

PROJECT

Bound by Brands?

*How Corporate Identity Constrains
Management Development*

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Executive Summary

This article investigates the effect the restrictions of branding and brand standards has on managers working in the bar industry. The research that was conducted aims to conclude if standardisation is preventing managers from being creative and innovative in their jobs. The findings of the research have assessed their motivation, and the effect this has had on conducting their current job roles and the implications this has on their future career development.

The standardisation that branding ensues can create problems for the managers that implement the brand standards in the bars they run. They could be described as the 'middle man' in the organisation. Managers lead their teams, as well as being receivers of the brand image and identity. They are important figures in the corporate structure. As they implement the brand at a functional level, their role is vital to the success of the brand, and the company.

If these managers struggle with balancing the company's ideals and systems, then this presents a problem for the entire company and brand delivery. As well as this, and perhaps more importantly the individual manager may feel that their personal needs are being neglected. Denying training and opportunities to increase their skills and knowledge will have a negative effect on motivation and self empowerment, which has repercussions on functional operations as well as future career opportunities.

To assess the situation, managers of bars that possess a strong brand identity have been interviewed. Their perceptions of their job roles have been assessed, and real industry examples of restrictiveness of brand implementation have been collated to draw clear conclusions regarding the subject. Brand standards do cause problems at a functional level, and the managers do feel the strain of being constricted in their duties and ability to make changes and adapt the business to perform to what they perceive to be their best.

Standardisation of service is a widespread issue in the hospitality industry, literature has been written surrounding the topic, none discuss the role of the manager in depth or concentrate on the practical issues combined with the psychological contract that brands place on their managers. Analysing other authors and academics research was the primary stage of this investigation. The results of the literature review led to the interest in the topic area.

This article has reached the conclusion that the branding phenomenon shows no signs of slowing down. Standardisation of service is here to stay; so we must find a way to embrace the restrictions, or to adapt standardisation to allow the managers of branded organisations room to breathe. First, the conditions they work in, and the restraints of branding must be discovered. Brands are regulated by the company by guidelines and brand standards. Investigation of these standards is required so opportunities for innovation and creativity can be determined. It is anticipated that the realities of managing a branded site denies opportunities for managers to be creative and innovative. If this is true, then the empowerment of that individual manager may be affected detrimentally.

Context

The need for consistency has resulted in standardisation and strict guidelines for the managers of branded bars (Adapted from Delgado-Ballester & Muneura-Allaman, 2005). The aim of this paper is to examine to what extent the limitations of branding in the bar industry affects managers in conducting their job role and the implications this has on their personal skills development.

Bar managers of branded companies are subject to organisational measures and brand standards set their employers that go beyond operational procedures. *“Employees operate in a behavioural context determined by the organisational culture, structures and systems, and the management practices”*(Hoogervorst et al, 2004:287). Managers are themselves employees, so it is important to determine the results of restrictions of branding on management team, as the repercussions effects the other employees.

Bar managers are implementers and receivers of the brand identity; making them interesting subjects of research. Large bar chains are often perceived as good employers for bar managers (Springboard, 2011), and the prospects are greater than working for an independent. But is this the case? The majority of the current literature in this area surrounds employees, and has not looked at the role of the manager in depth (Davies, 2008: 678), or from the perspective of the individual. Therefore further investigation is necessary.

The explosion of branding in the bar industry has resulted in more people being employed in this sector, making the issues surrounding brand management an ever more prevalent. (Hughes & Rog, 2008). The restrictions of implementing brand standards, and the organisational culture created by brand identity could cause a negative effect on the individual manager. What has been assessed is if the brand standards help or hinder the managers. The guidelines that make the brand what it is, may eventually restrict managers in their job role and deny innovation, creativity and self empowerment. All three are aspects that can help determine motivation (Baird & Wang, 2010). Without motivation it is difficult for a manager to progress in their career, as they will struggle to strive to achieve development. Managers are the linking pin between corporate head office and their employees, so they are of vital importance to the organisation. They are responsible for the success of the brand at a functional level. Assessing their restrictions gives insight into the wider issue of effects of deskilling and affect of standardisation in hospitality. Branding has thus far been successful for marketing these bar chains, however standardisation could be eliminating the need for certain skills (Barron & Robinson, 2007). It indicates that if managers have to follow brand standards to the letter in effort not to change brand image or identity, then companies may not be aiming to develop managers' personal skills and abilities. However, the realities of the role need to be examined before assumptions can be made about the level of restrictions, or indeed opportunities that working for a branded bar entails.

This project will investigate to what extent implementing brand standards restricts managers in operational procedures as well as their peripheral duties, responsibilities outside the daily operations. Their perceptions of the brand standards they implement also need to be examined. This allows insight into what extent branding and organisational control when working for a branded bar company limits the need for innovation and impedes the development of creativity skills.

Once this has been completed, then empowerment and motivation of the individual manager can be examined. This is an essential investigation as there are future implications for these managers. If there are notable limits in training and development, then future promotions, career expectations and career fulfilment could be impeded upon (Chan et al, 2010). The current restrictions of branding and issues surrounding brand standardisation could result in managers not being able to fulfil their career potential. To assess these issues, the current literature written around this subject must be analysed, as well as investigating the current circumstances of the bar industry that these managers work in must be discussed first, then conclusions can be made.

Literature Review

The environment the bar managers are currently working in is a dynamic one. There has been mixed performances for branded bar companies during this period of economic change caused by the recession. Laurel Pub Company went into administration in 2009, whilst the market leader Wetherspoons is holding strong and retaining their 40% market share (Mintel, 2008). The British Beer & Pub Association (2009) reported that fifty two pubs and bars are closing down each week in the United Kingdom, making Wetherspoons success ever more impressive. One of the reasons for their success has been their brand remaining attractive to customers; and hence forth retaining market share. Standardisation appears to be a successful strategy for the sustention and increase of branded bars, therefore branding has been accepted as a viable business model in the bar industry (Gilbert & Stabb, 2000:33).

So what defines a brand? A brand is created to sell an idea that goes beyond a product or product line a business sells. In hospitality, brands are used to project the experience, style and characteristics of the service a customer will receive. A successful brand name allows a customer to know what an outlet will offer them before they even walk in the building. The brand name surpasses the tangible elements of a business and is created to hold its own value as it gives that company a signature identity (Gilbert & Stabb, 2000:34).

For a branded bar to achieve success, all components of the company must be integrated and working towards the same goal; the brand standard (Howley & Knowles, 2000). Therefore, consistency is required throughout the company, and each of the bars, so the same service must be delivered in each bar, if the brand is to be successful.

Consistency in a bar company requires control, which standardisation permits (Patching, 1999). The tangible elements of a business that can emulate a brand include the products on sale, the design and layout of the premises, the location of the outlet, the pricing strategy, the service quality and the overall image of the outlet (Elwood, C. & Lincoln, G. 1995). These can be controlled by the company. However the bar industry is labour dependent and how the management team deliver the service and brand standards is harder to control. The inflexibility of brand guidelines designed by bar companies are created to combat individualism in service and operations to achieve consistency. Level of responsibility, amount of influence and ability of flexibility will affect the role of a manager. As a manager the responsibility of running a site would usually allow the sense of autonomy in the job role, but this may not be the case in strictly standardised outlets. Restrictions in operational procedures may carry on into other responsibilities, such as team managing and recruitment.

Branding has indeed moved into recruitment, further extending the reach of branding control. If branding is the interface between producers and consumers; therefore it can be presumed that brands can be used as an interface between employer and employee (Foster et al, 2010). The term 'employer branding' was brought into human resource management literature in the 1990's when the academic world finally recognised branding as a legitimate discipline (Rosenthorn, 2009). The 'employer branding' theory has been developed to approach recruitment to a branded business as fitting the right person to the right brand (Davies, 2008). Applicants will be hired if it is believed that they share the same values and beliefs as the brand and project this to the customers (Ind, 2004). Personality takes precedence over experience and knowledge when employer branding is used in recruitment. This is because branded bar managers are required to import brand standards onto their

employees, and their customers. The company uses employer branding to assure that their ideals are carried throughout the business successfully.

