

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF A MULTICULTURAL TEAM

Case: Radisson Blu Resort & Spa, Malta
Golden Sands

LAHTI UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED
SCIENCES LTD
Faculty of Business and Hospitality
Management
Degree Programme in International
Business
Bachelor's Thesis
Autumn 2016
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ORA, ESSI: Effective Leadership and
Management of a Multicultural Team
Case: Radisson Blu Resort & Spa,
Malta Golden Sands

Bachelor's Thesis in International Business, 42 pages, 2 pages of
appendices

Autumn 2016

ABSTRACT

The thesis focuses on multiculturalism in work teams and how it can be led and managed efficiently. Globalization is a constantly growing phenomenon, meaning that organizations and teams across the world in all business areas are becoming increasingly multicultural. Leadership and management of multicultural teams is challenging due to the cultural differences. However, it is very important because well-functioning multicultural teams can be exceptionally productive and have excellent problem-solving skills, amongst other advantages. The thesis was carried out in cooperation with the Radisson Blu Resort & Spa, Malta Golden Sands. The author did her internship in the hotel in summer 2015. The purpose of the thesis was to study the leadership and management of the front office team, and to provide ideas for development as well as suggestions for further research.

The thesis was implemented as a qualitative study. The theoretical part of the thesis examines culture, diversity and multiculturalism, and what kind of advantages and disadvantages there are, and how they affect leadership and management. Secondary data was collected from related literature, articles and reliable websites. The empirical part of the thesis includes the primary data collection process and the data analysis. The primary data was collected with interviews, which is a common method of qualitative research.

The interview answers were used to study the current leadership style in the case company. The answers reveal that the leadership style is a mix of servant leadership and shared leadership, which is a fairly effective and suitable leadership style for a multicultural team based on secondary data. However, further training on cross-cultural skills is recommended since some answers indicated insecurity in dealing with cross-cultural issues and conflicts. In addition, further research on team members' opinions about leadership is advised.

Key words: leadership, effective leadership, management, multiculturalism, team, multicultural team

Lahden ammattikorkeakoulu

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Bachelor's Thesis in International Business, 42 sivua, 2 liitesivua

Syksy 2016

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämä opinnäytetyö keskittyy monikulttuurisuuteen työtiimeissä ja siihen, miten sitä voidaan johtaa tehokkaasti. Globalisaatio on kasvava ilmiö, minkä vuoksi organisaatiot ja työtiimit ympäri maailmaa erilaisilla aloilla muuttuvat yhä monikulttuurisemmiksi. Kulttuurierot tekevät monikulttuuristen tiimien johtamisesta haastavaa. Tehokas johtaminen on kuitenkin tärkeää, sillä toimivat monikulttuuriset tiimit voivat esimerkiksi tuottaa erinomaisia tuloksia ja kehittää poikkeuksellisia ongelmanratkaisukykyjä muiden hyötyjen lisäksi. Tämä opinnäytetyö tehtiin yhteistyössä Radisson Blu Resort & Spa, Malta Golden Sands -hotellin kanssa. Tutkimuksen tekijä oli hotellissa työharjoittelussa kesällä 2015. Työn tavoitteena oli selvittää, miten hotellin vastaanoton työntekijöitä johdetaan, ja antaa kehitysehdotuksia sekä suosituksia jatkotutkimusta varten.

Tämän opinnäytetyön tekemiseen käytettiin kvalitatiivisia tutkimusmenetelmiä. Työn teoriaosuus käsittelee kulttuuria, diversiteettiä ja monikulttuurisuutta, joiden hyötyjä ja haittoja tarkastellaan sekä vaikutusta johtamiseen pohditaan. Sekundääristä tietoa kerättiin kirjallisuudesta, artikkeleista sekä luotettavilta internetsivuilta. Työn empiirinen osa esittelee primäärin tiedon keruun ja tietojen analysoinnin. Primääriä tietoa kerättiin haastattelemalla, mikä on yleistä kvalitatiivisissa tutkimuksissa.

Haastattelujen vastausten avulla saatiin selville hotellin vastaanoton tämänhetkinen johtamistyyli. Vastauksista voidaan päätellä, että esimiestyössä on jaetun johtajuuden ja valmentavan johtamisen merkkejä. Sekundäärisen tiedon perusteella voidaan todeta, että nämä tyylit ovat melko sopivia monikulttuurisen tiimin johtamiseen, mutta lisäkoulutusta suositellaan. Haastatteluissa kävi ilmi, että etenkin kulttuurien välisten ongelmien ja konfliktien selvittämisessä on vielä jonkin verran epävarmuutta. Tiimin jäsenten mielipiteistä tulisi myös ottaa selvää ja suositeltavaa olisi, että ne otettaisiin huomioon jatkotutkimuksessa ja johtajuutta kehitettäessä.

Asiasanat: johtaminen, tehokas johtaminen, monikulttuurisuus, työtiimi, monikulttuurinen tiimi

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1 INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of the thesis is divided into five subchapters. The purpose of the subchapters is to introduce the background, objectives, research questions, and limitations of the thesis. The theoretical framework is also presented. The last subchapter describes the entire thesis structure.

1.1 Research Background

The topic of the research is effective leadership and management of a multicultural team. The author is interested in leadership and wishes to become a hotel manager one day. The author has worked abroad in multicultural teams herself, and therefore has first-hand experience of the challenges of a multicultural work environment.

As workplace diversity will increase remarkably in the coming years, organizations must recognize the need for immediate action. Resources must be spent on managing diversity in the workplace because an organization's competitiveness and success depends on its ability to embrace diversity and realize the benefits. Organizations that have a multicultural and diverse workforce enjoy, for example, increased adaptability, broader service range, variety of viewpoints, and a more effective execution. (Greenberg 2004.)

The tourism industry is a significant part of the global economy. Last year, it accounted for 284 million jobs worldwide and contributed approximately 10% to global GDP. The tourism industry is expected to continue growing significantly over the next decade creating tens of millions of new jobs and increasing its part of global GDP. Therefore, tourism organizations need to understand international travellers and know how to serve customers from different cultures and understand their increasingly diverse needs. To remain competitive and maintain a satisfied and loyal customer base, and in turn create greater organizational profitability, organizations in this industry must focus on the performance of the frontline employees. (Lu, Capezio, Restubog, Garcia & Wang 2016, 9.)

1.2 Thesis Objectives, Research Questions and Limitations

The purpose of the study is to examine what challenges there are in leading and managing a multicultural front office team in the case company, and how the team can be led and managed efficiently and effectively. Leadership methods are examined to find out the current leadership style, and how it can be better and more efficient.

The main research question is: what challenges do the managers of the case company have when they are leading and managing a multicultural team?

To achieve the answer to the main question, the following sub questions are utilized:

- What is 'multiculturalism' and how does it affect leadership?
- What is the current leadership style at the case company, and is it suitable for leading a multicultural work force?
- How can the leadership be better and more effective in the case company?

The research for the study focuses only on the situation and the individuals at the case company. Therefore, the results of the study apply solely to the company in question, and may be irrelevant or inaccurate for other companies operating in the hotel business. Furthermore, the focus of the study is fairly narrow and thus the findings cannot be generalized in a valid way.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The thesis is based on theories about culture, leadership and management. In Chapter 2, culture is discussed. Well-known theories, such as Geert Hofstede's definition of culture and the cultural iceberg model are presented in order to define and explain culture, multiculturalism and diversity. Multicultural teams are then presented, and with the help of the theory and some relevant models the issues of the teams are

discussed. These issues include general advantages and disadvantages, productivity and effectiveness, trust, and communication.

After the culture related topics, leadership and management are addressed in Chapter 3. Leadership and management are defined, after which some common approaches to leadership are presented in order to get a better understanding about different leadership styles that can be suitable for multicultural teams. At the end of the chapter, there is a discussion on effective leadership of a multicultural team.

