Understanding the role that Quality of Work Life of food and beverage employees plays in perceived service delivery and productivity

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A B S T R A C T

The purpose of this article is to determine the role that Quality of Work Life plays in the perceived service delivery and productivity of food and beverage employees in Potchefstroom, South Africa. The questionnaires were distributed at selected food and beverage establishments, and a total of 224 questionnaires were included in the statistical analysis. The data analysis consisted of a demographic profile, a factor analysis and a structural equation model. The results indicated that job, creativity and aesthetics, actualisation, organisational support and employee commitment attributes each exert an influence on the perceived service delivery and productivity of employees. This implies that food and beverage managers should try to improve the working conditions of employees as well as provide an appropriate level of recognition to hardworking employees. Management should consider the recommendations that are made in terms of the job satisfaction levels of food and beverage service employees, as they are able to positively influence organisational performance and success.

Key words: employee management, food and beverage sector, structural equation model, Quality of Work Life

Introduction

According to George (2008: 179), the food and beverage sector is the second-largest category, after accommodation, in the hospitality industry as well as a core aspect of the tourism industry. In South Africa, the food and beverage sector contributed to

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a 6.8 % increase in the total tourism income in the country during the period from March 2011 to March 2012 (Stats SA 2012: 23–25). According to Statistics South Africa (2012: 2), the growth in the food and beverage sector was most prominent among take-away and fast-food outlets (3.9 %), restaurants and coffee shops (3 %) and catering services (1.9 %). To further highlight the importance of this sector, it also employs a very significant workforce (approximately 308 500 employees). This indicates that the food and beverage sector is the largest employer in the South African tourism industry (Stats SA 2010: 29).

This sector can be divided into two major categories, that is, the *commercial* and the *subsidised or welfare* sectors. The commercial food and beverage sector is a large generator of income, revenue and business, which is of importance to the tourism and hospitality industry (Davis, Lockwood, Pantelidis & Alcott 2008: 21). This sector comprises a complex combination of many different types of establishments, including hotel restaurants, family restaurants, restaurants, fast-food outlets, bars, coffee shops and commercial caterers (Ninemeier & Perdue 2005: 9; Davis et al. 2008: 9). However, the food and beverage sector is characterised by certain challenges, including long working hours, high employee turn-overs, a dearth of experienced labour and, in general, poor wages (Bohle, Quinlan, Kennedy & Williamson 2004: 22; Gustafson 2002: 106; Marchante, Ortega & Pagán 2000: 6; Lo & Lamm 2005: 23). The Department of Labour (2008: 5) confirms that the South African labour market has a shortage of skilled employees and is further characterised by poor worker productivity. The South African food and beverage sector as a whole faces challenges such as low employment, poor wages, low quality service and limited education or training opportunities (National Treasury 2011: 39; Department of Labour 2008: 5; Mle 2012: 297; Department of Basic Education 2011: 21).

Bearing in mind these challenges facing the food and beverage sector, quality service is viewed as one of the most important constructs (Mei, Dean & White 1999: 136). The food and beverage experience includes not only the quality of the food, but also the quality of the service, the manner in which the food is presented and the ambience, as well as the presence of well-trained and friendly staff (Saayman 2013: 262). The role of service employees in many competitive business environments is, according to Liao and Chuang (2004: 41), to interact with customers and, by delivering high-quality services, generate favourable reviews from customers who experience higher levels of satisfaction and consequently increase their visits and purchases in the future. For this reason, Davis et al. (2008: 37) opine that food and beverage service employees should complement the meal experience, and that the staff should be able to do so in a variety of ways; certainly through their social skills, but perhaps also through their age, gender, the uniforms they wear, or even the tempo

of their service delivery. The quality of service is, however, greatly influenced by how satisfied employees are in their jobs (Liao & Chuang 2004: 41).

According to Lau (2000: 426), satisfied employees tend to provide greater productivity, which in turn enhances the quality of service delivery. Skalli, Theodossiou and Vasileiou (2008: 1906) concur and state that overall job satisfaction (experienced by employees) is likely to reflect a combination of partial 'satisfactions' related to various features of an employee's job, such as pay, security, the work itself, working conditions and working hours, all of which influence the quality of the employee's work life. Therefore, the Quality of Work Life of employees contributes to the satisfaction they experience, both from the workplace and from the work itself (Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel & Lee 2001: 241). It is therefore important to investigate how food and beverage service employees themselves perceive their Quality of Work Life, since managers may have a positive influence on the working environment that could lead to greater productivity and higher levels of quality service delivery gained from satisfied employees. Seth, Deshmukh and Vrat (2005: 913) concur and assert that the quality of service delivery and productivity has constituted a major area of concern for practitioners, managers and researchers, as these two factors exert a strong influence on business performance, lower costs, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and profitability. In particular, lower costs are vital for the success and ultimate profitability of the commercial food and beverage sector, particularly when considering the challenges faced by this sector.

Therefore, the purpose of this research was to investigate the perceived quality of service delivery and productivity of employees in the food and beverage sector, and the role that Quality of Work Life plays in the commercial food and beverage sector in Potchefstroom, South Africa. In order to achieve this goal, the article arrangement is thus: the introduction is followed by a review of the related literature, after which an explanation of the research method and a discussion on the results and implications thereof are furnished and finally, conclusions are presented.