The majority of literature surrounding employer branding views the theory in a positive light. The employer has someone whose personality suits their brand ideals, and the employee receives satisfaction from their job role (Kornberger, 2010). Currently there is little evidence from the point of view of the managers recruited using the employer branding method or the effect the psychological contract ensues upon them. Existing literature is from the perspective of the prospective employer.

Organisations that implement employer branding for recruitment purposes often perceive their workforce as a whole, and not the individual person. This does not mean to say that the individual employee is being overlooked, they are a "*corporation's greatest asset*" (Kornberger, 2010:17). Branded bar companies often have strong corporate and internal branding (Foster et al, 2010), to continue supporting employees and renewing the brand ideals to them. However training can be restrictive if only the company's methods are taught. Training methods that supposedly helps managers in the bar industry ultimately may restrict them from other opportunities, if personal skills development training that may not be seen as necessary by the company are not offered to the managers. Managers may feel de motivated if training methods are being denied to them.

Emotions in the workplace need to be investigated to assess motivation and empowerment of branded bar managers. Lashley (2002) approaches the difficult task of analysing emotions, concluding with the identification of management practices creating conflict in the hospitality industry. Lashley (2002) finalises the article by suggesting that a thorough understanding of the use of empowerment and individualism in an organisation must be achieved to develop future strategies for employee satisfaction of all levels. Empowerment plays a role in creating equilibrium between an individual's needs and wants from a job role and the company's need for a successful performance.

In reality, not every single employee can have unlimited responsibility, therefore empowerment is sometimes discouraged by branded bar companies in order to achieve standardisation. Lashley (1999) wrote in an earlier paper that there are different types of empowerment being applied in the service sector industry. Being an advocate of empowerment in service, Lashley (1999, 2002) states it necessary for empowerment to be an integral part of a bar managers role. A bar manager can be considered the linking pin between the corporate company head office, their employees, customers and stakeholders. That is significant responsibility and a large yet delicate undertaking that they have been chosen to do. The individual manager should not only be allowed, but expected to choose how to do it. The lack of empowerment in the bar industry at present may prevent managers achieving optimum performance.

Bar companies often promote from within, so they need to anticipate and prepare for unit managers '*moving up the corporate ladder*', ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities for them to develop necessary skills and abilities in preparation for future promotions. In a saturated market where companies need to differentiate from competitors to succeed, senior management require innovative skills. Empowerment is a key element in developing innovation and creativity (Pang & Wong, 2003). Creativity, innovation, motivation and empowerment are dependent on each other and it is essential that the individual managers possesses these.

Enthusiasm is essential, as the bar industry is “*labour intensive and service driven, and is reliant on the abilities and intention of employees*” (King, 2010:524). Motivation has a direct influence on a manager’s performance. Detrimental effects of poor managerial motivation can spread throughout the team they are managing. This is one reason the manager is so vital to a team. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, a widely accepted theory surrounding motivation in the workplaces is often used to rate motivation (Maslow, 1954).

According to Maslow (1954) employees of an organisation reach their full potential when they are able to use all their skills and attributes. In an organisation where brand standards are heavily relied upon, this could cause conflict in managers able to reaching the highest level of motivation; self actualisation if they are not allowed to be innovative and work to their full potential. The application of standardisation can ensure higher profitability and ease the burden on an under skilled industry such as hospitality (Hutchcraft, 2001: Barron & Robinson, 2007). However standardisation can stifle a manager when their skills are not utilised, because their job is redesigned so they are not required or able to use what they know. Certain skills such as creativity are particularly affected. Research suggests that standardisation can moderate the “*relationship between creativity and both team performance and customer satisfaction*” (Barron & Robinson, 2007:923). Its’ adoption into mainstream practise jeopardises the development of occupational technical skills and the realisation of creative ambitions.

Earlier research conducted supports the contention that there is an apparent tension between creativity and standardisation (Pang & Wong, 2003). This supports earlier findings from Ray (1995:288), who stated that “*corporate culture is the last frontier of control*”. Control does not allow for individualism. In reality, creativity is not encouraged if it does not emulate the desired corporate or brand image.

A paradox has ensued in hospitality, branding is being extensively used to standardise operations and to effectively attract custom by creating identity, loyalty and awareness with the brand. With oversaturation of the bar industry and a lot of companies reaching maturity, or facing decline in the product life cycle, innovation is needed to differentiate themselves in the market. Pang and Wong (2003:553) agree, stating that “*creativity is vital to corporate success*”. The reality is that creativity and innovation is essential to the survival of bar companies, to maintain competitive advantage and prepare to accommodate for future trends. If managers that are employed by major chains are not allowed to apply or develop these skills, what will the long term implications be for their individual career development?

As key members of an organisation, the managers role has currently been under analysed, hence the reason for this research project. It will be assessed as to whether the reality of working for the brand and implementing it restricts managers in their current role or future opportunities. The effect the constraints of branding have on the individual have been analysed to determine the level of influence branding has on empowerment and motivation.

Methodology

The most viable method of finding conclusions to the aim of this paper was to speak to the managers' themselves. Interviews were the most effective method for an accurate overview of the research topic for a project of this size. As a conceptual paper, it is an exploratory review of restrictions of opportunities caused by brand identity; the outcome is an objectivist view of a current issue facing many in the hospitality workforce. Their personal knowledge and experience of working for branded companies and introspection into their own behaviour was the most relevant data and was invaluable to this specific research topic. Interviews were conducted within the city of Sheffield, by the author. As brand standards remain the same across the country, the location of interviews have not affected the research results.

All the interviewees were managers of branded bars operating in the UK. Each interviewee is working, or has worked for a bar company offering food and beverage services, that at least 50 sites in the UK. The companies the interviewees were employed by are all recognisable brand names and possess a distinct brand identity. Therefore internal procedures and regulations have been implemented to maintain these brand standards. The interviewees selected possess industry experience of working in branded bars, and understand all the practical implications of branding. The outcome of the interviews was to assess to what extent these limitations has restricted their career opportunities.

In total five managers were interviewed, and were employed from four participant bar companies. The decision was made to use four bar companies, not so that comparisons can be made between effectiveness of branding between these companies – but so it can be evident that the findings of the research were not specific to one company. The aim of this project is to examine if *branding* restricts or limits managers, not individual company procedures. A critical analysis of an individual company was not relevant to the aim of this research.

One of the participant bar companies provided two of their managers to be interviewed. This ensured that results were not subjective to the opinion of an individual, because two managers working for the same company would have similar restrictions placed upon them. As previously stated individual companies were not analysed or criticised, but the findings from two managers from the same company has highlighted the extent these research findings are subject to opinion and personal characteristics.

A semi-structured interview style was selected as the most appropriate method of research. All interviewees have had different experiences of working for a branded bar company, so each interview was different due to new questions elicited by the answers given by the interviewee. Uniformity was not sought for this research. Semi-structured interviews allowed the conversation to be a two-way, flowing communication, which was essential. As personal thoughts and feelings were extracted, it was important that the interviewees did not feel intruded upon. It was felt necessary for flexibility within the interview structure; a scripted interview was not felt appropriate.

Overall this structure of interviewee and company selection ensured the data collected from the interviews reflected limitations of *branding*, not companies - on *managers*, not individuals.

Findings and Analysis

All managers interviewed were employed at an assistant manager level. They had substantial responsibility, whilst being at the stage where they would not be as tempted to *'toe the company line'* as someone working at general manager or corporate level. Despite inevitable variations in role and responsibility due to different company structures and all managers had different opinions; similar threads of argument kept arising through the interviewing process. These issues that all managers raised have been analysed.

Brand Standards Audits

All managers that were interviewed were subject to brand audits. Managers D and E were subject to internal audits conducted by their Brand Standards Manager or General Managers. Managers A, B and C were audited by 'mystery diners', external auditors who disguise themselves as customers and assess the dining experience. It must be noted that brand standards take precedence in terms of scoring over other factors such as service quality. The purpose of these audits is to assess performance solely on brand standards being upheld. Manager B reported that bonuses for all managers were based on mystery diner reports; scores surrounding brand standards. This stresses the importance the company base on the consistency of the brand being upheld. Financial incentives were based solely on brand standards audits; there was no assessment on personal or team development. This clarifies the company's position on direction of the business. Managers are not encouraged to pursue different avenues for business improvement, as performance is scored solely on brand standards and company guidelines.

