# Measuring the Quality of Working Conditions and Behavioral Intentions of Seasonal Hospitality Workers in Croatia

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## Abstract

The aim of this study is to present an objective picture of the quality of working conditions and predictors of behavioral intentions among the Croatian seasonal workforce in the hotel and food and beverage industry. The 6th edition of the EWCS survey was modified for the purpose of this study. The research was conducted from 18 November 2020 to 30 March 2021, and 196 respondents were surveyed. The authors performed exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis to analyze the collected data. The study found that intention to return and intention to recommend are predicted by different sets of sociodemographic characteristics and that the higher the earnings of seasonal employees, the higher will be their intention to return. Moreover, the results imply that seasonal workers who feel they have more control over their daily tasks are more likely to recommend their seasonal job to others. Although the topic of job satisfaction among seasonal hospitality workers is well covered in the existing literature, there is a lack of research focused on measuring the quality of their working conditions. This study is useful for the academic community as a starting point for further research and for managers in the hospitality industry who can apply the results in their everyday business practices.

***Keywords***: quality of working conditions, behavioral intentions, seasonal workers, hospitality, EWCS, Croatia

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is a complex phenomenon and a driver of the world economy. Traveling and getting to know different cultures is such a common activity today that it is no longer considered a luxury but a necessity. One of the main characteristics of Croatian tourism is its seasonality; in other words, there is a clear disparity in demand in the summer months compared with the rest of the year, especially in the coastal areas of the country. There are two types of seasonality – natural and institutional. Natural seasonality, as its name suggests, is caused by natural phenomena such as snow, sea, sun, sand, temperature, and availability, while institutional seasonality is associated with human influence - social convention associated with religion, culture, and public holidays (Weidner, 2006).

Although both types of seasonality are present in Croatia, it should be emphasized that natural seasonality prevails. Proof of this lies in the fact that tourism demand in Croatia is the largest, mainly during the swimming season, that is, during the summer months. Such a tourism system directly impacts the employment of the population, with a large number of workers being employed only during the tourist summer season. Seasonal work is an interesting and distinctive combination of the extreme form of short-term, final employment, and long-term contractual relations (Guidetti et al. , 2020). It can be said that the seasonal job is most volatile, i.e., it will end at a certain time or in the near future, after the seasonal peak passes (Araslı &

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Arıcı, 2019) and is often associated with low-skilled jobs performed by women and the younger population (Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015; Sobaih, 2015)

Following the aforementioned, natural causes, such as the climate, force hospitality managers to depend on seasonal workers during the summer months, putting them in an unpleasant every year situation of seeking workers who can resist the hard work. Therefore, it is crucial for hospitality enterprises to provide working conditions of better quality for their seasonal workers in order to ensure the highest possible level of job satisfaction and potential intention to return or recommend. Ultimately, a high degree of employee satisfaction will causally affect both the perceived quality of service provided and guest satisfaction (Mcphail et al., 2015). By reviewing scientific publications, the authors identified the need to bridge the gap in the existing literature on seasonal workers as it is found that the literature presents research exclusively in the context of measuring employee satisfaction with work but not with the quality of their working conditions. Based on the above, the objectives of this research paper are: a) to research and expand existing theoretical knowledge and, based on this knowledge, to develop a suitable scale for measuring the quality of seasonal working conditions in the hospitality industry, and b) to examine the relationship between extracted quality dimensions of working conditions and behavioral intentions of seasonal workers.

This research is vital for hospitality facilities that provide accommodation services as well as those engaged in the preparation and serving of food and beverages. The results of the research will provide managers with greater insight into the factors that affect the quality of working conditions in general and into the factors that seasonal workers perceive as key to assessing the quality of working conditions and their impact on behavioral intentions. The results will also provide hospitality companies with a solid basis for improving their working conditions by determining which factors positively and negatively affect seasonal workers' intentions to return and intentions to recommend.

