
A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE GENERAL MANAGERS' WORK: THE GREEK 4 & 5* HOTELS' CASE

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the General Managers' (GMs) Roles and Competencies in Greek 4 & 5* hotels from a contextual perspective, focused in culture. The existing literature indicates that the Greek context influences managerial work to a certain degree. The country's participation in 2 international surveys during the 1990s (CRANET, GLOBE project) have indicated characteristics that differentiate Greek management, comparing to the so called 'western' management. In order to identify the influence of culture in the work of the GMs in 4 and 5* a hotel, a research was conducted in 16 luxury (4 & 5*) 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 framework and roles required in any other European country. On the other hand they try to cope with the contextual challenges appearing mainly due to the Greek culture by adapting these roles and competencies to their working environment. In addition,

international and national hotel chains are following standard operating procedures and formal policies which in most of the cases are adjusted or fitted in the Greek context. Smaller independent hotels (usually family business) are more informal in relation to policies and standards.

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

1. INTRODUCTION

Managerial work in Greek hotels has been a neglected and under researched area, despite the significant contribution of the industry in the Tourism sector and the Greek economy. Greek hotel General Managers (GMs) in luxury establishments (4 & 5*) shape their competencies and perform their roles required for their position, under the influence of a strong national culture. This research paper explores the influence of the Greek context in managerial work in 4 & 5* hotels.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Greek Context

Greece has a long tradition in tourism and hospitality mainly due to its history and ancient civilisation. The 'modern' hospitality industry has emerged since the 1950s to cater for the tourism demand. Due to the rapid growth of the tour operators in Europe and the phenomenon of the mass tourism, Greece experienced a dramatic increase of tourism flows to in the late 1970s and 1980s, facilitated by plenty of natural, cultural and environmental resources, existing airport infrastructure in major islands, and lower cost of living in comparison with most of Europe (Eurostat, 2005). In addition Buhalis (2001) argues that Greek resorts have different product and market profiles making them capable of satisfying a great diversity of tourism demand. The Greek tourism product is an amalgam of natural, cultural and heritage attractions spread throughout the country, as well as a wide variety of services offered predominantly by small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs). Moreover,

15,000 miles of coastline; 2,500 islands; an average of 300 sunny days annually; a unique fauna and flora; as well as climatic superiority with mild winters and warm summers are some of its natural attractions.

Today the Hospitality & Tourism sector in Greece contributes approximately 15.00% of the National GDP ranking third in the E.U. after Spain (18.38%) and Portugal (15.40%) according to the WTTC (2005). The sector occupies totally 808,000 employees 18% of the country's entire labour force; a total of 96,750 employees work in hotels and 24,895 in small lodges (SETE, 2003).

The Greek and International literature suggests that Greek management has hardly existed until the early 1980s; all management practices and methods were largely adoption of MNCs practices. Kanelopoulos (1990) has documented a lack of wide diffusion of modern management methods and systems such as formal structures, planning and control systems, human resource management systems, incentive systems, and management information systems. Bourantas and Papadakis (1996) argue that the salient characteristics of Greek management (in the 1980s and early 1990s) were:

1. Concentration of power and control in the hands of top management.
2. Lack of modern systems to support strategic decisions.

A question that was raised here is whether Greek management possessed any unique characteristics that distinguish it from other European management styles (e.g., the institutionalised participation of employees in Germany or Sweden and the informal network relationships among small and medium-sized enterprises in Italy). The answer came during the 1990s and the early 2000s through the participation of the country in two international surveys: the Price Waterhouse Cranfield Project (CRANET) concerning Human Resources strategies and policies across Europe (Papalexandris and Chalikias, 2002); and the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness) project which provided useful insights for each participative country cultural perspectives in relation to management and leadership (Javidan & House, 2001). The findings of these significant surveys indicated the country's differentiation in management practices, due to the existing socio-cultural context.

