

## ZERO HOURS CONTRACTS AND THEIR PERCEIVED IMPACT ON JOB MOTIVATION OF EVENT CATERING STAFF

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Catering is a cornerstone of events. Motivating catering staff, who can be either permanent or “hourly paid” employees, represents an important managerial challenge, especially in the UK, where controversial zero hours contracts (ZHCs) prevail within the events industry. This article reports a representative case study of a London-based event catering company that relies upon ZHCs. In pursuit of corporate social responsibility (CSR) goals, directed at enhancing the well-being of employees and improving corporate image, the company considers replacing ZHCs with alternative contracts, but wishes to examine the potential impact of this intervention first. To aid in decision making, 18 in-depth, semistructured interviews are conducted with company’s managers and employees to examine the drivers of staff motivation and the perceived effect of ZHCs. The study finds that interpersonal relationships, remuneration rates, and perceived fairness of managerial treatment drive staff motivation in event catering. The major positive (flexibility and no mutual obligation) and negative (job insecurity and instable income) implications of ZHCs are well understood by employees. The internal (personal finances, family status, and individual lifestyles) and environmental (current job market situation and managerial abilities) circumstances determine the level of preparedness and the degree of willingness of event catering staff to accept ZHCs. Implications for policy making, professional practice, and future research are discussed.

**Key words:** Event catering; Zero hours contracts; Corporate social responsibility; Job motivation; Responsible human resource management

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### Introduction

The global events market has grown rapidly to become ever-more competitive (Bowdin, Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2011). In this

challenging business environment, events companies need to build a competitive advantage, which is often associated with attractive pricing strategies, unique and convenient venue location and ambience, outstanding food and service quality,

among others (Lynch, 2015). Importantly, in services industries, competitive advantage is often identified with company's staff (Kusluvan, Kusluvan, Ilhan, & Buyruk, 2010). This holds true for events as they are the social experiences facilitated by skillful employees (Bladen, Kennell, Abson, & Wilde, 2012) whose performance defines the effectiveness of operations management and determines the level of consumer satisfaction, thus shaping the lasting socioeconomic impact of events (Shock & Stefanelli, 2001).

A core segment of the events industry is catering, which provides food, drinks, and service at events venues (Cousins & Lillicrap, 2010). Similar to hospitality employment, event catering is characterized by several work-related challenges (Nickson, 2013). High staff turnover, low employee commitment, and poor job satisfaction negatively affect staff performance and jeopardize the achievement of organizational goals in event catering (Boella & Goss-Turner, 2013). For successful event delivery, it is important to understand how employee performance in event catering can be enhanced (Nickson, 2013).

Staff performance is correlated with job motivation (Luthans, 2011), which drives employees towards the fulfilment of their personal needs (Mullins, 2010). Managers ought to facilitate this drive by creating favorable working conditions. The core human needs alongside the cognitive processes behind shaping these needs that boost staff motivation have been broadly researched in the context of the tourism and hospitality industries (Pinder, 2014). However, this topic is understudied in events where extant literature has focused on the motivational drivers of event volunteers, rather than core event staff (Van der Wagen, 2009).

In the context of hospitality employment, the needs for job security and fairness of managerial treatment have been recognized as the key (de)motivational factors (Simons & Enz, 1995). However, the global economy has gradually shaped the employment conditions that are not congruent with the full satisfaction of these needs (Carré, Ferber, Golden, & Herzberg, 2000). This is exemplified by controversial zero hours contracts (ZHCs) widely used in the UK hospitality and events industries (Witts, 2016).

In ZHCs, the relationship between an employer and a worker is characterized by a lack of mutual

commitment (BBC News, 2013). The employer does not guarantee if, when, and how long they will request the employee's services (Batchelor, 2017) while the employee is not obliged to accept the job offered (GOV.UK, 2017). This lack of mutual guarantees creates advantages and disadvantages. For employees, this implies flexibility but also imposes uncertainty about the number of hours worked and the income earned (Brinkley, 2013). Further, ZHCs do not provide any holiday or sick pay, thus putting employees in an insecure position outside work (BBC News, 2013). In turn, ZHCs enable employers to effectively manage demand fluctuations, thus aiding in addressing this major operational challenge of all services industries (Cotton, 2013). The shortfall of ZHCs from the employer's perspective is in that they can create an underperforming and noncommitted workforce (Ellen, 2017). Additionally, ZHCs can impact negatively on employee empowerment and generate work-related stress as "staff without guaranteed pay have much less power to stand up for their rights and often feel afraid to turn down shifts in case they fall out of favor with their boss" (Bloom, 2016).

No research has attempted to understand how ZHCs affect job commitment and motivation of UK event catering staff, thus representing an important knowledge gap, especially in light of Brexit. Following the country's departure from the EU, the popularity of ZHCs in the UK is forecast to grow as labor right protection guaranteed by the EU legislation might no longer be valid (Batchelor, 2017). Further, better understanding of ZHCs is paramount from the professional viewpoint. This is because the hospitality human resources practices are underdeveloped (Kusluvan et al., 2010), while managing people represents a crucial challenge in catering (Sommerville, 2007). Better job conditions are required to attract, motivate, and retain talented and skilled catering employees (Nickson, 2013). This would aid in combating the bad reputation of the event catering sector attributed to employment standards (Boella & Goss-Turner, 2013). This would also enable considerate employers to gain a competitive advantage (Madera, Dawson, Guchait, & Belarmino, 2017). Lastly, research on ZHCs in event catering could prompt employers to develop alternative contract solutions that are perceived favorably by

staff, thus boosting employee motivation (Monaghan, 2017).

This study contributes to knowledge by critically analyzing the perceived impact of ZHCs on job motivation of event catering staff, looking at this issue from the managerial and employee viewpoint.

Literature Review

*Event Catering*

The rapid global growth of events has determined an increasingly important role they play in many national economies (Yeoman, Robertson, & Ali-Knight, 2012). Although it is difficult to accurately quantify the economic contribution of events due to their overlap with other services industries (Shone, 2013), some conventional estimates suggest that events are the 16th largest employer in the UK valued at circa £40 billion (Business Visits & Events Partnership, 2014). This corresponds to about a third of the total value of the UK tourism industry estimated at £127 billion (Cox, 2017).

