

Cultivating a Thriving Workforce in Hospitality Organisations - An Empirical Study of Its Antecedents and Consequences

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This paper focuses on cultivating employees' experience of thriving at work (TAW) within the context of hospitality organisations. Specifically, it conceptualises and empirically tests a selection of antecedents to employees' TAW, as well as its consequences.

Methodology/Approach: The study gathered data from 346 employees working in the hospitality industry. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was utilised with SmartPLS 4 to examine and validate the proposed conceptual framework.

Findings: Leadership autonomy support, working as a team, and employee engagement have positive impacts on cultivating employees' TAW. TAW has positive consequences on service quality and organisational attractiveness. Additionally, both work as a team, and employee engagement was found to mediate the relationship between leadership autonomy support and TAW.

Research Limitation/Implication: The study is limited to exploring only a selection of antecedents and consequences of TAW. However, the paper contributes theoretically to the field of hospitality research by enhancing our understanding and insights into the concept of TAW, as well as having several practical implications for managers of hospitality organisations.

Originality/Value of paper: The study contributes to a relatively new research domain within positive psychology, focusing on employees' TAW.

Category: Research paper

Keywords: thriving at work; leadership; employee engagement; service quality; organisational attractiveness.

Research Areas: Quality Management; Strategic Quality Management

1 INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly competitive and innovative workplace like the hospitality industry, employees often experience stress, emotional exhaustion, and other adverse outcomes due to low wages, heavy workloads, and the emotional demands of their jobs. Thus, leaders play a crucial role in encouraging and supporting employees to perform effectively at the workplace (Wu & Chen, 2019, p. 123). The literature focusing on services has largely emphasised the fundamental role of employees in service organisations, such as the hospitality industry, as their core activity is interacting with the organisation's customers. As frontline employees are “*the service, the organisation, the brand and the marketers. in the eyes of the customers*”, they should be in the centre of managerial tasks (Slåtten, Svensson & Sværi, 2011, p.270) to achieve effective and high-quality service (Wu & Chen, 2019).

Recently, literature has suggested that managers in organisations should proactively foster an environment that promotes employees' thriving in the workplace. Thriving at work is understood as “*a psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and a sense of learning at work*” (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein & Grant, 2005, p.538). Prior empirical research in the field of business management has revealed several favourable factors that contribute to thriving at work. These factors include organisational support (Abid, Zahra & Ahmed, 2015), proactive personality (Jiang, 2017), servant leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2018), unit contextual features and resources (Spreitzer et al., 2005), as well as fairness perception and trust (Abid, Contreras, Ahmed & Qazi, 2019).

In addition, previous studies have found positive associations with various outcomes, such as career adaptability (Jiang, 2017), turnover intention (Chang, Busser & Liu, 2020), positive health (Walumbwa et al., 2018), job satisfaction (Zhou, Milia, Jiang & Jiang, 2020), task performance (Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson & Garnett, 2012) and even life satisfaction (Zhai, Wang & Weadon, 2020). Therefore, organisations have been quick to adopt practices that promote employees' thriving. An example of this is the Thrive@Hilton programme, which helped Hilton rise to the top of Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For. This confirms that managers can create a general climate that promotes thriving and customising conditions for individual employees (Portah et al., 2022).

In broader psychological literature, thriving is known as a dynamic process of adapting to physical, psychological, or social adversity (Kleine, Rudolph & Zacher, 2019). However, as mentioned, researchers within the organisational behaviour and management domain, thriving at work is regarded as “*a psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and a sense of learning at work*” (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p.538). Employees who thrive at work exhibit personal growth by feeling energized and alive (vitality) and continuously acquire and apply knowledge (learning) (Kleine et al., 2019).

There is limited understanding of the role of thriving in the workplace, as highlighted by Paterson, Luthans, & Jeung (2014, p. 443), who state that thriving has been understudied. In this study, we aim to address this gap by focusing on both the antecedents and consequences. As thriving at work is socially embedded, we consider three levels as relevant. Specifically, the individual level will be reflected in employee engagement. The team level will be reflected in work as a team. Also, the leadership level will be reflected in leadership autonomy support. These three will be studied individually and in combination, in relation to thriving at work. Additionally, the process through which thriving at work leads to these outcomes (e.g. positive health) is also understudied (Walumbwa, Muchiri, Misati, Wu & Meiliani, 2018). We therefore seek to explore the various effects of thriving at work to gain a deeper understanding of the process. Specifically, service quality and organisational attractiveness is to be examined.

This article therefore responds to the need for research on the relationship between thriving and its antecedents and outcomes at leadership, team, and individual levels, as researchers have reported beneficial effects of thriving at both the collective and individual levels (Walumbwa et al., 2018; Kleine et al., 2019). This article focuses on the individual level of thriving at work and examines the antecedents and effects to better understand how and why one should cultivate employees' experience of thriving at work.