The results from the CRANET survey revealed that in Greece, as in other European countries, there is evidence of both convergence and divergence in HRM policies and the overall work context (Myloni et al., 2004). On the one hand the introduction of common legislation and agreements between countries of the E.U., will eventually lead to harmonisation of the Industrial Relations (I.R.) and H.R.M. systems across different national contexts (Brewster, 1994). In addition, globalisation forces multinational companies (MNCs) to adopt common H.R. practices in their overseas subsidiaries. On the other hand, there is still a persistent belief that social and cultural differences between countries will continue to supersede the forces of globalisation emanating from technologically driven markets or supranational agreements (Sparrow & Hiltrop, 1997). Moreover, Myloni et al. (ibid.) have found that for the range of H.R. issues examined in CRANET survey (Business Policy and Evaluation, Industrial Relation, Recruitment and Selection, Management Training and Development, Employee Benefits and Reward, Performance Evaluation) MNC subsidiaries have adapted parent company H.R.M. practices to the local ones, up to a point. These practices might be characterised by high levels of cultural susceptibility and to certain degree sensitivity to cultural differences. On the contrary Greek firms seem to adapt less H.R. 'Best Practices' and continue to follow the local patterns and norms. According to the above, it is possible that Greek firms still have some way to go in terms of facing direct competition in the global market. Myloni et al. (ibid.) conclude that Greek companies are still embedded to their cultural environment to a considerable extent.

The globe project has provided a better insight of the relation between management practices and national culture in greece. perhaps the most important finding is the country's score to the "in-group collectivism" dimension (also referred as "family collectivism") which reflects the extent to which a society's institutions favour autonomy versus collectivism. this dimension refers to the extent to which members of a society take pride in membership in small groups such as their family and circle of close friends, and the organisations in which they are employed. in greece being a member of a family and of a close group of friends, an in-group, is very important to people. papalexandris et al. (2002) indicate that one of the greek culture's main characteristics is strong family bonds, even though in big cities there might have been a recent change in this respect. the father is the centre of the family; he is responsible for all its members and the one who makes the final decision. there is a strict hierarchy and

younger members are expected to show respect to the older. power is concentrated in a few hands, which is usually accepted although it does not go unquestioned. family members and close friends tend to have strong expectations from each other. taking care of their needs and satisfying their expectations is critical to each individual. it is not unusual to forego due diligence, or equal employment opportunity, and to favour a close friend or family member in recruiting or in allocating rewards and promotions. making regular references to one's family and especially one's father is quite acceptable and can go a long way in opening doors.

Despite the paternalistic family oriented management style there are indications for a strong will to change. Figures from the GLOBE project (House et al., 2002) show that Greece has low mean scores in 'society as is' and higher scores in 'society should be'; these results confirm the existence of a culture gap found also in previous research studies in Greek organisational culture. According to Bourantas and Papadakis (1996), there is a discrepancy between general organisational culture as perceived by managers and their personally preferred culture. This is considered to be an indication of the desire for change within organisations. The greatest pressures for convergence are coming from the obligations of Greece as a member of the E.U. and several other organisations which require planning ahead and efficient management of the various projects. While this affects mostly the public sector, globalisation put pressures for uniform management practices and policies in private sector organisations. Thus, a slow but steady movement towards harmonisation of management practices at least with the rest of the E.U. members is observed.

2.2. The Nature of Managerial Work

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'. Among the numerous efforts to establish a credible account of the managerial work (i.e. Carlson, 1951; Martin, 1956; Burns, 1957; Sayles, 1964; Stewart, 1967, 1976; Stewart et al., 1980; Kotter, 1982; Luthans et al., 1985; Carroll & Gillen, 1987; Whitley, 1989) the literature reveals that only Mintzberg (1973, 1994) managed to conclude in a comprehensive and robust model. According to Mintzberg's view (ibid) the manager is working in a chaotic environment

spending most of his time talking to others – in and out from the workplace – influencing any kind of people, collecting information from various sources such as gossips and rumours and generally trying to maintain a very delicate balance like jugglers do. This empirical study found managerial roles to be highly variable, involving the often simultaneous pursuit of a variety of objectives in changing ways according to the judgment of the individual manager in the particular situation.