Historically, there has been a strong connection between food and events (Goldblatt, 2005) as a rare people’s gathering happens without the food served (Shock & Stefanelli, 2001). The function of food in events ranges from being a pure satisfier of a basic physiological need to determining quality of an event (Silvers, 2004). The major role of catering in staging a successful event has long been recognized (Mallen & Adams, 2013). Event catering is a complex function that comprises the processes of planning and operating that are necessary to provide preset food and drinks to specific groups of people (Cousins & Lillicrap, 2010). The role of catering depends on the event’s nature (Bowdin et al., 2011), in particular on the “type, purpose, scope, and objectives of the event” (Silvers, 2004, p. 295). Sometimes the whole event rotates around catering (for instance, a formal dinner party) because it is a crucial aspect for all events as the quality of food and drinks served determines event’s success (Robinson & Callan, 2005). There are three main categories of event catering: on premises, off premises, and concessionaire (Table 1). This study’s focus is on-premises catering given its largest share in the event catering market (Cousins & Lillicrap, 2010).

Table 1  
Event Catering Categories

Catering Category	Venue Type	Main Features of Catering Operations	Caterer Types	Venue Example
On-premises catering	Permanent venue with catering facilities and equipment in place	The caterer prepares and serves food in the same location	In-house caterer, which is based in the venue; Contracted external caterer who arrives at the venue for a specific event	Hotels; Convention/conference centers Restaurants; Other venues (e.g., banquet halls, clubs, museums, universities, offices)
Off-premises catering	Temporary venue with no catering facilities in place	The caterer usually prepares the food in the caterer’s own kitchen, then transports it and finishes the preparation on the event’s site	Contracted external caterer who arrives at the venue for a specific event	Any external venue booked for staging an event
Concessionaire catering	Venue can be either temporary or permanent	A combination of on-premises and off-premises catering, as per above	Contracted external caterer who has a mobile kitchen/concession trailer where food is produced and served; Caterer who works either temporary or permanently in a concession area for a specific venue	

Note. Source: Adapted from Goldblatt (2005) and Shock and Stefanelli (2011).

### *The Importance of Staff Performance in Event Catering*

The resource-based theory suggests that a company's competitive advantage lies within its internal resources, rather than external conditions (Barney, 1991). Most organizational theories derived from this notion focus on employees, considering their skills, experiences, attitudes, and behaviors as a source of competitive advantage (Kusluvan et al., 2010). This holds true for event catering as staff are at the core of the services industries (Evans, 2015). In particular, employee performance is crucial in the following areas of event catering: operations management; service quality and customer satisfaction; and risk management (Bowdin et al., 2011).

In operations management, catering staff provide key support to the event manager as food services are required at strictly allocated times (Bladen et al., 2012). This is particularly important for "high profile" events and/or for the events being held in historical venues as there is a tight schedule and many rules need to be followed to preserve the site (Whitfield, 2009). This requires event catering team to be efficient, capable, and stress-resistant. These employee qualities will become ever-more important as the number of events held in historical venues is growing, which is driven by the ongoing focus on consumer experience and personalization in events (Rogers, 2013).

Catering staff is a driver of customer satisfaction in events (Bowdin et al., 2011), implying that staff performance may represent the most significant part of the event catering product. Indeed, customer satisfaction with events has been defined as an "evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with a good or service over time" (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994, p. 54) where quality of the product and service offered, such as food and drink, determines how satisfied a customer is. Getz (2013) argued that satisfaction with events is determined by complex interactions between consumers and the "core," tangible, and intangible, elements of event delivery. Further, although the tangible features of events (e.g., the food served) are important in customer satisfaction, the intangible elements of events, such as the quality of service and human interactions, are equally essential (Shone, 2013). Through their appearance,

attitude, and behavior, catering employees facilitate human interactions in events (Kusluvan et al., 2010). These interactions represent so-called "moments of truth" as they shape consumer's overall perception of an event (Evans, 2015). As Anderson et al. (1994) argued, quality in the operational environment is related to the people delivering the service, thus emphasizing that event catering staff are the ones who create memorable experiences (Goldblatt, 2005). Customer satisfaction leads to repeat visitation and enhances corporate image, thus being not only a determinant of successful event delivery, but also a strategic event objective (W. Lee, Sung, Suh, & Zhao, 2017).

Lastly, event catering employees are instrumental in risk management. Event risk can be defined as "any future incident that will negatively influence the event" (Bowdin et al., 2011, p. 593) and catering operations are attributed substantial risks given the negative impact of possible food contamination, intolerances, or kitchen accidents on the event's reputation. Personal hygiene, discipline, and commitment of event catering staff play an important role in the provision of safe food at events (Cousins & Lillicrap, 2010).

The above discussion demonstrates the importance of event catering staff's performance for successful event delivery. Staff performance is closely linked to job motivation. The determinants of job motivation in events are reviewed next.

### *Job Motivation in Event Catering*

Defining job motivation is difficult and the concept has for long been a subject of academic debate (Pinder, 2014) with seminal contributions made to theory by Luthans (2011) and Vroom (1964), to mention a few. Overall, the concept of job motivation is considered to be connected with the concept of dynamism (Karthick, 2009) manifested in employee's gradual motion towards satisfying their needs (Champoux, 2016). In broad terms, these needs can be categorized as economic, intrinsic, and social.

A number of complex variables define why a specific need appears and drives job motivation. The complexity of variables is determined by the external contexts of employment (Kovach, 1987), such as the organizational, financial, and legal aspects

of work (Mullins, 2010), but also by the internal (social) settings. For example, within internal settings, national culture may influence the motivational variables (French, 2010), given examples of how motivational theories developed for the West do not work in non-Western contexts (Kanfer, Chen, & Pritchard, 2012). As a result, many cultural theories have highlighted national preferences for job motivation. For instance, Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) pinpointed such national culture's dimensions as uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and power distance as being particularly relevant for understanding job motivation in the services industries. Indeed, the current employment patterns in event catering highlight such challenges as job and salary insecurity, lack of certainty and difficulties in long-term planning (Batchelor, 2017), and issues with intrateam power imbalance (Williams, 2017). The core sociodemographic characteristics represent another example of internal variables that can influence the value systems of an individual (Hofstede et al., 2010), thus providing important motivational drivers (S. Schneider, Stahl, & Barsoux, 2014). Depending on these systems and on the individual personality traits, an employee will interpret differently the external and internal environments alongside the situational factors at work, thus being either motivated or demotivated by them (Kanfer et al., 2012).