Subsequently, the current study both responds to a neglected area in hospitality research and makes an overall contribution to the focus on thriving at work. While this study also makes a theoretical contribution, it is also practical, since it may advance managers' understanding in hospitality organisations of what drives thriving at work from the employee's perspective.

Based on existing theory and the need for further research, the conceptual framework in Figure 1 was created. There are three factors to be tested as antecedents, and two factors to be tested as consequences, for cultivating employees' experience of thriving at work. To study factors on three levels (leadership, team, individual), the following three antecedents were chosen: (i) leadership autonomy support, (ii) work as a team, and (iii) employee engagement. In addition, the following two consequences, (i) service quality and (ii) organisational attractiveness, were included in gaining a better understanding of the process through which thriving leads to such outcomes. The conceptual model for this study is visualised in Figure 1.

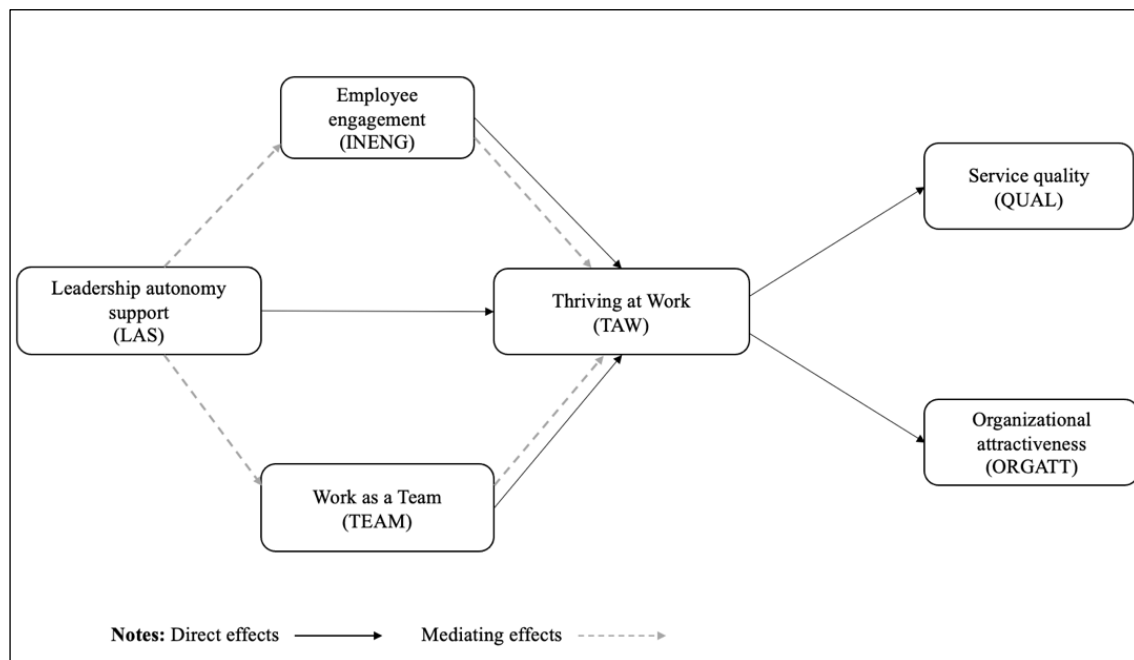


Figure 1 – The conceptual framework.

Following Figure 1, the next section is organised according to the need for further research on the relationship between thriving at work (TAW) and its antecedents and consequences at the leadership, team, and individual level (Kleine et al., 2019, p. 992). Firstly, it elaborates on the central concept of thriving at work (TAW), before continuing to the three antecedents: (i) leadership autonomy support, (ii) work as a team, and (iii) employee engagement. Secondly, it elaborates on the two consequences of the study: (i) service quality and (ii) organisational attractiveness. Finally, the section ends with a summary of the study's hypotheses.

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES

The concept of thriving at work (TAW)

As presented in Figure 1, the primary focus of this study is thriving at work. Thriving at work is defined by Spreitzer et al. as “the psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and a sense of learning at work” (2005, p.538). This vitality and learning are recognised in the literature as rooted in the psychological process of personal growth (Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson, & Garnett, 2012). Vitality is defined as the positive feeling of having energy available, reflecting feelings of aliveness. Learning is defined as the sense that one is acquiring and can apply knowledge and skills (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p.538). The hedonic perspective (subjective health) is illustrated through vitality, where individuals seek out pleasurable experiences. In contrast, the eudemonic perspective (personal growth) is characterised by individuals striving to realize their full potential as human beings. This forms an image of employees experiencing thriving at work.

For employees to thrive, researchers have found several individual characteristics (e.g. psychological capital, core-self-evaluation, proactive personality, perceived stress, and work engagement) as influencing antecedents, as well as relational characteristics (e.g. heedful relating, supportive coworker behaviour, empowering leadership, transformational leadership, perceived organisational support and trust) (Kleine et al., 2019).

