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The GMs' Roles and Competencies Profile
in Greek luxury hotels

Charalampos Giousmpasoglou (ASTER, MSc, MA, PgD, PhD candidate)

Strathclyde Business School – Department of HRM

Postal Address: ███████████████████████, Athens

Tel: ████████████████████████████

charalambos.giousbasoglou@strath.ac.uk

babisyious@googlemail.com

Key Words: Hospitality Industry, Managerial Roles, Competencies, Greece

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the General Managers' (GMs) Roles and Competencies in Greek 4 & 5* hotels from a contextual perspective. The existing literature indicates that the work of GMs in luxury hotels is complex and requires an extensive set of competencies in order to perform the required roles. In addition, the literature provides evidence that the roles and competencies framework is influenced to a certain degree from contextual factors such as national and organisational culture. In order to identify the roles and competences profile of the GMs in 4 and 5* hotels, research conducted in 16 luxury (four and five star) city and resort hotels in four popular destinations: Athens, Thessaloniki, Crete and Rhodes. In total 32 GMs and their assistants participated in this country case study. The results have indicated that Greek managers fully understand and appreciate the generic managerial competencies and roles required in any other European country. On the other hand they cope with contextual challenges appearing mainly due to the Greek culture, by adapting these roles and competencies to their working environment. Based on research data, three different GM profiles are identified according to the ownership status of the hotel: family owned and local Greek chains; national Greek chains and franchised international chains; and international chains.

Key Words: Hospitality Industry, Managerial Roles, Competencies, Greece

1. INTRODUCTION

Managerial work in Greek hotels has been a neglected and under researched area, despite the significant contribution of the hotel sector in the Greek economy. This research paper aims to explore and identify the key managerial roles performed and competencies required of GMs and their assistants in city and resort luxury (four and five star) hotels in Greece. It also evaluates the compatibility of Greek managerial roles and competencies in the Greek luxury hotel sector with '*western*' conceptions of management. For the purpose of this discussion the following hypothesis is made: *the ownership status of the Greek luxury hotels (family owned, local and national chain, international chain) determines to a certain degree, the GMs' roles and competences framework*. The identification of the luxury hotel GM' profiles in Greece will provide hospitality practitioners and academics useful insights about managerial roles and competencies in contexts other than those in the dominant Anglo-Saxon managerial traditions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Managerial Work in Hotels

In order to understand the nature of managerial work in hotels there is a need to answer the questions '*what managers do*' and '*why they do what they do*'. The hospitality research has been preoccupied with Mintzberg's ideas and several researchers replicated or tested his early work (Ley, 1980; McCall and Segrist, 1980; Arnaldo, 1981; Ferguson and Berger, 1984; Kim, 1994; Shortt, 1989; Nebel and Ghei, 1993; Hales and Tamangani, 1996; Mount and Bartlett, 1999). Based on his observations, Mintzberg (1973) contends that all managerial jobs are essentially alike in pace, variety, brevity and fragmentation and claims that the ten Interpersonal, Informational and Decisional roles (Figurehead, Leader, Liaison, Monitor, Disseminator, Spokesman, Entrepreneur, Disturbance handler, Resource allocator, Negotiator) are applicable to all levels of management. He also argues (*ibid.*) that differences in managers' jobs are with respect to the relative importance

of roles according to the functional areas and levels in the hierarchies. Mintzberg's work has been criticised from several perspectives (Martinko and Gardner, 1985; Snyder and Gleeck, 1980; Steward, 1982). The line of criticism is focused on the following reasons (Mount and Bartlett, 1999): first his sample is extremely low (five CEOs); second he assumes CEOs represent typical managers; third his work is questioned because his sample does not allow testing of his assertions about function and level, and forth, because simply describing '*what managers do*' is not necessarily linked or related to effectiveness. Beyond criticism, Mintzberg's ideas have been part of the management lexicon and are widely taught in business schools. In addition, his later work (Mintzberg, 1994) has provided a robust model by '*rounding up*' the manager's work.

Studies of managerial hospitality work have addressed three questions that have divided the work chronologically (Dann, 1990). Early research (pre-1973) was concentrated with the questions '*what managers do and how*' focused very often in how they allocate their time (Nailon, 1968). The middle-period representing the time between the early 1970s and the late 1980s is pro-occupied with what managers do in terms of roles (Ley, 1980; Pickworth, 1982; Ferguson & Berger, 1984; Nebel & Ghei, 1993; Mount & Bartlett, 1999). These studies have replicated and developed the framework presented by the general studies of managerial work drawing especially from Mintzberg's early work (1973). The period from the late 1980s until the late 1990's has focused in managerial behaviour and performance (Eder & Umbreit, 1989; Worsfold, 1989; Mullins & Davis, 1991; Peacock, 1995; Gore, 1995). A forth period can be added to Dann's (*ibid.*) chronological categorisation covers the time from the mid-1990s until today and focuses on the skills and competencies required in order to perform managerial roles effectively and efficiently (Christou & Eaton, 2000; Kay & Rousette, 2000; Chung-Herrera *et al.*, 2003; Kay & Moncarz, 2004).

