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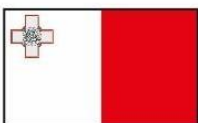
**IMMIGRATION IN MALTA:
FROM STRUCTURE TO EXPATS' AGENCY IN
THE CASE OF THE IGAMING INDUSTRY**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	5
ABSTRACT.....	6
KEY WORDS.....	7
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	7
1 DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC.....	8
1.1 Immigration in Malta	8
1.2 The IGaming Industry	9
1.3 Migrants or Expats?	10
2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH GAP	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 Categorizing Migration	12
2.3 International, Regular, Contemporary.....	13
2.4 Economic, Labour, Skilled.....	14
2.5 Immigration and One Industry: A Comparison.....	15
2.6 Malta and IGaming: The Research Gap.....	15
3 MIGRATION THEORIES.....	17
3.1 Classic Migration Theories	17
3.1.1 Social Capital Theory	17
3.1.2 Cumulative Causation Theory	18
3.1.3 Sayad’s Migration as a Total Social Fact	18
3.2 Agency (Subjective) vs Structure (Objective) Dichotomy	19
3.3 The International Mobility of Talent.....	19
4 METHODOLOGY	21
4.1 Objectives of the Research.....	21

4.2	Case Study Approach	21
4.3	Qualitative Research	22
4.4	Interviews With Expats	22
4.5	Interviews With Human Resources	23
4.6	Limitations	24
5	WHY DID YOU MOVE TO MALTA?	25
5.1	Structural Causes	26
5.2	Individual Agency Causes	29
5.3	Satisfaction	30
5.3.1	Would You Recommend It to a Friend?	30
5.3.2	Those Who Remain	30
5.3.3	Those Who Have Left the Country or the Industry	31
5.4	Personal Situation	32
6	RECRUITMENT VS RELOCATION?	33
6.1	Introduction to the Companies	33
6.2	A Conversation With HR	34
7	CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER IMPLICATIONS	39
7.1	Summary of Findings	39
7.2	Weaknesses of This Study	41
7.3	Reflection and Basis for Further Research	41
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	42
	Annex I: Disclaimer Sample	51
	Annex II: Interview Guide (Expats)	52
	Annex III: Summarizing Table (Expats)	55
	Annex IV: Expats' Stories	57

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ABSTRACT

The country of Malta has a history closely related with that of population movements, and in today's local news, the topic of immigration is ever present.

The arrival to the island of several companies that are part of the iGaming industry, as well as the country gaining access to the European Union, have promoted international, regular, contemporary, economic, labour and talent immigration.

This qualitative study explores the connection that iGaming in Malta has with these inflows of expats. Through eight different interviews, this dissertation has attempted to understand the profile and motivations of a selected group of these migrants, as well as the root causes for their decision to move to Malta.

Aided by the opinion of two experts in human resources, the conclusions of this paper explain how both the structure of the system and the migrants' own personal agency have played a role in their migratory process.

La historia de Malta como país está muy relacionada con el movimiento de poblaciones y hoy en día el tema de la inmigración siempre está presente en las noticias locales.

La llegada a la isla de varias compañías relacionadas con la industria del juego online, unida al acceso del país a la Unión Europea, han promovido ciertos tipos de inmigración: internacional, regular, contemporánea, económica, laboral y del talento.

Este estudio cualitativo explora la conexión entre la industria del juego online en Malta y los flujos de llegada de expatriados. A través de ocho entrevistas diferentes, esta disertación ha intentado entender cual es el perfil y las motivaciones de un grupo de inmigrantes selectos, además de estudiar las causas de su decisión de venir a Malta.

Con la asistencia de dos expertos en recursos humanos, las conclusiones de este trabajo explican como tanto la estructura del sistema como la agencia personal de cada migrante han jugado un papel en su proceso migratorio.

KEY WORDS

Immigration, Malta, expats, iGaming industry, employment

Inmigración, Malta, expatriados, industria del juego online, empleo

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CS	Customer Service
EMN	European Migration Network
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HR	Human Resources
I	Interviewee
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MGA	Malta Gaming Authority
MT	Malta
NSO	National Statistics Office
TCN	Third Country National
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

1 DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC

1.1 IMMIGRATION IN MALTA

This dissertation proposes a study of immigration in the relatively small island state in the middle of the Mediterranean: Malta. Having joined the European Union in 2004, Malta has been receiving significant numbers of foreigners, both as visitors as well as migrants, on an increasing trend.

According to Eurostat and NSO data, around 20% of the permanent population in the country are foreign nationals. While the population in 2020 surpassed the half a million inhabitants, the number of documented immigrants was measured at over one hundred thousand non-Maltese. Out of those, over fifty-two thousand residents have moved from other EU states, while another fifty thousand are TCNs.

This data presents the first reason why the foreign population in Malta is worth analysing from the lens of migration studies. A high percentage of inhabitants coming from different countries in such a small, and one may add overpopulated area, creates a particular and interesting social context.

Jobsplus (the national employment agency) provides data to visualize the labour trends of these foreign nationals. By the end of 2020, the amount of these non-Maltese who were employed full-time reached the seventy thousand. The IMF declared how positive the arrival of these foreigners has been for the economy, as they concluded that ‘foreign labour has helped support several years of strong economic growth in Malta’ (2020).

When observing the main sectors in which this migrant population is employed, for both EU nationals and TCNs, these are the ‘IT, technical, admin and professional or scientific’. This paper will be concerned with that main sector of employment for migrants, more specifically with their employment in the iGaming industry.

1.2 THE IGAMING INDUSTRY

The iGaming industry in Malta is governed and supervised by the MGA, who have described these companies as ‘one of Malta’s major economic contributors’ (2018). In 2020, MGA made public that iGaming represented up to 13% of the country’s GDP.

Three hundred and twenty-three iGaming companies have obtained a license to operate in or from Malta as of the end of 2020. These companies also provide almost nine thousand stable full-time jobs to residents in the islands, with only seven hundred working and delivering services in land, while the rest work with customers all around the world.

Sports and events betting on football, tennis, golf, horseracing or even politics amongst many others, betting exchanges, casino, slots, bingo, lottery...all form part of the services provided by the iGaming industry in Malta.

The publication *GamingMalta* (2018) summarizes well the reasons why these companies have set their base in Malta: ‘the country has a pro-business attitude, state-of-the-art infrastructure, and modest cost of doing business’. The island was also one of the first in Europe to issue comprehensive online gaming regulations, first allowing this kind of businesses to establish in the year 2000 and then improving the existing legislation by 2004, just in time for the EU membership. This dissertation will not delve into the fiscal policies (amongst other causes) of the Maltese government which have made the island a favourable destination for the iGaming companies. Instead, the current study will attempt to look at the industry only in connection with population movements.

From an academic perspective, more research is needed to understand the true relevance of iGaming in the Maltese society and demographics, as well as the experiences and migration projects of the foreigners working in these companies today and additionally, if the industry has worked as a motor for immigration in Malta.

‘Attracting foreign workers is key to our future, and we want to smoothen the process for anyone looking up taking a position in Malta’
(Silvio Schembri as Parliamentary Secretary in 2018).

‘Malta has access to an educated, dedicated, and multilingual workforce that is instrumental to the companies in the iGaming industry. The fact that Malta is a full EU member state offers iGaming companies access to the EU’s market of over 500 million people’
(*Gaming Malta*, 2018).

1.3 MIGRANTS OR EXPATS?

Two debates were presented in the initial stages of this research. Firstly, regarding the temporary or permanent aspect of the movement of those non-Maltese who will work in iGaming in Malta, to establish whether these migrations are for the long-term or just part of the circular mobility of labour. Both the EU's *Asylum and Migration Glossary* as well as IOM's *Glossary on Migration* state that population movements across borders can be classified as migratory if the intention of the person is to remain outside of their home country for at least twelve months.

This is the case for the non-Maltese migrant workers in the iGaming industry, as proven by the existing literature and even the interviews conducted for this study. However, this paper refers occasionally both to migration and mobility as synonyms, given that in many circumstances the line can be distorted as to what constitutes one or the other.

The second debate relates to the use of the term 'migrant' in contrast with the term 'expat'. The foreign workers of the iGaming industry do fit the established definition of a migrant, as someone who resides in a foreign country, and yet, the term 'expat' is often used instead.

The literature can be polarizing in this situation as well. The term 'expats' or even 'expatriates' can often be used colloquially solely for those living abroad who have taken certain types of employment, working for international companies or as part of the diplomatic or civil services, who may be more educated than average or be in a privileged position. The concept of 'migrant' in contrast has no universally accepted definition. According to IOM, the word can be understood from an inclusivist 'umbrella' approach, in which anyone who moves abroad can be included.