The effects of whether employees experience thriving at work are shown in health-related outcomes (e.g., subjective health, burnout), job attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, commitment, positive attitudes toward self-development, turnover intentions), and performance-related outcomes (e.g., task performance, organisational citizenship behaviour, creative performance) (Kleine et al., 2019).

Concerning the study's central concept of thriving at work, the following factors, as illustrated in Figure 1, were selected for testing.

Antecedents of thriving at work (TAW)

In this study, the following three antecedents (i) leadership autonomy support, (ii) work as a team, and (iii) employee engagement are proposed as essential factors in how one should cultivate employees' thriving at work.

Leadership autonomy support (LAS)

Concerning the leadership level as shown in Figure 1, the factor leadership autonomy support is presented. Leadership autonomy support (LAS) is defined as the employee's perception of the quality of their interpersonal relationship with their leader, specifically how they stimulate, motivate, and encourage them to work autonomously (Slåtten, Mutonyi, & Lien, 2020, p. 6). Such leaders contribute to safe work environments in which employees feel encouraged to take risks and learn from their experiences (Kahn, 1990). Employees who are driven by autonomous motivation, according to literature, behave with a complete sense of volition and choice (Slåtten et al., 2020). Employees who experience individualised support generally trust their leaders more, are more tolerant, more satisfied, more productive, more altruistic, more conscientious, more courteous, experience greater role clarity and less role conflict, and exhibit more civic virtue (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996).

LAS is built upon the self-determination theory (SDT), which means that employees who are motivated to be autonomous behave with a complete sense of volition and choice (Slåtten et al., 2020, p.6). It goes to show how leaders are essential, as they can influence employees' motivation, increase interest and lead them to focus on their performance by providing a meaningful rationale for doing the task, emphasise choice and acknowledge employees' feelings and perspective (Gillet, Gagné, Sauvagère & Fouquereau, 2013, p.451).

As mentioned in the introduction, hospitality employees are often affected by stress, emotional exhaustion, and other adverse outcomes. Literature on social

learning theory suggests that leaders can play a crucial role in preventing these outcomes, as human behaviours are influenced by individuals' cognitive, behavioural, and environmental factors, as well as interactions between these factors (Wu & Chen, 2019). It is therefore reasonable to believe that there is an exchange of norms and reciprocity between the employees and the organisation, and that autonomously supportive leaders engage employees and influence their work performance. Based on this, the following hypothesis is made:

H1. LAS is positively related to TAW.

Work as a team (TEAM)

In relation to exploring antecedents to thriving at work on multiple levels, as shown in Figure 1, working as a team is included as a factor. Working in teams is predicted to create a context for thriving at work, but the influence on an employee's individual experience of thriving at work can vary (Porath et al., 2022). In this context, working as a team is defined based on Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Bommer (1996) as teams of colleagues who set expectations for performance, appropriate behaviour, and the vision they perceive of their organisation.

In a work context, employees often work with other people, more specifically, colleagues. Working in teams is based on group cohesiveness, which moderates the impact of individualized support on employee satisfaction. Group members may set expectations for performance and appropriate behaviour, and possibly even have a different vision from that of the leader. The extent to which this group follows the leader may depend on the degree to which the leader controls essential organisational rewards (e.g., income, workload, responsibilities). Group cohesiveness is found to be positively related to employees' general satisfaction, commitment, trust, sportsmanship, and courtesy, and negatively related to employees' perceptions of role conflict. Literature shows that cohesive groups improve employees' attitudes, role perceptions, and citizenship behaviours (Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Bommer, 1996).

When work has high social intensity, researchers have found that colleagues have an impact on employees (Tews, Michel, & Ellingson, 2013). In the context of the hospitality industry, a significant portion of the work involves contact with individuals who either require assistance, a product, or a service. In addition, colleagues often share similar experiences at work, which can lead to them functioning as each other's source of support (Sloan, 2012). Supportive coworker behaviour refers to the care and consideration that individuals receive from other organisational members (Mossholder, Settoon, & Henagan, 2005). As mentioned, certain relational characteristics have been shown to promote thriving at work, and these relationships are also found to help individuals capitalise on opportunities for personal growth and development (Colbert, Bono, & Purvanova, 2016). Based on this, the following two hypotheses are made:

H2 a) TEAM is positively related to TAW.

H2 b) TEAM mediates the relationship between LAS and TAW.

Employee engagement (INENG)

In relation to the individual level of antecedents to thriving at work, as shown in Figure 1, employee engagement is a key focus of this research. Employee engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling state of mind related to work, characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Langelaan, Bakker, van Doornen, & Schaufeli, 2006, p. 522). Engaged employees experience. Employees who feel (i) *vigour* generally have high levels of energy while working, a willingness to exert effort in their work, and persistence in the face of difficulties. Employees who are (ii) *dedicated* feel a sense of enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Moreover, employees who are engaged experience (iii) *absorption*, where they're happily engrossed in their work, time passes quickly, and they may have difficulties detaching from their work. The latter can be compared to the state of flow, and is a consequence of employee engagement, whilst vigour and dedication are core dimensions of work engagement (Langelaan et al., 2006). In contrast to engagement, burnout is characterised by exhaustion, cynicism and reduced professional efficacy. Employees who experience burnout often feel mentally drained, develop a negative attitude towards their work, and lose confidence in meeting the job requirements (Langelaan et al., 2006).