1.4 Research Methodology and Data Collection

There are two different research approaches: deductive and inductive. Deductive research tests hypotheses and theories with data, whereas in inductive research the data is gathered to build concepts, and to create new hypotheses and theories. Quantitative research uses normally the deductive approach, and qualitative research the inductive approach. The study is conducted by using qualitative research methods that help to answer the research questions. Qualitative research attempts to understand the meaning of a phenomenon for those who are involved. Data for qualitative research is collected in a way in which the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis and the process is inductive as well as descriptive. Because of this, the key concern is to understand the participant's perspective and not the researcher's. (Merriam 2014, 5,14-15.)

The used form of qualitative research in the study is a case study that is an empirical study investigating a current phenomenon within its real-life context, i.e. the leadership and management styles of the multicultural front office team in the case company (Merriam 2014, 40). Data for the study was collected from both primary and secondary sources.

Interviewing, a common form of collecting qualitative data, was used in the study. Primary data was collected with interviews that were held with two of the front office managers in the case company. Due to time issues, strict schedules, and the geographical difference between the author and the

case company, the interviews were electronic, asynchronous interviews, i.e., the interviews were conducted via email (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 349). Secondary data supplements the thesis, and it was collected by using relevant literature and reliable electronic sources.

1.5 Thesis Structure

The study is divided into two main parts: theoretical and empirical. In the beginning, before the theoretical part, there is an introduction that presents the idea and purpose of the study, as well as the research questions and the used research methods. Figure 1 illustrates the thesis structure. The theoretical part is divided further into two chapters. Chapter 2 and 3 will cover few of the common theories concerning culture, multiculturalism, diversity, leadership and management.

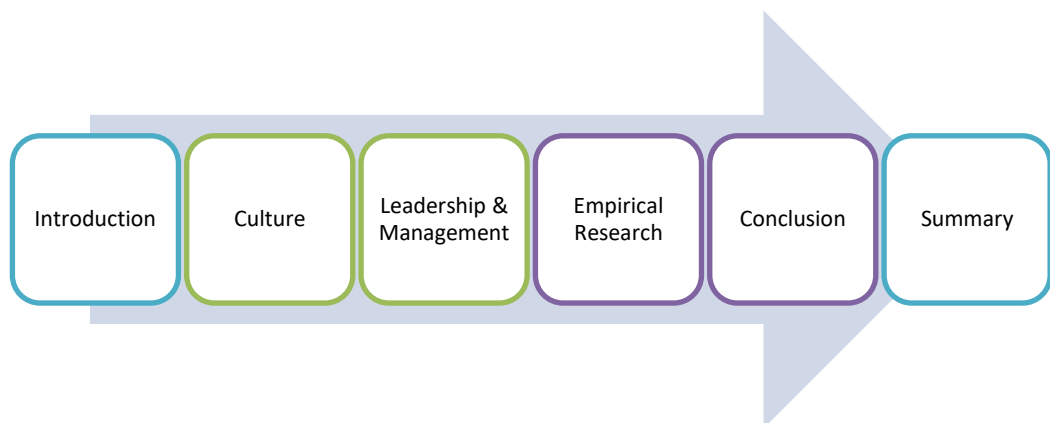


FIGURE 1. Thesis structure

The empirical part of the study is divided into two chapters as well. Chapter 4 includes the design and implementation of the case study, the results, and the data analysis. In Chapter 5 the research questions are answered, and suggestions for development and future research are given. At the end of the thesis there is a summary, followed by the reference list and appendices.

2 CULTURE

It is challenging to define or explain culture but in this chapter the reader is introduced to some approaches. After general definitions, the impact of culture and multiculturalism on teams in the working life is examined.

Advantages and disadvantages of multiculturalism are explained later in the text, in more detail.

2.1 What Is Culture?

Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. (Hofstede 1994.)

Geert Hofstede is a world-known social psychologist who has done pioneering research on cultures across modern nations. His definition of culture is possibly the most commonly used and understood. By mental programs, Hofstede (1994, 4) means patterns such as thinking, feeling, and acting that are naturally performed by people. However, a person's behaviour is not completely predetermined by his or her mental programs: everyone has a basic ability to differ from them, and to react in new, unexpected, or even destructive ways.

Figure 2 presents the three levels of human mental programming. *Culture* is always learned because it develops from one's own social environment, not from one's genes. *Human nature* is something all human beings have in common, and it represents the universal level of one's mental programming. It is an inherited operating system which determines basic physical and psychological functioning, such as the ability to feel fear, anger, love and joy, the need to relate with others, and the ability to observe the environment and to discuss it. *Personality* is a unique, personal set of mental programs that an individual does not share with any other human being. The personality is based on traits that are partly inherited with genes and partly learned through personal experiences and culture. (Hofstede 1994, 4-6.)

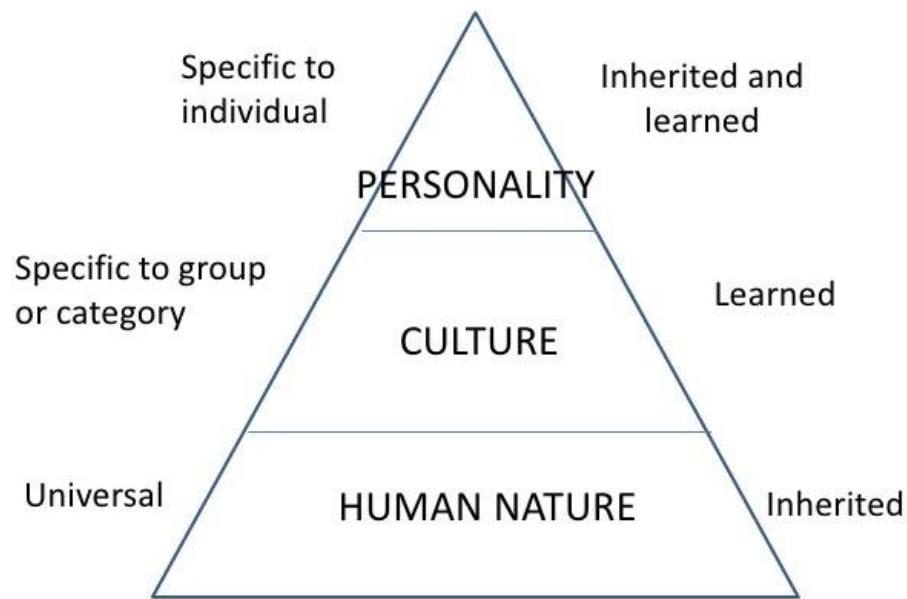


FIGURE 2. Three levels of human mental programming (Hofstede 1994.)

Hofstede defined culture decades ago but recent literature explains culture in a similar way. Culture is found as adaptation to circumstances and transmitting the coping skill and knowledge to the next generations. Culture includes values and patterns, it affects behaviour, morale, and productivity at work, it gives people a sense of who they are and where they belong, and tells them what to do and how to behave. Culture is generally considered the driving force behind human behaviour everywhere. (Moran, Harris & Moran 2011, 10.)

Culture is complicated and is no longer bound to the borders of nations. In the time of globalization, it is best to consider culture not as a bounded unit but as a set of overlapping tools, like language, practises, artefacts and others, that move freely with no clear limits within people globally. Culture is more of mixed cultural meanings and practices that span the globe than a matter of locations. Cultures are complex products of interactions across space and they are increasingly thought of as new roads rather than old roots. (Barker 2004, 44-45.)

2.1.1 Layers of Culture

According to Hofstede (1994, 10), people carry unavoidably several layers of culture within themselves since almost everyone belongs to several different groups and categories of people simultaneously. The layers are as follows:

1. National level – According to one's country, or countries for people who have migrated.
2. Regional/ethnic/religious/linguistic level – Most nations consist of culturally different regions and ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups.
3. Gender level – According to one's gender at birth.
4. Generation level – Separates grandparents from parents, and parents from children.
5. Social class level – According to opportunities for education, and one's occupation or profession.
6. Organizational or corporate level – For those who are employed, according to the way employees are socialized by their work organization.

