Barriers to the effective exploitation of migrants' social and cultural capital in hospitality and tourism: a Dual Labour Market Perspective

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Abstract

This article examines migrants' labour market entry experiences and positions in hospitality and tourism from a dual labour market theory standpoint. We conducted thirty interviews with migrants from Latin America, the Middle East, and Sub-Saharan Africa. The transcripts were first analysed through an open coding framework. That was followed by emotion and sentiment analyses for the interviewees' transcripts using Natural Language Processing approach (NLP) with a programming code written in Python. This article found that migrants' high representation in tourism and hospitality is linked to the immense cultural capital they harbour. However, migrants are often at the sector's lower end and fail to build on their social and cultural capital. The research contributes to the understanding that migrants' positions within tourism and hospitality are misaligned with migrants' credentials. Ethnicity impacts job search success and attainment of higher ranks significantly. The underemployment of migrants in hospitality and tourism leads to human capital loss for both migrants and host economies.

Keywords. Migrants; Hospitality and Tourism; Culture; Open Coding Framework; Emotion Analysis; Sentiment Analysis.

Introduction

The migrant workforce has experienced a significant increase in the past two decades. While migrants fulfil critical roles in the economic life of their adoptive countries (Grogger & Hanson, 2011), they often experience more risks and enjoy less protection from legal frameworks (Choi, Kim, & McGinley, 2017). Migrant workers' contribution is visible in all walks of life where migrants bring skills, new work ethics, culture and community vibrancy (Holland & Martin, 2015), They also contribute to local entrepreneurial ventures as leaders, innovators, and catalysts, especially in rural contexts (Liu, Wu, Xu, & Chen, 2021). Despite the extensive evidence available that migrants are fundamental for the effective functioning of many areas of society, media, politics and economy, etc. (Hack-Polay, Mahmoud et al., 2021; Mahmoud & Al Atrash, 2021), popular discourses have not always reflected this importance (Abdallah, Fletcher, & Hannam, 2019). Some literature has portrayed migrants as costs, understating their contribution to host countries (Choi et al., 2017; Grogger & Hanson, 2011). Consequently, many migrants struggle for recognition of their credentials and to deploy the social capital they harbour. However, as research increases in this area, particularly in the past three decades, the negative view of migrants has been vigorously questioned (Hack-Polay, 2019) by academics and non-government organisations (NGOs) through empirical studies and popular campaigns.

Previous studies on migrant job search suggest that social capital is critical and directly impacts several factors. According to the literature, social capital influences migrant wages and earnings both directly and indirectly. It sways, in a hidden way, the way a job is obtained and the sector in which such a job is. Reliance on relatives and acquaintances who have traversed the migrant experience seems to boost job search efficacy towards improved wages. Such improvements appear more relevant to the condition of undocumented migrants than legal migrants, underscoring how social networks could present opportunities for migrants (Aguilera & Massey, 2003). This perspective affects both skilled as well as less skilled migrants.

Many migrants fill jobs in sectors that offer significant employment opportunities for entry to the labour market. In the hospitality and tourism industry, migrant workers account for 24.2% of the workforce (People 1st, 2017). However, opportunities available in the industry are often said to be at the lower end of the employment spectrum, characterised by low pay, job insecurity, lack of progression and work-life balance, etc. Therefore, the sector also suffers from a high turnover in the labour market (Opute, Hack-Polay, & Rigby, 2021).

The study aims to examine how social capital may be directly and indirectly associated with migrants' job search strategies in a sector that is worth investigating. The study focuses on the UK hospitality and tourism sector, a key industry that absorbs migrant labour. Our study uniquely answers the following critical research questions: To what extent do migrants experience difficulties accessing hospitality and tourism jobs despite the general perception that the sector offers quick entry to the labour market for migrants? To what extent does social capital help migrants enter the hospitality and tourism sector? Is the hospitality sector a stepping-stone or a genuine career destination for migrants?

Literature review

Theoretical framework and Perspectives on British labour market

Theoretical framework: Dual Labour market Theory

Dual labour market theory contends that immigrants often experience a high degree of exclusion in the host labour market as they are priced out of the more rewarding jobs (Doeringer & Piore, 2020 [1985]). This entails significant differences in terms of the job level attained by immigrants, particularly first-generation and the locals (de Haas, Castles, & Miller, 2020). In addition, labour market segmentation also entails wide wage and working condition differences between hosts and migrants.

A key manifestation of the dual labour market of immigration is underemployment. This occurs where the migrants tend to find work or be placed in job roles well below their qualifications or the job roles they held in their country of origin (Hack-Polay, 2019). Müller (1999, p. 152) argues that "access to stable jobs" for migrants is hampered by both social and institutional discrimination. For example, language competence generally but also language accents, immigration status, and race often stand as significant barriers to migrants' equitable insertion in the host labour markets (Opute, Hack-Polay & Rigby, 2021). Thus, with its many casual and low-paid jobs, the hospitality sector becomes a fertile ground for migrant labour. The dual labour market differences may narrow over time, particularly for second generations and later generations, but in some cases, racial disparities and diversity features cause the persistence of such differences (Dustmann, 1993; Hack-Polay, 2019).

Finding a new job in a new country of residence is often said to be an exhausting endeavour for migrants (Hack-Polay, 2019). The disadvantage experienced by some social categories in employment is associated with educational attainment, social class, gender and race and ethnicity, and length of stay in Britain (Amadxarif, Angeli et al., 2020; Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 2005). These issues bear significance concerning the place that migrants occupy in a host labour market. It has been argued (e.g., Kelly, 2018) that employing a diverse workforce − and managing it effectively − not only satisfies legal and ethical obligations but is also beneficial for the business, leading to more satisfactory outcomes, and such a phenomenon occurs in several fields (e.g. Cobianchi, Dal Mas, & Angelos, 2021; Stazyk, Davis, & Liang, 2021), including hospitality and tourism (e.g. Hsiao, Ma, & Auld, 2014; Manoharan, Gross, & Sardeshmukh, 2021). Some authors (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 2005), argue that migrants and people originating from what is known as the New Commonwealth (former colonies) largely constitute a cheap source of labour within the Western hemisphere. As a result, migrants are treated as outsiders in the Western labour market.