# 2. Theoretical background

## 2.1. Quality of working conditions and employee job satisfaction

Job quality is a set of factors related to work and employment that positively and directly affect the well-being of workers (Esenaliev & Ferguson, 2019). The aim is to analyze the quality of working life from a multidimensional perspective, which stems from the evidence that people work not only to earn a salary but also to improve their social and personal life, ultimately achieving self-awareness and social integration (Guidetti et al., 2020). Guillaume et al. (2019) point out that in order to achieve high-quality work, it is necessary to ensure fair and positive working conditions related to aspects of the workplace, such as challenging tasks, training and advancement opportunities, job security, a positive work environment, and positive interactions with colleagues and supervisors. On the other hand, Guidetti et al. (2020) state in their research that the basic working conditions of employees are: salary, number of hours worked, access to training and learning opportunities, and social participation. There is also a belief that internal and external factors are crucial for creating a positive quality of working conditions (Campos-Soria & Ropero-García, 2016). In this context, internal factors refer to the organization of work and relations in the workplace (Trefalt, 2013), while one of the most important external factors is the accommodation provided to seasonal workers.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that the concept of quality of working conditions is closely related to the concept of worker satisfaction. Lillo-Banuls et al. (2018) focused on this topic in their research. They found that job satisfaction is mainly determined by the individual characteristics of workers (e.g., gender, age, and education), working conditions (e.g., working hours, work schedule), type of contract (employment, supervisory duties, and health and safety conditions), and salary. To better understand the interdependence of the mentioned concepts, it is extremely important to define job satisfaction. Helliwell and Huang (2019)

characterize job satisfaction as "the evolution of workers by the work environment", while Perić et al. (2018) believe that job satisfaction is related to workers' behavior in the workplace and the level of expectations regarding actual rewards received for the work done. Akgunduz et al. (2016) highlight the importance of employee feelings as one of the key determinants of organizational success.

Bardasi and Francesconi (2004) are two of the few authors whose research has focused on measuring job satisfaction in the context of seasonal workers. The results of their research indicate that seasonal workers have a lower level of job satisfaction compared with other temporary workers. This knowledge can be easily linked to the widely accepted opinion that the working and living conditions of seasonal workers, especially in Croatia, are very poor and negatively affect their physical and psychological condition as well as their behavioral intentions and attitude towards work.

Despite the fact that seasonal business is characterized by, among other things, a less skilled workforce, it is important to understand that seasonal workers are not so easy to replace (Alverén et al., 2012). The advantage of returning seasonal workers to the company lies in maintaining the quality of service provided to guests, but also in the easier networking and communication of a well-established team of workers, which strengthens the work of the company (Alverén et al., 2012).

## 2.2. Seasonal work in the hospitality business

Seasonality represents the common denominator for all natural or/and institutional imbalances, which affect business processes in the observed period. Although Croatian tourism is affected by both imbalances, the natural one represents the most common cause of tourism seasonality. Croatian tourism is mostly turned toward swimming tourism, as in any other Mediterranean country. According to Suštar and Laškarin Ažić (2020), in Mediterranean countries with a highly pronounced seasonal demand structure during the summer vacation, tourism seasonality in general negatively reflects on natural, institutional and human resources. Moreover, working in imbalanced conditions with high resource pressure directly influences labor demand.

According to the Croatian employment Bureau (2020), in 2019, the share of required hospitality seasonal workers in the total number of required seasonal workers was 52%. While employment of hospitality seasonal workers in total employment of seasonal workers in the same year was 57%. In addition, from the required 31.547 seasonal hospitality workers in 2019, almost 98 % of workers were employed. In Croatia, hospitality employers may utilize the opportunity to employ three types of seasonal workers: a) student seasonal workers, b) seasonal workers, and c) permanent seasonal workers.

According to Mooney (2016), an increasing number of young people work and try to build a career in the hospitality industry, primarily because of their propensity to work with people, flexible working hours, and easy earnings. Thus, seasonal work for young people is one of the most common ways to enter the business world. In Croatia, their employment conditions are strictly defined by the regulation on student affairs. However, if the seasonal worker is not a student, the employer usually decides between the other two types, depending on his preferences. For example, following the regulation defined in the Labour Market Law, an employer may offer an employment contract to a worker for a limited period, known as a fixed-term contract (seasonal worker). Likewise, if a person is working for the same employer minimum of 6 months in a continuum for at least one season, they can sign a fix-term employment contract familiar as a contract for permanent seasonal workers (Article 43, section 1).