Service Procedures

All interviewees indicated that operational, service procedures and brand standards did not always work in harmony. Manager A, B and D in particular had concerns regarding this. Manager A was blunt in her approach to brand standards and service style, strongly questioning its practicality (*see app. 7 for service standards*). The main criticisms were the time limits in which each activity had to be completed, lack of flexibility, and unaccountability of the individual customers' wants and needs. Manager A accounted an increased workload in training employees on the new service style and upholding them. The confliction between standardisation and the reality of implementation goes beyond operational procedures;

"I had to teach them the company line and to do it by the book, and then had to teach them that it was ok to take control of things themselves. Empowering someone, telling them to use their own instincts, at the same time teaching them to follow really strict standards is difficult" (Manager A, 2011). (*see app. 2 for full transcript*).

When this is compared with Manager E's experiences, the differences in empowerment can be considered. Manager E developed her own service standards in the sister property of a brand company, developing and monitoring service standards allowed her to excel and feel empowered. When asked about her role in the sister property of the brand, she stated:

"It was a million times better than working at Bar A. And because Bar B didn't fall under the brand standards of Bar A, there was leeway to change things if we needed. It sounds like more work, designing your own standards, but in a lot of ways it was actually easier. You

know, I had sway in what happened, and so did the staff. If they came to me with a valid point or suggestion with how to change something then I would take it on board. It was a lot better. There were some points that brand standards didn't make sense (at Bar A), it was a lot better this way (Manager E, 2011). (see app. 6 for full transcript)

Standardising service can be a contentious issue, as customers do require to be treated as individuals. It reflects the paradox of branding in hospitality businesses, people want to be treated as individuals, and however it is the recognition of one brand name that pulls in all these individuals to that particular chain of bars. Allowing Manager E to develop her own standards and training methods was a positive experience as it improved her motivation. She devised a service style that reflected the image and style of the bar and training and monitoring system to implement it effectively. However this would not have been allowed in one of the branded sites as service would have been inconsistent with the other bars.

Operational Restrictions

The practicalities of running a bar and the experience the managers have gained from working in bars have resulted in them finding many solutions to problems, and areas for improvements. Some have been disallowed, as they go against the brand standard. For example, Manager B (*see app. 3 for full transcript*) stated that he wanted to change a lot of operational procedures in the site that he ran. The changes he wanted to make were to ensure the smooth operation of service, particularly when considering the bar layout, and the change from day to night service. Manager B was allowed to change the bar layout, after justifying its need to the area manager. However the exact changes he wanted to make were not fully allowed as they did not fit with the brand image. The suggestions for improving the bar layout were designed to increase revenue of wet sales and service speed, however;

"The area manager wouldn't allow it. You normally find speedways in cocktail bars, which we aren't, so we couldn't do it". (Manager B, 2011)

The need for consistency in branded bars has already been stressed earlier in this paper, however the fact that adaptations that would increase revenue were denied by senior management is suggestion that senior management believe in their brand; their identity so much that they do not wish to change it, or see the need to. The future implications of this are not yet known, however it is clear that senior management believe that profitability will be incurred by the brand name, not by new ideas.

Frustrations

The same manager that was denied to make changes to improve profitability, Manager B, was frustrated by this. Improving the bar layout would have increased revenue, and profitability as the bar relies heavily on wet sales. Manager E reported that the Head Chef that used to work in the same site that she did had found innovative ways of increasing profitability whilst improving the flavour of the dishes. All dishes looked the same in appearance to those being sold in other sites within the same company. The Head Chef had managed to increase gross profit by 30%. Again, the Area Manager discovered this and prevented it from continuing, because it was not the brand standard. This is another example of innovation being denied, even in the face of increased profitability. This Head Chef

eventually left the company and began working for an independent restaurant, as he felt he was not being appreciated.

Effect on Career Fulfilment

Manager D and E both worked for the same company, and both ended up leaving that company because the role was not stimulating, creative or challenging. Manager E stated;

“I’d like to work somewhere where I can use my knowledge and common sense a bit more. It might just be a personal thing, but I was part of something”. (Manager E, 2011)

None of the managers felt fulfilled, or self actualised (Maslow, 1954) in their current job role. Manager’s A, D & E had all left the bar chains they had worked for.

“I’ve learnt all I can there, if I want to go further and learn more and develop myself, I won’t be able to do it there. They expect you to do what they tell you to do, do everything their way. You can only learn a certain amount in that kind of environment”. (Manager A, 2011)

Managers A & E felt that personal development was not possible when working for a branded site. Managers B & C both saw their current roles as stepping stones to head office and senior management positions. This is not in itself unusual, as research from Coelho & Sousa (2011) states that organisational commitment was a mediating factor in self-enhancement; that *“organisational commitment regressed self enhancement values”* (Coelho & Sousa, 2011:24). It is interesting that none of them, even Manager C who has been promoted twice in two months did not feel fulfilled (*see app. 4 for full transcript*). Manager C had doubts regarding the lack of flexibility in the managerial functions that had to be performed, especially with promotions. In fact all of the managers had issues with the lack of influence they had over promotional events, a primary factor being that it did not take local or regional preferences into account, so were not as effective as they could be (Manager D, 2011). Manager D (*see app. 5 for full transcript*) did give account to the promotional events she arranged, that some allowed for variety. Also, Manager’s B & E stated that depending on the particular promotion, there was some flexibility. This was an interesting result, as previously it was felt that managing a branded bar involved one hundred percent standardisation. This indicates that there is some room for manoeuvre for the manager to be flexible and innovative when working for a branded company.

Branding not actually that bad?

The interview results highlighted that perhaps there is ability for creativity for the managers in the bar companies. There are many restrictions; however the managers did have a level of influence than previously expected by the author. Some areas were not up for debate. Manager A, B, C & E stated that they could not change the products on sale, or price. Manager B did however, stream line the products on sale, and Manager D was given substantial authority in the private bookings and functions she was in charge of. After analysing the interview findings, it appears that the managers do not agree with all the standards put in place by their employers to achieve the brand, they do not always see it as too much of an obstacle. The managers perceived the brand as a framework to work within; or around.

Conclusions

Following this research, many factors surrounding branding guidelines have been highlighted. The restrictions on management duties- and the penultimate effect on that individual were discovered. Assessing manager's perception of the brands was an important part of the process, as this gave insight into the manager's relationship with the brand, which inevitably affects how they implement it.

Managers perceive brand standards as an extension of company policy. The difference between implementing a brand and working within company policy is that, a brand is an association. It is designed to create an emotional link between a person and a product or service. A brand needs to be believed by the people that work for it, to make it come alive. As a manager it is their responsibility to deliver the brand in the manner that head office requires. If the manager views brand standards as guidelines, or a framework then it suggests that the association they have with the brand is not strong enough. This may be because the internal branding (Foster et al, 2010) is not conducted effectively within that certain company. Or perhaps more likely it may be that the brand standards are too strong, and has had the opposite effect desired by the bar companies. Disenchantment with the brand is the danger, if the restrictions become suffocative of personal skills and abilities the managers want to apply. Out of the five managers that were interviewed, three had already left the companies they had been working for, and one is unsure of their future with the company. Branding has become an affliction, not an aid.

The restrictions of branding on a manager's role involve many areas of the bar industry. There were no business areas or functions that brand image and identity did not affect. Consuming a branded bar is a holistic experience, including products, service and atmosphere (Bitner, 1990). There is no area that a manager has sole control over, so no areas that they could feel empowered in, or develop for themselves. The managers reported that it was not the products sold, or overall brand image that they disagreed with, it was the peripheral duties where they wanted control. This may be hard to achieve in a large corporation. What may need to change is for the company's overall goal to be – how can we keep doing this better? Rather than, how can we keep everything in the bars the same?

Managers need to be heard and their ideas listened to, if they are to feel appreciated by their employer companies (Lashley, 2002). Examples have been produced of how creative managers have developed new ideas that increase profitability, quality, or both have been denied implementation in fear of lack of consistency. Rather than dismissing the idea, the bar chain could pilot the new idea and then if successful use it across the company. This could be a motivating factor for these innovative managers. This would lead to empowerment within the management team in bar chains, and would be passed on to the team members that the managers lead. This would result in the psychological contract the employer brand has on the employee manager being a positive influence as well as a necessity to achieve company objectives.

