Boot camps, bugs, and dreams: Metaphor analysis of internship experiences in the hospitality industry

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the vocational discourse of Israeli students who participated in internships in Eilat hotels. By applying metaphor analysis, the study highlights positive and negative stereotypical images through which a hospitality career is portrayed in the examined discourse. The study concludes by discussing the ironic tension between the interpersonal and affective aspects of the profession found in positive metaphors and values of individualism and competitiveness – which characterize a market-based society in which commercial hospitality operates – found in the negative metaphors.

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry is frequently challenged by the need to attract and maintain talented leadership at all levels (Alexander, 2007; Barrows & Johan, 2008; Lashley, 2015). The number of students who choose to pursue an academic degree in the field has increased persistently over the last decades, which would seem to signal optimism (Littlejohn & Watson, 2004; Padureana & Maggi, 2011). The great importance attributed to work experience in this industry has led to internship programs becoming a common component in most tourism curricula worldwide. However, findings from across the globe repeatedly indicate that many tourism students choose not to develop careers in the field (Daskin, 2016; McMahon & Quinn, 1995). In fact, for many, the internship is both their first and their last experience in the industry (Koc, Yumusak, Ulukoy, Kilic, & Toptas, 2014; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000). As a result, scholars have argued that the internship should receive close attention when examining students' negative attitude shift regarding a career in the industry, as it is after this experience that the decision to choose another career is often made (Busby, 2003; Ching-Sung & Chen-Wei, 2012; Clark, 2003). Drawing from the sociolinguistic litrature on tourism discourses (Dann, 1997, 2002; Hillel, Belhassen, & Shani, 2013; Noy & Kohn, 2010; Santos, Belhassen, & Caton, 2008; Stamau & Paraskevopoulos, 2004), the current study joins the body of research answering this call by examining the language with which students chose to describe the hospitality industry during a period which is, arguably, formative for the development of a vocational identity. More specifically, following Seyitoğlu and Çakar (2017) who have already recognized the usefulness of the analyzing metaphors in interviews conducted with tourism students regarding their education and internship experiences, we decided to anchor our analysis around repeated metaphors found in the data because these discursive instruments tell us a wider story about the hospitality industry – one that calls for careful attention.

Metaphors can be seen as abstract models of reality; therefore, they can be viewed as an intrinsic manifestation of deeper

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processes that cannot be expressed in a straightforward manner (Dann, 2002; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Morgan, 1986; Oswick, Keenoy, & Grant, 2002; Ricoeur, 1981; Schmitt, 2005). Scholars who examine the nature of metaphors agree that they have a figurative quality of re-describing reality in a symbolic manners or, as Recoeur insightfully notes, "Metaphor is the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to redescribe reality" (1981, p. 7). Moreover, metaphors are usually context-sensitive, and, arguably, the fact that some are frequently used by members of the same community tells us both about the shared values that govern this community and also about the social logic that guides the lived experience of its members. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest that the metaphorical coherence of a given culture reflects some kind of consistency, in logic or direction, in the way a given metaphorical concept guides the discourse within this culture. For example, in American society, "time is money" and "argument is war"; thus, one can expect to find a logical coherence in the way these metaphors shape the discourse surrounding the topics of time and argument (e.g., spending time, winning an argument, etc.). One of the insightful conclusions from their celebrated book—*The Metaphor We Lived By*—is that the systematicity of metaphorical concepts (e.g., spending time, saving time, losing time, living on borrowed time, etc.) also illuminates the way these concepts shape, and not only reflect, the behavior in a given society.

The current study aims to identify and characterize repeated metaphors that were found in the vocational discourse of students who took part in the Academic Internship Program (AIP) as part of the Bachelor's degree in the program of Hotel & Tourism Management at Ben-Gurion University in Eilat, Israel. Our premise is that popular metaphors used by students to describe their internship experiences in the hotel industry are linguistic resources for them to build, frame, situate, and affirm their vocational identities. In their elementary analysis of Turkish students' responses to the question: "What do you think interns are like?" Seyitoğlu and Çakar (2017) found six main categories in the participants' responses: things, animals, machines, professions, nature and others. The current study asks to further develop this theoretical angle by demonstrating the value of peering through a sociolinguistic lens at the internship experience in order to better comprehend its social and psychological dimensions. As such, this paper also follows the growing body of literature that calls to acquire a critical knowledge on hospitality, in general, and on hospitality employees, in particular, in the wake of apparent misrepresentation of the nature of many aspects of their experience (Lashley, 2007; Lugosi, 2008; Lynch, Molz, McIntosh, Lugosi, & Lashley, 2011).