2.1.2 The Cultural Iceberg

The many layers of culture can also be presented with an iceberg model as seen in Figure 3. The visible part of an iceberg is only a small part of a much larger whole. Similarly, people often accept the observable characteristics of a culture mistakenly as the culture, and do not understand that the culture has deeper and broader components that are not observable. Core values of a culture form the deep culture. Different cultural groups can share similar values but they are interpreted differently because the values are affected by family, religion, history, educational systems, and so forth. People's interpretations of how the core values should be reflected become visible and observable in the surface culture as use of words, actions and ways of communication. (Language & Culture Worldwide, LLC 2016.)

The cultural iceberg model is based on a theory by Edgar H. Schein, a psychologist who specializes in organizational culture. According to Schein, culture can be analysed at three different levels. These levels mean the degree to which the cultural phenomenon is visible to the observer. At the first level there are artefacts that make of the surface



FIGURE 3. The culture iceberg (JobsAbroad 2016.)

culture. Artefacts are the visible products of a cultural group, such as art, language, and food. The most important aspect of the first level is that it is easy to observe but difficult to analyse. At the second level there are espoused beliefs and values that are the goals, values, ideologies, and rationalizations of a culture. It is important to note that they may or may not be compatible with behaviour or other artefacts. Basic underlying assumptions make up the third level. These assumptions are beliefs and values that are unconsciously taken for granted. They determine people's behaviour, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. Together, the second and the third level form the deep culture. (Schein 2010, 23-24.)

2.1.3 Multiculturalism and Diversity

Simply defined, multiculturalism is the existence of several different cultures within one group, organization or nation. Many Western cultures have adopted multiculturalism as an official policy in the society that

represents promoting ethnic equality and tolerance towards various cultural practises within the nation. A multicultural approach is influential in education where it introduces people to different values, beliefs, customs and cultural practises. The aim of multiculturalism is to express respect and celebration of difference. (Barker 2004, 127.)

Diversity has been defined in two ways in academic research. There is surface-level diversity that is characterized by demographics such as gender, age, ethnicity and nationality, and task-related and cognitive diversity that is caused by differences in educational and functional background. Organizational diversity has a wider range of characteristics in addition to the previous ones, such as position in the organization, economic status, family responsibilities, IQ level, military experience, marital status and political backgrounds. Today, people are the most important source of sustainable competitive advantage in all businesses due to their differences in background, heritage, gender, religion, education and experience. Diversity is an important source of vitality and new ideas at any workplace. (Moran, Harris & Moran 2011, 157,164-165.)

2.2 Multicultural Teams

Team members can be very similar or quite different to what comes to experience, backgrounds, and perspectives depending on what culture they come from. There are two types of teams: homogeneous and heterogeneous. Members of a homogeneous team have all the same background and they generally perceive, interpret and evaluate things more similarly than members of heterogeneous teams. Heterogeneous teams can be divided further into three types: token teams, bicultural teams, and multicultural teams. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 132.)

In token teams a single member is from a different culture or a background than the other team members. In a team of ten Maltese hotel receptionists and one Finnish receptionist, for example, the Finnish receptionist would be the token member. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 132.)

Bicultural teams have members that represent two distinct cultures. These teams must continuously address and integrate the perspectives of both represented cultures, even if there is no equal number of representatives from both cultures. Usually, however, the culture of the group with more representatives is likely to dominate. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 133.)

Multicultural teams have members from three or more ethnic backgrounds. The more cultures there are in a team, the more it affects the dynamics of the team and its effectiveness. Therefore, it is important to address and integrate all represented cultures, like in bicultural teams, to ensure a most effective performance. How people behave in work teams varies across cultures, and some people work more cooperatively with each other than others. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 132-133.)

2.2.1 Advantages and Disadvantages

Cultural diversity in teams has both advantages and disadvantages, as presented in Table 1. When it comes to the advantages, cultural diversity allows teams to function more creatively, and thus multicultural teams are able to achieve higher productivity than homogeneous teams, even though they face more process problems. Due to the diverse backgrounds of members in multicultural teams, they have the capacity to generate more ideas, alternatives, and potential solutions to problems than their homogeneous counterparts. Furthermore, a wider range of perspective in heterogeneous teams enables creating more inventive alternatives and high-quality solutions to problems. However, multicultural teams also tend to have less *groupthink* than homogeneous teams. Groupthink is a significant source of ineffectiveness in teams, and it results from in-group pressures. It refers to a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgement that happens when team members are too deeply involved in an in-group and they fail to evaluate alternatives because they are striving for unanimity. Culturally diverse teams are less likely to agree on decisions prematurely, and to engage in counterproductive groupthink behaviours. These behaviours include self-censoring, sharing an illusion of

unanimity, pressuring directly, and self-appointed mind guarding. Multicultural teams do not subconsciously limit the range of ideas, perspectives, and solutions to those preferred by the leaders or the majority, and thus are less sensitive to groupthink. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 138-140.)

TABLE1. Advantages and disadvantages of diversity in multicultural teams (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 135)

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Diversity permits increased creativity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Wider range of perspectives + More and better ideas + Less groupthink <p>Diversity forces enhanced concentration to understand others'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Ideas + Perspectives + Meanings + Arguments <p>Increased creativity can lead to generating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Better problem definitions + More alternatives + Better solutions + Better decisions <p>Teams can become</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + More effective + More productive 	<p>Diversity causes lack of cohesion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mistrust - Miscommunication - Stress <p>Lack of cohesion causes an inability to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Validate ideas and people - Agree when agreement is needed - Gain consensus on decisions - Take collaborative action <p>Teams can become</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less efficient - Less effective - Less productive

Despite the many advantages, multicultural teams also have a few disadvantages. Cultural diversity often lowers team cohesiveness, the ability of team members to act as one. Attitudinal and perceptual problems, as well as miscommunication and stress diminish cohesion and often also productivity in multicultural teams. Dislike and mistrust, attitudinal problems, are common problems in multicultural teams because

team members tend to be more attracted to people from their own culture. Mistrust, however, results usually from unintentional cross-cultural misinterpretation than actual dislike. Trust in multicultural teams is discussed further in the subchapter 2.3. Stereotyping is a perpetual problem in multicultural teams. Team members often falsely assume that national stereotypes apply to their colleagues. Thus, seeing and assessing other team members' skills and contributions is not accurate. Stereotyping also affects behaviour, and for example, team members usually favour inappropriately colleagues from more economically developed countries and higher-status cultures. Cultural diversity in teams also means linguistical diversity, which causes problems with communication because not all team members are on the same level with all languages. Miscommunication is addressed more completely in the subchapter 2.4. All the disadvantages of cultural diversity increase the stress levels in multicultural teams. Stress can be observable as social-stress symptoms like bickering, stubbornness, and reprimanding, or superficial politeness and friendliness that makes team members frustrated. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 134-137.)

2.2.2 Productivity and Effectiveness

Cultural diversity affects teams in many ways and it can have either positive or negative impact on the team's productivity. Diversity enhances potential productivity but also increases the complexity of processes that the team members must manage in order to realize full team potential.

As illustrated in Figure 4, the actual productivity of multicultural teams can be higher or lower than that of homogeneous teams. Multicultural teams have the potential to achieve higher productivity but they also have more risk to experience greater losses due to faulty process. Therefore, the actual productivity of multicultural teams can be lower, higher, or the same as that of homogeneous teams. Multicultural teams can have several perspectives on any given situation, which increases their insight, and further their productivity. However, multicultural teams often struggle in

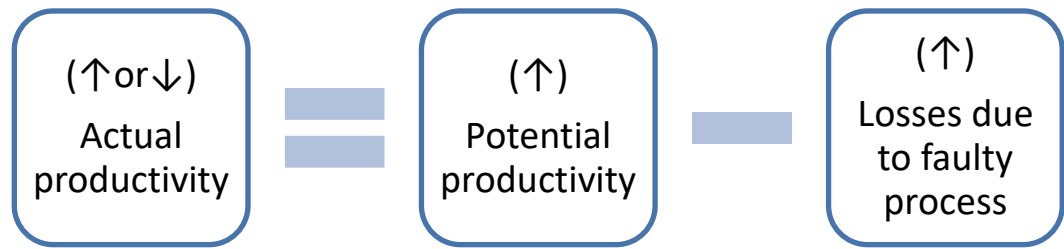


FIGURE 4. Productivity of multicultural teams (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 134)

evaluating and integrating these perspectives, unlike their homogeneous counterparts, and thus cause productivity losses due to faulty process. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 134.)