A number of theories have been developed to understand the trigger of job motivation and the determinants of the direction and the intensity of this trigger (Pinder, 2014). Motivational theories can be grouped into needs/content theories that try to identify what needs motivate people, and cognitive/process theories that focus on the process that creates job motivation (Champoux, 2016). There is extensive literature on motivational theories [see e.g., comprehensive analyses in Luthans (2012) and Mullins (2010)]; hence, their in-depth discussion is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, a summary of the main similarities and differences is provided below.

“Core” needs/content theories (Maslow and Alderfer) have identified a very similar set of needs that drives job motivation. Maslow initially suggested a hierarchical order of these needs, with the lower ones being prioritized, but then accepted that following the hierarchy is not always feasible

(Luthans, 2012). Alderfer added the possibility for needs to emerge simultaneously, thus creating a multidimensional motivational force (Simons & Enz, 1995). The “basic” needs, such as job security, pay, and work benefits, are considered particularly important for hospitality workforce (Spinelli & Canavos, 2000). However, there is growing evidence showing that by addressing these needs it is only possible to prevent employee's dissatisfaction with their job, while sustaining job motivation is not guaranteed, which challenges the traditional scientific management school of thought. This argument is in line with Herzberg's theory, which assigns the lower needs to a category of so-called hygiene factors, or dissatisfiers (Mullins, 2010). This pinpoints satisfaction as a potential driver of employee motivation (Luthans, 2012). Indeed, it has been demonstrated that dissatisfaction with job correlates with employee's absenteeism and high turnover (B. Schneider, 1985). This is further emphasized by Deery (2009), who argued that the physical and emotional well-being of staff are important to consider when satisfying employees and boosting their job motivation.

In “core” process/cognitive theories, the concept of “equity” (Adams) represents a backbone of academic discourse on job motivation (Luthans, 2012), also in the context of hospitality employment. For instance, fairness, impartial treatment, and recognition of staff's effort have been shown to improve the level of job motivation and satisfaction (Fulford, 2005). Equity prompts employees to demonstrate reciprocity, implying better job commitment (Bilgin & Demirel, 2012). In contrast, the feeling of unfair treatment generates dissatisfaction and leads to high turnover (Faldetta, Fasone, & Provenzano, 2013).

In summary, the literature has established that managers need to identify the key motivators for employees and then align the staff's goals to the organizational objectives, because if personal goals are complementary to the set organizational objectives, then the employee will pursue them for their own gain. Managers should design the work environment accordingly to enhance motivation of staff and boost their performance (Simons & Enz, 1995). Importantly, although the theoretical underpinning of job motivation is robust, there is a paucity of empirical studies on how/if “core”

motivational theories translate into practice (M. T. Lee & Raschke, 2016), thus questioning the practical value of the concepts proposed and calling for more hands-on research.

### *Employment Challenges in Event Catering*

Human capital is shaped by the practices and policies the management puts in place and follows, the process known as human resources management (HRM) (Riley, 2014). HRM tasks are essential for a managerial role, especially in labor intense industries, such as events and hospitality (Evans, 2015). The challenge for events and hospitality managers is in that there is often not a dedicated HR department, or it is a centralized and difficult-to-reach unit, and managers should thus incorporate HRM in their functions (Van der Wagen, 2009). Research on HRM practices adopted by events and hospitality managers is underdeveloped (Nickson, 2013), while the determinants of employee motivation, commitment, and retention in the context of these industries remain poorly understood (Kusluvan et al., 2010).

The HRM challenges for event catering resemble those of the hospitality industry. First, the natural fluctuation of work needed in event operations does not always require full-time employment (Van der Wagen & White, 2014). This relates to the “pulsating nature” of event organizations as they expand when the events get closer, peaking on the event day, and then contracting once finished (Toffler, 1990). Therefore, controlling labor costs and adjusting staffing levels across this event’s lifecycle are a major challenge for events managers (Carlsson-Wall, Kraus, & Karlsson, 2016). This challenge is less pronounced for contract event catering as, due to a high volume of events run, employment of a “core” team is more feasible and yet, motivating this “core” team remains an important managerial issue (Shone, 2013).

Second, event and hospitality businesses struggle to recruit quality staff as the sector grows and competition for resources intensifies (Sommerville, 2007). Concurrently, there are high turnover rates, especially for entry-level jobs (Riley, 2014). This increases direct and indirect costs, such as recruitment and training costs, triggers productivity loss, and leads to decreased customer satisfaction

caused by inexperienced, new employees (Tracey & Hinkin, 2006). Overall, the labor challenges cost the UK hospitality industry £274 million annually, thus undermining its profitability and discouraging investment in training, leading to skill gap (People 1st, 2015). High turnover rates are closely related to job dissatisfaction and poor employee commitment (Kenneth, Gregory, & Cannon, 1996). It is paramount to address this issue by enhancing job motivation, which can in turn increase staff retention (Faldetta et al., 2013).

Event catering workforce is characterized by a number of specific features that hinder stimulation of staff commitment and hamper employee retention. Employees enter event catering jobs at their lowest level and are either not committed to the sector itself or do not perceive it as a permanent career choice (Sommerville, 2007). The low attractiveness of entry-level jobs in event catering is due to low pay (Partington, 2016) as the sector operates at low profit margins and managers are bound to minimize labor costs (Dittmer & Keefe, 2008). Further, and similar to the traditional hospitality context (Ludenberg, Gudmunson, & Andersson, 2009), event catering employment implies working long hours, unsociable times, and late shifts while the work environment is often stressful (Boella & Goss-Turner, 2013). Therefore, a significant portion of event catering workforce is represented by nontraditional employees, such as students, retirees, or economic migrants (Nickson, 2013).

Thus, the literature has highlighted the negative aspects of event catering employment and how these affect employee (de)motivation and (dis)satisfaction (Partington, 2016). Concurrently, there is an opposite view in academic discourse that argues that event catering represents a unique opportunity to find self-realization and enjoy flexibility (Weaver, 2009). In addition, event catering implies the opportunities to attend special events, meet celebrities, and work in attractive surroundings (Evans, 2015). This notwithstanding, the perception of event catering employment can be improved and this affects staff recruitment and retention (Deery, 2009). Events companies can tackle these challenges with appropriate HRM strategies. To this end, HRM practices are often considered part of “internal marketing” where employees are viewed as customers who need to be satisfied and motivated

(Joseph, 1996). This has the potential to positively affect workforce by improving employee commitment (Wildes, 2005). The level of adoption of the principles of “internal marketing” by event catering companies is often reflected in the type of contractual obligations that a business chooses to hold with its staff (Kusluvan et al., 2010).

