



Provided by the author(s) and University of Galway in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite the published version when available.

Title	Ahead of the tide: Exploring a unique change agenda at the Armada Hotel
Author(s)	Curran, Deirdre; O Driscoll, Finian
Publication Date	2023-05
Publication Information	Curran, Deirdre, & O Driscoll, Finian. (2023). Ahead of the tide: Exploring a unique change agenda at the Armada Hotel. Galway: University of Galway. https://doi.org/10.13025/x9ht-q234
Publisher	University of Galway
Link to publisher's version	https://doi.org/10.13025/x9ht-q234
Item record	http://hdl.handle.net/10379/17742
DOI	http://dx.doi.org/10.13025/x9ht-q234

Downloaded 2024-04-25T02:01:27Z

Some rights reserved. For more information, please see the item record link above.





OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

Coláiste Ósta na Sionna
Shannon College of Hotel Management



A R M A D A
Hotel

Ahead of the Tide

Exploring a Unique Change Agenda
at the Armada Hotel





Contents

Section	Page
Prologue	3
Executive Summary	4 to 6
Section 1	
The Business Context	7 to 10
1.1 The Armada Hotel	7 to 8
1.2 The Vision for Change	8 to 9
1.3 Research Triggers and Objectives	9 to 10
Section 2	
Research Design and Theoretical Frameworks	11 to 16
2.1 Overview	11
2.2 Research Design and Methodology	11 to 13
2.3 Theoretical Lens: The Fair and Decent Work Treatise	13 to 15
2.4 The McKinsey 7s Framework	15 to 16
Section 3	
Results	17 to 28
3.1 Overview	17
3.2 Staff Survey Findings	17
3.3 Overall Perspective Analysis	17 to 19
3.4 Understanding the Relationship between Organisational Dimensions	20
3.5 Qualitative Findings from Focus Groups and Interviews	21 to 24
3.5.1 Overview	21
3.5.2 Triggers for/elements of the change agenda	21 to 22
3.5.3 A Focus on Well-being	22 to 24
3.6 Challenges faced by Staff	24 to 26
3.7 Findings of the project focused on Authentic Leadership and Sustainability	26 to 28
3.7.1 Armada's Current Sustainability Actions	28
Section 4	
Emergent Themes, Conclusions and Recommendations	29 to 36
4.1 Emergent Themes	29 to 31
4.2 Overall Conclusions and Recommendations	31 to 33
4.3 McKinsey 7s Framework Revisited	34 to 36
Appendices	37 to 43
References	44

Tables	Page
Table 1 Management-Level Participants	12
Table 2 Profile of Focus Group Participants	13
Table 3 Distribution of Responses by Operational Area	17
Table 4 Rank Order of Survey Dimension Scores	18
Table 5 Overall Score for Positive Perception by Operational Area	18
Table 6 Correlation Matrix of Survey Dimensions	20
Table 7 Triggers of Change	22
Table 8 Employee Benefits Provided	23
Table 9 Perceived Strengths of the Armada Hotel	24
Table 10 Cross-departmental Perceptions of Hotel Operations	40
Table 11 Cross-departmental Perceptions of Hotel Communications	40
Table 12 Cross-departmental Perceptions of Training & Development	41
Table 13 Table 13: Cross-departmental Perceptions on Training & Development	41
Table 14 Cross-departmental Perceptions on the Hotel's Culture	42
Table 15 Cross-departmental Perceptions of Wellbeing	42
Table 16 Cross-departmental Perceptions of Current Engagement Levels	42
Table 17 Cross-departmental Perceptions of Future Engagement Levels	43
Table 18 Overall Perception of the Armada Hotel	43

Figures	Page
Figure 1 Sustainable Development Goals infographic	14
Figure 2 Job Quality Dimension infographic	15
Figure 3 The McKinsey 7s Model for Organisational Design and Change	16
Figure 4 Hard and Soft Pillars of the 7s Model	16
Figure 5 Distribution of Mean Scores across Operational Areas & Survey Dimensions	19
Figure 6 The Authentic Leadership Cycle	28
Figure 7 Dimensions of Job Quality Infographic	29



Prologue

In June 2021 Hotels re-opened their doors after a series of Covid-imposed lockdowns. Almost immediately a problem of staff shortages began to emerge. In late 2021/early 2022 the Armada hotel gained a lot of media attention around plans to offer staff a better employee proposition as part of a transformative change process (See Appendix 2).

Two researchers from the University of Galway approached the hotel owner about conducting a detailed case study. He agreed. This report documents the findings of that case study and makes recommendations for the hotel specifically, and the hotel industry more broadly.

The report includes the voice of Armada staff who participated in surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The researchers are extremely grateful for their input which was offered from a genuine position of care for the success of the enterprise.

The researchers would also like to thank Martin Kelley (MSc SIPM) for his work on the sustainability aspect of the project.

Dr Deirdre Curran and **Dr Finian O Driscoll**

May 2023

Author Profile

Dr Deirdre Curran is a lecturer and researcher in the Cairnes School of Business and Economics at the University of Galway. She has 25yrs experience of teaching and researching the employment relationship, and her current research focus is on the lived experience of hospitality workers. In 2021 she published the report 'Inside out Hospitality: A study of working conditions in the hospitality sector in Ireland.' Deirdre's research findings informed to the recommendations of the Joint Oireachtas Committee report 'Working Conditions and Skills Shortages in Ireland's Tourism and Hospitality Sector' (2022).



Dr Finian O Driscoll is a lecturer in the Shannon College of Hotel Management with over 20 yrs. teaching experience on a range of hospitality degree programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The focus of his research encompasses the measurement and evaluation of organisational and work environment factors that both positively and negatively impact the motivation, satisfaction, and job-related performance of employees within the workplace. Recent collaborative projects focus on the work experiences of frontline staff within the Irish hospitality industry.



Executive Summary

This report presents a detailed analysis of a hotel case study. The Irish family-owned hotel gained media attention in late 2021/early 2022 for claiming to be undergoing a change process that would offer staff a better employee proposition than was typical in the sector.

Two researchers from the University of Galway were granted access to conduct the study which sought to explore (quantitatively and qualitatively) the nature of, and triggers for, the changes, alongside the perceived benefits and challenges. A particular spotlight was placed on sustainability as a dimension of change and a masters student from the university focused on this aspect.

An initial consultation with the hotel owner established that the planned changes spread beyond the employee experience, and that the change process had commenced before the onset of the pandemic.

The hotel's chosen framework for change was the BCorp accreditation process which requires exacting standards of verified performance, accountability, and transparency on factors from employee benefits and charitable giving, to supply chain practices and input materials. At the time of writing the hotel had not heard the outcome of its accreditation application but, if successful, it will be the first hotel in this country to be accredited.

The theoretical features of decent work, and the McKinsey's 7S Framework of organisational change, were employed as lenses for interpreting the research findings.

Research methods included the analysis of survey data, interviews with management representatives (including the owner), and focus groups of sample staff from all levels and departments.

The findings demonstrate that this hotel is displaying industry leadership in terms of the treatment of employees, sustainability initiatives, and other aspects of transformational change.

During the pandemic, the hotel managed to retain all staff and diversified into new business initiatives such as E-commerce. Staff at the hotel have great respect for the owner and generally enjoy the work and the community atmosphere. As we will demonstrate, the nature of the work measures well against the criteria of decent work, and the change process incorporates all dimensions of the 7S Framework.

Despite the positives, the hotel has not been immune to the ravages of the pandemic. A combination of staff shortages and intense work pressures mean that much of management and staff time is spent firefighting rather than proactive development. Bear in mind that the data was gathered in June of 2022, during the height of the season.

Areas for improvement include communications, training, accessing quality staff, and staff retention. Nonetheless the authors believe that this hotel represents a case of exceptionally good practice that could inspire and inform other establishments in the industry as they grapple with post-pandemic recovery.

The concluding section of the report provides the hotel with recommendations that will assist efforts of continuous improvement and ensure the sustainability and success of the business into the future.

A key recommendation would be for this case to be highlighted on industry and academic platforms so that the learnings may be shared.

Local and National Perspectives

Prior to the pandemic the Tourism and Hospitality sector in Ireland was a thriving sector. Tourism was one of Ireland's largest indigenous industries and a critical component of the economy, worth an estimated €9.2 billion annually after 8 years of a boom by 2019. 1 in 9 jobs nationally were in tourism & hospitality sector. According to the Irish Tourism Industry Confederation (ITIC) the Irish tourism industry earned an estimated €9.3 billion in 2019, down 1% on the record high of 2018. The tourism and hospitality industry provides employment for an estimated 265,000 people throughout the country according to 1029 Q3 CSO (Central Statistics Office) data. By the start of 2020, the biggest challenge on the horizon was the potential fallout from Brexit.

And then the pandemic hit!

In July 2021, the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport, and Media published a report on the impact of Covid-19 on the Hospitality and Entertainment sectors [see Appendix 1]. The report contained 16 recommendations including on-going financial supports for the sector, apprenticeship initiatives, the establishment of a National Hospitality and Tourism Skills Directorate, and a review of working conditions.



Labour Shortages

Tourism and hospitality are critical contributors to the national economy, providing employment throughout the country in urban and rural locations alike. According to Fáilte Ireland, prior to the Covid pandemic, tourism accounted for 260,000 jobs in Ireland and in some regions of the country provided as many as 1 in 5 jobs.

The pandemic proved to be an unprecedented shock to the sector and provided tourism and hospitality workers time and space to consider their options. As a result, many chose to leave the sector, leaving an estimated labour shortage of 40,000 vacant positions in late 2021.

In February 2022 Fáilte Ireland published a report based on 'the most comprehensive research ever undertaken into the tourism and hospitality labour market.' In that report they document the views of tourism and hospitality employees on the work challenges they face. The main challenges identified were; low pay, long/unplanned hours, customer, and manager ill-treatment.

By June 2022, almost 90% of tourism and hospitality businesses were still struggling to recruit staff. Employers have had to radically address terms and conditions to encourage new staff, adopting a range of measures such as higher pay, training and development opportunities, and more flexibility in working arrangements for employees (<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/work/2022/06/10/hospitality-and-tourism-sector-still-struggling-to-recruit-staff-research-shows/>)

Most recent statistics from Fáilte Ireland suggest that these initiatives are taking effect and labour shortages are decreasing.

Its latest research suggests the sector's shortage of workers, while still a challenge for many businesses, has begun to ease. Figures provided to The Irish Times show the number of vacant positions in the industry dropped from 40,000 last autumn to about 22,000 in July, when the most recent research was carried out.

Source: <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/2022/10/04/tourism-and-hospitality-staffing-crisis-easing-as-employers-hike-pay-rates/>

During 2021-22 the Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport, and Media held a series of public hearings and reviewed written submissions from tourism and hospitality stakeholders regarding staff shortages and working conditions in the sector. Submissions were received by employer organisations, trade unions, academics, and relevant state bodies such as Fáilte Ireland. The Committee findings were published in a report launched in November 2022.

