

A Junior Sommelier Course for the Maltese Catering Industry Personnel

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<p>The objective of this Master thesis is to verify if a Junior Sommelier course designed on the basis of previous research is adequate to be used in providing catering industry personnel with a professional wine service course to help improve the quality of wine service in Maltese catering outlets. The study seeks an answer to the question: does this Junior Sommelier course meet the present training need to deliver better wine service levels in Maltese catering outlets? As a result, a full outline of the said course for subsequent implementation and use will be stated.</p> <p>The theoretical framework contains topics such as the Maltese Tourism industry development, the hotel and restaurants in Malta, the Maltese national qualifications network, what other wine courses are being provided internationally, and how adults learn. These topics help to understand the background for the need for such a course, which content should be in it and how prospective trainees can be taught said course. These topics open up on the concepts of service development, service quality, customer value and satisfaction.</p> <p>For the empirical research the author has undertaken to carry out two methods: three online surveys being sent out using SurveyMonkey, plus a Focus Group made of industry professionals who gave feedback on the proposed course. The online surveys included 20 questions regarding the wine course content and sought to get feedback on how appropriate the content is for the proposed course. The surveys were sent to 1041 contacts. The sample base was a data base of restaurant clients, students, restaurant/hotel employees and other stake holders collated over the years by the author. As a result, 293 respondents answered the surveys more could have been achieved but for the COVID-19 emergency which restrict the author's access to contacts. In addition, the Focus Group members (5) were required to fill in a questionnaire in order to dig deeper and receive more in-depth feedback.</p> <p>Summarizing the online data collection results and Focus Group feedback as findings, the study revealed that with minor changes the proposed course was more than adequate to be used as the training tool it is meant to be to help solve the problem of inadequate wine service levels in Maltese catering outlets.</p>	
Keywords Wine, Wine training, Adult learning, Wine and Food, Quality Service, Wine knowledge, Wine service, Wine consumption trends	

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1 Introduction

One of life's little pleasures is the opportunity of enjoying a good bottle of wine with family or friends. Unfortunately, today there are a myriad of wines available for consumers and wines are as different as people. They all have their character, some are bubbly, some are dour, some are elegant, and some are rough.

Nowadays the old maxim of red wine with meat and game, white wine with fish and poultry has given way to a much more relaxed attitude. People have broken away from the very rigid approach to the marriage of food and wine propounded by wine pundits of yore to those who would listen. People are now much more inclined to drink what they like, when they like, and are much more open and honest about their wine preferences. If people cannot decide for red or dry white wines, they need someone to help them decide on a wine choice to enhance their meal experience.

Finding the right wine for one's personal enjoyment can sometimes take a chunk of one's life and then it will be very difficult to prise you away from it to explore a new wine...unless there is that particular person who with his eloquence, knowledge and sometimes prodding good nature entices you to take the leap into the unknown and try a new style of wine and 'eureka' you may start seeing life in a different colour.

Hosting a table at home or in a restaurant presents different situations and one can hope that guests have more conventional tastes. However, it is a well-known fact that many a time choice on wine is influenced by a variety of different factors such as the occasion, time of day or year, one's mood so on and so forth. This is where a competent wine waiter can be useful in finding a solution to the conundrum of choosing the right wines at the right price using his/her selling skills by dealing with people's ego and preferences.

The success of wine sales in restaurants partly depends on the knowledge level of employees and managers (Gultek, et al., 2006). In order to effectively purchase and market wine, the restaurant employees and the managers need to possess the necessary knowledge about their products. For this reason, wine-service training is an important part of the entire process of purchasing and marketing wine at restaurants.

As a result of my previous research (Zahra, 2017) in the state of wine service in Maltese catering outlets the task set for this report is to propose a quality course for junior sommeliers which if applied in the local catering industry environment will be beneficial to all stakeholders with the aim of improving the level of wine service in Malta.

The course will include aspects of wine making, wine storage, wine faults wine and food harmony as well as purchasing considerations and regional wine quality level knowledge and appreciation. Such a course will create and strengthen wine service knowledge as well as directly enhancing the pleasures of wine appreciation in clients and service staff.

This in turn would attract the required attention from the industry which will appreciate the importance to improve the product for the benefit for all concerned as well as the enhanced performance of the local tourism industry as well as peripheral businesses such as off licences, supermarkets, and specialist wine merchants which all would benefit from professionally trained personnel in this area in their ranks.

My goal with this research orientated thesis, based on my previous research on the matter, is to get an insight on a proposed Junior sommelier course from the main stakeholders in Malta, customers, employees, management, who experience wine service from different angles on the proposed course. Using the appropriate survey tools as provided by the SurveyMonkey platform, the author managed to collate a course outline based on data from people are experiencing and what perception and expectations they have for my proposed course. The referencing protocol used in present report was that of Harvard, as provided in Microsoft Word.

This report has highlighted the optimal outline of the wine server course to fill in the void in the wine service element of dining establishments with regards to wine service standards provision in Malta. This research has also provided a solution to the bare dire lack of training focussed on wine service as provided to employees and managements trying to cope with this void by ad hoc measures many a time wasting time and money to train personnel who have no inclination to learn about wine service as highlighted in the previous 2017 research.

At present the general feeling in restaurant clients is reflected by the now famous quote of Basil Fawlty 'I can certainly see you know your wine, most of the guests who stay here wouldn't know the difference between a Bordeaux and a Claret' (Fawlty Towers – U.K. Comedy TV series).

This is the situation, servers of wine who do not really know what they are serving and are not capable of identifying or deciphering wine terminology and therefore failing to give clients the information required to make informed wine choices to optimise their wine preferences.

This work has managed to collect data from stakeholders to be able to outline the core elements for a professional wine service course which could start to fill the service void being experienced

in wine service which will ultimately provide sommeliers who not only have the skill but also turn their work into an art.

The finished course can be used by the Institute of Tourism Studies (Malta), as a possible commissioning party, to enhance its courses portfolio as part of its mission to provide professionally trained personnel for the local tourism industry.

This report was formulated by the author of this report even though it has to be said that the author found it very difficult to find updated and relevant books and other sources but the findings of my previous research and to a great extent my 40 year working experience in the catering industry in Malta including my 20+ year lecturing and training on food and beverage service experience at the Institute of Tourism Studies in Malta made up for the difficulties encountered.

This research is an alternative hypothesis claiming that the work in this thesis is a viable solution to the present low level of wine service in Maltese catering outlets. Therefore, the delimitation of this thesis report is to answer the research question: *'Is the proposed Junior Sommelier Course a viable and, quality and professional product that can help solve the lack of proper wine service in Maltese restaurants?'*

2 Theoretical framework

The objective of this report is to investigate and see how the present situation in customers' experiences in wine service when eating out as highlighted in previous research held in 2017 can be improved through improved wine service levels and go further by proposing a viable wine service course for industry personnel to satisfy this need in the local hospitality scene.

2.1 Tourism in Malta

Tourism in Malta has been a main pillar of the local economy for the last five decades. It is a big source of foreign revenue and a large provider for jobs and related services. This industry has been experiencing a resurgence after the dip experienced during the 2008-9 financial crisis.

2.1.1 A historic perspective

The development of tourism in Malta started in the late 1950s, as the Maltese authorities sought to identify new areas of economic development in view of the diminishing role of the British military base in Malta. The Government initiated a programme of capital spending aimed at improving access to beaches, together with increased promotion and advertising. The ensuing increase in passengers and aircraft movements necessitated the construction of an air terminal for civilian activity in 1956, with the first passenger terminal inaugurated in 1958.

In the beginning, initiatives such as the setting-up of the Malta Government Tourist Board in 1958, had led to moderate increases in the number of tourist arrivals, partly due to the limited funds made available. However, the adoption of a grants programme to encourage business in the hotels sector in the mid-1960s, even though more costly, was very successful, with the sector expanding further through the seventies. This was followed by a period of decline following the second oil shock and the ensuing global recession, especially in the United Kingdom in the early 1980s, which had resulted in a sharp drop in arrivals from the United Kingdom. Since then, arrivals have increased almost uninterruptedly as seen in Appendix 6 (Central Bank of Malta, 2018).

The evolution of tourism in Malta can be analysed in the light of Butler's tourism destination life cycle model as in Appendix 5. According to this model, visitors would come to an area in small numbers initially, restricted by lack of destination access, facilities, and limited awareness of what the country offers. As facilities are provided and awareness grows, visitor numbers will increase. With marketing, information dissemination, and further facility provision, the area's popularity grew rapidly.

The development of the tourism industry involved tackling two main challenges, namely: the insufficient skills and education of the local population, and the lack of infrastructure. In fact, initially Malta was predominantly visited by the British to meet friends and family members stationed on the islands. As the numbers of visitors increased, Malta moved on to the involvement stage, where policymakers, having considered the potential of this industry, took steps to support tourism-friendly facilities. In Malta, this stage was characterised by notable private investment in the tourism industry; international hotels chains such as the Hilton and Sheraton groups started operating locally. As a result, different forms of employment such as travel agencies, real-estate, banking, insurance, leisure, and retail outlets were generated (Central Bank of Malta, 2018).

From the mid-1990s through the mid-2000s the number of visitors reached a plateau, and this can be considered Malta's stagnation stage according to Butler's model. The authorities worked hard to avoid going into the decline stage shown in Figure 1. With the setup of the Malta Tourism Authority in 1999, Government aimed to improve the Maltese tourism product by shifting attention from a practically exclusive sun and sea destination to a more segmented industry niches based on improvements in the quality of tourism services. The advent of low-cost airlines in 2006 increased route connectivity with mainland Europe. The effects of the air transport reform were complemented in subsequent years by the woes of competing destinations in the wake of the Arab Spring. As a result of this during the past decade, the Maltese tourism product experienced the rejuvenation stage, with the industry returning to very strong growth.

2.1.2 Tourism in recent years

Tourism in Malta is a mainstay of the economy. Tourism in Malta is an important sector of the country's economy, contributing to about 15 percent of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP). It is overseen by the Malta Tourism Authority, in turn falls under the responsibility of the Minister for Tourism and Consumer Affairs.

In order to make the industry more sustainable with a stable base for further development a National Tourism Policy was put in motion for the period 2015-2020. This policy envisaged actions that stimulated actions and developments that made the Maltese tourism industry future proof by development in line with United Nations World Tourism Organization's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. This code established that all stakeholders in tourism should safeguard the natural environment with the objective of achieving solid, continuous and sustainable economic growth which satisfy equitably the requirements and aspirations of present and future generations.

The Maltese policy is based on three fundamental principles namely:

- Managing Visitor Numbers
- Raising the level of Quality across the entire tourism value chain and
- Reducing Seasonality

These three principles were considered as individually pivotal and also jointly inter related, forming the basis of the targeted continuous and successful sustainable development of tourism activity in Malta (Ministry for Tourism, 2014).

Malta features several tourism attractions encompassing elements of the island's rich history and culture, as well as aquatic activities associated with the Mediterranean Sea. In addition, medical tourism has become popular in Malta in recent years, especially since government efforts to market the practice to medical tourists in the United Kingdom.

The number of people who visited Malta in 2009 dropped considerably compared to the figures for 2008 - overall, the country's tourism industry suffered an 8 percent drop from 2008 due to the international financial crisis. Visits from non-European Union countries dropped more considerably than visits from European Union countries (and even more so than visits from Eurozone countries), while the average stay length remained the same for both 2008 and 2009. Visitors from most countries require a visa to visit Malta. The nationalities requiring a visa are standardised as per European Union rules.

Visitors already holding a valid Schengen Area visa most likely do not need to complete any more formalities to enter Malta, so long as they are already inside the Schengen Area. Visitors holding citizenship of the European Union do not require a visa to enter Malta as they hold the right to free movement within the European Union. The drop in arrivals started to change course in the following year with year on year increases until 2013 when the industry increased its growth rate further.

In recent years post 2013, it has grown at a fast pace even beating the seasonality factor which was endemic in past years. National Statistics Office (NSO) data shows that inbound tourism in 2017 stood at 2,273,837, an increase of 15.7% when compared to 2016. 2019 figures show that 2,771,888 (an increase of 5.2%) inbound visitors were in Malta generating 19,338,860 guest nights (an increase of 4.1%) as well as approximately over 2 billion euro in expenditure (an increase of 5.7%) (Malta Tourism Authority, 2020).

2.2 Tourism arrivals

More than half of these tourists came to Malta using low-cost airlines. These visitors were more likely to stay in collective accommodation establishments at a level of 69.4% of registered arrivals. Their average stay was that of 7 nights. The estimated expenditure as stated earlier exceeded €2.2 billion.

The overseas markets for the Maltese tourism product vary from the United Kingdom to Japan. In 2019, the overseas market that showed the biggest increase was that of Hungary with a 34.2% increase. The peak of arrivals was in the month of August (as is usual) but arrivals were also spread over all months. These tourists also spent 811,589 million euro on services separate from accommodation, and air/sea fares. This boils down to Euro 807 per capita or Euro 115 per night (Malta Tourism Authority, 2020).

Malta's market share of total air trips from the UK is 0.9%. the Maltese National Statistics Office (NSO) declared that the UK market holds a share of 24.6% (2018) of total inbound tourists, the UK is the largest source market for Malta generating 649,624 tourists in 2019 (Malta Tourism Authority, 2020). Holidaymakers account for 85.3% of total tourists from this market, 9.1% visit friends and relatives whilst 4.1% come for business purposes (2018) (Malta Tourism Authority, 2019).

Malta's market share of total air trips from the Nordic region (Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland) is 0.4%. The Nordic region accounted for 4.9% of total inbound tourists to Malta in 2018, generating a total of 128,320 tourists. Holidaymakers account for 81.7% of total inbound tourists to Malta from the Nordic countries, followed by 7.9% who come for business purposes whilst 6.4% visit friends and relatives (Malta Tourism Authority, 2019).

If one looks at the eastern European markets one finds that with a share of 3.7% (2018) Poland is the 6th largest inbound market for Malta generating 96,362 tourists. Holidaymakers account for 86.7% of inbound tourists from this market, 4.7% visit friends and relatives whilst 3.9% come for business purposes. 4.7% of Polish tourists visit Malta to learn the English language. Poland accounts for 5.2% out of total English language students (Malta Tourism Authority, 2019).

Hungary accounts for 1.1% of total inbound tourists to Malta in 2018, generating 28,294 tourists. 2.3% of Hungarian tourists visit Malta to learn the English language. Hungary accounts for 0.8% out of total English language students. Romania's share of total inbound tourists to Malta is 1.3%,

generating 32,709 tourists (2018). The Czech Republic's share of the total inbound tourists to Malta was 0.9%, generating 22,872 tourists (2018).

With a share of 1.1% (2018) of total inbound tourists, Russia generates 28,944 tourists. Holiday-makers account for 67.8% of inbound tourists from this market, 7.9% visit friends and relatives whilst 7.5% come for business purposes. 18.6% of Russian tourists visit Malta to learn the English language. Russia is the fourth largest market for TEFL travel in Malta accounting for 6.2% out of total students. Belarus's share of total inbound travellers to Malta is 0.1%, generating 3,680 tourists (2018).

The far eastern target markets generated the following tourism numbers in 2018 which are growing consistently in recent years. Japan's share of total inbound travellers to Malta is 0.9%, generating 22,863 tourists (2018). 15.3% of Japanese tourists visit Malta to learn the English language. China's share of total inbound travellers to Malta is 0.3%, generating 7,550 tourists. This is nothing when one considers the size of the market but until recently relations with this country were mostly of an economic nature and tourism still in its infancy.

South Korea's share on total inbound travellers to Malta is 0.2% generating 4,518 tourists (2018). 22.2% of tourists from South Korea visit Malta for English language learning. The Indian market is also another market that is being nurtured but inroads were achieved in the weddings market with Indian nationals which are well to do organizing weddings in Malta using local hotel and catering facilities. India's share of total inbound travellers to Malta is 0.2% generating 5,774 tourists (2018).

Besides the far east markets other long-haul markets generated inbound tourism as follows in 2018. Inbound tourists from Australia amount to 45,860, accounting for 1.8% of total tourists, and Brazil accounts for a share of 0.4% of total inbound travellers to Malta, generating 10,749 tourists.

Inbound tourist arrivals are serviced by the following units:

- 15 5-star hotels (7,128 beds)
- 42 4-star hotels (15,858 beds)
- 54 3-star hotels (9,833 beds)
- 25 2-star hotels (1,646 beds)
- 1 Tourist village (632 beds)
- 122 Guesthouses/Hostels (4,360 beds)

- *Self-Catering Accommodation 3,868 units (16,140 beds)*

The average occupancy of these establishments in 2019 was 65.7% (Malta Tourism Authority, 2020).

On the other hand, domestic tourism in 2017 increased by 10.3% compared to 2016 amounting to 260,763 people. The average stay was 2.8 nights showing what I consider to be weekend breaks, most of the visitors in this category were of the 25 to 44 age bracket (43.6%) and travelling for holiday purposes (89.9%).

The preferred accommodation was private rented, which also showed an increase of 1% over 2016, whereas those that opted for collective accommodation went up by 35.6% over the same period. Domestic tourism generated an estimated €40 million an increase of 8.9% on 2016. These people, especially those in private rented accommodation had to eat out in some form of catering establishment (National Statistics Office - Malta, 2019).

However with every challenge comes an opportunity, the Covid-19 emergency has effected the tourism industry (CBM - Central Bank of Malta, 2020), where all tourist outlets have been shut down, has ground to a halt in the second quarter of 2020 and no restart is being expected before July/September 2020 and then focusing on internal tourism as many locals will be expected to seek forms of relaxation after the partial lockdown which has been in effect in recent months from March 2020.

Based on the Maltese NSO results for the first quarter of 2020, tourist arrivals in Malta for February were 20,623 more than the arrivals of February 2019, an increase of 16.5%. This was before the first appearance of COVID-19 in the beginning of March which led to the closure of the international airport and the running down of all tourism activity in the country (iNEWSMALTA, 2020).

This slump, -29.8%, is being looked at by Maltese tourism authorities as an opportunity to refresh our industry its services and attractions to be ready for the restart expected in September this includes maintenance and retraining of personnel. With 90% of those working in the accommodation and food service sectors of the Maltese Hospitality industry having their wages subsidized by the Covid-19 Wage Supplement fund provided by the Maltese government, 25% of these workers are directly employed in hotels and restaurants.

This challenge will be addressed by creating a training fund of five million euro to offer training courses, free of charge, to 25,000 employees to refresh their knowledge and skills, learn new skills as well as get certification of knowledge and skills already in their ownership.

This special fund and training programme was announced by the Maltese Minister for Tourism and Consumer Protection, Ms. Julia Farrugia Portelli (Union Press, 2020) the provision and delivery of 300 accredited courses online as well as 750 short courses provided by industry experts from Forbes Travel Guide, University of Malta and other organisations such as the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) and the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology (MCAST) with the goal of enhancing industry personnel's knowledge and skills as well as career progression advice (iNEWSMALTA, 2020).

This training programme also has been given the approval and support of the Malta Hotels and Restaurant Association (MHRA). The MHRA went on further stating also that this training programme will help tourism professionals and other employees apprehend ways to improve their work performance, increase their employment opportunities and accordingly support the growth of the Tourism sector in Malta.

Mr Johann Buttigieg, the CEO of the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA), stated in a newspaper interview (Union Press, 2020), that these proposed courses will cater for differing employee abilities at different levels. UNWTO Secretary-General for Tourism Zurab Pololikashvili, had this to say to the Maltese government's Prime Minister: "We are closely following the incredible work of your government in this exceptional crisis and I wish to personally congratulate you for your commitment and efforts as Prime Minister in helping the travel and tourism sectors to deal with the coronavirus outbreak and to address its socio-economic impact" (Lynch, 2020).

The knowledge and skill provided in these courses will cover aspect such as; leadership skills, personal soft skills, customer care, language skills, and other skills connected with the tourist industry. This effort is also in line with the National Tourism Policy 2015-2020 as it meets one of the policy's fundamental guiding principles, namely that of 'raising the level of quality across the entire tourism value chain'. The hospitality sector in Malta has had downturn of 29.8% as per latest economic update from the Maltese Central Bank. (CBM - Central Bank of Malta, 2020) Predictions at this moment in time see tourist arrivals reaching the levels of February 2020 only in 2023, at the earliest.

2.2.1 Hotels and restaurants in Malta

Full-time employment in Malta in 2017 was at a level of 187,053. Of the stated total 77% were in the private sector and of these 25.2% were in accommodation and food services (National Statistics Office - Malta, 2019).

Employees directly connected on a full-time basis with food and beverage services in January 2019 numbered 8005 while 6,308 were employed on a part-time basis (NSO-Malta, 2019). These were employed in 212 hotel establishments and over 2000 catering units nationwide.

Malta's restaurants endeavour to better service levels by entering a nation-wide survey-based competition on a voluntary basis that allows diners to choose from Malta's top restaurants. The number of franchisors operating in Malta has increased in recent years. The future of the food service franchises in Malta looks optimistic, due to the following aspects:

- Growing popularity of franchise as a safe way to run a restaurant;
- Growing interest in the Maltese market voiced by foreign franchise networks;
- Increase of shopping centres with room for in-house restaurants outlets;
- Relatively big market fragmentation, and lack of diversity.

Research carried out in 2019 (Malta Tourism Authority, 2020) among managerial staff of 157 of restaurants, cafes and bars operating in Malta, showed that the most popular locations of catering networks establishments are tourist resort areas, shopping malls, city centres, and high streets. However, at the same time, ongoing endeavours are underway to motivate and stimulate service improvement with awards/competitions and quality assurance protocols.

2.2.2 How restaurants are being assessed for quality

The official for licensing and assessment is the Malta Tourism Authority's office for 'Quality Assurance and Industry HR, Compliance and Regulatory services'. However, since this entity seeks to see that operators are with their legal obligations and responsible for the appropriate delivery of services as allowed by their licence, this office also deals with complaints received from tourist and local clients. However, the author feels that the a restaurant survey held annually in Malta to gauge client satisfaction in restaurants is a good tool to see what the local culinary market managed to achieve vis a vis the local market.

The 2018 Malta & Gozo Restaurant Survey (2019 survey still not published when writing this report) conducted in September 2018 returned an incredibly high number of responses, with 3,153

participants who dined out on average one to two times a week, equivalent to a total of 245, 934 dining experiences in a year! The 2018 survey saw 26 new restaurants in the 'The Definitive(ly) Good Guide to Restaurants in Malta & Gozo' and its portal www.restaurantsmalta.com. The diners' responses and ratings will determine which restaurants will be included in the 2019 edition of the guide.

Award winning restaurants were chosen from the highest rated restaurants, both overall, and in the various price categories for Malta and Gozo, taking into account not only the Overall rating but also individual Food, Service and Ambience ratings, the number of people rating, value for money, comments and other data from the survey (The Definitive(ly) Good Guide to Restaurants, 2019).

Additional Awards were:

- Best Food (sponsored by Decante represented by Attard & Co Food Ltd)
- Best Service (sponsored by C& H Bartoli)
- Ambience (sponsored by Design Hub)
- Best Maltese Food
- Restaurant Most Dedicated to Supporting Local (sponsored by The Parliamentary Secretariat for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights)
- The Best Chef Award (sponsored by Pentole Agnelli represented exclusively by The Catering Centre)
- Best Business Entertainment (sponsored by Rummo Pasta)
- Most Romantic Restaurant (sponsored by Churchill Crockery represented exclusively by The Catering Centre)
- Best Value for Money
- Best Restaurant offering Vegetarian options (Jimmy Vella Fruit & Veg. Ltd & Le Breton)
- Most Children-Friendly (sponsored by the Malta Baby & Kids Directory)
- Best Newcomer
- Best Restroom
- And in memory of Colin Best - co-founder of the Restaurant Guide. - The Colin Best Award for the Most Consistently Outstanding Restaurant in Malta & Gozo.

The Definitive(ly) Good Guide to Restaurants in association with Riedel, The Wine Glass Company Wine Awards were as follows:

- The People's Choice Wine List (taken from the results of the returned surveys)
- The Riedel Wine Experience of the Year
- Wine List of the Year
- Commended Wine Lists
- The Best Maltese Wine List (sponsored by The Parliamentary Secretariat for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights)

Looking at the awards given there is nothing on wine service, the nearest thing being wine lists. This alone does not provide a nice picture on importance given to wine service skills in local restaurants or hotels for that matter. This in itself is another reason why the industry should invest in a nucleus of professionally training people in wine service techniques to enhance the industry's image and performance.

2.2.2 Who are the people who eat out?

Between 2008 and 2018 Malta has registered the highest growth in statistics of how much people spend when people eat out in the European Union. This was shown in a recent report by Eurostat (Appendix 9) says that in the last 10 years the growth was of 4.4% from 8.2% in 2008 to 12.6% in 2018.

Behind Malta came Ireland with a rise of 2.9% and Hungary with an increase of 2.5%. Furthermore, from the 28 EU member countries there were four which saw a decrease in spending of people eating out. Romania had a decrease of 2.9% followed by Spain, Slovakia and the United Kingdom.

Trish Caddy, a senior foodservice analyst, in the 2019 Eating Out Review survey states the growth in the eating-out market is being driven by affluent diners who are spending more on quality dining experiences as well as the convenience of quick meals through the home delivery channel (Caddy, 2019). I would agree with this line of thinking applied for the Maltese environment as the recent affluence experienced by Maltese society is surely to have led to increases levels of people eating out.

In 2018, households in the EU spent over €600 billion or 3.8% of the EU GDP on 'catering services' such as restaurants reflecting a 7.0% of the households' total consumption expenditure (EU, 2019).

A 2015 survey on family spending in Malta published in 2018 estimated expenditure at € 3.7 billion or an annual average of 22,346 per household showing an increase of 14.2% on a previous survey

conducted in 2008. In this survey it was identified that around €36 per week were spent on restaurants and hotels an increase of 34.5% on 2008 figures. Even though we are not talking 2019 figures the evident trend in an increasing expenditure in this area and the economic upturn has not changed so the spending in question is expected to remain in the same trends of increase (NSO - Malta, 2018).

With people eating out so much more and spend these amounts of money in restaurants the question of value for money crops up. One way of reaching this required objective one element that needs attention is the ability to provide diners with good wine and food choices to help them enjoy eating out.

'Guests do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.'

**Jeff Kellogg, Wine Director at Maialino
– Gramercy Park Hotel NYC**

2.3 Restaurants and customers' meal experiences

The history of what we call modern restaurants can be traced back to France, where they replaced older types of different eating establishments. More modern taverns with high-class and almost luxury styling was established in the 18th century in London. The word "restaurant" has been used since the Middle Ages (Hansen, 2005).

The end of the 19th century saw a rise in the number of tourists when the European middle class started to explore the world. New types of hotels, restaurants and other eating establishments were established. Today, the word "restaurant" is widely spread all over the world, and the meaning can vary according to the style of restaurant it describes. The increase in the number of customers who dine out was also described by Finkelstein (1989). An estimate for the turn of the century was that two out of three would dine out. French cuisine is found all over the world, and other countries' cuisines have also had influence in Malta, for example, and in the types of dishes that are eaten in Maltese restaurants.

The style of the restaurant was also found to influence the customers' choices of restaurants (Auty, 1992). Meiselman (2003) revealed context, environment, and the food itself as important for customers' perceptions of food quality.

Jose de Avillez Burnay Ereira (2019) states that people today have an increasing desire to enjoy different experiences and have fun when eating out, they do not want just food. Experimental

studies have revealed that there was a significantly higher difference in acceptability from customers when dinners were served in different eating locations, e.g. between dinners served in institutional food establishments compared to tablecloth dining in restaurants (Edwards et al., 2003).

The meal appears to have the effect on people that they can start talking and discussing their meal experiences everywhere about past, present, or future meal experiences, e.g. at work, on an airplane, at home, and in other places or situations. Today, there is an increased focus on food and meals in many countries, from both everyday people and professional meal producers. The information and interest around meals, food, cooking, and related themes are abundant. Therefore, almost every newspaper, magazine, TV channel, and other media channels carry some sort of information about meals, food, original use of spices, etc. that is of interest to the general public. But no meal can be seen as complete without a good bottle of wine. Therefore, the ensuring of an all-round successful meal experience very often stands on the right wine and food combination.

2.4 Who drinks wine?

'I drink wine when there is an occasion, and sometimes when there is no occasion'

Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616)

Wine is one of the foundations of Western Civilization. Even in ancient Greek history (Wilkins & Nadeau, 2015, pp. 275-283) wine was appreciated as a cultural status symbol. They were producing their own unique varieties and making wine an essential part of Greek, and human, culture. The story of wine is that of medicine, religion, war, discovery, science and dreams (Estreicher, 2004). Wine has been important if not critical to our lives since the dawn of mankind.

Its history follows that of western civilization and the two are often intertwined. Abrupt changes in scientific understanding and technology, or market forces, have occurred through the ages and profoundly affected the making, storing, and drinking of wine. There is no reason to believe that we have now reached any kind of steady state. In fact, it is safe to predict that more changes, hopefully beneficial, will take place.

Though both wine and beer have been revered as elements of religious ritual throughout history, wine certainly enjoys a much higher place among the world's religions than beer in the modern age. I believe a great deal of the current superior place within society that wine enjoys over beer is a direct result of the power of Christianity, particularly the Catholic church, which relies on wine as a holy sacrament in mass. In fact, wine grapes have spread to various parts of the world in

large part due to missionary efforts and the need to have wine in the areas where missionaries were carrying out "God's work". So, rather than import the wine to usually rather remote areas, they would plant vines and make it themselves. Since wine is considered by the Catholic church to be the representation of the "blood of Christ", it would stand to reason that such power bestowed upon it would have some carryover outside of mass.

Wine produces pleasure. Alcohol can produce a relaxed, sometimes euphoric state, and recent studies using brain imaging technology, have found that wine affects the part of the brain associated with pleasure, good wine more so than bad wine (Lehrer, 2009). The colours, aromas, and tastes of wines span the spectrum and, in many ways, have gone on to shape and influence everything we appreciate about fine wine. It is in France where some of the world's most common grape varieties—such as Chardonnay, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon—were first grown and harvested. Whether you're a connoisseur of great wine or simply looking for the best bottle to give as a gift or to pair with dinner it is a journey many seek to pleasure their sense of oenological adventure. People love wine because, just like any alcoholic drink, it stimulates them. It releases dopamine in the brain. This will give the drinker pleasure for a while and will even boost the desire for sex. Wine is often drunk before intercourse for a better enjoyment.

While beer is generally accepted as pre-dating wine, though we can't be entirely sure which really came first. While both have enjoyed their time in the spotlight at various stages of history, both among royalty and commoners, it is readily apparent that indeed wine is certainly viewed in a much more sophisticated light than beer currently (though the landscape is most definitely shifting with the rise in popularity of craft beer). Unlike beer, which does not get better with age for the most part, however fine wines do. Not all wines, just fine (red) wines. ... Whereas if you sip at a moderate pace, eat food, talk etc, you can drink wine for hours and hours. This also requires the ability to "handle your liquor" and to keep things 'classy'.

You do not serve small portions of beer, swirl them around, spend time judging colour against light, viscosity, nose, bouquet, aromas and the multiple taste and aftertaste sensations of beer, not for the most part. However, wine-tasting of course embodies all that and more, with all the wine-tasting locations there are and the wine-tasting menu descriptions.

Which would a 'cultured' individual prefer? Barley fields, fields of hops, grains, or rolling vineyards thick and heavy with grapes coming into 'cuvaison' amongst transforming autumnal colours - which would such a person rather surround him/herself with? Which would most people out there

rather surround themselves with? In which one would you rather build your home? Wine is class, class is wine!

Clearly, the biggest thing that continues to perpetuate a more sophisticated image for wine is the massive machine of billions spent on marketing to create, define and grow a target demographic. Whereas the beer industry has found its primary demographic to be among the male, sports-loving, every-man, the wine industry has clearly found its greatest success by building a much more romantic and refined image among its consumers.

2.4.1 Wine consumption trends

Wine consumption in each different country around the world is normally calculated on a per capita basis, taking the estimated annual consumption in litres and dividing by the population in each country. Theoretically this results in a figure which indicates the amount of wine that each man, woman, and child, regardless of age consume in that country, every year. These globalised and general statistics are compiled and published by the Wine Institute every year.

Although this might give an indication of volume from a business point of view, the assumption taken on the basis of the total population, and not taking into consideration tourist intake into each country, and the absence of an all-inclusive demographic study of the local population plus tourist intake combined, including drinking trends in accordance with age and gender, gives a warped statistic of what is actually taking place, and what might be the best production as well as the best marketing tool for winemakers and importers.

Wine consumption in the Maltese Islands is about 12,000,000 bottles of wine a year (Spiteri, 2013). At 75cl per bottle this would amount to 9,000,000 litres of wine every year. This statistic does not seem to have changed that much in 2019 perhaps a slight increase has come about as in a 2019 WHO report Malta has the 3rd largest growth per capita in the European Union (Abela, 2019) but ranks 37th in the world after Norway and before Iceland (NationMaster, 2019). This consumption is generated by 43% of the local inhabitants and the 2 million tourists who come to Malta annually.

From the bottles of wines consumed, some 60% are estimated to be imported wines, thus giving us about 720,000 bottles of imported wines consumed in Malta, and 40% local wine consumption thus giving a consumption figure of 4,800,000 bottles of locally produced wine, which could be the total production of wine from all registered wineries in the Maltese Islands combined. Various

discussions I held with various restaurateurs indicated that most locals invariably consume imported wine, this includes also purchase of wine from supermarkets; whereas the majority of visitors would opt for locally produced wine, albeit not the top of the range wines.

2.4.2 Why people drink wine

“Wine is one of the most civilized things in the world and one of the most natural things of the world that has been brought to the greatest perfection, and it offers a greater range for enjoyment and appreciation than, possibly, any other purely sensory thing.”

Ernest Hemingway

John Gitlin in a recent survey (Gitlin, 2019), gives an insight into who and why people drink wine. I accept it is based on the U.S. market, but people are people and human likes and dislikes tend to be similar around the globe. It transpires from this survey that the majority of adults, drink wine often. This culture of wine drinking is universal in its nature and Gitlin uses a quote by Benjamin Franklin the goes: ‘*Wine is constant proof that god loves us and loves to see us happy*’ to connect US wine drinkers with their wine heritage. In Malta it calculated that an average of seven litres of wine each per year.

In John Gitlin’s survey (Appendix 3) it turned out that 63% of respondents simple drink wine because they like the taste, 47% drink it because they feel it a stress reliever (imagine in the present Covid-19 scenario), 41% appreciate that wine pairs well with food and lastly 33% say that wine makes them feel happy.

Adrienne Lehrer (Lehrer, 2009), in her book *Wine and Conversation* mentions another development that may have increased wine-drinking activity is medical research showing the health benefits of drinking moderate amounts of wine, even greater benefits than other kinds of alcohol. Paola (2008) summarizes some of the main findings of wine. ‘The benefits of moderate wine drinking, vis-à-vis abstinence are reflected not only in terms of total mortality, but in terms of lower mortality, related to coronary artery disease and cancer. Additionally, wine has been reported to decrease the incidence of kidney stones; to eradicate the bacteria responsible for food poisoning and diarrhoea; to enhance insulin sensitivity; to enhance resistance to certain strains of the common cold; to be associated with a lower incidence of rheumatoid arthritis in women; and to be of benefit to cognitive function’.

The same survey based on 500+ respondents states that 75% of adults drink wine routinely in the USA comparing to Malta’s 43% of adults (National Statistics Office - Malta, 2019). The three most

common themes why wine is consumed turned out to be that firstly it is seen as a healthy practice (42% of survey responders considered wine as healthy) especially as quite a few researchers have highlighted the health benefits of wine and how it better for consumers than other types of alcohol.

Secondly people seem to deem wine as being affordable. This can make sense as I believe that one can make wine as expensive as one wants it to be considering the price ranges available on the market with prices going from €2.99 to € 500+. From this survey on a minute 2% are will in to spend high for their wines with the preferred price base being below €50.

The third theme highlighted in Gitlin's survey was that wine consumption is associated with desirable traits as who would not to seem relaxed, trendy, fancy, health-conscious and fun all together? This survey puts forward the idea that wine drinkers can get a 'reputation' they may be seeking simply by consuming wines they like. Thus, people start describing themselves as relaxed (59%), sophisticated (38%), outgoing (25%), and health-conscious (18%). One respondent even went as far as to state:

'Wine drinkers are fancy, conscientious, and smart. They know a lot about wine and are able to enjoy it by using their sophisticated taste palates'

(Gitlin, 2019)

Wine consumers are obviously becoming much more discerning than was the case even five years ago, and in the case of wine, whether the locally produced brands and more so the numerous imported brands, must be of the top most quality at a reasonable price range, for any brand to secure a regular, loyal following in restaurants, at which any particular wine will be asked for by name. My firm belief on wine drinkers is that real wine drinkers (wine lovers, not wine show-offs), all or mostly all eventually end up drinking mostly Burgundies, Barolos, Brunellos, Rieslings and Champagne.

Burgundy red and white is head and shoulders above others. I hear and read about other 'wine buffs' saying burgundy needs to be priced above €400 but this, in my book, is wrong. I have often drunk a burgundy red village wine that next to a New world pinot where the burgundy wine has nuances and complexity the New World pinot cannot compete with. Once you drink premier and grand cru from Cote d'or, New World Pinot is not even close. A silky Vosne from Cathiard. A Mugnier Amoreuses from Chambolle. An Armand Rousseau Chambertin. Nothing else comes close.

For white burgundy the only non-sweet I have tried that gives some of the same pleasure are whites from Kumeo River from New Zealand. But try to find something as good as Coche-Dury, Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, Montrachet 2000 (if you can !) or Domaine Roulot, Meursault Les Perrières 2010 anywhere else.

Barolos is more accessible young than it used to be. But after drinking Giuseppe Rinaldi Brunate or Barto Mascarello I was sold. Fantastic wine. Castegiocondo' s 2015 Brunello di Montalcino, with its full body and enveloping structure is another wine to be included in anyone's bucket list.

Riesling from Germany and especially Mosel or Rheinhessen is great. Try a Keller Riesling from Dalsheim, JJ Prum or Julian Haart, to experience the real thing. My only issue with Riesling is it can get boring if you drink too much. Then one needs a hiatus before drinking the grape again.

My absolute favourite for sweet wine would be an Auslese from Egon Muller Scharzhofberger in the Mosel region of Germany. Chateau d'Yquem (Bordeaux) is also decent. So that might be the only addition to my preferred wines. I think a region list like this would have included Bordeaux 10+ years ago. Really aged Bordeaux is good, but I usually would prefer Barolo or Burgundy when choosing from a wine map. I hardly look at top Bordeaux any longer as it needs 20–30 years to shine.

Lastly champagne. No other sparklers compare. But an honourable mention for English sparkling which is probably the region that at some point in time might overtake Champagne. But while drinking well there's nothing there yet that compares to a lieux-dit from Selosse or a vvf from Bollinger. Or Salmon and Krug for that matter.

2.4.3 Winespeak

Winespeak, the language of wine, can and many a time it is, something which creates a barrier for normal consumers from enjoying to the best possible level the world of wine. Burk in her book *The Secret Life of Wine* (Burk & Bywater, 2008, p. 212) states that the very first person to use winespeak was none other than Omar Khayyam. Regular wine drinkers and wine aficionados will probably read or at least glance, what wine columnists or wine guides have to say about wines in general or particular wines which fancy their interest. Winespeak is the language of those who need to mouth off about every wine they sample. John Mariani (Mariani, 2019) is of the opinion

that nowhere is Winespeak better parodied than in Evelyn Waugh's 1944 novel *Brideshead Revisited*, when two drunken roués describe various bottlings as “a little, shy wine like a gazelle. . . . Like a leprechaun... Dappled in a tapestry meadow’ and ‘like the last unicorn’.

Kathleen Burk (Burk & Bywater, 2008), feel that when consumers read such fancy adjectives and nouns, they quite easily begin to distrust the meaning of the words they are reading. While the ‘conscientious’ writers may try to convey the ‘experience’ a wine drinker would be getting when drinking the particular wine, and this required some detail, what most people really are seeking is most probably what the wine tastes like and would they like it. Flavour is however a composition of two parts; the nose and the palate. A sceptic about this, I suggest, should try drinking a glass of his/her favourite wine while holding his/her nose shut. I believe that part of the enjoyment of drinking wine is picking out the differences between what a wine smells like and what it actually tastes like. For many like me, what a wine smells like (the nose) is many a time more interesting because the levels of aromas/bouquet are sometimes more complex, and easier to recognise than layers of taste.

Wine writers or ‘gurus’ often load on the nicer nouns when describing wine (Burk & Bywater, 2008, p. 223). One such ‘guru’ described a Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon as having: ‘*Gobs of fruit, blackcurrants, and dark berries, notes of leather and pencil shavings, a hint of liquorice, chocolate and coffee*’. It is quite natural to have several reactions to such a description. One can easily pour out a glass of wine, sniff it, swirl it and sniff it again, and try, quite often with increasing desperation, to find each of these scents. Besides the fact that after all, would one be ready to buy a wine that tastes of pencil shavings? Or ignore all the ‘guru’ wrote, pour yourself a glass of that wine and say to yourself what Jancis Robinson is reportedly having said that only a very few can really discern more than a small handful of wine scents and tastes. Drink the wine and simply decide whether you like it or not!

It is a well-accepted fact that what very often attracts wine drinkers into wine shops, or drinking wine in restaurants or at home, are the adjectives used to describe the fruit one is expected to find in the wine, be it tropical, forest, citrus, stone fruit and so on. What happens is that seldom does the aroma correspond directly to the taste/palate of the wine in the mouth. Some do achieve this such as rather aggressively fruity New World wines. However I think we should be thankful that things like burnt rubber, wet leather and pieces of garden hose seldom do.

The banality of the way wine ‘buffs’ tend to describe individual wines has been remarked on for a very long time, as far back as 1937, when James Thurber’s cartoon in *The New Yorker* showing

a wine snob telling his guests, *“It’s a naïve domestic burgundy, but I think you’ll be amused by its presumption.”* Satires of such piffle haven’t stopped the modern wine media from trudging on in the pages of *Wine Advocate*, *Wine Spectator*, *Decanter* and other publications with hundreds of descriptions that range from technical gibberish like, “Brett in the nose, incomplete malolactic fermentation, a slight taste of graphite, a scent of botrytis, and enough vanillin to suggest overuse of new French barriques,” to reveries like “cinnamon, Meyer lemon, papaya, Monte Cristo No. 2 with Dominican wrapping, cat’s pee, and a hint of Sicilian blood orange” or “ ‘clove cigarette enjoyed in the rain’”. (Jennings, 2016)

Perhaps the silliest descriptor ever heard was in the 2013 documentary *Somm*, in which one wine steward, preparing to take the Master Sommelier Exam, exclaims with mind bewildering certainty, *“I’m getting notes of. . . freshly cut garden hose.”* How mad can it get? I think many will agree that it is difficult to compare such a description to a preferred bottle of Pinot Noir.

Phrases such as wet horse hair, stewed prunes, burned candle’s wax, ripe plantains, saddle leather, pencil shavings, cinnabar, summer rain, decaying roses, old linen, cigar box—all such references join an endless parade of duller descriptions like juicy, citrus-y, black cherry-like, Winesap, tar, vanilla and bell peppers that may be repeated dozens of times within the same discussion of a particular varietal wine, they may be more understandable to apprehend the character and style of a particular wine.

2.4.4 Can we talk differently about wine?

This also begs the question: Is there a better way to talk about wine? Bianca Bosker is a one such person asking this simple question. Bosker feels that a kind of adjectival inflation is being experienced in the quest to overwhelm wine aficionados in their wine experiences by writing ever more ‘baroqueial’ style wine descriptions. My own experience of critic’s notes suggests this is quite a reality. It is as if each critic is trying to get one over the other in their imaginary quest to become ‘the next Parker’. Bosker also alludes to the fact ‘senseless’ metaphorical ‘overloads’ in the wine ‘discourse’ is becoming bizarrely fashionable.

Bosker has a vision that when writing about wine, any writer should endeavour to enhance the consumer’s senses and journey in wine exploration in such a manner that even the most amateur wine aficionado can tackle the most familiar aspects of a wine’s taste and character as are usually included in tasting notes and descriptions. Andrew Jefford (Jefford, 2015) has a feeling that by using extravagant tasting descriptions, the wine industry has lost sight of what descriptive wine

notes should need to be conveying. Studies such as that conducted by the Journal of Wine Economics show that the language of tasting notes is ‘practically’ unhelpful and best seen as a load of BS.

Of course, the wine media know very well that no one reads these reams of blather about 20 French Chenin Blancs or 30 Brazilian Tannats. Instead, people just glance at the numerical scores, instigated by Robert M. Parker, Jr. in his Wine Advocate back in 1978, and take their cue from them. Jefford feels that if Parker had merely given scores, his critical work would not have achieved the economic significance it did. Nor is it quite good enough to call it all ‘bullsh**t’. If the work of Parker and others is followed, it is because it is found useful. Something is true; something is being communicated; something is of value.

The really good wine writers have, over many centuries, provided beautiful descriptions—some too flowery—of wine in general and of certain kinds of wine specifically. The best are very funny, as when Cardinal Richelieu asked, ‘*If God forbade drinking, would He have made wine so good?*’ and Alexander Dumas, who said, ‘*Wine is the intellectual part of the meal.*’ Even Napoleon got off a good one when he quipped, ‘*Nothing makes the future look so rosy as to contemplate it through a glass of Chambertin.*’ Ernest Hemingway always got right to the point about wine, as in A Moveable Feast when he reported, ‘*We had a Corsican wine that had great authority and a low price. It was a very Corsican wine and you could dilute it by half with water and still receive its message.*’ (Mariani, 2019)

I have to admit that even I fall into the trap of ‘winespeak’, when doing tutored tasting and the reaction I get depends on the audience, people who are frequent wine drinkers and some prior experience of wine tasting slang, go along while others who are less fluent in wine show ‘blank’ faces.

What I am trying to say is that I tend to go along with Mariani’s outlook on this subject and application of such phraseology may be doing more harm than good to generate loyalty in wine drinkers. Far better to give a general background on a wine and why it is distinctive within its region, style or profile. I also always tend to mention the alcohol level in a wine, because a one-degree difference can be remarkable, which few of my colleagues, I noticed, ever do when doing tutored tastings and even in the now very common wine blogs and YouTube videos etc...

Ernest Hemingway, in my opinion, was one of the most dependable wine writers ever, not because he wrote columns about wine but because his well-informed opinions, dropped into his novels,

stories, commentaries and letters, came to such a clear, rational point without rambling on in cloying praise. He didn't even have to say what wine he was drinking to evoke the essence of wine's pleasure with food: *'As I ate the oysters with their strong taste of the sea and their faint metallic taste that the cold white wine washed away, leaving only the sea taste and the succulent texture, and as I drank their cold liquid from each shell and washed it down with the crisp taste of the wine, I lost the empty feeling and began to be happy and to make plans.'*

Some might easily see winespeak as a sort of 'anti-language' where language and meaning part company right in front of the consumer's eyes. Charles Jennings he sees two main reasons why certain people use 'winespeak':

- The number of descriptors available for wine appreciation is pretty small – especially when you consider the thousands of wines to be talked about – so wine buffs press unfamiliar, sometimes unintelligible, words and images into service just so they don't bore themselves. There are, after all, only so many ways you can combine 'body', 'red' and 'full'.
- Essentially the experience of drinking wine exists in the drinker's own personal universe. Unlike an opera or an art exhibition, there's no common event against which to test your assertions. What goes on inside a few cubic centimetres in your head is pretty much the only thing that matters. A quality like damp roof tiles? Why not?

Jennings is quite explicit in his views and if I were a normal consumer in a restaurant or a wine shop, all I would really want from someone explaining or suggesting a wine to me is a 'winespeak' that is graven simplicity. On the other hand, anyone drinking wine, should sniff before sipping thus doubling the expected pleasure coming from the particular wine. In a nutshell, 'winespeak' can only take the wine aficionado only so far, after that it is up to the individual drinker, unless the consumer wants to follow blindly after what his/her preferred wine 'guru' says or writes, no matter where he leads.

Academic attempts to give rigour to wine writing, such as Noble's 'Aroma Wheel', to come up with an objective language for wine, or to 'unfuzz' winespeak always end in boredom for the reader. Conservative, restrained wine descriptions are tedious, repetitive and soporific, and utterly fail to evoke the excitement of smelling and tasting wine. They are phenomenologically inadequate in my humble opinion.

The writing of descriptive (as opposed to academic) wine notes is a specialized form of wine entertainment and is quickly seen as such by users. No one takes them literally; they are liberally

sprinkled with salt by the experienced reader, and soon leach more water than an aubergine. The tongue is always somewhere in the writer's cheek (or should be). They are drafted with a smile, in a spirit of levity (or should be).

There are three sorts of skill, in my book, which can be buried in wine descriptions, and this is what readers are hunting for. The first is tasting skill: you can pick the right wines to go purple about. Parker has this, for the majority of his readers; that is one of the secrets of his success. Some say Pliny was the first 'Parker' (Burk & Bywater, 2008, p. 130). They bought the bottles and, damn it, the guy was right!

The second is the ability to communicate enthusiasm. You read the note; you want to try the wine. This, too, is a skill Parker singularly possesses. (Pomposity and self-importance, by the way, detract from the levity of the genre; Parker avoids both with a nimbleness which eludes lesser critics.)

The third sort of skill is genuine literary skill, of the sort possessed by Hugh Johnson. It's the glaring lack of this, in truth, which really hobbles the wine world's reputation: most wine descriptions possess zero literary merit, Parker's included. This is why they make the uninitiated laugh or weep, and come to seem embarrassing, in the fullness of time, by their perpetrators. I have long thought it a shame that the recruitment process for wine writers and critics, such as it is, tends to privilege wine interest and skill above writing ability. The danger is that you end up with wine nerds writing for wine nerds, in an excitable, echo-filled ghetto.

This is why professionally trained personnel are required to guide consumers with simple, understandable and down to earth suggestions and advice, in their wine choices, be it in a restaurant, wine shop or even a supermarket, to weed out inferior wines and help consumers enjoy a better meal experiences and standard of living with better wine choices combined with establishing reasonable end-consumer prices in wine shops, supermarkets, wine bars, restaurants and hotels as well as enhancing wine and food pairing success.

2.5 Wine and food

For most of history, wine has been a regular accompaniment to meals. Often the culinary and winemaking traditions of a region would evolve together, creating a natural pairing between the local wine and the local cuisine. Food and its accompanying wine should harmonise well together, the French like to call this 'mariage', in our modern times we refer to it as 'matching' or 'pairing',

with each enhancing the other's performance. However, the combinations that prove most successful are those that please the individual. Appendix 8 of this report gives an indication on which wine characteristics indicate ideal food/dish style to pair with.

When considering possible food and wine partnerships there are no guidelines to which there are no exceptions. For example, although fish is usually served with white wine, some dishes, for example heavily sauced salmon, red mullet, or a fish such as lamprey (which is traditionally cooked in red wine) can be successfully accompanied by a slightly chilled red Saint-Emilion, Pomerol or Mercury. The key issue in not having red wine with fish comes from the reaction of oily fish, such as mackerel, with red wine to produce a metal taste in the mouth.