Theoretical background

Work refers to the number of hours of labour from which an employee gains real wages, derives benefits, improves his or her self-concept and self-esteem, as well as gains opportunities to engage in activities that fulfil his or her contribution to society (Stark & Goldsbury 1990: 80; Fisher 2010: 14). According to Martell and Dupuis (2006: 333), it is important to investigate the influence that work has on life, as work is a major role player in everyday life. Furthermore, work occupies an employee's thoughts, largely determines an employee's schedule and contributes to his or her

social identity. Work is the connection that the employee experiences with the outside world, and the quality of that connection regulates all his or her relationships (Martell & Dupuis 2006: 334). Work is often a vehicle through which an individual establishes his or her identity and place in society or in related peer groups, and the level of economic independence he or she has gained. This fact alone supports the need for organisations (such as those in the food and beverage sector) to take a closer look at how well they provide individuals (employees) with opportunities to achieve satisfaction and success, both on and off the job. It is therefore important to emphasise at the outset that work is becoming increasingly important, not merely because of the amount of time that people spend on the job, but also because work is assuming a larger, more meaningful role in the lives of most people (Kiernan & Knutson 1990: 101). In response, organisations are beginning to realise that they have a primary responsibility towards their employees, which contributes to the internal business environment (Kiernan & Knutson 1990: 102). This is especially vital for the food and beverage sector due to the nature of this sector and the working conditions of its employees. Sirgy et al. (2001: 243) and Fisher (2010: 39) emphasise that a happy employee is a productive employee as well as a dedicated and loyal employee. This implies that Quality of Work Life has an influence on the behavioural responses of employees, such as job satisfaction and job performance (Sirgy et al. 2001: 242).

Furthermore, the quality of service delivery and productivity has a direct relationship with overall job satisfaction (Johnston & Jones 2004: 204). Job satisfaction as experienced by employees is therefore closely related to Quality of Work Life. The latter (consisting of various work-life domains) is a process by which organisations respond to the needs of employees while developing mechanisms which allow them to share fully in decision making that shapes their lives at work (Kiernan & Knutson 1990: 103). Quality of Work Life, therefore, enables employees to design their own level of overall job satisfaction, which in turn will contribute to improved perceived service delivery and productivity.

However, according to Sirgy et al. (2001: 242), Quality of Work Life is much more meaningful than this, and goes beyond mere job satisfaction. The basic premise, according to Neal, Sirgy and Uysal (1999: 154), is that satisfaction is functionally related to the satisfaction of life domains and sub-domains such as work, personal health, family and leisure. The study of different life domains has indicated that there are many life domains that influence the satisfaction of employees in their own working environments. These life domains influence one another; this effect is referred to as the *bottom-up-spillover theory*, meaning that satisfaction in one domain will also influence satisfaction in another domain (Sirgy et al. 2001: 244). Since the different life domains are based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which

explains how to achieve self-actualisation, an individual must satisfy or saturate all previous lower-order needs, that is, psychological, safety, belonging and self-esteem before achieving self-actualisation (Maslow 1970: 18). This hierarchy of needs also offers insight into different work-life domains that are largely composed of work-related needs (Sirgy et al. 2001: 278). A Quality of Work Life measure, based on needs satisfaction and spillover theories, was developed and designed to capture the extent to which the following four concepts, namely, the work environment, job requirements, supervisory behaviour and ancillary programmes of an organisation, are perceived to meet the needs of an employee. Furthermore, seven major needs, each with several dimensions, were identified by Sirgy et al. (2001: 278):

1. Health and safety needs (protection from ill health and injury at work and outside of work, and the enhancement of good health);
2. Economic and family needs (pay, job security and other family needs);
3. Social needs (collegiality at work and leisure time away from work);
4. Esteem needs (recognition and appreciation of work within the organisation and outside the organisation);
5. Actualisation needs (realisation of one's potential within the organisation and as a professional);
6. Knowledge needs (learning to enhance job and professional skills); and
7. Aesthetic needs (creativity at work as well as personal creativity and general aesthetics).

These needs are not just important to employees, but are equally important to management, as they have to be managed so as to meet the perceived needs of employees through the work environment, job requirements, supervisory behaviour and ancillary programmes of service delivery. Meeting employees' needs requires an insight into the internal business environment, which is composed of various attributes that influence the judgement of employees and affect their behaviour (Schiffman & Kanuk 2009: 265). This implies that employee satisfaction is influenced by the experiences of employees at work as well as their behavioural responses during work (Martinko, Harvey & Dasborough 2011: 146).
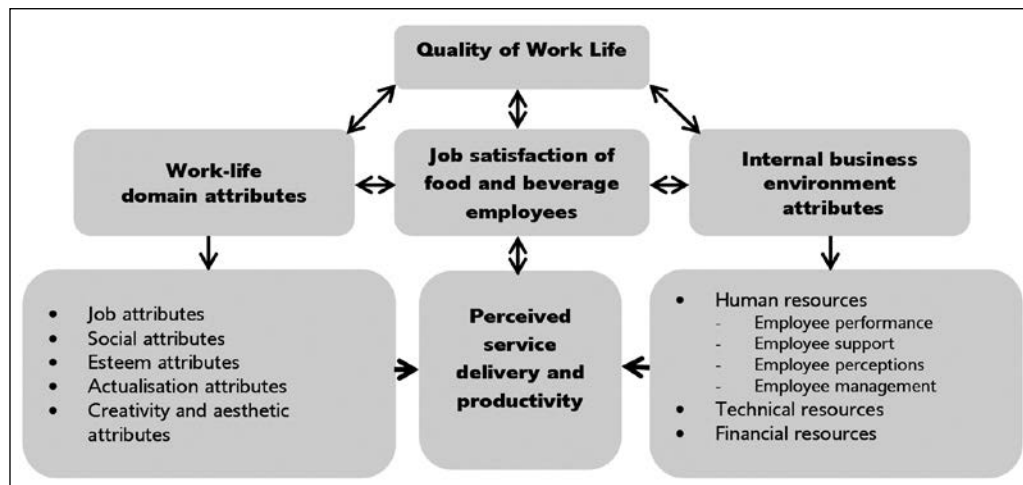
The internal business environment refers to all the variables and elements, such as human, technical and financial resources over which the business has potential control, and which are generally administrated by management (Mostert 2008: 31). The focus of this research was on the human resource variables associated with the internal business environment, which include, but are not limited to, employee performance, support, perceptions and management (Page & Connell 2009: 259). These employee variables influence organisational performance, especially in the food and beverage sector, as this sector is highly dependent on employees and

the service they deliver. Tanke (2001: 14) avers that management should consider employee satisfaction, by addressing their needs and wants, to ensure employee loyalty and productivity.

