

The challenge of cultural diversity to an effective hospitality and tourism industry

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Abstract: The decision of an organization to be active in the field of hospitality and tourism should include correct decisions related to cultural diversity through the examination of the social culture in which they operate. "The consequences of a positive social change include the ability to identify benefits for both the organization and its employees" (Nwankpa, 2018). The understanding and respecting of cultural diversity can affect the achievement of goals of an organization. "As tourism is the main source of intercultural contacts, any cultural diversity can have an effect on the overall working environment dealing with current and future challenges of tourism in the country" (Milicevic, 2017). The purpose and originality of this article is to present the design and methodology has been used to examine this topic, and describe the findings and implications of the results in order to support the organisations and its staff who are employed in the hospitality and tourism industry, and therefore, regarding the cultural diversity and the effects it has on tourists as human beings. The article presents a real empirical study of research related to the local hospitality and tourism industry in the Republic of Cyprus.

Keywords: Business Administration, Microeconomics, Globalization, Demographics, Tourism Economics, Labour Economics, Growth, Sustainability

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

This research, analyses the implication of strategic actions by organisations that influence cultural differences in the hospitality and tourism industry. There is being found that some gaps appear in relation to the available literature on cultural differences and the effects on hospitality and tourism industry. Two of the main concepts in a very competitive environment, are managers as effective leaders, and leaders as effective managers. "Leaders and managers have to gain the necessary skills in order to make effective decisions concerning organisational resources, goals, and strategies" (Northouse, 2019). Leaders should know to manage cultural differences and how to mix those differences with those of tourists in order to behave effective in the industry. "The respect and importance of interculturality in tourism development is the main source of intercultural contacts. The education on cultural diversity, and the need of staff to deal with current and future challenges of tourism

in the country are been shown based on a growing number of travellers from different cultural backgrounds. Consequently, the need is greater awareness of cultural differences” (Langovic et al., 2016).

According to Camilleri (2018), “Tourism is one of the leading industries, in terms of international trading between countries. In addition to receipts earned in destinations, international tourism has also generated US\$ 211 billion in exports through international passenger transport services that were rendered to non-residents in 2015; bringing the total value of tourism exports up to US\$ 1.5 trillion, or US\$ 4 billion a day, on average. International tourism now represents 7% of the world’s exports in goods and services, up from 6% in 2014, as tourism has grown faster than other world trade, over the past four years (UNWTO, 2017)”.

Section 2 reviews the current global business environment and explains the need for more competitive organisations in order to achieve their goals, achieve targets and survive. Business and economic challenges are pushing organisations to develop sustainable solutions with respect to human diversity (client differences) and cultural differences (client’s cultural groups) in order to create a competitive advantage.

“A range of important cultural and social differences affects the way we interpret what is meant. Some degree of common background is essential for exchanging messages. Sometimes, practical problems crop up because the communicators fail to establish early on what that common background might be” (Mariani, 2020). To find more about this challenge on Section 3 it is presented the research methodology has been used in order to collect primary and secondary data, regarding the use of suitable tourism and hospitality strategies, practices and methods, in complex working environments to create change and survival. The results are presented on Section 4 of this article. On Section 5, this article discuss and analyses the findings from this research which could support the organisations’ needs for further development about sustainable and innovative strategic implementations.

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the study

The aim of this research was to examine the role of leadership in the hospitality and tourism industry, and the actions of leaders regarding controlling cultural differences, as well as to examine the effects of existing perceptions and attitudes towards cultural differences in the hospitality and tourism industry. Also, this research examined how cultural differences could affect the quality of services, and the functional values of an organisation operating in that field, and to critically present decisions of management who were decided in order to respect cultural differences in the hospitality and tourism sector.

The scope of this research is to find answers on the following questions: 1) “How leadership transformation could create respect on cultural diversity in the way that should support the organisation which is implementing it?”, b) “What are the

sustainable strategic directions which assure the quality of services with respect to culture differences of Tourists?, c) "How the managerial decisions of an organisation operating in the hospitality and tourism sector could build perceptions and attitudes for employees against their customers?", d) "What actions could bridge different cultures to create a healthy working environment?".