It may seem that 'foreign or migrant worker', 'immigrant' and 'expat' have become politicised terms. Different scholars suggest that 'expat' be used for those who choose living abroad as a lifestyle, while 'migrant' be used for those for whom the migration stems from economic need.

This dissertation has used both 'expats' and 'migrants' as interchangeable definitions, while understanding the implications assumed for each and choosing to follow IOM's inclusivist approach to the definition of migrant and immigrant.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH GAP

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Academic research in the field of migration focuses on the study of population movements. Human migration across national borders, or international migration, has achieved great importance for states and societies around the world, as it ‘affects bilateral and regional relations and is involved in economic restructuring, security, national identity and sovereignty’ (De Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020).

The Age of Migration highlights the increasing importance of human mobility in an interconnected world, under the realm of globalization, in the contemporary period of the history of migrations. The book explains the concepts of ‘open borders’ and ‘freedom of movement’ in the context of the creation of the European Union. Additionally, in its very preface, the researcher found the first mention to the structure vs agency dichotomy, as the authors suggest a division between the causes of contemporary international migration, distinguishing between the role of states, migration policies and other structural (objective) actors versus the agency or will of individual migrants (subjective).

Understanding the causes of why people move is presented by the scholars De Haas, Castles, and Miller as essential for a better understanding of its consequences. Furthermore, this area of study can produce valuable information to be used for improving the governance of emigration and immigration, and thus their effective benefits for both structural actors and individuals.

Beyond *The Age of Migration*, several different scholars have had a say in explaining why the study of international migration matters; Koser (2007), Gold and Nawyn (2013) or White (2016), amongst others, have published great handbooks which have added value to the field.

Contemporary international migration has even become a popular, as well as a divisive topic, in other areas such as the media, or the discourses of national leaders and policy makers. Despite the many different opinions on the topic, which are beyond the scope of this dissertation, it remains clear that the volume of international migrants, as a share of the world’s population, has increased in recent years, making the studies within this field increasingly relevant as well (De Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020).

The second chapter of this dissertation has begun with an explanation of the relevance of the study of human population movements. As it shifts from the general to the specific, this chapter looks at literature concerning contemporary, regular, qualified, economic or labour and talent migration for employment purposes, as well as immigration in the labour force through an analysis of industries and job markets.

With the aim of discovering the possible gaps in the literature, this chapter ends with mentions to the existing studies covering the immigration phenomenon in the labour force of the iGaming industry in the country of Malta.

2.2 CATEGORIZING MIGRATION

As previously mentioned, the focus of this dissertation can be described as based on international, contemporary, regular, labour, and skilled migration. This chapter will now attempt to explain the origin, and relevant literature, behind each given categorization.

According to Bergman (2018), it is not easy nor simple to conceptualize migration. Many dichotomies can be presented when trying to construct one's definition.

Firstly, migration can be defined as 'internal' or 'international' and thus transborder, depending on whether it involves the crossing of state limits. As covered in the description of the topic, a second dichotomy can explore its duration in time, to determine if migration is temporary or permanent. Other dichotomies can concern the direction of the migration flows, to understand if a flow refers to out-migration (emigration), or in-migration (immigration). Studies in the field of migration can also look at the causes of population movements as a further categorization, producing the subtypes of family reunification, education, labour, or retirement migration amongst others. Migration can alternatively be categorized as lawful, and thus regular or documented, or as irregular or undocumented. Migration can be forced, or voluntary. Migration can include highly qualified professionals, or non-qualified individuals.

These are just some of the categories mentioned by Bergman (2018) and yet the scholar himself argues that the list is 'incomplete and oversimplified'.

De Haas, Castles and Miller (2020) refer to these categorizations as 'essential tools for understanding migration'. The scholars, in a similar way to Bergman, delve on the complexity of establishing classifications, and the problematic these can bring as a source of further confusion or misconceptions. A particularly useful distinction that the three authors introduce is that of the three main sources of the categorization terminology, being this a) academic

researchers (analytical), b) the governments of states (administrative) and c) politicians or the media (discursive).

This dissertation has begun utilizing certain categories to provide context already in chapter one, choosing between the concepts of ‘mobility vs migration’, ‘temporary vs permanent migration’ or even ‘migrant vs expat’, and will now continue to attempt to distinguish, based on the literature and as carefully as possible, the category to which the non-Maltese workers of the iGaming industry immigrating to Malta belong to, opting when possible for the analytical and academic framework as main source.

2.3 INTERNATIONAL, REGULAR, CONTEMPORARY

Once migration has been defined as a ‘change in administrative borders’ by De Haas, Castles and Miller (2020), it is only natural to establish what kind of borders. This dissertation takes the Republic of Malta as the administrative area in question, as a country in the receiving or hosting end of immigration coming from different countries.

Even though international migration can, at times, present more challenges than internal migration, it is noteworthy that Malta joined the European Union in 2004, and as thus participates in the offer of freedom of movement for both residence and employment to all citizens of the Union. This is now legally facilitated by *The Citizens Rights Directive* (2004/38/EC), which was later included in Maltese law under the order of *The Free Movement of European Union Nationals and Their Family Members* (2007).

Article 45 of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (TFEU) also guarantees that ‘Freedom of movement for workers shall be secured within the Union.’ This treaty, originally one of the founding documents of the Union, and ultimately amended in 2009, shows how relevant population movements are for the EU. Naturally, the decision of joining the EU has contributed to the increase of international immigration into Malta, particularly that coming from other EU states (Savona-Ventura and Felice, 2010; *Aditus Foundation*, 2019).

Several scholars have written about the broader topic of international immigration arriving in Malta, with the most common perspectives and studies focusing on aspects concerning illegal or undocumented immigration. This dissertation however will focus only on the categorization of regular, documented migration, as this is the most common type which forms the chosen case study of workers in the iGaming industry.

One of the most common beginnings of any study about immigration in Malta is that which explains the history of the Maltese islands as a crossroads of cultures and civilizations in the middle of the Mediterranean, where different population movements have settled and eventually left at different times in history (Falzon, 2012; Schembri and Attard, 2013; Xuereb, 2015 to name a few local scholars).

Another theme present in the literature, and relevant for this dissertation, is how Malta may have followed the example of other Southern European states, as the country received a ‘boom’ of immigration in the early 2000s. This phenomenon has been studied under the name *The Southern European ‘model of immigration’*. Malta does fit the model, yet with particularities, such as those concerning its small extension and ultimately limited space for receiving large numbers of immigrants (King and Thomson, 2008 or Baldwin-Edwards, 2018).

On one last note regarding contemporary migration and timeframes, as defined by De Haas, Castles and Miller (2020), the period would include a study of migration from the 1973 onwards. This dissertation however focuses on looking at the period post 2000s, and particularly immigration to Malta after the EU membership.

2.4 ECONOMIC, LABOUR, SKILLED

Following IOM’s definition (2019), economic and labour migration are connected, as both relate to the causes of a change of residence being rooted in an economic opportunity. Labour migration specifically relates to employment opportunities. In the case of Malta and within the scope of this dissertation, documented migrant workers arrive in the island motivated, or brought by, employment opportunities in the iGaming industry, amongst others.

As for skilled migration, particularly within the EU, data from 2019 showed that an average of 34% of those changing residence had obtained tertiary education and would thus be considered high-skilled workers (European Commission). Several authors have covered different aspects of skilled migration in the literature, both as a broader topic, as well as looking at the EU particularly (Iredale, 2001; Moore, 2001; Brandi, 2004). The theory chapter of this dissertation will continue to discuss the determining factors of skilled or talent migration summarized in Solimano (2008).

With regards to Malta and as mentioned in the introduction, data concerning migration for employment is collected by both the Census of the NSO, as well as *Jobsplus*, the national employment agency. Again, different authors have studied the role of immigration for

employment or immigration in the labour market in the Maltese islands, covering both skilled and un-skilled migrants (Xuereb, 2015 or Mohnani, 2019).

2.5 IMMIGRATION AND ONE INDUSTRY: A COMPARISON

In the literature, there are different examples of other areas where a high concentration of skilled expats have chosen to relocate to. One area in particular invites to draw a comparison with the case of Malta, and that is Silicon Valley, in the United States.

