



# HIGH MARKS SYMPOSIUM 2023

COMMEMORATIVE  
BOOKLET



# THE FEASIBILITY OF INTRODUCING A PROCESS IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT IN FOUR-STAR AND FIVE-STAR HOTELS IN MALTA

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## **Abstract**

This study focuses on the feasibility of introducing an independent process innovation department within four-star and five-star hotels in Malta. The concepts that contribute towards process innovation; such as Lean Six Sigma and Process innovation model, discuss the importance and awareness that it requires, together with exploring the local industry's knowledge and perception on Process innovation. This form of innovation is one of Hjalager's (2009b) five categories of innovation.

This study addresses the formidable question: Should hotels invest in a process innovation management department, to gain better competitive advantage within the industry? An analysis on the local hotels' organisation structure, influence on innovation behaviour and if Lean Six Sigma and Process Innovation models exist. This research evaluates if the proposed department benefits the organisation's overall operational and financial performance by enhancing the challenge or process.

The study explores the subject in detail through literature review and adopts a mixed methodology, both qualitative (through semi-structured interviews) and quantitative methods (through surveys) to allow a better understanding on the hospitality industry's perception on process innovation from both spectrums of hierarchy – the General managers and Heads of Departments within both four- star and five-star hotels.

This research discusses how process innovation can contribute to improve the competitive advantage of hotel organisations. The importance of having a healthy organisational culture and the crucial role management plays within this process, together with the need of effective human resource management practices and staff involvement. These are all pivotal to increase the empowerment and loyalty towards the company.

Findings through this research show that if the organisation has a solid structure of processes in place, it would be a matter of tweaking and adjusting as the process progresses, therefore focusing on incremental innovation. The findings discuss that it is within the manager´s responsibility to constantly think in an innovative manner. Another means of establishing process innovation within the organisation is through 'best practices', which appoints 'champions of innovation' in every department. The project leaders will be the experts within the team itself and are the lead source of thorough investigation in order for the project improvement to be implemented with the approval from the respective head of department.



# CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AMONG WOMEN IN MALTA: OPPORTUNITIES, MOTIVATIONS, EXPECTATIONS, AND COVID-19 PANDEMIC EFFECTS

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## Abstract

Continuing Professional Development refers to the procedure by which a person takes control of her/his own development and learning (Megginson & Whitaker, 2007), engaging in an ongoing process of action and reflection. It is an exciting and empowering process, which can motivate individuals to accomplish their ambitions. Furthermore, Continuing Professional Development reminds us that the onus for development lies with the individual rather than the employers/managers in the organisation (Megginson, & Whitaker, 2007). This research project aims to analyse the process of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the tourism and hospitality industry among women in Malta. Additionally, the purpose of this research is to focus on the existing opportunities for Continuing Professional Development in Malta, women's motivations and expectations, and the overall COVID-19 Pandemic effect on the sector. The main hypothesis statement is to assess whether a significant difference exists in satisfaction and expectations for work-life balance between women and men. Despite the importance of the topic and the various research that exists on the subject, secondary research specifically on women within the Maltese context is lacking. An explanatory mixed approach has been adopted for

this research study, starting with a quantitative online questionnaire, followed by qualitative focus groups to explain in further detail what was elicited through the online questionnaires. A non-probability sampling procedure was applied for the online questionnaire, resulting in 51% (N=53) female participants and 49% (N=51) male participants, totalling 104 valid responses. The fifty women participants for the focus groups were selected from amongst the questionnaire participants, using the first four largest groups (according to the course followed). Twenty-one showed their interest in participating. Ultimately, nineteen women participated in the three focus groups. The data for the online questionnaire was collected through Google Forms and analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics 28.0.0.0). The focus groups were conducted through Microsoft Teams and the content elicited was analysed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) by means of an online software called Delve. The Independent Samples T-Test confirmed that the null hypothesis for each question cannot be rejected, and therefore, the main null hypothesis was confirmed. The findings from the focus groups indicate that women have overall positive views about Continuing Professional Development however, they express preference for online lifelong learning as they can achieve a better work-life balance. Furthermore, participants feel that they are more empowered after receiving training and that progression can never be gender equal as they believe that the Maltese society is patriarchal. This study will supplement the existing body of knowledge on lifelong learning and work-life balance by investigating specific issues for women in Malta, as well as the effect of COVID19 on Continuing Professional Development. It will also provide three viable solutions that can be practically employed in the tourism and hospitality industry in Malta. The researcher will also identify areas that can be expanded upon with further studies, such as the effect of the patriarchal society on gender equality in career progression