1.3 Significance of Study

The significance of this qualitative case study is to explore the reasons why the investigation of cultural differences is so important especially for the tourism and hospitality industry that has to mix and "implicate positive social change for local communities, and identify benefits to the organization and its employees" (Nwankpa, 2018). Researchers who use a qualitative case study research method, and use interviews are receiving key answers for the topic of research. Stacey and Vincent (2017) argued that "an interview allows the individual conducting the study to capture data faster and also provides participants the opportunity to use technology at their convenience. By this method it makes the research more effective because by receiving and decoding live actions might be clearer for me to analyse and understand". Organizational leaders seeking to minimize conflicts between employees in order to maximize profitability and to keep a sustainable working environment in high quality for the local tourism and hospitality industry are thankful of their human capital who behaves with respect to cultural differences. This study provides a practical model of understanding better 'how' and 'why' effective leaders must understand cultural differences to assure that employees and tourists understand and respect each other in the industry. A significant predictive model can aid to support leaders on understanding the perception and attitude towards cultural differences and the effects they have on hospitality and tourism industry and on different generational characteristics. The implications for social change environment include the potential to increase productivity and communication.

1.4 Conceptual framework

The user participation theory is the conceptual framework for this study is that effective managers must understand cultural differences of employees and customers, and assure the respect of it in the organisation and in the industry in general. Zhang et al. (2017) noted that transformational leaders develop obliging team goals as well as encourage team members to develop a common identity, common tasks, integrated roles, personal relationships, and shared reward distributions that reinforce cooperative goals. They also promote intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation (...) to improve task structure and a cooperative climate in the virtual environment (Kahai, Huang, & Jestice, 2010). In addition, transformational leaders may seek to empower their employees with positive enforcement and encourage solutions to problems with creative thinking.

This qualitative study examines the use of digital communication strategies in relation to each generational differences based on three conceptual framework topics: (a) leadership, (b) motivation, and (c) organizational change.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

Management and Leadership are two different but close related definitions which have a very strong role in the tourism and hospitality industry. Both are associated with effective managers and leaders in organisations, who need to earn the necessary knowledge and skills in order to succeed in a managerial position and situation. Leadership and management are nearby: “the development of people to think, write and speak effectively and creatively; the development of an appreciation of and respect for social, moral, and ethical values as the foundation of one’s relationship to others and one’s responsibilities to the community; the development for analytical, decision-making and communication competencies, self-reliance, responsibility, integrity and self-awareness (French, 1999)”. Also, “the development of tourism implies a lack of appropriate strategies that would adapt to specific areas, according to their attractiveness and specificities. It implies inadequate human resources that should implement strategically set goals. It is necessary to define priorities, primarily in the area of profiling the material basis of tourism, i.e. the offer of accommodation facilities” (Kordić et al, 2018).

The role of a leader is to communicate effectively by decoding and transferring the right messages to connect cultural differences and to face serious challenge in the hospitality and tourism industry. Some leadership communication methods include speaking, writing, and electronically transfer the message (Northouse, 2019). According to Ralph Stogdill, as it stated in the book of Huczynski (2017), “leadership is an interactive process that targets the organizations’ goals, and plays a very important role into the overall organizational effectiveness”. Zeugarides (1997) argues that “a leader perceives the attitude that influences groups’ and cultures’ differences in order to act in a specific way”. It is also a process that “specific people give motives to the group in order to control and drive them to a specific direction for success” (Myers, 2019).

The organisations’ productivity is based on final actions of a leader in practice at the working environment. “Actions are based on commitment, trust, innovation, and respect of the different opinions” (Astin et al 2000; Wielkiewicz et al 2005). It has been established that rudeness in the workplace reduces performance effectiveness and creativity, and increases worker turnover, which is costly for the organisation. Politeness also varies with the type of the relationship (among strangers, friends, and intimates). Culture, personality and professional training influence the degree of politeness and the modality of expressing it”.

According to DeVito (2019), "Language cannot be used without carrying meaning and referring beyond itself. Meaning is an active process created in cooperation between sender and receiver, speaker and listener, writer and reader. Meaning is constructed out of the messages you receive combined with your own social and cultural perspective". "Messages occur in clusters and may reinforce one another or contradict one another. Before the meaning of any act of behaviour is identified or guessed, the entire package or cluster should be considered... All parts of the message system, including verbal and nonverbal behaviours, work together to communicate a unified meaning" (Literat, 2018). Literat (2018) also argued that "in the business world politeness is now recognized as an important part of interpersonal interactions. Leaders have to appreciate cultural differences in order to motivate employees to behave in the 'desirable' ways".