Adler & Gundersen (2008, 140-141) argue that team productivity does not depend on diversity, but on how well diversity is managed. When diversity is managed well it becomes an asset and a productive resource for the team. On the contrary, if diversity is ignored it causes problems that decrease the productivity. Additionally, tasks and the stage of team development have an impact on a multicultural team's performance. Usually multicultural teams are more advantageous with innovative and creative tasks, rather than routines. They function the best with the ideation process at the work stage of team development because the process is based on using differences. The right conditions for a productive and effective multicultural team require mutual respect, equal power, common goals, external feedback, recognition of differences, and member selection based on task-related abilities. Thus, it is important that team leaders assess each situation accurately, and emphasize aspects that best fit the team's general goals and objectives, in addition to its current task.

Tirmizi (2008, 8) presents several overlapping results of diversity research. Some studies argue that heterogeneous teams always outperform homogeneous teams, and others claim that diversity does not have predictable effects on team performance. A study about diversity and its impact on performance is also brought up, and it presents a model that divides diversity into three different types: informational, social, and value

diversity. Informational diversity refers to differences in educational background and work experience. Social diversity means visible diversity e.g. gender and ethnicity. Value diversity is differences in perceptions and purposes of team members. According to the study, different types of diversity affect team performance in different ways. For example, a high-performing team with maximum effectiveness has high informational diversity and low value diversity, but low value diversity alone creates more efficient teamwork. Over time, value diversity becomes more important for team performance and social diversity less significant. Tirmizi (2008, 13) continues that in addition to productivity and performance, team members' satisfaction and learning are also vital attributes to a team's effectiveness and success.

2.3 Trust in Multicultural Teams

Trust is the "psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviours of another". Trust brings people together and lays the base for successful interpersonal and intragroup relationships. Within an organization, trusting one's leaders builds up job satisfaction, increases perceived fairness, lowers employee turnover rate, and improves employees' efficacy. Between employees, trust improves cooperation and team dynamics. (Kwan & Hong 2014, 93-94.)

The core element of trust-based relationships is homogeneity that is challenging to achieve in diverse teams due to cultural differences. Furthermore, rapid change and high employee turnover rate diminish trust, which is common in hotels and other tourism businesses (Linstead, Fulop & Lilley 2009, 462.) Trust is universally valued in social relationships but the trust processes vary between cultures because trust is determined by using certain cues that are based on beliefs and norms in a culture. Thus, the formation and development of trust is different across cultures. Levels of general trust and trust in strangers tend to be higher in the western cultures and lower in the eastern cultures. Trusting beliefs, who should be

trusted and how much, are different in different cultures, which influences people's trust decisions and the trust development process.

Trustworthiness is also measured differently depending on the culture.

Trustworthiness can be based on social characteristics or personal characteristics. Social characteristics mean the group one belongs to, and personal characteristics are personality traits such as benevolence, integrity, and competence. For example, Westerners normally use individual characteristics and Easterners use social relations as trust-establishing cues. (Kwan & Hong 2014, 93,98-99,109.)

Trust might be the most important characteristic of a high-functioning team. Even though it is challenging to build trust between multicultural team members, leaders can take advantage of some tips to make the process easier. Firstly, the team should be structured for success. A multicultural team should have a clear direction and should ideally have employees that are curious, flexible, thoughtful, and emotionally stable. Secondly, leaders should understand the different cultures and language differences within their team. They should also note individuals' personal characteristics as they might sometimes differ from typical cultural characteristics. Thirdly, team norms should be clear and something everyone sticks to, regardless their cultural background. The team leader's responsibility is to provide additional communication for those team members that are having difficulties in adjusting to something different than what their culture has taught. Fourthly, personal bonding is a great way to build trust and ease potential conflict. Deep, personal relationships are not possible to establish with each team member but rapport and individual connection can, and should, always be fostered. Lastly, if and when conflicts arise they should be addressed immediately. The best leaders understand multiple cultural perspectives and are able to serve as a cultural bridge between parties in conflict situations. (Molinsky & Gundling 2016.)

2.4 Cross-Cultural Communication

Communication is simply exchanging meanings, trying to let others know what you mean. Communication includes sending both verbal messages, words, and non-verbal messages such as tone of voice, facial expression, behaviour, physical setting, et cetera. Consciously and unconsciously sent messages are also part of communication. Communication therefore is a multi-layered process through which meanings are exchanged, and it becomes even more complex in a cross-cultural setting. Cross-cultural communication happens when a message is sent from one culture to another. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 70-71.)

There are few other definitions that explain the cultural factors of communication. Intercultural communication is sharing meanings between people from different cultures. Intracultural communication on the other hand is communication between culturally similar individuals. Interracial communication refers to communication between members of different racial and ethnic groups. (Moran, Harris & Moran 2008, 39.)

Figure 5 demonstrates the communication process between cultures. The sent message is never exactly the same as the received message because communication is an indirect, symbolic behaviour. Ideas, feelings, or information cannot be sent out directly, they must be externalized or symbolized so they can be communicated. Encoding means producing a symbol message, in other words encoding meanings into words and behaviour. Decoding on the other hand means the receiving of a meaning from the symbol message. The process of encoding and decoding is based on an individual's cultural background and it differs accordingly for each individual. A greater difference in sender's and receiver's backgrounds means greater difference in the meanings they associate with particular words and behaviours. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 70-71.) Another cross-cultural communication model, presented by Griffin (2008, 176), adds filters to the communication process. Filters include distrust, suspicions, assumptions, pre-judgements, status, culture, emotions, education, socio-economic class, experience, socialization, and

stereotypes. The filters, also called noise, influence the process of encoding and decoding and thus colour and shape how the sender formulates the message and how the receiver interprets it. Filters are made up of personal preferences and values, and they are being shaped by cultural diversity.

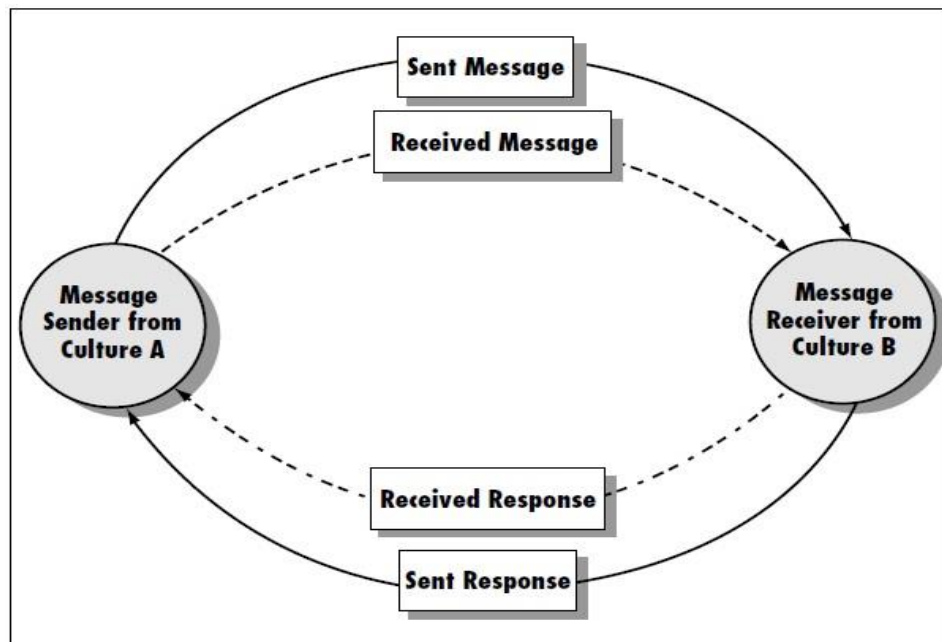


FIGURE 5. Communicating across cultures (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 70)

It is commonly thought that understanding others is the biggest obstacle in cross-cultural communication. However, a greater difficulty is becoming aware of and understanding one's own cultural conditioning. Generally, people are the least aware of their own culture and are surprised if they hear foreigners describe them. Raising cultural self-awareness increases the ability to predict the effect one's behaviour will have on others. In addition, projected similarity is also a common source of misinterpretation. It refers to the assumption that people are more similar to oneself than they actually are. Underlying projected similarity, subconscious parochialism, is thinking one's own way as the only way. It is important to respect other cultures' point of view but it is not always necessary to accept or adopt it. However, strict attachment to one's own belief system reflects to parochialism and projected similarity. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 81-86.)