2.3. Managerial Competencies

Throughout the second half of the 20th century understanding of the 'manager' has been a matter for debate and calls for action, though managerial performance has been notoriously difficult to evaluate (Child, 1969; Anthony, 1986). The research on managerial roles could not provide credible and sufficient answers to the measurement of managerial performance. The competence approach that appeared in the 1980s marked a new development; its focus lies in endorsing and promoting types of managerial behaviour rather than measuring managerial outcomes. Boyatzis defined the term 'competency' as 'an underlying characteristic of a person in that it may be a motive, trait, aspect of one's self-image or social role, or a body of knowledge which he or she uses' (1982, p.21). This approach was labelled as the 'personal characteristics' or 'behavioural' approach emphasises the distinction between threshold competencies which all job holders require – the competencies necessary for someone to fill the job – and differentiating competencies which distinguish the outstanding from the average manager (Boyatzis, 1982; Spencer & Spencer, 1993).

There has been an enormous diversity of interpretation of the meaning of the term 'competence' or 'competency', and no agreed definition (Rees, 2003). Woodruffe (1993) pointed out, defining the word according to Boyatzis' definition, leaves the term open to a multitude of interpretations. To avoid unresolved debates about 'motives', 'traits' and so on, the term 'competence' can be used to refer to a 'set of behaviours, skills, knowledge and understanding which are crucial to the effective performance of a position' (Woodruffe, ibid., p. 29).

The term and its related concepts have been adapted in number of ways. It has been extended to cover the training of a select group of managers and to the total change of an entire organisation. Despite Boyatzis' original intention to provide a model of competency that could be validated against organisational criteria, competencies have also been taken up at a national level and provide the framework for example, for developing general management competences

in the U.K. (Townley, 1999). In this case the Management Charter Initiative (MCI, 1991) has adopted a functional approach to competence, which reflects a greater focus on task, seeking to identify concretely the work functions which a competent manager should be capable of performing (Cheng *et al.*, 2003). For the purpose of this paper however, the discussion will focus in the frameworks that are falling in the '*behavioural*' approach.

According to Iversen (2000) all the different models within the '*behavioural*' approach are primarily based on the study of the competency (competent behaviour) of outstanding performers. The major contributors within this approach are based in research conducted in the U.S. (Boyatzis, 1982; Schroeder, 1989; Spencer & Spencer, 1993), but there are also significant contributions from the U.K. (Cockerill, 1989; Dulewicz & Herbert, 1992/9; Cheetham & Chivers, 1996/8).

The various approaches have been encapsulated in the shape of a competency model/framework. This is a descriptive tool that identifies the knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviour needed to perform effectively in an organisation (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). Competency frameworks are considered to be beneficial in that they assist jobholders to contribute significantly to their personal development by enabling them to understand clearly what is required to perform effectively in a particular role, as well as in a wider context (i.e. throughout the industry). They also provide a framework within which to develop tools and techniques designed to improve performance (Brophy & Kiely, 2002). Competence frameworks and methods vary considerably from organisation to organisation and the extent and depth to which they become part of human resource functions can also differ (Rees & Garnsey, 2003). By examining the established competency frameworks of the behavioural approach, it can be argued that competencies typically gather in 5 '*clusters*': *Intellectual/ information handling, Achievement /results orientation, Managing and leadership, Motivational / Interpersonal, Personal* (Dulewicz & Herbert, 1999). A sixth cluster was added by the work of Cheetham & Chivers (1996, 1998) that of *Values and Ethics*. Although this approach has

been criticised for being too general by not recognising that the competency mix may vary from position to position, it remains the most popular approach in both sides of the Atlantic.

Since the concept of managerial competencies became fashionable in the late 1980s, a number of studies have been conducted to identify the essential competencies of managers in the hospitality industry. The majority of the competency frameworks developed for the hospitality industry is falling in the behavioural approach, which is concerned with superior performance. In the late 1980s Tas (1988) carried out a study that targeted the management competences required by graduate trainees in the hotel business. This study was part of an effort to change the nature of the hospitality management curriculum which traditionally had a vocational / technical orientation (Baum, 2002). It involved the examination of the views of the general managers of 75 properties with 400 or more rooms. Baum (1991) has replicated the study in the UK and was based on the response of 118 hotel GMs out of 223 hotels with 150 or more rooms. The third replication of the study came surprisingly from Greece where Christou & Eaton (2000) surveyed 178 hotels (4 & 5*) with 91 reponses from the GMs. The common finding for all three studies was that general managers identified the '*soft skills*' as essential. There where however some gaps between the perceptions of Greek GMs compared to those of from the UK and the US: Greeks where very reluctant to consider any area as unimportant and rated most competencies as '*essential*'. The main limitation of these studies is the methodological quantitative approach which as Eaton & Christou (*ibid.*) suggest could be combined with qualitative tools such as in-depth interviews, in order to triangulate the data. Since most of the hospitality managerial competencies studies suffer from '*cultural and conceptual myopia*', the differences that have been surfaced between the study of Tas (1988) in the US, Baum (1991) in the UK, and Christou & Eaton (2000) in Greece, indicate the significance of contextual factors in the development of managerial competencies frameworks.