Regarding the popularity of locations for seasonal work in Croatia, seasonal workers mostly choose to work in Split - Dalmatia, Dubrovnik - Neretva, Istria, and Primorje - Gorski Kotar. At the same time, the most common jobs of seasonal workers are waiter/waitress, salesman/ saleswoman, chef/cook, assistant chef/assistant cook, valet/maid, cleaner, assistant waiter/waitress, kitchen worker/kitchen worker, receptionist/receptionist (Croatian Employment Bureau, 2020).

## 2.3. Scales for measuring the quality of working conditions and job satisfaction of seasonal workers

A literature review revealed that while there are many studies on employee job satisfaction, there are only a few concerned with measuring the quality of working conditions. A lack of research in the context of examining the quality of working conditions of seasonal workers was also noted in the literature. Hence, this empirical research is vital and can serve as a basis for future research.

The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) and the Descriptive Job Index (JDI) are listed as the most common scales for measuring job satisfaction (Khalilzadeh et al., 2013; Haiyan et al., 2018). The MSQ scale is used in the operationalization of employee satisfaction with work. This measurement instrument covers three basic dimensions: (1) internal satisfaction, (2) external satisfaction, and (3) general employee satisfaction. Given the length of its contents, this scale is used in research in two different forms, its longer version (100 items) and its shorter version (20 items). Despite the MSQ being characterized as comprehensive, the main drawback of the longer version of the survey questionnaire in the literature is mainly the impatience of the respondents during the survey. Ineson et al. (2013) used this scale in their own research. The results show statistically significant relationships between employee satisfaction at work and employee commitment to the company as an organization. In contrast, Hancer and George (2003) refute previous research with a research of their own and state that internal factors of employees exert the greatest influence on job satisfaction.

In addition to the MSQ, another measuring instrument that is often used is the Descriptive Job Index (JDI), which consists of five dimensions: work itself, salary, opportunities for promotion, supervision, and associates (Johnson & Johnson, 2000; Kass et al., 2001; ). In later years, the questionnaire was revised, with authors claiming that job satisfaction is affected not only by five aspects but also by a sixth one – promotion (Tutuncu & Kozak, 2007).

There are also proponents of measuring job satisfaction with the help of the Job in General Scale – a one-dimensional scale that measures overall job satisfaction. Patrons of the Job in General Scale claim that the results of such a scale are robust and resistant to change and advocate an overall assessment of satisfaction, rather than a mere summation of elements that affect satisfaction as separate dimensions (Mincu, 2015; Kawada & Yamada, 2012; Lee & Moreo, 2007).

All mentioned scales aim exclusively at measuring job satisfaction, yet none measures satisfaction as the level of met quality expectations regarding working conditions. One of the most significant scales used in measuring the quality of working conditions is the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) scale. Its aim is to collect and compare reliable data on working conditions in Europe. Namely, it measures working conditions in different European countries, analyses the links between their different aspects, identifies risk groups, highlights concerns and areas of progress, and, finally, contributes to the development of EU policy aimed at improving the quality of work (Eurofound, 2016).

So far, six EWCS surveys have been conducted, and the seventh is ongoing (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2020). Although the number of issues and problems covered by the EWCS measuring instrument has expanded over time, the core of the issues has remained unchanged in different waves, allowing a comparative study of changes in working conditions and their effects (Cottini & Lucifora, 2010).

Topics covered include employment status, working hours, work organization, learning and training, physical and psychosocial risk factors, health and safety, worker participation, work-life balance, earnings, and financial security, and work and health (Eurofound, 2020). Due to the wide range of elements that the EWSC scale

possesses, it can be identified as the most appropriate instrument in measuring the quality and satisfaction of working conditions, especially in the context of seasonal workers. Accordingly, a modified EWSC measurement scale was applied in this study.

