

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master's degree in
Management from the Nova School of Business and Economics.

**FLEXISTAFF: VALIDATION OF VALUE PROPOSITIONS TO ADDRESS
STAFFING CHALLENGES IN PORTUGUESE RESTAURANTS WHILE
BALANCING WORKER AND EMPLOYER NEEDS**

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BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE

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WORKERS PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This project addresses staffing challenges in Portuguese restaurants by balancing the needs of both businesses and workers. Using Lean Startup and Customer Development methodologies, we focused on two propositions: FlexiStaff, addressing immediate, on-demand staffing for businesses, and QualiStaff, emphasizing worker training and long-term stability. FlexiStaff proved more relevant in the short term, improving efficiency and customer satisfaction. This thesis documents the journey of two entrepreneurial students, driven to create impactful solutions and redefine workforce management in the hospitality industry.

Keywords: Staffing solutions, Workforce Management, Staffing Challenges, Qualified Workers, Needs, Restaurant Staffing, Customer Development, Entrepreneurship

Note: This work project is divided into two individual parts. Sections from 4.2 “Business Perspective: Customer Discovery and Validation” to 4.2.7 “Conclusion of Business Perspective” were authored by Leonardo Billi, while Chapter 5, specifically from 5.1 “Workers Perspective” to 5.9 “Conclusion of Worker Perspective”, was written by Christian Ray Lantieri. The remaining sections were developed collaboratively by both authors.

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1. Introduction

During Portugal's peak summer months, popular tourist destinations like Lisbon, Porto, and the Algarve face a surge in visitors eager to enjoy local cuisine and hospitality. Yet, beneath the vibrant atmosphere lies a pressing operational issue: restaurants and beach clubs struggle to secure sufficient, skilled personnel on short notice. These staffing shortages lead to long waits, inconsistent service, and declining customer satisfaction; problems that directly undermine revenue and brand reputation.

This challenge became particularly evident through observations of the hospitality sector's seasonal volatility and firsthand insights from industry stakeholders. Conversations with restaurant owners and managers revealed the pressures of maintaining quality service among workforce shortages, especially when faced with unpredictable staffing needs. Simultaneously, workers in the hospitality industry expressed frustrations about inconsistent employment opportunities, a lack of professional development, and short-term contracts that fail to ensure stability.

Motivated by these challenges and guided by the entrepreneurial principles taught at Nova SBE, this thesis aims to address staffing inefficiencies by applying Steve Blank's Customer Development Process (CDP). By actively engaging with hospitality managers, workers, and industry experts through interviews, surveys, and feedback sessions, two core needs emerged:

1. **Immediate, on-call staffing solutions** to accommodate sudden demand surges.
2. **A stable, well-trained workforce** capable of supporting consistent, long-term operations.

To address these distinct yet complementary needs, two value propositions have been developed:

1. **FlexiStaff:** Short-term, last-minute staffing solutions to meet urgent demand.
2. **QualiStaff:** Longer-term recruitment services focused on building operational stability.

The conceptualization of these value propositions has been informed by a methodical exploration of the hospitality industry's pain points and the application of entrepreneurial frameworks. By validating the proposed solutions through customer discovery processes, testing, and engagement metrics, this research aims to deliver actionable insights that align with the real-world needs of both employers and workers.

From an academic perspective, this work contributes to the literature on human resource management, service operations, and workforce optimization in seasonal industries. By examining the dynamics of staffing shortages, this thesis highlights the challenges businesses face in balancing operational efficiency with service quality and employee satisfaction. Practically, the findings hold significant relevance for hospitality stakeholders navigating the complexities of fluctuating demand, offering scalable strategies to improve staffing practices and customer satisfaction.

The core research question guiding this thesis is as follow:

“Which value proposition best positions FlexiStaff to address staffing challenges in Portuguese restaurants while balancing worker and employer needs?”

By answering this question, this thesis aspires to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, providing hospitality businesses with innovative, data-driven solutions to meet the demands of an ever-evolving market landscape. Furthermore, it seeks to empower workers with better employment opportunities, fostering a more sustainable and resilient workforce in one of Portugal's most vital economic sectors.

2. Research Objective and Methodology

The research seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of FlexiStaff and QualiStaff by addressing the following objectives:

- Identify the key pain points in managing staffing during peak periods.
- Validate the viability of the two proposed models.
- Understand preferences and needs on both the business (demand) and worker (supply) sides.

Using the Customer Development Process (CDP), the research incorporates iterative feedback from surveys, interviews, and landing page experiments. The methodology focuses on:

1. **Demand-Side Validation:** Assessing business needs and adoption willingness for FlexiStaff and QualiStaff.
2. **Supply-Side Validation:** Evaluating worker preferences for flexible, short-term roles versus stable placements.

Data was collected through targeted outreach using Brevo, TripAdvisor scrapers, Bubble.io (landing pages), surveys and structured interviews. Metrics such as conversion rates, click-through rates (CTR), average time spent, visualization per active user and engagement levels were analyzed to determine which model best addresses the identified challenges.

This thesis aims to bridge the gap between staffing challenges and operational efficiency in Portugal's hospitality sector. By testing and refining FlexiStaff and QualiStaff, it provides actionable insights into creating scalable solutions that align with the needs of both businesses and workers, enhancing customer satisfaction and overall service delivery.

3. Inside The Building: Contextual Analysis

3.1 Introduction

This chapter delves into the foundational groundwork conducted prior to “Get Out of the Building” and engaging with potential stakeholders. It explores the theoretical frameworks and market dynamics essential for addressing staffing challenges within the Portuguese hospitality industry. It begins with a literature review of staffing issues inherent in the hospitality sector, including the impact of COVID-19 on worker availability. The chapter then explores the application of the Lean Startup methodology and Customer Development Process (CDP) in developing effective staffing solutions. A concise analysis of the Portuguese food service market, our identified target subsector in hospitality, is presented, highlighting industry trends and staffing challenges. The chapter concludes with an examination of the competitive landscape, identifying key players offering staffing solutions within the industry.

3.2 Literature Review

3.2.1 Staffing Challenges in the Hospitality Industry

The hospitality industry relies heavily on human interaction to deliver quality service (Baum, 2015). Persistent staffing challenges include seasonal fluctuations, high employee turnover, difficulty in finding qualified staff, and the impact of COVID-19.

Seasonal Fluctuations: Hospitality businesses experience significant seasonal demand variations, especially in tourist destinations (Jolliffe & Farnsworth, 2003). In Portugal, coastal regions see surges during summer months, leading to staffing shortages (Silva & Gonçalves, 2018).

High Employee Turnover: The industry faces high turnover rates due to factors like irregular working hours, job-related stress, and limited career advancement opportunities (Kusluvan et al., 2010).

Difficulty in Finding Qualified Staff: Attracting and retaining skilled personnel is challenging (Walsh & Taylor, 2007). Demand for experienced workers often exceeds supply during peak seasons (Baum, 2006).

Impact of COVID-19: The pandemic exacerbated staffing issues. Lockdowns led to temporary closures, causing many workers to leave the sector. Experienced professionals sought employment in other industries or migrated for better salaries (Baum et al., 2020). The Portuguese Association of Hotels, Restaurants, and Similar Establishments (AHRESP) reported significant workforce losses, intensifying difficulties in finding qualified staff upon reopening (AHRESP, 2021).

These challenges strain resources and impact customer experience, necessitating innovative staffing solutions tailored to industry demands.

3.2.2 Impact of Staffing on Service Quality and Operational Efficiency

Service quality directly influences customer satisfaction and business reputation (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Adequate staffing levels are essential to meet customer expectations, particularly during high-demand periods (Kimes, 2011). Understaffing leads to longer wait times and diminished service quality (Huang & Xie, 2019), affecting customer satisfaction and repeat business (Oh & Parks, 1997). Balancing labor costs with staffing needs is complex (Jones & Siag, 2009). Efficient operations require staffing models adaptable to demand fluctuations without compromising service standards (Lam & Han, 2005). Inefficient staffing increases operational costs and reduces profitability (Lee-Ross & Pryce, 2010).

Understanding the interplay between staffing, service quality, and operational efficiency is crucial for developing strategies that enhance customer satisfaction while maintaining financial viability.

3.2.3 Lean Startup Methodology and Customer Development Process (CDP)

The Lean Startup and CDP frameworks offer practical tools to tackle staffing problems iteratively. Rather than relying on assumptions, these approaches encourage “getting out of the building” and engaging directly with stakeholders, restaurant owners, managers, and workers, to validate needs and refine solutions (Ries, 2011; Blank & Dorf, 2012)

Steve Blank's CDP (Blank & Dorf, 2012) complements this by providing a structured approach to discovering and validating customer needs. It involves:

1. **Customer Discovery:** Engaging with potential customers to understand their problems.
2. **Customer Validation:** Testing if the product effectively solves identified problems.
3. **Customer Creation:** Building user demand and scaling acquisition efforts.
4. **Company Building:** Structuring the organization to support growth.

Blank emphasizes interacting with real customers to challenge assumptions and guide development (Blank, 2013). For example, leveraging these frameworks involves developing a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) for a staffing platform to rapidly test hypotheses about worker availability and business preferences. Additionally, customer feedback plays a pivotal role in guiding refinements, ensuring that value propositions, such as FlexiStaff's last-minute staffing solution, or QualiStaff's training-focused model, are closely aligned with the industry's real challenges and client specific needs.

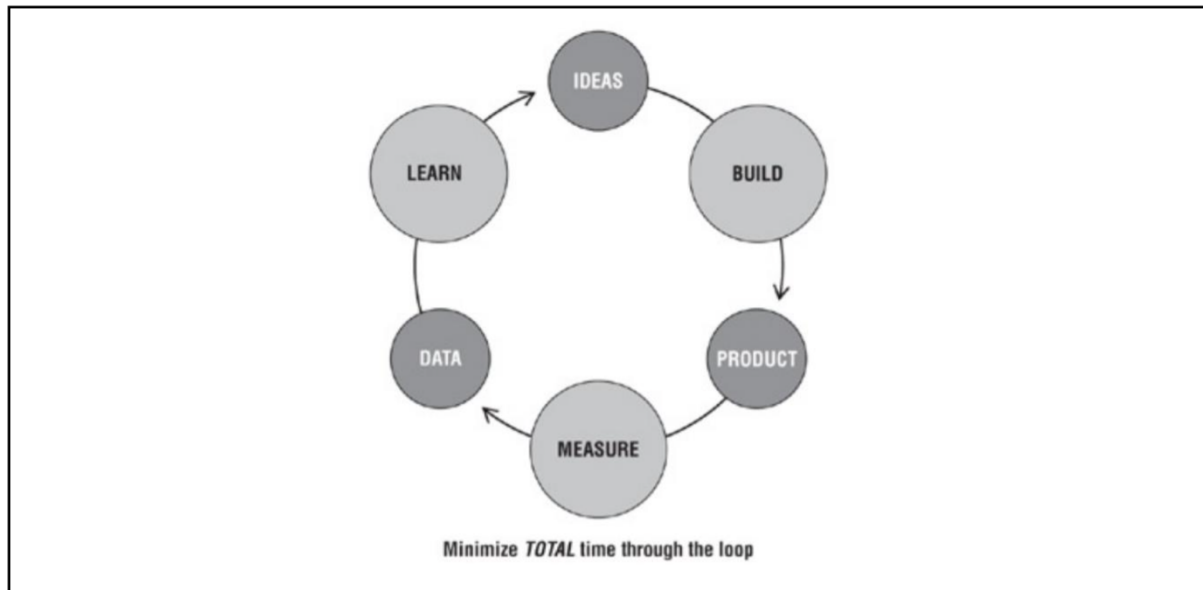


Figure 1: The Build-Measure-Learn Feedback Loop (Ries 2011)

By continuously iterating based on real-world input gained by customer engagement, the empirical investigation becomes grounded in the hospitality sector's practical demands, thereby bridging theory (validating assumptions, building robust solutions, adjusting the business model based on market response) and practice (implementing effective, market-ready staffing services, or pivoting if necessary).

3.2.4 Flexible Staffing and the Gig Economy in Hospitality

The rise of the gig economy introduces transformative paradigms for workforce management, particularly in industries with fluctuating demand like hospitality (Friedman, 2014; Kuhn & Maleki, 2017). Flexible staffing models allow businesses to adjust staffing levels dynamically, utilizing temporary or on-demand workers (Sundararajan, 2016). Digital platforms streamline this process by connecting service providers with employers, reducing hiring costs, and expanding the talent pool (Wood, 2016; Iwu et al., 2018; Benner, 2017). However, flexibility alone is insufficient to address the complexities of the hospitality sector. Critical challenges persist, such as maintaining consistent service quality, ensuring worker reliability, and adhering

to labor regulations (Gerwe & Silva, 2020; Kessler, 2018). Furthermore, concerns about worker commitment and accountability add another layer of complexity (Aguinis & Lawal, 2013). Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach, incorporating strategies like training programs, performance standards, and trust-building measures (Carroll & Mosakowski, 1987; Riley et al., 2010). By leveraging the Lean Startup methodology, businesses can iteratively refine their staffing models through a cycle of experimentation and learning (Build-Measure-Learn Loop).

3.3 Market Analysis

3.3.1 Overview of the Portuguese Food Service Sector

The food and beverage service industry, our target subsector within the hospitality industry, plays a significant role in Portugal. It is marked by seasonal demand fluctuations and persistent staffing challenges. With over 73,000 establishments in 2022, the sector employs approximately 287,000 workers. According to recent industry reports (e.g., World Travel & Tourism Council, 2023), tourist spending has surged, intensifying staffing pressures in hotspots like Lisbon, Porto and the Algarve. Seasonality drives demand spikes during summer and holidays, creating challenges in managing customer volume fluctuations. Such demand volatility amplifies the need for staffing solutions that can scale up and down rapidly, ensuring businesses meet high service standards when it matters most

3.3.2 Staffing Challenges and Solutions

The persistent shortage of qualified staff reflects deeper structural issues in the market, including demographic shifts and changing worker preferences. AHRESP (2022) data highlights unfilled vacancies and growing reliance on short-term solutions. The COVID-19 intensified issues, as many workers left the industry due to uncertainty. The European Commission (2021) notes significant workforce reductions, with employees seeking

opportunities elsewhere. After the pandemic, businesses are exploring flexible staffing solutions, including temporary contracts and staffing agencies. Innovative approaches are increasingly recognized as necessary. In this context, Lean Startup-inspired testing allows for rapid validation of concepts like FlexiStaff and QualiStaff, revealing which features resonate and which might require further refinement.

3.3.3 Digitalization in Workforce Management

As Portugal's hospitality sector becomes more tech-savvy, digital platforms streamline hiring and onboarding. Deloitte (2022) notes improvements in efficiency for firms embracing digital workforce solutions. This digital shift aligns perfectly with the iterative approach the research, as prototypes and online testing environments enable real-time feedback, accelerating the learning cycle and ensuring that proposed solutions evolve alongside market conditions.

3.3.4 Relevance to Staffing Challenges

The market context: seasonal peaks, post-pandemic labour shifts, and increasing digital adoption; creates fertile ground for flexible staffing models. Linking Lean Startup and CDP frameworks to these trends, the research identifies and refines value propositions that directly address urgent industry needs. The result is a structured, evidence-based roadmap for solutions like FlexiStaff and QualiStaff to gain traction and deliver tangible improvements in operational efficiency and customer satisfaction.

3.4 Competitive Landscape

3.4.1 Innovative Startups

Blanché.pt: Founded in 2023, it connects professionals with employers in hospitality for permanent roles, they are about to add the function to request workers for specific work shifts as an extra. While facilitating matching, it lacks training or certification programs, potentially limiting candidate quality.

Merytu: Launched in 2019, it connects professionals with employers seeking flexible staffing. Its gig-based structure offers worker flexibility but may challenge employers needing long-term consistency. Absence of training modules indicates a gap in providing qualified staff. Additionally, the platform allows establishments to book staff for the following week or even the upcoming month, highlighting its focus on advance scheduling rather than last-minute solutions.

3.4.1 The Established Agencies

Talenter / Adecco: Leading temporary staffing agencies in Portugal. Their generalist approaches and traditional methods may not fully address the specialized needs of hospitality businesses requiring dynamic solutions.

Existing players offer staffing services, but gaps remain in flexibility, rapid response, and quality assurance. Innovative startups focus on matching but often lack training programs, while established agencies may not provide the immediacy and adaptability required.

4. Outside of the Building: Industry Perspective

This chapter details our iterative, outside the building methodology, guided by Lean Startup and Customer Development principles. To help visualize this process, we introduce a methodological flow diagram and structured summaries after each activity.