Table 1: A comparison of managerial competency frameworks in Hospitality

Competency Areas ('*clusters*' according to **Dulewicz & Herbert, 1999**)	Tas (1988); Baum (1991); Christou & Eaton (2000)	Lockwood (1993)	Kay & Russette (2000)	Brophy & Kiely (2002)	Chung – Herrera (2003)
1. Intellectual	Operational Awareness	Managing Operations & Business	Conceptual – Creative; Technical	Planning & Organising, Problem Solving	Industry Knowledge; Critical Thinking
2. Personal	Ethics; Professionalism; Legal Responsibility	Personal Management Skills		Enthusiasm	Self Management
3. Communication	Communication		Administra-tive	Effective Communication	Communica-tion
4. Inter-Personal	Customer Problems Handling		Inter-personal	Teamwork	Inter-personal
5.Leadership	Employee Relations; Leadership; Motivation	Managing People	Leadership		Leadership
6. Results – Orientation	Development & Control of Productivity; Customer relations			Leading for results, Customer Service Focus; Financial Awareness; Strategic Thinking	Implementa-tion; Strategic Positioning
No. of Competencies:					
40	36	78	18	36	99

The above set the scene for the managerial competencies debate, which is broadly represented by a pluralist and a unitarist approach. Bartlett and Ghoshal (1997) argue that "*situational factors vary so much that it is impossible to make a generic list of managerial competencies that are relevant for most managerial positions*". On the other hand Spencer and Spencer (1993) suggest that "*superior managers of all types and levels share a general profile of competencies. Managers of all types are more like each other than they are like the individual contributors they manage*". Thus, it is difficult to identify which position is closer to the hotel GM profile; this dilemma has confronted organisational studies for decades. The following presentation and discussion of the research findings aims to help the reader develop a better understanding of managerial roles and competencies in Greek luxury hotels.

3. RESEARCH PROFILE, DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

3.1. The Research Profile

This research employed in total 16 luxury hotel case studies with 32 participant senior managers (16 GMs and their immediate assistants) – representing 4 and 5* in Athens, Thessaloniki, Rhodes and Crete. The 16 establishments selected for this research, represent two broad hotel types operating in Greece – city and resort. Basic prerequisite for the participant hotels was to be holders of 4 or 5* official rating that is accredited by the Greek Chamber of Hotels. The ownership status of each hotel (family; local chain; national chain; multinational chain) was also considered. The luxury hotels in the selected geographical regions were then shorted / filtered by using the following two criteria (Table 2):

I. As a minimum standard the city hotels should provide TV and air conditioning in room and, restaurant and parking facilities. Additionally resort hotels should have outdoor swimming pool.

II. All participant hotels should have more than 150 rooms. This happened in order to ensure that only medium to big companies would be researched. This aimed to a) compare hotels with similar organisational structure, and b) allow future replication in other European countries with similar size and structure hotels.

The case selection process followed in this research was dictated by the structure of the luxury hotel industry in Greece: given its nature and geographical spread (approximately 1,150 establishments all over Greece) a decision was made to limit the destinations in the most representative and popular places for city and resort hotels respectively.

Table 2: Case Selection Process

Region	Initial No. of 4 & 5* hotels	Short by Criterion No.1	Short by Criterion No.2	Final No. of Hotels
City Hotels				
Athens	49	26	15	**15**
Thessaloniki	28	20	6	**6**
Resort Hotels				
Crete	250	141	66	66
→ Region criteria narrowed in the area of Chania				**6**
Dodecanese	171	70	56	56
→ Region criteria narrowed in Faliraki & Ixia, Rhodes				**26**

A three-part tool followed by a cover letter explaining the aim of the interview was used, in order to serve the needs of the research. The first part examined demographic data of the company and the participant (Appendices 1 & 2); the second part employed a 14 question semi-structured in-depth interview; and the third part adopted the Personal Competencies Framework (PCF) Questionnaire, originally developed by Dulewicz and Herbert (1992/99). Additional qualitative data sources derived from observation (field notes) and company documents.

A major methodological concern for this study was to produce valid and reliable outcomes. A case study research protocol was used as recommended by Yin (2003). This protocol contains procedures and general rules that should be followed in using the research instrument/s and is considered essential in a multiple-case study (Yin, *ibid*.); it was created prior the data collection phase. In addition, during the data collection tests for the quality of research were employed (Construct and External Validity, Reliability); these tests were followed by the use of triangulation methods (Data/Theory/ Methodological Triangulation).