Therefore, the participative management style has been widely accepted as a core concept of Quality of Work Life. Participative management creates opportunities for employees to exert an impact on their working environment by participating in decisions concerning their jobs, thereby enhancing their self-esteem and their realised levels of satisfaction (Kiernan & Knutson 1990: 104). Kim (2002: 232) concurs, stating that participative management and empowerment through human motivation both positively influence job satisfaction and productivity. Other studies indicate that employee management delivers better performance, improved labour productivity, greater guest satisfaction and, overall, a competitive advantage (Ball, Johnson & Slattery 1986: 141; Hu & Cai 2004: 28; Smeral 2007: 27; Cook, Yale & Marqua 2010: 182; Tanke 2001: 4; Barrows, Powers & Reynolds 2012: 688; Baum 2007: 1383). It can thus be said that employee management influences an employee's satisfaction at work as well as his or her behaviour during work.

However, investigations on the Quality of Work Life of employees in the food and beverage sector or on how employee satisfaction plays a role in the quality of service delivery and productivity has, to date, received limited attention (Lau 2000: 424). This study attempts to investigate the relationship that work-life domains (those that contribute to Quality of Work Life) and the internal business environment have on the perceived service delivery and productivity of food and beverage service employees. Based on the discussion above, it is evident that a relationship exists in the service delivery environment between Quality of Work Life, work-life domains, the internal business environment and job satisfaction (as illustrated in Figure 1).

As illustrated in Figure 1, Quality of Work Life in a service delivery environment is dependent on many different attributes that form a relationship with one another. Quality of Work Life is highly dependent on job satisfaction, as the latter is a major contributor to the quality that employees experience at work. Furthermore, Quality of Work Life is composed of various attributes associated with work-life and the internal business environment. The latter is the environment over which management has control, and therefore management can address whatever limitations exist (Saayman 2009). Furthermore, from a tourism and hospitality point of view, human resources are the most important aspect to consider, since tourism and hospitality form part of the service industry. However, both these attributes (work-life domain attributes and internal business environment attributes) are also directly and indirectly dependent on job satisfaction and vice versa. The work-life domain attributes are derived from a study conducted by Sirgy et al. (2001: 278), and were simplified to five attributes or

Figure 1: Attribute dependency and relationship in a service delivery environment

domains that have a distinct influence on the work itself, while the internal business attributes contribute to the manner in which employees perceive work in the food and beverage service sector. The perceived service delivery and productivity relate to the manner in which employees make sense of the inputs incorporated into an environment (such as work) in order to obtain certain outputs (such as quality service, guest satisfaction and employee satisfaction). Therefore, the attributes depicted above were included in this study, as they are all dependent on one another and to some extent influence the Quality of Work Life and ultimately the job satisfaction experienced by employees. If properly understood and addressed, knowledge regarding the importance of the Quality of Work Life of employees will guide the sector in improving working conditions and, in return, establishments will be granted the opportunity to influence their own performance.

Therefore, it is important to investigate the influence that work-life domains and the internal business environment have on the perceived service delivery and productivity of food and beverage service employees, as well as to demonstrate the impact that these employees have on organisational (food and beverage establishments) performance and customer satisfaction.

Methodology

This section describes the study focus, the questionnaire, the sampling method and survey, and the statistical analysis.

Study focus

The research was quantitative in nature, and questionnaires were distributed among commercial food and beverage service employees in Potchefstroom in the Tlokwe Municipality of the North West province of South Africa (see Map 1). As indicated in Map 1, Potchefstroom is located on the eastern border of the North West province of South Africa. It is situated in relatively close proximity to major metropolitan areas of South Africa, such as Johannesburg (the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality) and Pretoria (City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality). Potchefstroom is a growing city with many amenities, including a world-renowned university. The city also attracts many international visitors as the weather and altitude conditions are excellent for sports training. The city offers a wide variety of commercial food and beverage establishments, and the employees at the various establishments include people from all walks of life (Tourism North West 2012).

The establishments that participated in this research study include hotel restaurants, family restaurants, restaurants, fast-food outlets, bars, coffee shops and commercial caterers. The food and beverage service employees at these establishments completed a questionnaire in order to determine whether the work-life domains that were identified for this study contributed to their Quality of Work Life, and the way in which the latter contributes to their perceived service delivery and productivity.
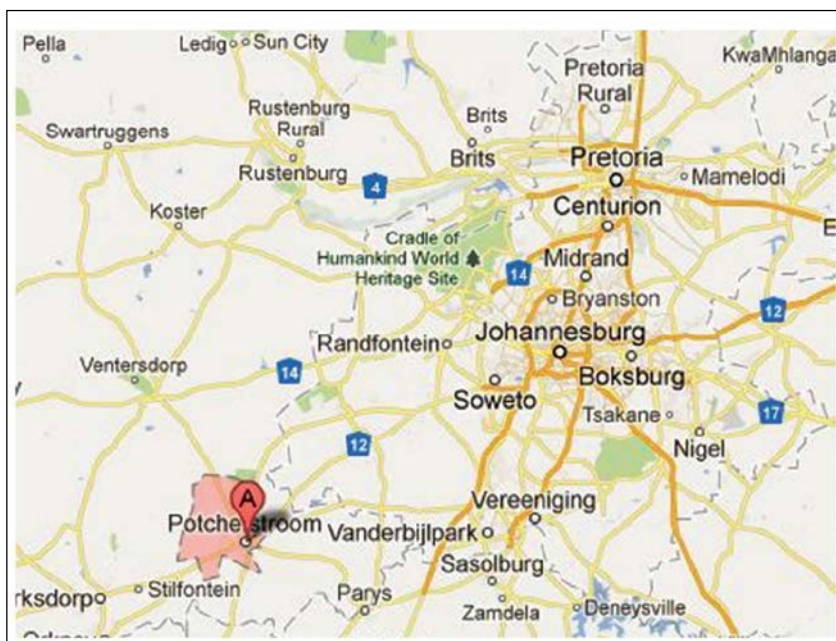
Source: Google Maps (2012)
Map 1: Map showing the location of Potchefstroom with an A

Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in the survey was adapted from the work of Sirgy et al. (2001: 249) as well as that of a previous study completed by Naude (2010: 116–125) concerning the Quality of Work Life of front office employees. A similar questionnaire was employed for related research conducted by Jones and Pizam (2008: 270) concerning the productivity of hospitality operations. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section A included basic demographic questions such as gender, year of birth, relationship status, level of education, length of service and type of establishment employed at.

Section B comprised five sub-sections, which included 23 specific statements pertaining to the following sub-sections: **job attributes** *(My salary is reasonable; Working hours are too long; My job allows for family time)*, **social attributes** *(I have good friends at work; I have flexible hours; We communicate effectively)*, **esteem attributes** *(I am appreciated at work; My work is acknowledged; I contribute to our success)*, **actualisation attributes** *(My job allows me greater responsibility; My job allows me to give new and fresh ideas; My job allows me to lead a meaningful life)*, **creativity and aesthetic attributes** *(Creativity is encouraged; I have artistic work facilities; Creativity is appreciated)*.

Section C was related to the internal business environment and included two sub-sections, which comprised 12 specific statements pertaining to attributes associated with the business environment, for example, **organisational support and employee commitment** (*I will work hard for the establishment's success; I promote the establishment to my friends; The establishment and my values are similar*) and **perceived service delivery and productivity** (*I am a productive employee; Increasing productivity will decrease quality; I offer individual service for customer needs*).

Sampling method and survey

The questionnaires were administered from November 2011 to February 2012 at selected commercial food and beverage establishments in Potchefstroom. The owners or managers of the respective establishments were contacted to seek permission, and to determine whether or not employees would be allowed to complete the questionnaire during working hours. The sample size included 450 commercial food and beverage service employees in Potchefstroom. The target population was chosen based on the availability of the employees at the selected establishments. The use of a stratified random sampling technique (as used in this study), sometimes called proportional or quota random sampling, involves dividing the population into homogeneous subgroups and then taking a simple random sample in each subgroup

(Trochim & Donnelly 2007: 44). According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970: 608), for a population (N) of 460, a sample size (s) of 210 is required. In total, 224 completed questionnaires were received and were included in the analysis, which exceeds the number of required questionnaires.

Statistical analysis

The data were captured using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 20.0 (SPSS Inc. 2012), and SPSS was further utilised for the statistical analysis as well as to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the analytical process. This assured that the data were interpretable according to the goals and objectives that had been set for the research. Amos (Arbuckle 2012) was used for the structural equation model (SEM). The statistical analysis employed in this study comprised three stages.

Firstly, the profile of the respondents, the work-life domains and the internal business environment of the employees were compiled. Secondly, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied to the work-life domains and business environment. A factor analysis, according to Pallant (2011: 181), is a data reduction technique that reduces large sets of variables to a smaller set of factors or components. EFA with Oblimin rotation is often used in the early stages of research to gather information on the interrelationship between the variables. An assessment of the suitability of the data is required for testing in order to determine the relationship among the variables and to conduct an EFA. To evaluate the factorability of the data, two statistical measures are employed; firstly, Bartlett's test of sphericity, and secondly, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy. According to Pallant (2011: 183), Bartlett's test of sphericity should be significant ($p < .05$) for the factor analysis to be appropriate. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index ranges from 0 to 1, with 0.6 being suggested as the minimum value for a good factor analysis (Pallant 2011: 183).

Reliabilities, according to Pallant (2011: 97), are indicated by using the internal consistency measures from the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the mean inter-item correlation to determine the reliability of the scales. The reliability and validity of the measuring instrument is of great importance as it concerns the consistency of the measurements (Knapp & Mueller 2010: 337). When measuring the Cronbach's alpha of a scale, the result must be above 0.7 (Pallant 2011: 183). According to Steyn (2000: 1–3), all factors with loadings greater than 0.3 can be considered to be significant, and items that cross load on to two factors with both factor loadings greater than 0.3 are categorised in the factor where interpretability is considered to be the best.

Thirdly, a SEM was performed to indicate the relationships between the work-life domains and the influence thereof on the perceived levels of service delivery

and productivity. SEM represents a theory-driven data analysis approach for the evaluation of causal relationships among measured variables. The SEM consists of two parts: firstly, a measurement model that examines the relationships between latent variables and manifest variables from the factor analysis, and secondly, the structural model that describes the influence between the latent variables. According to Hancock and Mueller (2006: 379), in good research practice, it is necessary to report multiple fit indices by means of three broad classes in order to retain the SEM; these indices include Chi square as the relative or normed chi-square or (x2/df), comparative fit index (CFI – value) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The p value of the standardised regression coefficient should be smaller than 0.05 in order to be statistically significant (Pallant 2011: 135). According to Cohen (1988: 79-81), the strength of the relationship should follow these guidelines: for a small relationship (r=.10 to .29), a medium relationship (r=0.30 to 0.49) and a large relationship (r=0.50 to 1.0). The results of the study are discussed in the next section.