Methodological Flow Diagram:

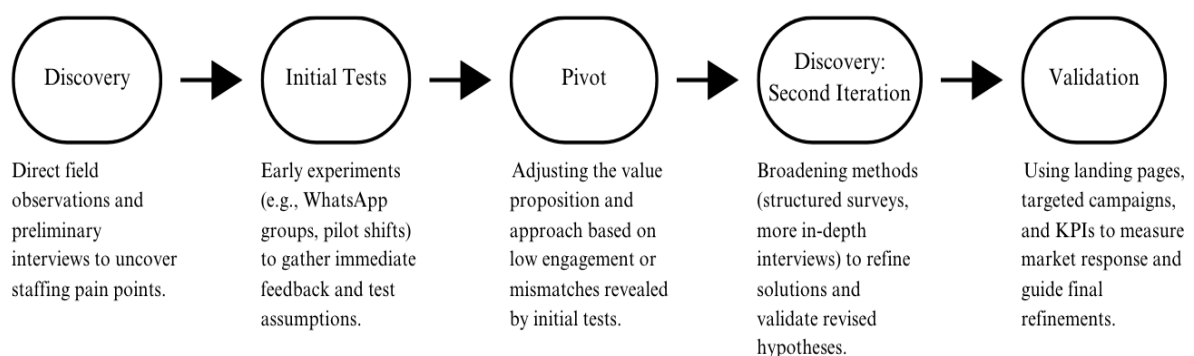


Figure 2: Methodological Flow Diagram for FlexiStaff's Lean Approach

4.1 Customer Discovery 1.0

4.1.0.1 Introduction and Problem Exploration

Since (or during) the summer of 2023, direct observations at Portuguese beach clubs and restaurants, particularly in the Algarve and Lisbon, identified significant operational challenges related to staffing. These establishments frequently struggled to maintain quality service during peak periods, especially around mealtimes and aperitivo hours.

Extended wait times were observed, with patrons often waiting over 15 minutes to receive their initial beverages and more than 30 minutes for main courses. During these peak times, staff appeared disorganized and overwhelmed, leading to slow service and an inability to manage the influx of customers effectively. The visible frustration and impatience among customers indicated a decline in overall customer satisfaction, which poses a significant risk to the establishments' reputation and revenue streams.

These staffing shortages had evidently direct consequences on both customer satisfaction and business outcomes. Customers, less inclined to order additional items due to prolonged wait times, spent less on average. The potential loss of customers, as they might seek alternatives with better service, could negatively affect both immediate revenue and long-term patronage. These observations highlight the urgent need for solutions that can enhance staffing flexibility and responsiveness in the hospitality sector.

4.1.0.2 Initial Tests: First Interviews with Hospitality Establishment Owners and Managers

To validate the identified problems and gather more detailed insights, 20 interviews were conducted with owners and managers of beach clubs and restaurants (Appendix 2). These establishments, located along Praia de Carcavelos, the coastline from Cascais to Estoril, and selected areas in Lisbon, varied in size, with outdoor seating capacities ranging from 50 to 200.

The interviews aimed to understand the challenges these businesses faced in meeting their staffing needs, particularly during peak demand periods.

Most interviewees (around 90%) identified staffing as one of their top challenges. High staff turnover, rigid contracts leading to inflexibility, and difficulty in filling specific roles were consistently mentioned. Many establishments struggled with balancing staffing levels throughout the year. Some maintained the same staff year-round, which led to overstaffing during low-demand seasons and understaffing during high-demand periods. Others hired seasonal staff for peak seasons but still lacked the flexibility to adjust staff levels effectively in response to daily fluctuations in demand.

To address peak demand periods, managers often resorted to last-minute solutions such as word-of-mouth recruitment or social media postings. However, these methods frequently resulted in inadequate skill matching and reliability issues, as they offered no systematic way to ensure that the recruited individuals possessed the necessary competencies or commitment.

4.1.0.3 Analysis of Existing Staffing Solutions

Participants in the interviews expressed dissatisfaction with existing staffing solutions. Many cited recruitment agencies like Talenter, which often focus on longer-term contracts rather than providing short-term or on-demand staff, as insufficient. This lack of flexibility forced establishments to either overstaff during quieter periods or struggle to meet customer needs during busy times.

In addition, we understood that finding staff with the appropriate skills at short notice was particularly challenging. While some establishments needed experienced workers for tasks such as bartending, others were willing to employ low-skilled workers for roles such as runners or dishwashers. Regardless of their specific requirements, these businesses faced difficulties in rapidly sourcing workers who met their needs.

4.1.0.4 Willingness to Invest in Flexible Staffing Solutions

The interviews revealed that owners and managers were willing to invest in flexible staffing solutions. Many expressed openness to paying higher wages or fees for last-minute, reliable staff who could effectively meet immediate needs, especially during peak demand periods. There was also significant interest in streamlined, user-friendly platforms that would facilitate quick staffing requests and placements. This indicated an opportunity for a service model that could offer both low-skilled and qualified workers on short notice.

4.1.0.5 Initial Tests: Early Experiments and Pilot Testing

Based on initial findings, early experiments tested flexible staffing models; initially focusing on “low-skilled” workers (*those without prior hospitality experience*) and “qualified” workers (*experienced, highly adaptable professionals*).

Two WhatsApp groups for workers were created to facilitate these experiments, as it’s outlined in the Appendix 3. One group, for low-skilled workers, quickly grew to 139 members and consisted of university students from NOVA, Católica, ISEG, and other institutions, as well as non-students and immigrants seeking flexible work opportunities. The other group, comprising 15 hospitality students from the Estoril Hospitality University (ESHTE), catered to establishments requiring specialized skills and experience.

Experiments

Partner	Request	Expectations	Outcome	Compensation	Key Learning
1° Experiment: Wind Surf Cafe	Bartender	Bartender capable of all bar tasks	Worker lacked comprehensive skills	€9/hour (above initial €7/hour agreement)	Precise role definition and skill matching are crucial
2° Experiment: Wind Surf Cafe	Experienced Bartender	Experienced bar tender high level	Worker cancelled 20 minutes before shift	€8/hour (agreed, not paid due to cancellation)	Need for mechanisms to ensure worker reliability
2° Experiment: Emma Beach Club	Runner	Last-minute request not previous experience requested	Satisfactory performance; extended to 4 days	€6.8/hour (above standard). Next three days €5/hour for their agreement	Restaurants willing to pay premium for immediate staffing

Table 1: Summary of Pilot Testing Outcomes

4.1.0.6 Key Learnings and Implications

The combination of direct observations, stakeholder interviews, and initial experiments confirmed the existence of a need for flexible staffing solutions in the Portuguese hospitality industry. Several critical insights emerged from these engagements:

1. **Skill Matching and Worker Selection:** Accurate alignment of worker skills with the specific requirements of each role is essential for immediate productivity and service quality. This underscores the need for more rigorous screening and training processes to ensure workers possess the necessary competencies.
2. **Reliability and Accountability:** Worker dependability is crucial. Last-minute cancellations, as experienced with the partner restaurant, can severely impact operations and damage relationships with establishments. Mechanisms such as commitment confirmations or penalties for no-shows may be necessary to ensure staff reliability.
3. **Flexibility and Willingness to Pay:** Establishments showed a willingness to offer higher compensation for workers who could meet immediate needs effectively. This

willingness extends to both low-skilled and highly qualified workers, indicating that a tiered approach to staffing could be beneficial.

4. **Efficient Communication and Technological Solutions:** Both establishments and workers expressed a preference for timesaving, mobile-based platforms to streamline the process of requesting and filling temporary shifts. This highlights the need for the FlexiStaff platform to be fully responsive and optimized for mobile devices, rather than being limited to desktop use.

These findings established a foundation for refining FlexiStaff. However, translating these insights into practice required further market testing.

4.1.1 Pivot

In September, following initial tests, we launched a dedicated landing page and conducted targeted outreach to hospitality businesses in Caparica, Carcavelos, Estoril, Cascais, and Lisbon center. The hypothesis was that focusing on low-skilled workers for last-minute shifts (FlexiStaff's initial proposition) would trigger a positive response. However, engagement was unexpectedly low: no significant leads emerged despite extensive outreach. Timing, language barriers, trust deficits, and the end-of-season slowdown likely contributed to these poor results. This outcome indicated that simply focusing on low-skilled workers did not fully capture the complexity of market needs or the nuances highlighted by our previous experiments.

Objective: The purpose of the experiment of the landing page was to assess whether the platform's value proposition could generate interest from potential users, thus validating the **Problem-Solution Fit** of FlexiStaff for low skilled workers. The goal was to measure whether visitors could be converted into customers, providing insight into demand.

Description: A responsive landing page was developed using **Bubble.io**, optimized for both mobile and desktop. The page, launched under the domain www.lastminuteworkers.com, integrated APIs such as **Google Analytics**, **Zapier**, and email collection tools for data tracking.

#	Hypotesis	Results	Key Insights
H1	At least 10% of contacted business will respond	Not Validated: A Conversion of 5% was achieved, indicating room for improvement	2/40 business responded. Contacts were made via Whatsapp (15) and email (around 25) targeting Carcavelos, Estoril, Cascais and Oeiras
H2	At least 50% of those who contacted us will request a worker within 2 months	Not Validated: A conversion rate of 0% was achieved	No follow-up request for workers were made by the 2 responding businesses.

Table 2: Summary of First Landing Page Experiment for FlexiStaff

The page presented FlexiStaff's first value proposition: offering **low-skilled workers** for short-term shifts. However, several challenges emerged:

- **Seasonal Timing:** The landing page launched as the peak season ended, leading to naturally reduced demand.
- **Language Barrier:** The landing page was initially in English, limiting accessibility for Portuguese-speaking users.
- **Trust Issues:** Outreach through WhatsApp and email yielded low engagement, as the platform lacked an established reputation.

These factors, along with the off-season and weather conditions, led to poor engagement. Even initial leads failed to follow through, highlighting a gap in our strategy, our bad: we rushed into

customer acquisition without fully validating the customer's pain points. Confronted with underwhelming results, it became clear that adjustments were necessary. The initial approach needed refinement to better reflect the key learnings, particularly regarding skill specialization, reliability guarantees, and effective communication.

This realization prompted us to apply **Steve Blank's Customer Development** methodology, particularly the "**Pivot or Proceed**" decision point. A review revealed that we had skipped crucial stages of **Customer Discovery**.

Instead of continuing with the old value proposition, we chose to take a step back and gather more robust market insights through in-depth surveys and interviews. By re-examining our target segments, refining our messaging, and considering a broader range of staffing solutions beyond low-skilled workers, we aimed to ensure that our revised value propositions genuinely addressed the market's underlying needs.

4.2 Business Perspective: Customer Discovery and Validation 2.0

4.2.1 Introduction

Building on the insights gained from challenging our previous vision, prompted by the realization that we had overlooked critical aspects during the customer exploration and discovery process for FlexiStaff, this chapter delves into understanding the staffing challenges within the Portuguese hospitality industry. By conducting a comprehensive survey of 60 hospitality establishments and in-depth interviews with owners, managers, and industry consultants, we aim to validate the identified problems, understand the nuances of staffing issues, and explore potential solutions aligned with industry needs. This analysis ultimately informs our focus on two value propositions: **FlexiStaff** and **QualiStaff** (the latter is a proposition still belonging to the FlexiStaff brand, but named differently for differentiation).

4.2.2 Survey Analysis

4.2.2.1 Methodology

To gain quantitative insights into the staffing challenges faced by the identified subsector of hospitality establishments, we designed a structured questionnaire encompassing multiple-choice questions, Likert scale assessments, and open-ended responses (Appendix 4). The survey targeted key areas such as types of establishments, company size, specific staffing issues during peak periods, current staffing methods and their effectiveness, satisfaction levels with existing solutions, and openness to new staffing solutions.

The survey was distributed electronically using tools like **Brevo** and a **TripAdvisor scraper** to target a large pool of establishments across Portugal, particularly in regions with significant tourism activity such as Lisbon, Porto, and the Algarve, as it's outlined in Appendix 6. These tools allowed us to reach a broad and relevant audience. Over a two-week period, a total of 60 responses were collected, ensuring a diverse and representative sample of the industry.

4.2.2.2 Respondent Demographics

Most respondents were restaurant owners or managers, accounting for 85% of the sample, while the remaining 15% comprised bar owners and managers of other hospitality venues such as beach clubs. Most establishments were small businesses, with 60% employing fewer than 10 full-time equivalent employees. Seating capacities varied, but the average was around 80 seats, indicating that most establishments catered to a moderate number of customers.

4.2.2.3 Key Findings

The survey revealed several pervasive staffing challenges within the industry. A significant 70% of respondents identified **finding qualified staff** as a major challenge. Establishments struggle to recruit staff with the necessary skills and experience, leading to increased workloads for existing employees and potential declines in service quality.

High staff turnover was another prominent issue, with 50% of establishments experiencing frequent departures. This leads to instability and increased costs associated with recruiting and training new staff. Some owners expressed frustration, stating that they often invest time in training employees only to have them leave shortly after.

Inflexibility in staffing levels emerged as a challenge for 60% of respondents, who struggled to adapt their workforce to fluctuating demand. This often results in understaffing during peak periods and overstaffing during slower times, affecting both service quality and profitability.

The **need to quickly train new staff** was identified by 65% of respondents as a significant issue. The lack of time and resources to properly train new hires affects their effectiveness and the overall customer experience.

Last-minute staff cancellations posed a problem for 50% of establishments, disrupting operations and placing additional strain on available staff.

Regarding current approaches to addressing these challenges, establishments employ various methods with mixed results. Reliance on permanent staff is the predominant strategy, used by 70% of respondents. While this provides consistency, it lacks flexibility to adjust to demand fluctuations. Word-of-mouth (WOM) recruitment is utilized by 50% of establishments. Although quick, it often results in inconsistent quality and reliability due to the lack of formal vetting.

Only a small fraction of establishments uses temporary agencies (15%) or staffing platforms (5%). Limitations include inflexibility, focus on long-term contracts, and lack of awareness or trust in digital solutions. Notably, 20% of respondents had no formal staffing strategy, relying instead on ad-hoc solutions such as WOM that often prove insufficient during peak periods.

Satisfaction levels with current staffing methods were moderate, with an average rating of 3.2 out of 5. Only 35% of respondents expressed satisfaction, indicating room for improvement. Challenges with traditional methods include the inability to adapt to demand variability and difficulties in securing reliable staff. Low adoption of staffing platforms is attributed to cost concerns, unfamiliarity with technology, and scepticisms about worker quality.

Despite these challenges, there is openness among establishments to explore new staffing solutions. Half of the respondents were unaware of existing staffing platforms, indicating potential for market education. Many expressed willingness to invest in solutions offering reliable, qualified staff on short notice, especially if cost-effective. Desired features include quick access to qualified workers, flexible contracts, cost transparency, and user-friendly interfaces.

4.2.2.4 Implications

The survey findings underscore a critical need for staffing solutions that offer both flexibility and reliability. Establishments are grappling with challenges related to skill matching, staffing flexibility, reliability, and streamlined processes. These needs highlight opportunities for innovative solutions that can effectively address these pain points, particularly those that ensure staff possess the necessary qualifications, allow for workforce adjustments without long-term commitments, reduce last-minute cancellations, and simplify administrative tasks.

4.2.3 Interview Analysis

4.2.3.1 Methodology

To complement the quantitative data from the survey with qualitative insights, we conducted 12 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with owners, managers, and industry consultants. Notable participants included the owners of Cobaia Restaurant, Fado em Si, Rui dos Pregos, Pinto Cafés, and a consultant from O Gerente, a company providing strategic guidance to

numerous restaurants across Portugal. The interviews sought to delve deeper into the staffing challenges, current strategies, and openness to new solutions, while also identifying trends in managerial attitudes and adaptability.

4.2.3.2 Key Themes from Interviews

Staffing Challenges Post-Pandemic: Many interviewees highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing staffing challenges. Experienced hospitality professionals left the industry for sectors offering better work-life balance and job security, leading to a scarcity of qualified staff. Sergio, an industry consultant, noted that the pandemic shifted the power dynamic, with employees now having higher expectations and more options outside the hospitality sector or outside Portugal.

Importance of Qualified and Reliable Staff: A consistent theme was the critical need for staff who are both qualified and reliable. Establishments prioritize staff who can deliver high-quality service, but frequent turnover and no-shows disrupt operations. Luis P. of Pinto Cafés expressed the need for staff who understand their standards and can uphold them consistently. The problem of having a high turnover rate means that establishments invest time and resources in training, only to have employees leave shortly after.

Limitations of Traditional Staffing Methods: Word-of-mouth recruitment and permanent staffing arrangements were cited as insufficient in meeting fluctuating demand. Pedro S. G., owner of Fado em Si, argued that such methods are too rigid, failing to adapt to seasonal or even daily variations in customer traffic.

Interest in Last-Minute Staffing Solutions: Despite some apprehension, several establishments expressed interest in last-minute staffing solutions, provided quality and reliability could be ensured. Pedro from Fado em Si mentioned, *"If there was a way to get qualified staff on short notice, who we could trust to do the job well, that would be a game-*

changer for us." This indicates a demand for flexible staffing options that can respond quickly to immediate needs.

Concerns About Last-Minute Staffing: Despite the openness to flexible staffing, many owners worried about bringing in untested workers during rush hours. Managers feared that individuals unfamiliar with their procedures could cause more harm than good. This concern emphasized the need for robust quality assurance processes, training measures, and standardized onboarding systems.