The psychological contract, "*individual beliefs about the terms of their relationship with the organisation that employs them*", (Boxall & Purcell, 2003; Flynn, 2011) that is placed upon a manager by the brand is in need of examination. If it is the personality that is being the primary reason for selection in the role, then it is the person that must be focussed on. The findings of this research raises the question does branding work for everyone?

It is inevitable that one size does not fit all; one brand will not suit everyone. Managers when recruited may believe and be attracted to the brand image, ideals and identity. However as

they become more confident in their role they may outgrow this. None of the managers interviewed felt fulfilled in their current position, or felt a strong affiliation to the brand they worked for. Their personal needs and skills development took precedence over loyalty to the employer brand. Therefore brands should seek to differentiate their training and employee retention methods in the future should they want to keep their staff.

Brands need to learn to adapt to their team. Managers need to be aware of the culture and operations of the bar chain before they start to work for the firm, and then allow management to do their jobs. Ensuring that their individual values meet that of the employers will aid managers when conducting their job roles. If they believe in the brand values, it is less likely that the restrictions of the brand shall have a detrimental effect in their current or future career as their motivation to succeed within the corporation will be greater.

The emotional response to the brand can aid in the hindrance of practical restrictions and standardisation. It is questionable whether the emotional link between the brand and the manager creates a total equilibrium and harmony for the manager's personal development.

Overall the managers do feel restricted in their job roles. Believing in the brand is imperative to brand implementation, but concern for their personal skills development outweighs brand loyalty. The results of the interviews showed that managers have had to go against brand standards in a variety of cases for different reasons; either operationally or for personal reasons. Whilst they have all been successful in their career to date; it has not always been comparable with the brand they work for. The restrictions are too great in number to be followed with exact precision. .

The future implications of standardisation's restraint on manager's job roles are yet to be decided. However, it is predicted that in the future the restrictiveness of branding could be greater than anticipated by the bar companies. Innovation and creativity skills are necessary for the development of these brands, and the manager's need for personal development. There is evidence that companies that are seeking managers with creative and innovative natures, potentially in anticipation for future promotions. However if they are denied the opportunity to utilise their creativity and contribute to the brand then they may feel deterred from pursuing these individual needs and skills. They may defer from the company and seek new ventures, or feel unable to succeed in other roles. This is a result from impaired personal development.

Research for this article has found that essentially, managers require company decentralisation, so creativity and innovation skills can be developed. They are seeking empowerment to motivate them in their job role. Detrimental effects on their future careers could occur if this is not addressed. Bar companies need to find flexibility in their company structure, where their brand is being reflected positively in their operations by trusting their management team to accomplish this without complete and total standardisation. Investigation is required into this topic to find a compromise that will allow a manager to fulfil their career expectations whilst enhancing company performance.

The confictions between company and individual do result in motivational issues. Decentralising branding and operational procedures is not impossible. Strong internal branding will increase the psychological contract the manager has with the brand, allowing the operational procedures to be more flexible as there is strong association and loyalty. Brand values will not be negatively affected by trusting managers who have the knowledge, experience and drive to take more control, make changes and enhance performance.

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Appendices

1. Interview Transcript: Manager A

Please tell me your story, in your own time. How did you end up working for the company?

I began working for the company just because I was looking for a job, and luckily I was hired as a waitress. As time went on I learnt more about how the bar and restaurant ran. For the first year I was under eighteen so I wasn't allowed to work on the bar, but I did everything else. Most of the other waitresses just took food in and out of the kitchen and cleared the floor. I worked on the till, helped the kitchen by doing starters and desserts when needed. I guess it was because I worked more than the other girls, so I trained all the new people as well. I really liked doing different things, and although I didn't always like being the only waitress that was till trained, I was the first point of contact for customers which was important. I was the only non-manager at the time that was allowed on the till, apart from the barmen/women. After working there for about six months, the bar/restaurant went under refurbishment and was rebranded to a more upmarket brand owned by the parent company. That's when I got promoted to the supervisor position. We all went through the training for the new brand and it went from there really. I only worked there for a few more months because I was going off to university to study hospitality at degree level.

What made you choose that particular company to apply to, and what was the recruitment process?

I applied to a few jobs at the time; it was one of the most popular employers in the area which made me apply. It was a large company, so I was aware of what they did and what they were about. I didn't know much about their actual procedures or reputation to be honest. In terms of how I got the job, when I asked if they were hiring they asked me to fill in an application form. When I came to hand it in it was quiet and the general manager said he could interview me there and then. He told me what the job involved, what the wage was and a few other things. He explained that he wanted people that were committed and that would stay working there for a while. After a fifteen minute conversation he offered me the job.

So what was meant to be a part time job turned into you getting promoted? Did you think that would happen? And what do you think made them promote you over someone else?

I think it was because I knew how the whole restaurant worked, I was always reliable and because I was studying hospitality at uni, they knew I wanted to pursue a career in hospitality rather than just working for the money. I found it a bit strange because when they first told me I was getting promoted I was still under eighteen, so I couldn't work on the bar at the time. I felt a little uncomfortable about the thought of managing people who were doing a job that I couldn't do, but my birthday was only two weeks later.

How did your job role change after you got promoted?

Well my promotion came at the same time of the rebrand, so it's hard to say what changed because of the promotion or the rebrand. The main difference the promotion resulted in was cashing up. As being the only waitress previously that worked on the tills I was used to handling money when others didn't, but now I was cashing up. The waitresses now had their own personal change and tills, and I was responsible for cashing those up. I trained people before, and I continued to do this, and I handled complaints before, but now I took more of a

lead role. As I wasn't a manager I couldn't personally conduct refund transactions, however I had a lot more of a say in when to authorise them. Now when training people, I had to follow the guidelines rather than doing it my own way, which I used to do. The customer journey had to be followed to the letter. This was a bit annoying, because it resulted in extra training and in the initial stages a little confusion.

In what way?

We the 'customer journey' guidelines were very strict, and in short time limits. In reality it was difficult to adhere to them completely. Roughly, according to the guidelines, a three course meal would involve the waitress going to the table at least fourteen times. Doing this in the right time limit was nearly impossible if you had a few tables, even if you had more than one table. The standard was supposed to be that the restaurant was split into zones; each zone would have between six and eight tables. No waitress was supposed to have any more than eight. The wage budget given by the company didn't allow for this and often one waitress would have to serve up to twenty two tables at one time. This made adhering to the customer journey immensely difficult, nearly impossible. To add to that, not all customers wanted the full table service, a lot of people just wanted a drink, or a quick meal, it felt as if we were bothering them unnecessarily. The new brand was more upmarket than the last, it raised to bar/restaurant to a mid market restaurant, however it was still very standardised and customers coming in didn't always want that attention.

I see, you said that the new standards made training more of a challenge, in what way? Could you explain further?

Well the procedures on the bar did not change much, so that was fine. There were some extra products on sale, we changed the way the coffees were made but that was simple. It was the floor staff that had the problems. We had stand alone computer tills, so the waitresses started to use the satellite tills, and they would control their own money and would have money pouches. Some of the girls had a little trouble with it at first, but it was ok. The main problem was the customer journey and the time limits, like I said. The thing is with waitressing, and I suppose in all service jobs that to give good service, you need to remember that every customer is different. Different people want different things. Before the rebrand I would teach them the basics, and the structure was different. One person would clear tables, one would run food, one would make coffees etc. It was simple and I told them that the guest was the first priority. Now, each person had full control over their own tables and customers, some took to this and some didn't take too well. The less competent ones were better at it.

How do I explain this properly? Now, I had to teach the brand standards and the company policies of how it would be done by the book. But I also had to teach them how to handle it when the customer didn't want full service, or when something went off track. I had to teach them the company line and to do it by the book, and then had to teach them that it was ok to take control of things themselves. Empowering someone whilst implementing really strict standards is really hard. In reality, a lot of the standards didn't work in practice, and I had to teach them how to be a good server and teach them individual skills at the same time. I couldn't badmouth the company guidelines in front of staff, but I didn't agree with them. A lot of the waitresses needed direction, and they got confused and stressed in the beginning about exactly how to do it.

Were there any good points about the customer journey?