3 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Chapter 3 discusses leadership and management. These two similar processes are often mistaken as one and the same, which is why the terms are first defined and explained. Then, some leadership styles are introduced that are considered especially suitable for leading multicultural teams. At the end, ways of effective leadership are presented.

3.1 Terms and Definitions

Today's meaning of the word *leader* stands for someone who sets ideas, people, and even organizations in motion. A leader takes the worlds of ideas, people, commerce, and organizations on a journey, which requires vision, courage, and influence (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 158). Recent definitions see *leadership* as a distributed phenomenon and an influence process, rather than an act of an individual, which is most appropriate for multicultural teams. Defining leadership as a process proposes that leaders affect and are affected by their followers, and recognizes that leadership is multidirectional and available to everyone in the team. Leadership can also be defined as shared, which refers to a participatory leadership that involves all members in decision making. Leadership as a multi-directional influence relationship, that provides a sharing of leadership functions, can create a team climate that produces effective multicultural teams. (Williams 2008, 136-137.)

Finding an all-inclusive definition for leadership is difficult but there are certain things that leadership definitely is not. Leadership has nothing to do with one's position in the hierarchy of a company, and it has nothing to do with titles. One can be a leader without being the CEO or a senior executive of a company. Furthermore, leadership does not require certain personal attributes. Extroverted charismatic traits are not needed to practise leadership. Lastly, leadership and management are not synonymous. Typically, managers manage things and leaders lead people. (Kruse 2013.)

A traditional view of management is task-based and mechanical. A manager's job is to ensure that team members are performing their tasks meeting the standards, and setting goals. Managers are people who command and control, they do not need to be self-aware like leaders do. Traditionally, managers do not need to be concerned about risks and trust issues because they have all authority by their position. Furthermore, management is not a learning process like leadership. Leaders tend to collaborate and share ideas but managers give tasks and see that they are done according to their instructions. (Ryan 2016.) Linstead, Fulop & Lilley (2009, 19) present another approach and remind that even though management is often presented as the management of things, the process of managing things is a relational, differential activity that involves criteria and environments that change. It requires handling multiple realities, roles, and loyalties of individuals. Managers have to deal with colleagues, customers, competitors, and networks, which means that management could be defined as the control and management of relationships.

3.2 Approaches to Leadership

The most common approach to leadership is the *trait theory*. Trait theory assumes that certain characteristics and abilities make good leaders, and it is a popular theory because it offers an easy way to measure the strength of leadership. However, trait theory has been criticized because it is not always easy to define the qualities, and moreover the qualities that are applicable in all situations. Nevertheless, research has indicated some qualities that can be associated with good leadership performance. Figure 6 exhibits these qualities that may be something learnt or something people are born with. (Linstead, Fulop & Lilley 2009, 479-480.)

Drive is the high desire for achievement, and ambition to get ahead in work and make things happen. Leadership motivation is the desire to lead and the willingness to take responsibility. Honesty and integrity are the correspondence between words and actions, and the foundation to attract



FIGURE 6. Common leader traits (Linstead, Fulop & Lilley 2009, 481)

and retain followers by gaining their trust. Self-confidence is needed to withstand setbacks and to lead others through hard times in new directions. Self-confidence means being emotionally stable, and the ability to make hard decisions and standing by them. Cognitive ability is above-average intelligence to analyse and solve problems but people who have it are not necessarily or usually geniuses. Knowledge of the business simply means that the leader gathers and comprehends information about the company and industry, which is needed to develop visions, strategies and business plans. (Linstead, Fulop & Lilley 2009, 479-481.)

Transactional and *transformational leadership* could also be considered for effective multicultural teams. Transactional leadership is the most useful in the forming stage of team development where expectations for team behaviours and success are still unclear. Transactional leadership motivates followers by appealing to their self-interest, using contingent rewards such as praise and material rewards. In transformational leadership leaders and followers get to higher levels of morality and motivation together with commitment, emotional engagement, or fulfilment of higher-order needs. To motivate team members, transformational leadership can use inspirational motivation, idealized influence, and individualized consideration. According to research, both approaches are effective. Transactional leadership with the contingent rewards has a

positive impact on team effectiveness and commitment. On the other hand, transformational leadership, with individualized consideration, is most positively related to team satisfaction. (Williams 2008, 150-151.)

Servant leadership can help produce an appropriate climate for multicultural teams. An ethic of caring is the core of servant leadership, which is an important part of building trust and cooperative relationships that are necessary in well-functioning multicultural teams as discussed earlier. In the servant leadership approach an individual becomes a leader by first becoming a servant. Servant leaders value all team members' and encourage trust, respect, and individual strengths while emphasizing listening, empathy, and acceptance. Servant leaders aim their attention to the needs of followers and help them to become more autonomous and powerful. The themes of providing support, fostering collaboration, and valuing and appreciating make servant leadership an effective leadership style. (Williams 2008, 151-152.)

Traditionally, approaches to leadership focus on individual leaders who direct activities and guide followers to implement tasks. When leadership is in the hands of only a few individuals it can lead to competition and fragmentation of the team. *Shared leadership* aims to get team members to share leadership functions, eventually moving towards a team structure where there is no person having the title of leader. In the early stage of shared leadership there may be a designated leader, or a coach, helping others to develop the necessary leadership skills. Leadership can also be rotated, so that several team members get the opportunity to share leadership functions. Different multicultural teams can use different approaches but the ultimate goal is to share leadership. Then, all members are empowered, the team is self-governed, and the members have control over the team's work process and major decisions. Furthermore, when team members have a central role they work better together and feel more valued. Shared leadership is a suitable approach for a multicultural team but in order to work it requires the following conditions: approval and support from top-level management, clearly defined objectives, appropriate socialization among the team members,

appropriate tasks, adequate information system, interpersonal skills, and last but not least commitment to accepting and valuing differences as well as open-minded, trust-based core values. (Williams 2008, 153-154.)

3.3 Effective Leadership and Management of Multicultural Teams

Leadership in teams, in general, has a rapidly increasing importance since organizational structures are changing and the use of work teams is becoming more common in all business areas. Often, the primary reason for a team to fail is ineffective leadership and therefore it is critical to understand the role of leadership. Today, effective leadership is team-centric, focusing on leader-team interactions rather than on leader-subordinate interactions. Leadership functions can be shared by team members, which has been proven to improve team problem solving skills for instance. (Northouse 2013, 287-289.)

Managing cultural diversity is challenging because multicultural teams face greater issues than do homogeneous teams in developing sufficient communication skills to achieve the essential level of integration that is required for superior performance. Moreover, multicultural teams often fail to create a synergistic culture, which results in low performance. However, Adler and Gundersen (2008, 145-147) provide guidelines for effective management that increase integration and minimize diversity-related productivity losses:

1. Task-related selection – The team members should always be selected according to their task-related abilities rather than their cultural background.
2. Recognizing differences – Teams must recognize, understand, and respect cross-cultural differences to be able to enhance communication. Once each team member is able to differentiate their stereotypes from the actual personalities and behaviours of the other team members, they begin to understand why the team members from other cultures think, feel and act the way they do. Cultural intelligence contributes to cultural synergy.