Importance of Being an Attractive Employer: Several managers recognized that becoming a more attractive employer is an increasingly critical factor in recruiting and retaining quality staff. Offering a positive work environment, fair compensation, well-defined working hours, and opportunities for growth were seen as essential measures. Helder, a consultant, stressed that hospitality businesses need to compete for talent by creating conditions that appeal to today's workforce. This shift in mindset suggests that establishments willing to invest in better employment conditions will likely find it easier to source and retain reliable staff, regardless of whether they come from traditional channels, immigrant pools, or on-demand platforms.

Openness to Collaborative Training Programs: Some establishments are open to innovative approaches to address staffing challenges, particularly collaborative training programs. Owners Joao and Giorgio of Cabaia Restaurant proposed a program where workers undergo a one-week unpaid training at their restaurant. Successful trainees would be certified, ensuring they meet quality standards before placement. Joao remarked, "*By training them ourselves, we ensure they meet our expectations and can hit the ground running.*" This approach addresses the qualification gap and builds a pool of reliable workers familiar with the establishment's standards.

4.2.3.3 Management Typologies: Adaptive vs. Traditionalist

A significant outcome of the interviews was the identification of two distinct managerial profiles:

Adaptive and Innovative Managers (20-30%): A minority of interviewees had already begun adapting to the post-pandemic staffing landscape. Rather than lamenting the loss of experienced domestic workers, they turned to immigrant labour pools, particularly Nepalese and Indian recruits, finding them fast learners, highly skilled, and reliable when treated fairly. Bruno, from São Rafael restaurant, praised such workers for their problem-solving abilities and adaptability. These adaptive managers quickly trained new hires to meet service standards, also improving working conditions to attract and retain talent. They recognized that Portuguese workers often proved less willing to endure long, irregular hours, thus necessitating alternative approaches.

Traditionalist Managers (70-80%): Most managers interviewed struggled to adapt their staffing models or integrate new hiring strategies. They expressed frustration with market conditions but took few steps to mitigate these issues. Rather than explore immigrants as a labour source or invest in training and improved working conditions, they tended to rely on traditional methods and complained about persistent shortages. According to O Gerente's consultant, these managers remain locked into outdated practices and fail to recognize the need to enhance their appeal as employers.

4.2.3.4 Integration of Interview Insights

The qualitative data complements our survey findings, reinforcing the notion that staffing challenges, ranging from a lack of qualified staff to high turnover, are pervasive. Interviews confirm that the industry is ripe for intervention, though any solution must prioritize reliability, skill verification, and trust-building measures. The openness to new solutions, especially from establishments willing to train and certify new workers, suggests that both immediate and long-

term staffing models could find traction. The divide between adaptive and traditionalist managers underscores the market's heterogeneity. While a small group is ready for flexible, tech-enabled solutions, new labour pools, and improvements in working conditions, the majority require a more fundamental shift. They must first recognize the importance of becoming attractive employers to capture the attention of skilled and reliable workers. Staffing solutions like FlexiStaff and QualiStaff must therefore be coupled with strategies that address employer branding, training, and employee well-being to fully resolve the staffing challenges faced by the hospitality industry.

4.2.4 Synthesis of Findings

The combined insights from the survey and interviews confirm that Portuguese hospitality establishments face persistent staffing challenges. These challenges manifest as difficulty finding and retaining qualified staff, high turnover rates, and inflexibility in adapting to fluctuating demand. Traditional staffing methods, reliant on permanent hires or word-of-mouth recruitment, often fail to meet urgent and changing needs.

At the same time, the research reveals a nuanced industry landscape with two distinct managerial mindsets. While a minority of adaptive managers actively seek innovative solutions, such as recruiting motivated immigrant workers, offering training to ensure skill alignment, and improving employment conditions to attract talent, a larger group of traditionalist managers struggles to adjust their practices. This majority stands to gain the most from structured, reliable staffing platforms and training programs but also needs to recognize the importance of becoming more attractive employers.

From a solution perspective, the findings highlight the need for flexible staffing options that ensure quality, reliability, and trust. Establishments are open to training initiatives and last-minute staffing platforms if these can provide assurance of worker competence and

dependability. Attractiveness as an employer, through better working conditions, fair compensation, and growth opportunities, is emerging as a key factor for long-term staffing stability. Both immediate and sustained approaches, such as on-demand staff placement (FlexiStaff) and longer-term workforce development (QualiStaff), find their rationale within these industry dynamics.

4.2.5 Hypotheses and Validation

The following table summarizes critical hypotheses tested through surveys and interviews, along with their validation status and key insights:

4.2.5.1 Hypotheses Table

#	Hypothesis	Results	Key Insights
H1	Establishments struggle with staffing during peak periods due to fluctuating demand.	Validated. Surveys and interviews confirm frequent staffing issues during peak times.	Both quantitative and qualitative data confirm that dynamic demand patterns cause persistent staffing gaps.
H2	Current staffing methods are inadequate, leading to dissatisfaction among establishments.	Validated. Moderate satisfaction levels indicate traditional methods aren't effective.	Managers express frustration with traditional hiring practices, underscoring a need for flexible, reliable solutions.
H3	Establishments are open to new staffing solutions if they offer reliable, qualified staff cost-effectively.	Partially Validated. Openness exists, but concerns over cost, quality, and reliability remain.	While interest exists, trust and quality assurances are paramount. Solutions must clearly demonstrate value to overcome initial skepticism.
H4	Quality and familiarity are crucial for effective last-minute staffing solutions.	Validated. Untrained staff hinder operations; qualified, familiar staff are needed.	Establishments highly value reliability in temporary staff. Ensuring pre-screened or trained workers who can quickly adapt to operational environments is critical.
H5	Collaborative training programs can improve staff quality to meet establishments' needs.	Validated. Positive responses to training proposals show openness to developing staff.	Collaborative training is effective, benefiting both establishments and workers.

Table 3: Hypotheses Testing (survey and interviews) Results and Insights

4.2.6 Development of Value Propositions

Based on the findings and validated hypotheses, we focus on two value propositions: **FlexiStaff** and **QualiStaff**.

FlexiStaff Aim: Provide last-minute, qualified staff to establishments facing immediate staffing shortages during peak periods.

Key Features:

- **Rapid Response:** Ability to supply staff on short notice to cater to sudden increases in demand.
- **Qualified Personnel:** Ensuring staff have the necessary skills and experience through pre-screening and certification processes.
- **Familiarity with Establishments:** Providing staff who have undergone standardized training to minimize the learning curve and integrate smoothly into operations.

Alignment with Needs: FlexiStaff addresses the need for flexibility without compromising on quality. It mitigates concerns about unfamiliarity and reliability of temporary staff by ensuring they are adequately trained and certified. This proposition aligns with establishments' desire for immediate staffing solutions that do not disrupt operations.

QualiStaff Aim: Offer trained staff for permanent or temporary positions, focusing on long-term solutions through collaborative training programs.

Key Features:

- **Collaborative Training:** Partnering with establishments to train and certify workers before placement, ensuring they meet specific standards.

- **Quality Assurance:** Providing staff who are ready to contribute effectively, reducing the time and resources needed for training.
- **Career Development Opportunities:** Offering pathways for staff growth, enhancing retention and loyalty.

Alignment with Needs: QualiStaff addresses the need for qualified, reliable staff who are committed to the establishment. It enhances employer attractiveness by contributing to staff development and addresses long-term staffing challenges.

Partner establishments play a key role in the success of both FlexiStaff and QualiStaff programs. For **FlexiStaff**, they provide up to one week of unpaid training to ensure workers are ready for last-minute deployment, building trust and guaranteeing quality. In return, they are willing to offer higher compensation for workers' availability and effort in meeting urgent demands. For **QualiStaff**, establishments actively contribute by offering tailored training and certification opportunities, enhancing staff competency, reliability, and operational alignment. This collaboration fosters a mutually beneficial relationship, where workers gain career growth while restaurants access a skilled and dependable workforce. Additionally, partners are eager to participate in skills assessments and training processes, further refining both value propositions and improving overall match quality.

4.2.7 Conclusion of Business Perspective

The comprehensive analysis of survey data and interviews underscores the multifaceted staffing challenges within the Portuguese hospitality industry. Establishments are grappling with immediate shortages, high turnover, and the need for qualified staff. Traditional methods are inadequate, leading to operational inefficiencies and compromised service quality.

By focusing on **FlexiStaff** and **QualiStaff**, we aim to address these needs effectively. FlexiStaff offers a flexible, immediate solution for peak demand periods, ensuring that establishments can

access qualified staff on short notice without sacrificing quality. QualiStaff provides a pathway to building a skilled, committed workforce over time through collaborative training programs and quality assurance measures.

These value propositions are informed by industry needs and validated hypotheses, emphasizing flexibility, reliability, and quality. They align with the preferences and concerns expressed by establishments, offering tailored solutions to their staffing challenges.

In the following chapters, we will detail the development and testing of these value propositions from both the businesses' and workers' perspectives. We will present the results of our landing page experiments and offer recommendations for future implementation, aiming to create viable services that meet the industry's evolving needs.

4.8 Test the Product-Solution of FlexiStaff: FlexiStaff Landing Page

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of customer needs before proceeding with further experiments and to integrate feedback gathered from surveys and interviews, we adopted, as introduced in subchapter 4.1.1, a pivot in one aspect of our business model: specifically, the value proposition. To achieve this, between September and October, we leveraged the insights from surveys and interviews during the new customer discovery phase to create an improved version of the FlexiStaff landing page (*www.lastminuteworkers.com*), replacing the outdated Bubble.io version. The enhanced landing page is shown in its entirety in Appendix 8.

This iteration shifted the focus from the original value proposition, which emphasized providing "low-skilled" workers for extra shifts during peak seasonal demand, to a more refined and targeted proposition: Qualified workers for extra shifts during peak seasonal periods.

To overcome language barriers, we implemented AI-powered translation tools like DeepL, allowing users to select their preferred language via a dropdown menu. The landing page

prominently displayed the updated value proposition, followed by clear call-to-action (CTA) buttons targeting two distinct audiences: businesses and workers. (Appendix 8, section 1)

For businesses, we emphasized: "Need expert last-minute staff? Join our community of business owners and get workers when you need them most, even at the last minute."

For workers, we offered: "Looking for flexible and well-paid work? Join our network of on-demand workers and start earning more today with our last-minute approach."

Users were directed to separate waitlists where they could provide their email addresses. This process differentiated between initial interest and deeper engagement, allowing us to segment data into two groups for detailed analysis. We tracked key metrics such as unique page visits, average engagement time, conversion rates, and sign-ups using Google Analytics 4 (GA4).

Advertising Campaign: To validate FlexiStaff's value proposition further, we launched a targeted advertising campaign. Initial methods like word-of-mouth and email marketing proved insufficient for a B2B platform. Therefore, we initiated a 10-day Facebook Ads campaign with a daily budget of €1.50, utilizing a bootstrap approach due to limited resources (Appendix 14, section 1, 2 and 5). The ads targeted restaurant owners, managers, and hospitality professionals aged 25 to 60 in key Portuguese regions like Lisbon, Porto, and the Algarve. We focused on interests such as "Food and Beverage," "Hospitality Management," and roles like "Restaurant Manager" and "Hospitality Manager." Behavioral indicators relevant to small business management in the food and restaurant sector further refined the audience.

Advertisements highlighted FlexiStaff's ability to provide flexible and qualified staffing solutions on short notice, addressing the industry's pressing needs during seasonal demand fluctuations. We also shared the landing page in various Facebook groups, which proved more effective in attracting potential workers (FlexiWorkers) but less successful in engaging business managers.

4.8.1 Hypothesis and KPI Table for FlexiStaff

To evaluate FlexiStaff's value proposition and user engagement, we formulated five hypotheses based on industry benchmarks for web data, focusing on conversion rates, engagement times, and user behavior. Data was collected from **November 2nd to 21st**. We began promoting the landing page on November 2nd through Facebook groups and targeted emails. From November 11th to 21st, we intensified our efforts with Facebook Ads, which significantly increased website traffic and user interactions, providing a strong basis for testing our hypotheses. We tested five key hypotheses to assess the effectiveness of the landing page in converting visitors into engaged users and potential customers. Below is a concise summary of each one:

#	Hypothesis	Results
H1	The conversion rate from landing page visitors to initial interest (e.g., CTA clicks) exceeds 20%.	Validated: A conversion rate of 34% was achieved (90 clicks out of 265 landing page visits).
H2	The conversion rate from businesses showing initial to final interest (business waitlist email sign-ups) exceeds 20%.	Not Validated: Only 12.5% of users on the business waitlist left their emails (3 out of 24 active users).
H3	The conversion rate from workers showing initial to final interest (workers waitlist email sign-ups) exceeds 30%.	Validated: 36% of users on the workers' waitlist left their emails (5 out of 14 active users).
H4	The average time spent on the landing page exceeds 30 seconds.	Validated: The average engagement time is 34 seconds.
H5	The visualizations per active user are at least 1.5, indicating repeated visits and sustained interest.	Validated: The median number of visualizations per active user is 2.1, suggesting users revisited the website at least once.

Table 4: FlexiStaff Hypotheses: Conversion and Engagement Insights

Key results: The landing page testing for FlexiStaff showed promising outcomes. The high conversion rate for initial interest (34%) indicates strong engagement with our value proposition. Workers demonstrated significant interest, with a 36% conversion rate to email sign-ups, surpassing our target. However, business engagement was lower than expected, with

only a 12.5% conversion rate to email sign-ups, highlighting areas for improvement in building trust and communicating value to this segment. The findings provide a clear justification for further development and optimization of the platform.

4.9 Test the Product-Solution of QualiStaff: QualiStaff Landing Page

Objective: The primary goal was to assess market interest in QualiStaff's value proposition as a recruitment agency providing certified and trained hospitality staff. Unlike FlexiStaff's focus on last-minute staffing, QualiStaff offers a traditional and reliable approach. The test aimed to validate the problem-solution fit by measuring visitor conversion into clients and gauging genuine interest.

Description: In late October, we developed a responsive QualiStaff landing page using Bubble.io, accessible at *qualistaff.agency.com*, and outlined in Appendix 12. The page effectively communicated QualiStaff's unique value proposition and aimed to build trust with potential users.

A brief description emphasized how QualiStaff recruits are equipped to elevate service standards. Below this, CTAs invited:

- **Businesses** to "Access trained staff immediately."
- **Workers** to "Join the QualiStaff team and earn more."

The page included fictitious testimonials to build credibility and addressed common staffing challenges: 1) Struggling to find qualified staff who are ready to excel from day one? 2) Tired of spending time and resources on staff training? 3) Dealing with turnover and unreliable schedules?

Advertising Campaign: We launched a ten-day Facebook Ads campaign with a daily budget of €1.50 focusing entirely on Facebook to engage hospitality professionals in key regions. The

campaign targeted restaurant owners, managers, chefs, and other professionals aged 25 to 60. Advertisements highlighted QualiStaff's value proposition of delivering highly trained and reliable professionals, addressing challenges like high turnover and unqualified staff. We emphasized professionalism, reliability, and readiness to meet client demands (Appendix 14, Section 3, 4 and 5).

4.9.1 Hypothesis and KPI's Table for QualiStaff

To assess QualiStaff's value proposition and measure user engagement, we launched the landing page on November 15th using Bubble.io's starter plan, giving us a data collection period from **November 15th to 29th**. We began by sharing the landing page in Facebook groups and through targeted emails. Starting November 19th, we intensified our efforts with a Facebook Ads campaign running until November 29th, which generated most of our website traffic and user interactions. We formulated four key hypotheses to evaluate the effectiveness of the QualiStaff landing page in converting visitors into engaged users and potential clients. These hypotheses were similar to those for FlexiStaff but adjusted to reflect the different nature of QualiStaff's value proposition as a recruitment agency offering certified and trained hospitality staff.

#	Hypothesis	Results
H1	Conversion rate from visitors to initial interest exceeds 15%	Not Validated: Conversion rate is 9.3% (9 clicks on CTA's out of 97 views).
H2	Conversion rate from users (both business or workers) to email sign-ups exceeds 10%.	Not Validated: 0% of the users showed final interest and submitted its email
H3	Average time on page exceeds 30 seconds.	Validated: (35 seconds)
H4	The visualizations per active user are at least 1.5, indicating repeated visits	Not Validated: the median of visualizations per active user is 1.1, suggesting users almost never revisited the website

Table 5: FlexiStaff Hypotheses: Conversion and Engagement Insights

The landing page testing for QualiStaff highlighted significant challenges. The low conversion rate for initial interest (9.3%) and zero email sign-ups indicates a lack of engagement. Despite adequate time spent on the page (35 seconds), this did not translate into meaningful conversions. These findings suggest a need to reevaluate QualiStaff's messaging, design, and overall value proposition before further development.

4.10 Landing Page Testing Insights and Future Improvements

The landing page tests revealed key insights for both platforms. FlexiStaff demonstrated strong potential, particularly among workers, with high engagement and conversion rates validating its focus on last-minute staffing solutions. However, lower business engagement highlights the need to improve trust-building and communication of its value.