Participants

The profile of the participants who formed part of the survey was thus: mostly female (61%) with an average age of 31 years. The majority of the food and beverage service employees were single, accounting for 58% of the participants. This grouping was followed by 37% who were married or living together. The participants indicated that their highest level of education was Grade 12 (48%), followed by participants who indicated that they had attended high school (21%). A large percentage (30%) of the employees had not been employed for longer than a year. The majority of the participants were employed at family restaurants (21%), followed by those employed by bars and clubs (19%). Most participants (17%) indicated hotel restaurants as their place of employment, while 16% were employed at restaurants and 15% indicated that they were employed at a catering business. The majority (61%) indicated that they received staff meals as an additional benefit, and a quarter (25%) of the employees indicated that they would have a new job at another type of establishment within the next five years.

Results

The following section will discuss the results of the factor analysis and the structural equation model (SEM).

Results of the factor analysis

The factors were extracted from the data by applying a principal axis factor technique to determine the smallest number of factors representing the inter-relationships among the values. The factors in Table 1 were labelled according to the work-life domains and business environment. As discussed in the previous section, no items with loadings greater than 0.3 were cross loaded on to two or more factors. Instead, all the items with a factor loading greater than 0.3 were considered to be a contributing factor.

Table 1: Pattern matrix of exploratory axis factor analysis with Oblimin rotation and Kaizer normalisation on items measuring Quality of Work Life domains and the business environment

	Job attributes	Social attributes	Esteem attributes	Actualisation attributes	Creativity and aesthetic attributes	Organisational support and employee commitment	Service and productivity
Work-life domains							
Job attributes							
I enjoy the food and beverage sector	.788						
I enjoy serving people	.647						
I am building up experience	.619						
Social attributes							
I have good friends at work		.358					
I have flexible hours		.571					
We communicate effectively		.737					
Employees feel valued		.768					
We have workplace unity		.873					
Managers are interested in us		.674					
Esteem attributes							
I am appreciated at work			.816				
My work is acknowledged			.746				
I contribute to our success			.764				
Our uniform looks good			.477				
Guest satisfaction is my goal			.545				

Table 8 continued

	Job attributes	Social attributes	Esteem attributes	Actualisation attributes	Creativity and aesthetic attributes	Organisational support and employee commitment	Service and productivity
Actualisation attributes							
My full potential				.722			
Me to use my talents				.764			
Me to assume greater responsibility				.774			
Me to give new and fresh ideas				.791			
Me to lead a meaningful life				.816			
My professional development				.777			
Creativity and aesthetic attributes							
Creativity is encouraged					.739		
I have artistic work facilities					.740		
Creativity is appreciated					.849		
Internal business environment							
Organisational support and employee commitment							
I will work hard for the establishment's success						.653	
I talk this establishment up to my friends						.707	
Mine and the establishment's values are similar						.802	
The establishment inspires job performance						.791	
I normally have a good mood during work hours						.579	
This is the best establishment to work for						.731	
Perceived service delivery and productivity							
I am a productive employee							.548
I offer individual service for customer needs							.701
Goals are reached through customer satisfaction							.814
I have a good relationship with loyal customers							.866
I get frustrated when I am not productive							.403
I am aware of customer complaints							.717

The total percentage variance explained for the factors identified in this study ranged between 53.34% and 73.43% (see Table 2). To aid in the interpretation of these factors, an Oblimin with Kaizer normalisation rotation technique was applied, indicating that factors with an eigenvalue of 1.0> were extracted by Kaiser's criterion. The factors that were identified, included *job attributes*, *social attributes*, *esteem attributes*, *actualisation attributes*, *creativity and aesthetic attributes*, *organisational support and employee commitment* and *perceived service delivery and productivity* (which forms part of the internal business environment).

Table 2: Factor analysis of Quality of Work Life domains

Factors	Bartlett's test p value	KMO	Variance explained (%)	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach's alpha (Reliability coefficient)	Minimum communalities	Maximum communalities
Job attributes	<0.0001	0.61	61.70	2.04	0.55	0.74	.300	.839
Social attributes	<0.0001	0.80	53.34	3.42	0.92	0.82	.128	.762
Esteem attributes	<0.0001	0.71	56.24	3.68	0.88	0.80	.203	.666
Actualisation attributes	<0.0001	0.85	66.60	3.22	1.04	0.90	.521	.666
Creativity and aesthetic attributes	<0.0001	0.71	73.43	3.23	1.04	0.82	.433	.722
Organisational support and employee commitment attributes	<0.0001	0.84	58.94	3.62	0.90	0.86	.335	.644
Service and productivity attributes	<0.0001	0.80	61.84	4.00	0.78	0.83	.175	.917

In order to interpret the seven factors on the original five-point Likert scale of agreement, factor scores were calculated as the average of all the items contributing to a specific factor. The results (Table 2) indicate that the *service and productivity* internal business environment attributes scored the highest mean value (4.00), with a reliability coefficient of 0.83. This was followed by the *esteem* work-life domain (3.68), with a reliability coefficient of 0.80. The *organisational support and employee commitment* internal business environment attribute scored a mean value of 3.62 and a reliability coefficient of 0.86. This was followed by the social factor (3.42) with a reliability coefficient of 0.82. The *creativity and aesthetic* work-life domain indicated a mean value of 3.23 and its reliability coefficient was 0.82. The *actualisation* work-life domain revealed the highest reliability coefficient, namely 0.90, with a mean value of 3.22. The *job attribute* work-life domain exhibited a mean value of 2.04

and a reliability of 0.74, which indicated that employees evaluated the statement unfavourably.