# DEVELOPING A HISTORICAL LIBRARY'S IDENTITY THROUGH HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

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## Abstract

National libraries serve locals and visitors from all around the world. These organisations are solely responsible for preserving and safeguarding national book treasures and unpublished documents and manuscripts. Heritage interpretation's primary function is to assist tourists in developing a sense of place and identity. Cultural heritage interpretation refers to the strategies used to increase visitor understanding and perception of cultural assets through development, management, and, sometimes, planning. The primary purpose of this dissertation is to provide a study on how the National Library of Malta can function as a cultural centre that safeguards the identity of all that makes us who we are. The author researched ways from similar libraries abroad through the literature review to answer this question. Through the lens of social identity theory, the proposed study is empirical research on the usefulness of local historical libraries in supporting tourists in creating a sense of place and learning about Malta's past. The literature review will focus on the last decade (2012-2022) to demonstrate the underlying nature of the issue, current advancements, and any recommendations that should be adopted. Two semi-structured questionnaires were disseminated to obtain a more focused picture: one for Malta's tourist guides and one for Malta Libraries' management, who are also professional librarians, allowing for a more in-depth examination of the data. The comparisons offered an assessment of where the

National Library of Malta stands and what tourist guides expect against what is done as expressed by library professionals. A comprehensive picture of what must be done to restore this important historical library to its former splendour is also discussed. While tour guides frequently emphasise the difficulty of intersectoral collaboration, library management officials frequently emphasise their inability to communicate effectively, as they appear to be waiting for authorities to establish new ways to maximise and restructure the National Library of Malta. All the professionals questioned care about their clients' demands, which is a good sign for this business.



## REVISITING THE ITALIAN MT BOAT ATTACK ON MALTA'S GRAND HARBOUR ON THE 26<sup>TH</sup> OF JULY 1941

**Donald Pace** Higher National Diploma in Tourist Guiding  
(Tutor: Mr Martin Debattista)

### Abstract

The failed attack by Italian naval special forces using explosive motor torpedo boats and manned torpedoes on Malta's Grand Harbour on the 26th of July 1941 was one of the highlights of Malta's Second World War History and the most well-known attempt to attack the Maltese harbours from the sea during the war. This long essay sought to revisit the event and evaluate how the actions of the key participants contributed to the success of the defenders and the failure of the attack. The contribution of the well-planned defences, the role of the gunners, most of them Maltese, as well as the Italian attackers' strategy, were analysed. The sequence of events that led to the attack's failure was reviewed through a selection of publications and reports which narrated the story from both the perspective of the attackers and that of the defenders. As a basis for the research, interviews were carried out with eminent researchers and experts in the field. The author also carried out site inspections of the main defences involved in the event to understand the impact of the weaponry placed in these strategic locations around the Grand Harbour together with the complex system of observation and communication used to coordinate the defences. As a result, several interesting facts and conclusions have been brought to light, giving the account a new perspective. Based on these findings, a guided tour of the still-existing Grand Harbour defences has been designed. This tour offers participants a detailed account of what happened in different locations around the attacked areas from both the attackers' and defenders' perspectives. The possibility of further tour itineraries has also been evaluated to enhance the experience including a seaborne tour for those wishing to experience the perspective from the side of the attackers.



## **BUILDING THE *DGĦAJSA TAL-PASS* IN GRAND HARBOUR FROM EARLY TIMES TO THE PRESENT**

**Mariella Schembri** Higher National Diploma in Tourist Guiding  
(Tutor: Mr Michael Cassar)

### **Abstract**

It is natural that as inhabitants of small islands located in between two large continental mainlands, people on the Maltese islands are compelled to adapt themselves to a life with strong attachment to the sea, and have developed a number of skills in relation to the sea including boat building. They developed a number of different sea craft to address the many economical and social requirements, and one of the most notable is the dgħajsa tal-pass, which has been ferrying people across the harbour for centuries. The study aims to describe the evolution of the dgħajsa tal-pass, and its several uses across the years and looks at the close connection it has with the communities surrounding the Grand Harbour, particularly the Cottonera area, up till the present day. It is based on a review of literature, and qualitative research through narrative approach, which involved various visits to workshops of boatbuilders, boat trips and a visit to the Maritime Museum. In doing so the study reveals the general scarcity of documented material about the dgħajsa tal-pass and even less so on the boatbuilding artisanship, which should be considered as a living heritage, and its survival supported and strengthened without losing its authenticity.

# THE HIDDEN JEWISH HISTORY

**Leonid Segal** Higher National Diploma in Tourist Guiding  
(Tutor: Mr Vincent Zammit)

## Abstract

This study will identify and record Maltese Jewish history. My research will begin with Sicilian Jews arriving in 4-5 CE and end with Arab dominance in 870-1090. It will also cover the emergence of the Jewish Maltese community during Aragon's control (1283-1410), including Spain's expulsion of Jews, the knights' slavery of Jews in Malta, and British colonial immigration of Jews. Malta's Jewish community will also be examined.

Data collection: Qualitative. Archival material and a semi-structured interview with the local rabbi, who leads the Jewish community, will collect data.

Outcome: The material will be used in a tour for Hebrew-speaking tourists from Israel and English-speaking Jews largely from the US and UK. The full/half-day tour will visit St. Paul's catacombs, Mdina's Jewish silk market, the Jewish cemetery, and any other Jewish sites I find throughout my investigation.