Silicon Valley has become a tech hub in recent years, with several similar companies gathered in just a small area, naturally, the staff of those companies have moved to the San Francisco Bay Area, and this phenomenon has been covered in the literature. Baxter (2010) explains how the Valley went through a period of ‘rapid economic growth’, how it became quickly overpopulated by highly skilled migrants, and how that changed the social structure, as well as economy, of the region. And yet, this case contrasts in many aspects with Malta; expats at the valley do not have the advantage of moving freely without visa, as is the case of Malta and the EU. In Silicon Valley the expats are, for the most part, highly skilled professionals, while in Malta, as this dissertation will explain, such specific expertise is not always required.

Geographically, the Valley is not quite as isolated and limited in terms of space as the island of Malta is. Additionally, in Malta the local government has been sympathetic to iGaming expats, while Silicon Valley has often struggled to manage its staff recruitment in accordance with the US visa procedures and the Trump administration’s ‘anti-immigration’ stance (Newcomer, 2017; Lien, 2017).

2.6 MALTA AND IGAMING: THE RESEARCH GAP

As for the study of immigration related to iGaming in Malta, no study has been found by the researcher that proved to be interdisciplinary and comprehensive, focusing on the causes of these migrations per se.

Different papers have been found however, exploring certain aspects of the immigration in the local iGaming industry such as the human resources of the companies that employ these expats (Gauci, 2017; Zammit, 2017 or Muje, 2019), topics related to iGaming as a business (Galea, 2004; Agius, 2017 or Mohnani, 2019) or even other social aspects concerning adaptation and integration, in this particular case, of specific groups of expats (Dalli, 2020).

This dissertation is thus filling a gap in the literature, as it explores the causes of population movements into Malta, in connection with the iGaming industry, from the perspective of the study field of international migration, prioritizing the importance of migration theories, but also allowing selected migrants to tell their own stories.

3 MIGRATION THEORIES

The following chapter contains a review of the relevant theories that contribute to explain the migratory process of the expats in Malta, working in the iGaming industry.

Migration studies can become quite complex, which is why theories are useful to organize and understand their outcomes. This chapter will be divided into three sections: an overview of the relevant classic migration theories, a clarification of the agency vs structure dichotomy as well as a mention to other factors related to the international mobility of talent.

3.1 CLASSIC MIGRATION THEORIES

Most migration scholars mention the article *Laws of Migration* (Ravenstein, 1885) as one of the first theorizations of human population movements, followed by the *Theory of Migration* (Lee, 1966). While Ravenstein connected migration with economic development, Lee introduced more wide-ranging explanations, looking at the different factors that could trigger migration, from the situation at home to the destination countries and other personal motives of the migrants themselves.

After Lee, Massey (2017) has defined well the two classic theories which the researcher has found to be of more relevance for this dissertation, given their integrated approach, which looks at both structures and individuals' motivations. These are the *Social Capital Theory* and the *Cumulative Causation Theory*.

3.1.1 Social Capital Theory

The *Theory of Social Capital*, also known as *Migration Network Theory*, stems from the works of Bourdieu (1998, 2000) and Massey et al (1998, 2017). This theory looks at the importance of international social networks, which are interconnected and function as resources that contribute towards new migration projects.

The concept of *social capital* understands that networks of relationships are indeed facilitators for these international population movements. The term 'chain migration' has been used to refer to these links.

This theory does not leave aside other causes of migration necessarily, but it does analyse how social capital can be key for migrants when choosing one destination or another. Migrant networks also increase the benefits of migration, while allowing for the risks to decrease.

3.1.2 Cumulative Causation Theory

Myrdal (1957) introduces the *Theory of Cumulative Causation*. According to this theory, ‘migration induces changes in social and economic structures that make additional migration likely’ (Myrdal, 1957, in De Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020).

Massey (1990, 2017) added that particularly successful experiences, can promote further migration. If migration networks provide the social capital, cumulative causation as a mechanism affecting migration incorporates financial capital (in the form of remittances, or even job referrals) as well as cultural capital (passing down the motivation and idea to migrate, information and other social remittances).

Portes (2007) stated that migration movements will cumulatively repeat over time, increasing in frequency particularly within the same social network.

Despite both theories being very relevant and applicable to the present dissertation, they both are subject to different criticisms. De Haas, Castles and Miller (2020) summarize these two theories and explain how useful they can be to see the role of migrants as agents of their own movements and yet add that both theories present certain weaknesses. The theories do not explain the original causes nor circumstances that lead pioneer migrants to start the journey to new destinations. Neither can they explain why certain migration networks become less active eventually.

In addition, both theories might have a negative edge, given that they might lead to exclusion, first of those who are not part of the ‘chain’ (either ethnically, culturally, or socially), secondly, certain geographical areas or even industries might become less accessible to individuals outside of the network, as well as locals.

3.1.3 Sayad’s Migration as a Total Social Fact

Sayad (1999, 2010) interprets migration as a total social fact. While still considering the will of the migrant, Sayad understands that this agency is constricted by external factors, which can be economic, political, or social.

Sayad criticises those which see migration only as the movement of the workforce according to the needs of the labour market. He also believes that models mentioning push and pull factors, as those which list factors that encourage migration, are too simplistic. Sayad gives higher importance to theoretical analysis of the relations between factors, as well as the subjective elements of each migration flow.

This author proposes that migrations be studied from the personal perspective, from the migrants' own trajectory, as he argues that the structure, context, and conditions of migration (objective dimension) and the migrants' agency or will (subjective dimension) need to be looked at separately.

3.2 AGENCY (SUBJECTIVE) VS STRUCTURE (OBJECTIVE) DICHOTOMY

Archer (1988) had presented 'agency' as the individuals' will and capacity, which is subjective to their persona, and which allows them to make their own decisions. 'Structure' is the term used to describe the context which individuals exist in, whether it is social context, political, economic, cultural etc.

The tension between these two concepts is present in several different migration theories and some authors will give more relevance to one on the other. For example, Mezzadra (2012), sees agency as more relevant, given that it functions as a creative force against the structure.

Mezzadra's approach makes migrants more autonomous. It values personal preferences and will, as main forces, which can deal with any limitations caused by the structures.

3.3 THE INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY OF TALENT

Even though the population movements studied in this dissertation can be classified within the category of migration, given their long-term characteristics as explained in the introduction, the connections and fine line separating the academic literature concerning labour migrations and mobility make it so that extensive authors and work remain relevant to the case.

Solimano (2008) writes about the mobility of talent across national borders. The author describes human talent within the labour force as a valuable resource, which is why his work and theories are particularly interesting for analysing the current case study.

The word *talent* can have different meanings in this case, and it is not always required for the migrants, which Solimano calls *expats*, to have obtained tertiary education, although it is the case that most of the talent or knowledgeable migrants have University qualifications.

Solimano mentions thus three different types of talent mobility:

- a) Directly productive talent: also known as technical talent, ITC, including engineers, technology experts or entrepreneurs. Workers in this type can also act as providers of certain goods and services.
- b) Academic talent: including the mobility for the purpose of research or studies.
- c) Talent in social and cultural sectors: including the mobility of professionals in the health industry as well as others trained to provide social services or even those moving to engage in cultural activities.

Solimano also lists the following elements as the possible root causes and ignitors of talent mobility:

- 1) International differences in earnings and development gaps.
- 2) Non-pecuniary motivations.
- 3) The demand for capital and talent.
- 4) Technology and the demand for talent.
- 5) Agglomeration and concentration effects.
- 6) Linguistic compatibility, networks, and sociocultural affinity.
- 7) Policy regimes and immigration policies.

These factors will be explained in depth and applied to the case study of the iGaming industry in Malta in the fifth chapter of this dissertation.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The main objective of this dissertation has been to explore and to understand the causes of the immigration related to the iGaming industry in the country of Malta, as well as to clarify the connection between these movements of population and the industry itself.

The following two have been secondary aims:

- To collect and tell the stories of migrants, to identify their profile and their experiences moving to Malta and securing a job within the industry.
- To identify the iGaming companies' perspective regarding relocation and recruitment policies, as well as how these have affected immigration to Malta.

As a result, the following research questions have been formulated:

- Is the iGaming industry connected to (or a motor for) immigration in Malta?
- What are the causes for the immigration (to Malta) of workers of the iGaming industry?
- Who are the foreign nationals in Malta working for the iGaming sector?
- What are their experiences?

4.2 CASE STUDY APPROACH

The case study chosen has been Malta and those immigrants on the islands who have a connection, through present or past employment, to iGaming. Robson (2002) explained that a case study is 'a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context'.

Thus, this example of the immigration related to the iGaming industry in Malta provides a good single case study, as it focuses on one event only. The research has also been kept to a single country, the Republic of Malta, and to a certain point in time, as it does focus on the current reality of the migrants in said industry.