2.2 The Republic of Cyprus

Cyprus is a beautiful island in the Mediterranean Sea at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa. Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean with a population of approximately 800,000. "Throughout the centuries, Cyprus has been a meeting place of civilizations and cultures. The island has superb mountain scenery, forests, fascinating coastlines and beaches, and a rich historical and archaeological heritage bearing witness to its long and diverse history. The marvellous climate of the island offers endless opportunities to nature lovers. In May 2004, Cyprus joined the European Union and became its easternmost and southernmost outpost" (source: www.aspectsofcyprus.com). "The country's economy has emerged as one of the leading business and financial centers in the region. Various sectors of the economy like tourism, banking, insurance and telecommunications provide the economy with a cutting edge. In January 2008, Cyprus joined the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the Euro(€). The official languages of the Constitution of Cyprus are Greek and Turkish, but English is widely spoken. (source: www.cyprustourism.org).

2.3 Theoretical Framework on Strategic Directions in the tourism industry

According to Ralph Stogdill, as it stated in the book of Huczynski (2017), leadership is an interactive process that targets the organisations' goals, and plays a very important role into the overall organizational effectiveness. Zeugarides (1997) argues that leadership is the process that a person influence other group members in order to act in a specific way. It is also a process that specific people give motives to the group in order to control and drive them to a specific direction for success (Myers, 1999). The productivity of the final actions by a leader of an organisation can be examined in practice at the working environment, based on commitment, trust, innovation, and respect of the different opinions (Astin et al 2000; Wielkiewicz et al 2005). However, leadership is based on the interaction between the employees by creating a specific culture for the organization (Wielkiewicz et al 2005). In difficult

business situations all actions are demonstrating the potential to grow and become an effective leader by mastering skills in organizational leadership as well as entrepreneurial leadership and develop teambuilding and effectiveness in self-managed teams and take leadership roles. Strategic leadership factors should concentrate on what line managers have to do as leaders in order to play their vital and immediate part in increasing levels of engagement in the tourism industry of Cyprus. Any new strategies should therefore include the steps required to improve performance and be effective to increase commitment of employees on implementing strategic directions and leadership decisions, in order to save tourism industry from the bankrupt.

2.4 Efficacy of the Power of Communication in the hospitality and tourism industry

For effective communication, itself term open to a variety of interpretations, is not a natural gift, as often supposed, characterised by expressions such as ‘the gift of the gab’, but a skill based on understanding, observation and practice (David et al, 2017). “The importance of communication and its long-lasting impact are related to external image and reputation...A range of important cultural and social differences affects the way we interpret what is meant. Some degree of common background is essential for exchanging messages. Sometimes, practical problems crop up because the communicators fail to establish early on what that common background might be” (Hentley, 2007). The development of Mass Media and the Social Media that is part of our lives has made the designing of a strategic communication planning ever more completed and demanding. Word of Mouth method is still alive and effective, but is not enough for organisations growth.

2.5 Innovative Solutions for the Tourism and hospitality sector

The driving forces in a tourism and hospitality sector are “the major underlying causes of a changing industry as they have the biggest influence on how the industry landscape will be altered, in order to develop market demands, create competition, and lead to the industry’s profitability... The creation of a strategic integrated and sustainable plan is a set of interconnected spheres where economy is not in the centre and environment has a limit factor” (Serge, 2020). “The connection between the economic and the environment criteria as a result, build high quality of human capital within the organisation” (Kupperschmidt, 2000). If leadership is successful then organisations keep a sustainable and successful working environment. Leaders of an organization seek to minimize conflicts between employees and maximize profitability. “All organizations are operating in macroenvironmental influences arising from general economic conditions, population demographics, societal values and lifestyles, legislation and regulations, and technology” (Wheelen and Hunger, 2018). The overall evaluation of the above theories can take to the result for necessity

of successful decisions by leaders in the tourism industry who must act with social or human responsibility. Hargreaves et al (2003) argues that "Sustainable leadership matters, spreads and lasts. It is a shared responsibility between human and financial resources that cares an organisation and avoids exerting damage on the surrounding educational and community environment".

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research procedure

Each organisation operates differently and uses existing theories in practice to create sustainable and competitive solutions in a global business environment of the 21st century. This research uses case study to examine the topic because "an empirical strategy could direct research into a particular contemporary phenomenon in real life conditions and bring practical collection of data" (Robson, 2002). "The strategic use of case study has a great ability to produce answers like 'why?', 'What?', and 'how?'" (Saunders, 2019). The use of a case study is also very important for a researcher who looks to gain "a rich understanding of the research framework and the procedures established" (Morris et al, 1991).