Wine and food matching can be a mysterious and daunting undertaking. Often the unfortunate result is that some people just go blind into a wine shop or restaurant and accept any advice offered on wine purchases be it good or bad. With hindsight the process of pairing does not have to be difficult. Like Toto in the *Wizard of Oz* the aim of good pairing is to pull back the curtain and reveal the man wearing the wizard's mask. Selecting the ideal wine to accompany one's meal should be fun and engaging akin to trying a new cuisine or learning a new hobby.

2.5.1 What is the sense of pairing wine and food?

The ultimate goal of the pairing process between wine and food dishes is to enhance the dining experience. Nothing gives pleasure on the palate as when wine and food are perfectly matched. On the other hand, nothing tastes quite as awful as when wine and food clash. A perfectly seared pork tenderloin accompanied by a glass of fresh dry rosé promotes a simple meal and turns it into a heavenly experience, however a grilled ribeye accompanied by a glass of oaky Chardonnay will go a long way to ruin a perfectly good steak as well as a good glass of wine. This proves that two rights can and will make a wrong.

In many cultures, wine has had a long history of being a staple at the dinner table and in some ways both the winemaking and culinary traditions of a region will have evolved together over the years.

'Nothing more excellent or valuable than wine was ever granted by the gods to man.'

- Plato

It is an accepted fact that wine and food can reach back in history together. It is very probable that fermented beverages are some of the first consumable liquids that mankind developed. In many

cultures, wine has had a long history of being a staple at the dinner table and in some ways both the winemaking and culinary traditions of a region will have evolved together over the years. Rather than following a set of rules, local cuisines were paired simply with local wines.

Very commonly, archaeological ruins that have been studied present relics connected with wine. The Greeks are known to have kept wine around their houses in clay pots or amphoras, even Noah packed some wine on his Ark. Even the bible has numerous references to wine. Shakespeare, Roman philosophers, and even Egyptian hieroglyphics also all mention wine through the ages.

While it is often said that "taste is subjective", there are quantifiable taste characteristics (like bitter, sweet, salty or sour) that can be perceived and measured as low, moderate or high—such as measuring the sweetness of honey or the saltiness of oysters (Goldstein, 2006, pp. 14-26). Flavours, such as butterscotch, char and strawberry, are more personal and can't be quantifiable. Flavours are either perceived to be present or not.

The perception of flavours is linked to our sense of smell, while tastes come from the sensory glands of the taste buds. Though individual sensitivity to the different taste "senses" can vary, wine experts will often recommend pairings based on these more objective measurements rather than the more subjective concept of "flavours". In wine there are three basic tastes—bitter, sweet and sour. These three tastes can each be identified with a primary component of the wine—tannins (bitter), residual sugar (sweet) and acidity (sour). A fourth component, alcohol, is identified in wine tasting with a perception of "heat" or hotness in the back of the mouth and is the primary factor influencing the body of the wine. The residual heat of the alcohol can be considered in food pairing with some ingredients minimizing the heat of the wine while some will accentuate it.

Acidity is a dominant player in any food and wine pairing due to the pronounced and complex ways that it can heighten the perception of flavours. In wine tasting, acidity is perceived by a mouth-watering response by the salivary glands. This mouth-watering can also serve to stimulate the appetite.

The sweetness of wines is determined by the amount of residual sugar left in the wine after the fermentation process. Wines can be bone dry (with the sugars fully fermented into alcohol), off-dry (with a hint of sweetness), semi-dry (medium-sweet) and dessert level sweetness (such as the high sugar content in Sauternes and Tokays). Sweet wines often need to be sweeter than the dish they are served with. In food pairings, sweetness balances spice and heat.

The astringency associated with wine is usually derived from a wine's tannins. Tannins add a gritty texture and chalky, astringent taste. It can enhance the perception of "body" or weight in the wine. Tannins are normally derived from the skins, seeds, and stems of the grapes themselves (leached out during the maceration process) or from contact with oak during barrel aging. Tannins react with proteins. When paired with dishes that are high in proteins and fats (such as red meat and hard cheeses), the tannins will bind to the proteins and come across as softer. In the absence of protein from the food, such as some vegetarian dishes, the tannins will react with the proteins on the tongue and sides of the mouth—accentuating the astringency and having a drying effect on the palate.

Alcohol is the primary factor in dictating a wine's weight and body. Typically, the higher the alcohol level, the more weight the wine has. An increase in alcohol content will increase the perception of density and texture. In food and wine pairing, salt and spicy heat will accentuate the alcohol and the perception of "heat" or hotness in the mouth. (Goldstein, 2006) Conversely, the alcohol can also magnify the heat of spicy food making a highly alcoholic wine paired with a very spicy dish one that will generate a lot of heat for the taster.

2.5.2 Wine and food pairing over the ages

Even though not many historical references do not specifically talk about wine and food being paired together, and I know as I have found it very difficult to find such references myself in these report's research, it is also obvious that they were consumed together.

In many cultures, wine and local cuisines developed together, and since they 'grew up' together they often taste good together. For example, a Chianti is the natural choice with Tuscan cuisine. And no one would ever think of serving a beef bourguignon without a French Burgundy red. This something called pairing by terroir. However, over time with migration and settlements in new countries outside Europe, wine grapes have expanded beyond their indigenous terroirs.

In the modern wine world, new wine regions, especially those found in the so called 'New World' category, sometimes match the local cuisines, but they do not have the centuries of history and development that European matches typically have. Furthermore, nowadays wines are being served with foods that traditionally were never paired with wines which reflect the modern concept of wine and food pairing.

2.5.3 Modern dining and wine and food pairing

The modern wine dinner phenomenon is a reflection of what diners are seeking in the new millennium to enhance their experiences when dining out. While Old World wine makers have been serving some of their wine with certain food for centuries, in recent years, modern wine and food dining has taken 'pairings' to a whole new level. The modern "art" of food pairings is a relatively recent phenomenon, fostering an industry of books and media with guidelines for pairings of particular foods and wine. In the restaurant industry, sommeliers are often present to make food pairing recommendations for the guest.

Today's modern meals are created with great care by chefs, winemakers, and sommeliers, almost as creating a symphony of eating and drink to achieve that memorable dining out experience. These people very often meet long into the night to work out special dishes and wine selections for their daily or occasional menus. You also get restaurants which rely on wine-savvy staff to come up with spontaneous pairing recommendations if they have professional training. As a result of this evolution in drinking and eating, food and wine pairings which were once exclusive to fine dining gourmet, 5-star establishments are now becoming increasingly frequent in run-of-the-mill eating establishments. Some outlets even go as far as putting in wine suggestions on their menus. But modern wine dinners have even gone further than this.

For example, in California, USA, as the wine industry started to grow and evolve, many wineries started to host dinners on their premises to showcase their wines by adding restaurants to their wine making facilities. Even in Australia this was experienced with Brown Brothers winery coming to mind. In Malta there is Meridiana Wine Estate that does this same thing even renting out their premises for special occasions such as sit-down dinners where their wines a part of the food and drink selection.

While a perfect balance where both food and wine are equally enhanced is theoretically possible, typically a pairing will have a more enhancing influence on one or the other. Master Sommelier Evan Goldstein (Goldstein, 2006, pp. 14-26) notes that food and wine pairing is like two people having a conversation: "One must listen while the other speaks or the result is a muddle". This means either the food or the wine will be the dominant focus of the pairing, with the other serving as a complement to enhance the enjoyment of the first. In regards to weight and intensity, if the focus of the pairing is the wine then a more ideal balance will be a food that is slightly lighter in weight to where it will not compete for attention with the wine but not too light to where it is completely overwhelmed. If the focus of the pairing is to highlight a dish, then the same thought would apply in pairing a wine.

At the Institute of Tourism Studies – Malta, a monthly wine and food dinner programme was run for six years in what was called The Mistral Wine Club Dinners, where student and local wine aficionados enjoyed the experience and appreciation of various wine selections combined with special menus for the occasion. During these dinners a different wine was served with every dish on the menu which included a brief comparison between the wine and the dish it was served with. These dinners helped students to ply their skills and gain knowledge in wine and food combination while diners enjoyed and appreciated the pairings based on regional, terroir, grape variety and cuisines.

All these circumstances are all examples of how consumers and diners, new and experienced, were introduced to new and innovative ways to enjoy food and wine. As a ripple effect of these culinary events, a tangible increase in interest in wine lists came about with things like wine-by-the-glass menus with people's appetite for wine starting to grow. Add to these developments an increasing interest in food with the explosion of TV programmes as evidenced by Food Network's phenomenal growth and the locavore movement. The Locavore movement being people who embrace and try to eat local foods often grown in the vicinity which started in the Sonoma county wine country and spread widely.

2.5.4 Compliment or contrast when pairing?

After considering weight, pairing the flavours and texture can be dealt with using one of two main strategies — complement or contrast.

The first strategy tries to bring wine together with dishes that complement each other such as an earthy, Burgundian Pinot noir with an earthy, mushroom dish.

The second strategy operates under the truism that "opposites attract" and brings together food and wine that have contrasting traits such as a crisp, acidic Sauvignon blanc and a fish with a creamy lemon sauce. The crisp acidity of the wine serves as a contrast that can cut through the creaminess of the sauce and give a different, refreshing sensation for the palate as opposed to what a complementary pairing, such as a creamy, buttery Chardonnay, would bring.

For most of history, the "complementary strategy" was the prevailing thought on food and wine pairing. In the 1980s, as more people started to discover and experiment with pairings, the idea of using contrast started to gain more favour. It follows the same idea that the "salty/sweet" pairing does in cooking (such as salty peanut butter with sweet jelly).

The same food may be complemented or contrasted: a hard, nutty cheese such as Hirtenkase should have "a nutty, slightly sweet wine with it," or a full-bodied red wine.

2.5.5 Beyond wine and food pairing

Wine and food go beyond mere eating and drinking. This concept goes beyond, as very often it is an integral part of experiencing new places, new experiences as well as reflecting emerging trends and sensations.

Beyond the basic guidelines listed above, food pairings can dive even further into matching several layers of texture and flavours. The term "bridge ingredients" refers to ingredients and flavours that have certain affinities in wine pairing (such as slow-cooked onions with creamy wines, etc.). It can also refer to using herbs and spices perceived in the wine (such as rosemary in some Cabernet Sauvignon) and adding them to the dish as an ingredient. Their presence in a dish may increase the likelihood that the certain wines will pair well.

The above principles can be used for pairing wines with Asian cuisine. Pair for the flavour of the dish - whatever the 'main ingredient' may be - it is not the meat, seafood, or vegetables that stand out as the predominant flavour. Rather the true flavour of the dish is determined by the cooking method (for example, the toasty flavours of a stir fry), the sauce (from curries to sweet-and-sour), the use of seasonings (such as ginger and coriander leaves to mask fishy tastes), or the blending of ingredients to form new flavours (as in sukiyaki or satay). Indeed, it may result from a combination of any of these elements. Also, note that in the case of an Asian meal, several dishes are served at the same time and are shared by everyone present. The wine chosen for such a meal must be versatile

Rather than following a set of rules, such as with local cuisines being paired simply with local wines. The modern "art" of food pairings is a relatively recent phenomenon, fostering an industry of books and media with guidelines for pairings of particular foods and wine. In the restaurant industry, sommeliers are often present to make food pairing recommendations for the guest.

The main concept behind pairings is that certain elements (such as texture and flavour) in both food and wine interact with each other, and thus finding the right combination of these elements will make the entire dining experience more enjoyable. However, taste and enjoyment are very subjective and what may be a "textbook perfect" pairing for one taster could be less enjoyable to another. |

Gordon Shepherd in his 2017 book on neuroenology declares that wine tasting starts when the consumer starts thinking about drinking wine, the cephalic phase, using the front part of the brain, the pre-frontal cortex (Shepherd, 2017). This in combination with the environment the client is in such as the restaurant and its atmosphere, waiting to order in a restaurant looking at a wine list or the wine bar not to mention the urge to drink wine motivating the brain to think or look forward to what wine is ideal for the consumer.

Christopher Loss from the Department of Culinary Science at the Culinary Institute of America also adheres to Shepherd's outlook that where wine and food combination is concerned, every sniff, bite and gulp goes into creating moments of reflection in those consuming wine and food.

Inspecting a wine bottle's label with a person's visual system starts the brain assessing how the wine will taste and the person's expectations of the wine. Furthermore, mental sensations on reward, emotion, memories as well as influences from others (friends, Sommelier, adverts, articles etc.) will motivate influence the urge to choose a wine.

People usually do what is called a preliminary analysis of a wine by smelling the extracted cork of the bottle, looking at the poured wine in the glass and finally tasting the said wine to see if the previous expectations and perception can be conformed or changed after the person's brain deciphers the wine's flavours. Shepherd (Shepherd, 2017, p. 98) presents the complexities of sipping and moving the wine in the mouth and how the stimuli picked from the wine interact in the brain to produce the final perception of the wine's flavour.

Memory brain cells tell the drinker if the wine is what they like or what they want or crave, emotion brain cells say if the wine is pleasing or displeasing or how the wine compares with other flavours, reward brain cells will be activated to reward or reject the wine, the language generating cells will communicate the feelings and judgements about the wine to others. This is when an internal image is created by the perceptual systems of the brain as one can see in the video in Appendix 2. This is something all good sommeliers need to be aware of in their line of work.

Gary Beauchamp from the Monell Chemical Senses Centre in the USA is of the opinion that savouring wine is perhaps the 'quintessential' human multimodal experience, combining as it does vision, touch, taste, smell, and even audition into an exceptional aesthetic experience. This something sommelier must strive towards when suggesting wine and food combination pairings for the clients.

2.5.6 Other 'experimental' pairings

'Other' experimental pairings with wine include a growing trend of pairing wine with something other than food. In this trend two of the most popular experimental pairings are those that have a go at pairing or matching with music and art. Such pairings tend to draw mostly on the senses beyond taste and smell.

When one adds the aural component, this pushes the 'pairing' to a completely new level, and it is more appreciated by music lovers. Imagine pairing a bottle of Chianti Riserva with an opera by Puccini. This can easily take that person to Florence or the Teatro della Pergola found there. Another outlook in this area of pairing is that which says heavy tannic reds go down better with heavy metal music (!) as they both show a bold, in-your-face character or Michael Bubl  with a young, rich Californian Chardonnay. Sparkling wines are sure to be better appreciated when consumed while whimsical ragtime music is being played as both are seen as being effervescent and uplifting.

Why do I see this working? I believe that music (good music) enhances the dining experience. From my work experience I believe that when people enjoy eating out, music is the last thing they think of. But it really has psychological effect on people as they are enjoying their wine. The right tempo and beat of music can keep a party of clients moving at the pace one desires. And if one is not comfortable as to where to begin, a good website as a source would be www.wine-andmusic.com. (Burk & Bywater, 2008)

Pairing wine and art, the other main trend, is enjoyable to many as it integrates the sense of sight used in wine and food pairing to a higher degree through the visual experience of art. Pairing wine with art, comparing and matching the colour and the feel of an art piece with the colour and feel of a wine. Always keeping in mind, the calming colours of the art matching the velvety, soothing, earthy wine/s. blue colours and earthy tones would work well with earthy wines such as single estate Chateauneuf du Pape or a Valpolicella Ripasso, on the other hand, vibrant and bright colours go down well with bright coloured like an Alsatian Pinot Gris. Country or pastoral scenes are enhanced by herbaceous Sauvignon Blanc or Sancerres.

Another element of wine and art pairings is the texture of the food and to a lower extent the wine. Burk (Burk & Bywater, 2008) states that if one is showcasing a sculptural piece of art, something like a paella with a glass of highly textured Cava is a winner!

The two easiest combining principles that can be applied in wine and art (and even music) are: 'like goes with like' and, 'goes with where it grows'. The best bet is to go along the like with like combi. It is more difficult to get it right with opposites. Pairing by terroir is also good such as granite or other stone sculptures with an aromatically stony wine such as a Chablis.

If someone wants to go down this road some example to try out could be:

- The movie '*Chocolat*' paired with a late harvest Zinfandel, along with some home-made dark chocolate or gourmet bites.
- A black and white photo art show combined with a clear, white such as a young Riesling and a dark wine like a Cahors made with Malbec.
- A slideshow of travel photos from say my visits to Italy, France and Spain combined with a Pasqua Amarone della Valpolicella 'Black Label', a Santenay 'Clos de Malte' from Burgundy and velvety Torroja Priorat.
- A late harvest Alsace Riesling (Vendage Tardive) paired with a medium rare done fillet of beef served with a Riesling Sauce and spring vegetables.

Making these 'experiments' more experimental can be achieved by using the lesser known varieties such Carignan (high acidity reds), Mourvèdre (spicy reds), Petit Verdot (intense dark reds), Torrontes (floral white) and Roussanne (creamy whites). It is always advisable to experimenting with what one likes and move on from there. A small journal of successful combinations even failed ones, to guide future experiments. One should try diverse combinations to come up with new pairings.

Good pairing recommendations may be crucial for the success of foods and beverages, both in the retail and hospitality sector. Food–beverage pairings are often presented by culinary professionals such as chefs or sommeliers, however little focus has been given to consumer perception of such pairings. (Paulsen, et al., 2015) Many a time it boils down to a "just about balanced" (JAB) scale for rating the relative balance of intensity between two products when deciding what is good with what.

Further to this approach one might say that a hedonistic element (Danner, 2016) comes into play as well as during the decision process customers more often than not do tend to have hedonistic influences in wine choices. This also implies that choices would reflect the deeper understanding of consumers' perceptions of wine quality, wine-evoked emotions, and how these relate to consumer preferences and purchase as defined by Köster (2009).

2.5.7 Wine and food pairing – When all is said and done?

To many people, learning about pairing of food and wine is understandably like learning a new language. Goldstein (Goldstein, 2010) opines that these two things require a little study and will become easier as experience is gained by the consumer and at a certain stage the consumer will reach a point where the acquired knowledge will become reflexive.

Where wine and food pairing is concerned, when all is said and done, three outcomes need to be achieved to declare success. Wine and food are like George Burns and Gracie Allen, or Laverne and Shirley, or Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton. But like celebrity duos, not all pairings are successful. Whether planned or blindly matched, one will achieve one the following three main basic outcomes every single time wine and food pairings are brought to a table for consumption these being:

1. The wine will overpower the food.
2. The food will overpower the wine.
3. The wine and the food will enhance one another.

The first two results are should be easy enough to pinpoint when one experiences them. Like when one is enjoying a nice glass of wine or a nice food item, but when you bring both together in the mouth, it takes a lot of self-control not to spit everything out. In other words, they are incompatible and create clashing tastes in the mouth. It is like the wine is trying to tango and the food is trying to waltz, what can one expect the outcome to be?

To overcome the first two outcomes, one has therefore to avoid pairing strong wines with delicate foods, or strong spicy foods paired with delicate wines. A Cabernet Sauvignon will blanket out a broiled fish and as spicy fish curry dish will drown away a delicate Pinot Gris.

Another reason for outcomes one and two might be the misjudgement of the actual flavours such as a premium Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc being served with a goats cheese dish, generally Sauvignon Blanc is considered as a good pair with goats cheese however a super flavoured Cloudy Bay needs a dish that is on par with its intensity otherwise you will get a situation similar to *'fingernails scratching across a person's blackboard of taste buds'*. This situation sends out a message that one has not to take for granted what is considered as normal pairs as not all varietal wines are the same.

The third outcome, that is, perfect pairings usually leave a few failed pairings in their path as one seeks the desired goal. Chefs and sommeliers have been found to make 20 wine and food tasting,

all different, until they reach what they consider to be the perfect match. This means one must be adventurous to try new things which will bring to the fore some 'do-not-ever-pair-again' matchups but one will also meet some real pairing gems. The greatest pleasure to experience is the result of good pairings as besides wine and food enhancing each other, a 'third' flavour profile is created. This is when wine and food taste good separately but combined they create this mythic third taste that can make one swoon and help elevate the one's entire tasting and /or meal experience. A simple example of such a scenario would be eating a pepper encrusted fillet of beef with an accompanying 'peppery' Syrah/Shiraz. Or for the adventurous at heart the drink of a sweet dessert wine like a Barsac from Bordeaux with a blue Roquefort cheese slight drizzled with genuine bee's honey.

2.5.8 Wine and food pairing criteria

Pairing of wine with food is a lot like falling in love. In true love, one may be blind to colour, race, religion and gender and one will find true happiness with the lover who shares the same shared values, experiences, interests and innate attraction. Wine and food come together when the character traits of the wines mesh or combine with the food's personality.

Furthermore, it is a common factor that when a wine is drunk on its own it may feel or taste different than when drunk with food. Rosengarten and Wesson did some impressive work in this area way back in the 1990's when in publications they authored, namely, *Wine and Food Companion* (1990) and *Red Wine and Fish* (1989) and are still regarded in many quarters as innovative works. These two gentlemen rated wines on two levels, one numeric (for wine taste) and one based on letter 'A to F' (for wine and food pairing) or how they performed as 'soloists' (drunk on their own) and how well they paired with food.

Goldstein maintains that even if today it is accepted that attraction of opposites is a goof wine and food pairing approach, in his mind the most obvious and noteworthy combinations are based on the 'shared' rather than 'contrasting' aspects of any wine and food. He explains further that the basis of this idea of his is that wines and food share certain tastes. Tastes are not flavouring in his book; these are omnipresent in food with most dishes showing a variety of combinations in them. On the other hand, something like salt is not an element in wine but the three classic tastes of sweetness, sourness and bitterness are the 'building blocks' of any wine that define its character profile. This is what helps us, the consumers or the sommeliers, decide how and with what a wine should be best served. Goldstein believes that that the interplay of tastes holds the key to wine and food pairing.

Roger C. Bohmrich (Bohmrich, 2011), Master of Wine, in an article on millesimal-usa.com, defined the criteria for wine and food pairing as instances, which I am sure, all of us have probably experienced those perfect occasions when the wine became one with the dish, but these are individual, or at least not universal, experiences.

He went on to dwell on the point that perhaps one should be thinking about the relationship of tastes more conceptually, and then selecting one of many wines from a “family” of styles that share those fundamental taste characteristics.

We may find that attributes such as body, acidity, alcohol content and barrel aging in wines, count for more than grape variety in the realm of wine and food pairing. Therefore, before while one can pick wines by relying on their style profiles, ideally one would need to answer two crucial questions:

- *What is the overall taste profile of the dish: light and subtle; sharp and herbal; full flavoured and fatty; heavily seasoned or spiced?*
- *What wine options share the same overall personality, or which would serve as an attractive contrast: light, dry white; aromatic and intense white; full-bodied, firmly defined red; refreshing rosé or soft, ample red?*

Since tastes vary significantly according to people’s unique personal experience and differing sensitivities, among many other factors, the guiding principle of food and wine pairing is to emphasize tolerance and flexibility. In Bohmrich’s criteria at the end of the day there is only one rule: there are no rules! In line with this frame of mind comes into play the reality that many wine styles are offered as options within each grouping of food/cuisine preparations that flexibility of choice dictated by the individual taste preferences.

Any sommelier worth his/her salt should primarily adhere to the general wine pairing guidelines and recommendations as outlined in Appendix 7. Having said this, sommeliers doing wine and food pairings also have to consider the human aspect of ‘personal preferences’. Some wine writers and oenophiles say that most food and wines will react indifferently to each other. This insinuates that instead of creating a culinary firework display, good or bad, they exist in a blah-blah nowhere where they are experienced together, but they (food and wine) really do not touch each other and therefore do not show off each other’s worst characteristics and do not enhance each other. This is like saying they are as neutral as distilled water.

This, in my book, is not reality. There are degrees of pairing perfection like being spot-on to just being okay. A bad pairing might be spit inducive, but it might be just a 'not so good' pairing. This most of the time simply is down to personal opinion. For example, take a sommelier who loves a fruity New Zealand Shiraz with veal but the client prefers a Chilean Pinot Noir. One cannot say one or the other is wrong. Pairings are like wine and food they boil down to personal taste.

2.5.9 What can ensure a positive wine and food pairing experience?

While good wine and food combination goes a long way in ensuring diners' good meal experiences, faulty wine service can damage this goal or objective. According to an article published on a website (NowBali, 2019) which I happened to access, the most common complaints are:

- *Wine orders* – when servers have limited or no knowledge of the wines list and availability not to mention ideal pairing advice.
- *Wine serving temperatures* – part of positive wine appreciation is the capacity serve a wine at the correct temperature and if improper storage is the rue in a restaurant this could lead to faulty wine which have their defaults enhanced by the wrong serving temperatures.
- *Faulty wine service itself* – anything from delayed orders to long waiting time to get the wine to the clients table, not allowing the client to taste the wine before pouring to all the guests around the table or even for getting to serve the host!
- *Decantation of wines* – quality mature reds and even some whites scream out for decanting as a way to allow them to show their best to the client.
- *Corked and spoiled wines* – boiling down to bad purchasing and storage procedures and standards which more often than not lead to spoiled or corked wines which a far below par destroying the wine pairing experience for the client.

As one can easily notice, these points highlight the abilities or lack of , of wine servers when caring for their wine stocks, as well as providing the required service levels to make teir wines shine in the eyes of the client. To minimise such complaints, it is therefore essential to have properly trained professional people with the correct demeanour on hand as outlined in Appendix 4 of this report, to provide the required levels of service.

Another aspect of the wine service element coming into play is the effect COVID-19 will be having on wine orders and consumption in restaurants. It is an accepted fact that drinks sales are a key contributor to restaurant finances. Nick Lander argues that many businesses will have to adapt their wine lists when they finally reopen after lockdowns are over. In a perfect world, a ratio of 30:70 of total sales to drinks sales would be the goal. he aim is to strike the right balance between encouraging the sale of alcohol – easy money – and creating a respected establishment with a

reputation for good food and service. Too high a proportion of alcohol sales and the establishment risks turning into a pub.

Further to this Lander suggests that under lockdown, there has been a massive switch in wine sales from businesses to households. This means consumers are more knowledgeable than they were about 'costs' and, therefore, 'less likely' to accept a restaurant's large mark-up on wines. This could have serious implications for the food to drinks sales ratio. This also insinuates bigger pressure on front line staff (wine servers/sommeliers, if any?) on achieving regular and acceptable sales levels. (Lander, 2020)

Then there is the question of how a wine is chosen from a post-pandemic list. We know, at our cost, that there has to be some form of social distancing and the waiters, including sommeliers, have to wear a face mask. While the kitchen is often behind a swing door, wine service is radically different. It is more personal, more colourful, more expressive and more theatrical. Lander questions the possibility of experiencing dramatic wine displays such as that in Charlie Palmer's Aureole restaurant in Las Vegas with its four-storey wine display and having the wine bottles picked out by young women hanging by wires known to many as the 'wine angels', just like something out of a 'Mission Impossible' film.

If or should, restaurant wine lists become less attractive, if their displays are forced to be less exciting, and if, in the short term, wine service has to be less personal due to reduced personnel numbers, or reduced customer contact, this will definitely hurt the all-important drinks to food ratio in the short and medium term. John Ragan MS, wine director, Union Square Hospitality Group, New York, opines about what will change post-COVID. He put forward a few thoughts on what catering unit operators and staff may be experiencing in the coming months:

- *There could be less experimentation in wine and more attention paid to known classics.*
- *Value for money will be more important than ever – there will be less focus on 'trophy wines' and more on what sommeliers call 'workhorse wines'.*
- *Smaller, more compact wine lists, which minimise investment in stock, will predominate.*
- *There will be fewer paper wine lists – there might be a move to put wine lists on iPads, but that can be problematic in terms of hygiene as well. More casual restaurants will return to chalkboards.*
- *More guests may choose to pour their own wine, wishing to minimise the number of people handling a bottle.*
- *Wines by the glass will be increasingly common.*

What has been written before encapsulates the expectancies and responsibilities as well as the scenarios that restaurant personnel have to perform in in order to provide the level of wine service the clientele and managements expect of them. All the more the importance of having 'professional' servers to be able to cope and deal with all the hype and what else is thrown at them. These are the 'Sommeliers'

2.6 The Sommelier – Who is this person?

A sommelier or wine waiter is a person who is an expert in fine wine and is responsible for serving it to patrons. Sommelier is French in origin and originally a wine waiter's job was to serve royalty as was the tradition in 1300's England where the royal butler would source the wine for the king. During the reign of Louis XIV, the sommelier was the official in charge of the transport of baggage when the court moved. In the household of a great lord, he was the official who chose the wines, table settings and desserts. The sommelier used his tastevin, a silver saucer on a thick silver chain worn around the neck to check his lord's wine for poison. He also checked the food. If the sommelier died, his Master would avoid the meal. (Fallis, 2015)

2.6.1 Historical background

According to Parr and Mackay (2010), the word sommelier has come to us by way of an interesting etymological journey. A somier (Old French for 'pack animal'), was watched over by a sommierier. A sommierier's responsibility included the animals and their cargo. Sommierier mutated into soumelier, and the meaning slightly shifted-- a soumelier (a Middle French word) was responsible for transporting supplies. The spelling and meaning slightly shifted again-- a sommelier was someone in charge of a specific type of cargo. Now, this term refers exclusively to beverages, and sometimes cigars (Scala, 2014).

The modern-day sommelier emerged alongside the modern-day restaurant. Public dining used to happen in a tavern-like form: diners would eat whatever stew, pie, or meal the tavern owner had made that day. The phenomenon of the a la carte menu didn't occur until during the French Revolution. The word restaurant comes from a French root word that means "to restore," and these first dining venues were places to eat restorative food during the trying times of the Revolution. By 1782, two of the first a la carte restaurant menus at Antoine Beauvilliers 'Beauvilliers' and 'Boulangier' offered made-to-order dishes in France (Bakas 2011).

Another early restaurant, Boeuf a la Mode (1792-1936), also helped cement this new genre of eating establishment into a form with an assured future. André Jammet, formerly an owner of the

NYC restaurant La Caravelle and a descendant from a family with centuries of French restaurant experience, notes that the chef profession was once a patronized job funded by the European aristocracy. After the French Revolution-- with the aristocratic class wiped out-- many chefs found themselves without a job and began to open up small shops cooking for the public. This was the impetus for these early 18th century restaurants.

These venues began to require beverage professionals, and the first sommeliers laid the foundations of the current discipline. Early wine stewards were usually rejected cooks, kicked out of the kitchen and sent to the basement, usually with a chip on their shoulder (Steinberger 2008). But early sommeliers had much different jobs than we do today; they dealt with *négociants* and barrels, and a few bottles here and there. Estate bottling only became the standard format for transporting wine in the mid-1900s.

During the 'Fin de Siècle'(1890's), with a lot of well to do people visiting Paris were suspicious of sommeliers and weren't shy about publishing their concerns in papers like the New York Times, citing high wine prices and Champagne selections as the main concerns (Anonymous 1887; Parr & Mackay 2010:4). In Manhattan, the careers of two of NYC's earliest sommeliers launched at The Algonquin Hotel in 1930s and 1940s. These waited on the famous Round Table club of writers which coincided with one of the most exciting times in wine: the era when wineries began to estate bottle and ship corked glass bottles with labels on them (Scala, 2014).

This shift in format paradigm changed what a restaurant wine list could be. With wine packaging easily accessible in one-meal portions, suddenly restaurants could collect many more varieties of bottles in their cellars than previously had been possible. Bottles could be aged differently, and provenance was more trustworthy knowing the wine had been bottled at the estate and not at a '*négociant's*' warehouse.

With these growing restaurant wine lists, growing wine cellars, and a consumer demand for variety and knowledgeable service, came the demand for the sommelier profession. The lively and popular sommelier profession as we know it today is a recent development made possible by the challenges and changes of the 20th century. Tremendous growth in the sommelier industry carries with it just a few decades of recent history.

2.6.2 The modern sommelier

Present day sommeliers form part of what I consider to be an altogether different breed of wine servers a far cry from those haughty, pompous Frenchmen, as they were almost always men, with their silver tasteevin around their necks who domineered in upmarket French restaurants.

Elin McCoy describes today's sommeliers as being anti-stuffy, some sporting tattoos and even have thousands of Instagram followers. This shows how the world has changed and even sommeliers have changed with it. It also reflects a shift resulting from the recent economic crisis where the dining scene has shifted to more casual form and the somms (sommeliers) have joined the Parkers and Robinsons' of this world as critics if not essential sources of information on bottles from new regions, grapes and producers all be it in a restaurant context. (McCoy, 2017)

Goldstein (Goldstein, 2010, p. 5) sees sommeliers as the people guiding consumer tastes. He sees this influence as being evident in dining rooms/restaurants as wine consumers are more prone to experimenting with new wines when dining out than when entertaining at home for family and friends. Thus, when consumers eat out in restaurants, they choose their restaurants, among other things, for the perceived professionalism of their staff. Feel safe in their knowledge that questions like *'Can you just pick for me?'* or *'What is the best wine with the dish I have ordered?'*, will be provided for in courteous and professional manner.

What does a sommelier do? Primarily there to help guests select wine, make sure it is sound, and then to keep glasses full throughout the meal, a top notch sommelier such as Master Sommelier, for example, or a Concours Mondiale champ is also expected to be able to answer questions about production methods of wines and spirits, international wine laws, wine regions, grape varieties, and the harmony of food and wine. Service and salesmanship skills of waters, liqueurs, brandies, ports, and cigars are also required.

A good sommelier is a showman or woman when out on the floor; the act of decanting a bottle of wine, for example, or sabering a bottle of Champagne (opening with a sword), adds an air of drama to the theatre of dining. Good sommeliers understand that the dining room is a theatre, and that "the dance," the meal service, must go smoothly no matter how frantic things may be in the back.

21st century somms, whose numbers include a lot of women, offer their services to fine and even casual restaurants. According to a poll made by the Guild of Sommeliers Salary Survey in 2014 in the U.S.A., the average salary for a Master Sommelier is \$150,000 compared to the \$78,000

for an Advanced Sommelier. The sommelier boom of recent years has resulted in the emergence of 'super somms' especially in the UK and USA. Their heightened status shows how the fast-evolving wine culture and the increased importance of wine in restaurants which should be also reflected in Malta's hospitality environment.

There is no 'one way' to gain the skills needed to be a competent and successful sommelier. Gerard Basset believes that 'attitude is everything, the rest can be taught' (O'Hare, 2016). While many sommeliers have no formal training, increasing numbers are turning to accredited qualifications as part of their development. Gerard Basset MS MW in 2010 during an interview with Emily O'Hare defined the role of a sommelier as (O'Hare, 2016):

'The role of the Sommelier encompasses so many aspects. They must be hospitable - welcoming, warm, a good listener. They must understand restaurant service and have good technical skills. They must be business-minded when buying and cellaring wine. They must be a great salesperson to understand what the customer needs and sell it to them. They must also be a wine ambassador and represent well all the wineries on the list. They need to be a leader, to train and motivate staff. And, above all, must never take themselves too seriously.'

-Gerard Basset

The above definition by Basset, in my considered opinion, encompasses the most important characteristics of any wine server course which intends to produce professionally minded sommeliers. Today's somms have become, in my opinion, the wine counterpart to celebrity chefs.

For servers or bartenders first learning about wines, the best place to start is with the most popular wines. Remembering that the first goal is to be able to confidently speak about wine with customers in order to sell it to them. So, focusing on popular varietals is a great way to hedge one's bets and begin putting one's new wine knowledge into practice at the place of work / restaurant. A great way to make this practice more relevant to learners is to take a look at the varietals or wine styles any wine by-the-glass list or wine list and really get to know them.

In my book, two of the main providers of such knowledge and relevant certifications for sommeliers are the Court of Master Sommeliers and the Wine & Spirit Education Trust, with sommeliers often choosing to pursue both paths of study (WSET Global, 2019). There are several more institutions that also provide this training, which I will mention later, but I feel that these are the most accessible and provide up-to-date and relevant training which is also internationally recognized and lauded.

2.6.3 What does it take to make it as a sommelier?

Fallis puts the cards on the table and believes that while from the outside the job of a sommelier may be seen as a 'cool' job to have. Some will agree and some maybe not so much. Behind the scenes, sommeliers know that things are not quite as glamorous. In the back of the house, or the part of the restaurant diners don't see, a sommelier may have to trek through fish guts, meat by-products, water, puddles of bleach, parking garages, rain, sleet, or snow, to get to their cellars. Once they get there, they may have to inhale just to turn around, or to squeeze through an aisle. The typical restaurant wine cellar is an afterthought and is makeshift at best. Ideal size, shelving, temperature, humidity, and lighting are pipe dreams for most sommeliers. (Fallis, 2015)

Many with the proven knowledge acquired through studying WSET and SWE curriculum have found themselves at a disadvantage in the marketplace by lacking the title "Somm." While of course knowing that "Somm" implies knowledge of service and not specific wine knowledge, it can still be frustrating to explain to peers, family and friends that one is not a "Somm" and the lack of a title denoting proficiency in wine means you are "nothing" despite your hard work. Or at least nothing in the minds of those who think the only description of one with wine knowledge is that of a sommelier. By adding wine list creation and management; wine and food pairing; and wine service standards to the foundations provided by the WSET and SWE, the WEI Sommelier certifications will be the most well rounded first level sommeliers currently being certified by any certifying body.

Often the sommelier must navigate through the combat zone-the kitchen, making hairpin turns with arms laden with bottles sometimes costing thousands of dollars, or go up and down what we called "the stairs of death", slippery metal stairs with slippery railings, that were also traversed by underpaid and under-appreciated dishwashers swinging red hot 50 pound metal pots or worse, knives.

Before service, there are many chores. Sommeliers evaluate wine daily, looking for value and menu compatibility. They meet with vendors and place orders. They receive and stock the wines, lifting cases and climbing up and down stairs and sometimes ladders to place the bottles in their racks. They take physical inventory regularly, oversee staff training, and are responsible for running a profitable wine program. Off duty, they usually read stacks of trade and consumer publications, occasionally visit wine regions, and try new foods and wines while checking their competitors and, at the same time, honing their palates and pairing skills.

Catering establishments that feel wine is an integral component of their operation will invest in a wine program with passionate leadership. If an establishment wants to garner a wine award, it will be necessary to spend money in both inventory and someone whose primary function is to manage it, sell it, and train the staff.

Beth von Benz, former Wine Director at New York City's Judson Grill, said:

"It is imperative to have a qualified wine person on the floor. The modern customer is more sophisticated with wine, than they were in the past. They expect to find a qualified wine person on the floor in a good restaurant. With an increasing emphasis on international wines, many from obscure areas or from little-known producers, a guest needs help navigating through a list, or a gentle suggestion on an unfamiliar wine that might be a delightful pairing with the restaurant's cuisine."

Some restaurants, such as Alain Ducasse in NYC, his place in Monaco, Le Louis XV, or Aureole in Las Vegas, have teams of sommeliers. Because these establishments fully support a strong wine program, they are excellent environments for expanding one's palate and trying new wines.

Sommeliers are a passionate bunch. They are not always highly paid, but they love their medium. I always try to embrace the skills, talent, enthusiasm and knowledge of the sommelier each time I am fortunate enough to be in the company of one. And very often I am pleasantly surprised.

Though 'sommelier' is a job title potentially anyone may claim, becoming a professional and certified sommelier often requires some combination of experience, training, formal education, classes and examinations. Furthermore, it is a job, rather a career, that requires on going uptake of knowledge and experience as wines evolve continuously not to mention the client, whose trends, likes and dislikes also change continuously.

It is possible to become a sommelier by starting at the entry level in the hospitality or wine industry and working up, though many choose to become educated and professionally certified by one (or more) of the many certifying bodies. Various certifications are offered by a wide range of educators.

A very basic education in wine may be attained over the course of months at a cost in the hundreds of euros, but advanced professional certification typically requires years of study, practice and experience costing thousands of euros. (Wikipedia, 2019)

Any person seeking to succeed as a sommelier must ask himself if s/he has the following 'loves':

- A love of food
- A love of wine
- A love of people

2.6.3.1 A love of food

A common link between sommeliers is an enthusiasm and interest in food. We spend a lot of time thinking about food, what to eat, how to cook it, where to go to eat, and then equally, even more excitingly, what to drink with it. We enthuse about every detail in a restaurant from the quality of the butter to the lighting in the dining room. For us a meal is never just a meal it is an occasion, a journey, a joy.

2.6.3.2 A love of wine

To be a sommelier requires a lot of learning: from viticulture and viniculture, to geography, geology, history, and science. And once you've learned it, years have passed and the whole wine world has changed! Vineyard areas have expanded; there are new regions, rediscovered varieties and new varieties all needing to be re-learned. But such learning is a pleasure and can be undertaken continually. Your research may be in a library one minute, a vineyard the next and a wine bar later that evening. A sommelier can introduce a new wine to hundreds of people with a recommendation and then pour it out or even be crucial to launching a new small domaine.

2.6.3.3 A love of people

If you love food and wine, but don't enjoy looking after people then 'somm'ing' is not the career for you. Often the ability to taste can seem the most important skill for a 'somm', and while it is 'important to have a disciplined tasting methodology' according to James Tidwell MS, Beverage Manager and Sommelier at The Four Seasons Resort in Irving, Texas, *'service skills and gracious hospitality are the ways to share the love of wine.'* (O'Hare, 2016)

Jeff Kellogg, Wine Director at Maialino in the Gramercy Park Hotel NYC, agrees *'Guests don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.'*

Wine Director for Shangri La Wine Hotels and Resorts, Lu Yang, adds that 'knowing and understanding the local culture and market, is a very important part of being a modern sommelier.'

Every night somms are educating wine drinkers in three-minute soundbites and they have the power of the purse. Adam Lechmere in a website article discusses the putting of customers at

ease is essential in order to understand what the right wine might be for their meal. Wine experts like Marvin R Shanken; James Suckling; Jancis Robinson MW; Antonio Galloni of Vinous; and Lisa-Perrotti-Brown MW, would all agree that while quality of food and wine is paramount for a restaurant, it is the quality of the service, the welcome and attention customers receive that ensures their return as well as the sustainability of any professional catering operation. (Lechmere, 2020)

2.6.4 Qualifications and skills

It is possible to be called a sommelier without any formal qualification. Learning on the job is common and many people progress from being a waiter or barman to a sommelier.

Qualifications such as those offered by The Court of Master Sommeliers (CMS) and the Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) are extremely well respected on a CV and can propel you even more quickly into a sommelier role, sometimes without ever having worked in a restaurant.

WSET qualifications provide more focus on product knowledge and tasting skills, while the CMS programmes build on these elements with additional focus on service technique including glassware selection and pouring.

Sommeliers need a range of skills in order to effectively perform their allotted duties. Sommelier responsibilities include:

- Creating and updating the wine list in coordination with chefs and the Food and Beverage Manager
- Recommending food and wine pairings
- Advising guests on wines based on their personal tastes and food choices
- Inform guests on wines based on their personal tastes and food choices
- Inform guests about different varieties of wines and prices
- Ensure wines are served at the right temperature and within the proper glassware
- Store open bottles properly to maintain strong taste levels
- Manage the wine cellar and ensure its fully stocked
- Train servers on available wines
- Negotiate (often) purchase prices with suppliers
- Organize wine tasting days or 'wine of the month' events
- Ask guests for personal ID to verify legal drinking age is s/he is in doubt
- Comply with all health and safety regulations in force

Persons who apply for the job of sommelier are expected to have the following abilities:

- Experience as a Sommelier, Wine Steward/Stewardess or similar role
- Ability to create tasteful food and wine pairings
- Extensive knowledge of different wines and which regions produce each type
- Knowledge of local vineyards and wineries
- Understanding of the winemaking process
- Good communication skills
- Availability to work during opening hours, including weekends and holidays
- Flexibility to travel occasionally to meet with wine producers and visit wine-tasting events
- Certification as a Sommelier or degree in hospitality is a plus

As far as abilities go this can be catered for by the right courses. And there are several institutions that provide for these requirements. In my case, I will be trying to propose one such course for the Institute of Tourism Studies encompassing the perceived abilities a sommelier should have.

2.7 Wine service courses

Obviously, sommeliers, good ones that is, do not grow on trees. These people need to be trained by other professionals who win and wine service in their heart. There different centres in Europe, the USA, and the far east that offer such courses. Many use the Court of Master Sommeliers as the benchmark for their course content. Others take a more proactive approach and design their courses according to the perceived needs of their target clientele.

2.7.1 The Court of Master Sommeliers

The Court of Master Sommeliers (CMS) is the main educational organisation for wine service professionals, established in 1977 to encourage quality standards for beverage service in hotels and restaurants. Their programmes place an emphasis on technical service skills, significant producers and vintage ratings in addition to product and tasting knowledge. (CMS, 2020)

For CMS programmes students mostly self-study with some face-to-face instruction for selected levels prior to examination. The CMS has four sommelier certifications which can be completed under its guidance.

However their courses all cover the main winemaking regions of the 'Old' and 'New' world wine countries with a sprinkling of liqueur wines, sparkling wines, viticulture and vinification, beers and

cider making, main spirit types, Sake production and quality levels, and last and not least food and wine pairing, beer and food pairing. Course length for these courses varies from three days to multiple weeks. The prices for these courses in the United Kingdom are as follows:

2.7.1.1 Introductory Course and Examination

This 3-day course costs around £565. This is the first level at which all prospective Master Sommeliers should begin. The course is run over two days with the examinations held on the morning of the third day.

The course contents includes:

1. elementary practices in the vineyard and winemaking procedures.
2. the grape varieties, origins, specific winemaking procedures and classifications for all the major wines of the world.
3. the production, raw materials and flavours of Spirits and liqueurs.
4. technical skills of wine service.
5. importance of social skills.
6. fundamentals of matching wines with food.
7. an introduction to the skills of wine tasting.

Candidates who satisfactorily gain this certificate will be able to:

1. explain the factors which contribute towards the quality of wines.
2. describe the characteristics of the wines from the main wine producing countries of the world.
3. demonstrate an understanding of the wine classification and control systems in current use.
4. interpret wine label terms.
5. state the basic ingredients and flavours of aperitifs, spirits and liqueurs.
6. demonstrate an awareness of beers, saké and other beverages.
7. demonstrate the correct service of wine and other beverages.
8. demonstrate a basic competence in selling and matching wines with foods.
9. identify the requirements of the Advanced Sommelier Certificate.

The lectures are presented by Master Sommeliers using a power-point format interspersed with wine tastings, plus a practical service demonstration. The examination comprises a multiple-

choice theoretical paper plus a short elementary practical service test. The pass mark for each part of this examination is 60%. The fee for the Introductory Sommelier Certificate course includes a copy of the course book – Sales and Service for the Wine Professional by Brian K. Julyan MS

2.7.1.2 Certified Examination

The Certified Sommelier qualification cost around £235 and is the primary certification for wine and beverage professionals in the Hospitality Industry. It is intended to provide a meaningful qualification for the working Sommelier. The examination will recognise beverage professionals whose knowledge, skills and demeanour are worthy of the title – Certified Sommelier.

The pre-requisite for this examination is the Court of Master Sommeliers Introductory Sommelier Certificate. Candidates who wish to take the Certified Sommelier Certificate must do so within three years of passing the Introductory Certificate.

The Certified Sommelier Qualification is the pre-requisite for entry to the Advanced Sommelier Certificate course. The objectives of the course are:

1. To create a minimum standard of service and knowledge for the Hospitality Industry.
2. To provide successful candidates with credentials to show employers their skills have been evaluated at a high level of proficiency by the leading authority on beverage service – the Internationally recognised Court of Master Sommeliers Worldwide.
3. To create a certification that provides all successful candidates with a sense of accomplishment while providing the most dedicated students an opportunity to further their education and skills at the Advanced and Masters' levels.

The Certified Sommelier Examination comprises three parts:

1. Short written theory paper of 40 multiple choice and short answer questions.
2. Tasting test consisting of two wines tasted blind, and answered on a Tasting Grid.
3. Practical service test.

The pass mark is 60% in each section. All three sections must be passed together.

The theory paper is at a higher level than the Introductory Sommelier Certificate exam.

2.7.1.3 Advanced Course and Examination

Costing something in the region of £745, this 5-day course is intended for persons with extensive wine service experience and who wish to develop their knowledge and service skills to a higher

level. Prospective candidates should be aware that the level is significantly higher than the Certified Sommelier Certificate and that it is, therefore, necessary to carry out considerable study in preparation for this course. The programme is conducted over five days, with the final two and a half days devoted to examinations. The lectures are presented by Master Sommeliers using a power-point format interspersed with a number of wine tastings, plus a practical service demonstration.

Candidates who satisfactorily gain this certificate will be able to:

1. Discuss, recommend and serve aperitifs, spirits and liqueurs, displaying a sound knowledge of the products.
2. Select, prepare and position glassware necessary for the service of drinks in the lounge, restaurant, function room or private suite.
3. Present, offer, prepare (decanting where necessary) and serve wines, demonstrating a high degree of efficiency and proficiency.
4. Discuss menu content and wine lists, recommending wines to accompany food, displaying a sound knowledge of the products, their vintages and characteristics.
5. Handle queries and complaints with skill and diplomacy.
6. Demonstrate a sound knowledge of Beverage Management including an ability to train beverage servers.
7. Demonstrate an ability to sell.
8. Orally describe the characteristics of wines.
9. Analyse classic styles of wine, identifying where appropriate, grape varieties, country and district of origin, vintage and quality level.

The examination comprises three parts:

Part 1 – A 1-hour Theory paper of 24 multiple choice questions and 60 short answer questions – totalling 150 marks.

Part 2 – A practical tasting of 6 wines tasted blind in 25 minutes.

Part 3 – A 45-minute Practical Service test.

The pass mark is 60% in each section and all three sections must be passed together.

2.7.1.4 Master Sommelier Diploma Examination

The examination alone costs around £765. The Master Sommelier Diploma is open to candidates who have passed the Court of Master Sommeliers Advanced Sommelier Certificate. The examination is similar in format and content to that of the Advanced Sommelier Certificate examinations, comprising examinations in Theoretical Knowledge, Practical Tasting and Practical Service, except knowledge which is tested by oral questioning. The pass mark for each of the three sections is 75%.

A candidate passing one or two parts of the Diploma may retake the other part or parts in any two examinations during the following two calendar years. After this period, all three parts must be retaken. Throughout the examination, the candidate must exhibit an exemplary standard of both technical and social skills, demonstrating the courtesy and charm of a Master Sommelier plus an ability to sell.

Members of the examining panel are nominated by the Court of Master Sommeliers. Examinations are held annually in London and the USA. Upon completion of each three disciplines – theory, tasting and practical; with passes deemed satisfactory to the Examining panel, the candidate may be asked to become a member of the Court of Master Sommeliers. Upon acceptance, they will be allowed to add the letters MS (Master Sommelier) to his name for use in professional dealings.

However, these prices may vary slightly depending on geographical location in the U.K. Out of the UK prices will be the equivalent value in the currency of the host country. Furthermore, if not everyone applying for a Course a place is catered for; those persons will be put onto a waiting list and they will be contacted about upcoming courses.