The report contains 11 key recommendations summarised to include:

1. *The establishment of an independent hospitality oversight body.*
2. *A single Government department with responsibility for all aspects of this sector.*
3. *The re-establishment of Joint Labour Committees.*
4. *Expedition of work permits and visas but with conditions.*
5. *Increased resources for the WRC (Workplace Relations Commission).*
6. *Commissioning of further detailed research on employment rights and working conditions.*
7. *The provision of platforms for employee voice equal to employer voice.*
8. *The nomination of a body accountable for delivery of the report recommendations.*
9. *Further apprenticeship, traineeship, diploma, and degree programmes.*
10. *Development of the 'Excellent Employer' programme to encourage employers to recognise unions.*
11. *The development of a national mandatory code of conduct for the hospitality sector.*

The authors believe that the delivery of these recommendations will lead to significant improvements in the working conditions and prospects of hospitality workers and would go a long way to addressing long-standing labour shortages in the sector.



Section 1: The Business Context



1.1 The Armada Hotel

The ruins of the Atlantic Hotel are located on the site, a 60-room hotel, built in 1810. The hotel was the biggest on the British Isles at the time. During the famine it was used as an auxiliary workhouse for 500+ women and children. In the 1930s the hotel was closed and became derelict.

1968 John Burke snr and Claire Burke bought a shebeen bar, which was trading off the licence of the former Atlantic Hotel. The site has grown to become the four-star hotel it is today. John Burke is the sole owner.

The primary business focuses include accommodation, food & beverage, weddings & events, and outdoor dining. The Armada Hotel has 88 guest rooms and the newly acquired Armada House [in 2022] has 13 guest rooms. In the height of the 2022 summer season the hotel employed 225 staff, Off-season staff numbers increased from 84 in 2019 to 158 in 2022.

According to John Burke, the activities of the hotel are guided by four main pillars:

- 1. Respect for the environment and sustainability*
- 2. Investment in the well-being of young people through The Elevate Foundation, a dedicated philanthropic fund www.elevatefoundation.ie*
- 3. Commitment to the well-being of staff at the hotel (led by a dedicated well-being manager)*
- 4. Support for the local community*

In 2021 the hotel management team decided to pursue a business accreditation called BCorp. If successful, this will be the first hotel to ever be accredited in Ireland under this scheme. B Corp Certification is a designation that a business is meeting ambitious standards of verified performance, accountability, and transparency on factors from employee benefits and charitable giving, to supply chain practices and input materials.

To achieve certification, a company must:

- *Demonstrate high social and environmental performance.*
- *Make a legal commitment by changing their corporate governance structure to be accountable to all stakeholders, not just shareholders.*
- *Exhibit transparency by allowing information about their performance measured against B Lab's standards to be publicly available on their B Corp profile on B Lab's website.*
- *As leaders in the movement for economic systems change, B Corps reap remarkable benefits. They build trust with consumers, communities, and suppliers; attract and retain employees; and draw mission-aligned investors.*<https://www.bcorporation.net/enus/certification>

The accreditation process is rigorous and, if successful, the hotel will be part of a worldwide community of businesses focusing on ethical employment and sustainability.

(B Corp Anthem - B The Change)



Here is an example of a hotel in Mexico that achieved BCorp accreditation in 2022.

<https://www.elganzo.com/>

At the time of writing the Armada had not heard the outcome of their BCorp application.

1.2 The Vision for Change

Towards the end of 2021 media articles began to emerge about a change process underway at the Armada Hotel involving an investment of €3million, and the recruitment of up to 100 additional staff [See Appendix 2 for a selection of news coverage].

John Burke claimed to be 'looking at the best employers that are out there, what are they doing and how can we bring that into the hospitality sector.' A large part of the change programme was offering a different and better employee proposition.

'We've been trying to develop the Armada as a great place to work for quite some time, this is the next big step forward and it's where we start putting our money where our mouth is.'

The Clare Champion

The authors are researchers of the hospitality sector based at the University of Galway. In 2021, Dr Curran published a report entitled 'Inside Out Hospitality', a study of the lived experience of hospitality workers in Ireland pre-pandemic.

The authors approached John Burke about conducting an in-depth case study of the change process underway. He agreed to a meeting to discuss the possibilities and the researchers travelled to the hotel in early December 2021 to meet with John Burke and Rebecca Coady (Head of Strategy/Sustainability at the hotel).



During a vibrant discussion, which involved other members of the Armada team, it became apparent that the hotel was embarking on a uniquely ambitious programme of transformational change spanning strategy, structures, systems, and employee terms and conditions.

Within a week of meeting, Mr Burke and Ms Coady had agreed to facilitate the conduct of a case study and by the end of 2021 a project proposal had been agreed [see Appendix 3].

1.3 Research Trigger and Objectives

The hospitality sector has been uniquely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. While some establishments pivoted to food preparation and delivery, many were forced to shut down for over 16 months. Re-opening of in-door dining in July 2021 has led to extensive challenges of staff recruitment across the sector, along with claims by employers that this is stunting their ability to recover and thrive.

To date, little independent research has been conducted in Ireland to explore the reality of hospitality work (apart from Curran, 2021). This research will explore the proposed transformational change process embarked on by the Armada Hotel.

The Armada claimed to be offering an employee proposition that is different from, and better than, that typically associated with hospitality work. An improved employee experience is but one dimension of the proposed change.

This report presents the findings of the detailed case study of a transformative change process at the Armada Hotel. At a time of unprecedented staff shortages in hospitality and tourism, it seems opportune to highlight movements towards best practice. The authors believe that improvements to aspects of hospitality and tourism strategy and working conditions will place establishments at a unique advantage in terms of surviving and thriving post-pandemic.

The research objectives (ROs) of this project are to:

RO1: Explore the triggers for change at the Armada

RO2: Document stakeholder perceptions of the benefits of change, and challenges ahead

RO3: Place particular emphasis on employees' perception of the change plan

RO4: Use the Fair Work Frameworks as lenses for analysing the findings

RO5: Shine a light on sustainability initiatives and possibilities at the hotel

RO6: Provide a benchmark to revisit the host organisation after two years to track progress and outcomes

RO7: Inform the debate on how the hospitality sector could thrive post-pandemic to become a more valued employment destination

It was evident, early in the project, that authentic leadership and sustainability were important dimensions of the changes. Martin Kelley, an MSc student in Strategy Innovation and People Management at the University of Galway, was recruited to explore this aspect.

Martin Kelley framed his dissertation around authentic leadership and sustainability, thus making a valuable and valued contribution to this work.



Section 2: Research Design & Theoretical Frameworks

2.1 Overview

Fundamental to any form of research study is the choice of methodological design to gather data, and the application of relevant theoretical frameworks, to help unfurl and explain the narrative contained in this data. To this end, a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches (mixed methods) was utilised to collect and disseminate the relevant data and pertinent information. The qualitative data collected was derived from a series of focus groups and individual interviews over a two-day period in June 2022. The quantitative data and subsequent analyses contained in this report was generated from an in-house staff survey that was managed and administered by a third-party organisation. The hotel kindly granted access to the authors for the purpose of this study.

Given that the Armada hotel was/is on a journey of strategic developmental change, it was important to consider and select a relevant theoretical lens (perspective) and managerial model with which to frame the context of the research study vis-à-vis the strategic aspirations of the organisation. To this end, the application of the theoretical lens of 'Fair and Decent Work', and the 'McKinsey 7s' managerial framework were chosen as the principle models for this study. Details about the research design and methodology utilised for the current study are presented first, followed then by a description of the theoretical and managerial frameworks to frame the narrative of the analysis.

2.2 Research Design and Methodology

The primary motivation behind this project is to track and evaluate the change process at the Armada Hotel to contribute to the debate about how hospitality could reform to become a more ethically- and sustainability-informed sector.

By way of introduction, the researchers produced a short video for circulation to staff. The video explained the researchers' backgrounds, motives and rationale for the research, timelines, anticipated outcomes, and what would be involved if they chose to participate. The importance of each employee's voice was stressed, and they were encouraged to participate.

There are several dimensions to the methodology adopted.

1. A secondary analysis of the local and national context was conducted to set the scene for the empirical research.
2. The researchers spent two days on-site conducting interviews with managers and focus groups with a sample of staff from all departments.
3. Staff survey data, gathered by an external body on behalf of the hotel, was analysed where it related to the research objectives
4. Separately, Martin Kelley gathered data from key managers regarding authentic leadership and sustainability and conducted a review of best practice in this regard.

The hotel was progressing through the BCorp accreditation process when this project commenced. As part of that process, survey data had been collected, in the previous six months, by an external 'employee engagement' consultancy firm called Workbly. <https://workbly.com/>

Workbly conducted on-line surveys of each department in the hotel [including managers and HODs], measuring:

- Work planning and management
- Communications
- Training and Development
- Leadership
- Culture
- Wellbeing
- Current/future engagement

Response rates were 56% and details of the survey data are provided in the Findings section of this report. At the risk of over-surveying employees on overlapping dimensions the researchers sought, and were granted, a copy of the survey data.

In June 2022, the researchers spent two days on location at the hotel conducting interviews and focus groups. Semi-structured interview and focus group schedules were designed to elicit data relevant to the research questions. [See Appendix 4]

Members of the management team were interviewed individually by both researchers. [Table 1]. Two were not available on the day and were interviewed subsequently via Zoom. Interviews lasted from 40mins to one hour and were conducted in a private room provided by the hotel.

Table 1: Management-Level Participants

Manager	Format & Date
Owner/Director	In Person 07-06-22
General Manager	In Person 08-06-22
Rooms Division Manager	In Person 07-06-22
Wellbeing Manager	In Person 08-06-22
Strategy/Sustainability Manager	On-Line 30-06-22
Human Resources Manager	On-line 06-07-22

Four cross-functional focus groups were conducted. The participants included representatives from each of the main hotel functions [Almost 20% of staff]. Participants were selected by the Strategy/Sustainability Manager from a list of staff employed in each function. A mixture of participants was selected across gender, nationality, age, employment status, length of service, and staff level. Logistical issues were considered e.g., staff on holidays, the work schedule for the day and who could be released/when. Efforts were made to include as many people from as many different departments as possible, while allowing for business needs on both days. Participants were assured that they would not be named in the Research Report or any subsequent publications. However, the organization and owner agreed to be named. The focus group composition is outlined in Table 2.

The sister project on sustainability and authentic leadership involved an in-depth interview with the Strategy and Sustainability Manager and secondary analysis of international best practice in the sector.

Table 2: Profile of Focus Group Participants

Focus Group	Organisational Participant
1	Front Office Reservations Horticulturist/ Farm
2	Ocean Bar Waiting Staff Purchasing Supervisor Weddings Organiser Yard Team
3	Chef Aileen's Supervisor Accounts Supervisor Guest Relations Front Office Manager
4	Reservations Pastry Chef Front Office Team Yard Team Restaurant Team
5*	Financial Controller Accommodation Manager

**Focus Group 5 was different in that it was comprised of two members of the management team.*

2.3 Theoretical Lens: The Fair and Decent Work Treatise

“Work is core to people’s livelihood, their identity, and their well-being. Having a decent job gives workers adequate financial resources and contributes to their physical and mental health, their personal control and sense of purpose.”(<https://www.esri.ie/publications/monitoring-decent-work-in-ireland>)

As a lens to make sense of the findings, the authors decided to draw on the various frameworks of fair and decent work, alongside the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal [8] ‘Decent Work & Economic Growth’.