3.2. Research findings

3.2.1. Managerial Competencies in Greek Luxury Hotels

The Personal Competencies Framework (PCF) questionnaire was used in this research to measure the GMs' and their assistants' perceptions, regarding their ideal perceived competencies framework. It also served as to measure the compatibility of the Greek Hotel GMs' competencies framework with '*western*' conceptions of managerial competencies. In total thirty two PCF questionnaires were completed; the findings were organised under six main headings (competency clusters) namely *intellectual, information handling, achievement, result oriented, management and leadership, motivational, interpersonal* and *intra-personal* (Dulewicz and Herbert, 1999). In each cluster, competencies responses were examined separately according to the ownership status of the hotels (Family owned, Local Greek Chain, National Greek Chain, and Multinational Chain). An overview of the findings (Figures 1 and 2), indicates that all competencies were rated with very high scores – the mean average in each cluster was above four (4.00) which corresponds to '*important'* in the answer rating scale. There were however variations and deviations in the managers' preferences to a certain degree. In addition, when the difference of PCF results between the opinion of the GMs and their assistants is examined, more variations surface.

Family owned hotel managers have scored the lower ratings in five out of six clusters (Figure 1). Their results seemed to be inconsistent to the rest three types of hotel managers (local chain, national chain, multinational). More specifically, only in the communication cluster managers from family owned hotels are not last in ranking. On the other hand Greek local and national chains' managers have demonstrated similar views followed closely by their colleagues employed in multinational hotel chains. Thus, it can be argued that overall there was convergence in the views of hotel managers employed in all types of chains.

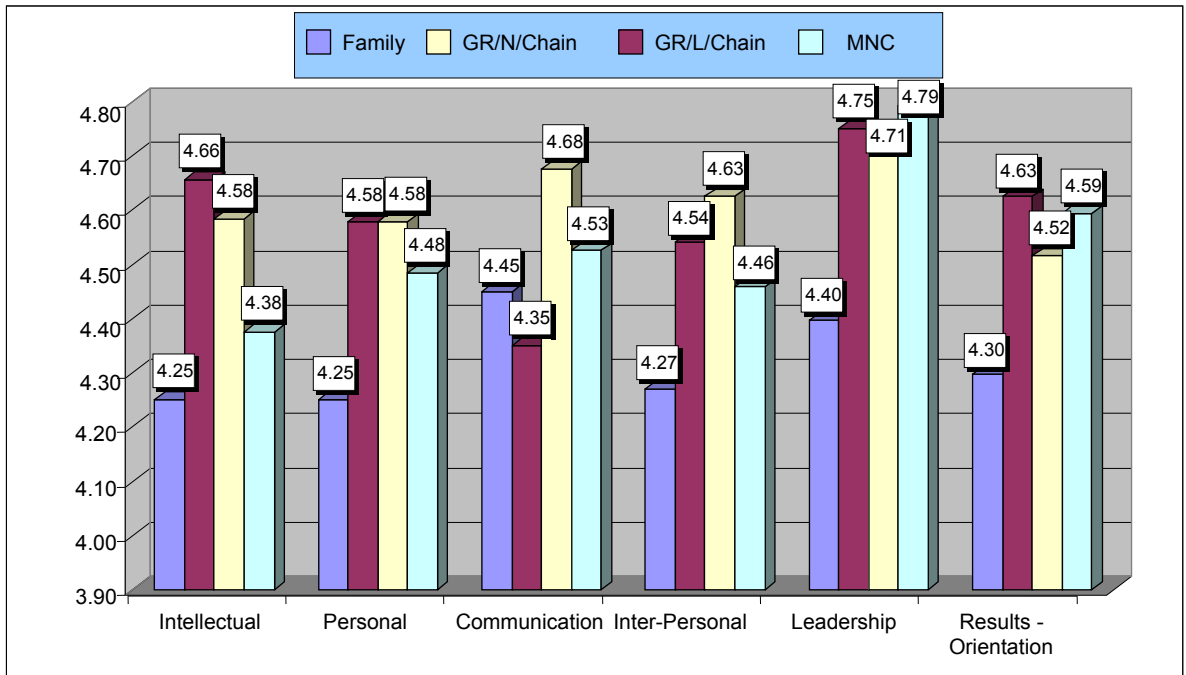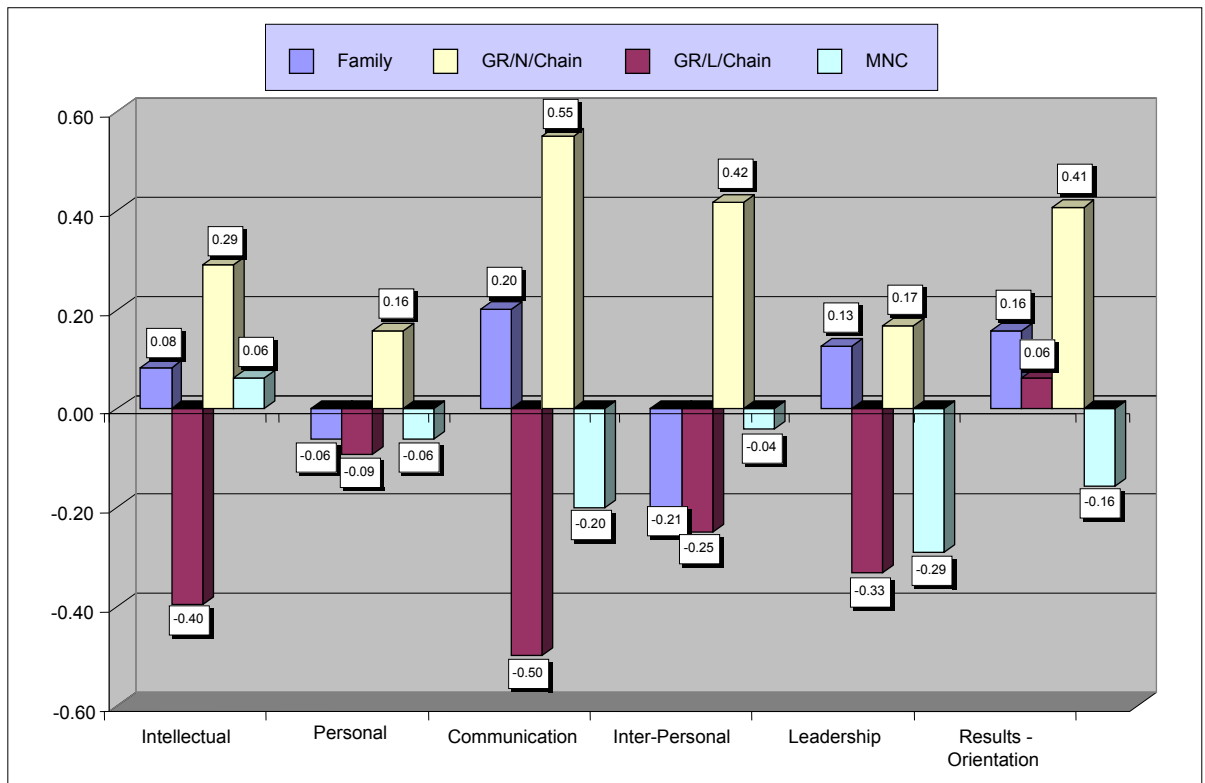**Figure 1:** PCF Results based on the Hotel Ownership Status