3. Establishing a vision or a superordinate goal – Members of diverse teams often have difficulty agreeing on their purpose because they do not understand each other's intent. Thus, leaders have to help their team and set a vision or a superordinate goal that overlooks individual differences, in order to maximize team effectiveness.
4. Equalizing power – When all members participate, teams generally produce more and better ideas. The distribution of power should be managed according to each member's ability to contribute to the task rather than some falsely assumed cultural superiority.
5. Creating mutual respect – Effective team work requires respect. Mutual respect can be enhanced by selecting members with equal abilities, and minimizing judgements based on cultural stereotypes. Equal status, cooperation, and a common goal reduce prejudice.
6. Giving feedback – Multicultural teams usually have difficulty in decision-making, and therefore managers should give team members positive feedback on their process and output, both as a team and as individuals. Positive external feedback helps the team to see itself as a team and to value diversity.

To conclude, successful leaders of multicultural teams need to have a set of specific cross-cultural competencies. Ideally, they would understand not only cultural but also business environments worldwide, learn the key characteristics of different cultures, have cross-cultural communication skills, be able to adapt to other cultures, and learn from other cultures from a position of equality. This kind of set of abilities is challenging to acquire but training programs about culture and diversity exist and they are very popular. In these programs, people and especially leaders are taught about the characteristics of different cultures, and how to be culturally sensitive. This kind of leadership training helps leaders to know about their own cultural biases and preferences, which is a key to understanding others and being a good leader. (Northouse 2013, 383-384, 407.)

4 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The research data for the thesis was collected electronically by using an email interview. Thus, the thesis applies empirical research because the research is based on experimentation and evidence rather than theory (Explorable 2016). This chapter introduces briefly the case company, and then goes through the interview design and implementation, and studies the outcome.

4.1 Case Company Introduction

The Radisson Blu Resort & Spa, Malta Golden Sands belongs to Island Hotels Group Holdings Plc (IHGH Group), a leading name in the five-star hotel sector in Malta. IHGH Group started as a family business of one hotel in 1987 but today it is a publicly-listed business with an impressive portfolio. The portfolio includes a catering company Island Caterers, the Radisson Blu Resort, St Julian's, the Radisson Blu Resort & Spa, Golden Sands, and vacation ownership company Azure. The IHGH Group is an innovator in its industry, and it is able to deliver quality service and product consistently. The driving force is commitment to people, both customers and employees. (Island Hotels Group Holdings Plc 2016a.)

The Radisson Blu Resort & Spa, Golden Sands is operated by the IHGH Group under a franchise agreement with the Rezidor Hotel Group. It was opened in 2005 as a luxury five-star hotel and vacation ownership resort which it still is today. The resort has 330 rooms and suites along with extensive leisure and conference amenities, and it also offers upscale vacation ownership accommodation. The resort was built incorporating major eco-friendly measures, and it is known for its responsibility towards the environment. (Island Hotels Group Holdings Plc 2016b.)

The front office team in the Radisson Blu Resort & Spa, Malta Golden Sands is lead and managed by front office managers that report to an operations manager. In addition, the team has supervisors and some full-time and part-time employees and interns that are of various nationalities.

There is also a separate night team but it is excluded from the study. The team consists of approximately 30 people working as receptionists, porters, telephone operators, and in the reservations department. The author worked as a receptionist and a reservations assistant during her six-month internship in the company.

4.2 Interview Structure and Implementation

Electronic interviews refer to interviews held both in real time as well as offline, and thus they can be divided into two different types: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous interviewing happens in real time and it can be done with the help of web conferencing software, chat rooms or instant messaging tools. For the study, the interviewing was done via email, which is an asynchronous interviewing method alongside with Internet forums. Electronic interviewing is especially advantageous when the interviewer and the interviewees are not located in the same geographical area, like in this particular case. Furthermore, all forms of electronic interviewing enable automatic recording of answers as they are typed in, which removes problems associated with audio-recording and transcription. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 349-350.)

The interview was designed as a qualitative interview according to the nature of the study. Qualitative interviews are non-standardised, and either semi-structured or in-depth. This interview is semi-structured, which means that there is a list of themes and questions to be covered, even though they can vary from interview to interview (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 320). The author interviewed two front desk managers of the case company. The interview questions were grouped into question sets according to three different themes: leadership and management, multiculturalism, and team work. In addition, there was a set of background questions. An email interview consists of a series of emails each containing a small number of questions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 351). In this case, the managers received three separate sets of

questions, each set containing four to seven questions. All questions can be seen in Appendix 1.

All the interview questions were open questions. Open questions are likely to begin with the words 'what' or 'how', encouraging the interviewee to reply freely and provide an extensive and descriptive answer (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 337). Referring to a list by Patton that was recommended by Merriam (2014, 96), the questions were designed in a way that their answers would provide information about experience and behaviour, opinions and values, feelings, and factual knowledge of the interviewees. In addition to the actual interview questions, a few probing questions were used to seek a further explanation about the interviewee's meaning and to understand the response better. The data acquisition process, as a whole, is pictured below in Figure 7.

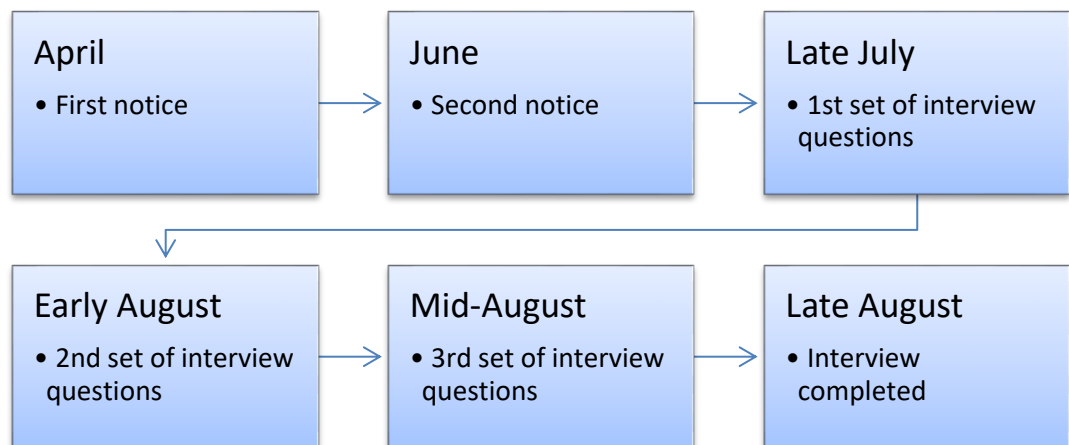


FIGURE 7. Data acquisition process

The front desk managers of the case company had been notified earlier in the spring about possible interviewing for the thesis. In June 2016, in the beginning of the thesis process, they were contacted again to ensure their willingness to take part in the interviews. After receiving a positive response, the interview questions could be planned and the interview was designed. The first question sets were sent out to the front desk managers on 25 July 2016, and the next question sets would be sent after the answers for the previous set were received. Both of the interviews were completed as a whole within four weeks. Personal reminders were sent

between each question set. Usually, email interviews last for some weeks, like in this case, because there is a time delay between a question being asked and it being answered. However, it allows both the interviewer and the interviewee to reflect on the questions and answers before providing a considered response, which can be highly advantageous (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 351).

4.3 Data Analysis

This subchapter reveals the main observations that are made based on the interview answers. The interview was divided into three parts according to three different themes, and therefore it was logical to use the same division for the data analysis. The following three sections present and analyse the answers of the interview questions of each theme.

4.3.1 Leadership and Management

The front desk managers were first asked to describe the necessary characteristics of a leader, and both emphasized the importance of leading by example because in that way the leader can gain the trust and respect of their team members. The managers were also unanimous that a leader should always be fair. One of the managers thought that a leader should also be motivated him/herself because people will look up more to a leader who is passionate and motivated towards his/her role. They continued by telling that a leader should always think rationally and analytically when facing challenges and decisions because emotional reasoning could have a negative impact on the team. The other added that a leader should be friendly, helpful and supportive at all times.

“A leader should always put the team in the first place, not an individual.”