Migrants in the hospitality and tourism sector

In a pre-COVID-19 pandemic era (WHO, 2019), hospitality has been growing steadily since 2010. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimated that the worldwide contribution of the hospitality sector to global gross domestic product or GDP was over 10% in 2019 (WTTC, 2020). In Britain, the hospitality industry, which represents 6% of businesses (UKHospitality, 2020), has a more sizable share of employment when benchmarked against world standards. The British hospitality sector nationally accounted for 9% of the gross domestic product and represented 11% of the national labour force in 2019 (WTTC, 2020).

The hospitality sector appears as one of the most diverse business fields, and it is much dependent on migrant human resources (Alrawadieh, Karayilan, & Cetin, 2019; Daunfeldt, Johansson, & Seerar Westerberg, 2019; Gürlek, 2021; Kim, Choi, & Li, 2016; Shneikat & Alrawadieh, 2019). Moreover, the skill profiles of entry-level hospitality and tourism jobs require overall low education qualifications (Casado-Díaz & Simón, 2016; Daniel, Costa, Pita, & Costa, 2017; Huang & Baker, 2021). Recently, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimated how this field employs a higher proportion of non-British nationals (16%) compared to all other industries (11%). In addition, Partington (2017) portrays hospitality as a *very* labour-intensive industry. Moreover, with little effort put into replacing labour with technology (Partington, 2017), it is no wonder that of the 501,000 non-British nationals working in the tourism sector, an estimated 64% were EU citizens, and 36% were non-EU nationals (ONS, 2019).

Besides, non-British nationals were more likely to be over-educated for the occupation in which they work compared to British citizens. EU citizens in hospitality and tourism were most educated to a degree or equivalent level (28%), followed closely by non-EU employees (27%) in comparison with only 22% of British workers (ONS, 2019). Overall, during the

studied period, more migrants in the British tourism and hospitality sector were older workers, London-based, working more hours and employed temporarily (ONS, 2019).

According to Partington (2017), word of mouth appears to be the most popular approach to job search in UK hospitality for migrant workers. Additionally, it is thought that UK employers prefer migrant workers to their British counterparts (Matthews & Ruhs, 2007). Lyon and Sulcova (2009) go further to report that migrant workers in UK hospitality are perceived by employers as more positive and productive at work than UK nationals.

Notwithstanding, previous studies (e.g., Joppe, 2012) have situated migrants amongst the most vulnerable workers in the tourism and hospitality sector. Many migrants are more vulnerable to experience labour exploitation (Partington, 2017) and, therefore, at risk of forced labour and modern slavery (Balch & Rankin, 2014), with an impact on human sustainability (Massaro, Bagnoli, & Dal Mas, 2020), motivation (Mahmoud, Reisel et al., 2020), thus more likely to burnout. Previous studies have shown that weaknesses in the enforcement of the legal frameworks geared at protecting vulnerable employees, and the cost of tribunal cases lead to precarity in the conditions of many migrant employees who are unaware of their employment rights. Hence, they accept poor employment conditions (López-Andreu, Papadopolous, & Hamedani, 2019). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that salaries, skills and relevant sector expertise may not be the outcome of movements in the market, but rather the consequences of cost-cutting actions as well as the occurrences of the downsizing processes (López-Andreu et al., 2019). Cases of migrant exploitation, such as underpayment, delayed payment and the intentional withholding of pay, are increasingly reported in the UK hospitality industry (Rydzik, Pritchard, Morgan, & Sedgley, 2017).

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Interestingly, recent studies suggest evidence of frustration amongst skilled migrant workers in the UK hospitality sector (Ndiuini & Baum, 2020) and overall (Han & Hwang, 2021) due to underemployment despite their qualifications and skills.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative methodology, using in-depth interviews conducted with 30 migrants originating from the Middle East, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa, with respectively 7, 11 and 12 participants. These regions were selected to precisely capture the experiences of these under-researched non-Western and non-Eastern European migrant groups whose presence is growing in hospitality due to the expanding number of Global South tourists in the UK (Statista, 2020). A cross-sectional data structure was used since the evidence came from variables gathered and evaluated across a particular time period (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019) relevant to the studied phenomena (Curado, Oliveira, & Antunes, 2019). The in-depth interviews covered a range of key issues, including educational and occupational credentials from the country of origin, careers before migrating, job search strategies, current employment in the receiving nation and main barriers to accessing relevant jobs. All the participants were recruited in South London, specifically in the Croydon, Greenwich, and Lewisham areas. These locations were chosen because of the availability and historical concentration of migrants. In addition, issues of confidentiality and anonymity were addressed by substituting the participants' actual names to ensure that the quotes do not lead to their identification.

A snowball sampling approach was used to reach the participants. The researchers first contacted three migrants from a small migrant group in Croydon who introduced the research team to two other participants that could satisfy the selection criteria. As the initial participants

served as intermediaries for meeting other potential participants, the issues of reaching apt participants and organising the time and location of the interviews were minimised. The main benefit of the snowball sampling was that it enabled the researchers to reach targeted participants who met the selection criteria; this approach also saved time and resources. In-depth interviews allowed participants the room to expand on their stories and stress any aspects they deemed critical. This approach suited the study of the experiences of participants, whose accounts were multifaceted, involving fleeing, hardship, loss and grief, adaptation to new cultural realities, etc. The in-depth interviews captured their life history, particularly concerning re-entering employment and the British socio-economic environment. Selecting an ethnically diverse sample was purposeful to contrast migrant experiences from different cultures. The in-depth interviews were conducted in the vicinity of the migrants' place of work for their convenience. The interviews lasted approximately one hour each.

