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Abstract

The aim of this thesis was to gain an understanding of the leadership challenges and the essential skills needed for new leaders based on the leadership competencies in the Norwegian hotel industry. We specifically focused on the challenges for newly graduated hospitality students with positions as middle managers in the hotel industry who are eager to be general managers in the future. This study was conducted to explore how the lack of competencies can cause challenges for new leaders and hence which competencies are important to obtain. No previous studies have explored leadership challenges based on leadership competencies for new leaders in the Norwegian hotel industry. This thesis adopted qualitative methods to conduct semi-structured interviews with general managers at Norwegian hotels to obtain their perceptions of challenges for new leaders based on these leadership competencies in the Norwegian hotel industry. The results demonstrated that leadership challenges exist with regard to communication, problem-solving, and self-management skills. Some aspects of teamwork and financial skills also present challenges but IT knowledge presents no challenge. These skills were divided into four dimensions: social or interpersonal, cognitive, meta, and functional competencies, which are similar to Bharwani's conceptual competence framework for general managers in hospitality. However, this thesis adds another competency domain, local cultural competence. In addition, the study revealed that the skill of creativity and the combination of education and experience as a competence are essential for aspiring new leaders. The competencies were found to be essential for all leaders but may be interchangeable depending on the needs of the hotels, and some may be less demanding than others.

Keywords: leadership competencies, leadership skills, leadership challenges, new leaders, Norwegian hotel industry.

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Introduction

More than a third of the world's service trade is comprised of the hospitality and tourism sectors, which are two of the fastest expanding industries in the world (ILO, 2010). In 2019, the hospitality and tourism industries created 330 million jobs worldwide, which represents 10.3% of total global employment (Padhi & Triveni, 2020). This number demonstrates that this industry is continuing to grow. The report also shows that the productivity of the Norwegian hospitality and tourism industry has once again expanded following COVID-19 (WTTC, 2022). Although Norway offers a broad range of accommodation options, hotels are the most popular types of accommodation chosen by visitors and the most successful businesses overall (Statista, 2020). With such significant and ever-increasing progress in this industry, management in this field requires the knowledge and competencies to cope with guests from all over the world with high and differing expectations, seasonal and diverse employees, and the emergence of new technologies.

Consequently, hospitality businesses must develop leaders with competencies specific to their unique industry's challenges and targets (Bharwani & Talib, 2017). Researchers have established that leadership competencies are the key to successfully managing people (Bharwani & Talib, 2017; Delamare & Winterton, 2005; Liang, Chang, Ko, & Lin, 2017). Leaders who develop their leadership competencies may improve their influence over organizational outcomes, overcome obstacles, and successfully control the environment and people around them (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). In reality, however, significant challenges to the effective performance of leaders exist. One of the reasons for these challenges is when a leader lacks leadership competencies (Gonfa, 2019). When a lack of leadership competencies cause obstacles, the low performance of hotel general managers can directly affect the industry's productivity (Sousa et al., 2019).

Leadership studies have indicated that some of the new leaders in the workplace are suffering from a lack of these competencies. One such group are newly graduated hospitality students working as middle managers in the hotel industry in Norway who are eager to be hotel general managers in the future.

Nonetheless, the leadership of these middle managers is vital to the industry as they represent the future of this industry (Brophy & Kiely, 2002; Burgess, 2013). However, no research has been conducted on leadership challenges based on leadership competencies for new leaders in the hotel industry. Researchers have begun studying challenges for new leaders in the hospitality industry, but the extant research is limited. Therefore, we decided to assess the challenges that poor leadership competencies may present for new leaders in the Norwegian hotel industry and investigate what competencies need to be obtained.

Research Background and Rationale of the Study

As a constituent of the service industry, hotels possess unique qualities that can place considerable pressure on their employees and, therefore, their leaders. Hotels require a large workforce because they are open 24 hours a day. Hotels are extremely labor-intensive and are operated by a diverse group of employees (Blayney, 2009). For this reason, leaders play a crucial role in the operations of the hotel industry. As the head of the hospitality unit and person in charge of operations, hotel leaders are responsible for the whole property, including ensuring that all the employees perform their jobs correctly.

Moreover, leaders must ensure that the service provided to guests is compatible with the goal and strategy of the organization (Walker, 2004). The hotel industry is also very competitive, and it is easy for competitors to copy the observable parts of a company's products and services. Consequently, the intangibles are the key to a hotel's success. These intangibles include human

capital (employee knowledge, competencies, and commitment) and social capital (employee relationships and interactions with those outside the firm). If a company can set itself apart through its talent pool, especially its management and leadership, it will always maintain a competitive advantage (Bharwani, 2015). Undoubtedly, the staff in hotels are the business' most valuable resource, and they play a key role in determining the success of an organization (Yukl & Gardner, 2020,p541). For this reason, new leaders who try to develop their competencies, identify, and improve their weaknesses, and evaluate the issues they face in the industry before becoming leaders may generate a significant competitive advantage in the workplace. According to Chung-Herrera et al. (2003), companies that would like to stay ahead of the competition must be able to identify the skills and competencies required for tomorrow's hospitality industry leaders(Chung-Herrera et al., 2003). Therefore, effective leadership is crucial for organizational success.

