoretical part there will be defined what employee engagement is, what are the drivers, present a carrier engagement model, that could help managers to engage their employees better and provide the impact that engagement has towards employees but also toward the company. Then I will introduce the four dimensions of the work environment by Tsai, Horng, Liu & Hu. (2015) in which I will have a closer look on each dimension namely promotion, motivation, procedural justice and knowledge sharing and how does it affect work engagement. There will also be an explanation of the correlation between employee engagement and work environment.

The empirical part will introduce the research method which is qualitative research done by semi-structured interviews where I will be following a questionnaire created to collect data from the five employees working in the reservation department of the Conscious

Hotels. After collecting the data, they will be coded and then further divided based on the four dimensions of the work environment.

1 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

In this chapter, I am going to explain the meaning and essence of employee engagement as a vital element of human resource management (hereafter: HRM). Firstly, I am going to define the term employee engagement and then explain its drivers. After that I am going to present the career engagement model, talk about the impacts of employee engagement, and describe the correlation between employee engagement and work environment. Near the end of the chapter, I am going to make a comparison between the four dimensions proposed by Tsai et al. (2015) and the career engagement model, after which I am going to end the chapter by demonstrating the trends of employee engagement.

1.1 Definition

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines engagement as ‘*an emotional involvement or commitment*’ and as ‘*being in gear*’. Del Rowe (2018) describes engaging employees as developing their emotional commitment to the company. Engaged workers have a different point of view of the world compared to disengaged workers, because their managers are developing their strengths rather than focusing on their weaknesses (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). Devi (2017) argues that employee engagement is a two-way interaction between the company and the employee, in which the company has the responsibility to set the way and lead by example. In the present usage, the term employee engagement was invented by the Gallup Organization. They surveyed and interviewed employees and managers for 25 years with the intention to create a benchmark for workplaces that can be used for comparison (Little & Little, 2006). Furthermore, Coffman & Gonzalez-Molina (2002) are saying that engagement is not only about how employees think it is also how they feel. They are describing engaged employees as an “economic force that fuels organization’s profit”.

1.2 Drivers of employee engagement

Gibbons (2006) researched the drivers of engagement and found there are 26 drivers of employee engagement. However, in his meta-analysis he highlighted 8 engagement drivers that had higher frequency in his study. The drivers of employee engagement are:

- Trust and integrity – This is a driver of engagement that is assuring individuals that management is caring about them, is open towards them, is attentive to the employees, sets up proper and working communication channels in place and ensures that employees opinions are counted and the values and goals of the organization are align with employee personal behaviors.

- Person-job fit – management and HR must come up with jobs/work tasks that fit into the nature of employees. This is necessary so that the daily work tasks and roles can be a source of emotional and mental wellbeing. A job that is exciting and challenging, where employees are allowed to take ownership and responsibility and join the decision-making process.
- Synchronization of individual and organization's performance – this driver is connected with how much the employee appreciates the company's strategic goals, how much is the employee being aware of the wide effect on overall performance and the individual alignment with the consciousness of how does employee's individual contribution add to the overall company performance.
- Career growth opportunities – Are employees having a sense of career growth and promotion? If training opportunities are made available for employees, it will give them a feeling of a defined career path.
- Pride About Company – Deriving self-esteem when being associated with a company will increase engagement in an employee. It will enable a scenario, where the employee is advertising the company to customers and possibly attracting talents from rival companies to come and join.
- Co-workers/Team Members – Cooperative and supportive team members and managers will drive up the level of engagement of an employee.
- Employee Development – It refers to the perception of an employee that the company is making specific efforts to develop their personal skills.
- Line Manager Relationship - A good work relationship with a manager is an engagement driver that will boost the degree of engagement of an employee (Gibson, 2006).

1.3 Career engagement model

Neault & Pickerell (2011) developed a Career engagement model for organizational leaders to create a bridge between career counseling and employee engagement. This study suggests that the company should have a career consultant to work with both employees and managers. For employees it would help them with development and growth, for the managers it would help navigate their employees towards fulfilling certain tasks, in an effective way. The model is made of four components: alignment, commitment, contribution, and appreciation.

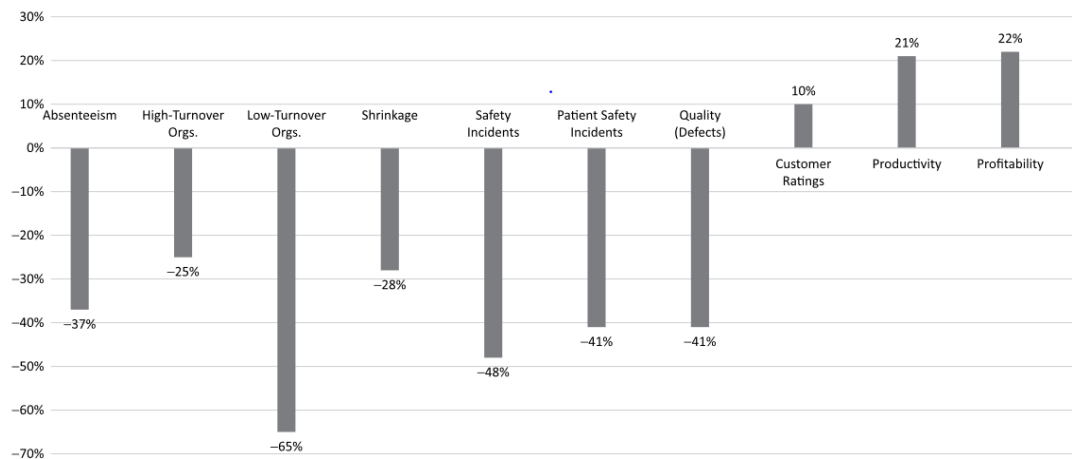
- Alignment: Regarding the Career Engagement model, alignment is described as a fit between individual and organizational values. To fulfill this Neault & Pickerell (2011) recommend coaching conversations between the employees and career consultants. This supports also research of Berger, Hanham & Stevens (2019) that shows that immediate feedback provided to students generated higher alignment from their side. At a workplace, it would mean that if immediate feedback is provided, the employees and employers are more likely more aligned in fulfilling company needs.

- Commitment: Neault & Pickerell (2011) describe commitment as a loyalty and intent to stay with the company. To achieve this, they suggest conversations between the manager or the counselor and the employees to help identify employees' long term career goals and if the company offers such opportunities. As Keller Johnson (2005) is pointing out, the commitment of employees is strongly linked to the relationship they have with their manager and their co-workers. If an employee does not have a positive relationship with people related to the company, the company has a higher risk of losing the employee, regardless of the benefits or salary.
- Contribution: For the career engagement model, contribution is defined as “the level of discretionary effort employees are willing to make” (Neault & Pickerell, 2011). It is important to challenge employees in an appropriate way so the extra value they are creating is linked to their own sense of engagement. The authors are also pointing out that a strong person's job fit will inspire discretionary effort (Neault & Pickerell, 2011). Lloyd (2008) defined discretionary effort as “voluntary effort directed towards organizational goals above the minimum work required”.
- Appreciation: What leads to employees being fully engaged is the knowledge that the effort they are making to support their company goals is being recognized, appreciated, and valued. It is on career consultants or managers to help employees celebrate their accomplishments. Employers should have effective reward and recognition initiatives in place to show appreciation that goes beyond salary or bonuses (Neault & Pickerell, 2011).

1.4 Impacts

Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., Agrawal, S., Plowman, S. K., & Blue, A. (2013) were analyzing in their Gallup Q12 research the employee engagement and how it affects the company. They based the findings on the relationship between twelve engagement items to nine performance outcomes namely: profitability, productivity, employee turnover, customer metrics, safety (work accidents), absenteeism, shrinkage, patient safety (accidents) and quality (defects). The results below are showing that all the 12 engagement items have some bearing and validity on multiple performance outcomes.

Figure 1. Employee Engagement and Key Business Outcomes



Source: Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., Killham, E. A., & Agrawal, S. (2009).

The nine performance outcomes that were used in the study were affected by employee engagement in multiple ways. When comparing the bottom quartile business units with the top quartile units, the results are evidently illustrated in the figure above and are evident thus: 37% lower absenteeism, 25% lower employee turnover (in high-turnover organizations), 65% lower employee turnover (in low-turnover organizations), 28% less shrinkage, 48% less safety incidents, 41% fewer patient safety incidents, 41% less quality incidents (defects), 10% higher customer metrics, 21% higher productivity and 22% higher profitability. (Harter et al., 2013)

According to Buckingham & Coffman (2014), engaged employees make their working units more profitable. Engaged employees are more satisfied with their jobs, which keeps the turnover lower. Unfortunately, only 13% of the world's employees, and about 30% in the USA, are engaged at work (Crabtree, 2013). When looking on the service industry 42% of respondents were engaged and the rest 58% were feeling partially engaged or disengaged Heymann, (2015).

Additionally, research conducted by Chapman & White (2019) shows several positive results of having engaged employees:

- Employees show up for work: it shows that on average engaged employees miss 27% less working days than employees that are highly disengaged.
- Less staff turnover: business groups that have more disengaged employees have on average 51% more turnover than groups with more engaged employees.
- Workplace is more secure: having on the job accidents is by 62% more likely in a company which has disengaged workers in comparison to companies that have more engaged workers.
- Less employee theft: it shows that companies with high levels of disengagement lose 51% more of their inventory compared with highly engaged workplaces.

- Higher customer ratings: companies that have a high level of engaged employees have 12% higher customer rating scores than companies with low engagement employees.
- Higher productivity: when comparing the companies in the top 25% engagement scale and the companies in the bottom 25%, it shows that companies in the top are on average 18% more productive than the companies in the bottom.
- Higher profitability: employers that have the most engaged employees are 22% more profitable than those companies with least engaged employees (Chapman & White, 2019).

In his study from 2017, Devi finds that engaged employees complete their work tasks on time and they are more likely to meet all deadlines, which is contributing to the positive overall performance of the organization. Engaged employees also feel driven to improve their skills, which helps their proficiency on the job.

From the research done by Neault & Pickerell (2011) several themes evolve. It shows, as already stated above, that engagement includes commitment, so employees have higher intention to stay in their company. They are also more attached if they have good relationships with their managers and co-workers. And employees contribute more – they are willing to go an extra mile to fulfil their tasks.

1.5 Correlation between employee engagement and work environment

Based on Ramli, (2019) work environment concludes everything that is around the employees and that can affect them in fulfilling their duties. While at work, employees need interaction with colleagues and superiors, they also need to follow the company policies and rules that are set and reach existing performance standards (Ramli, 2019).

In 2015, Tsai, Horng, Liu & Hu. concluded a study on the connection between work environment and employee engagement. They then combined four dimensions – procedural justice, motivation, knowledge sharing and promotion – to further explore the relation between work environment and the hospitality industry. They found that companies can motivate, encourage, and engage employees by improving the work environment.

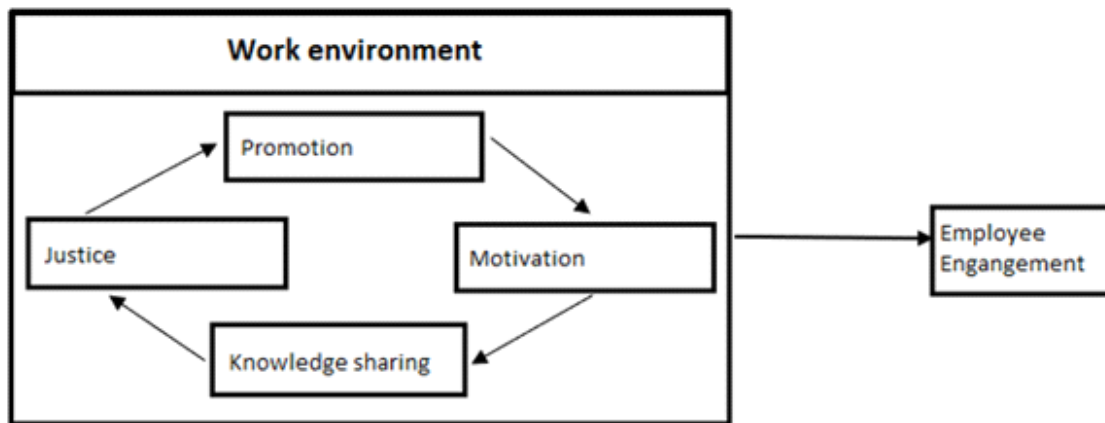
- Procedural justice: Procedural justice is according to Vermunt & Törnblom, (2007) defined as a perception of how fairly people are treated in all kinds of social spheres such as within family, workplace and the legal arena. It is closely related with employees being monitored by their managers. Monitoring of employees is one of the primary tools for preserving fairness during allocation rewards decisions. It provides the manager with the knowledge to make fair decisions. In the context of a work environment, procedural justice is the degree to which employees affected by managerial decisions perceive them to have been made based on fair methods (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993). Procedural justice influences job satisfaction and therefore the intention to leave the company. It also includes the following: knowing what other

people received in similar circumstances, if a manager is trustworthy or not, and whether an outcome is or is not fair (Vermunt & Törnblom, 2007). Kim & Beehr (2020) are connecting procedural justice with motivation because if employees perceive their management as fair, they have higher motivation to work.

- Motivation: Utman (1997) is defining motivation as “a reflection of individual interest in a task and engagement for the benefit of the task itself“. It makes sense that motivation divides based on the age of the employees. However, there are few factors, which are the same across generations – a high salary, stable and secure future, variety in work tasks and a possibility to learn new things (Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008). Research has proven that motivation in the workplace is important. Motivation can play a decisive role in the relation between the employee and the job performance (Bright, 2013). Asaari, Desa & Subramaniam (2019) are stating that employees that are highly motivated are more efficient, productive and willing to work towards the achievement of the goals of the company compared with the employees who have a low level of motivation. It is one of the most important but also challenging aspects. Based on Asaari et al. (2019) employees see salary and recognition as an important reward that is increasing their motivation and satisfaction. Salary might be seen also as a reward that works as a catalyst to encourage individuals to work harder and better.
- Knowledge sharing: Knowledge sharing is part of a social exchange process, where two individuals exchange, or transfer knowledge from one to another. It should be stimulated by an open work culture, where employees feel supported when they have a question, and by fair treatment from the organization (Schepers & Van Den Berg, 2007). Employees are perceiving fairness of certain events (eg. meeting with manager or performance appraisal procedure) based on a history of their experiences with the involved person, which is then influencing the employee's behavior and attitudes toward that party (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000). A study (Wenger, 1998) found that organizations should build practice communities: groups of employees who share experiences, insights, and tools about an area of common interest.
- Promotion: Employees who are aware of job variety and possibilities for promotion are encouraged to improve their knowledge and develop their skills. Career development and promotional opportunities have been considered as the most powerful predictor of employee's engagement. When employees feel their opportunities for promotion at work are unlimited, their engagement increases, and they are more active at work (Tsai et al., 2015).

The below figure labeled as Figure 1 was taken from the study done by Tsai, et al. in 2015, and is slightly altered. What this study will instead focus on, are the four dimensions which make up the work environment, and how this work environment influences the employee engagement.

Figure 2. Model linking work environment to employee engagement



Source: Adapted from Tsai, Horng, Liu & Hu (2015).

1.6 Trends of employee engagement and work environment

As presented above, based on Neault & Pickerell, (2011) appreciation employees is helping to make them feel more engaged. Gary D. Chapman (1995) wrote a book called “The five languages of love” where he explains that each person received love best in a different way. He created these five languages – words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service and physical touch. It was supposed to help people to realize what is hers or his love language and also how to give appreciation to people around, as each person has different combinations of love languages. Based on this Chapman & White (2019) wrote The 5 languages of appreciation in the workplace, which should help organizations to empower employees. These languages are:

- Words of affirmation: Some employees will appreciate verbal acknowledgment that their work is appreciated. It could be only simple ‘good work’ or public recognition during a meeting for example.
- Receiving gifts: Some employees will value material objects when being rewarded for extraordinary work performance. Some companies have set up employee engagement programs which help employees redeem their efforts for products or experiences based on their preferences.
- Acts of service: Sometimes small gestures that an employee is valued can go a long way. Few examples are: assisting with technology problems, helping with difficult projects, delivering coffee or lunch.
- Quality time: Those companies who are centered around teamwork understand how face time is a symbol of appreciation and belongingness in the workplace. Some employees value checking by their managers or one-to-one meetings. Company outings, team buildings belong under this language too.

- Physical touch: There are some people who most recognize appreciation via physical touch. This is specific in a workplace, as it might be tricky to keep it professional. The authors are suggesting high five, handshake, fist bump or pat on a back as appropriate (Chapman & White, 2019).

2 HOTEL INDUSTRY

Tourism is one of the main economic engines for countries, with a total contribution of 9,5 percent to global GDP and total of 8,9 percent for employment in 2013 according to Aynalem, Birhanu, & Tesefay, (2016). Tourism is the world's third largest industry accounting for 7 percent of global exports and is creating a maintaining reliance on other associated industries based on Ferrer-Roca et al (2020).

As of Europe, it is ranked as the number one world's destination for international arrivals, in 2018 it was 713 million (Ferrer-Roca, N. et al. 2020). Tourism is creating a surplus for the European Union economy according to Ferrer-Roca et al. (2020). Tourism is one of the service industries that has been very affected by the growth of the European integration process and it is being used as a fail-safe tool to meet the ultimate goal of integration and stability based on Ana (2017).

The biggest players in tourism in Europe are based on Ana (2017) France, Spain, Italy and Germany. However, there is a clear growth in tourism for all countries, after they entered the European Union. The increase is on average three times bigger after joining. This is attributed to the shared accession and market-oriented policies. Based on Ana (2017) tourism is one of the most visible aspects of country branding and it is helping with the country image.

2.1 HRM specifics of the service industry

According to Davidson, McPhail & Barry (2011), if a company wants to create a high-performance work system and work practices they should focus on the following: training, job security, decentralized management, employee empowerment, fair pay and fair procedures. This is in line with the 1st dimension. Based on Lucas & Deery (2004), Human Resource Management in hospitality consists of mostly duplicating mainstream Human Resource Management practices. Since there are specific differences between hospitality tourism and mainstream HR management, it is not expected that mainstream HR practices would have the best effects for the hospitality industry.

As an industry which usually deals with 24/7 service, there might be a conflict in the cultural values of the employees. Human Resource Management should be aware of it and consider their practices accordingly based on Davidson, McPhail & Barry (2011). A few years prior, Poulston (2008) identified several issues of Human Resource Management in hospitality, most predominantly the issue of under-staffing. There is a high staff turnover, which is the rate at which employees leave the company and are replaced by another employee (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Other identified issues are poor training and sexual harassment (Poulston, 2008).

2.2 Hotel industry specifics of the Netherlands

Based on StatLine (2021) there were 2.3 million people working in trade, transport, hotels and catering and 448 thousand in accommodation and food serving in 2018 in the Netherlands. Per the statistical distribution of the gross domestic product (GDP) across economic sectors in the Netherlands in 2017, agriculture contributed around 1.85 percent to the GDP of the Netherlands, 17.42 percent came from the industry and 70.33 percent from the service sector. (Statista, 2021). Hospital industry is part of this service sector (Poulston, 2008).

2.3 HRM Specifics of the Netherlands

The Netherlands is considered a conservative welfare state, including moderate work-life balance policies and has stronger regulation and collective agreements than other western European countries (Den Dulk, et al. 2011). The average annual salary in the Netherlands in 2018 was just under 34.700 Euro gross (Statista, 2022).

Jenkins (2001) found that the hospitality industry is not considered a final career station for students of tourism-related studies in the Netherlands. The research has shown that the more students come in touch with the industry through their first-hand experience, the less they want to continue in their final careers. The percentage of students who will not be looking for a job in the hospitality industry is increasing from 4,2 per cent in the first year to 8,7 per cent in the third year.

2.4 General information about the Conscious Hotels

Conscious Hotels were founded in 2008 by Marko Lemmers and Sam Cohen, two Dutch businessmen with experience in the hotel industry. They wanted to create a business which will be sustainable to our planet and have an image of being an eco-friendly hotel. Some of the eco-friendly features are beds and tables created from recycled yoghurt pots, and showers which have 50% pressure filled with air, so they save 50% of water. They offer only organic and local foods, guests are able to rent recycled bicycles and they do not accept cash in the hotels.