2. Literature review

2.1. Vocational identity and career exploration in market-based society

Psychoanalytical theorists characterize identity as a fundamentally dynamic process, as we develop our sense of self by perceiving and responding to others' perceptions of us. On one hand, at the root of this process is a tension between identifying with others in an attempt to merge into a collective and, on the other hand, identifying against the perceptions or expectations of others in a quest for autonomy. Freud conceptualized this dual process in terms of identification and repression, whereas Lacan described it as alienation, separation, and mirroring. This duality is reflected in many theories on identity construction. (For a critical review of this body of literature, see Vanheule & Verhaeghe, 2009). While it is not unusual for identity theorists, including those focusing on occupational identity (e.g., Bujold, 2004; Savickas, 2005; Skorikov & Vondracek, 2012), to recognize that our social environment exerts a heavy influence on our identification process, Verhaeghe (2012) argues that we must look beyond our immediate social circle, as well as at oft-considered categories like gender or ethnicity, towards broader social forces of our era such as at the market-based rationale that governs and shapes our relationship with ourselves and with others. His suggestion to view identity in the context of the market-based society in which it is constructed is specifically valuable for this study, which focuses on metaphors that are circulated in the vocational discourses of interns in a specific work environment in one town.

As Verhaeghe (2012) insightfully explains, a market-based society rewards traits and behaviors associated with the drive for autonomy rather than connection with others. Under these conditions, in which the consumer–supplier relationship governs many domains of human interaction, a market-based rationale promotes relentless competition as a path to economic efficiency, and it is closely bound up with a meritocratic ideology that suggests that human successes and failures are attributable to individual talents and effort in the job market. As such, a market-based society promotes the myth of the "perfectible individual," and the responsibility of reaching this unrealistic goal falls mostly on the individual's shoulders. Individuals who work in such cultures mirror these social expectations in the production of their identity, internalizing what it means to be "good" members of the workforce, and if they feel they are failing, they likely understand that this profession is not for them.

With this theoretical premise in mind, it is now possible to present some of the key conceptual constructs of the literature on the role of identity in the career development process. Vocational identity can be loosely defined as a sense of personal continuity and connections with the professional environments and/or attributes of a distinguishable occupation. Contemporary scholars in the field of career exploration agree that forming a coherent vocational identity plays an important role in the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Holland, 1996; Savickas, 2011). Accordingly, vocational identity formation can be defined as the process by which individuals relate to their professional role, and it reflects the manner in which they perceive themselves in relation to their career choice and its implications for other life goals, such as prestige and family (Bujold, 2004; Dien, 2000; Holland, 1973, 1996; Savickas, 2005).

Given the central role of career development in the competitive job market, the idea of developing a coherent vocational identity has gained the interest among many young adults and academic programs. In his celebrated work on identity formation, Erikson (1968) notes that achieving a sense of vocational identity is often the most challenging aspect of identity formation among young adolescents because of social pressures to find an occupation. Ever since Erikson put the limelight on this issue, many theories, models, and concepts have been developed in this growing field. Within this body of literature, vocational exploration is a useful

concept for our study, and it is usually used to describe the process of self-examination of intra-personal aspects (e.g., abilities, interests, and values), together with an investigation of the external conditions (e.g., educational and vocational options, the world of work) that many young adults go through. One of the insights that arises out of the research is that the significance of the vocational component in one's identity is more often evident with people who experience a coherent sense of a continuous career, which is associated with less conflict, burnout, and turnover, and this can enable faster adaptation to a new job. At the same time, most scholars agree that vocational identity is an ongoing, self-reflective, and dynamic process and should not be viewed as a fixed identity component which individuals can, or necessarily should, reach.

Marcia (1966) elaborated on Erikson's work, leading to the creation of the *identity status model*, which holds that people can generally be characterized in one of four states of identity development, based on where they fall along two dimensions: exploration and commitment. Those not actively exploring identity possibilities and not yet committed to a particular expression of identity are considered to be in a state of identity diffusion. Those committed without having undertaken an exploration are referred to as identity foreclosed. Those actively exploring but not yet committed to an identity are in identity moratorium. Those who have actively explored and arrived at an identity have reached identity achievement. Marcia's model has been successfully applied to the domain of vocational identity (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2012), where it helps to illuminate the search process. While people do not move through this process in a homogenous way, and movement is not always linear, patterns are observable, as young people respond in somewhat predictable ways to the sociological clock.

Super (1980) differentiates between five stages in career development in accordance with the tasks conducted at each stage. The first stage, at ages 14–18, is the crystallization of career preferences. At this stage, adolescents focus on thinking about tentative vocations by gathering information from role models. The second stage is the specification of career preference (18–21 years) and is usually involved with confirming the career goal. In Israel, at this age many adolescents are engaged in performing their national service in the army, police, fire departments, hospitals, educational institutes and other organizations authorized to absorb volunteers who do not join the military service (mostly ultra-orthodox Jews and Arabs) (Fleischer & Gal, 2006). Nevertheless, at this stage, many Israelis recognize vocational goals that fit their talents even during their military service (Levy, 2008). Super's (1980,1990) third stage is the implementation of career preference, which occurs at the age of 21–24 years. At this stage, adolescents are engaged in getting the training and/or education to fulfill their vocational goals. The fourth stage is the stabilization of a career path, which occurs at the age of 24–35 years. At this stage, people usually gain experience with which they either confirm their choice or change their career. The last stage is after age 35, and involves advancement in the chosen career. According to Super's theory, exploration marks the adolescent stages, and is followed by the final stages, in which the actual vocational choice is made.