2.7.2 The Wines and Spirits Education Trust (UK)

This wine training institution was founded as charitable trust in 1969 to serve the growing educational needs of the UK wine and spirits industry which, at the time, primarily spanned import, distribution and retail. Funding for the setting up of this institution was provided by The Vintners' Company and it was the WSET that from thereon took over the education initiatives started by the Wine and Spirit Association of Great Britain. (WSET, 2020)

WSET provides best-in-class education and qualifications to inspire and empower the world's wine and spirits professionals and enthusiasts. WSET at present offers a comprehensive suite of qualifications covering wines, spirits and saké.

WSET qualifications, just like those of the CMS, are globally recognised as the international standard in wine and spirit *knowledge*. They are designed for those who are just starting out in their careers, as well as established professionals, and the many enthusiasts who have a passion for wines and spirits. As an independent, not-for-profit organisation, WSET's educational products are seen as offering *impartial and sound learning* on which individuals and businesses can build *knowledge and expertise*.

Social responsibility is a part of all their courses, therefore WSET is proud to be a partner with the *Wine in Moderation – Art de Vivre Programme* and *DrinkAware.co.uk*. Qualifications are available through a network of over 800 Approved Programme Providers (APPs) working in over 70 countries worldwide and more than 15 languages. In addition, WSET work closely with the industry to ensure that their qualifications and education products are job relevant. Many of the industry's leading brands support WSET's work through their Corporate Patronage Programme.

At the moment WSET has nine courses running on a classroom based or online based delivery approach. These courses are focussed on wine, spirit and sake knowledge. Four are based on wine, three on spirits and two on sake. These courses are specified as follows:

- *Level 1 Award in Wines*
- *Level 2 Award in Wines*
- *Level 3 Award in Wines*
- *Level 4 Diploma in Wines*
- *Level 1 Award in Spirits*
- *Level 2 Award in Spirits*
- *Level 3 Award in Spirits*
- *Level 1 Award in Sake*
- *Level 2 Award in Sake*

2.7.2.1 Level 1 Award in Wines

This is a beginner level introduction to wine suitable for those starting a wine career or pursuing an interest in wine. Ideal for individuals new to wine study, this qualification provides a hands-on introduction to the world of wine. Persons who undertake this course will be allowed explore the main types and styles of wine through sight, smell, and taste, while also gaining the basic skills to

describe wines accurately and make food and wine pairings. Upon successful completion they will receive a WSET certificate and lapel pin.

The course content is based around the following aspects:

- The main types and styles of wine
- Common wine grapes and their characteristics
- The principles of food and pairing
- How one can describe wine using the WSET Level 1 Systematic Approach to Tasting Wine (SAT)

This qualification has a minimum requirement of six hours of study time, in a classroom or online, with a WSET course provider. Delivery will vary by course provider; however, this is the minimum requirement that should be met. Assessment is by a closed-book exam of 30 multiple-choice questions and the qualification is regulated by Ofqual (UK). It is also available to study in various foreign languages such as French, German, Simplified and Traditional Chinese and Russian.

2.7.2.2 Level 2 Award in Wines

This qualification is intended for beginners wishing to learn about a wide range of wines or those seeking to build on the introductory knowledge gained with the WSET Level 1 Award in Wines. Persons who take this course will gain knowledge of the principal and regionally important grape varieties of the world, the regions in which they are grown, and the styles of wine they produce. Through a combination of tasting and theory, participants will be guided to explore the factors that impact style and quality and learn how to describe these wines with confidence.

The course content is based on the following topics:

- How environmental factors, grape-growing, winemaking and maturation options influence the style and quality of wines made from eight principal noble grape varieties.
- The style and quality of wines made from 22 regionally important grape varieties produced in over 70 geographical indications (GIs) around the world.
- How grape varieties and winemaking processes influence key styles of:
 - Sparkling wines
 - Fortified wines
- Key labelling terms used to indicate origin, style and quality

- Principles and processes involved in the storage and service of wine
- Principles of food and wine pairing.
- How to taste and describe wine using the WSET Level 2 Systematic Approach to Tasting Wine®(SAT)

This qualification has a minimum requirement of 28 hours of study time of which 16 hours of delivery time with a WSET course provider (classroom or online) and 11 hours of personal study and revision. The course would have a 1-hour examination, closed-book, comprised of 50 multiple-choice questions and it is also available in multiple languages.

2.7.2.3 Level 3 Award in Wines

An advanced level qualification for professionals working in the wine industry and for wine enthusiasts. Participants of this course would be seeking to delve deeper into the world of wines, this qualification provides a detailed understanding of grape growing and wine making. Upon completion you will be able to assess wines accurately and use their understanding to confidently explain wine style and quality. Upon successful completion attendees will receive a WSET certificate and lapel pin and will be able to use the associated WSET certified logo. This course is described further as being relevant, interactive and designed to allow students to immediately put in place what they learn into their daily lives and work. For those that apply for this course it is recommended that they hold the WSET Level 2 Award in Wines and Spirits or can demonstrate the equivalent level of knowledge. Participants must be of legal drinking age in the country (in Malta it is 17 years of age) where they are attending the course and exam to participate in any alcohol tasting.

The content of this course, in a nutshell, is based on the following topics:

- The key factors in the production of wine: location, grape growing, winemaking, maturation and bottling
- How these key factors influence the key characteristics of the principal
 - still wines of the world
 - sparkling wines of the world
 - fortified wines of the world
- How to apply your understanding to explain wine style and quality
- How to taste wines, describe their characteristics and evaluate their quality, using the WSET Level 3 Systematic Approach to Tasting Wine® (SAT)

This course is delivered in tandem, that is theory and tutored tastings, participants have to pass both areas in order to get the certificate. This qualification has a minimum requirement of 84 hours of study time, including 30 hours of classroom or online delivery time with a WSET course provider and is available in various languages.

2.7.2.4 Level 4 Diploma in Wines

This course is building on the knowledge and skills gained from the WSET Level 3 Award in Wines, the Diploma deepens participants' understanding of how and why wine production and business factors influence the style, quality, and price of wines. Attendees' expertise is built both theoretically, through comprehensive study of a large number of wine regions, and practically, by developing your wine tasting skills to an expert level.

Candidates must hold either the WSET Level 3 Award in Wines or the WSET Level 3 Award in Wines and Spirits to enrol on the WSET Level 4 Diploma and must be of legal drinking age in the country where they are attending the course and exam to participate in any alcohol tasting.

Successful graduates acquire exceptional analytical skills and proficiency in evaluative wine tasting, gaining global recognition as authoritative wine specialists. If successful graduates wish to progress to the Master of Wine programme, they are deemed as being well-prepared.

This qualification has a minimum requirement of 500 hours of study time:

- 116 hours of delivery time with a WSET course provider (classroom or online)
- 370 hours of personal study and revision, including preparing an independent research assignment
- Examinations for each unit (excluding D6) totalling 11 hours 50 minutes.

It normally takes between 18 months and 3 years to complete the Diploma. Each unit is weighted differently in terms of hours of study required, the table below shows the minimum guided learning time, private study time and the weighting applied against each unit.

The Diploma is delivered in six mandatory units covering a broad range of topics including wine production, wine business, and still, sparkling and fortified wines of the world. To be more exact, the topics delivered are grouped under the following:

1. *Wine production* – 20% weighting
2. *Wine business* – 10% weighting
3. *Wines of the world* – 50% weighting
4. *Sparkling wines* - 5% weighting
5. *Fortified / liqueur wines* – 5% weighting
6. *Independent research assignment* – 10% weighting

To complete the Diploma, participants must pass all six units, successfully meeting the rigorous assessment requirements across the syllabus. Assessment varies by Unit:

- *Wine production*, a 90-minute closed-book examination made up of open-response questions.
- *Wine business*, 60-minute closed-book examination made up of open-response questions.
- *Wines of the world*, a theory and tasting examination to be held over two consecutive days:
 - Day one – A two-part theory exam formed of open-response questions to be completed in 3 hours 20 minutes (one 2-hour paper and one 80-minute paper).
 - Day two – A two-part blind tasting examination of 12 wines to be completed in 3 hours (two papers of 1½ hours)
- *Sparkling wines*, a 1½ hour closed-book examination made up of open-response questions and a blind tasting of three sparkling wines.
- *Fortified wines*, a 1½ hour closed-book examination made up of open-response questions and a blind tasting of three fortified wines
- *Independent research assignment*, one research assignment of 3,000 words

Those who successfully complete the Diploma will receive a WSET certificate and lapel pin and will be able to use the post-nominal “DipWSET” and associated WSET certified logo. Successful graduates will also become members of the WSET Alumni Body, with access to quarterly reports and a number of exclusive events.

2.7.2.5 Level 1 Award in Spirits

This course is designed for individuals new to the subject of spirits, this qualification offers a hands-on introduction to the world of spirits. There are no entry requirements for this qualification. Participants must be of legal drinking age in the country where they are attending the course to participate in any alcohol tasting. However, this is not a barrier to successfully completing the

qualification. Requirements may vary by course provider. Course participants explore the main styles and types of spirits through sight, smell, and taste to develop an understanding of the key factors affecting flavours and aromas. Upon successful completion students will receive a WSET certificate and lapel pin.

The course set up includes topics such as:

- The basic principles of spirit production
- The main types and styles of spirits
- How to serve spirits
- Factors affecting the flavour of spirits
- How to describe spirits using the WSET Level 1 Systematic Approach to Tasting Spirits® (SAT)

This short course has a minimum requirement of six guided learning hours with a WSET course provider and is readily available to study in various languages. This course is assessed by a closed-book exam of 30 multiple-choice questions and the qualification is regulated by Ofqual (UK).

2.7.2.6 Level 2 Award in Spirits

The WSET Level 2 Award in Spirits is intended for people who have little or no prior knowledge of spirits. It is intended to provide a comprehensive level of focused product knowledge required to underpin job skills and competencies – for example, in bar service, and for staff requiring focused product knowledge in retail and wholesaling businesses.

There are no restrictions on entry to the WSET Level 2 Award in Spirits. Candidates who are under the legal minimum age for the retail purchase of alcoholic beverages in the country where the examination is being held, or those who choose not to taste alcohol for health or religious reasons, will not sample any alcoholic beverage as part of their course, but this is not a barrier to successfully completing the qualification.

The TQT for the Level 2 Award in Spirits is 26 hours. There are 15 GLH (including the 1-hour examination) and 11 hours private study. The TQT is an estimate of the total amount of time, measured in hours that a learner would reasonably need to be able to show the level of achievement necessary for the award of a qualification, it is made up of GLH and private study time. GLH includes all tutor supervised learning and supervised assessments.

This course is designed around four learning outcomes:

1. Understand the main production factors that determine types of spirits.
2. Understand how the principal types of spirits are produced and labelled, and describe their key characteristics.
3. Understand how the principal types of flavoured spirits, liqueurs and aromatised wines are produced and labelled, and describe their key characteristics.
4. Know the common equipment used and the principles involved in the service of spirits.

Assessment is by a closed-book exam of 50 multiple-choice questions and it is regulated by Ofqual. Successful candidates should be able to give information on the characteristics of the principal spirits and aromatised wines as well as their methods of production. They should also confidently provide guidance on the use and service of spirits and make informed recommendations to customers when selecting spirits and liqueurs to meet their taste and price requirements.

2.7.2.7 Level 3 Award in Spirits

The WSET Level 3 Award in Spirits is an advanced-level qualification for professionals and enthusiasts wishing to acquire a detailed understanding of the spirits of the world and develop the tasting skills required to accurately describe and evaluate a spirit. Entry for this course requires Level 2 Award in Spirits or equivalent and potential applicants should discuss their current level of knowledge with their APP before enrolling on the course.

This qualification is intended to build on knowledge and skills gained from the Level 2 Award in Spirits. Participants will acquire a deep theoretical understanding of the techniques used in spirit production, from the processing of raw materials to post-distillation operations. Through a combination of tasting and the application of theoretical knowledge students will learn to explain confidently why spirits look and taste the way they do and how and why they differ from each other.

The course is designed to include four main areas of study:

1. Understand the principal factors involved in the production of spirits and how they influence style and quality.

2. Understand the key characteristics and labelling terms of the selected global spirits and how legal frameworks and production choices influence their style and quality.
3. Understand the key characteristics of other named global spirits, their labelling terms and key production choices that are implemented.
4. Be able to describe the key characteristics of selected global spirits and use the description to identify a spirit's quality level, giving supporting reasons, and its category.

This course is delivered with a minimum requirement of 84 hours* of study time of which 30 hours are delivery time with a WSET course provider, 51 ½ hours personal study and revision followed by a 2 ½ -hour examination.

Students will need to pass both parts of the theory examination, and the tasting examination, to achieve the qualification. On successful completion of the examination students receive a WSET certificate and lapel pin, and will be able to use the associated certified logo.

2.7.2.8 Level 1 Award in Sake

A beginner level introduction to sake for those starting a career in the industry or pursuing an interest in sake. There are no entry requirements for this qualification. Students must be of legal drinking age in the country where they are attending the course to participate in any alcohol tasting. However, this is not a barrier to successfully completing the qualification.

The course targets individuals new to the subject, this qualification offers a hands-on introduction to the world of sake. Students explore the main styles and types of sake through sight, smell and taste to develop an understanding of the key factors affecting flavours and aromas.

The course includes the following topics:

- The basic principles of sake production
- The main types and styles of sake
- How to serve sake
- Factors affecting the flavour of sake
- How to describe sake using the WSET Level 1 Systematic Approach to Tasting Sake® (SAT)

This qualification has a minimum requirement of six guided learning hours with a WSET course provider and it is available to study in various languages. Assessment is by a closed-book exam of 30 multiple-choice questions and it is regulated by Ofqual (UK).

2.7.2.9 Level 3 Award in Sake

This course is designed as an advanced level qualification for professionals working with sake or sake enthusiasts. The target market are individuals seeking to develop their expertise in sake, this qualification will provide you with a detailed understanding of the production methods that affect the style, quality and price of sake. Upon completion, students should be able to assess sakes accurately and use this information and their understanding of sakes to make authoritative recommendations. The course includes topics in line with the following:

- The main techniques that are used in the production of sake and how they influence style and quality
- The principal and specialty categories of sake
- The sake industry and the commercial importance of sake in the Japanese and export markets
- The principles behind the storage, selection and service of sake
- How to taste sake, and evaluate quality, identity and price, using the WSET Level 3 Systematic Approach to Tasting Sake® (SAT)

This qualification has a minimum requirement of 42.25 hours of study time, including 16 hours of classroom or online delivery time with a WSET course provider. The course is assessed by a closed-book exam of 50 multiple-choice questions and a paper of short written answers followed by a blind tasting of two sakes. This qualification is regulated by Ofqual (UK).

2.7.3 AIS - Italian Sommelier Association

Another course provider for wine service courses is the Italian Sommelier Association, 'AIS' (Associazione Italiana Sommelier, sometimes also as known as Italian Association of Sommeliers) is an Italian non-profit organization founded in Milan on July 7, 1965, officially recognised and legally

acknowledged by the Italian government on April 6, 1973, with formal President of the Republic decree #539 in 1973.

Its founding members were Prof. Gianfranco Botti, Jean Valenti, Leonardo Guerra (tax advisor) and Italian sommelier Ernesto Rossi. Italian Sommelier Association is part and founding member of the Worldwide Sommelier Association (WSA), which is officially recognized across the world, wherever it is present with an affiliate. AIS is one of the oldest and actually the largest sommelier association in the world.

The aim of the Italian Sommelier Association, as stated in the third article of its charter (AIS, 2017), is to qualify sommelier's role and profession, therefore adding value to wine, traditional specialties and gastronomy culture. Its aim is also to promote, even in the legislative branch, the introduction of its didactic approach in hospitality related schools, as well as to endorse the sommelier's professional role, international recognition and esteem.

AIS courses are split on three formative levels with options to further build on one's knowledge and skills with another four levels. All courses are underwritten by the WSA. (AIS, 2017) these courses are:

2.7.3.1 AIS / WSA – Level 1 Course

Covers wine tasting technique, viticulture, oenology, service technique. The content of this course includes topics as indicated below:

- Who is the Sommelier?
- Viticulture
- The production of wine.
- The components of a wine.
- Wine tasting technique.
- Sparkling wines.
- Sweet, fortified and aromatized wines.
- Italian wines and their regulations.
- Beers.
- Spirits.
- Duties of the sommelier.
- Visit to a winery.
- Written exam and blind tasting exam

2.7.3.2 AIS / WSA – Level 2 Course

This course includes a complete overview of Italian and international oenography: wine regions and sub-regions, grape varieties, wine styles, appellation systems. This course is designed to include the following topics;

- Wine tasting technique.
- The regions of Valle d'Aosta and Piemonte.
- The regions of Lombardy and Trentino Alto Adige.
- The regions of Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia.
- The regions of Tuscany and Liguria.
- The regions of Emilia-Romagna and Marche.
- The regions of Umbria and Lazio.
- The regions of Abruzzo, Molise and Campania.
- The regions of Puglia, Calabria and Basilicata.
- The regions of Sicily and Sardegna
- Viticulture in European countries.
- Viticulture in France – main regions.
- Vinification in France – main regions.
- Grape growing and winemaking in non-European countries.
- Written exam and blind tasting exam.

2.7.3.3 AIS / WSA – Level 3 Course

An advanced course covering wine-food pairing technique, wine & food categories, service technique. The course is delivered through the following topic content;

- Sensory analysis of food and wine - Food and nutrients: composition according to the organoleptic characteristics. Related notes the influence of some cooking and preservation systems on the organoleptic characteristics of food. Review of the wine tasting technique and AIS terminology.
- Technique of food-wine pairing - Notes on the evolution of food-wine pairing. The scales of evaluation of the characteristics organoleptic properties of foods. Terminology and AIS food sensory evaluation form. AIS card of food-wine pairing.
- Eggs and sauces - Eggs: composition according to the organoleptic characteristics and cooking systems. Butter and others fatty seasonings. Sauces: notes on classification and preparation; organoleptic characteristics in operation pairing.

- Condiments, aromatic herbs and spices - Olive oils: notes on classification, organoleptic characteristics and tasting. Vinegar and Vinegar: traditional balsamic. Aromatic herbs and spices: use in cooking, organoleptic characteristics of different preparations and combinations.
- Cereals - First courses and single dishes; notes on wheat flour and bread. Pasta and rice: notes on classification, organoleptic characteristics and pairing of first courses. Notes on other cereals (maize and barley).
- Fishing products - Fish, crustaceans and molluscs: composition and cooking systems according to the organoleptic characteristics and pairing, notes on the classification and evaluation of freshness.
- White and red meat, game - Meat: composition of the different meats and cooking systems according to the organoleptic characteristics of the pairing, notes on the classification of meat.
- Cured meat products - Cured meats and sausages: classification and production according to the organoleptic characteristics and pairing.
- Mushrooms, truffles, vegetables and other legumes - Mushrooms, truffles, vegetables and legumes: notes on the classification, composition and cooking systems in operation of the organoleptic characteristics and of the combination.
- Cheese I - Notes on milk composition and organoleptic characteristics. Cheese: production and classification in function of the organoleptic characteristics and of the combination.
- Cheese II - Types of cheeses: organoleptic characteristics and combinations. The service of the cheese.
- Sweets, ice creams and fruits - The main basic pastas, dry and fresh pastries: organoleptic characteristics and combinations. Overview on ice cream and fruit desserts.
- Chocolate - The cocoa. The sweet cocoa: sensory characteristics and combinations. Chocolate: production, types, organoleptic characteristics and combinations.
- Didactic dinner - Summary of principles, technique and food-wine matching sheet. Matching of four courses (appetizer, first and second course, dessert) with different types of wine.

2.7.3.4 AIS / WSA – Sommelier Diploma

AIS (Silver) Sommelier Diploma is released upon successful completion of all three previous levels and a two-day examination session, featuring written tests (two different tests), blind tasting and wine-food pairing assessment tests, didactic dinner, practical / service and final oral tests. Overall pass mark is set to 60%.

2.7.3.5 AIS / WSA – Professional Sommelier Diploma

AIS Professional (Gold) Sommelier Diploma, which is released by Italian Sommelier Association after candidate's career assessment.

2.7.3.6 ALMA / AIS – Master Sommelier Diploma (Since 2009)

This is a special course, designed “to put the finishing touches to the Sommelier’s training with specific preparation dedicated to the management and promotion of wine”. It is either formally or informally considered the fourth level of Italian Sommelier Association education program.

There are other centres such as the following, which all follow in the most part what I have described in the previous sections. These centres include:

2.7.4 Union de la Sommellerie Française

In France, the Union des Sommeliers (UDS) was founded in 1907 to ensure social protection for its members, both sommeliers and cellar masters in Paris region. The approach and role of the association developed throughout the years as it lost its autonomy by merging with the Mutualité Hôtelière in 1959. Ten years later, sommeliers regained their independence as the Association des Sommeliers de Paris (ASP) was founded in 1969.

In 1970 the old UDS was renamed in Union de la Sommellerie Française, UDSF, which supervises today the 21 regional associations in France (including ASP). The title of Mention Complémentaire Sommellerie (MCS) and Brevet Professionnel de Sommelier (BP) can be achieved studying for many different approved providers, and the final qualification of Maître Sommelier can be achieved after an accurate career assessment, requiring at least 10 years of professional experience.

2.7.5 National Wine School

The National Wine School was founded in 2009 in Los Angeles, California, USA. The school offers ANSI-compliant professional certification for the wine trade in the United States. They offer five levels of wine certification. To earn a sommelier pin, one must complete level three certification. To earn the advanced sommelier pin, the student must complete the level four certification.

2.7.6 North American Sommelier Association

The North American Sommelier Association (NASA) was founded in 2006 and is the official representative in the United States and Canada of the Worldwide Sommelier Association (WSA). Its Certified Sommelier course is divided into three phases but is offered as one entire course and includes extensive class time, lectures, educational visits to wineries, and educational dinners.

Unlike other groups, NASA has only two tiers of Sommelier qualification: Silver-Pin and Gold-Pin. The Gold-Pin qualification is obtained through a series of extensive requirements and certifications (Master Wine Taster, Master Of Service...) as well as proof of experience in the industry. Aside from the Sommelier Certification, NASA also provides various smaller proprietary specialization courses, such as 'Italian Wine Specialist', 'American Wine Specialist', 'Spanish Wine Specialist' and various masterclasses such as 'Master Of Terroir', 'Master of Sangiovese', 'Master of Service', and 'Master Wine Taster'

2.7.7 International Wine & Spirits Guild

The International Wine Guild was founded in 1998 and is approved and regulated by the Colorado Department of Higher Education. The independent school offers the Level IV 'Guild Master Wine Educator Diploma', the Level III 'Guild Wine Master Diploma and Certification', the Level II 'Advanced Wine Course and Executive Sommelier Certification' and the Level I 'Introductory Wine Sommelier Certification'.

The International Wine & Spirits Guild was established to encourage study to develop technical and professional understanding and increased knowledge of wine throughout all areas of the wine, spirits and food service industry. IWSG also offers professional courses and certifications for Wine Judges, Wine Instructors, and in Fine Spirits and Sake.

2.7.8 International Sommelier Guild

The International Sommelier Guild (ISG) educates and certifies sommeliers in Canada, China and the United States. It was founded in 1982 and the programme consists of Level 1 Wine Fundamentals, Level 2 Wine Fundamentals and a Sommelier Diploma. They also offer a 'Certified Sommelier Instructor' diploma.

2.7.9 Sommelier levels

As I have highlighted in the previous sections there are various institutions that provide wine service courses. However, my considered opinion at this stage is that the benchmark for sommelier courses is the Court of Master Sommeliers as their courses are organized in four levels and there is a continuity of learning built into the courses as compared to what is offered by the AIS and to a degree the WSET. The CMS's four levels of certification must be completed sequentially and therefore ensures the build-up of knowledge (WSET Global, 2019). These are:

- *Introductory Sommelier Certificate (CMS I)*

A 3-day course with an examination comprising multiple choice questions and a practical wine service test.

- *Certified Sommelier Examination (CMS II)*

A three-part examination consisting of a theory paper, blind tasting and practical wine service test. Candidates who have passed the Introductory Sommelier Certificate usually need a further period of self-study before they are ready for this assessment.

- *Advanced Sommelier Certificate (CMS III)*

A 5-day programme with the final two and a half days devoted to examinations. The exam consists of a theory paper, blind tasting and practical wine service test.

- *Master Sommelier Diploma (CMS IV)*

The 'final exam' consisting of three parts: Theory, practical tasting, and practical service. Successful completion of all three parts can take around three years of study. As of early 2019, only 249 people have earned the title Master Sommelier.

The proposed course which will be presented for consideration by interested stakeholders will be loosely based on the CMS approach but more focussed and designed to be delivered in short period of time.

2.8 Classification of vocational courses in Malta

Vocational courses are important for providing professionally trained people to off services of technical nature (Mittal, 2018). Vocational courses are courses that are usually aimed at equipping students with practical skills for a specific profession or field. These courses are tailor-made to make students completely job ready. Hence, are often aimed at a specialized career and designed in a manner such as to help upgrade skills for that particular career.

Students have been training for specific vocations for thousands of years, just not in the way we think of vocational education today. Women learned domestic skills from their mothers, and young men trained for specific trades under skilled professionals. Young apprentices, for example, may have learned to shape swords by shadowing the town's bladesmith. This type of hands-on, skills-based learning has lasted throughout human history. As we have developed, so has it.

If one looks at the United States on how vocational education formalized one has to look at the 1917 Smith-Hughes Act which became the first law to authorize federal funding for vocational education programs in U.S. schools. It established vocational education as acceptable training for certain future professionals who wouldn't need bachelor's degrees to do their jobs, such as plumbers, mechanics, and factory workers. They completed their training in focused vocational programs associated with high schools.

While this law helped to put vocational education in a regulated mode, it also filtered the lesser privileged people for these courses and if these same people decided to change course in their chosen career path, the very often found that they had received negligible training in the so called core subjects, whereby preventing career switch or return to formal academic learning.

This trend was also experienced in my country in the 1970 when vocational education was introduced via the setting up of trade schools. The privileged families sent their children to universities to become doctors and lawyers and the like while working class families opted for the trade school route unless their children had very high IQ's.

This legal default was rectified to a degree in the United States in 1990 by introducing the Perkins Act of 1990 that attempted to reconcile these problems. Section 521 of the Perkins Act, Public

Law 101-392 defined vocational education as, “organized educational programs offering a sequence of courses which are directly related to the preparation of individuals in paid or unpaid employment in current or emerging occupations requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree.”

The Perkins Act now provides vocational programs to young students as a way for them to start their educational careers, not limit them. Now, students can begin their CTE courses in high school or after obtaining their diplomas or GEDs, and they leave prepared to either go right into a career or continue working toward a four-year degree (Brush, 2016).

2.8.1 The Maltese Story

The Maltese story on vocational education after the beginnings in the early 1970's started not regulate and redefine itself after entry into the European Union (E.U.) in 2004. Until this time vocational training was rather splintered and had no real regulatory set up mostly looking at the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand for developments and certification frameworks.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Malta had evolved in leaps and bounds over the past two decades, even though the history of VET in Malta, goes back a long way and can even be traced to forms of ‘apprenticeships’ that were adopted during the times of the Knights of Malta in the 1500's.

2.8.1.1 TVET Mission in Malta

According to the National Vocational Education and Training policy, Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Malta has social and economic functions. For example, the promotion of VET is a method to respond to broader societal challenges, including promoting social cohesion. VET also fosters employability by providing an opportunity to further education and skills. In this light, the promotion of VET in Malta is an approach towards mitigating labour market exigencies by shaping skills development in accordance to the needs of specific sectors. The Maltese Hospitality industry is one such sector which is in constant need of professionally trained personnel due to high turnover levels (UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, 2015, p. 4).

2.8.1.2 The Maltese TVET Strategy

The National Vocational Education and Training Policy (2015) came about following consultations between stakeholders and was developed in the context of the Bruges Communique's appraisal

of Malta's performance in the field of VET. Referring to the Bruges Communiqué's assessment, the policy document comments on eleven strategic objectives which Malta has improved on in the field of VET, including:

- Making Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) an attractive learning option by providing a variety of VET courses and including VET subjects in secondary compulsory education;
- Fostering the quality and relevance of IVET and Continuing Vocational Education and Training (CVET) by establishing a Quality Assurance framework;
- Enabling flexible access to training and qualifications;
- Developing a strategic approach to incorporating IVET and CVET within the education system and promoting international mobility;
- Fostering innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, as well as the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in IVET and CVET;
- Promoting inclusive IVET and CVET and helping people manage their careers and play an active role in society;
- Supporting the involvement of VET stakeholders in the provision and governance of VET and enabling greater visibility for the achievements of European cooperation in VET;
- Coordinating governance of European and national instruments in the areas of transparency, recognition, quality assurance and mobility;
- Intensifying cooperation between VET policy and other relevant policy areas;
- Improving the quality and comparability of data for EU policy making in VET; and
- Ensuring the efficient use of European Union (EU) support.

2.8.1.3 The Maltese TVET legislation

The introduction of VET subjects at secondary schools is not as novel an idea as may perhaps be believed. Certainly, those people who remember the 'trade schools' dating back to the 1970s and 80s will remember that these schools had a strong vocational inclination and some of the most qualified and competent 'trades-people', in the Maltese older generation, had in fact studied at these schools. There had also been schools that were set up in previous decades that also had strong trades' inclinations.

Developments on VET in recent times has been triggered by a felt need within the labour market to have highly skilled people who would work in occupational sectors that were not normally targeted by universities since these sectors were of a vocational rather than an academic nature. The leading protagonists in the field of VET in Malta have been the Malta College of Arts Science

and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS). They are not the only local VET providers, however, as can be readily seen by the number of privately-run institutions that offer training in the VET field.

Maltese legislation concerning vocational courses came online in 2005 via the publication of Legal Notice 347 which established the Malta Qualification Framework (MQF) (NCFHE - National Commission for Further and Higher Education, 2016, p. 13). It also introduced level descriptors on a national basis. This legal notice allowed for the collection of all courses and placing them in an 8-level framework. As a result, the Maltese MQF was put into practice in June 2007 after consultation with interested stake holders. The Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) is responsible of applying the supervision and updating of the Maltese MQF.

The law which incapsulates the framework of TVET is Chapter 327 (Education Act) regulates the education system in Malta. The Education Act stipulates that State VET institutions, namely the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), provide training for free (UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, 2015, p. 6).

The Education Act also specifies the scope and organisation structure of the aforementioned VET providers. It provides these two entities the legal power to issue qualifications. The Education Act also contains specific subsidiary legislations that regulate specific aspects such as:

- SL 327.431 – Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning Regulations;
- SL 327.432 – Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Regulations; and
- SL 327.433 – Further and Higher Education (Licensing Accreditation and Quality Assurance) Regulations.
- Legal Notice 295 (2012) regulates the validation of informal and non-formal learning. It also regulates the granting of validation awards classified within the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF). The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) has the power to establish a Sector Skills Committee to govern and regulate the validation process. Sector Skills Units are also to be set up with their main initial focus to be that of establishing occupational standards and the respective validation process in the given sector.

2.8.1.4 Maltese Formal, Non-formal and informal TVET systems

The Maltese Vocational Education and Training (VET) subjects are provided at the secondary education level. The National three-year Vocational Pilot Project, launched in 2011, offered vocational qualifications in four vocational subjects in a number of state and non-state schools. In order to mitigate the problem of school dropouts, Malta is currently offering vocational subjects as optional subjects in standard secondary schools as well as vocational colleges.

At the post-compulsory education level, the main state institutions providing initial vocational education and training (IVET) include the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS). MCAST provides vocational courses from the secondary until the under-graduate level, while the ITS provides training up to the post-secondary education level which enables students to take under-graduate level courses at the University of Malta.

Non-formal and informal TVET systems are applied by the MCAST and the ITS who provide continuous vocational education and training (CVET) while the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) is responsible for offering training to the unemployed.

Both MCAST and ITS, specifically at the lower level courses of training (foundation level) might be a form of second opportunity 'school.' This is because they enable students to acquire some of the skills or knowledge that they failed in acquiring earlier on (whilst at secondary school). However, and more importantly, they serve to introduce students to what a vocational career is, and what it entails, and serve to give them a basic qualification in their career of choice, should they successfully complete their course.

In Malta, the VET subjects are agribusiness, artisanship, construction, engineering technology, hairdressing and beauty, health and social care, hospitality, information technology, retail, and textiles and fashion. All these courses are monitored by a fully-fledged framework for quality assurance, including regulations, manuals, tools and documentation for the higher and further education. Therefore, the courses are vetted in order for them to be 'fit for purpose'. Having said this, education is becoming increasingly global and, in the future, it is possible for schools to partner with one another and offer certain courses on-line to increase student interaction and optimise student learning. Dr Damien Spiteri in his 2017 article on VET states that while certain aspects of VET are hands-on and practical, others are more theoretical. For this reason, such cooperation,

particularly within the VET field is an avenue that may be worth exploring (Spiteri & Kissaun, 2017).

J. Tilak, who has written extensively about VET in Asia, explains that, in countries like South Korea and Taiwan, governments have felt constrained to introduce strict quotas to limit university enrolment in order to make vocational careers more enticing to young people. While such strategies have not been employed by governments in Malta, it remains to be pointed out, all the same, that not all students can pursue post-secondary studies.

For the purpose of this report, I will be proposing a Junior Sommelier Course is based on in dept wine knowledge and service technique pegged at MQC Level 4. This course will also be aimed at adults seeking to enhance career prospects in the catering industry by increasing their knowledge and skills on wine and wine service or people seeking a second or third career in the catering sector.

Prospective attendees for this course are definitely going to be adult persons (18+ years) and some seeking a second or third career in their life through this course. This means they have experiences, good and bad, as well as different characters that require a proper adult learning approach to be on hand for optimum delivery and goal achievement.

2.8.2 The proposed Junior Sommelier course vis-à-vis the Maltese MQF Requirements

The proposed sommelier course as described (Appendix 15) in this report tries to match MQF requirements (Appendix 10) by ensuring that it can and will deliver the level of knowledge that is factual and theoretical knowledge relevant to the field of work of participants. The content will also make sure that participants understand broad theoretical knowledge and analysis of information related to a field of work or study.

Content will also give participants the understanding of facts and establishes basic principles in broad contexts within the field of work or study. The course would also apply facts and procedures in broad contexts within the defined field of work or study and selects and analyses theoretical knowledge in a broad context.

A range of cognitive and practical skills are also built into the course required to generate solutions to specific problems. Participants of the course would be able to demonstrate acquired knowledge and the ability to apply a range of technical or academic skills to carry out multiple complex tasks and communicate theoretical and technical information in a work or learning environment. The

course would also give the tools to participants to generate solutions to specific problems within their field of work or study.

Competencies built into the course would allow participants to exercise self-management within the guidelines of their work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change. Participants will be to apply the knowledge and skills gained to perform qualitative and quantitative tasks that require technical capacity normally associated with a professional's or technician's competence.

Participants will be able to supervise the quality and quantity of work of themselves and others' under quality assured structures with responsibility and autonomy. They will also demonstrate an advanced level of key competences in wine service at this level as a basis for higher training and education in this field of work or study. They may also supervise the routine work of others, take some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work procedures.

Successful graduates of the proposed course would have achieved the following learning outcome goals which covers aspects such as knowledge and understanding, the applying of knowledge and understanding, communication skills, judgement skills, learning skills and autonomy and responsibility:

1. Understands and analyses broad theoretical, practical and technical knowledge related to a field of work or study.
2. Follows instructions and carries out defined theoretical, complex and technical tasks.
3. Communicates theoretical and technical information in a work or learning context.
4. Interacts with and generates solutions to problems within the immediate environment of a given field of work or study.
5. Applies key competences to defined actions and to a technical or academic field of work or learning context.
6. Exercises autonomy and takes responsibility for defined qualitative and quantitative tasks of self and others by completing complex tasks in a broad context under quality assured mechanisms.

Furthermore, the proposed course is designed to fit the Maltese MQF requirements for it to be considered as a formal 'Qualification' (NCFHE - National Commission for Further and Higher Education, 2016, p. 53). The NCFHE describes a course as being a 'Qualification' when said course is considered to be the formal outcome (certificate, diploma or title) of an assessment and

validation process which is obtained when an Awarding body, such as the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards and/or possesses the necessary competence to do a job in a specific area of work. A qualification confers official recognition of the value of learning outcomes in the labour market and in education and training. A qualification can be a legal entitlement to practice a trade (Source - OECD).

Use of the terms 'Qualification' and 'Award' in Malta, clearly state that the term Qualification in Malta is to be used to refer only to substantial programmes based on learning outcomes at the respective MQF level and having enough workload to meet the requirements depending on the level, as per Table 1 of the NCFHE Referencing report of 2016.

The parameters for which a course offered in Malta can be considered to lead to a 'Qualification' are specified in Chapter 2 of the 2016 referencing report, where the level descriptors for the different Levels on the MQF and the required minimum number of credits are set for qualifications at different levels. In order to distinguish between substantial courses which, lead to a 'Qualification', and short courses, all those courses which do not fulfil the requirements in terms of minimum credits required, are to be called 'Awards'.

The above-mentioned demarcation was introduced in 2016 in order to overcome any confusion in understanding the different types of certification that exist. It would therefore be easier for employers, learners and education and training providers to correctly ascertain the knowledge, skills and competences gained as a result of learning in terms of the amount of learning as well as level of learning.

2.8.3 Parameters for Qualification and Award qualifications

Courses that can be accredited as 'Qualifications' up to Level 7 need to fulfil the following criteria:

- Learning must be in line with the level descriptor equivalent to the specific qualification level targeted;
- Learning must fulfil the number of credits required; and
- In the case of IVET Qualifications, the number of credits includes the indicated percentage of the course dedicated to key competences, sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge.

It is important that training courses, such as the one being proposed in this report, are pitched at the right level of difficulty of learning in terms of knowledge, skills and competences covered and the learning outcomes to be achieved following the learning experience. Both the state and private

sector in Malta offer short courses which do not have the necessary number of credits to be called a Qualification. These courses are usually of different duration, and consequently have different credit allocations. Any course which fulfils the level of learning but not the required number of credits to qualify for the title of 'Qualification' are to be called 'Award'. (NCFHE - National Commission for Further and Higher Education, 2016)

The Maltese Qualifications Framework is based on the principles and objectives of learning outcomes that are subsequently linked to Validation of Informal and Non Formal learning and, where appropriate, to credit systems. The Level descriptors for the different MQF levels, specified in terms of learning outcomes and qualifications, include a number of credits required at each level. These learning outcomes set the standard against which all Qualifications and Awards, within the national education system, are accredited. All courses accredited by NCFHE, as well as those conferred by the self-accrediting institutions like the Institute of Tourism Studies, use credits.

Credits are used by a wide range of Education and Training providers. All courses accredited by NCFHE are assigned a number of credits based on their total learning workload. The University of Malta has fully implemented a credit system based on ECTS for a number of years. MCAST, the main VET provider also uses credits (ECVET for levels 1-4 and ECTS for Level 5 and higher). The ITS also uses ECVET credits as the basis for programme design and planning. All courses accredited by NCFHE are included in the national register for accredited courses with identifiable credit points.

One credit is defined as being equivalent to a workload of 25 hours of total learning. Education and training institutions can label credits as either ECTS or ECVETs, according to the orientation of the learning programme. Both ECVET and ECTS have the same hours of total learning (1 x 25 hours). Self-accrediting Further and Higher Education institutions are bound to follow the parameters of the MQF in terms of level descriptors and number of credits as illustrated in the Referencing Report (Chapter 2). All other Further and Higher Education institutions are legally obliged to apply to NCFHE to accredit their Qualifications and Awards. The process of Validation of Informal and Non-Formal learning has been set by Subsidiary Legislation 327.432. It is the Subsidiary Legislation which sets the principles for the validation process.

Courses accredited by NCFHE and those by the self-accrediting training providers (like the ITS) use the learning outcomes approach: Most of the course descriptions offered in Malta are described in terms of learning outcomes. This is the case for the state VET providers, MCAST and ITS, and the Higher Education provider University of Malta. The licensed private Further and

Higher education institutions whose courses are accredited by NCFHE are also expected to be described in terms of learning outcomes. The compulsory education system is also geared up to launch its curricula in terms of learning outcomes. This shows how education and training provision in Malta has experienced a paradigm shift towards learning outcomes.

The NCFHE is authorized by law to carry out external quality audits linked to the licensing of Further and Higher Education institutions in Malta. These standards ensure transparency with respect to the conferring of qualifications and awards in Malta. Following an independent review by experts, NCFHE chooses whether to accredit courses or not. All institutions with courses accredited by NCFHE have to fulfil the quality assurance standards as indicated in the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education.

2.9 How adults learn

One of higher education's most prevailing trends is an ever-increasing number of adult learners and non-traditional students. From the community colleges to the research universities, adult students are returning to all sectors of academe in never-before-seen numbers (Nelson, 1996). Based on my lecturing experience, I believe that adult learners have a different approach to learning. By the time they reach adulthood, they are most likely responsible for their own success and are perfectly capable of making their own decisions once they have the information needed. Adults learn best when learning is focused on adult students, not on the teacher therefore student-centred approaches. This is called andragogy, the process of helping adults learn. With teachers acting as catalysts for learning.

Adults tend to apprehend knowledge and skills in slightly different ways as against teenagers. While adult students come to the college classroom for the same reasons that traditional students do, they bring along "more complex issues that may dramatically affect their ability to stay in school" (Osgood-Treston, 2001, p. 121). They have more luggage in their minds and therefore it is imperative that educational institutions are to be prepared to meet these aspects as well as the future's challenges, including the unique needs of adult learners in today's college institutions' classrooms, the administrators and academia members must plan today to make needed changes. Per the World Future Society, *"Proactive, future-oriented thinking can lead to greater success in both work and private affairs. The future will happen, no matter what we do, but if we want it to be a good future, we need to work at it"* (2002, available at <http://www.wfs.org>). (Rollins, 2014)

Over the past few decades, society, and not least the Hospitality industry, has changed rapidly and dramatically. As a result, planning for the future, while never easy, has become a formidable task for all educational and training organizations. What was once expected to occur five to 10 years in the future happens more immediately and abruptly. Whether dealing with changes in educational practice, increasing opportunities for technological applications, the societal implications of multiculturalism, funding issues, or the wars on poverty, drugs, illiteracy and crime, educational and training administrators and academia must now plan in a way that was not required of them in the past. This is to ensure that their services and products are 'future proof'.

Lisa Rollins in her 2014 article in the Social Sciences Journal, expressly feels that while it is undoubtedly challenging to proactively and realistically plan for the uncertain changes ahead, humans possess the ability to not only think constructively about the future, but also to '*anticipate many future events, envision desirable goals, and develop effective strategies for realizing our purposes*'. (Rollins, 2014)

Yes, change is inevitable, yet many organizational leaders fail to effectively map out successful transitions. Strategic quality planning, however, provides those who utilize its tools (e.g., environmental scanning, trend extrapolation, Delphi Technique, scenario planning, etc.) with a systematic framework that can help move an organization to go from its present state to where its planners want it to be (Alexander & Serfass, 1999).

Educational institution administrators and academics should be aware that many college students, including non-traditional and adult learners, fail to make connections between what is being presented in the classroom with that which occurs in their own lives and relates to their future goals in life.

Although the traditional college student is usually described as being between 17-23 years, it is suggested by Rollins that teaching faculties in higher education should actively work to help students make such connections, including through the incorporation of adult learning principles. For example, according to "Principles of Adult Learning," an online article, '*Adults are relevancy-oriented. They must see a reason for learning something. Learning has to be applicable to their work or other responsibilities to be of value to them. Therefore, teachers and instructors must identify objectives for adult participants before a course starts... [and] theories and concepts must be related to a setting familiar to participants.*'

2.9.1 The Differences in learning

Malcolm Knowles, a pioneer in the study of adult learning, observed that adults learn best when:

- They understand why something is important to know or do.
- They have the freedom to learn in their own way.
- Learning is experiential.
- The time is right for them to learn.
- The process is positive and encouraging.

While every individual is unique and everyone processes information at their own pace and in their own way, research has discovered there are seven types of learning styles or categories that everyone falls into (Knowles, 2019). Here are the 7 types of learning styles:

2.9.1.1. Visual (Spatial) learning

As the name suggests, visual learners are those that learn best when they have an image or cue to help them process the information. They may also need to map out or write out their thoughts in order to really process what they are thinking.

These are some of the most common characteristics of visual learners:

- Have good spatial sense and sense of direction
- Can easily visualize objects, plans, and outcomes
- Like colouring, drawing, and doodling
- Have good colour balance
- Are good at using maps and rarely get lost

For example, a visual learner in a writing class may process the information better by seeing a movie clip of how a film adapts the literature it was based on, instead of listening to the literature being read aloud.

You are a visual learner if: You prefer pictures, images, and mind maps to help you process information.

2.9.1.2. Aural (Auditory-Musical) learning

Aural learning is a unique type of learning style, but it is used to classify those who respond primarily to sound. Unsurprisingly, most musicians are aural learners. This is a learning style that isn't often addressed in many schools because it can be hard to teach outside of music class. These are also individuals who respond best to things such as binaural beats.

Aural learners:

- Find that certain music invokes strong emotions
- Enjoy listening to music in the background while learning
- Have a good sense of pitch or rhythm
- Often hear songs, jingles, and themes tend to pop in their head without prompts

For example, a song that helps you remember the alphabetical order of all the states is a way to tap into aural learning styles.

You are an aural learner if: You prefer learning through rhythms or tend to use clever rhymes to remember something.

2.9.1.3. Verbal (Linguistic) learning

Verbal learners learn best both under verbal instruction and writing. They typically excel with both. These learners are typically those that go into public speaking, writing, journalism, and debating.

Verbal learners:

- Express themselves in both written and spoken word
- Enjoy reading and writing
- Like tongue twisters and rhymes
- Has a large vocabulary and enjoys learning new words
- For example, reading definitions of a word aloud or writing them down a few times, are ways for verbal learners to process information.

One is a verbal learner if: One needs to read content aloud to learn something or prefer someone to speak the information to you so you can process it.

2.9.1.4. Physical (Kinesthetic) learning

If you are someone who likes getting their hands dirty, then you are likely a physical learner. Physical learners are extremely animated and always need to be moving. They learn best by going through the motions of what they are learning.

Physical learners:

- Notice and appreciate the physical world around them, such as textures
- Enjoys sports and exercise along with outdoor activities and working with their hands
- Tend to use and pick up on body language
- Enjoy making models or doing jigsaw puzzles

For example, if something is bothering you or you are trying to wrap your head around a concept, you would rather go for a run or walk than sit down and figure it out.

You are a physical learner if: You don't learn something until you do it and need to draw out your own diagrams or role play to learn new information. You may also be constantly in motion and speak with your hands.

2.9.1.5. Logical (Mathematical) learning

Most logical thinkers end up being engineers, mathematicians, or pursuing the sciences. This is because they have a very unique way of learning. They are the individuals who want to understand the reason behind content or skills and tend to enjoy games like chess and doing brainteasers.

Logical learners:

- Classify and group information together to better understand it
- Perform complex calculations
- Create procedures for future use, after coming up with a solution to a problem
- Plan agendas and itineraries and even rank and number them

For example, those who prefer making a neat and organized list while studying and extracting key points from material for these lists are typically logical learners.

One is a logical learner if: One can learn something only when they understand the bigger picture, along with the logic, reasoning and systems behind that concept.

2.9.1.6. Social (Interpersonal) learning

As the name suggests, social learners are natural group workers. For students, these are the individuals that seem to be involved in every extracurricular activity. For adults, they are the individuals that like to be engaged with others, work on teams, and ask their peers for feedback in order to learn.

Social learners:

- Prefer to socialize after work or class
- Enjoy playing group sports
- Bounce ideas off of others and to work through issues in a group
- Listen well
- Are often trusted by others for their advice

For example, in school when teachers assign group projects, it is often a way to appeal to social learners.

One is a social learner if: If a person prefers to work with other people and find s/he learns best in groups.

2.9.1.7. Solitary (Intrapersonal) learning

Solitary learners are individuals who simply prefer to learn on their own and keep to themselves. In most situations, this is a learning style for socially introverted people—but not always. There are some people who are extroverts in social situations but prefer to be alone when they are trying to learn. They also tend to be concerned with goals and outcomes.

Solitary learners:

- Spend time on self-analysis
- Prefer to relax or travel away from crowds
- Think independently
- Journal, write, and record personal thoughts and events as a way to improve.

For example, someone who reads self-help books to develop a deeper understanding of themselves is often a solitary learner.

One is considered as a solitary learner if: One needs to sit alone and study by him/herself in order to retain information.

2.9.2 How can one apply this knowledge in the learning routine?

After finding out one's learning style, what can learners do with this information? One can start applying this to his/her everyday life, even if no longer in school.

While one cannot always ask someone in a meeting to sing a rhythmic song for you so that one remembers the information better, one can start using these learning techniques in everyday life to grasp concepts faster, better, and with greater ease.

Educators and learners need to always remember that there is no wrong way to learn. And even if it may seem strange to others, one needs to play to one's own strengths when trying to learn a new concept so that it really sticks.

By being more aware of how it is that one learns, one may find that s/he can develop new interests, start retaining information from beneficial books better, or that s/he remembers new names and pick up new skills even faster.

3 The Methods

In this section of the report I am overviewing the methods used for the master thesis. Moreover, an effort to describe the research process and time frame of the surveys conducted to collate data and feedback on the proposed junior Sommelier course.

The study was conducted as a product orientated case study. It describes some of the main existing wine server courses and proposes a wine server course for Maltese catering personnel. Yin (2009) emphasises that a case study is an empirical inquiry that looks a contemporary phenomenon in detail and within a real-life context. As to this master thesis, a professionally designed and delivered wine server course is a contemporary phenomenon as already outlined in previous research by me in 2017.

For the theoretical framework and data collation the author used quantitative method and qualitative methods: literature and documentary analysis. Based on the theoretical knowledge from books, reports, articles, webpages, previous research and documents, the author prepared a set of questionnaires directed to stake holders. In addition to the surveys, the author conducted individual 'interviews' with a number of industry professionals forming a preselected focus group in order to get deeper insights on the proposed wine server course.

3.1 Survey research

The author chose to conduct a quantitative approach for research as seen in figure 26, using three surveys as the main research method combined with the focus group feedback. Couper et al (2009, 2-3) describe surveys as a method for gathering information for the purposes of constructing quantitative descriptors. Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005, 124.) state that surveys refer to a method of data collection that utilizes questionnaires or interview techniques. The survey is an effective tool to get opinions, attitudes and descriptions as well as for getting so called cause-and-effect relationships.

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Conceptual	Concerned with understanding human behaviour from the informant's perspective. Assumes a dynamic and negotiated reality	Concerned with discovering facts about social phenomena Assumes a fixed and measurable reality
Methodological	Data are collected through participant observation and interviews Data are analysed by themes from descriptions by informants Data are reported in the language of the informant	Data are collected through measuring things Data are analysed through numerical comparisons and statistical inferences Data are reported through statistical analyses
Source: Adapted from Minichiello <i>et al.</i> (1990, p. 5)		

Figure 1. Differences between qualitative and quantitative research

Often, when discussing the conducting of a survey, the emphasis is very often on questionnaires, however this would not be the whole survey. One has to see the importance of understanding that questionnaires are usually only a part of a survey research process and in order to succeed, all components, such as analysis and reporting, must be given due importance as well, just as implied by Ritter and Sue (2012, 3).