The first hotel was opened in 2008. It is called Museum Square and it is located in a neighborhood of Amsterdam called Museumkwartier, close to the Van Gogh Museum and the Rijksmuseum. It is the smallest hotel and it offers a meeting room, 36 hotel rooms, a breakfast area and a little backyard where the guests can drink coffee. Hotel Museum Square has finished a recent renovation, which took place for three months, from January to March in 2019. This decision was made because the interior of the hotel was worn out after ten years of usage. It was decided by the owners and upper management that it is time to redesign the interior in a modern way.

The second hotel Vondelpark was opened in 2010, this time with 81 rooms. It is located close to Vondelpark, the biggest city park in Amsterdam. The hotel offers a bar with a breakfast area which can be transformed into a meeting room. Both hotel Vondelpark and hotel Tire Station are offering parking spaces for the guests, which are rented for 27,50 Euro per day.

Hotel Tire Stations is located just a five-minute walk from hotel Vondelpark. With 112 rooms, it is the biggest Conscious hotel so far in room numbers. The unique eco-feature of this hotel is a tunnel top between building A and B. It is not used for commercial use but it is let free for insects, especially bees. There are solar panels located on the roof to provide sustainable solar energy for the hotel. Tire Station hotel also uses Aquifer Thermal Energy Storage, which is a system that pumps water from the earth, to keep the hotel warmer or colder depending on the season. Tire Station also has an eco-patisserie, Sticky Fingers, on the ground floor as well as organic restaurant Moer, whose area is used as a breakfast bar in the morning.

The Westerpark is the newest addition to Conscious Hotels. The building was previously an old train station, but now it has transformed into a hotel with 89 rooms. It is located in the Westerpark in a very popular and hip part of Amsterdam - Westergas. Guests can enjoy the all-organic restaurant Kantoor. The entire hotel is running on wind energy – another strategy of the hotels to become more sustainable.

Figure 3. Conscious hotel Westerpark



Source: Conscious Hotels (n.d.)

2.5 Sustainability in tourism

Sustainable tourism is based on the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2019) “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities”. Based on Pigram, (1995) tourism can certainly contribute to environmental degradation and be self-destructive. But it also has the potential to bring significant enhancement to the environment.

Conscious hotels main marketing message is Eco-Sexy. Big smiles. Since 2008 when they were founded, they have been looking for ways to be more sustainable for the planet. Some of their sustainable improvements are stated above, but are they in line with sustainable tourism trends?

Amsterdam is the capital of the Netherlands and it is a tourist desired destination, because of its canals, museums and thanks to the Dutch government's positive view of some substances it also attracts crowds interested in other “green policies”. Although tourism increase led to some significant economic benefits, it also caused pollution and unbalanced development, which had negative impact on the environment and canals ecosystems based on Sharma & Sehrawat (2019).

Amsterdam has been growing in terms of population, businesses, and visitors. It has been among the top 10 most visited cities in Europe according to Gerritsma, & Vork, (2017). However with the growing number of visitors came also a growing number of complaints, protests and negative posts on social media channels. The increase of city tourism, which was on a rise before the global pandemic, has led to overcrowding in Amsterdam. What led next was somewhat of a housing crisis.

Based on Gerritsma & Vork, (2017) there has been a number of Amsterdam residents reporting illegal home rentals to the Housing Fraud contact point nonetheless, in 2016 there were more than 14 000 homes on Airbnb. Based on their study, Gerritsma, & Vork, (2017) where they were researching the view of the locals on tourism, the biggest issues were overcrowding for 46 percent of respondents, then excessive noise 24 percent, littering 22 percent and lack of safety 14 percent. As for the conclusion of their study, most respondents still have positive feelings and a sense of pride about tourism in Amsterdam.

There were clear differences between respondents from relatively new tourist area Noord who have a more positive attitude towards tourists and from the West area that has been receiving tourists for longer and has more negative feelings about them.

Kasimu, A. B., Zaiton, S., Hassan, H., (2012) are describing the hotel industry as one which creates a threat to the environment because of their high consumption of water, energy and non-durable goods. They are located close to tourists' attractions and provide food, drinks and accommodation and other forms of recreational services. Hotels are their own little factories, having kitchens, laundry, public toilets and pools creating huge

amounts of waste. Based on Bohdanowicz, P., Simanic, B., & Martinac, I. V. O. (2005) hotels affect the environment in the form of water and air pollution, waste generation and energy related emissions. For example, a normal hotel releases between 160 and 200 kg of CO₂ per square meter of room annually.

Studies have indicated that there are three major areas of sustainable tourism practices and those include water conservation, waste management and energy management. (Kasimu, A. B., Zaiton, S., Hassan, H. 2012) As for the waste management hotels are using environmentally friendly detergents and cleaning products, reusing linen sheets and towels, refillable dispensers for soap and shampoo, reusing cloth napkins and glass cups. For water saving management low-water-volume toilets are being used in the guest rooms and other public areas. Some hotels are placing water meters to track usage in all the rooms, however this is not attractive practice for the hotels, as it is pricey to install such systems in all rooms. Hotels can also use treated wastewater for watering gardens. (Kasimu, A. B., Zaiton, S., Hassan, H., 2012) The study found that hotel management is willing to do these changes to some extent as there is the fear of hotel guests not accepting and enjoying these changes.

However the big question then is if there is a demand for eco-tourism in Amsterdam hotels? Based on Wearing & Neil (2009) study in Hong Kong, people are overwhelmingly positive in paying for eco-friendly options while traveling. And based on Wight (1997) ecotourism is a growing tourism market and ecotourists are influencing general travel experiences of the public. Based on their study 56 percent will choose hotel accommodation when traveling over a hostel or private home.

3 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

In this chapter, I am going to explain the research process, present the findings that aimed to best answer the main research question along with the sub-questions, discuss the findings, make valuable recommendations, and state the contributions of the research along with the limitations and directions for future research. I will start by explaining the purpose of the research along with the research questions, after which I will dive into the methodology. Here, I am going to talk about the reason behind choosing semi-structured interviews, the process of question formation, data collection, and the chosen coding method.

After that, I will represent the findings consisting of five themes based on the gathered data and the consequent coding. Before the end, I will summarize and discuss the findings followed by an explanation about their meaning and the overall contribution of the research together with the limitations and the directions for future research, which will officially close the chapter.

3.1 Purpose and research questions

It is proven that job dissatisfaction, poor employment conditions, and poor-quality supervision are the main causes for high employee turnover in the hospitality industry (Poulston, 2008). As we know, if employees are not feeling engaged, they are more likely to leave the company, which leads to the cycle of high turnover and therefore poor training of employees (Poulston, 2008). However, the purpose of this paper is not to find out if the issues above are happening in the Conscious Hotels. This paper is aimed to further explore the link between work environment and employee engagement.

The topic of this thesis was chosen based on my six-month internship in the revenue department of Conscious Hotels. I was working directly with employees of the reservation department. Based on the daily observation I thought of ways which would make reservation employees feel better at work. It is a specific job, as they must deal with all kinds of customers, there are daily strange demands and people from all backgrounds and cultures contacting them. Which is just underlining the said above, that working in a hotel is providing a specific work environment. That is why I would like to find out how their work environment affects their engagement and eventually based on findings from this thesis, how to improve their engagement through work environment.

Based on the interviews there is going to be feedback by the employees, which can further help the company finding its weak and strong spots in the work environment of the company. Based on these findings Conscious Hotels management can change their practices so the employees are more engaged and therefore the company can thrive better. To put it simply, the purpose of this research is to find out how employees at the Conscious

Hotels are affected by their work environment and how that affects their engagement at work.

The main research question of this paper is:

MRQ: How does Conscious Hotels' work environment impact employee's engagement in their work?

These sub-questions based on Tsai et al. (2015) will help to answer the main research question:

RQ1: How does procedural justice affect employee engagement?

RQ2: How does motivation affect employee engagement?

RQ3: How does knowledge sharing affect employee engagement at their work?

RQ4: How does promotion affect employee engagement at their work?

3.2 Methodology

Based on the main research question, the literature review on the usage of qualitative and quantitative research along with their differences represented in Table 1, conducting a qualitative research was the most logical and viable approach. This is the case because qualitative research is exploratory, meaning it seeks to discover personal opinions, emotions, and thoughts. It concentrates on depth rather than width and allows the participants to freely disclose their experiences without constraints. Additionally, the researcher significantly deepens his understanding of the participants' perspectives by getting answers to the "whys" which comes from the respondent's opportunity to elaborate on their answers.

Table 1. Differences between quantitative and qualitative research

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Quantitative research</i>	<i>Qualitative research</i>
<i>Focus of understanding the context of the problem</i>	<i>Smaller</i>	<i>Bigger</i>
<i>Dimension of group studies</i>	<i>Smaller</i>	<i>Bigger</i>
<i>Proximity of the researcher to the problem being studied</i>	<i>Smaller</i>	<i>Bigger</i>
<i>Scope of the study in time</i>	<i>Immediate</i>	<i>Longer range</i>
<i>Researcher's point of view</i>	<i>External</i>	<i>Internal</i>
<i>Theoretical framework and hypotheses</i>	<i>Well structured</i>	<i>Less structured</i>

<i>Flexibility and exploratory analysis</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Higher</i>
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Source: Queiros, Faria & Almeida (2017).

Qualitative data does not include measures and numbers, but it covers more or less any other form of human communication. As such, it includes individual and focus group interviews, ethnographic participant observation, videos, photographs, films, advertisements, diaries, documents, books, magazines, e-mails, phone calls, etc. (Gibbs, 2007). For the purpose of this empirical research, out of all qualitative methods, semi-structured in-depth interviews were chosen as the most appropriate technique.

As Miles & Gilbert (2005) explain, semi-structured interviews are conversations in which the researcher knows what he wants to talk about before conducting the interviews and therefore has a set of pre-determined questions he wants to ask and an idea of what he needs to cover, however the conversations is free to vary and take unexpected turns. Unlike structured interviews which follow a strict order of asking questions and unstructured interviews which do not have a set pattern or pre-determined questions, semi-structured interviews go with the flow but over time return to the initial topic and the pre-set questions.

3.3 Reasons for choosing semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were chosen due to several important reasons. Firstly, their flexibility allows an emergence of other correlated questions aside from the predetermined ones, which gives interviewees a possibility and freedom to express their personal views on their own terms. Secondly, the information gathered from such interviews provides not only answers, but also reasons and deeper explanations for those answers. Thirdly, during interviews interviewees have a tendency to more easily discuss sensitive topics, give more details, and mention other important information that the interviewer might have overseen when creating the questions. Fourthly, they provide relevant and useful information with fewer participants and finally yet importantly can be performed in an informal manner (Queiros, Faria, & Almeida, 2017). Fifthly, and finally, interviews are a great tool for understanding people's behavior and especially understanding the meanings and interpretations which people give to their behavior (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005) which is the essence of the research.

3.4 Formation of questions

In line with that, questions were formulated prior to the interviewing process. Based on the literature review, the experts' suggestions and recommendations, as well as my work experience at the hotel I formulated around 25 questions. They covered various crucial elements including motivation, satisfaction, the changes and uncertainties produced by the

COVID-19 pandemic, sustainability, knowledge sharing, work relationships, and employee onboarding. Each question greatly contributed to the research and the final results.

3.5 Data collection

For the purpose of this thesis, 5 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted during a period of one month. Data collection took place from 19 April 2021 to 17 May 2021. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the administered interviews were conducted via Skype. Each interview was in English and lasted around half an hour. All discussions were taped for subsequent data processing.

The sample size included five employees from the reservation department with varying age, gender, and work experience. The youngest participant was in his early twenties, while the oldest one was in her late forties. Each participant was highly collaborative and engaged in the topic. They paid attention to all of the questions and answered them from their personal points of view. Simultaneously, during each interview I gave my best to create a safe environment where they would feel free to share their honest opinions. As a researcher and an interviewer, I tried to establish a reasonably close connection with each respondent in order to better understand what is going on in their minds, their thoughts and ideas, and then interpret their responses as objectively as possible.

3.6 Coding

According to Sgier (2012) coding lies at the core of all qualitative analysis. It focuses on what the data says and discovering patterns within it. Coding of interviews was established by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss' in 1967, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Deterding and Waters, (2021) are describing coding as an actual work of analyzing interview data that have been collected. Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed a grounded theory method, which consists of three main steps:

- Coding text and theorizing: Small parts of the transcripts will be coded line by line. Useful concepts will be identified, and key phases will be marked. The concepts will be created based on Strauss and Corbin (1990). This process is called open coding.
- Memoing and theorizing: Memoing is described as a process by which the researcher writes running notes depending on each of the concepts and identifying them. Memos are work notes about the concepts and their insights that are discovered from the observations. Memoing then contributes to theory building (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).
- Integrating, refining and writing up theories: It is the next step that is linking together categories in a theoretical model which is constructed around a central category that holds the concepts together.
- Coding begins by describing small parts of the data: sentences, lines, and even paragraphs or words (Deterding & Waters, 2018). Coding in this thesis is going to be based on Strauss and Corbin's book: *Basics of qualitative research* (1990).

In the past, processing and analyzing data was manually performed thus representing a time-consuming process. However, in recent years, computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (hereafter: CAQDAS) programs have gained enormous popularity (Woods, Macklin, & Lewis, 2016) as their unstoppable evolution enables higher level of objectivity, convenience, and efficiency (Winsome & Johnson, 2000). The reduced amount of clerical chores that comes from using CAQDAS programs gives researchers more time to take a step back and focus on other more important segments of the research and the writing process. While the reduction of researcher's bias prevents from overseeing important elements and connections leading to improved quality of the research (Vignato, Inman, Patsais, & Conley, 2021).

Nevertheless, most CAQDAS programs such as NVivo are highly complicated and require excessive step-by-step guidelines on how to be used which makes them impractical for beginners and first-time researchers (Sohn, 2017). Additionally, the usage of better rated and more quality CAQDAS programs is costly and often requires licensing together with newer technology tools and gadgets (Vignato, Inman, Patsais, & Conley, 2021). Furthermore, in many cases the CAQDAS programs can be overly automatized and robotized which can then lead to poorly executed research containing incomplete or inappropriate findings.

Taking all of that under consideration, the interviews for the empirical part of the dissertation were manually coded and analyzed. This was the best approach for me as I am a beginner when it comes to coding qualitative data and finding patterns within it. This approach enabled me to more comprehensively analyze the gathered data and find schemes that the CAQDAS programs might easily neglect as they did not actively participate in the gathering process and hence did not observe the participants' mimics, gesticulations, and facial reactions.

3.7 Findings

The thorough process led to the creation of five overarching themes, eleven categories, and thirty-five codes each equally important. On one hand, the themes were primarily based on the four theoretical dimensions proposed by Tsai et al. (2015) - procedural justice, motivation, knowledge sharing and promotion, but enriched with the naturally imposed fifth theme which combines all four dimensions and wraps everything. On the other hand, the codes were more naturally imposed by the similarities and the repeating references. Table 2 represents the overarching themes, categories, and codes that are going to be further discussed below.

Table 2. Overarching themes, categories and codes

Overarching themes	Categories	Codes
Promotion	/	Career development
		Opportunity to learn
		Promotional opportunity
Motivation	Reward system	Monetary incentives
		Non-monetary incentives
		Words of affirmation
		Recognition
	Additional elements affecting the level of motivation	Physical aspects of the workplace environment
		Safety
		Work atmosphere
		Company's values regarding environmental sustainability
Knowledge sharing	Coworker relationship	Compatibility
		Feedback
		Support and help
	Onboarding	Coaching newcomers
		Additional onboarding elements
		Timeframe
		Onboarding satisfaction
		Introductions
Procedural justice	Management	Relationship with the manager
		Manager's characteristics
		Decisions and decision-making process
		Management during COVID-19
		Feedback
	Organizational structure	Autonomy
		Work during COVID-19
Impact of work environment on employees' perception and their emotions	Satisfaction	Level of overall satisfaction
		Improvements
	Employee engagement	Hotels' effort to engage the employees
		Level of engagement
	Impacts of the four dimensions constituting a work environment	Impacts of promotion
		Impacts of motivation
		Impacts of knowledge sharing
		Impacts of procedural justice

Source: own work

The following pages are going to cover all five themes in the same order as stated in Table 2. Each theme will provide the reader with a deeper understanding of how employees in the reservation department at the Conscious Hotels perceive the constructing elements of the four work environment dimensions, their representation, distribution and the personal feeling awakened by them.

3.7.1 Promotion

As a direct and self-explanatory dimension, promotion does not include separate categories. Instead, it covers three essential codes: career development, opportunity to learn, and promotional opportunity. All three codes play a significant role in terms of level of engagement and give useful insights into the promotional elements and opportunities at the Conscious Hotels.

3.7.1.1 Career development

Career development is a lasting path of managing effort, dedication, and knowledge in order to move towards a personally desired and preferred professional future (Ali, Bashir, & Mehreen, 2019). In other words, it is a process of choosing a professional path, advancing the skills, gaining experience and progressing towards the end goal. However, a person's career development is influenced by numerous factors, both internal and external. External factors are those outside of the person's control such as social, legal, economic, political, technological, competitive, and the institutional environment.

Furthermore, the career development is simultaneously beneficial for both, the individual and the organization (Ali, Bashir, & Mehreen, 2019). In that regard, it is important to remember that companies play an important role in the development of each employee. Counseling sessions and one on one meetings majorly help in understanding the employee's potentials and their career goals, which is why those actions should be high on the list of priorities for the HRM department, as well as the department manager or the supervisors. Understanding these aspects gives the management a chance to then implement special training sessions and invest in the employee's career which will lead to increased engagement and organizational effectiveness (Ali, Bashir, & Mehreen, 2019).

3.7.1.2 Opportunity to learn

The opportunity to learn is interlinked with everything else, especially career development and promotional opportunities. At the same time, the opportunity to learn is also directly connected to knowledge sharing which will be further discussed in the upcoming pages. Being aware of the connections, it is important to remember that an opportunity to learn can come from multiple different channels. Precisely, it can be represented as a result of the available technologies, the surrounding, the management, the colleagues etc.

The empirical results suggest that the employees understand the above mentioned channels. They indicated that they have enriched their knowledge due to their colleague's openness and collaboration. Their answers also stated objective statements regarding the missing elements such as training and seminars intended to improve their skills. At the same time, it is important to mention that the same person who stated that he does not look for vertical promotion is also the one who is satisfied with what he has learned so far and does not ask for more. This is meaningful because the other employees indicated their willingness to further develop their skills and knowledge, while this person did not have such preferences. This draws a line between aspiration, vertical promotion, and satisfaction with the given opportunities to learn. More precisely, it is obvious that people, who want to climb up the ladder, also want to learn more and are not easily satisfied without being given valuable promotional and career development opportunities.

- I have increased my competence and my colleagues help me a lot with that... I especially like it when they [the coworkers] share their knowledge with me without me asking. That is valuable to me because that is how I learn more and improve myself... So far I got enough information, my basic needs are met, I have the necessary tools, my colleagues are here to help me whenever I need them and the manager is open to questions, so I would say that I have everything I need in order to succeed (Marlou).
- ... after I got the regular job I started stagnating and I do not mean knowledge wise, but position and salary or some perks... Yes, but only until a certain point. There is a lot you can learn, but after a while, the job becomes repeatable and monotonous... I think I have already reached my knowledge limit. I do not think there is anything new for me to learn here (Rianne).
- Not necessarily [being provided with the necessary tools for professional development], I believe that I have learned much more from my colleagues than from anyone else (Deren).
- Yes, I have learned a lot since I first started working and that is enough for me (Casper).
- As for the learning, there are not any trainings or seminars to improve our skills if that is what you meant, but our jobs are pretty routine so I assume they do not find the workshops necessary (Isabelle).

3.7.1.3 Promotional opportunity

Promotional opportunities are of utmost importance when it comes to decreasing turnover rates and increasing retention (Bibi, Pangil, Johari, & Ahmad, 2017). Besides that, they positively influence employee engagement, motivation, and satisfaction (Aslam, 2014). Additionally, they are also important because they promote individual self-growth.