In contrast, QualiStaff faced significant challenges, with low interest and no email sign-ups, pointing to a need for clearer messaging and better alignment with target audience expectations. These results provide a clear direction for refining both platforms to enhance engagement and conversion rates in future iterations.

5. Outside of The Building: Human Lens

5.1 Workers Perspective

Previous chapters highlighted the challenges hospitality establishments face in securing appropriately skilled and reliable staff, particularly during peak demand periods. While owners and managers expressed interest in flexible or qualified staffing solutions, the viability of these models also depends on workers' preferences, motivations, and willingness to engage. This chapter examines the workers' perspective, using qualitative and quantitative data from WhatsApp group engagement, interviews, and landing page experiments. It provides a comprehensive understanding of which types of workers align with FlexiStaff or QualiStaff, their motivations, and the conditions under which they are most likely to adopt these models.

5.2 Validation of Interest through WhatsApp Groups

To assess the interest of potential workers in flexible staffing solutions, two WhatsApp groups were created:

5.2.1 Low-Skilled Workers Group

The first group consisted of 152 individuals, mainly university students from institutions such as NOVA, Católica, and ISEG, as well as immigrants from countries like Cape Verde and Angola. Approximately 80% were students seeking flexible work opportunities to earn additional income while balancing their studies or other commitments. The remaining participants were immigrants looking for work to support their living expenses. The rapid

growth of this group—reaching over 139 members in less than two days—indicated a strong interest in flexible work. (Appendix 3, Section 2)

5.2.2 Experienced and Qualified Workers Group

The second group comprised 15 individuals with experience and qualifications in the hospitality industry. This group was formed through referrals, notably from a student at the Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies (ESHTE), who mentioned that many of his peers were interested in flexible, well-paid work opportunities. Participants included experienced waiters, bartenders, and hospitality students eager to apply their skills in a flexible work environment. Their interest was driven by the prospect of higher compensation and the freedom to choose their working hours. (Appendix 3, section 1)

5.2.3 Key Insights from Worker Engagement

The high level of interest in both Whatsapp groups underscored the demand for flexible work arrangements among different demographics. The primary motivators were competitive compensation and flexibility, allowing workers to manage other responsibilities such as studies or personal projects. However, reliability emerged as a critical issue. An illustrative incident underscores this challenge:” An establishment requested an experienced bartender on short notice. Upon posting the opportunity in the qualified workers' WhatsApp group, two candidates responded within ten minutes. The first respondent was selected, but five minutes before the shift, he informed us that he was unwell and couldn't attend. This left the restaurant without the needed staff for that day.”

This event emphasized the importance of worker commitment and reliability. To address this, a policy was implemented stating that any worker who accepts a shift but fails to show up without valid notice would be removed from the group and excluded from future opportunities.

5.3 Interviews with Workers

To deepen our understanding, we conducted 10 brief interviews with members from both groups. Lasting approximately 15 minutes each, these semi-structured interviews explored employment history, motivations, willingness to undergo training, and openness to structured assessments. The interviews were conducted either in person or via phone calls, lasting approximately 15 minutes each. Participants were asked about their employment history, motivations for seeking work, preferences regarding work arrangements, and their willingness to undergo training or assessments (Appendix 17).

5.4 Findings

Preference for Flexible Work among Students and Experienced Worker: Approximately 60% of the interviewed workers were students or experienced professionals in the hospitality industry who preferred flexible, well-paid shift opportunities without long-term commitments. One student remarked: *"Flexible shifts that fit around my studies are ideal. I can earn money without sacrificing my education."* An experienced bartender stated: *"I have years of experience, and I prefer picking up shifts when I want. The idea of a platform that offers well-paid, flexible work is very appealing."* These workers valued the autonomy and higher pay associated with the FlexiStaff model, making them suitable candidates for last-minute staffing solutions.

Desire for Stability among Immigrant and Unskilled Workers: Around 40% of the interviewed workers were immigrants or individuals with limited experience seeking stable employment opportunities. They expressed a strong willingness to undergo training programs to acquire necessary skills and secure qualified positions through the QualiStaff model. One immigrant worker shared: *"I'm ready to work hard and learn. If there's training that can help me get a stable job, I'm interested."* Another added: *"Stability is important for me. I need consistent work to support my family here."* These workers prioritized job security and

professional development, making them ideal candidates for training and placement through QualiStaff.

Reluctance towards Unpaid Assessments and Training: Some workers were hesitant to participate in unpaid assessment shifts or training without immediate tangible benefits. A student expressed: *"I understand the need for assessments, but I can't afford to work for free. Maybe if there was some compensation or guarantee of future shifts, I'd consider it."* This highlights the need for incentivizing assessments, guarantee something after the assessment, or finding alternative methods to evaluate worker competencies.

Importance of Work Environment and Growth Opportunities: While compensation was a significant factor, some workers emphasized the importance of a positive work environment and opportunities for growth. An experienced waiter noted: *"Good pay is important but so is how you're treated at work. Opportunities to learn and grow keep me motivated."* This suggests that factors beyond pay influence worker satisfaction and retention, especially among those considering longer-term employment.

Reliability and Commitment Challenges: The interviews confirmed that reliability is a concern, particularly among workers seeking flexible arrangements. A manager from one of the partner restaurants commented: *"Last-minute cancellations can be disruptive. We need assurance that workers will show up when they commit."* This underscores the importance of implementing measures to enhance reliability within the staffing models.

5.5 Additional Validation through Promotional Activities

Two landing pages were launched that worked as a part of the test worker interest and to validate hypotheses:

FlexiStaff Landing Page: Achieved a 36% conversion rate (email sign-ups), confirming strong interest among flexibility-driven workers. This demonstrates the viability of the FlexiStaff model for attracting workers who value immediate, short-term opportunities.

QualiStaff Landing Page: Failed to generate sign-ups, with a 0% conversion rate. This suggests that stability-driven workers require more trust-building and personalized outreach than the tested approach provided.

5.6 Collaboration with Restaurant Partners for Training and Assessment

5.6.1 Partnership with Cobaia Restaurant

A partnership with Cobaia Restaurant was established to operationalize both the FlexiStaff and the QualiStaff model. Cobaia offered to host workers for both assessments and training, providing practical, hands-on experience alongside theoretical instruction. Successful participants would receive certification, enhancing their employability. As the owner explained:

“We need staff who are smart and adaptable. We’re willing to train them and give feedback. If they prove themselves, they’ll have more opportunities with us and other partners.”

This collaboration reinforces the potential to address qualification gaps and provide stable career opportunities.

5.6.2 Training and Certification Process

The proposed training at Cobaia Restaurant is a practical, learning-by-doing approach supervised by experienced staff. The training focuses on:

- **Practical Skills:** Gained through working in the restaurant environment.
- **Theoretical Knowledge:** Supplemented through online materials on our platform.

Upon successful completion and positive feedback from the restaurant, workers would receive certification, enhancing their employability and readiness for placement.

5.6.3 Ensuring Quality and Reliability

Both FlexiStaff and QualiStaff models prioritize the quality of the worker community. A rigorous screening and selection process is essential to maintain high service standards for partner establishments. This includes an **Assessment of Skills**: Through initial shifts or training programs; **Commitment Policies**: To ensure reliability and accountability among workers. Collaboration with restaurant partners plays a crucial role in this process, as their feedback and involvement help in setting and upholding the quality criteria.

5.7 Hypotheses and Validation from Workers' Perspective

Based on the interviews and engagements, several key hypotheses were formulated and tested:

#	Hypothesis	Results	Findings
H1	Workers are interested in flexible, short-term opportunities.	Validated: Interviews confirmed strong interest in FlexiStaff.	Students and experienced professionals favored FlexiStaff's immediate, well-paid shifts, underscoring demand for short-term flexibility.
H2	Unskilled or immigrant workers will invest in training for stability (QualiStaff).	Validated: Interviews showed ~40% willingness to train for stable roles.	Supports QualiStaff's approach, as some workers see training and stability as valuable
H3	Conversion of Workers (FlexiStaff LP): Initial to final interest >30%.	Validated: FlexiStaff landing page achieved a 36% email sign-up conversion.	High engagement confirms that those who value flexibility and immediate earnings take tangible steps toward using the service.
H4	Conversion of Workers (QualiStaff LP): Initial to final interest >30%.	Not Validated: QualiStaff landing page achieved 0% email sign-up conversion.	Indicates that stable roles with training did not resonate as strongly, at least through the tested messaging and channel (Facebook).
H5	Transparency and growth opportunities enhance appeal.	Partially Validated: Some workers expressed need for clarity and advancement.	While many prioritize pay and flexibility, stability-focused workers appreciate transparency and paths for career development.

Table 6: Testing Worker Preferences and Engagement Insights

5.7.1 Segmented Motivations and Worker Profiles

The workers' responses revealed distinct motivations that align with the two staffing models:

Flexibility-Driven Workers (FlexiStaff):

Motivations: Quick earning potential, freedom to choose shifts, minimal long-term commitments.

Challenges: Some reliability issues due to their flexibility-oriented nature.

Insights: Streamlining onboarding and emphasizing autonomy can enhance engagement.

Stability-Driven Workers (QualiStaff):

Motivations: Desire for job security, willingness to upskill through training, long-term employability.

Challenges: Reluctance to engage in unpaid training without clear benefits.

Insights: Trust-building, guaranteed placements after training, and partnerships with reputable employers can increase participation.

These segments demonstrate the need for tailored strategies to engage workers effectively, depending on their priorities.

5.7.2 Key Insights from Hypotheses Testing

The findings provide several valuable insights into the preferences and behaviors of workers: The validation and engagement efforts with workers confirmed the demand for both flexible and stable staffing solutions, each appealing to different worker profile

Preference for Flexibility Validates FlexiStaff: Among the workers interviewed, a significant majority (students, professionals, and multitaskers) strongly favored the FlexiStaff model. The ability to choose when and where to work aligns with their demand for freedom and flexibility,

making this solution more appealing than QualiStaff. The rigid structure of training programs and long-term commitments in QualiStaff was perceived by many as limiting, particularly for workers seeking autonomy.

Training Programs Appeal to Specific Segments: While the FlexiStaff model resonates with a broader segment of workers, unskilled and immigrant workers expressed an openness to QualiStaff's structured training and stable employment opportunities. This suggests that QualiStaff holds potential in addressing qualification gaps but appeals to a narrower segment of workers willing to trade flexibility for career advancement.

Transparent Communication is Critical: Workers emphasized the importance of platforms that clearly outline roles, schedules, and compensation. Transparency generates trust and enhances participation, particularly among skilled workers who value clarity in job expectations. This is especially important for FlexiStaff, where rapid decision-making by workers is essential.

Flexibility as a Decisive Factor: Compensation is important but not the sole driver of worker preferences. The freedom offered by FlexiStaff, in terms of choosing shifts and managing time, was consistently highlighted as a decisive factor in worker engagement. While QualiStaff offers growth opportunities, its structured nature may not align with the immediate needs of most of the workforce.

Incentives Enhance Reliability Across Both Models: Worker reliability remains a challenge for both value propositions. Tangible incentives, such as performance-based bonuses, were shown to improve commitment and reduce cancellations. This is crucial for FlexiStaff, where reliability can directly impact the success of last-minute placements.

FlexiStaff Aligns Better with Worker Priorities: Overall, the findings indicate that FlexiStaff is better positioned to meet the preferences of most workers. Its emphasis on

flexibility and short-term commitments makes it the preferred choice for the key worker segments interviewed. In contrast, QualiStaff may be more suitable for a smaller subset of workers seeking stability and structured career pathways.

5.8 Recommendations and Strategic Implications

Building on the findings from WhatsApp engagements, interviews, and landing page tests, this section outlines strategic recommendations to optimize the FlexiStaff and QualiStaff models based on worker preferences and motivations.

Enhancing FlexiStaff Engagement: FlexiStaff appeals strongly to students and experienced professionals due to its flexibility and immediate compensation. To maximize its impact, key actions need to be implemented: 1) simplify onboarding to ensure quick and intuitive registration, supported by automated validation of worker profiles and qualifications; 2) enhance transparency in job postings by clearly outlining shift timing, compensation, and role expectations to build trust and enable quick decision-making; 3) introduce reliability incentives such as bonuses or a points system to reward consistent, punctual workers, enhancing reliability and access to better opportunities; 4) provide 24/7 support services via mobile apps to address worker concerns and maintain engagement.

Strengthening the QualiStaff Model: QualiStaff resonates with immigrants and unskilled workers but requires focused efforts to improve adoption: 1) build community partnerships with NGOs and cultural associations to establish trust and credibility within target communities; 2) incentivize training programs by offering stipends, meals, or guaranteed placements to encourage participation; 3) create flexible training modules combining online and hands-on components, allowing workers to progress at their own pace before practical training at partner establishments; 4) highlight clear career pathways, emphasizing long-term benefits such as structured certifications and partnerships with reputable employers.

5.9 Conclusion of Workers Perspective

From a workers' perspective, there is a clear divergence in preferences that aligns neatly with the two proposed staffing solutions. The FlexiStaff model resonates with the majority of interviewed seeking flexible, short-term opportunities, particularly students and experienced professionals who value autonomy and immediate compensation. Conversely, QualiStaff holds distinct potential for workers who prioritize stability, skill development, and long-term employment, such as immigrants and those with less experience.

This segmentation reinforces the strategic need to tailor each value proposition to its corresponding worker profile. By ensuring that FlexiStaff continues to emphasize immediacy, higher pay rates, and ease of access, it can thrive among those who prefer quick engagements. Meanwhile, QualiStaff can cultivate trust and credibility through structured training programs, clear career pathways, and partnerships with establishments like Cobaia Restaurant, appealing to workers who view stable career progression as their primary goal.

In sum, the data gathered from WhatsApp engagements, interviews, promotional campaigns, and partnership initiatives underscores that while both flexible and stable staffing solutions have a place in the hospitality labor market, their respective worker audiences diverge in motivations and requirements. Recognizing and catering to these differences is critical for effectively meeting the industry's evolving staffing needs.

6. Result and Discussions

This chapter serves as the concluding section of the research, synthesizing all the information gathered throughout the study. It combines insights from both inside and outside the building approaches, integrating perspectives from businesses and workers, as well as theoretical frameworks such as the Customer Development Process (CDP) and the Lean Startup Model. In the subsequent subchapters, the results of the research will be presented alongside a discussion of its limitations, providing a comprehensive overview of the findings and their implications.

6.1 Limitation of the Research

While the research identified a clear problem-solution fit by confirming that food and beverage establishments in the hospitality face significant staffing challenges and expressing initial interest in the proposed value propositions, several limitations must be considered. The study encompassed both coastal areas and the Lisbon metropolitan region, yet the variety of examined establishments remained limited. Other geographic areas, market segments, and categories of hospitality businesses might exhibit distinct patterns in staffing needs and responsiveness to new staffing models. The timing of data collection, often aligned with less busy periods, may have influenced engagement levels and not fully reflected the intensity of peak-season demand. Furthermore, resource constraints, both in terms of budget and brand recognition, may have restricted the breadth and depth of market penetration, potentially affecting the trust and credibility necessary to persuade more traditionalist managers to adopt new approaches.

While problem-solution fit was validated through the demonstration that the proposed services address genuine and urgent staffing issues, achieving product-market fit remains an area for future exploration. Deeper validation under a range of conditions, particularly during peak seasons and across more diverse hospitality environments, would allow for more accurate

assessment of scalability, long-term retention, and recurring usage. Future research should apply the iterative and evidence-driven methodologies advocated by Steve Blank and the Customer Development process to refine hypotheses, adapt the business model as needed, and confirm product-market fit. Expanding experiments to include additional geographic regions, different types of hospitality venues, and longer observation periods, as well as continuously measuring key performance indicators such as worker reliability, establishment satisfaction, and overall cost-effectiveness, will be instrumental in moving beyond problem-solution fit. This ongoing, rigorous approach to research and validation can ensure that the solutions become not merely relevant in theory, but truly integral to the operational fabric of the hospitality industry.

6.2 Conclusion

This study set out to answer the question: "*Which value proposition best positions FlexiStaff to address staffing challenges in Portuguese restaurants while balancing worker and employer needs*". To address this, we applied Lean Startup and Customer Development methodologies, rigorously testing two distinct value propositions under our branch, **FlexiStaff** and **QualiStaff**, through market observations, interviews, surveys, and landing page experiments.

FlexiStaff, designed as an on-demand staffing solution, showed strong alignment with the core market needs. Our findings confirmed that establishments face chronic staffing shortages and fluctuating demand, leading to inefficiencies, reduced customer satisfaction, and lost revenue. Managers expressed frustration with existing methods, mainly permanent staffing and word-of-mouth recruitment, that do not provide the necessary flexibility or reliability. By offering last minute qualified workers for extra shifts, FlexiStaff directly tackled this pain point. The concept resonated strongly with stakeholders: high conversion rates from both establishment managers and potential workers demonstrated a clear willingness to engage. Although the business-to-email sign-up conversion was lower than hoped, the overall evidence indicates

FlexiStaff has a promising path toward product-market fit, as it effectively helps businesses adapt to demand surges and maintain service quality.