## MEDICINAL HERBS AND PLANTS OF 17<sup>TH</sup> AND 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY MALTA

**Francesca Vincenti** Higher National Diploma in Tourist Guiding  
(Tutor: Mr David Pace)

### Abstract

The area of research aims to identify herbal or plant medicinal formulas that were prepared and used in the Maltese islands during the 17th and 18th centuries and to identify the healing remedies used then which may still be in use today. In the past, the Santo Spirito hospital in Rabat, Santa Scolastica in Birgu, the Sacra Infermeria in Valletta and Argotti Gardens in Floriana, which was a botanical garden used by the Hospitaller Knights of St John to grow medicinal plants, were notable sites in this respect. There are countless medicinal plants and herbs that grow in the Maltese Islands and stories of such healing herbs have already featured in documents, thanks to previous research done by other academics. The research will adopt a qualitative and document-based research approach to data collection. Data will be collected using academic publications and papers, while secondary data shall be retrieved from the archives of the Inquisition, the National Library and the archives of Santo Spirito hospital. Therefore, a bibliographic method for analysis shall be the main method used. The essay will give an overview of the herbal medicines administered during the period. Emphasis will be placed on the type of natural plants that were administered, which may still be administered today. The data shall be supplemented by means of a semi-structured interview with a physician or other expert holding an academic or research background in the field of medicine or herbal therapies. The information gathered shall be useful to determine whether enough material exists to support an alternative medicine tour that would include some of the historical landmarks highlighted in the research. The findings of this essay may further contribute toward the setup of botanical gardens and future nature reserves, in line with the Regulations on the Protection of Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats instituted by the Authorities in Malta



## MEANINGFUL JOURNEYS TO ST PAUL'S GROTTO: THE VISITORS' EXPERIENCE C. 1650 - C. 1750.

**John Paul Chircop** Higher National Diploma in Tourist Guiding  
(Tutor: Dr Christine Jones)

### **Abstract**

The Grotto of St Paul in Rabat has enjoyed an important position as an internationally renowned shrine for Christians for several hundred years. It attracted visitors from all over Europe, reaching a climax in the 17th century, through the efforts of the Order of St John. These visitors made the journey for a broad continuum of reasons, reflecting their interests, professions and beliefs, and so they experienced the grotto very differently. This research sought to analyse travel accounts from the period c.1650-c.1750 and shed light on the various motivations of visitors to the Grotto, by structuring them into three distinct groups: devotees, artists and tourists. A complex, pluralistic reality was revealed, demonstrating overlapping motivations and interests, very much like those of 21st century visitors to the Grotto. The outcome of the research helped design a themed tour of Rabat placing these fascinating travellers from early modern Europe into the spotlight.



## A BRIEF HISTORY OF DOORKNOBS AND DOOR KNOCKERS IN MALTA

**Sandra Friggieri** Higher National Diploma in Tourist Guiding  
(Tutor: Ms Graziella Bencini)

### Abstract

This study gathers information on doorknobs and door knockers in Malta. They are part of our everyday art culture and have a story to tell, shedding more light on the residents, traditions, and history of our unique gem cities. Other information on how doorknobs and door knockers originate and develop over time, what materials are used, whether made locally or imported and how these relate to the door and the portal is also included. Data is gathered mainly by means of semi-structured interviews with two different artisans, a bronzesmith and a blacksmith, thus focusing on bronze and wrought iron. However, secondary interviews with other persons knowledgeable in this field are also carried out. This data is supplemented with research from books, academic journals, articles, and archives. For this research, illustrative material is collected. As a result, it is observed that the form-making and decorating of door knockers in bronze is still done the traditional way, using the Lost Wax Technique, while with wrought iron, metal is hammered using the same tools. Door knockers are still produced in both materials to embellish different buildings. However, our strategic position resulted in door knockers being influenced by various cultures. The need for more information about their age and manufacturers was due to artisans needing to apply their stamp on the finished product. Today a sustainable approach is being met with buying of local recycled metal. In addition, contemporary designs are being introduced. Both artisans emphasised that this could be a dying craft if nothing is done. Youngsters show an interest in these trades; however, today this is not a thriving business which can provide sufficient income to support today's lifestyles



# THE APPEAL OF DARK TOURISM IN MALTA

**Mario Cacciottolo** Higher National Diploma in Tourist Guiding  
(Tutor: Mr James Sultana)

## Abstract

This research explores the appeal of dark tourism and identifies factors behind why tourists may want to visit 'dark' sites and hear stories relating to crime, sex, murder and tragedies. Also, the study defines local episodes of dark history and identifies sites within the Maltese islands that can support dark tourism. The study was conducted through qualitative research and the data was collected by examining books and journals. Further research was gathered by three interviews with people associated with various aspects of dark tourism in Malta. The results of the study address the researcher's belief that there is ample opportunity for specific types of dark tourism tours around Malta of various kinds, and identify which would engage the most interest, and for which reasons. The study suggests there is ample opportunity to hold tours relating to the criminal and tragic history of individuals within the Maltese islands, which will serve not only to entertain the public but to further educate them on the crimes and misdemeanours from the nation's past. This research therefore concludes that there is significant potential for Malta to market itself as a dark tourism destination and cater for people interested in darker episodes of history.



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