Employee engagement involves having a sense of energetic and affective connection with one's work (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008). Research shows that employees who are engaged in their work will have better work performance, along with a better work-life. Work engagement and thriving at work are states that share many similarities, as both are defined as work-related, positive, and affective-motivational states (Kleine, Rudolph, & Zacher, 2019).

Literature also indicates that employees whose leaders empower them tend to display greater trust in leadership, along with higher motivation and work engagement. Obstacles to such empowerment include leaders who operate within a hierarchical structure, fear retaliation, and fail to prioritise employee engagement (Tsaur, Hsu, & Lin, 2019). In other words, a contrast to leadership autonomy support. In the hospitality industry, the literature indicates that empowerment has a positive impact on employees' work-related outcomes. It is therefore reasonable to believe that the level of support by one's supervisors can influence employees' work engagement and thereby the following two hypotheses are made:

H3 a) INENG is positively related to TAW.

H3 b) INENG mediates the relationship between LAS and TAW.

Consequences of thriving at work (TAW)

In this study, service quality and organisational attractiveness are proposed as essential factors in why one should cultivate employees' thriving at work.

Service quality (QUAL)

Organisations rely on the quality of their employees' work in their pursuit of success. The quality of the service executed can be perceived from both a leadership perspective and an individual's working perspective. In this research, service quality refers to the personal evaluation that employees make of their service delivery to customers (Slåtten, Svensson, & Sværi, 2011). As stated earlier, work in the hospitality industry often involves a high degree of interaction with customers, and in these situations, employees can read signals to indicate their success. The link between an employee's perception of their service quality and the reported perception from customers can influence whether the employee considers themselves qualified for the job (Slåtten et al., 2011). The consequences of service quality are shown to be job satisfaction, which in turn strengthens the delivery of high-value service and leads to customer satisfaction. This is beneficial for organisations as it leads to customer loyalty, which in turn produces profit and growth (Slåtten, 2008). In other words, customer satisfaction is closely related to employees' job satisfaction, which highlights the importance of perceived service quality. According to the literature, job satisfaction is a predictor of service quality (Slåtten, 2008), and it is therefore reasonable to believe the following hypothesis:

H4. TAW is positively related to QUAL.

Organisational attractiveness (ORGATT)

The organisational attractiveness depends on the organisation's image, which can include attributes (e.g., economic, relational, professional) that are tangible or intangible, can be symbolised in a trademark, and can be managed to create value and influence. This concept is closely related to psychological contract where individuals' beliefs regarding terms and conditions of the exchange between the individual and his or her organisation (Trybou, Gemmel, van Vaerenbergh & Annemans, 2014, p.2) In this study, the concept of organisational attractiveness (ORGATT) centres on whether people perceive the hospitality organisation to be a great place to work. Specifically, ORGATT relates to the overall attitude of current employees regarding whether their organisation is an attractive employer (Mutonyi, Slåtten, Lien, & Gonzáles-Pinero, 2022, p. 5).

Few empirical studies have examined this issue, and most have focused on potential applicants' impressions of organisations as employers during the recruitment process, rather than on individuals already working at the organisation (Trybou, Gemmel, van Vaerenbergh, & Annemans, 2014). This study, therefore, seeks to increase insight into the factors driving organisational attractiveness for people working in the organisation:

H5. TAW is positively related to ORGATT.

Figure 2 provides a summary of the conceptual framework and the hypotheses proposed in this study.