In 2015 all member states of the United Nations agreed ‘a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future’. At the centre of the blueprint are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which focus on ending poverty, improving health and education, reducing inequality, and spurring economic growth, while tackling climate change. The 17 goals are illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Sustainable Development Goals infographic



The significant goal relating to this project is Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. The essence of this goal is 'to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.' Decent work is defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as:

'Productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.'

In general, work is considered as decent when it:

- pays a fair income
- guarantees a secure form of employment and safe working conditions
- ensures equal opportunities and treatment for all
- includes social protection for the workers and their families
- offers prospects for personal development and encourages social integration
- Offers workers the freedom to express their concerns and to organise

Source: https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/sustainable-growth-and-jobs/employment-and-decentwork_en

The Scottish Government-sponsored Fair Work Convention gives preference to the term 'fair work' structured around the five dimensions of fair; pay, conditions, contracts, management, and representation. The recently published report 'Fair Work for All' (2022) uses these dimensions as a framework for analysing the findings of a research project on hospitality work.

The Carnegie UK (United Kingdom) Trust-RSA Working Group on Measuring Job Quality brought together representatives from trade unions, industry, charities, and academia to consider job quality measurement and implementation in the UK. Their report 'Measuring Good Work' identified the characteristics of 'good' work as identified by all the stakeholders (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Job Quality Dimension infographic



Following a review of international measurement frameworks and consultation with stakeholders in Ireland, the Economic and Social Research Institute [ESRI (Economic and Social Research Institute)] published a report in 2021 which identifies six key dimensions of decent work: access to work; adequate earnings; employee voice; security and stability of work; equality of opportunity and treatment in employment; and health and safety.

When people have access to decent work, they are more likely to experience individual wellbeing and more likely to contribute to the welfare of their communities. <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/measuring-good-work-the-final-report-of-the-measuring-jobquality-working-group/>

Access to decent work that offers opportunities for achievements and meaning is a central aspect of being alive in the world. (Blustein et al. 2018)

2.4 The McKinsey 7s Framework

The Armada's journey to establishing itself as a leader and innovator in the hospitality industry is no mean feat, and certainly presents a number of organisational and environmental challenges to negotiate along the way. For the hotel to achieve the range of goals it has set for itself requires a collective effort to embrace organisational change, and an engendered level of 'Esprit de Corp' among all stakeholders, both internally and externally. To assist the hotel in understanding the important elements that need evaluation and monitoring, the authors selected a tried and tested management framework to capture and reflect upon key organisational components that can facilitate the hotel's strategic development needs. The McKinsey 7s model for organisational planning management is an approach that considers seven interrelated elements that represent the main factors for organisational development.

Figure 3: The McKinsey 7s Model for Organisational Design and Change



These elements are further grouped into 'Hard' and 'Soft' elements (Figure 3). Strategy, structure and systems represent the hard elements, and are much easier to identify and manage when compared to soft elements. On the other hand, soft areas, although more challenging to manage, are viewed as the foundation of the organization that are more likely to create the sustained competitive advantage.

A caveat of the model is that all seven elements must be afforded equal importance and focus in order to achieve the best outcomes for the organisation. Figure 4 offers a synopsis of all seven elements of the model.

Figure 4: Hard and Soft Pillars of the 7s Model

The 7 Interdependent Elements



Section 3: Results

3.1 Overview

This section will be presented in three parts. Firstly, the results from the quantitative data obtained from employee surveys will be presented followed by the qualitative data derived from the interviews and focus groups. Finally, the findings of the specific project on authentic leadership and sustainability will be explored.

3.2 Staff Survey Findings

As previously highlighted, the Armada Hotel staff were surveyed, using the services of an external agency (Workbly.com) at the beginning of 2022. This not only served the purpose of evaluating the work environment as part of the BCorp accreditation process, but also dovetailed as a complimentary source of important organisational data for the current project. Staff at the hotel were asked to voluntarily participate in the survey which explored seven organisational and work environment aspects which included: Work Planning and Management, Communications, Training and Development, Leadership, Culture, Wellbeing, Current/Future Engagement. A 10-point agreement scale (1 to 10) was used to measure the opinion/perception of staff across these dimensions, with lower scores (≤ 5), indicating less agreement among staff with the various statements. Mean scores are reported for all items measured.

One hundred and twenty-seven staff (N=127) across eleven departments/functional areas completed the online survey [56% response rate]. The distribution of inter-departmental responses is detailed in Table 3. For the sake of brevity, only specific aspects of the survey results are emphasised here. Additional results and tabulations can be found in Appendix 5.

Table 3: Distribution of Responses by Operational Area

Operational Area	Organisational Dimension
Accommodation/Maintenance	18
Administration/Accounts	5
Banqueting Bar	4
Banqueting	12
Front Office Operations	15
Johnny Burke's Bar & Grill	4
Kitchen-Chefs	14
Kitchen Porters & Yard	19
Managers & HODs	14
Ocean Bar	8
Aileen's Restaurant	14

3.3 Overall Perspective Analysis

Tables 4 and 5 present an overview of results from both the operational areas across the hotel, and in terms of those dimensions that were positively perceived by staff.

Table 4: Rank Order of Survey Dimension Scores

Organisational Dimension	Rank	Mean Score
Leadership	1	8.00
Overall Perception	2	7.59
Organisational Culture	3	7.35
Engagement	4	7.05
Wellbeing	5	7.04
Operations	6	6.86
Future Engagement	7	6.24
Training & Development	8	6.21
Communications	9	5.99

On average, staff are quite positive about leadership within the organisation, returning the highest score on the survey. This compliments the positive narratives about the hotel’s leadership derived from the focus groups and interviews during the qualitative phase of the project. Additionally, most staff rate their general perception of the hotel as a good place to work highly, as well as favourably viewing the supportive culture that permeates throughout the establishment. Staff feel engaged in their work roles and duties and perceive that structures in place foster a healthy work-life balance and general well-being. However, staff perceive the level and forms of communication to be weak and in need of improvement; a sentiment that also emerged from the qualitative findings.

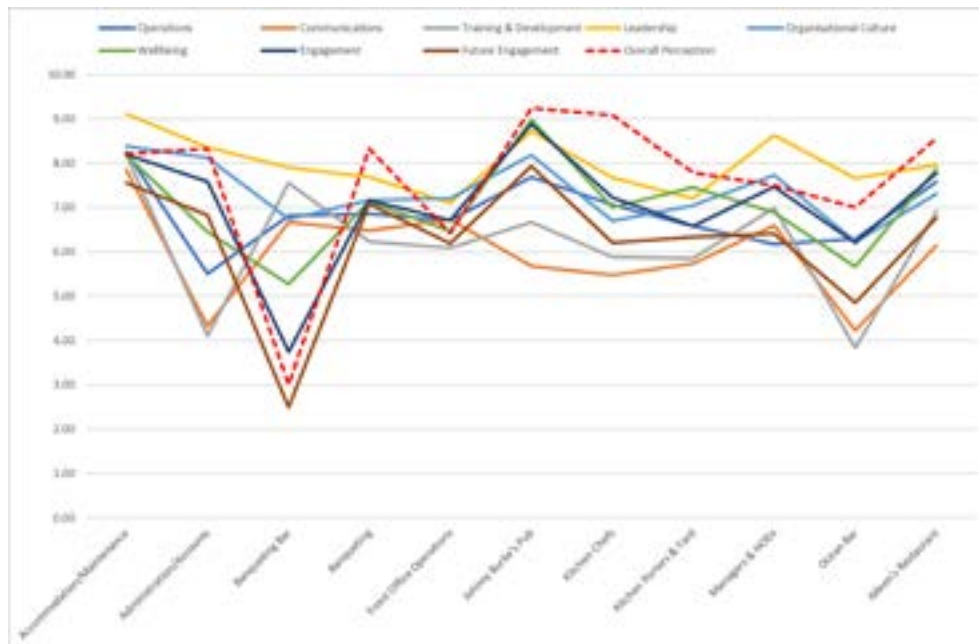
As is evident from Table 5, the operational areas of Accommodation and Maintenance, and Johnny Burke’s Pub, emerged as the two operational areas most positive about the various aspects of the organisation that were evaluated. Worryingly, both the Ocean Bar and the Banqueting Bar returned similarly low levels of agreement on the areas surveyed.

Table 5 Overall Score for Positive Perception by Operational Area

Department	Rank	Mean Score
Accommodation/Maintenance	1	8.21
Johnny Burke’s Bar & Grill	2	8.00
Aileen’s Restaurant	3	7.44
Managers & HODs	4	7.16
Banqueting	5	7.13
Kitchen-Chefs	6	6.92
Kitchen Porters & Yard	7	6.73
Administration/Accounts	8	6.63
Front Office Operations	9	6.62
Ocean Bar	10	5.77
Banqueting Bar	11	5.58

When comparing the distribution of mean scores of the organisational dimensions across each operational area, a certain narrative emerges within the data as per Chart 1. This analysis reveals interesting variations in agreement levels within and between the operational areas in terms of the measured dimensions.

Figure 5: Distribution of Mean Scores across Operational Areas & Survey Dimensions



Compared to most other functional areas in the hotel, the Banqueting Bar appears to be the area that is most negative of all the operational areas. Staff here score low agreement levels on their perceptions about the hotel as a good place to work, and the perceived level of current and future engagement manifested by these employees in the workplace. Further, the low level of perceived well-being reported by staff in the Banqueting Bar is closely followed by a similar perception by staff in the Ocean Bar. It is also interesting that staff in both Administration/Accounts and the Ocean Bar display remarkably similar (and low) agreement scores on the Communications and Training & Development dimensions. Johnny Burke's Pub displays the most positive perceptions of all the operational areas within the Armada. Finally, Leadership perceptions were rated highest in the operational areas of Accommodation/Maintenance, Johnny Burke's Pub, and Managers/HODs.

Note: Further details on the distribution of agreement levels across each operational area/organisational dimension are available in the Appendices.



3.4 Understanding the Relationship between Organisational Dimensions

The correlation between each of the measured organisational dimensions are presented in Table and details the nature of the inter-relationships/inter-dependencies between each of the organisational phenomena surveyed. Further, correlation is also a useful exploratory data analysis technique that helps with identifying clusters of ‘dimension relationships’ latent within data.

Table 6: Correlation Matrix of Survey Dimensions

Dimension	Overall Perception	Operations	Communications	Training & Development	Leadership	Organisational Culture	Wellbeing	Employee Engagement
Operations	0.22							
Communications	-0.31	0.62						
Training & Development	-0.38	0.71	0.92					
Leadership	0.26	0.34	0.25	0.40				
Organisational Culture	0.42	0.27	0.33	0.36	0.77			
Wellbeing	0.75	0.67	0.29	0.40	0.46	0.65		
Employee Engagement	0.95	0.34	0.85	0.08	0.50	0.89	0.84	
Future Engagement	0.80	0.32	0.09	0.08	0.17	0.88	0.81	0.87

Note: Blue/Dark Blue =high agreement perceptions, Pink/Red = low agreement perceptions

Taking the item ‘Overall Perception’ as a global measure of the perception staff have toward the Armada Hotel as good place to work, several outcomes can be discerned from the correlation data. Firstly, the combination of Well-being, Current Levels of Employee Engagement, and Potential Future Engagement Behaviours, reveal strong relationships with how staff perceive the Armada Hotel as an employer. Staff who perceive the Armada as a good place to work, display higher levels of work engagement (current and future), and have a healthier sense of well-being within their work environment.