Aside from the degree of agreement with provided quality of working conditions for seasonal workers, it is crucial to determine their degree of behavioral intention. In this context, behavioral intentions are understood as loyalty to an attitude expressed through the intention to return and the intention to recommend (Antón et al., 2018). The relationship between job satisfaction and the intention to return to work in the same facility has been investigated by many researchers (Meyer et al., 2002; Egan et al., 2004; Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006), and the results of their studies indicate that there is no connection between the mentioned concepts. In other words, they found neither a positive nor a negative connection between the satisfaction of hospitality workers and their behavioral intentions.

# 3. Research methodology

## 3.1. Data collection and questionnaire

For the purposes of this empirical research, primary data obtained by the survey were used. The measuring instrument was an online survey questionnaire. The research sample was chosen intentionally and consists of seasonal workers who worked within the borders of Croatia in the facilities that provide hotel accommodation services or prepare and serve food and beverages. The research was conducted from 18 November 2020 to 30 March 2021, and 196 respondents were surveyed.

The structure of the survey questionnaire includes four parts. The first part of the survey questionnaire contained general open-ended questions about the seasonal work that seasonal workers did during the summer tourist season in Croatia. The second part of the survey questionnaire referred to the main construct in the research, which includes the following basic dimensions: basic objective dimension and the complementary objective dimension of quality of working conditions. A modified EWSC scale served as a basis for designing this part of the measuring instrument (Poggi, 2010; Van der Wel et al., 2015; Gomez-Baya & Lucia-Casademunt, 2018; Williams & Horodnic, 2018; Rigó et al., 2020). In this part, structured questions were asked using a Likert 5-point agreement scale, anchored at one (1) = "completely disagree" and five (5) = "completely agree". The third part of the survey questionnaire explored their behavioral intentions following suggestions of previous researchers (Kim et al., 2010). In the last fourth part, the measuring instrument included statements relating to the sociodemographic profile of the respondents, namely: age, gender, level of education, type of seasonal work, number of seasons, and salary.

## 3.2. Data analysis methods and results

To analyze the collected data (n=196), the authors applied the statistical program SPSS 25.0. First, descriptive statistics were performed to analyze the sociodemographic profile of respondents (table 1).

**Table 1**
***Respondents' profile***

| Characteristics | | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 65 | 33.2 |
| | Female | 131 | 66.8 |
| Year of birth | <=1989 | 16 | 8.2 |
| | 1990-1995 | 42 | 21.4 |
| | 1996-1999 | 128 | 65.3 |
| | 2000-2003 | 10 | 5.1 |

**Table 1** ***(continued)***

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level of formal education | High school | 104 | 53.1 |
| | Undergraduate professional study | 1 | 0.5 |
| | Undergraduate university study | 72 | 36.7 |
| | Graduate study | 17 | 8.7 |
| | postgraduate study | 1 | 0.5 |
| | Missing | 1 | 99.5 |
| Type of hospitality business | Accommodation business (hotel and similar accommodation facilities) | 142 | 72.4 |
| | Food and beverage business | 54 | 27.6 |
| Seasonal job - monthly income | <3,500 HRK | 5 | 2.6 |
| | 3,501–5,000 HRK | 44 | 22.4 |
| | 5,001 – 10,000 HRK | 116 | 59.2 |
| | 10,001 – 15,000 HRK | 27 | 13.8 |
| | >15,001 | 4 | 2.0 |
| Type of seasonal worker | Student seasonal worker | 117 | 59.7 |
| | Seasonal worker | 52 | 26.5 |
| | Permanent seasonal worker | 27 | 13.8 |
| Number of seasons | 1 | 56 | 28.6 |
| | 2-3 | 60 | 30.6 |
| | 4-6 | 58 | 29.6 |
| | 7 and more | 22 | 11.2 |

By summarizing the respondents' basic characteristics (seasonal worker profile), it can be concluded that the majority of respondents are female (66.8 %), between 21 and 25 years old, with high school education. In terms of their seasonal job characteristics, most of the respondents earned between HRK 5,001 and HRK 10,000 per month during their last season. According to the Croatian national classification of seasonal workers, the majority of respondents belong to the first type, "student seasonal worker" (59.7 %). Compared with the other characteristics, responses to the question concerning the respondent's experience in seasonal work, expressed by the number of seasons, are more fragmented. Namely, 28.6 % of respondents reported having 1 season of experience; 30.6 % of respondents, 2 or 3 seasons of experience; 29.6 % of respondents, between 4 and 6 seasons of experience; and 11.2 % of respondents, seven and more seasons of experience.