Zooming in on the fourth stage, we can see that career training, in particular, is characterized by intensive exploration in the quest for occupational meaning. It is therefore not surprising that, before their graduation, college students spend much of their time engaging in activities that enable them to choose a profession and develop their skills (Ng & Feldman, 2007). In the wake of increased exposure and access to information, a plurality of values, and rapid technological and socio-cultural changes, the exploration process is becoming more complex and challenging (Flum & Kaplan, 2006). Under these circumstances, the AIPs that many tourism and hotel management departments offer seem like a valuable contribution that differentiates these studies from many other academic programs. Indeed, there is agreement among scholars that internships are critical vocational episodes during which students develop a general attitude towards the profession, and therefore these opportunities can be seen as key facilitators in a person's early stage of vocational identity formation (Flun & Blustein, 2000).

There is mounting evidence that students do not always have realistic and reliable information about the vocational environment and often have a poor understanding of the labor market (e.g., Nachmias & Walmsley, 2015). In many cases, graduate students also experience gaps between their prior expectations and their first actual experiences in the job market (e.g., Marshall & Butler, 2015). Many scholars conclude that students need guidance with searching, filtering, and processing appropriate information (Flum & Blustein, 2000; Kaplan & Flum, 2012; Sinai, Kaplan, & Flum, 2012). Flum and Kaplan (2006) suggest that an exploratory orientation should be the goal of the education process. In line with this suggesiton, other scholarsstress the need for nurturing a secure educational and training environment that supports exploration and includes personal mentoring and refelctive components (Clark, 2003; Ko, 2008; Nisan, 1992).

2.2. The Israeli hospitality workplace

In 2018, there were 35,000 direct employees in the Israeli hotel industry, and an additional 6,300 worked in hotels through temporary employment agencies. Similar to other countries, the hospitality industry's image in Israel is of a small number of career path possibilities with low wages (Kelley-Patterson & George, 2001). On the other hand, promotion is relatively rapid. Within a few years, junior employees can be promoted into general managerial roles in their departments, while also experiencing an unusual increase in responsibility and position complexity. Wages, on the other hand, are a bit less dynamic. Wages at the lower career levels are low and unrewarding, especially compared to the investment of effort perceived by the employee. In 2018, the average monthly wage in the hotel industry amounted to approximately 8,100 NIS, while the average wage for a temporary agency employee was around 6,600 NIS (Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2018). In comparison, the average employee wage in Israel during the same time was 10,474 NIS (Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2019). Minimum-wage earners constitute 50% of the employees in the hotel industry. According to the Association of Hoteliers, incomes for the second level of employees, who make up 20% of the total number of employees, range from 5,500 to 7,500 NIS per month. Junior managers, who constitute 15% of the employees, earn between 7,500 and 10,000 NIS, and senior managers earn between 15,000 and 40,000 NIS.

In order to understand the vocational context students enter, it is important to describe some major characteristics of the Eilat

tourism work environment at the time of this study. Many tourism workers come to this city for a temporary sojourn, lured by a government grant awarded to discharged soldiers for performing work in the hospitality industry. Eilat's image as an isolated resort town where the sun never stops shining attracts many of them. Their stint there is often their first vocational experience outside their parents' home, and also their first as civilians, as it comes directly on the heels of their army service. Those eligible for the full grant receive ~$2,700, as of September 2017, after finishing six months' work (an eligible person who works for a shorter period may be entitled to a partial payment under certain conditions). As a result, a large percentage of employees in Eilat view their work as a "short break" before "real life." Those few employees who chose to stay more than a year usually become middle-range managers although they lack formal management training. In many cases in Israel, hospitality human resources change rapidly as many young employees view the hotel industry as transitional, and not as a career option. In Eilat, the situation is even more complicated as many employees are attracted to the remote city also because of its liminal image and choose it as their first experience away from home after national service. It was found, for example, that those young employees do not consider a long-term career there, and many of them use tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs to a much higher extent than the Israeli average (see Belhassen, 2012).

3. Methodology

The Department of Hotel & Tourism Management at Ben-Gurion University was established in 1994 in Beer Sheva. Since then, it has been the leading academic institute for acquiring tourism and hospitality academic education in Israel. Over the years, the practical training component in the program has undergone several transformations. For example, at first, students were required to spend 1,200 h in supervised internships without academic credit. In 2010, the practical training component was transformed into an optional course that is constructed from three subsequent units spread over three semesters. The course comprises personal and class meetings, and students are required to submit three written assignments. The current program at the Eilat Campus, on which this study is based, was founded in 2006, and today follows the 2010 requirements outlined above. The data of this study is based on assignments and class meetings related to this course, and approval for the research was granted by the Ben-Gurion University Human Subjects Research Committee.

The data for this study are derived from two main sources: written assignments and focus groups. The first source is the written assignments in the three-stage practicum course at the Eilat Campus, as described above. The reports were handed in by 46 students who undertook their internship during 2011–2016 in Eilat. The students were informed that their assignments might be chosen to be analyzed for research purposes. These written assignments constitute narratives of vocational identity. The chosen assignments were those in which students used metaphors. In line with the constructivist epistemology that guided this research. There was no attempt to adhere to a statistically representative sample of the narratives.