Secondly, we see strong relationships between Effective Communications, Operational Efficiencies, and Training & Development. Given that the Communications dimension was the lowest-scored organisational feature of the survey, it cannot be overstated the inherent importance strong, open, and transparent communications mechanisms have in a work environment. As we will see later, communications are particularly pertinent in the context of, and organisation focused on authentic leadership and sustainability. Additionally, a correlation exists between Leadership and the level of employee engagement with the hotel, further emphasising the importance of tangible leadership engagement that fosters strong workplace relations.

Thirdly, Leadership and Organisational Culture are highly related and in many cases are reciprocal dynamics. further supports the frequent reference staff made to both aspects during focus groups and interviews. The linkage between strong leadership and strong organisational culture is very apparent.

Fourthly, the correlations further indicate the importance of strong, pro-employee culture for staff well-being, and the level employee engagement displayed in the workplace.



3.5 Qualitative Findings from Focus Groups and Interviews

3.5.1 Overview

The interview and focus group data were analysed around a set of themes related to the research questions as follows:

- Triggers for/elements of the change agenda
- Strengths of the Hotel
 - John Burke as a leader
 - Employee Voice
 - Family atmosphere
- Perceived Benefits of the Changes
- Challenges faced/perceived
- Opportunities emerging

3.5.2 Triggers for/elements of the change agenda

John Burke as the hotel owner is clearly the main driver of the change agenda. It is important to note that his vision preceded the pandemic, although it has no doubt been impacted by it. John is driven by a desire to succeed as per his own standards. In May 2017 he climbed Mount Everest which was the culmination of a year of training and planning. He said at the time:

I treated Everest like a work project; finding the best people to work with, breaking down the action plan into segments to enable me to get to the summit of the world. I was fully aware of the risks but focussed only on controlling those things I could control.
<https://www.ilovelimerick.ie/john-burke/>

This short quote begins to offer insights into the man.

John Burke's parents bought a pub in 1968 which they expanded into the hotel. As a teenager John worked in the hotel, particularly while doing his degree at Shannon College. By 21 he was working there full-time and by 23 his parents had retired, and John took over the reins of running the business. He is now in his mid-40s. John's primary motive in embarking on this change process was to make the hotel a more 'inspiring' place to work for himself, and for his team.

What good is personal wealth? What does it buy you? When you can potentially do things with it that are more fulfilling? What can be more fulfilling than trying to make a difference in peoples' lives?

He is also inspired by, and subscribes to, companies with an ethical commitment not to damage the earth (e.g., Brands like Patagonia and Finisterre). Both those brands are BCorp accredited and John saw BCorp as an ideal framework for transforming the hotel in terms of goals and ethics.

The ethical/conscientious business model is going to become more and more relevant.

John's vision pre- and post-pandemic is not just one of survival but one of continuous growth and improvement. Recruiting and retaining the best talent is part of the strategy and this has been hampered by staff shortages in the sector post-pandemic. Chefs are particularly scarce, and the remote location of the hotel provides a unique challenge.

The competitive side of John Burke aspires to be recognised as an industry leader, and for his business to be seen as one of the most desired hotel destinations. In this respect the stunning remote location does help, and part of the strategy has been to celebrate the surroundings by bringing the outside-in and the inside-out through interior design, themed eating outlets, large sea-facing windows, surf lessons for staff etc.

He also aspires to contribute towards ‘showing a way forward’ to the industry in terms of ‘the bigger global picture of climate change.’ This is particularly illustrative of an authentic leadership style as we will see later in this section.

Finally, in terms of triggers, it is accepted by the Armada team that customer expectations and demands are becoming more intense, particularly in the context of rising inflation.

Table 7: Triggers of Change

Triggers	Elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John’s vision • Growth V survival • Staff shortages (esp. Chefs) [attract and retain talent] • Desire to be industry leader • Desire to enhance reputation • Customer demands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial investment by JB • BCorp as a framework • Ethical governance • Staff wellbeing/Manager • Sustainability • Employee benefits • Community engagement • Business development – systems/governance/compliance • Structural development

Elements of the change process, which could be described as transformational, are listed in Table 7 above and include a €3million investment by the owner.

3.5.3 A focus on Well-being

The Armada is one of the 1st hotels (perhaps the only one) to employ a Wellbeing Manager. While in the post less than a year, reports from colleagues confirm that he has been a valuable addition to the team and a particular support to the Human Resources Manager, and Strategy/Sustainability Manager. He has already moved from 3day/week to Full Time.

His role incorporates the three dimensions of staff well-being (primarily), guest well-being, and environmental well-being.

The post-holder himself sees his role as a ‘work-in-progress’ and has already realised that well-being initiatives cannot make traction without addressing operational issues.



When I started in the role the discussions were that it was

going to be yoga on the beach etc. the more, I sat in and observed what was going on I learned very quickly that operational challenges were the biggest issues – relationships, staffing issues, communications, training etc. with communications being No1.

As a unique initiative, there is no template for how to ‘do’ well-being in hotels. This represents both a challenge and an opportunity. The investment in this post is further evidence of John Burke’s commitment to trying to make a difference in peoples’ lives. The potential of this role is to carve out a unique definition of well-being that fits the Armada context and vision.

The ‘environmental well-being’ aspect of the role centres on sustainability initiatives. This aspect of the change process was explored in detail by Martin Kelley, an MSc student from University of Galway [details later in this section].

Given that key aspects of the change process are to make the Armada an ‘inspiring’ workplace while, at the same time, addressing the chronic shortage of staff in the sector, a range of employee benefits have been introduced. See Table 8 below for a list of benefits introduced. Many of these exceed the norms of the industry. Not every employee chooses to avail of each benefit. This represents a menu that employees can choose from based on their own needs /motivations.

Table 8: Employee Benefits Provided

Employee Benefits	
•	Above industry-norm rates of pay
•	'Refer A Friend' bonus
•	Private Healthcare with VHI
•	Night Premium
•	Reward & Recognition - Employee & Manager of the Year
•	Wellbeing Programme (created by the Wellbeing Manager)
•	Company organised Social Events
•	Paid days off when partaking in our Community Charity Work
•	Meals on duty
•	Uniform provided
•	Education Supports
•	Employee Assistance Programme
•	Internal & External paid training days
•	Career Progression Opportunities
•	Career Break
•	Maternity Leave Bonus (for those new costs)
•	Wedding Leave
•	Compassionate Leave

John Burke estimates that the hotel is investing €123k per annum on employee well-being, benefits, and resources to support same.

John is conscious to minimise the negative impact of the hotel on the surrounding community and to maximise the positive impact. Customers being on-site can generate litter, traffic/parking issues, waste-water treatment for example. In parallel the hotel is a key employer, and, with the labour shortage, attention has focused on attracting, retaining and developing local talent. Fundraising and supporting local sports teams has long been a feature of the Armada. The hotel is also keen to patronise local suppliers who share ethical governance and sustainability values.

As part of the change process a Community Advisory Board has been formed, and not just from fans of the hotel.

We tried to find a cross-section of people from the community that would give honest and valuable contributions.

The Advisory Board meets each quarter, helping to support understanding of the any negative impact the hotel is making on the community, and helping steer decisions around business planning and capital investment, e.g., improving parking, ensuring it is easier to book restaurant outlets. There were examples of impressive support for staff experiencing personal or financial challenges. In one case the owner intervened directly with the bank to support a staff member's application for a mortgage. Staff reported feeling physically and psychologically safe at work.

Table 9: Perceived Strengths of the Armada Hotel

Perceived Strengths of the Hotel:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● JB's Vision and Leadership. Respect and trust he has from staff. ● Relations among staff –'Family vibe' ● Wellbeing manager ● Remote and beautiful location ● Gender balance in management ● Openness to/opportunities for staff development ● Staff pride in hotel ● Staff trust in management (mostly) ● Empathy for staff with personal issues ● Visible investment ● Autonomy for managers ● Staff feel valued (mostly) ● Better place to work than others experienced ● Tenure of senior staff ● Staff can see & value improvements ● How JB managed Covid shutdowns ● Innovation (during Covid and generally) ● New staff benefits ● Egalitarian (mostly) ● Unity of senior management team

3.6 Challenges faced by staff

Throughout the interviews and focus groups staff were asked what the 'liked least' about working at the hotel, and what challenges they face on a day-to-day basis.

1. Communication

Communication was a challenge that was repeatedly raised. There were a number of contexts where this became apparent. For example, staff sometimes feel they are not told information that they need to know. When the outlet 'Gulls' was opened, some staff [who would be impacted by the opening] had not been consulted, or even told, about the opening. Another example was that a well-known comedian was scheduled to perform at the hotel, but staff were not aware of this and in fact denied it when asked by customers until they found out on Instagram that he was in fact performing.

Some staff felt that their voice was not always welcome or heard. Some felt there was a gender dimension to this in that you were more likely to be heard if you were male. Staff who are closest to the challenges, have excellent ideas about how to address them, but they are not being asked. Staff mentioned the introduction of new expensive systems such as till systems, card cutters, and payment systems that backfired in terms of their effectiveness. There was a feeling that if staff had been consulted in advance the problems could have been avoided.

Some staff mentioned being contacted while on leave which should not be happening except in exceptional circumstances.

Understanding of the work done, and challenges faced, by different departments could be improved. Some of the office staff (9-5ers) felt that their contribution and pressures was not always given due recognition. Better cross-departmental understanding of, and respect for, each other's unique contribution would help staff relations.

In terms of individual performance, 'job chats' were happening consistently in some department, but not in others. As a result, some staff felt they were having to compensate for under-performance of some colleagues.

Staff told the researchers that many of the issues raised with them would not be raised directly with management as they felt there was little point in doing so.

Staff mentioned a 'newsletter' which they felt was helpful in keeping people updated.

The hotel owner was asked specifically whether the issue of union membership had ever been raised. He responded that this has never arisen and there would be concerns around this due to the flexible nature required in work due to seasonality, e.g., kitchen porters painting, Chef assisting at farm, admin team assisting in breakfast etc., in order to keep them in employment.

2. Staff Shortages

Unsurprisingly, staff shortages were having an impact at the hotel. Given the intensity of business there was insufficient time for new staff to 'settle' and be trained up. This places more pressure on existing staff to either train them or cover for sub-standard performance. The kitchen and accommodation functions were acknowledged as exceptional in how well staff were trained. Other staff talked about having to train staff who promptly left or having to train staff who were brought in to manage them.

How staff felt on coming into to work was heavily dependent on who had been rostered before them, or with them. When rostered with staff they had confidence in, they knew it would be a good day.

While recent initiatives to improve staff retention were welcomed, more could be done in this regard. More opportunities for promotion from within would be welcome. Also empowering staff to make decisions within their own role is welcomed and they would like to see more of this.

There was a perception that some graduates from Shannon College feel there are aspects of work that they should not be asked to do, which increases pressure on other staff.



3. Inefficient use of Limited Space

Lack of organisation and lack of storage space were other challenges faced. Staff talked about instances of over-ordering of products with no physical space to store them, and no clear logical at times for the order. An example was shared about multiple bags of ice being ordered, with no space to store them, and four ice machines on site that could produce to demand. One positive example was shared where bulk product was ordered but stored by the supplier until needed.