Typically, there are four types of promotion: horizontal, vertical, dry, and open or closed promotion. Horizontal promotion means that an employee is rewarded with increased benefits, while the responsibilities stay the same. Vertical, is the traditional promotion of climbing up the ladder. Dry promotion is unwanted promotion that brings an increase in

responsibilities, without any other benefits or status development. The last type of promotion is based on an eligibility criteria of the open position which leads to either an open or closed promotion (Ford, 2021).

In the context of our research, this code explains the vertical promotion opportunities provided to employees in the reservation department at the Conscious Hotels. Unfortunately, the findings are not in favor of strengthening employee engagement and retention. The answers were mixed, but at the end, there were more employees who were willing and ready to look for other work opportunities outside the Conscious hotels if their promotional needs do not get met in-house. In other words, they do not feel like staying at the company in the future, unless the management satisfies their promotional aspirations. At the same time, they clearly stated their need and desire of getting a vertical promotion, while two employees realistically explained that getting a vertical promotion is very difficult due to the organizational structure. Additionally, one of the other two employees, explained that he does not expect a vertical promotion because he does not seek such promotion, but at the same time expressed awareness regarding the difficulty of getting a vertical promotion.

- Yes and no [seeing yourself at the Conscious hotels in the future]. If I choose this future then yes, but I am not sure if I see myself here in ten years. Who knows, maybe. We will see (Marlou).
- ...after I got the regular job I started stagnating and I do not mean knowledge wise, but position and salary and some other perks...so unless I am given a promotion I think I might look for another job where I would get a chance to further develop my skills. I am not where I want to be in terms of position and financial level and that makes me question what to do in the future... No [other reasons for leaving the Conscious hotels], I do not think so, I just prefer to constantly improve and develop myself. It is not easy, but I also depends on the person's will, dedication, character and many other personal factors. Anyways, at the moment the situation at the company also plays a major role when talking about success. Long story short, if you want to succeed besides being hard working you also need to be lucky which means to want and ask for something at the right moment (Rianne).
- I don't see that there is an easy way to go to the next level because the next level would be a manager position of all the other agents, and there is only one person on that position, so unless that person quits I do not see how I can climb the ladder... Probably not [seeing yourself at the Conscious hotels in the future], because if I do not move forward with my career I will eventually feel trapped and needing to find some new challenge that will better fit my experience and knowledge (Deren).
- ...I do not expect a better position and I do not even want that because I am satisfied with my current obligations and what I do. Plus, from what I have heard it is very difficult to change positions and right now I am not willing to fight for that (Casper).

- It is not very easy [to succeed at the Conscious Hotels]. I feel like you need to give your absolute maximum to be given a chance to move up the ladder... Yes, I do [see myself at the Conscious hotels in the future]. There is more positives then negatives so far... so at the end of the day I like working here (Isabelle).

3.7.2 Motivation

As an important overarching theme, motivation includes two categories. The first category, reward system consists of four codes. The first code is about monetary incentives, the second one discusses the non-monetary incentives, the third code is dedicated to words of affirmation, and the fourth one is about recognition. The second category for this theme, called additional elements affecting the level of motivation covers four codes: physical aspects of the workplace environment, safety, work atmosphere, and company's values regarding environmental sustainability. This is an important theme because understanding what drives and motivates employees is key element for achieving high levels of employee engagement.

3.7.2.1 *Reward system*

Rewards and incentives have an immense immediate impact on employee motivation. They are highly desired by employees, thus represent a valuable mean for increasing engagement. Typically, the rewards are categorized into two groups financial and non-financial (Aslam, 2014).

The financial factors are straight-forward, while the non-financial ones are more complicated. That complexity comes from their connection with psychological traits. They not only include flexible working hours, extra leave, independence, social events, gatherings, flexibility, and other forms of non-financial incentives, but also understanding of the employees' needs and desires. In other words, they also include appreciation, recognition, words of affirmation, and promotional opportunities (Aslam, 2014).

Furthermore, their impacts are far-reaching. They have an enormous effect on employee morale, satisfaction, engagement, and performance (Aslam, 2014). They touch the employee's emotions and make them feel a certain way which can either be positive or negative depending on what the reward system offers.

3.7.2.1.1 Monetary incentives. The financial factors are self-explanatory, they represent extrinsic monetary incentives for a job well done or in other words great performance. They come in a form of salary raise, stocks, profit shares, commissions, extra allowances, insurance, and bonuses (Aslam, 2014). As such they play a vital role in motivating the employees.

For instance, since the salary is the backbone of every job and money is necessary for everyday expenses and life in general, HRM experts, as well as experienced business owners recommend giving employees salaries that are in sync with their workload, effort, and productivity. Although some people believe that low salaries save money, the truth is opposite. Low salaries cause higher levels of turnovers, dissatisfaction, and lower productivity. On the other hand, fair salaries attract top talents, make employees feel valued and thus motivated. Similarly, the other monetary incentives also stimulate better performance and inspire employees to be better and achieve more in order to get those bonuses (Seng & Arumugam, 2017).

The answers given by the interviewed employees, just once again confirmed the above mentioned. The financial incentives play a vital role when it comes to motivating people in the reservation department at the Conscious Hotels, but unfortunately, their answers also revealed some faults and gaps in the monetary incentive system.

- ... as every other person on the planet, I am also motivated by the salary, or should I say I would be motivated by it if it was higher. Do not get me wrong I am not greedy or something, but I need money for living (Marlou).
- ...after I got the regular job I started stagnating and I do not mean knowledge wise, but position and salary and some other perks... Besides that, I would like greater financial stability that would enable me to have the lifestyle I desire... Also, the financial part plays a role and the overall climate at the company which here is not bad at all (Rianne).
- ...if they throw in some reward for a job well done I definitely would not mind it (Deren).
- ...I see the bonuses as a motivational mean, but unfortunately that is not the case at the hotel. We do not receive any financial bonuses (Isabelle).

3.7.2.1.2 Non-monetary incentives. The tangible forms of non-monetary incentives were mentioned before, therefore I am going to skip explaining them once again. Instead, I am going to focus on the empirical findings.

According to the employees, tangible non-monetary incentives would motivate them to do more and be better. Furthermore, they would appreciate such rewards, but at the same time that does not happen.

- ...if they throw in some reward like a voucher, or a gift card for a job well done I definitely would not mind it (Deren).
- ...I would appreciate if they give us flexible working hours and more free days (Casper).
- I see the bonuses as a motivational mean... not other perks or benefits for achieving great results, but there are annual Christmas parties as well as other gatherings and regular perks that in a way make up for this (Isabelle).

3.7.2.1.3 Words of affirmation. Appreciation is a key element that affects employee engagement and productivity. Words of affirmation represent reassuring or encouraging words, which communicate appreciation and respect for a job well done. They express gratitude to employees and team members, hence serve as a motivational mean. Their positive background and context inspire people and make them more confident. Additionally, they can be given or received in different forms depending on the occasion and the personal characteristics of the involved entities. In other words, they can be written or verbally communicated, shared privately and individually or in front of others, as well as handwritten or sent via email (Baggett, et al., 2016).

The research showed that using words of affirmation to praise and recognize great performance is not part of the manager's managing approach. As most of the employees explained, at their beginnings here, the manager extremely rarely used to give words of affirmation, but over time that has completely stopped.

- You mean something like "you are the best", or "great job"...? Not really, maybe in the very beginning but even that was rare. That is not her style (Casper).
- In the beginning a couple of time, now I do not even remember when was the last time I heard such words. Performing well is expected, that is the criteria (Rianne).
- Words of affirmation are not her strong suit, so extremely rarely (Marlou).
- What is that? Haha. No, I am kidding. Never. Encouraging words from the manager are not part of the culture here, but for me, right now that does not represent a problem. I know my worth and that does not bother me, however during the first months it would have been nice to be directly praised and feel valued (Deren).
- Similarly, to constructive feedback, the necessity of receiving words of affirmation is higher when you are new at a company in comparison to later on. I think that the manager knows that and approves it (Isabelle).

3.7.2.1.4 Recognition. On some level, all people seek approval, validation, and recognition. Maslow's hierarchy of needs recognized the need of recognition and puts it high on the pyramid. Based on that, employees expect and crave acknowledgement for their effort and dedication (AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013). Knowing that their input and value are recognized, makes them feel appreciated and motivated to not only continue doing well but also to exceed themselves and become even better (Aslam, 2014).

The interviewees indicated that the management recognizes their work and effort, but at the same time that is not directly expressed. Besides that, none of them mentioned any of the typical recognition aspects or forms suggested by the literature, such as receiving awards, special dinners or meetings with top managers or the CEO, inclusion in the decision making process, being given a certain status (Danish & Usman, 2010) etc.

- Of course, succeeding is never easy but I really believe that the management recognizes and appreciates the hard working employees (Marlou).
- Yes [they have recognized my potential] I put a lot of effort to be here but unfortunately, after I got the regular job I started stagnating (Rianne).
- I feel motivated when the management recognizes my effort and acknowledges it although here that is not very straightforward... Now I know that they recognize the effort, but they do not necessarily show that. You need to be here for a while to understand that which sometimes might be frustrating especially for the new employees (Isabelle).

3.7.2.2 Additional elements affecting the level of motivation

The motivation, which then leads to engagement is impacted by numerous factors. Some of them were already mentioned, others will be mentioned down below. Although the upcoming factors are neither categorized as monetary nor non-monetary, their importance is undeniable and irreplaceable.

3.7.2.2.1 Physical aspects of the workplace environment. The workplace environment affects employee engagement, productivity, and morale (Chandrasekar, 2011). Employees working in workplaces with improper lightning, lack of ventilation, inadequate equipment and furniture, lack of necessary facilities etc. negatively impacts employee performance and motivation. Therefore, paying attention to these elements and especially the small physical details should be on the list of priorities for the company's management. According to the employees, the physical aspects of the work environment in the Conscious Hotels are topnotch and thus satisfactory.

- The physical aspects are satisfactory. You have seen the office, you know how it is organized. I absolutely have no complaints regarding that. The work conditions are great... and the computers are up to date (Rianne).
- ... that [the physical] aspect is spot on. They have normal, minimalistic offices with functional furniture and machinery (Marlou).
- The working space is decent and exactly what one hotel of such rank should offer (Deren).
- Yes, I love how comfortable I feel at the office. I am lucky to work in a nice office where I feel protected (Isabelle).

3.7.2.2.2 Safety. Undoubtedly, safety is a basic need of every human being. Maslow's hierarchy of needs acknowledges the safety needs and explains them as unavoidable part of our living and mindset that seeks security (Hopper, 2020). Going from there, safety at the workplace ranks high on the list when making a decision whether to work at a certain company or not. Therefore, the management must create safe working conditions in line with the regulations and acts (Jonathan & Mbogo, 2016). Additionally, working in a safe environment makes the employees more productive and concentrated due to the lack of concerns and fear regarding their wellbeing.

Four out of five employees expressed that they feel safe working at the Conscious Hotels. This finding is understandable and expected as the Netherlands has strict regulations in terms of health and safe at the workplace. Although the topic was also discusses with one participant the word safety never directly appeared, hence the lack of data.

- ...we have never been at risk (Rianne)
- For sure. There is no doubt about it [feeling safe]. I am as safe as someone can be (Marlou).
- They are a normal company that follows the government regulations, and stuff. They follow with the standards and make sure we are safe and sound (Deren).

- Working in a place where you do not have to worry about being exposed to any hazards and just be able to focus on the work is really important for the mental health... I am lucky to work in a nice office where I feel protected (Isabelle).

3.7.2.2.3 *Work atmosphere.* The interviewees indicated the importance of working in a positive atmosphere where there is a nice communications and a flow deprived negativity. At the same time, they classified the positive work atmosphere as a motivator, which aligns with the findings presented in the available literature.

- ...the work environment also motives me. I am glad I work with these nice people and they motivate me to be better (Marlou).
- I am motivated by the nice flow and communication with the manager, the colleagues and the other departments (Rianne).
- I must admit that [climbing the ladder] would motivate me... I am motivated by my coworkers and the overall positive spirit in the office (Deren).

3.7.2.2.4 *Company's values regarding environmental sustainability.* Person- organization fit is all about compatibility between an organization and the individual. Precisely said that means that the company's values align with the personal ones which means that they fit one another (Kristof, 1996).

Furthermore, nowadays, environmental suitability is a core principle that has gained enormous popularity. Knowing that the Conscious Hotels are based on the environmental sustainability pillar it was interesting to hear the interviewees opinions regarding how that factor affects them. Namely, the employees feel proud for working at a company that is environmentally sustainable. Additionally, the ones who label themselves as environmentalist were extremely excited and view the hotel's environmental sustainability as a motivator and feel that there is a perfect fit between their and the company's green values.

- Initially no, I would have applied even without knowing about their sustainability, but once I read about it and understood how concerned they are with the environment I was glad to submit an application and wait for a call from them. I do not know, but I feel like I liked their sense of responsibility. Even now, I like the idea of working for a company that does not only operate to create profit but also to do good simply by creating a system based on certain values (Rianne).
- ...they really met my expectations in terms of their environmental sustainability efforts. As an environmentalist, I feel proud to work at one of the Conscious hotels because they stand by everything that they promote and sell. There are absolutely no lies about their products, as a matter of fact sometimes they do more good for the environment than they say. They regularly try to find innovative and sustainable solutions that can be

implemented which makes me honored to work for them. I am sorry I got a bit too excited. I guess I am trying to say that their vision and mission is matching with my values and that makes me happy (Isabelle).

- You mean their green and sustainable initiatives? Yes, definitely. They even exceeded my expectations...Yes, it was [the hotels' environmental sustainability relevant for the decision to start working at one of their hotels]. I support green strategies and love socially responsible companies and the Conscious hotel fit the profile (Casper).

3.7.3 Knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing covers an immense amount of data, thus, this theme consists of two categories. The first category, coworker relationship includes three codes. Firstly, compatibility, secondly, feedback, and thirdly, support and help. Each code analyzes the different, but yet mutually dependent aspects of the work relationship between the colleagues in the reservation department. The second category deals with the often neglected and in numerous cases improperly executed onboarding process. Thus, the second category, under the name of onboarding covers five codes: coaching newcomers, additional onboarding elements, timeframe, onboarding satisfaction, and introductions.

3.7.3.1 Coworker relationship

Building healthy and strong relationships in the workplace is extremely important. They benefit both the employees and the organization (Basford & Offermann, 2012).

On one hand, if positive, these relationships are beneficial for the employees because the social interactions affect their physical and psychological health. Besides that, constructive relationships between colleagues bring personal joy and can lead to increased individual creativity.

On the other hand, good coworker relationships lead to higher job satisfaction, and increased engagement (VensureHR, n.d.). They increase motivation and intent to stay (Basford & Offermann, 2012). Additionally, by forming and maintain stable relationships with their colleagues, the employees are more motivated and stimulated to come up with new and innovative ideas as a result of brainstorming and mutual support. They practice mutual understanding, listening, acceptance and transfer of knowledge and skills. Furthermore, teams that consist of people with different backgrounds, level of experience, age, and gender are more likely to create satisfying and stable long-term results (Indeed, 2021).

3.7.3.1.1 Compatibility. Good coworker relationships are characterized by mutual respect, open and honest communication, mindfulness in actions and words, and trust (VensureHR, n.d.). They constantly evolve, and the employees slowly learn more about one another which over time, leads to deep mutual understanding and acceptance that eases the workload and makes the working hours more interesting.

All five employees expressed satisfaction when it comes to compatibility and collaboration with their colleagues. They explained the relationship as close to perfect, great, and amazing, while labeled one another as nice, wonderful, and open.

- They [the coworkers] are amazing... The people [the coworkers] are open for collaboration (Marlou)
- ... to my colleagues who seemed nice, but at the same time [while working as an intern] [the coworkers] tried to keep their distance from me because they were not sure whether I am going to stay at the company or not. However, they were accessible and although sometimes I was hesitant to ask them questions, I quickly realized that they are open for communication and teamwork. Now we work quiet well together (Rianne).
- ... they [the colleagues] were wonderful [at the beginning]. We immediately connected and they accepted me without any problems... Amazing [the current relationship], almost all of my colleagues are my age so we have a lot in common. Of course we do not agree on everything but that just makes things more interesting... With them, the time flies by. If something unpleasant or annoying happens we try to just laugh it out loud and go on with our day like nothing has happened... maybe not perfect but very close (Deren).
- It is great. We are in the same boat so we are here for one another even when things get rough (Casper)
- I am motivated by the positive relationship with my coworkers. They are great and that gives me strength to keep moving forward... It is amazing. We really support each other. Some of my teammates are much younger than I am, but that is not an issue because it actually improves the efficiency (Isabelle).

3.7.3.1.2 Feedback. Feedback represents a proactive communication process between two people that disclose or pass on information regarding the receiver's work-related performance and achievements (Baker, Perreault, Reid, & Blanchard, 2013). As such, feedback is an integral part of the professional world and every successful company. With its appearance it makes sure that the employees know and understand the desired results, aligns the performance with the company's goals and ensures their achievement (Sharma & Marandure, 2011), assures stability and continuity, empowers employees, creates a positive work environment based on open communication and knowledge-sharing, and increases creativity. On personal level, feedback promotes individual reflection, reinforces self-awareness, and enhances professional development, which includes improvement of competences and skills (Mulder, 2013).

According to Mulder (2013), both colleagues and managers play a significant role in creating an effective feedback culture. For instance, when an employee receives a goal-directed feedback it is very likely that the he is going to discuss that with a colleague. At the same time, seeing it as a way of learning, inexperienced employees tend to look forward to receiving a feedback from a more experienced colleague.

The research shows that the employee enjoy helping each other and appreciate receiving or giving constructive feedback to their colleagues. They recognize the importance of giving each other feedbacks and do not take it personally, instead they see it as a way to improve themselves. Additionally, as expected, the more recently employed people with less experience tend to ask and get more feedbacks than the more experienced ones, which puts an accent on the learning context of this segment.

- ...again I have to say that at the beginning I was getting constructive feedback more often than now (Rianne).
- ...my colleagues very often give me feedback which is amazing because that way I can improve myself (Deren).
- My coworkers always comment my work and tell me what to do better because they are more experienced and know more... I appreciate that (Casper).
- ...I can say that we support each other by pointing out some of our weaknesses and teach each other a thing or two (Isabelle).

3.7.3.1.3 Support and help. There are a few distinctive types of support: emotional, tangible, informational, affirmational, and belonging support (Home Base, 2020). Each one of them equally contributes to the coworker relationships. Unlike, providing support which is something constant, usually unmeasurable, and abstract, helping someone is more tangible, measurable, realistically achievable and with a specific end goal.

However the best option is for the two of them to be combined because that means consistent flow of work related advice, support, listening and trying to understand,

empathizing with the coworker's situations and emotions, and teaching each other or in other words transferring knowledge.

All employees indicated having a nice mutual support system in which they help each other. As they explained, they try to help one another by transferring knowledge. They do that by playing on their strengths and sharing those insights, expertise, wisdom, and know-how to the rest of the teammates.

- They support me and help me whenever I need something. Since I am quiet new I have the tendency to ask many questions and beg for advice but they have never refused to help me, so I really appreciate that. I especially like it when they share their knowledge with me without me asking. Those actions are valuable to me because that is how I learn more and improve myself (Marlou).
- However, they were accessible and although sometimes I was hesitant to ask them questions, I quickly realized that they are open for communication and teamwork... I always tried to get answers from my colleagues because I did not want to bother her [the manager] (Rianne).
- We function very well together. We always help each other out and no one feels threatened by the rest of the group. We are not competitive at all, actually we are the opposite of that. For example, I am very good with operating the booking system, so I usually help them with that while other people help out by advising us how to use other apps and programs... I think that what we currently have [the knowledge flow] works for us so I would not change anything (Deren).
- All of my colleagues have been here longer than I have and have more work knowledge. One colleague of mine is a little bit better with Excel so sometimes I ask her for that. I do not want to overstep so I share my knowledge in a more informal way that does not seem like a real lesson. Usually, they do not directly ask me for help because they know more but whenever I have some questions they are my first option to get answers (Casper).
- I try to transfer my knowledge as much as possible in order to help others to achieve positive result. However, I can say that we support each other by pointing out some of our weaknesses and teach each other a thing or two... the colleagues are open for collaboration (Isabelle).