In the first assignment, students described the organizational departments in which they worked, the organization, and their initial experience there. There was also a theoretical question about the ability to teach and/or to train new employees to give service. In the second assignment, students analyzed a managerial problem they had observed during the internship. The final assignment comprised two parts. In the first, students wrote their occupational biography in the tourism industry. In the second part, they answered questions regarding various aspects of the internship program and their experience from a personal perspective. The two different formats of writing provide an authentic reflection of the experience, which generated a wide range of data and data analysis options for this study. In addition to the submitted written assignments, the content of personal and class meetings (conducted by the first author) were utilized to deepen the understanding of the metaphors students used.

The data analysis was conducted in two steps. First, we searched for repeated motifs, idioms, metaphors, symbols, allegories, and other linguistic patterns in order to produce a list. The task of identifying metaphors was conducted by following three rules: (1) when a word or phrase could be understood beyond its literal meaning in the context of what was being said; (2) when the literal meaning was derived from an area of physical or cultural experience; and (3) when this literal meaning was transferred to another area (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Ricoeur, 1981; Schmitt, 2005). It is important to note that all our data were originally used, and initially analyzed, in Hebrew. The last step was to create categories to organize our findings. This task required the establishment of temporary categories, which were later improved, modified, or extended.

The second source of the data can be described as a more straightforward metaphor extraction through two focus groups moderated by the first author. The focus groups were conducted during 2018 with students in the AIP courses. Each focus group was comprised of 8 students, who were recruited using a purposive sampling technique. The focus group discussions were tape-recorded for further analysis. In addition, extensive field notes were compiled for each group. The transcripts were later coded and subjected to a thematic analysis of the metaphors used.

The focus group started with a general explanation about vocational narrative and about the rhetoric advantages and limitations of using metaphors to describe a phenomenon. Thereafter, the students were asked to think for themselves about 2–3 metaphors that could describe their experience in the tourism industry. Then students were asked to share their metaphors, and these were written on a blackboard. Lastly, an open discussion about the metaphors was held during which students could elaborate about their choice and about other metaphors suggested by their classmates.

The discursive approach to data analysis has been recognized as a valuable tool to understand the processes of career selection and vocational development (Flum & Blomshtion, 2000). Vocational stories allow us to understand the manner in which vocational identities are formed through a close examination of the metaphors used to describe these processes. Metaphors, which are the conceptual anchors around which the findings were organized and analyzed, can be seen as a figurative re-description used to refer to an experience with the terminology of another experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Ricoeur, 1981). As such, they can also be viewed as an intrinsic manifestation of deeper processes that cannot be expressed in a straightforward manner (Morgan, 1986; Schmitt,

2005). Lakoff and Johnson's (1980, p. 14) conceptualization of orientational metaphors (i.e., those metaphorical concepts that have a spatial orientation: up–down, near–far, in–out, front–back, deep–shallow, etc.) is very useful to understand the cultural context and the unspoken meanings embedded in the analyzed text. Metaphors are therefore context-sensitive, and the fact that some are repeatedly used by members of the same vocational community during their internship arguably tells an important story about their experience and its role in the decision whether or not to develop a career in the hospitality industry (Oswick et al., 2002). In light of this premise, the current study seeks to provide a socio-linguistic analysis of the AIP experience in the hotel industry in Eilat that is framed by key metaphorical categories used by students in their written and oral descriptions of this experience.

Student participation was voluntary, and their responses were kept confidential, in accordance with Ben-Gurion University's IRB ethical guidelines. The fact that some of the data used here were part of the internship assignments was taken into consideration during data collection. The AIP course is not mandatory and has a special grading system without an exam. The final grade is based on students' actual professional experiences in the tourism organization, on class and personal meetings, and on students' reflective assignments in which there are no right or wrong answers. Participants were free to ask not to use their assignments for research without penalty after passing the course successfully. Any identifying information was not disclosed.

4. Results

Our analysis yielded eight categories of metaphors by which the AIP experience, and, more broadly, the tourism career were described by students. Regardless of their overall reported experience, these categories reflect an ambiguous yet coherent scheme, which we chose to divide into three themes: those related to warmth and connection, those related to power and exploitation, and those related to chaos or a sense of being out of control. The theme of warmth and connection consists of metaphors that are positive in their essence such as making dreams come true, falling in love, and experiencing a family-like environment; these metaphors color the hospitality working environment in an appealing light. The theme of exploitation consists of metaphors that reflect general characteristics of the nature of the organization as an unattractive workplace for new employees such as a boot camp or slave market. Under the theme of chaos are figurative images that are more affectively ambiguous such as the description of catching the hospitality/tourism bug, being thrown into the deep end, or needing to constantly put out fires on the job. These metaphors invoke a sense of a lack of control, either within the industry itself or in one's attraction to working in it.

4.1. Warmth and connection

4.1.1. Falling in love
The hospitality workplace environment was described with great intensity when it came to personal relationships, interacting with guests, and giving service. The ability to create deep connections with both returning and occasional guests, being exposed to other cultures, and hearing peoples' stories were sources of enjoyment that were frequently described as the reason for experiencing unexpected feelings of love for the working environment of hotels, and for the tourism industry in general. This was well expressed by one of the students:

"I fell in love with tourism, a field in which one can combine work with pleasure, as the interaction with customers is vast. Meeting interesting people, cultures, and languages, and at work, one can observe the product in real time. Through the eyes of guests and holidaymakers, one can learn whether the product is good or bad."

