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Reflexive Paper to Identify Cultural Traits in a Local Hotel in Jordan Using a Qualitative Approach

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Abstract

In qualitative research methods, a case study approach is the method that is commonly viewed in achieving the aims of exploring the management of cultural-change through management programs: It is the change in the culture of the work environment through the management and training programs in order to enhance a hotel's performance. In addition to that, the case study approach "provides the tools to study complex phenomena within their contexts" [1]. That is the purpose of this research; it is to examine a complex phenomenon within its context. In this study, the researcher interviewed a general manager in a local hotel in Jordan. The main themes were extrapolated and analysed through thematic analysis technique. A reflective comment followed the analysis.

Keywords

Qualitative, Case Study, Open-Ended Interview, Culture Change, Reflection

1. Introduction

This study is exploring the impact of managing cultural change on performance in local hotels in Jordan. It is the researcher's concern that led to this paper that deals with the association of organisational performance (OP) and organisational culture (OC) [2]. That is why the goal of this qualitative research is to identify the association of (OP) and (OC), and to investigate the organisational culture impact on employee performance among local hotels in Jordan. In order to achieve this, seven to ten hotels and tour agents[1] will be studied using the case study approach as it has a level of flexibility and provides

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[1]The exact number of interviewees will be determined later according to availability and time and after consulting my supervisors. They will not be less than 7 to 10 hotels and tour agents.

an intensive description and analysis for a single or multiple unit within their contexts [3]. However, for the purpose of this paper, a four stars' hotel's General Manager was interviewed, within the dead sea area in Jordan, to examine the association of employee culture and organisation performance.

2. Literature Review

This section will focus on literature related to organisational factors such as performance, culture and workplace learning. Performance is the first aspect of those elements which has to be considered as a multi-dimensional concept [4]. Gavrea *et al.* [5] argue that performance indicators are designed to provide data on the quality of the job performed that leads to achieving the objectives within a budget in an organisation. While Motowidlo and Kell [6] define job performance as the total expected value to the organisation of the discrete behaviours that an individual does overtime. On the other hand, organisational culture is enacted and created by people's interactions and shaped by leadership behaviour and a set of, rules, routines, norms and structures that conduct and constraint behaviour [7].

Jordan local hotels are a vital area to examine the theory of performance because of the continuous low-performance existence that the researcher reports from his experience as a hotel manager for thirty-one years. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest the persisting local hotels' low performance [8], [9], [10]. Besides, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in Jordan demonstrates statistics of low occupancy rates through the last fourteen years [11] [12]. To illustrate, occupancy rates for the four, three- and two-stars' hotels in Jordan were less than 50% almost all through the years from 2005 to 2018. Table 1 shows this phenomenon.

Table 1. Occupancy rates.

Years	Two stars	Three Stars	Four Stars	All Classified Hotels
2005	n/a	n/a	n/a	49.4%
2006	n/a	n/a	n/a	42.4%
2007	n/a	n/a	n/a	47.3%
2008	n/a	n/a	n/a	55.3%
2009	31.0%	40.3%	56.7%	45.8%
2010	36.1%	39.3%	49.2%	48.0%
2011	25.5%	31.6%	43.2%	41.9%
2012	36.9%	45.0%	52.9%	50.7%
2013	21.2%	33.9%	43.1%	45.1%
2014	21.5%	36.5%	44.1%	45.9%
2015	29.1%	33.7%	35.2%	39.3%
2016	24.7%	36.5%	40.0%	42.2%
2017	24.3%	26.9%	38.2%	40.4%
2018	21.1%	37.5%	37.8%	44.2%

Source: Ministry of Antiquities and Tourism-Jordan, adapted by the researcher.

3. Research Method

In the beginning, the researcher began with the first local hotel and interviewed the general manager with semi-structured questions (Appendice 1 and Appendice 2), designed for the interpretation of the status quo of performance, the relation of performance to culture, and if there are ways to enhance the quality of performance in this hotel.