Figure 2: PCF Result differences between GMs and Assistant GMs

based on the Hotel Ownership Status

Furthermore, when comparing the views between the GMs and their assistants (Figure 2) greater variations are observed, with the wider gaps appearing in Greek local and national chains. In the intellectual cluster a very small gap was found in family owned and multinational chains managers' views. A significant gap was observed in the case of the Greek chain managers; assistant GMs had higher ratings in local chains while in national chains the opposite occurred with the GMs rating intellectual competencies higher than their assistants. In personal competencies clusters the smallest rating deviations were observed. Only in the case of the Greek national chains' GMs gave higher ratings than their assistants; in the rest three types of hotels assistant GMs gave slightly higher ratings than their superiors. In the communication cluster appeared the bigger gaps: more specifically GMs in family owned hotels rated higher these competencies while the opposite was observed in multinationals where assistant GMs had a notable difference in scores.

Significant differences were observed in Greek local and national chains: in local level assistant managers seemed to value communication much more than their superiors while almost the same differences in scores in favour of the GMs this time, were found in national chains. In the inter-personal cluster it was the GMs from the national hotel chains that gave notably higher scores than their assistants; also notable differences in favour of the assistant GMs were observed in family owned hotels and local chains while in multinationals this was insignificant. Furthermore, the leadership cluster was valued higher from the GMs working in family owned hotels and national chains; the opposite was found in local chains and multinationals with assistant GMs demonstrating higher scores than their superiors. The last competencies cluster (results-orientation) was characterised by higher scores in favour of GMs, with the greater gap appearing in national chains; only in the case of multinationals assistant managers gave slightly higher ratings to this competencies cluster.

As a concluding point here, it can be suggested that the use of PCF questionnaire has surfaced the contextual similarities and differences between

the views luxury hotel GMs and their assistants in Greece. The above discussion provides data for the creation of a competencies framework; the context in which this framework is shaped and developed is examined in the following part, which presents data from the in-depth interviews with the GMs and their assistants.

3.2.2. Managerial Roles and work Context in Greek luxury hotels

Although the use of PCF questionnaire has provided this research with valuable data, it was not possible to depict the social settings and conditions that the managers' roles and competencies framework was created. In order to do so, semi-structure in-depth interviews were employed; with their responses the social actors (in this case hotel managers) enabled this research to identify *'what lies beneath'* in each case.

The first field of enquiry examined the senior managers' roles. Two groups of managers with similar characteristics were identified here: those working in family owned and local chain hotels, and those in national and multinational chains. The former, identified a wide range of roles which covered tasks in both operational and strategic level. Thus, a GM who belongs in this group was found that, s/he monitors closely day-to-day hotel operations supported by his/her immediate subordinates the Food and Beverage manager and the Front Office manager. On the other hand s/he has to achieve the agreed financial targets which in most of the cases are not specified and vague (i.e. increase revenues and decrease costs). Other roles that GMs reported were direct communication with staff and customers, problem solving, and the constant monitoring of the hotel's service quality levels. GMs play also a vital support role to the hotel's Human Resources department: they participate in the recruitment and selection process; they negotiate staff's salaries; they approve or reject training and development programmes; they lead, motivate staff and act as '*father-figures*'; they intervene as '*fire-fighters*' in cases of conflict; they have the last word in cases of dismissal and disciplinary action. The other group of managers – those in national and multinational chains – have

reported results-oriented roles like achieving agreed targets; '*selling*' the hotel / increase business; materialise budgets; maintain or increase product and service quality standards. They also emphasised their roles as representatives of the hotel and the company in local or regional level. Especially GMs and their teams from multinationals, work very hard in order to create a good image as a company, in local communities. The responses indicated clearly a humanistic approach in management on behalf of those working in family owned and local chain hotels; on the other hand those working in Greek national and multinational chains adopt a technocratic approach with clear articulated job descriptions and specified roles. It should be noted however that managers in Greek chains appeared more staff oriented than their colleagues in multinationals; they clearly connected the importance of good staff relations and communication with performance.