Abductive reasoning was adopted to guide our data analysis (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Simillidou, Christofi, Glyptis, Papatheodorou, & Vrontis, 2020; Suddaby, 2006). Abductive logic (or reasoning) emphasises that previously earned conceptualisations should steer data analysis only loosely (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Simillidou et al., 2020), leaving considerable room for any data-emergent, non-theory fitting discoveries to shape the study findings (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Simillidou et al., 2020). We followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines of thematic analysis. We started with gaining acquaintance with our data by transcribing audio, going through the text, taking first notes, and generally poring over the data. We analysed the data using the open-coding framework (Flick, 2019). The term "open coding" refers to the process of analysing data by finding the *distinct* classifications derived from the data and their conceptual possibilities (Ertaş & Kozak, 2020). Put it forward, a coding framework was established in this article, as suggested by several authors (e.g., Graumann & Kallmeyer, 2002; Mendy & Hack-Polay, 2018). And, In line with previous studies (e.g. Farmaki & Kladou, 2020;

Massaro et al., 2020; Simillidou et al., 2020), the transcripts were reviewed for the purpose of sense-making. This allowed the researchers to capture the way in which the migrants' narratives were distributed as well as the perspectivisation level. Moreover, codes were applied to text data from transcripts and interview notes in the initial coding round until saturation was reached by adding conceptual codes based on the respondents' expressions (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). The second phase of coding included an arduous process of detecting similarities, commonalities, and distinctions among first-order concepts in order to condense them down to a workable amount (Gioia et al., 2013; Simillidou et al., 2020). As a result of this procedure, second-order themes were formed, representing clusters of the enormous number of first-order elements and were categorised using commonly used terminology (Gioia et al., 2013). Finally, a third coding episode related to a back-and-forth approach between first-order elements, second-order themes, and the research's theoretical foundations (Gioia et al., 2013), which was based on the dual labour market theory. This activity entailed re-organising and re-examining blocks of verbatim text in order to determine which of its assigned ideas and themes could be understood in light of established theories and which could not (Gioia et al., 2013). This last coding stage was guided by both data and current theory (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017), resulting in the reduction of second-order themes to fewer aggregated thematic classifications (Christou, 2018; Gioia et al., 2013; Simillidou et al., 2020). Finally, a degree of participant validation was sought by sharing the first draft of the analysis (anonymising the responses) with a quarter of our respondents to check the findings for accuracy (Hack-Polay & Mahmoud, 2021). Table 1 shows the data structure inspired by the work of Gioia et al. (2013).

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Furthermore, we employed Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK) to tokenise words and determine the sentiments (Bird, Klein, & Loper, 2009), and National Research Council Canada (NRC) Lexicons (NRCLex) to identify emotional affect from the transcripts (Bailey, 2019) and the code written in Python and developed by Mahmoud, Hack-Polay et al., (2021) was run to obtain the results. Sentiment ratings depict an objective means of estimating attitudinal vibes in textual data. In this respect, running the code several times on the same transcripts gave the same results, which indicate that the tool employed was reliable. The next section presents and discusses our results.

Results

Pre-migration professional experience

Most participants had a status change in the UK, usually dropping to lower professional status than what they operated at in the home country, in line with other studies (Rydzik, Pritchard, Morgan, & Sedgley, 2012). Just two participants were in jobs that met their expectations. The majority felt a sense of lower status and loss in exile. Table 2 shows the migrants' employment before emigrating.

TABLE-2 HERE

Table 2 indicates that most of the migrants were employed in the migrants' home country. A third of the participants operated within higher skills roles (managers, teachers, administrators) before migration. Most participants were from urban areas; this may explain why they were primarily employed in the home country, considering that in developing

economies, urban centres account for most national jobs. In the UK, only a fraction of the migrants had comparable jobs to those once held in the country of origin.

Our analysis offers evidence about the experiences of migrants from three geographical areas: Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. During the interviews, the participants made limited reference to changing jobs. Islam, a Middle East migrant, proudly pointed out:

"All my life, I was a government civil servant before I was forced to leave my country."

Pedro, a Latin American migrant, said:

"I was a teacher back home for many years."

This participant had searched for work for several years but was unable to get a teaching position due to a loose labour market caused by the British government austerity measures for the last two decades. Thus, many migrants take up employment in the massive hospitality field. Henriette, an African migrant and former secondary school teacher, who wanted to enter the hotel sector to use her French language competence, reported:

"I hoped I wouldn't be unemployed for long because of the French language I know; but I wasn't employed for a long time because of the lack of connections".

The experience of our Middle East participants was not dissimilar. As they are also visible minorities and migrants, Middle Eastern migrants find it hard to get into employment, even in the hospitality and tourism industry where migrants' social capital (language, education, cultural awareness, etc.) would normally represent an asset. The hospitality and tourism sector is often viewed as an accessible employment sector for migrants and minorities. However, for the participants in our study, the economic climate, dominated by a tight labour market, did not

help the minorities and migrants' cause. As minorities' unemployment rate is over twice the rate for the local British population, migrants are given less priority. Robert, a Sub-Saharan African migrant, asserted:

> *"It's not easy to get a job, especially when you live in a small town. If you go to my city, it's hard because there are many people looking for jobs. If you don't know anybody you can't do anything".*

Migrants' entry strategies to the hospitality and tourism labour market

The migrants' strategies for entry to employment in hospitality and tourism were varied. Many participants found the first position with friends' help. Some re-trained in the UK while a small minority followed regular job search routes, e.g. applications and interviews. The following analysis reviews the migrants' hospitality labour market entry routes.

There is a paucity of academic works accounting for the strategies deployed by the migrants to enter the hospitality labour market. However, academic investigations acknowledge differences in the experience of the labour market based on race, gender and social networks. Migrant status then compounds the difficulties for newcomers to a host society.

Personal networks

The three groups of migrants investigated made strong mentions of receiving job vacancy information from relatives and friends. A sizable number of them (eleven) argued that the initial tangible employment offer came through someone they knew well. This route to finding jobs

attests to the criticality of networks and acquaintances. The experience reported by Abdul reflects those of many of the migrants in the study:

> *"My friend took me to his workplace to ask if I could get a few hours as a dishwasher or waiter. I didn't know how to cook but I wanted to learn. I worked, I worked so fast clearing and washing the dishes that within two hours the supervisor offered me a job. He said he believed that I'd work as hard as my friend has done for him"..*

Abdul's experience was not isolated. Other migrants reported obtaining the first work position using this strategy. The type of employment that the participants entered often reflected the job types of the networks they used, e.g. menial jobs in the hospitality sector (cleaning, dishwashing, roles as waiters or maids, etc.). Maha, a female Middle East migrant, that the ease of finding work in the sector was also due to the critical labour shortage and turnover in restaurants and bars. She said:

> *"I got my first job in the restaurant thanks to my cousin. She was leaving her position to go to work in a bigger hotel. She told her boss about me and I got a call few days later to come for an interview. It wasn't really an interview. The only question I was asked is 'when do you want to start'. I knew my cousin had sealed the job for me".*

From the experience of the participants, it may appear as though unskilled and manual employment in hospitality is a 'ready-made' field for migrants and minorities predominantly.