3.2 Research Design

Qualitative and quantitative methods of study can find answers to the above research questions. A research design leads to analysis the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, usually in the form of quality analytical numbers and techniques. According to Saunders (2019), "there are three layers: research strategies, research options and time horizons. These three layers can be considered to be the focus of the research design process, to transform the research question into a research program" (Robson, 2002). The research will use the interview method to collect qualitative data, and the questionnaire method to collect quantitative data.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

The issues of 'confidence' and 'confidentiality' during an interview and the completion of a questionnaire by participants must be taken very seriously by researchers. Participants must remain anonymous as the main target is to examine given answers and not accuse or reward them. Interviews can show reactions and emotions as well as tone of voice, facial expressions and any hesitations. Questionnaires are also very important since the researcher has the opportunity to receive in writing important and useful information about the field of research. However, by asking in depth questions about the research topic, it might acquire in-depth knowledge and data, which should be carefully protected, and destroyed information given which could hurt the participant. Some examples include a list of completed questionnaires and a recorded interview. Furthermore, the use of any bibliography and references during a survey review should be carefully presented on the final assignments, as authors' work might be taken as interception of other's

primary data. All primary data is a copyright of the examiner author, and should be borrow with respect.

4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This project critically analyses the implication of strategic actions that influence cultural differences in the hospitality and tourism industry. It also presents existing and under development strategic plans prepared by leaders. The strategic planning based on perceptions and attitude must be well prepared in order its implementation in practice to be successful, profitable for the stakeholders and create sustainability in the tourism sector of the Republic of Cyprus. The scope of this research is to find answers on the following questions: 1) "How leadership transformation could create respect on cultural diversity in the way that should support the organisation which is implementing it?", b) "What are the sustainable strategic directions which assure the quality of services with respect to culture differences of Tourists?", c) "How the managerial decisions of an organisation operating in the hospitality and tourism sector could build perceptions and attitudes for employees against their customers?", d) "What actions could bridge different cultures to create a healthy working environment?".

4.1. Leadership transformation on diversity for organisations

Cyprus is an island where its main income is based on services. Tourism industry is one of the most important factors for the economy of Cyprus and takes a very serious place in the final decisions of the local government. "The processes of a strategic plan could create value by meeting and exceeding customer needs and by delivering benefits to them" (Camilleri, 2018). Successful organisations rely on strategic planning, sustainable implementations and leadership actions to create value. Therefore, the strategic planning process is related to the short-term marketing and operational plans. All strategic plans related to tourism sector (like airlines, hotels, events) are affected by any internal or external factors (like coronavirus situation) around the world. In order to identify and evaluate marketing strategies for hospitality and tourism sector, someone must make a PESTEL (Political, Economic, Social, and Technological, Environmental, Legal) Analysis. The internal environment and commercial laws play a very serious role in order to start a business in the tourism and hospitality sector. Technology is very important in order to promote Cyprus in abroad in order to bring Tourists. Websites, social media, and other web technologies were used in order to make Cyprus as a very important destination for tourism and hospitality either for holidays or for organising events and conferences and other types of entertainment and businesses. Cyprus has sea and sun which is something that most tourists want and ask when they come to visit the island either for entertainment or business. The combination of those environmental beauties together with entertainment and business in a promotion campaign could help Cyprus

to create a competitive advantage in this geographic area. Cyprus Law is very friendly to business sector by giving low taxes and other attractive benefits, as well as protecting human rights based on European and other global laws and ethical norms. Local organisations are trying to offer high quality of services in order to survive in the hospitality and tourism industry of Cyprus.

4.2. Sustainable strategic directions of cultural differences for Tourists

Cyprus, as a small country in a global market, could not be affected by the changes of the sector. Technology takes a very serious place in our everyday lives, and affects most of our operations. Airline tickets, car rental, hotel booking and other forms of services in the tourism industry are available to customers (visitors/tourists) over the internet in order to make their lives even more easily. On the other hand, governments and global organisations had created a very serious number of laws in order to protect human's rights and customer's decisions. For example, those laws covers customers in the case of flight delay or flight cancellation, in the case of bankruptcy, in the case that accommodation and other leisure or hospitality services booked over the internet were not on the level that the seller promised, and several other reasons that could affect or have a negative feedback on the customer's needs and wants related to the services he or she bought over the internet. Recently, governments have made decisions about electronic methods of travellers' protection from covid-19 infection (i.e vaccination).