Some of the students explained this impulse of emotions with reference to the dynamic features of the work environment in the hospitality industry. For many of them, this vibrant characteristic was a major source of attraction, and they used words such as "passion," "love," and "connection" to describe it. As one young man who worked in the food and beverage department of a large hotel expressed it:

"I immediately fell in love with it…, the rhythm…, I enjoyed it from the start…. I felt great satisfaction from hard work that is demanding, dynamic, and full of action…."

The use of this metaphor is not as simple as it first appears, however. Falling in love is usually an unconscious process, which is understood to be irrational, or in popular parlance, "blind." Lovers cannot see the unattractive characteristics of their object of love until their initial infatuation subsides. The tourism industry does indeed have a glossy image, replete with glamour and happiness, especially in resort areas. However, regardless of the hotel's characteristics and its location, usually after an initial period, the employee learns to look at their beloved work environment with more objective eyes. Therefore, the students' usage of this metaphor to describe their initial encounter with the industry says as much about the disenchantment that most of them describe later on as it does about the industry's positive characteristics.

4.1.2. Fulfilling dreams
Previous studies have found that a positive evaluation of the tourism industry's characteristics is linked to the interaction with the public, providing customer service, and meeting people from different cultures (Richardson, 2009). In the analyzed narratives in this study, students described the profession as one which enables them to derive pleasure primarily from providing service and making dreams come true. Most of the students who referred to this characteristic indicated a positive emotion. A representative example of the typical use of this dream-industry metaphor can be found in this quote from the report of a receptionist:

"Working with guests is challenging; the opportunity to fulfill guests' dreams by instigating actions that seem trivial to me, though to them are regarded as well above their expectations, brings great satisfaction...."

Other students stressed the "dream" as the essence of the hospitality product, as indicated by another student who also interned as a receptionist:

"We are selling a dream, and by that we have the chance to get in touch with people's happiness.... Knowing that it is me who made a difference to their holiday is worth everything."

However, like the metaphor of falling in love, dreaming also entails an illusionary aspect. First, students used this metaphor to refer to the guests' dreams, and although they view themselves as important actors in this dream, they are the ones who are aware of the illusion. Using MacCannell's (1973) back–front analysis of tourism-related settings [which was inspired by Goffman (1959)], it would be safe to say that students recognize the illusionary nature of tourism settings. Being dream-makers requires responsibility and awareness of the illusion created by the hotel setting. The role of the students is to cater to the guests' illusionary dream, which is arguably the opposite of living the dream.

4.1.3. Home sweet home

Students with positive experiences tended to utilize the metaphor of the hotel as a second home in their description of their work experience. The popularity of this metaphor might be related to the characteristics of the work environment in Eilat's hotels, resulting from the demographic composition that tends to staff them, as described above. Most of the students reported that they spent their leisure time with other employees, and also referred to the celebrations of birthdays and other family events together as an important resource that increased their sense of belonging to the organisation. Some of the students suggested that the intimate ambiance in their department was enabled by the lack of individual tips, which creates bonding where everyone helps each other without competition—like in a family. This conceptual metaphor appeared in the focus groups in various forms (e.g., using kinship and family-related vocabulary) to describe this family-like sense of belonging as a critical and positive attribute of the hotel industry.

Other students complained about the lack of celebrating personal or collective events in their department, and blamed their direct managers for not understanding the importance of creating a sense of family in an intensive work environment. For example, during a focus group, students who worked in the reception area of one of the small hotels reported that there was a custom of tipping the receptionists, but that the tips were taken by the direct manager, who did not use this money to organize departmental parties for birthdays or holidays, as is done in the big hotel chains in the city. What strikes us about this complaint is the expectation it reveals, on the part of employees, that the managers should bolster the family atmosphere of the department, and that this simply is seen as being customary in the hotel industry.

4.2. Power and exploitation

4.2.1. The military unit

Many students utilized a military metaphor with reference to the discipline needed to control employees in the hotel industry. Such a metaphor is not surprising, given that many of our respondents (and many of the hotel workers in Israel more generally) are, as noted above, recently discharged soldiers. This category consists of many military-related metaphors such as rank, boot camp, and battlefields, in addition to derogatory adjectives used to describe young soldiers in the Israeli army. As a whole, these metaphors were used to refer to the hierarchical atmosphere, the discipline, and the regulation that characterizes the working environment, and also to the chaotic nature of the job.

One common use of military metaphors was in reference to the managerial style required in order to successfully control the employees:

"... the management structure resembles that of a military hierarchy; as such, the possibility for personal expression is low, and the industry, in my opinion, is perceived as a slave market."

"No one sees the lower ranked employees, at least in the beginning. You are one among a thousand employees; you are not unique in any way until you reach a place in which you have a 'name'.... For the sake of high work flow, they often do not see these young soldiers.... This kind of attitude is not one which will make you want to stay.... We are invisible…, like 'green' soldiers in the army."

Interestingly, there was a significant difference between the perception of junior staff and that of managers. Junior-level interns found the atmosphere more difficult, while management-level interns actually understood the necessity for such a military-like system. The scarcity of long-term employees and the high turnover rate, especially in junior positions, make seniority an important asset. This was well reflected, for instance, by a student who became a junior manager during his internship and explained the need for the military-like culture:

"People come for a few months and then leave; the high turnover also affects the more veteran employees. How many times can one train people over and over and then watch them leave?"