The results of the exploration of the case study in this dissertation do not aim at fully explaining the phenomenon of iGaming and migration, as it would have been necessary to collect large numbers of quantitative data for that purpose. The analysis on this dissertation does show the results after conducting qualitative research through the methods of literature review and computer-based research, as well as conducting interviews. Any conclusions,

narrated on chapter seven, cannot be generalized, and show only the opinions and experiences of the relatively small number of both expats and HR experts that have participated in this study.

4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The use of qualitative methods has been deemed to be the most appropriate, given the nature of the objectives and research questions proposed. Castles (2017) explains how qualitative methods are most suitable for researching intentions and other similar social issues.

Qualitative data collection methods used for this dissertation have included both the revision of already existing texts or secondary sources (books, newspaper articles and other reports or studies) as well as audio files and notes or primary sources, collected during semi-structured interviews.

For completing this research, eight semi-structured interviews were conducted, involving migrants who currently work or have worked for the iGaming industry in Malta, as well as two semi-structured interviews to human resources representatives of two iGaming companies in Malta.

For the data analysis, the process followed that indicated by Fernandez Nuñez (2006), where the structure is suggested as follows: data collection, capturing, transcribing, and arranging the information collected, codifying and integrating the data.

In this dissertation, given the inexperience of the researcher, the advice of Álvarez-Gayou (2005) was followed. Both the number of subjects interviewed as well as the topics discussed in the interviews, were few and connected to key aspects needed to answer the research questions.

4.4 INTERVIEWS WITH EXPATS

Chapter five of this dissertation contains the codification and analysis of the responses collected in the interviews with the group of expats. These interviews have been guided by the researcher through a series of prompts, noted as part of Annex II.

The questions were broader than the scope of this research. Firstly, given that the research question was narrowed overtime, and additionally to collect any data that might have been relevant. The questions were phrased as to allow the interviewees to share their full experience,

not limited just to the causes, of their move to Malta. More details about each different interviewee and their story of their move to Malta can be read on Annex IV.

The subjects were contacted via email through their company, as well as via different social media networks, using private groups where workers of the iGaming industry already share experiences frequently.

The requirements in order to be eligible to participate were that all interviewees would have to be non-Maltese, within working age at the time of the interview, as well as either working currently or having worked for an iGaming company in Malta.

All names of both the interviewees and their companies have been removed from the research to guarantee their privacy. Annex I contains a sample of the disclaimer and consent form provided to all interviewees.

These interviews were then codified and divided into topics that concerned the research questions. Firstly, using the dichotomy of subjective agency vs objective structure (Archer, 1988) and secondly according to the ignitors of talent mobility proposed by Solimano (2008).

Lastly, a summarizing table containing the data of all eight participants of these interviews can be found as part of Annex III. Participants were chosen randomly out of those who first agreed to participate in the study, although the researcher attempted to achieve a balance of ages and home countries, with the aim of guaranteeing a varied sample. Participants' data has been arranged only by the order in which their interviews took place.

4.5 INTERVIEWS WITH HUMAN RESOURCES

Chapter six of this dissertation contains the results of the interviews with two different members of the human resources teams of two iGaming companies based in Malta.

Once again both their names and other private information has been kept outside of the research for obvious reasons. This was reassured to all interviewees, in addition to informing them that their interview would be audio recorded and used solely for the purpose of this dissertation.

To organize these interviews, invitations were sent to the human resources personally, mostly via email and LinkedIn. There were no requirements for the people to be interviewed, just that they should have been part of the HR or talent acquisition of the company, ideally, but not necessarily, in a managerial position or having had some experience in their role.

4.6 LIMITATIONS

This topic and case study were ultimately chosen by the researcher due to her personal interest and involvement in the iGaming industry, after having lived in Malta as an expat working in the same field for over three years.

This personal motivation and experience have served the dissertation well, as having an insight in the industry and in the employees' or even employers' perspective was key in the initial stages of the research. However, having had previous knowledge of the topic might have perhaps presented a bias, something which the researcher has aimed at avoiding as much as possible.

Regarding the expats interview process, with different degrees of enthusiasm, several candidates have volunteered and agreed to sharing their story. Perhaps one more obvious limitation is that the selected group belong to only five different nationalities. With a more varied group the answers collected would have perhaps been even more varied.

The interviews to HRs however have been rather difficult in contrast, as it has been complicated to secure just the two interviews included in this dissertation. Ideally, more interviews would have been conducted to HR of different companies.

5 WHY DID YOU MOVE TO MALTA?

This chapter presents an analysis and codification of the information collected through the interviews conducted with the eight different expats that participated in this study. The data has been analysed firstly in two main tables, and then by themes, which were guided by the question prompts in the semi-structured interviews.

Two main divisions are presented within this chapter; structural causes vs individual agency causes for the interviewees explanations of why they moved to Malta, a classification based upon Archer (1988). The drivers of migration or root determinants presented by Solimano (2008) are also functioning as themes and subsequently as subdivisions within this chapter. Additionally, two simpler tables have been included, showcasing the opinions of the expats referring to their satisfaction with both their mobility or move to Malta and the result of their employment in the iGaming industry in Malta.

As previously mentioned, a summarizing table with information of all eight participants, as well as more details on their individual story, can be found on Annex III and IV respectively.

5.1 STRUCTURAL CAUSES

Cause: International differences in earnings	
<p>- The salaries in iGaming</p> <p>All the interviewees mentioned the situation in their home countries, as well as the higher salaries and better working conditions in iGaming as main causes for their move. Many noted differences not only between Malta and their country, but even between iGaming and other industries in Malta</p>	<p>I2: <i>‘The main benefit (of iGaming in Malta) is the salary, this job is well paid. Also, this kind of job gives a lot of stability (...) The iGaming salaries fit the cost of living (...) in other industries in Malta, the salary cannot keep up.’</i></p> <p>I4: <i>‘I feel like iGaming salaries in Malta are quite good plus it is easy to get promotions and wage increases.’</i></p> <p>I5: <i>‘Spain is not in a good moment now speaking about jobs (...) It is not that is difficult to find a job, but it is difficult to find a good job (...) if you are working in an iGaming company in Malta it means you are kind of rich.’</i></p> <p>I7: <i>‘In Italy there aren’t many job offers (...) and even if you find a job it won’t be something that you really like (...) in Italy there was also less stability.’</i></p>
<p>- The situation in the home country</p> <p>Two participants (I5, I7) explained how in their country they would be unable to find a job like the one they currently have in iGaming in Malta:</p>	<p>I5: <i>‘I asked my father, who wants me to return, if you can find me a job in Spain like this in any city I will come back’.</i></p>
<p>- A more neutral perspective</p> <p>Two others mentioned that similar opportunities would be available for them if they were to return to their country at this point, perhaps due to having gained work experience. They did agree that this was not the case when they first decided to emigrate.</p>	<p>I3: <i>‘I don’t think it would be a problem now if I wanted to work in Spain, although perhaps just in specific cities.’</i></p> <p>I6: <i>‘I was quite young (when I moved), if I went back today, I would probably be able to find a job I would be happy with.’</i></p>
<p>When directly asked whether they would like to be working in their own country instead of in Malta, keeping the same conditions (including salary), most interviewees agreed that they would (I1, I2, I3, I5, I7, I8) while the remaining responded with a maybe or perhaps, adding that their family and partners live in Malta now and they would take that into consideration before moving (I4 and I6).</p>	

Cause: The demand for talent, agglomeration, and concentration effects

- Malta as an iGaming Hub

Different interviewees (I1, I4, I6, I7) mentioned the higher demand for iGaming jobs in Malta than elsewhere. Two interviewees (I2, I6) have mentioned that although not having their job secured for one specific iGaming company, their idea was to work in the industry, and that given the high concentration of companies in the island this would not have been difficult even in the case of being rejected by one company.

I1: *'In Malta there are so many iGaming companies, if you were to leave one company there are so many others (...) that are looking for the same skills.'*

I4: *'The iGaming industry is huge in other places too like Gibraltar (...) but in Malta I feel like there are quite a lot of jobs and different companies that you can apply for.'*

Cause: Linguistic compatibility, networks, and sociocultural affinity

- English

Seven out of the eight participants spoke good English before moving to Malta, only for two of them was English their first language. Although in Malta both English and Maltese are official languages, none of the interviewees declared to understand Maltese.

For daily life and particularly amongst groups of expats and in the iGaming industry, English is used. Additionally, some of these expats conduct most of their work in iGaming in their own language, other than English (I2, I7, I8).

English was mentioned in the interviews in different ways, as a motivation to move to Malta, or even as an impediment in applying for a job in iGaming.