Furthermore, surveys and questionnaires are seen as the most popular information gathering methods when seeking ideas and views for product development. The major types of questionnaires are usually descriptive or analytical. Once the goal of the research or the so-called research problem is formulated, therefore having the purpose of the study clearly defined, this will determine what type of survey one should undertake, that is analytical or descriptive. Descriptive surveys are aimed at identifying the 'phenomena' whose variance one wants to describe. Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005, 125-126) sustain that descriptive studies are often used to obtain consumer/client attitudes towards a certain product and to ascertain views and opinions of employees or other stake holders.

All surveys, which ever data collection method is used, have common features. They all seem to require clear objectives, well-designed questionnaires and a sampling strategy. The particular field of online surveys is rapidly developing with various online sites offering a myriad of choices to work with. So called electronic methods of information collection are bringing many benefits, such as low cost and quick responses. But there are some downsides to them as well, as noted by Ritter and Sue (2012, 12), like choosing the right target group and low response rates. These may be due to unforeseen circumstances like such as changed email addresses, defective internet connections, closure of businesses or as I experienced the COVID-19 emergency which put many of my target groups offline due to shutdowns and lock downs.

As I experienced in my previous 2017 research, online surveys can provide a wealth of opportunities as well as challenges for researchers such as me. It is therefore very important to identify these opportunities and limitations when conducting online surveys. Ritter and Sue (2012, 5) do not believe that online surveys will replace other methods of data collection, instead all these 'methods' will be co-existing and supporting one another.

The author opted for web-based surveys, because they are easy to distribute and have worked in previous research. Also, most of today's communication with clients, target groups etc., is conducted by email so this channel mode is ideal for reach hundreds of respondents at the same time. Moreover, the collected information is usually easier to analyze at a later stage.

To choose the targets of the online surveys, the author noted that since, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Maltese and tourist clientele were spending more on eating out, becoming more discerning, well-travelled and also have defined attitudes as to what they expect to be provided as part of their 'meal experiences' when dining out and spending good money for the services and products they get in return. All this made a sample of these an ideal target for this research.

Competition in the hospitality industry is fierce. According to a study conducted by Ohio state university (Parsa, et al., 2005), 60% of restaurants fail within their first year and 80% don't make it past their first year. While there are many factors that contribute to this staggering statistic, it's important to note that efficiently serving guests is mutually beneficial. Efficient, customer-centric, organized service is an integral part of great restaurant experiences.

In a previous report on this subject by the author (Zahra, 2017), providing the right customer orientated experience is the provision of quality wine service as part of the overall meal experience package. In this scenario there are four interested stake holders who stand to benefit from this;

The Employers/Caterers(Industry stakeholders): these require their staff to give optimal levels of service to ensure customer satisfaction, sustainable sales and profits as well as repeat business and growth.

The Employees: the average employee seeks to better his job satisfaction levels in many forms and one of them being the knowledge that they are doing a good job and get satisfaction from their clients and employers with ripple effects such better pay and work conditions.

The Clients: this interested party seek better service and quality products giving them a sense of 'value for money' whenever they seek a meal out with family, friends or business associates.

The Wine Suppliers: these stake holders go to great lengths to promote their wines in best manner possible. Therefore, it is in their interest that their products are presented and served in best way possible and suggested in right manner.

Targeting these stakeholders in this research product-based project will seek to bring acceptance and support for the proposed junior sommelier course while taking on suggestions to improve the framework of the same course. Therefore the author decided to survey the afore mentioned stakeholders of the product's viability. Provide them with a profile of the proposed product, including features and benefits, and ask specific questions about their interest levels.

3.2 Online surveys

The author conducted web-based feedback surveys among interested stake holders using Survey Monkey as an online survey tool combined with individual questionnaires to the author's focus group members. The online survey links were sent to respondents via email as well as being made available via three Facebook pages. The surveys and questionnaires were in English as respondents were both Maltese and foreign. The Maltese are fluent in English and foreigners are mostly comfortable with the English language.

The *client* online survey included 15 questions, the employee survey included 19 questions and the industry questionnaire also had 19 questions. The first six questions were profile questions such as sex, age, profession, household type and frequency of eating out. Thereafter questions were about wine ordering with food, wine service quality experienced, perceived wine service faults, expected character traits in wine servers, how can service skill be improved, is the proposed course conducive to improving server skills in wine, suggested adjustments and/or improvements, if the personnel trained by this course can improve meal experiences, would clients promote such a course to family and friends and finally respondents were asked if they felt that by their response they had given input to make this course a reality, and therefore feeling a sense of ownership.

The *employees* survey also had questions covering the profile of the respondents but then covered work experience, work procedures, wine service procedures, wine service training received, certified training if any, opinions on servers needing wine service training, opinion on proposed course content, any course change suggestions, length of course, delivery methods of course content, type of assessments ideal for proposed course, should the course be full time or part-time, how professional the deemed the course, interest in attendance, improving career prospect via the course, if they would promote the course to others.

The *industry* survey, while touching on profile by getting feedback on gender, work experience and type of work place, went further and sought feedback on job roles, work experience, if their place of work serves wines, types of wine served, are personnel professionally trained in wine service, should all servers be properly trained in wine service techniques and knowledge, opinion on proposed course content, changes to content, length of course, delivery methods of course, assessment methods, full or part-time basis, quality of content of course, promoting the course to their personnel, if such a course would help improve the level of wine service, and if their establishment would be willing to support such a course.

Before these surveys were sent out, the author sent a sample test-survey on March 16th 2020 to author's colleagues at the Institute of Tourism Studies as well as some friends in order to get an external perspective even though something similar was undertaken in previous research (Zahra, 2017). Via the test-survey the author collected 15 responses on each and therefore guaranteed that the surveys work technically. Furthermore, respondents provide some useful feedback about the questions and also answer options. After the test-survey the questionnaire was completed according to feedback. For example, most questions were changed into multiple choice format but allowing an 'other' option in the end just in case respondents had other views or points to mention.

The surveys were finalized and created on Survey Monkey on 23rd June 2020 and the links sent link was sent via email to 1041 contacts and Facebook to 650 'friends', on 24th June 2020. Both in the email and on the Facebook pages, the author the need of the surveys connecting it to previous research held in 2017 and also mentioned that the results would be used in a master thesis. The covering letter attached to the surveys can be seen as appendix 14.

The sample included ITS restaurant clients, hotels and restaurant contacts as well as past ITS students employed in the hospitality industry. The author was planning to incentivise receivers to respond to the survey in conjunction with a local 4Star hotel by offering a free day by the pool voucher, but this was shot down when the COVID-19 pandemic landed in Malta.

The first draft of the course content was circulated to the stake holders for their attention with a scope of getting feedback and any suggestions for adjustment and improvement.

The course content will include the basics of wine storage, wine faults, serving temperatures and techniques, including also regional wine knowledge information about main wine producing countries in Europe and the New World regions and their wine producers.

The surveys were open for answering from the 24th of June 2020 and one reminder email was sent in July 2020. The surveys were closed on the 17th of August 2020. As a result, 292 responses were received. The results are discussed in the next chapter of this report.

3.3 Focus group questionnaires

Since the objective of this report is to propose a relevant and doable Junior Sommelier course at MQC Level 4 after it is put to all stake holders for their feedback and suggestions after the previous research had given indications of what should or could be part of such a wine server course.

Therefore, a focus group of industry professionals was created to provide feedback initially via semi structured interviews but late due to the Covid-19 pandemic restriction I had to revert to a questionnaire distributed via emails for my processing at a later stage.

Sekaran and Bougie (2013, 118) refer to interviewing as a data collection method, especially during the exploratory stage of research. They further state that interviews may be unstructured, semi-structured or structured, and conducted face-to-face, by telephone or online. In this case the author opted for the latter approach to get over the Covid-19 obstacle.

Collis and Hussey (2014, 133) state: '*An interview is a method for collecting primary data in which a sample of interviewees are asked questions to find out what they think, do or feel.*' According to Bryman and Bell (2015, 210) interviews used in research aim to elicit from interviewees all manner of information by the interviewer regarding interviewee's own behaviours, attitudes, norms, beliefs and values.

Unstructured interviews are so labelled because the interviewer does not enter the interview setting with a planned sequence of questions (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The interviewer typically has only a list of topics or issues, often called an interview guide, that are covered. The style of questioning is usually informal. The phrasing and sequencing of questions will vary from interview to interview. (Bryman & Bell, 2015)

Bryman and Bell (2015, 210) see structured interviews, sometimes called a standardized interview, entails the administration of an interview schedule by an interviewer. The aim is for all interviewees to be given the same context of questioning. It means that each respondent receives the same interview stimulus as any other. Questions are usually very specific and offer interviewee a fixed range of answers.

Semi-structured interviews, again according to Bryman and Bell (2015), is a term that covers a wide range of instances. It typically refers to a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in general form of an interview schedule but can vary the sequence of questions. The questions are somewhat more general than typically in a structured interview schedule. Also, the interviewer has some latitude to ask further questions in response to what significant replies are. In a semi-structured interview, the researcher prepares some questions to encourage the interviewee to talk about the main topics of interest and develops the other questions during the interview (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

The difference between surveys and questionnaires is the basic fact that while a survey is a collection and analysis of experiences. Opinions of a target audience through asked questions, a questionnaire is defined as a specific list of questions with options for the audience to respond more flexibly. Saris and Gallhofer state that over 90% of opinion feedback is generated from questionnaires used directly or via internet. (Saris & Gallhofer, 2014, p. 2)

A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. Questionnaires can be thought of as a kind of written interview. They can be carried out face to face, by telephone, computer or post. (McLeod, 2018)

Questionnaires can be an effective means of measuring the behaviour, attitudes, preferences, opinions and, intentions of relatively large numbers of subjects more cheaply and quickly than other methods. An important distinction is between open-ended and closed questions. Often a questionnaire uses both open and closed questions to collect data. This is beneficial as it means both quantitative and qualitative data can be obtained.

'Closed' questions would structure the answer by only allowing responses which fit into pre-decided categories. Data that can be placed into a category is called nominal data. The category can be restricted to as few as two options, i.e., dichotomous (e.g., 'yes' or 'no,' 'male' or 'female'), or include quite complex lists of alternatives from which the respondent can choose (e.g., polytomous).

Closed questions can also provide ordinal data (which can be ranked). This often involves using a continuous rating scale to measure the strength of attitudes or emotions. Such questions can be economical by providing large amounts of research data at a low cost. Also, respondent provide information that can be easily changed into quantitative data allowing statistical analysis of responses. Such questions also can be standardized and therefore simplifies the reliability issue. Lastly the lack of detail could be a bit of a downside of such questions as responses tend to be 'fixed' leading respondents to keep from giving answer that reflect their true feelings. (McLeod, 2018)

On the other hand, 'open' questions allow people to express their true views allowing respondents to provide all the detail they like in their own words. In depth feedback is more likely with such questions. These give no pre-set answer options and instead allow the respondents to put down exactly what they like in their own words. The result of such an approach to questions is likely to be rich qualitative data. On the other hand such questions could be time consuming to answer

and best used in small sized sample audiences. Data analysis will also be time consuming. Lastly such questions are not the ideal for 'less educated' respondents as open questions require very good writing skills and a good ability to express one's feelings verbally.

Designing the questionnaire, according to McLeod (McLeod, 2018), entails the following guideline:

- *Make sure that all questions asked, address the aims of the research. However, use only one feature of the construct you are investigating in per item.*
- *The longer the questionnaire, the less likely people will complete it. Questions should be short, clear, and be to the point; any unnecessary questions/items should be omitted.*
- *Questions should progress logically from the least sensitive to the most sensitive, from the factual and behavioural to the cognitive, and from the more general to the more specific.*
- *The researcher should ensure that the answer to a question is not influenced by previous questions.*
- *There should be a minimum of technical jargon. Questions should be simple, to the point and easy to understand.*
- *The language of a questionnaire should be appropriate to the vocabulary of the group of people being studied. Use statements which are interpreted in the same way by members of different subpopulations of the population of interest. For example, the researcher must change the language of questions to match the social background of respondents' age / educational level / social class / ethnicity etc.*
- *Make sure it looks professional, include clear and concise instructions. If sent through the post, make sure the envelope does not signify 'junk mail.'*

Regarding the current master thesis, a semi-structured interview in the form of a questionnaire, was deemed as the most appropriate method in the circumstances of the time. The author had specific topics of interest in mind and prepared a number of questions (9) beforehand. However, an allowance was made in the questionnaire for respondents to add comments in the end. This sample questionnaire can be seen in appendix 13 in this report.

Therefore, the author conducted five semi-structured interviews using questionnaires with industry professionals. The aim was to get deeper understanding of the industry's attitudes and current situation. As the online questionnaire included mostly open-ended questions and the online questionnaires helped to receive some in depth feedback.

An open question is one that cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no” or a brief factual answer, but requires a longer, developed answer. A closed question is one that requires a brief factual answer or requires the respondent to choose from a list of predetermined answers. (Collis & Hussey, 2014)

As to timeframe, all the interviews/questionnaires were distributed and collected in June July 2020. Since the questionnaires filled in by the focus group respondents were filled in and returned to the author these the doubled as transcripts which allowed for analysis and the possibility to make assumptions regarding the current needs and offer ideas for future application. The focus group findings are presented in chapter 4.

3.4 Reliability and validity

Reliability is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable. Reliability refers to the consistency of a measure of a concept. An important term measuring reliability is stability. It means whether a measure is stable over time, so that the results relating to that measure for a sample of respondents do not fluctuate. Another important factor involved is internal reliability, meaning whether or not respondents` scores on any one indicator tend to be related to their scores on the other indicators. (Bryman & Bell, 2015)

Therefore, one way to measure reliability would be to evaluate and consider how similar the results would be if another researcher conducted the same research in another place and time. If the results would be similar, the research is reliable.

Validity refers to the issue of whether an indicator (or set of indicators) that is devised to measure a concept really measures that concept (Bryman & Bell 2015, 170). Internal validity refers to what extend a causal relationship exists between variables (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2005, 85). External validity relates to what extend the findings can be generalized beyond the specific research context (Bryman & Bell 2015, 50-51).

Regarding current survey, as the online questionnaire comprises a profiling part in the beginning followed by 9 fixed open-ended questions with no answer options given, it should not be relatively easy to come up with similar results. Given that the same questionnaire would be used, and the study would be based on a proposed course format put for to respondents for their consideration and critical analysis.

Moreover, 292 is a reliable number of respondents to generalize the results and make conclusions. As two methods were used: the three online surveys and online questionnaires/interviews (Focus Group), it allowed the author to double-check some aspects of the survey results by asking the open-ended questions in the questionnaires to the focus group members.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Ethics refers to the correct rules of conduct necessary when carrying out research. We have a moral responsibility to protect research participants from harm. However important the issue under investigation the author needs to remember that s/he have a duty to respect the rights and dignity of research participants. This means that they must abide by certain moral principles and rules of conduct. (McLeod, 2018)

In the present climate of significant social and technological change, the author did the utmost to respond to increased ethical regulation and scrutiny of research. New sources, types of data and modes of accessing participants are all challenging and reconfiguring traditional ideas of the research relationship. Aspects the author had to deal with were the key ethical dilemmas - including research boundaries, informed consent, participation, rapport and analysis - within the context of a rapidly changing research environment. (Miller, et al., 2012)

In Malta, "Data Protection Legislation" means The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018 and previously in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act as contained in Chapter 586 of the Laws of Malta, (Act XX of 2018). Other points given attention in this area of ethical considerations were the following stressing the need to:

- (a) *do good (known as beneficence) and*
- (b) *do no harm (known as non-maleficence)*

In practice, these ethical principles mean that myself as the researcher, I needed to:

- (a) obtain informed consent from potential research participants;
- (b) minimise the risk of harm to participants;
- (c) protect their anonymity and confidentiality;
- (d) avoid using deceptive practices; and
- (e) give participants the right to withdraw from my research.

These considerations I hope to have covered as per appendices 12 and 14 of this report. When one looks at these five basic ethical principles, it may appear obvious that my dissertation should include these (dissertation.leard.com, 2020). However, there are many instances where it is not possible or desirable to obtain informed consent from research participants. Similarly, there may be instances where you seek permission from participants not to protect their anonymity. However, I feel that the choices made do reflect the research strategy chosen to guide my work.

3.6 Description of implementation of working methods

During the course and formulation of this work some problems/difficulties that I encountered were things such as difficulty in deciding the content of the research, limited knowledge in methodology, inability to find modern, specialized and related references, as well as a lack of interest in the research among others (Qasem & Zayid, 2019). Another difficulty was that the research had to be undertaken during the Covid-19 emergency, which in my country, resulted in the closing down of most catering and hospitality establishments restricting access to the target audience of my research.

4 Findings

In the current chapter the results of the conducted research are demonstrated by the author. Firstly, the online surveys' results are presented from the following aspects: the respondents' profile, work background, experience, experiences in dining establishments and also personal expectations of clients re the services provided, career opportunities, and so on.

In addition to the online surveys, the author conducted online questionnaires in lieu of semi structured interviews among a focus group of industry professionals. The interviews could not be made due to the Covid-19 pandemic emergency. Hence, the main findings of these questionnaires are presented. This chapter ends with an analysis part where both – online surveys and questionnaire findings – are compared and summed up.

4.1 Online survey results

Altogether 292 respondents answered the online surveys. The author is satisfied with the results but regrettably could not apply a motivational incentive due to the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic as it would surely have had a big role in increasing the response levels. All responses were voluntary. Below the survey results are presented as provided by each survey group based on the proposed course content provided with the online survey for consideration by respondents.

4.1.1 Restaurant client survey

The first three questions in this survey were about the respondents' profile.

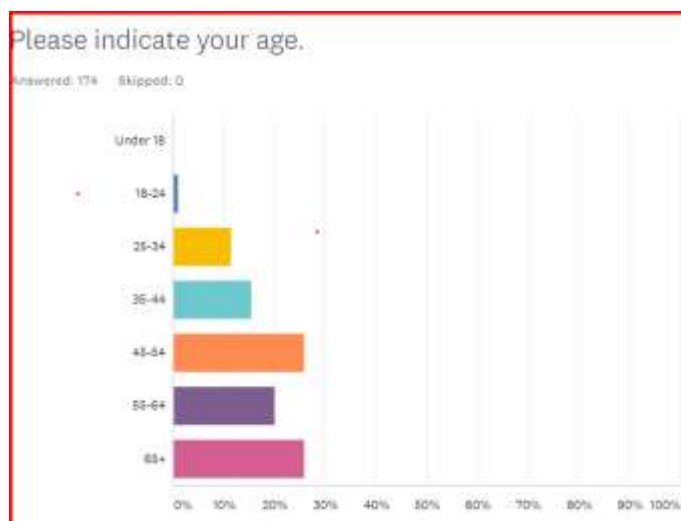


Figure 2. Respondent age breakdown

The age groups of the respondents are shown in figure 2 below. The lowest percentage was that of the 18-24-year-old group (1.15%) and the largest were two, 45-54-year-old group and the 65+ year old group (both 25.86%).

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	0.00%	0
18-24	1.15%	2
25-34	11.49%	20
35-44	15.52%	27
45-54	25.86%	45
55-64	20.11%	35
65+	25.86%	45
TOTAL		174

Figure 3. Response percentage by age group.

The gender make up of the respondents was as seen in figure 4 below, were mostly female (54.07%), males (45.93%) and two respondents did not answer this question.

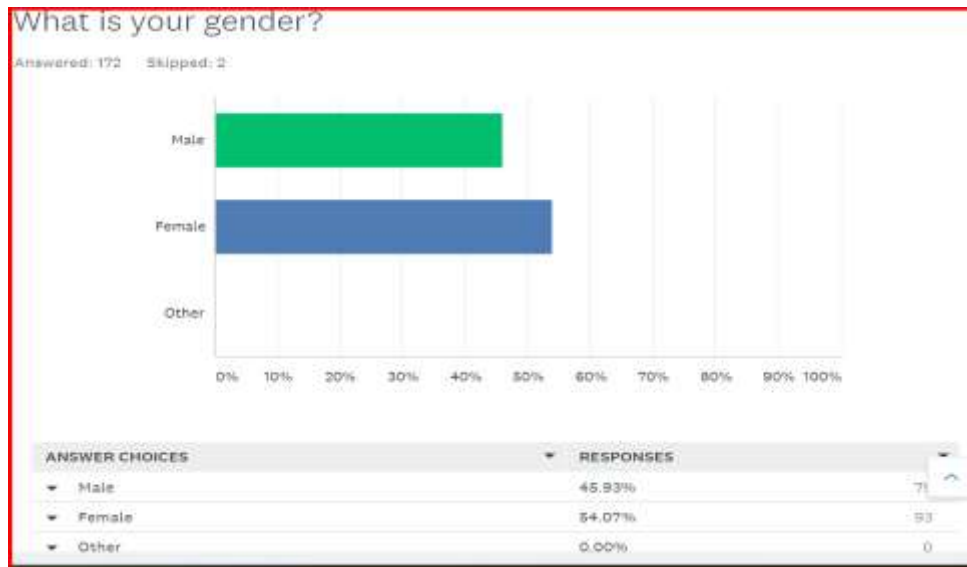


Figure 4. Gender breakdown and response percentages.

The work background of the respondents is outline in figure five below. Nine skipped this question and 165 answered.



Figure 5. Respondent professional breakdown pie chart.

The professional background of the 165 respondents (who answered this question) as seen in figure 6 below were professionals (22.42%), retired (21.21%), middle management (17.58%), self-employed (11.52%), top management (7.88%), junior management (7.27%), office/clerical workers (3.03%), retail sales (1.82%), unemployed (0.61%) and other professions (6.67%). Summing up these respondents mostly had managerial and professional backgrounds.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Retired	21.21%	35
Self Employed	11.52%	19
Unemployed	0.61%	1
Professional	22.42%	37
Top Management	7.88%	13
Middle Management	17.58%	29
Junior Management	7.27%	12
Office/Clerical worker	3.03%	5
Retail Sales	1.82%	3
Other	6.67%	11
TOTAL		165

Figure 6. Respondent professional background by percentage.

The following question sought information on household type and figure 7 gives a general breakdown of respondents.

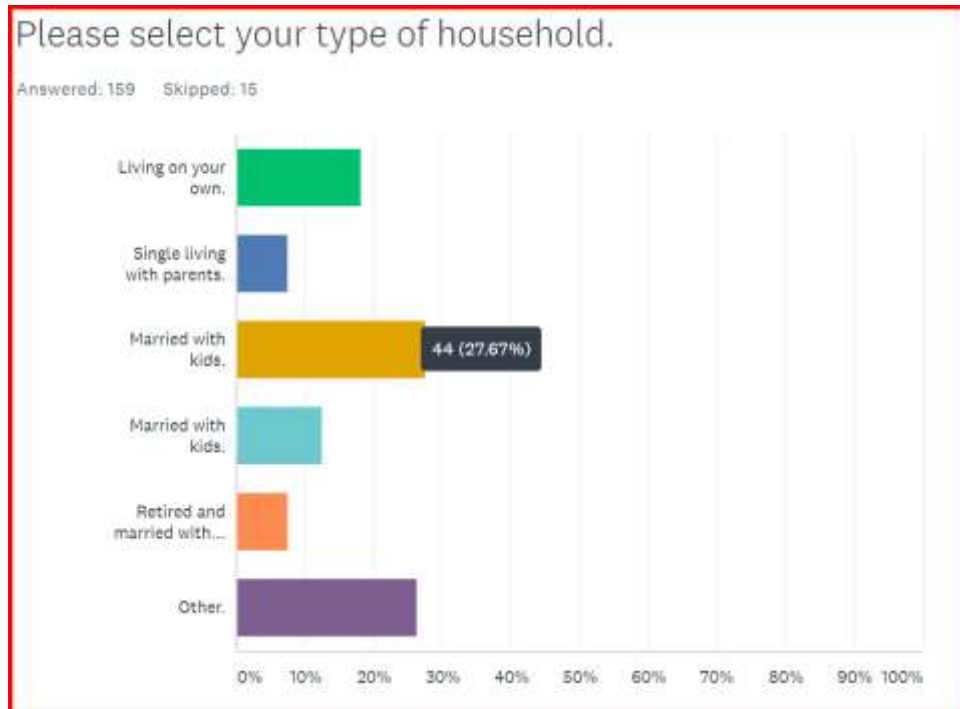


Figure 7. Respondent household type break down.

The majority were married with kids (27.67%) and the rest as seen in figure 8 below. Respondents living on their own were 18.24%, single living with parents were 7.55%, married without kids 12.58%, retired and married with kids 7.55% and other categories not specified were 26.42%. there were also 49 comments added to this question which focussed on clarifying marital status such as divorced, widowed etc. which were not part of the choices provided. The majority were married with children.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Living on your own.	18.24% 29
Single living with parents.	7.55% 12
Married with kids.	27.67% 44
Married with kids.	12.58% 20
Retired and married with no kids.	7.55% 12
Other.	26.42% 42
TOTAL	159

Comments (49)

Figure 8. Respondent household type breakdown in percentages.

The next question requested feedback on frequency of eating out. Figure nine gives an outline below and figure ten provide a breakdown.

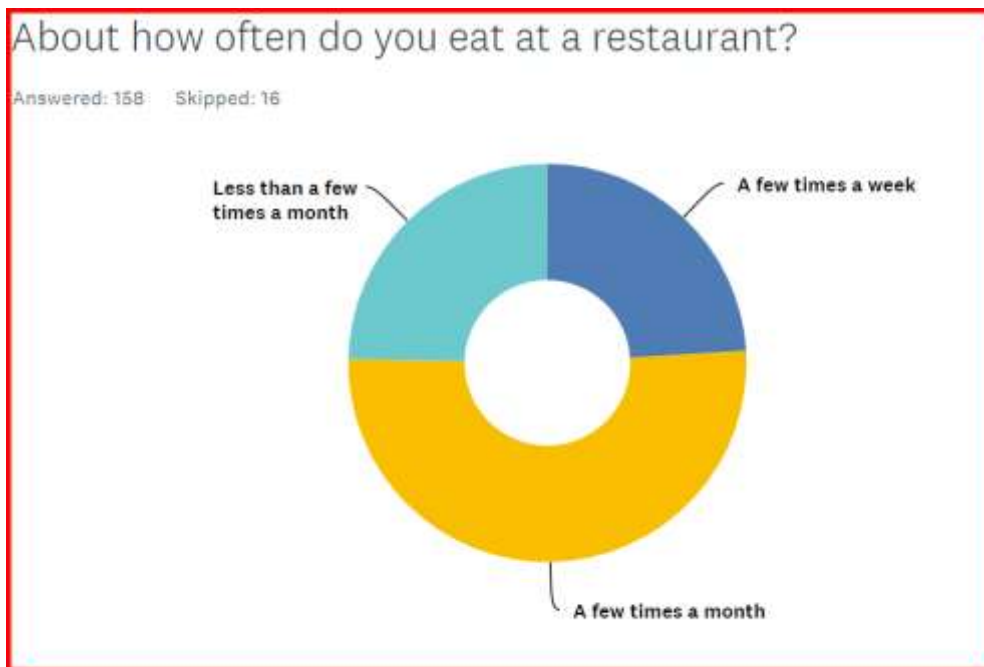


Figure 9. Respondents' eating out frequency pie chart.

16 respondents skipped this question but the others (158) eat out a few times a week (24.05%), less than a few times a month (24.68%), a few times a month (51.27%). No respondents said they never eat out. Summing up the majority of respondents were people who eat out regularly perhaps not with the same frequency.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Every day	0.00% 0
A few times a week	24.05% 38
A few times a month	51.27% 81
Less than a few times a month	24.68% 39
Never	0.00% 0
TOTAL	158

Figure 10. Respondents' eating out frequency by percentage.

The next question was on how often they order wine when eating out. an outline of the responses is provided in figure 11 below.



Figure 11. Frequency of wine ordered with food

The breakdown of the responses were as follows based on figure 12 below. 17 respondents failed to answer this question. 157 did answer and the result was 50.32% always order wine, 21.02% usually order wine, 15.92% sometimes order wine, 10.19% rarely order wine and 2.55% never order wine. There were 15 comments added to this question.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Always	50.32% 79
Usually	21.02% 33
Sometimes	15.92% 25
Rarely	10.19% 16
Never	2.55% 4
TOTAL	157
Comments (15)	

Figure 12. Frequency of wine ordering with food by percentage.

The most relevant comments were: According if we are having a snack or dinner, half bottles of wine with fruity taste, ordering both white and red, having wine with every meal, as well as wine or cocktails, depending on mood and type of food ordered. Other comments included the dependence on the ethnic origin of the food, depending on the meal occasion also having wine when

eating a dinner. Other comments had already been included in the answer choices. Summing up this question's response, 87+% are people who consume wine when eating out.

The next question was regarding respondent point of view about wine service personnel being trained in wine service. The level of respondent agreement is shown below in figure 13. 17 respondents skipped this question.

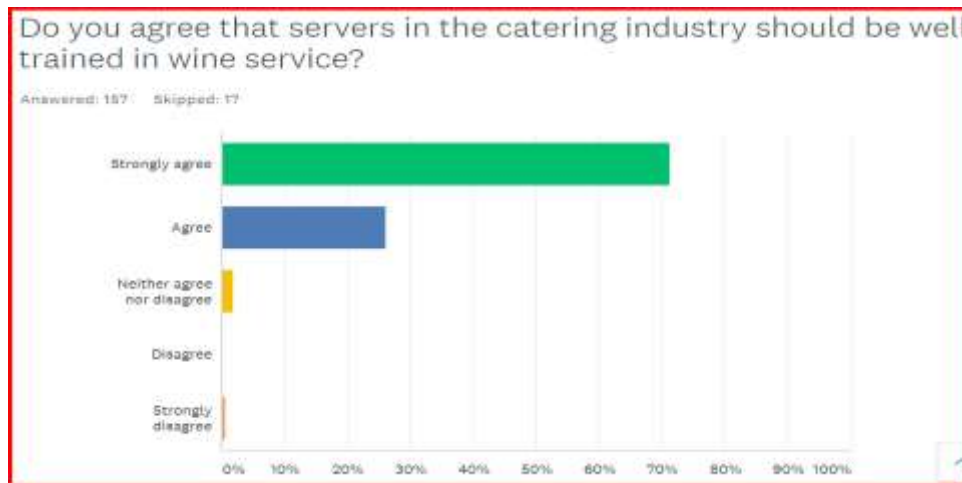


Figure 13. Responses on training levels of wine service in personnel.

The breakdown of responses is seen in figure 14 below and there were also 10 comments. 71.34% of respondents strongly agree, 26.11% agree, 1.91% neither agree nor disagree, 0.0% disagree and 0.64% strongly disagree. Therefore, the majority are of the opinion that servers should be well trained in wine service.

The main 'other' comments by respondents were as follows: good service is a must, and it is part of the meal, furthermore, wine can enhance the taste of the food. Sometimes you go to a restaurant and servers do not know how to hold the bottle, people appreciate a good suggestion to the type of meal and clients expect servers to be trained in first class restaurant but in others an amount of knowledge is enough.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	71.34%	112
Agree	26.11%	41
Neither agree nor disagree	1.91%	3
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.64%	1
TOTAL		157
Comments (10)		

Figure 14. Percentage response on server training in wine service.

This survey then asked respondents to mention three possible faults in wine service experienced when eating out. 95 answered this request and 79 skipped it. The responses are listed below but five were left out as they were unreadable.

1. *Wrong temperature, served from the left, pour too much for tasting.*
2. *Temperature, suggested replacement (when request was unavailable) that does not make sense, wrong glasses.*
3. *When asking for a specific type of wine, not everyone would know what to recommend unless you ask for a specific name.*
4. *Improper way of pouring. Making noise when removing Cork. Lack of knowledge of background re wine.*
5. *Way of pouring. Making noise when removing Cork. Little knowledge about wine.*
6. *Presentation, opening and pouring the wine.*
7. *1. Serving red wine way too warm. (room temperature in a kitchen in Malta is not room temperature in a cellar in Tuscany! 2. Horribly overpricing wine (a €4 bottle sold at €25 is not on) 3. Decanting is not always done (when its needed).*
8. *Open bottle without showing you the label and name of wine.*
9. *Not familiar with the wines offered on the wine list; do not know how to serve wine properly; not knowledgeable with wine in general.*
10. *Wrong glasses, warm red wine in summer, pouring.*
11. *Opening the bottle and just leaving it on the table, having no clue about wines in general and some places don't have one decent bottle of wine on the menu.*
12. *Stored inappropriately, served at wrong temperature, one glass fits all never works.*
13. *Poor knowledge of the wine, poor manners when opening the bottle and pouring the wine. And no idea of food pairing.*
14. *Lack of knowledge.*

15. *Not being able to recommend wine, not opening the wine properly, pouring glasses too full.*
16. *They offer wine list before ordering food.*
17. *None.*
18. *The handling of the wine bottle.*
19. *1. Not knowing what wines they have available, 2. Not knowing the type of House wine by the glass is available and 3. When asking for a particular grape sometimes they refer to the manager not knowing what to offer.*
20. *Lack of general wine knowledge, lack of understanding of available wine, inability to serve wine properly.*
21. *Lack of knowledge of wine available, lack of understanding on wines, inability to serve wine properly.*
22. *Dripping, white wine without cooler.*
23. *Wine recommendation, Presentation of the wine and Service.*
24. *Open wine without tasting, leaving bottle on table with no service, no idea between white and red grapes!*
25. *Most issue is they don't have the appropriate wine glasses. Sometimes they don't have a sommelier who can recommend a wine to go with the food you are ordering.*
26. *No knowledge.*
27. *1.Total or no knowledge of product. 2. Often unable to open bottle correctly. 3. Not providing any follow up service once placed on table.*
28. *No information about the wines on the menu, no idea how to serve a wine, no idea re client tasting wine when bottle is opened.*
29. *Temperature according to the colour of wine.*
30. *Poor knowledge when recommending wine, poor skills (eg pouring wine), inappropriate glasses.*
31. *The wine is served at an incorrect temperature. The wine glass is not appropriate for the type of wine being served.*
32. *Server unable to proffer advice.*
33. *Cheap wine is served. Price of wine in restaurants is expensive. Waiters have no knowledge of wines.*
34. *Wine which should be served chilled served without chiller.*
35. *Wine temp incorrect, lack of knowledge of wine list, problems opening or checking for faults.*
36. *Temperature of the wine; No coolers offered when having chilled wine; No advise on wine choice.*

37. *As long I'm drinking my favourite wine it doesn't matter.*
38. *wines that exist only on the list, having to check date of white wines, having to ask for the wine chiller at the table.*
39. *1. Local choice limited to one manufacturer for promotional factors. 2. Expensive wines are offered or suggested for profit. 3. Storage temperatures and location are not always adequate to wine product.*
40. *The temperature of the wine, the way the waiter opens the bottle and the way he pours it into the glass.*
41. *Sometimes spill do not use a napkin and do not hold the bottle properly.*
42. *1. Wasn't my taste. 2. wasn't complimenting the food. 3. They restaurant wasn't stocked well according the menu.*
43. *Ordinary glasses that don't complement the wine. Poor wine coolers. No or lack of knowledge of serving staff re wine.*
44. *Not enough knowledge about the wine; not being given the opportunity of being offered the wine before acceptance; reluctance to change the wine if it is not drinkable.*
45. *No knowledge of food and wine pairing. Wine service is treated the same by untalented wine servers. No wine chilled buckets served with wine.*
46. *How they open the wine bottle, how they serve the wine and they might not know how to answer clients' questions.*
47. *Need to ask for an ice bucket, order wine by number, broke the corkscrew.*
48. *No advice offered; rarely when advice is given no indication of price; very often person taking order has no idea.*
49. *None that I can think of.*
50. *1) Servers are not conversant with the wine list 2) Servers do not know how to pour and serve the wine 3) Servers do not distinguish between grape varieties, regions and styles.*
51. *Pouring wine, no ice bucket, and not replenishing the glasses.*
52. *1. When glass is not changed when the second bottle comes. 2. Proper glass is not given. 3. You ask for a second bottle of the same wine and they do not have.*
53. *The bottle is not opened in front of us, were not asked to taste before serving others.*
54. *Failing to open bottle properly, lack of knowledge when asked for suggestions, the way the pour the wine.*
55. *No suggestion on wine pairing. Wine not served at the correct temperature.*
56. *No clue about pairing, breaking the cork in the bottle, not pouring properly, not presenting the wine or showing the label..*
57. *I think not understanding main wine terminology.*
58. *Incorrect temperature, wrong glass, unable to offer advice.*

59. *Wine not chilled enough; no explanation as to type of wine; no proper handling of wine.*
60. *They don't know the properties of the wine, they are not knowledge enough on the palate and combination with food plus they don't serve it in the right temp.*
61. *Wrong wine brought to table because wine ordered was out of stock. Waiter sometimes has no knowledge about wine he/she is serving and no knowledge of how to hold bottle/serve wine.*
62. *Unable to advise you on wine to match with your food, do not know what wine is actually available and out of stock, and do not know how to describe a wine at all.*
63. *Dripping while pouring, Bottle opened before served, in some restaurants only full bottles are served.*
64. *Corked wine.*
65. *servicing wine at the wrong temperature, spilling drops of wine on the tablecloth or worse on the customer, filling the glass too much.*
66. *Lack of knowledge from waiting staff – overpriced wines – red wines kept in bad condition, especially in summer.*
67. *They do not know their wines, they just pour the wine and they fill the glass to the top.*
68. *Not much knowledge of the wine, pouring & general handling of the wine, not changing wine glasses if a different bottle of wine is taken or even the same wine but a different bottle.*
69. *Aged white wines. Pouring wine. And also serving it very quickly. (Maybe to get the second bottle).*
70. *Wine left unopened, wrong glass given for type of wine, not offered to taste.*
71. *No capability of opening a wine bottle, no knowledge of the wine list whatsoever and lastly the way wine is served.*
72. *Lack of knowledge from sommelier, overpriced.*
73. *No advice given.*
74. *Too expensive cheap wine(x4), not great selection of wine on the wine list, sometimes they get the wine late, not quick.*
75. *Not served at right temperature.....not opened in front of client.....not so knowledgeable.*
76. *White Not cold enough and red sometimes too warm.*
77. *We hardly order wine, so I am in no position to mention and list any faults.*
78. *Bottle is served open. Few knowledge about the wine. No tasting.*
79. *Pouring without tasting. Not providing ice buckets. Not knowing about the wines available.*
80. *They don't know the wine, they don't let red wine breathe, don't always get you an ice bucket.*
81. *Wine not at the right temperature.*

82. *Don't know what they are talking about when they suggest, do not ask on what you like and are not open minded to different suggestions.*
83. *Lack of food and wine pairing knowledge, not knowing the proper wine service procedure and not serving the wine at the correct temperature.*
84. *Presentation, serving.*
85. *No knowledge about wines, not familiar with wine list, not able to recommend wine to be paired with food.*
86. *Not right temperature. Inappropriate glasses. Dirty bottles.*
87. *Wrong distribution after tasting, Wine spilling, wrong handling of the bottle, no cloth is used.*
88. *No knowledge, wrong temperature, don't know how to serve wine.*
89. *Wrong glasses, temperature and not enough information about the wine.*
90. *I don't really observe*

The next question was about the expected character traits the respondents wanted to see in their wine servers. For this question 125 responded and 49 opted not to. Instead of repeating statements the author grouped them together to minimise waste of time for readers. The responses were as follows:

1. *Knowledge on wine – 10*
2. *Ability to advise on wine choices – 16*
3. *Smartness and politeness – 3*
4. *Well trained – 13*
5. *Good customer care skills – 10*
6. *Knowledge of wines available on wine list – 17*
7. *Ability to assess wine quality and condition – 10*
8. *Knowledge on grape varieties – 5*
9. *Wine region knowledge – 4*
10. *Know the proper wine storage and serving temperatures – 16*
11. *Know the wine service sequence – 12*
12. *Wine and food combination ability – 5*
13. *Grape knowledge – 4*

The next question put to respondents was one that requested their opinion on the proposed wine server course's content vis-à-vis the perceived training needs of wine servers in Maltese restaurants and hotels. The general feedback can be seen in figure 15 below.

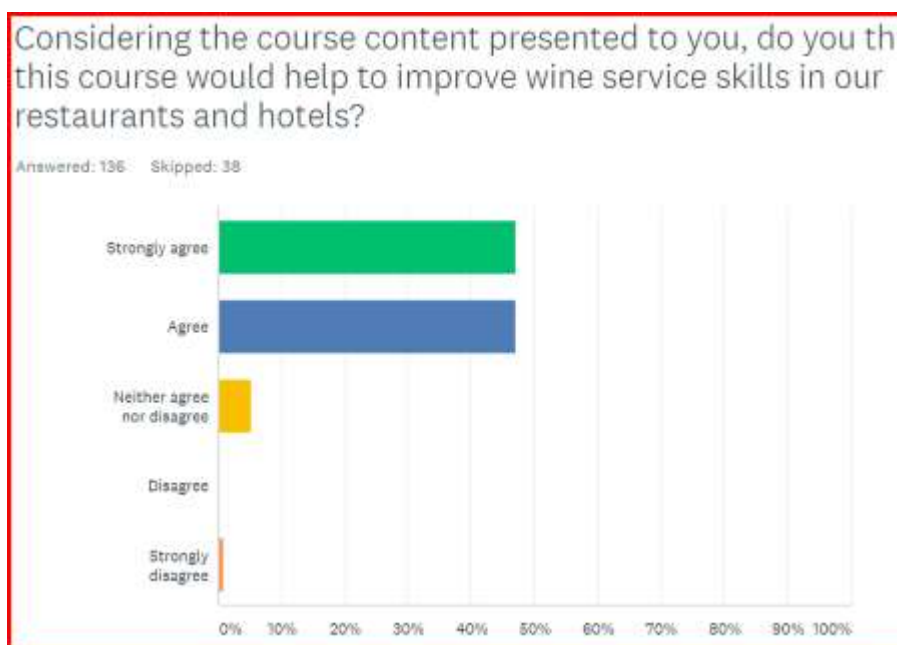


Figure 15. Responses on course content vs skills needed.

The detailed breakdown was as follows: 136 respondents answered this question and 38 skipped it. There were also 6 comments added which will be listed below after the breakdown of figure 16 feedback. 47.06% strongly agreed with the course content. 47.06% just agreed, 5.15% neither agreed nor disagreed and 0.74%strongly disagreed.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	47.06%	64
Agree	47.06%	64
Neither agree nor disagree	5.15%	7
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.74%	1
TOTAL		136
Comments (6)		

Figure 16. Breakdown by percentage of responses on course content.

The comments added to this question's responses were 6 and the author included these by stating that the responses were better knowledge on local grapes should be included, proper training is paramount and knowledge is an asset that can be used to improve service levels. However there was some scepticism as to how much employers would allow employees to use their acquired

knowledge and skills. only four as the other two replicated the answer choices given. Summing up the responses the majority of the respondents, 94%, agree that this proposed course can be conducive to improved wine service levels in restaurants.

The next question asked respondents to show their level of agreement to the statement that the proposed course included all aspects of the skills and knowledge the wine servers should have. 124 respondents answered this question and 50 decided not to. There were also eight comments added at the end. Figure 17 give an outline of the feedback and figure 18 a breakdown.



Figure 17. Response chart on course content.

The breakdown of the feedback was as follows: 58.87% approved the content, 29.03% strongly approved, and 12.10% neither approved nor disapproved. There were no other answers as can be seen in figure 18 below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly approve	29.03% 36
Approve	58.87% 73
Neither approve nor disapprove	12.10% 15
Disapprove	0.00% 0
Strongly disapprove	0.00% 0
TOTAL	124
Comments (8)	

Figure 18. Responses on course content by percentage.

The comments provided were:

1. *Clients deserve the best.*
2. *but I am not knowledgeable in the subject.*
3. *They should also be trained in when to know to refill glasses, without being obtrusive if they work in a upper-class establishment.*
4. *I don't know the contents of the course to answer the question*
5. *Agree.*
6. *Agree.*
7. *I cannot see the course content*
8. *Agree.*

The next question, question 12, asked respondents to name any perceived adjustments to the course so it can better achieve its objective. The question outline is below in figure 19.

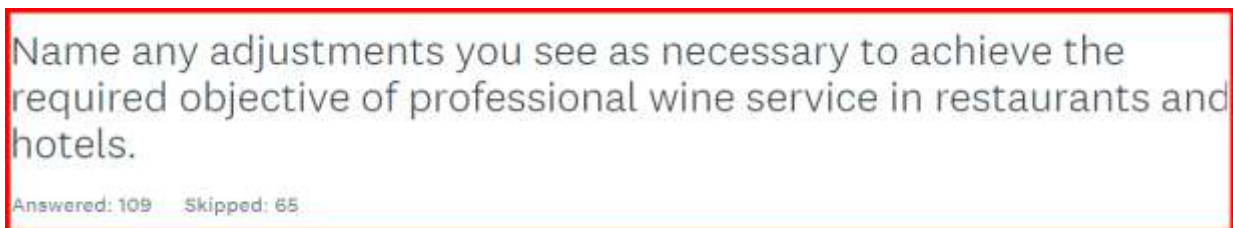


Figure 19. Question put to respondents requesting adjustments to course content as presented.

109 gave comments and 65 opted out. The comments focussed on interpersonal skills, service skills, course session length, wine knowledge, strong assessment methods, wine storage and stock control, wine pricing, and service techniques. The author has listed the most pertinent comments below to save on reading and for fear of changing or misrepresenting the respondents' comments.

1. *Short taster sessions to encourage servers commit to the full course.*
2. *As the course will be 100% online, studying about wine, should have some on hand training as well.*
3. *more than a few hours course would help.*
4. *keeping informed of the wines available and their choice with the dinner chosen.*
5. *Not familiar enough with the course contents, so not in a position to comment.*
6. *less traditional wine growing nations, such as Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, should be covered. They have the largest variety of vines/grapes and some of the oldest traditions.*
7. *Dispel myth about red wine not being chilled in our climate!!*
8. *Thorough testing.*

9. *Important to the knowledge of each wines with what to serve etc...*
10. *All seems to be very detailed and necessary topics will be covered.*
11. *Cigars as optional, possibly including a water pairing option and more emphasis on taste/palate identities.*
12. *More on the job training sessions.*
13. *Wine tasting with different houses.*
14. *Training essential. Gaining commitment from owners.*
15. *Licenses for sommeliers.*
16. *Advertisement as part of the restaurant hotel.*
17. *For the sake of completeness, I would suggest reference be made to Eastern European and Mediterranean wines.*
18. *A slightly more basic course focused on service and specific wine list offered in establishment for those who cannot or do not want to go in depth on all regions. Focus on local wines.*
19. *Should also be a consideration of equating cost with quality of the wine offered.*
20. *stock control. Nothing is as disappointing as having chosen the wine you like and when you order the second bottle there is none left!*
21. *1. Location of storage should be adequate. 2. Temperature and expiry monitored. 3. Wine manufacture exclusivity should be abolished (offered from one local provider for promotion). 4. Customer should have description of wine product and origin on wine list. 5. Language translations of lists should be available. 6. Wine server should have multiple knowledge of languages including Maltese to communicate well with customer. 7. Be polite, courteous and above all gentle making sure to serve wine in a pleasant manner including a smile .8. Be very attentive and request customer satisfaction diligently.*
22. *comparing the wines according the dishes on the menus.*
23. *Compulsory for all food service personnel.*
24. *Knowledge from low to top quality wines.*
25. *Practical matters how to serve the wine, temperature and place where to keep the wine.*
26. *Use of vocabulary; a wine expert should not take it for granted that the person ordering is as knowledgeable.*
27. *Knowledge of wines and wine list held by the restaurant, knowledge on how to serve wine.*
28. *Employ good sommeliers and not overbooking otherwise the staff won't have enough to take care of clients.*
29. *staff knowing the wines and their origins.*
30. *sommelier a must when restaurants are pricy; information re wines served to be included in wine list.*

31. *the service element should not be left to the end but spread throughout the course.*
32. *Wine sommeliers should have some qualification or knowledge at least about wine and wine handling. It helps in the whole experience.*
33. *An increase in sommelier jobs which employ trained professionals.*
34. *Educating people serving wine, maybe in some places not as in detail from others but at least the basic.*
35. *When stock is depleted prepare same wine to be served should clients order another one.*
36. *Knowledge about the wine that is being served. Knowing how to present the wine. Opening and serving the wine correctly.*
37. *Compassion and people skills.*
38. *I think the servers should also be made aware of local wines and the importance of upselling or cross selling locally produced wines.*
39. *Staff should be professionally trained, if not all, at least the head waiter / restaurant manager.*
40. *Servers should be all trained by law.*
41. *More knowledge of wine houses they serve.*
42. *More local wines, and more new wines.*
43. *I believe that all aspects are covered.*
44. *no need to adjust all-rounder course to have better knowledge about wine.*
45. *The course is fairly comprehensive. However, 60 contact hours and 90 self-study hours: for the experienced wine drinker (myself) being served this is truly junior!*
46. *Seems course to be quite covered - no further suggestions.*
47. *Servers at this stage should all speak at least good English.*
48. *Type of wine, country, place How has been fermented, flourishing etc.*
49. *Business ethics.*
50. *It is good to have someone who could suggest the best wine-food combination and also based on the customer's tastes.*
51. *Servers should have tried all the wines so as to be able to speak about them with confidence, not just in theory.*
52. *A recognised qualification in Malta is essential.*
53. *It's a combination between food and wine now days Maltese became familiar with wines so having a similar will get that extra touch.*
54. *More practical knowledge on the marketing aspect and how not to be deceived or underestimate as a buyer or seller of a wine.*
55. *A further insight on the food and wine pairing and the seasonality of such pairing.*

56. Wine service in restaurants must be entrusted to persons who have taken courses in wine studies at least to WSET Level 3, and on top of this must be trained hands-on. In Malta, sometimes not even the restaurant owner has a clue on wine or wine service.

Question 13 asked respondents if the course proposal once implemented could lead to better meal experiences. 107 respondents answered this question and 67 opted to avoid it. Figure 20 below outlines the feedback received.