4. Nature of the Work

The intensity of work sometimes resulted in what was referred to as 'lastminute.com' management. With so many outlets on-site and continuously operating at high capacity, management was seen to be sometimes more about 'firefighting' than planning. Staff also felt the pressure of such intense workload which sometimes led to frustration and tension between departments.

While new work-life-balance initiatives are welcome, it is believed that more could be done to support caregivers in the workplace.

5. Manager Support

The quality and responsiveness of some managers was raised. Staff expressed full confidence in John Burke as the owner but felt that some other managers could perform better either by being more responsive to staff requests and needs, or by delegating some of their duties to staff below them. Staff also feel that there is a need for a full-time Human Resource manager.

Notably, pay was not mentioned as an issue by one single employee.

All these contributions were offered in a context of acknowledging the positives and the efforts for improvement that are underway. It was also felt that many of the issues raised were resolvable for the benefit of all. Suggestions were offered from a position of genuine care for the success of the hotel. Many of the contributors had worked in other venues and, to a person, they acknowledged the Armada as the best place they had worked.

3.7 Findings of the project focused on Authentic Leadership and Sustainability

[explored by Martin Kelley under the supervision of Dr Curran]

The term 'authentic leadership' has recently gained some traction in academic literature since the term was coined by Bill George (2003). Gardner and Carlson describe authentic leadership as 'a pattern of leader behaviour based on self-awareness, balanced processing of information, relational transparency with followers, and an internalized moral perspective' (2015, p. 245).

The core dimension of authentic leadership is genuineness or authenticity and, according to insight.com, there are several distinguishing features that authentic leaders share:

- They demonstrate behaviours which enable employees to trust in them
- They take ownership when they have made a mistake
- They show the necessary courage to challenge the status quo
- They defend their people and processes

www.insights.com/media/1107/authentic-leadership.pdf

Gardner et al (2011) argue that authentic leadership generates followers who are moved to follow direction from a leader out of passion and motivation, rather than simply obeying orders. Transparency through open communication, and a focus on supportive narratives, creates a genuine workplace that allows for innovation, creativity, and higher job satisfaction. Transformational change begins with authentic leadership as employees are free to develop their own leadership abilities and carve new paths for the organisation. When leaders motivate employees, through trust and transparency, change is likely to be positive and lasting (Gardner and Schermerhorn, 2004).

Authentic leadership and sustainability have come to the forefront across the globe as organisations seek answers to growing issues related to the human and environmental well-being. In the work context, these concepts need to be embedded into business strategy to gain any lasting traction.

Kelley's research project explored the impact of authentic leadership and sustainability initiatives in the Armada hotel and beyond. Through data collection from the hotel, and broader industry analysis, a framework was developed that illustrates how these concepts are integrated in a way that may inspire other establishments to adopt an authentic leadership style and introduce sustainability initiatives for the benefit of all hospitality stakeholders.

The research findings propose that the term 'authentic leader' does not need to rest solely with an individual but can be reflected by an organization that motivates other organizations to follow suit.

It was found that the Armada hotel both has, and is, an authentic leader capable of motivating other hotels to develop sustainability plans so that the hospitality industry becomes environmentally focused, and employee-centric, while remaining economically viable. While this research project highlighted a specific hotel, the themes and recommendations suggest that any hospitality organization that could motivate others towards sustainability.

As the world seeks solutions to global issues, such as climate change, authentic leadership is needed to change previous organisational norms and gravitate towards sustainability. 'To destabilize the status quo and paint a picture of the desired new state for followers, change leaders must communicate the need for change' (Battilana et al, 2010).

'Sustainability' is the integration of social, economic, and environmental concepts so that humanity will continue to exist through the promotion of individual well-being, community prosperity, and natural resource protection (Kuhlman and Farrington, 2010). A review of the literature brings the term 'triple bottom line' to light, which proposes the balancing of business, social, and environmental interests (Evans et al, 2017, p. 599), as the main issue for organisations seeking to make sustainability part of their business model and strategy. Furthermore, it can be argued that 'sustainability can be achieved only by simultaneously protecting the environment, preserving economic growth and development, and promoting equity' (Portney, 2015, p. 6). Grin, Rotmans and Schot (2010) claim that sustainability, through a comprehensive transformation, is essential to economic, social, and environmental survival.

Kelley's study of the Armada defines sustainability as financially viable methods for developing future environmental security and staff welfare, whilst supporting business success. Kelley suggests that sustainability must be incorporated into the mission, values, and strategy of a company if transformational change is to occur. Companies that have integrated social and environmental sustainability into their business strategy have been found to increase sustainability performance across the organisation (Longoni and Cagliano, 2015).

The most critical issue in undergoing transformative sustainable change is leadership and Kelley argues that authentic leadership style is likely to be most impactful. The motivation towards sustainability must be felt and employed by individuals as a collective unit, under the guide of an authentic leader who genuinely believes in, and lives by, a sustainability agenda. Authentic leadership requires frequent and effective communication, more so than other styles of leadership, as sustainability calls for each employee, and organisation, to be a leader in their own field and community. ‘Authentic leaders’ build extraordinary support teams to help them stay on course” (2007)

3.7.1 Armada’s Current Sustainability Actions

Through a ‘lead by example’ mentality, the Armada hotel incorporated numerous initiatives that were employee-driven, and environmentally/sustainability focused. Next, the hotel implemented employee training to educate all staff on those initiatives and allow for knowledge of their operations to be a key driver in triggering sustainability initiatives, motivating individuals, and spreading job satisfaction and pride in the work of the hotel.

Amongst staff of the hotel, there was an intention to become a leader in environmental and employee-welfare sustainability within the industry. Through the exhibition of authentic leadership traits and sustainability initiatives, the hotel will be able to motivate other hotels to follow their lead and become more sustainable.

Overall, it was found that employees, customers, the environment, and the community are crucial factors in developing the hotel strategy, rather than focusing exclusively on bottom line profits.

While the initiatives the Armada are undertaking are remarkable, it is also important to show how the hotel has the potential to lead others and becomes an authentic leader for the industry. Below is a framework displaying the authentic leadership cycle as it relates to environmental and human sustainability within the hotel:

Figure 6: The Authentic Leadership Cycle



Before the authentic leadership cycle repeats itself within the organisation, there is an offshoot that allows for the sustainability initiatives to be triggered by another establishment, motivated to perform similar sustainability initiatives. Thus, creating a ripple effect beyond the host hotel.

Section 4: Emergent Themes, Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Emergent Themes

Some striking themes that emerge from the findings. The first thing the authors would like to acknowledge is that the changes underway at the Armada preceded the pandemic. Post-pandemic labour shortages have undoubtedly awakened the sector to the need for reform, and there are promising signs of improvement. In John Burke's case, the vision for change was based on the knowledge that the lived experience, of himself and his team, could and should be better.

The factors that emerged as most positively perceived by staff were; leadership, the hotel as a good place to work, the organisational culture, levels of engagement and well-being/work-life-balance.

John Burke's vision and leadership along with the universal respect and trust he has from his staff is one of the strongest themes throughout the data. According to forbes.com 'authentic leaders' display the following characteristics:

- Understanding their purpose
- Practicing solid values
- Leading with heart
- Establishing connected relationships
- Demonstrating self-discipline

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/hbsworkingknowledge/2015/11/10/the-true-qualities-of-authenticleaders/>

If we revisit the dimensions of job quality and decent work presented earlier in this report, the hotel measures favourably.

Figure 7: Dimensions of Job Quality Infographic



- Staff have security of employment and if anything, it is retention of staff that is the issue.
- Pay was not mentioned by a single employee as an issue of dissatisfaction. For an industry renowned for low pay, and lack of pay progression, this is remarkable.
- While staff are clearly under strain from intense workloads, health, safety, and psychosocial safety is not an issue. The employment of a well-being manager, who is adapting his brief to meet the needs of staff and managers at the hotel, will help staff to retain their mental health and resilience. Small initiatives, such as the work done on the staff canteen, will certainly help. The evidence of supportive care for staff facing personal challenges is also noted in this regard.
- There is evidence to suggest an openness to job redesign and enrichment, with staff being encouraged to take on roles which meet their skill set. This will help to encourage a sense of purpose and value by the hotel as long as it does not result in work overload. The balance of external recruitment and internal promotions should be monitored to ensure opportunities for the progression of existing staff.
- Social support and cohesion are strong and peer relationships are valued by staff. The relationship with line managers is strong in most cases but this can never be assumed and needs constant attention.
- Voice and representation need some attention. The hotel is not unionised. Throughout our research staff raised issues and offered suggestions. While many feel able to raise issues when needed, more structured mechanisms for employee voice would be beneficial to all. More employee involvement in addressing problems as they arise would lead to better outcomes.
- The management team have made efforts to address the issue of work-life balance and there are signs that this is improving. If staff need time off this is facilitated where possible. There was no indication of excessive hours or lack of opportunity to rest.

This study provides evidence that John Burke displays these characteristics. Not one person that we spoke to had anything critical to say about his leadership. That is rare indeed!

He is ever present in the workings of the hotel and would not ask any staff member to do something he would not do himself. He has invested huge financial resources into the changes underway, but also emotional resources, to the extent that one of the authors' recommendations is that he step back from the operations of the hotel and concentrate on the strategic direction. It would also be advisable for him to draw on the support of experienced industry or wider business mentors.

As shown by the data in this report, the changes underway are potentially transformative and involve changes to physical structures, systems, working conditions and benefits, sustainability initiatives etc. The BCorp Accreditation application demands a focus on all these areas, and more. If successful in achieving accreditation, the hotel will be unique, and the potential for a ripple-effect through the industry would be welcome and significant.

Generally, staff members enjoy coming to work at the Armada and they reference a family-like atmosphere as key to this. The hotel is situated in a very scenic location and the recent improvements in staff benefits, along with the developing impact of the well-being manager, are also significant factors. Most staff members trust their manager, have pride in the hotel, and feel valued. There is evidence that empathy is shown to employees with personal challenges, in the form of practical and emotional supports. The data shows that staff who perceive the hotel as a good place to work display higher levels of engagement and have a better sense of well-being. But the picture falls short of 'perfect.' Cultural differences emerged in the lived experience of employees in different departments. The Ocean and Banqueting Bars may require some targeted interventions to improve morale.

The biggest issue that needs work is communication, as staffs' least positively perceived dimension of work. The importance strong, open, and transparent communications mechanisms in a work environment are acknowledged in stable-state times, but even more so in times of transformational change. As this report argues, communications are particularly pertinent in the context of an organisation focused on authentic leadership and sustainability.

The second least favourably perceived aspect of employment was training and development. In the context of a busy hotel environment, finding time for training and development is obviously a challenge. However, it is an essential element of decent work that warrants more investment. There were examples of job enrichment where staff were encouraged to take on new work areas, thus expanding their skills and experience.

The employment of a well-being manager is a unique feature of this hotel and demonstrates commitment to improving employees' experience of work. While this manager's initial activities focused on initiatives such as yoga on the beach, it quickly became apparent that operational issues, such as lack of communication, needed to be addressed before wellness initiatives could take effect.