There were, it wasn't as bad as I'm probably making out. It was hard to implement at first, but it was good to know what was expected of us. The reason why I disagreed with the standards is like I said; every customer is different and expects different types of service. The 'customer journey' does not suit everyone, you need to adapt to each customer. The waitress could give really great service and the customer would leave smiling, but if they didn't hit all the targets then in the company eyes, they have failed. After the rebrand we had to hit 95% on our mystery diner reports. We failed one because one night we were really busy, a check back was missed and the food was late so we failed. The report was very complimentary and said the server, which was me did a very good job under the circumstances, but we still failed. I just think the way the company judges performance isn't always fair. After the rebrand we had to do hourly checks on the restaurant/bar, if one of these is missed or late then we fail, if there is one piece of tissue on the side of the toilets, we fail. It's not really a fair indication of how hard the staff works. And like I said before, the time limits were ridiculous.

Apart from the customer journey, were there any other new brand standards you didn't like?

I'm trying to think, there were a couple that didn't really work. With large bookings, we weren't allowed to push tables together. We could section off areas, but couldn't push tables together to make a large table. Obviously this put a lot of people off booking. If there is a group of twenty going for dinner, they want to sit together. Explaining why we couldn't give them a big table was always a little awkward and a bit stupid really.

So what were the positives?

Well the rebrand raised the stakes; it was more upmarket, which did overall motivate the employees. Eventually empowering everyone, because they took control over their own customers worked. People were mostly motivated by the money they could earn in tips, but it worked. I felt more motivated, but I got promoted at the same time, so it's hard to say what the biggest factor in my motivation. Not everyone felt that way though.

Who?

The kitchen staff struggled as well. It was a bar/restaurant, but we focussed on dry sales to pull in customers to make money off the wet sales. We (the company) promoted the food heavily and was the primary reason most customers came to us, so the kitchen operations were very important. During the training period before the rebrand, it was obvious the chefs were very unhappy with the new rules, particularly the head chef. The kitchen trainer the company had sent had shown specs of what all the new dishes should look like and how they should be prepared. The kitchen trainer himself had never worked as a chef before, and the chefs felt very undermined by it all. They felt as if they were being given unreasonable and unnecessary rules, particularly the time limits. Obviously the menu had been developed by the company, and the specifications. The head chef, who had a lot of varied experience in all different types of restaurants did not agree with all of the specification standards, when he tried to make suggestions he got shot down completely. After a few months he left the company. To be honest, before the rebrand I used to make desserts a lot, I remember always making a fruit salad in patterns to make it look nicer. My general manager told me to

stop doing it, even though it looked better because it wasn't consistent with brand standards and all the dishes across the board had to be consistent.

How did that make you feel?

It was only a small thing but it definitely annoyed me, because I only did it to try and make it look better, you know to make an improvement. It made me think, what's the point in bothering?

So the head chef left then?

Yeah he did, I don't think that was the sole reason, but it was definitely a factor. He felt like he was being ignored, and he didn't appreciate being told what to do by someone who had never even been a chef before.

Overall, what do you think about how the company is run internally?

Erm, they're a bit company and profitable, so they're doing a lot of things right. They bring in a lot of customers and obviously do a lot of really effective marketing. For me, as you know I was promoted, and might have gone further if I'd have stayed in the company, but after learning everything I did at uni and from what I've learnt working there, I don't think I would go back. The hours were very long, often we didn't get breaks. I know that's standard in the hospitality industry but it still wasn't fair. I just feel that I've learnt all I can there, if I want to go further and learn more and develop myself, I won't be able to do it there. They expect you to do what they tell you to do, do everything their way. You can only learn a certain amount in that kind of environment. To be honest, a lot of what I learnt from working there is what not to do, not how to do it properly. I think they could take more care of their staff, and be a bit more open to change.

Do you think that's because of the branding?

In a lot of ways, yes. I know that I was only a supervisor so I was at the lowest level, but after everything my managers told me about the company and some of the things that happened and some of the things they had to do, it seemed that they had little control over how the business was run. My general manager was always really strict on the staff, but looking back it was probably because hiring and firing was one of the only things he had a say in. I remember when the kitchen flooded, we had to shut the kitchen down and everything, but we had to stay open.

Really?

Yeah, and there were other things. We always ran out of a lot of food, which looks really bad. I always used to think that it was because the manager that did the ordering wasn't doing it properly, but that wasn't the case. The company had signed a contract with Brakes (supplier) that left it up to them what food each unit received. It was crazy because we always ran out. At one point we only had stock to sell for a quarter of the menu. It looks really unprofessional, but we had absolutely no control over it. I mean, the computer and the finance system was the company, the products sold, the way we served was the company. Everything was.

2. Interview Transcript: Manager B

Could you tell me your work history please? Where was the first bar you worked in?

A hotel and country club in Darwin

Oh right, and then you started working at the independently owned bar?

Yes

And when you started there, were you a regular member of staff? What was the process?

Just got promoted. Went from glass collector to bar staff. Then I was got promoted to supervisor, then assistant manager, then when the manager left I got made general manager

Were you full time then?

By the time I was assistant manager I was, after about two years

Oh right, and it was independently owned, and there weren't that many staff. Did u work a lot of hours?

Yeah. Loads. I worked about forty, fifty hours a week

Ok. When you were the general manager, what were you responsible for?

Absolutely everything. The daily operations, marketing, promotions, rotas, the security staff

Ok, so everything was down to you then?

Ultimately, but you can delegate some stuff out. Do you see what I mean? It was all my responsibility but other people did other things

So if you wanted to put on a promotional night or something like that, you could? And you can do it the way you wanted to?

Yeah. The owner had to be notified, but he never turned me down or said I couldn't do anything I had suggested

So what made you come to work here?

Well the independent one shut down

I know I know. So you started off here as a bartender?

Yeah. At the time I needed a job. I got promoted quite quickly (after a couple of months) when they realised how good I was. First to supervisor, then to assistant manager

So what's the difference between supervisor and assistant manager at this company?

Erm, supervisor's just run the shift. They do the cashing up, do the change for the tills. Managing is more to do with the wages, running promotions, things like that, stock. The behind the scenes stuff, paperwork

So on a shift, is there normally a supervisor and you, or do you still run shifts on your own as well?

No I still run shifts on my own, I work on the bar when I have to, I just have the extra things to do as well

Are you responsible for health and safety as well?

Yeah I'm responsible for it, but not accountable. (General Manager) is accountable

Ok, so a change of topic then. When you do promotions, how does that work? Do you come up with the ideas yourself or does the company tell you what they are?

All the promotions that happen on the last weekend of the month, they come from head office. There's a marketing manager for the company who does all of that and we have to run them and promote them. They come up with all of them; we just have to make sure they run smoothly. There's promotions that are coming in now, we're trying to promote sky sports – that's pretty much down to us. They just put sky sports in the building (install) and we decide how to promote it, and who to. Try and target a specific group

As it's their promotions, do the company give you targets to hit as well?

Yeah, well we get budgets set at the beginning of the year (points to a spreadsheet), week 1 to 52. The budgets tend to be higher on the weeks/weekends where we're running promotions. But with sky sports, it works out that sky sports costs you £1500 a month. We have to make four times as much from that, to make it worth it. They have certain mark ups on things, the cost should be 25% of the takings that result from it. So if you want to spend £250 on a DJ, you need to make a grand

Do you pick the DJ's?

Me and (General Manager) pick them. They all come from the same company, not the company (employer), but a different company that the company (employer) have picked

So you can't pick anyone from outside that company?

No. It's the same for the door staff. They all come from the same company though. If there are door staff that we know, and we like them we get them to join that company so they can work for us. That's what we did with the head doorman

When you got promoted through the company, was there any training involved? What was it?

Well there's the Academy (computer quiz) for bar staff. There's a supervisor one called AIMS, which is more advanced and for supervisors. More management based. There's another thing (can't remember what it's called), but it's called modules 5 & 6. It's like the Academy but more advanced. I'm currently doing module 5. Once I do module 6 I go onto a diploma thing, once you've done the diploma, you get your own pub. Even if another pub manager comes in from another company to this company, they have to do the diploma thing as well, even if they're at the same level

Is that where you learn about all the brand standards?

Yeah, in modules 5 & 6. You learn about stock and stuff like that. All the operations stuff

And then you would have had on the job training obviously. With the managers showing you how to do things?