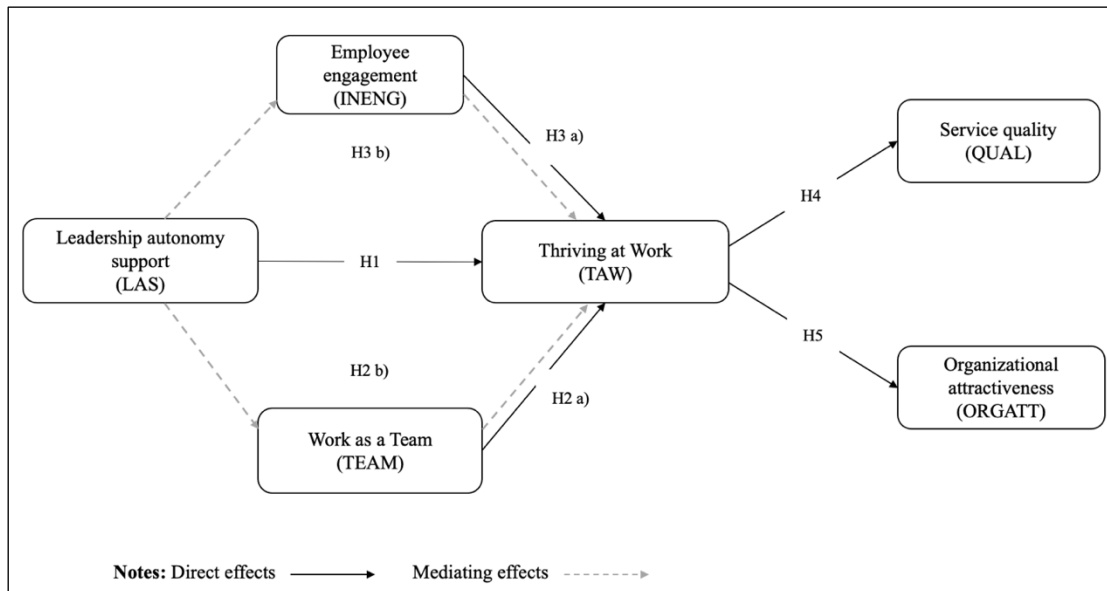


Figure 2 – Summary of the study's hypotheses

3 METHODOLOGY

This paper aimed to understand how and why one should cultivate employee thriving at work. The relationship between the following three antecedents (i) LAS, (ii) TEAM, (iii) INENG, and TAW was tested as factors explaining how to cultivate employee thriving at work. The relationship between TAW and the following two consequences (i) QUAL and (ii) ORGATT was tested as factors explaining why one should cultivate employees' thriving at work.

A quantitative method was employed for data collection, utilising a standardised digital questionnaire with items based on literature and set answers that respondents could use to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the measurement. This method was chosen to examine possible similarities and variations in their responses. Additionally, this approach enabled the collection of data from as many individuals as possible within a limited timeframe, allowing for generalisations of the results to the selected population (Johannessen, 2016).

Sample and data collection

In this study, the research question aimed to test the hospitality industry. In February 2021, data were gathered as part of a larger research project on employees working in the hospitality industry in Norway. A hospitality employee

is defined as any individual working in the industry at all levels within an organisation, as shown in Table 1.

The questionnaire was shared digitally through online forums for people working in the hospitality industry, as well as by contacting businesses that could distribute the questionnaire to all their employees online. The general goal was approximately 400 respondents. A total of 346 respondents participated, resulting in a response rate of approximately 80%.

As shown in Table 1, 71% of the respondents were female, and the remaining 29% were male. The average age of birth was 1982, with a significant spread from the youngest to the oldest participants. The largest proportion of respondents worked in hotels and accommodation (34.7%), followed by the second-largest group, which worked in restaurants and cafés (18.8%). The majority of respondents (72.2%) worked full-time jobs, while some worked part-time jobs (18.8%). In one of the questions, respondents were asked to evaluate the degree to which they had high contact with customers, and 73.7% of the respondents reported having a high degree of customer contact.

Table 1 – Demographics

What	Specifics	Frequency	%	Average
Age		346	100%	1982 (year)
Gender				
	Female	246	71%	
	Male	100	29%	
Education				
	High School	76	21%	
	Apprenticeship	62	17.9%	
	Bachelor/Master	179	51.7%	
	Other	29	8.3%	
Sector in hospitality				
	Hotel/Accommodation	120	34.7%	
	Restaurant/Café	65	18.8%	
	Activity-based	32	9.2%	
	Museum/Attraction	7	2.0%	
	Tourist info/Travel agency	21	6.0%	
	Transport	9	2.6%	
	Other	92	26.6%	
Work position				
	Full time	250	72.2%	
	Part time	65	18.8%	

What	Specifics	Frequency	%	Average
	Temporary	17	4.9%	
	Other	14	4.0%	
Travel time to work				
	Less than 30 minutes	286	82.6%	
	Between 31 – 60 minutes	47	13.6%	
	Between 1 – 3 hours	10	2.9%	
	More than 3 hours	3	0.87%	
Time as an employee				
	Less than 1 year	47	13.6%	
	Between 1 – 5 years	157	45.3%	
	Between 6 – 10 years	55	15.9%	
	11+ years	87	21.1%	
Degree of customer contact				
	Low	28	8.09%	
	Medium	63	18.2%	
	High	256	73.7%	

This study used a platform called Nettskjema (www.nettskjema.no) for data collection. The participants were asked to consent to voluntary and anonymous participation. After several pretests and English-Norwegian back-translations had been completed, the questionnaire was distributed via a link sent to managers in the hospitality industry, who then distributed it to their employees. The link was also shared in forums for individuals working in the hospitality industry. With the use of the Nettskjema platform, the collected data were imported into SmartPLS 4 software for analysis.