There is a genuine commitment to sustainability that comes from John Burke's leadership in walking-the-walk of commitment to sustainability in his own life. Staff in the hotel are encouraged to suggest ideas for improving sustainability. There is also a commitment to 'big ticket' initiatives such as a 'commitment to 100% renewable electricity' in place as well as 'no dig, low carbon release farming methods' at the hotel farm. The sustainability drive at the Armada could act as a beacon of authentic leadership and motivation to other hotels, creating a positive spiral.

As demonstrated by the 7S Framework and the data, the change underway at the Armada is truly transformative spanning, as it does, structures, systems, staff, strategy, skills, and style. The question needs to be asked as to whether the team (and the owner in particular) are embarking on too much too soon. The business context of a large, busy hotel at times mitigates against anything more than staying afloat.

4.2 Overall Conclusions with Recommendations

In conclusion, there are several recommendations that we would make, both at local level and at national industry level.

Our first recommendation is that the findings of this research be shared with hotel staff so that they know their voices have been heard. To facilitate this, the authors have prepared a PowerPoint summary of the findings and recommendations to be shared at staff meetings.

Slow down and plan ahead. Our recommendation would be for the management team to start the year by taking stock of all that has been achieved, along with the findings of this project, and plan ahead in terms of realistic next steps. While the plans are admirably ambitious, there is a risk of individual and collective burn-out if the current pace of change continues.

As well as paying attention to staff well-being, the well-being of managers and John Burke himself could benefit for some attention. That could mean drawing on external mentoring and self-care supports and remembering that 'Rome wasn't built in a day.'

Communication needs work. This should involve introducing mechanisms for employees to raise their voice, or interdepartmental mechanisms for shared understanding of the challenges faced

by colleagues. Participants in this project were very vocal with the views, opinions, and ideas. They welcomed the opportunity to voice these to the researchers. More effort is needed to encourage that openness to become part of the hotel culture. Given the numbers employed at the hotel, the election of staff representatives acting as conduits for employee voice is advisable.

A balance needs to be struck between the daily pressures of a busy hotel and finding time for adequate training and development. Staff talked about having to train new employees on-the-job while dealing with their own pressures. Sometimes these newly trained staff would leave, and the cycle would begin again. Aside from this issue, investing in the training and development of staff will encourage retention and loyalty. The training suite offered by Failte Ireland may be a good place to start to look for useful interventions. The government is also sponsoring a range of training initiatives and apprenticeships.

Documenting and sharing the story. The findings of this project provide a comprehensive baseline at the front-end of a transformative change process. Replicating the research two years hence would provide valuable comparative data about the impacts of the change process.

This is the first study of its kind in Ireland and the authors believe that there are valuable lessons to be shared at industry level and beyond. The authors are member of a Global Hospitality Research Alliance (GHRA), and the research methodology and findings would be of interest to that group also.

Sustainability matters. To further develop authentic leadership and sustainability within the hotel, Martin Kelley offers the following recommendations to the Armada Hotel.

Recommendation 1:

GATHER CUSTOMER AND STAFF DATA ON SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

Booking Experience

- Add a sustainability section to explain current initiatives and ascertain if the hotel's initiatives were a factor in interest/booking
- Make the customer feel welcomed and show how their stay is affecting the environment and social standards of the hotel

Post-Stay Customer Survey

- Gain additional ideas from external sources for later implementation
- Discover how initiatives impacted the customer's stay

Staff Sustainability Survey

- As part of the employee welfare survey, explore the impact of sustainability initiatives on the staff
- Explore how well the staff understand the sustainability initiatives currently undertaken and how it affects the day-to-day work of employees
- Allow all employees to have a voice within the organisation and provide a place for additional ideas for the hotel to implement

These actions will draw on insights from customers, employees, and managers, potentially leading to the creation of new initiatives.



Recommendation 2: SPREAD THE NEWS OF SUSTAINABILITY SUCCESSES

Motivate others in the hospitality industry

- Invite major industry players and representatives to visit the hotel and explain the sustainability practices
- The leadership team of the hotel could perform consulting for other hotels in developing their sustainability strategy
- Collaborate with other hospitality establishments on sustainability initiatives to create a sum bigger than the parts

The hotel has potentially a role to play within the wider hospitality sector in encouraging a drive towards improved sustainability standards through authentic leadership, thereby encouraging other hotels and hospitality establishments to develop their own tailored sustainability initiatives.

Recommendation 3: Invest in Further Sustainability Initiatives

Invest/Support in Renewable Energy and Regenerative Agriculture for the Community

- Invest in wind and tidal energy due to the proximity to the ocean.
- The investment or support of these energy sources is crucial to the environmental sustainability of the hotel, the community and Ireland as whole.
- Further the progression of regenerative farming as part of the hotel's food offering supply.
- Working with farmers to invest in regenerative agriculture techniques for the hotel food and community would set an environmental standard unmatched in many industries and further the hotel's place as an authentic leader.

This research recommends a few renewable energy and regenerative agriculture ideas for implementation. As there are wind turbines currently in place in the surrounding area, an extension of this renewable energy plan led by the hotel and community would be mutually beneficial. Furthermore, tidal energy is an innovative technology that would allow for the hotel and community to achieve 100% renewable energy. Additionally, the only way to build upon the hotel's current high standard is to change from 'low carbon release' to a 'carbon sink' where the land is taking carbon out of the air and storing it in the ground.

Much of the success of a hotel rests with the quality of its staff. Staff shortages is a challenge faced by every establishment in the industry and this is exacerbated by the remote location of this hotel. Competent staff are out there. They just need to be recruited, rewarded, and trained. It is recommended that department managers work closely with HR in the recruitment process. These managers know what they are looking for and can convey realistic job expectations from the outset.

The issue of adequate storage (for products, furniture, archives etc.) needs to be addressed. We found that staff had ideas about solutions so this could prove an easy 'win' in terms of employee voice.



4.3 McKinsey 7s Framework Revisited

Strategy

- In general, the developing strategic direction of the Armada Hotel has the support of both internal and external stakeholders. From the internal perspective, employees in the hotel are relatively positive about the potential opportunities the strategic route being pursued, and the potential opportunities it presents in terms of operational and service expansion. Ensuring the goals and objectives of the strategy are clearly understood and appreciated by employees is tantamount in this regard.
- The external stakeholder view is similarly positive, in so far that the potential spill over effects of the hotel's expansion have certain desirable community-focused multiplier benefits vis-à-vis tourism revenue, employment and local investment. However, continuous monitoring and evaluation of strategy-related developments, and the impact (positive and negative) that they may have on all aspects and levels of the hotel is strongly recommended going forward.

Structure

- The leadership of the hotel must align a sufficient managerial and operational structure to the 'growth needs' of the hotel. This is a challenge given the current labour market pressures faced by the Hospitality and Tourism industry. While there is an established organisational structure, any new amendments, adjustments or additions to the current format must be grounded in rational, logical and efficiency-based needs.
- In addition, while the financial, operational and service-standards health of the hotel are unquestionably vital, and in need of constant attention by the leadership, a structure should be put in place that alleviates the evidential 'over-stretching' of certain human resources that threaten to undermine and negate the incredible efforts by all involved in the Armada. Essentially, a robust organisational structure must buttress robust organisational health. The creation of a dedicated 'executive team' to provide a managerial support buffer between John Burke and the total organisation is of noteworthy importance.

Systems

- Based on the feedback and findings of the interviews and (staff survey), improving certain aspects of 'internal communication' is an area in need of attention. Whilst all organisations rely on a combination of formal and informal methods of communication, the leadership must focus efforts to develop a fluid and easily accessible communications system over and above the normal communication platforms so that no one is left out of the loop per se.
- Establishing regular meetings that include representatives from the respective operational areas is a point to note. In addition, the possibility of creating a 'Staff-Management Liaison' team to facilitate intra-departmental communication could be considered. Additionally, constraints relating to 'storage space' and associated systems need improvement.



Style

- The type and nature of leadership in the Armada (and in particular John Burke) is viewed positively by staff. The 'family-grounded' values and principles espoused and practiced by the leadership daily is the very foundation upon which the level of staff morale is fostered. Nearly all those interviewed spoke very positively about the way they are made 'feel part of the family' at the Armada. This in turn has made the hotel a 'great place to work' for employees.
- In many instances, several 'leadership styles' are evident which reflect aspects of, among other styles, Transformational Leadership, Authentic Leadership, Servant Leadership, Strategic Leadership, and Charismatic Leadership.
- However, and understandably, the principles and standards set down by the owner can sometimes be diluted at least, or absent at worst, among management who may exhibit competing or different styles. While each person will have their own particularistic approach to managing, maintaining continuity in the style and supportive practices is an area that should be explored by the leadership of the hotel. To this end, it is suggested that CPD leadership training for senior management be considered going forward.

Staff

- Given the general positive morale reflected among the staff at the Armada Hotel, it is acknowledged that the maintenance of such positive organisational attitudes and behaviours is challenging under the current tight labour market.
- Upholding the 'great place to come to work' moniker afforded by the staff will be an everpresent and ongoing process. As the hotel expands both strategically and operationally, matching such expansion with 'sufficient' human resources becomes a more focused imperative in order to alleviate the obvious work pressures to come with this.
- Efforts in place to support staff are commendable and the presence and unique role of a Wellbeing Manager is very encouraging in this regard.

Skills

- While staff at the Armada believe that there are opportunities to grow and develop at the hotel, knowledge of such training opportunities seems to be a grey area from some. To maintain desirably high service standards in all levels of the organisation, a concerted effort should seek to create a 'Career Path' type training/certification structure within the Armada. This might entail establishing collaborative links with relevant training and educational institutions in the Mid-West region.
- While it is true that some just want a 'job', others aspire for a 'career', and the difference in attitudes and motivation between both can yield vary different organisational and employee outcomes. The hotel should pursue a 'growth within' staff development strategy.

Shared Values

- Considering the total organisation that is the Armada Hotel, and in particular the 'familyorientated' principles that permeate the company, it is very clear that the 'vision' and 'values' espoused by all, are shared by all. This is not an easy feat to achieve, and it certainly is quite a unique cultural phenomenon per se.

- Such values and beliefs can only be fostered and modelled on the efforts and examples of 'good practice' by the leadership and management of the hotel, and the continuous aim for consistency and stability in everyday actions, interactions and respectful behaviours among all. In this context, any future strategic aspirations at the Armada Hotel will be greatly facilitated.

In conclusion, the Armada is doing an awful lot of things right. Staff enjoy coming to work and the camaraderie of their colleagues. They have a high level of trust in (most) managers and in John Burke in particular. His style of leadership is driven by an internal ethical compass and by a desire to make the Armada a better place to work for himself and for the team. While the pace of change may need to slow down, much has been achieved, and many of the constructive criticisms are fixable.

The efforts of this hotel are exemplary and must be shared.