Yeah, all that module work is evidence based. It all has to be signed off by (General Manager)

Do you train the supervisors as well?

Yeah. Well we take it in turns. I'm responsible for recruiting staff as well

What makes you pick certain people over others?

Experience, whether you set a good impression when you first meet them. With some people, you can tell straight away if they'll fit in or not. So experience, personality

Do you help decide who gets made supervisor, gets promoted?

Yeah, we have monthly managers meetings, where all of that sort of stuff is discussed. Each member of staff is discussed. That's when it's decided if someone gets promoted, if there's an opening. We promote from within whenever we can. If there's no one suitable then we use the company intranet site to advertise. Then we look elsewhere

So it sounds like you have a large level of responsibility when it comes to your job. Is there anything about the training, or managing staff that you don't agree with?

No

And what about the other aspects of the business? What would you change about the business if it was completely up to you?

Well we're a 'family pub'. The problem is, this bar doesn't get those kinds of customers, and we have to kick them out at six. We don't have a children's menu here like other pubs in the same brand, but we have to allow them in during the day. Its causes more problems than it solves a lot of the time. We don't get enough families coming in here to justify it. We get a lot of heavy drinkers in here, so it's not really appropriate to have kids in here a lot of the time. We need to focus on getting drinks out quickly.

Loads of operational things. Everything about the bar layout. That's actually getting changed on Sunday. Loads of operational things. When I first started, there were loads of products on sale. When I took over responsibility of stock, I chopped it down and got rid of all the things we didn't sell. There was no point in keeping them. It made it easier; they took up space more than anything. But yeah, like I said on Sunday everything's getting stripped down, deep cleaned and starting again. We're making till 4 (the busiest part of the bar) bigger and better

So you're allowed to do that, they'll give you the budget to do that?

Well the general manager has to clear it with the area manager, you've got to prove it'll be worth it. I wanted to get speedways put in the whole bar, but the area manager wouldn't allow it. You normally find them in cocktail bars, which we aren't, so we couldn't do it.

So there a lot of operational things you'd change. Why haven't you changed them yet?

A few reasons, there aren't enough hours in the day for one thing. A lot of the things you can't change automatically, if they'd tamper with other things, if they went against the brand

So you serve food here, when your other bar didn't. Does that increase the workload?

Definitely. Every night you have to check everything in the kitchen, fill out all the check lists

Do all the checklists get checked?

Yeah, the area manager comes in every couple of weeks, everything gets checked. There are penalties if you don't. First it's a verbal warning, then first and second written warning and then the sack

So is it a bigger workload working here than in the independent?

Well the independent bar was more hours, but when I'm working here I'm a lot busier, there's a lot more to do

What's your least favourite part of the job?

Rotas. I know it seems like a small thing but there are so many part time staff here, all students and doing the rota for them is a nightmare

Is that the only thing? Disciplinary procedures with staff?

I haven't had to do any myself, but I've had to sit in on a few as an independent witness. I just think they're a waste of time sometimes really. Sack them or don't sack them. A lot of the time when people have a disciplinary they get sacked not too soon after, it's just going through the motions really

Yates has the brand standards and customer journey? Is it helpful? Do you train the staff on it?

Yeah, it lets everyone know what they're doing. To be honest we should make sure everyone gets trained on them. We got a bad mystery diner last month, which was because of that

What happens when you don't hit the target (95%)?

Well the manager's bonuses are affected by it massively. Manager's bonuses are dependent on getting at least 80% overall on the mystery diners if they want to get their bonuses

Ok, so we're nearly done. So finally, what are your career expectations working for the company?

Well I want my own pub, that's the next stage. Then area manager maybe, somewhere in the future. But there are so many other jobs within the company in head office. I mean I was offered a job as General Manager for (an independent) but I wanted to work for a company that gave me opportunities. It's the prospect of the other roles (non operational) that attracted me to it

And overall, what do you think about the overall performance of the company?

I don't have much to compare it to be honest. But from what I've heard from other people it's not the best bar company. There are others that treat you really well. But I'm not complaining, I've done really well

3. Interview Transcript: Manager C

So you're new to your current position. Could you tell me the story of how you got promoted?

Yeah sure. Well I was first offered a job as a trainee team leader, which is the first stage of the management ladder. I worked in the bar for a couple of weeks (nearly a month) and then I started doing all the cashing up and help leading the shifts

Ok, and did you have any other responsibilities?

Well I had the keys for all the stock cupboards and things like that. Basically my role was helping sure the shift ran smoothly

And when did you get promoted to shift leader?

Well it was weird, I had only been working for the company for two months, I hadn't even finished my management books for the team leader stage and they asked me to go to a different site as a shift leader. I had to finish my management booklets really quickly and the next week I was in the other site as a shift leader

So how did the role change?

Well shift leader is the next step up. It's a lot more responsibility. Before I was helping run the shift, now I'm responsible for it. I do all the extra things like refunds, making sure everything's set up. Doing all the cashing up and stuff like I did before, but now I have a lot more accountability. I'm directly under management, but now I'm able to be left alone running the shift, once I've finished my training. It doesn't sound that different, but it's a lot more responsibility. I'm still going through all the training now, there's a lot of work involved before they let you run shifts on your own. There are two levels after shift leader; assistant manager and pub manager

You mentioned management books? Are they the main part of your training?

Yeah they are. They are all about the management and brand standards and stuff like that. There's also a lot of stuff about stock and cashing up, the legal stuff. Obviously there's a lot of on the job training as well. I haven't been working in the bar industry long so I'm learning things every day

You worked in a bar before though didn't you?

I worked for another company before, that was my first bar job. After about four months I got the team leader position at (another brand for the company)

Why did you leave?

I wasn't getting enough hours, and I wanted a new challenge. I went to (another brand of the company) because it was a better job

So the company your with now is giving you the career prospects you need and want then?

Yeah they are. My area manager wants me to go as far as possible in the company. I want my own pub and then area manager in a few years

Do you think you'll stay with the company?

I do. You never know what's going to happen in the future. But at the moment I'm happy, the company have done a lot for me. I want to move further up north in the future. The good thing about working for a large company like this is that you can move around quite easily. There are more opportunities

So what attracted to you applying for the company in the first place?

I don't know really, I went in and asked if they had any vacancies and they did. I knew about the company so I thought they would be good to work for

So it's a well known company, and that's what made you apply for them. Can you tell me, in your own words, what the brand name stands for? What are they trying to convey to customers?

Well (the brand) appeals to pretty much everyone. Its good value for money, good quality at reasonable prices. We're a family pub, but all bars are different across the board about letting children in. We have a kids menu so that attracts a lot of families. Sheffield is a student town, but we get a lot of the over thirty five crowd. I guess we're more appealing to them, because its less student orientated than other places. There's a very different atmosphere from day to night as well. The crowd the food pulls in during the day is very different to the people you get at night. We appeal to a lot of people

Do you think too many people?

It seems like that sometimes. There'll be a family with young children in on a Saturday, then a stag do will come in, and then there'll be a couple trying to have a quiet drink all in the same area. But I guess people know what to expect when they come into one of our pubs. We're trying to get away from the binge drinker image, but obviously that doesn't stop people coming in. To be honest though that's one of the good things about it, all different types of people come in

Do you think it's the brand name that gets people coming in?

I think so, people know what they're getting with us, we provide good service, and all our associates know what's expected from them. We try and do our best

So how are the brands implemented into the bar?

In what way do you mean?

What emulates the brand? What does the company have control over?

Well the company decides most things, all the menus, promotional events, food and drink is decided by the company. The two bars I worked in are owned by the same brand but they are slightly different in the things they sell. The menus are different, the drinks are slightly different. The signs and logos show what the brand is

What is the difference between the two brands?

I think the one I started in is for a younger crowd. Where I work now is for older people, and you can see that from walking in the building, and by the name I suppose

Do you think they have a strict control over the branding?

The brand standards are pretty strict. The management books are really thorough; everything has to be done in a certain way. I was really surprised

Do you think they're too strict?

It's hard to say. They obviously work because the company is doing really well, but it is a bit much sometimes. I mainly notice the operational procedures, but all the products (food, drink and service), we can't change that

Do you want to?

If I had my own bar it would be very different to the one I work in now. I would deliver the highest service possible, serve cocktails, maybe a different menu, but I don't know too much about food. I'd have to get a chef to do that

Anything else?