I2: *'I wanted to continue learning languages, to have the opportunity to live speaking English.'*

I5: *'When I first came to Malta, I didn't speak good English, so I didn't have the confidence to go for an interview in iGaming (...) when I eventually did I was hoping they don't put me with someone who has a weird accent (for the interview).'*

I6: *'I saw that Malta was English speaking, if it wasn't, I would have struggled. I am too old to learn a new language.'*

- Having someone they knew on the island or in the industry, or even relocating with colleagues

Regarding social networks, all eight interviewees knew someone working for iGaming in Malta and living in the island before they made the move. This might have affected them on different levels, as at least two interviewees did add that knowing someone in Malta was not a main determinant for them to choose this destination over others (I3, I8).

I1: *'I came as part of a group of people who relocated together (...) we had people here from back home who also knew other people in Malta, so we had contacts this way.'*

Cause: Policy regimes and immigration policies

- The European Union

Most interviewees stated that there was no need for them to apply for visas nor work permits as they are EU citizens (I1, I2, I3, I5, I8).

For those from the UK, the process does not seem complicated either, given that they both mention they were able to get a ten-year work permit upon being offered their contract (I4) or after Brexit came into place (I6).

5.2 INDIVIDUAL AGENCY CAUSES

Cause: Other non-pecuniary motivations	
<p>- The climate</p> <p>Several other considerations were mentioned as determinants in the participants' decision to move internationally to Malta.</p> <p>The more pleasant climate of the Mediterranean Maltese islands was mentioned several times by different participants (I1, I2, I3, I6, I7).</p>	
<p>- Personal development</p> <p>Several others mentioned self-development, in addition to career and personal skills development as well (I1, I2, I3, I4)</p>	
<p>- Staying close to family</p> <p>For one expat, another reason to return to Malta was that of being closer to family (I4).</p>	
Cause: International profile	
<p>- Need for travelling</p> <p>One motivation which was present in one way or another in all the interviewees was the need for traveling or for wanting to explore living abroad.</p> <p>Several interviewees had already lived outside of their home country in different instances (I2, I3, I4, I7, I8).</p>	<p>I1: <i>'I wanted to go abroad (...) taking yourself out of Ireland makes you take a step back and gain a different perspective and appreciate your home a lot more.'</i></p> <p>I3: <i>'Your country is not going to move from there, you already know the people, the everyday life...you go outside to try and find something different.'</i></p> <p>I5: <i>'I had an existential crisis (...) I wanted to enjoy my life and I wanted to travel (...) and Malta is a common point for a lot of people in the same situation'.</i></p>
<p>- Wanting to explore living abroad</p> <p>'Anywheres'? (Goodhart, 2017): A connection was found to the idea that population can be divided between those with a more international profile ('anywheres') and those with a more local profile ('somewheres')</p>	<p>I4: <i>'Since I have lived abroad before I was never nervous for the move (...) I don't think I will ever be tied down to a place, I love to move around and to experience different cultures.'</i></p> <p>I7: <i>'I just wanted to have the experience of living abroad (...) I always thought living abroad at a young age is a good experience.'</i></p>

5.3 SATISFACTION

5.3.1 Would You Recommend It to a Friend?

Seven interviewees would recommend coming to Malta to work in iGaming to a friend. The last interviewee however had a different perspective, as she stated that the answer would depend on the personal family situation of said friend. This could suggest, as the interviewee herself mentions, that perhaps Malta or both Malta and the employment in iGaming might be more suitable for and attract a specific profile of person, who may yet have to start a family.

I1: *'I would recommend it (...) location is lovely and you can meet a lot of nice people of different nationalities (...) There are so many companies here that job opportunities are always out there.'*

I3: *'If you have the chance, you should try it (...) the good thing of this industry is that you don't need any specialization nor particular skills to start. You can always start in customer service and just go up.'*

I4: *'I recommend, there are a lot of benefits (...) the move is not hard (...) the company you choose can help you too in many ways such as offering even remote interviews or training until you can move.'*

I5: *'I recommend it, but it is the typical country where you will either hate it or you will love it.'*

5.3.2 Those Who Remain

Some interviewees are content and would be satisfied staying in Malta and in iGaming, at least for the near future. One interviewee mentioned planning on staying for the long-term, given his involvement in a relationship with a Maltese partner, while another mentioned she would be willing to go back to her home country despite also being involved in a relationship with a local. The responses of the interviewees who have chosen to remain in Malta to the satisfaction questions were all very similar.

	Satisfaction (out of 5) with the migration to Malta	Satisfaction (out of 5) with the iGaming industry in Malta
Interviewee 3	4	4
Interviewee 4	5	4
Interviewee 5	5	5
Interviewee 6	5	5
Interviewee 7	5	5

5.3.3 Those Who Have Left the Country or the Industry

One interviewee has already left the country and the industry, another one has left the country but continues working in iGaming, while a third one is going to leave (both country and industry) in the short-term. These responses indicate that although the people who have left are not necessarily less satisfied with their experience, they have in fact decided to put an end to it. Only one answer stands out as significantly, and that relates to I8 and her satisfaction with Malta as a country of residence. As previously mentioned, this corresponds to the profile of an interviewee who is the only one in the group to have had a child. Again, her opinion stands out as an indicator and, although not definite proof, perhaps something future expats moving to Malta might want to consider.

	Satisfaction (out of 5) with the migration to Malta	Satisfaction (out of 5) with the iGaming industry in Malta
Interviewee 1	5	4
Interviewee 2	5	4
Interviewee 8	3	5

During the process of writing this dissertation, a question raised was that of the sustainability of these migrations as well as the sustainability of the iGaming industry in Malta. One of the interviewees explained well this concern. I6 mentions how this topic has ‘always been on the back of his mind’, as he understands that this industry may move often, according to regulations. Furthermore, companies that have relocated to Malta from abroad could also choose to relocate once again for several different reasons. As will be commented on the conclusions chapter, this topic goes beyond the scope of this dissertation and yet this paper can set the ground for future further related research.

5.4 PERSONAL SITUATION

When directly asked about their personal situation concerning their decision to move in relation to iGaming, the answers given all fit in four categories. Only one participant had her job abroad and was offered by her company to relocate to Malta (a). Another participant had his interview while he was still abroad and chose to come to Malta with a secured position once hired (b).

For the rest of expats, they found their job in iGaming only after they were already living in Malta. In some instances, they had come over with interviews already scheduled, and hoping to work for iGaming (c), while in others, the iGaming industry had nothing to do with their migration nor reason to choose Malta, and they just discovered the industry after settling and working elsewhere (d).

- a) Relocation offered directly by their company while employed abroad: **I1**
- b) Found the job while living abroad, chose to come to Malta with a job secured: **I3**
- c) Arrived in Malta to find the job and to have interviews: **I2, I6**
- d) Found the job after arrival in Malta and having worked elsewhere: **I4, I5, I7, I8**

6 RECRUITMENT VS RELOCATION?

6.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPANIES

Maltese representatives of the human resources departments of two different companies were interviewed to obtain complementary information to the stories provided by the expats. This chapter contains a summary and simple analysis of their responses.

These interviews functioned as a conversation, and therefore a different structure was followed on each one regarding question prompts and duration. Some basic details of each company were asked to both interviewees and are displayed in the table below:

	Company A	Company B
Approx. number of employees in Malta	500	200
Percentage of non-Maltese staff	50	30-35
International jurisdictions	Yes	Yes
Offers relocation to other countries	Yes	Yes
Offers relocation packages	Yes (specific cases)	Yes (specific cases)
Offers referral bonuses	Yes	Yes
Approx. percentage of referred employees	40	25
Role of the interviewee within the company	Talent acquisition specialist for customer relations (recruitment and HR)	HR Management (attraction, recruitment and retirement or termination)

6.2 A CONVERSATION WITH HR

Both companies gave similar answers regarding their preference for recruiting someone who is already settled locally in Malta versus relocating someone who resides abroad. They both would prefer the first case of choosing a candidate who is already based in Malta. However, they both agree that initial stages of interviews can be easily conducted online. The COVID-19 has helped this transition.

In both companies there seems to be a difference between potential applicants for entry level positions, such as customer service, and those who would apply for more senior or technical roles. The two companies would be more willing to show flexibility when receiving applications of the latter.

Other similarities include the preference for hiring those who already have the right to live and work in the EU.

A summary of the interview with each HR responsible will now be summarized below.

Company A

In this company a great majority of employees are hired locally, this means that on the final stages of the application for employment, the potential employees are already living in Malta, in most cases. However, the HR explained that the application process might start while the applicant is abroad.

