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### Conduct analysis of hospitality organisations

*Tourism and the hospitality industry that organically joins it are of decisive economic importance worldwide, about 10% of the Hungarian working population works in this sector. The aim of our research is to present the structure of the organizations in the sector, focusing on the different perspectives of managers and subordinates in relation to decision-making, responsibility issues, subordination relations and sustainability. Decision making during operation is important for the successful operation of organizations, so it is necessary for managers to understand the factors that influence the decisions of their subordinates. Although decision-making is always the responsibility of the leader, in an ever-changing, evolving sector that requires quick response is a decisive success factor. Data was collected by conducting in-depth interviews on site in the summer of 2024, during which we interviewed the manager of the catering establishments separately and an employee of our choice.*
*Keywords: organizational behaviour, hospitality, sustainable management*
*JEL codes: D23, L25, L83, Q01*

**Introduction**

Hospitality has thousands of years of history. Dynamic, ever-changing, transforming
activity that always adapts to the expectations and fashion of the given age. It has undergone spectacular development in recent decades, and its economic importance is constantly growing. Hospitality is closely linked to tourism and is an indispensable part of the tourist offer. Nowadays we can witness a kind of gastronomic revolution, in which, in addition to the conditions of quality hospitality, local and seasonal ingredients play a prominent role. Gastronomy plays an increasingly important role in people's lives. Nowadays, eating is not only a means of survival, but also conveys a kind of enjoyment value and plays a prestige role. Nowadays it can be felt that hospitality plays an increasingly important role within the tourism system. While it used to appear as an additional service next to accommodation, today it also functions as an independent attraction. When travelling, people usually want to taste food and drink specific to the area and not what they do back home. (Gonda, 2020)

Gastronomy is in the center of interest these days. Michalkó (Michalkó, 2016) interprets gastronomy as a man-made attraction, where gastronomy complements the everyday pleasure caused to the individual with an extra experience realized through the combined effect of the special environment and taste pairings experienced during consumption. For example, visiting a restaurant rated by a rating system or visiting a national cuisine.

According to the report of the Hungarian Tourism Agency (Magyar Turisztikai Ügynökség, 2023), tourism contributes significantly to economic recovery and job creation in Hungary. According to the data of the Central Statistical Office (2021) satellite account, tourism's direct contribution to the economy is 6.8% of GDP, and its contribution, including indirect effects, is 10.7% of GDP. According to the data, the number of jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors is 428 thousand, 10.0% of the jobs were directly generated by the sector (KSH, 2021).

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Although the sector itself is significant in terms of the number of people employed, it also faces a number of problems. According to a survey by Eventrend Global, 13% of hospitality workers change jobs at least once a year, leave the sector in several cases and return soon after. 26% of respondents have worked abroad for at least 4 months consistently, so we can say that leakage from the country is still a real and persistent phenomenon. Another significant problem, which in many cases can be an obstacle to development, is that only 16% of respondents working in the sector said that they can communicate fluently with their guests in English and 8% in German. (Eventrend Group, 2019) The list of challenges of the sector could certainly be continued, since hospitality is typically a human-centered profession, so our research also focuses on the human factor, taking into account the communication between boss and subordinate, the control powers and the process of decisions.

**Organizational culture in the hospitality industry**

An organization is built and operated by its employees, who, in addition to achieving leadership goals and visions, also strive to achieve their individual goals. This is no different in any hospitality organization, although several studies suggest that hospitality organizations have different cultures than other industries. In this industry, it is not only important to employ professional, satisfied and integrated employees, whom we can retain in the long run, but also that guests are satisfied with the staff who serve them (Dawson et al., 2023). According to the literature, the performance of employees depends to a large extent on motivation and the organizational culture present (Achmad, 2017). Pizam ( 2020) defines hospitality organizational culture as, "a system of shared norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and expectations whose ultimategoal is to provide exceptional service and memorable satisfactory experiences to all the organization's stakeholders".

Part of organizational culture is what decision-making processes, control powers, information flow and communication systems operate in an organization, what motivational models and tools help management retain employees. The success of the outcome of a decision depends a lot on the person of the decision-maker, their competence, their leadership style and the method they use to make the decision (Paprika et al., 2007). Decisions and their quality and results have an impact on the success and efficiency of the organization (Hussein, 2024), as well as on the performance and attitude of the workforce, therefore it is an important task of the management to pay special attention to the different motivations of employees, which are affected simultaneously by different external and internal influences (Wardhana & Harsono, 2024). In our research, we examined the factors listed above in hospitality organizations.

**Description of the research**

The research took place between July 15. and August 15. 2024, we conducted in-depth interviews with the head of the organization, mostly the owner and a subordinate employee at various types of catering units. By selecting catering establishments, it was an important aspect that they had not previously prepared an organizational chart, their daily operating routine was developed based on their experience during operation and the manager's ideas. During the research, we visited four confectioneries, four restaurants, four bars and two hotels.