### *Employment Contracts*

An employment contract forms the basis of the relationship between employee and employer and is defined by the UK government as “an agreement that sets out an employee’s: employment conditions; rights; responsibilities and duties” (GOV.UK, 2017). Carré et al. (2000) described a standard form of employment, such as full-time contracts, as a long-term relationship between an employer and an employee, where both parties benefit from the agreement. This involves, for the worker, job security, training, and career progression while, for the companies, this implies committed workforce and a good return on investment from the employee’s growth.

The standard form of employment has been dominant in the services industries until late 1980s when the forms of new, less standardized contracts started emerging (Fourie, 2008). These less standardized contracts included temporary/part-time and on-call work, casual, freelance, and seasonal employment, and contracts with irregular working hours, also issued by agencies (Kallerberg, 2000). Some of these new contracts offered more stability and better salaries while others led to precariousness and were dominated by low-pay and unskilled workers (Koch & Fritz, 2014). In her critical reflection upon transition to this new employment structures, Crompton (1999) identified the shift from the Fordist to post-Fordist economy as a driver. She explained the transition by the growth of the service economy where the fixed shifts of the manufacturing industries have been gradually replaced with more flexible and heterogeneous forms of employment. Deregulation of the services industries represents another driver as policies have pushed for liberalism and the creation of competitive markets (Fourie, 2008).

The ZHCs represent an example of a nonstandard contract (Office for National Statistics, 2017),

which accounted for 6% of all 2017 employment contracts in the UK (Pyper & Powell, 2018). The controversy of ZHCs has been recognized and the topic has attracted significant media coverage as a result (Walsh, 2017). This holds true for the events and hospitality industries characterized by the largest adoption of ZHCs (Witts, 2016).

### *Zero Hours Contracts*

ZHCs are characterized by the following key features (GOV.UK, 2017): 1) no guaranteed working hours; 2) no obligation to offer and/or accept work; 3) hourly paid employment with the minimum level of pay guaranteed; and 4) voidance of any exclusivity clause. Since the introduction of ZHCs, they have become an object of political and public debate given the controversy of their features. Although the value of ZHCs for employers in aiding labor control and enabling work flexibility has been recognized, the numerous downsides of ZHCs for employees, such as job insecurity, unstable income, and fewer rights, have been emphasized (Batchelor, 2017). For instance, the negative effect of ZHCs on vulnerable labor categories, such as mothers, has been discussed given that no paid maternity leave is offered while childcare arrangements are difficult to make due to irregular working patterns (BBC News, 2016). Considering the discussion on employee motivation held earlier, it can be argued that ZHCs can drive job demotivation given the issues they have with job security and fairness.

For some employees, the major issue with ZHCs is not in the contract itself, but in its poor administration, as managers do not always follow good practice examples (BBC News, 2013). For example, holders of ZHCs often complain about poor communication of working shifts and last-minute changes and cancellations made to the hours worked, which hinders planning (BBC News, 2016). The issue of power imbalance has further been raised as workers on ZHCs can be bullied by permanent staff, be reluctant to voice their opinion on job-related matters, and are forced to live fearing job insecurity (Williams, 2017). A case that has received extensive media coverage is the one of SportsDirect, a major UK sports apparel retailer, whose employees protested against the climate of fear, anxiety, and

pressure at workplace (Moore, 2016). In response to the growing critique, abolishment of ZHCs and/or their more stringent regulation has been called for (BBC News, 2019).

Importantly, there is an alternative view that argues that ZHCs have been disproportionately demonized (BBC News, 2013). For example, many events and hospitality managers posit that the prime categories of hospitality workforce, such as young, retired, or part-time workers, would actually prefer this type of contract due to such benefits it offers as flexibility and freedom (Cotton, 2013). This debate reflects the two underlying, contrasting perspectives upon the labor market (de)regulation in the services industries and the role of corporates in society, namely neo-liberalism and corporate social responsibility (CSR). The neoliberal perspective supports freedom of choice of an individual and/or a company and rejects any idea of external regulation and internal responsibility, except for responsibility towards shareholders (Mullerat, 2010). In contrast, the CSR perspective argues for a business to serve a wider society's goals by looking well after its employees (Whitehead & Phippen, 2015). In between these two, a moderate perspective has emerged that calls for the selective application of ZHCs with an element of ethics and external regulation required avoiding exploitation of the concept (Mullerat, 2010).

### *Summary and a Knowledge Gap*

This section has highlighted the importance of event catering for staging events. It has further reviewed the key role of event catering staff in delivering a successful event and disclosed the managerial need for motivated workforce. The section has established the challenges of HRM in event catering and discussed the controversy of ZHCs. It has shown that, to date, no academic research has attempted to examine the impact of ZHCs on employee (de)motivation in event catering while the outcome of the UK economy-wide staff surveys conducted to date have shown mixed results. Indeed, BBC News (2013) found that the employees on ZHCs are as satisfied with their jobs as the staff on traditional contracts, while Hall (2013) revealed substantial levels of job dissatisfaction attached to ZHCs. This outlines

an important knowledge gap that this project will address by seeking answers to the following research questions: "What drives job motivation and satisfaction among event catering employees?" and "What influence, positive or negative, do ZHCs have on job performance and motivation of event catering staff?"

### Research Design

This study explored the perceived impact of ZHCs from the perspective of managers and employees of an event catering company. The managerial viewpoint aided in an understanding of why and how ZHCs are being used and their anticipated effect on employees. This perspective is important given that managers are in charge of HRM practices in the services industries (Van der Wagen, 2009). The employee perspective disclosed the attitudes of staff towards their employment conditions, thus revealing how ZHCs affected their job motivation. Subsequent comparative analysis enabled the "match" of the two perspectives, outlining similarities and discrepancies in the perceptions recorded.

To achieve the project's aim, a case study approach was adopted. This approach suits research that requires consideration of a specific person, community, organization, or situation in order to gather in-depth data for evaluation of particular contexts and/or settings (Gillham, 2010). A case study approach is appropriate when studying complex social phenomena in real world situations (Swanborn, 2010). Its application is further justified if the accessibility of study informants is restricted and/or when reaching for limited populations, such as managers and employees in the services industries (Poulston & Yiu, 2010). The shortcoming of a case study approach is in low generalizability of results. This shortcoming can be partially overcome by selecting a case study that is broadly representative of the market under review, a so-called representative case study (Matthews & Ross, 2014).