Re-training

Some migrants accessed after re-training on a course that required industrial placement. Among the employed participants, six used re-trained before gaining their initial jobs. Generally, the participants accessed training through voluntary organisations assisting

migrants. Most participants discovered training opportunities this way, but many others were informed about such training opportunities by friends and relatives already benefiting from the initiatives. Navigating the 'training route' was beneficial to the migrants because the first contact with the employer was initiated by a network that they trusted. In the absence of such opportunities, the period of unemployment of the participants would be protracted. Charlotte, a female Sub-Saharan African migrant, noted:

> *"I attended an IT training course with a migrant organization in West London. The organization found me work placement with a small hotel. My English was average but I was competent in computing. After my placement, I was offered to stay for three months and they employed me permanently later."*

Carlos, a Latin American migrant, had a similar story. He got a work experience placement via a training institution he was attending at the time. The work placement organisation offered to employ him on completion of the training. Carlos was a caretaker in the hotel and was grateful that such an opportunity was presented to him:

> *"I'm thankful to the friend that introduce me to Greenwich College. I'm also grateful for the support that the College provided and for finding me this work placement. I now have a really generous employer because they want to keep me. I'm lucky and I thank God. If these people hadn't helped me, I wouldn't be here"* (Carlos, Latin American).

Using the training route offered three benefits. First, it allowed the migrants to gain experience while improving their English language competence. Re-training often involved acquiring specific occupational skills and created possibilities to experience British workplaces for newcomers. The employer and training institutions could also provide valuable references

for the migrants' future job applications. Second, training programmes encapsulated English language classes with professional training, e.g. computing, catering, bookkeeping, etc. For instance, Charlotte studied English with computing; Carlos learned English with professional catering training. Training for a job secured employment but did little to cast out the shadows of menial jobs and underemployment for migrants within the hospitality sector.

The daring ones and conventional job search

Individual migrants sometimes engaged in job search activities in the hospitality sector by following a similar route as experienced UK job seekers. In this paper, this route is termed as 'conventional'. Few migrants (3 in the sample) used that strategy which involved the migrants applying for positions and competing with the locals almost on equal terms. In essence, the migrants will write for or collect application forms, pay a personal visit to companies and agencies or mail their CVs to employers. In this article, this strategy is termed as 'personal effort strategy' because the migrants take the initiative, show independence and brave perceived issues of language, migrant status, race, and go on the assault. This strategy was used only by a minority of participants, and it testified to the lack of confidence of many migrants to confront the host job market. The migrants using the conventional job search approach were generally more competent and confident in the English language. Matthieu, a Francophone Sub Saharan African migrant, said:

> *"You need courage. Learning English till you become totally proficient is not enough. I thought it's important to combine learning English with practical action. I wasn't ashamed to pick up numbers from the Yellow Pages (telephone directory) and call employment agencies, catering companies and hotels directly."*

Other factors, such as advice from welfare and employment services and tips from relatives, experienced workers in the hospitality sector and friends, significantly contributed to the success. However, these daring actions geared at entering employment in the hospitality field were only taken by a small number of migrants (e.g., a Latin American migrant who studied higher education in the UK). Abdul explains the way in which he secured work, and his experience echoes other participants':

> *"Soon after I got the right to work, I sent my CV to different hospitality places. I wanted a job as a cook, waiter, or even cleaner if that could help me have a foot in the sector. Many applications were unsuccessful. Many CVs weren't even acknowledged. I also walked into the doors of many restaurants and hotels around London to ask for work. It took over one year to find my first job as an assistant chef. I was delighted."*

The different approaches to entering the world of work in the host country had varying degrees of fruitful outcomes. Using 'friends' and re-training resulted in more effective job search approaches, even though all strategies still land the migrants work roles beneath their qualifications, causing a high degree of underemployment. The migrants who took the conventional job search route took longer to find employment, but when they did, the job roles they obtained were higher than those of the migrants leveraging on friends' suggestions and recommendations.

When social capital is unworthy

Many participants aimed to rebuild their lives in the UK by deploying their intellectual and cultural capital. Striving to find jobs helps the self-reconstruction endeavour. Maha's statement summarises many feelings expressed by the migrants:

"I thought that having experience of different cultures and knowing other languages would make it easier to have a professional level job in a hotel or a restaurant. But it wasn't easy. I started as a cleaner, then became a chambermaid before eventually making it to administration. It's a long and painful process to have your credentials recognized."

However, the process was often complicated. Many participants were actively employed to be liberated from the anxieties of unemployment, idleness and the welfare benefits to realise their potential.

The common job roles that migrants fill include security guards, care support work, cleaning, waiter/waitress, and chambermaids, receptionist, etc., if they find employment altogether. Most participants found unskilled positions and came to 'accept' their condition. Our data shows that a more effective strategy to overcome the barrier to employment in hospitality and tourism was the use of relatives and friends. Table 3 describes the participants' occupations when the interviews took place.

TABLE-3-HERE

The main observation from Table 3 is that most migrants operated in low-skill roles in the hospitality sector when they entered the labour market. The seemingly less favourable employment position of migrants has important consequences, ranging from psychological

health and physical health issues to social exclusion. Kwaku, a Sub-Saharan African migrant, who lives with others in the same flat in Croydon, perceives this as an opportunity:

"I'm lucky to be living with other countrymen and women (six people in the two bedroom-flat) in the same house. We live like a family, like back home. We spend time together and help each other with everything. It's cheaper too. But we've also helped each other find jobs".