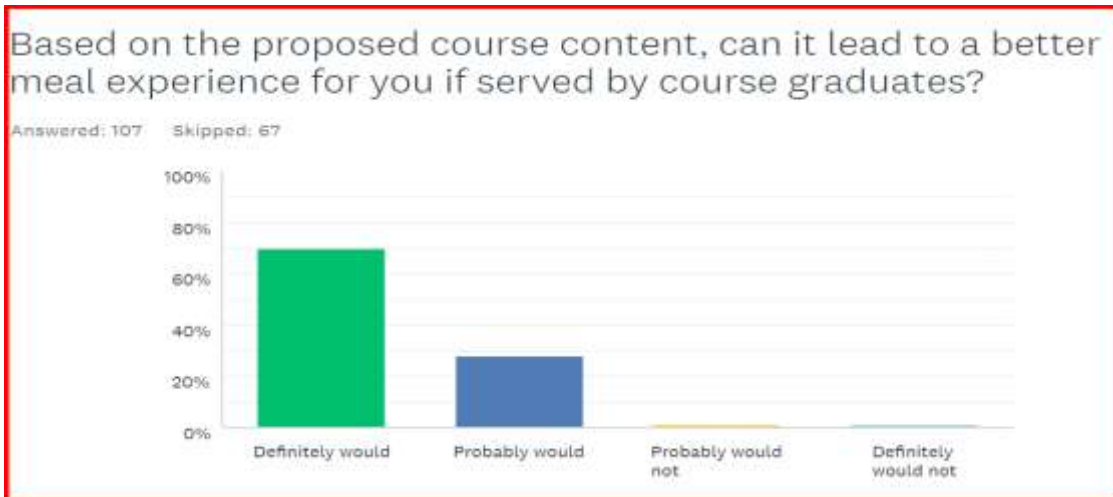


Figure 20. Respondents opinions on course’s effect on service levels.

The breakdown of the feedback in figure 21 below, was that 70.09% stated it definitely would, 28.04% said it probably would, 0.93% said it probably would not and 0.93% said it definitely would not. Some comments were also made, and they are listed below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Definitely would	70.09%	75
▼ Probably would	28.04%	30
▼ Probably would not	0.93%	1
▼ Definitely would not	0.93%	1
TOTAL		107
Comments (7)		

Figure 21. Respondents’ opinion on percentages on course’s effect on service levels.

Comments added to this question were the following: The way a waiter treats the clients makes the meal an enjoyable experience, such a course will definitely benefit for the Fine Dining Restaurants and Hotels, as normally guests would be more intuitive about wine. However, for normal

restaurants this would also be beneficial as you never know who would have a basic understanding in wines and would easily give a better meal experience. Professional training makes the dining and wine serving experience for the customer to feel special. The course as proposed would ensure servers would know better their product and they would probably help clients to choose the wine that goes best with the food they are going to eat.

Summing up this question's responses, 94% agree that such a course can help servers do a better job thus improving the 'meal experience' outcomes of the clients.

Question 14, the next question, asked respondents if they were ready to promote the proposed course to friends and employees. There were 105 respondents to this question and 69 opted not to answer. Figure 22 below give the outline of the feedback.

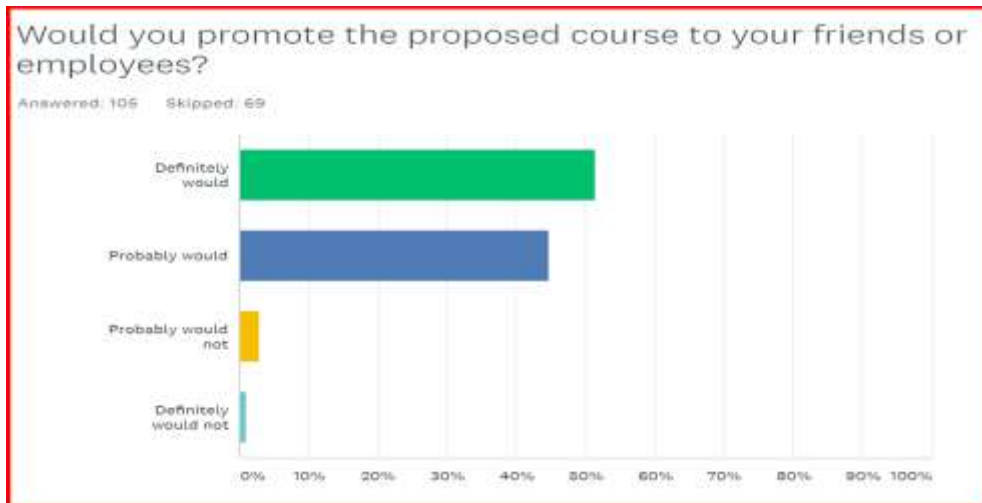


Figure 22. Promoting of course by respondents to friends and/or employees.

The feedback breakdown is seen in figure 23 below but basically was the following; 51.42% said they definitely would, 44.76% said they probably would and 2.86% said they probably would not and 0.95% said they definitely would not.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Definitely would	51.43% 54
Probably would	44.76% 47
Probably would not	2.86% 3
Definitely would not	0.95% 1
TOTAL	105

Comments (6)

Figure 23. Percentage breakdown of responses regarding promotion of course by respondents.

Comments added by respondents were the following: they would promote if the persons are interested, as well as the present situation regarding the Covid-19 pandemic would be the right time to promote as part of retraining of personnel with the end goal of service improvement.

Finally, in question 15 respondents were asked to state to what level they feel that they have contributed input to help improve service levels. 104 responded and 70 declined to give feedback. The outline of which is seen in figure 24 below.

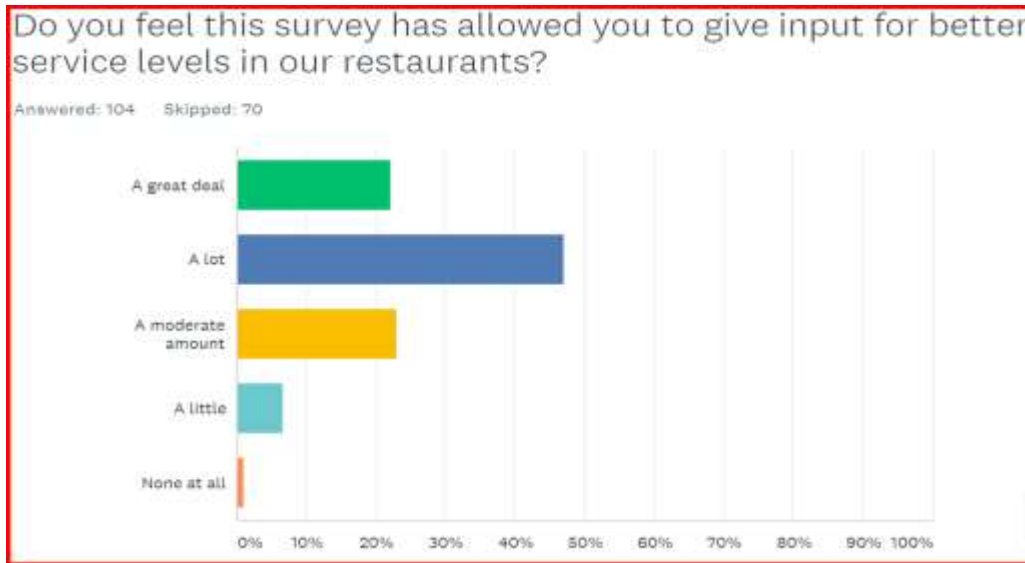


Figure 24. Participant feelings on ownership of the proposed course.

Respondent feedback was; 22.12% felt they provided a great deal, 47.12% felt they provided a lot, 23.08% felt they gave a fair amount, 6.73% felt they gave a little, and 0.96% felt they gave nothing. Figure 25 below says all this.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
A great deal	22.12% 23
A lot	47.12% 49
A moderate amount	23.08% 24
A little	6.73% 7
None at all	0.96% 1
TOTAL	104
Comments (5)	

Figure 25. Respondents feedback in percentages on ownership of course.

Comments re this question generally speaking were on the lines that they felt as being given a lot of space to give feedback re content and the course being fit for purpose. Especially if it improves not just the service skills but also the level of customer care.

Summing up the feedback it is clear that respondents, 92.32%, feel they have given input as to how better service can be provided. The data up to now reflects the feedback of the first survey held in 2017 based on restaurant client responders.

Summing up the client feedback in this survey it is evident that there is a desire in clients to see better and more profession wine service in Maltese restaurant for their benefit via improved meal experiences and they see this proposed course a s a way of achieving this goal. Now let us look at what the employees think of the proposed course.

The next survey was focussed on catering industry employees who were previously Institute of Tourism Studies students. The survey was therefore called by the author as ‘Catering industry employee survey’.

4.1.2 Catering industry employee survey

This survey had 94 respondents dropping from 174 in previous research done in 2017. The author attributes this to the effect of the Covid-19 on the hospitality industry in Malta.

Figure 27 below provides an age outline for the respondent profile.

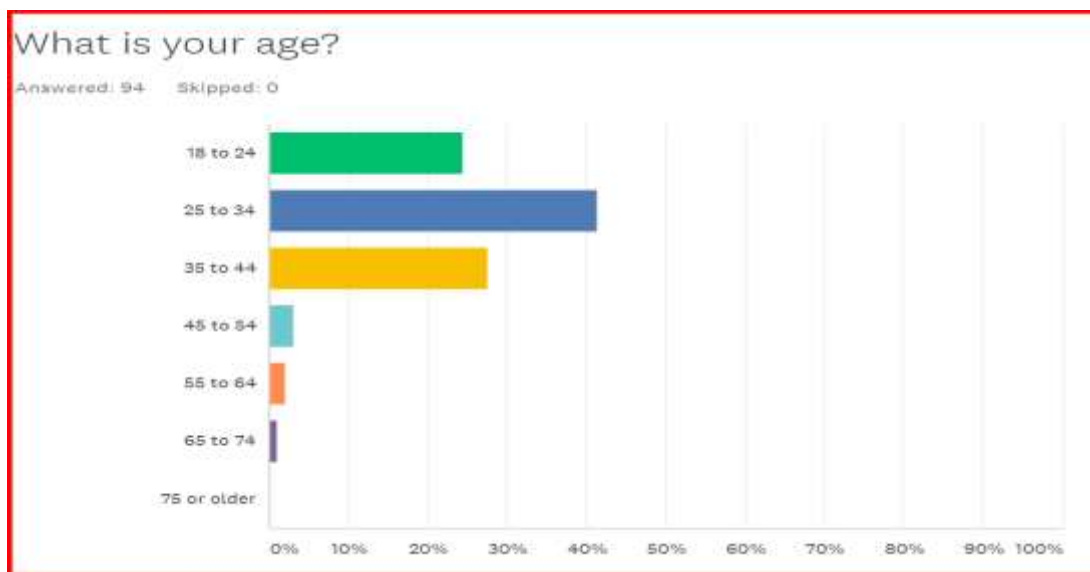


Figure 27. Respondents age group breakdown.

Figure 28 give the age bracket breakdown. The biggest portion of respondents, 41.49%, were on the 25-34-year-old bracket. 27.66% were 35-44 years old, 24.47% were 18-24 years old, 3.19% were 45 to 54 years old, 2.13% were 55-64 years old, and 1.06% were in the 65-74-year-old bracket.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
18 to 24	24.47%	23
25 to 34	41.49%	39
35 to 44	27.66%	26
45 to 54	3.19%	3
55 to 64	2.13%	2
65 to 74	1.06%	1
75 or older	0.00%	0
TOTAL		94

Figure 28. Respondents' age breakdown by percentage.

The next question, question 2, was about gender. 93 answered and one skipped this question. Most respondents were male as seen in figure 29 below.

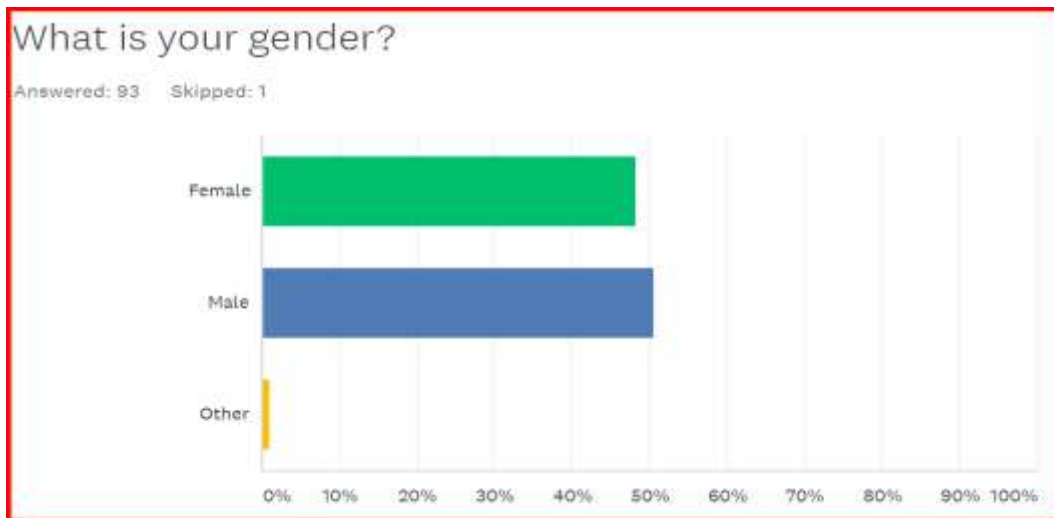


Figure 29. Employee survey gender breakdown

The breakdown as seen in figure 30 below was 50.54% male, 48.39% female and 1.08% other gender.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	48.39%	45
Male	50.54%	47
Other	1.08%	1
TOTAL		93

Figure 30. Employee survey gender breakdown by percentage

Question 3 of the survey was about current occupation. Figure 31 below provides an outline. The respondents have a wide enough background showing varied skill sets. Some have even changes their career path.

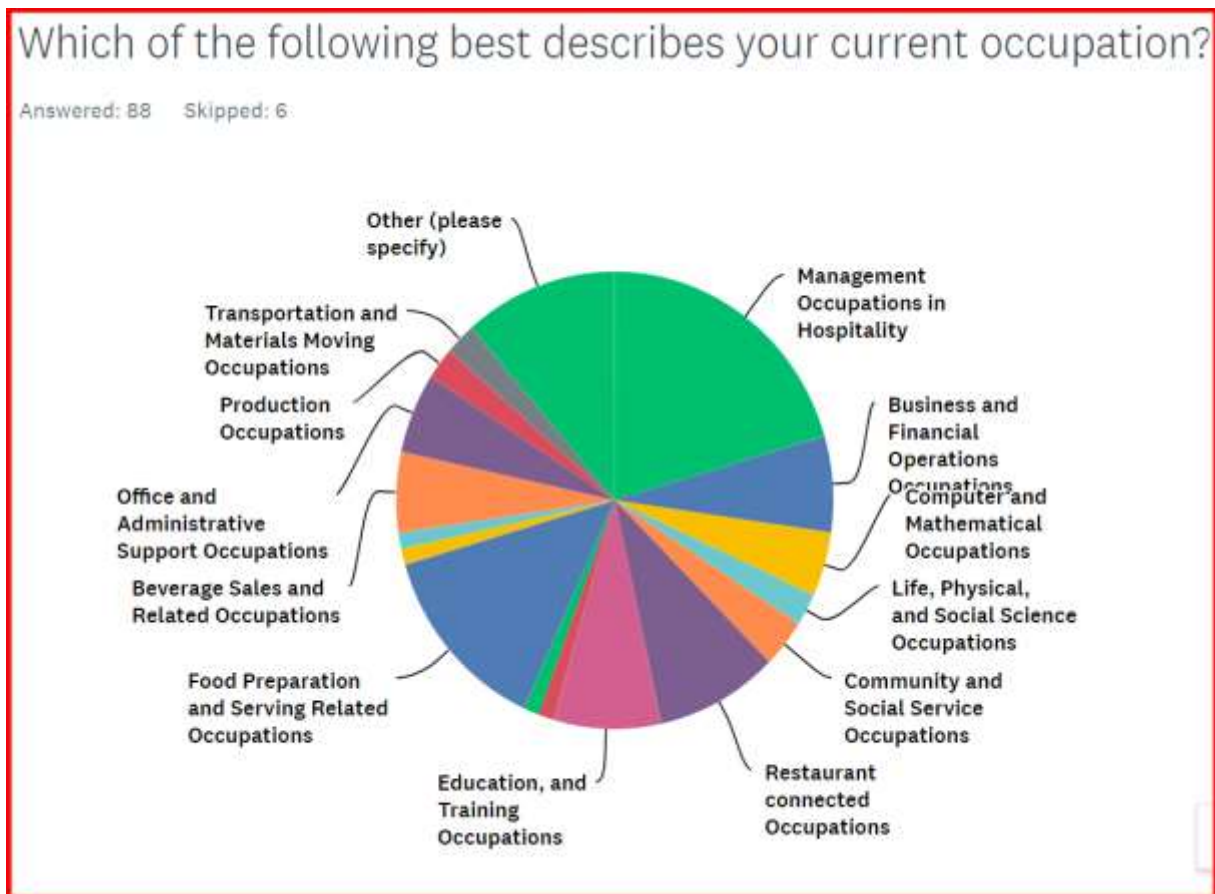


Figure 31. Employee survey current occupation background

Figure 32 below provides a detailed breakdown of respondents' present occupation. The author decided to include the large digital list to reflect the breakdown percentages.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Management Occupations in Hospitality	20.45%	18
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	6.82%	6
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	4.55%	4
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	2.27%	2
Community and Social Service Occupations	3.41%	3
Restaurant connected Occupations	9.09%	8
Education, and Training Occupations	7.95%	7
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	1.14%	1
Protective Service Occupations	1.14%	1
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	13.64%	12
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	1.14%	1
Personal Care and Service Occupations	1.14%	1
Beverage Sales and Related Occupations	5.68%	5
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	5.68%	5
Production Occupations	2.27%	2
Transportation and Materials Moving Occupations	2.27%	2
Other (please specify)	Responses 11.36%	10
TOTAL		88

Figure 32. Occupational background by percentage.

For the 'others' section there were six responses which identified present jobs as being with government employment, accountant, survey interviewer, student, legal assistant and also 'stay home'.

The next question enquired on the respondents' job roles. Figure 33 give an outline of the responses received, 80in number as 14 opted not to answer.

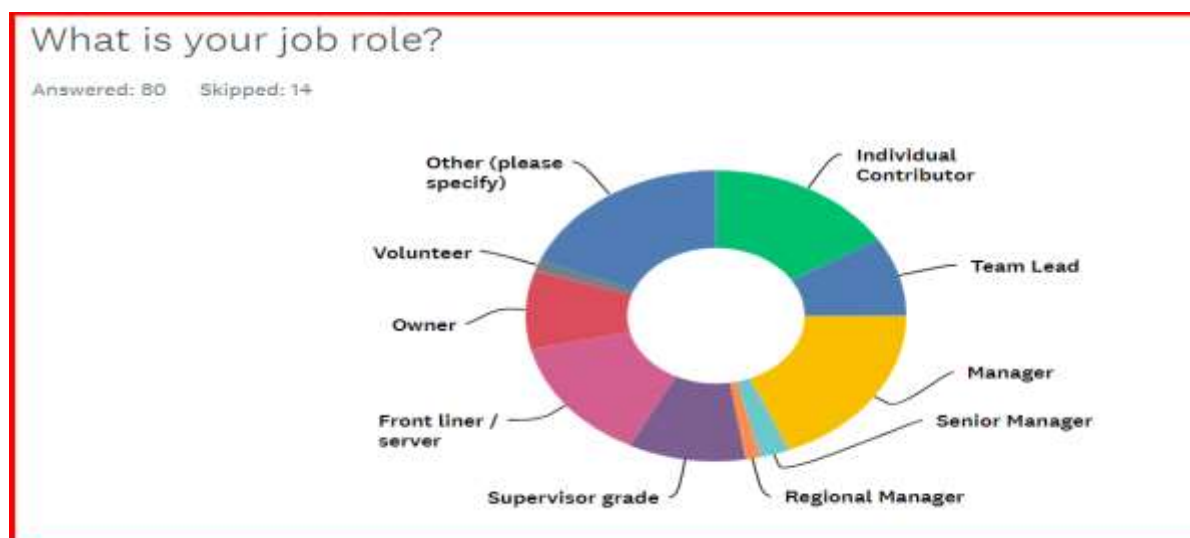


Figure 33. Job role pie chart of respondents.

The breakdown of the responses was as follows in figure 34 with 'other' responses at the end.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Individual Contributor	16.25%	13
Team Lead	8.75%	7
Manager	18.75%	15
Senior Manager	2.50%	2
Regional Manager	1.25%	1
Supervisor grade	10.00%	8
Front liner / server	13.75%	11
Partner	0.00%	0
Owner	8.75%	7
Volunteer	1.25%	1
Intern	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	18.75%	15
TOTAL		80

Figure 34. Employee job role responses by percentage.

Responses in the 'other' option included roles of Events Coordinator, inspector, lecturer, C.E.O., administrator, chef, sales, financial controller, director, F&B lecturer, administrative assistant, and learning support educator.

Question 5 asked details of work experience in the current job. There were 79 responses to this with 15 opting to not answer. Figure 35 outlines the responses below.

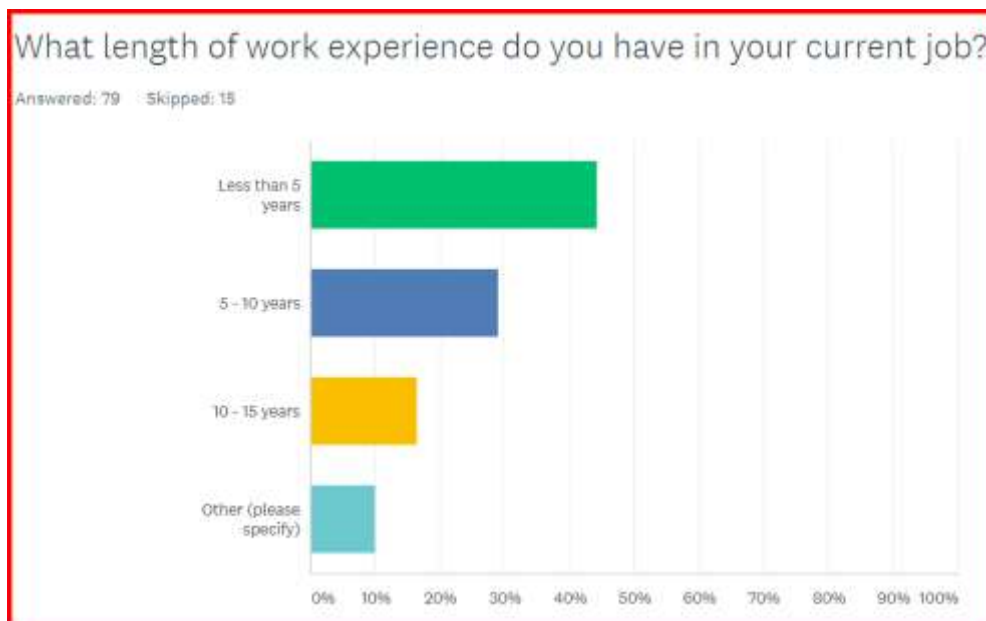


Figure 35. Work experience of respondents breakdown

The detailed breakdown of the responses is in figure 36 below. Responses to the 'other' option below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Less than 5 years	44.30%	35
▼ 5 - 10 years	29.11%	23
▼ 10 - 15 years	16.46%	13
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 10.13%	8
TOTAL		79

Figure 36. Work experience breakdown in percentages.

The 10.13% 'other' responses included two respondents with 30+ years' experience, one with 16 years' experience, one with 20 years' experience, one with 24 years' experience and one with no experience as s/he is unemployed.

The next question, number six, asked respondents if in the course of their work they had the occasion to take wine orders, and/or serve wine. Figure 37 lays out the response levels and there were 78 who answered and 16 who opted not to.

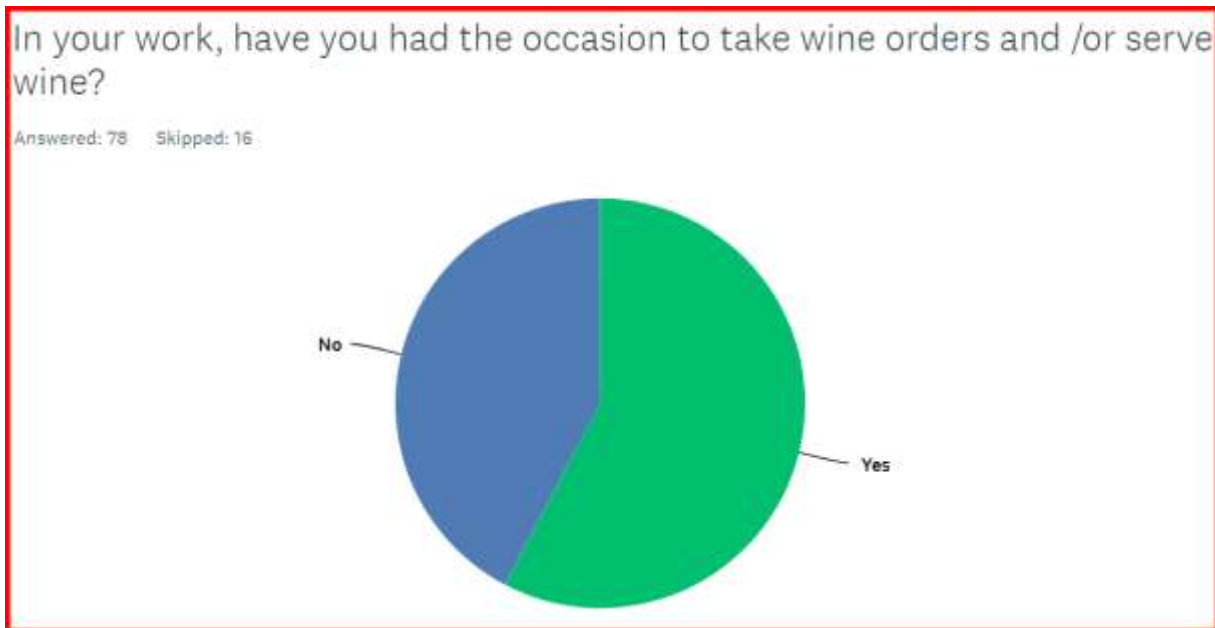


Figure 37. Response on wine service experience.

Figure 38 give the detailed breakdown of responses below. This is quite clear cut and the author feels no clarification is needed.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Yes	57.69%	45
▼ No	42.31%	33
TOTAL		78

Figure 38. Reponses on wine service experience by percentage.

Question 7 below, asked respondents if they had undertaken any certified wine training and figure 39 below outlines these responses. 77 opted to answer this question and 17 declined. The majority of respondents has received some sort of certified wine service training.



Figure 39

The detailed breakdown by percentage is clear in figure 40 below as well as responses thereafter.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	64.94%	50
No	33.77%	26
Other (please specify)	Responses 1.30%	1
TOTAL		77

Figure 40. Respondent feedback on wine service training breakdown by percentage.

Responses, there was just one stating that the respondent is currently undertaking the WSET Level 2 course.

The next question, number 8, requested the type of training done to be specified. 67 responded and 27 skipped this question. The 67 respondents stated that the training done amounted to the following: WSET Level 2 and 3, wine pairing course, basic wines at ITS, Sommelier Diploma, (fisar, Italy), local wine classes, short introductory course on wines ad spirits, and wine and food pairing.

Question 9 asked if it was the opinion of the responders regarding the level of desirability that F&B servers should be properly trained in wine service techniques. 64 answered this question and 30 declined. Figure 41 below shows the response.

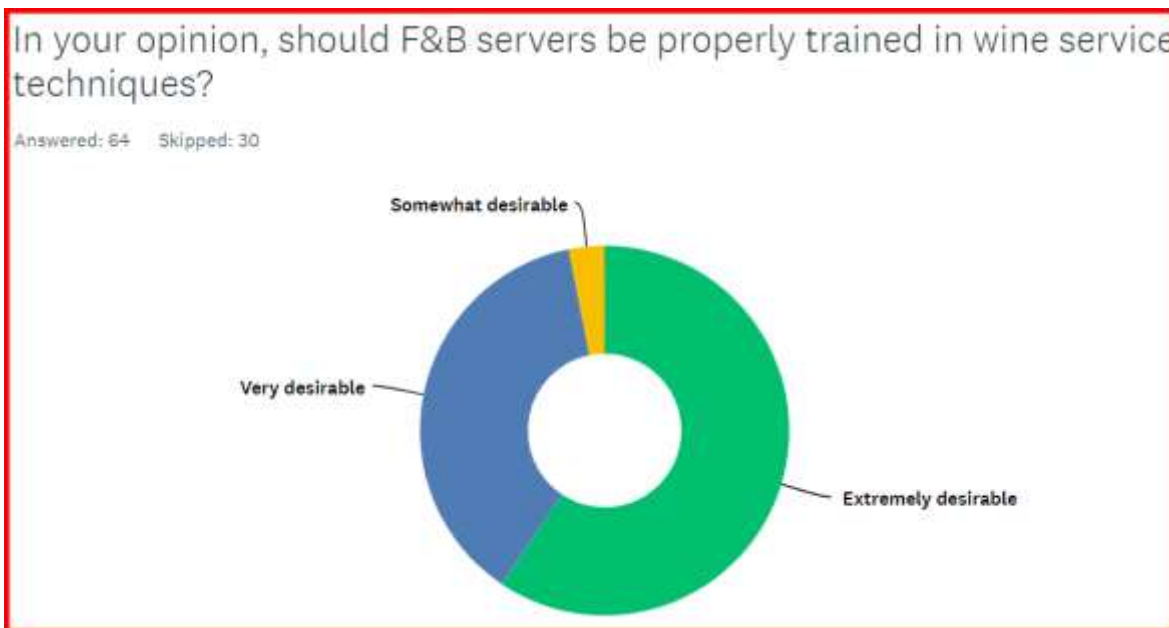


Figure 41. Respondent feedback of server wine training.

The breakdown of the responses was 59.38% extremely desirable, 37.50% very desirable, 3.13% somewhat desirable as seen in fire 42 below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely desirable	59.38%	38
Very desirable	37.50%	24
Somewhat desirable	3.13%	2
Not so desirable	0.00%	0
Not at all desirable	0.00%	0
TOTAL		64

Figure 42. Respondent feedback breakdown by percentage.

The summing up of the responses for this question clearly show that clients are in favour of proper wine service training and see it a desirable in all F&B servers.

The next question, number 10, was on the level of approval of the proposed course content by respondents. 62 answered this question and 32 did not. The majority of respondents approved the course content as being fit for purpose. A good amount strongly approved the course content the rest had different ideas. Figure 43 below lays out the responses.

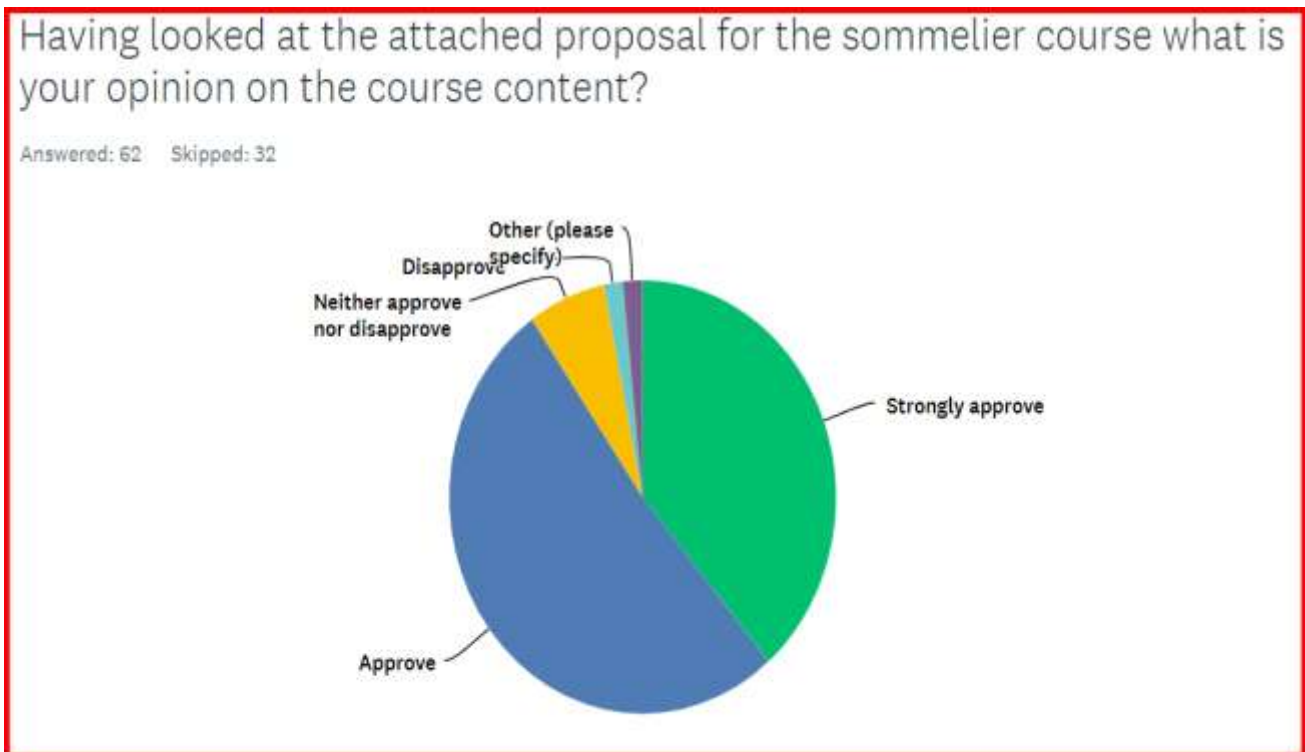


Figure 43. Respondent feedback on course content.

Breakdown of responses in figure 44 below, are clear and 'other' responses follow on.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly approve	38.71%	24
Approve	51.61%	32
Neither approve nor disapprove	6.45%	4
Disapprove	1.61%	1
Strongly disapprove	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	Responses 1.61%	1
TOTAL		62

Figure 44. Respondent feedback by percentage on course content approval.

One response in the 'other' option stated:

'I approve that the course guidelines covers the essential and most fundamental knowledge that a wine server requires. However, as the course is in Malta and will be taught to Maltese individuals and individuals working in Maltese restaurants and bars. It is essential that Maltese and Gozitan viniculture / viticulture is discussed.'

The elements that disapproved this course's content were negligible with only one respondent disapproving and none disapproving. Therefore, it can be summed up that clients are satisfied with the course content.

Question 11 asked for changes in course content as can be seen in figure 45 below. 50 answered this question and 44 opted not to.

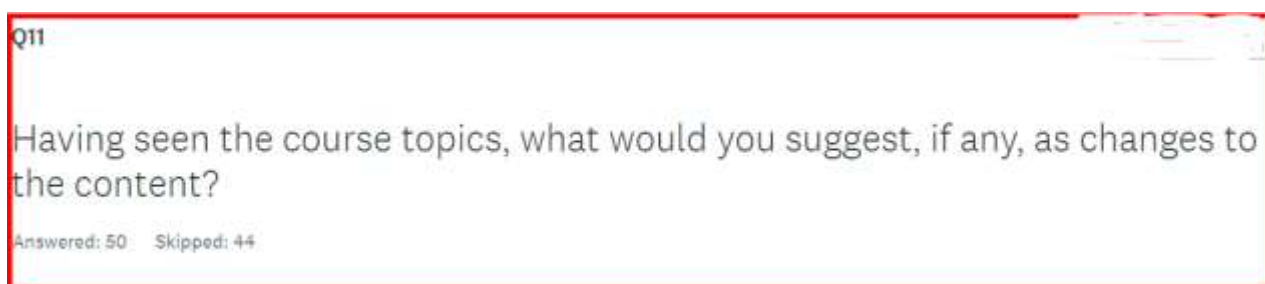


Figure 45. Question put to respondents about any suggested changes to the proposed course.

The author feels that the responses stated terms as follows: while mostly there is wide agreement that content is appropriate, detailed, and one or two even feel content might be split into two courses to allow for deeper insights. One suggested taking into consideration the existing topic in

food and wine pairing... a topic where a person in culinary arts module is paired with a sommelier to produce a multi-course meal from different countries and different wines. Another idea was a sub-topic on local wines and maybe how they are made compared to the other countries in the wine-making world. Another idea was to have visits to a vineyard and wine tasting could help in giving a comprehensive learning experience. In F&B beverage knowledge such as cocktails, wines and other beverage along with the food is extremely necessary to go forward. Respondents feel that this course is extremely detailed which is great for persons working in the wine industry or in fine dining restaurants. One suggestion was for having another more general and faster course for F and B workers (Not just sommeliers).

One respondent felt that the classic approach to wine service should be at the centre of the course while at the same time not forgetting that even the 'world of wine' is developing. Respondents also emphasized a more thorough understanding of pairing wines based on the composition of food rather than just the type of food. One respondent opinionated that learning on cigars is not as necessary in the modern climate. Cigars could be covered in more advanced courses. Another suggested to add some other countries such as Malta, Cyprus, Lebanon. One other response was that the course seems very detailed and straight forward to improve knowledge and learning capabilities. Explanations on Maltese wine are missing. Even if there are not too many high-quality Maltese wines it is important to promote the ones that are good to create awareness for the opportunities to produce and sell good quality Maltese wine in restaurants and improve the reputation of local products.

Respondents also feel that Industry stake holders need to invest in such services. Respondents further feel that while the course looks very comprehensive, they feel that having a 100% online participation available is very good. This could maybe be included as an intrinsic part of the regular course delivery, so should someone need to be abroad for a period, they may still attend class. Another suggestion was about the possibility of perhaps focusing more on practical conversations between food and beverage servers and potential clients, were servers can be tested on how they speak about the different types of wine, with potential clients.

The summing up of the suggestions and comments to question 11 clearly show a positive feeling about the course and in some instances suggest the addition of certain wine knowledge aspect to ensure it is more comprehensive.

The next question, number 12, as seen in figure 46 below, was regarding the length of the course as many may be working and one has to refrain from causing clashes with work commitments. 50

responded to this question and 44 opted to decline. The majority of respondents said it is the right length with some saying it is too long, without explaining why, and a small number saying it is too short.

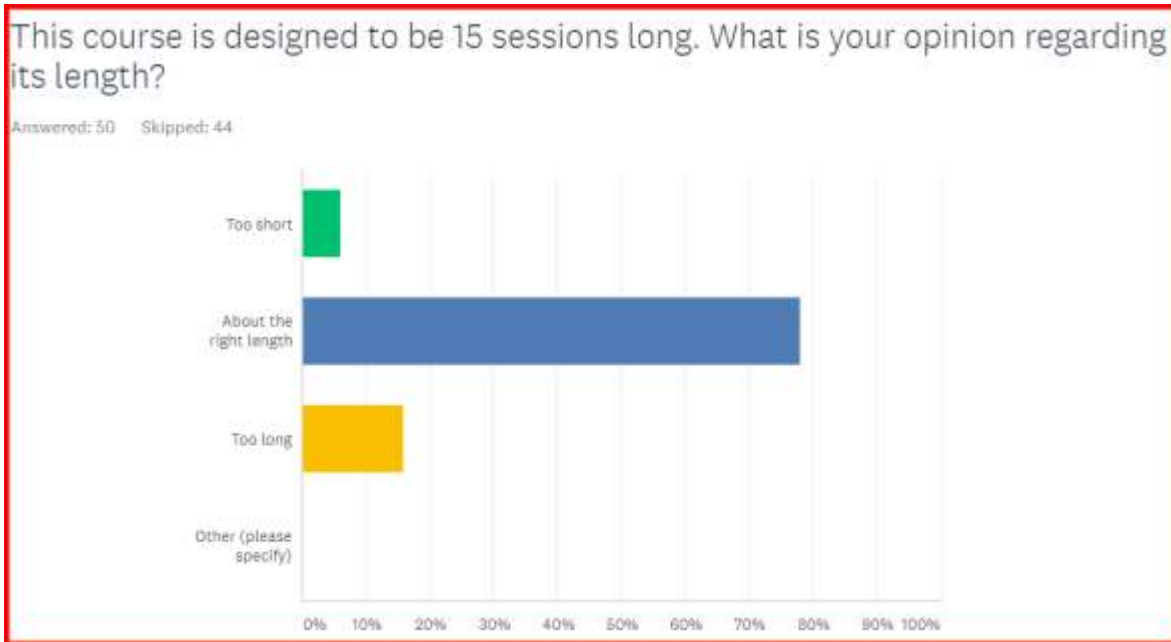


Figure 46. Responses regarding course length.

The primary responses were on the following lines: 78% saw it as being of the right length, 16% as too long and 6% as too short. No other responses were put in as is clear in figure 47 below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Too short	6.00% 3
About the right length	78.00% 39
Too long	16.00% 8
Other (please specify)	Responses 0.00% 0
TOTAL	50

Figure 47. Respondent feedback breakdown by percentage

The responses seem to that the proposed course length is agreeable to the majority of respondents at 78% rating.

Question 13 focussed on the optimum delivery method for this course and figure 48 below shows the responses. 50 answered this question and 44 opted not to. The majority of the respondents opted for a blended approach to course session delivery. The author feels that should sessions be delivered in the classroom with the added facility of online attendance the largest amount of attendees should be reached and catered for.

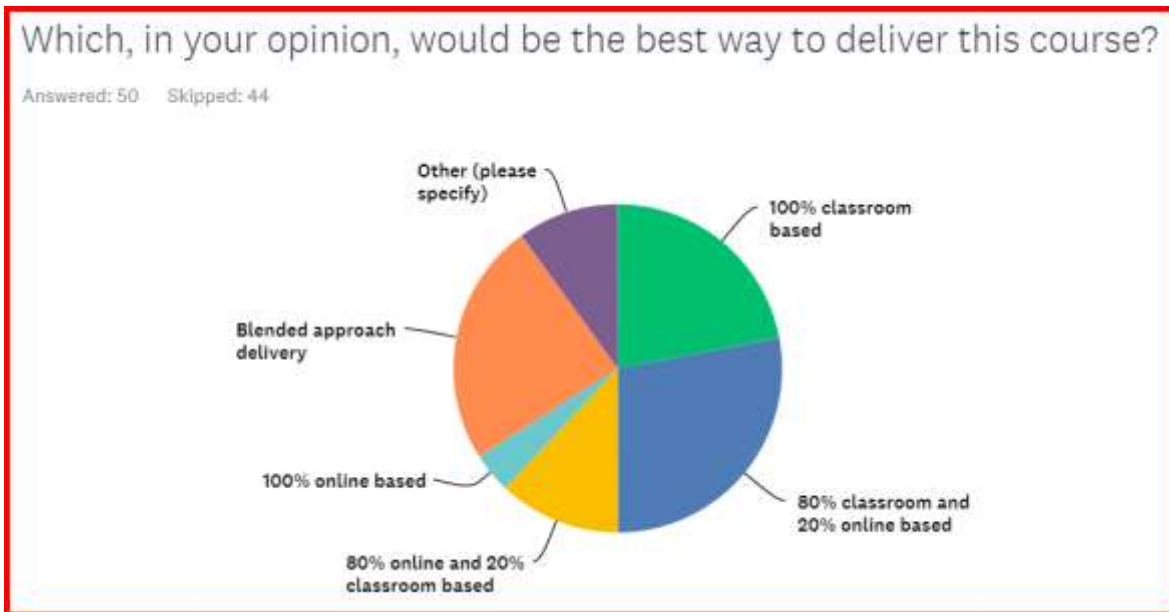


Figure 48. Respondent feedback on course delivery methods.

The responses' breakdown to this question panned out at 28% going for 80% classroom and 20% online delivery, 22% for 100% classroom based, 12% for an 80% online and 20% classroom-based delivery, 4% for 100% online based, and 24% for a blended approach delivery. There were also five responses in the 'other' option which one can see below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
100% classroom based	22.00%	11
80% classroom and 20% online based	28.00%	14
80% online and 20% classroom based	12.00%	6
100% online based	4.00%	2
Blended approach delivery	24.00%	12
Other (please specify)	10.00%	5

Figure 49. Respondent feedback by percentage.

The responses in the 'other' option were as follows:

- 80% classroom 20% restaurant based.
- Depends if an actual wine tasting will take place during the sessions..
- Short taster sessions to encourage servers to commit to the full course.
- Either 100% classroom based, or 100% online, I feel that a blend wouldn't work well.
- Theory to be online. Any practical to meet in class due to the busy schedules of the potential students especially in our industry where hours are unpredictable.
- I would say, let the student decide. Every person responds to different stimuli & the learning habits may even change with moods. Allowing the student to decide to definitely allow for a more holistic and tailored lecture.

Respondents seem to be split on this between online and classroom-based delivery the main discussion being which should be given priority. In the present situation of Covid-19 the less gathering of groups in closed confines for long periods is not advisable. However blended learning seems to be the way forward.

The next question, number 14, requested feedback on the ideal assessment methods to be applied. 50 answered this question and 44 skipped it. Figure 50 below show the feedback picture.

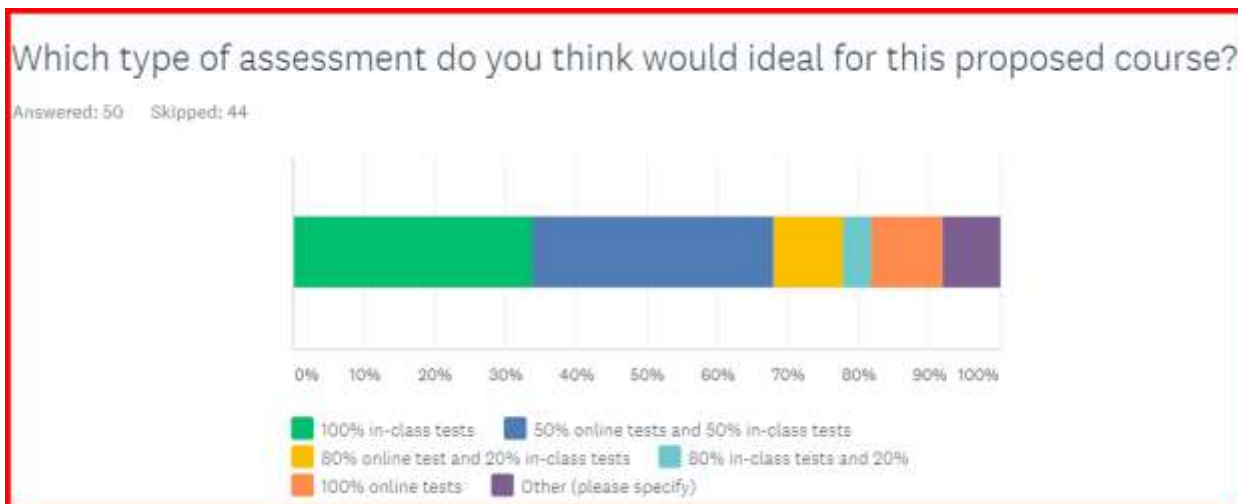


Figure 50. Respondent feedback on course assessment methods chart.

The breakdown of the above feedback was 34% going for 100% classroom-based assessment, 34% going for 50% online and 50% classroom-based assessment, 10% liked 80% online tests and 20% in class tests, 10% opted for 100% online testing and 4% for 80% in class tests and 20% online tests. 8% had other responses cited below figure 51.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
100% in-class tests	34.00%	17
50% online tests and 50% in-class tests	34.00%	17
80% online test and 20% in-class tests	10.00%	5
80% in-class tests and 20%	4.00%	2
100% online tests	10.00%	5
Other (please specify)	8.00%	4
TOTAL		50

Figure 51. Percentage breakdown of feedback on assessment methods.

The responses for this question were:

- *A blend, ultimately presentation of a wine is very important, therefore, although written knowledge is crucial so is presentation skills/body language and the ability to present and comment on a wine in a face to face setting.*
- *Formative Assessment.*
- *Same as before, it depends if hands on tastings are included.*
- *50% in class tests and some time for practical assessments with potential clients.*

Summing up the responses here, the feeling the author gets is that a mix of assessment modes is acceptable and something in line with the delivery method format approach would make sense.

Question 15, next in line, wanted to know if the proposed course should be on a full-time basis, part time basis or another basis. Figure 52 below outlines the feedback. There were 50 respondents to this question and 44 did not answer for whatever reason. The majority feel the course should be on a part time basis.

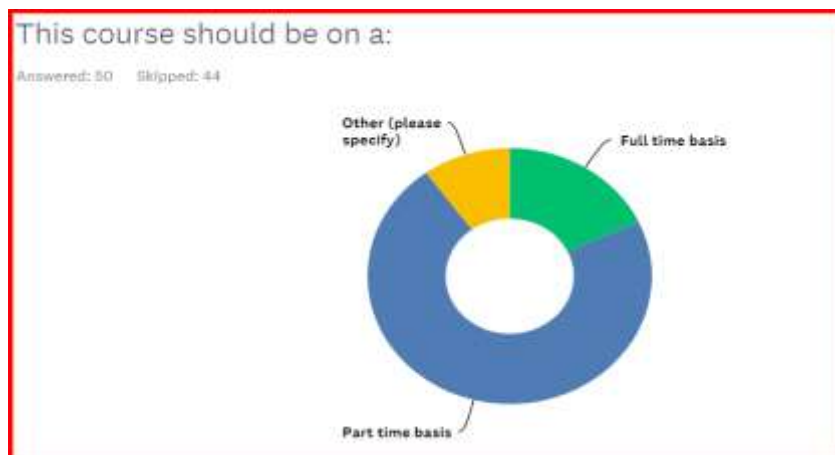


Figure 52. Full time course vs part time.

The breakdown of the responses was as follows 72% opted for part time basis and 18% for full time basis. 10% had other responses listed below figure 53 below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Full time basis	18.00%	9
Part time basis	72.00%	36
Other (please specify)	Responses 10.00%	5
TOTAL		50

Figure 53. Full time vs part time in percentages.

The responses were the following:

- *Should be flexible enough to meet the Hospitality industry needs. So, not to fix with the timeframes but at the same time with a specific target date of completion.*
- *Both full time and part time.*
- *Can be both.*
- *Either works.*
- *You should be able to offer both. Especially for people who are working they will mostly be needing a part time course.*

The sunning up of this question’s response is that part time basis is good but a full time option can or should be available.

Question 16 asked about the perceived professionalism of the proposed course. This question had 48 responses and 46 did not answer. Figure 54 below outlines the responses.

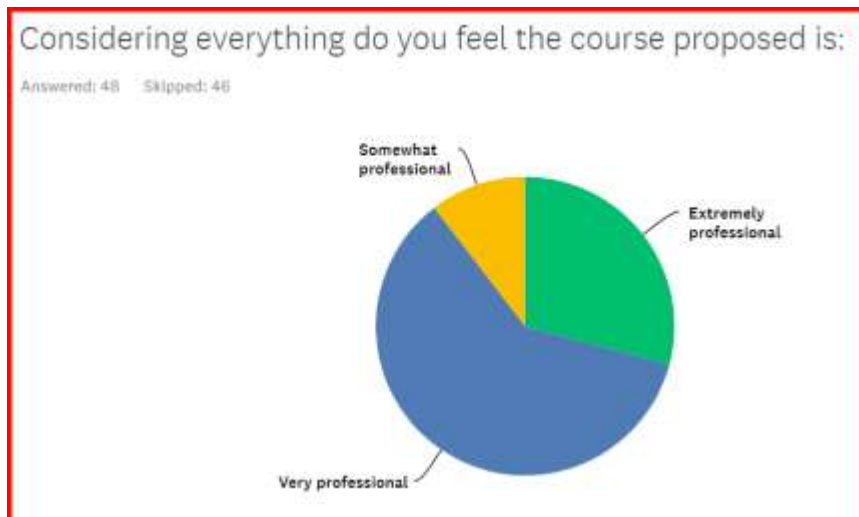


Figure 54. Respondent feedback professional level of course content.