It is advised to use open-ended questions in qualitative research (Appendix 3), but not very open-ended as too much data would emerge within the answers' body which would lead to confusion about focus [13]. So balanced open-ended, semi-structured questions were used, which started with prompt questions then, secondary questions would emerge as the interviewee was answering the prompt ones. This is referred to as "the interview guide" [13] as a researcher starts with specific questions of the topic he wants to cover then questions which were not included start to emerge to fill up some gaps in the data gathering; in this, the process is flexible, "also, the emphasis must be on how the interviewee frames and understands issues and events—that is, what the interviewee views as important in explaining and understanding events, patterns, and forms of behaviour" [13].

The process that the research questions were devised was built on a social problem, which was the culture issue with performance, and personal experience which was the experience of the general manager of this particular hotel [13]. Moreover, it followed steps in developing the research questions: it started with *the research area*, which was "the management cultural change" as the researcher's topic. Then to narrow down the process, *the aspect of the research area* was selected, which was the "impact of the management of cultural change on performance". Then research questions were developed depending on these aspects; therefore, six prompt questions were developed. From those questions, all of them were selected because all were focused on the issue that the researcher wanted to investigate [13].

As for the interviewee, he was selected on his proper experience in the local hotel management in Jordan and abroad, and for his position. From his stand, he can evaluate and decide on many issues that would encounter the quality of performance in the local hotels in Jordan. This hotel formulates a good case study for describing the issue of performance and how could management solve this issue in order to enhance the quality of performance in such a hotel. The first question was trying to identify an established definition between the researcher and the interviewee about the meaning of management culture. The second question tried to verify the link between management programs and the culture in the work environment. The third question focused on the recognition of the status quo of quality of performance in a local hotel in Jordan (which this hotel is an example of it). In the fourth question, after describing what is meant in culture management, the researcher tried to connect change with performance, although this issue was addressed by the interviewee in the past ques-

tions in the following parts of the prompt questions. The fifth and the sixth questions focused on exploring the customer's view about performance and the obstacles that hindered the advancement of performance.

4. Findings

As the general manager who was interviewed has proper experience in the local hotel business in Jordan, and as he has maintained a specific standard for the hotel he managed since 1981, a flow of answers came out of his mouth concerning the interview questions. Accordingly, it was found from the main themes extrapolated from the answers' transcription that the organisation's culture is associated with low-level conduct associated with national culture in this hotel. Laziness, carelessness, focusing on easy work, "do-not-follow" the rules habit and "do-not-accept new knowledge were among the traits that local employees share within the organisation culture. Moreover, it was noticed that similar required functions done by different cultures among employees [Philippines], were achieved with more dedication to their work. Furthermore, an inverse relationship was discovered between a higher amount of work in high seasons and the quality of the hotel's performance.

5. Discussion of the Key Findings

A preliminary conclusion would be suggested for this interview state that performance is related to what the client expects according to the standards of the hotel known, or experienced in the past, by customers. It was defined by the general manager as semi-international standards.

After transcribing the interview, a thematic analysis was done in order to extrapolate the emerging themes from the answers' body. The vital dominant themes on the interviewee's mouth are presented in Table 2 as follows.

The components of the themes could be minimised to the bold wordings.

One can notice, in the previous table, the local culture theme of this working environment which is resistant to the overall operations, and which hinders the advancement of the hotel's performance as a local one. Also, one can find within the "change theme" that education and training programs would help in changing the culture in a way that reflects positively on performance.

In his evaluation of "the training programs in five-star hotels in Jordan and its impact to upgrade the performance of their employees", Salem [14] found that there is a significant relationship between modern methods and techniques of training programs and plans, duration of the program, and selection of qualified and specialized trainers who enable the trainees to reach the desired goals of the courses, and the efficiency as well as the performance of the employees in those hotels. He emphasized in his conclusion and recommendations on the importance of choosing qualified trainers, finding modern methods that fit the determined objectives, raising the levels of training plans, and the distribution of the training study's results to all of the hotels in Jordan in order to share its benefits

Table 2. The main themes extrapolated from the semi-structured interview.