As a result of the lower positions that migrants occupy in UK hospitality, many dwell in overcrowded accommodation but, for these migrants view it as a way of cutting on living costs to be able to make ends meet and send remittances back home for some. Thus, the economic benefits of living in overcrowded accommodation due to low pay in the hospitality sector are not arguable. Many migrants had high-status jobs respectably in their native country. Managerial positions were common occupations that the participants held in their home countries. However, many participants were in UK hospitality job roles below their qualifications and experience.

Impediments to migrant entry to the hospitality and tourism industry

The analysis in this section explains the social and cultural influences on migrants' employment. As the section brings to light the way in which language, race, ideology and the complexity of the host labour market create and perpetuate disadvantage. The aggregate of these issues defines the migrant's labour market positions.

Shattered self-esteem

This article unveiled a link between host language proficiency and migrants' occupational choices. The language issue is a key barrier to migrants' employment. The initial employment that migrants experience is conditioned by language ability. Migrants, who do not have language competence, usually enter menial jobs. As previously exposed in the examples of two Latin American migrants who saw the limitation of their language abilities as the primary impediment to their successful insertion in the British labour market more broadly and, more specifically, the hospitality sector. Felipe believed that:

> *"I had no choice but take up employment in the hospitality sector because there you did not need to speak English. People would just show you what to do, often by gestures and the training was completed."*

For instance, the experiences of a Latin American migrant participant and a Middle Eastern migrant are enlightening. Abdul from the Middle East said:

> *"I was asked if I wanted to clear boxes for two hours; that became permanent employment."*

Paul, a Sub-Saharan African migrant, accompanied his cousin on a building site just to 'get himself out of the house a bit', but then his dream of finding a job materialised. Paul believes that

> *"Unskilled work in hospitality isn't too difficult to find because it's work mainly for foreigners."*

Migrant communities urge friends to tell others about job opening, thus cultivating social solidarity; but unwittingly, this practice contributes to inflating migrant presence in the lower stratum of organisational ladders, i.e. in low-skill employment.

Ethnicity and stereotypes

Few participants referred to a direct experience of racial bias at work. Nonetheless, they appear to have been silenced by the spectrum of prejudice. Most would avoid complaining about any forms of treatment for fear of being dismissed. Participants felt some undesirable treatment they received were linked to their being different but seldom spoke about openly. As Henriette, an African migrant, explained:

> *"We do what we have to do, then go home. You never know what will happen to you tomorrow if you talk too much. I heard that black workers get sacked in this hotel if they complain about prejudices".*

The migrants were quite happy to be earning their living in honesty; they were concerned about their stagnant status was associated with language intonation and their ethnicity. Adam, a Latin American migrant, explained:

> *"Living and working abroad makes be nostalgic of my country when I think about the good job I had at home. I think I do this job only because I'm a foreigner".*

As a result, young migrants become hesitant to seek opportunities and social promotion.

Cultural differences and gender

Social-cultural boundaries here are understood as behaviours or social and cultural practices that the migrants bring with them into the host society, which contrast with those of country of origin and could help identify the newcomers as outsiders. These may include religious beliefs, national dress, language, social behaviours (e.g. address and greetings), employment practices, etc. The migrants in this research sometimes had to abandon part of self culturally and embrace new ways. That is part of the adaptation process. This is a painful sacrifice, but it is for survival.

Ibrahim's example is telling. A Middle East Muslim migrant, who had to handle non-halal meat in a London restaurant, showed the degree to which migrants must reposition themselves culturally when faced with novel realities. The participant argued:

"I don't want to sacrifice myself, my beliefs and cultural and religious values that I've had since I was a child".

Cultural boundaries largely influence the unemployment of migrant women in the hospitality sector. 'The place of women is in the house', many male migrants. This culture gulf affected women significantly and impaired their ability to operate in the host country. This was more pertinent for women in the Middle East and Latin American migrant groups. Miriam, a female Middle East migrant, explained how she continued to hold the native values with respect to women being housewives, charged with childcare and household tasks. She explained:

"Such was the social division of labour back home and I don't know why this should not be replicated here if we're together".

However, the effects of cultural antagonism between the old and new cultures #affect both men and women. For example, during training in hospitality work roles, the migrants had to accept to train with women and accept roles that they perceived as feminine. Sam, an African migrant, took time to fit in. He contended:

"I was embarrassed because I was placed with ladies mostly on the first lesson. This isn't usual in my culture. Later the trainer saw my embarrassment and we discussed the issue".

The clash of cultures continued in the workplace for male participants from the three geographical areas covered by the sample. For example, it was unusual for Musa, a Middle Eastern migrant, to work with women in the catering section of a large restaurant first. He explained:

"I was shy among all these ladies with whom I was sticking labels on the products. As I was slower than the female colleagues, the supervisor asked me if I wanted to try another job in the factory. I trained in forklift driving which I thought was more of a male job".

The migrants mostly managed to overcome cultural barriers and continue their education and careers. At times, cultural differences were pronounced, leading the migrants to abandon their desired careers to focus on different levels of work, thus downgrading their labour market expectations. For example, Idriss, whom an employment agency sent to work in a factory making sausages for a large hotel chain, told the researchers that, due to his religious beliefs, he took up a cleaner position in one of the hotels served by the sausage factory to meet his cultural requirements. The migrants' experiences demonstrate that culture plays a role in the labour force integration of migrants.

Migrant networks

Most participants who used personal effort or conventional job search approach lacked awareness of job hunting in the British context, which contrasted with the previously familiar environment of the home country. Where labour market success was largely contingent upon networks of connections, e.g. the extended family, friends, etc.; however, in the host environment, they lacked such networks, which disabled their job-hunting efforts, thus leaving the migrants in a situation of underemployment or unemployment, including in the perceived 'easy' hospitality labour market. As a result, they developed anxiety for not attaining positions that they aspired to. This anxiety was widely shared among the migrants. As Jean, a male Sub-Saharan African migrant, explained:

"When I started looking for a job in hospitality and tourism, I had no clue about where to start. Later I heard that I could approach employment agencies. But I didn't know what they were and where to find them".