3.7.3.2 Onboarding

Onboarding is a valuable HRM element and a comprehensive process that if properly designed and implemented can create numerous benefits. The available literature indicates that effective onboarding programs decrease turnover rates, increase productivity, and strengthen employee engagement (Stein & Christiansen, 2010; Harpelund, 2019; Kumar & Pandey, 2017; Dai & De Meuse, 2007). By experiencing a suitable and warm onboarding newcomers more easily get passionate about their new work and future at the company, as well as the company's vision, mission, and overall success (Stein & Christiansen, 2010).

However, to achieve that companies must reinvent the traditional onboarding process and integrate new aspects to it that would make it more eligible, interesting, personal, and up-to-date (Cable, Gino, & Staats, 2015). Harpelund (2019) pinpoints that employee onboarding is long-term strategic process and as such should include an orientation seminar, usage of modern technology and social media tools, gamification, personalization, welcome kits, a “buddy” system, special events created to serve as mechanisms for socialization and easier integration of the newcomers, as well as other creative elements.

3.7.3.2.1 Coaching newcomers. All interviewees indicated that they have experienced a somewhat similar onboarding experience. More precisely, what overlaps between all of them is the way they have been coached. Namely, at the beginning each one of them was shadowing a more experienced employee who showed them how to perform their tasks and duties.

- I was shadowing another colleague who was showing me around. He showed me how to use the excel sheets in order to check the data, how to make reservations, check for availability, send confirmation details to customers, process payments, answer questions customers might have, provide support to guests who may need to amend or cancel reservations and etc. Then he also gave me a written guideline on how to sort out issues that might arise with reservations and bookings. He made it clear that I need to stick to the provided solutions and the specific wording because that is a proven system that works the best and does not cause additional issues. Of course, dealing with guests is not easy and it takes time to learn the appropriate way of communicating with them, but everything is learnable and reachable. After he showed me as much as he could and we have to keep in mind that was not always available to explain everything as a result of the overwhelming workload, he let me do some smaller tasks and micromanaged me. At the end of the month, I worked independently (Rianne).
- I had a mentor that has dealt with many different cases and scenarios and has done reservations through the system numerous times. He was with me for two weeks and introduced me to my tasks. Firstly, he explained how important it is to follow the given instructions on how to perform the tasks. I remember him telling me that it is vital for me to work as I am being told because that way it is almost impossible to make mistakes. After he made sure that I remember the first rule, he explained how to use the system and its functionalities... Also, during that period he was there for me in case I had some questions which was not bad (Deren).
- ...there was one person who showed me how to do my job. During the first few weeks he was always with me. Very often I was watching him perform the tasks and then he was micromanaging me for a while. He was making sure that the information I was entering and the emails I was sending were all correct (Casper).

The given references portray the coaching process, which is an integral part of the onboarding process. As, noted none of the employees was left unattended or immediately

thrown into the deep water without previous introduction to the workload and the duties. However, these answers also indicate the lack of depth when it comes to coaching. As subtly implied the coaching is very methodical, strict, obsolete, and even overwhelming.

3.7.3.2.2 Additional onboarding elements

When it comes to providing additional onboarding elements such as a handbook with useful information, social media tools, welcome kits, special events or anything similar, the interviewees indicated that there are no such things. This is devastating because numerous researchers and practitioners pinpoint the strong need of reinventing the obsolete and inefficient onboarding procedures by adding such elements that are proven to make the onboarding experience better and therefore increase the level of engagement early on.

3.7.3.2.3 Timeframe. The gathered data shows that the average time of onboarding newcomers at the reservation department at the Conscious Hotels is a couple of weeks, but not more than a month. This is concerning because as previously mentioned onboarding newcomers should be a long-term process with pre-scheduled steps and stages (Harpelund, 2019). Dai & De Meuse (2007) suggest integrating onboarding practices before the first work day and extending the process to at least half a year. However, according to the interviewees that is not the case.

3.7.3.2.4 Onboarding satisfaction. Although, there are some common rules on how the company can make people satisfied with something, satisfaction is highly depended on the person's expectations, believes, previous experiences, demands, and other subjective factors. Hence as expected, the interviewees gave various answers about their level of onboarding satisfaction.

- I think that those procedures work very well... I was couched quiet well and I am satisfied with that. And as I have heard I am not the only one with positive feelings regarding my welcome and the coaching. Those elements are well coordinated and implemented (Marlou).
- It was okay. I had very little prior experience, so I needed some time to figure everything out which made me anxious. You know that person showed me so much at once and my brain could not process everything so fast... It is not necessarily well coordinated in the sense that it's all step by step written down what to do, when to do... So I am not sure if coordinated is the right word, but I think they can be more organized with the welcoming (Casper).
- I know that I had extremely high demands and hopes which were generally met, but some actions disappointed me a bit... I expected a slightly different welcome than the one I got. I am not sure but I felt like I was not properly introduced to the environment... Maybe it is going to sound ridiculous and over the top but I expected a warmer welcome but all I got was one week of shadowing a more experienced employee and no follow up meeting with anyone from the human resource department (Isabelle).

Furthermore, even though, the answers varied between employees it is noticeable that there are some common gaps and flaws in the onboarding approach that can cause lower levels of satisfaction. As stated, some of these deficiencies are due to the lack of interactive onboarding elements while others are a result of insufficient coordination.

3.7.3.2.5 Introductions. Starting a new job is always stressful (Raypole, 2021) thus being introduced to the new colleagues and the manager from the very beginning can be helpful. Knowing the names of the people that surround you at least eight hours per day five day a week takes off a portion of the anxiety. Therefore, proper introductions early on are an essential part of the onboarding process. The interviews show that introductions at the reservation department take part at the very beginning. In other words, the more experienced person who coaches the newcomers immediately introduces them to their new colleagues and the manager.

3.7.4 Procedural justice

Similarly, to the previous theme, the fourth overarching theme called procedural justice is also exceedingly far-reaching. Therefore, it is separated into two categories. The first category, management includes five codes. The first code is relationship with the management, then manager's characteristics, decisions and decision-making process, management during COVID-19, and last but not least feedback. The second category called organizational structure is narrower and includes only two codes: autonomy and work during COVID-19.

3.7.4.1 Management

The management plays a vital role in terms of employee engagement. The manager's actions have direct and immediate impact on the employee's satisfaction and fulfilment (Dale Carnegie Training, 2012).

3.7.4.1.1 Relationship with the manager. Good manager-employee relationships are an essential part of successful hospitality establishments. The interviewed employees indicated they have a good relationship with the manager. They described her as trustworthy and reachable, which is favorable because trust in the management enhances a positive work climate. It stimulates cooperation, increases motivation, boosts employee engagement and dedication, creates positive feelings and perceptions towards the company and especially the manager, and reduces conflicts (Gill, 2008).

- ...we have a great relationship. She is very reachable and there is a two-way communication (Marlou).

- I did not really approach her with any questions, I always tried to get answers from my colleagues because I did not want to bother her [in the beginning]... [Now] I am also not afraid to approach my manager if that is needed...we have a nicely established relationship. I trust her and she trusts me (Rianne).
- I believe her actions are correct and I do not doubt them in any way. We have a good relationship (Deren).
- Well we are not close friends, but we have a normal manager-employee communication. We communicate with each other whenever it is necessary and have some small chitchats now and then... Probably that is one of the reasons I have confidence in her (Casper).
- We have a productive professional relationship. She is not much older than me (Isabelle)

3.7.4.1.2 Manager's characteristics. Being a great manager is not easy. Each manager has numerous responsibilities, ranging from performing simple everyday tasks to managing employees and navigating issues. Therefore, every successful manager must have certain characteristics and skills. For instance, a good manager possesses strong soft skills, emotional resilience, leadership skills, communication skills, confidence, time management skills, knowledge, and professional experience (Colorado Christian University, 2022; Culture Amp, n.d.).

During the interviews the employees directly mentioned a couple of the stated qualities. Firstly, and most importantly, they recognized the manager's experience and knowledge. Secondly, they classified her as professional, capable, and approachable. Additionally, one employee described her as authoritative, while another one labeled her as detail oriented.

- ...the manager is highly experienced (Marlou).
- She seemed refined and capable... She is a determined and meticulous professional who sometimes can be as hardhearted but I think that is because of her devotion to details. She always gives her best and therefore expects the same from us. That means that if we make some foolish mistake she gets annoyed because she knows that the mistake could have been avoided (Rianne).
- Our manager is excellent at what she does, she really knows her way around, she is supportive and appreciative. Due to her, once per month, we have a gathering outside the office and that brings us closer together (Deren).
- She is an intelligent woman who makes rational decisions and never rushes into anything...She is a typical Dutch woman with typical Dutch manners and everybody in the department knows that. But, do not get me wrong I like her strong personality and I think that is necessary in the workplace because if you do not have authority than people won't take you seriously (Casper).

- ... really knows a lot and always keeps me in the loop and I think that goes not only for me, but the entire department under her leadership. The manager is great and approachable... the manager is experienced and hence effective (Isabelle).

3.7.4.1.3 Decisions and decision-making process. This code goes hand in hand with the previous two. Both, the manager's decisions and the employee participation in the decision-making process are vital elements contributing to the level of employee engagement. Aslam (2014) defines participation of employees in the decision making process as a valuable mechanism that stimulates innovative thinking, increases motivation, and improves effectiveness. Additionally, it awakens a feeling of ownership and pride (Aslam, 2014).

However, the empirical research shows that the employees from the reservation department at the Conscious Hotels are not included in the decision making process. As one interviewer explained, making decisions is the manager's responsibility, yet as she and another employee mentioned, in some rare occasions they have been asked for an opinion.

Nonetheless, the research also revealed that the employees at the reservation department are satisfied with the decisions made by their manager. They believe that their manager is making right decisions. According to them, her decisions are rational, logical, and systemic.

- Of course I am not part of the decision making process, but I am always informed about everything, as is everyone else in my team. In some rare occasions we also have a vote, or a say, but the bigger decisions are always made by the upper manager and other figures. They [the decision] are logical. Plus I am pretty new in all of this and thus I really do not think it is my place to evaluate the big decisions at this time. That is probably going to change in the future because I will have more experience and knowledge but for now I trust my manager and believe that her decisions are the right ones (Marlou).
- Yes, her [the manager's] decisions are commendable... The same [trust] goes for her decisions. Yes, sometimes I question them, but at the end, I understand that she is right even though I might not completely agree with the rulings... I am not included [in the decision making process], although sometimes I am asked for opinions (Rianne).
- Yes, yes I am [satisfied with the manager's decisions]. She knows her job and she is good at it... No, or at least not that I know of [being part of the decision making process]... depends of the situations, I think most of them are systematic but the covid pandemic changed a lot (Deren).
- I am very satisfied [with the manager's decisions]. She is an intelligent woman who makes rational decisions and never rushes into anything... I am not part of the decision making process (Casper).

- No, no I am not included in the decision making process. Making decisions is the manager's responsibility, we just follow the orders. In only a few occasions we have been asked to contribute in terms of making decisions and I can tell you that that process can be tricky because different people have different ideas on how to approach a certain problem, so at the end if the management does not incorporate their idea or suggestion it can lead to frustration or disappointment. However, since I have been here for a while and hence have seen a lot, there have been a couple of situations where the manager has asked to share my opinion with her... Yes, I am satisfied. The decisions are logical and very systematical. In fact, the entire work process is highly systemic and rule based (Isabelle).

3.7.4.1.4 Management during COVID-19. The uncertainties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic made everyone scared. On one hand, the employees were afraid about losing their jobs. On the other hand, the managers were frightened due to sudden and urgent need to find new ways of managing and conducting business. Usually, hospitality managers need to anticipate future events and design plans on how to approach possible situations, but this was an extraordinary circumstance that is outside the boundaries of possible predictability.

On a more positive note, the pandemic also highlighted some strengths and positive traits of hospitality managers. The main qualities that surfaced were work-life balance, managing stress, team building, leadership, and resilience building (Giousmpasoglou, Marinakou, & Zopiatis, 2021).

The above mentioned characteristics align with the manager's qualities mentioned by the interviewed employees. According to them, the hotel's management including the department manager professionally navigated the COVID-19 situation along with the turbulences. Interestingly, the employees were surprised of how well the management handled the situation and are satisfied with the undertaken actions. They indicated that she, the manager made rational decisions and managed to stay calm during the entire time. Additionally, the employees recognize the toughness of the manager's situation and responsibilities.

- The management decided we didn't have to answer phones during the first corona wave, because so many angry customers were calling and everyone wanted to get their money back, it was really horrible, we were really overwhelmed. So we were communicating with customers only through email for some time and that was much better. So I would say that was the best decision. And as for the worst one... well I am not really sure about the worst decision. I do not know. I am very satisfied. This has been a global disaster and they did well. They made the necessary changes not just in my department, but in every department and every segment of the business. ...I mean they did everything they could (Marlou).

- I believe they managed to navigate considerably well [the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic]. The best decisions were to start working from home, remotely, and to stop answering the calls that at beginning of the pandemic were exhaustingly unstoppable. As, for the worst decision, I really do not know. I cannot think of a bad decision. I believe that at times, no one knew how to handle the situation, but the manager somehow kept us in line (Rianne)
- ... the sudden change [due to COVID-19] is not anyone's fault. I think you cannot avoid the situations and I think they [the Conscious hotels] are doing it quite ok... It is not easy but they are trying [maintaining a certain level of stability] (Deren).
- It was much better than I expected. When they shut down almost everything I was the newest member of the team and I was really scared that I am going to lose my job. I heard that some people from other departments got fired and expected the worst. At the time, I was still learning and even despite of that they gave me a chance instead of letting me go. She [the manager] handled the corona problems without panicking and showing any hesitation. I do not know if she was secretly scared and overwhelmed with everything but she never expressed any negative feelings and I salute her for that (Casper).
- ...I was a bit surprised with how well they handled the COVID-19 situation. In my opinion, they handled the situation like a pro. With everything that was going on especially at the beginning I think that they did a really god job. Despite everything the management managed to stay calm or as calm as someone can be in a situation where hotels are being shut down and people are being let go. Of course our hotel was not immune to that, unfortunately as I have heard there were some cut downs, but generally they tried to minimize the negative effects. We were all scared, but our manager managed to calm us down and keep the positive spirits. She came up with great solutions and I really respect her for that (Isabelle).

3.7.4.1.5 Feedback. As mentioned in the previous pages, a manager's proactive feedback approach stimulates learning and improves the overall welfare for everyone including the company (Mulder, 2013), while the lack of manager's feedback can cause issues and create an unproductive environment. However, the literature also shows that positive feedback does not necessarily generate positive outcomes. Instead, positive results are only achieved by possessing a deep knowledge of human behavior and understanding the essence of the feedback process along with its characteristics. Therefore if not properly communicated, a feedback can cause more harm than benefit.

Additionally the literature shows that very often feedbacks convey negative context hence create negative emotions. Furthermore, the anxiety that comes from such a feedback is likely to generate counterproductive results (Baker, Perreault, Reid, & Blanchard, 2013). Therefore, managers must put a lot of time and effort into finding the right words and the most appropriate approach for each employee in order to successfully convey the message,

transfer knowledge, and stimulate better performance. However, that is easier said than done. According to O'Leary & Pulakos (2011) some managers avoid giving feedback because they are scared of damaging the relationship with the employees. Furthermore, giving a qualitative feedback is time consuming and thus managers often neglected it, which is a misfortune because a good feedback can create multiple benefits (Baker, Perreault, Reid, & Blanchard, 2013).

The interviews revealed that the manager neglects the process of providing feedback, which according to some employees was more proactive and efficient at the beginning of their employment. This finding aligns with the previous statement regarding the neglecting part, but does not give any further explanation on why it happens. The employees did not mention a reason behind the lack of constructive feedback by one of them did indicate that he only receives a feedback regarding concrete issues or a specific improvement.

- I usually get feedback when they have something concrete to comment on. So it's not an automatic reaction. I just get a comment when I do something wrong or very well. I usually get the feedback during our one on ones [meetings with the manager] (Marlou).
- ... I have to say that at the beginning I was getting constructive feedback more often than now (Rianne).
- ...the manager always organizes weekly meetings but we do not get constructive feedback (Deren).
- ...the manager not so much [giving constructive feedback]. She was more proactive in that sense at the beginning (Casper).
- Depending on what you mean by constructive, but I would say not very often. I can say that is one item that is really missing. She does not necessarily give us constructive feedback. Instead, the feedbacks are usually vague and not personalized. However, now, that I have been working here for a while I feel free to directly ask for it but at the beginning when I started working at the hotel that was not the case. I was shy so I needed some time before opening up and reaching my potentials. But, in this regard I have to add that at the beginning the constructive feedbacks are generally more frequently received or given because then there is a greater need of them (Isabelle).

3.7.4.2 Organizational structure

The organizational structure describes how activities are organized and directed in order to achieve the organizational goals. Usually, it includes hierarchy, division of responsibilities, way of performing tasks, vertical information flow, and other important aspects. For the purpose of the research, this category covers autonomy and work during COVID-19.

3.7.4.2.1 Autonomy. Although the literature indicates that managers should give the employees a certain level of freedom to explore and find their own ways to efficiently perform their tasks and hence stimulate their creativity and boost engagement and performance, the research shows that the employees at the reservations department at the Conscious Hotel are not given any autonomy. As they explained, the management imposes specific, rule based protocols of acting and performing work tasks. Some employees oppose that system because as they explained, would like to have a bit more autonomy and be allowed to implement new solutions that would make their jobs easier and would decrease the time spend on doing a specific action.

- Right now I am following the instructions because I am trying to avoid making mistakes. But in the future I would like to create my own ways and procedures. Of course the hotel already has its own procedures and it might be a bit difficult or almost impossible to do something about those actions, but I am hopeful that one day I will be able to make some minor changes or at least work in a way that fits me (Marlou).
- I like being independent, but again in this company the entire work process is highly structured and strict (Rianne).
- At the time [at the beginning] that [working exactly as told so] was acceptable for me because I was new and did not want to make any mistakes, so I did not think much of it, but now it is starting to annoy me. I know there are shortcuts that can save me some time and still keep the quality of my work, but I am not allowed to implement them which makes me stick to the old ones... I would like to do things my way instead of following the strict guidelines and have more autonomy as that is very important to me (Deren).
- ...we do have some standard protocols in which is said how the work should be done... I just follow the instructions. I do as I am told and honestly I do not mind that... I have never been good at making decision. I am by nature a very hesitant person (Casper).
- The management prefers to follow the already set way of conducting business (Isabelle)

3.7.4.2.2 Work during COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic changed the entire world in just a few weeks, causing long-lasting consequences. Numerous people lost their jobs, the global economy took a serious hit, inequalities at a global scale dramatically increased, social tensions fiercely intensified, and the list does not end here. The situation had a serious negative impact on tourism and hospitality. Hotels all over the world were forced to lock their doors, cancel all bookings and deal with the consequences.

The interviewed employees explained that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their work and brought numerous work-related changes. As expected, they were caught off guard and started working remotely. The most recent member of the team explained that the remote work created difficulties because he was still learning and had question that needed to be

answered by various people which lengthened the process as he was forced to send numerous emails and wait for responses.

- It has not been easy. There were some major changes. We worked remotely. There were many crisis, many confused and angry guests and big decisions, but we are managing (Marlou).
- ...the past year has been a complete game changer. There were major changes in the way we perform our tasks and the approaches and it was not always easy, so in a way that made our job more dynamic and out of the ordinary (Rianne).
- ...the covid pandemic changed a lot about how we do reservations and cancellations. Those changes came out of the blue, but I do not think that anyone could have predicted that and the sudden change is not anyone's fault (Deren).
- ...this year was challenging. Since we were forced to work from home during it was difficult to get answers to your questions. We did not have that much contact with each other, so I had to send a lot of emails internally to ask for help. Before corona it was easier to navigate but then I had to struggle to get information on how to proceed with certain actions. Sometimes I had to ask 3 or more people before getting the right information... Satisfying and variable because of corona. Sometimes we work from home sometimes in the office (Casper)
- Yes, yes [we were working from home] and we still do in some cases (Isabelle).