## Results of the structural equation model

Three structural equation models were performed to indicate the relationship between the work-life domains, the internal business environment attributes and the perceived service delivery and productivity. It is also normal to test more than one model to obtain the most acceptable fit (Hancock & Mueller 2006: 371). For this reason, different models should be investigated to ensure the best fit. The following results were obtained.

The data were incorporated into Amos (Arbuckle 2012) to test the relationship between the work-life domains (social, esteem and actualisation attributes) displayed in Figure 2. According to Maslow (1970: 22), by satisfying all the prior needs in the hierarchy of needs, self-actualisation can be achieved. As social and esteem attributes are lower in Maslow's hierarchy than actualisation attributes, combining the former attributes with the latter seems appropriate.

The interpretation of correlations, as suggested by Cohen (1988: 79–81), proposes that a small relationship (r=.10 to .29), a medium relationship (r=.30 to .49) and a large relationship (r=.50 to 1.0) are indicated by these measurements. The correlations between the factors in Figure 2 exhibited a large positive correlation between the social and actualisation attributes (r=0.66), between the esteem and actualisation attributes (r=0.71) and between the social and esteem attributes (r=0.84). Furthermore, the standardised regression weights (β-value) revealed that the social attributes exerted a negative influence (β=-.02) on the perceived service delivery and productivity, but that this influence was statistically insignificant (p≤0.05). The actualisation attributes had a β=.44 influence on the perceived service delivery and productivity, while the esteem attributes had a β=.13 influence on the perceived service delivery and productivity, but also had no statistical significance.

According to Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin and Summers (1977: 86), an example of a statistic that minimises the impact of a sample size on the Chi square model is the relative or normed Chi square or (x^2/df). An acceptable ratio for the Chi square divided by its degrees of freedom is between 2.0 and 5.0 (Tabacknick & Fidell 2007: 542). Values for the comparative fit index (CFI) should vary between 0.0 and 1.0, with values closer to 1.0 indicating a good fit (Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen 2008: 54). According to Blunch (2008: 115), models with RMSEA values of 0.10> should not be accepted. The proposed four-factor model in Figure 2 was tested and revealed the following results: the x^2/df was considered to be acceptable as its value was 3.30,

the CFI value for the proposed model was acceptable as its value was 0.81; however, a RMSEA of 0.10 with a 90% confidence interval of [0.094; 0.110] was reported. This result indicated that the standardised coefficient of the social attributes had a negative influence, as respondents could have interpreted it as being negative. Therefore, the fit was not acceptable and the model was modified, because the social and esteem attributes were not statistically significant.
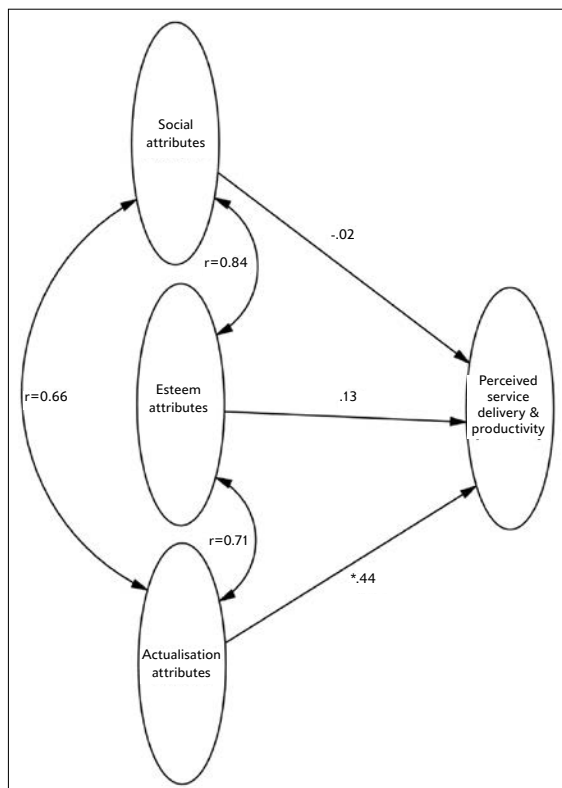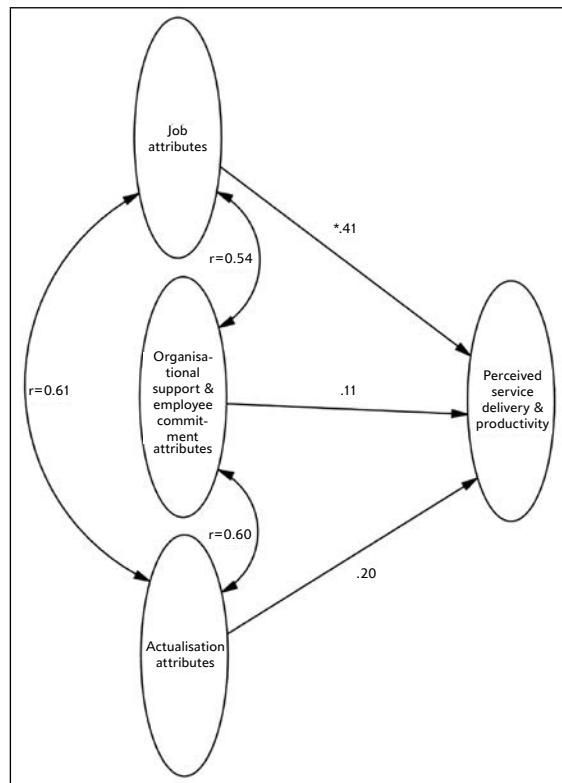

* Statistical significance at a 5% level of significance (p≤0.05)

Figure 2: Proposed model of Quality of Work Life on the perceived service delivery and productivity of employees