In contrast, the **QualiStaff** proposition, which emphasized training and certifying workers (including immigrants and unskilled labour) for more stable, long-term placements, elicited significantly lower engagement. While QualiStaff's social impact potential, fostering workforce integration, reducing skill gaps, and enhancing the long-term talent pool, is compelling, it did not immediately resonate with establishments' most pressing needs. Managers primarily sought quick, reliable solutions rather than more complex arrangements. Low conversion rates suggest that QualiStaff, in its current form, may not align well with the urgent, short-term staffing challenges that dominate the industry's attention. Further pivoting, differentiation, and longer-term market education would be required to realize its potential.

Comparing the two propositions, FlexiStaff emerges as the stronger candidate for improving staffing efficiency and customer satisfaction within the current market context. It offers a scalable, responsive solution that directly addresses the short-term staffing gaps and operational hurdles hospitality managers encounter. QualiStaff, while potentially impactful from a social and developmental standpoint, appears less suited to the immediate priorities and constraints of most establishments.

Answering the Research Question:

In summary, our research indicates that value propositions emphasizing rapid, flexible staffing solutions, such as FlexiStaff, is the best to address staffing challenges in Portuguese restaurants while balancing worker and employer needs. Immediate availability, ease of implementation, reliability, and worker quality assurance emerged as critical drivers of acceptance. QualiStaff's longer-term, training-focused approach holds meaningful promise for developing a more skilled

and inclusive workforce over time but is less likely to solve the industry's acute short-term challenges without further refinement and market adaptation.

Final Recommendation:

Given the evidence gathered so far, **FlexiStaff** should be prioritized as the main focus moving forward due to its stronger alignment with immediate market needs and customer expectations.

The next steps should involve conducting further experiments to refine the model, specifically targeting three key areas: building trust with businesses, improving conversion rates from prospective clients, and solidifying the operational framework to ensure a seamless experience for workers as well. Addressing these aspects will not only help validate the value proposition but also create a more robust and scalable solution.

In parallel, while **FlexiStaff** addresses the urgent demand for flexible and responsive staffing, integrating elements from **QualiStaff**'s training model over time could serve as a strategic enhancement. By incorporating a pipeline of qualified and dependable workers, FlexiStaff could distinguish itself further, ensuring long-term customer retention and operational reliability.

In the short term, however, the clearest path to improving staffing efficiency and increasing customer satisfaction lies in strengthening **FlexiStaff**'s core offering as a responsive, agile, and scalable solution. By focusing on these priorities, the startup will be well-positioned to achieve product-market fit and set the foundation for sustained growth and innovation in the staffing sector.

6.3 Final Remarks

This work exemplifies how a hands-on, iterative approach, rooted in the Customer Development Process and Lean Startup methodology, can guide entrepreneurial ventures toward meaningful market alignment. Through the creation of surveys, interviews, and the testing two no-code landing pages, we went beyond mere engagement; we gathered actionable, data-driven insights that sharpened our understanding of both business and worker needs. These experiments not only validated core assumptions but also uncovered nuances in employer-worker dynamics, enabling us to refine our value propositions and prioritize the solution most resonant with the current market landscape. Through direct user interaction, rigorous feedback loops, and continual adjustments, we have laid a more substantial foundation for achieving product-market fit. Ultimately, this project highlights the importance of iterative learning, collaborative industry involvement, and evidence-based decision-making, serving as both a testament to addressing complex staffing challenges in the hospitality sector and a practical foundation for our entrepreneurial journey. It underscores the value of experimentation, adaptability, and data-driven approaches in creating effective, real-world solutions.

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List of Figures and Tables

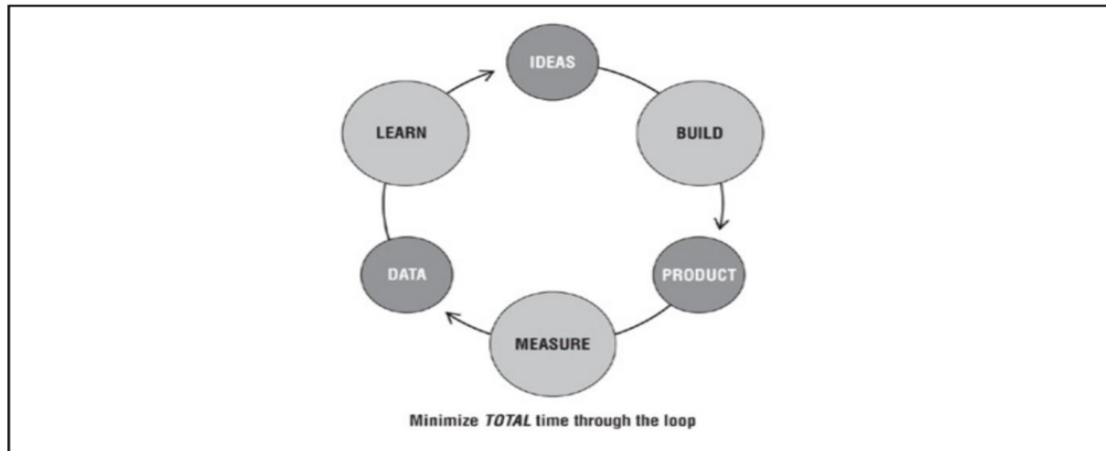


Figure 1: The Build-Measure-Learn Feedback Loop (Ries 2011)

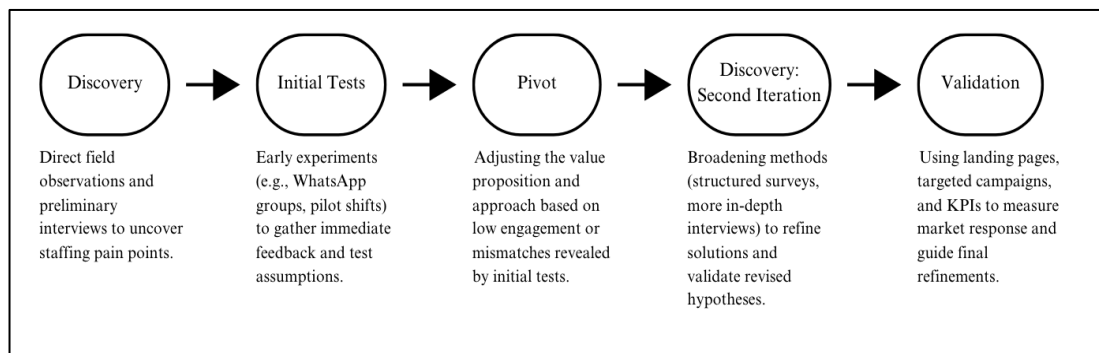


Figure 2: Methodological Flow Diagram for FlexiStaff's Lean Approach

Partner	Request	Expectations	Outcome	Compensation	Key Learning
1° Experiment: Wind Surf Cafe	Bartender	Bartender capable of all bar tasks	Worker lacked comprehensive skills	€9/hour (above initial €7/hour agreement)	Precise role definition and skill matching are crucial
2° Experiment: Wind Surf Cafe	Experienced Bartender	Experienced bar tender high level	Worker cancelled 20 minutes before shift	€8/hour (agreed, not paid due to cancellation)	Need for mechanisms to ensure worker reliability
2° Experiment: Emma Beach Club	Runner	Last-minute request not previous experience requested	Satisfactory performance; extended to 4 days	€6.8/hour (above standard). Next three days €5/hour for their agreement	Restaurants willing to pay premium for immediate staffing

Table 1: Summary of Pilot Testing Outcomes

#	Hypotesis	Results	Key Insights
H1	At least 10% of contacted business will respond	Not Validated: A Conversion of 5% was achieved, indicating room for improvement	2/40 business responded. Contacts were made via Whatsapp (15) and email (around 25) targeting Carcavelos, Estoril, Cascais and Oeiras
H2	At least 50% of those who contacted us will request a worker within 2 months	Not Validated: A conversion rate of 0% was achieved	No follow-up request for workers were made by the 2 responding businesses.

Table 2: Summary of First Landing Page Experiment for FlexiStaff

#	Hypothesis	Results	Key Insights
H1	Establishments struggle with staffing during peak periods due to fluctuating demand.	Validated. Surveys and interviews confirm frequent staffing issues during peak times.	Both quantitative and qualitative data confirm that dynamic demand patterns cause persistent staffing gaps.
H2	Current staffing methods are inadequate, leading to dissatisfaction among establishments.	Validated. Moderate satisfaction levels indicate traditional methods aren't effective.	Managers express frustration with traditional hiring practices, underscoring a need for flexible, reliable solutions.
H3	Establishments are open to new staffing solutions if they offer reliable, qualified staff cost-effectively.	Partially Validated. Openness exists, but concerns over cost, quality, and reliability remain.	While interest exists, trust and quality assurances are paramount. Solutions must clearly demonstrate value to overcome initial skepticism.
H4	Quality and familiarity are crucial for effective last-minute staffing solutions.	Validated. Untrained staff hinder operations; qualified, familiar staff are needed.	Establishments highly value reliability in temporary staff. Ensuring pre-screened or trained workers who can quickly adapt to operational environments is critical.
H5	Collaborative training programs can improve staff quality to meet establishments' needs.	Validated. Positive responses to training proposals show openness to developing staff.	Collaborative training is effective, benefiting both establishments and workers.

Table 3: Hypotheses Testing (survey and interviews) Results and Insights

#	Hypothesis	Results
H1	The conversion rate from landing page visitors to initial interest (e.g., CTA clicks) exceeds 20%.	Validated: A conversion rate of 34% was achieved (90 clicks out of 265 landing page visits).
H2	The conversion rate from businesses showing initial to final interest (business waitlist email sign-ups) exceeds 20%.	Not Validated: Only 12.5% of users on the business waitlist left their emails (3 out of 24 active users).
H3	The conversion rate from workers showing initial to final interest (workers waitlist email sign-ups) exceeds 30%.	Validated: 36% of users on the workers' waitlist left their emails (5 out of 14 active users).
H4	The average time spent on the landing page exceeds 30 seconds.	Validated: The average engagement time is 34 seconds.
H5	The visualizations per active user are at least 1.5, indicating repeated visits and sustained interest.	Validated: The median number of visualizations per active user is 2.1, suggesting users revisited the website at least once.

Table 4: FlexiStaff Hypotheses: Conversion and Engagement Insights

#	Hypothesis	Results
H1	Conversion rate from visitors to initial interest exceeds 15%	Not Validated: Conversion rate is 9.3% (9 clicks on CTA's out of 97 views).
H2	Conversion rate from users (both business or workers) to email sign-ups exceeds 10%.	Not Validated: 0% of the users showed final interest and submitted its email
H3	Average time on page exceeds 30 seconds.	Validated: (35 seconds)
H4	The visualizations per active user are at least 1.5, indicating repeated visits	Not Validated: the median of visualizations per active user is 1.1, suggesting users almost never revisited the website

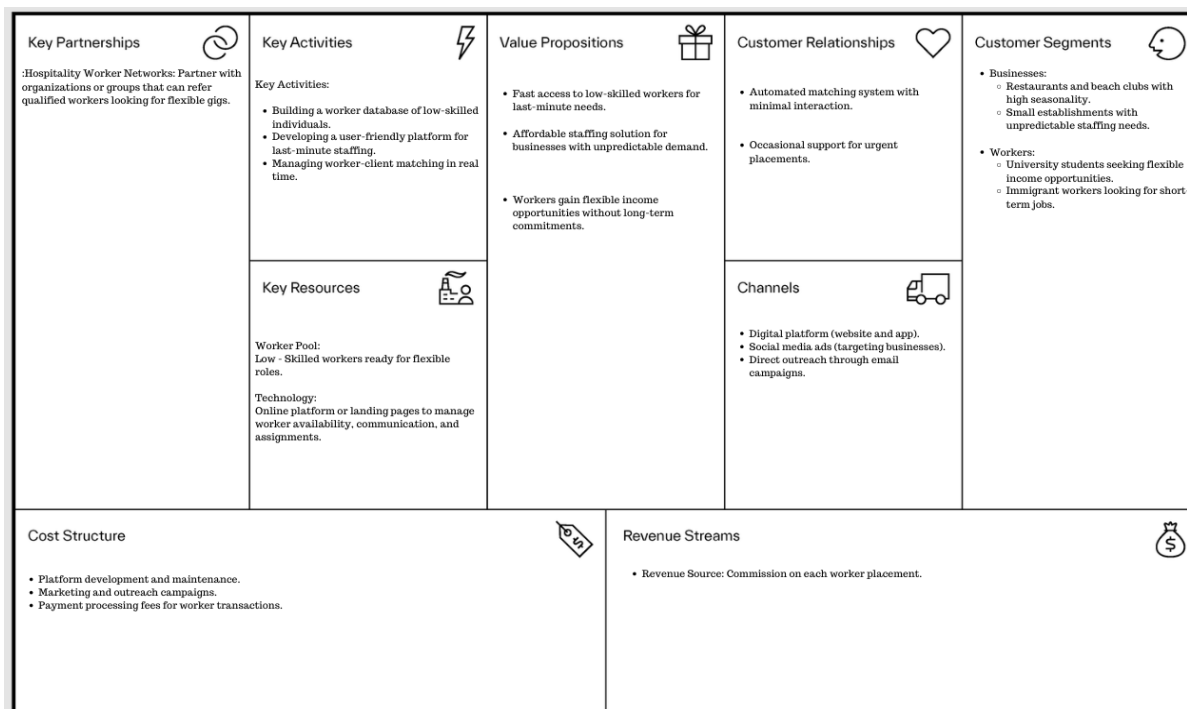
Table 5: FlexiStaff Hypotheses: Conversion and Engagement Insights

#	Hypothesis	Results	Findings
H1	Workers are interested in flexible, short-term opportunities.	Validated: Interviews confirmed strong interest in FlexiStaff.	Students and experienced professionals favored FlexiStaff's immediate, well-paid shifts, underscoring demand for short-term flexibility.
H2	Unskilled or immigrant workers will invest in training for stability (QualiStaff).	Validated: Interviews showed ~40% willingness to train for stable roles.	Supports QualiStaff's approach, as some workers see training and stability as valuable
H3	Conversion of Workers (FlexiStaff LP): Initial to final interest >30%.	Validated: FlexiStaff landing page achieved a 36% email sign-up conversion.	High engagement confirms that those who value flexibility and immediate earnings take tangible steps toward using the service.
H4	Conversion of Workers (QualiStaff LP): Initial to final interest >30%.	Not Validated: QualiStaff landing page achieved 0% email sign-up conversion.	Indicates that stable roles with training did not resonate as strongly, at least through the tested messaging and channel (Facebook).
H5	Transparency and growth opportunities enhance appeal.	Partially Validated: Some workers expressed need for clarity and advancement.	While many prioritize pay and flexibility, stability-focused workers appreciate transparency and paths for career development.