3.7.5 Impact of work environment on employees' perception and their emotions

The last theme is especially important because it ties all four dimensions and directly connects them to their effects on the employees from the reservation department. Additionally, the theme explains the overall employee satisfaction and their perception regarding the hotels' effort to engage all employees. Hence, the theme is divided into three categories. The first category is about satisfaction and as such covers level of overall satisfaction and the possible improvements. The second category, employee engagement includes two codes: the hotels' effort to engage the employees and the level of engagement. Finally, yet importantly, the third category of this theme investigates the impacts of the four dimensions constituting a work environment. As such, it covers four codes, or more precisely one code for each dimension. Therefore, the first code is called impacts of promotion, then impacts of motivation, impacts of knowledge sharing, and impacts of procedural justice.

3.7.5.1 Satisfaction

Employee engagement is a broad subject that depends on multiple occurrences and conditions. Among those matters is employee satisfaction. The literature suggests that employee satisfaction is a fundamental principle of employee engagement (Schmailan, 2016).

3.7.5.1.1 Level of overall satisfaction. The research shows that the employees from the reservation department are mildly satisfied. As most of them said, they are satisfied, but there are ways and things the management can do to further increase the level of satisfaction.

- I am satisfied with my current obligations and what I do (Casper).
- At the beginning and up to a certain point I was very satisfied, but now that level of satisfaction has dropped down (Rianne).
- At the moment, I am satisfied. I am not saying I cannot be more satisfied, but I am fine with what I have. Although I must add that some rewards or other related stuff would make me even more content (Marlou).
- More than mildly satisfied, but not completely (Deren).
- I am satisfied. Of course they can do more to increase the level of satisfaction, but there is always something that can be fixed or improved and if they are willing to work on that they have strong potential to become even better (Isabelle).

3.7.5.1.2 Improvements. The employees mentioned different ideas about how the management can improve the work culture and atmosphere, which will then lead to increment in satisfaction and engagement. According to them, there are at least several possible improvements, but the most frequently mentioned one was receiving rewards and bonuses.

- ...they can implement more ways to stimulate us [incentives]... Small stuff they can do to make us feel better. For example to be given more independency and a chance to brainstorm our ideas openly and frequently... However, it would be nice to attend some creative workshop that would broaden our horizons even if it is not directly connected to our everyday tasks and duties (Isabelle).
- I would suggest for the management and the HR department to pay more attention to keeping the employees motivated and constantly working on engaging them (Rianne).
- ...it would be nice to receive some additional bonuses for job well done. Besides that, I would like it if they find a way to spice things up a little bit and just to be clear I do not mean to give us even more work, even now the workload can be overwhelming from time to time. I mean to make it more interesting by implementing some creative elements or touches (Deren).
- ...but I would appreciate if they give us flexible working hours and more free days if I achieve great results that are above the norm (Casper).
- Yes, definitely a salary raise, but also other not monetary bonuses and stimulations (Marlou).

3.7.5.2 *Employee engagement*

This category is the essence of the research as it directly deals with the concept of employee engagement. As such, it covers interviewees' perception of the Hotels' effort to engage the employees and the personal level of engagement.

3.7.5.2.1 Hotels' effort to engage the employees. Almost all employees agreed that the hotels' effort to engage the employees is not at its best. According to them the management is trying, but the engagement methods and approaches are in great need of improvements in order to be more efficient and thus create better results. Additionally, as two interviewees indicated the Conscious Hotels have a tendency of putting more effort to engage the employees when they first start working at one of the Conscious Hotels than later on. In other words, the effort to engage the employees decreases over time.

- ...employee engagement is not very straightforward. It can easily fluctuate depending on various factors such as the current workload, the peoples' perception their momentarily expectations and need, as well as the manager's effort at the time and his approach. Generally, I would say that the hotel does put an effort to engage the employees but I would not say that they do that methodically or according to some previously drafted plan. As a matter of fact is more like a spontaneous reaction to the current situation (Isabelle).
- Again, at the beginning they seem a bit more eager to engage the new employees, but after a while that enthusiasm slows down and it seems like they do not have a plan on how to engage the employees. However, there are unscripted and casual social gatherings organized by the manager and that feels good. At those events we get to be ourselves and feel like the company wants us to get to know each other on a deeper and more personal level (Rianne).
- Okay, nothing special, but fine [the hotels' effort to engage the employees]. They do as much as they think it is enough and it is not like they are doing a bad job (Casper).
- I think that they are doing a good job. I mean it is obvious that they are trying to engage the employees, especially the newcomers (Marlou).
- It [the hotels' effort to engage its employees] can be better. There are some weaknesses that can be easily fixed if the upper management listens to our recommendations (Deren).

3.7.5.2.2 Level of engagement. Based on the indications regarding the hotels' effort to engage the employees, the mediocre levels of engagement are not surprising. During the interviews, the employees stated that they are not overly connected and committed to the hotel. The words they used to explain their level of engagement were not thrilled and not enthusiastic.

- I can be happier when coming to work every day and dedicating high amount of effort, but at the same time, I am far away from feeling disengaged... The pros outweigh the cons so at the end of the day I like working here (Isabelle).
- Enough [engaged] (Casper).
- Honestly, I am not enthusiastic about working at the Hotels anymore, I feel that on a personal level I can be more enthusiastic about my work. As a matter of fact I know I can be more fulfilled like I was when I first started here and everything was challenging me because I was eager to learn (Rianne).
- My future is still uncertain but that is mostly because of me and my mindset. However, at the moment, I am happy to work with such nice people, they encourage me to be a good employee (Marlou).
- If I am being honest, I am not thrilled about working here. I do not hate my job, but I do not wake up excited to come to work. Nonetheless, I do my obligations with dedication and accuracy (Deren).

3.7.5.3 Impacts of the four dimensions constituting a work environment

The last category shines a light on the impacts of the four dimensions constituting a work environment. In a way, it summarizes how the employees in the reservation department are influenced by the currently integrated elements leading to employee engagement, or in some cases the lack of action in terms of stimulating engagement.

3.7.5.3.1 Impacts of promotion. When it comes to the impacts of the currently provided promotional opportunities and the overall promotional state that includes learning stimulated by the management and professional development also made possible due to the management's actions, most of the employees expressed disappointment and dissatisfaction. More precisely, only two employees stated that at the moment they are not looking for promotion. Out of them, one stated that he is happy the way things are. The other one explained that even though at the moment he is not looking for a better position he likes to know that in the future he can have that opportunity, but unfortunately was not sure whether that is realistic because as he said "getting a promotion can be problematic". Besides those two cases, the others expressed negative feelings towards the lack of promotional structure and opportunities. For instance, one employee explained who she is considering leaving the Conscious Hotels as a result of the missing promotional opportunities. Additionally they added that if existing the promotional elements can positively influence them and their performance.

- I am not looking for any promotion right now, so I would say it is all right. I am happy with where I am how things are (Casper).
- I can easily say that I give my best even though there are no the promotional opportunities and not because of them. I would like more and I believe I deserve more which if provided would motivate me to do more at work... if I am not given a promotion I think I might look for another job where I would get a chance to develop my skills more. I am not where I want to be in terms of position and salary and that makes me think about my future actions (Rianne).
- No, no I still have stuff to learn before wanting more [a promotion]...I like the sound of that [getting a promotion in the future], but I am a realist so I know that getting a promotion can be problematic...The stuff I have learned here make me more competent and prepare me for future concurs. Even if I do not stay at the company in the future I believe I would be able to find other job in the same field due to my experience (Marlou).
- I believe that I have learned much more from my colleagues than from anyone else...unless that person quits I do not see how I can climb the ladder. Although, I must admit that would motivate me... I would like to have a viable chance to climb the ladder as that would motivate me to be even better (Deren)
- This is going to sound harsh, but in order to be affected by something that something needs to exist or happen. Now, since there are no creative workshops, seminar, or anything like that to help us learn more I can say that there is absolutely no effect on me otherwise if there was something like that it would have a positive one (Isabelle).

3.7.5.3.2 Impacts of motivation. The interviewed employees clearly indicated the lack of monetary and non-monetary rewards along with their impacts on them. According to two of them, it is impossible to be impacted by something that is not provided. At the same time, the same two employees explained the importance of rewards and indicated that they would be more motivated and eager to work if the management implements rewards as part of the motivation system. Additionally, some of the employees compensate the lack of rewards with satisfaction and motivation by the positive work environment and relationship with the colleagues. Furthermore, one employee indicated that is positively motivated by the safety and the physical aspects of the work environment, which partially substitute for the lack of rewards.

- Having a stable income motivates me to come work every day, as well as the hotels' sustainability because it is in line with my interests, but I would appreciate any other additional perks. However, I am not looking for much (Casper)
- I can say that they do not provide any rewards so it is impossible to know how they would affect my work. However, I believe rewards would be a neat motivator, the same goes for the recognition (Rianne).

- The lack of rewards disappoints me. I like bonuses because they scream appreciation, but the other stuff, like the overall positive work atmosphere make up for that (Marlou).
- Although every educated human knows the value of bonuses and rewards, the management here seems to be oblivious to that fact. Rewards have a tendency to make a person feel good about himself, but here I am unable to experience that feeling. But there are also some benefits such as working with great people and in a safe environment (Deren).
- I have been here for a while now which makes me understand that the manager appreciates having me around so that makes me feel comfortable in my skin. I am not looking for rewards because I know that is not realistic and as we talked because of the surrounding I can concentrate on being productive instead of worrying about other obstacles (Isabelle).

3.7.5.3.3 Impacts of knowledge sharing. The code examines the impacts of knowledge sharing which includes impacts of coworker relationships, knowledge sharing between them, and onboarding influences. The interviewed employees unknowingly came to a consensus regarding the positive impacts of coworker relationships in the reservation department. The research shows that there is a strong bond between the employees. The support and encouragement they give one another makes them better employees. Additionally, four employees indicated that the onboarding has prepared them for the everyday work tasks.

- It [the relationship with the colleagues and the knowledge sharing between them] makes me better at my job. It is useful and functional... I did not have much experience so it [the onboarding experience] helped me understand how to work and perform my job. So, I guess it had a good impact although it could have been better (Casper).
- The knowledge sharing shaped me into what I am today. That is why nowadays I want to help the newcomers as much as possible. I want them to learn as easily as possible. So, overall the knowledge sharing helped me a lot. I believe that this is one of the most important things also helping the company...It was helpful [the onboarding], or at least as helpful as that dry approach can be (Rianne).
- I have increased my competences and my colleagues help me a lot with that. The stuff I have learned here make me more competent and prepare me for future tasks. Mostly yes [the colleagues are the ones responsible for my professional development and the learning]. It [the onboarding] prepared me for the tasks...I am happy to work with such nice people, they encourage me to be a good employee (Marlou).
- They have a positive impact on me both communication wise and knowledge sharing wise. The first one improves my social skills, while the other improves my professional ones... there are also some benefits such as working with great people...whenever I need additional motivation, help, or support I can talk to my colleagues and they can fill the void...It [the onboarding] helped me to get to know the workload. Aside from that, I am not sure how it impacted me. I guess it had a relatively positive effect because I was not just left by myself to figure things out (Deren).

- Some of my teammates are much younger than I am, but that is not an issue because it actually improves the efficiency... It [the relationship with the colleagues and the knowledge sharing] has a positive effect. Our relationship makes us stronger and improves our efficiency (Isabelle).

3.7.5.3.4 Impacts of procedural justice. The very last code examines the impacts of procedural justice which includes the impacts of manager-employee relationship along with the manager's approach and decisions, as well as the organizational structure. The research shows that the employees from the reservation department are generally positively influenced by the relationship with their manager. As some of them said, her experience and decisions make them feel secure and create certain stability. However, her strict approach can be difficult to understand and accept, but usually after a while the employees get used to it. Additionally, some of them that are highly ambitious employees expressed a desire to be part of the decision making process and have more autonomy because as one employee explained that would positively impact her feelings towards the Hotels and make her more productive.

- [the managing situation and approach] positively, definitively positively [affect me and my work]. I do not mind not getting affirmations (Casper).
- The relationship is good, I can easily say that in terms of our communication I have no complains. However, I would like to be more independent and part of the decision making process because that would encourage me to further develop myself and of course be more useful for the Hotels (Rianne).
- Her decisions make me feel safe. I trust her and I believe her choices, which in a way makes my work more stable. Yes, she can be more affectionate but with time, I got used to her approach (Marlou).
- There are strengths and weakness, but mostly I enjoy the manager's approach. We have accepted one another and that works for us except for some minor disagreement that we cannot agree upon such as strictly following the guidelines. Anyhow, whenever I need additional motivation, help, or support I can talk to my colleagues and they can fill the void (Deren).
- Using just one word, I would say that our relationship and her approach and decisions are constructive. I am not delighted, but I am far from objecting her ways and means as she is a professional that only needs a bit more social touch or should I say people skills (Isabelle).

3.8 Discussion

On one hand, the results of the interviews show that the manager of the reservation department makes logical, rational, and systemic decisions, which according to the employees are correct. On the other hand, the employees are not part of the decision

making process which disregards Aslam's (2014) statement about the importance of including the employees in the decision making process. However, in some rare occasions some employees with more experience are asked to give their opinion on a certain topic. Besides that, the employees in the reservation department do not have any autonomy. They are exposed to specific demands, principles, and protocols that must be strictly followed. Additionally, although Mulder(2013) indicates that manager's feedback leads to intensified learning and overall improvement, the research shows that after the employees settle in in the work environment, the manager tends to neglect the process of providing constructive feedback. This is in line with her strict character and the lack of using words of affirmation to praise the employees when they excel at something.

Furthermore, as expected the COVID-19 pandemic created abundant changes in the working process. However, the employees believe that the management professionally handled the COVID-19 issues, obstacles, and restrictions. Although the hotels were forced to lock their doors, and cancel numerous bookings, the manager of the department maintained a certain level of stability throughout the entire crisis and made rational decisions.

The research showed that the employees have a strong and powerful connection. Not only that they support and encourage each other, but also share knowledge and give one another constructive feedbacks which improve their skills and competences. This compatibility represents a safe harbor for the employees and thus acts as the strongest motivator that in many cases compensates for other missing or poorly executed elements leading to engagement. Additionally, the interviews also revealed that the onboarding methods are undefined and dreary but do manage to prepare them for the work tasks.

Furthermore, as the research showed the Conscious Hotels do not do well in terms of motivation and promotion of their employees. There are neither monetary nor non-monetary rewards, the expression of recognition is complex and not straight forward, succeeding is challenging, getting a vertical promotion is difficult and almost impossible, and there is an absence of professional development enabled by the management. All these missing elements represent weaknesses, as the positive impacts of their existence cannot be experienced. More precisely, the expressed desire by the interviewed employees to receive rewards once again confirms the importance and meaning of rewards when it comes to motivation and engagement (Seng & Arumugam, 2017). Nonetheless, the employees feel safe working at the Conscious Hotels, like the physical aspects of the workspace, and enjoy working in the positive atmosphere created by the colleagues. In addition, some of them that describe themselves as environmentalists are additionally motivated by the hotel's sustainability.

In the end, the interviews showed that although the management is trying to engage the employees, the effort is not at its best and the engagement methods and approaches need serious improvements. Therefore it is not surprising that the employees are only mildly satisfied and feel mediocre engagement. They are not overly connected and committed to

working at the Hotels, quite the opposite, some of them are actually willing and thinking about leaving the Conscious Hotels in order to find better positions. Finally yet importantly, the employees suggested several possible improvements among which the most requested one was implementing a reward system.

3.9 Recommendations

Based on the findings and the literature review there are several suggestions on how the Conscious Hotels can strengthen the employee engagement. Considering everything, I give the following recommendations:

- The Conscious Hotels should implement an efficient reward system
- The Conscious Hotels should implement actions and programs that will enable professional development of the employees
- The Conscious Hotels should pay more attention to the needs and career goals of the employees
- The Conscious Hotels should further improve and extend the onboarding process by integrating various onboarding tactics
- The manager of the reservation department should be more affectionate and encouraging

3.10 Contributions, Limitations and Future research directions

The dissertation provides a thorough review of the available existing literature on employee engagement while the research findings fill the research gap related to investigating and analyzing employee engagement in practice. More specifically, the findings advance the understanding of how the Conscious Hotels' work environment affects the employee engagement.

This is a first ever research on the topic at the Conscious Hotels and as such brings great value not only to the hotels themselves but also to the academic world and especially the human resource management experts and practitioners. The findings from this research advance the knowledge of employee engagement in the hospitality industry. They enrich the currently available literature therefore can be used as a starting point or a reference for future research on the topic.

The research provides a deeper understanding of the meaning and influence of the four most important dimensions leading to high levels of employee engagement and their correlation to the work environment. The results also shine a light upon the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hospitality employees, which is one of the hot topics in

academia as there are still too many unanswered questions regarding the virus itself, the restrictions, and the effects of the rigorous changes.

The dissertation can therefore be useful to other hotels willing to investigate the optimization of employee engagement and their approach to it. Particularly, it can help them perform assessments of their employee engagement and thus identify their strengths and weaknesses leading to recognizing aspects that can be improved in order to increase the level of employee engagement and their overall performance.

Additionally, the dissertation provides recommendations and practical implications, applicable and useful not only for the HR department at the Conscious Hotels, but also for interested parties and managers in other hospitality establishments. Taking under consideration the problematic aspects recognized by the research they can make sure they are not forgetting or neglecting some of the critical elements and therefore enhance their process.

However, the dissertation also has certain limitations. Namely, there are two decisive limitations of the research:

- Sampling size: all five interviewees were from the reservation department responsible for all four Conscious Hotels meaning that the employee engagement in other departments of the hotels is yet to be explored. In other words, I can make a general conclusion about the way the work environment at the Conscious Hotels affects the employee engagement only regarding the reservation department because I included one department which was available at the time and simultaneously open for collaboration.
- Disadvantages connected to the chosen research method: qualitative research has its weaknesses and limitations in terms of data analysis, accuracy, verifiability, biases, and generalizability. Specifically, firstly, there is a high possibility for informant or researcher bias meaning that the process and thus the findings can be easily and either consciously or subconsciously affected by the interviewer or the participants (Graebner, Martin, & Roundy, 2012). Secondly, the verification process for in-depth interviews is longer (Queiros, Faria, & Almeida, 2017). Thirdly, the analyzing procedure is more complex which means it is easier to make mistakes when processing data.

Based on the above, a following qualitative research is needed that would include semi-structured in-depth interviews with employees from other departments at the Conscious Hotels. The research findings are especially important for the Conscious Hotels thus the hotels' HR department can further exploit the results of the empirical research for their own interest and well-being. They can easily build up on the findings and further investigate the phenomenon or even broaden the research by combining it with other important HRM functions. Over time, in case the hotels decide to implement some of the previously given recommendations, a consequential research should be performed to explore whether there will be significant difference, or in other words to compare the current employee engagement with the employee engagement after the implementations.

Besides that, quantitative research is also recommended, as it would numerically test and analyze the given phenomenon from another perspective that might have been overseen in my research. Additionally, it is recommended for other researchers to bring the findings into play in case they are aiming to expand the research to other hotels or accommodation facilities, as well as any other sort of institutions.

CONCLUSION

The main question of this dissertation is: Does the work environment impact employee engagement? From the research done can be concluded that it can and it does. We can see, once linked with the four dimensions, that employees are impacted by all – promotion possibility, motivation, procedural justice and knowledge sharing. All of these dimensions are present and valid in their engagement efforts, but some are having higher importance than others.

It is very visible that the employees are having a possibility of promotion in mind, and all are thinking about their possibilities within the company. They are realizing that the possibility of vertical promotion is minimal, and they would like some vision or chance from the Conscious Hotel management. Employees were mentioning further developing of their skills with workshops or further education. As said in the recommendation, the management should develop actions and programs for further development for the employees, that doesn't have to be necessary linked to the reservation department only but could provide a link to other departments so the employees could have better overview of the hotel practices that could help them with development of their career further.

According to Tsai, et al. (2015) career development and promotional opportunities have been considered the most powerful predictor of employee's engagement but it is not in line with this dissertation. It is clear that the employees perceive this opportunity as almost impossible therefore promotion is not their strongest predictor of their engagement.