Then, the managers described themselves as leaders. One manager was said to practise a servant leadership style by nature. As mentioned before, servant leadership focuses on the growth and well-being of the team, and the leader acts like a general coach teaching and training the team

members. The other manager seemed somewhat hesitant with the answer but their aim was to become like the ideal leader by learning and growing day by day. There seems to be some discrepancies between the managers' answers, which means the managers are not equally aware of themselves as leaders.

“The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first, and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible.”

The last questions of this theme were to find out the greatest challenges and the easiest things that the managers see in leadership. Both managers think that leadership is all about challenges and it is certainly not an easy task. Managing change is mentioned as the most difficult task. Change is a process that always involves both the employees and the organization, and the challenge is to find a balance with the least negative impact for both sides. Often, there are several change processes going on simultaneously, which can become stressful for the leader. However, both managers agree that if the leader is able to find the right way on how to treat the team members leading becomes easier. One manager points out that listening is the easiest and the most effective way of leading because it helps to know about the team and the individuals, and the best leadership success comes from knowing how others feel and what they need in order to succeed.

4.3.2 Multiculturalism

The first question of the second theme asked the managers to describe the team they are working with. The aim of this question was to find out if the managers see the team as a group of individuals or an entity. It was interesting to see that one manager gave a rather descriptive definition about the group's individuals and their nationalities, listed in Figure 8, and ages, whereas the other manager described the team as a dynamic one in which efforts are generally done collectively as a whole team. The managers' answers could be linked with their work experience as leaders,

since a less experienced manager might not see a group of different individuals as a whole.

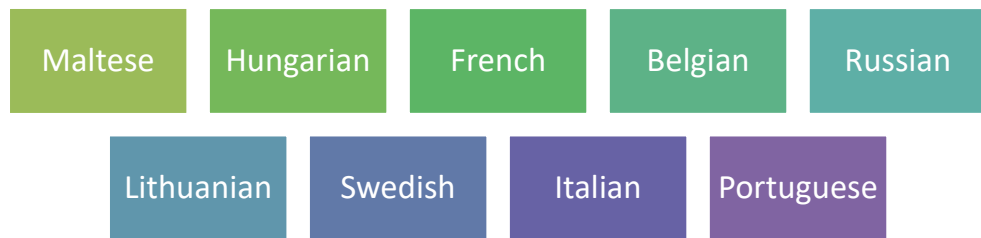


FIGURE 8. Nationalities of the front office team in summer 2016

Both managers enjoy working in a multicultural team. One of the managers acknowledges the disadvantages caused by multiculturalism but in their opinion disadvantages are outweighed by the advantages because the presence of several nationalities and cultural backgrounds in the team aids in dealing with hotel guests that come from different cultures and countries themselves. The other manager says that there has never been an unpleasant situation, explaining that since the team members are all quite young, it is easier to get along with one another and be open to other cultures. The answer is slightly worrisome, if the manager does not see any disadvantages in multiculturalism or is not prepared for problematic situations they might not be able to deal with problems that occur when cultures collide.

“Managing a multicultural team is not easy, yet the team does offer an added value what it comes to knowledge about customer experiences and communication in one’s mother tongue.”

Next, it was important to know if the managers had worked with a multicultural team before because the more one works with other cultures the more one gets experience and knowledge about how to develop their cross-cultural skills. Both managers had worked in a multicultural team before coming to Radisson Blu Golden Sands but they said it had been a very different experience. In their previous work environments there had been only two or three nationalities present. One manager had worked with people from her own culture or similar cultures, which did not require

any specific cultural skills. The other manager on the other hand represented a cultural minority in her previous team and often felt left out and ignored. Thus, both managers have had to learn new cross-cultural skills when coming to their current work place.

The managers had already been asked about the greatest challenges in leadership but this question was designed to find out the difficulties related to multiculturalism especially. Both managers brought up two same issues: problems with language and communication within the team and with clients, and differences in the approaches and attitudes of team members from different cultures. However, the managers have a unanimous opinion that their team members are relatively tolerant and adaptable, which prevents culture based conflicts. As discussed earlier, communication is a complex process and the possibility of errors and misunderstanding is higher in a multicultural context. Therefore, it is necessary to stay open-minded and not to get frustrated.

“Thankfully, we have a team full of toleration, which is the backbone of working well with each other on a daily basis.”

According to one manager, the most important thing to consider when leading a multicultural team is to accept cultural differences openly and to work around them in order to set a focused direction for the team members. Also, cultural differences should be cherished as advantages, and each team member should be given a task that best suits their abilities. This way of thinking is highly in line with the effective management guidelines presented earlier that also support task-related member selection, recognizing differences, and setting a common goal. The other manager emphasized in this question also that treating every team member the same is the most important thing, which is very important in a multicultural team too but there are many other challenges that could have been mentioned instead. Hence, it is not clear whether this manager understands the challenges caused by multiculturalism specifically or not.

Lastly, in this set of questions the managers were asked to tell about a negative as well as a positive situation they had encountered at work that was influenced by multiculturalism. One manager described a negative situation from a leader's perspective where they were struggling to solve an issue between two team members who were from different cultures that were both foreign to them. It was challenging to the manager to think and act rationally without being judgemental and critical about the team members' cultural backgrounds. On the contrary, the other manager described a negative situation in which foreign team members would be communicating in their own language, hence leaving everyone else out of the conversation. This is an understandable but a common problem in all multicultural work environments.

“The diverse collection of skills and experiences, such as languages and cultural understanding, allows the team to provide service to customers on a global basis.”

Then, the managers continued with their positive experiences. Both described a situation where they have a hotel guest and a team member from the same culture. This enables performing customer service in the guest's own language, which creates a unique, personal and memorable guest experience. Customer service that exceeds hotel guests' expectations is not only the aim of Radisson Blu but also a great competitive advantage against other hotels in the business.

4.3.3 Team Work

The aim of the last question set was to learn how the team works together and in what ways do the managers communicate with their team members. The first question asked about the communication methods. Both managers highlighted the importance of direct verbal communication, like daily handovers, briefings, and one to one meetings that are considered as the most effective way of communication. The managers also use email, and written memos and handovers as non-verbal communication methods. For a multicultural team, it is important to receive information in various forms to avoid any misunderstanding. Earlier,

listening was mentioned as an efficient way of leading but it may also be a deal-breaker in cross-cultural communication.

“I believe that when one communicates effectively, in whatever form, it eliminates confusion and can foster a happy workplace.”

Decision-making is never easy, as the managers say, but the team seems to have quite equally shared power when it comes to daily operations. The managers say that there are several persons in the team that are involved in the day to day decisions regarding guest issues, current situations and some team related matters. Only complex decision-making issues that require more in-depth processes are taken care of by the higher front desk management. Otherwise decisions are made by the supervisors or other employees. Sharing decision-making is a part of shared leadership that is an effective way of leading multicultural teams, as discussed earlier in Chapter 3. When each member of the team is able to be part of the decision-making process they feel more empowered and valued, thus creating an efficient and well-functioning team.

Giving feedback is an important part of communication because it influences the team productivity and effectiveness. Therefore, it is great that the managers give feedback to their team members constantly in many different ways. Feedback is given on a daily basis, in one to one meetings, and annually through structural appraisals. One manager adds that the best way of giving consistent and reliable feedback is to do it while in the process. It enables the manager and the leader to build their relationship with the team. The manager also thinks that the most effective way of giving feedback is to communicate with a team member casually without pressure. However, it should be kept in mind that employees coming from cultures that respect higher authority might feel intimidated by this kind of friendly approach.

Last but not least, the managers evaluated trust between the team members and themselves. Building and maintaining trust is an on-going process for both the managers and the team members. One manager

feels that there is mutual trust but not as much as they would like to have. The manager thinks it might be due to the hectic environment they have at work where the employee turnover rate is relatively high, which is the result of many seasonal employees and interns. The other manager also believes that there is trust but they point out that it is challenging to build and maintain trust. Mistrust is a common problem in multicultural teams, and therefore it is important that the managers recognize the issue and constantly work on it.

“Trust cannot be built in one day.”

5 CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the thesis by introducing the main research findings and providing answers to the research questions stated in the first chapter. Validity and reliability of the study is also discussed, and suggestions for further research are given.