Jean's experience is not isolated. Most participants conjured similar encounters. However, this wealth of experience in hospitality has not improved the migrants' job-hunting skills to navigate the competitive UK labour structures. A key area that holds lots of migrants back in British labour culture was procedures complexity. This varies from employer to employer and is not consistent across sectors, with companies having application forms of varying shapes and lengths. The novice could find this puzzling and burdensome. Yusef, a Middle Eastern migrant, explained:

Once I received a job pack to apply for a role as a receptionist in a large hotel. It was promising. But the length of the application and the peculiar qualification requirements put me off. My friends couldn't understand the forms and couldn't help me. Nobody in my community could help.

The migrants' limited understanding of UK employment culture, e.g. application forms and curriculum vitae, is well-documented.

"England is a strange place; this is a new beginning". I sometimes feel lost in this alien employment culture".

The migrants' narratives encapsulate the sense of feeling uninvited, fear and pessimism. All steps of life in the host country represent a new beginning. For many migrants whose

expectations are not met, being migrant workers is perceived as 'freefall' from a high status. The entire process and conceptual contribution of this paper are delineated in Figure 1.

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FIGURE-1-HERE
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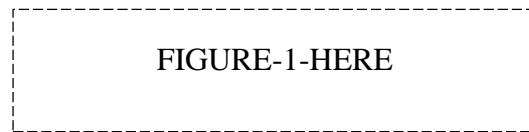
Our findings suggest that an immigrant typically brings three types of assets to the host country:

- Type A: Qualifications and experience
- Type B: Physical and financial capabilities; family and dependents; language skill and personal network
- Type C: Social and cultural capital

Unfortunately, many of these assets become redundant because of the gloomy job environment migrants face at the early stage of migration in developed countries. The results of this study indicate that migrants face a dim job environment while looking for employment and ends up in menial, low-skill and semi-skilled jobs or remain job seekers for protracted periods. By this time, Type A and Type C assets remain unused, resulting in 'assets drain' in the long run. Consequently, all three parties (immigrants, economy and society) become losers -many migrants become/remain unskilled or semi-skilled workers. As a result, the economy and society lose access to valuable human capital.

Emotion and sentiment analyses

Emotion analysis results, as shown in Figure 2, revealed that the respondents' narratives held mixed emotions of fear, anger, anticipation, trust, surprise, negative, sadness, disgust, and joy. However, positivity was slightly highest than the rest. The sentiment analysis confirmed the emotion analysis results— it showed that 83% of the sentiments were neutral whilst 12% and 0.05% were positive and negative, respectively.

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FIGURE-2-HERE
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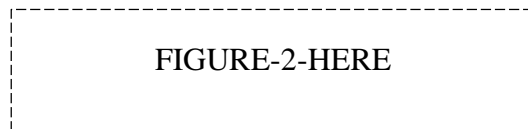
Discussion

Our investigation confirms how migrant workers' occupational position in tourism and hospitality sits in sharp contrast with the professional roles they previously had in the country of origin. Within western labour markets, the migrants predominantly operated in non-skilled and semi-skilled employment in the hospitality sector, while before becoming migrants, they held higher-level professional positions at home (Hack-Polay, 2019; Müller, 1999).

This study attempted to address two questions. First, "to what extent do migrants experience difficulties accessing hospitality and tourism jobs despite the general perception that the sector offers quick entry to the labour market for migrants?" Second, "is the hospitality sector a stepping-stone or a genuine career destination for migrants?" In that regard, addressing our research questions, our findings challenge the common assumption that such a field provides an easy route to employment for migrants. Though formal qualification requirements to enter the sector may be lower, entry is contingent upon several factors: networks, personal

effort and a degree of training. Most participants tap into networks of friends and relatives in their job search in hospitality, with the next favoured approach being the re-training route. However, few migrants secure better jobs by braving a string of critical barriers. Despite positivity held by the respondents, other negative emotions like fear, anger and sadness were expressive of their struggle, as revealed by our emotion analysis. That was further evidenced through our sentiment analysis, where 83% of the vibes were neutral. Though participants were largely in employment, the work roles they hold are typical of the low level of jobs found by earlier scholarship (Mendy & Hack-Polay, 2018). This supports the dual labour market perspective (Doeringer & Piore, 2020 [1985]; Müller, 1999) articulated in our theoretical framework. The job prospects of the migrants were impacted by socio-cultural factors, e.g., race, language, cultural differences and the lack of extensive social networks (MacKenzie & Forde, 2009). Struggling to find work was normalised in the migrant experience (Markova, Anna, Williams, & Shaw, 2016).

The literature agrees that migrants make a significant and lasting contribution in the countries of settlement (Tienda & Sánchez, 2013). The migrants who held high qualifications as well as solid occupational credentials still needed a helping hand in the job search by friends and employment agencies. Addressing our research question "To what extent does social capital help migrants to enter the hospitality and tourism sector?" our findings demonstrate that prior relevant socio-cultural engagement, such as completion of relevant training and education gained in the UK helps promote better integration into the hospitality job market (Tannock, 2015). However, the lack of positive networks with locals hinders the migrants' ability to secure jobs commensurate with their past experiences and current training. Empirical studies (Aguilera & Massey, 2003) established that a culture of network use is a key determinant. If it is accepted that migrants are a racialised group as advocated by the recent literature (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 2005; Hack-Polay, 2019), the validity of Dual Labour Market theory in British

hospitality can also be assumed. Social networks are essential for the integration process. However, also critical for effective job search would be networks, e.g. using relatives and friends is a fundamental job search strategy among migrants. Significant research (Hack-Polay, 2019; Mendy & Hack-Polay, 2018) established that "the friends' route" was the most frequently used job search strategy in migrant circles. Job search in a foreign country is a challenging endeavour for migrants (Hack-Polay, 2019; MacKenzie & Forde, 2009; McCollum & Findlay, 2015). With complex application forms and labour regulations which limit many migrants' right to work (McCollum & Findlay, 2015), a number of them forsake the integration process.