This project employed a representative case study of an event catering company from London, UK. The company is an established commercial caterer that employs circa 2000 staff across several subbrands. It specializes in on-premises event catering and provides hospitality services to a number of historical venues in London. The case study

company is broadly representative of UK event catering market in terms of employment patterns. Its workforce is made up by: young/students; over 40s; females; economic migrants; and staff not educated to an event's degree. The case study company has a centralized HR department that issues policies and provides overall managerial guidance while the unit managers are responsible for applying these policies and carrying out "basic" HR functions on the ground, such as deciding on remuneration rates, recruitment procedures, and staff training opportunities. The majority of the company's workforce is employed on the basis of ZHCs. In response to the ongoing critique of ZHCs, the feasibility of their future use is currently being reevaluated by the top management who consider substituting ZHCs with alternative, and less controversial, types of employment contracts. This project was designed as part of this reevaluation exercise in order to inform management decision making. The exercise was initiated by the top management who commissioned the research and facilitated access to study's informants.

For the following reasons, the project adopted the qualitative research paradigm for primary data collection and analysis. First, the issue of ZHCs in the context of event catering is too understudied to apply a quantitative research method. Survey design necessitates extensive past research given its confirmatory nature, while the qualitative research paradigm is more appropriate for exploratory projects (Matthews & Ross, 2014), such as this one. Second, the goal of this study is not to precisely measure the impact of ZHCs on job motivation, but to refine the knowledge on *what* this impact can be and *how* those affected by the impact feel about it. In other words, the project aimed at understanding (and reflecting upon) human experiences by adopting a participatory, humanist approach to primary data collection, as suggested by Sedgley, Pritchard, and Morgan (2011). That is why the project examined employee perception of ZHCs, which is to gather in-depth insights and capture subjective attitudes, feelings, and beliefs, based on first-hand people's experiences as proposed by Corbetta (2003). Lastly, according to Creswell (1998), qualitative research is best suited to study controversial social issues, especially where a comparative analysis of stakeholder views is necessary. The issue

of ZHCs is highly controversial, which provides a further rationale towards the choice of the qualitative research paradigm for primary data collection and analysis in this study.

Within the portfolio of qualitative methods, in-depth, semistructured, face-to-face interviews were adopted. These are guided conversations that offer scope for deviation from a set of "core" questions, thus enabling detailed exploration of complex societal issues (Matthews & Ross, 2014). Interviews were preferred to focus groups as the latter collect data from participant's interactions (Rosenthal, 2016), while this project set to gather the individual perceptions. In addition, the issues of employment contracts and job motivation can be too sensitive for group discussions and can trigger social desirability bias, thus hindering provision of true answers (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012).

The interview schedule was developed following the main themes emerged from the literature review. These were built around the topics of: 1) determinants of job (de)motivation; 2) understanding of ZHCs and the perceived effect of ZHCs on job (de)motivation; and 3) preference of ZHCs compared to alternative types of employment contracts. The main themes were then regularly updated with any supplementary themes that arose from inductive analysis of the interview material as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

For recruitment, purposive sampling was employed and the study participants were selected from among the case study company's managers and employees. For managerial interviews, those unit managers were chosen who directly dealt with the HR issues on the ground. For staff interviews, employees directly involved in event catering operations were recruited, broadly accounting for the diversity of sociodemographic characteristics in terms of gender (mostly females), age (mainly young/students and over 40s/retirees), cultural background (mostly economic migrants), family status, and work experience in event catering (Table 2). The respondents were able to self-select into the study as the anonymity of responses was guaranteed. The sample size ( $n = 18$ , 10 employees and 8 managers) was determined by the saturation effect (Hesse-Biber, 2014) and interviewing was stopped after no new themes were found to be emerging. Thomson (2010 cited by Marshall, Cardon, Poddar,

Table 2  
Interview Participants ( $N = 18$ )

Interview/ Pseudonym	Company Role	Gender	Age	Work Experience in Event Catering <sup>a</sup>	Nationality	Family Status	Educated to a University Degree in Events? <sup>b</sup>
1. Sandra	Employee	Female	18–25	Limited	Italian	Single	S
2. Darren	Employee	Male	18–25	Limited	Portuguese	In a relationship	S
3. Cindy	Employee	Female	18–25	Limited	Brazilian	Single	S
4. Monica	Employee	Female	26–39	Moderate	Bulgarian	Two parent family	Y
5. Franco	Employee	Male	40–65	Extensive	Spanish	In a relationship	N
6. Molly	Employee	Female	40–65	Moderate	British	Two parent family	N
7. Anna	Employee	Female	18–25	Limited	Brazilian	Single	S
8. Carlo	Employee	Male	18–25	Limited	Portuguese	Single	S
9. Olivia	Employee	Female	26–39	Limited	Spanish	In a relationship	Y
10. Natalie	Employee	Male	18–25	Moderate	Italian	Single	S
11. Ben	Manager	Male	40–65	Extensive	French	In a relationship	Y
12. Ethan	Manager	Male	26–39	Limited	Romanian	In a relationship	S
13. Ronnie	Manager	Male	26–39	Moderate	British	In a relationship	Y
14. Holly	Manager	Female	26–39	Extensive	British	Single	N
15. Angelo	Manager	Male	26–39	Moderate	Portuguese	In a relationship	N
16. Vanessa	Manager	Female	26–39	Moderate	British	Two parent family	N
17. Stephanie	Manager	Female	40–65	Extensive	British	In a relationship	N
18. Samuel	Manager	Male	40–65	Moderate	British	In a relationship	Y

Note. <sup>a</sup>Limited (<2 years); moderate (2–5 years); extensive (>5 years). <sup>b</sup>Y = Yes; N = No; S = Student.

& Fontenot, 2013) suggested that saturation is achieved with 10–30 interviews, which this study's sample fits into.

Interviews were conducted in the course of 5 weeks in June–August 2017. They were held at the workplace of the study participants in informal settings, such as at lunch breaks in a work canteen and/or nearby café. On average, interviews lasted between 30 and 50 min, they were digitally recorded, and subsequently transcribed. No financial incentive was offered. Thematic analysis was applied to the data collected following the procedure outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006) where the codes were first generated to structure raw data with subsequent organization of codes into superior categories (themes). Table 3 presents the coding structure employed in this study and the next section discusses the study's results.