This study was submitted to and approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) under project No. 694704, in compliance with the research ethics guidelines set by the NSD. As mentioned, participants were asked to consent to voluntary participation before the survey began. Nettskjema offers autonomous deletion of IP addresses, allowing for complete anonymity.

Instruments

When testing TAW, items from both learning and vitality were used, whereas “I find myself learning something new often” and “I feel that my work gives me energy mentally” (Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson, Garnett, 2012). On testing LAS, some of the following items were “my leader gives me authority over issues within my

area", "my leader listens to me", and "my leader encourages me to take initiative" (Slåtten, Mutonyi & Lien, 2020). TEAM was tested through items as "the organisation encourages employees to be team players" (Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Bommer, 1996). To test INENG, respondents had to evaluate items as "the job gives me energy" and "I view my job as being meaningful" (Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2011). As for QUAL, items such as "my service is good" (Slåtten, 2008) were tested. For ORGATT, "this organisation is an attractive employer" (Trybou, Gemmel, van Vaerenbergh, & Annemans, 2014), among others, was also tested. See the rest of the items, along with the results, in Table 2.

Results

Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed to test the conceptual model, utilising the software SmartPLS 4. The first step in evaluating the PLS-SEM results involved examining the measurement model, and the second step was to evaluate the structural model. Based on the PLS-SEM results, mediator effects were also estimated and analysed. To test the mediator effect, the bootstrapping test of Zhao et al. (2010) was used to assess whether the direct and indirect effects were statistically significant. The combination of these two tests determined the degree of the mediator effect. The rules by Hair et al. (2017) were followed to ensure the quality of the measurement and structural model results.

Measurement model analysis

As shown in Table 2, the convergent validity, internal consistency reliability, and discriminant validity were examined following Hair et al. (2017). First, convergent validity refers to the extent to which item scores correlate positively with those of alternative items measuring the same construct, which was evaluated based on the loadings of the items and the average variance extracted (AVE). Second, the internal consistency reliability was assessed through the intercorrelations of the observed item scores within a construct, as well as with composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. Third, discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a construct is distinct from other constructs and is assessed in this study using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations between constructs. The HTMT reveals whether the HTMT value is significantly different from 1, or more precisely, whether the 95% confidence interval of the HTMT statistic does not include the value of 1.

As shown in Table 2, following Hair et al. (2017), the criteria have been met. All constructs had CR value of more than 0.7, verifying the internal consistency of all the observation variables that were used to measure the latent variables. All standardised loadings are above 0.7. The AVE values are above 0.50. The combination of DG rho and Cronbach's alpha is above 0.7. This is done to ensure that the measurement model is both reliable and valid.

Table 2 – Results of the measurement model analysis

Variable	Indicator	Standardised loadings	DG rho_a	AVE	α
INENG	I view my job as being meaningful	0.84	0.92	0.76	0.92
	I like to work intensely	0.87			
	I often become absorbed in the job I am doing	0.92			
	The job gives me energy	0.81			
	I persevere when I encounter challenges	0.89			
LAS	My leader gives me authority over issues within my area	0.82	0.94	0.79	0.93
		0.89			
	My leader listens to me	0.89			
	My leader encourages me to take initiative	0.92			
	My leader is concerned that my work is goal-oriented	0.92			
TEAM	My leader instills motivation		0.86	0.78	0.85
	The organisation develops a team attitude and spirit among the employees	0.89			
		0.90			
	The organisation encourages employees to be “team players.”	0.85			
TAW	The organisation's employees work together for the same goal		0.94	0.73	0.93
	I am mostly looking forward to each new day at work				
	I feel that my work gives me energy physically	0.87			
	I see myself continually improving	0.81			
	I find myself learning something new often	0.87			
	I feel meaningful at work	0.85			
	I feel that my work gives me energy mentally	0.84			
	I continue to learn more which improves my work	0.86			
QUAL		0.86	0.86	0.77	0.85
	My service is good	0.85			
	I provide a service of high quality	0.90			
ORGATT	My overall service is excellent	0.88	0.93	0.89	0.93
	This organisation is an attractive employer	0.93			
	This organisation is a good place to work	0.94			
	This organisation I would recommend to my friends	0.95			

Note: DG rho_a = Dillion-Goldstein Rho, AVE = Average variance extracted, α = Cronbach alfa

Structural model analysis

The structural model shows both direct and mediating effects, and the direct-path relationships will be presented first. In addition, the structure of the model will be followed and therefore the results from the three antecedents (i) LAS, (ii) TEAM, (iii) INENG (the how's) are presented before the results from the two consequences (i) QUAL and (ii) ORGATT (the why's). Firstly, all standardised direct-path coefficients were statistically significant at the 1% significance level. Amongst the three antecedents, the direct-path coefficient relationship between INENG and TAW stands out as the highest ($\beta = 0.65$), followed by LAS and TAW ($\beta = 0.29$), and then TEAM and TAW (0.08). Showing that INENG is a highly positive factor in relation to TAW, along with both LAS and TEAM, although with a weaker effect. By this, the following hypothesis H1, H2 and H3 was supported.