I would change a lot of operational things. When it gets busy, you can't do everything that you're supposed to do. It can be a bit difficult. When we get audited they only look at the brand standards, we might not always hit those specific targets, but it doesn't mean people don't do a good job

When you get a bad or average audit, is this demotivating?

Yeah it can be, it depends on the individual problem I suppose. At the same time, on my first day at here I got a 100% score for a perfect score. That made me really happy and made me look good in front of my new colleagues. I kind of needed it at the time, I was really nervous going in to a shift leader position; I didn't feel that I had enough experience. I thought the others that worked there would think that I couldn't do it. It all worked out ok in the end though

What's the difference between your job now and when you worked in the bar before working for the company you do now?

Well obviously the responsibility that comes with it, and managing the team

Do you feel more motivated in your new role?

I do, but at the moment I'm still in training so I'm under a lot of pressure. It's a lot of work at the moment

Do you feel empowered in your new role?

It's hard to say, it's still early days. I'm not going to lie; it felt quite good being a shift leader and feeling like I'm making a valuable contribution. It makes me feel a bit important.

Is there anything you don't like about your new role?

I think at the moment I have to do a lot of things at once. All the management booklets and everything are a lot of hard work, especially because I'm working forty/ fifty hour weeks. They still expect you to do the management booklets as well, and I have a backlog of the training things from my team leader position

Are the company supporting you in this?

Well ultimately I have to do the work myself, and it has to be completed by a certain time

How helpful is the training?

It is helpful, the wine training made me realise I had been telling customers things about wine that weren't exactly accurate. But some of it is really obvious, other bits are quite hard. You have to come up with your own ideas about how you would up sell different products, what you would do on different promotions events to maximise profit

Do you get to implement those ideas?

If they're ones that help promotions that are already in place then yeah, but it depends. A lot of ideas that I came up with, my area manager told me straight away that we didn't have the budget to do that. I think they make you do them just to see if you have the ideas. I think it's a bit pointless when you don't get to carry them out

So you think they're testing you, to see if you're creative?

Probably. It's just annoying because you want to do certain things but then they tell you that you can't. I don't see the point

But maybe it's because in the future, as you go up in the business, you'll be able to?

Maybe. We'll see. I'd like to try out some different things, getting a younger crowd in here (the bar)

Do you think that's what the business needs?

Well like you know, Sheffield is a student town. It's all young people. The company have the other bar for the younger people and here is for the older crowd, but we need more of a mix in here. Even older people don't want to drink in an old man's pub these days. I just think we should have a bit more control over what happens. But to be honest, so much of our time is taken up doing the day to day things there's not really time to do it. I suppose that's why the company comes up with all the ideas

4. Interview Transcript: Manager D

So you worked for the Bar Company? Could you tell me about the recruitment process, how you started working for them?

Well first off you had to send off your CV and covering letter to the company. They gave everyone a phone interview. If you passed that then you got a face to face interview. That was a really long interview, like two hours long; really intense really thorough interview. And then, after that if you passed the face to face interview then you had a trial shift.

What kind of thing did they have you doing on the trial shift?

It was to pick up the basics of being on the bar; they also put you in as like a stand-in manager, to see how you handled it. You had to chat to customers, to members of staff, see how well you integrate with everyone. It was like they looked at your leadership skills a bit, threw you in at the deep end to see if you could handle it.

Then you got a position as a party planner in Leeds. What was that like?

My responsibilities were supposed to be like; I was set targets and things to increase the revenue they made from parties. That was basically my job description. My actual job role was that I would be dealing with all of their enquiries, whether it was by phone or by website. I had to get all the parties booked in, tailor making all of their packages. I also had to seek out bookings, because that was a major source of revenue for them. Corporate companies and things like that. It never actually kind of took off properly. I was brought in to take over the party planner, who was supposed to be leaving, that never really materialised. It was a really big bar, and everyone was really busy. There was no one to train me because they didn't have the time, so I ended up being her number two person, more like her assistant. I didn't have any official training.

So when you say tailor making the packages, did you have set packages of buffets, decorations they had, or could you adapt them?

Well they did have set menus for buffets and extra things that the clients could pick, and choose, and that was really easy. There were the extra things, like getting a DJ, which you had to do yourself, and that was down to the client, what they wanted really. Obviously there were limits, for instance you couldn't have a heavy rock metal band or anything like that. If they didn't want the standard decorations, then you had to sort that out for them. You had to know the business quite well first. Especially when seeking out new business and new party bookings. You had to know about all the companies, if they had had a party with us before and things like that. It can be a bit embarrassing when you're trekking the streets and knocking on doors on companies who already have a regular booking with you. Because the bar was so big, there were a few separate bars that could be used as private parties. You had to constantly weigh up each booking. For a lot of them, it wouldn't make sense for a booking to have a private room because their budget wasn't big enough. That was a problem sometimes. Clients would want a private room, but from our point of view it wasn't worth it.

So would you be implementing the parties?

If I arranged them, then yeah. You would at least be there in the beginning to make sure everything was alright. I would give all the handovers to the staff that were pretty extensive. I

left before I got to do all that much, I ended up leaving before the main party planner I was supposed to be taking over from.

So that was the end result? How did it all come about?

Well it got to the point I was so frustrated. I wasn't learning anything, but at the same time I had a lot of responsibility. I was supposed to be taking over from this party planner, and I just didn't feel like I had enough knowledge to do it. It was weird because I was hired into a management position, but I ended up being a number two. When I first started working for the company I did all the standard training for the bar, and worked on the bar for the first month. Then I started supervising. I actually had to ask for more time on the bar, so I would be confident and know what I was managing. I felt really awkward asking for it, because it looked like I didn't know what I was doing, but I thought it was better to admit it, then to be in a situation where I do something really wrong. Then all of a sudden I was in a management position, but not at the same time. I think if someone had been there to train me properly then it might have been a bit different. I didn't stop working for the company, I moved to the smaller bar in Leeds, where I felt a bit more comfortable, but I wasn't a party planner any more, which upset me. I felt like I had failed.

A party planner is a specific role. Do you think that that contributed to the whole thing?

Yeah. Being a party planner requires you to know the area really well. Especially when you're looking for new bookings, you need to know the city really well and I didn't.

Did you feel more comfortable working in the smaller bar?

I did, but it still wasn't my dream job. I was a placement student when I was working for them, so I had to complete the year. I feel a bit bitter about it. They realised they'd made a mistake in putting me in that position. Not training me up, and putting me in that role.

How did you select staff?

It was all about reading between the lines and stuff. Not asking standard interview questions. Trying to get to know them, rather than what they know. It's a bit bad really, just going over personality rather than experience. It seems to work for them; they're really ambassadors for the brand. All the teams have a really 'pro company' attitude, they love working for the company. So it works.

5. Interview Transcript: Manager E

So as a manager, you still work on the bar, and used to before you got promoted. How strict were their standards with drinks?

Extremely strict. They would do spec tests quite often, and they really want their drinks to be exactly the same in any Revolution bar you would walk in to. I mean, there was 'six steps to a perfect cappuccino', and you couldn't make them for a customer until you had been trained, tested and signed off.

Do you get audited by mystery diners?

No we didn't it was the managers that oversees it really. Mostly the general manager. The brands standards manager for the company would go to each bar and check all of the drinks and stuff on a regular basis. He came round constantly to all the bars, and you never knew when he was coming most of the time. He would do a food audit, a bar audit. There were over two hundred points on his checklist.

What happened if you failed them? Were you ever in a situation where the bar failed?

We never failed. You had to get over a certain percent (85%) and we always hit that, at least. They would put up the league tables on the emails to all the bars, to show the best ones. It wasn't a case that we would think we would fail; it was the case of getting in the top ten. Trying to be number one. The bar would get a bigger budget if we got number one. And you would get a budget for a massive staff party, all of us managers would get bonuses. Each manager was in charge of different sections of the audit. So when the report came out, the GM would look at where the low scores were and whoever was in charge of that would be told to sort it; so a lot of pressure.

So there is a lot of incentives to keeping within the brand standards?

Yeah, definitely.

Were the bars judged on any other standards?

Nope. Not that I can think of. Obviously health and safety and stuff like that, but nothing else really.