Initial relocation bonuses are not offered for most entry level positions, but for more senior roles or positions which the company struggles to fill in, they do offer an extra amount of money at the start of the employment contract, to motivate the candidate to make the move to Malta.

This company has branches in different countries. When an employee is offered to relocate to Malta from another branch of the company, relocation packages are given which include up to two months' worth of rent for an accommodation, as well as additional pocket money.

This Company explains the main selling points of moving to Malta to work in iGaming as follows:

'When it comes to expats relocating to Malta they normally do so because of the location (...) the weather and a lot of people have this idea that Malta is a party place, but when it comes to the iGaming industry it is basically known for the good wages, good salary and a good culture within the business (...) our company stands out due to the culture of the company, we are diverse and inclusive.'

About what the company looks for in a potential employee, this HR responsible mentioned that:

'We always look for people who have that eagerness, they don't need to be experienced in the industry, they don't need to have sports knowledge (...) but they must show they are eager to join the company.'

She explained how in Malta her company mostly recruits for the customer relations department (customer service), where no experience nor academic qualifications are needed for an entry level position. For more technical roles she does mention how academic qualifications can be relevant but are still not a requirement. The company values experience and personal skills over academic qualifications.

Being fluent in English is always necessary to work in this company, given that the whole process of recruitment is in that language, and that is also the internal working language of all teams within the company.

To apply to entry level positions, it is required to have the right to live and work in the European Union. For more senior or technical roles, it is preferred, however other applicants might be considered as well. The company only sponsors applicants who need a visa in rare occasions, particularly when a position could not be otherwise filled.

This company offers referral bonuses. An employee of the company might refer an external candidate and if this person obtains the job and passes the probation period successfully, the original employee gets a bonus, of a different amount depending on seniority of the position of the referee. The HR states that a good percentage of new employees have been referred, normally around 40%.

Company A has no problems finding new applicants for most positions offered in Malta.

This company does not have the human resources to be able to investigate how well their non-Maltese employees are adapting to Malta, however the HR interviewed hopes this can change in the near future.

From her perspective of being Maltese, she explains how other Maltese people working at this company are very open minded and happy with the Expats in Malta, although she is aware that a significant part of the general Maltese population may have a more negative outlook. She also believes that Malta has benefited as a country from the arrival of the iGaming industry, and the foreigners that came with it:

'I personally think it's a good thing. The more foreigners that come the more they are keeping the economy alive. I am grateful that people still want to come to Malta, that the industry is still alive.

You will hear some Maltese people saying 'oh they are coming and taking all our jobs' but those are just the silly ones. Foreigners keep the economy going.'

Company B

For this company, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, most applications came from people who were already based in Malta, while now post COVID they are receiving an increasing number of applications from people who are still abroad. This company is also flexible for the recruitment procedure. They do prefer to conduct interviews in person at their offices in Malta, when possible, but they can also do the process completely online.

For employees who do move to Malta with a job offer, this company offers not just a relocation bonus but also accommodation on arrival for up to two months paid for the company in their own flats. The amount for the bonus does depend on the seniority of the employee as it did for Company A.

Additionally, Company B hires external services to advice with visa applications, moving to Malta, real estate agents and even tour guides to welcome and assist the employees moving to Malta.

For the Malta office, this company recruits applicants for positions related to customer support (different languages), as well as more technical and administrative positions.

As main selling points of the industry in Malta this HR expert mentions the following, in addition to the culture of his company (similarly to Company A):

‘Malta is a gaming hub, if you are interested in working in Gaming you would generally choose Malta because there are a lot more opportunities here than anywhere else (...)

In Malta, the gambling industry is one of the best payers (...) basic entry level salaries are way over minimum wage and also over average salaries, this makes it a much more attractive opportunity (...)

There is also the selling point of living and working on a Mediterranean island, as you have the sunshine for 300 days of the year, you also get a good tax break, from an income perspective’

About individuals wanting to move to Malta to work in iGaming, this HR expert explained how having a ‘can do’ attitude, being proactive as well as flexible and ready for a changing industry are key traits they do look for in potential applicants. He also explained that many applicants are not truly committed to the company nor their position:

‘We say customer support can be a hit or miss when you employ people, you can find those who come because they really want to grow a career and develop themselves, and then we have seen people who came to Malta just because they want to have a couple of years where they can earn good money and spend that on drinking and parties for example, you get both kinds of people’.

For Company B it is also a general requirement to be fluent in English, as this is also the working language.

Regarding the need for academic qualifications, this company agrees with the comments of the HR from Company A:

‘The person with the work experience will always get the job over those with qualifications (...) For customer service and other entry level positions, a degree is nice to have, but definitely not a requirement’.

This company again values those applicants having the right to live and work in the EU:

‘Work permit applications can be challenging to get, as part of some of the applications you would also need to prove why an individual (TCN) was potentially better than anyone else in Europe or Malta (...)

Being European can make the process move a bit faster (...) we do see a bias from most managers on whether someone is European, not because of racism, it is a time critical bias, because a visa application process can take months, while a European person can relocate within two weeks’

Referral bonuses work in an identical way as they do for Company A. Although in the case of this company, Company B indicates struggling to find new applicants, particularly for certain technical positions. Therefore this company has thus started to allocate resources to following the employee’s adaptation process in the country and even conducting leaving interviews with those who resign, as to try and understand the existing issues.

As for the reactions of the Maltese population, this HR comments the following:

‘Some Maltese people will say ‘oh these people took our jobs’ or ‘oh these jobs could have been for the Maltese’ (...) My personal answer to them is if you think you are good enough to do a job, get the qualifications and skills needed, start from a junior role and grow from there.’

Just as the interviewee from Company A, this person also believed that iGaming and its expats have had an overall positive effect in Malta, from making it possible to improve the infrastructure in the island to creating an international atmosphere and forcing the Maltese to keep an open mind.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This chapter contains a review of the conclusions obtained after studying the immigration to Malta of the non-Maltese expats who are working, and in one case have worked, for the iGaming industry.

This study has aimed at **understanding the process and motivations behind the migration, and thus the selected stories, of a group of expats in Malta working for iGaming**. Additionally, through the eight interviews to expats, this dissertation has attempted to explore and describe the **connection between these movements of population to Malta and their employment in the iGaming industry**.

As a secondary objective, this study has also explored the existing **relocation and recruitment proposals of two different iGaming companies** in Malta by obtaining data through two interviews with representatives of the human resources of the two companies.

Throughout the research, several key findings have been noted as follows:

Firstly, the migration of the expats working, or having worked, for the iGaming industry in Malta can be categorized as **international, regular, contemporary, economic, and skilled**.

Whether all iGaming migrations can be classified as skilled can lead to a debate. As explained by the HR specialists who were interviewed and the expats themselves, to join the industry under the customer relations department there are no minimum academic requirements. In contrast, in the group of selected interviewees, all but one had obtained a university degree or equivalent professional education, although in most cases their job in iGaming was not related to their field of studies.

One clear requirement to work in iGaming in Malta is to be able to speak English. Again both the expats and the HRs have confirmed this, given that English is not only an official language in Malta, but also the internal working language in the iGaming sector.

Understanding Solimano's types of talent (2008), these examples of expats in iGaming would mostly belong to the category of **directly productive talent**, with only three participants employed in a more technical position related to their field of studies.

Secondly, after reviewing the existing literature available to the researcher, three classic theories of migration that fit the explanation of the causes of the migration of iGaming expats

to Malta are the **theory of social capital, the theory of cumulative causation and the migration as a total social fact.**

These theories give relevance to the existence of **international social networks as a motor for migration.** They are significant given that **all eight interviewed expats had a relation with someone who was already based in Malta and working for iGaming.** As the number of expats moving to Malta increased overtime, so did their own connections and capability to submit referrals, which constitute a significant percentage of new recruits, as explained by the HR experts. The same experts have also shown light to the importance of both relocation and recruitment for the industry, indicating that although **local recruitment remains a priority** for their companies, they are willing to be flexible for those who might want to relocate on a case-to-case basis.

For those who do decide to make the move to Malta, **the dichotomy of structure vs agency remains present, as a division in the origin of the main causes for said move.** All interviewees mentioned at least an objective **structural cause (financial motivations)** and a **subjective agency cause (their international profile and projection)** as main causes for their move to Malta, and eventually employment in iGaming.

Other causes mentioned were related to self-development or career development, facilitating policy and migration regimes (the impact of the European Union), linguistic compatibility and other non-pecuniary motivations, such as the climate.