Appendix 1

Link to the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media Working Conditions and Skills Shortages in Ireland's Tourism and Hospitality Sector November 2022

https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint_committee_on_tourism_culture_arts_sport_and_media/reports/2022/2022-11-15_report-on-working-conditions-and-skills-shortagesin-ireland-s-tourism-and-hospitality-sector_en.pdf

Appendix 2

SAMPLE OF NEWS COVERAGE ON THE PROPOSED CHANGES AT THE ARMADA

<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/transport-and-tourism/armada-hotel-in-co-clare-to-create-100-jobs-as-part-of-3m-development-1.4710156>

<https://clarechampion.ie/armada-hotel/>

<https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2021/1026/1255851-armada-hotel-in-recruitment-drive-for-100-staff/>

<https://www.clareecho.ie/armada-hotel-to-fill-100-new-jobs-as-part-of-e3m-redevelopment/>

Appendix 3

ORIGINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL

The Armada Project Proposal

Dr Deirdre Curran and Dr Finian o Driscoll, NUI Galway

December 2021

The proposal is to conduct a small research project, at the outset, exploring the Armada vision for change, the anticipated challenges, and the desired benefits.

This would provide a benchmark to return to once the changes are embedded.

The project would place a particular spotlight on the 'worker' angle (as per the B Corp criteria). This would also potentially support the recruitment campaign of the Hotel.

Research Objectives:

1. To explore the perceived benefits and challenges associated with the new strategic vision of the Hotel
2. To pay particular attention to the likely impact of the new strategic vision on the employee value proposition offered by The Armada

The 'worker' criteria of B Corp focus on (some may not be relevant to context):

- Employment status – FT/PT/temp/Hourly etc. Direct vs contract employees
- Wages – living wage, min wage, gap between lowest-highest, financial benefits beyond pay, financial participations schemes, pensions, etc
- Non-financial benefits
- Health, Wellness & Safety
- Career development
- Management Training

- Performance management and feedback
- Internal promotions
- Intern hiring
- Employee engagement
- Worker empowerment
- Legal compliance
- Employment law training

Research Team: Dr Deirdre Curran and Dr Finian O Driscoll (NUIG) as co-leads, plus two MSc students (1xHR, 1xSIPM).

The research team will work closely with nominated representatives from the Hotel's management team to deliver a project that is mutually beneficial.

Methodology:

A **survey** of staff addressing the two research objectives or focusing on an aspect that the Hotel wishes to address.

One-to-one interviews/focus groups with the management team and representatives from each category of staff.

Anticipated outputs would include:

- Data to contribute to the BCorp accreditation process
- A presentation and report to the management team of the Hotel
- Promotional material for the Hotel to use in recruitment
- Media coverage of the findings
- A Whitaker Institute seminar
- An applied case study to be presented at one national, and one international, Hospitality and Tourism Conference
- An academic article for a journal
- A dissertation topic for the students

Costs:

Travel and subsistence costs for the research team.

Research assistance in data collection, analysis, and write up.

An application could be made to SBE to cover this.

Timeline and initial actions:

December 2021: Agree the parameters of the project with the Hotel Team.

January 2021: Virtual meeting to agree a plan of action

February 2022: Data collection commences

June 2022: Research interviews on site

July-Dec 2022 Research report write up

Appendix 4

RESEARCH INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

Exploring Transformative Change at the Armada Hotel

Project Interview Schedules

The objectives of this project are to:

- Explore the triggers for change at the Armada (Management Team)
- Document stakeholder perceptions of the benefits of change and challenges ahead (Management Team & Focus Groups)
- Place particular emphasis on employees' perception of the change plan (Focus Groups)
- Use the McKinsey 7s Framework as a lens for analysing the findings (Findings lens)
- Highlight positive aspects of the changes (Management Team & Focus Groups)
- Document the challenges faced and how these were addressed (Management Team and Focus Groups)
- Provide a benchmark to revisit the host organisation after two years to track progress and outcomes. [the report will do this]
- To inform the debate on how the hospitality sector could thrive post-pandemic to become a more valued employment destination (Management Team & Focus Groups)

Manager Questions

1. Tell us about you and your role/history at Armada.
2. What are the biggest challenges facing the Armada (& the hotel industry) today?
3. Can you please explain your understanding of the strategic changes underway at the Armada?
4. What were the triggers for change?
5. What involvement did you have in crafting these changes?
6. Do you feel your voice is being heard in the change process?
7. What do you see as the objectives of the change process?
8. What do you see as the main benefits of the planned changes?
9. Which parts of the change process do you consider most important and why?
10. What challenges do you foresee/have you foreseen along the way?
11. How do you ensure that staff are working together, as a team, to realise the proposed changes?
12. In what ways will the changes impact staff at the Armada?
13. As a manager, what is your biggest daily challenge?
14. How would you describe the culture of the Armada as a place to work?

Focus Group Questions

1. Tell us briefly about your roles and experience at the Armada.
2. What do you like most about working here?
3. What do you like least about working here?
4. Can you please explain your understanding of the strategic changes underway at the Armada?
5. What involvement did you have in crafting these changes?
6. Do you feel your voice is being heard at the Armada?
7. As a staff member, what are the best parts of the changes proposed?
8. How well do you trust the senior team to lead and manage the hotel?
9. What ONE thing would make this a better place to work?

Appendix 5

SOME ADDITIONAL SURVEY RESULTS

Note: The following tables/Heatmaps are interpreted as follows:

- Blue/Dark Blue cells reflect stronger agreement levels for the surveyed items reflecting a positive attitude among staff.
- Pink/Red cells reflect weaker agreement levels and point to potential organisational issues in need of attention.

Table 10: Cross-departmental Perceptions of Hotel Operations

Department	OPERATIONS			
	Planning in my department is very effective	Workload is distributed fairly in my department	I have all the tools and equipment to do my job	My tasks are manageable in the time available to me
Accommodation/Maintenance	8.71	8.00	8.53	7.76
Administration/Accounts	5.67	6.00	5.67	4.67
Banqueting Bar	8.25	6.00	7.00	6.00
Banqueting	6.08	6.58	7.83	6.92
Front Office Operations	6.42	6.83	7.25	6.33
Johnny Burke's Pub	6.50	6.75	9.25	8.25
Kitchen-Chefs	6.92	6.69	7.54	7.08
Kitchen Porters & Yard	6.19	6.13	7.06	6.94
Managers & HODs	6.36	6.27	6.55	5.55
Ocean Bar	7.00	5.50	8.00	4.67
Aileen's Restaurant	7.46	7.36	7.73	7.82
Mean Item Scores:	6.87	6.56	7.49	6.54

Key Points for Hotel Operations:

- Staff generally agree that they have the necessary resources, tools, and equipment to effectively perform their jobs/duties. Accommodation/Maintenance returned the highest agreement level for this aspect of the Operations dimension.
- Issues relating to workload distribution appears to be an issue for most departments, and in particular those working in the Ocean Bar. This is somewhat supported by the lower agreement levels when considering the manageability of tasks.
- Activities associated with Planning potentially pose certain organisational challenges.

Table 11: Cross-departmental Perceptions of Hotel Communications

Department	COMMUNICATIONS									
	I know what is going on in the business on a daily basis	Management keeps me informed about important issues and changes	Team briefings happen every day	When team briefings happen, they're clear and effective	My team has a department meeting every month	Communications with other departments is very effective	I know what is expected of me in my role	I've given my daily tasks	I get regular feedback on my work	In the past 2 years, I have had an job chat / appraisal
Accommodation/Maintenance	7.40	8.33	5.93	8.67	9.80	6.47	8.33	9.00	8.33	6.20
Administration/Accounts	5.00	4.67	2.67	4.67	1.00	5.67	6.67	4.67	3.67	4.67
Banqueting Bar	8.67	7.67	6.00	8.33	1.67	7.33	8.00	7.33	7.67	6.00
Banqueting	6.90	6.60	7.30	7.30	4.10	5.80	6.80	7.90	5.30	4.40
Front Office Operations	6.75	6.83	5.42	6.25	7.33	5.83	6.00	8.33	5.75	6.83
Johnny Burke's Pub	6.50	6.30	4.00	5.25	2.00	5.75	8.33	7.75	5.50	5.00
Kitchen-Chefs	5.75	6.08	3.38	5.42	4.17	4.08	7.83	7.67	5.33	4.83
Kitchen Porters & Yard	7.00	7.36	5.14	5.79	2.93	5.86	7.57	6.86	5.29	3.57
Managers & HODs	7.95	7.46	4.82	7.64	5.82	6.99	7.46	6.95	6.55	5.36
Ocean Bar	5.00	4.40	3.40	4.80	2.40	4.20	6.40	5.00	3.80	3.00
Aileen's Restaurant	6.73	7.38	5.18	6.73	3.73	5.91	9.00	8.09	5.55	3.36
Mean Item Scores:	6.55	6.64	4.86	6.46	5.89	5.73	7.94	7.23	5.72	4.84

Key Points for Hotel Communications:

- Staff score low agreement levels for Team Briefings, Monthly Departmental Meetings, and Job/Performance Reviews. Additionally, staff scored low agreement levels relating to Regular Feedback.
- Most department scored high agreement levels in terms of job role expectations and being kept abreast of daily hotel activities.

Table 12: Cross-departmental Perceptions of Training & Development

Department	TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT					
	Induction training prepares me well for the job	On the job training happens regularly	On the job training meets the required standard	Training is a priority in my department	I am aware of other training programs available to me	There are opportunities to grow and develop at the Armada Hotel
Accommodation/Maintenance	8.71	8.14	8.57	8.93	6.43	8.29
Administration/Accounts	4.67	3.33	4.33	4.00	1.33	7.00
Banqueting Bar	7.00	7.33	9.33	7.67	7.00	7.00
Banqueting	6.50	6.00	5.80	5.90	5.80	7.40
Front Office Operations	5.75	7.17	6.58	5.92	4.33	6.75
Johnny Burke's Pub	8.00	6.25	6.25	5.00	6.00	8.50
Kitchen-Chefs	5.50	5.08	5.75	6.75	4.92	7.33
Kitchen Porters & Yard	6.86	5.29	5.93	5.50	5.50	6.07
Managers & HODs	6.82	6.00	6.55	6.36	7.36	8.82
Ocean Bar	4.80	4.40	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.80
Aileen's Restaurant	7.73	6.73	7.73	7.09	4.82	7.46
Mean Item Scores:	6.58	5.97	6.44	6.01	5.14	7.13

Key Points for Training & Development:

- Staff awareness of training programmes and associated developmental opportunities is evidently low for the most part (with the slight exception for HODs and the Banqueting Bar).
- Staff in Administration/Accounts and the Ocean Bar returned the least agreement level of all operational areas.
- Staff working in Accommodation/Maintenance scored the highest agreement level for the Training & Development dimension.
- In general, most operational areas agree that there are opportunities to grow and develop in the Armada.