The average number of employees of the companies behind the examined catering units ranged between 5-24 people in the past two years, and their net annual turnover ranged between HUF 31-450 million. Half of the enterprises are owned and the other half are rented premises. On average, their material expenses account for 25% while their personnel expenses account for 20% of their revenues. The business profit of the audited companies decreased sharply in the past three years, and a third of the examined companies had negative profit after tax last year. According to them, the primary reasons for this were high inflation, changes in consumer habits, the rise of home delivery during the Covid pandemic, as well as high VAT rates and special taxes on the sector. At

the same time, all respondents are more optimistic about the future, inflation expected in 2024 is significantly lower than in 2023, and domestic tourism is recovering. The proximity of the Austrian border in the region is a particularly big competitive advantage compared to other regions of Hungary, according to a report by the Austrian Labour Office (Österreichische Sozialversicherung, 2024), in September 2024 127,934 people worked on the other side of the border, most of whom qualify as commuters, so they spend their higher income earned abroad at home.

During our research, we sought answers to the following questions:

1. Do managers and subordinates draw the organizational chart in the same way, do manager's place subordinates on the same level as subordinates places him/herself?

2. How is the flow of information in the organization? Do subordinates know, dare or want to contact the competent manager directly with the problem that has arisen, or do they only report the problem to their immediate superior?

3. Decision-making powers have been examined from several aspects

- According to the leader, who has decision-making authority in the organization vs. according to the subordinate, who has decision-making power in what?
- Does everyone in the organization interpret the decision hierarchy system in the same way?
- What are the topics on which only management can clearly decide?

4. We examined the difference between judging motivational tools arising during the operation of the company. Does management know how best to motivate employees?

5. When examining control powers, we wanted to know whether employees know which superior/superiors/colleagues they have to meet, whether the instructions are clear, if they receive instructions to the contrary from different levels, which ones are they implementing?

6. The examination of development opportunities section discusses whether, when it comes to improving and increasing the performance of the existing unit, is there an additional need for manpower, or is there already enough reserve in the current staff to make this feasible?

7. The last question discusses the topic of sustainability, which is very fashionable nowadays. What do managers and subordinates think about environmental awareness, what steps do they take to ensure that the unit they work for has the lowest possible pollutant emissions?

**1. Organisation chart**

Different people may perceive, interpret, evaluate things differently, approach and process the same topics from different perspectives and judgments. This is also true for those involved in an organization. Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) investigated the fit of the external and internal stakeholders of the organization – environment-organization-group-individual – its consequences and organizational behavior in 3 dimensions, which can be approached from 2 sides:

- "bottom view": begins to examine fits from the direction of the individual and the group - mainly dominated by the expectations of the individual and the group towards the organization
- "top view": begins to examine the fits from the direction of the environment and organization – mainly the expectations formulated by the organization and the environment dominate towards the individual and group
- Therefore, it is an interesting question how the individual himself, the employee, sees the organization as a whole, the organizational hierarchy, and where he classifies himself in this system. As well as how the manager sees the same thing and what level he puts the employee on.

Depending on whether the owner is the head of the unit himself, the managers of the audited catering establishments basically drew four levels (five where the owner and the actual manager differed), which are shown in *Figure 1*:
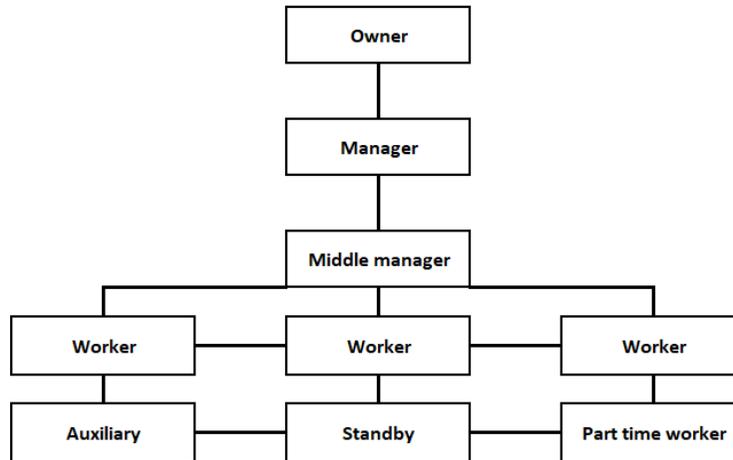
Figure 1. Organisation chart from a managerial perspective
Source: own editing