Since this is the first research of its kind conducted in Croatia in an online environment, the authors decided to first apply Exploratory Factor Analysis. Exploratory Factor analysis is particularly helpful in defining the structure among variables in the analysis and in revealing what variables best predict other sets of variables (Hair et al., 2014). Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation was used to reduce a large set of variables into a few representative variables of each factor. Further, Cronbach's Alpha was checked in order to test the reliability of constructs (Table 2).

**Table 2**
***Exploratory factor analysis results***

| | | Component | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Factor loading** | **Eigenvalue** | **Variance explained (%)** | **Cronbach's alpha** |
| **F1: Physical aspect** | | 4.054 | 31.183 | 0.755 |
| This job included a lot of movement/ walking | 0.805 | | | |
| This job included carrying and moving heavy things | 0.755 | | | |
| While working I was exposed to high temperatures | 0.733 | | | |
| The job implied a fast pace of work | 0.715 | | | |

**Table 2** ***(continued)***

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **F2: Opportunities for self-actualization (improvement)** | | 1.915 | 14.730 | 0.858 |
| This seasonal job offered many opportunities for personal improvement. | 0.884 | | | |
| This seasonal job offered good opportunities for career advancement. | 0.849 | | | |
| This seasonal job offered many opportunities for learning new things and following new hospitality trends. | 0.828 | | | |
| **F3: Monetary aspect of quality** | | 1.406 | 10.815 | 0.816 |
| Working on Sundays and holidays was paid extra. | 0.879 | | | |
| I had paid overtime hours. | 0.877 | | | |
| **F4: Health aspect of quality** | | 1.301 | 10.004 | 0.762 |
| This job has negatively affected my physical health. | 0.875 | | | |
| This job has negatively affected my mental health. | 0.860 | | | |
| **F5: Opportunities for self-determination** | | 1.054 | 8.110 | 0.703 |
| During my work, I could distribute tasks according to my own schedule. | 0.875 | | | |
| During my work, I could perform tasks by using my own methods. | 0.821 | | | |

*Note:* Cumulative variance explained: 74,842 %.

The Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) value is 0.757 (greater than the threshold score of 0.7), and Bartlett's test is significant (x2=917.869, df=78, p<0.001), indicating that data were sufficiently correlated and that there is sufficient sampling adequacy. The authors employed the concept of statistical power (Hair et al., 2014), following a cut-off value of 0.45 for the sample size (n=196). Extracted factors with eigenvalues higher than one explained 75 % of the variance. According to EFA results, the construct of quality of working conditions in the hospitality industry is multidimensional and is structured as follows:

a) The physical aspect of quality;
b) Opportunities for self-actualization (improvement);
c) The monetary aspect of quality;
d) The health aspect of quality;
e) Opportunities for self-determination.

The next step of the analysis was to test whether loyalty statements are normally distributed and whether factors (Word-of-Mouth WOM and repeat behavior) are reliable to proceed with multiple regression analysis.

**Table 3**
***Normality and reliability test for loyalty statements***

| WOM | Mean | Std.deviation | Skewness | Std.eror | Cronbach alpha |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I will recommend this working position in this hospitality enterprise/facility. | 3.19 | 1.512 | -0.253 | 0.174 | 0.897 |
| I will talk positively about my working experience in this hospitality facility. | 3.67 | 1.323 | -0.764 | 0.174 | |
| **Repeat behavior** | | | | | |
| I am planning to return to the same hospitality enterprise next season. | 2.44 | 1.630 | 0.571 | 0.174 | 0.834 |
| If I am given the opportunity, I would like to have a permanent job in this hospitality enterprise. | 2.14 | 1.482 | 0.937 | 0.174 | |

As seen from the results in Table 3, Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.834 to 0.897, which is above the required minimum of 0.7 (Klobas & Baggio, 2011), suggesting good internal consistency and stability of the presented factors. Furthermore, to test the normality of the data, the authors checked skewness values, which are within the acceptable range of +1 and -1 (Morgan et al., 2004), confirming the normal distribution of the presented data. Each factor was transformed into one variable with mean value to perform regression analysis.