The breakdown of the responses depicted in figure 55 below were as follows; 60.42% said it was very professional, 29.17% extremely professional, 10.42% somewhat professional.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely professional	29.17%	14
Very professional	60.42%	29
Somewhat professional	10.42%	5
Not so professional	0.00%	0
Not at all professional	0.00%	0
TOTAL		48

Figure 55. Respondent feedback on content by percentage.

Summing up the feedback for this question delivers the feeling that respondents see it as being very professional in it make up.

The following question, number 17, asked respondents if they would be willing to attend such a course. 48 answered this question and 46 opted out. The respondents in the large part stated they would consider actively attending the proposed course. Figure 56 below shows the feedback.

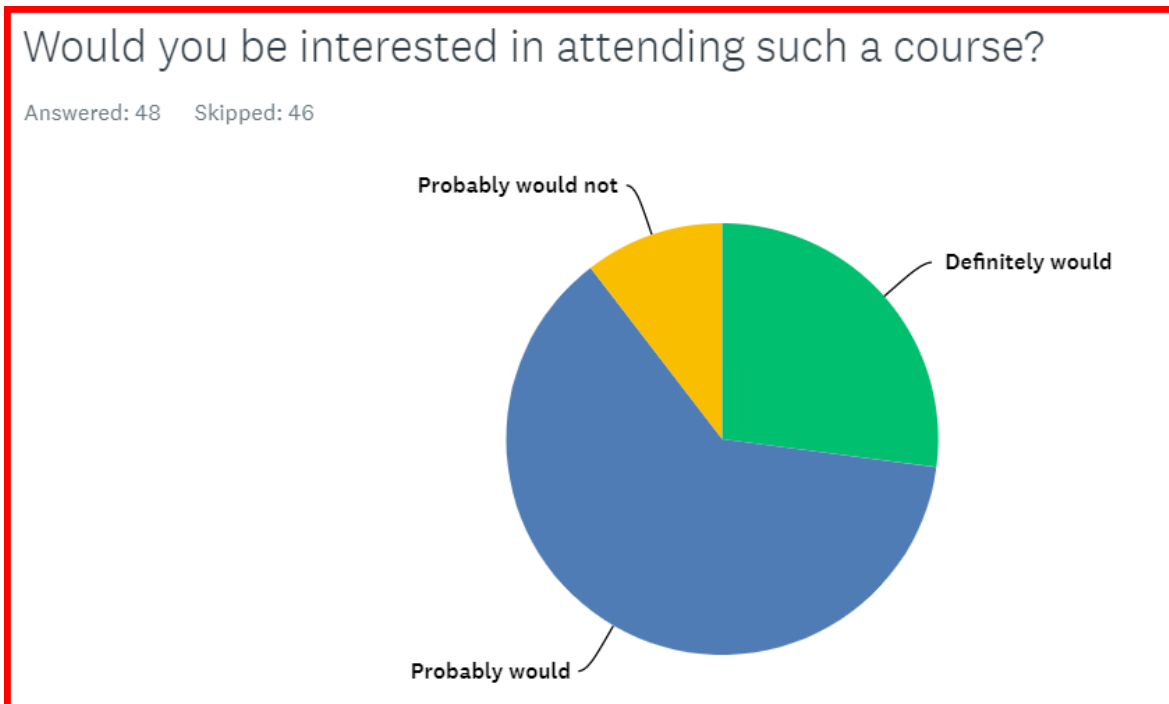


Figure 56. interest in course attendance.

Feedback breakdown as seen in figure 57 below, was on the lines of 62.5% saying they would probably attend, 27.08% definitely would, 10.42% probably would not.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Definitely would	27.08%	13
Probably would	62.50%	30
Probably would not	10.42%	5
Definitely would not	0.00%	0
TOTAL		48

Figure 57. Respondent feedback on course attendance by percentage.

The sum up of the feedback here is that the majority would probably attend such a course.

Question 18 asked about career prospects. There were 48 respondents to this question with 46 opting out. Figure 58 below shows the details.

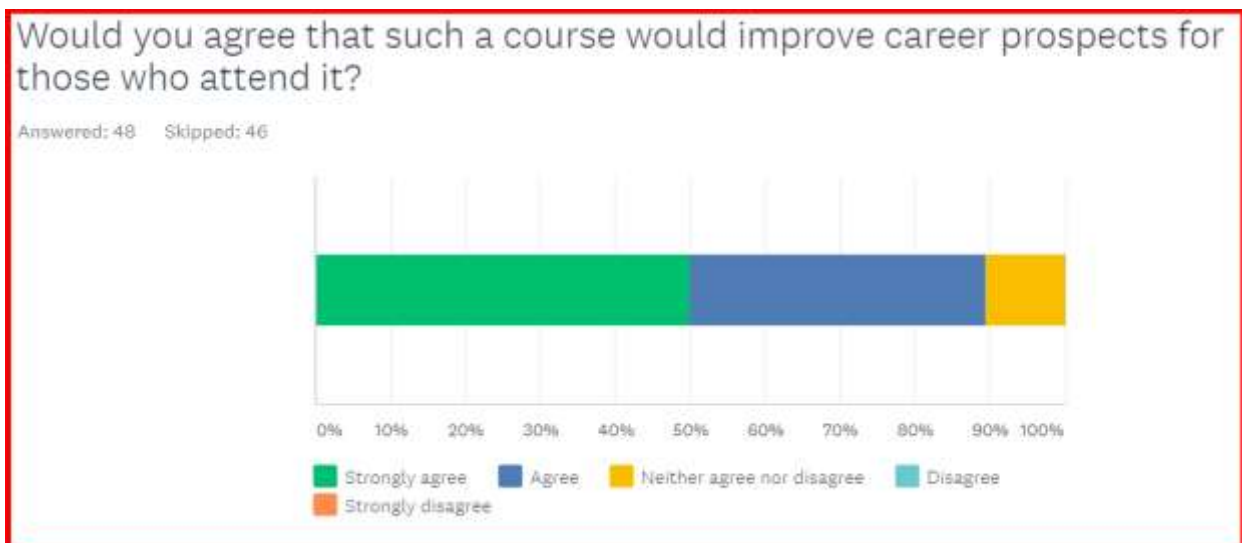


Figure 58. Career prospects vs Course attendance.

The breakdown is very clear in figure 59 below. 50% strongly agree that such a course would improve career prospects, 39.58% agree, 10.42% are neutral and no one disagreed.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	50.00%	24
Agree	39.58%	19
Neither agree nor disagree	10.42%	5
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		48

Figure 59. Percentage breakdown of respondent feedback on career prospects.

Summing up on this question, respondents feel that such a course can improve career prospects.

The next question was about promoting the course. For question 19, there were 47 responses and 47 opted not to answer. Figure 60 below clear shows what the feedback was.

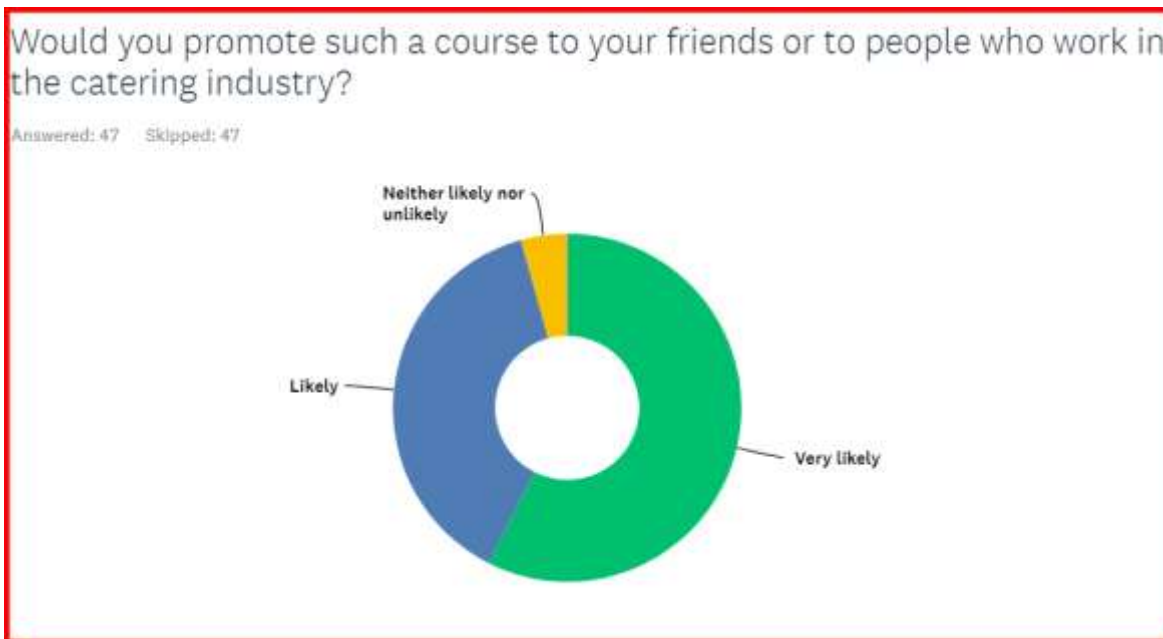


Figure 60. Promotion of course to interested parties.

The breakdown of the responses was 57.45% very likely to promote it, 38.30% likely, 4.26% neutral and no unlikely responses as can be seen in figure 61 below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very likely	57.45%	27
Likely	38.30%	18
Neither likely nor unlikely	4.26%	2
Unlikely	0.00%	0
Very unlikely	0.00%	0
TOTAL		47

Figure 61. Percentage breakdown on course promotion.

Summing up this questions response and the overall feedback of the respondents of this survey, the author perceives a very positive reaction to the course and with minimal adjustments it can be further improved. It is also perceived as a way to improve career prospects. Moving on, now we can have a look at what the industry stakeholders feel about proposed junior sommelier course.

4.1.3 Industry stakeholder survey

This survey sought to collect data from catering industry stakeholders, here the author had the biggest let down s due to the Covid-19 emergency almost all establishments were in shut down with limited access to their managements/owners etc. however 24 establishment managed to

give feedback allowing the author to get a glimpse of their feelings and opinions on the proposed course. The survey was made up of 19 questions and after the profiling part regarding age, gender, work experience and job roles it went on to request feedback on course content, duration, assessment and possible promotion to interested parties.

Question one was regarding age. Figure 62 below, outlines this element. The majority of respondents were in the 35 to 54 age brackets. 25 persons responded to this question.

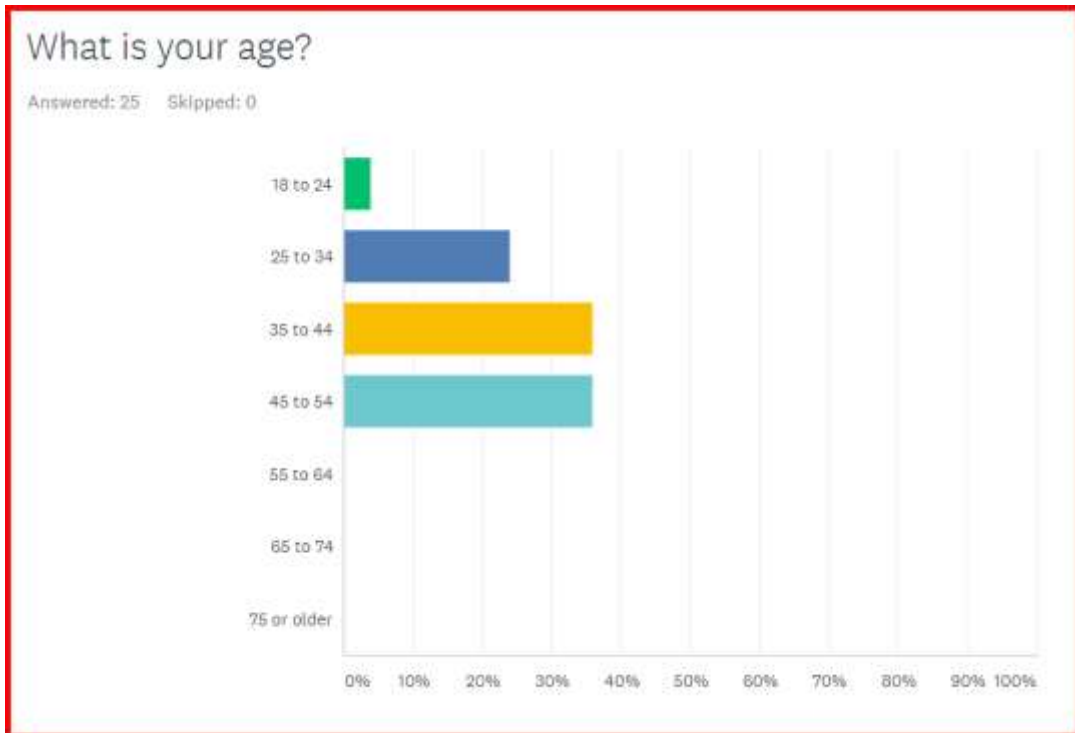


Figure 62. Age groups of industry survey respondents.

The breakdown of responses were 35-44 years 36%, 45 to 54 years 36%, 25 to 34 24% and 18 to 24 years 4%. Figure 63 below confirms this.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
18 to 24	4.00% 1
25 to 34	24.00% 6
35 to 44	36.00% 9
45 to 54	36.00% 9
55 to 64	0.00% 0
65 to 74	0.00% 0
75 or older	0.00% 0
TOTAL	25

Figure 63. Percentage breakdown of industry stake holders by age group.

The sum up of this feedback is that the majority of respondents were mature persons with a good expectancy as far as experience is concerned.

The next question regarded gender. Most of the 24 respondents were male. Figure 64 shows the outline.

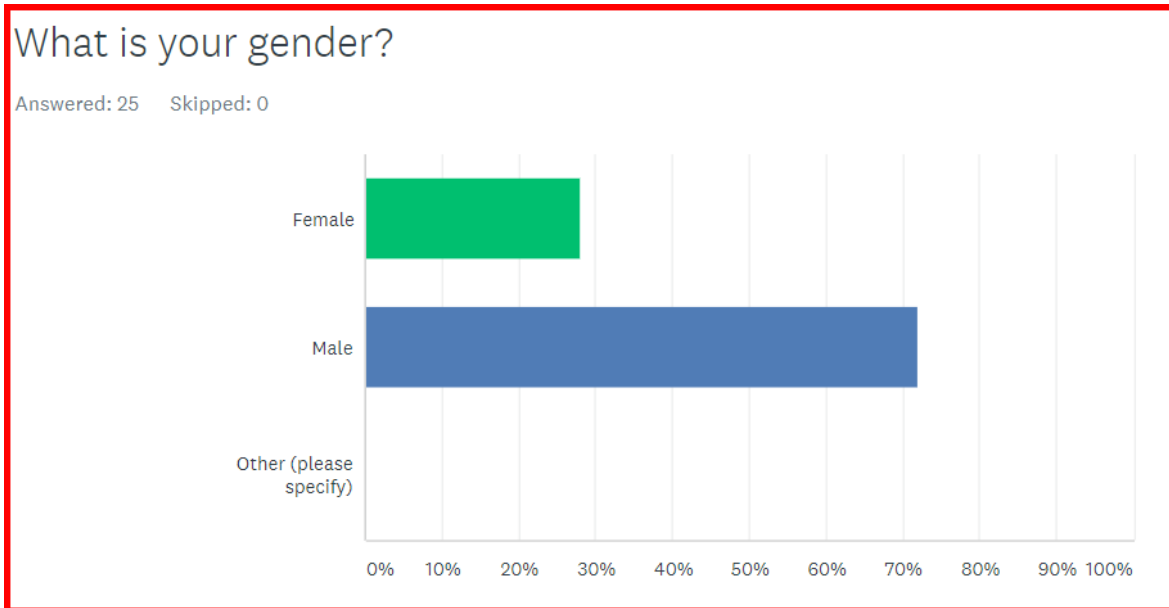


Figure 64. Respondents: Male vs Female

The breakdown was 28% female and 72% male as confirmed by figure 65 below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	28.00%	7
Male	72.00%	18
Other (please specify)	Responses 0.00%	0
TOTAL		25

Figure 65. Percentage breakdown on responder.

Question 3 sought the type of establishment respondents worked in. all 25 answered this question. Figure 66 below outlines the responses.

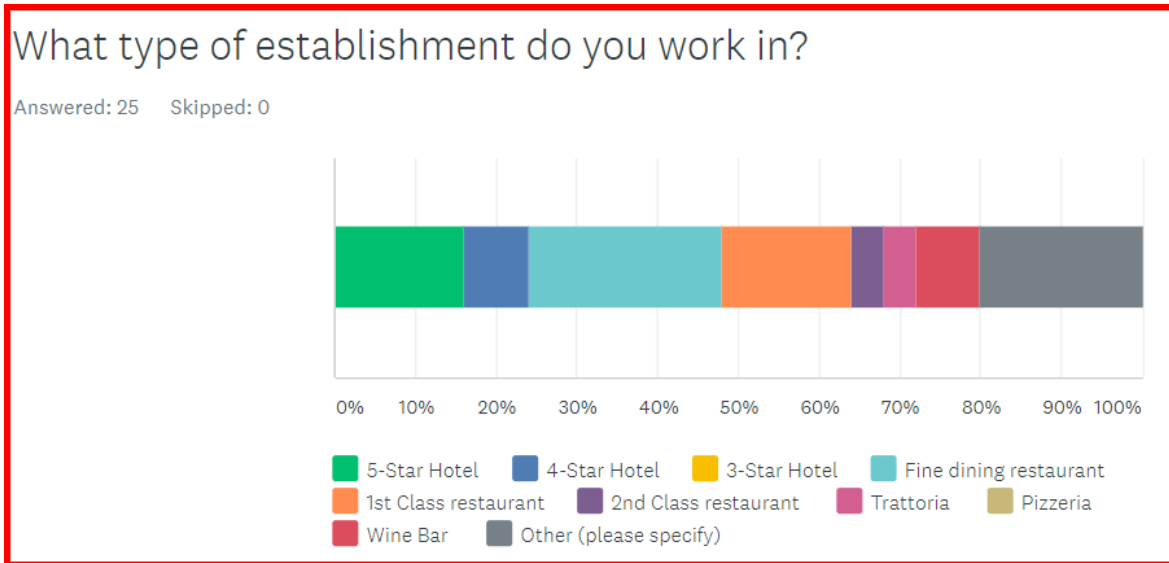


Figure 66. Respondents' place of work.

The breakdown of the responses was the following; 5-Star hotels 16%, 4-Star hotels 8%, fine dining restaurants 24%, 1st class restaurants 16%, 2nd class restaurants 4%, trattoria 4% 'other' types of establishments 20%. There five responses to the 'other' option seen below figure 67.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
5-Star Hotel	16.00%	4
4-Star Hotel	8.00%	2
3-Star Hotel	0.00%	0
Fine dining restaurant	24.00%	6
1st Class restaurant	16.00%	4
2nd Class restaurant	4.00%	1
Trattoria	4.00%	1
Wine Bar	8.00%	2
Other (please specify)	Responses 20.00%	5
TOTAL		25

Figure 67. Respondent workplace breakdown by percentage

The responses summed up, show that the respondents work in establishments that see wine service as important for their operational sustainability.

The next question centred on the respondents' job role. Figure 68 below outlines their roles.

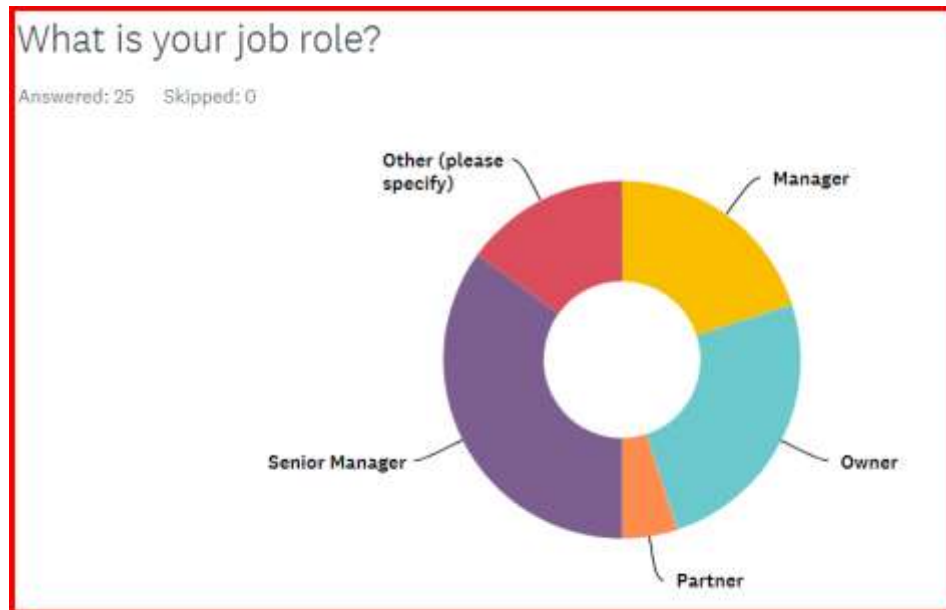


Figure 68. Pie chart of respondents' job roles.

The breakdown for this question was the following; 20% are managers, 25% are owners, 35% senior managers, 5% partners in business, and 15% gave other responses seen below figure 69.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Headwalter	0.00% 0
Individual Contributor	0.00% 0
Manager	20.00% 4
Owner	25.00% 5
Partner	5.00% 1
Senior Manager	35.00% 7
Other (please specify)	Responses 15.00% 3
TOTAL	20

Figure 69. Job roles breakdown by percentage.

Summing up, the respondents are people who hold positions that can be deciding on this courses acceptance and promotion.

The element of work experience was dealt with in question 5. The outline of the respondents' work experience is clear in figure 70 below with breakdown and responses to follow.

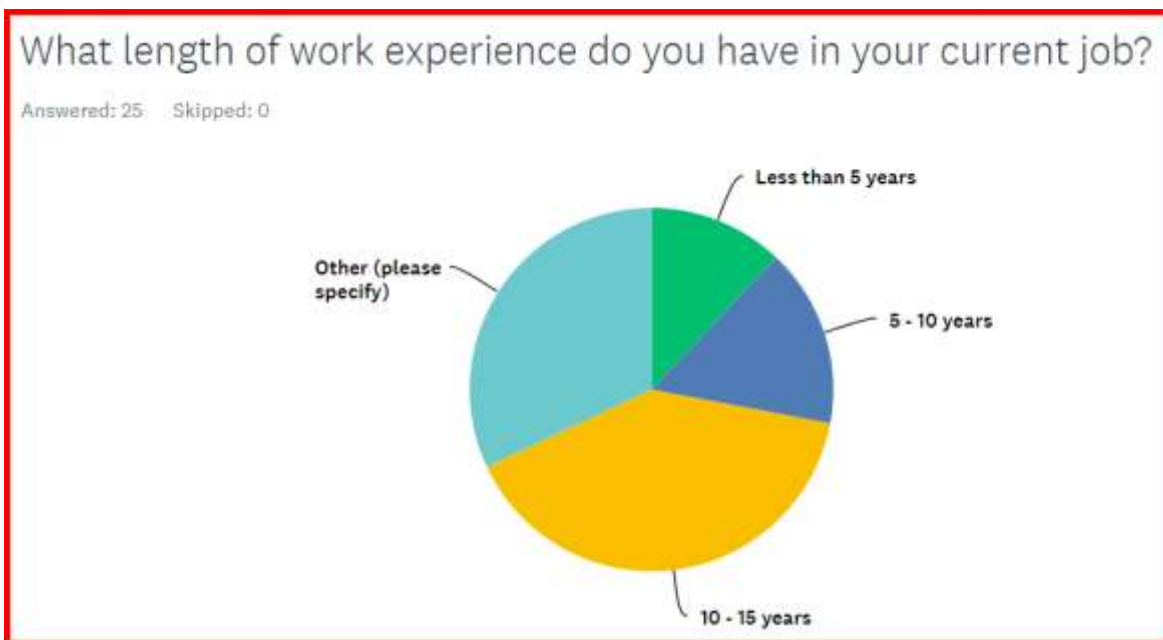


Figure 70. Respondent work experience.

The details of the responses were: 40% had 10-15 years' work experience, 16% 5-10years work experience, 12% less than 5 years' work and experience and 32% with other responses listed below figure 71.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 5 years	12.00%	3
5 - 10 years	16.00%	4
10 - 15 years	40.00%	10
Other (please specify)	Responses 32.00%	8
TOTAL		25

Figure 71. Percentage breakdown of respondent work experience

The other' responses regarding work experience which were not part of the choice groups given were:

- 35 years' experience, 31 years' experience, 20 years' experience, 30 years' experience, 20+ years' experience, 20 years' experience, 26 years' experience, 31 years' experience

Summing up the respondents for this question it is clear they carry a lot of experience in the catering and hotel industry and their views matter.

Question six was quite straight forward as it wanted to confirm that the respondents actually work in establishments that serve wine as part of their services. Figure 72 below outlines their answers and the breakdown follows in figure 73.

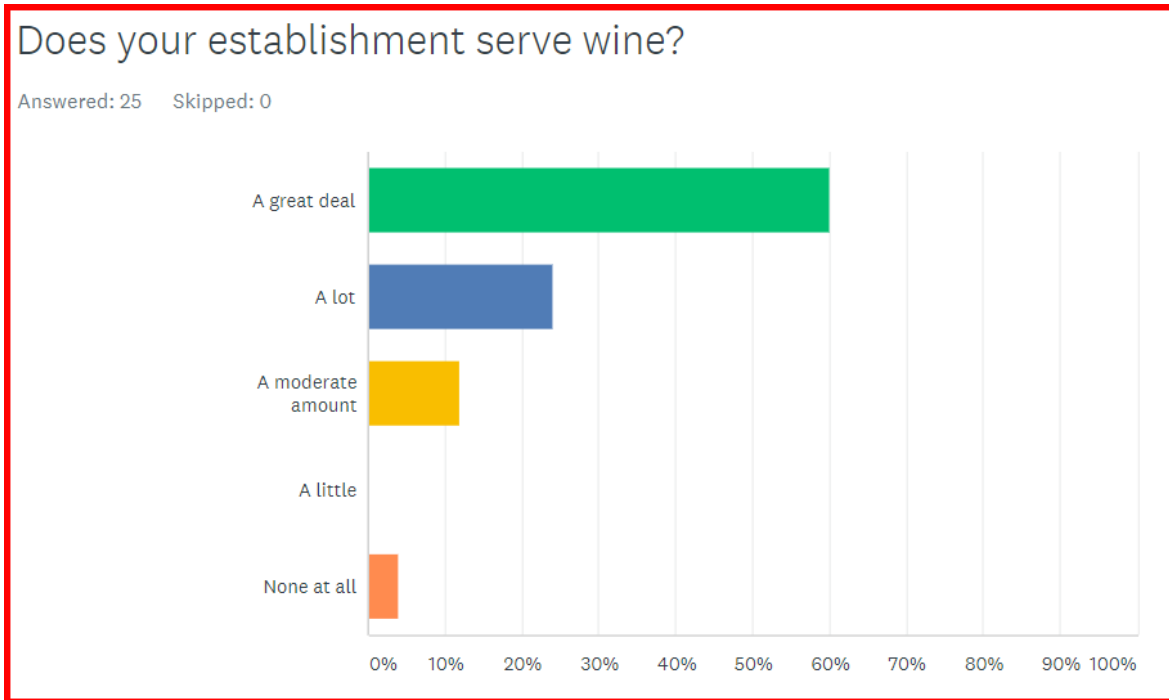


Figure 72. Provision of wines in respondents' establishments.

60% responded they get to serve wine a great deal, 24% a lot, 12% moderately and 4% none at all. Details in figure 73 below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ A great deal	60.00%	15
▼ A lot	24.00%	6
▼ A moderate amount	12.00%	3
▼ A little	0.00%	0
▼ None at all	4.00%	1
TOTAL		25

Figure 73. Respondent feedback on wine provision by percentage.

Question seven asked about the types of wine served as the more varied the availability, the more knowledge servers should have. Figure 74 below show an outline of the responses. There was also one comment which is shown below also.

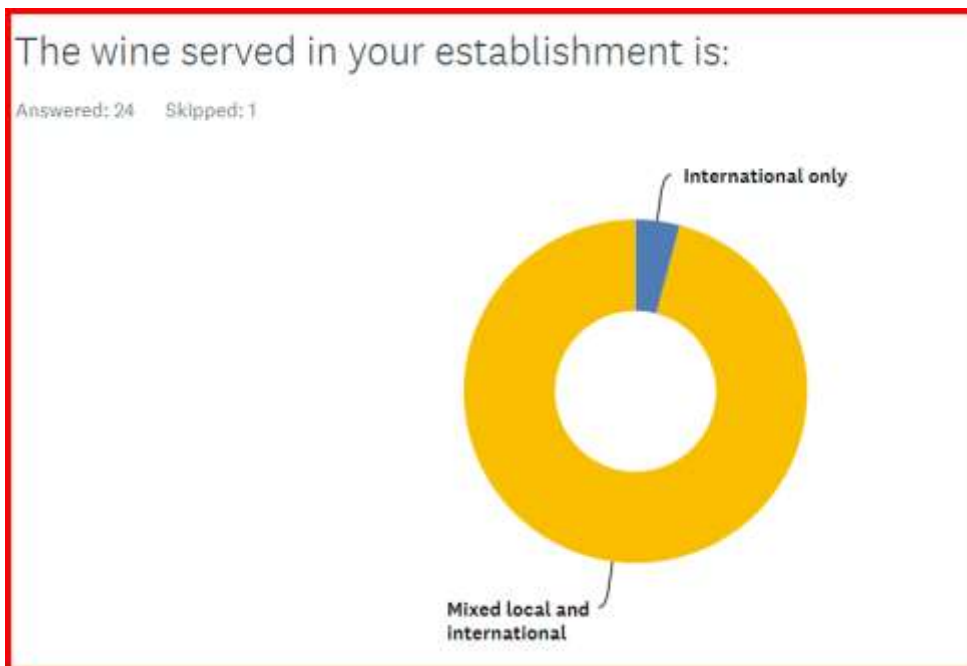


Figure 74. Wine types offered in establishments of respondents.

The breakdown of the responses were the following, 95.83% serve a mix of local and foreign (imported) wines and 4.17% international (imported) only. None serve local wines only. These can be verified in figure 75 below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Local only	0.00%	0
International only	4.17%	1
Mixed local and international	95.83%	23
TOTAL		24

Figure 75. Wine type feedback by percentage.

The only comment received was that the respondent concerned only imports wine. Summing up it a reality that most catering establishments serve a mix of local and foreign wines and therefore it is imperative that employees have the desired knowledge of these wines to help in their service to clients.

The next question, number eight, asked if the service staff in the respondents' establishments had professional training. Three respondents did not answer this question and 22 answered. Figure 76, below, gives an idea of the responses.

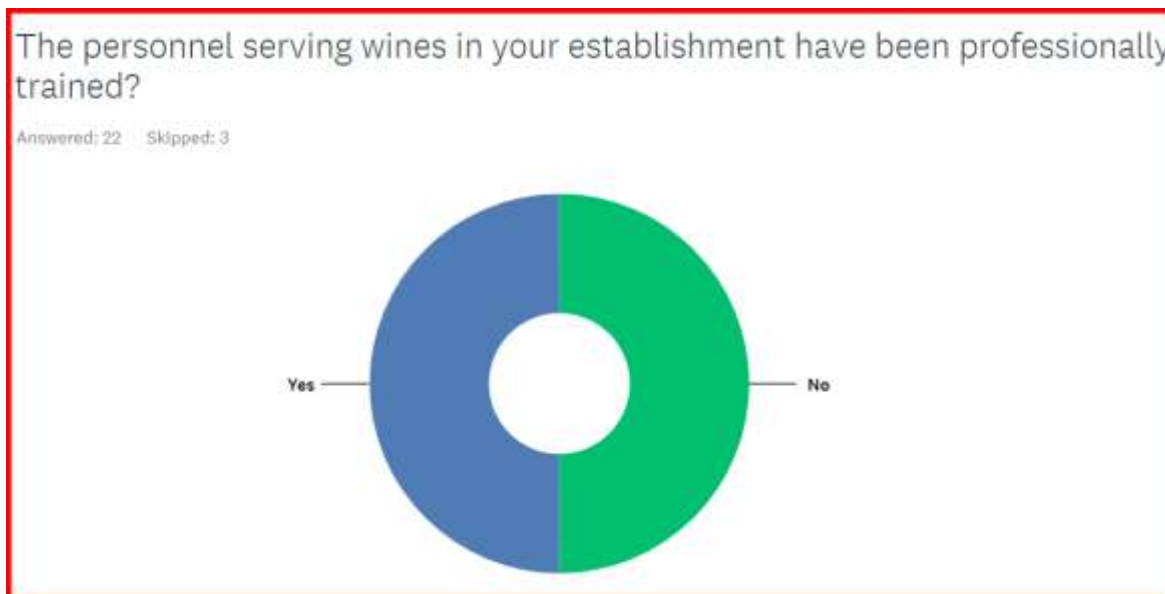


Figure 76. Personnel professional training in wine service.

The responses were split evenly 50%/50% but there were some responses/comments which are below figure 77.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No	50.00%	11
Yes	50.00%	11
TOTAL		22

Figure 77. Percentage breakdown on server professional wine training.

The comments received put forward aspects such as *'We do not serve wine; we sell it only'* or *'In-house basic training provided'*. A number have received WSET Intermediate training, while some establishment have a mix of both, skilled staff and staff trained on job. *One respondent went on to say that: 'They are trained in regards on how to open a bottle of wine and how to serve it'.*

Another respondent tried to improve service level by making a list of grape varieties and characteristics of the wines that s/he had on the wine list for them to read and learn. S/he informed staff what to suggest with certain foods. Also, every evening the chef prepares dinner for the staff and I open a couple of bottles and we stay discussing them. But s/he being honest, accepted that it is

quite difficult when one has the majority of the servers as third-country nationals, as they can't even understand certain vocabulary in English let alone this complexity.

One more respondent declared that s/he organizes wine tastings from time to time to teach staff, and feel that personnel do take an interest during the wine tasting although some are Muslims, so they do not even attend, which is acceptable to a degree. Finally, the question of wine local wine knowledge was raised by one respondent and s/he emphasized the inclusion of this subject in the proposed course's content.

Moving on in question nine, the author sought the respondents' level of agreement to the statement that F&B server should be properly trained in wine service. Respondents' views are illustrated in figure 78 below.

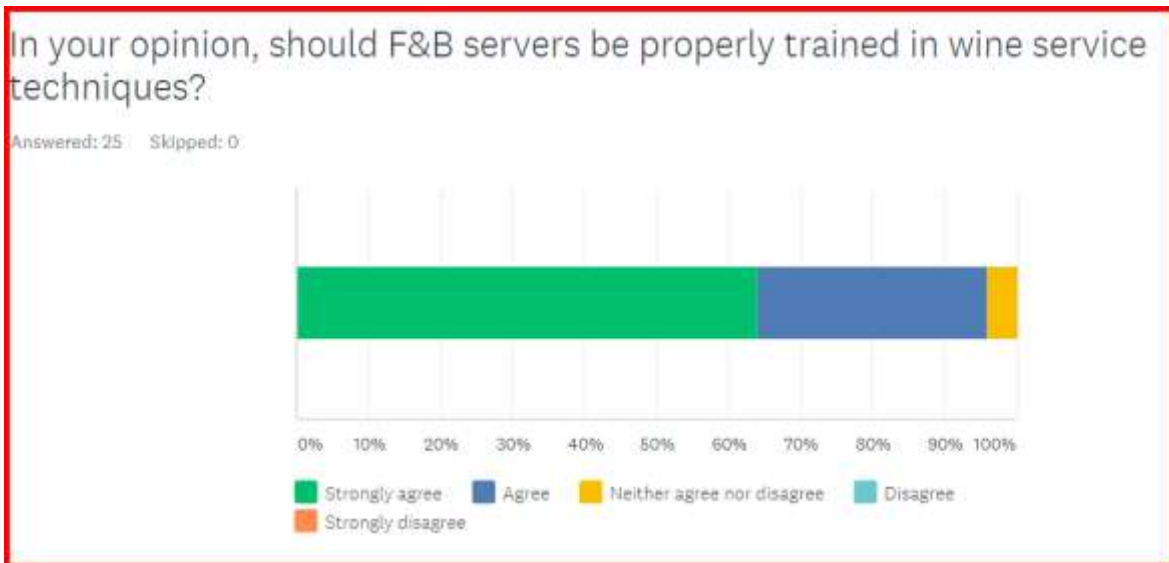


Figure 78. Opinions on servers being provide with proper wine service skills and knowledge.

The breakdown of the responses were as follows; 64% agree strongly, 32% agree, and 4% were neutral. There were no negative responses as can be seen in figure 79 below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	Count
Strongly agree	64.00%	16
Agree	32.00%	8
Neither agree nor disagree	4.00%	1
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		25

Figure 79. Percentage breakdown on wine service training.

Summing up, it is evident that industry stake holder in their majority want professionally trained wine service personnel.

Question 10 asked about the professionalism level of the proposed course content. Figure 80 outlines this feedback below. One respondent skipped this question.

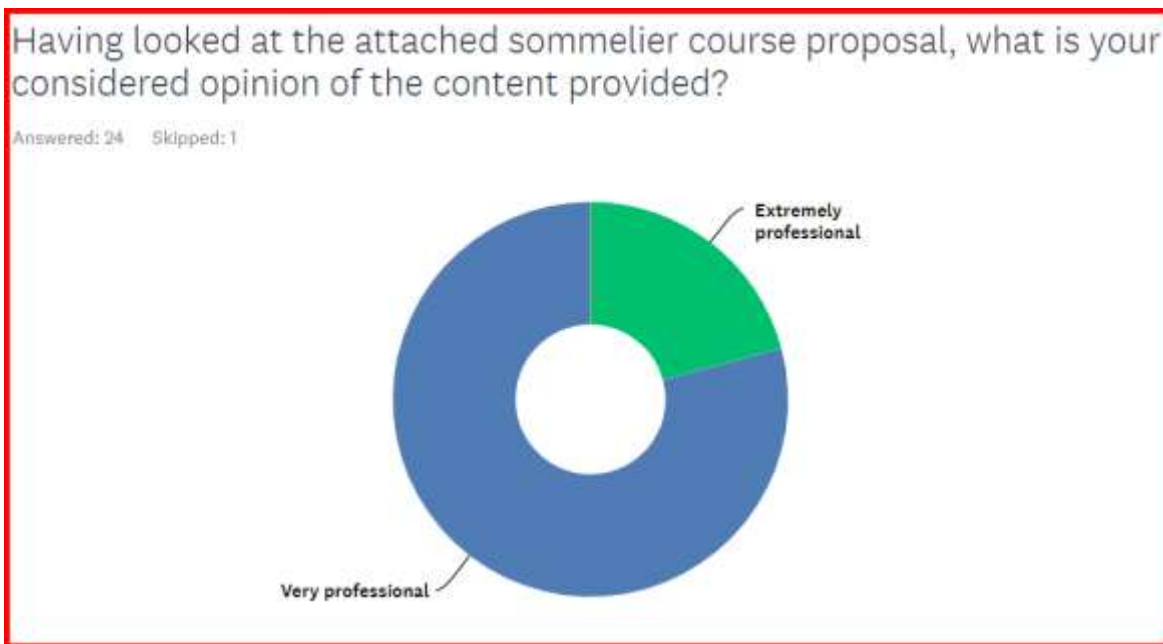


Figure 80. Professional level of proposed course.

The breakdown of the responses was 20.83% said extremely professional, 79.17% said it is very professional. There were no minor or negative responses. As can be seen in figure 81 below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Extremely professional	20.83% 5
Very professional	79.17% 19
Somewhat professional	0.00% 0
Not so professional	0.00% 0
Not at all professional	0.00% 0
TOTAL	24

Figure 81. professional level feedback by percentage on course content.

Summing up on this question, respondents see it as being very well designed and pertinent.

Question 11 asked for any change suggestions. There were 15 comments and 10 opted not to comment.

The main comments were:

- *'more emphasis on food pairing'*
- *'more depth in the wine making, grapes, and different wine areas with the same grapes produce different wine'*
- *'I suggest adding Languedoc and Roussillon region, which becomes more and more important in the shelves around the world'*
- *'no changes, I think the course proposed is actually a very good quality'*
- *'I cannot think of any obvious changes on this point, so I do not think it is fair to comment'*
- *'I am not that technical on this point, so I do not think it is fair to comment'*
- *'it is a strong solid base'*
- *'a section on local wines, since the course is tailored to the Maltese tourism industry'*
- *'I did a sommelier course myself here in Malta, i am more of an Italian wine lover and I know very well the story of wines in Italy and Europe. unfortunately, most of the courses are based on wines production in France which I believe is not at all the country of the wine, of course this is my personal thought'*
- *'to be more knowledgeable a more practical when to serve wine'*
- *'In my opinion, this course is not intended for Improving Wine Service Skills in just any catering establishment. It is intended and targeted for a certain high-end and 1st class restaurant. Or for wine aficionados like myself to improve my knowledge. I would definitely suggest this course to any of my servers as I think it will improve the sales, but I do not think that any would-be interested besides my partner and me.'*

Summing up respondents seem to feel that the content is generally good as is but some more emphasis on local wine and wine and food combination would be beneficial.

The next question asked about the course length, that is 15 x 4-hour sessions. Being industry stakeholders their view on this was required. Figure 82 shows their views below.

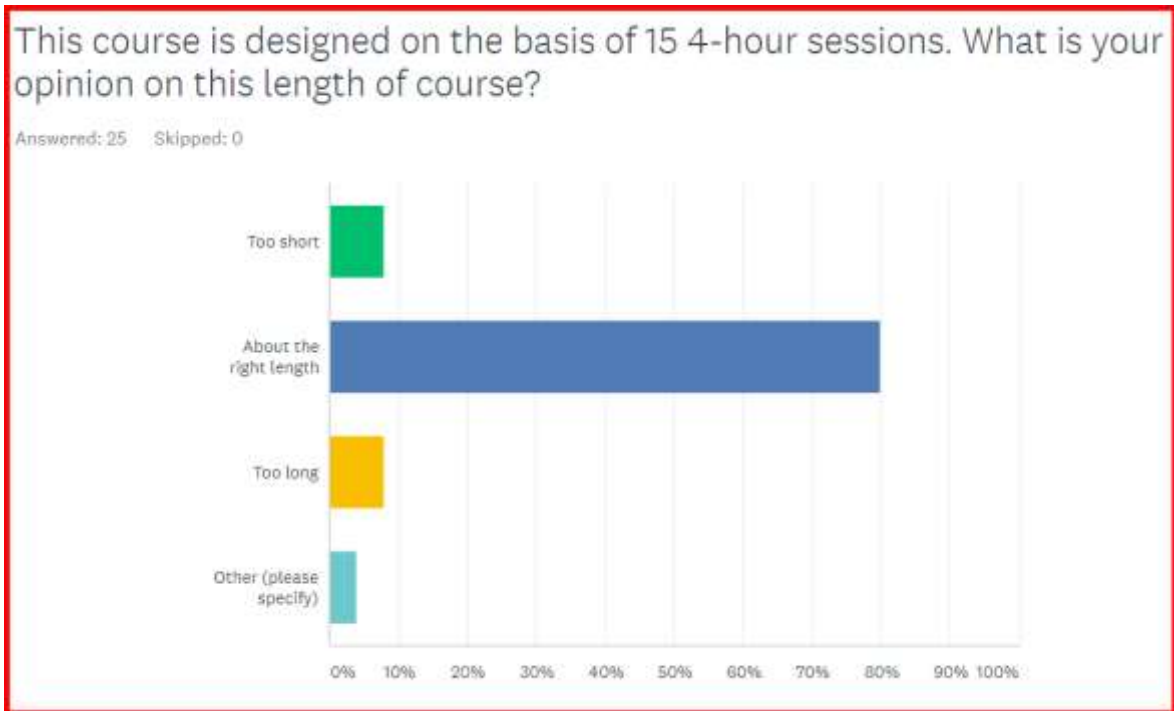


Figure 82. opinions on course duration.

The responses showed that 80% see it as being the right length, 8% see it as too short, 8% see it as too long and 4% had other views. See figure 83 below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Too short	8.00%	2
▼ About the right length	80.00%	20
▼ Too long	8.00%	2
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 4.00%	1
TOTAL		25

Figure 83. Percentage breakdown of feedback on course duration.

The 'other' response stated it is ideal for beginners. Summing up the majority see it as being the right length for what is expected from it.

The next question, number 13, asked about the best delivery methods for such a course. Only one respondent opted not to answer this question. Figure 84 below shows the responses.

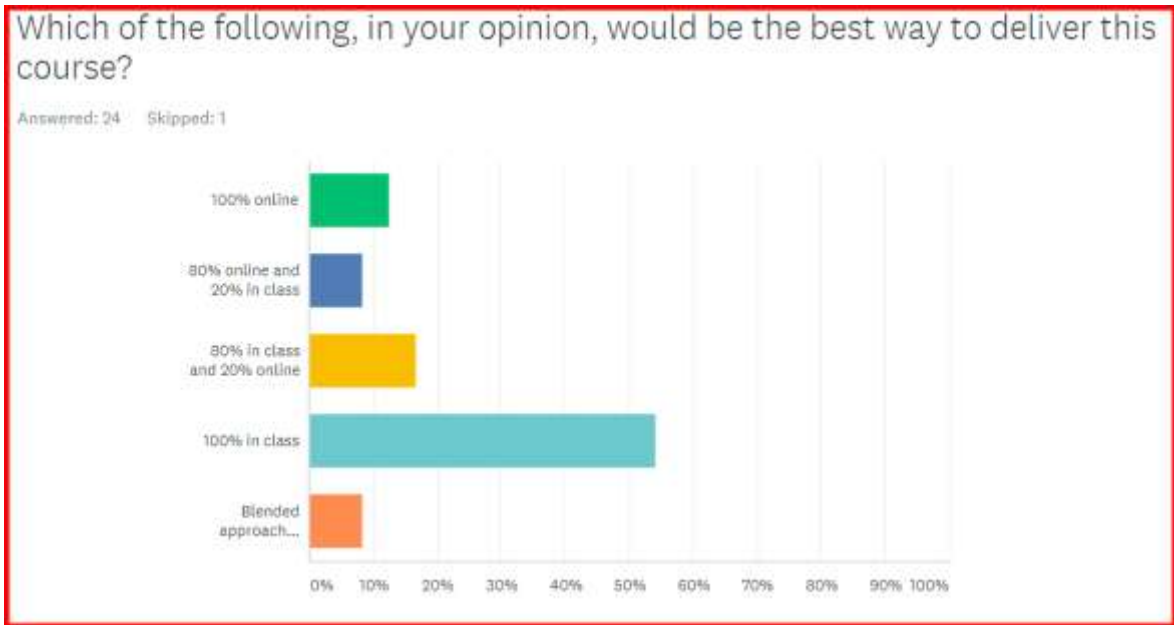


Figure 84. Feedback on delivery methods of proposed course.

The breakdown of the responses were on the following lines; 54.17% say it should be 100% in class, 16.67% 80% in class and 20% online, 8.33% prefer 80% online and 20% in class, 12.50% opted for 100% online and 8.33% opted for the blended approach delivery. Figure 85 below shows these results.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
100% online	12.50% 3
80% online and 20% in class	8.33% 2
80% in class and 20% online	16.67% 4
100% in class	54.17% 13
Blended approach delivery	8.33% 2
TOTAL	24

Figure 85. Percentage breakdown of feedback on course delivery methods.

Summing up on this one views are varied but the biggest is for 100% in class delivery. One comment received stated, 'in-class and in a service environment'.

Question 14 asked about ideal assessment methods to be applied. Figure 86, below, gives the outline and there were no declined responses.

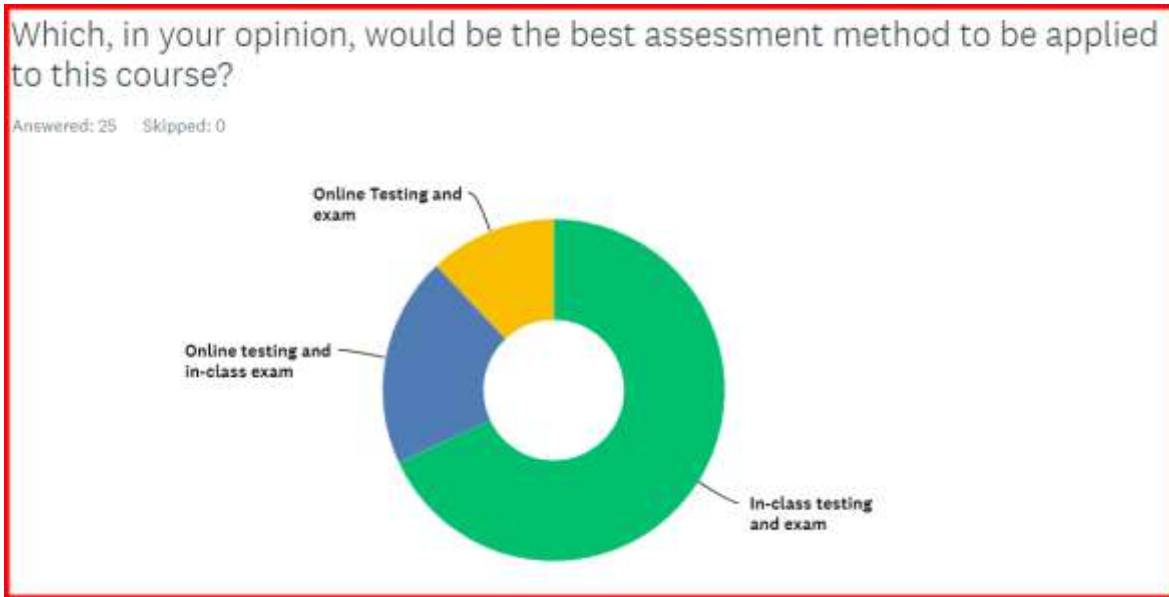


Figure 86. Respondent feedback on assessments modes – Pie chart

The breakdown of responses were on the following lines; 68% in-class testing and exm, 20% online testing and in-class exam, 12% online testing and exam. These figures are seen in figure 87 below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
In-class testing and exam	68.00%	17
Online testing and in-class exam	20.00%	5
Online Testing and exam	12.00%	3
TOTAL		25

Figure 87. Percentage breakdown of feedback on assessment modes.

Summing up the majority seem to prefer a 100% in class testing and exam as the ideal form of assessment with one third of respondents considering the online element.

Question 15 enquired if the course should be on a full time or part time basis as well as other timings. The responses are outlined below in figure 88. There were also two responses in the 'other' option.