As the social and the esteem attributes (Figure 2) had no statistical significance for the first model, the model was modified and therefore included two work-life domains and an internal business environment attribute, as illustrated in Figure 3. Model 2 includes job attributes, organisational support and employee commitment attributes, and actualisation attributes. The correlations between the factors in the modified four-factor model (Figure 3) indicate that a small-to-large positive correlation exists

between the organisational support and employee commitment attributes, and the actualisation attributes (r=0.60); between the actualisation and the job attributes (r=0.61); and between the organisational support and employee commitment attributes, and the job attributes (r=0.54). Furthermore, the standardised regression weights (β-value) revealed that actualisation attributes had a β=.20 influence on the perceived service delivery and productivity, but with no statistical significance, while the organisational support and employee commitment attributes had no statistically significant (β=.11) influence on the perceived service delivery and productivity. The statistically significant influence that the job attributes (β=.41) had on the perceived service delivery and productivity was the highest. The model in Figure 3 provided the following fit statistics: the x^2/df was considered to be acceptable, as its value was 2.40; the CFI value for the model was acceptable at 0.88; and the RMSEA was quite acceptable with a value of 0.08, and produced a 90% confidence interval of [0.069; 0.088]. The RMSEA for Model 2 also produced a good fit. However, further modification was necessary in support of additional literature.

* Statistical significance at a 5% level of significance (p≤0.05)

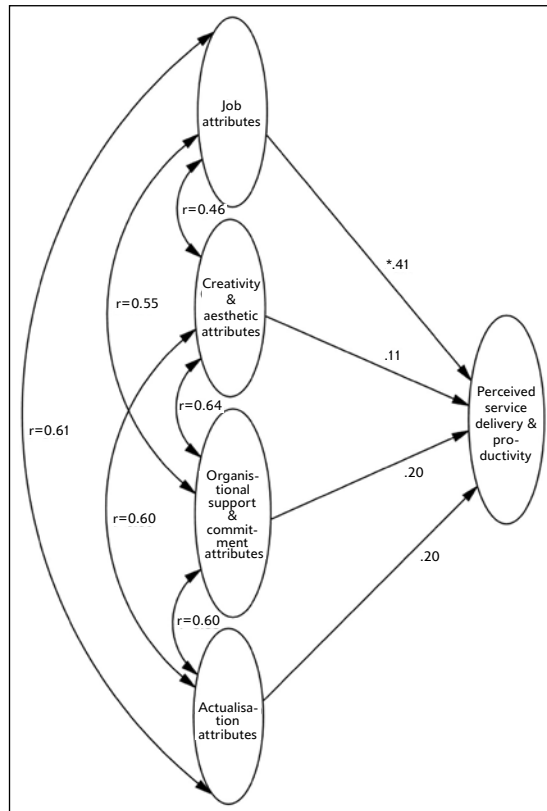**Figure 3:** Adapted model of Quality of Work Life on the perceived service delivery and productivity of employees

As the organisational support and employee commitment attributes and the actualisation attributes (Figure 3) were statistically insignificant (p≤0.05), the model was modified to include three work-life domains and an internal business environment attribute (see Figure 4). These modifications included job attributes, creativity and aesthetic attributes, organisational support and employee commitment attributes, and actualisation attributes.

The correlations between the factors recorded in Figure 4 indicated that large correlations existed between the organisational support and employee commitment attributes and the actualisation attributes (r=0.60), between the actualisation and the job attributes (r=0.61), and between the organisational support and employee commitment attributes and the job attributes (r=0.54). The creativity and aesthetic attributes and the job attributes (r=0.46) also indicated correlations, while the organisational support attributes and the creativity and aesthetic attributes correlated (r=0.64), as did the actualisation attributes and the creativity and aesthetic attributes (r=0.60). Furthermore, the standardised regression weights (β-value) revealed that the actualisation attributes had a β=.26 non-statistically significant influence (p≤0.05) on the perceived service delivery and productivity, while the organisational support and employee commitment attributes had a β=.20 non-statistically significant influence on the perceived service delivery and productivity. The non-statistical significance that the creativity and aesthetic attributes (β=-.19) had on the perceived service delivery and productivity was negative. Furthermore, the statistically significant influence that the job attributes (β=.42) had on the perceived service delivery and productivity was the highest.

The model in Figure 4 led to results with the following effects: the x2/df was considered to be acceptable as its value was 2.35; the CFI value for the proposed model was good with a value of 0.87; and the RMSEA was highly acceptable with a value of 0.078, and a 90% confidence interval of [0.070; 0.086] was produced. The results therefore demonstrated that the data fitted the SEM (in Figure 4) of this study well. This suggests an adequate and acceptable fit, while other factors (such as creativity and aesthetic attributes, organisational support and employee commitment attributes, and actualisation attributes) are, according to the literature, contributors to the perceived service delivery and productivity of employees. The model represented in Figure 4 exhibited a good fit and adequately supports the literature.

Managerial implications

The following findings were obtained from the fitted structural equation model, as illustrated in Figure 4. The contributing attributes are discussed below along with the implications of each attribute for food and beverage managers.

* Statistical significance at 5% level of significance (p≤0.05)

Figure 4: Fitted structural equation model of Quality of Work Life on the perceived service delivery and productivity of employees

Firstly, employees felt that their best interests should be served and receive top priority in their working environment and that job satisfaction would lead to improved perceived service delivery and productivity. Job satisfaction is also a contributor to Quality of Work Life and supports the argument that a happy employee will be a productive employee. Job attributes had the highest influence on the perceived service delivery and productivity and are closely related to job satisfaction. This is supported by Kiernan and Knutson (1990: 103), Sirgy et al. (2001: 241), Raub, Alvarez & Khanna (2006: 135), Baum (2007: 1383), Langton and Robbins (2007: 207), Zelenski, Murphy & Jenkins (2008: 522) and Poulston (2009: 24), to name but a few. The implications for managers in the food and beverage sector are firstly that job satisfaction could contribute to perceived levels of service delivery and productivity. According to Silva (2006: 321), job satisfaction would increase significantly when employees experienced

an improvement in their remuneration, promotion opportunities, fringe benefits, communication and working conditions.