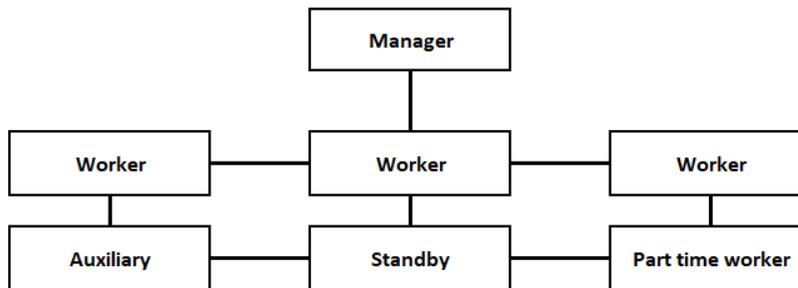For employee surveys, only three levels are drawn, which are shown in *Figure 2*:



Figure 2. Organisation chart from a subordinate perspective
Source: Own editing

When we asked stakeholders for positions in the unit and the list of colleagues, about 70% of the surveyed subordinates did not name the position with which they have no direct connection without asking about them. These were mostly cleaners, kitchen maids and helpers.

**2. Information flow**
According to the traditional model of communication, the emitter formulates a message, which is transformed into a form that can be transmitted and received with the help of some kind of sign system, transmitted through some channel to the receiver, who deciphers the signals, i.e. translates the message for himself. This process also takes place in an organization among the stakeholders in the organization. The efficient flow of information and communication within the organization is key to its effective operation. Klein (2009) describes communication as the transfer of information with shared meaning. The information itself is what we transmit in communication. The direction of communication and the flow of information can be done in two ways:
   1)   along a hierarchy (vertically)
         a.   downstream (instruction)
         b.   upstream (report)

2)   between organisational actors at the same level (lateral) (Bakacsi, 2015)
In vertical communication, information travels through several hierarchical levels, depending on the size of the organization, before it reaches the recipient. The larger an organism is, the more stages it has to go through.
It is worth considering whether there are guiding information flow steps. If there are, how closely should the degrees be followed, can degrees be omitted, can persons be avoided?

When examining the flow of information in the surveyed catering establishments, we found that while according to the managers, information flows directly regardless of position levels, so helpers can also talk to the manager, during subordinate interviews we found that they mostly turn to their own middle manager with their problems, even if the organization is so small that it would not justify taking this step. However, respondents agree that the solution is no longer provided by the middle manager, but comes directly from the manager/owner. *(Figure 3)*
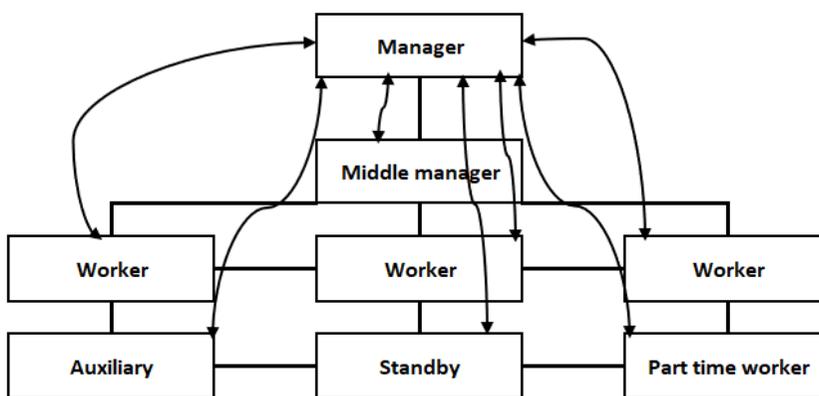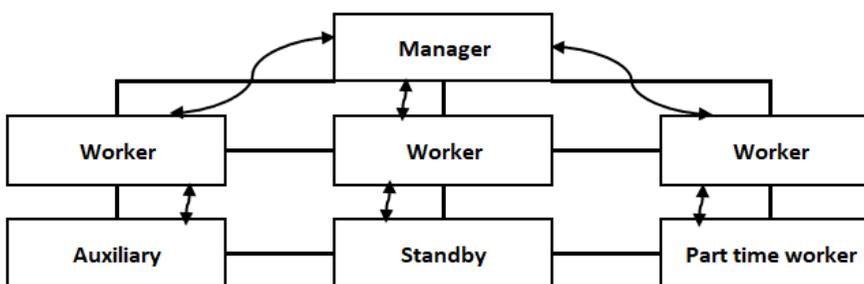


Figure 3. The flow of information according to the different actors of the organisation
Source: Own editing

The question of how far a certain amount of problem goes in the organization also received different answers. Respondents agree that in order for a problem to reach a leader, it must reach a certain level, but both sides think differently about how big this level is.

