**12 - Exploring Wellbeing: A Study of Scottish Hospitality Sector**

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**Introduction:** The concept of wellbeing has in recent times resurfaced strongly even though the notion has been in existence for many years. Echoed in psychological, medical, economic, and social sciences is now also prevalent in other disciplines. The complexity and different perspectives make it an interesting area to explore. With the current push of the wellbeing agenda in businesses, larger organisations seem to be making greater efforts relative to micro, small and medium sized firms (MSME).

Consequentially, most research centre on the wellbeing of employees in larger organisations or looking at the quantitative nature of environmental factors effect on wellbeing. Other research attempting to investigate and bridge the gap between the relationship of wellbeing to performance, growth, and productivity, have mainly been in relation to the employee or the worker.

The limited emphasis on MSMEs is troubling for two reasons. First, the general resource constrained nature, state, and operational dynamics of MSME organically leans itself to wellbeing considerations, research, and interventions. Second, significant contributions of MSMEs to development and growth is being impacted by external factors and turbulence, with the hospitality (Accommodation and Food Services) sector being one of the most affected.

The hospitality sector is a welcome point for the wider society including locals and visitors. With this consideration, if there is a significant impact on the wellbeing of employees and owners in this sector, the wellbeing of the wider society is also impacted.

Within United Kingdom (UK) devolved administrations (Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland), Scotland has the highest number of registered businesses in this sector. Considering the sector’s dynamic, resilient, and fast adapting nature, and changes in the past to present, the research seeks to take a holistic approach on wellbeing from an employee and owner perspective within this sector.

**Scope:** This study seeksto explore and investigate wellbeing through the lens of both employees and business owners within the Scottish hospitality (accommodation and food service) sector. The following research questions arise:

1. How is the concept of wellbeing defined and perceived by business owners and employees within the urban hospitality tourism sector in Scotland?

2. How does micro, macro environmental factors and turbulence affect the wellbeing of business owners and employees?

3. Are there any wellbeing practices and programmes available tailored to the needs of the owner and employees?

4. What is/are the relationship/s between wellbeing and productivity and what framework could be coined to establish the relationship within the industry of which could be applied in the rest of UK?

**Approach:** This research is purely mono method research where qualitative data will be collected from micro and small business owners and employees through semi structured in-depth interview. A cross sectional design will be used as time horizon choice as the research will explore and interpret the research questions over a short period in time and not over a long period of time. Interviews will be supplemented with Secondary data on external factors and background of business. Data sampling will be purposive as the research looks in micro and small business with employees’ size between (1-9) and (10-49) respectively within the accommodation and food service in urban Scotland. Snowballing technique will be employed where recruited participants will be asked to assist in identifying potential alike micro and small businesses. Participants will be sourced directly and through hospitality network groups.

**Results:** At this early stage of the research, the research avoids any pre informed decision on the research as this is an exploration to reveal the reality of effect and impact of the concept.

As far the researcher in concerned, this is the first research of kind to explore and investigate the concept within the hospitability sector in Scotland and bridging the dichotomy with employee and owner perspective.

Relevant literature confirms the nonexistence of a standard definition of wellbeing hence the research adds to the knowledge gap. The devolved administrations in UK are set up differently with distinct devolved history within the MSME space and would be interesting to explore and investigate how the concept interplays within Scotland.

**Implication:** As there is no universal definition of wellbeing especially in the MSME space, this research will define wellbeing within the hospitality space, adding to the knowledge gap.

The research will help micro and small business have a deeper understanding on the importance of wellbeing to productivity and how the impact of micro, macro environmental factors and turbulence have on their wellbeing.

Policy makers can prioritise wellbeing for SMEs, where reporting scheme similar to diversity and pay gap reporting is mandatory for businesses.

This research could open opportunity for financial support to SMEs to prioritise the agenda for wellbeing. Wellbeing practises and programmes would be promoted and improved within the SME space.

**Limitations:** The study is only looking at Scotland and within the hospitality sector but unsure if the finding can be generalisable to other sectors as well as the devolved and other nations.