5.1 Answers to Research Questions

In the Introduction, the main research question was stated alongside with three subquestions. The answers to the sub questions are presented first as they help find an answer to the main research question.

- What is 'multiculturalism' and how does it affect leadership?
 - Multiculturalism refers to the presence of several different cultures within one group or organization. Members of multicultural teams have different languages, values, behaviours, and ways of communication. Thus, leaders of multicultural teams face a great challenge when planning and implementing effective communication, trust-building, goal-setting, and other leadership functions.

Leadership is affected by as many ways as there are individuals, personalities, backgrounds, and cultures in a team. Setting guidelines and rules for a diverse team is challenging because everyone is used to working in a way that is the norm in their own culture, and norms are not the same in every culture. Yet, leaders should recognize and respect the cultural differences without being judgemental. Especially the managers of the case company must overcome several obstacles in leadership practises with their team because the team consists of people from nine different countries and cultures.

- What is the current leadership style at the case company, and is it suitable for leading a multicultural work force?
 - Based on the empirical research findings it can be said that the managers of the case company are applying a mix of

servant leadership and shared leadership. Considering the nature of the business and the team with whom the managers work, the leadership approach is believed to be suitable.

In many parts of the interview both managers gave answers that indicated the use of servant leadership and shared leadership methods. It was stated directly that servant leadership is one of the manager's leadership style, and it was explained by giving examples about how the manager focuses on the growth and well-being of the team, listens to the team members, and tries to be as open-minded as possible. Additionally, the importance of being fair and treating everyone equally was emphasized. In one of the interviews it was said: "we always have to value and thank everyone for their hard work, as the input from each and every individual is affecting the result". Valuing, appreciating and especially caring are core themes of servant leadership.

When it comes to shared leadership, it does not occur completely in the case but parts of it are obvious. The managers said that decision-making, and thus power, is shared between the team members. There are supervisors and other people with decision-making power in the team, which is very efficient in a hectic hotel environment where there is not always time to run each decision by the managers first. The open-minded attitude and the support of the managers helps shared leadership forward. Since both servant leadership and shared leadership were found as effective methods for multicultural teams earlier in Chapter 3, it can be said that the current leadership style in the case company is suitable.

- How can the leadership be better and more effective in the case company?
 - Leadership is an on-going process and therefore it can always be improved. The managers are recommended to continue developing their cultural skills and awareness. The front desk managers are encouraged to support each other in leadership, which will hopefully result in a harmonious

leading style and create a strong base for the front office team.

First and foremost, the managers need to be fully aware of their own culture, and their own behaviours and attitudes because in that way they are able to understand others. One manager stated in the interview that sometimes they struggle with understanding team members that are from a foreign culture because they have a different perspective and a point of view. On the other hand, the other manager emphasized in the interview answers the difficulty of treating each of the team members correctly. The insecurity in these answers reveal that the managers do not yet have sufficient cross-cultural skills. But, recognizing one's weaknesses is required in order to be able to develop. Therefore, cultural training would be advisable for both managers. Also, discussing the interview, and sharing ideas and thoughts together would help the managers to work on a consistent and effective leadership plan. In the process, the managers could learn leadership skills from one another.

Based on the aforesaid, the main research question is answered as follows:

- What challenges do the managers of the case company have when they are leading and managing a multicultural team?
 - The managers have various challenges in the leadership and management of their team due to cultural differences of the team members. These challenges include language and communication issues, and trust-building issues that may lead to difficulties in team productivity and efficiency. Thus, it may be difficult to maintain effective leadership. Lastly, leaders should also be fully aware of their own culture and have excellent cross-cultural skills in order to understand a multicultural team and be good leaders.

The two front desk managers of the case company were interviewed in order to find out an answer to the main research question and the

managers' answers revealed that the challenges presented in theory are real. However, the challenges are fairly common and they can be overcome because the managers seem to have an effective leadership style.

5.2 Validity and Reliability

The thesis consists of a theoretical and empirical part. The secondary data for the thesis was collected from related literature, articles, and reliable websites. The primary data was collected by interviewing two managers that work at the case company, with whom the author has worked herself. The interviewees were chosen based on their position in the company. The aim of the research was to find an answer to the main research question.

Qualitative research is different in nature than quantitative research and therefore research validity and reliability are also evaluated differently. Validity of qualitative studies is not usually questioned because unlike quantitative studies, the researcher can derive a meaning from the words and language that a research participant has used. If a non-standardised interview is conducted carefully and the questions can be clarified and the answers probed, a high level of validity is possible (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 327). Even though the interviews for the thesis were conducted via email, the questions were clarifiable and probing occurred. Furthermore, the managers' answers in the interviews together with the secondary data provided answers to all research questions. Thus, the study can be considered valid.

Reliability of qualitative studies, however, is more concerning due to the lack of standardisation. Also, issues of bias are related to reliability. Interviewer bias affects the analysis of the data, and interviewee bias may have an impact on the given answers (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 326). Results of the thesis may be somewhat biased since the author used to work with the managers. However, because the interviews were conducted via email the interviewees were able to think in peace and give

considered answers without being affected by a tone of voice or body language, which in turn reduces interviewee bias. Reliability of qualitative studies can be enhanced by triangulation, which means using multiple sources of data or data-collection methods within one study. For the study, the data was collected from multiple secondary sources and two primary sources, which makes the study fairly reliable.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

The thesis did not cover the team members' point of view about leadership. Therefore, it is recommended that the managers send out a questionnaire for example, in which the team members can tell about their feelings and opinions anonymously. Alternatively, if team spirit is high and the managers feel that the atmosphere is right, even a group discussion could be held with the team where each team member would be able to share their views on leadership openly.

The findings of the thesis are confined to the case company and therefore cannot be generalised or assumed to be the same in similar situations or similar companies operating in the hotel business. Managers and leaders of other multicultural teams should compare the findings of the thesis with their own research findings critically, and make suitable development plans according to their own requirements and consideration.

6 SUMMARY

The thesis was carried out in cooperation with the front office of Radisson Blu Resort & Spa, Malta Golden Sands. The aim of the thesis was to find out the current leadership and management style of the multicultural front office team, and how it could be better and more effective.

The first main chapters introduced theories about culture, and leadership and management. Since the focus of the thesis was on multicultural teams, special characteristics, advantages and disadvantages, and challenges of multiculturalism were presented in Chapter 2. Effective leadership and management of multicultural teams was discussed in Chapter 3. Primary data for the thesis was collected from interviews that were held with two front desk managers of the case company, and the answers were presented in Chapter 4.

In the beginning of the empirical research part the case company was briefly introduced. Next, the interview design and implementation was explained. The data analysis and the interview answers were included in the same chapter, and the analysis was divided into three subchapters according to the interview themes for the sake of clarification.

Lastly, since the main research question and all sub questions were answered, the thesis reached its objectives. The thesis revealed that multiculturalism affects leadership in many ways, which needs to be acknowledged by the leaders of multicultural teams. The case company managers already have some of the needed leadership skills and they are practising a suitable leadership method for a multicultural team. However, further training and development of cross-cultural skills is recommended.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. Interview questions.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Nationality?
- How many years have you worked in the Company?
- How many years have you worked in a superior position?
- What is your title?

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- What kind of characteristics do you think are necessary for a leader?
- How would you describe yourself as a leader?
- In your opinion, what are the greatest challenges in leadership?
- What are the easiest things in leadership?

MULTICULTURALISM

- Please describe the team you are working with (i.e. the Front Office Team).
- How do you feel about working with a multicultural team?
- Do you have previous experience on working with a multicultural team?
- What kind of challenges do you face when leading a multicultural team?
- What is the most important thing to consider when leading and managing a multicultural team?
- Please describe a situation that you have encountered at work, in which multiculturalism appeared to be a problem.
- Please describe a situation that you have encountered at work, in which multiculturalism appeared to be an advantage.

TEAM WORK

- How do you communicate with the members of your team?
- What is the decision-making process like in your team?
- How do you give feedback to the members of your team?
- Do you feel that there is mutual trust and respect between you and your team?