Significant investigations into migrant education and employment concur that a substantial number of migrants have professional jobs and some form of higher education in the home country (Hack-Polay & Igwe, 2019). Table 3 and other studies (e.g., Castells, 1975; Hack-Polay & Mendy, 2017; Mendy & Hack-Polay, 2018) found that work roles that migrants are given are often far below their educational credentials and pre-migration statuses and experiences. Anthias and Yuval-Davis (2005) contended that some social groups' exclusion or inclusion is contingent upon several factors, e.g. language, education, culture, ethnicity and race. Those parameters distinguish the position of social actors and identity in a social space. Hack-Polay (2019) contends that labour market opportunities are diminished for migrants because of the ineffective enactment of diversity frameworks. This viewpoint is supported in contemporary race and ethnicity literature.

One of the key contributions of this article is the systematic identification of the job search strategies used by migrants in the hospitality sector and their categorisation in terms of effectiveness. Our findings demonstrate that this typology can explain the reasons leading to migrants mainly operating in subaltern labour: because migrants secure a place in the dual labour force via friends, who hold menial roles themselves, it is obvious that the new migrants whom they introduce will hold similar roles (MacKenzie & Forde, 2009). The migrants who

re-train and those who use the conventional job search route also face disadvantage because language operates as a negative filter biased against migrants. A further significant contribution of the study is to challenge the assumption that the tourism and hospitality field provides a much easier avenue for migrant employment. The study evidenced that migrants still face significant difficulties entering, even the low paid jobs. The main barriers remain language, racism (particularly for migrants of colour) and the paucity of the migrants' social networks.

Practical and Policy Implications

The marginalisation of migrants in UK hospitality is magnified by the complexity of the labour market structure. Despite the possible better outcomes reachable by diverse teams, migrants seem to be persistently overlooked for substantial employment roles (ILO, 2016). Migrants' high level of education and occupational experience typically should act as significant assets for competitive advantage in the hospitality and tourism sector. However, they do not always appear to make a difference. This means that, perhaps, greater dynamism is required in support initiatives in place to empower the migrants to live a productive life (e.g., McCollum & Findlay, 2015), leading to potential policy implications. Supporting management systems should be put in place to bridge the gaps of culture, race, gender to allow diverse teams in tourism to perform better, as it is happening in other business fields, like healthcare (Cobianchi et al., 2021; Cobianchi, Pugliese, Peloso, Dal Mas, & Angelos, 2020).

The UK's exit from the EU could increase opportunities for non-European migrants, as many organisations in the hospitality sector may require foreign labour as EU migrants return to their countries. Strengthening the recruitment of migrants could provide the hospitality sector with a strategic opportunity for labour force renewal at a time when the ageing population and skill shortages are key issues for the sector (Tienda & Sánchez, 2013). Besides, employers (particularly international hoteliers) may be able to draw on migrants' valuable

cultural experiences and social capital (Yaduma, Williams, Lockwood, & Park, 2015). Many of our participants knew multiple languages and cultures, which renders them apt for higher managerial roles. With many nationalities among the customers of UK hospitality, one need not be an expert to reach the conclusion that valuable human capital has arrived on our shore to help the UK maintain its global competitive advantage (Hack-Polay, 2019). Failing to address issues of dual labour market causes the emergence and growth of migrant enclaves (Hack-Polay, 2019), which in turn has significant ramifications for social cohesion.

Our study highlights the importance of re-training and courses to align the skill set required by the local hospitality enterprises and those of participants as a bridge to finding jobs. Indeed, while migrants are usually underemployed compared to their education and qualification, the skills gained in their home countries may not fit the ones required by a different market, including, for example, legal and administrative duties, the use of technologies, and so on. Therefore, training and courses may act as powerful tools to upskill migrants' competencies, aligning their existing knowledge to the needs, processes, and managerial requirements of the host market. There is a call for policymakers to investigate these avenues further to bridge the gap and take advantage of the potentiality of diversity in employment.

Research Limitation and implications

Although our article deepens the understanding of immigrants as resources in the hospitality industry, both for customers and employees, there are limitations. First, although an in-depth interview qualitative methodology fits this kind of research, the number of interviewees is limited and could be enlarged. Second, as this study is context-specific- the hospitality industry of the UK, the external validity of these findings could be limited in different settings. Enlarging the number of participants may represent a good strategy to

compare the situation of different countries, in Europe but also in other continents. Moreover, even though the sampling and research methodology in conducting the interviews aimed to be as much rigorous as possible, some of the information counted on the interpretation of the results. Further research streams might investigate different experiences and strategies of migrants looking for a job in other sectors or industries, or geographical areas, verifying if the same conditions regarding the relevance and nuances of social and cultural capital apply.