After the identification of what kinds of roles are performed by the hotel managers, the issue of the most important competency or set of competencies for successful managerial performance was addressed. Similarly with managerial roles, the responses here reflected the structure and ownership status of the hotels. The common denominator across the different types of hotel managers was good communication in any direction (superiors, subordinates, customers, suppliers); this was valued very high from all the participants. Coping with stress was another common answer, especially from assistant GMs. The formal education and training in '*good hotel schools*' meaning reputable establishments abroad and the knowledge of foreign languages was another point that everyone agreed. Family owned and local chain managers appeared as '*all-in-one/multi-purpose*' managers; the key words here were flexibility and adaptability. Due to the limited availability of resources, GMs in this type of hotels have to be creative and resourceful to cope with the everyday challenges and often think '*outside of the box*' in order to provide credible solutions. On the other hand they rely heavily in their team – in most of the cases the department managers – who are often treated as '*family*' with the GM playing the role of the '*father*'. While managers in family and local hotels put emphasis in good communication and human

relations, Greek national chain managers seem to adapt both a humanistic and a technocratic approach. The similar structure of the Greek national chain hotels with the multinationals and the existence of standard operating procedures clearly affect the managers' competencies and their overall behaviour. On the other hand, those managers are able to understand the full implications of taking a '*humanistic*' approach to people management. The last group of managers, those working in multinational chains operating in Greece, demonstrated knowledge of the '*Greek*' paternalistic management style which they seemed to denounce. The heavily standardise working environment in multinational hotel chains does not leave any room for differentiation in the managers' behaviour. It should be noted however that there are two types of multinational hotel chains in Greece: those managed directly from the parent company and the franchised brand names. The former are only a handful (less than ten establishments in the whole county); those are managed strictly '*by the book*' meaning that at least for managerial staff in all levels there are rules and procedures that cannot be broken. GMs play a strategic role by taking decisions mostly related with sales and finance; the operational part of the job is coordinated by their immediate subordinates – in this case the department managers. On the other hand, the majority of the managers working in franchised multinational chains behave more like their colleagues in Greek national hotel chains, since most of them are coming from this type of hotels. In this case GMs play both a strategic and a '*passive*' operational role; the later is delegated to the department managers who constantly inform their superior for the progress of operations. In addition, the owner of the franchised multinational hotel plays an active role at least in strategic level alongside the GM. The field work data showed that in this hotel type, the Greek owners do trust their GMs in order to make important decisions; on the other hand GMs have to be able to provide clearly articulated and well documented proposals in order to be able to persuade their employers invest money or resources.

3.3. Research findings Implications

The research findings have led to the identification of three different luxury hotel GM profiles in Greece, according to the ownership status of the hotel.

The first GM type refers to those managers employed by family owned hotels or local hotel chains, which represent the vast majority of the Greek 4 and 5* hotels (Hellenic Chamber of Hotels, 2007). This is a typical SMTE (small-medium tourism enterprise) owned and essentially co-managed by the leader of the family surrounded by friends and relatives in various positions. The GMs working in a 4* or 5* family/local chain hotel are males between 55-65 years old, speaking in average two foreign languages and have at least a hospitality first degree. Employers in this category are in favour of the "*old school*" for two main reasons: they value more the experience, reputation and seniority than qualifications; in addition "*near retirement*" GMs may cost less in the payroll. The recruitment is conducted mainly through recommendations and "*word of mouth*", and rarely with internal recruits; the selection process is usually conducted by the owner and in most of the cases is based in subjective criteria (i.e. personal references, reputation and salary). There are limited options for training and development in this type of hotel, and very often is up to the GMs' discretion to recommend which programme to attend. In most of the cases, there is no time allocated for training and development activities, in the GMs daily schedule. The job roles performed by the GMs are focused in what Mintzberg (1973) describes as "*figurehead*", the person who is there to inspire and lead the staff; they also find the time to communicate with customers and listen carefully to their views. The communication competencies cluster is perceived as the most valuable for successful operations and management. GMs in family hotels go through an informal performance evaluation – in most of the cases conducted by the hotel owner – based primarily in the financial performance, and secondarily the levels of customer satisfaction and quality. This type of GMs put great emphasis in networking, and they work very hard to build a good reputation in the marker. Their overall relations with the owners can be described as *"tolerable"* since the GMs are often faced with unrealistic demands on behalf of the owners.