According to the leaders, they need to know everything:
- problems affecting operation (technical problems, e.g. leakage, machine failure)
- problems related to guest satisfaction (returned food, problematic guest, complaint book entry)
- problems with workforce organization (sudden illness, termination, ill health)
- the supply/logistical problem of important raw materials

The range of problems that managers do not consider to be a top priority and therefore may not be addressed is narrow enough, but they include:
- events that cannot be classified as minor accidents at work (finger cut, minor injury caused by broken glass)
- raw material problems, if they can be solved more efficiently by others (e.g. purchaser)
- failure of non-essential devices, if that problem can be handled more efficiently and quickly by someone else (e.g. maintainer)
- problems with the supply of additional materials (napkins, toothpicks)

According to subordinates, the manager mainly has to solve problems that they encounter in the first place:
- problems affecting operation (technical problems, e.g. leakage, machine failure)
- problems related to guest satisfaction, but there is already a difference here, as according to them, only the entry in the complaint book can be handled by the manager.
- Even during workforce organization problems, only those that result in not having the right number of people during a day are considered important for the manager. Changing shifts, working overtime, leaving earlier, if possible, or someone from the team does extra work is not one of them.

The biggest difference is in the importance of judging raw material procurement. While managers believe that this is one of the most important guarantees of guest satisfaction and quality, and by the way, it is also an important financial issue, the opinion of employees is different, they prefer to notify only the person responsible for purchasing and, if possible, improvise during the preparation processes.

**3. Decision-making power**
In the course of an organization, members of the organization, especially leaders, have to make a multitude of individual or group decisions every day, which can be short-term (operational), medium-term (tactical) and long-term (strategic). A typical strategic decision is to determine the number of employees or the service structure of the property. As with any business, tactical goals in this sector are mostly aimed at the smooth running of the business, such as creating a menu, defining a marketing strategy, or developing kitchen technology. Operational decisions are mostly made in connection with the day-to-day running of business, such as handling guest complaints, dealing with sudden difficulties in general operation, or ordering goods. While the first two are mainly the responsibility of the management, the decisions of the third category are more up to the subordinates. Several decision-making levels may be present - the larger the organization, the more levels can be isolated. *(Figure 4.)*
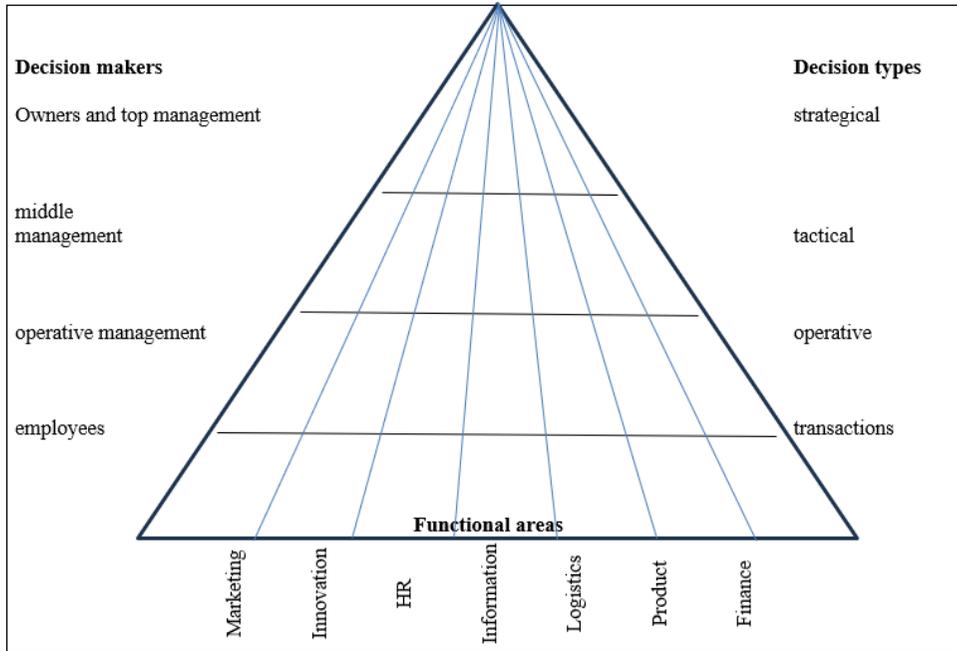
Figure 4. Decision- making levels
Source: (Chikán, 2020)

It is worth examining what rights and powers are associated with the given levels, as well as the extent to which decisions are delegated and what decisions are delegated.

The larger the organization, the more levels can be separated and the more distinct each type of decision is from each other in different fields of activity. Decisions can be programmable if there has been an example and a solution procedure developed for it, e.g. there is a predictable stock shortage for certain products. Or they may not be programmable if a particular problem occurs for the first time, such as a guest complaint, which must always be handled individually. In this case, a solution procedure should be developed as the problem arises (Hussein, 2024). The majority of management decisions are made up of decisions related to everyday operations, in addition to which the provision and efficient use of the necessary resources and the minimization of costs as much as possible in such a way as to maintain or increase the satisfaction of external and internal stakeholders (Rázga-Ilyés, 2024).