Table 6: Testing Worker Preferences and Engagement Insights

Appendix

Appendix 1: Business Model Canvas – Initial Version (Pre-September 2024)

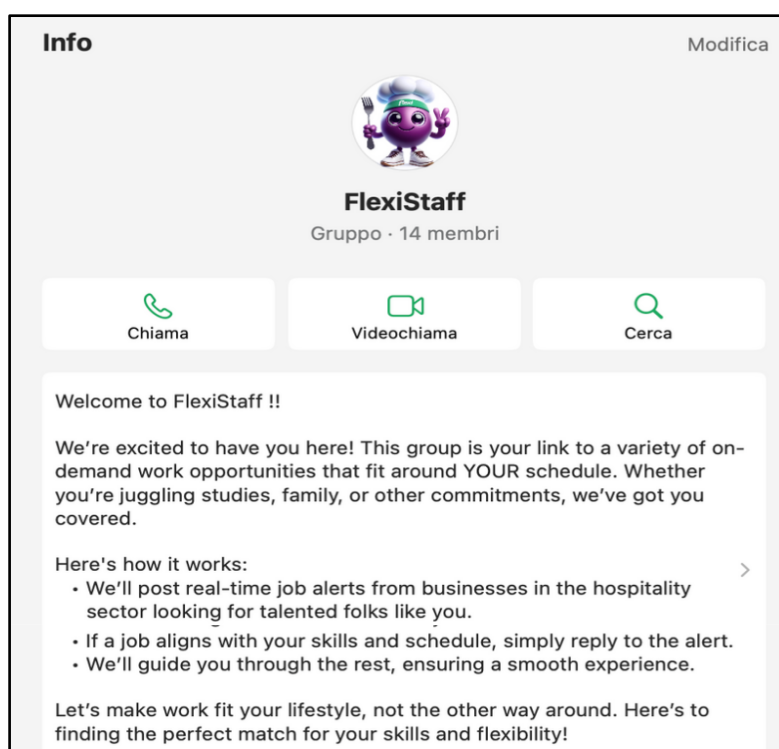


Appendix 2: Customer Exploration and Interviews Questions (Pre-September 2024)

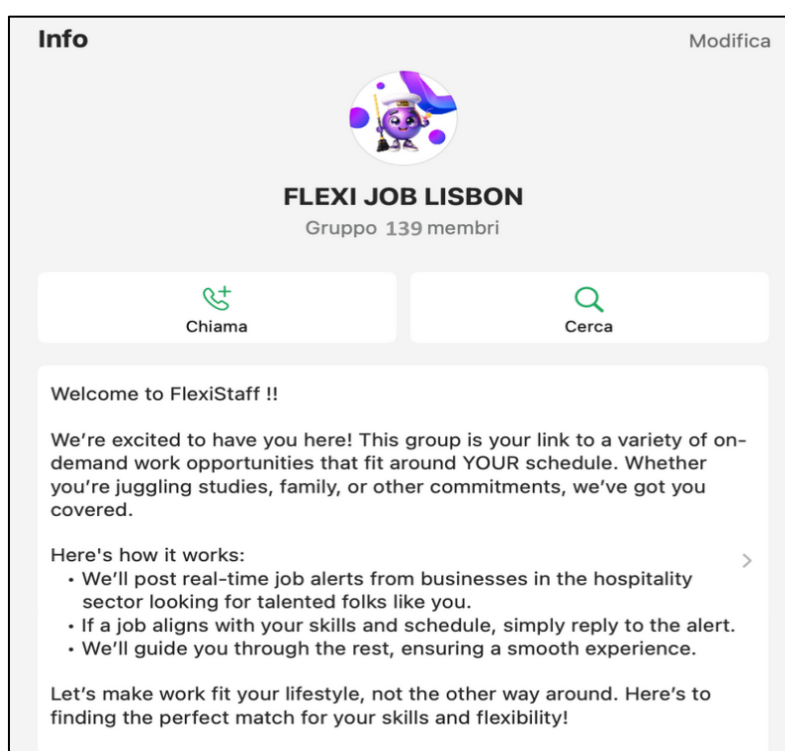
First Interviews Questions:

1. What are the biggest challenges or frustrations you face in running your restaurant/establishment?
2. Can you walk me through the key problems or "pain points" that impact your day-to-day operations?
3. If you could fix one thing in your business operations right now, what would it be and why?
4. How do these challenges affect the customer experience at your establishment?
5. Could you rank these challenges in order of importance to your business?
6. How would you describe your current approach to staffing? What works well, and what doesn't?
7. What are the biggest challenges you face related to staffing?
8. How do staffing issues typically affect your operations during busy periods?
9. How much time do you spend personally dealing with staffing issues, and what aspects consume the most time?
10. Are there particular roles or positions that are harder to fill than others? Why do you think that is?
11. How do you currently find new staff, especially during peak seasons or in emergencies?
12. How do you plan and budget for staffing across different seasons?
13. Are you willing to spend more to secure reliable staff, especially during busy periods?
14. What percentage of your operating budget is typically allocated to staffing-related costs?
15. Are there any upcoming challenges you foresee that could make staffing more difficult?

Appendix 3: WhatsApp Group Engagement Statistics and Screenshots



Section 1: Engagement within ETCHE Students FlexiStaff Group (15 Members)



Section 2: Engagement with the Macro WhatsApp Group (139 Members including students, immigrants and freelancers)

English
📢 Job Opportunity in Carcavelos! 🍷

We are looking for a FlexiWorker to work on Saturday 27/04 and Sunday 28/04, from 16:00 to 22:30.

Number of people needed: 1
Location: Carcavelos
Required Experience: Medium/High
Languages: English and Portuguese
Salary: from €5 to €7 per hour

If you are interested, available and you meet all these requirements, please respond with "Interested" or "Interessado"!

Detailed information will be provided privately to the first responder

🔥 Even if you're not the first to respond, please express your interest! You might be contacted later.

Section 1: Experiment of 26/4: Job Opportunity in Carcavelos

Leonardo Billi
Hello everyone!

English
📢 Job Opportunity in Cascais! 🍷

We are looking for a FlexiWorker to work TOMORROW 12/07, from 09:00 to 18.00.

Number of people needed: 1
Location: Cascais
Required Experience: No experience
Languages: English and Portuguese
Salary: 50€

If you are interested, available and you meet all these requirements, please respond with "Interested" or "Interessado"!

Detailed information will be provided privately to the first responder

🔥 Even if you're not the first to respond, please express your interest! You might be contacted later.

Section 2: Last Experiment of 7/7: Job Opportunity in Cascais

Appendix 4: Customer Exploration and Survey Questions (October 2024)

"We are conducting research to better understand the staffing challenges faced by businesses in the hospitality industry, particularly during periods of high demand. Your insights will help us design better solutions to address these challenges. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete, and all responses will be kept confidential. For the purpose of this survey, a 'temporary worker' refers to staff hired for short-term or seasonal work or just a shift, typically to address peak demand periods, such as during holidays, weekends, or for a day of an event. This includes part-time workers, freelancers, or staff hired via agencies or platforms.

1. What type of establishment do you operate?
2. What is the size of your business? (Select one based on full-time equivalent employees)
3. How many covers (seating capacity) does your establishment have?
4. How often do you experience staffing challenges during peak periods (e.g., holidays, summer, weekends)?
5. How frequently do you face each of the following challenges? (Rate on a scale of 1 to 5):
 - Too many staff during off-peak times
 - Too few staff during peak times

- Difficulty finding qualified staff
 - Need to quickly train new or temporary staff
 - Last-minute staff cancellations
 - Difficulty balancing staff costs with demand
6. Rank the top 3 challenges you face in managing staff, especially during periods of high demand (select only 3):
- Customer Satisfaction
 - Operational Efficiency
 - Profitability / Revenue
 - Employee Morale
 - Time spent managing HR issues
7. What are the most common challenges you face in terms of staff? (Select all that apply):
- Finding qualified staff at short notice
 - High employee turnover
 - Difficulty adjusting staff levels to demand fluctuations
 - Lack of staff training or skill levels
 - Retaining temporary or seasonal staff
 - Managing payroll and budget for temporary workers
8. How do you currently manage staffing during **peak demand** periods?
9. On a scale of 1-5, *"How satisfied are you with your current solutions for managing temporary or short-term staff during peak demand?"*
10. What do you think is the most important factor in solving your staffing challenges? (For this survey, a "temporary worker" refers to someone hired on a short-term or flexible basis, typically to meet sudden staffing needs.) (Select one):
- Easier access to temporary staff
 - Better forecasting of staffing needs
 - More efficient communication with potential workers
 - Improved training for temporary workers
 - More flexible staffing options
11. Have you ever used a digital platform to manage staffing needs?
12. If you answered "yes", what **was your experience** using digital staffing platform?
13. If you haven't used digital platforms, why not?
14. Would you consider using a digital staffing platform to manage future peak demand periods?
15. If you are considering using a digital platform for recruitment or managing staff, which of these 3 features would you consider most important? (Select only 3):
- Immediate access to qualified workers
 - Cost transparency and control
 - In-platform communication with staff
 - Worker reviews and ratings
 - Flexible contracts for short-term or last-minute hire
 - Integrated payroll or administrative management
16. What additional improvements could help you manage staff during peak periods more effectively?

Appendix 5: Customer Interviews – Questions (October 2024)

1. What are the most critical challenges you face in staffing your establishment?
2. Can you walk me through your current process for finding and hiring staff for extra shifts?
3. How do last-minute staffing shortages typically impact your daily operations and customer satisfaction?
4. During peak demand periods, what is the biggest issue you encounter with your current staff?
5. Are there specific roles (e.g., bartenders, waitstaff) that are harder to fill last minute? Why?
6. What tools, platforms, or agencies do you currently use to address your staffing needs?
7. What do you like about your current approach to staffing? What frustrates you the most?
8. Have you worked with temporary staffing platforms before? If so, what was your experience like?
9. When you urgently need staff, how often do you compromise on quality to fill the position?
10. Would a platform offering qualified, pre-screened workers for short-term shifts solve any of your current problems?
11. How important is it for temporary staff to have prior experience in hospitality or your specific type of establishment?
12. What would you need to see in a worker's profile to feel confident about hiring them for an immediate shift?
13. If a platform provided you with workers trained to meet your operational standards, how much would you be willing to pay for this service?
14. How do you currently verify the skills and reliability of workers you hire on short notice?
15. Would you prefer to select workers from a pool yourself or have the platform match workers to your needs? Why?
16. How much do you typically pay for extra shifts (hourly or daily) for skilled workers?

Appendix 6: Email Campaign Content and Metrics for Survey



Caro(a) {{ contact.NOME }},

Sou Christian, estudante da Nova SBE, trabalhando na minha tese sobre os desafios enfrentados por proprietários de restaurantes. Minha equipe e eu também estamos desenvolvendo uma plataforma para resolver problemas comuns no setor. Sua contribuição seria extremamente valiosa para entendermos e atendermos às suas necessidades.

Ficaria muito grato se você pudesse dedicar alguns minutos para responder a uma breve pesquisa: <https://forms.gle/St8xFFx6jJ6jYcYy5>

Sua participação é totalmente voluntária, e todas as respostas serão mantidas em sigilo. Como forma de agradecimento, terei prazer em compartilhar um resumo dos resultados com você.

Obrigado pelo seu tempo e consideração. Se tiver alguma dúvida ou quiser discutir mais sobre o assunto, não hesite em me contatar.

Atenciosamente,
Christian

Section 1: Portuguese Email Version: Content

Dear {{ contact.NOME }},

I'm Christian, a student at Nova SBE working on my thesis about challenges restaurant owners face. My team and I are also developing a platform to address common issues in the industry. Your insights would be incredibly valuable in helping us understand and meet your needs.

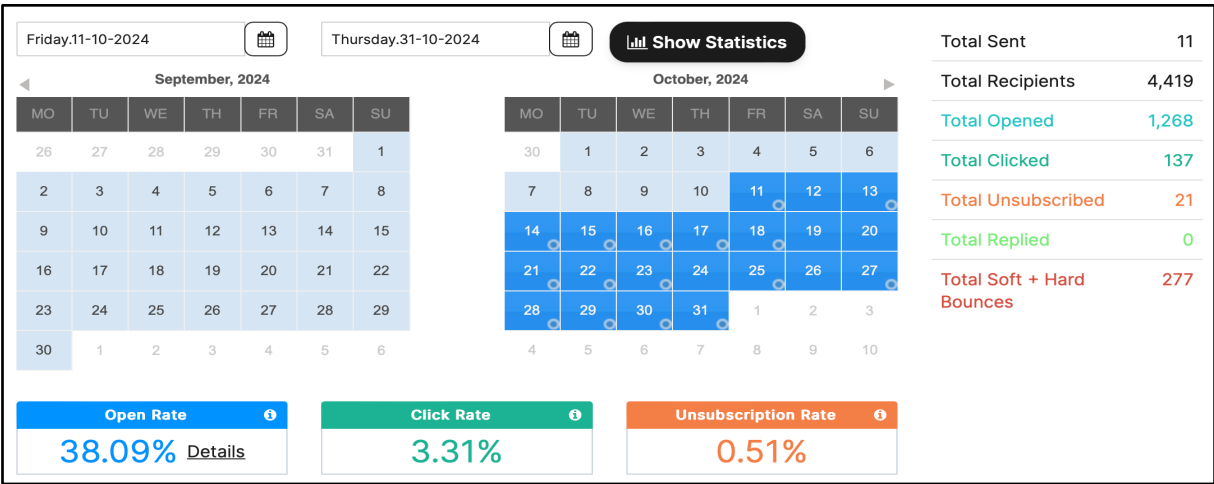
I would greatly appreciate it if you could spare a few minutes to complete a brief survey:
<https://forms.gle/St8xFFx6jJ6jYcYy5>

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and all responses will be kept confidential. As a token of our appreciation, I'd be happy to share a summary of the findings with you.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please feel free to contact me.

Best Regards,
Christian

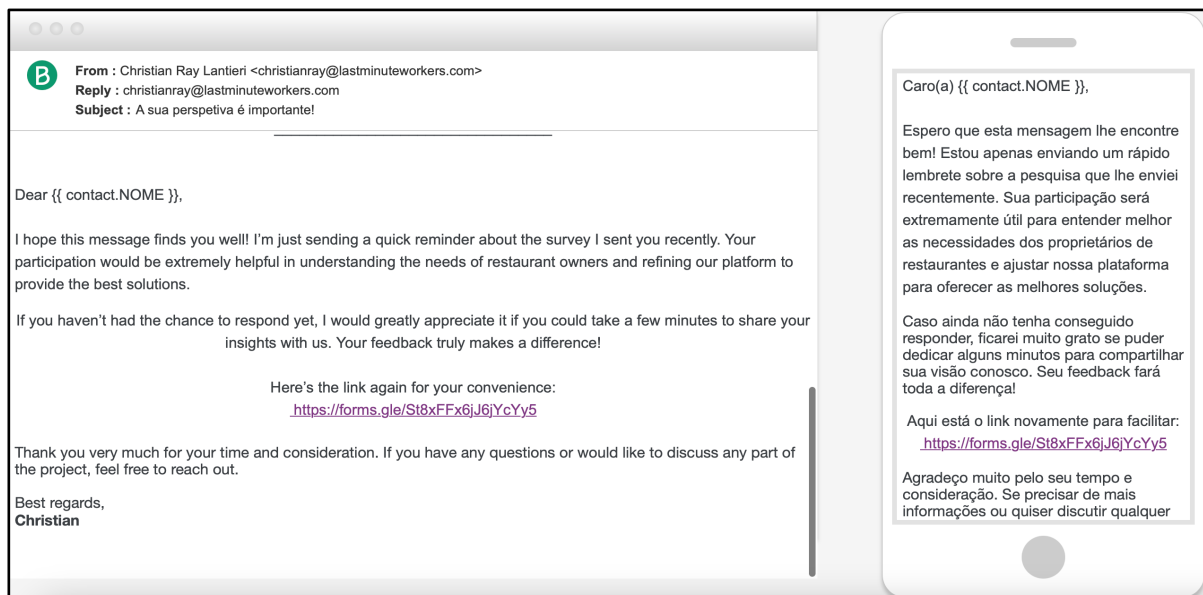
Section 2: English Email Version: Content



Section 3: Campaign Overview: Key Statistics and Performance in Brevo

Campaign ID	Name from	Sending date	Sent	Non delivered	Non delivered rate	Delivered	Total opens	Opened	Trackable open rate	Total clicked	Clicked	Click rate	Click-to-Open rate	Unsubscribed	Unsubscription rate	Delivered rate
1	Christian Ray Lantieri	11-10-2024	290	24	8.28%	266	153	80	38.10%	12	10	3.76%	12.50%	3	1.13%	91.72%
2	Christian Ray Lantieri	13-10-2024	272	7	2.57%	265	139	77	36.15%	11	10	3.77%	12.99%	0	0%	97.43%
3	Christian Ray Lantieri	16-10-2024	809	66	8.16%	743	611	273	45.88%	46	40	5.38%	14.65%	4	0.54%	91.84%
4	Christian Ray Lantieri	29-10-2024	750	12	1.60%	738	323	167	28.16%	13	13	1.76%	7.78%	5	0.68%	98.40%
5	Christian Ray Lantieri	18-10-2024	307	24	7.82%	283	197	93	39.41%	11	10	3.53%	10.75%	2	0.71%	92.18%
6	Christian Ray Lantieri	31-10-2024	284	11	3.87%	273	84	54	22.59%	5	4	1.47%	7.41%	1	0.37%	96.13%
7	Christian Ray Lantieri	18-10-2024	93	10	10.75%	83	49	19	26.76%	3	3	3.61%	15.79%	0	0%	89.25%
8	Christian Ray Lantieri	18-10-2024	171	18	10.53%	153	98	47	38.21%	5	5	3.27%	10.64%	0	0%	89.47%
9	Christian Ray Lantieri	23-10-2024	694	73	10.52%	621	480	216	45.19%	21	19	3.06%	8.80%	3	0.48%	89.48%
10	Christian Ray Lantieri	25-10-2024	416	9	2.16%	407	252	128	40%	14	12	2.95%	9.38%	3	0.74%	97.84%
11	Christian Ray Lantieri	30-10-2024	333	24	7.21%	309	216	114	45.42%	11	11	3.56%	9.65%	0	0%	92.79%

Section 4: Detailed Performance Analysis of Each Campaign



Section 5: Follow-Up Email Campaigns: Portuguese and English Versions (half of the campaigns were did to follow-up the same targeted profiles)

Appendix 7: Business Model Canvas – Iterated Version (November 2023)

Key Partnerships  Hospitality Worker Networks: Partner with organizations or groups that can refer qualified workers looking for flexible gigs.	Key Activities  Worker Acquisition: Recruit workers interested in flexible, last-minute shifts. Rapid Matching: Develop a fast-matching system to link workers with businesses needing urgent coverage.	Value Propositions  For Businesses: Immediate access to a pool of pre-vetted, qualified workers who can start at short notice, ideal for covering demand spikes. For Workers: Opportunity to work flexible shifts that match their schedules, with potential for higher pay for short-notice jobs.	Customer Relationships  For Businesses: Transactional and on-demand, minimal commitment but high responsiveness. For Workers: Short Term, flexible engagements based on availability; less formal but requires strong communication.	Customer Segments  Primary: Restaurants and Beach Clubs facing last-minute staffing challenges during peak seasons. Secondary: Qualified hospitality workers interested in flexible, short-term opportunities. Testing focus: Assess the demand from businesses for on-demand, last minute qualified workers and gauge worker interest in ad-hoc shift.
Key Resources  Worker Pool: Qualified workers ready for flexible roles. Technology: Online platform or landing pages to manage worker availability, communication, and assignments.		Channels  Online Channels: Landing pages, Facebook Ads, Instagram. Testing Focus: Using these channels to generate leads and validate interest from businesses and workers, with metrics set to measure reach, engagement, and conversions for each.		
Cost Structure  Recruitment and Marketing Costs: Advertising on social media and direct outreach. Technology: Development and maintenance of online platforms or landing pages. Testing Focus: Keep track of the cost per acquisition for both worker and business sign-ups, as well as the operational costs of vetting and marketing.			Revenue Streams  Revenue Source: Commission-based fee per successful placement of last-minute workers.	