Table 13: Cross-departmental Perceptions on Hotel Leadership

Department	LEADERSHIP										
	My direct line manager is a role model for the business	My direct line manager provides appropriate support when needed	My direct line manager encourages me to help me grow in my role	My direct line manager is available to me when needed	My direct line manager cares about me as a person	I am trusted to do my job	I am given the freedom to do my job	I think my manager to make the right decision	The Senior Management Team in general is approachable	The Senior Management Team in general follow through on their promises	The Senior Management Team in general do a good job of running the business
Accommodation/Maintenance	9.90	9.57	9.57	9.86	9.71	9.50	9.36	9.40	7.50	7.71	7.64
Administration/Accounts	9.00	8.33	8.67	8.00	9.33	8.33	8.33	10.00	8.00	7.67	7.33
Banqueting Bar	7.33	7.33	7.67	8.67	8.67	8.67	8.33	8.67	9.00	7.33	7.67
Banqueting	7.60	8.10	7.80	7.50	8.30	8.30	8.00	8.90	7.20	7.20	7.90
Front Office Operations	6.92	6.58	7.27	7.33	6.92	8.33	7.20	7.33	6.92	6.90	6.83
Johnny Burke's Pub	8.00	8.75	8.00	8.25	8.50	8.75	9.00	9.00	9.00	9.00	8.75
Kitchen Chefs	7.95	7.95	7.88	8.46	7.89	9.08	8.36	8.36	7.00	6.58	7.27
Kitchen Porters & Yard	6.71	6.90	5.86	7.14	6.57	8.07	8.19	7.36	7.29	7.41	7.88
Managers & HODs	9.22	8.67	8.56	8.00	8.78	8.00	8.33	9.11	9.22	7.78	8.10
Ocean Bar	8.60	8.60	7.60	8.80	8.40	8.60	7.80	8.80	8.00	8.80	8.60
Aileen's Restaurant	8.77	8.09	7.90	7.36	7.50	8.38	8.38	8.38	8.00	8.09	8.73
Mean Item Scores:	8.18	8.14	7.85	7.94	8.84	8.61	8.40	8.42	7.83	7.79	7.60

Key Points for Hotel Leadership:

- Perceptions about the quality of leadership at the Armada are quite positive across most aspects measured for this dimension.
- In particular, the notion that staff feel they are 'Trusted' by the senior management at the hotel is very welcome. Further, this trust appears to be reciprocal such that staff believe they can trust their direct line manager vis-a-vis decision making.

Table 14: Cross-departmental Perceptions on the Hotel's Culture

Department	CULTURE													
	I am empowered to make quick decisions if a problem arises	I feel my opinions are listened to	I get praised for my work effort	I feel appreciated working here	I am treated fairly working here	This is a friendly place to work	There is a good sense of teamwork in my department	Every team member in my department does about 100% quality work	We hold ourselves and our team members accountable for results	When things go wrong the focus is on solutions, not blame	All departments work very well with each other	There is high level of morale in the business	People are treated equally regardless of gender, age or other original personal characteristics	When you present the organization, you were really laid out
Accommodation/Maintenance	8.57	7.71	8.43	7.25	8.08	8.71	8.08	8.29	8.36	8.46	8.51	8.27	8.64	8.56
Administration/Accounts	8.67	8.67	8.67	7.00	8.33	8.00	8.00	8.67	7.67	8.00	7.67	8.00	8.67	8.33
Banqueting Bar	6.67	6.00	6.33	6.33	6.33	7.67	6.33	6.33	8.00	6.33	6.67	6.33	6.33	6.67
Banqueting	6.50	6.20	7.30	6.70	6.80	6.80	7.10	6.50	6.80	6.80	6.80	6.80	6.80	6.80
Front Office Operations	8.50	7.80	8.60	8.40	7.80	7.80	7.87	7.87	7.50	8.50	8.00	8.50	7.80	8.07
Johnny Burke's Pub	8.00	7.50	6.75	7.75	8.00	8.50	8.00	7.50	7.75	8.00	7.75	7.50	8.00	8.50
Kitchen Chefs	7.00	6.00	6.20	6.30	6.80	6.80	7.00	6.75	6.50	6.50	7.00	6.50	6.17	6.27
Kitchen Porters & Yard	7.50	6.21	6.92	6.07	6.86	7.86	7.86	6.86	7.29	7.57	6.43	6.79	7.71	6.84
Managers & HODs	8.36	7.78	8.00	8.88	7.75	8.25	7.88	7.25	7.88	7.88	6.75	6.30	8.36	8.25
Ocean Bar	6.50	6.00	6.80	6.80	6.40	7.40	7.00	6.80	7.00	6.80	6.80	6.80	6.40	6.80
Aileen's Restaurant	8.27	6.70	6.5	6.20	7.00	6.50	6.30	6.80	7.10	6.80	6.70	6.40	7.40	6.80
Mean Item Scores:	7.99	6.72	6.99	6.99	7.42	8.29	7.81	6.99	7.76	7.89	6.87	6.76	6.99	6.76

Key Points about the hotel's Culture:

- Perceptions about the culture of the Armada are very positive in general. In particular, aspects of culture that relate to employee empowerment, a sense of belonging, friendship, as well as the perception of equality, equity and respect, each score strongly.
- All staff agree strongly that the Armada is a friendly place to work.
- While not weak, there may be opportunities to enhance and reinforce the work efforts of staff. (Refer to B.F. Skinner's Operant Psychology/Reinforcement Theory to learn more).
- There are certain variations in agreement among some departments as to the credibility of the manifest culture at the Armada (see scores for Banqueting Bar, Kitchen staff, Ocean Bar)

Table 15: Cross-departmental Perceptions of Wellbeing

Department	WELLBEING										
	The rostering process is fair in my department	I get my rest in good time	My number of working hours per day is fair	I get to take my break everyday	I am happy with the staff food available to me	I have a good work/life balance working here	Compared to industry standard, I am paid fairly for the work that I do	I can cope with the everyday pressure of working here	I am happy with the level of support the Armada Hotel is giving to the community	I am confident we are doing all we can to reduce our environmental impact	I trust our leadership team to keep me and my colleagues safe during the Covid pandemic
Accommodation/Maintenance	8.25	8.40	8.64	8.75	7.20	8.20	6.40	8.50	8.21	8.71	8.96
Administration/Accounts	7.67	8.00	8.33	7.67	8.00	5.00	5.33	6.33	7.00	8.00	8.00
Banqueting Bar	6.50	5.50	6.00	6.50	5.00	6.50	5.50	6.50	6.50	6.50	6.50
Banqueting	7.11	6.78	6.90	6.32	5.89	6.56	7.22	6.22	7.76	7.44	7.22
Front Office Operations	6.58	6.10	6.70	7.00	5.25	5.67	5.17	7.67	7.33	8.83	6.42
Johnny Burke's Pub	8.25	5.75	6.00	8.25	6.75	6.25	6.00	6.25	6.25	8.50	8.00
Kitchen Chefs	6.73	6.71	7.46	6.27	7.46	6.55	5.55	8.00	6.46	7.50	8.27
Kitchen Porters & Yard	7.43	6.64	8.07	7.64	7.43	7.57	6.54	8.00	7.71	7.14	8.21
Managers & HODs	6.88	6.88	7.38	7.11	6.71	5.50	6.50	6.25	7.50	7.50	7.63
Ocean Bar	5.20	6.00	6.20	6.20	6.80	5.20	7.40	6.00	6.00	4.20	4.40
Aileen's Restaurant	6.50	4.80	6.80	7.90	7.20	6.00	7.80	8.80	9.20	6.80	6.20
Mean Item Scores:	7.05	6.99	7.42	6.96	6.52	6.17	6.52	7.57	7.49	7.44	7.88

Key Points about Wellbeing at the Armada:

- Rostering issues appear to have a negative effect on staff in certain departments in F&B.
- With the exception of the Banqueting Bar, most departments are relatively satisfied with their allotted work hours/schedule.
- However, some departments are less in agreement that they have a sustainable work-life balance.

Table 16: Cross-departmental Perceptions of Current Engagement Levels

Department	CURRENT EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT			
	Working here meets my expectations	Overall, I am satisfied working here	Overall, I feel connected to the business	I enjoy coming to work
Accommodation/Maintenance	8.43	8.36	7.79	8.21
Administration/Accounts	7.67	8.00	7.00	7.67
Banqueting Bar	6.00	5.00	2.00	2.00
Banqueting	7.33	7.22	7.00	7.11
Front Office Operations	6.83	6.75	6.42	6.83
Johnny Burke's Pub	8.50	8.75	9.00	9.25
Kitchen Chefs	7.36	7.27	7.18	7.09
Kitchen Porters & Yard	7.07	6.14	6.93	6.21
Managers & HODs	8.00	7.00	7.63	7.25
Ocean Bar	6.40	6.00	6.20	6.20
Aileen's Restaurant	8.33	7.68	7.89	7.22
Mean Item Scores:	7.45	7.11	6.82	6.82

- Most employees feel that their work-related expectations are being met by the Hotel and are thus relatively satisfied
- Staff in the Banqueting Bar are least engaged or satisfied
- In general, most employees enjoy coming to work

Table 17: Cross-departmental Perceptions of Future Engagement Levels

Department	FUTURE ENGAGEMENT BEHAVIOURS			
	If things stay just as they are, as a team we will be very productive	If things stay just as they are, we'll be able to provide our guests with consistently great service	I'll still be working in this organisation a year from now	I would recommend working here to a friend or family member
Accommodation/Maintenance	7.79	7.43	7.29	7.71
Administration/Accounts	6.33	6.67	6.00	8.33
Banqueting Bar	2.00	6.00	1.00	1.00
Banqueting	6.78	7.56	6.67	7.33
Front Office Operations	5.42	5.17	7.42	6.75
Johnny Burke's Pub	6.75	7.00	9.50	8.50
Kitchen-Chefs	6.27	5.46	6.18	6.91
Kitchen Porters & Yard	5.50	6.71	6.57	6.57
Managers & HODs	5.25	5.38	7.63	7.38
Ocean Bar	4.20	4.20	5.00	6.00
Aileen's Restaurant	6.11	6.78	6.33	7.89
Mean Item Scores:	5.67	6.21	6.33	6.76

- While there is a general consensus among staff that they plan to remain in the Hotel and would recommend the establishment to friends/family, there is an inherent concern that productivity and efficiencies in service delivery will be compromised if some level of change is not enacted by leadership/management.

Table 18: Overall Perception of the Armada Hotel

Department	OVERALL PERCEPTION I would say that Armada Hotel are great employers
Accommodation/Maintenance	8.21
Administration/Accounts	8.33
Banqueting Bar	3.00
Banqueting	8.33
Front Office Operations	6.42
Johnny Burke's Bar & Grill	9.25
Kitchen-Chefs	9.09
Kitchen Porters & Yard	7.79
Managers & HODs	7.50
Ocean Bar	7.00
Aileen's Restaurant	8.56
Mean Item Scores:	7.59

- All in all, staff have a positive perception of the Armada Hotel as great employers (with the exception of the Banqueting Bar).

References

1. BCorp Website

<https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/>

2. Carnegie Uk Report

<https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/measuring-goodwork-the-final-report-of-the-measuring-job-quality-working-group/>

3. Curran, D. (2021) Inside Out Hospitality Report

<https://aran.library.nuigalway.ie/handle/10379/17135>

4. Failte Ireland Tourism Career: Labour Research Report 2022

<https://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Publications/tourism-careers-labourr-research-pdf-1-8mb.pdf?ext=.pdf>

5. Fair Work Convention

<https://www.fairworkconvention.scot/>

6. Forbes.com Ethical Leadership

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesnonprofitcouncil/2021/09/02/ethical-leadership-in-a-complex-world/>

7. ILO Decent Work

<https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>

8. ITIC Report 2022

<https://www.itic.ie/RECOVERY/budget2022/>

9. Martin Kelley Thesis [& associated references],

Available on request from Dr Deirdre Curran

deirdre.curran@universityofgalway.ie

10. Mc Kinsey Framework

<https://strategicmanagementinsight.com/tools/mckinsey-7smodel-framework/>