Did the brand standards just cover the food and drinks?

There was a standard of service as well.

Was that really strict?

Yeah it was, but the brand standards manager mostly looked at the food and drink. I guess it's easier to assess/ but the service style was strictly controlled as well. Just as much as the food and drink. But at the same time, as long as you were friendly and smiley to your customers it was fine. It was more to do with things like; when you were making cocktails you had to do it directly in front of the customer, things like that. Everyone adhered to it no problem though. All the managers (95%) who worked for the company have been promoted internally so they all know how it should be.

So after Bar A you moved over to Bar B (sister property of Inventive Leisure, unbranded site). Could you tell me what that was like?

It was completely different. I was in charge of the food service, training and staff there. They hadn't had any food service standards there prior to that. They hadn't found their identity yet, before it was just bar food, burgers and things like that. They decide they wanted to serve Thai food. To take it off (launch) they wanted a proper set of standards and proper training of the staff on food service. He wanted a proper day team, rather than just bar staff that served food; they wanted a real team. So I had to make the steps of service from scratch. Then I had to train them on it. I also had to teach them about the personal side of it, how to make the customers feel special and appreciated. So I was in charge of all of that and it was all up to me. (The head chef developed the menu). I designed the tests for checking the service as well.

Did you enjoy doing that then?

Yeah I did, it was a million times better than working at Bar B. And because Bar B didn't fall under the brand standards of Bar A, there was leeway to change things if we needed. It sounds like more work, designing your own standards, but in a lot of ways it was actually easier. You know, I had sway in what happened, and so did the staff. If they came to me with a valid point or suggestion with how to change something then I would take it on board. It was a lot better. There were some points that brand standards didn't make sense, it was a lot better this way. The chefs at Bar A were always complaining because they had found ways to make things better, to make the food tastier at a cheaper cost. The things they found to change didn't even change the appearance of the overall dish, they just made it better. But they had to do everything 'to spec' so much that they couldn't even do them. The General Manager let him (head chef) do it for a while, because it was looking good on the general manager's stats and stuff because his gross profit was higher. For a few months they did it and then the area manager caught on to what was happening because the kitchen's gross profit was too high. As soon as the area manager stopped it the gross profit dropped by 30%, which is huge. They were only small changes; you can see how much difference it made. The area manager wanted everything done to spec so it had to be changed back. The head chef ended up getting so frustrated so he left in the end. It was ridiculous. They should have more faith in their staff. Head chefs are senior management at the end of the day.

The Company say they give their General Managers a lot of autonomy over the bars they run. Is that true, from what you've seen?

Yeah they do say that, and that they run them individually. They do let the GM's run some nights differently. I mean, food's always the same no matter what. Those promotions cannot be changes; they're the same across the board. But obviously, in different cities there are different nights that are busy, and the GM's would always say how different nights would suit some promotions better, but they couldn't change it. Drinks offers can be changed.

So overall, you prefer working for Bar B?

100%. Working at Bar A I guess was helpful. I mean, to a certain extent the brand standards for the drinks and things like that were good, they probably should be the same. But they were extremely strict. It keeps everyone on their toes, which is necessary. But at Bar B the strictness was exactly the same. I have nothing against that. It's just other things, management things that need a bit more room for manoeuvre.

Could you see yourself carrying on working at Bar B?

Yes and No. Bar B has made me realise that I would prefer to work for an independent, even at Bar B the standards are really strict. I'd like to work somewhere where I can use my knowledge and common sense a bit more. It might just be a personal thing. But I got a lot of job satisfaction from training staff with my food service plan, because I was part of something.

Could you see yourself going back to Bar A?

Not really, it's not my thing.

6. Manager A's Standard Operating Procedures

Our Customer's Journey

These steps should make sure all of our guests have a great experience every time they decide to eat with us. It should make your lives easier as well guys! There are a few points on here but don't get too intimidated, they're there to help you. If there's anything you're not sure of, speak to your manager. It's important that we're all on the same page, so read through these carefully and make sure you understand everything! The most important thing to remember is to smile guys!

1. Host greets guests, asks how many are in the party. The host then decides where they are best placed to sit in the restaurant. If the host has to leave the front door to check, they must ask the guests politely to wait for a moment whilst they find a table.
2. The table must be set up with the menu stands in place, neatly. There should be a menu for each place setting. Nothing else should be on the table, and chairs should be neatly tucked underneath the table.
3. Once it has been assessed that the table is correct, and the hostess has informed the server that they have new guests, the guests can be taken over to the table. This should be done by the hostess, and the server should greet them at the table. From the moment the guests enter, it should take no longer than two minutes for them to be greeted and seated.
4. The server should greet the guests at the table, introduce themselves by name, and make sure they are all comfortable. Tell the guests the specials for the day, and also inform them of any dishes that may be out of stock. Ask if they are ready to place their drinks order.
5. If they are not ready, then leave the guests, and come back in two minutes, no later.
6. Take the drinks order. If they are ready to order food then take the food order. If not, then just get the drinks.
7. Put the drinks order through the satellite till. The order will go through to the bar and they will prepare the drinks and put them on the tray. The drinks must arrive to the table within five minutes.
8. When you take the drinks to the table and they haven't yet ordered food, ask if they are ready to order.
9. When you take the food order, go to each person individually. Take order for each course, ask if they would like sauces where appropriate (e.g. for steaks, ask what sauce they would like to accompany it; peppercorn etc.). Ask if they would like any side orders. Offer bread and olives for while they're waiting for food.

10. Once all guests have ordered, repeat it back. If a medium well done or well done rib eye steak has been ordered please inform guest that it will take a little longer to come to the table (20-25 mins). Thank them and put the order through the till.
11. If they have ordered a starter, then it should take no longer than ten minutes. If it is a main course, then it should take no longer than fifteen minutes from the moment the guest orders to the moment it comes to the table.
12. After taking the food order and inputting it in the till, take a cutlery basket, with wrapped cutlery for each guest, salt, pepper and sauces to the table. This must be done within two minutes of the guest ordering.
13. When the food is ready to be taken out, you will be notified by your bleeper. The food will be plated, and ready to take to the table. All plates must be on a tray.
14. Carry your tray, at shoulder level or above to the table. Place the tray down on a kickstand (not on the table).
15. Give each guest their dish.
16. Ask if they require any additional sauces, and if they would like any more drinks if they are a third full or less.
17. Take the kickstand and tray away from the table and out of the dining area.
18. Check back within five minutes. When doing a check back, do not just ask "is everything alright"? Pick a specific dish, and direct the question specifically towards a guest. For example, "is that steak cooked to your liking sir?"
19. If the guests are satisfied, then take the cutlery bin away and any empty glasses or debris on the table. If the guest has a problem, take action immediately. Notify the manager on duty if necessary. If there is a problem, do an extra follow up check back to ensure the guest is satisfied.
20. Once all the guests have finished eating, all plates must be cleared within three minutes.
21. If they have a following course, notify the kitchen.
22. If they have a following main course, take another cutlery bin, again check their drinks and ask if they would like any more.
23. Repeat the process for the main course.
24. After the guest has finished their main course, and have not already ordered desserts, direct the guests' attention to the dessert section of the menu and offer coffees.
25. If they place an order, then put it through the till, take cutlery to the table, and ensure that the coffees arrive to the table within five minutes of ordering, and their desserts within ten minutes.

26. Check back with the guests within five minutes if they are having a dessert course. It is not necessary if they are only having coffees.
27. Keep an eye on the guests and clear the table when appropriate. When they ask you for the bill, tell them you will get it straight away, and get it for them by printing it off from the till. If they have been sitting there for a while and looking restless, ask them if they are ready to get the bill.
28. Take the bill over to them on a small tray, with a mint for each guest. This should be done within two minutes of the bill being requested.
29. The guest may want to pay at the till, which they are welcome to do. If the method of payment isn't clear (e.g. if they do not immediately get their credit/debit card out) then politely ask them. Do not rush the guests or interrupt a conversation. They may not be ready to go just yet.
30. If they are paying by card then get the card machine and perform the transaction at the table, then process the payment on the till, print off a receipt and take it to the guest. If it is a cash or voucher payment, process it through the till and return the receipt to the guest, on a tray.
31. Thank the guests for dining with us. If it is raining, give them a complimentary umbrella and walk them out.