Section 1: FlexiStaff Business Model Canva

Key Partnerships  Hospitality Schools and Training Institutes: Secure a steady supply of newly trained, qualified staff.	Key Activities  Worker Acquisition: Ensure that workers meet qualifications for long-term placement and, where applicable, offer training. Business Outreach: Build partnerships with businesses interested in stable staffing.	Value Propositions  For Businesses: Reliable recruitment service that provides access to trained, qualified staff available for longer-term or seasonal contracts. For Workers: Access to stable, higher-quality job placements with reputable businesses, ensuring better job security.	Customer Relationships  For Businesses: Relationship-oriented, more personalized service aimed at consistent placements. For Workers: Potentially long-term, relationship-based placements with support for career stability.	Customer Segments  Primary: Restaurants and beach clubs needing stable, longer-term placements for skilled staff (e.g., seasonal or contract-based). Secondary: Qualified workers seeking consistent, longer-term placements. Testing Focus: Measure interest from businesses for recruitment services for qualified staff and evaluate worker preferences for stable, fixed-term roles.
Key Resources  Worker Pool: Qualified workers ready for stable roles. Technology: Online platform or landing pages to manage worker availability, communication, and assignments.		Channels  Online Channels: Landing pages, Facebook Ads, Instagram. Testing Focus: Using these channels to generate leads and validate interest from businesses and workers, with metrics set to measure reach, engagement, and conversions for each.		
Cost Structure  Recruitment and Marketing Costs: Advertising on social media and direct outreach. Worker Vetting and Training: Costs associated with vetting workers or offering basic training for recruitment placements. Technology: Development and maintenance of online platforms or landing pages. Testing Focus: Keep track of the cost per acquisition for both worker and business sign-ups, as well as the operational costs of vetting and marketing.			Revenue Streams  Recruitment fees for each long-term placement, potentially including a retainer for ongoing access to qualified staff.	

Section 1: FlexiStaff Business Model Canva

Appendix 8: FlexiStaff Landing Page (https://flexistaff.com/landing_page)

Your Last-Minute Qualified Staffing Solution for Restaurants & Beach Clubs

Match your demand with your right extra workers or find flexible jobs that fit your schedule.

[Start Now](#)


Be Part of FlexiStaff



Do you need Expert Last-Minute Extra Staff?

Become part of our community of business owners. Get your worker when you need him most, even at the last minute.

[Find worker](#)


Looking for Flexible and Remunerative Work?

Join our network of flexible on-demand workers and start **earning more** today than ever before, thanks to our last-minute approach.

[Join Now](#)

Section 1: Header, Index Structure and Key CTAs

How FlexiStaff works

Great things are born when there's seamless collaboration and transparency.

Streamlined Staffing Solutions

Flexistaff connects you with a large network of experienced staff in Portugal, tailored to your needs. Find the right help, fast. No hassle, just reliable last-minute staffing.



Curated Candidates

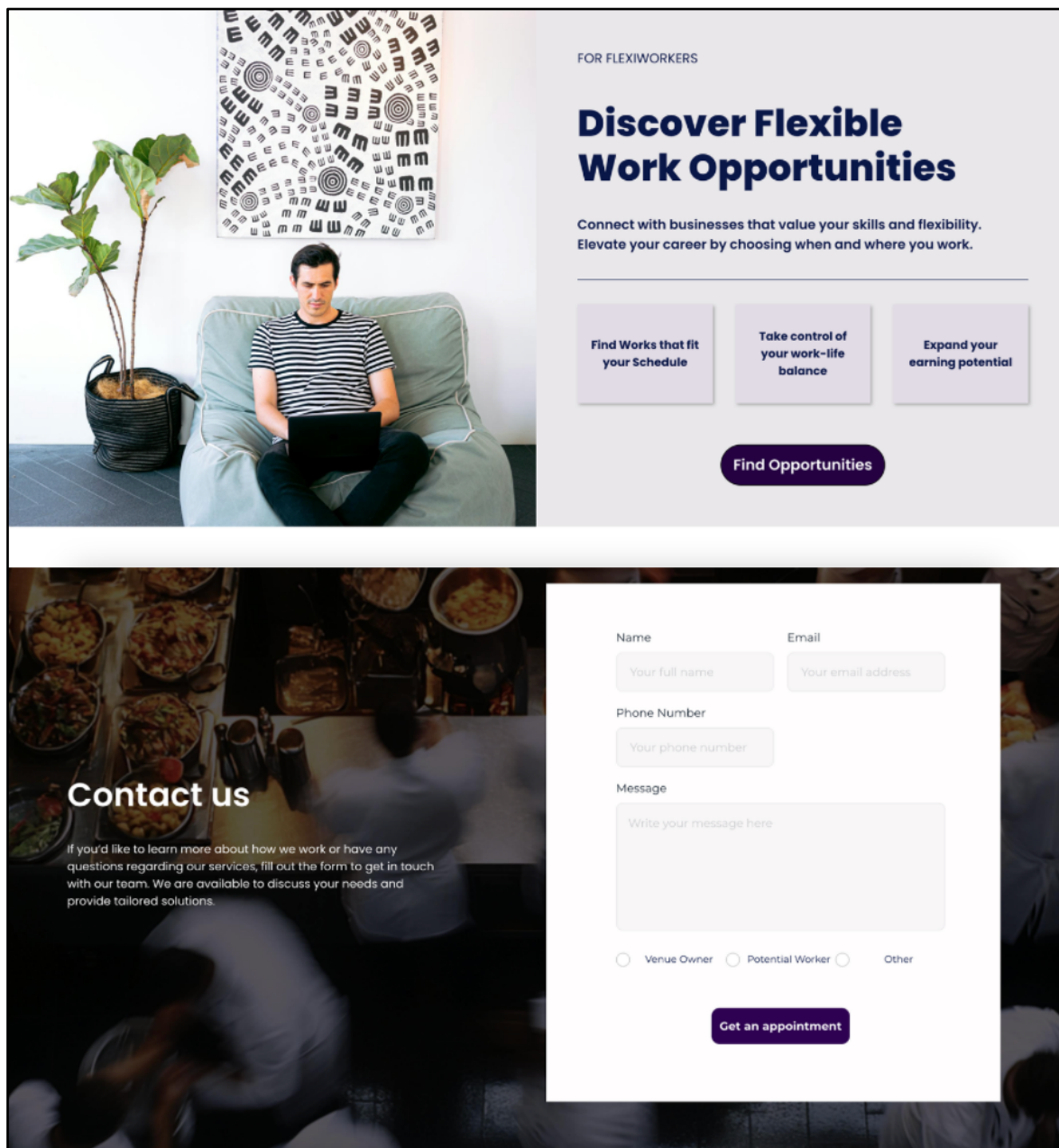
We choose the last minute candidates to ensure they have the necessary skills for every role, providing only the most suitable for your business.

We work as a team

At FlexiStaff, we work together to create seamless collaboration between businesses and FlexiWorkers, ensuring both sides achieve their goals while building a strong, supportive community.



Section 2: Operational Workflow: How FlexiStaff Works



Section 3: Worker Interface and Contact Us Section

Appendix 9.1: Waitlist FlexiWorkers Page for Users Who Clicked on CTA Buttons
<https://flexistaff.com/waitlist>

Join the FlexiWorker Community WaitList

Be part of our FlexiWorker team and earn more!
We're building a network of clients and need
motivated workers ready for last-minute, well-
paid shifts.

[Join](#)

8+ people on the Waitlist

Appendix 9.2: Waitlist Business Page for Users Who Clicked on CTA Buttons
(<https://flexistaff.com/waitlist>)



Join the FlexiStaff Business Waitlist

Simplify your hiring with FlexiStaff. Join the
waitlist to find flexible, qualified staff when you
need them.

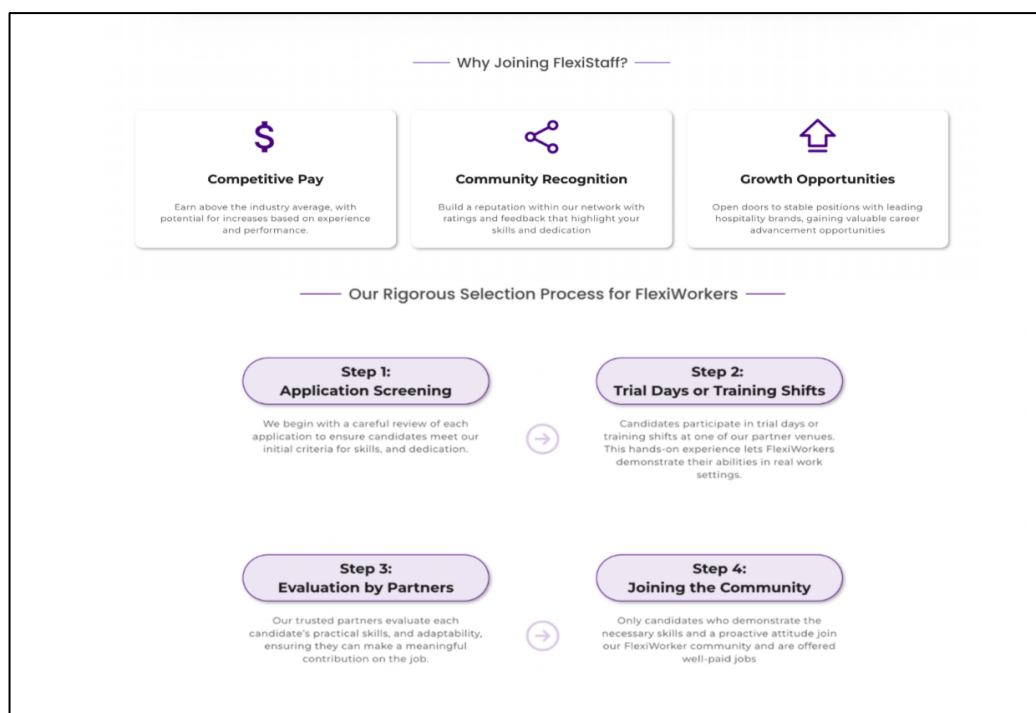
[Join](#)

8+ people on the Waitlist

Appendix 10: FlexiStaff Community Page (For potential FlexiWorkers who sent their emails)

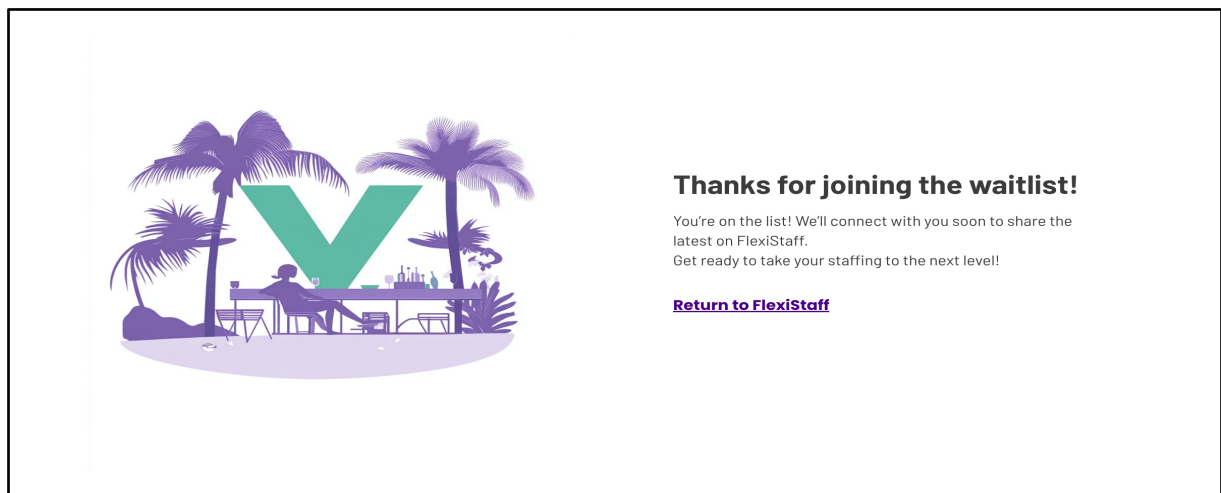


Section 1: CTA and section of why joining FlexiStaff

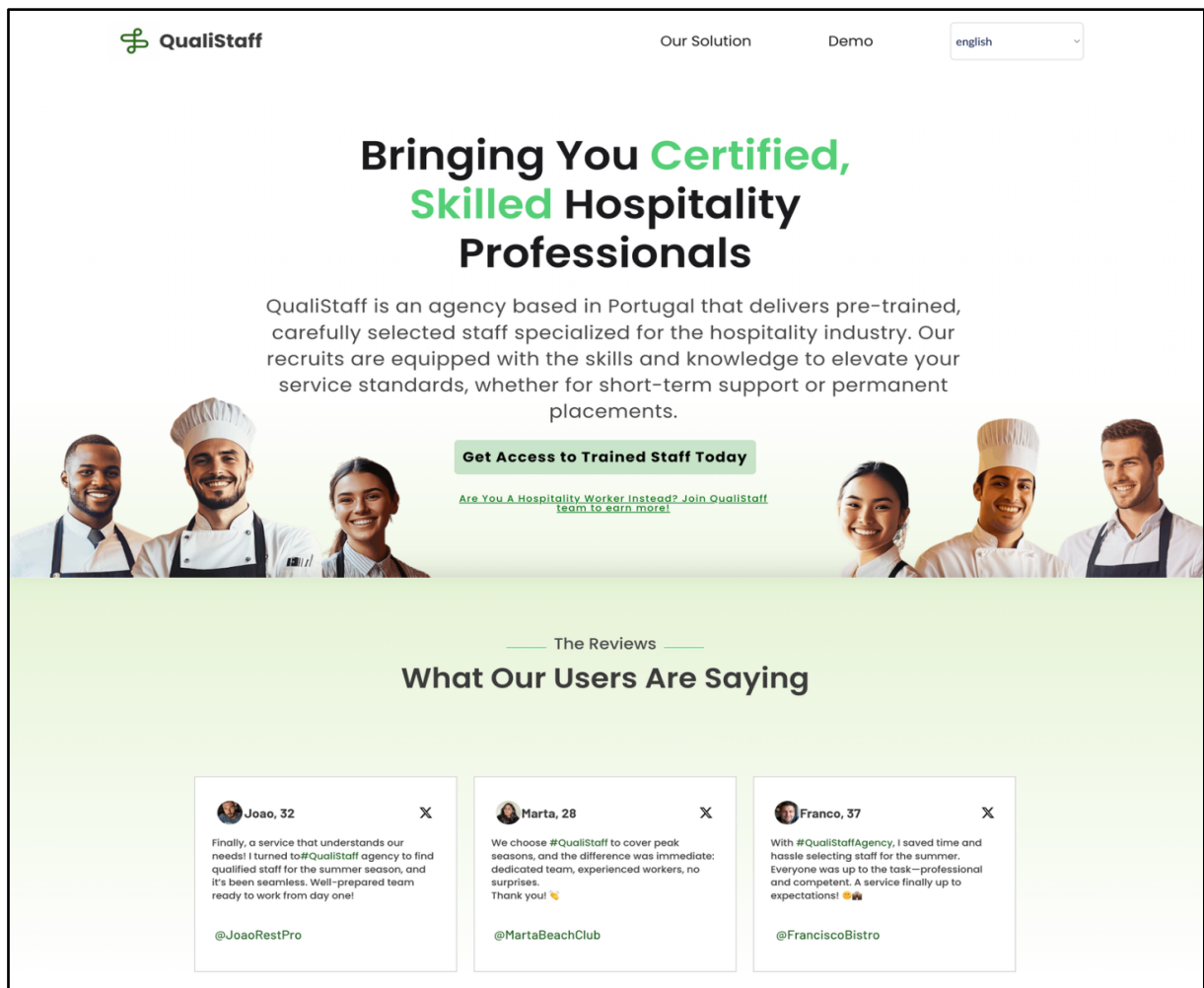


Section 2: Selection Process and Training Possibilities

Appendix 11: Thank You Page for Users Who Submitted Their Email Addresses
(https://flexistaff.com/thank_you)



Appendix 12: Qualistaff Landing Page



Section 1: Index Overview and User Reviews

The Problem

Is Staffing a Challenge for Your Business?



Struggling to find qualified staff who are ready to excel from day one?