	1-Local culture	2-Change	3-Limitations	4-Quality and performance	5-Definitions	6-Different cultures' operations and habits	7-Customers	8-Performance and standards
					Themes			
1	Focus on Easy work	Management programs teach employees	On the hotel's budget for spending on learning	High occupancy leads to low quality	Performance in this manager's interview is not defined as it is in literature	More dedicated in their work with the same salary	Happy	Performance relation to what the client expects
2	Laziness	Continuous training to avoid forgetting what is learned	Of employees interest in learning	High occupancy leads to low performance		More satisfied with jobs	Complainers	Standards of the hotel advertised
3	Careless	Motivation	On affording programs' cost	High quantity vs low quality (inverse)		Same salary as locals	Expect the value for what they pay the majority	Semi-international standards
4	Need to follow up 24 hours	On the job training	Un-wellness of Tourism market					
5	Do not follow the rules and procedures	Personal relations	Savings vs. quality (inverse)					
6	No teamwork		Wars					
7	No business-oriented communication between peers		Limitations of capital					
8	Not dedicated to their work		Limitations of affordability of losing money					
9	Do not accept new knowledge							
10	Concerned only about salary							

with those hotels so as to raise the level of employees' efficiency and performance. These findings support the second central theme of the researcher's analysis "change". The primary purpose of the researcher's study is to explore the impact of management programs on performance in local hotels in order to change the culture; the general manager draws the attention to the importance of the programs in changing the working place culture. Similarly, Salem [14], in his study, shares several key features of the importance of the training programs

in raising the employees' efficiency and performance in five stars' hotels. Likewise, what works for five stars' hotels, works for local hotels except for the costly expenses of the programs which the general manager pointed out. He referred to the importance of the expansion of the tourism market needed, which would help in investing in such programs.

Correspondingly, research findings in Kenya on "the effect of customer satisfaction on performance in the hotel industry" [15] indicated that "hotels strive to meet the excellent services in pursuit of guest satisfaction" which leads customers to become loyal clients; thus, reaching to the best performance of the hotel. In contrast the carelessness, the non-dedication attitude, the negligence of following the rules, the laziness, and the individual attitude all of which factors that were found in the employees' local culture in the hotel being studied obstruct the guest satisfaction; thus leading the operations to be less in performance in this hotel.

The next study focused on the impact of the "knowledge management on hotel performance in five stars' hotels in Egypt" [14]. This study revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between knowledge management and hotel performance. This means that the flow of the knowledge needed to manage a hotel and the trust between peers and managers and peers has a positive impact on the performance of the hotel. Therefore, KPMG defined knowledge management as a "systematic and organised approach to improve the organisation's ability to mobilise knowledge to enhance performance [14]. This trust and this flow of information cannot be built and done with the prevailing local culture that the researcher has investigated. Those hotels in Salem's study tend to be more advanced in communicating knowledge and information through the whole operation which enhances performance whereas the local hotel in this particular study lacks this flow of trusting movement of knowledge which raises the hotel's performance. Compared to the culture of those hotels, management programs are needed in this hotel to enhance trust and knowledge management. As Salem [14] puts it "culture is the most important factor for successful knowledge management". Consequently, "hotel performance can be improved by locating and sharing useful knowledge" [14] which contributes to a competitive edge [14].

Such studies contribute to the understanding of the highly essential impacts of culture on the performance of local hotels. This process could help local hotel managers and operators in dealing with the cultural problems to enhance the local hotel quality of performance and productivity as well.

6. Reflection on the Paper and Related Literature

In qualitative research methods, a case study approach is the method that I would view in achieving my aims in exploring the management culture change through management programs. It is the change in the culture of the work environment through the management and training programs in order to improve a hotel's performance. In addition to that, the case study approach "provides the

tools to study complex phenomena within their contexts" [1]. That is the purpose of my research; is to examine a complex phenomenon within its context.