Out of the two consequences, the direct-path coefficient relationship between TAW and ORGATT was high ($\beta = 0.62$), while the relationship between TAW and QUAL was weaker ($\beta = 0.17$), yet still positive. By this, the following hypotheses, H4 and H5, were supported. As shown in Figure 3, the results of the hypothesised relationships, as suggested in Figure 2, all received support.

When analysing the results of the structural model, the in-sample predictive power (R^2) was examined, and the value was significantly high for TAW (0.80). Showing that INENG, LAS, and TEAM together have a predictive power of 80% for TAW. Moreover, the results show that TAW has a predictive power of above 60% on ORGATT (0.62). The predictive power between TAW and QUAL is weaker, but still in relation (0.17). The R^2 values that are acceptable depend on the context, and even the result of 0.10 can, in some cases, still be considered satisfactory.

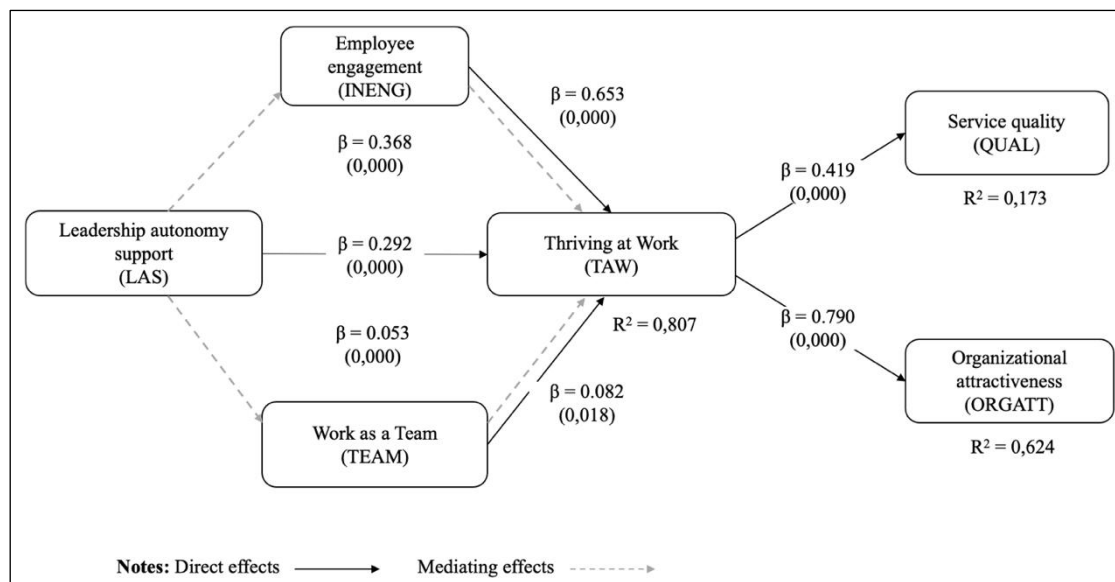


Figure 3 – Results of the structural model analysis

Mediation analysis

In addition to the direct effects, this study also examined possible mediating effects between the antecedents and their relationship to TAW. As presented in Table 3, the test shows complementary mediating effects in the relationship between LAS and TAW, whereas both TEAM and INENG operate as mediators in the relationship.

Table 3 – Test of mediator effects

Hypothesis	Effect	Mediator	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Mediator effect
H2 b	LAS – TAW	TEAM	0.292	0.053	Complementary
H3 b	LAS – TAW	INENG	0.292	0.368	Complementary

Note: TAW Thriving at work, LAS Leadership autonomy support, TEAM Work as a team, INENG employee engagement.

TEAM has a significant indirect effect, $\beta = 0.05$, on the relationship between LAS and TAW, which supports Hypothesis 2(b). INENG also has a significant indirect effect, $\beta = 0.36$, in the relationship between LAS and TAW, which supports Hypothesis 3(b). This confirms that not only can TAW be researched on multiple levels, but also multiple levels of relations. A summary of the hypotheses guiding this study, along with their support, is presented in Table 4.

Table 4 – Results of the hypotheses leading this study

Hypothesise relationships		Supported
H1	LAS is positively related to TAW.	Yes
H2 a)	TEAM is positively related to TAW.	Yes
H2 b)	TEAM mediates the relationship between LAS and TAW.	Yes
H3 a)	INENG is positively related to TAW.	Yes
H3 b)	INENG mediates the relationship between LAS and TAW.	Yes
H4	TAW is positively related to QUAL.	Yes
H5	TAW is positively related to ORGATT.	Yes

Note: TAW Thriving at work, LAS Leadership autonomy support, TEAM Work as a team, INENG employee engagement, QUAL Service quality,

4 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study, in line with the conceptual model presented in Figure 3, was to examine the role of employees' thriving at work in the hospitality industry. Moreover, it is essential to understand how and why one should cultivate employees' experience of thriving at work in the context of the hospitality industry. More precisely, this study explored the three antecedents LAS, TEAM, and

INENG, the two effects QUAL and ORGATT, and the mediating role of TEAM and INENG.