The limitation of this study is in that it focuses on the UK sector of events and considers the ZHCs within. There are different models (and related experiences) of ZCHs applied across the world but these have been excluded from analysis due to space constraints. Therefore, the study's outcome is applicable to the UK geography only while further research is necessary to test its validity outside the geographical market concerned.

## Results and Discussion

### *Determinants of Job (De)Motivation*

The importance of economic rewards in employee motivation is recognized (Mullins, 2010) and was further supported empirically in this study as money dominated in staff and managerial interviews (Table 3). Some identified money as their sole work motivation, while some pinpointed financial remuneration as one of the main drivers. Further, correlation between the applied effort and the financial reward received was established, which is in line with expectancy and equity theories (Luthans, 2012) with all staff claiming to have felt frustrated if their efforts did not match the pay awarded. According to Herzberg, money is a hygiene factor in job motivation; that is, if the pay is perceived low and unfair, then this prevents employees from feeling satisfied (Luthans, 2012). Interestingly, the feeling of unfair pay was at times strong enough for staff to negate the managerial efforts to motivate employees by praising them and building symbiotic relationships at work. This partially contradicts Bilgin and Demirer (2012), who found that the feeling of being valued and taken care of by the management had a positive impact on job motivation of staff. However, the concept of “being valued” is abstract

Table 3  
Coding Structure With Themes and Codes

Themes	Codes	Employees	Managers	
<b>Motivation:</b> Factors influencing job motivation (+) and demotivation (-) among staff	+Financial reward/monetary remuneration	<b>10 (100%)</b>	<b>8 (100%)</b>	
	+Recognition of efforts by management	<b>10 (100%)</b>	<b>6 (72%)</b>	
	+Sound relationship with colleagues/Social interaction/Meeting new people	<b>8 (80%)</b>	4 (48%)	
	-Ignorance by management/Lack of recognition/Poor managerial treatment	<b>8 (80%)</b>	3 (36%)	
	+Internal satisfaction from pleasing customers	5 (50%)	1 (12%)	
	+/-Challenging nature of the job	4 (40%)	1 (12%)	
	-Frequent changes in work rotas	4 (40%)	-	
	-Being understaffed	3 (30%)	2 (24%)	
	+/-Work environment (e.g. safety, cleanliness, free food)	2 (20%)	2 (24%)	
	+Desire to improve language/communication skills	2 (20%)	1 (12%)	
	-Lack of paid holidays	1 (10%)	2 (24%)	
	+Attractiveness of venues	1 (10%)	1 (12%)	
	+/-Promotion opportunities	1 (10%)	4 (48%)	
	<b>Zero hours contracts (ZHCs)</b>			
	Pros (+) and cons (-) for managers	+Flexibility/Lack of commitment		<b>8 (100%)</b>
+Improved financial control			<b>6 (72%)</b>	
+Managing high staff turnover			5 (60%)	
+Easy to dismiss staff in 'low' season			4 (48%)	
+Managing skill shortage			3 (36%)	
-Uncommitted staff			3 (36%)	
Pros (+) and cons (-) for staff	-Bad publicity		3 (36%)	
	+Flexibility/Lack of commitment	<b>10 (100%)</b>		
	-Lack of work and job/income security	<b>8 (80%)</b>		
	-Lack of (life) stability	4 (40%)		
Motives for choosing ZHCs (managers)	+Holiday paid as percentage on top of hours worked	2 (20%)		
	High fluctuation of work driven by high demand fluctuation		<b>8 (100%)</b>	
	Core team can cover multiple sites when needed with no extra recruitment necessary		<b>6 (72%)</b>	
Motives for choosing ZHCs (staff)	No budget for permanent contracts		4 (48%)	
	Flexibility	<b>10 (100%)</b>		
	No other choice/Perceived as a traditional/normal employment contract within the sector	4 (40%)		
Perception of fairness (+) and unfairness (-) (for staff)	Poor understanding of mutual contract obligations	3 (30%)		
	+I do not feel scared I will be fired if I disagree with my manager/refuse the hours offered	<b>9 (90%)</b>		
	-The company does not provide holiday pay	5 (50%)		
	-Managers do not always accommodate my availability	3 (30%)		
Effect on the job market	-I am often requested to work different hours from what has been initially agreed	2 (20%)		
	Uncommitted workforce	<b>8 (80%)</b>	<b>6 (72%)</b>	
	Better availability of/openness to new job opportunities	4 (40%)	2 (24%)	
Preferred employment contract	Zero hours	<b>5 (50%)</b>	<b>4 (48%)</b>	
	Full-time, permanent	3 (30%)	1 (12%)	
	Part-time, permanent	-	1 (12%)	
	Fixed/guaranteed-hours	2 (20%)	<b>2 (24%)</b>	

*Note.* Values signify the number of text passages found in interview transcripts that are accredited to each code alongside the proportion of interview participants who mentioned these passages (%).

and highly subjective and may well include monetary rewards as a tangible indicator of managerial appreciation:

I think they [line managers] are trying [to improve our motivation], but what they do isn't enough. There're things that are above them, like the pay, and managers try to be nice to you and they try to be your friends, but everything has its limits and it's just not enough. . . . In the real world, we need to pay the bills and we're physically exhausted, so the pay is so much important. (Cindy, employee)

The importance of economic rewards in job motivation was well understood by managers (Table 3) who appreciated the crucial role of pay as a hygiene factor and highlighted the need for balancing out monetary remuneration as a means of boosting job motivation and improving staff retention:

It's very important that staff go home with some money, people would be happy if they could save. When the pay is sorted, people can start focusing on why they're coming here, instead of thinking they're not paid enough. . . . With these kinds of jobs, people work because they need to pay the bills. What I try to do is to take care of how much people earn overall in terms of their monthly income, trying to balance their hours so they can have a good salary—and this is what people are looking for and what retention is about. (Angelo, manager)

Next to economic rewards and the associated managerial recognition of the efforts applied by staff, the employee motivation was further driven by their personal traits, but also by the social needs of existence, interactions, and relatedness (Table 3) that were prioritized by the individuals depending on their (personal) character alongside individual and external circumstances. This confirms Alderfer theory (Luthans, 2012), which posited that a combination of certain social needs is present in each individual regardless of the job they do (Mullins, 2010), which is further reinforced by intense social nature of the event catering jobs (Bladen et al., 2012). In particular, employees highlighted job motivation arising from the positive connection established with the others, be these company's clients or colleagues:

I like talking with the customers, I love interacting with people. That's really my motivation. And,

generally, getting out of the house, just being able to be with other people, that's what pushes me. . . . Another great motivation is to make friends at work. This job allows you to meet great people, very open and friendly. (Olivia, employee)

The relationship with management was further identified as a (de)motivational factor by both staff and managers (Table 3), which is in line with Herzberg (Luthans, 2012). Employees opted for managerial recognition in terms of respectful treatment alongside the ability to provide feedback that would be listened to and acted upon which confirms Hemdi (2009). This underlines managerial fairness and transparency in managerial decision making (Fulford, 2005) as a critical motivational force:

When the manager doesn't put himself in our shoes is really demotivating. This is really bad because they don't always understand or appreciate how hard we work. . . . For example, I bought new shoes and today my feet were hurting. I told my manager I wasn't able to stand anymore, they saw my blood, but they did not care, they just wanted us to look nice for the company. They do not care about how often you eat, how many breaks you take, this demotivates a lot. It's really about the relationship you have built with your manager, and I wish we were valued more. (Natalie, employee)

The relevance of managerial attitudes to staff was also recognized by managers (Table 3). However, for managers, the relational aspect of the job was not as central as for employees. Managers focused on describing the positive impact of tangible rewards on staff motivation but largely failed to appreciate the power of relationships as an important job demotivator. This confirms Luthans (2012) and Mullins (2010), who claim that managers should not only strive to address the basic human needs as described by Maslow, but also acknowledge the importance of tackling a higher order, relational needs in employee motivation.

As for other drivers of job motivation, they were found to be less significant (Table 3). Mullins (2010) argued that, for physical jobs, the nature of the work performed itself represents a main demotivator as it affects intrinsic motivation of staff. Hospitality jobs are stressful and physically challenging (Boella & Goss-Turner, 2013), which was further confirmed in this study with a

number of employees pinpointing the challenges of the work environment and the job roles played as demotivators.

### *ZHCs and Their Perceived Impact*

The interviews revealed a good understanding of the pros and cons of ZHCs by employees and managers, although the managerial assessment was more positive in terms of emphasizing the advantages of using ZHCs for achieving organizational goals while ignoring some of the known issues of this contractual agreement from the viewpoint of staff (Table 3). To some extent, a surprising finding was in that the employees were not as critical of ZHCs as initially expected. In fact, while being well aware of the disadvantages of ZHCs, the staff were prepared to balance these out with their perceived benefits:

Well, OK, many people like them [ZHCs] because they do not imply commitment. I can work 70 hours one week, then 10 hours next week, and then I book a day off, or I simply go away. It's far very flexible. But, then, if there's no commitment, there's no reliability. I can easily say "I'm not coming to work today." I'm not obliged to work any hours. They [managers] do not have much power to tell me what to do and, as a result, they do not have enough staff to rely on. If staff calls sick or arrives late, or if they're going on holiday, it's the company's problem, not the staff's, so I do not care. (Carlo, employee)

As shown by Carlo above, flexibility was identified as the main advantage of ZHCs, which is in line with Brinkley (2013). This reflects an established problem with events and hospitality jobs that are considered temporary. Concurrently, the lack of stable income and job insecurity were disclosed as the major drawbacks of ZHCs, which is coherent with Maslow's vision on work availability as a basic human need (Mullins, 2010).

Better financial control and absence of long-term financial obligation over HR costs was repeatedly mentioned by the managers as a major benefit of ZHCs. The value of ZHCs in matching the variable business needs with available labor levels was recognized, and so was the role of ZHCs in creating the sought profit margins (Dittmer & Keefe, 2008). Uncommitted staff and bad publicity were

the only significant shortfalls of ZHCs as viewed by managers (Table 3). Although employee commitment directly impacts customer service quality (Deery, 2009) and, indirectly, long-term company finances (People 1st, 2015), the managers were prepared to compromise on these shortcomings given the short-term financial benefits ZHCs deliver in terms of managing variable costs of event catering employment:

They [ZHCs] are used purely to adjust to the level of business. Today I have an event for 50 people and I need just 3 staff, but the day after I have an event for 500 and need 30 people. Then, I might not have events at all for a week. The beauty [of ZHCs] is in that I pay people for the exact amount of hours they work, rather than for having someone on payroll who's not needed at all times. Plus, this contract takes away all the bureaucratic hassle of firing someone. If they [staff] do not perform well, they're very easy to be managed out of the business—I simply do not give them hours! (Ronnie, manager)

### *Preferences for ZHCs and Their Alternatives*

Reflecting upon a good understanding of the pros and cons of ZHCs, these contracts were preferred by the majority of interview participants (Table 3). The internal (personal finances, family status, and individual lifestyles) and environmental (current job market situation and managerial abilities) circumstances determined the degree to which event catering staff were prepared to embrace ZHCs.

Personal financial well-being constitutes a backbone of Maslow's safety needs and a major employment driver (Mullins, 2010), and the prospects of financial insecurity broadly associated with ZHCs (Pyper & Powell, 2018) are likely to deter acceptance of ZHCs among staff. However, given that a substantial share of event catering employees is represented by younger people/students, who often live with their parents and/or in shared houses, steady income as a key detrimental effect of ZHCs was only considered critical by those who had family commitments, often combined with sole responsibility to pay rent. Due to their early age, many event catering staff were not yet concerned about gaining a mortgage while, for the older employees who represent another significant category of event catering workforce, this was not an issue either

as they would normally have already repaid their mortgage debt. Importantly, managers recognized that ZHCs would be unable to attract skilled professionals and fill supervisory and managerial positions, thus being only suitable for nontraditional workforce and for entry-level jobs, such as cooking and waiting.

Flexibility was another factor in staff preference for ZHCs across all employee categories. For students, ZHCs provided enough money to pay bills without compromising their studies. For economic migrants, ZHCs offered an opportunity to look after their children, thus reducing the costs of childcare, but also to have another job. Lastly, ZHCs enabled older employees to generate extra money to cover on-going costs and to save for the future:

It [ZHCs] is just perfect for my lifestyle! I'm a foreigner. I came to here to study and to experience another country, so I need time for that. I also need money and this type of contract gives me cash to pay for, so excellent! In addition, I can choose when I want to work to fit my University and holiday schedule. (Sandra, employee)

Next to individual circumstances, employee motivation is conditioned by the external environment (Kovach, 1987). More specifically, the local job market situation plays a role with restricted work availability being a prime (de)motivator. Indeed, limited job market increases staff commitment as they become more concerned about getting decent work (Luthans, 2012). There was a dominant perception among interview participants that there were numerous jobs available in London, so the events staff would not feel insecure if their current job was lost. Further, ZHCs were seen favorably because another, and better, job opportunity could arise suddenly, thus enabling employees to leave immediately, without giving a long-term notice.