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Figure 1: Immigrants face turbulent employment environment before joining the hospitality industry and tourism sector
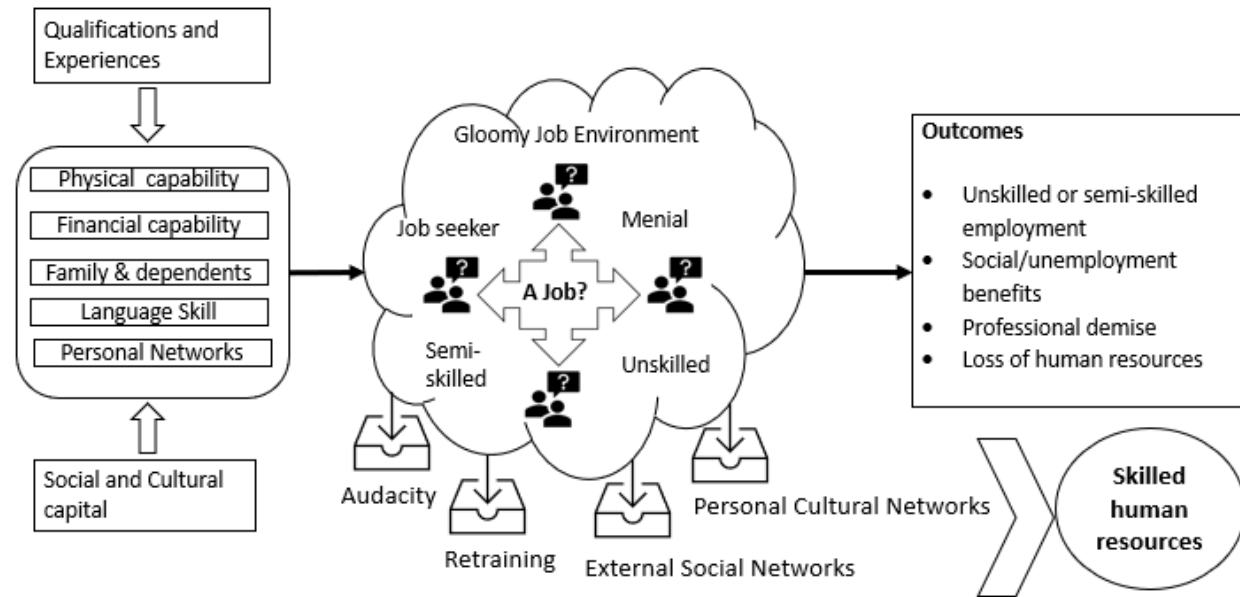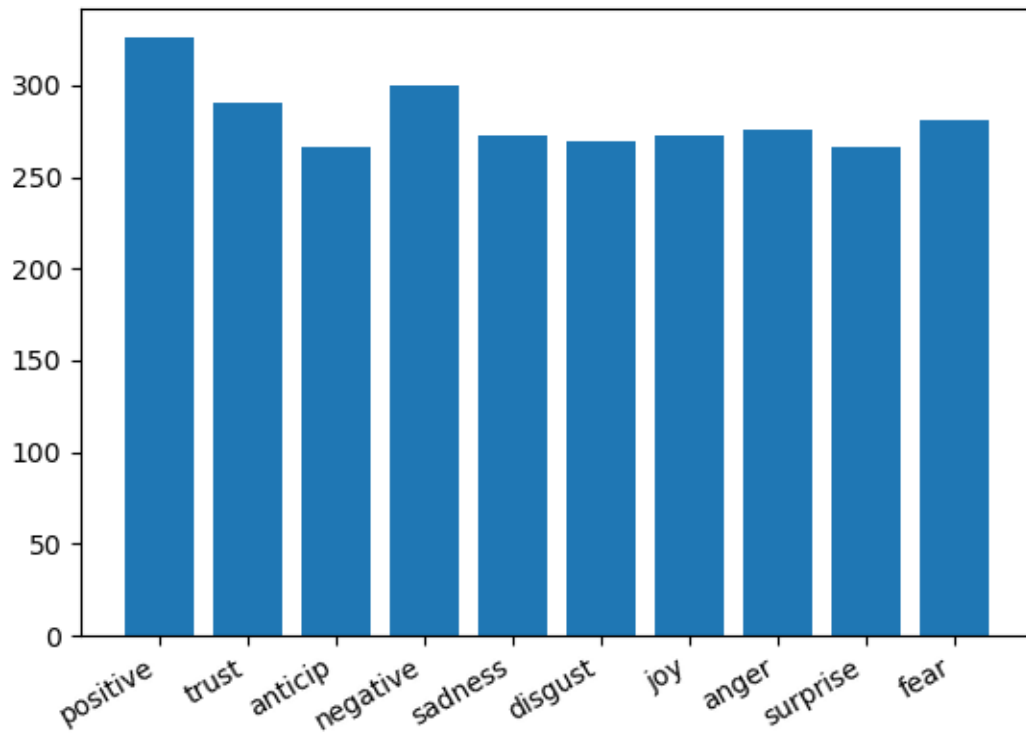
Figure 2: Emotion Analysis

Tables

Table 1: Data structure and coding scheme

Initial codes	Second level codes	Final analytical themes
▪ *Worked as manager* ▪ *Owned large/medium business*	Managerial/high executive level jobs	**Pre-migration work experience**
▪ *Was a supervisor/ senior worker* ▪ *Was a small business owner*	Middle management /supervisory level jobs	
▪ *Worked in unskilled jobs* ▪ *Worked in the clerical field*	Non-professional/Manual jobs	
▪ *Several years of experience* ▪ *Relevant hospitality/tourism work*	Work experience	**Social Capital**
▪ *Family and friends in UK* ▪ *Friendship with locals* ▪ *Social clubs* ▪ *Being outgoing*	Family and social network	
▪ *Speaking multiple languages* ▪ *Has worked or lived in several countries*	Language and culture	
▪ *Degree* ▪ *High school* ▪ *On-the-job training*	Education	
▪ *Assistance from acquaintances* ▪ *Strangers' help*	Networks	**Job search strategies**
▪ *In-person company visits* ▪ *Sending several CVs* ▪ *Making several phone calls* ▪ *Newspapers and Internet search*	Individual push	
▪ *Learns English* ▪ *Relevant UK hospitality training* ▪ *Went to university*	Training	
▪ *Discrimination/racism* ▪ *Cultural differences* ▪ *Foreignness* ▪ *Language Accent* ▪ *Stereotypes* ▪ *Country of origin*	Ethnicity	**Impediments to entry to the job markets**
▪ *Lack of confidence* ▪ *Other people* ▪ *Overqualification*	Self-esteem	
▪ *Low paid care jobs* ▪ *Childcare issues* ▪ *Sexual harassment*	Gender	

Table 2: Pre-migration job roles of the informants

Job roles	Middle East (N= 7)	Latin America (N= 11)	Sub-Saharan Africa (N= 10)	Whole sample (N= 30)
Management	3	2	2	7
Education— Teacher	2	2	3	7
Admin Assistant	2	4	3	9
Studying	0	1	2	3
Not Working	0	2	2	4

Table 3 Employment in the UK hospitality sector

Job roles in UK hospitality	Middle East (N= 7)	Latin America (N= 11)	Sub-Saharan Africa (N= 10)	Whole sample (N= 30)
Not declared	2	4	5	11
Receptionist	3	2	2	7
Waiter/Waitress	0	2	3	5
Cook/Assistant cook	1	0	1	2
Supervisor	0	2	1	3
Restaurant/Hotel management	1	1	0	2