Or by this student who was a middle-range manager in the food and beverage department at a large hotel:

"The Department of Food and Beverages staff are usually those young people who arrive in Eilat for a period of six months, and

their motivation, in most cases, is very low—to get the Grant for Discharged Soldiers, and to leave. They are more interested in partying and having a good time after the army. For example, they arrive for the breakfast service with red eyes, often smelling of alcohol, sometimes not arriving to their morning shift on the pretext that they aren't feeling well. The service provided by these waiters is poor and has nothing to do with the word 'service'…. They walk around like zombies, and their level of interest in the guests is very low. Even when you finally get a good employee, let's say those students from the Eilat Campus of Ben-Gurion University, who usually show up on time, you realize that they are the minority…. If you don't want to lose control of your department as a manager, you must behave like a commander in the army and stick to the rules and discipline."

4.2.2. The slave market and socks

Many students used the metaphor "slave market" both in class meetings and in their written reports. Sadly, this is consistent with the literature regarding the atmosphere in parts of the hotel industry (Poulston, 2009). The findings of a study conducted in Turkey showed that one reason for the industry's poor image in the eyes of students is managers' conduct towards employees (see Roney & Öztin, 2007) . The frequent use of the metaphor of slavery reinforces that of the previous section and portrays an image of a corporate culture in which a large part of the staff, including those in authority, are seen as not taking the role of employee seriously (Super, 1990), lacking a feeling of involvement in the profession, and sometimes lacking systematic training for their role.

The metaphor of the slave market may be connected to the imbalance between life roles that is required by the hospitality industry. Students experienced the hospitality workplace as a system that cannot tolerate employees who are not totally committed to work. As one student wrote:

"I started looking for work in a hotel, which was more difficult than I had thought …. I went to all the hotel chains in Eilat…. I had a personal interview with the department directors, but once they heard I was going to be a student their initial smile vanished. Apparently, the hotel industry does not like hiring students because we cannot be slaves—we have other obligations."

In spite of this attitude, our respondent eventually found a job. Although it seems that the hotels are somewhat aware of students' situation and have hired them knowing they were students, some difficulties still arose when students tried to combine school work and their employment, such as coping with a lack of consideration from their managers and difficulties reaching balance and stability, as implied, for example, by this student's summary task description:

"The hotel hires you knowing that you are a student, yet they require you to work hours like the other workers, who are sometimes treated like slaves. Unlike the other employees, I could not provide these shifts due to university obligations which they knew about. You are then confronted with the dilemma of whether to disappoint your supervisor or to give up on a few classes and try to compensate for them at a later time..."

Or as expressed in another narrative:

"The reason I stayed at the Dan Eilat hotel was due to their consideration regarding my student status, and this should be stated as a positive review. Other hotels can treat you like a slave even though they know you are a student."

On the other hand, for some interns, consideration of their status as students led to a great deal of appreciation, and even long-term loyalty:

"Despite the slave market image of the industry in Eilat, I had a different experience during my studies. I can attest that I received assistance from my supervisor, who gave me a free hand to request long holidays for school purposes, and thus they also contributed to my commitment towards the organization, which I hold to this day...."

Another metaphor used in the oral exercise to describe the exploitive attitude of managers in the tourism industry was "socks." Like the shuk, this metaphor is quite popular in spoken slang in Hebrew to refer derogatorily to people who change their partners like they change socks. In a similar way, students, especially those who work in hotels, suggest that hotel managers are not committed to developing a long-term relationship with their young employees.

4.3. Chaos

4.3.1. Filling holes, extinguishing fires, the shuk, the pressure cooker

All the narratives reflect the fact that the tourism work environment is dynamic, but at times, it can be too much so. The consequences of this dynamism create a managerial style that is not professional, at least in the eyes of the beholders, as reflected in the analyzed narratives. Two of the prominent metaphors used, which are, admittedly, also frequently used by managers and scholars in Israel to describe the nature of work in the hospitality industry, are "extinguishing fire" and "filling in holes." The recurrent use of these two metaphors confirms intern awareness of the lack of organization in the hospitality industry, which the interns perceived as not professional, and therefore unattractive. Many of the students referred particularly to young managers in their narratives as being unprofessional because they do not take care to plan properly, therefore, leaving everyone else in the position of having to "put out fires."

Students' use of these metaphors was often coupled with references to the high turnover that characterizes the hotel industry in Israel, in general, and in Eilat, in particular. Most of the students observe or assume that this rapid turnover in human resources creates a vicious circle, in which employees with low motivation and commitment are promoted, due to a shortage of skilled

employees. As a result, the intermediate managerial level includes employees who lack the appropriate skills.

> "The onsite managers are not always the appropriate people for the role…, acting unprofessionally in front of employees, in the ongoing daily management and in human relations in front of guests…. There is a feeling among the junior employees that the management level is unprofessional…."