Mintzberg grouped these ten roles into three broad categories: inter-personal (Figurehead, Leader, Liaison), informational (Monitor, Disseminator, Spokesman) and decisional roles (Entrepreneur, Disturbance handler, Resource allocator, Negotiator). His work triggered many similar studies which fell in the following paradox: although they rejected Mintzberg's Roles Model for the shake of a new model creation, one way or another came to similar conclusions with Mintzberg. Despite the original work's weaknesses (Fondas and Steward, 1994), it remained for almost three decades the only straightforward model for the nature of managerial work. Twenty years later Mintzberg (1994) provided a revised version of his work (figure 1) justifying carefully his model by covering most of the points that have been fiercely attacked in the past (Hales, 1999).

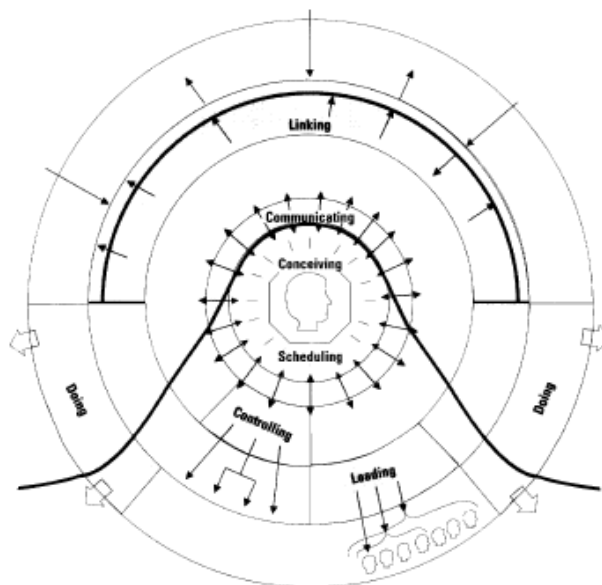


Figure 1: Managerial Work Rounded Out

Source: Mintzberg (1994), p.23

A plethora of writers attempted to develop managerial work frameworks for hospitality – in most of the cases unsuccessfully. The main reason for this failure is the involvement of many disciplines in hospitality research and the lack of valid and reliable sources. Hospitality research has been preoccupied with Mintzberg’s ideas and several researchers replicated or tested his early 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).

Table 1: A summary of Managerial Work Studies in the Hospitality Industry

Author/s	Year	Focus of Study
Nailon	1968	Hotel Managers Time & Contact Patterns
Ley	1980	Hotel GMs Roles and Performance
Arnaldo	1981	Hotel Managers Roles, Leadership
Ferguson & Berger	1984	Hotel Manager Roles Framework
Hales & Nightingale	1986	Framework for Hospitality Unit Mgrs’ Work

Umbreit and Eder	1987	Hotel Mgrs Behaviour & Effectiveness
Wosford	1989	Hotel Managers Leadership Role
Shortt	1989	Managerial Work Survey (MWS)
Guerrier & Lockwood	1990	Literature Review in Hospitality Mgrs'
Dann	1991	Roles Literature Review in Hospitality Mgrs' Roles
Mullins & Davis	1991	Managerial Effectiveness in Hospitality
Nebel & Ghei	1993	Conceptual Framework of Hotel Mgr's Job
Kim	1994	Hotel Managers' Roles in Korea
Peacock	1995	Hospitality Manager Effectiveness
Gore	1995	Hotel Managers' Decision Making
Teare	1995	Literature Review in Int. Hospitality Mgmt.
D'Annunzio-Green	1997	Int. Hospitality Management Development
Ladkin	1999	Literature Review in Hotel Mgr Roles
Mount & Bartlett	1999	Hotel Management Roles Survey (MRAS)
Brotherton	1999	Hospitality Management Framework
Stalcup & Pearson	2001	Hotel Management Turnover Causes

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 is added to Dann's (ibid) chronological categorization covers the time from the mid-1990s until

today and focuses on the skills and competencies required in order to perform effectively the managerial roles (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 management 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.