From the interview preparation and implementing process, I learned a lot: first, in developing the research questions which tackled a consisting problem in the hotel operations environment in the local hotels in Jordan. I prepared those questions in 6 prompt ones that would explore this phenomenon, *i.e.* the management culture in the working environment of a local hotel. Second: in how would I follow up with secondary questions that may fill the gaps of gathering the data and information. Third: in how to pick up a participant who is in charge of the overall operations in a local hotel and who has the proper experience to be able to frame the issues and events in this local hotel, *i.e.* what this manager sees as necessary in explaining issues, events, and behaviours [13]. Forth: in analysing the answers' body into major themes, as shown in Table 1 in the previous section, which emerged from the participant's mouth. Fifth: in how I connected this to key literature that reflects research and investigation of phenomena which is related to the field of my topic.

It was a face to face interview, the appointment preparation went well and easy, and the participant was so helpful and informative, as my experience in the local hotel business for thirty-one years helped me a lot for the whole process.

One of the significant issues that emerged in this interview is the definition of performance according to the manager's view. He viewed performance as the overall operations of the hotel when it is on high occupancy. Therefore, he related high occupancy to performance as being high performance and connected this to the quality of performance as being lower when the hotel is in high performance according to his view. However, the definition of job performance in literature is "the total expected value to the organisation of discrete behaviours that an individual carries out over a standard period [6]. Moreover, "performance determinants are knowledge, skill, motivation, habits, and situational opportunities and constraints" [6]. So as one notices that performance in literature is related to the total value of the individual's behaviours and not to the receiving of high demand on occupancy on the hotel service. It is also noticed that what determines performance in literature are factors related to the level of training, education and behaviour of the individual who achieves the tasks and not too high occupancy. To solve this problem, the researcher has to agree upon the definitions in advance with the interviewee, or explain to him what is meant by a term used in business while used differently in literature for the reason of answering the interview questions by the literature. I did explain to the participant on another definition within the interview, which is the "management culture". However, on this definition, I was satisfied with the participant's wordings "quality of performance" which happened to fill a gap of understanding the drawbacks of the working environment's culture. For the next interviews and in my interview schedule I will make a point of reference to define both terms: management culture (after the first question), and performance.

The strength of the interview concerning my topic is in conducting the case study approach, which enabled me to study this persisting problem within the context of the phenomenon. Needless to say, that in my experience this problem remained existent all through my career in managing a tourist 200-room local hotel in Jordan; this helped me in formulating the questions, selecting the manager, and conducting the interview. Moreover, a case study "facilitates exploring a phenomenon using a variety of data sources" which enables the researcher to explore through a variety of lenses [1]; an approach which I will use in my study in getting the data from different sources such as tour agents and five-star hotels. Thus, this would enable me to decide about the generality of this phenomenon.

According to Yin [1], a case study answers the why, and the how questions, and study a phenomenon within its context so a researcher "cannot manipulate the behaviours of those involved in the study". Also, in a case study, the "boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and the context". This what makes the case study approach robust for my topic because it fits the criterion.

In contrast, the limitation of the case study approach is in its subjectivity, so a researcher would get what is constructed as an interpretation only in the mind of this particular participant's experience. That is why I will conduct multiple case studies covering many hotels and tour agents who could reflect a broader sense of reality concerning this phenomenon.

I will add the narration approach to my study, which is a "life story method in which people describe their life experiences via storytelling" [16]. Thus, this would enable me to triangulate on the sources and the outcomes which enhance trustworthiness and conformability. I will use either my experience in this story or a fellow manager that used to work in the same field.