Arguably, the lack of planning and professionalism reflected in the extracts where these metaphors can be found affected students' attitudes towards work and towards the hospitality industry as a potential career path. Effectively, during their internship, they are evaluating examples of their future colleagues. As one student described:

> "The actual performance of the food and beverage station managers is unprofessional; they often arrive late for work, often due to the same reasons as the waiters—which is partying…. They do not know how to solve employee issues, and do not portray any personal example…. Managers post their status on social media, such as "Facebook"…. They write about their status at the party, and they do so…with terrible spelling mistakes…. The result is that many employees do not feel committed to them and, of course, do not see them as role models…. I realized that this has always been the state of this department…. I have been constantly accompanied by a very bad feeling…."

This quote, and many others, indicates that students negatively evaluate their colleagues and many of their managers during the AIP.

Another metaphor with which students described the chaotic nature of their work environment was "the shuk" and "the pressure cooker." The shuk is a Middle Eastern cultural term that refer to an open urban marketplace. In modern Hebrew slang, it refers to chaos or the lack of order in a certain place. For example, "The Sunday check-in scene at the hotel is a like a shuk," "Friday services are like a shuk," etc. Less commonly used in Hebrew was the metaphor of the pressure cooker, which appeared in two of the class exercises and was deemed accurate by the others.

4.3.2. Jumping into the abyss

Many students repeatedly reported sensing a lack of sufficient vocational training before they began their positions in the hotels. The orientational metaphors used to describe this experience were various versions of "jumping into deep water" or "parachuting from an airplane." One popular variation was expressed by a student who wrote about his first days working in reception: "I was put in front of clients and had to learn how to swim." Another student wrote:

> "After my interview, they just dropped me from the airplane into reception, and they expected me to land on my two feet. I was shocked because I neither had any experience in front of customers nor technological skills with the software."

In using these metaphors, many of the students highlighted the gap between their academic knowledge and intellectual capacity, on one hand, and the skills needed for their entry-level job on the other. The academic experience is often portrayed as irrelevant to the actual working environment for entry-level positions. A few students used the Hebrew idiom of "learning how to swim in a correspondence course" to sarcastically refer to the ineffectiveness of trying to learn to perform practical tasks by being exposed only to theory.

The sense of being dropped into a new position is intensified by the dynamic nature of the work environment in the hotels. Some hotels conformed to the original idea of the AIP, in which students experience various departments. Those students who experienced such AIPs reported a very dynamic internship, which led them to reach a point where they felt confident enough to "swim by themselves" or "stand on their own feet," but then to immediately lose this sense of stability as soon as they were thrown again into the deep water of a new department. As described by one of the students:

> "During my AIP, I experienced a wide range of roles in the "front of the house" and in the "back of the house," with many opportunities for mobility. It was a big shock to be thrown again and again into different departments with different people and rules, but I think it made me a better employee. I became confident that I could reach a managerial position in a relatively short time in many of the hotel's departments."

Being forced to jump into the deep water of vocational reality, which is quite different from the that portrayed in class, was perceived by many of the students as an opportunity to show their alleged academic advantage. Many of them included a description of knowledge transfer that some of their managers allowed them to bring in times of need. For example, a student described how the knowledge he acquired in class helped him to lead a significant change in a hotel restaurant.

> "We then redesigned the department and changed the restaurant's menu; we repriced the products—I was assisted by the work I had done in the 'Introduction to Food and Beverage Management' course…. It is safe to say that although we jumped into the deep water without proper preparation, we were pretty good…. Thanks to our knowledge, we broke the daily income record of the restaurant on a daily basis after 15 years of operation, and almost doubled our monthly revenue record. "

These descriptions also indicate that, despite its image, the hotel industry can provide an intellectual challenge and the opportunity to implement the skills acquired during university studies. However, it should be noted that many of the students reported not only a gap between their perceived skills and the possibility of implementing those skills during the AIP, but also a lack of opportunities to do so, due to a managerial style which did not empower employees or share information with them regarding the challenges and goals of their department. In most cases, jumping into the abyss was perceived by the students as an undesirable characteristic of their initial experience in the hotel industry, although some of them did see the silver lining of such a challenge as

good preparation for their future career.

4.4. Sickness

A key metaphor that emerges in many of the narratives centers on bugs or disease, specifically, attraction to the hospitality or tourism industry as something one is "infected with" beyond one's rational control. One woman who worked as a receptionist wrote:

"You can recognize an employee who's got the tourism bug; you can see it within the first few weeks on the job."

Another example is this self-diagnosed victim:

"I got this hotel bug. I think I got it from birth—it's either you got it or you don't."

A third quote illustrates a similar position:

"It is either you are infected by the tourism bug or you are not—some people are more vulnerable than others."

The intense and dynamic job of working long, demanding hours in constant connection with guests is stimulating, but it is also frustrating. Students reflected this contradiction in their descriptions of those who enjoy the work as "masochists":

"I am a kind of masochist.... Only masochists work in this field.... The dynamic nature and the guests bring enormous satisfaction, but it sucks out your strength, and those who do not love it cannot survive."

"A guest who screams his frustrations at you can be a very difficult and frustrating experience."

"Experiencing the ugly side of the tourist on a daily basis—shouting, verbal abuse, pushing—can surely wear one down...."

The descriptions indicate an ambivalent feeling stemming from the fact that the contrasting features of the tourism environment, the positive and negative, are two sides of the same coin. The metaphor of sickness (bug or masochism) reveals the perception that affinity to the industry is beyond one's control.