As early as in 1973, McClelland claimed that job performance should be predicted from competence rather than intelligence; his work has triggered the 'behavioural' approach in management competencies. The term 'competence' was first used in a managerial context in the research of the McBer Consultancy in the late 1970s in the USA as part of the initiative by the American Management Association to identify the characteristics which distinguish superior from average managerial performance. The work was encapsulated in *The Competent Manager* (Boyatzis, 1982).

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 competence 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.

Table 2: Methods/Approaches for measuring performance and competence

Researcher	Performance measure	Competence measure
Boyatzis, (1982)	Supervisory nominations and ratings, work output measures	Behavioural Event Interview (BEI)
Schroder, (1989)	Work group / managerial performance	Behavioural Observation Method (BOM)
Spencer & Spencer, (1993)	Various managerial levels performance	Job Competence Assessment (JCA)
Dulewicz & Herbert, (1991-99)	Career advancement	360 degree Ratings (from supervisor, peers)

		and subordinates)
Cheetham & Chivers, (1996-98)	Professional Performance in different professions	Provisional Model Critical Peer Evaluation / Reflection

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, 1996; 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).

Table 3: 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		Administrative	Effective Communication	Communication
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	Implementation; Strategic Positioning
No. of Competencies:					
40	36	78	18	36	99

By examining the established competency frameworks of the behavioural approach (table 2), 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 / models (table 3) developed for the hospitality industry, are falling in the behavioural approach which is concerned with superior performance. Most of these studies examine the competencies required of the hospitality graduates in the UK and US respectively. Linking effectively the Hospitality managerial work with the Hospitality Higher Education has been always an issue; regardless the approach in Hospitality Education, there was always a demand to create a skilled core of Hospitality

graduates ready to cope with the diverse environment of the sector. Thus, since the early 1990s a growing number of tourism and hospitality university courses that aim to meet the demands of a volatile and changing world (Umbreit, 1993) have taken up the challenge to prepare students by developing and enhancing the management competencies and skills needed to operate successfully. This movement has been supported by the industry's growing demand of suitable qualified managerial staff, which until today is regarded as scarce.

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) who surveyed 178 hotels (4 & 5*) with 91 responses from the GMs. The common finding for all three studies was that general managers identified the 'soft skills' as essential. There were however some gaps between the perceptions of Greek GMs compared to those of from the UK and the US: Greeks were 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, proves that contextual and situational factors matter.

Under this fact lies the heart of a debate which is broadly represented by a pluralist and a unitarist approach. On the one hand Bartlett & 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 & 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". It is difficult to decide which position is closer to the hospitality industry profile. This dilemma has confronted organisational studies for decades. As Ruth (2006) argues the problem of developing a competency framework involves abstraction, aggregation and standardisation. The extent to which this takes place is precisely the extent to which its applicability and usefulness in any particular situation is vitiated.

3. RESEARCH PROFILE, DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. The Research Profile

The research that conducted as part of a PhD Thesis, served mainly two aims: first to explore the GMs' roles and competencies profile in Greek 4 and 5* hotels; and second to investigate the role of culture and the level of influence in GMs' work.

In total 16 hotel case studies with 32 participant senior managers (16 GMs and their immediate assistants) were chosen – representing 4 and 5* in Athens, Thessaloniki, Rhodes and Crete.

Table 4: 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

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 4):

- I. As a minimum standard the city hotels should provide TV and air conditioning in room and, restaurant and parking facilities. Additionally for resort hotels they 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 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.