When assessing decision-making power, similarly to the handling of problems, we received answers that were identical on several points and different on several points. According to managers, the decision-making power of subordinates is limited to a minimum, they can make decisions in their own area at most, mostly only those for which the manager does not have any competence or are related to improving the guest experience. Typically, such decision situations include:

- compilation of weekly menu
- treatment of various allergies and sensitivities in restaurants (the chef and waiter can decide together how to fulfill the special request)
- consideration of special guest requests: preparation of drinks, mainly cocktails, which are not included in the drink list, but all ingredients are available.
- decorating, serving, serving solutions
- minimum deviation from recipes to increase quality: this is mainly the case when the ingredients do not have the same constant characteristics, e.g. homemade cheese/dairy products, eggs (mainly size), availability of seasonal vegetables

During the interviewing of subordinates, their own decision-making powers ranged from the scale set by the manager, i.e. they were the same as described above, and on the other hand, they arose from ad-hoc cases. In ad-hoc cases, decisions were not fundamentally determined by the type or size of the problem, but by whether the manager of the current area was present at the time of the problem to be solved or, if not, whether he was available. If available, subordinates mostly left the decision to the manager, but in cases where the current manager was not available, they declared that they solved the problem themselves, based on their previous experience. When asked whether their solution was the best they thought was the best or what they thought the leader would have done in the given situation, they mostly made a decision that appealed to the leader.

## 4. Motivation

An organization is made up of individuals and groups of individuals. Individuals, on the other hand, are motivated to act with varying degrees of intensity to meet their own needs. From this it can be concluded that the individual, the employee, must be motivated in order for the performance to be expected by or exceed the expectations of the organization. In an encouraging, supportive and motivating organization, the individual is much more confident in his own abilities and achievements, which he will use to bring out the best in himself and his work (Arifin et al., 2021). This is supported by a 2024 study (Wardhana & Harsono, 2024), in which self-efficacy performance; self-efficacy motivation; He investigated the motivation-performance paired interactions and the combined incentive effects of the 3 factors in the hospitality industry. Therefore, an important question for every organization and management - and therefore also a task - is how and how it can motivate its employees. It is necessary to find the individual motivations that can best connect to the goals of the organization, and if these are satisfied, the organization will also benefit from them (Bakacsi, 2015). Motivation, in fact, has the ability to accelerate the process by which an individual's behavior or attitude is formed in order to achieve individual goals that are related to organizational goals (Hemakumara, 2020).

If an employee's needs are unmet, it creates internal tension and acts as a driving force that drives the individual to seek a solution to meet that need. If this succeeds, then by satisfying the need, the internal tension will decrease (*Figure 5*) and this can lead to benefits such as loyalty to the organisation; increased performance; desire to develop; motivation.



Figure 5: The process of motivation
Source: (Robbins, 1993)

There is agreement between managers and subordinates on the order of motivational tools and their effectiveness. It is important to note that the research was carried out in a town near the Austrian border, where, due to the risk of emigration, we usually found outstanding wages. Money is the main motivator in most cases, but due to the high average wages in the sector in the region studied, it may not be the best incentive. Not everyone is only interested in money, moreover, inadequate wage differentiation often creates controversy and disrupts team spirit (Adrian, 2012). The list of motivational elements is as follows:

- money/housing allowance
- increase the number of free weekends

- fewer working days, even if this does not result in a reduction in working time (e.g. instead of 5*8 hours of work and 2 days free, 4*10 hours of work and 3 days free is more preferred)
- Cafeteria
- other measures: team building trainings, professional development

As mentioned earlier, there is an extremely high turnover in the segment, as all the examined catering establishments are located in Sopron, where Burgenland and Vienna have a very high exhaust power. The population of the city over the past ten years has increased by about 50 thousand people. The real estate market cannot keep up with this growth, so the majority of those moving in live in apartments, the price of which has doubled on average recently, already rivaling the capital, so the main motivation is still to raise salaries or provide housing allowance. The sector is characterized by 7/7 opening days and an uneven distribution of work, i.e. traffic increases on weekends and in the summer season. The immediate family members of a significant number of hospitality workers do not work in the sector, so the role of free weekends is intensifying. Most respondents would be satisfied with 2 free weekends per month, but now this number mostly averages 1.

Reducing the number of working days is also an attractive solution for research participants, even if it does not explicitly involve a reduction in working hours. Around 75% of respondents would be willing to work more hours on fewer days, improving work/life balance. At the very end of the line are measures to improve the working atmosphere, according to the respondents, these are not the events that can bring the team together due to fluctuation in the sector.