If I think of different methods for conducting this research, I will use focus groups. "Data in focus groups are generated by the interaction between group participants [17]. Moreover, this approach focuses on meeting with different managers and supervisors from different hotels; then, questions would be presented unto them. Answers start to emerge from those participants while there is a meeting coordinator, who would be the researcher, in order to organise the process of questioning and to answer and record the event for later transcription. Focus groups method focuses on more than one interviewee. Hence managers and supervisors from different roles and positions will be able together to build a historical understanding of a phenomenon being studied [13], that is, the culture problem phenomenon which hinders raising performance in a local hotel.

As of ethical issues, it is widely held view that a researcher has to preserve the participant's privacy and identity, has his consent on researching in his arena, avoiding harmful actions for the participants in collecting the data, be just to participants when analyzing the data, and be confidential when writing the research [18]. In my qualitative interview, I maintained all ethical outlines mentioned by Flick [18]. Therefore, in the appendices pages of this report, one can find the letter of intent (Appendix 1) signed by the participant showing the pur-

pose of this interview and his consent for conducting it, without mentioning his name or corporation on this report or any other one, or doing any harmful actions through this interview. Data analysis will be reviewed by higher education doctoral-level professors, so I believe, through this review and then by matching the data with other sources and outcomes, that justice would be achieved.

7. Research Contribution

This research is contributing to the theory of performance. Therefore, based on the above evidence of low-performance phenomenon in local hotels, the researcher argues that Jordan is a vital country that would reflect a low-level-conduct in the organisation which is worth investigation. It is also a contribution to Professional Practice by proposing recommendations to hotel managers and policymakers.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix 1: Letter of Intent

Dear Mr *R, ̃ Ñ ⊙Ⅎ . ⊂*

My name is Nader Saadeh and I am a doctoral student at the University of Northampton. As part of my DBA research, I am conducting a series of interviews which explore the impact of management culture on performance and productivity, and how the change in management programs would impact those areas. The outcome of this research is to hopefully contribute to a better understanding of the perceptions and experiences of positive impacts of management programs on performance and productivity in local hotels in Jordan.

I would like to interview in order to capture your experiences and perceptions as you are currently working or worked in local hotel. The interview will last for approximately 30 to 45 minutes. I shall be adhering to the BERA (2004) ethical guidelines for research. Your contribution would be invaluable to my research and it will remain anonymous. Results of this study will be made available to the University and selected academic journals. Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified and only group data will be presented. I am grateful for your participation in my study, and any transcript relating to this interview will be made available to you to check for accuracy.

If you have any questions about this research please contact me at nader_abe@yahoo.com, 0796152491, or 0785210220.

Thank you for your co-operation and time.

Nader Saadeh
DBA student researcher

Name of participant .....*R.A* ....*NA* ....

Signature of participant...

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule

QDA
University of Northampton

Interview Schedule Date *30-07-2018*

Applicant Name *Mr R___ Na___*
Position Applied *General Manager ____ , Hotel Stars*
Recruiter's Name Nader Saadeh – DBA student in UoN
Recruiter's Phone +96279-6152491

Start Time	End Time	Interviewer	Location
16:25	*16:50*	*Nader*	*Abdulah Ghosheh st- close to 7th circle*
			interviewee office

Comments

Amman - Jordan
079-6152491

Appendix 3: Questions

Semi-structured Questions for the interview which will be held in accordance of Qualitative Data Analysis GRA8010

Tutor: Dr.John Ryan

University of Northampton

Research Area: Exploring the impact of management culture change on performance and productivity in local hotels in Jordan.

a) What is your(paticipant) position?
b) How long you have been in this position?
c) Was your career always in this field of work?

Prompt related questions:

1) Could you describe what could be the meaning of "management culture" in your terms?
2) Could you describe if management programs have any relation to management culture?
3) From your experience,could you describe what would be the performance in a local hotel in Jordan?
4) Is it possible to change the management culture atmosphere? And does this has any impact on performance How?
5) In your experience how would you describe the customer's view on performance?
6) Why do you think performance of local hotels in Jordan remained poor in the past 10 to 15 years? What predicaments and obstacles that hindered advancement in performance in those types of hotels?