Tired of spending time and resources on staff training?



Dealing with turnover and unreliable schedules?

Our Solution

Certified and Experienced Staff, Ready to Work for you



Access to Certified Hospitality Talent:
Our staff members are rigorously selected and trained to uphold high service standards in any setting.



Guaranteed Quality and Training:
All our recruits complete an intensive training program, ensuring they are prepared to contribute to your team from day one.



Scalable Staffing Options:
Whether you need seasonal staff, temporary support, or long-term placements, QualiStaff provides different solutions for any staffing need.



Swift, Seamless Onboarding:
Get access to trained staff quickly, with minimal onboarding time, to keep your operations running smoothly.

Section 2: Problem Identification and Solution Framework

Why Choose Us?

We Offer the Best Services to solve your problems

Qualified & Pre-Experienced

Access our community of highly trained and dependable professionals, ready to integrate. No need to train—find the exact person you need and start working immediately.

Build Your Team

Customize your team with qualified workers who match your specific needs. Select professionals from our pre-screened community and work professionally.

Always Ready To Help You

Rely on our efficient and dependable staffing solutions, available whenever you need them. You're just a call away from building your dream team.

Frequently Asked Questions

How does QualiStaff work?

How does QualiStaff train/certificate it's workers?

How can i get your support?

Section 3: Benefits of Choosing QualiStaff and FAQs

Appendix 13.1: Waitlist Business Page for Users Who Clicked on CTA Buttons (Qualistaff)



Join QualiStaff Waitlist for Business

Simplify your hiring with QualiStaff Agency. Join the waitlist to find qualified, ready to expectations and trained staff when you need them.

[Join](#)

 8+ people on the Waitlist

Appendix 13.2: Waitlist Workers Page for Users Who Clicked on CTA Buttons (Qualistaff)

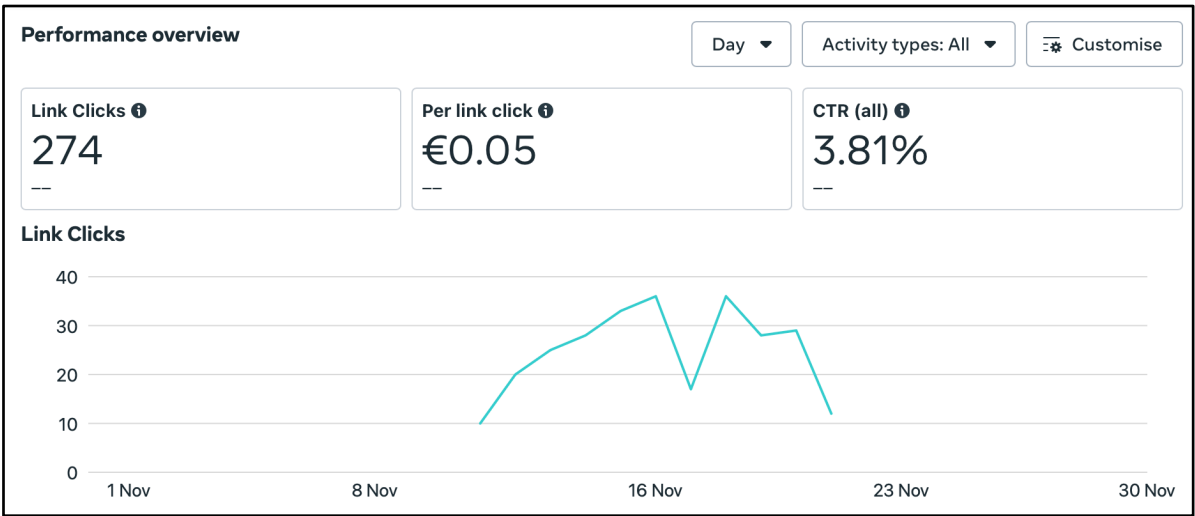
Join the Qualistaff Trained Team

Do you think you have what it takes? Send us your email to explore the opportunity of joining our special team.

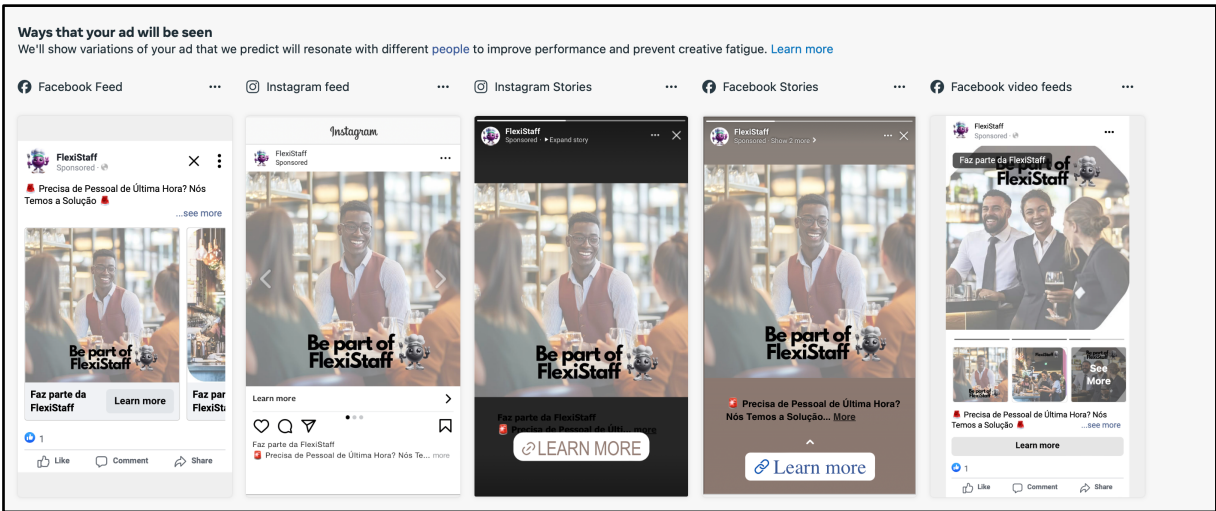
[Join](#)

 8+ people on the Waitlist

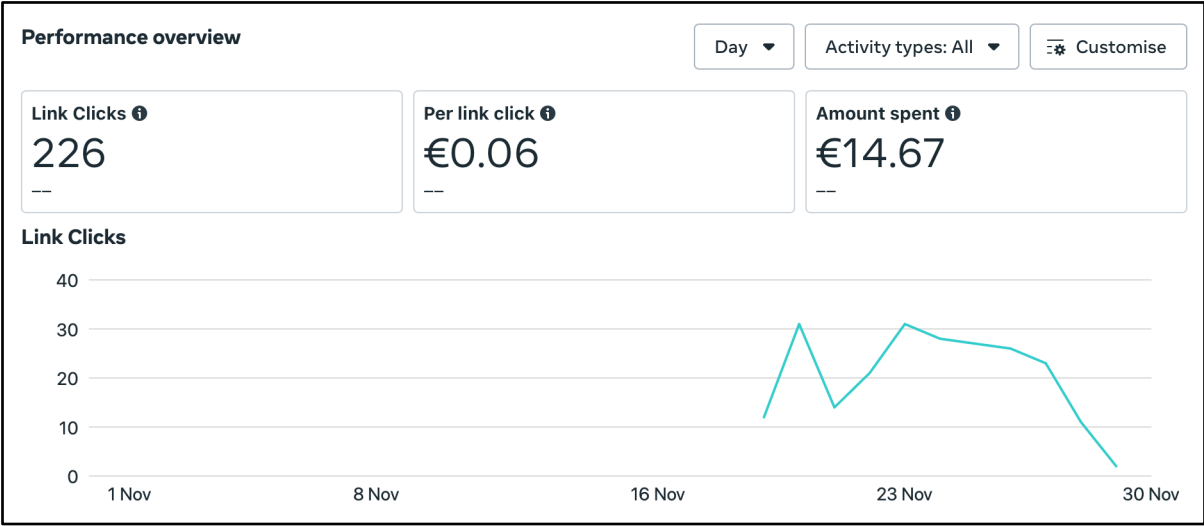
Appendix 14: Promotional Campaign Details and Facebook Ads Creatives



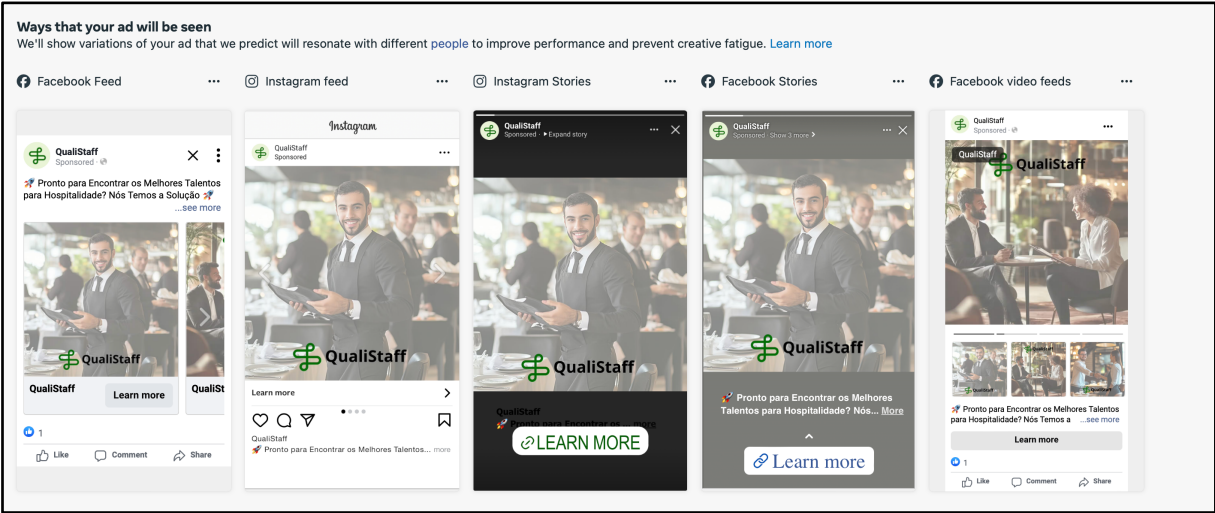
Section 1: Campaign Details: FlexiStaff Overview



Section 2: Advertisement Reach: FlexiStaff



Section 3: Campaign Details: QualiStaff Overview



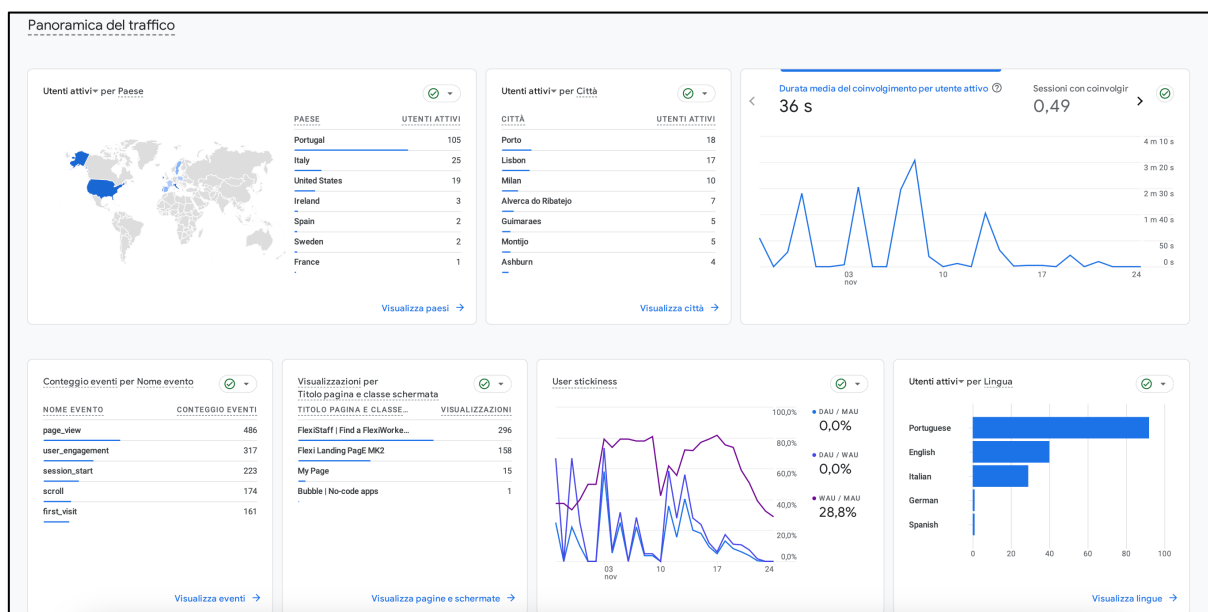
Section 4: Advertisement Reach: QualiStaff

Report Period: Nov 1, 2024 - Nov 30, 2024

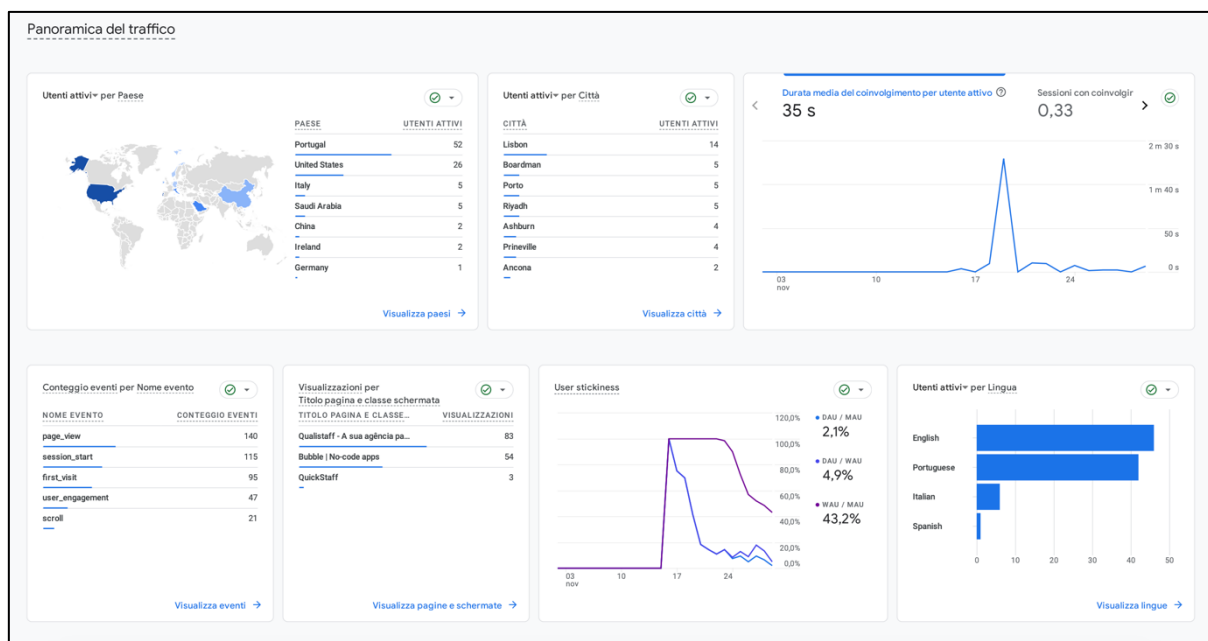
Campaign na Delivery status	Delivery level	Reach	Impressions	Frequency	Attribution setting	Result Type	Results	Amount spent (EUR)	Cost per result	Starts	Ends	Reporting starts	Reporting ends
[11/11/2024] completed	campaign	4716	8077	1,71	7-day click or 1-day view	Link clicks	274,00	14,99	0,05			2024-11-01	2024-11-30
completed	adset	4716	8077	1,71	7-day click or 1-day view	Link clicks	274,00	14,99	0,05	2024-11-11	2024-11-21	2024-11-01	2024-11-30
[11/19/2024] completed	campaign	6785	12851	1,89	7-day click or 1-day view	Link clicks	226,00	14,67	0,06			2024-11-01	2024-11-30
completed	adset	6785	12851	1,89	7-day click or 1-day view	Link clicks	226,00	14,67	0,06	2024-11-19	2024-11-29	2024-11-01	2024-11-30

Section 5: Specific Key Meta Statistics and Campaign Outcomes

Appendix 15: Funnel Exploration Results – Google Analytics Export



Section 1: Google Analytics Export for FlexiStaff



Section 2: Google Analytics Export for QualiStaff

Appendix 16: Workers Interview Questions

1. How important is flexibility in your work schedule? Would you prefer flexible shifts, or do you value a more stable, long-term job? Why?
2. Would you be willing to take a stable, long-term job if it provided better pay and career growth opportunities?
3. What motivates you to seek flexible, short-term work opportunities?
4. Would you be open to undergoing short training sessions or assessments to qualify for better shifts or higher pay? Why or why not?
5. If a staffing platform offered you stable, well-paid shifts, would you be willing to invest time in training or certification?
6. What is the minimum pay rate you would accept for a temporary shift in hospitality?
7. How do you determine whether a job is worth taking (e.g., pay rate, location, type of work)?
8. Would you be willing to sign up for a platform or app to find temporary shifts? Why or why not?