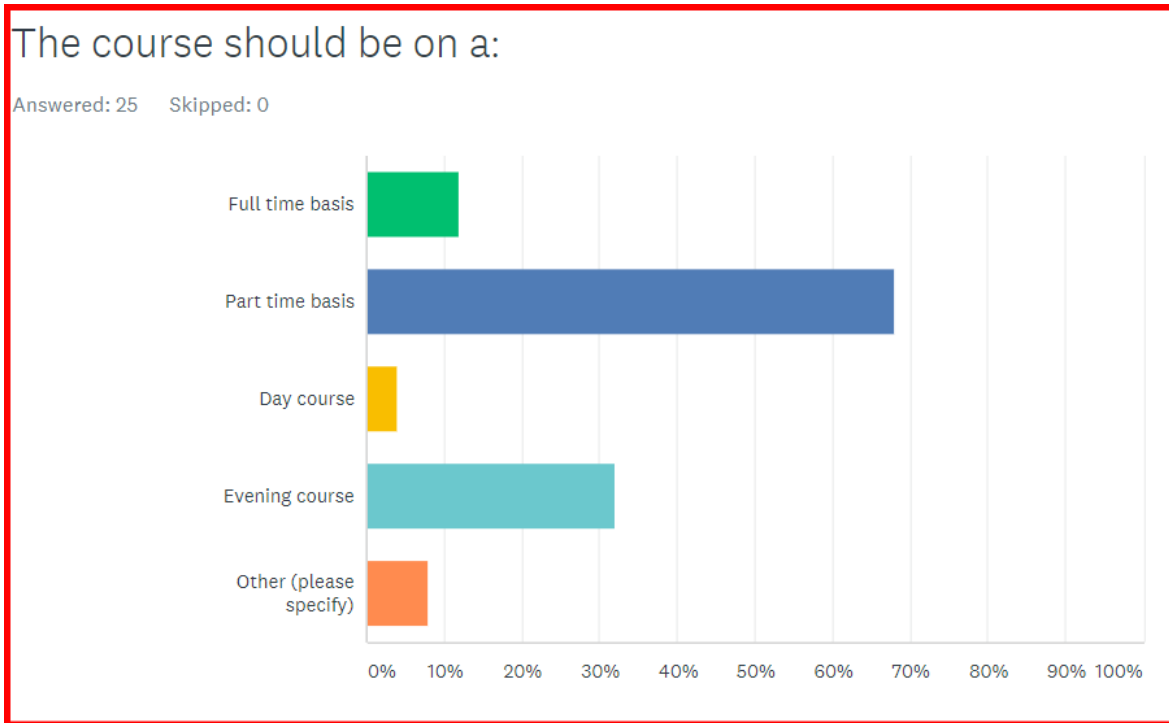


Figure 88. Course Format, full time ...

The respondents feedback was on the following lines; 68% opted for part time basis, 12% full time basis, 32% want an evening course, 4% want a day course while there were 8% other responses listed below under figure 89 which shows the breakdown of responses.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Full time basis	12.00%	3
Part time basis	68.00%	17
Day course	4.00%	1
Evening course	32.00%	8
Other (please specify)	8.00%	2
Total Respondents: 25		

Figure 89. Percentage breakdown of course format

The 'other' responses opined that if possible, various options would be provided and went further by stating that students at a catering school should have it as a module, and those already in employment should be able to access it part time.

Summing up the general consent is for an evening part time course which could also make an allowance for integrating full time students and industry employees (part time) to follow the same course.

Question 16 asked for the respondents' overall feeling on the course commenting on the quality therein. Figure 90 below, shows these responses. There was also one other response.

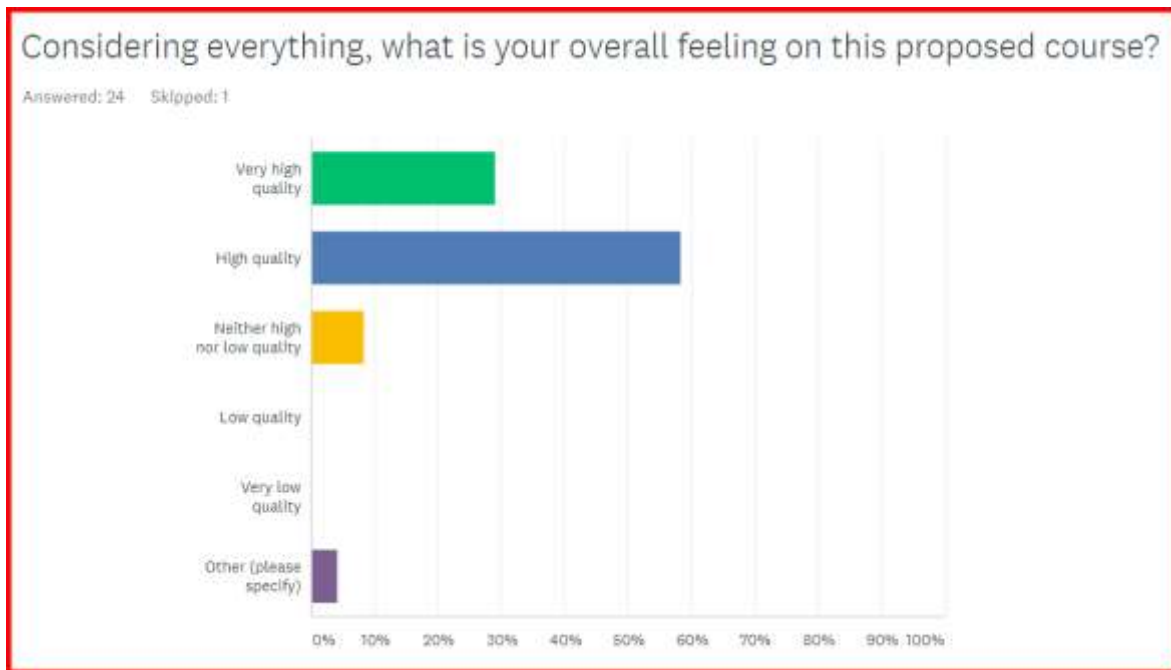


Figure 90. Overall respondent feeling on proposed course.

The breakdown of the responses followed the following lines; 58.33% say the proposed course is of high quality, 29.17% very high quality, 8.33% were neutral and there were 4.17% 'other' responses. Figure 91 below shows this detail feedback. Other response to follow.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very high quality	29.17% 7
High quality	58.33% 14
Neither high nor low quality	8.33% 2
Low quality	0.00% 0
Very low quality	0.00% 0
Other (please specify)	Responses: 4.17% 1
TOTAL	24

Figure 91. Respondent feedback by percentage on course proposal.

The sole response added to this question was: *'Like I said in my previous statement, in my opinion this course is appropriate for certain restaurants but for other casual dining establishments there needs to be an easier version about the very basics of food and beverage serving'*.

Summing up this question's response respondents see the course as being of high quality overall.

Asking respondents if they would consider promoting such a course with their service personnel, question 17, provided the feedback shown in figure 92 below.

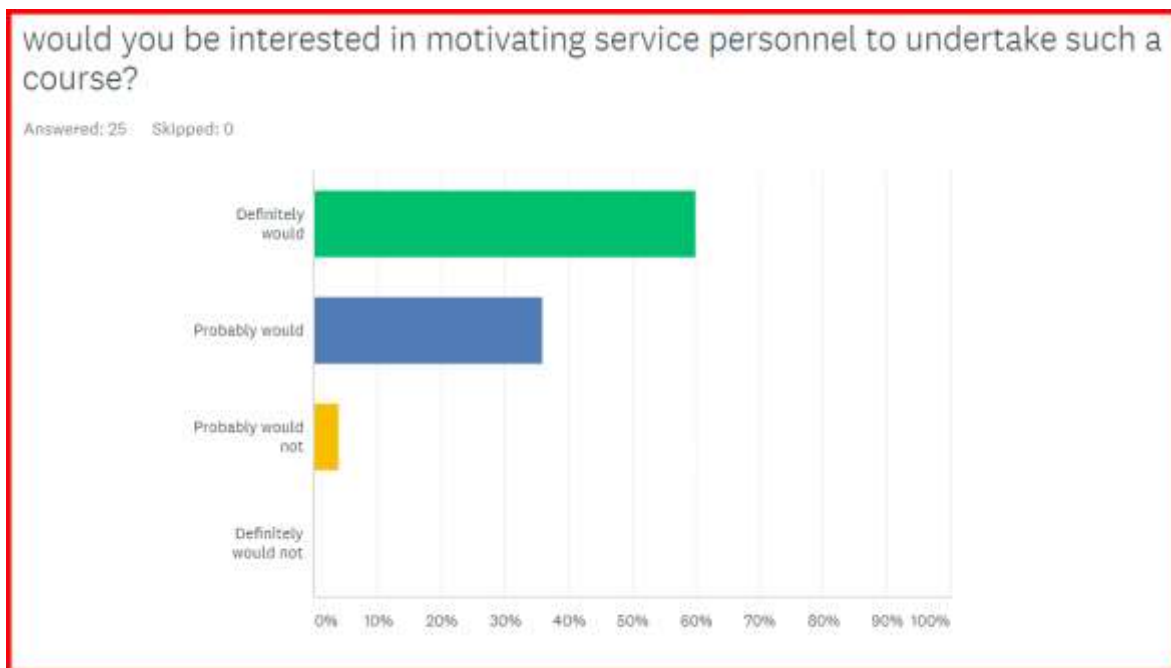


Figure 92. Promoting staff to follow course.

Breakdown of responses was the following; 60% definitely would promote the course, 36% probably would and 4% probably would not. This is confirmed by figure 93 below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Definitely would	60.00%	15
Probably would	36.00%	9
Probably would not	4.00%	1
Definitely would not	0.00%	0
TOTAL		25

Figure 93. Percentage breakdown regarding course promotion.

Summing up the responses the overall majority seem ready to promote the proposed course to their service personnel.

The following question, number 18, enquired if this course could improve the service level provided by their service personnel. Figure 94 below shows the responses received.

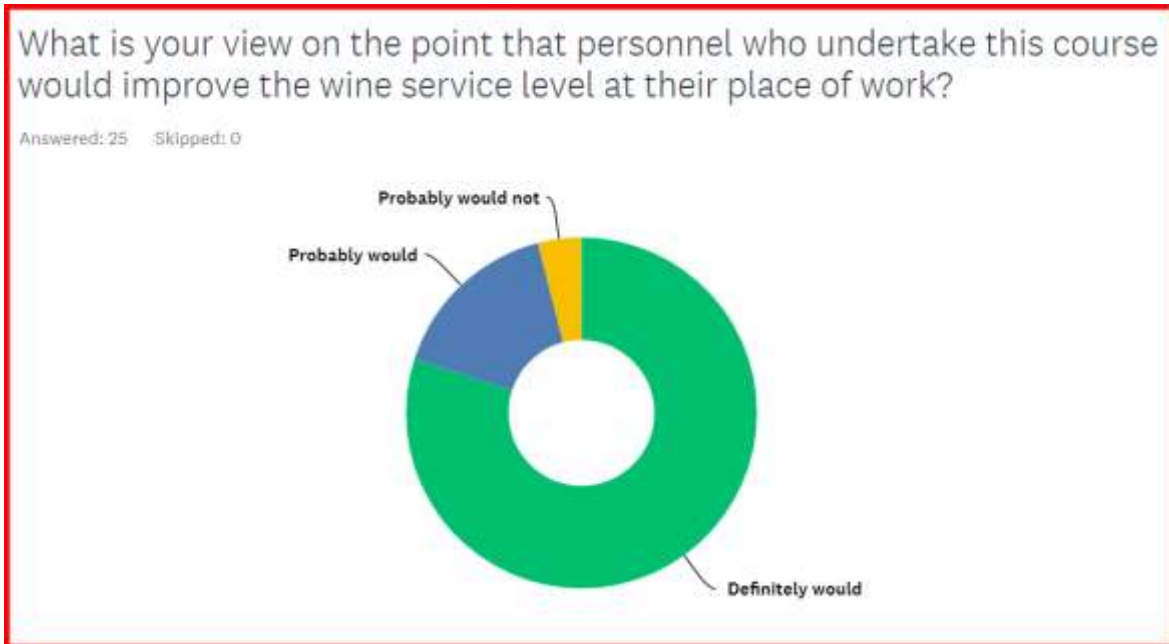


Figure 94. Feedback on ripple effect of the course on trained personnel.

The response breakdown was the following for this question; 80% stated it definitely would, 16% said it probably would and 4% probably would not. Figure 95 below shows all this.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Definitely would	80.00%	20
Probably would	16.00%	4
Probably would not	4.00%	1
Definitely would not	0.00%	0
TOTAL		25

Figure 95. Percentage breakdown of feedback of course's ripple effect on personnel.

Summing up the responses it is evident that the stakeholders see this course as a good tool to improve the service level at their place of work.

The last question, number 19, enquired about the stakeholders supporting/undersigning this course to train their personnel. Figure 96 shows the received feedback below.

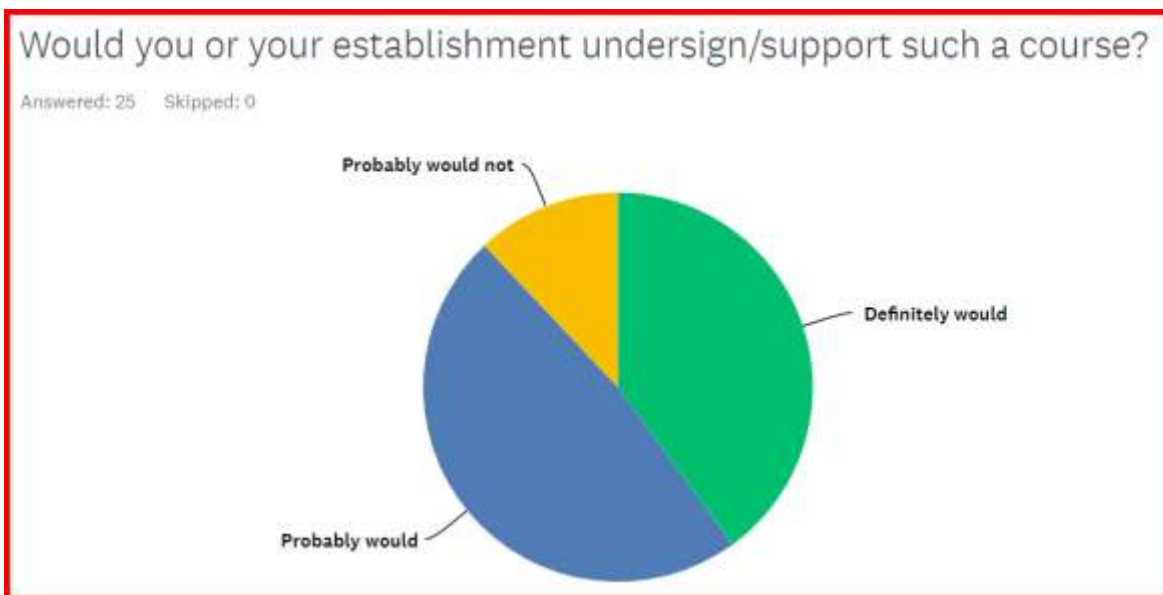


Figure 96. Undersigning and/or supporting of Junior sommelier course

The response breakdown, in figure 97, was the following; 40% definitely would support such a course, 48% probably would, 12% probably would not. These responses are clear in figure 97 below.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Definitely would	40.00%	10
Probably would	48.00%	12
Probably would not	12.00%	3
Definitely would not	0.00%	0
TOTAL		25

Figure 97. Breakdown of responses on course support

Summing up this question, respondents seem to be very ready to support the proposed course and overall see it having the right balance, length, content and delivery methods to be successful in its goal.

The author now moves on to the questionnaire survey made with the chosen focus group in lieu of the planned interviews due to Covid-19 restrictions.

4.1.4 Focus group questionnaires survey

In addition to the online surveys, the author conducted five semi-structured 'interviews' via a questionnaire sent via email due to Covid-19 restrictions. The author prepared a ten-question form (Appendix 13) sent out in combination with a copy of the course content outline to the members of the focus group via email. The covering letter of the questionnaire can be seen at appendix 12 and the course content outline in appendix 15.

The focus group were selected with different backgrounds which are all connected to the hospitality and catering industry in Malta. The members had the following work background; 5-Star hotel staff training manager, hotel general manager, 4-Star hotel Food and Beverage manager, Wine import company director and wine blogger, food and beverage service trainer/educator. These members were considered by the author to be in a position to provide feedback on the proposed sommelier course due to their work background. For the sake of this report each member of the group was allotted a letter from the alphabet for confidentiality purposes. Namely A, B, C, D, and E.

All five members of the focus group have extensive experience in the hospitality industry in Malta as well as the wine business. A transcription of the feedback will be presented in following paragraphs organized by questionnaire question followed by the answer provided by each group member. Summing up will be presented at the end where the main findings of the questionnaires. The questionnaires themselves are in appendices

Q1 – *What do you think about the **course concept**?*

- A. 'The course is very informative re wines, it covers history of wines, new and old world, grapes and origins, wine styles and tasting techniques.'
- B. 'Looks interesting – would enable companies to fill in skills gaps and shortages in a relatively short period. Freeing staff up for a 4-hour per lesson each week would make scheduling easier.'
- C. 'I think the concept is quite interesting. One would need to understand the depth of the context of each section.'

- D. 'The course concept was highly interesting. We appear to have a lack of suitably qualified and experienced sommeliers locally. A course such as this would serve to enhance and elevate the quality of service to our esteemed guests.'
- E. 'The concept is very well needed to enhance wine service in restaurants in Malta, as this is missing in most establishments. Very good syllabus.'

Q2 – *To what extent would you feel comfortable **suggesting to your staff to undertake this course?***

- A. 'I highly recommend this course to all employees working in food and beverage industry and wine connoisseurs. The course is educational and knowledgeable.'
- B. 'Very comfortable.'
- C. 'If I may, knowing that who is behind the concept of the course has been a wine enthusiast and educator himself, for many years already gives some credibility to the content. So, I would be quite comfortable to recommend this course to my staff.'
- D. 'Absolutely! However, they would have to be selected according to experience and previous academic background, as the level is advanced.'
- E. 'Very comfortable.'

Q3 – *Would you be interested in **sponsoring staff** to follow this course, and why?*

- A. 'Yes, the course itself is an investment for front of house personnel, gaining valuable knowledge in food and wine pairing. Provides the benefits to drive wine sales, by designing state of the art wine lists and other wine developments.'
- B. 'An investment would be viable – if an agreement was reached with employees whereby if they left within a particular time window, they would have to reimburse the company for the cost of the course (say within 6 months of completion).'
- C. 'When it comes to sponsoring there needs to be agreement from within the company. So, yes, I would always suggest sponsoring staff for such initiatives for further development.'
- D. 'Yes- however it would depend on the price.'

E. 'Once it starts and in due course, yes.'

Q4 – What **additions or changes** would you suggest in this course, and why?

A. 'I'm very satisfied with the course, it is informative and well organized. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to access course on internet and learn further.'

B. 'I would look at the exam duration – normally a level 4 qualification is backed by a 2-hour exam. Thus, I would consider revising the exam duration by lowering it at least by 30 minutes.'

C. 'The outline looks fine. Possibly by knowing the depth of the context would allow for better answering this question. If the context is at a higher level, maybe it could be ideal to divide the course in stages, so not to overwhelm the person undertaking the subject. From a catering / hospitality perspective, I encounter many staff that have been out of the education system since many years.'

D. 'Perhaps including Maltese wines- we have a small selection of wines, but some is of a high quality. It would be fitting to promote local wines within our local industry.'

E. 'Looks good as it is.'

Q5 – What would be your **preferred mode**, including duration, for this course to be delivered to prospective attendees, and why?

A. 'Four-hour sessions, covering theory, wine styles and tastings.'

B. 'If this course is based on a theory only basis, I would suggest 4 hours per week split in 2x2 hour sessions. Timing of sessions should look at the fact most of the persons working in this line would be afternoon or evening workers. Thus, scheduling on a late morning basis would give the most flexibility scheduling wise (days off and days when they would be working in the evening). Again, I would suggest an 80% online approach and a 20% in class delivery. The first session being one of the ones in class to ensure everyone is comfortable.'

C. 'I believe that the way forward would be online learning, but still deep inside I would think that physical networking is very important especially when it comes to tasting, different.'

On the other hand if possible I would still leave the option for those who cannot physically be there to attend virtually. So, not quite a straightforward answer. Possibly the less fixed the more attractive it will be. When it comes to duration, again it depends on the depth of the context.'

- D. 'I suggest that this course should be accredited at MQF Level 4 or 5. In that case, duration should be between 1-2 years, depending on the frequency of lectures. Lectures would preferably be classroom-style, to allow for discussions and tasting.'
- E. 'Direct class and on-site lectures. Duration 16 sessions of 4 hours each - once weekly.'

Q6 – Which **improvements** can you see this course creating in your staff whilst they are carrying out their duties?

- A. 'Improvement in procurement, wine storage and par levels. Developed food and beverage service levels, sommeliers can train and educate other members re wine styles, tasting and regions especially on French Appellations. Staff can be able to come up with food and wine pairing template according to the seasonal menu changes at the place of work.'
- B. 'Greater knowledge, thus being able to recommend wines to go with certain dishes especially with specials of the day, as well as knowing how to better manage stock levels by pairing of certain slow-moving wines.'
- C. 'By enhancing the product knowledge, I see many possible improvements. Coming from a hospitality background I believe that it could improve the interaction between the customer and staff which will allow for a better dining experience which could result in greater revenue generated. To mention also that it will assist with the image of both the caterer and the employee as being professionals.'
- D. 'Enhanced professionalism, service quality and sales of better-quality wines.'
- E. 'A very good outlook on wine, recommending, discussing wine, client satisfaction.'

Q7 – To what extent would you see the ripple effect of this course in your staff and across the industry spectrum of **service/meal experience** of a restaurant?

- A. 'Increased wines sales by recommending extraordinary wines pairing with perfect food. Sommelier can perform their role in a professional manner by providing guests the perfect

experience of taking them on a culinary journey while dining or enjoying a bottle of wine in lounge environment.'

- B. 'More professionalism and the element of salesmanship – would eventually scale itself in industry as staff move, talk and command an improved wage based on sales.'
- C. 'As mentioned above the sense of professionalism itself can create healthy competition, which can eventually ripple to other establishments.'
- D. 'As stated earlier, knowledge of wines seems to be very lacking locally, among both industry professionals and clients. Having better trained and passionate staff should result in enhanced knowledge of wines and the purchasing of better-quality products.'
- E. 'Should be a catalyst to start a very well needed course to enhance quality.'

Q8 – *Would this course **change the traditional service methods**, and if so, in what extent?*

- A. 'Yes, it would help the team adopt a modern style of service, keeping up with the trends. Also, possible increase in wine sales by organizing Gastro Dinners.'
- B. 'No – in some respects it would bring a return to the traditional sommelier in a restaurant who manages and helps with sales of products. Which in turn would help drive up spend per head of clients.'
- C. 'I believe that this course should enhance the proper service methods. So, if traditionally champagne should be served in a flute this would be the way. So more than change the traditional service methods this would help correct certain mistakes performed during service.'
- D. 'Employing qualified sommeliers would enhance the service quality in the restaurant and elevate its status.'
- E. 'It should improve those traditional service methods which are based on some training but would certainly create a new spectrum of knowledge throughout.'

Q9 – *Would **further training** be required for service staff after such a course, if yes, why?*

- A. 'Yes of course. Wine education is extensive and there is no end wine education. Wine producers, especially in the new world are continuously evolving in their styles of wine making like oaked Rieslings in the Eden Valley of Australia.'
- B. 'Hands on training would always be of benefit to such programmes. Training in costings and sales techniques to help develop sales and pricing of products would be natural extensions to offerings proposed.'
- C. 'Further training is always recommended as sometimes it is easy to fall back to certain routines. Also, because trends evolve during time and it is important to keep up with the changes.'
- D. 'Continuous Professional Development is always required. I suggest that sommeliers should keep up to date with new developments and trends in wine production, brands, etc. Sommeliers should also share their knowledge with other team members to ensure a holistic improved service quality.'
- E. 'Training onsite is always essential – even experts must keep on studying and improving.'

Q10 – ***Further comments?***

- A. 'I highly recommend wine education courses to be introduced to every food and beverage service establishment globally. Like WSET was a good education for me and my team, I have experienced lots of benefits after completing such a course and looking forward to attending other wine course very soon.'
- B. 'None.'
-
- C. 'I think that overall is a good concept. As stated, a better understanding of the context would allow for better judgement of the course. What is sure is that from my experience catering training needs adapt to the industry needs and not the other way around. As new trends evolve rapidly.'
- D. 'None.'
-

- E. 'I think that this is a very good initiative which should be encouraged and implemented, with all assistance from government, Malta Tourism Authority and all touristic business establishments.'

In the following part of the report the author will try to summarize the results of the surveys undertaken during the course of this report's formulation.

4.2 Summary

This chapter analysis and sums up the results of the online surveys and the questionnaire focus group survey. The author bring out the most significant keywords and topics that came out of both, online surveys and the focus group questionnaires.

As revealed by the online surveys' results, the most important criteria of choice were in the case of the industry stakeholders 48% of which were from five and four star hotels and also fine dining restaurants concluded that the proposed course is a needed tool to improve staff performance and service levels. They further emphasised the need for the course to have strong knowledge in it and also give due importance to customer care and wine and food combination.

Importance of both local and foreign wine knowledge was highlighted to be at the core of the course with the peripheral topics of customer care, wine and food pairing, wine service techniques and ability to discuss with clients and explain to clients the different wine styles available in order for the client to make informed choice s thus optimizing the meal experience and guest satisfaction.

It was further established that personnel need training and those which received some sort of training this basically mostly in wine knowledge through courses such as the WSET (UK) Level 2 certificate in wines. In fact, 96% agreed that service personnel should be provided with professional training to ensure better service levels throughout.

The proposed course was seen by 100% of respondents as a course that is either extremely professional or very professional in its makeup. Minimal adjustments were suggested and most of the adjustments mention are already inbuilt into the course, only they are not that evident at first glance, perhaps a bit of default for this lies with the author.

80% agree the course is of the right length with the view of it being too short or too long is split evenly 8% vs 8%. When it comes to course delivery it was found that there are variety of opinion

but the largest chunk 54.17%, preferred 100% in class with the next portion 16.67% suggesting 80% in class and 20% online. This would be something that can be decided at a future date anyway in the Covid-19 era. Whatever makes more sense as far as health and safety will carry the day.

As far as testing and assessment is involved 68% preferred in class testing including any final examinations with online testing and in class exams coming in second. The author personally prefers this option. Furthermore, the general opinion was found to expect such a course to be on a part time basis with 68% preferring this method.

Industry stake holder, 87.5%, proffered the opinion that this course is of very high quality and is seen positively by them. So much so that 96% are ready to promote this course with their service staff. Finally, they also feel that personnel that undertake this course will very probably enhance the level of service within their respective establishment and therefore satisfaction levels and better customer meal experiences.

At the end of things, the stakeholders or 88% of them, declared that they would openly support or undersign this course to show their acknowledgement of the importance of this training course for the catering industry.

The employee survey showed respondents with an average work experience of 10 years, therefore they should know where they need training to improve their skills and career prospects. The majority have to serve wine as part of their job. 64.94% had received or undertaken some sort of wine service training but still feel that level have fallen behind and there is a need for refresher and updating courses.

Training received or undertaken was mainly the WSET (UK) course and some of them quite some time back. Presently the WSET courses are the only internationally acknowledged course present in Malta and the institute of Tourism Studies is the registered centre in Malta. The only other similar course is that made by the Italian A.I.S through a local educator.

Employees are of the opinion that F&B servers should be properly trained in wine service with 96.88% showing this in the survey. 93.2% strongly approved the proposed course as being ideal to provide such training. Minor adjustments were suggested by these such as more customer care and wine and food pairing as well as practical tasting techniques. 78% saw the course as being the right length although some, 16% saw as too long. A matter of opinion depending on the content

earmarked for delivery. 15 sessions is what the author call a one semester course which at the Level 4 level targeted would be expected, in order to reflect its academic level.

Employees were split about the delivery of this course but the respondents who prefer 80% classroom and 20% online delivery were the largest group at 28%, with those wanting a 100% classroom-based approach coming in a close second with 22%. Again, this something that has to be considered as the present Covid-19 situation evolves.

As far as assessment is concerned the employees were split evenly on 100% in-class tests and 50% online tests and 50% in-class tests at 34% each this implies that assessment methods need to be kept open and decided according to the trainees in any group doing such a course to reflect better the preferences.

72% of respondents prefer the course to be on a part time basis which is in sync with the industry stakeholders with 72% agreeing to this option. 89.59% feel the course is professional in its make up and objectives therefore making it very attractive to the, also in sync with industry stakeholders here. In fact, 89.58% would be interested in attending such a course when it is made available.

Further to the above 90% feel that the course would improve career prospects for graduates as it improves their skills and knowledge to perform better and possible request better payment levels. As a last point on this survey, 95.75% feel comfortable promoting this course to friends and people who work in the catering industry therefore showing that the proposed course is appealing to employees and see it as tool to improve their career prospects.

Lastly on the topic of online surveys the client survey showed the following points. The age groups were varied from 25 to 65+ years of age implying varied experiences in different sorts of catering establishments. Interest is the fact that 54.07% were female respondents show that the female species seem to give due importance to proper service when eating out including the area of wine service.

The majority from their work profiles are professional and in management or related areas of employment. 40.15% were married and 18.24% living on their own. 51.27% eat out a few times a month, 24.05% a few times a week and 25.68% less than a few times a month. This element gives credibility to their opinion on service received, including wine service levels. 87.26% order wine when eating out.

97.45% expect servers to be well trained in wine service, therefore they have expectancies in this area when eating out. The primary faults noticed by the clients were focussed on lack of proper equipment, lack of knowledge on use of service equipment such as glassware, decanters, wine buckets, also lack of wine knowledge, wine and food pairing and soft skills when dealing with clients.

Reflecting the highlighted faults mention above the preferred traits they expect in sommeliers / wine servers is that they have good customer skills, grooming, confidence in their job, flexible, wine and food pairing, service techniques, grape and wine knowledge as well as good table etiquette.

When asked about the course content being able to improve wine service skills in restaurants and hotels 94.12% agreed that it is ideal for the purpose put to it by the author. This was confirmed further when 88% declared that in their opinion the proposed course includes the skills and knowledge a wine server should have, and presumably would be better with the suggested improvements in question 12 of the survey which included tasting session, in sync with employees and stakeholders, introducing lesser known wine regions, wine service temperatures, wine styles etc.

Clients also were of the opinion that the course content once applied by trainees would improve the meal experience with 98.13% giving this opinion. 96.19% would be ready to promote such a course with friends and employees as they see it as a sensible course which has a positive goal for all concerned.

Furthermore, respondents, 92.32% of them, feel that this survey has allowed them to give input for better service levels in Maltese restaurants and therefore this it shows a level of ownership by the clients. This concludes the online surveys part and the author moves on to the questionnaire feedback summary from the focus group chosen by the author.

The focus group questionnaires can be found as appendices 16 to 20 of this report. The summary of the focus group feedback collected via the questionnaires was the following;

- Regarding the concept all members of the group saw it as interesting and well needed. They emphasised the requirement to provide the needed depth in knowledge and skill to ensure it is being a successful tool in elevating the service levels in Maltese restaurants.

They further emphasized that this course could help to provide a tool for catering businesses to fill in skills gaps in personnel and related staff shortages in a relatively short period. They also feel that establishments should find it difficult to allow staff members to attend such a course as four-hour sessions are quite doable. In sync with other surveys the group looks at this course in a positive manner.

- The group members feel comfortable with the *concept* of the proposed course. They stated that suggesting to their staff to undertake this course especially those working in the food and beverage service element of front of house is very probable. Another point coming out was that the fact they know who the person and institution providing the course are proven professionals and have a history in wine service training also gives the course more credibility and weight in their minds. The group also suggested that participants should be vetted so as to ensure that those doing it have a reasonable amount of work experience and some knowledge of wine as this should facilitate uptake of knowledge and skills as they feel the content is rather advanced and should be respected.
- The element of *staff sponsorship* as part of a CPD programme was positively met by the group but they insisted that certain safeguards are built in to cover the element of staff poaching as they would have invested in these staff members and would not like to see that newly acquired skill and knowledge pinched from under their noses before they could benefit from it. This could include a sort of contract whereby staff members would be required to reimburse training cost if they leave their job before six months after they graduate. Finally, the price factor was also mentioned signifying that the cost of training is important for them. However, there are schemes provided by local authorities such as one called 'Investing in Skills' which cover training costs for hospitality industry personnel where the employers can claim refunds on training costs.
- The group's comments on *additions or changes* to the course as it is being proposed were minimal as they like what they see. However, they feel the access to the course should ensure online availability and attendance. A suggestion was to lower the exam length to two hours as in Malta Level 4 qualifications see this as ideal. This will be taken into consideration. Another member felt that if the course is too advanced perhaps it could be split in two phases to allow for the high degree of knowledge being imparted to be better absorbed by the participant. Having said this, if participants are vetted ensure the right level of attendee is ensured this should not create problems. One other suggestion was to ensure Maltese wine, their production, grapes used etc. is in the course. This element will be added in and amplified in due course.

- The group's views on mode of *delivery*, *assessments* etc. on the proposed course were that four-hour sessions are good enough. One suggested 2x2hour sessions but considering the content needing to be delivered two-hour sessions might encroach on the educator's ability to give what is required and in the required format allowing for discussion and debate. One even suggested a Level 5 qualification and the course being strung out over 1-2 years but this could be counterproductive in the short and long term as catering employees and the managements are not very receptive of strung out training as they want results quick for their investment in training. However, one can consider a longer course in the future. The group seem to agree that the best method of delivery is a blend of online and in class lecturing. To which the author agree as he feels that this may increase interest and also applications as for the participants it may be seen as being more flexible. The same outlook was put forward for the assessment method a blend of online testing and in class exams.
- Regarding the element of possible *improvements to the staff* as a result of the proposed course, the focus group mentioned that things like stock rotation, procurement, wine storage, wine sales customer satisfaction and better customer interaction could all see improvement. They also feel that the course would improve the level of professionalism in their staff and enhance the image of both the staff and the establishments in the eyes of the clientele. Another point noted was that trained staff could deliver in selling better quality wines to clients through that recommendation skills when it come to wine and food pairing. Finally, the overall meal experience stands to benefit from these employees, something that is in sync with the client survey.
- The group also feel that the service and meal experience of the customer stands to benefit from this course as the graduates due to their expected professional manner, table etiquette, salesmanship and knowledge able outlook on the wines being put to the clients, should achieve the required improvements in this area. Another point mentioned was that the fact that staff tends to move from one establishment to another that knowledge stand to spread out into other establishment with the expected ripple effect being that clients will start to feel the improved service and encourage other staff to seek out the course in order to get the required knowledge to improve their career prospects. This also is in sync with the employee survey. Therefore, a sense of professionalism in the trained employees can create healthy competition allowing for improved wages and conditions of work which will in turn improve staff satisfaction levels, reducing staff turnover and improving the clients services.

- Asked how this course would *impinge or change the traditional service methods*, the group responded that this proposed course can induce new approaches to wine service and keep up with trends therefore increasing sales and help in organizing and conducting special meals such as 'Gastro Dinners'. Some saw no real changes in the sense that bringing back the concept of the sommelier would not change the service methods but promote better wine sales driving up the spend per head in the clientele. Another point of view was that the course should be used as a tool to enhance serve methods in place and help correct certain mistakes that a recurring, something mentioned also in the client survey. Therefore, the employment of qualified sommeliers is seen as an improvement more than an impingement on the traditional service methods as it inserts a level of wine knowledge that is many a time missing in service staff.
- Asked regarding the possibility of *further training* once this course is finished by trainees. The focus group were of the opinion that while appreciating the usefulness of this course, further training is always an option as wine trends and styles are continuously evolving and staff should ideally keep abreast of developments but his course would have given a sound base on which to build their knowledge and skills in the area of wine service and its related aspects. Further training could also be in the form of hands-on sessions to refresh knowledge and skills, costings methods, development of sales and pricing techniques were considered a natural extension to this course. Therefore, in the eyes of the focus group continuous professional development is always required and as a spill off the trained sommelier could be used to impart some of their knowledge and skills to their colleagues thus improving overall team performance.
- *Further comments* received mention the importance of such a course for every food and beverage server as it can provide lots of benefits post completion for all concerned. The course is also seen as something which has been adapted to the catering establishment needs and it should be encouraged and implemented even with assistance from the local government and the Malta Tourism Authority and not least the Maltese touristic establishments and wine importers and local wine producers.

Summarizing the online surveys and focus group questionnaire results, it is possible to highlight six main aspects of wine service that needs to be improved. First the knowledgeable use of proper wine service equipment servers need to know how to use the proper equipment with the proper wine and service requirement. Secondly the element of wine knowledge need to be improved dramatically to allow for better information the client on choices available. Thirdly the point of good customer interaction skills and grooming to project a satisfactory image of the

server in the eyes of the client. Fourth, the skills of wine and food combination and recommendation. Fifth, the ability to undertake proper wine storage and serving temperatures and lastly sixth, upselling skills to improve wine sales and promotional sales activities so as to ensure improved spend per head in the restaurant where servers perform their duties.

5 Conclusion

The current chapter summarizes the research and points out the main conclusions. Additionally, suggestions for the future product development are presented.

The master thesis process really got underway in October 2019 and the online studies/surveys were sent out in June/July 2020. When the process was planned by the author there was no Covid-19 situation so although the author tried to keep to the planned and accepted path of project development this work was handicapped by the resulting limiting of access to the target segments for the collection of data. This game changer came about after March 2020 and by the time the surveys were to be sent out a number of respondents could not be reached for their feedback.

Hence the situation changed drastically during the master thesis process for the author as the surveys and focus group interviews were planned for June/July 2020. It can be said the current master thesis results are now more valuable as they touched up the preferred delivery and assessment models in the present situation with social distancing and other health measures put in place but at the same time ensuring the continued training still taking place. Therefore, understanding better, the stakeholders' expectations in these aspects of the proposed course's delivery and assessment.

The aim of the master thesis was to put to different stakeholders of the Maltese catering industry a junior sommelier course based on previous research held in 2017 where feedback was collected on the perceived situation in restaurants regarding wine service level, should servers be training in this area and what should be included in the training to ensure a proper professional designed course to cater for the highlighted needs.

To achieve the purpose, the author looked at the industry's recent developments combined with a bit of history and related statistics, the legal framework for training course qualifications in Malta, benchmarking the proposed course against similar courses in other countries in European Union and further afar, the author also looked at job description and job specifications of a sommelier, the character traits one expects to find in such a person, consumer trends, wine and food pairing

criteria, course benchmarking, as well as looking at how adult learners tend to apprehend information when attending studies.

The necessary surveys' format was designed before distribution to the targeted audiences and since face to face interviews were not possible a questionnaire was designed to cover the intended questions so these could then be sent to focus group members for their feedback. This part of the process ended by giving the author 293 surveys and five questionnaire/interviews from different stakeholders whereby their satisfaction levels and suggestions, possible adjustments could be evaluated. Analysing these results pointed out the strengths of the proposed course, as well as the aspects that may need to be improved. Based on these results chapter 4.2 combined the results' analysis and included suggestions on how the proposed course could become better designed and more effective before promoting it to the targeted market of possible applicants.

The empirical research combining the online surveys and the five focus group questionnaires/interviews sought an answer to this report's research question: is this proposed junior sommelier course what is needed to improve the level of wine service in Maltese restaurants? The study results show that all stakeholders are satisfied with the concept of the proposed course in most of its aspects. Altogether 84% of the respondents said the course is very professional and well designed. Plus, the focus group members all praised the course and its content especially the content mentioning its broad coverage of the needed skills for proper professional training to take place.

Regarding possible weaknesses, four main issues were revealed: more hands-on training, more wine tasting technique skills, customer care /soft skills, and wine storage and pricing skills. Based on these findings, four future developments are presented.

First, to improve the sommeliers' administrative skills side they can be provided with special sessions on proper wine storage and stock rotation upskilling their capabilities as they may be expected to be responsible for wine purchasing decisions, wine list formulation as well as wine pricing.

Secondly, since the course is not on customer care, again special sessions could be put in place to enhance their customer interaction and improving the element of 'meal experience' during the performance of their duties. Also, this could increase their confidence when suggesting wines to clients as they appreciate better the customer's frame of mind.

Thirdly, improved wine tasting techniques can come in hand if the employees are required to assess a possible defective wine for a client or to propose possible wine when in the process of planning special 'Gastro Dinners' for their establishments.

And fourth, possible assessment/training on site to assess service technique in action. This could be added in the future after agreement with establishment managements to reinforce the course's credibility and also exposure to the persons who decide, i.e. the managements.

In the future such a course could be earmarked for promotion nationwide to interested persons as a source of knowledge and training to enhance the local tourism industry level of service especially with the national mid-term goals of attracting 6-star tourism which requires high levels of service.

Regarding future research, the author suggests conducting a survey among course attendees after the first course is carried out hopefully in October 2021. It would allow to receive feedback first-hand from the persons who experienced the course and see what and where improvement can be made to improve its content, sustainability, delivery methods, assessment tools etc.

To sum up, the current master thesis is a valuable source of information for the Institute of Tourism Studies when seeking to amplify its course portfolio for the benefit of the Maltese Hospitality industry as well analysing stakeholders' preferences and expectations. The online survey conducted received enough responses (294), under the circumstances, that allowed for the reliable conclusions of the author.

The questionnaires, in the author's opinion, added in-depth feedback giving outlooks that needed to be given due importance to better understand of the stakeholders' appreciation and what could be improved. All in all, the author is of the opinion that the research was needed to reinforce the previous 2017 research and at the same time present a possible, viable and acceptable solution to deal with the problem of sub level wine service by service personnel in the catering sector of the Maltese Hospitality industry.

5.1 Suggestions for development

Besides what was mentioned in chapter 5, the putting into action the suggested Junior Sommelier course would be a concrete way of improving service quality levels as perceived by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry in 1988, presently developed into the now widely accepted SERVQUAL model.

This model is seen by many as a reliable measure for service quality. These researchers, Parasuraman et al, had then listed ten determinants or dimensions of quality service based on reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding the client and tangibles.

Van Looy et al in 2003 went on to merge some of these dimensions, leading to five determinants covering service quality:

1. *Tangibles* – the appearance of physical facilities, personnel, the tools or equipment used to provide the service and communication material.
2. *Reliability* – consistent performance and dependability, meaning that the performance of service is done correctly the first time and the service providers deliver on their promises.
3. *Responsiveness* – the willingness to help clients while providing prompt service.
4. *Assurance* – by the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.
5. *Empathy* – the caring for, and individualized attention to client needs.

Grönroos, in 2015, went further and brought these down to two dimensions, technical outcomes and functional process related. These quality dimensions revolve around WHAT the customer receives and HOW the customer receives it (the service and product). The outcome dimension, according to Grönroos, is what clients receive in their interactions with the service provider (the server, in my case), or what the client is left with at the end of the interaction process. On the other hand, the technical dimension is the effect left on the client's view due to server performance on the job, what they say and how they do their job which can also influence clients.

The proposed course is as planned by the author has kept in mind Grönroos's and Van Looy's dimensional service aspects. The author ultimately designed the course for those individuals that have already proven to a good degree, their knowledge of wine and wine styles through successful completion of the internationally recognized Wine Spirit Education Trust (WSET) or Society of Wine Educators study programs but are desiring to also obtain a sommelier certification.

Applicants will be required to show additional proficiency specific to restaurant operations in the areas of food and wine pairing; wine list creation and stock management; service standards and serving temperature adjustment as highlighted by stakeholders. The proficiency will involve a practical demonstration of service (possibly by video submission) and passing timed, online tests

as well as an in-class exam (or online if needs be), consisting of questions on those topics covered during the duration of the course. All topics are taught through an online classroom facility or physical in class delivery or a combination of the two methods.

This Sommelier certification, once put into motion, will be a proven sign of a solid and well-rounded industry foundation. Certainly, this certification and a future Certified Advanced Sommelier Certification will be the most respected first and second level sommelier certifications available in Malta competing with similar certifications anywhere.

I would recommend that all or part of the above competencies are considered during the ongoing exercise for identification, formalization, and implementation of the proposed qualification and help development of updated competencies. Furthermore one investigate the possibility of specialises spin off training or courses in subjects such as beer, water, whiskey and cognac.

5.2 Evaluation of the thesis process and one's own learning

In my opinion, the whole thesis process went smoothly with high efficiency, in spite of some forced interruptions and slight deviations from the product thesis timeline due to the COVID-19 emergency, and finally led to the satisfactory result as for the thesis report and for the product itself.

I had a great command over the whole process and did not lose the goal of the thesis and product at any stages. Moreover, to get a trustworthy result of great value, a variety of data collection methods starting from focus group questionnaires and ending with online stake holder surveys were used at the different stages of the thesis process.

In addition, all the concepts and examples covered in the theory part were carefully and critically analysed considering advantages and disadvantages of what provides the holistic idea of the proposed product excluding preconceptions.

To conclude, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the thesis process, it is enough to take a look at the created course content (product) appendix 15, to understand and ensure its value, user-friendliness and current relevance.

As far as learning outcomes are concerned, I was directly involved in all stages of the product development and thesis writing, which afforded me a chance to benefit in the highest degree from all the activities aimed on the product creation and writing of the thesis report.

First of all, I got deeper knowledge of many international wine service courses and related topics. Some of them can be highlighted as market trend issues, trends in quality wine service, details of courses certification, drivers and barriers of staff development in the hospitality industry in Malta which is trying to become more sustainable, quality assurance and impacts depending on the catering industry sector.

Secondly, thesis writing, and product development processes helped me to put in the theory base, which I got via studying in Haaga-Helia and WSET(UK), the knowledge and skills base which I have learned in my working career and to create a useful tool for staff development in the Maltese catering industry.

Thirdly, via completing this report, I was able to enhance my professional skills and to build the network that is extremely useful for my lecturing carrier.

Furthermore, the work on this thesis gave me the opportunity to find relevant, up to date, quality international sources of information on wine service courses which helped me benchmark my proposed wine server course.

Last but not least, the thesis writing and product creation processes were an excellent opportunity to check, improve and demonstrate such competencies as critical and analytical thinking, problem solving, ability to set clear an relevant objectives and to find solutions to them, as well as, the ability to write consistent, coherent, grammatically correct and comprehensive academic texts.

To conclude, this master thesis report and the designed product reflect my skills and knowledge and show me as a worthy student of International Hospitality programme in Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences specializing in Culinary Management.

Last but not least I have to show my appreciation all the support and learning received from my Haaga-Helia lecturers and support of my colleagues at work as well as my family in the recent months.

“Wine can be a better teacher than ink, and banter is often better than books”

— Stephen Fry, The Fry Chronicles

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Appendices

Appendix 1.

Maltese MQF Levels

8	Doctoral Degree	
7	Master's Degree Post-graduate Diploma Post-graduate Certificate	
6	Bachelor's Degree	
5	Undergraduate Diploma Undergraduate Certificate	VET Higher Diploma Foundation Degree
4	Matriculation Certificate Advanced Level Intermediate Level	VET Diploma (iv)
3	General Education SEC Grade 1-5	VET Level 3 (iii)
2	General Education Level 2 SEC Grade 6-7	VET Level 2 (ii)
1	General Education Level 1 School Leaving Certificate	VET Level 1 (i)
B	Introductory Level B*	
A	Introductory Level A*	

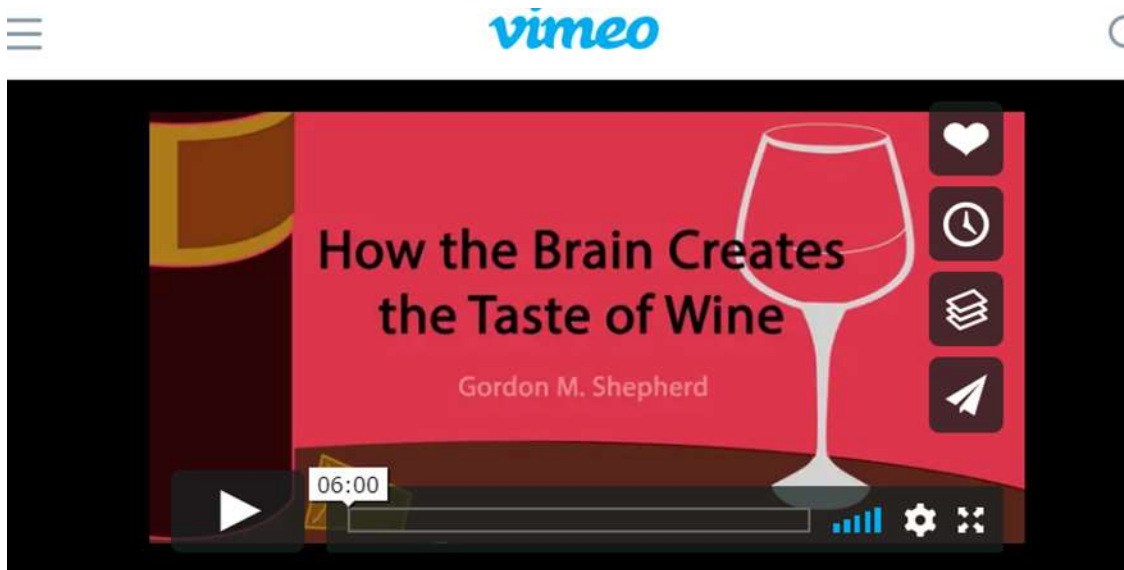
* These are not yet included in legislation

Annotations

- i. A Full VET Level 1 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as a Full Secondary School Certificate and Profile (SSC&P) Level 1.
- ii. A Full VET Level 2 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 4 Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) subjects at Grade 6 and 7.
- iii. A VET Level 3 Qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 6 Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) subjects at Grades 1 to 5.
- iv. A VET Diploma should enjoy the same parity of esteem as the Matriculation Certificate.