**5. Control powers**
In our research, we also wanted to know how the internal control system is evolving in each of the organisations we studied. The assessment of audit powers is best illustrated in *Figure 6*:



Inspectorial rights, according to managers
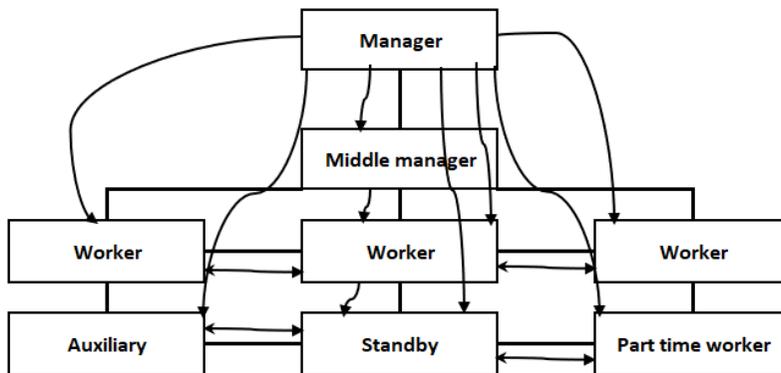
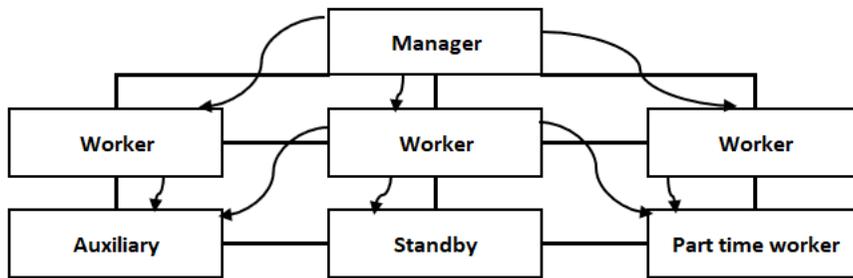**Inspectorial rights, according to workers**



Figure 6: Inspectorial rights by different actors in the organisation
Source: Own editing

In response to our question about which instructions subordinates carry out if they receive different instructions, the answers were as follows (*Figure 7*):
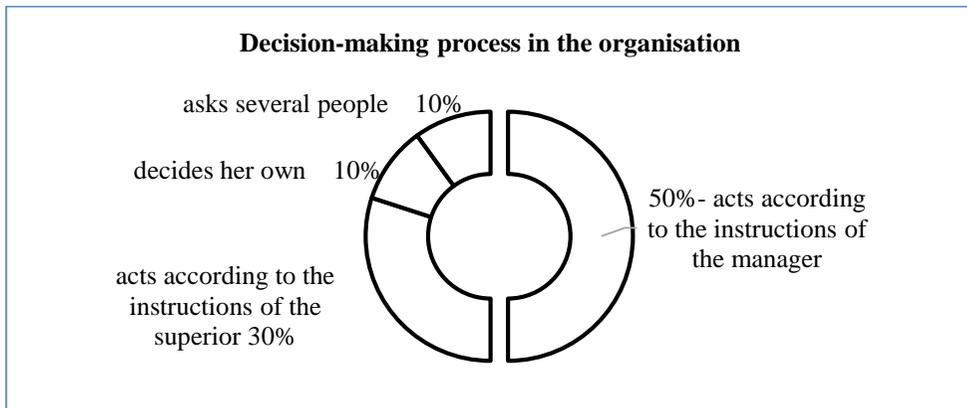


Figure 7: Decision-making process in the organisation
Source: own editing

## 6. Unit development

Organizations are exposed to many external and internal influences during their operations, which constantly shape both organizational structure and culture. As a result of changes in the external environment and in order to adapt to these changes as quickly as possible, organizations undergo a continuous process of development and learning.

In our sixth question, we wanted to know three things:
- How do respondents evaluate the current economic performance of the company, if 100% is the ideal state when the restaurant operates with a full house from opening to closing and all rooms in the hotels are booked for 365 days?
- What steps would they take to achieve the ideal state outlined?
- If the above-mentioned ideal state were to occur, how much resource expansion would the company have to make?

The greatest similarity between the responses lay in the fact that, in the opinion of both managers and subordinates, the current state of the unit was not set up for this state, so expansion is definitely necessary, but there is no consensus on the level at which this expansion should take place. Since different sectors require different specialized workers, the answers are presented in several parts: In case of full occupancy, the position to be expanded compared to the current one, according to managers (*Table 1*):

Table 1: Jobs to be expanded by manager

| Hotel | Hot kitchen restaurant | Property without kitchen |
|---|---|---|
| - maid/cleaning staff<br>- breakfast staff<br>- repairman<br>- housekeeping<br>- office (finance/corporate governance) | - Waiter<br>- Kitchen maid/ preparation<br>- Dusting<br>- Dishwashing staff (white+black) | - Waiters<br>- Barbeck (preparer)<br>- Auxiliary waiter/cup picker/dishwasher |

Source: Own editing

Looking at the answers, we can say that if the given place reaches 100% occupancy, in the opinion of the managers, mainly those jobs should be expanded, which are often invisible to guests, but nevertheless provide the physical conditions for basic operation.