Two regression analyses were conducted (Table 4 and Table 5) to find whether the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics have any influence on loyalty statements distributed in two factors (WOM and Repeat behavior). All VIF values are less than the tolerance value of 10, indicating that there are no multicollinearity issues in the presented results (Hair et al., 2014).

**Table 4**
***Impact of sociodemographic characteristics on seasonal workers' intention for word of mouth***

| Independent variables | Coefficients ß | t | sig. | Collinearity statistics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Tolerance | VIF |
| Number of seasons | 0.154 | 2.074 | 0.039 | 0.765 | 1.307 |
| Type of seasonal worker | 0.101 | 1.266 | 0.207 | 0.664 | 1.505 |
| Type of hospitality business | -0.214 | -3.196 | 0.002 | 0.946 | 1.057 |
| Gender | -0.108 | -1.426 | 0.155 | 0.736 | 1.358 |
| Year of birth | 0.049 | 0.662 | 0.509 | 0.780 | 1.283 |
| Level of formal education | 0.050 | 0.674 | 0.501 | 0.777 | 1.288 |
| Seasonal job - monthly income | 0.272 | 3.834 | 0.000 | 0.836 | 1.196 |

*Note:* $R^2 = 0.210$ $F(7,187)=7.112$ $p < 0.01$; dependent variable: WOM; VIF - variance inflation factors, standardized ß coefficients- unequal measurement scale.

As seen in Table 4, there are three significant predictors of Word of Mouth: number of seasons, type of hospitality business, and monthly income. The results show that seasonal workers who have greater experience with seasonal jobs are more willing to share their positive thoughts with others than those who have less seasonal working experience. Moreover, the negative relationship between the type of hospitality business and WOM implies that respondents who had seasonal jobs in hotels are more willing to recommend their job than workers who worked in food and beverage facilities. The next significant relationship implies that respondents with higher monthly income are more prone to recommend their job than respondents with a lower monthly income.

**Table 5**
***Impact of sociodemographic characteristics on seasonal workers' intention for repeat behavior***

| Independent variables | Coefficients ß | t | sig. | Collinearity statistics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Tolerance | VIF |
| Number of seasons | 0.184 | 2.467 | 0.015 | 0.765 | 1.307 |
| Type of seasonal worker | 0.203 | 2.534 | 0.012 | 0.664 | 1.505 |
| Type of hospitality business | -0.241 | -3.585 | 0.000 | 0.946 | 1.057 |
| Gender | -0.073 | -0.957 | 0.340 | 0.736 | 1.358 |
| Year of birth | 0.160 | 2.166 | 0.032 | 0.780 | 1.283 |
| Level of formal education | -0.003 | -0.037 | 0.970 | 0.777 | 1.288 |
| Seasonal job - monthly income | 0.195 | 2.731 | 0.007 | 0.836 | 1.196 |

*Note:* $R^2 = 0.201$ $F(7,187)=6.738$, $p < 0.01$; dependent variable: Repeat Behaviour; VIF - variance inflation factors, standardized ß coefficients- unequal measurement scale.

According to the results presented in Table 5, five of the seven relationships with "Intention to repeat behavior" are significant. Significant positive relationships indicate that younger respondents who have worked

more often and had higher monthly incomes are more willing to work again in the same facility and find permanent employment there. The significant negative relationship between "Type of hospitality business" and "Repeat behavior" suggests that seasonal hotel workers are more open to repeat working or permanent employment than those workers who worked in food and beverage facilities.

The next two regression analyses (Tables 6 and 7) reveal the impact of extracted factors on loyalty intentions. Here also, the VIF values are below 10, suggesting that further regression analysis has no multicollinearity issues.