Secondly, the creativity and aesthetic attributes regressed negatively towards the perceived service delivery and productivity of employees, and were not statistically significant, although the literature review supports them. According to Maslow (1970: 25), human beings have aesthetic needs that require satisfaction, particularly as these needs contribute towards the quality of their working environment. If employees perceive that the level of aesthetics in their current working environment does not contribute towards their productivity, the regression will be negative. In other words, when creativity and aesthetics are developed, their enhancement will have an improved influence on the perceived service delivery and productivity of employees. Aesthetics have an influence on satisfaction levels at work. This implies that managers in the food and beverage sector should try to improve the working environment of employees and make it more functional, so that employees can perform at peak levels of productivity. This will ensure an increase in the perceived service delivery and productivity of employees (Vilnai-Yavetz, Rafaeli & Yaacov 2005: 545).

Thirdly, the perceived organisational support that establishments offer employees can positively influence the perceived service delivery and productivity and could lead to job satisfaction, as suggested by Susskind, Borchgrevink, Kacmar and Brymer (2000: 67). When employees experience job satisfaction, they are more committed towards the organisation and could experience an employment relationship that is more likely to be perceived as an advantage and would encourage the maintenance of employment. Organisational support comes in different shapes and sizes, but tending to the needs of employees should be the main goal of management. Managers and human resource practitioners should consistently remind themselves that organisational support from the establishment could lead to job satisfaction, which might in turn lead to employee commitment. A satisfactory employment relationship will ensure that employees feel valued, thereby contributing to job satisfaction and improved perceived service delivery and productivity (Susskind et al. 2000: 67).

Lastly, actualisation had an influence on the perceived service delivery and productivity. Sirgy et al. *(*2001: 242) suggest that when one life domain is satisfied, it will spill over to the next life domain. When incorporating work-life domains, it is understandable that when an employee is satisfied with the work environment and reaches 'actualisation' at work by fulfilling his or her needs, this will generate favourable attitudes and behaviours resulting in improved performance (Kuvaas 2008: 2). Just as actualisation needs contribute to overall life satisfaction, so actualisation attributes at work contribute to job satisfaction. The empowering of employees can

lead to job satisfaction that will result in growth (professional development) and, ultimately, self-actualisation at work (Margulies & Kleiner 1995: 14). By involving employees in decision making at work and developing their professional skills, managers and human resource practitioners can improve the perceived service delivery and productivity of employees. According to Margulies and Kleiner (1995: 14), when empowering employees and implementing empowered teams, management should treat their employees as an integral part of the team and should spend time getting to know them. The latter is one of the core aspects of basic management principles (Saayman 2009: 227). It is furthermore recommended that management should demonstrate genuine care for their employees, and build on their strengths rather than concentrating on their weaknesses. Management should invest in people by creating opportunities for training and development, sharing information on the strategic direction and the performance of the establishment, and finally, allowing employees some control over decisions and thus enabling them to be their own authority.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to determine the role that Quality of Work Life plays in the perceived service delivery and productivity of food and beverage employees.

The results indicated that job satisfaction is a major contributor to Quality of Work Life and, as expected, has a large influence on the perceived service delivery and productivity of employees. Job satisfaction incorporates a vast range of possibilities and is the major contributor to perceived service delivery and productivity. When reviewing the other work-life domains that were included in the SEM, it is evident that it would have been possible to use only job satisfaction as the variable that correlates and regresses towards the perceived service delivery and productivity. However, there is a difference between the job attributes that lead to job satisfaction and job satisfaction itself. When investigating the influence of job attributes, creativity and aesthetic attributes, organisational support and employee commitment attributes and actualisation attributes on the perceived service delivery and productivity of employees, the research indicated that job attributes had the most significant influence, followed by actualisation attributes, organisational support and employee commitment attributes and, lastly, creativity and aesthetic attributes. Based on these results, it is recommended that food and beverage managers improve the working conditions of employees as well as provide the appropriate level of recognition for hardworking employees. Management should furthermore consider the recommendations that are made in terms of the job satisfaction levels of food

and beverage service employees, as these recommendations are able to influence organisational performance and success.

This research was the first study conducted among South African employees in the commercial food and beverage sector and, as such, it contributes to the literature on hospitality management within the South African context. There is, to date, only limited research available on the influence of Quality of Work Life on the perceived service delivery and productivity of employees in the food and beverage sector. Furthermore, the South African working conditions that influence employees in their working environments are unique, as are some of the challenges faced in South Africa; this research considered these aspects.

Limitations

A possible limitation of this research could be that the study was conducted in just one South African city. Furthermore, it was conducted only because it concerns food and beverage service employees, and therefore no generalisations regarding the hospitality industry could be made. It is therefore recommended that future research be conducted on the advancement of the perceived service delivery and productivity in the greater tourism industry and hospitality sector, as this could improve competitiveness in the industry. An investigation into the improvement of the perceived service delivery and productivity could also be conducted nationally and internationally in order to compare results. Furthermore, research into other sectors of the expanded tourism industry could also be undertaken. Investigating other front-line employees in different departments or sectors could well reveal interesting results and have interesting managerial implications. All functional departments in the hospitality sector of the greater tourism industry would benefit from this type of research, as tourism is a service-orientated sector, and is highly dependent on it employees.

Acknowledgements

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