The factors for the motivation of the employees of reservation department are in line with the factors stated above - a high salary, stable and secure future, variety in work tasks and a possibility to learn new things (Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008). Employees were mentioning the possibility of bonuses and monetary motivation. Something like that is missing in the company and it would really spark the employee's motivation and engagement. However, it was clear that their salary is a big motivator and surprisingly they were not mentioning salary increase but bonuses. This could mean they don't see salary increase as an option at all. As stated above, the management should pay attention to the needs of the employees.

As for knowledge sharing it was probably the most positive part of the interviews for the employees. It was clear they like to work with each other and helping each other with daily tasks and workload. That is in line with an open work culture, where employees feel supported when they have a question, and by fair treatment from the organization (Schepers & Van Den Berg, 2007). The employees feel more engaged with the work because of their colleagues, and it makes them feel better at work. As for recommendation to the management, there should be some standard operation procedure in place for the newcomers, as it would improve the onboarding process. As for this dissertation, knowledge sharing is the strongest predictor of employee engagement because of the overall positive conclusion based on the interviews.

In the context of a work environment, procedural justice is the degree to which employees affected by managerial decisions perceive them to have been made based on fair methods (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993). The perception of procedural justice for the reservation employees seems somewhat positive. They have a good relationship with the manager, and they trust in the management decision making. They were mentioning however, they are not involved at all in the decision making process regarding their jobs and two of the employees would like to be, as they feel it would be more helpful for the hotels too. Based on Vermunt & Törnblom, (2007) it would help with employee engagement if they had higher level of independence and some power in the decision-making process regarding their job. Kim & Beehr (2020) are connecting procedural justice with motivation because if employees perceive their management as fair, they have higher motivation to work.

In conclusion, the work environment is one of the factors that is affecting the engagement of the employees of the reservation department of Conscious Hotels and the management should keep this in mind. Regarding knowledge sharing and procedural justice the employees were feeling they are treated fairly and they were having a positive relationship with their coworkers but there is definitely a space for improvement regarding the promotion and motivation as employees felt that there was no possibility of promotion and bonuses.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Povzetek (Summary in Slovene language)

Živimo v svetu, v katerem naše delo neposredno vpliva na naše počutje, srečo in kakovost življenja. Povprečna oseba dela 40 ur na teden in 120 ur na mesec. To pomeni, da tretjino dneva preživimo s sodelavci, običajno v pisarni, obkroženi z delovnim okoljem. Vprašanje je, ali ima delovno okolje na nas vpliv? Ali ima moč, da izboljša eno tretjino našega dneva? Ali smo zaradi njega lahko pri delu celo bolj zavzeti?

Ta disertacija temelji na študiji primera mojega polletnega pripravništva v Conscious Hotels v Amsterdamu. Potekalo je v letu 2019 in v začetku leta 2020, intervjuji pa so bili opravljeni po času koronakrize. V tem diplomskem delu želim ugotoviti, ali delovno okolje vpliva na zavzetost zaposlenih v oddelku rezervacij v podjetju Conscious Hotels.

Veliko napisanega o zavzetosti zaposlenih so objavila le svetovalna podjetja (Slåtten in Mehmetoglu, 2011). Leta 2004 so Robinson, Perryman in Hayday komentirali, da je presenetljivo, kako malo akademskih in empiričnih raziskav je bilo opravljenih o zavzetosti zaposlenih. Poleg tega Slåtten & Mehmetoglu (2011) navajata, da obstaja potreba po raziskavah, ki se osredotočajo na zavzetost zaposlenih v gostinsko-turistični panogi.

Schaufeli (2013) poudarja, da sodobne organizacije zahtevajo, da manj ljudi opravi več dela in da podjetja potrebujejo zaposlene, ki so tudi psihološko pripravljene vlagati v svoje delo. In prav to je bistvo zavzetosti zaposlenih.

Ta disertacija je razdeljena na tri poglavja. Prvo je teoretično poglavje, v katerem bom predstavila vključevanje zaposlenih in delovno okolje. Drugo poglavje, v katerem bom predstavila nekatere posebnosti hotelske panoge in nekaj podrobnejših informacij o hotelski panogi in posebnosti storitev za stranke na Nizozemskem. V tretjem poglavju bom opisala svoje raziskovalne metode z ugotovitvami.

V teoretičnem delu bo opredeljeno, kaj je zavzetost zaposlenih, kateri so dejavniki, predstavljen bo model zavzetosti, ki bi lahko pomagal menedžerjem pri boljšem vključevanju zaposlenih, in prikazan bo vpliv zavzetosti na zaposlene in tudi na podjetje. Nato bom predstavil štiri razsežnosti delovnega okolja, ki so jih oblikovali Tsai, Horng, Liu in Hu. (2015), v katerih si bom podrobneje ogledali vsako dimenzijo, in sicer napredovanje, motivacijo, postopkovno pravičnost in delitev znanja, ter kako vplivajo na zavzetost pri delu. Razložena bo tudi korelacija med zavzetostjo zaposlenih in delovnim okoljem.

V empiričnem delu bo predstavljena raziskovalna metoda, ki je kvalitativna raziskava, izvedena s polstrukturiranimi intervjuji, pri čemer bom upoštevala vprašalnik, ki sem ga oblikovala za zbiranje podatkov od petih zaposlenih, ki delajo na oddelku rezervacij v Conscious Hotels. Po zbiranju podatkov bodo ti kodirani in nato nadalje razvrščeni glede na štiri razsežnosti delovnega okolja.

Po Ramliju (2019) delovno okolje zajema vse, kar je okoli zaposlenih in kar lahko vpliva na izpolnjevanje njihovih nalog. Med delom morajo zaposleni sodelovati s sodelavci in nadrejenimi, prav tako morajo upoštevati politike in pravila podjetja, ki so določena, ter dosegati obstoječe standarde uspešnosti (Ramli, 2019).

Leta 2015 so Tsai, Horng, Liu & Hu. opravili študijo o povezavi med delovnim okoljem in zavzetostjo zaposlenih. Nato so združili štiri razsežnosti - postopkovno pravičnost, motivacijo, delitev znanja in napredovanje - da bi dodatno raziskali povezavo med delovnim okoljem in gostinsko-turistično panogo. Ugotovila sta, da lahko podjetja z izboljšanjem delovnega okolja motivirajo, spodbujajo in vključujejo zaposlene.

- Postopkovna pravičnost: Postopkovna pravičnost je opredeljena kot zaznavanje, kako pravično so ljudje obravnavani na vseh družbenih področjih - v družini, na delovnem mestu in na pravnem področju (Vermunt & Törnblom, 2007). Spremljanje zaposlenih je eno od glavnih orodij za ohranjanje pravičnosti pri odločanju o dodeljevanju nagrad. Vodji zagotavlja znanje za sprejemanje pravičnih odločitev. V kontekstu delovnega okolja je postopkovna pravičnost stopnja, do katere zaposleni, na katere vplivajo vodstvene odločitve, menijo, da so bile sprejete na podlagi poštenih metod (Niehoff in Moorman, 1993). Proceduralna pravičnost vpliva na zadovoljstvo pri delu in s tem na namero zapustiti podjetje. Vključuje tudi naslednje: vedeti, kaj so v podobnih okoliščinah prejeli drugi ljudje, ali je vodja vreden zaupanja ali ne in ali je izid pravičen ali ne (Vermunt & Törnblom, 2007). Kim & Beehr (2020) povezujeta postopkovno pravičnost z motivacijo, saj imajo zaposleni večjo motivacijo za delo, če vodenje dojemajo kot pravično.
- Motivacija: Utman (1997) opredeljuje motivacijo kot "odraz posameznikovega zanimanja za nalogo in zavzetosti za korist same naloge". Smiselno je, da se motivacija deli glede na starost zaposlenih. Vendar pa obstaja nekaj dejavnikov, ki so enaki za vse generacije - visoka plača, stabilna in varna prihodnost, raznolikost delovnih nalog in možnost učenja novih stvari (Wong, Gardiner, Lang in Coulon, 2008). Raziskave so dokazale, da je motivacija na delovnem mestu pomembna. Motivacija ima lahko odločilno vlogo v odnosu med zaposlenim in delovno uspešnostjo (Bright, 2013). Asaari, Desa & Subramaniam (2019) navajajo, da so zaposleni, ki so visoko motivirani, bolj učinkoviti, produktivni in pripravljeni delati za doseganje ciljev podjetja v primerjavi z zaposlenimi, ki imajo nizko raven motivacije. Gre za enega najpomembnejših, a hkrati tudi najzahtevnejših vidikov. Na podlagi Asaarija in drugih (2019) zaposleni vidijo plačo in priznanje kot pomembno nagrado, ki povečuje njihovo motivacijo in zadovoljstvo. Plača se lahko obravnava tudi kot nagrada, ki deluje kot katalizator, ki posameznike spodbuja k boljšemu in kakovostnejšemu delu.
- Izmenjava znanja: Izmenjava znanja je del procesa družbene izmenjave, kjer si dva posameznika izmenjujeta ali prenašata znanje drug na drugega. Spodbujati jo je treba z odprto delovno kulturo, kjer se zaposleni počutijo podprte, ko imajo vprašanje, in s pravično obravnavo s strani organizacije (Schepers in Van Den Berg,

2007). Zaposleni dojemajo pravičnost določenih dogodkov (npr. sestanek z vodjo ali postopek ocenjevanja delovne uspešnosti) na podlagi zgodovine svojih izkušenj z vpleteno osebo, kar nato vpliva na vedenje in odnos zaposlenega do te stranke (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman in Taylor, 2000). Študija (Wenger, 1998) je pokazala, da bi morale organizacije graditi skupnosti prakse: skupine zaposlenih, ki si izmenjujejo izkušnje, spoznanja in orodja o področju skupnega interesa.

- Napredovanje: Zaposleni, ki se zavedajo raznolikosti dela in možnosti napredovanja, so spodbujeni k izboljšanju znanja in razvoju svojih spretnosti. Karierni razvoj in možnosti napredovanja veljajo za najmočnejši napovedni dejavnik zavzetosti zaposlenih. Kadar zaposleni menijo, da so njihove možnosti za napredovanje pri delu neomejene, se njihova zavzetost poveča in so pri delu bolj dejavni (Tsai et al., 2015).

Glavno vprašanje te disertacije je: Ali delovno okolje vpliva na zavzetost zaposlenih? Iz opravljene raziskave je mogoče sklepati, da lahko in da vpliva. Ob povezavi s štirimi razsežnostmi lahko ugotovimo, da na zaposlene vplivajo vse - možnost napredovanja, motivacija, postopkovna pravičnost in delitev znanja. Vse te razsežnosti so prisotne in veljavne pri prizadevanjih za zavzetost, vendar imajo nekatere večji pomen kot druge.

Zelo očitno je, da zaposleni razmišljajo o možnosti napredovanja in o svojih možnostih v podjetju. Zavedajo se, da je možnost vertikalnega napredovanja minimalna, in si želijo, da bi jim vodstvo Conscious Hotela ponudilo določeno vizijo ali priložnost. Zaposleni so omenjali nadaljnje razvijanje svojih sposobnosti z delavnicami ali nadaljnjim izobraževanjem. Kot je bilo rečeno v priporočilu, bi moralo vodstvo razviti ukrepe in programe za nadaljnji razvoj zaposlenih, pri čemer ni nujno, da je to povezano samo z oddelkom rezervacij, ampak bi lahko zagotovilo povezavo z drugimi oddelki, tako da bi zaposleni imeli boljši pregled nad hotelskimi praksami, kar bi jim lahko pomagalo pri nadaljnjem razvoju njihove kariere.

Po mnenju Tsaija et al. (2015) naj bi bili karierni razvoj in možnosti napredovanja najmočnejši napovedni dejavnik zavzetosti zaposlenih, vendar to ni v skladu s to disertacijo. Jasno je, da zaposleni to priložnost dojemajo kot skoraj nemogočo, zato napredovanje ni najmočnejši napovednik njihove zavzetosti.

Dejavniki motivacije zaposlenih v oddelku za rezervacije so v skladu z zgoraj navedenimi dejavniki - visoka plača, stabilna in varna prihodnost, raznolikost delovnih nalog in možnost učenja novih vsebin (Wong, Gardiner, Lang in Coulon, 2008). Zaposleni so omenjali tudi možnost nagrad in denarno motivacijo. Nekaj takega v podjetju manjka in bi resnično spodbudilo motivacijo in zavzetost zaposlenih. Vendar je bilo jasno, da je njihova plača velik motivacijski dejavnik, in presenetljivo niso omenjali zvišanja plače, temveč nagrade. To bi lahko pomenilo, da zvišanja plače sploh ne vidijo kot možnost. Kot je navedeno zgoraj, bi moralo vodstvo nameniti pozornost potrebam zaposlenih.

Izmenjava znanja je bila za zaposlene verjetno najbolj pozitiven del razgovorov. Jasno je bilo, da radi delajo drug z drugim in si pomagajo pri vsakodnevnih nalogah in delovnih

obveznostih. To je v skladu z odprto delovno kulturo, kjer zaposleni čutijo podporo, ko imajo vprašanje, in pošteno obravnavo s strani organizacije (Schepers in Van Den Berg, 2007). Zaposleni se zaradi sodelavcev počutijo bolj zavzete za delo, zaradi česar se pri delu bolje počutijo. Kar zadeva priporočilo vodstvu, bi bilo treba za novozaposlene uvesti standardni postopek delovanja, saj bi to izboljšalo proces uvajanja. Kar zadeva to disertacijo, je delitev znanja zaradi splošne pozitivne ugotovitve na podlagi intervjujev najmočnejši napovedni dejavnik zavzetosti zaposlenih.

V delovnem okolju je postopkovna pravičnost stopnja, do katere zaposleni, na katere vplivajo vodstvene odločitve, menijo, da so bile sprejete na podlagi poštenih metod (Niehoff in Moorman, 1993). Dojemanje postopkovne pravičnosti pri zaposlenih na rezervacijah je dokaj pozitivno. Imajo dober odnos z vodjo in zaupajo v sprejemanje odločitev vodstva. Omenili pa so, da sploh niso vključeni v proces odločanja o svojem delu, dva od zaposlenih pa bi si to želela, saj menita, da bi bilo to bolj koristno tudi za hotele. Na podlagi Vermunta in Törnbloma (2007) bi k zavzetosti zaposlenih pripomogla večja stopnja neodvisnosti in nekaj moči v procesu odločanja o njihovem delu. Kim & Beehr (2020) povezujeta postopkovno pravičnost z motivacijo, saj imajo zaposleni večjo motivacijo za delo, če svoje vodstvo dojemajo kot pravično.

Zaključimo lahko, da je delovno okolje eden od dejavnikov, ki vplivajo na zavzetost zaposlenih v oddelku rezervacij v Conscious Hotels, zato bi moralo vodstvo to upoštevati. Glede delitve znanja in postopkovne pravičnosti so zaposleni menili, da so obravnavani pravično. S sodelavci so imeli pozitivne odnose, vendar je vsekakor treba izboljšati napredovanje in motivacijo, saj so zaposleni menili, da ni možnosti za napredovanje in nagrade.

Appendix 2: Overview of the interviews

The interviews were done between June 2020 and August 2021 with employees of the reservation department of Conscious Hotels. Rianne used to work in the reservation department but now is working in finance, the rest are still working there or left to other companies. Interviews were done over Skype and then transcribed.

Isabelle

P: Hello, thank you a lot for helping me finish my thesis. Doing this research is very important to me and thus I appreciate your participation.

I: Oh Pavla, please it is my pleasure. I have been through the same process and I know it requires understanding from other people, so I am happy to help.

P: Thank you, so without further ado, let's get started.

I: Please, ask away.

P: I want to start by asking you how do you perceive the hotel's effort to engage its employees?

I: I have been working here for more than seven years and from what I have seen and learned throughout the years, I can say that employee engagement is not very straightforward. It can easily fluctuate depending on various factors such as the current workload, the people's perception of their momentary expectations and need, as well as the manager's effort at the time and his approach. Generally, I would say that the hotel does put an effort to engage the employees but I would not say that they do that methodically or according to some previously drafted plan. As a matter of fact it is more like a spontaneous reaction to the current situation.

P: I understand. So then, according to you what leads to employee engagement?

I: As I already said, a lot of elements contribute to the level of engagement. The work environment is highly important in terms of engagement because people put more effort and feel more comfortable in a positive work environment where the colleagues are friendly and open for cooperation. The same goes for the management, employees feel much better knowing that the manager has their back or that they can approach the supervisors without being scared of their reactions. Besides that, motivation also plays a vital role in engaging the employees. If they are motivated they tend to put more effort and genuinely dedicated to performing their tasks as well as possible.

P: Great that you mentioned that. I can see that you have a deep understanding of the topic, so how engaged do you feel?

I: Thank you, I guess I have picked up a thing or two on the way. I can be happier when coming to work every day and dedicating high amount of effort, but at the same time, I am far away from feeling disengaged.

P: So then what would push you over the edge in terms of being happier?

I: Small stuff they can do to make us feel better. For example to be given more independency and a chance to brainstorm our ideas openly and frequently.

P: I understand, that is really important.

I: Yes.

P: Now, I would like to know what motivates you?

I: Many things motivate me. For once I feel motivated when the management recognizes my effort and acknowledges it although here that is not very straightforward. The managers do not have a habit of praising the good work because they think that is expected of us which means that is a must and not up to the person's will and dedication. Additionally I am motivated by the positive relationship with my coworkers. They are great and that gives me strength to keep moving forward. And last but definitely not least, I see the bonuses as a motivational mean, but unfortunately that is not the case at the hotel. We do not receive any financial bonuses, not other perks or benefits for achieving great results, but there are annual Christmas parties as well as other gatherings and regular perks that in a way make up for this. Anyhow, they can implement more ways to stimulate us.

P: That is a shame. But, you really covered a lot of my questions. However, if you don't mind I would like to go a bit deeper in some of the mentioned fields.

I: Of course, no problem. Go for it.

P: Firstly, I want to ask you whether the physical factors or any other factors of the work environment influence you and your perception of the Hotels in any way?

I: See, I completely forgot to mention that. Yes, I love how comfortable I feel at the office. Working in an environment where you do not have to worry about being exposed to any hazards and just be able to focus on the work is crucial for the mental health. Unfortunately, there are many people who do not enjoy this basic human right. I am lucky to work in a nice office where I feel protected.

P: You are right that is essential. So being aware of the above mentioned, how do the provided motivational elements affect you? How do you feel about it?

I: I have been here for a while now which makes me understand that the manager appreciates having me around so that makes me feel comfortable in my skin. I am not looking for rewards because I know that is not realistic and as we talked because of the surrounding I can concentrate on being productive instead of worrying about other obstacles.

P: I understand. Tell me, how would you explain your relationship with the manager from your department?

I: We have a productive professional relationship. She is not much older than me but really knows a lot and always keeps me in the loop and I think that goes not only for me, but the entire department under her leadership.

P: Can you please describe the information flow between you and your manager?

I: The department has weekly meetings where we talk about the upcoming week. Usually, there are not major changes in the workload or the procedures. The work is pretty routine based so most often those meetings are very short and up to the point. The manager informs us in case there are some expectancies and tells us how to approach them.

P: I see and are you maybe included in the decision making process?

I: No, no I am not included in the decision making process. Making decisions is the manager's responsibility, we just follow the orders. In only a few occasions we have been

asked to contribute in terms of making decisions and I can tell you that that process can be tricky because different people have different ideas on how to approach a certain problem, so at the end if the management does not incorporate their idea or suggestion it can lead to frustration or disappointment. However, since I have been here for a while and hence have seen a lot, there have been a couple of situations where the manager has asked to share my opinion with her.

P: If that is the case, are you satisfied with the decisions made by your manager regarding the job duties, the changes and the rules?

I: Yes, I am satisfied. The decisions are logical and very systematical. In fact, the entire work process is highly systemic and rule based. The management prefers to follow the already set way of conducting business, which is why I was a bit surprised with how well they handled the COVID-19 situation.

P: Please tell me more about that.

I: You mean the COVID-19 pandemic?