Overall, the level of the owner's involvement (and his family) in the GMs' work in most of the cases is high. The Greek context is dominant here, with the the relationships between the owner, the GM and their subordinates to dictate the GMs work.

The following hotel GM type is found in national Greek hotel chains; in most cases this represents a former family business – led very often by a charismatic founder – which expanded gradually its operations nation wide. This type of hotel has adapted to a certain degree the organisational structure and standards of a multinational hotel chain; there is still however moderate involvement of the owner (or his family) to the management of the company. GMs, those working here are males between 45-55 years old, speaking in average two foreign languages and have very good educational background including a hospitality first degree and postgraduate studies. Their professional background shows experience from the '*primary*' departments of a medium/big size hotel (Food and Beverage, Front Office - Reservations); in addition, sales and contracting background is a prerequisite for this type of GMs. Recruitment is conducted through personal recommendations or internal candidates with experience in various hotels of the chain; '*head hunters*' are rarely used for high profile candidates. Since the recruitment process does not involve a lot of candidates, two or three selection interviews take place with senior managers from/in the Head Office; during the final interview the owner is also present. Throughout the year there are moderate opportunities for training and development; the GMs are free to choose between in-house or outsourced programmes, in Greece and/or abroad. Their job roles are focused in leadership (employee motivation / inspiration) and entrepreneurship (help business grow). The *results orientation* competencies cluster is their primary concern, they value however the remaining managerial competencies as integral parts of their competencies framework. This is reflected in their performance evaluation, a formal procedure which takes place one or two times a year depending on the type of the hotel unit (city-resort). The primary targets are mainly financial and the maintenance of quality standards; there is however a reference to the '*performance*' of the GMs in areas such as

communication, leadership and inter-personal relations. The GMs '*secondary*' competencies are evaluated through peer reviews, customer satisfaction questionnaires and '*mystery guest*' audits. Although there is intense networking activity within the corporate limits, GMs maintain their contacts outside the company; in addition, their reputation is mostly heard within the corporate limits. The owners – who in most of the cases occupy the position of the managing director or chairman of the board – have a moderate involvement in the GMs' work, mainly at strategic level. There are however cases that intervene in GMs' work when they have personal interest, i.e. '*strongly recommend*' the selection of a particular candidate. It is important to note here that the owners know personally all of their GMs, and maintain regular communication. It can be argued that in this type of business, the Greek culture meets the corporate culture: the Greek hotel national chains are structured and managed according to the multinational hotel chain model; the Greek culture is however evident everywhere and it is very often the case that '*favours*' and deviations from the standards occur when is about relatives or friends. On the other hand, it can be argued that this type of business has embodied the Greek context characteristics in the best way, so their GMs can use it in a beneficial manner.

Finally, the multinational hotel chain is a foreign brand name, franchised in most of the cases by a Greek businessman. There are only a few cases that the management of the company belongs to the parent company. This type follows the organisation, structure and standards dictated by the parent company; there are however some variations / deviations due to the Greek socio-cultural context. For example, the standard operating procedures are adapted to the local working patterns and legislation. Typical GMs employed by multinational companies are middle aged 45-55 years old males with impeccable educational background. They speak in average two languages, including the parent country's in case it is not English. Their professional background has a sales and finance orientation, although they understand very well hotel operations. The recruitment is conducted internally or through the use of '*head hunters*' who are aiming at high profile recruits. In the case of

franchised brands the personal recommendation is also used. The selection process is rigorous and involves at least three interviews. There are many opportunities for training and development in Greece and abroad on a regular basis. The GMs' roles in this type of hotels are focused in entrepreneurship and finance. Their annual performance evaluation is multi-dimensional, lots of emphasis is put however in achieving agreed (financial) targets. This corresponds to their preference in the *results-orientation* competencies cluster. Networking is very important within the corporate limits; outside these limits the GMs maintain only those contacts necessary to '*do the job*'. Their reputation is synonymous with hard work and what is actually on their resume. The Greek culture is something that they cannot ignore –especially in the case of foreigners – the corporate culture however is what determines their behaviour. It should be noted here that there are less than 10 foreign GMs in 4 and 5* hotels in Greece (most of them in Athens); they are not represented in this study because it was not possible (politely rejected) to reach them. The above profile refers to Greek nationals working in Multinational hotel chains. The fact that a small number of foreign nationals work as luxury hotel GMs in Greece may lead in the following arguments: first that a pool of very good Greek GMs exist who satisfy the high standards of the multinational hotel chains; and second that the Greek context is presenting difficulties that foreign nationals/expatriates cannot cope with. Table 3 summarises the findings of this research; the three different profiles identified for Greek luxury hotel GMs are not exclusive and provide a generic context for discussion in this field.

4. Summary

This research paper has discussed the effects of the Greek context, in the roles and competencies of the GMs' working in 4 and 5* hotels. Previous research on hospitality managerial work and managerial competencies provided the theoretical background. The findings of this research identified three different types/profiles of luxury hotel GMs, according to the ownership status of the hotel (family/local hotel chain; national hotel chain; multi-national hotel chain); each one is affected to a certain degree by the Greek work context.