Regarding the connection between moving to Malta and working for iGaming, four different routes were discovered in the studied group of expats: relocation offered by the company, finding, and successfully obtaining the job while still abroad, arriving in Malta to find a job and attend interviews or finding the job after having resided in Malta for a period of time.

This study went beyond its initial objectives, as it attempted to explore the **satisfaction of these expats with their mobility and subsequent employment.** These questions received varied responses; however, one clear point was that **all the interviewees would recommend this move and experience to a friend with only one exception, as the only interviewee who has formed a family and has children states that her recommendation would be subject to the family situation of the person in question.**

This study has ultimately attempted to fill a gap in the literature, where the specific case study of the causes for the move of the expats in Malta working for iGaming had not been explored by academia in the field of migration.

7.2 WEAKNESSES OF THIS STUDY

In this study it is noticeable the lack of experience of the researcher in choosing the appropriate methodologies for conducting interviews, as well as a possible bias which stems from the researcher being an expat in Malta and having worked in iGaming herself. This bias and any possible subjective opinions have been avoided as much as possible, and every conclusion has been backed up by the data collected.

Perhaps another weakness can be the limited number of participants in the interviews, particularly in the case of the human resources experts, as no more acceptances were received to conduct similar interviews. This again explains why this qualitative study is only representative of the cases covered, and why any conclusions cannot be generalized. It is also relevant to mention that only a part of the information collected in the interviews has been used, given that all interviewees were eager to share their story and opinions in depth, beyond the scope of this dissertation.

7.3 REFLECTION AND BASIS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As a personal reflection from the researcher, writing this dissertation has been very fulfilling. Having migrated to Malta and worked in the iGaming industry it was always a field of personal interest to discover the different motivations and circumstances of the non-Maltese who had decided to immigrate to the country. It was this personal interest in the topic that originally facilitated the discovery of the gap in the literature in the field of migration studies.

While conducting the present research, especially during the interviews, it became obvious that the topic could be extended beyond the focus of this paper. Other interesting aspects of this migration that could be explored in future research are the following:

How is the integration of these expats or migrants in the Maltese society? What is the true opinion of the Maltese on the expats in iGaming? How have these iGaming migrations changed Malta? Or are these migrations sustainable for Malta?

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Annex I: Disclaimer Sample



CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the interview carried out by Laura Perez Alvarez, for the purpose of conducting her final master's degree project titled **"Immigration in Malta: From structure to Expats' agency in the case of the iGaming industry"**. This research is part of the curriculum at the **Official Master's Degree in International Migration at the University Institute of Studies on Migration (IUEM)**. I understand that statements from this interview may be used in publications of this research project, referencing my general characteristics, occupation, and country, but not my name or any other personal information.

In accordance with the provisions established in the Regulation (EU) 2016/679, I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in this interview, that I have the right to access, rectify, limit the processing of my data, oppose its processing, or the right to exercise my right to the portability of personal data and to request the deletion of any of my personal data that I have provided during this interview at any time.

I understand that the information I provide in this interview will only be used by the Institute of Studies on Migration (IUEM) for the above purpose, and is being collected today by Laura Perez Alvarez, for the Institute of Studies on Migration (IUEM). I also understand that Laura Perez Alvarez will include this information in her final master's degree project in confidentially and will not copy, store, or transmit it for any other purpose than this.

I agree to audio record the interview. The recording is only made for the purpose of data collection presented above. The information, as below and the (audio recorded) information you will provide through your participation in this research project, will be kept by the responsible organisation for a maximum of 48 months from this date. The information will be kept in a secure environment according to data protection guidelines and national legislation in force. After this period, the information will be destroyed.

Student responsible for the research
Name: Laura Perez Alvarez
Place (country): Malta
Signature and date, agreeing to the above, personal data being will be used as set out

*The data of the interviewee figuring below that of the student has been removed from this Annex, in accordance with the relevant data privacy regulations.

Each interviewee was presented with a new sample for their completion.

Annex II: Interview Guide (Expats)

BLOCK 1: PERSONAL INFORMATION

- Year of birth
- Place of birth / Citizenship
- What languages do you speak?
- Do you have children or other dependents?
- How about your academic education? What is the highest level you have obtained?
- How long have you been in Malta? / For how long did you live in Malta?
- Where did you live before you came to Malta? Have you lived in other places other than your place of birth? / Where are you living now?
- What were your thoughts about Malta before moving here?
- Do you know the opinion that your family and close friends had of you moving to Malta?

BLOCK 2: YOU AND IGAMING

- Are you currently working for an iGaming company in Malta? When did you start to work in the industry? Can you tell me a bit more about your start? When did you finish your employment?
- How did you initially hear about a job in this industry?
- Did you arrive to Malta with a job already secured in this industry? Or as part of a relocation program of the company? Did you know the iGaming industry before you moved to Malta?
- Did you work in other companies in the sector before or is your current company your first one? Did you work for one or more than one company? Did you have other jobs in Malta before iGaming?
- About your role in the company: is it related to customer service? Is it part of management? Is it more technical?
- Did you enter the company on that same role, or have you changed roles since you joined?
- Did you have any previous experience on a similar role?
- Is your position related to your studies or previous knowledge?
- Do you see potential for growth in this industry? For yourself within the company or even in other companies?
- What would you say are the main benefits of a career in iGaming?
- And the main negative aspects?

BLOCK 3: MOVING TO MALTA

- What would you say were, in your opinion, the main reasons for you moving to Malta?
- What was the main motivation for you to go to live abroad?
- Would you say the situation in your country was more or less favourable?
- How would you compare your life in Malta to that of your previous countries of residence?
And of your country of birth?
- Had it not been for your job in the iGaming industry, would you have moved to the island?
- Had you ever visited Malta before deciding to move here?
- Describe your experience in the first weeks here, arriving in Malta.
 - Did you know anyone in the island?
 - How did you find accommodation?
 - Did you have to apply for a residence permit to arrive or to work in Malta?
- If so, how was that process? Did you receive assistance from the Maltese authorities, or your company's HR?
- Have you opened a bank account in Malta?
- How would you describe your experience in Malta (so far)? Now after years or months
- Have you felt welcomed by the local population? Do you think iGaming workers are in general welcome in Malta?
- How do you feel about the quality of life here in relation to the cost of living?
- Would you say that salaries in Malta are in general enough to bear the cost of life here? And what about iGaming salaries in particular?
- How does this (cost of life and salaries) compare to the situation in your country?
- What would you say has been the main positive aspect of your move here? And the benefits?
- What would you say has been the main negative aspect? And the risks?
- What has made you stay for as long as you have?
- Do you have plans to remain in Malta? Would you be willing to move again?
- If so, what are the causes that could make you move again to a different country?
- If you could and the opportunity came up, would you like to be working in your own country, having your current job?
- If your company had offered the same opportunity in a different country, would you have accepted it?

BLOCK 4: SATISFACTION

- Could you rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5 (one meaning extraordinarily little and five very much) how satisfied are you with the following?
 - Your decision to have moved to Malta
 - Your decision to have joined the iGaming industry in Malta
- Would you recommend moving to Malta for working in iGaming to a friend?

Annex III: Summarizing Table (Expats)

The following table contains a summary of the answers given by each participant in the interviews to the non-Maltese working in the iGaming industry.

Both chapter five of this dissertation and Annex IV contain more information and details about the participants and their stories.

	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	I6	I7	I8
Gender	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female
Home country	Ireland	Spain	Spain	UK	Spain	UK	Italy	Bulgaria
Age (years)	26	29	33	23	33	37	31	35
Education level	Degree: History and geography	Degree: Biology	Degree: Commerce	Degree: Criminology	High School	Professional education : IT	Degree: Web design and IT	Degree: Social pedagogy
Children or dependents?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Time in Malta (years)	4	1.5	2.5	10	2.5	9	5	7
Current worker?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, part-time
Time in iGaming in Malta (years)	4	0.7	2.5	2	1	9	2	5
Heard of Malta before the move?	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Knew someone living in Malta?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Knew of anyone working for iGaming?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Had lived abroad previously?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Personal situation regarding employment in iGaming	Relocated	Arrived for an interview	Arrived with the job secured	Already lived here	Already lived here	Arrived for an interview	Arrived for an interview	Already lived here
Found the job	Abroad	Locally	Abroad	Locally	Locally	Locally	Locally	Locally
Role	CS Manager	Spanish CS agent	Risk and fraud	Risk and fraud	Spanish CS agent	CS Manager	Italian CS agent	Bulgarian CS agent
Position related to studies?	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Previous similar experience?	No	Yes, CS	Yes, CS	Yes, CS	Yes, CS	Yes, CS	Yes, CS	Yes, CS
Would have moved to Malta without iGaming?	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Residence permit needed?	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Relocation package or HR assistance?	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	I6	I7	I8
Wants to continue working in iGaming?	Yes	No	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe
Wants to remain in Malta?	No	No	Yes, short-term	Maybe	Yes	Yes, long-term	Yes, short-term	Yes, short-term
Would have gone to a different country for the same job?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Would prefer to be working in their home country?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Yes
Would recommend moving to Malta to work in iGaming?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe

Annex IV: Expats' Stories

This Annex explains in better detail the individual and unique story of each expat who participated in the interviews for this dissertation.