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; the second part was a 14 question semi-structured in-depth interview; and the third part was the Personal Competencies Framework (PCF) Questionnaire, originally developed by Dulewicz and Herbert (1991/99). 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 research protocol was used as recommended by Yin (1994, 2003). The case study 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 to 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. Discussion of the findings

The research findings showed that a Greek GM in his/her career is likely to work in both city and resort hotels, so the roles performed and competencies framework adopted are changing according to the case (best fit approach) in order to cope with the position's demands. 'What, why and how' each GM does in the work context, is the result of a complex process which integrates elements such as personality, roles, competencies, organisational and national context (culture). Since the City hotel type was introduced in Greece quite recently – just prior to the Olympic Games in 2004 – it would be unfair to build the profile of the GMs in Greece based on the "City-Resort" hotel distinction. This research has identified significant differences and similarities of the hotel GMs, when comparisons are based on the ownership status of the company they work.

The first category identified is the Family/Local Hotel Chain, 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 relatives in various positions (In-Group Collectivism). The following category, the National Greek Hotel Chain is 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.

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.

The GMs working in a 4* or 5* family/local chain hotel are male 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 have 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 market. 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. On the other hand there are average performers (GMs) who promise more than can deliver; these individuals sooner or later are marginalised and are forced to relocate or work in lower hotel categories (usually 3* hotels). 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 "in-group collectivism" dimension to dictate the relationships between the owner, the GM and their subordinates.

The second type of GMs, those working in Greek National Hotel Chains 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. Finally, 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.

Table 5 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.

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

Company Type	Family /Local Chain	Greek National Chain	Multinational Chain
GMs’ Characteristics			
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 &	Sporadic – GMs’	Moderate to High	High Opportunities

Development	own discretion	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

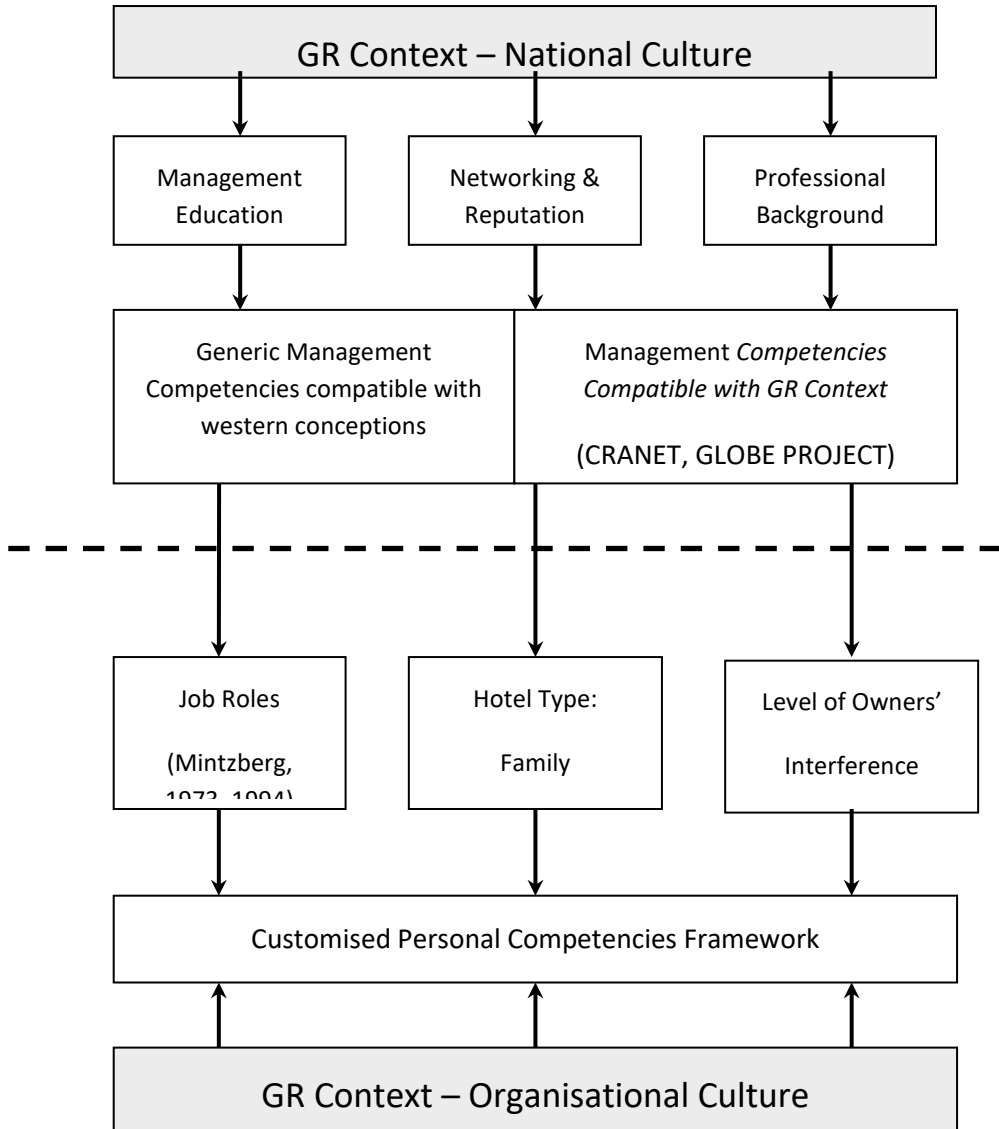
The last type of GMs, are those working in multinational companies. They are middle aged (45-55 years old) enthusiastic males with impeccable educational background. They speak in average two languages - including the parent country’s (in case it is not English). Their professional background has a sales 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 this, which 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 so small number of foreign nationals work as luxury hotel GMs in Greece may lead in the following arguments: first that there are very good Greek GMs who satisfy the high standards of the multinational hotel chains; and second that the Greek context is presenting difficulties that foreign nationals cannot cope with.