In case of full occupancy, the position to be expanded compared to the current one according to subordinates (*Table 2*):

Table 2: Jobs to be expanded according to subordinates

| Hotel | Hot kitchen restaurant | Property without kitchen |
|---|---|---|
| - Receptionist<br>- Cleaning staff<br>- Repairman | - Chef<br>- Bartender/beverage maker | - Waiters<br>- Auxiliary waiter/cup picker/diswasher |

Source: Own editing

Based on the answers of the subordinates, it can be concluded that in their case the majority of the jobs in need of expansion are mainly those involved in the specific process of hospitality, positions above them or not related to them on a daily basis were ignored.

## 7. Sustainability

Sustainable hospitality is a very complex topic, which is why its precise definition is often a source of conflict among experts in the field. In many cases, published articles focus specifically on the cooking process, the source of ingredients, how vegetables and fruits are grown, how they are sold, and how food ends up on consumers' plates. This can be seen as a "narrow interpretation" of sustainable hospitality. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations understands that "sustainable gastronomy (...) it means a cuisine that takes into account where ingredients come from, how ingredients are grown, how they end up on the market, and finally on our plates" (FAO) The sustainable operation of hospitality establishments can not only have an impact on natural resources, but can also contribute directly or indirectly to many other sustainability efforts through

the previously described hospitality value chain or its impact on other ecosystem actors. There are several parallels between the UN 17-goal framework adopted in 2015 and sustainable gastronomic operation (*Table 3*):

Table 3: UN relevant sustainability goals for the study

| Sustainable Development Goal | Example |
| --- | --- |
| 1 – Poverty eradication | Charity initiatives in catering establishments. |
| 2 – Ending hunger | Delivering leftover food to the hungry at the end of the day. |
| 3 – Health and well-being | Health-conscious menu compilation. |
| 5 – Gender equality | Ensuring equal working conditions for men and women. |
| 12 – Responsible consumption and production | Fight against food waste. |
| 14 – Protection of oceans and seas | Combat overfishing by using responsibly sourced fish. |

Source: www.sdgs.un.org/goals (2024)

The raison d'être and familiarity of the topic is shown by the fact that there was the greatest agreement between managers and subordinates on this issue, everyone rated it a seven on a scale of one to ten. The following diagrams (*Figure 8 and 9*) illustrate what the employees of the surveyed companies think can best reduce the carbon footprint of the property.
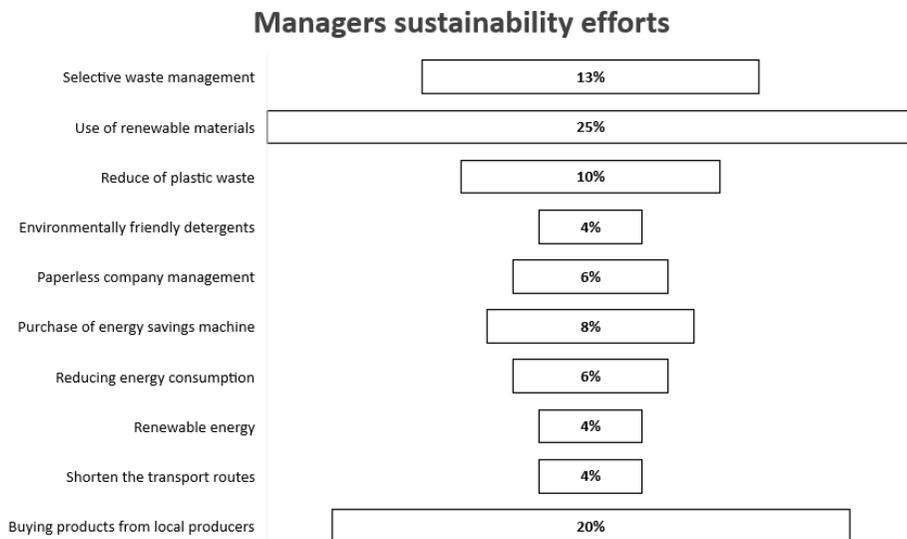