Next, preference for ZHCs correlated with the abilities of managers to apply and reinforce these contracts on the ground. This is in line with BBC News (2013) claiming that managers are the ones who determine the level of staff's (dis)satisfaction with ZHCs. For example, employees felt demotivated when managers did not plan correctly the number of people or the amount of time needed to cater for the event, sending people home or paying them less than expected, as a result. Financial

savings represent the prime rationale behind the adoption of ZHCs by managers (Dittmer & Keefe, 2008), which was confirmed in this study. To reduce the negative effect of ZHCs on staff motivation, it is important for managers to invest in time and labor planning. It is further important to maintain transparency and fairness in communicating managerial decisions on ZHCs. Effective communication underpins employee–manager relationship as ZHCs can have power imbalance and both sides can take advantage of this (Williams, 2017):

It's annoying when they [managers] make us come but then understand they do not need us, so they send us home. We could have worked somewhere else and earned money, you know. In addition, we have to pay for travel and the time spent on travel in London can be huge. It's just about being professional and managing them [ZHCs] properly. . . . Call me only when you need me and, if you screwed up because of your poor planning, give me something to compensate for my inconvenience. In turn, if I cannot work, I'm going to tell you straight away and, please do not be unhappy, you have to accept it as it's a zero-hour contract. (Molly, employee)

A probe was made into the influence of the national cultural background of employees on their contractual preferences. This probe was tested with three interview participants from Portugal. ZHCs do not exist in Portugal and are considered abnormal, while permanent or semipermanent employment contracts dominate. In addition, the score of uncertainty avoidance as a core dimension of national culture is very high for Portugal (99 out of 100, where 100 indicates poor toleration of unknown and/or ambiguous situations, such as being jobless), implying the need for job security (Hofstede et al., 2010). This notwithstanding, all Portuguese employees valued freedom and flexibility of ZHCs and stated preference for these contracts. This finding suggests that national culture cannot automatically predict human attitudes and highlights how individual and environmental circumstances may play a bigger role in job motivation.

As an alternative to ZHCs, some interview participants discussed the value of fixed hours or full-time, permanent, contracts (Table 3). Importantly, this was a dominant view among staff with family commitments who wanted better job security,

which is in line with Luthans (2012). The positive effect of permanent or guaranteed hours contracts was also recognized by some managers (Table 3) as these could encourage staff to think of a steady career path in event catering. This could subsequently reduce employee turnover, thus saving on recruitment and training. Permanent contracts could be awarded to the best performing, “core” staff, thus incentivizing the rest of employees (Evans, 2015). These core staff would work with employees on ZHCs on specific projects, but they could then be moved onto other support roles across the company’s venues in a “low” season. Moving these core staff around would reduce the detrimental effect of the pulsating nature of event catering employment (Whitfield, 2009).

The concept of “time bank” (variable contracts with fixed hours) was also discussed by some staff and managers as an alternative to ZHCs. This concept suggests that an employee is paid a certain amount of hours per time period, but if they need to work less or more within that period, this can be tracked and the hours worked subsequently adjusted. This concept guarantees a certain amount of remuneration, thus strengthening the feeling of job security among staff and improving their retention while offering managers scope for maneuvering in terms of labor costs:

I think variable contracts could work in events, as long as there’s a system of banking hours. They [staff] could work one week 30 hours, another 50, and if they do not work, their hours can be banked. This would make them happier and more committed. . . . Some of other businesses already do it. We could do it, I think, but it’d be really important to monitor the hours worked, that’d be the real difficulty, but it can be done, why not? (Ben, manager)

### Conclusions

The study contributed to knowledge with a critical analysis of the determinants of job motivation in event catering. It provided empirical evidence to demonstrate the important role of such factors as financial rewards, interpersonal relationships at work, and the nature of the job performed in driving staff motivation. These factors need to be considered to effectively manage workforce performance on the ground. They should further be integrated

into HR policies of the case study company and, more broadly, across the sector of event catering to ensure long-term business continuity.

Another contribution of this study to knowledge is in that it shed light on the perception of ZHCs, being one of the few attempts to look at this controversial issue empirically and being the first known attempt to explore it through the lens of event catering staff and managers. The study outlined the main variables affecting the employee attitudes to ZHCs. It further demonstrated that, in the sector concerned, employees are well aware of the shortfalls of these contracts but prepared to balance these out with their perceived advantages. This suggests that, despite the negative image created by the media, ZHCs can remain a feasible category of employment contracts for the services industries, subject to proper managerial application on the ground. An alternative of adopting permanent contracts for core team members to reward for good performance was also revealed alongside the potential of using time banks as a means of enhancing job motivation in event catering. These findings signify the contribution of this study to professional practice.

The limitations of this exploratory study are in that, being largely a starting point in research on ZHCs in the context of event catering, it was underpinned by the qualitative research paradigm and a case study approach, which restricts generalizability and representativeness of the study’s outcome. Thus, future studies should aim at applying quantitative tools for primary data collection and analysis, serving the purpose of confirmatory research. This is in response to a call for more in-depth empirical investigation of the employee motivation in event catering as revealed in the literature review. Quantitative research could further target employee perception of ZHCs in event catering and expand the scope of examination to other companies within and outside the sector of events. For example, this is to see if there is a correlation between events companies with formalized human resource practices, such as a corporate policy of providing a partial pay for showing up last minute when not needed, and employee motivation. For instance, this is to further examine motivation with regard to ZHCs of employees who work similar schedules with flexible labor agreements for other

sectors of events, such as festivals. In other words, the findings of this exploratory study could inform the design of large-scale staff surveys in support of corporate policies and management approaches to ZHCs in the events industries and beyond. Lastly, cross-disciplinary and cross-boundary research is necessary to uncover the complexity of linkages between ZHCs and employee commitment, job motivation, and staff turnover. Extending the scope of this investigation to such related subjects as psychology and national culture research would enable a better understanding of the complexity of variables affecting human decision making at work. This would facilitate the design of scientifically grounded managerial tools and corporate blueprints for boosting employee motivation.

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