3.3. Conceptual Framework

The findings of this research have led to the construction of the following conceptual framework (figure 2) regarding the GM's competencies and roles profile in Greek 4 and 5* hotels. Everything occurs under the influence of a strong national culture which is present within and outside the GMs' working environment. Throughout their careers, GMs initially acquire their competencies by attending higher education courses (in Greece and abroad); this shapes the first generic managerial competencies framework which is consistent with the western conceptions of management competencies (behavioural approach). This generic competencies framework is enhanced and developed through their professional development, in which GMs are shaping their own (personal) managerial profile and competencies framework. They are also 'exposed' to the community of the GMs through their networking efforts and contacts that are developed gradually as they change jobs and positions. Thus, throughout their career, GMs shape a generic competencies framework

that is 'enhanced' by a new cluster which refers to the Greek context. **Figure 2:** GMs' Competencies Mapping in Greek Luxury Hotels



In their current jobs, GMs are performing their roles according to the competencies framework that has already been shaped throughout their careers; they are influenced however by the ownership status (family vs. chain hotels) and the level of the owners' interference. This situation calls for adaptation to the current position demands, thus the personal competencies framework is adjusted accordingly ('best fit' approach). Again the cultural / contextual factors are present and influence the GMs' roles and competences in their workplaces.

4. CONCLUSION

This research paper has discussed the effects of the Greek cultural context, in the roles and competencies of the GMs' working in 4 and 5* hotels. Previous research related to management and culture in Greece (CRANET survey; GLOBE project), managerial work (Mintzberg, 1973, 1994), and managerial competencies (the 'behavioural' approach), have provided the theoretical framework. 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 strong Greek national culture and this is reflected in their generic profiles. Since research in this topic is still in early stages, the above findings can provide a basis for future research in Greece and/or other European countries.

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