Figure 8: Managers sustainability efforts
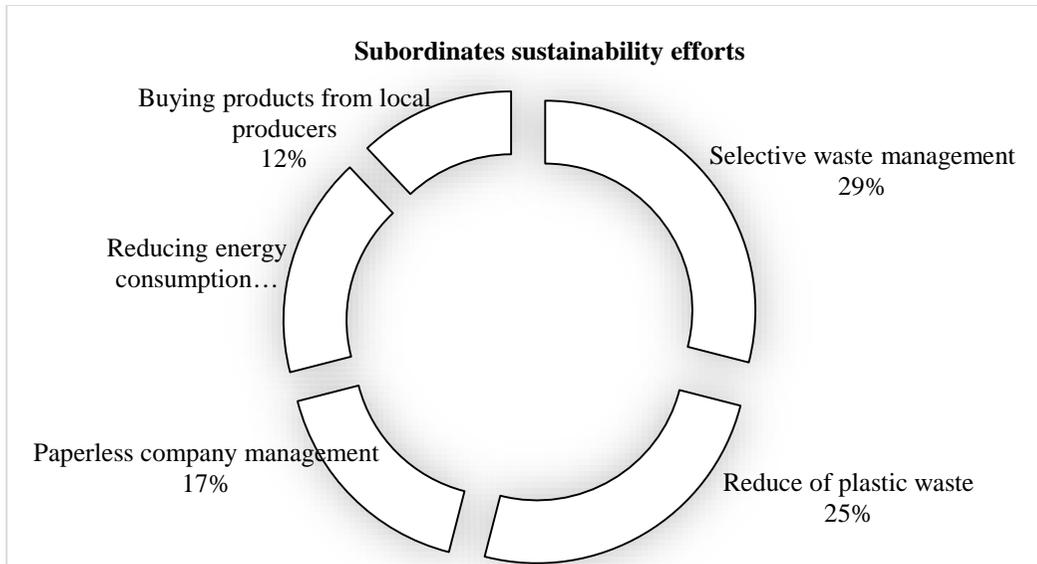Source: Own editing

Figure 9: Subordinates sustainability efforts
Source: Own editing

It can be seen that managers' knowledge of the topic is diverse, while that of subordinates is mostly limited to information that is directly related to the tasks encountered during their work. The most important difference between the two groups is that managers' sustainability efforts are often related to reducing operating expenses, such as reducing gas consumption, which was mostly due to changes in heating settings. The managers surveyed reduced the average temperature of restaurants by an average of 1.5 degrees during the winter months. At the same time, it is interesting that the preference of local producers has received special attention not only because of the shortening of transport routes, but the promotion of the products of local businesses, mainly small family companies, often has marketing value in addition to outstanding quality.

## 8. Summary

The present study focused on the decisions of hospitality workers, in particular it tried to shed light on the organizational behaviour in tourism and hospitality and their responses to the given problems encountered.
As we pointed out at the beginning of the thesis, this sector is of great economic importance, therefore the changes and the new environment affecting the sector must be seriously addressed. In our view, these new trends have changed the economic conditions so far, and the response to them calls for a systemic solution.
However, in order to find systemic solutions to emerging problems at macro level, it is primarily necessary to identify at micro level where significant resources need to be invested.
This study also aims to serve this purpose. As the data of Eventrend Global have shown, there is a need to change the motivation and qualifications of employees and those working in the sector. During our research, we wanted to know how employees see their own position within an organization, how they perceive the flow of information, decision-making powers, motivational tools, control powers, etc. We then asked the same questions to the leaders of the same organization(s) and compared the answers. Based on the results of the research, the difference between the views of managers and subordinates became clear in each topic.
At the beginning of the research, of course, we also assumed that the employee was less informed about the operation of the organization. This hypothesis of ours was confirmed during research.

Overall, we believe that due to the significant "brain drain" effect in this sector, managers need to pay even more attention to employee motivation factors than in other sectors. If employees can be persuaded to work and stay with various motivational tools, the fluctuation that currently dominates the sector will surely decrease in the long run.

If the subordinate is sufficiently motivated, of course, he will not work with the same approach as a manager or even an owner, but he will perform the tasks assigned to him more thoroughly and carefully, and will look at his own and the company's goals in a different spirit.

## 9. Limitations and future research

In view of the results of the research, it is essential to mention that the average salary in the region is higher than in other parts of the country, so although the results are universal, some of their elements cannot be applied to Hungary whole. During the Covid pandemic, the well-skilled, middle-aged stratum leaked out of the sector, the average age of the service staff of the surveyed catering establishments is 28 years, i.e. they mostly represent generation Z, who have different views than the members of generation X and Y who make up the leading stratum both in their work ethic and attitude towards the workplace (Ruzsa, 2018).

As we have indicated several times, the results of the research are currently valid only for one region with relatively special conditions, therefore, if we want to get a representative picture of the whole Hungarian context, it is recommended to carry out similar studies in Budapest and several other county seats, including the eastern, western, northern and southern regions as well.

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