The aim of this section is to highlight everyone's experience, as well as to provide more background to the reader, to make the reasons for the move of each interviewee clearer, particularly whether the iGaming industry was the motor for the migratory progress in question.

Every story is different from the rest. Every story provides an interesting insight and an alternative perspective on the connection between international migration to Malta and working in the iGaming industry.

Interviewee 1: Female, Irish, 26 years old.

A case of relocation

For this person, her first time moving to Malta was not only her first time living abroad but also the first time living outside her parents' home. She was also quite young at the time at 22 years old.

She moved as part of a relocation program of the iGaming company she already used to work at back home, the move was supposed to be just for a few months, but she ended up staying for over four years. She has recently moved back to Ireland, where she continues to work for the same company after relocating for a second time.

Before she joined the industry, she did not know anything about iGaming nor sports, but through her experience in the company she has gained knowledge and skills and has been promoted several times. She now holds a managerial position.

Initially she found the industry through the recommendation of a friend.

She would have never moved to Malta had it not been for the offer of relocation coming from her company. She moved alongside other work colleagues and knew other people from her country and company already here in Malta. Her goal with the move was to see the world in a way, as well as to try new experiences.

For her, the move has meant gaining independence and achieving personal development. She has been quite pleased living in Malta and mentions the international atmosphere as well as the weather as the more positive aspects of her move. However, she finds that she would like to return to live closer to her family, which seems to be the main cause of her return to Ireland.

Interviewee 2: Male, Spanish, 29 years old.

Former iGaming employee

For the second interviewee, moving to Malta to work in iGaming was not a challenge, given that he had previously lived in the island while doing an Erasmus internship. In fact, he had also lived in Ireland and Slovenia too, besides his native Spain. He has now left Malta to return to Spain, where he has continued his studies following two different master's degrees.

He found the job in the iGaming industry in Malta through a friend, who encouraged him to come back to Malta, after he initially secured a job interview. He was eventually hired two weeks after his arrival. He was not aware of what gaming nor betting entailed, although he had some customer service experience having worked in catering.

This interviewee found the work in the industry to be quite challenging mentally, as he explained that sometimes it can have a dark side, particularly with customers who may not make good use of gambling.

For him, the main benefit of working in iGaming was the salary, good enough that it allowed him to explore Malta and enjoy life practicing his English, while also saving enough to pay for his postgraduate studies back in Spain.

Interviewee 3: Male, Spanish, 33 years old.

Promoting mobility

This third interviewee has a very international profile, as he has previously lived and worked in the United States, Poland, Bulgaria, and Cyprus.

Having only heard of Malta as a tourist destination, this person decided to move after wanting to change jobs. He was encouraged to do this by a friend already living in the island and working in iGaming.

He is overall satisfied with life in Malta thus far and is currently in between jobs, after deciding to switch companies but remain in the country. He states that he came to Malta solely for the job, having a position secured after receiving an offer while still abroad. He has gained expertise in his field and has been promoted quickly and gained more responsibility since his arrival. He is now looking for a company that offers better working conditions.

He believes that everyone should experience moving abroad, at least for a certain period of their lives.

Interviewee 4: Female, UK, 23 years old.

Moving with family to Malta

The story of this person is quite unique, as she originally moved to Malta with her parents over ten years ago, following a relocation of her father, through his company.

This interviewee has also lived abroad in China and the UK, and eventually returned to Malta during the COVID-19 pandemic. After graduating from university, she has found a way to integrate her studies into her iGaming career, where she started working locally as a customer service agent but was then soon promoted to working with the fraud and risk team.

She believes that the iGaming industry offers great opportunities for upward mobility and personal growth. She also enjoys the relaxed lifestyle in Malta and has integrated well with the Maltese after so many years in the island. She mentions how her family eventually applied for citizenship in Malta, given their long-term residence, yet their application was rejected by the local authorities without justification.

This interviewee believes that there are other destinations which also offer good opportunities to work for iGaming, and she would be willing to relocate with her company to continue working abroad.

Interviewee 5: Female, Spanish, 33 years old.

Migration after an existential crisis.

The fifth interviewee had been in Malta for a short holiday before she decided to move, to try living abroad for the first time just for a month or two. She has now stayed for over two and a half years in the island.

The main reasons for her move relate to a self-proclaimed existential crisis at the beginning of her thirties. She then realized that her friends were starting a family, while she was not at that point of her life yet. She still wanted to travel, and she felt unhappy in her job as well. After more than fifteen years working in catering, she did not feel like the job was good for her anymore. She felt demotivated and in need of a change. That is when the idea to come to Malta turned into action.

This interviewee did not speak good English on arrival, she believed that she had a better chance of finding a job in catering, where she worked for over one year while she improved her English.

With the onset of the pandemic, the encouragement of a friend who knew the industry and a much better level of English, she eventually joined her current iGaming company as part of the international team of customer service for Spanish speaking countries.

She enjoys life in Malta and has a Maltese partner now, but also explains how life here has not always been easy. She would eventually like to return to Spain; however, she does not feel like the options for employment in Spain are stable nor well paid enough.

Interviewee 6: Male, UK, 37 years old.

Looking for a change abroad.

The sixth participant in the interviews with expats in Malta moved to the island almost a decade ago after feeling dissatisfied with the job opportunities offered in his home country. Having a friend already in Malta who informed him of the many jobs available in the industry and knowing that English was widely spoken were all the reasons he needed to make the move.

Just a few days after arriving he found a job and has been working at that same company ever since, having been promoted to his current managerial position. He states that the sustainability of the industry has always been a topic on the back of his mind but is thankful for having been able to develop his career here in Malta. He also mentioned the better climate of Malta as another positive aspect of his move.

He has been here long enough to witness how the cost of living spiked, particularly the cost of accommodation and rent, something that he explains might relate to the arrival of more expats and the iGaming salaries, which are better than the Maltese minimum wage.

He has also been affected by the transition to Brexit, as he now has a card that allows him a ten-year residency if he keeps his employment, in contrast with his previous EU card that allowed for permanent residency.

He has now found love and his partner is Maltese. He believes that if he was not in this relationship, he might have gone back to his home country as a result of the pandemic, so he could be closer to family. His future plans include staying in Malta for the long-term.

Interviewee 7: Male, Italian, 31 years old.

Returning to Malta after the pandemic.

The second to last person to be interviewed initially moved to Malta in 2014, only to then move to Ireland, and eventually return to Malta in 2020, after the pandemic, motivated by the employment opportunities and the weather in the island when compared to other countries.

He left his home country looking for more stable jobs and better salaries than those available in Italy. When he first arrived in Malta he did not know much about iGaming and was only looking for any job related to customer service, IT, or marketing. He is now very comfortable in his job in the island, where he is able to use skills which he learned during his academic education and even to work remotely, something he sees as a great perk, or to increase his savings.

About Malta, he enjoys living here truly, although he mentions that the cost of living is remarkably high when compared to other places where he lived, particularly the cost of renting an apartment. He believes Malta is a place of contrasts, but one that ultimately offers certain limitations given its geography. He believes that living abroad while one is still young is a wonderful experience, although personally he thinks he will not stay in Malta in the long-term.

Interviewee 8: Female, Bulgarian, 33 years old.

From cruising the world to making a stop in Malta.

The last participant in this series of interviews used to work in cruise ships traveling the world until she eventually decided to relocate to Malta. She intended to find a job here but had not decided to work for iGaming until after her arrival.

She became a mother just recently, and she explains how this has caused a change in her perspective regarding living in Malta and the iGaming industry. Her child is now her main priority, which is why she is currently working part-time from home.

She is very appreciative of the company she works for, as ever since the pandemic and her becoming a parent she has been offered an extended maternity leave, greater flexible hours, the option to work from home and mental health support.

However, her change in perspective has made her decide to leave Malta in the near future. She explains how she has seen the quality of life in Malta decay in recent years, and how this is more relevant now that she has a young family.

She believes relocating to her home country can offer a better quality of life; cleaner environment, more green areas, proximity to nature and spaces for children to play.