Effective digital solutions often are significant on whether the design of a strategic plan could succeed and provide autonomy for leaders to act and implement managerial decisions. A direction challenge can be evaluated as successful only after continues actions, implementations and evaluations of strategic plans. A successful strategic plan should have excellent abilities and an important working involvement whenever organisational sizes, and continues learning. The idea of designing and developing a strategic plan for achieving a development is arising based on the goals that have been set by each organisation. To update a strategic digital plan for development needs to identify the necessary skills that must be improved, devise activities to improve those skills, identify the resources to perform those activities, identify the measures to record progress, and work out a timeline because without all these elements it is not possible to make an impact on communication's development. City tourism is one of the fastest growing travel segments worldwide and the impacts of the changing nature of city tourism become increasingly apparent in many cities. The proliferation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has had a significant impact on the travel industry, as well as on tourist behaviour, and is also transforming the nature of travel and the actual tourist experience".

4.3. Bridging cultural differences for healthy working environments

Leadership in practice requires some less tangible and less measurable skills as well as managerial skills on topics like trust, inspiration, attitude, decision-making, and personal character. The more experienced is a leader the better results will have to achieve his/her goals. A strategic leadership ambition is faces of humanity, and is enabled mainly by the leader's character and especially his/her emotional reserves. Any continues improvement of current skills and abilities will have an impact on the organisation that a leader works for. Good interpersonal skills and time management skills by leaders are very important for the success of the organisation and always help on giving a competitive advantage on an organisation. Improving of personal skills through various trainings are necessary for achieving the strategic leadership ambitions and future goals of any organisation to bring change. Organisations in the tourism industry, must pay salaries and suppliers, and investors in order to survive.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Organisations operating in the hospitality and tourism industry of Cyprus are trying to design and implement new strategic direction to create sustainable business solutions based on the new global challenges that arise over the years. The high quality of services for the tourism industry is still alive but the market sometimes looks to be in shock (i.e economic bankrupt and pandemic). The achievement of outcomes of a plan depends on the growth results of a business. A business plan should become successful by satisfying staff's and customers' needs and also by implementing 'updated' strategies. The degree to which the role of sustainability is implicated and improved is based on the engagement of employees to participate in the success of the organisation that are employed. A successful leader should have excellent communication skills to transfer the implementation idea of a strategic plan.

A business planning for tourism development should take very seriously all the factors before start preparing a plan in order to satisfy the needs and wants of the business, to create a competitive advantage and make a profitable organisation. Furthermore, the hospitality and tourism industry should create a number of interesting trends and developments to create a competitive advantage. New technologies are making fundamental changes in the structure of the travel industry, including its products and services. A Tourism development and strategic planning involves an analysis of the businesses' internal strengths and weaknesses, and as well its opportunities and threats in the market place. "The development of people to think, write and speak effectively and creatively; the development of an appreciation of and respect for social, moral, and ethical values as the foundation of one's relationship to others and one's responsibilities to the community; the development for analytical, decision-making and communication competencies, self-reliance, responsibility, integrity and self-awareness;" (French, 1999). Bad communication that

does not work properly can create serious mistakes which could damage the image of an organisation, and affect performance at workplace.

6. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The perception and attitude towards cultural differences and the effects they have on hospitality and tourism industry is close related to people's cultures and communication. Good communication and respect of cultural differences appearing around the world can become an important powerful tool for the success of the local industry of Cyprus. The creation of sustainable business plans can create change and development to the future directions for the industry. This research explored theoretical and practical foundation contents, examined past and current research findings, and investigated real empirical studies of the tourism and hospitality industry implementing in the Republic of Cyprus. In the industry are operating organisations which have to face a competitive global environment (globalization). Cyprus as a small country that is trying to attract people by differentiate its products and services to face challenges against other bigger markets in this area in order to succeed. "The measuring of effectiveness within an organisation has both strengths and weaknesses" (Tourish et al, 2017). It is clear that each organisation works differently, so some methods and strategies that are implemented in one organisation cannot easily implement by other. The investigation of this project has included some very good findings, but at the same time, there were also some findings that needed more in depth analysis to achieve better results. Most of the research questions have been answered clearly to fill the gaps, but some others looked to be difficult answered because of the general way that they have been presented to the examiners. Time pressure in busy working environments looked a serious problem for getting thorough answers. Time counts for all, on one side is the respect of participants' time, and on the other side is the need for a successful final reason that must be prepared on time. Even, during the interviews, more specific and clearer questions could bring more promising and qualitative answers in order to understand better the messages arising from local leaders' decisions and actions. The bigger number of selection of numerical data could show very positive information about participation on training programmes, but those were not easy to be collected as come against safety and data protection by the organisations.

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