Table 3: The GMs' profile in Greek 4 and 5* hotels

Company Type GMs' Characteristics	Family /Local Chain	Greek National Chain	Multinational Chain
Average Age	55-65	45-55	45-55
Sex	Male	Male	Male
Education	HE Graduates	HE Graduates & Postgraduate Edu.	HE Graduates & Postgraduate Edu.
Professional Background	All Departments (Emphasis in F&B)	All Departments (Emphasis in Sales & Contracting)	All Departments (Emphasis in Sales & Contracting)
Recruitment & Selection	Recommendations	Recommendations & Internally	Head Hunters & Internally
Training & Development	Sporadic – GMs' own discretion	Moderate to High Opportunities	High Opportunities
Job Roles	"Figurehead"	Entrepreneur & Leader	Entrepreneur
Competencies	Emphasis in Communication	Results Orientation	Results Orientation
Performance Evaluation	Informal Annual	Formal Annual (1 or 2 times)	Formal Annual (1 or 2 times)
Role of Networking	High	Moderate outside High inside	Low outside High inside
Role of reputation	High in local /national market	High in national marker	High in regional / international market
Ownership level of involvement	High to Moderate	Moderate	Low
Role of Culture	High	Moderate	Moderate to low

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Appendix 1: Background information for participant Hotels

Hotels*	Ownership	Rating	Employees	Rooms	Type
Athens					
H1	GR/L/Ch	5*	160	167	City
H2	GR/N/Ch	5*	110	263	City
H3	MNC	5*	90	192	City
H4	FAMILY	4*	93	398	City
Thessaloniki					
H5	GR/N/Ch	5*	110	287	City
H6	MNC	5*	80	196	City
H7	GR/N/Ch	4*	102	425	City
H8	FAMILY	5*	100	178	City
Crete (Chania)					
H9	FAMILY	5*	149	146	Resort
H10	MNC	4*	250	414	Resort
H11	GR/L/Ch	4*	65	200	Resort
H12	GR/L/Ch	4*	84	202	Resort
Rhodes					
H13	MNC	5*	240	402	Resort
H14	GR/L/Ch	5*	215	390	Resort
H15	FAMILY	4*	64	176	Resort
H16	GR/N/Ch	5*	194	694	Resort

Hotel Types Explained:

Greek Family Business (FAMILY)

Greek Local Chain (GR/L/Ch)

Greek National Chain (GR/N/Ch)

Multinational Chain (MNC)

Hotel Names are confidential. For convenience reasons they are numbered as H1 to H16

Appendix 2: Background information for participant Hotel Managers

Hotel Managers	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Academic Qualifications	Languages
Athens					
H1/GM	Male	over 50	Married	ASTER/ PgD	2
Assistant	Male	over 50	Married	ASTER	2
H2 / GM	Male	40-50	Married	ASTER, BSc	3
Assistant	Male	20-30	Single	HND / MSc	2
H3 / GM	Male	40-50	Married	ASTER / BSc	2
Assistant	Male	40-50	Married	BSc / MSc	2
H4 / GM	Male	over 50	Married	ASTER / PgD	3
Assistant	Male	30-40	Single	ASTER	4
Thessaloniki					
H5/GM/Thes	Male	40-50	Married	ASTER/BSc	2
Assistant	Male	30-40	Married	BSc/MSc	2
H6 / GM	Male	over 50	Married	ASTER / PgD	2
Assistant	Female	30-40	Married	TEI	2
H7 / GM	Male	40-50	Married	ASTER	2
Assistant	Female	40-50	Married	TEI	3
H8 / GM	Male	over 50	Married	ASTER	2
Assistant	Male	30-40	Married	TEI/MSc	2
Crete (Chania)					
H9/GM/Crete	Female	30-40	Married	ASTER	3
Assistant	Female	30-40	Married	BSc	2
H10 / GM	Male	40-50	Single	BSc / MSc	2
Assistant	Male	30-40	Single	BSc / MA	2
H11 / GM	Female	30-40	Married	TEI	2
Assistant	Male	30-40	Married	ASTER	2
H12 / GM	Male	40-50	Married	BSc	3
Assistant	Male	30-40	Married	TEI	2
Rhodes					
H13/GM	Male	40-50	Married	BSc / MSc	4
Assistant	Male	40-50	Married	ASTER / MA	2
H14 / GM	Male	40-50	Married	ASTER / TEI	4
Assistant	Male	30-40	Married	ASTER / MSc	2
H15 / GM	Female	40-50	Married	ASTER / PgD	3
Assistant	Female	30-40	Single	TEI	2
H16 / GM	Male	30-40	Married	BSc / MSc	2
Assistant	Male	30-40	Married	TEI / MSc	3

Academic Qualifications explained:

ASTER: Higher Education Hotel School (in Rhodes Island) / First Degree
T.E.I: Technical Education Institute (equivalent to former British polytechnics) / First Degree
H.N.D: Higher National Diploma
BSc: Bachelor of Science
MSc or **MA** or **PgD**: Postgraduate Studies