**Table 6**
***Impact of extracted factors on seasonal workers' WOM intention***

| Independent variables | Coefficients ß | t | sig. | Collinearity statistics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Tolerance | VIF |
| Physical aspect of quality | -0.068 | 0.089 | 0.446 | 0.852 | 1.174 |
| Opportunities for self-actualization | 0.347 | 0.073 | 0.000 | 0.854 | 1.172 |
| Monetary aspect of quality | 0.144 | 0.049 | 0.004 | 0.792 | 1.263 |
| Health aspect of quality | -0.295 | 0.060 | 0.000 | 0.853 | 1.172 |
| Opportunities for self-determination | 0.368 | 0.065 | 0.000 | 0.775 | 1.291 |

*Note:* $R^2 = 0.513$ $F(5,190)=40.060$, $p < 0.01$; dependent variable: VIF - variance inflation factors, unstandardized ß coefficients- equal measurement scale.

The results presented in Table 6 show that there are three significant positive relationships and one significant negative relationship (out of five tested relationships). The positive impact of "Opportunities for self-actualization" on WOM implies that seasonal workers who believe their seasonal job offered them opportunities for advancement would be more willing to recommend their seasonal job position and talk positively about that job. Similarly, respondents who believe their seasonal job has a monetary aspect of quality and provides opportunities for self-determination would be more willing to share positive WOM. Considering that the health aspect was measured with negative statements, the negative relationship between "Health aspect of quality" and WOM implies that respondents who do not believe their seasonal job has negatively influenced their health (mental or physical) would be more willing to share positive WOM.

**Table 7**
***Impact of extracted factors on seasonal workers' repeat behaviour intention***

| Independent variables | Coefficients ß | t | sig. | Collinearity statistics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Tolerance | VIF |
| Physical aspect of quality | -0.178 | 0.111 | 0.111 | 0.852 | 1.174 |
| Opportunities for Self-actualization | 0.307 | 0.092 | 0.001 | 0.854 | 1.172 |
| Monetary aspect of quality | 0.163 | 0.061 | 0.008 | 0.792 | 1.263 |
| Health aspect of quality | -0.198 | 0.075 | 0.009 | 0.853 | 1.172 |
| Opportunities for self-determination | 0.264 | 0.081 | 0.001 | 0.775 | 1.291 |

*Note:* $R^2 = 0.331$ $F(5,190) = 18.771$, $p < 0.01$; dependent variable; VIF - variance inflation factors, unstandardized ß coefficients- equal measurement scale.

Table 7 shows similar results with extracted factors. Namely, there are also three significant positive relationships and one significant negative relationship. Seasonal workers who perceive their jobs as being of good quality, based on opportunities for self-actualization, monetary aspects, health aspects, and opportunities for self-determination, are more willing to work again in the same hospitality facility or find permanent employment there (providing the employer provides such an opportunity).

# 4. Discussion and implications

In the tourism industry, many enterprises, both small and large (e.g., large hotel chains), are confronted with a shortage of skilled seasonal workers. The disproportion between supply and demand for this type of employee is mostly attributed to the industry's rapid growth without any serious investments in making work conditions more attractive. Seasonal hospitality jobs are often characterized by traditionally lower or tipped wages, accompanied by long, anti-social working hours, without any perks or opportunities for advancement (Thinktourism, ltd. 2021). Despite the evident need to analyze the quality of seasonal working conditions, this study is one of the few that focuses on the perspective of seasonal hospitality employees. The study applies an objective approach to measuring job quality, which, according to Guidetti et al. (2020), is based on the assumption that job characteristics are the predominant source of employee experience.

By applying statistical analysis, the authors have confirmed that the proposed scale is applicable in the hospitality industry, which advances previous work in developing scales that measure the quality of job conditions. Although the authors tested the scale on a relatively small sample, it could benefit future researchers to continue further testing and development. To our knowledge, this is the first study to explore the mentioned job features as potential determinants of behavioral intentions among seasonal hospitality employees. Moreover, this study is among the rare ones examining the sociodemographic characteristics of seasonal workers and their impact on behavioral intentions, which gives the study additional value.

The key findings of this study suggest that the seasonal workers have a common attitude towards the quality dimensions of working conditions, which may be divided into five sets of distinct factors: Physical aspect of quality, Opportunities for self-actualization (improvement), Monetary aspect of quality, Health aspect of quality, and Opportunities for self-determination. Each of these dimensions contains specific quality items that are a facet of broader evaluative dimensions (Hair et al., 2014). For hospitality managers, these dimensions may be helpful in visualizing the quality of seasonal working conditions in more detail. In particular, they can use them as a base for self-evaluation and/or as a list of criteria for improving relations with seasonal employees.