5. Discussion

As noted, Verhaeghe (2012) suggests that identity should also be understood in light of the socio-economic condition that also characterizes the work environments of the participants in this study. A market-based society promotes the values of individualism and competitiveness. However, as our findings show, not every task that the hospitality workplace requires is well-suited to an individualistic and competitive orientation on the part of employees. Although many aspects of hospitality transactions are what work theorists term skill-based (e.g., operating a computer reservation system), equally important are the less tangible interpersonal and affective aspects of the job (Crang, 1997; Lugosi, 2008; Veijola, 2010), which are oriented towards care-giving, welcoming, and cultivating a sense of connection with clients. In short, the abilities needed for this kind of work are those related to the human drive for merging and connection, rather than autonomy and separation. It is precisely these aspects of the job that some of our internship students found so compelling, leading them to experience a sense of "falling in love" with the hospitality industry, as articulated above. Care labor performed for others generated a sense of satisfaction at helping guests' "dreams come true." Further, the integration of workers' affective and value-driven selves into the employment role no doubt contributed to making possible the sense of "home" experienced by some interns, as well as the expectation that managers would support a culture of collectivity and conviviality among workers via group celebrations and the like.

Yet, there is a sense in which students recognized the illusory nature of these positive perceptions. The strengths necessary for good performance in a job based on communication, emotional labor, and experience creation—what Veijola and Jokinen (2008) call *hostessing*—are not those championed by the market-based regime Verhaeghe describes. As a work domain oriented towards performance and expression, tourism work can be thought of as part of the much-celebrated "creative economy," in which work tends to be discursively characterized as pleasurable for the employee (Nixon & Crewe, 2004). However, the reality is that creative work is ultimately audience-directed, which means that it must lean on hostessing skills to succeed. Combined with its emphasis on providing welcome and care, hospitality can then be characterized as an ideologically feminized occupational field (Hamington, 2010).

Bearing this in mind helps us to understand why some students seem to recognize that taking up a career in the hospitality industry would be an act of martyrdom. It also explains their tendency towards the metaphors of masochism and of an interest in hotels as being like a disease—something which infects a person despite any wish they might have to the contrary—such that their commitment to the industry is imagined as not being a product of rational choice. As long as they remain committed to a set of values and behaviors that serve them in a hospitality career path (e.g., care, service, other-orientation)—in other words, as long as they commit to developing an occupational identity grounded in these characteristics—they will never measure up to the market-based ideal of the competitive, self-promoting, quantitative-achievement-oriented ladder climber (Verhaeghe, 2012). Verhaeghe draws our attention to the etymology of the word respect—*re-spicere*, the act of looking back at—to lead us to consider the power the other's gaze holds over our imagination of a desired self (p. 12). In a market-based society, an occupational identity of looking after others simply does not come with high regard—the sad fate of ideologically and/or structurally feminized work in general (Veijola, 2010). This reality is all too readily driven home by the abuse hospitality workers frequently take from customers, which our participants often experienced first-hand (Crang, 1997; Hochschild, 1983).

6. Conclusions

To conclude, the metaphors used by the internship students in this study open a window into their experience in the hospitality industry. When viewed together with contemporary scholarship on identity, these metaphors can help us theorize about why, despite having made substantial investment in a tourism education, so many students end up deciding that a career in the hospitality industry is not for them. Indeed, some students may feel a sense of pride and accomplishment in learning to be flexible, to think on their feet, and to cope in new and stressful environments—and they no doubt achieve career and personal growth from the experience. However, based on the metaphors through which they describe the internship experience, it should not come as a surprise that so many leave it with complex and problematic feelings at best, towards committing to a career in the hospitality industry. A market-based cultural narrative, with its consequences for identity ideals, combined with the socio-structural situation of a workforce po-pulated by co-workers, and sometimes even supervisors, who are not amenable to professionalization, quite logically does not motivate educated young people to stake their livelihoods in the hospitality industry.

If the basic characteristics of hospitality work do not render it an easy path to occupational self-esteem in a market-based society, then perhaps a sense of respectability can be at least somewhat reclaimed by simply doing one's job well, and with pride, as one contributes as a small part in a larger, smooth-running operation. Here, however, the interns in this study faced the socio-structural challenge of finding themselves in an industry staffed largely by workers who are not interested in professionalization, or at least not yet. As noted, many hospitality employees in Eilat matriculated directly from their army service, and they view tourism work as a "time out" before making more serious career and life plans. In terms of Marcia's (1966) identity status model, these workers are likely in a state of diffusion, meaning that they have not yet committed to, nor are they (at least at the moment) actively exploring possibilities for identity. The student interns, however, are in the midst of an investment-heavy professional educational journey, a process more likely associated with Marcia's moratorium phase, in which people are actively exploring identity possibilities and purposefully attempting to move towards commitment. This explains the frustration expressed through some of the metaphors our participants offered, such as the unpleasant military-like environment necessary to maintain discipline among unmotivated workers, or the sense of being placed too quickly into situations of high responsibility, where they had to improvise and troubleshoot, due to incompetent managers hastily promoted from the lower ranks.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2019.100228.

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