This study helps address the knowledge gap in understanding thriving at work, as noted by Paterson et al. (2014). This study also responds to the call for more research on thriving at multiple levels (Kleine et al., 2019) and in the context of hospitality (Wu & Chen, 2019). Proposing a multilevel model with both antecedents and consequences. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is yet to be done in hospitality research.

The results, as shown in Figure 3, indicate that the study's three antecedents account for a substantial 80% of TAW variance ($R^2 = 0.80$). This confirms the relevance emphasised by Kleine et al. (2019) through the examination of three levels: leadership, team, and individual. It also supports the notion that TAW is socially embedded (Spreitzer et al., 2005).

Among the three predictors, INENG emerges as the most significant, with a direct effect of $\beta = 0.653$. This underscores the importance of assigning tasks to employees in the hospitality industry that align with their interests and motivations, as it leads to INENG and subsequently has a significant positive effect on TAW.

The study also reveals that leadership has a substantial positive effect, with $\beta = 0.292$. This finding aligns with social learning theory (Wu & Chen, 2019) and highlights the significance of organisations hiring individuals with qualities that qualify them as autonomously supportive leaders, as it fosters employees' TAW.

The third and final predictor, TEAM, exhibits a weaker influence on TAW, with a small effect of $\beta = 0.082$. Nonetheless, this result sheds light on how employees operate in the hospitality industry. It is possible that many employees in the hospitality sector may not work closely with colleagues for extended periods, depending on the season, and therefore, colleagues may have a less significant impact on their TAW than in other sectors (e.g., healthcare). Additionally, it is conceivable that the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected responses, with employees potentially working more independently during the survey period.

Another interesting finding, as shown in Table 3, is that both INENG and TEAM serve as positive mediators in the relationship between LAS and TAW. In line with social learning theory, this suggests that leaders in such cases serve as role models for employees, and their behaviour influences both TEAM and INENG, both individually and collectively, impacting employees' TAW in the hospitality industry.

Thus, the study's predictors LAS, TEAM, and INENG provide a robust explanation of *how* organisations can cultivate employees' experience of TAW ($R^2 = 80\%$).

Regarding *why* organisations should cultivate employees' TAW, this study demonstrates that it has a significant positive influence on employees' perception of the ORGATT. Employees who experience TAW are likely to view the organisation as appealing, a great place to work, and a place they would

recommend to others (Mutonyi et al., 2022). This, in turn, enhances the psychological contract (Trybou et al., 2014), reduces burnout, and diminishes turnover intentions.

The study also reveals that employees who experience TAW deliver better QUAL, thereby enhancing the organisation's overall work performance (Slåtten, 2008). Kleine et al. (2019) research was limited by their insufficient to conduct an in-depth examination and interpretation of the hotel management challenges caused by specific environmental problems faced by the hotel industry (Wu, Chen & Wang, 2022). The findings further extend the applicability of thriving into the context of the hospitality industry. Specifically, using employees in the hospitality industry as samples, this study examines the positive effects of thriving at work on QUAL and ORGATT, as well as the mediating effects of TEAM and INENG.

This paper contributes to the existing knowledge by empirically examining the factors that impact thriving at work in the context of the hospitality industry. The findings provide valuable insights into the direct effects of LAS, TEAM, INENG, QUAL, and ORGATT, as well as the mediating roles of TEAM and INENG. This study addresses the research gap identified by Kleine et al. (2019) by conducting an in-depth examination of the challenges faced by the hotel industry, specifically those related to environmental issues.

From a practical perspective, hospitality managers can benefit from understanding the needs and potential of their subordinates, fostering a sense of value and trust in the decision-making process. This, in turn, enhances the manager-subordinate relationship and promotes professional competence and caring. Furthermore, organisations in the hospitality industry should emphasise the importance of learning at work to facilitate thriving among employees.

The data analysed were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the participating employees were engaged in service behaviours while coping with internal and external environmental threats caused by the pandemic. This could also explain the low effect of working as a team, as employees might have worked alone.

5 CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the existing knowledge by focusing on thriving at work in the hospitality industry and discussing the individual findings in detail. It offers new insights and extends the understanding of the role of intangible resources in the context of hospitality research. The findings emphasise the importance of supportive leadership and effective communication in promoting thriving and provide practical implications for hospitality managers. Future research opportunities include exploring additional relationships within the proposed model, such as the direct relationships between LAS and INENG, and LAS and TEAM, as well as further investigating the specific challenges and opportunities within the hospitality industry.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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The authors declare that any AI or AI-assisted technologies were not used to prepare this work.



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