(NCFHE - National Commission for Further and Higher Education, 2016)

Appendix 2. Neuroenology: How the Brain Creates the Taste of Wine

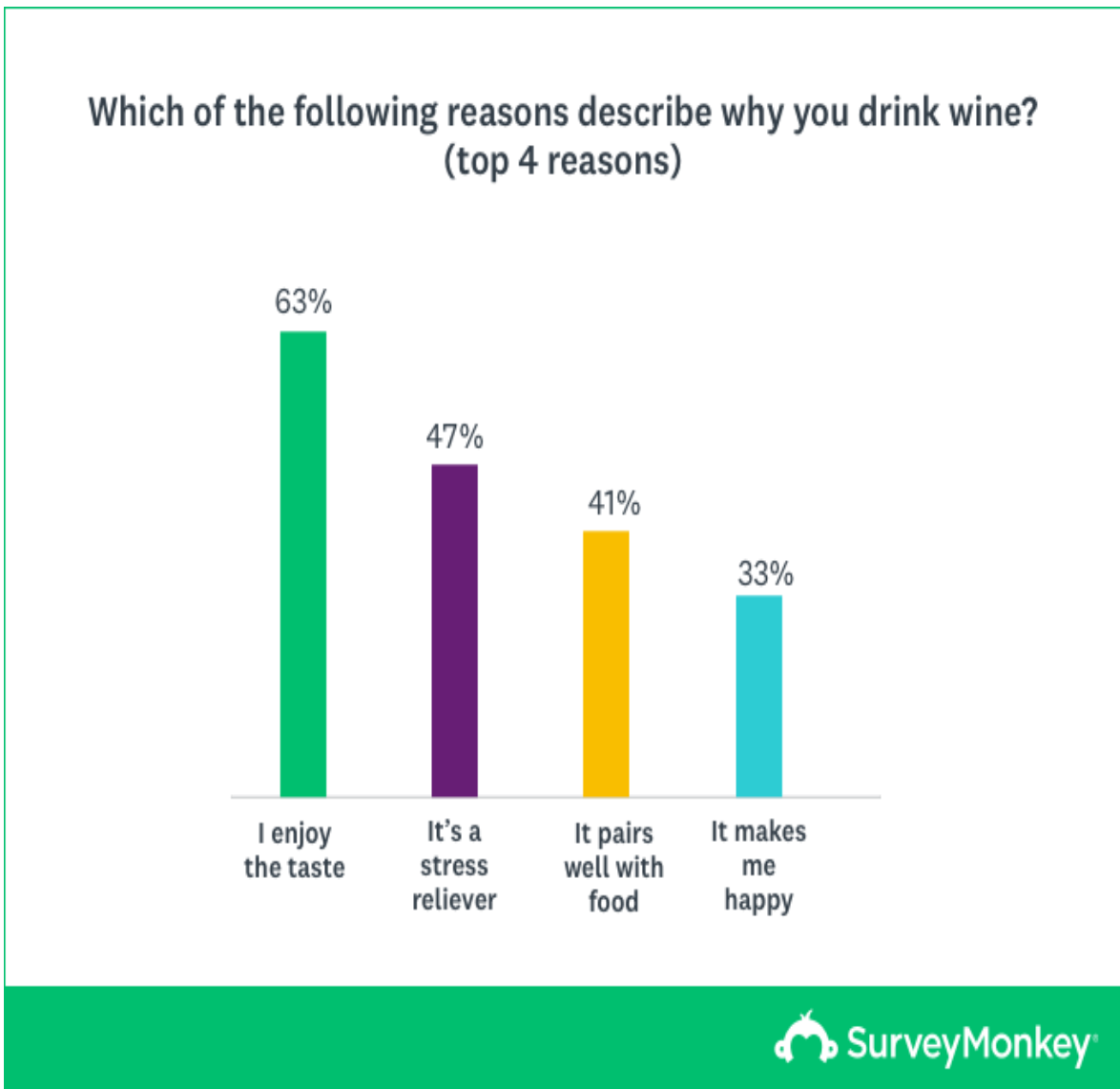


Neuroenology: How the Brain Creates the Taste of Wine

2 years ago

Source: <https://vimeo.com/254564210>

Appendix 3. Wine survey findings by John Gitlin



Appendix 4. The Demeanour of the Professional Sommelier (Barrachina, N/A)

1. The Attitude of the Sommelier:

- It is imperative for a sommelier to display a quietly confident but not arrogant attitude and to demonstrate superlative hospitality throughout beverage service.
- It is important for sommeliers to put themselves in the role of a server; no job or task on the floor is beneath the role of a sommelier; he or she does whatever needs to be done in the moment to take care of the guest.
- The intentions of overall hospitality must be first; i.e. making guests feel welcome and comfortable whether they are partaking of beverages or not
- The sommelier is an integral part of a team providing the experience of superlative hospitality for the guest. The sommelier should be aware of all aspects of service that are transpiring in the dining room.

2. Vendors:

- Always treat and communicate with vendors (i.e., parties such as distributors, importers, brokers and winemakers) respectfully and responsibly; no profanity and no abusive language or treatment should ever occur.
- The supplier is an essential part of the team that supports the experience of hospitality for the guest.
- Use the vendor's time in an efficient and professional manner by communicating your needs clearly, honouring appointments and answering or returning e-mails and phone calls.
- The hospitality world is ever-changing, and today's colleague or vendor could potentially become tomorrow's employer or vice versa.

3. Colleagues

- Integrate into the service team and provide help whenever and however needed. A good service team member does not let another team member fail.
- The sommelier is in a high visibility position and is a service leader who sets the tone of the overall service experience in a dining room.

4. Team Education

- Share knowledge and service acumen with team members; educate with an inclusive spirit.
- Avoid intimidating or alienating guests and co-workers with esoteric wine information.
- Strive to simplify beverage knowledge without dumbing it down; hand it to others in an easily understandable way. Improving the overall competence of each team member will result in increased guest satisfaction and sales.

5. Tableside Demeanour

- SMILE. Be friendly, respectful, engaging, and professional in a genuine and authentic manner.
- Attention should ALWAYS be on the guest and serving the guest, and never drawn to the sommelier.
- Respond to guest compliments with brief thanks and appreciation.
- Utilize your considerable knowledge as appropriate.

6. Establishing Guest Rapport

- Approach guests with the intent of understanding their priorities, wants and needs; look for opportunities to fulfil and exceed their expectations.

- Pay close attention to guest response, speaking manner and body language; adjust your manner and behaviour accordingly.
- Assess to what degree assistance is required and desired.

7. General points

- Possess considerable depth of knowledge of your restaurant's overall beverage program, food menu, and operation policies.
- Be able to provide brief but accurate descriptors (aroma, flavour and structure) of all beverages without overwhelming the guest with unnecessary verbiage. Read the guest and supply the appropriate amount of information.¹
- DO NOT MAKE THINGS UP: If you do not know the answer to a guest question, offer to get the answer as soon as possible.

8. Communication

- Maintain eye contact with guests as appropriate.
- Be an active listener. Clarify anything the guest has communicated, especially when confirming the order.
- Discreetly determine if the host has a budget in mind; if not, offer several selections at different price points.
- When in doubt, undersell: honour the guest's trust with regard to price point and perceived value.
- Learn and remember guest's preferences.
- Guest relationships are built over time.

9. Dealing with problems

- Remember, “The guest is always right.”
- Guest perception is your reality.
- The only “justice” is the resolution of the problem in the guest’s mind; “fairness” does NOT matter.
- Make an honest and authentic effort to make the situation right.

10. Suggested Steps for Problem Resolution

- A. Recognize and acknowledge there is a problem.
- B. Engage the guest, ask them to express themselves.
- C. Listen actively, authentically and completely.
- D. Ask the guest about their expectations of how the issue can be addressed, i.e., “How can I make this right?” “What can I do?” “What’s the best way to take care of this?”
- E. Decide what can be done, based on your understanding of the guest’s expectation, the business parameters and policies of your establishment.
- F. Rely on other key staff members when appropriate.

10. Specific problems:

I. Guest rejecting a glass or bottle of wine:

- Immediately apologize and remove the glassware and bottle.
- Away from the table, discreetly determine the condition of the wine
 - If the wine is flawed, offer another bottle of the same wine
 - If the wine is sound, offer the wine list to make another selection.
- Above all, never put the guest in the position of being wrong.

II. Spilling wine on the guest or the table:

- Apologize and take immediate action to mitigate any spillage and possible staining.
- Assure the guest that the restaurant will pay for any necessary dry cleaning.
- Immediately reseat guest at another table if possible.
- If another table is not available, temporarily move guests to the bar or another table and reset original table.

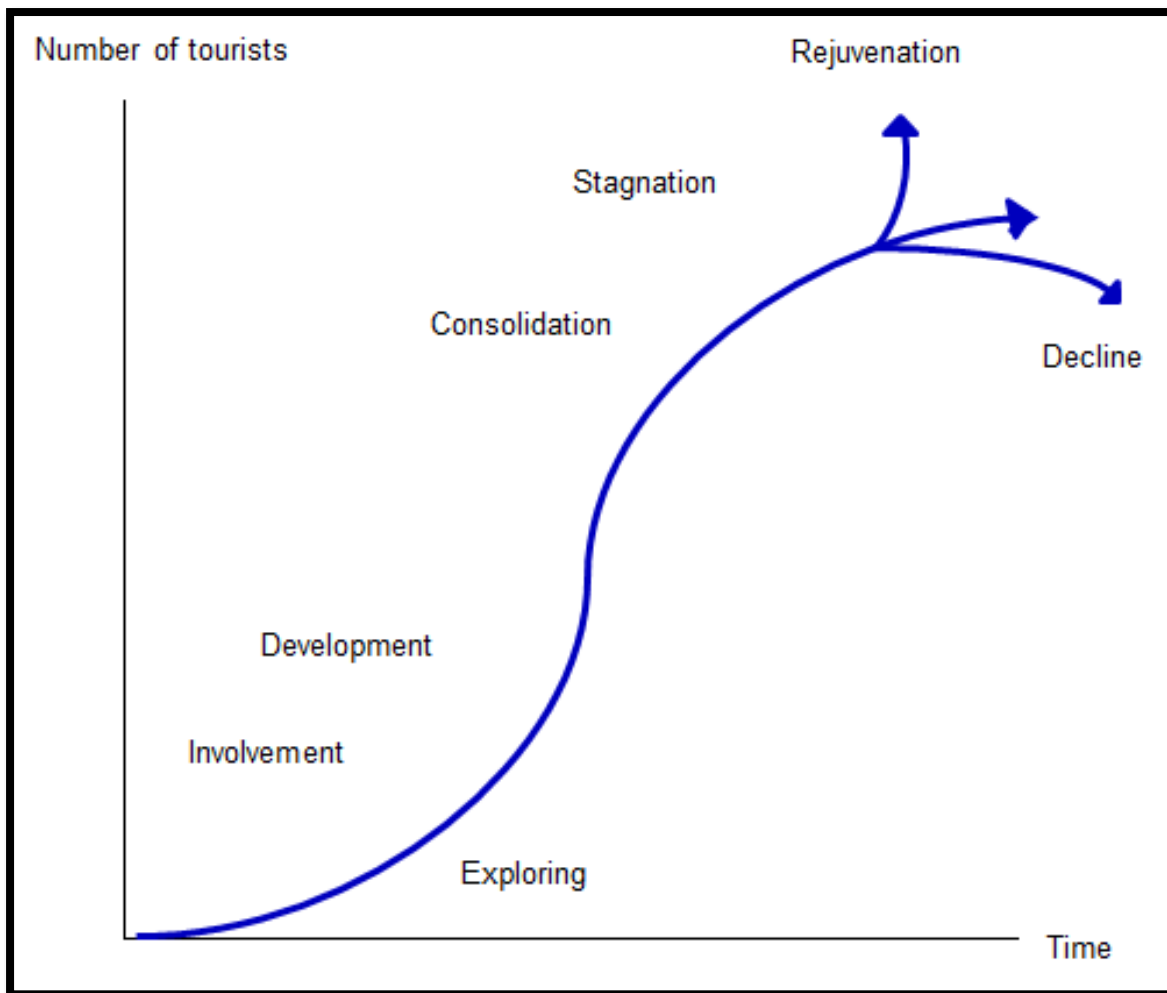
III. Wrong bottle or price on the bill:

- These are difficult scenarios that can be challenging to resolve. Bring in upper management to help resolve the issue.
- Apologize for any misunderstanding and politely suggest that the guest pay for the bottle they believed to have ordered.
- If the guest refuses to pay for the wine, bring in the maître d' or manager to help resolve the situation.
- Be as diplomatic as possible and realize the potential ill will the situation could create for the restaurant.

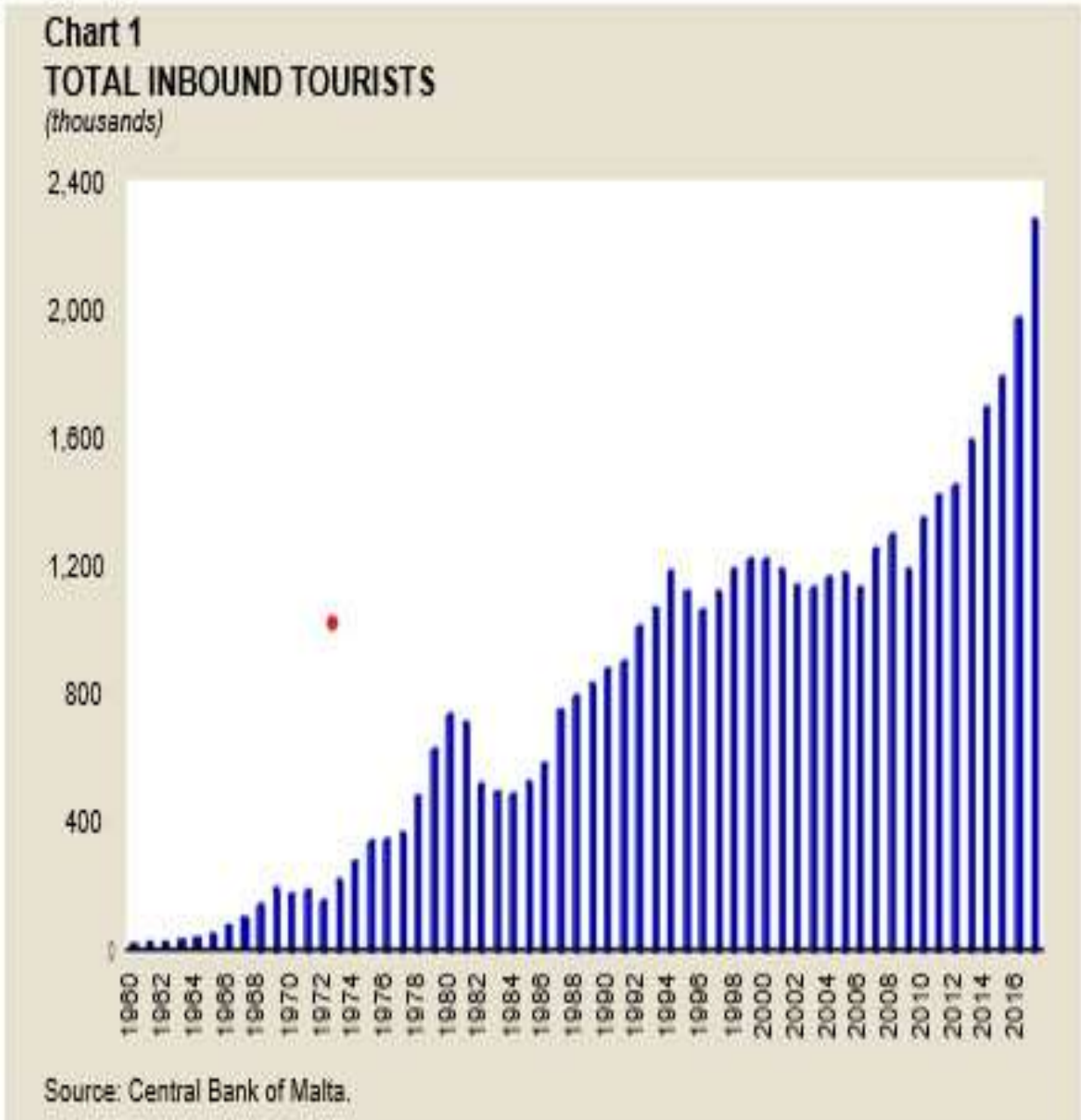
IV. Complaints on wine list or by the glass pricing:

- Acknowledge the customer's opinions and tactfully state the restaurant's policies on pricing.

Appendix 5. Butler's Lifecycle Curve



Appendix 6. Total inbound tourists 1960 – 2016



Source Quarterly Review by Central Bank of Malta - 2018

Appendix 7. Making recommendations to customers

A few general pointers are set out below that may be followed when advising the customer on which beverage to choose to accompany a meal. However, it must be stressed that customers should always be given complete freedom in their selection of wines or other drinks.

- Aperitifs are alcoholic beverages that are drunk before the meal. If wine will be consumed with the meal, then the aperitif selected should be a grape (wine-based) rather than a grain (spirit-based) aperitif, since the latter can potentially spoil or dull the palate.
- The aperitif is usually a wine-based beverage. It is meant to stimulate the appetite and therefore should not be sweet. Dry and medium dry sherries, dry vermouths and Sercial or Verdelho Madeira are all good examples of aperitifs.
- Starter courses are often best accompanied by a dry white or dry rose wine.
- National dishes should normally be complemented by the national wines of that country, for example, Italian red wine with pasta dishes.
- Fish and shellfish dishes are often most suited to well chilled dry white wines.
- Red meats such as beef and lamb blend and harmonise well with red wine.
- White meats such as veal and pork are acceptable with medium white wines.
- Game dishes require the heavier and more robust red wines to complement their full flavour.
- Sweets and desserts are served at the end of the meal and here it is acceptable to offer well chilled sweet white wines that may come from the Loire, Sauternes, Barsac or Hungary. These wines harmonise best with dishes containing fruit.
- The majority of cheeses blend well with port and other dry robust red wines. Port is the traditional wine harmonising best with Stilton cheese.
- The grain- and fruit-based spirits and liqueurs all harmonise well with coffee.

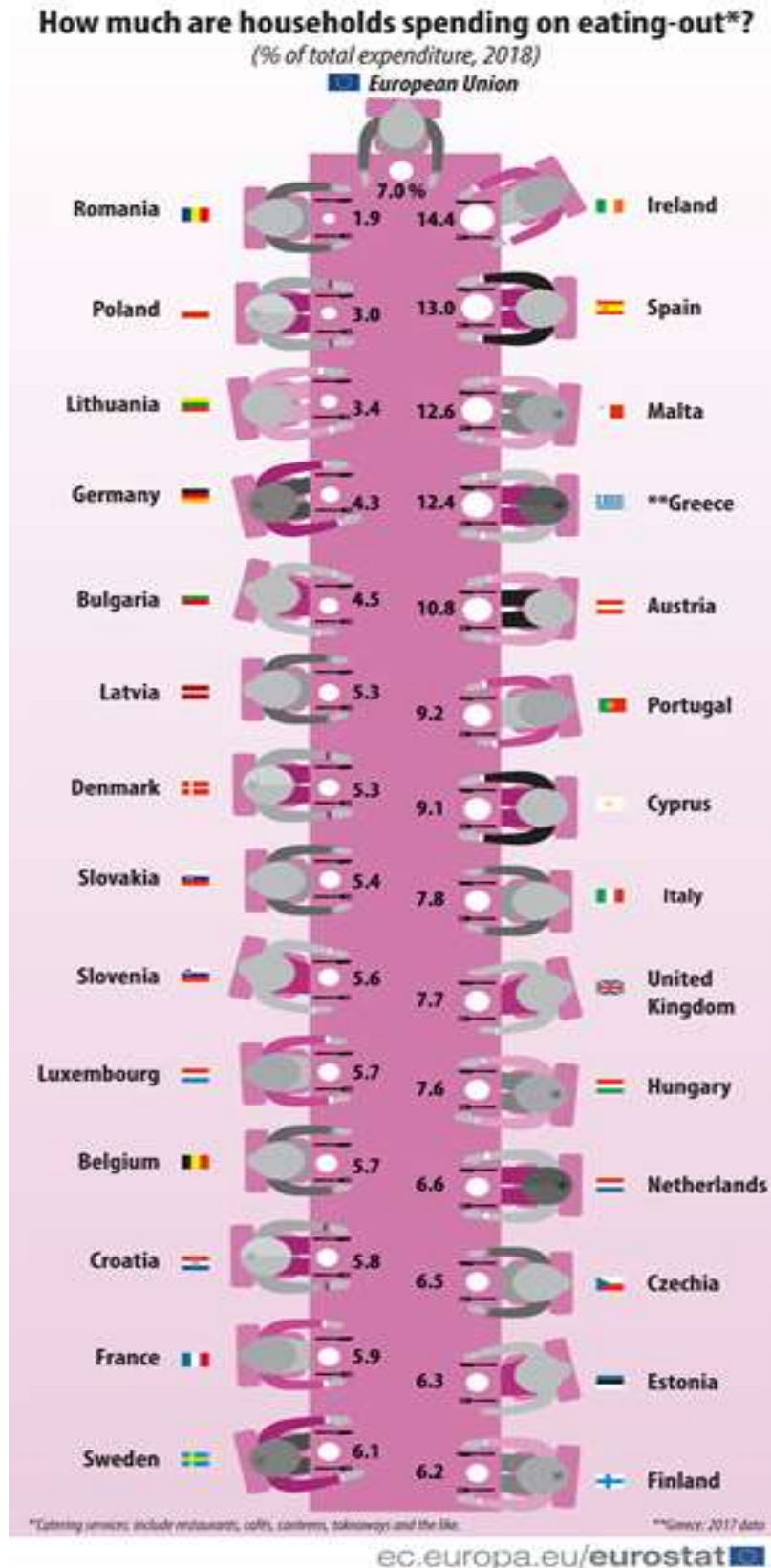
Appendix 8. General guidelines for matching wine and food

Wine Characteristic vs Food considerations

- *Acidity* - Can be used to match, or to contrast, acidity in foods, for example, crisp wines to match lemon or tomato, or to cut through creamy flavours.
- *Age/maturity* - As wine ages and develops it can become delicate with complex and intricate flavours. More simple foods, such as grills or roasts, work better with older wines than stronger tasting foods, which can overpower the wines.
- *Oak* - The more oaked the wine then the more robust and flavoursome the foods need to be. Heavily oaked wines can overpower more delicate foods.
- *Sweetness* - *Generally* the wine should be sweeter than the foods or it will taste flat or thin. Sweet dishes need contrast for them to match well with sweeter wines, for example, acids in sweeter foods can harmonise with the sweetness in the wines. Savoury foods with sweetness (e.g. carrots or onions) can match well with ripe fruity wines. Blue cheeses can go well with sweet wines. Also sweeter wines can go well with salty foods.
- *Tannin* - Tannic wines match well with red meats and semi-hard cheeses (e.g. cheddar). Tannic wines are not good with egg dishes and wines with high tannin content do not work well with salty foods.
- *Weight* - Big, rich wines go well with robust (flavoursome) meat dishes, but can overpower lighter flavoured foods.

Source: Table 5.15 in Food & Beverage Service by Dennis Lillicrap, 8th Edition.

Appendix 9. EU Household Spending on Eating Out 2018



Appendix 10. Level Descriptors for MQF Level 4 Courses

MQF Level Descriptors for Level 4		
Level Knowledge	<p>Level 4 EQF</p> <p>Factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study.</p>	<p>Level 4 MQF</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understands broad theoretical knowledge and analysis of information related to a field of work or study; 2. Understands facts and establishes basic principles in broad contexts within a field of work or study; 3. Applies facts and procedures in broad contexts within a defined field of work or study; 4. Selects and analyses theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a specific field of work or study.
Skills	<p>A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrates acquired knowledge and the ability to apply a range of technical or academic skills to carry out multiple complex tasks; 2. Communicates theoretical and technical information in a work or learning environment; 3. Generates solutions to specific problems within a field of work or study.
Competences	<p>Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change. Supervise the routine work of others, take some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Applies knowledge and skills to perform qualitative and quantitative tasks that require technical capacity normally associated with a technician's competence; 2. Supervises the quality and quantity of work of self and others' under quality assured structures with responsibility and autonomy; 3. Demonstrates an advanced level of key competences at this level as a basis for higher education.
Learning Outcomes	<p>Knowledge and Understanding;</p> <p>Applying Knowledge and Understanding;</p> <p>Communication Skills;</p> <p>Judgmental Skills;</p> <p>Learning Skills;</p> <p>Autonomy and Responsibility.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understands and analyses broad theoretical, practical and technical knowledge related to a field of work or study; 2. Follows instructions and carries out defined theoretical, complex and technical tasks; 3. Communicates theoretical and technical information in a work or learning context; 4. Interacts with and generates solutions to problems within the immediate environment of a given field of work or study; 5. Applies key competences to defined actions and to a technical or academic field of work or learning context; 6. Exercises autonomy and takes responsibility for defined qualitative and quantitative tasks of self and others by completing complex tasks in a broad context under quality assured mechanisms.

Figure 10: Level Descriptors for MQF Level 4

Appendix 11. Minimum MQF Credits for Qualifications and Awards by Level

MQF Level	Examples of Qualifications	'Qualification' Minimum Credits Required	'Award' Credits Required
Level 8	Doctoral Degree Third Cycle Bologna Process	NA	NA
Level 7	Masters Second Cycle Bologna Process	90-120	Less than 30
	Post-Graduate Diploma	60	
	Post-Graduate Certificate	30	
Level 6	Bachelor ²³ /Bachelor (Hons.) ²⁴ First Cycle Bologna Process	180-240	Less than 180
Level 5	Short Cycle Qualification	120	Less than 60
	Undergraduate Higher Diploma	90	
	Undergraduate Diploma	60	
	Undergraduate Certificate	30	
	VET Level 5 Programme ²⁵	60-120	
Level 4	Pre-Tertiary Certificate	30	Less than 120
	VET Level 4 Programme ²⁶	120	
	MATSEC Certificate	NA	
Level 3	VET Level 3 Programme ²⁷	60	Less than 60
	General and Subject Certificate	NA	
Level 2	VET Level 2 Programme ²⁸	60	Less than 60
	General and Subject Certificate	NA	
Level 1	VET Level 1 Programme ²⁹	40	Less than 40
	General and Subject Certificate	NA	
Introductory Level A	Preparatory Programme	30	Less than 30
Introductory Level B	Pre-entry Basic Skills Course	30	Less than 30

Table 1: Minimum number of credits for 'Qualifications' and parameters for 'Awards'

Source: NCFHE Referencing Report 2016

Appendix 12. Covering note/letter used in email sent to Focus Group re their Questionnaire

Dear

I am currently conducting my thesis for the master's degree in Hospitality Management with Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences in Finland. My thesis is entitled 'A Junior Sommelier Course for the Maltese Catering Industry Personnel', and its' aim is to propose and make available to catering service personnel the required skills and knowledge to enhance wine service levels in local catering establishments.

The proposed course and its content was identified in a previous survey held some time back among relevant stakeholders. You are being requested to take part in a Focus Group to criticize and suggest modification to the attached outline of the proposed course. I see this course as a tool to improve our service staff performance level in the challenging times ahead for our industry in a post COVID-19 environment.

By answering this mail and the attached questionnaire you will be consenting to allow me, John Zahra, ID No 266159(M), to process the information given by yourself, regarding the proposed Junior Sommelier course, for the purposes of research and completion of the Master's thesis entitled 'A Junior Sommelier Course for the Maltese Catering Industry Personnel'.

Your participation in my survey, does in no way suggest that you have been forced to participate in any way and it is to be clear that you do so on a voluntary basis as you agree and wish to provide input for my research.

All personal data will be protected according to the Data Protection Act on the Laws of Malta (ACT XXXI of 2001). All participants are promised anonymity, and when your feedback and any quotes are used from your questionnaire forms, you will not be mentioned by name or place of work in such a way that it should not be possible to backtrack to you later.

Therefore, only your lines of work or society background will be mentioned to indicate the provenance of the information. Contact will be made directly via emails. Kindly fill in the attached questionnaire and return via email by.....

Thank you for your support.

Kind regards,
John Zahra

Appendix 13. Focus Group Questionnaire



Junior Sommelier Course Questionnaire – Focus Group

Participant	
Profession	
ID Card No.	
Date	

1. What do you think about the course concept?

2. To what extent would you feel comfortable suggesting to your staff undertake this course?

3. Would you be interested in sponsoring staff to follow this course, and why?

4. What additions or changes would you suggest to this course, and why?

5. What would be your preferred mode, including duration, for this course to be delivered to prospective attendees, and why?

6. Which improvements can you see this course creating in your staff whilst they are carrying out their duties?

7. To what extent would you see the ripple effect of this course in your staff and across the industry spectrum of service/meal experience of a restaurant?

8. Would this course change the traditional service methods, and if so, in what context?

9. Would further training be required for service staff after such a course, if yes, why?

10. Further Comments.

Please be sure that any and all information provided will be solely used for the purpose of the thesis research and all personal data will be held in anonymity. Your input is greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

John Zahra

Appendix 14. Covering note used in Email surveys of targeted stake holders

Dear Sir/Madame,

I hope this mail finds you well. I am currently conducting my thesis for the master's degree in Hospitality Management with Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences in Finland. My thesis is entitled 'A Junior Sommelier Course for the Maltese Catering Industry Personnel'. The objective of this survey is to come up with, propose and make available to catering service personnel the required skills and knowledge to enhance wine service levels in local catering establishments.

The proposed course and its content was identified in a previous survey held some time back among relevant stakeholders. You are being requested to take part in a Focus Group to criticize and suggest modification to the attached outline of the proposed course. I see this course as a tool to improve our service staff performance level in the challenging times ahead for our industry in a post COVID-19 environment.

By answering this mail and the attached questionnaire you will be consenting to allow me, John Zahra, ID No 266159(M), to process the information given by yourself, regarding the proposed Junior Sommelier course, for the purposes of research and completion of the Master's thesis entitled 'A Junior Sommelier Course for the Maltese Catering Industry Personnel'.

Your participation in my survey, does in no way suggest that you have been forced to participate in any way and it is to be clear that you do so on a voluntary basis as you agree and wish to provide input for my research.

All personal data will be protected according to the Data Protection Act on the Laws of Malta (ACT XXXI of 2001). All participants are promised anonymity, and when your feedback and any quotes are used from your questionnaire forms, you will not be mentioned by name or place of work in such a way that it should not be possible to backtrack to you later.

Therefore, only your lines of work or society background will be mentioned to indicate the provenance of the information. Kindly fill in the attached questionnaire by the **15th of July** and return to me via email for processing.

Thank you for your support and time.

Kind regards,

Appendix 15 - Proposed course outline

Junior Sommelier Part-Time Course Proposal

'Improving Wine Service Skills for Wine Servers in Malta's Catering Industry'

Session No	Topic	General content
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Course introduction</i> • <i>The basics of food and beverage pairing</i> • <i>The deductive tasting model</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Philosophy of the course</i> • <i>Basics of food and beverage pairing</i> • <i>Predictable food and beverage interactions</i> • <i>Philosophies behind finding great matches</i> • <i>Understanding food and beverage pairing as fundamental to be a sommelier</i> • <i>Importance of using a consistent tasting technique</i> • <i>Components of the ideal tasting environment</i> • <i>Demonstrate the most effective way of tasting a wine</i> • <i>On-line test</i>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Viticulture</i> • <i>Vinification</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The vineyard cycle</i> • <i>Caring for the vine</i> • <i>Making wine</i> • <i>Bio-dynamic wine</i> • <i>Wine maturation techniques</i> • <i>Wine faults</i> • <i>On-line test</i>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The French Paradigm – Understanding EU wine law</i> • <i>Burgundy Wine</i> • <i>Bordeaux Wine</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why is France so important to the wine world?</i> • <i>How the French name their wines and wine regions</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Understand why the Appellation d'Origine Protégé, A.O.P. system was established</i> • <i>List the classic French grape varieties</i> • <i>Burgundy – historic perspective</i> • <i>Reading a Burgundy wine label</i> • <i>Grape varieties of Burgundy</i> • <i>Burgundy wine classifications</i> • <i>The major AOP's of Burgundy</i> • <i>Primary grapes of Bordeaux</i> • <i>Major wine districts of Bordeaux</i> • <i>Climatic influences in Bordeaux</i> • <i>1855 classification</i> • <i>Recognizing five first growth châteaux</i> • <i>Saint-Emilion classification system</i> • <i>On-line test</i>
<p>4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Loire Wine</i> • <i>Alsace Wine</i> • <i>Rhône Valley</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Name the major districts of the Loire region</i> • <i>The five primary grapes of the Loire region</i> • <i>Grapes and their appellations</i> • <i>Location of Alsace in France</i> • <i>History of Alsace wine and its impact on wine style</i> • <i>Climatic conditions in Alsace and its effect on wine styles</i> • <i>Primary grape varieties of Alsace</i> • <i>Name the main white and red grapes of the Rhone region</i> • <i>Understand the climate differences between the north and south of the Rhone region</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The main appellations of the Rhone region</i> • <i>On-line test</i>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Champagne Wine</i> • <i>World Sparkling Wines</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Definition of Champagne</i> • <i>The three sub regions of champagne</i> • <i>The méthode champenoise in French and English</i> • <i>Other methods of making sparkling wine</i> • <i>Italian sparkling wine</i> • <i>French sparkling wine</i> • <i>Spanish sparkling wine</i> • <i>On-line test</i>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Italy and its islands' wines</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Where are the major wine regions of Italy?</i> • <i>Main grape varieties for the northern, central and southern Italian wine regions</i> • <i>Sicily wine quality and doc wines</i> • <i>Italy's prominent geographic features and their effect on wine styles</i> • <i>Italian wine classifications</i> • <i>Italian label terminology</i> • <i>On-line test</i>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>German Wines</i> • <i>Austrian Wines</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The primary grapes of Germany</i> • <i>The main wine regions of Germany</i> • <i>The German climatic effect on grape growing and wine making</i> • <i>The hierarchy of German wines</i> • <i>The Prädikat system</i> • <i>The primary white grapes of Austria</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The four main wine regions of Austria</i> • <i>The three sub-regions of Niederösterreich</i> • <i>The three Wachau wine classifications</i> • <i>On-line test</i>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Spanish Wines</i> • <i>Portuguese Wines</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The location, climate, primary grapes and wine styles of the main growing regions of Spain</i> • <i>Hierarchy of Spanish wines</i> • <i>Why red Rioja wine is oak aged</i> • <i>The sub regions of Rioja in Spain</i> • <i>Location, climate, grape variety, and styles of wine by main wine region of Portugal</i> • <i>Wine hierarchy of Portugal's wines</i> • <i>On-line test</i>
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>USA Wines</i> • <i>Canadian Ice wines</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>History of wine in the USA</i> • <i>Who regulates wine making in the USA?</i> • <i>US wine label minimum requirements</i> • <i>Linking climate with grapes and wine style in the main wine AVA's</i> • <i>Definition of US A.V.A. regions</i> • <i>North western states</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Oregon AVA's</i> ○ <i>Washington AVA's</i> • <i>California AVA's</i> • <i>New York State AVA's</i> • <i>Where and how Canadian ice wines are made</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>On-line test</i>
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>South American Wines</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Argentina</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>The importance of elevation and diurnal differences for viticulture</i> ○ <i>Role of irrigation and methods of irrigation in vineyards</i> ○ <i>The primary grape varieties of Argentina</i> ○ <i>The three main wine regions of Argentina</i> • <i>Chile</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Geographical influences in the Chilean wine regions</i> ○ <i>The major grapes of Chile and their origins</i> ○ <i>The Chilean D.O. classification system</i> ○ <i>The major Chilean growing regions and their sub regions</i> • <i>Uruguay</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Main wine regions</i> ○ <i>Main grape varieties</i> ○ <i>Classification of wines</i> • <i>On-line test</i>
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>South Africa</i> • <i>Australia</i> • <i>New Zealand</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>South Africa</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Wine history</i> ○ <i>The effect of the two oceans on the wine lands of S. Africa</i> ○ <i>The 'Wine of Origin' system and designations</i> ○ <i>The role of the KWV Organization</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Primary grape varieties</i> ● <i>Australia</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Climatic influences</i> ○ <i>Grapes of Australia</i> ○ <i>The Australian 'GI' system</i> ○ <i>The primary wine regions</i> ○ <i>The philosophy of blending in the wine industry</i> ● <i>New Zealand</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Climatic conditions of the islands</i> ○ <i>Primary wine grape varieties</i> ○ <i>Main wine regions</i> ● <i>On-line test</i>
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Liqueur or Fortified Wines</i> ● <i>Sweet wines</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The reason for fortifying wine</i> ● <i>How are fortified wine made?</i> ● <i>Differences in making fortified and sweet wines</i> ● <i>Main grapes used in making sherry, port and madeira</i> ● <i>What is a Solera?</i> ● <i>Definition of Vin Doux Naturel</i> ● <i>On-line test</i>
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Beer</i> ● <i>Sake</i> ● <i>Cider</i> ● <i>Spirits</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Beer</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Beer ingredients</i> ○ <i>What does each ingredient give beer?</i> ○ <i>Beer & Craft Beer styles</i> ○ <i>Main categories of beer</i> ● <i>Sake</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>What is Sake?</i> ○ <i>Primary ingredients of sake</i> ○ <i>Definition of Junmai</i> ○ <i>Quality categories of sake</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Important features and flavours of Namazake and Ni- gori</i> • <i>Cider</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Major ingredients of cider</i> ○ <i>How is cider made?</i> ○ <i>The major production areas of cider</i> • <i>Spirits</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>What is distillation?</i> ○ <i>Making the main spirits, vodka, gin, whisky. Brandy, Rum, Mezcal and Tequila</i> ○ <i>The purpose of aperitifs and digestifs</i> ○ <i>Flavours common to liqueurs and cordials</i> ○ <i>The dominant flavour of whisky</i> ○ <i>Bourbon – how it is made, ingredients</i> • <i>On-line test</i>
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cigars</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cigar types</i> • <i>Cigar making</i> • <i>Cigar service</i> • <i>Cigar storage</i> • <i>Cigar related equipment and use</i> • <i>On-line test</i>
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Service, Salesmanship and Hospitality</i> • <i>Court of Master Sommeliers Service Standards</i> • <i>Demeanour of the Professional Sommelier</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Professional appearance</i> • <i>Sommelier tools</i> • <i>Pre-service set up</i> • <i>Standard service</i> • <i>Glassware placement</i> • <i>Sparkling wine service</i> • <i>White wine service</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Young red wine service</i> • <i>Old red wine service</i> • <i>Cordial, port and brandy service</i> • <i>Wine list creation guidelines</i> • <i>Wine storage</i> • <i>Purchasing older wines</i> • <i>Suggested serving temperatures</i> • <i>Attitude of sommelier vs:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Wine Vendors/salesmen</i> ○ <i>Colleagues</i> ○ <i>Team education</i> • <i>Tablesides demeanour</i> • <i>Establishing guest rapport</i> • <i>General knowledge re establishment</i> • <i>Communication/body language</i> • <i>Dealing with problems</i> • <i>Problem resolution</i> • <i>On-line test</i>
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Final exam</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Online or classroom 2-hour exam</i>

Appendix 16 - Focus group questionnaire – Member ‘A’

Junior Sommelier Course Questionnaire – Focus Group

All personal data will be protected according to the Data Protection Act as per Chapter 586 of the Laws of Malta, (Act XX of 2018). All participants are promised anonymity, and when your feedback and any quotes are used from your questionnaire forms, you will not be mentioned by name or place of work in such a way that it should not be possible to backtrack to you later.

Participant Name	GROUP MEMBER ‘A’
Profession/Job Title	Operations Manager
ID Card No.	
Date	8th July 2020

1. What do you think about the course concept?

The course (WSET Intermediate) is a very informative course re wines.
We covered history of wines: Old world and New World, Grapes of origins per regions and wine tasting and styles.

2. To what extent would you feel comfortable suggesting to your staff undertake this course?

I highly recommend this course to all employees working in the food and beverage industry and wine connoisseurs.
The course is educational and knowledgeable.

3. Would you be interested in sponsoring staff to follow this course, and why?

Yes, the course itself it's an investment for front of house personal, gaining various
knowledge in food and wine pairing.
Provides the benefits to drive wines sales, by designing state of the art
Wine lists and other wine developments.

4. What additions or changes would you suggest to this course, and why?

I'm very satisfied with the course, it was informative and well organized.
In addition, we had the opportunity to access courses on intranet and learn furthermore.

5. What would be your preferred mode, including duration, for this course to be delivered to prospective attendees, and why?

Four hours - Covering Theory, wine tasting and styles of wines.

6. Which improvements can you see this course creating in your staff whilst they are carrying out their duties?

I've experienced improvements in procurement, wine storage and par levels.
The food and beverage service level developed and sommeliers were able to train and educate other team members re wines styles, tasting and regions especially on the
French Appellations.
Staff were able to come up with Food and wine pairing template according to the
seasonal menu changes.

7. To what extent would you see the ripple effect of this course in your staff and across the industry spectrum of service/meal experience of a restaurant?

I've noticed increase in wine sales by recommending extraordinary wines pairing with perfect food. Sommelier can perform their role in a professional manner by providing
guests the perfect experience of taking them on a culinary journey while dining or
enjoying a bottle of wine at the lounge.

8. Would this course change the traditional service methods, and if so, in what context?

Yes, helped the team adopt a modern style of service, keeping up with the trends.
Also I've experienced an increase in wine sales in one of our Gastro Diners.

9. Would further training be required for service staff after such a course, if yes, why?

Yes of course, wine education is extensive and there is no end in wine knowledge.
Wines producers, especially in new world are continuously evolving in their styles of wine making to mention an example of oaked riesling in Eden Valley Australia.

10. Further Comments.

I highly recommend wine education courses to be introduced to every food and beverage service establishment globally. WSET was indeed a good education for me and my team, I've experienced lots of benefits after completing the course and looking forward to attending other wine courses very soon.

Please be sure that any and all information provided will be solely used for the purpose of the thesis research and all personal data will be held in anonymity. Your input is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time.

John Zahra

Appendix 17 – Focus group questionnaire – Member ‘B’



Junior Sommelier Course Questionnaire – Focus Group

All personal data will be protected according to the Data Protection Act on the Laws of Malta (ACT XX of 2018). All participants are promised anonymity, and when your feedback and any quotes are used from your questionnaire forms, you will not be mentioned by name or place of work in such a way that it should not be possible to backtrack to you later.

Participant Name	GROUP MEMBER ‘B’
Profession/Job Title	Assistant Lecturer in F&B Ops – Former GM in Hospitality Industry
ID Card No.	
Date	23/06/20

1. What do you think about the course concept?

Looks interesting – would enable companies to fill skills shortages in a relatively short period
Freeing staff up for a 4-hour per lesson each week would make scheduling easier.

2. To what extent would you feel comfortable suggesting to your staff undertake this course?

Very comfortable

3. Would you be interested in sponsoring staff to follow this course, and why?

An investment would be viable – if an agreement was reached with employees whereby if
They left within a particular time window they would have to reimburse the company for the
Cost of the course (say within 6 months of completion)

4. What additions or changes would you suggest to this course, and why?

I would look at the Exam duration – normally a level 4 qualification is backed by a 2 hour Exam. Thus I would consider revising the Exam duration by lowering it at least 30 minutes.

5. What would be your preferred mode, including duration, for this course to be delivered to prospective attendees, and why?

If this course is based on a Theory only basis, I would suggest 4 hours per week split in 2 x 2-hour sessions. Timing of sessions should look at the fact most of the persons working in this line would be afternoon and evening workers. Thus scheduling on a late morning Basis would give the most flexibility scheduling wise (days off and days when they would Be working in the evening. Again I would suggest an 80% online approach and a 20% in Class. The first session being one of the ones in class to ensure everyone is comfortable.

6. Which improvements can you see this course creating in your staff whilst they are carrying out their duties?

Greater knowledge thus being able to recommend wines to go with certain dishes especially With specials of the day, as well as knowing how to better manage stock levels by pairing Off certain slow moving wines

7. To what extent would you see the ripple effect of this course in your staff and across the industry spectrum of service/meal experience of a restaurant?

More professionalism and the element of salesmanship – would eventually scale itself in Industry especially as staff move, talk and command an improved wage based on their sales

8. Would this course change the traditional service methods, and if so, in what context?

No – in some respects it would bring a return to the traditional Sommelier in a restaurant Who manages and helps with sales of products. Which in turn would help drive up spend per
--

Head of clients

9. Would further training be required for service staff after such a course, if yes, why?

Hands – on training would always be of benefit to such programs. Training in costings and
Sales techniques to help develop sales and pricing of products would be natural extensions
To offerings proposed.

10. Further Comments.

NONE

Please be sure that any and all information provided will be solely used for the purpose of the thesis research and all personal data will be held in anonymity. Your input is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time.

John Zahra

Appendix 18 – Focus group questionnaire – Member ‘C’



Junior Sommelier Course Questionnaire – Focus Group

All personal data will be protected according to the Data Protection Act on the Laws of Malta (ACT XX of 2018). All participants are promised anonymity, and when your feedback and any quotes are used from your questionnaire forms, you will not be mentioned by name or place of work in such a way that it should not be possible to backtrack to you later.

Participant Name	GROUP MEMBER ‘C’
Profession/Job Title	Food & Beverage Manager
ID Card No.	
Date	01-07-2020

1. What do you think about the course concept?

I think that the concept is quite interesting. One would need to understand the depth of the context of each section

2. To what extent would you feel comfortable suggesting to your staff undertake this course?

If I may, knowing that who is behind the concept of the course has been a wine enthusiast
And educator himself for many years already gives some credibility to the content.
So, I would be quite comfortable to recommend this course to my staff.

3. Would you be interested in sponsoring staff to follow this course, and why?

When it comes to sponsoring there needs to be an agreement from within our company.
So, yes I would always suggest sponsoring staff for such initiatives for further development

4. What additions or changes would you suggest to this course, and why?

The outline looks fine. Possibly by knowing the depth of the context would allow for better

answering this question.
If the context is at a higher level, maybe it could be ideal to divide the course in stages
So not to overwhelm the person undertaking the subject. From a catering/hospitality
Perspective, I encounter many staff that have been out of the education system since
many years.

5. What would be your preferred mode, including duration, for this course to be delivered to prospective attendees, and why?

I believe that the way forward would be online learning, but still deep inside I would
Think that physical networking is very important especially when it comes to tasting, since
the experience will make the tasting different.
On the other hand if possible I would still leave the option for those who cannot physically
be there to attend virtually. So, not quite a straight forward answer.
Possibly the less fixed the more attractive it will be.
When it comes to duration again it depends on the depth of the context.

6. Which improvements can you see this course creating in your staff whilst they are carrying out their duties?

By enhancing the product knowledge I see many possible improvements. Coming from a
hospitality background I believe that it could improve the interaction between the customer
and staff which will allow for a better dining experience which could result in greater
revenue generated. To mention also that it will assist with the image of both the caterer and
the employee as being professionals

7. To what extent would you see the ripple effect of this course in your staff and across the industry spectrum of service/meal experience of a restaurant?

As mentioned above the sense of professionalism itself can create healthy competition.
Which can eventually ripple to other establishments.

8. Would this course change the traditional service methods, and if so, in what context?

I believe that this course should enhance the proper service methods. So, if traditionally
Champagne should be served in a flute this would be the way. So more than change the
traditional service methods this would help correct certain mistakes performed during
service

9. Would further training be required for service staff after such a course, if yes, why?

Further training is always recommended as sometimes it is easy to fall back to certain
Routines. Also because trends evolve during time and it is important to keep up with the
changes

10. Further Comments.

I think that overall is a good concept. As stated a better understanding of the context would
allow for better judgment of the course.
What is sure is that from my experience catering training needs to adapt to the industry
needs and not the other way around. As new trends evolve rapidly

Please be sure that any and all information provided will be solely used for the purpose of the thesis research and all personal data will be held in anonymity. Your input is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time.

John Zahra



Keith Apap

Appendix 19 – Focus group questionnaire – Member ‘D’



Junior Sommelier Course Questionnaire – Focus Group

All personal data will be protected according to the Data Protection Act as per Chapter 586 of the Laws of Malta, (Act XX of 2018). All participants are promised anonymity, and when your feedback and any quotes are used from your questionnaire forms, you will not be mentioned by name or place of work in such a way that it should not be possible to backtrack to you later.

Participant Name	GROUP MEMBER ‘D’
Profession/Job Title	Talent & Training Manager
ID Card No.	
Date	02/07/2020

1. What do you think about the course concept?

The course concept was highly interesting. We appear to have a lack of suitably qualified and experienced sommeliers locally. A course such as this would serve to enhance and elevate the quality of service to our esteemed guests.

2. To what extent would you feel comfortable suggesting to your staff undertake this course?

Absolutely! However, they would have to be selected according to experience and previous academic background, as the level is advanced.

3. Would you be interested in sponsoring staff to follow this course, and why?

Yes- however it would depend on the price.

4. What additions or changes would you suggest to this course, and why?

Perhaps including Maltese wines- we have a small selection of wines, but some is of a high quality. It would be fitting to promote local wines within our local industry.

5. What would be your preferred mode, including duration, for this course to be delivered to prospective attendees, and why?

I suggest that this course should be accredited at MQF Level 4 or 5. In that case, duration should be between 1-2 years, depending on the frequency of lectures. Lectures would preferably be classroom-style, to allow for discussions and tasting.

6. Which improvements can you see this course creating in your staff whilst they are carrying out their duties?

Enhanced professionalism, service quality and sales of better-quality wines.

7. To what extent would you see the ripple effect of this course in your staff and across the industry spectrum of service/meal experience of a restaurant?

As stated earlier, knowledge of wines seems to be very lacking locally, among both industry professionals and clients. Having better-trained and passionate staff should result in enhanced knowledge of wines and the purchasing of better quality products.

8. Would this course change the traditional service methods, and if so, in what context?

Employing qualified sommeliers would enhance the service quality in the restaurant, and elevate its status.

9. Would further training be required for service staff after such a course, if yes, why?

Continuous Professional Development is always required. I suggest that sommeliers should keep up to date with new developments and trends in wine production, brands, etc. Sommeliers should also share their knowledge with other team members to ensure a holistic improved service quality.

10. Further Comments.

NONE

Please be sure that any and all information provided will be solely used for the purpose of the thesis research and all personal data will be held in anonymity. Your input is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time.

John Zahra

Appendix 20 – Focus group questionnaire – Member ‘E’

Junior Sommelier Course Questionnaire – Focus Group

All personal data will be protected according to the Data Protection Act on the Laws of Malta (ACT XXXI of 2001). All participants are promised anonymity, and when your feedback and any quotes are used from your questionnaire forms, you will not be mentioned by name or place of work in such a way that it should not be possible to backtrack to you later.

Participant Name	GROUP MEMBER ‘E’
Profession/Job Title	Company Director
ID Card No.	
Date	23 rd June, 2020

1. What do you think about the course concept?

The concept is very well needed to enhance wine service in restaurants in Malta, as this is missing in most establishments.
Very good syllabus.

2. To what extent would you feel comfortable suggesting to your staff undertake this course?

Very Comfortable.

3. Would you be interested in sponsoring staff to follow this course, and why?

Once it starts and in due course Yes.

4. What additions or changes would you suggest to this course, and why?

Looks good as it is

5. What would be your preferred mode, including duration, for this course to be delivered to prospective attendees, and why?

Direct class and on-site lectures.
Duration: 16 sessions of 4 hours each – one weekly.

6. Which improvements can you see this course creating in your staff whilst they are carrying out their duties?

A very good outlook on wine, recommending, discussing, client satisfaction.

7. To what extent would you see the ripple effect of this course in your staff and across the industry spectrum of service/meal experience of a restaurant?

Should be a catalyst to start a very well needed course to enhance quality.

8. Would this course change the traditional service methods, and if so, in what context?

It should improve those traditional service methods which are based on some training, but would certainly create a new spectrum of knowledge throughout.

9. Would further training be required for service staff after such a course, if yes, why?

Training on site is always essential – even experts must keep on studying and improving.

10. Further Comments.

I think that this is a very good initiative which should be encouraged and implemented, with all assistance from Government, MTA and all touristic business establishments.

Please be sure that any and all information provided will be solely used for the purpose of the thesis research and all personal data will be held in anonymity. Your input is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time.

John Zahra