P: Yes. I want to know how the hotels carried themselves out during the first waves of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I: In my opinion, they handled the situation like a pro. With everything that was going on especially at the beginning I think that they did a really good job. Despite everything the management managed to stay calm or as calm as someone can be in a situation where hotels are being shut down and people are being let go. Of course our hotel was not immune to that, unfortunately as I have heard there were some cut downs, but generally they tried to minimize the negative effects. We were all scared, but our manager managed to calm us down and keep the positive spirits. She came up with great solutions and I really respect her for that.

P: I guess you were working from home. Right?

I: Yes, yes and we still do in some cases.

P: Okay. So then overall how does the current manager's approach, decisions, and relationship impact you and your work?

I: Using just one word, I would say that our relationship and her approach and decisions are constructive. I am not delighted, but I am far from objecting her ways and means as she is a professional that only needs a bit more social touch or should I say people skills.

P: We all have some weaknesses. But how often does she use words of affirmation?

I: Similarly, to constructive feedback, the necessity of receiving words of affirmation is higher when you are new at a company in comparison to later on. I think that the manager knows that and approves it.

P: I see and what about your relationship with the colleagues? How would you explain the relationship between all of you?

I: It is amazing. We really support each other. Some of my teammates are much younger than I am, but that is not an issue because it actually improves the efficiency.

P: In that case, how often do you give constructive feedback to your more inexperienced colleagues?

I: I try to transfer my knowledge as much as possible in order to help others to achieve positive result. However, I can say that we support each other by pointing out some of our weaknesses and teach each other a thing or two.

P: That is nice. Then how does the relationship with them and your knowledge sharing impact you and your work?

I: It has a positive effect. Our relationship makes us stronger and improves our efficiency.

P: Amazing. On the other hand, how often do you get constructive feedback from your manager?

I: Depending on what you mean by constructive, but I would say not very often. I can say that is one item that is really missing. The manager is great and approachable, but she does not necessarily give us constructive feedback. Instead, the feedbacks are usually vague and not personalized. However, now, that I have been working here for a while I feel free to directly ask for it but at the beginning when I started working at the hotel that was not the case. I was shy so I needed some time before opening up and reaching my potentials. But, in this regard I have to add that at the beginning the constructive feedbacks are generally more frequently received or given because then there is a greater need of them.

P: Of course and I am glad to hear that you have figured stuff out and that you have a productive and encouraging relationship with the colleagues. So, based on everything how do you perceive your current work environment?

I: All in all positively. I feel safe, the colleagues are open for collaboration, the manager is experienced and hence effective, and the office is nicely arranged.

P: Great, and if we go back to when you first started working at the hotel. What did you expect when you first started working at the Conscious hotels and where your expectations met?

I: That is an interesting question. Please give me a few seconds to think about it because it has been a while.

P: No problem, please take your time.

I: I would say that my expectations were partially met. I know that I had extremely high demands and hopes which were generally met, but some actions disappointed me a bit. I expected a slightly different welcome than the one I got. I am not sure but I felt like I was not properly introduced to the environment.

P: Can you please tell me more about that?

I: Yes, of course. Maybe it is going to sound ridiculous and over the top but I expected a warmer welcome but all I got was one week of shadowing a more experienced employee and no follow up meeting with anyone from the human resource department.

P: No handbook with useful information, social media tools, welcome kits, special events or anything similar?

I: No, nothing like that. But, on the positive side they really met my expectations in terms of their environmental sustainability efforts. As an environmentalist, I feel proud to work at one of the Conscious hotels because they stand by everything that they promote and sell. There are absolutely no lies about their products, as a matter of fact sometimes they do more good for the environment than they say. They regularly try to find innovative and

sustainable solutions that can be implemented which makes me honored to work for them. I am sorry I got a bit too excited. I guess I am trying to say that their vision and mission align with my values and that makes me happy.

P: That sounds amazing. Thank you for sharing that with me, I loved hearing more about their sustainability strategy. I am an environmentalist myself so I completely understand you, I share your passion. But, what would you say, how difficult it is to succeed at the Conscious hotels? Do you feel like you are given a possibility to learn, improve and climb the ladder?

I: It is not very easy. I feel like you need to give your absolute maximum to be given a chance to move up the ladder. Now I know that they recognize the effort, but they do not necessarily show that. You need to be here for a while to understand that which sometimes might be frustrating especially for the new employees. As for the learning, there are not any trainings or seminars to improve our skills if that is what you meant, but our jobs are pretty routine so I assume they do not find the workshops necessary. However, it would be nice to attend some creative workshop that would broaden our horizons even if it is not directly connected to our everyday tasks and duties.

P: Of course, and how do the provided promotional opportunities affect you? Please remember that when I say this I also mean the management's effort and the given opportunity to learn and professionally develop yourself.

I: This is going to sound harsh, but in order to be affected by something that something needs to exist or happen. Now, since there are no creative workshops, seminar, or anything like that to help us learn more I can say that there is absolutely no effect on me otherwise if there was something like that it would have a positive one.

P: So at the end of the day do you see yourself at the Conscious hotels in the future?

I: Yes, I do. The pros outweigh the cons so at the end of the day I like working here.

P: I am glad to hear that and the very last question, what would you say how satisfied are you working here?

I: I am satisfied. Of course they can do more to increase the level of satisfaction, but there is always something that can be fixed or improved and if they are willing to work on that they have strong potential to become even better.

P: Of course, that makes sense. Well, that is all. I wish you all the best and once again thank you.

I: Thank you. Bye.

P: Bye.

Deren

P: Hello and thank you for accepting to participate in my research.

D: No problem, you are welcome.

P: So let's get started. Can you please describe your onboarding experience? How they welcomed you and helped you integrate in the new surrounding?

D: I had a mentor that has dealt with many different cases and scenarios and has done reservations through the system numerous times. He was with me for two weeks and introduced me to my tasks. Firstly, he explained how important it is to follow the given instructions on how to perform the tasks. I remember him telling me that it is vital for me to work as I am being told because that way it is almost impossible to make mistakes. At the time that was acceptable for me because I was new and did not want to make any mistakes, so I did not think much of it, but now it is starting to annoy me. I know there are shortcuts that can save me some time and still keep the quality of my work, but I am not allowed to implement them which makes me stick to the old ones. However, I went off topic for a while, so let me get back to the essential question. After he made sure that I remember the first rule, he explained how to use the system and its functionalities. Also, during that period he was there for me in case I had some questions which was not bad.

P: Great, and were there any other activities? Did you maybe get a welcome kit, or a booklet with necessary information including the vacation days, their values, policies, etc. And were you properly introduced to the manager and your colleagues?

D: Yes, I met the manager on my very first day, but that was brief. She just welcomed me and that was it. My mentor also introduced me to my colleagues and I must say they were wonderful. We immediately connected and they accepted me without any problems, but, no, I did not receive any of the things that you mentioned.

P: I am glad to hear that the colleagues were friendly and accepting of you, I had a very similar experience. But that aside, I would like to know how would you explain your current relationship with them?

D: Amazing, almost all of my colleagues are my age so we have a lot in common. Of course we do not agree on everything but that just makes things more interesting.

P: If that is the case it must be fun spending eight hours a day with them.

D: Yes, definitely. With them, the time flies by. If something unpleasant or annoying happens we try to just laugh it out loud and go on with our day like nothing has happened.

P: It is nice to work with people who can make your day better.

D: I agree.

P: So, how are the information and knowledge flows between you guys?

D: We function very well together. We always help each other out and no one feels threatened by the rest of the group. We are not competitive at all, actually we are the opposite of that. For example, I am very good with operating the booking system, so I usually help them with that while other people help out by advising us how to use other apps and programs.

P: You seem like a perfect team.

D: Well, maybe not perfect but very close.

P: So, is there any way to maybe even further improve the knowledge flow?

D: I think that what we currently have works for us so I would not change anything.

P: The, how does the relationship with your colleagues and your knowledge sharing impact you?

D: They have a positive impact on me both communication wise and knowledge sharing wise. The first one improves my social skills, while the other improves my professional ones.

P: That is amazing. What about the onboarding? How did that experience impact you and your work?

D: It familiarized me with the workload. Aside from that, I am not sure how it impacted me. I guess it had a relatively positive effect because I was not just left by myself to figure things out.

D: How would you explain your relationship with the manager from the department? D: Our manager is excellent at what she does, she really knows her way around, she is supportive and appreciative. I believe her actions are correct and I do not doubt them in any way. We have a good relationship based on communicate. Due to her, once per month, we have a gathering outside the office and that brings us closer together.

P: That sounds great. I am really interested in finding out what you usually do on those gathering. When I was there once we went on a boat ride and once had a lovely dinner.

D: Yes, yes we do all sorts of things. Sometimes we go to fancy dinners, other times we play sports and sometimes enjoy free boat rides.

P: Yes, they do quite well in that regard.

D: Yes, yes.

P: And aside from those nice moments, overall, are you satisfied with the decisions made by your manager regarding the job duties?

D: Yes, yes I am. She knows her job and she is good at it.

P: How often do you receive words of affirmation from the manager?

D: What is that? Haha. No, I am kidding. Never. Encouraging words from the manager are not part of the culture here, but for me, right now that does not represent a problem. I know my worth and that does not bother me, however during the first months it would have been nice to be directly praised and feel valued.

P: Yes, the beginning are always difficult and the newcomers need much more approval.

D: That is correct.

P: So, are you in any way part of the decision making process?

D: No, or at least not that I know of hahah.

P: Fair enough. Are all decisions regarding to your job applied systematically?

D: Hmm depends of the situations, I think most of them are systematic but the covid pandemic changed a lot about how we do reservations and cancellations. Those changes came out of the blue, but I do not think that anyone could have predicted that and the sudden change is not anyone's fault. I think you cannot avoid the situations and I think they are doing it quite ok.

P: Yes, unfortunately the COVID situation really did us good, but I am glad to hear that you are doing well and that the hotel has maintained a certain level of stability.

D: It is not easy but they are trying.

P: It was difficult. It was really difficult, but I am glad to hear that they are doing well. But aside from that, how does the current manager's approach and relationship impact you and your work?

D: There are strengths and weakness, but mostly I enjoy the manager's approach. We have accepted one another and that works for us except for some minor disagreement that we cannot agree upon such as strictly following the guidelines. Anyhow, whenever I need additional motivation, help, or support I can talk to my colleagues and they can fill the void.

Now, back to the initial topic. What would you say, how often do you get constructive feedback from your manager or your experienced colleagues?

D: Honestly, the manager always organizes weekly meetings but we do not get constructive feedback. On the other hand, my colleagues very often give me feedback which is amazing because that way I can improve myself.

P: Do you feel like the Conscious hotels have provided you with the necessary tools for your professional development?

D: Not necessarily, I believe that I have learned much more from my colleagues than from anyone else.

P: So, then do you feel like you are given a possibility to learn, improve and climb the ladder? Do you feel like you have a possibility to learn new things? If yes, does it motivate you?

D: Hmm, this question is a bit tough. Honestly, I don't see that there is an easy way to go to the next level because the next level would be a manager position of all the other agents, and there is only one person on that position, so unless that person quits I do not see how I can climb the ladder. Although, I must admit that would motivate me.

P: Besides that, what else motivates you?

D: I am motivated by my coworkers and the overall positive spirit in the office. Also I would like to have a viable chance to climb the ladder as that would motivate me to be even better at what I do and if they throw in some reward like a voucher, or a gift card for a job well done I definitely would not mind it. Besides that, I would like to do things my way instead of following the strict guidelines and have more autonomy as that is very important to me.

P: What do you think of the physical aspects of the work environment? Do their presence or state influence you and your thinking in any way?

D: There is not much to say here. The working space is decent and exactly what one hotel of such rank should offer.

P: What about other elements such as safety, health insurance etc.?

D: They are a serious organization that follows the government regulations, protocols, and rules. They comply with the standards and make sure their employees are safe and sound.

P: I agree, I also think they are responsible in that regard. So, overall how do you perceive the hotel's effort to engage its employees?

D: It can be better. There are some weaknesses that can be easily fixed if the upper management listens to our recommendations.

P: Like what? What would you recommend?

D: As I said before, it would be nice to receive some additional bonuses for job well done. Besides that, I would like it if they find a way to spice things up a little bit and just to be clear I do not mean to give us even more work, even now the workload can be overwhelming from time to time. I mean to make it more interesting by implementing some creative elements or touches.

P: Talking about this, how do the current motivational system and the provided motivational elements affect you and your work?

D: Although every educated human knows the value of bonuses and rewards, the management here seems to be oblivious to that fact. Rewards have a tendency to make a person feel good about himself, but here I am unable to experience that feeling. In spite of that, there are also some benefits such as working with great people and in a safe environment.

P: How satisfied are you with your job?

D: More than mildly satisfied, but not completely.

P: Do you feel engaged and if yes, how engaged and why?

D: If I am being honest, I am not thrilled about working here. I do not hate my job, but I do not wake up excited to come to work. Nonetheless, I do my obligations with dedication and accuracy.

P: Do you see yourself at the Conscious hotels in the future?

D: Probably not, because if I do not move forward with my career I will eventually feel trapped and in need of finding some new challenge that will better fit my experience and knowledge.

P: Before we finish, I just want to touch upon another element. Namely, I want to ask how do you feel about the hotel's sustainability? Is that in any way relevant to you?

D: You mean if that motivates me?

P: Well yes, but also how does it make you feel generally speaking?

D: Honestly, I cannot say that their sustainability directly motivates me. What they are doing is nice and I believe that they are helping to reduce the negative impacts imposed on the Earth, but that does not affect the quality of my work. I would try to do a good job even if they were not an eco-friendly hotel just because that is who I am as a person.

P: That is all, thank you very much.

D: Thank you. This was fun.

Marlou

P: Hi.

M: Hi.

P: Should we get started right away?

M: Sure, why not.

P: Okay, so let's dive right in. How do you perceive the hotel's effort to engage its employees?

M: I think that they are doing a good job. I mean it is obvious that they are trying to engage the employees, especially the newcomers. I think that those procedures work very well. For example I am very satisfied with my onboarding. The whole experience was quite positive. I was coached quite well and I am satisfied with that. And as I have heard I am not the only one with positive feelings regarding my welcome and the coaching. Those elements are well coordinated and implemented.

P: And how long have you been working at the Conscious hotels?

M: For about a year now.

P: So you have had time to adjust and get familiar with the work environment.

M: Yeah I definitely know my way around. I mean I would not say that I know absolutely everything, but I am getting there. There are still stuff I need to learn. I am quite new in this field so the road is ahead of me.

P: Since you mentioned that, do you feel like the Conscious hotels have provided you with the necessary tools for your professional development?

M: Yes, I believe so. So far I have received enough information, my basic needs are met, I have the necessary tools, my colleagues are here to help me whenever I need them and the manager is open to questions, so I would say that I have everything I need in order to succeed. Of course, succeeding is never easy but I really believe that the management recognizes and appreciates the hard working employees.

P: Why do you say that? How do they express recognition?

M: Well the team consists of quality employees, so I assume they recognize potentials.

P: Okay, I understand. That makes sense. So are you looking for promotion at the moment?

M: No, no I still have stuff to learn before wanting more.

P: Fair. But, how do you perceive the promotional opportunities generally provided by the Hotels? Do you think it is possible to get a promotion in the future?

M: I like the sound of that, but I am a realist so I know that getting a promotion can be problematic.

P: Why is that?

M: Well because of the work itself and the organization.

P: So, how do the promotional system affect you? And please remember that when I speak about promotion I also mean professional development an opportunity to learn.

M: Okay, I am happy with my professional development so far. I have increased my competences and my colleagues help me a lot with that. The stuff I have learned here make me more competent and prepare me for future concurs. Even if I do not stay at the company in the future I believe I would be able to find other job in the same field due to my experience.

P: So in a way the colleagues are the ones responsible for your professional development and your learning?

M: Mostly yes.

P: Okay, great. And how did the onboarding experience impact you and your work?

M: It prepared me for the tasks.

P: That is great. You mentioned your manager, so can you please explain your relationship?

M: As I said we have a great relationship. She is very reachable and there is a two-way communication.

P: Are you part of the decision making process?

M: Of course I am not part of the decision making process, but I am always informed about everything, as is everyone else in my team. In some rare occasions we also have a vote, or a say, but the bigger decisions are always made by the upper manager and other figures.

P: Do you agree with those decision? Do you think they are the right decisions?

M: They are logical. Plus I am pretty new in all of this and thus I really do not think it is my place to evaluate the big decisions at this time. That is probably going to change in the future because I will have more experience and knowledge but for now I trust my manager and believe that her decisions are the right ones.

P: Then how does the current manager's approach, you relationship, and her decisions impact you and your work?

M: Her decisions make me feel safe. I trust her and I believe her choices, which in a way makes my work more stable. Yes, she can be more affectionate but with time, I got used to her approach.

P: I understand, so then how often do you receive words of affirmation from her?

M: Words of affirmation are not her strong suit, so extremely rarely.

P: What about your colleagues? Can you please explain your relationship with the colleagues from your department?

M: They are amazing. They support me and help me whenever I need something. Since I am quiet new I have the tendency to ask many questions and beg for advices but they have never refused to help me, so I really appreciate that. I especially like it when they share their knowledge with me without me asking. Those actions are valuable to me because that is how I learn more and improve myself.

P: How often do you get constructive feedback from your more experienced colleagues and/or manager?

M: Hmm. I usually get feedback when they have something concrete to comment on. So it's not an automatic reaction. I just get a comment when I do something wrong or very well. I usually get the feedback during our one on ones.

P: You said that you are quiet new, so I have to ask you what do you prefer working exactly as you are told to or finding a way that works for you but is still efficient and effective?

M: I think that this is a very personal preference. Right now I am following the instructions because I am trying to avoid making mistakes. But in the future I would like to create my own ways and procedures. Of course the hotel already has its own procedures and it might be a bit difficult or almost impossible to do something about those actions, but I am hopeful that one day I will be able to make some minor changes or at least work in a way that fits me.

P: Overall how do you perceive your current work environment?

M: As a coherent unit. The department I work in is nicely structured, as I already mentioned the people are open for collaboration and the manager is highly experienced so that is a win-win situation for everyone.

P: I am really glad to hear that. What about the physical aspects of the work environment?

M: Oh, that aspect is spot on. They have normal, minimalistic offices with functional furniture and machinery.

P: Yes, yes they do. So would you say you feel safe working at the Conscious Hotels?

M: For sure. There is no doubt about it. I am as safe as someone can be.

P: Unfortunately, now I will transfer to a more depressing topic. How did the COVID-19 pandemic influence your work and the work of the department you work at?

M: It has not been easy. There were some major changes. We worked remotely. There were many crisis, many confused and angry guests and big decisions, but we are managing.

P: What were the best and the worst decision made during COVID-19?

M: The management decided we didn't have to answer phones during the first corona wave, because so many angry customers were calling and everyone wanted to get their money back, it was really horrible, we were really overwhelmed. So we were communicating with customers only through email for some time and that was much better. So I would say that was the best decision. And as for the worst one... well I am not really sure about the worst decision. I do not know.

P: Okay. Generally how satisfied are you with the way the Conscious hotels carried themselves out during COVID-19?

M: I am very satisfied. This has been a global disaster and they did well. They made the necessary changes not just in my department, but in every department and every segment of the business. The take outs, the remote work, I mean they did everything they could.

P: I understand. This is a burning hell.

M: Exactly.

P: Now I am going to shift the focus to something else and I am going to ask what is your understanding of sustainability?

M: Simply said sustainability is a way of living and conducting business. I do not really know what else to say here because everything has already been said. The Earth is changing every day and we are the main reason for that, so we really need to put an effort into finding sustainable solutions and implementing them in our day-to-day lives.

P: According to you, how sustainable are Conscious hotels?

M: Hmm. They are trying. They are sustainable, but it can be better. Some of their eco strategies are really great, but there is still a place for improvement.

P: Yes, there is always place for improvement. Now let's be positive and switch to something lighter.

M: Yeah, let's do that.

P: What motivates you to give your best?

M: Hmm. This question has a very obvious answer, but I will have to explain. Namely, as every other person on the planet, I am also motivated by the salary, or should I say I would

be motivated by it if it was higher. Do not get me wrong I am not greedy or something, but I need money for living haha.

P: Of course. I totally understand you.

M: Besides that, the work environment also motivates me. I am glad to work with these nice people and they motivate me to be better.