The results of regression analysis suggest four important findings with regard to the behavioral intentions of seasonal employees. *First*, the study found that intention to return and intention to recommend are predicted by different sets of sociodemographic characteristics. Namely, more-experienced seasonal workers, who work in the tourist accommodation sector and receive higher monthly incomes, also have significantly greater WOM intentions compared with less-experienced employees who have worked fewer seasons in the food and beverage industry and received lower monthly incomes. However, the intention to return to the same business is predicted by a larger set of sociodemographic characteristics (number of seasons (experience), type of seasonal worker and hospitality business, year of birth, and monthly income). This means that younger and more experienced seasonal employees who worked in the tourist accommodation sector are more likely to return than older and less experienced ones who worked in the food and beverage business. Moreover, the results imply that the higher the earnings of seasonal employees, the higher will be the intention to return. This result is consistent with the findings of Ismert and Petrick (2004), who reported that satisfaction with pay and benefits best predicts the return of seasonal employees. In addition, contrary to our findings, Alverén et al. (2012) found that there is a negative relationship between the intention to return and the number of seasons (experience). In other words, seasonal employees who worked two and more years show less intention to return than employees who worked their first season. When it comes to the sociodemographic characteristics of tourism employees, previous studies have reported diverse results. According to Findlay et al. (2013), there is a significant discrepancy between young employees and older ones when it comes to their perceptions of a good job. Guidetti et al. (2020) found that younger and less experienced seasonal workers find seasonal employment less attractive than older workers with experience in seasonal jobs.

In addition, the findings of this study reveal that the same set of extracted job quality dimensions affects both intention to recommend and intention to return in the same way. The most significant determinant of WOM intention is "Opportunity for self-determination", while the most significant predictor of intention for repeat behavior is "Opportunity for self-actualization". This means that seasonal workers who feel they have more control over their daily tasks are more likely to recommend their seasonal job. On the other hand, seasonal workers who feel they worked in an environment where they had opportunities for advancement and learning are more optimistic about returning to the same hospitality business. The reported findings add to the work of Guillaume et al. (2019), whose study results on objective quality dimensions provide evidence that seasonal workers have significantly fewer opportunities to work on challenging tasks, less comfortable physical working conditions, and less job security compared with regular workers.

By examining seasonal workers' perception of job quality dimensions and drivers of behavioral intentions, researchers and human resource managers are a step closer to understanding their specific needs, which could help in ensuring their satisfaction and positive response. To deal with cyclical employment, some authors (Jolliffe & Farnsworth, 2003) recommend different strategies depending on whether hospitality businesses choose to embrace seasonality (embracers) or challenge seasonality (challengers). Namely, if a hospitality business chooses to embrace seasonality, its staffing efforts should focus on activities with short-term results, such as hiring student workers and providing brief and task-specific training for employees. However, if it chooses to challenge the seasonal nature of tourism and seeks to extend the season, it will need to support its business operations beyond the normal season, for example, by utilizing government incentives that can help employers extend the season. In both cases, seasonal workers play a significant role in bridging the employment gap between seasons. This study confirms that to ensure the return of seasonal workers, human resource managers should devote special attention to the physical aspect of quality, opportunities for self-actualization (improvement), the monetary aspect of quality, the health aspect of quality, and opportunities for self-determination.

Although this study significantly contributes to the previous literature on seasonal working conditions, there are also some limitations that should be addressed. *First*, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this study was conducted online (through social networks), thereby reducing the sample's representativeness. Second, since our study included only Croatian seasonal workers working in Croatia, the findings of this study should be generalized with care. In particular, the presented results should not be generalized to other seasonal employees living and working outside Croatia. Third, this study is limited to examining sociodemographic characteristics and the objective dimension of quality. Accordingly, future studies should include and compare other determinants, such as the size of the organization and the subjective dimension of quality, and test whether they have a significant impact on the behavioral intentions of seasonal employees. To obtain a holistic view of job quality conditions, the authors suggest including regular workers to compare opinions.

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