P: Based on this I can see that you would suggest an increase in the salaries. But besides that, what would you add in order to improve the work experience for yourself, your current colleagues and the future employees at Conscious hotels?

M: Yes, definitely a salary raise, but also other not monetary bonuses and stimulations.

P: Smart. So, based on that, how do the provided motivational elements affect you? The rewards, the recognition, and the other tangible or intangible elements?

M: The lack of rewards disappoints me. I like incentive because they scream appreciation, but the other stuff, like the overall positive work atmosphere make up for that.

P: Overall, taking everything under consideration, how satisfied are you?

M: At the moment, I am satisfied. I am not saying I cannot be more satisfied, but I am fine with what I have. Although I must add that some rewards or other related stuff would make me even more content.

P: And how engaged do you feel and why?

M: My future is still uncertain but that is mostly because of me and my mindset. However, at the moment, I am happy to work with such nice people, they encourage me to be a good employee.

P: I like your answer. Do you see yourself at the Conscious hotels in the future?

M: Yes and no. If I choose this future then yes, but I am not sure if I see myself here in ten years. Who knows, maybe. We will see.

P: I am almost certain that you will find the right path for yourself and you will have an amazing future. That is all from me. Thank you very much.

Rianne

P: Hello, thank you for helping me with my research.

R: Hi, there is absolutely no reason to thank me it is my pleasure.

P: Thank you and I promise not to take too much of your time.

R: No problem. Hopefully, I will be helpful.

P: I am sure you will. So, let's get started.

R: I am ready.

P: Firstly, I would like to ask you how long have you been working at the Conscious hotels?

R: I have been working here for almost three years. First, I started out as an intern and then after a while they offered me a regular position.

P: That means they recognized you potential...

R: Yes, I put a lot of effort to be here, but unfortunately, after I got the regular job I started stagnating and I do not mean knowledge wise, but position and reimbursement wise.

P: That is a shame, especially when you know you deserve more.

R: Exactly.

P: But, overall, do you feel like the Conscious hotels have provided you with the necessary tools for your professional development?

R: Yes, but only until a certain point. There is a lot you can learn, but after a while, the job becomes repeatable and monotonous. Although, I must admit that the past year has been a complete game changer. There were major changes in the way we perform our tasks and the approaches and it was not always easy, so in a way that made our job more dynamic and out of the ordinary.

P: Understandable, so how satisfied are you with the way the Conscious hotels carried themselves out during COVID-19?

R: I believe they managed to navigate considerably well.

P: What were the best and the worst decision made during COVID-19?

R: The best decisions were to start working from home, remotely, and to stop answering the calls that at beginning of the pandemic were exhaustingly unstoppable. As, for the worst decision, I really do not know. I cannot think of a bad decision. I believe that at times, no one knew how to handle the situation, but the manager somehow kept us in line.

P: I am glad to hear that because the past year has been extremely difficult for numerous people.

R: Yes and we have all been affected in one way or another.

P: Exactly. Based on what you have experienced and received in terms of promotion and development, what would you say how do those circumstances affect you and your work?

R: I can easily say that I give my best in spite of the promotional opportunities and not because of them. I desire more and I believe I deserve more which if provided would motivate me to further increase my input and satisfy my needs.

P: I am sorry to hear that. I hope you will get what you want and deserve.

R: I hope so as well.

P: How do the provided motivational elements affect you? The rewards, the recognition approach, the physical aspects of the environment etc.?

R: The physical aspects are satisfactory. You have seen the office, you know how it is organized. I absolutely have no complaints regarding that. The work conditions are impeccable, we have never been at risk and the technical devices are up to date.

P: Yes, you are right about that.

R: As for the other things, I can say that they do not provide any rewards so it is impossible to know how they would affect my work. However, I believe rewards would be a neat motivator, the same goes for the recognition.

P: You have to tell me more about that later on, but now let's circle back to your beginning here. Can you please describe your onboarding experience or in other words your welcoming and introduction to the new work environment?

R: My beginning as an intern, or a regular employee?

P: Both, I guess, but firstly as an intern.

R: All right. There was an open ad which seemed appalling, so I decided to apply. I quickly received a reply email asking me if I am willing to have an interview. The interview went well and I was hired. I mean I started working as an intern. I had modest practical knowledge, but the hospitality management degree pushed me over the edge. For a certain period of time I was not highly productive nor helpful. I was shadowing another colleague who was showing me around. He showed me how to use the excel sheets in order to check the data, how to make reservations, check for availability, send confirmation details to customers, process payments, answer questions customers might have, provide support to guests who may need to amend or cancel reservations and etc. Then he also gave me a written guideline on how to sort out issues that might arise with reservations and bookings. He made it clear that I need to stick to the provided solutions and the specific wording because that is a proven system that works the best and does not cause additional issues. Of course, dealing with guests is not easy and it takes time to learn the appropriate way of communicating with them, but everything is learnable and reachable. After he showed me as much as he could and we have to keep in mind that was not always available to explain everything as a result of the overwhelming workload, he let me do some smaller tasks and micromanaged me. At the end of the month, I worked independently, although from time to time I did have some questions especially when I had to deal with questions and complaints.

P: It is great that you had a person to help you understand and learn your duties and tasks, but in that time were you properly introduced to the colleagues from your department and the manager?

R: Yes, he immediately introduced me to my colleagues who seemed nice, but at the same time tried to keep their distance from me because they were not sure whether I am going to stay at the company or not. However, they were accessible and although sometimes I was hesitant to ask them questions, I quickly realized that they are open for communication and teamwork. Now we work quiet well together.

P: And what about the manager?

R: Pretty much the same as with the colleagues. I knew her, but did not see her much. Yet, she seemed refined and capable. But to be clear, I did not really approach her with any questions, I always tried to get answers from my colleagues because I did not want to bother her.

P: I am sure that now you know whom to contact with specific questions and probably do not even need that much help anymore?

R: Yes, I definitely know whom to contact and I am also not afraid to approach my manager if that is needed. Besides that, now I also communicate with other departments in order to coordinate the activities and help the newer or more recently employed colleagues by answering their questions and showing them some small tricks.

P: You have come a long way.

R: Honestly, I think I have already reached my knowledge limit. I do not think there is anything new for me to learn here, so unless I am given a promotion I think I might look for another job where I would get a chance to further develop my skills. I am not where I

want to be in terms of position and financial compensation and that makes me question my future actions.

P: Interesting... and are there maybe other reasons for leaving the Conscious hotels?

R: No, I do not think so, I just prefer to constantly improve and develop myself. I am young and want to evolve in all aspects before starting a family. Besides that, I would like greater financial stability that would enable me to have the lifestyle I desire.

P: I like your perception and the will to fight for yourself while evolving as a person and simultaneously building a career.

R: Thank you.

P: You are welcome and I believe you will succeed. You will get right where you want to be.

R: Thank you, I hope so.

P: I know so. But, based on this I guess you think it is difficult to succeed at the Conscious hotels or am I wrong?

R: It is not easy, however I also depends on the person's will, dedication, character and many other personal factors. Additionally, the momentarily situation at the company also plays a major role when talking about success. Long story short, if you want to succeed besides being hard working you also need to be lucky which means to want and ask for something at the right moment.

P: I understand, although it is a bit sad to lose competent and diligent employees.

R: I agree, but at the same time, I know that they cannot change the organizational structure in order to keep all competent employees and give them promotions moving them up the concrete hierarchical framework.

P: I agree. Now, let's take a step back. Can you please tell me, how does the relationship with your colleagues and your knowledge sharing impact you?

R: The knowledge sharing shaped me into what I am today. That is why nowadays I want to help the newcomers as much as possible. I want them to learn as easily as possible. So, overall the knowledge sharing helped me a lot. I believe that this is one of the most important ingredients leading to success.

P: I am on board with your attitude about knowledge sharing. And, as part of knowledge sharing, I have to ask, how did the onboarding experience impact you and your work?

R: It was helpful, or at least as helpful as that dry approach can be.

P: But, tell me is there a standardized onboarding procedure for each newcomer?

R: No, I do not think so.

P: And at the beginning did you get any introductory materials, an employee handbook, or were there any special events in order to socialize with the colleagues etc?

R: I just received materials on how to handle specific situations regarding my job tasks. It was something like a manuscript with given situations and solutions. Besides that, the events were not specifically intended for me to meet the new colleagues or something similar, they were just regular socializing events completely unrelated to other departments, or the HR department.

P: That is a shame.

R: Yes, they can do better.

P: I agree. That aside, what would you say that motivates you to excel at your job?

R: I am very self-motivated. I do not usually tend to ask for motivation from others, but when it comes to motivation at the workplace it is a bit different. As I said the learning curve, or let's say factor is very important to me and that is what motivates me the most. I like the idea of coming to work every day and learning something new, so when that is impossible I feel kind of purposeless and unmotivated. Also, the financial part plays a role and the overall climate at the company which here is not bad at all. I am motivated by the nice flow and communication with the manager, the colleagues and the other departments although often the last segment can be a bit shaky.

P: After hearing all this I have to directly ask: how satisfied are you with your job?

R: At the beginning and up to a certain point I was very satisfied, but now that level of satisfaction has dropped down.

P: I am sorry to hear that. But, despite of that, how do you perceive the hotel's effort to engage its employees?

R: Again, at the beginning they seem a bit more eager to engage the new employees, but after a while that enthusiasm slows down and it seems like they do not have a plan on how to engage the employees. However, there are unscripted and casual social gatherings organized by the manager and that feels good. At those events we get to be ourselves and feel like the company wants us to get to know each other on a deeper and more personal level.

P: Having events like that is important for creating meaningful connections and building trust.

R: Yes, that is why I like those moments.

P: How engaged are you and why?

R: Honestly, I am not enthusiastic about working at the Hotels anymore, I feel that on a personal level I can be more enthusiastic about my work. As a matter of fact I know I can be more fulfilled like I was when I first started here and everything was challenging me because I was eager to learn.

P: Yes, I can tell you are an ambitious person.

R: Thank you that is a nice compliment.

P: You are welcome. But, you mentioned your manager a couple of times and I want to know how do you feel about her? How would you explain your relationship and are you satisfied with the decisions she makes?

R: Yes, her decisions are commendable. She is a determined and meticulous professional who sometimes can be as hardhearted but I think that is because of her devotion to details. She always gives her best and therefore expects the same from us. That means that if we make some foolish mistake she gets annoyed because she knows that the mistake could have been avoided. Besides that, we have a nicely established relationship. I trust her and she trusts me. The same goes for her decisions. Yes, sometimes I question them, but at the end, I understand that she is right even though I might not completely agree with the rulings.

P: Of course, we are humans after all and have the liberty to independently think, make decisions and act.

R: Yes.

P: And are you included in the decision making process?

R: I am not included, although sometimes I am asked for opinions.

P: So, what do you prefer, working exactly as you are told to or finding a way that works for you but is still efficient and effective?

R: The second option. I like being independent, but again in this company the entire work process is highly structured and strict.

P: How does that, the current manager's approach and relationship impact you and your work?

R: The relationship is satisfactory, I can easily say that in terms of our communication I have no complains. However, I would like to be more independent and part of the decision making process because that would encourage me to further develop myself and of course be more useful for the Hotels.

P: That is reasonable. And how often do you receive words of affirmation?

R: In the beginning a couple of time, now I do not even remember when was the last time I heard such words. Performing well is expected, that is the criteria.

P: And what about getting constructive feedback from your more experienced colleagues and/or manager?

R: Hahaha again I have to say that at the beginning I was getting constructive feedback more often than now.

P: I guess, at the beginning a lot of things were better than they are now.

R: Yes, I guess so as well that is why I laughed.

P: Since, we established that, could you tell me what did you expect when you first started working at the Conscious hotels and where your expectations met?

R: I expected a nice work atmosphere and that is what I got. Maybe also to stay at the company for a bit longer, but we will see about that, it is still uncertain.

P: Knowing all of that, what would you add in order to improve the work experience for yourself, your current colleagues and the future employees at Conscious hotels?

R: I would suggest for the management and the HR department to pay more attention to keeping the employees motivated and constantly working on engaging them.

P: Those are valuable suggestions. We are close to the end just one or two more questions, so please stay with me just a little bit longer.

R: Sure, no problem.

P: Namely, I want to know in your opinion, how sustainable are Conscious hotels?

R: Highly sustainable, no doubt about that. They are on top of their game regarding ecology, sustainability, preservation of the environment and all scarce resources.

P: Was their sustainability one of the reasons you started working here?

R: Initially no, I would have applied even without knowing about their sustainability, but once I read about it and understood how concerned they are with the environment I was glad to submit an application and wait for a call from them. I do not know, but I feel like I

liked their sense of responsibility. Even now, I like the idea of working for a company that does not only operate in order to create profit but also to do good deeds simply by creating a system based on certain values.

P: I am glad to hear that. That is all. Thank you very much for your time.

R: You are welcome. If you ever need help again with something similar do not hesitate to contact me.

P: Thank you. Have a nice day.

Casper

P: How long have you been working at one of the Conscious hotels?

C: For a year and a half.

P: Great, Can you please describe your onboarding experience?

C: Can you please explain the meaning of onboarding?

P: Yes, of course. Onboarding is a series of events intended to welcome and help newcomers to learn their daily tasks, establish meaningful connections with the colleagues and understand how to contribute to the business.

C: Oh okay, so to explain my beginning here.

P: Yes, exactly. Who welcomed you? How did they integrate you in the new surrounding and etc.

C: Okay, sure. Well, there was one person who showed me how to do my job. During the first few weeks he was always with me. Very often I was watching him perform the tasks and then he was micromanaging me for a while. He was making sure that the information I was entering and the e-mails I was sending were all correct.

P: Where there any other activities? Did you maybe get a welcome kit, or a booklet with necessary information including the vacation days, their values, policies, etc. And were you properly introduced to the manager and your colleagues?

C: None of the mentioned, except for meeting the manager and the colleagues.

P: Okay, and how did you feel during that time?

C: It was okay. I had very little prior experience, so I needed some time to figure everything out which made me anxious. You know that person showed me so much at once and my brain could not process everything so fast.

P: Of course, that is totally understandable. I have been there myself. Starting a new job is stressful. Do you think the onboarding is well coordinated in your department?

C: It is not necessarily well coordinated in the sense that it's all step by step written down what to do, when to do, but we do have some standard protocols in which is said how the work should be done. So I am not sure if coordinated is the right word, but I think they can be more organized with the welcoming.

P: Overall, would you say that your expectations were met?

C: I did not have any expectations, so I guess yes. It was okay. There were a lot of things that needed to be learned, but that is fine.

P: Fair enough. Was the hotels' environmental sustainability in any way relevant for your decision to start working at one of their hotels?

C: Yes, it was. I support green strategies and love socially responsible companies and the Conscious hotel fit the profile.

P: Did they meet your expectations regarding that?

C: You mean their green and sustainable initiatives? Yes, definitely. They even exceeded my expectations.

P: That is great, I am happy to hear that. Now, I would like to know how would you explain the relationship with the colleagues from your department?

C: It is great. We are in the same boat so we are here for one another even when things get rough.

P: Do you share your work knowledge with your colleagues?

C: All of my colleagues have been here longer than I have and have more work knowledge. One colleague of mine is a little bit better with Excel so sometimes I ask her for that. I do not want to overstep so I share my knowledge in a more informal way that does not seem like a real lesson. Usually, they do not directly ask me for help because they know more but whenever I have some questions they are my first option to get answers.

P: That means you know whom to contact with specific questions.

C: Yes, although this year was challenging. Since we were forced to work from home during it was difficult to get answers to your questions. We did not have that much contact with each other, so I had to send a lot of emails internally to ask for help. Before corona it was easier to navigate but then I had to struggle to get information on how to proceed with certain actions. Sometimes I had to ask 3 or more people before getting the right information.

P: Speaking of that how satisfied are you with the way the Conscious hotels carried themselves out during COVID-19?

C: It was much better than I expected. When they shut down almost everything I was the newest member of the team and I was really scared that I am going to lose my job. I heard that some people from other departments got fired and expected the worst. At the time, I was still learning and even despite of that they gave me a chance instead of letting me go.

P: We were all scared and still are, but I think that we are starting to get used to living with this virus. So, after all, do you feel like the Conscious hotels have provided you with the necessary tools for your professional development?

C: Yes, I have learned a lot since I first started working and that is enough for me, but I do not expect a better position and I do not even want that because I am satisfied with my current obligations and what I do. Plus, from what I have heard it is very difficult to change positions and right now I am not willing to fight for that.

P: As long as you are satisfied, that is the only thing that matters.

C: Sure.

P: What would you say how do the provided promotional opportunities or the lack of them impact you?

C: I am not looking for any promotion right now, so I would say it is all right. I am happy with where I am how things are.

P: That makes sense and I am glad you are happy. Now, we talked about the relationship with your colleagues and the knowledge sharing between you...

C: Yes.

P: Regarding that, I would like to know how that impacts you?

C: It makes me better at my job. It is useful and functional.

P: And what about the onboarding, how did that impact you and your work?

C: As I mentioned, I did not have much prior experience so it helped me understand how to work and perform my obligations. So, I guess it had a good impact although it could have been better.

P: I understand. Now, we mentioned your colleagues but still have not talked about your manager. Are you satisfied with the decisions made by your manager regarding the job duties and the rules?

C: I am very satisfied. She is an intelligent woman who makes rational decisions and never rushes into anything. She handled the corona problems without panicking and showing any hesitation. I do not know if she was secretly scared and overwhelmed with everything but she never expressed any negative feelings and I salute her for that.

P: She sounds great. So then, how would you explain the relationship with her?

C: Well we are not close friends, but we have a normal manager-employee communication. We communicate with each other whenever it is necessary and have some small chitchats now and then. She is a typical Dutch woman with typical Dutch manners and everybody in the department knows that hahaha. But, do not get me wrong I like her strong personality and I think that is necessary in the workplace because if you do not have authority than people won't take you seriously. Probably that is one of the reasons I have confidence in her.

P: Of course, managers have to be authoritative. So, I am guessing you are not part of the decision making process or am I wrong?

C: No, you are right I am not part of the decision making process. I just follow the instructions. I do as I am told and honestly I do not mind that.

P: It can be very nice to be free of making decision and worrying if the made choices are the right ones.

C: Yes, I have never been good at making decision. I am by nature a very hesitant person.

P: And there is nothing wrong with it as long as you are happy. You should always do whatever feels good.

C: Yeah.

P: And does the manager ever give you words of affirmation?

C: You mean something like you are the best, or great job...?

P: Yes, something like that.

C: Not really, maybe in the very beginning but even that was rare. That is not her style.

P: Then, what would you say, how do the managing situation and approach affect you and your work?

C: Positively, definitively positively. I do not mind not getting affirmations.

P: I am glad to hear that. Now, you said, you are quiet new therefore I want to know how often do you get constructive feedback from your more experienced colleagues or manager?

C: My coworkers always comment my work and tell me what to do better because they are more experienced and know more, but the manager not so much. She was more proactive in that sense at the beginning.

P: That is great, that means that they are trying to help you and make you even better at your job.

C: Of course and I appreciate that.

P: Understandable and what would you say, that motivates you to excel at your job?

C: What motivates me? Honestly, the fact that I still have a job during a corona outbreak is a motivation itself. I don't know what I would have done if had gotten fired.

P: And what can they improve, implement or do to motivate you even more?

C: We already have 50% off in the restaurants, go on team building activities and etc but I would appreciate if they give us flexible working hours and more free days if I achieve great results that are above the norm.

P: Having a flexible schedule sound appealing.

C: Exactly.

P: Based on the current situation how do the motivational means impact you?

C: Having a stable income motivates me to come work everyday, as well as the hotels' sustainability because it is in line with my interests, but I would appreciate any other additional stimulus. However, I am not looking for much.

P: I would like to know how do you perceive the hotel's effort to engage its employees?

C: Okay, nothing special, but fine. They do as much as they think it is enough and it is not like they are doing a bad job.

P: Then, how engaged are you?

C: Enough...

P: Okay and how do you perceive your current work environment?

C: Satisfying and variable because of corona. Sometimes we work from home sometimes in the office.

P: I am glad to hear that even despite of everything that is going on in the world you still keep the positive spirit.

C: I am trying.

P: That is all from me. Thank you very much.

C: No, problem it was my pleasure.