These new leaders who may be future general managers require global insight,a multicultural viewpoint, people-handling abilities, technological competence, strategic and entrepreneurial talents, and the capacity to lead an organization with an increasing number of layers (Bharwani & Talib, 2017). Despite the fact that the middle management position is important and key to reaching a higher level of leadership, limited research has been conducted to determine the fundamental skills and talents required by middle managers for success in leadership and management in the context of the hospitality industry, especially in Norway. While there has been much research on required competencies for leaders(Cheung et al., 2010;Jiang & Alexakis, 2017;Millar et al., 2010;Sisson & Adams, 2013;Suh et al., 2012;Tavitiyaman et al., 2014;Wessels et al., 2017) no research exists concerning the challenges that new leaders face in the absence of leadership competencies, specifically in the hotel industry. If the challenges based on leadership competencies remain unsolved and unknown, it can directly and profoundly affect both future

leaders' performance and the hotel industry's future. Moreover, the aim of the hospitality universities is to train future hotel managers. However, attaining this academic aim is demanding without having enough research about the leadership challenges for new leaders in hotel industry, so this is one of the reasons that shows the importance of more researches in this field.

As a result of this gap in the literature, we conducted a literature review and interviewed 14 hotel general managers in Norwegian hospitality about the competency and challenges of new leaders. We then summarized the key competencies and skills needed by new leaders and the challenges that the lack of these competencies can pose for these new leaders in the hotel industry. This involved reviewing previous research in leadership competencies and specifically hospitality-related leadership competencies over the previous 25 years. Through this study, we hope to summarize and extend our knowledge in this area of research and provide suggestions to guide further research.

Secondary Motivation for the Study

Prior to researching leadership competencies and challenges, we were concerned about the challenges encountered by new leaders who aspire to be future general managers in the Norwegian hotel industry. We wondered what issues and requirements would arise for future hotel leaders if they wish to begin working in the Norwegian hotel industry. We were also concerned about what leadership challenges may arise for us in the real environment of this industry after graduation. As a result, our interest was one of the key motivations for writing this thesis.

Research Questions

To fill the research gap identified earlier, the primary research questions of the study consist of the following:

1) What are the leadership challenges based on leadership competencies for new leaders eager to be future hotel general managers?

2) What competencies and skills might new leaders need to obtain from the perspective of top managers in the Norwegian hotel industry?

Significance of the Study

This research will reveal new perspectives to approaching leadership competency issues as challenges for new leaders; specifically, this research will benefit the following four groups:

Students

Students will benefit directly from this research as its findings may increase their understanding of the leadership challenges that new leaders are likely to experience and the competencies required to meet those challenges. Moreover, this study will also provide students who want to continue progressing to higher managerial positions in Norwegian hotels with an understanding of the obstacles they are likely to encounter.

Academic Institutions

This study provides hotel schools and other related educational institutions with a greater appreciation of the importance of new leaders' competencies along with the challenges they are likely to face. Through this research, academic institutions may be encouraged to promote the change of or begin programs related to the significance of new leaders' positions and the existing challenges based on the competencies required in the hotel industry.

Human Resources

Hotel human resources can adopt the competencies model as an effective and useful way of hiring new leaders matched with the leadership competencies needed for the industry's challenges and targets.

Future Researchers

Through the data and analysis provided by this thesis, future researchers may be able to explore other challenges for new leaders and ways to mitigate them. Further, as previously mentioned, the results of this study can be used for future discussions on creating competitive advantage through intangible resources.

Dissertation Outline

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the study by providing background information, the rationale for the research, the research questions and objectives, and the significance of the study. The second chapter reviews the literature to identify key concepts that can be used to relate the current study to previous research findings. The third chapter discusses the methodological approaches used to collect and analyze the data and provides a justification for the selection of the specific methods. The fourth chapter represents the findings of the study. The fifth chapter discuss and analyzes the findings of the study, and the sixth chapter concludes the study.

Literature Review

Before starting the chapter, we searched for some words such as “New Leader,” “Leadership Competencies”, “Hotel General Manager”, “Hotel Middle Manager”, “Leadership Challenges”, “General Manager’s Competencies”, and “Leadership Skills”. We searched these words in relevant electronic databases, especially the Web of Science and JSTOR. We chose relevant articles from these two databases.

Leadership Competencies

Leadership is derived from the word “leader,” that is, a person who leads. In this perspective, leadership is the position, role, and capacity to guide others to more significant achievements. Meanwhile, when considering the relationship between leadership and organizations, a person can influence, inspire, and empower others to participate in the effectiveness and success of the organization (Ayub et al., 2014). However, there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are people who have tried to define it (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). According to Rost (1991), there are 221 leadership definitions (Rost, 1991, as cited in (Joanne B. Ciulla, 2017). Ciulla (2017) studied these definitions and discovered that the commonality of these leadership meanings is: "Leadership is about one person getting other people to do something" (Joanne B. Ciulla, 2017, p. 340). New hotel leaders for convincing others to do hotel workplace tasks in a proper way need to have several competencies and know challenges based on lack of these competencies. Therefore, in this thesis, the essential competencies required by leaders and the challenges based on these competencies are investigated.

In recent years, the hospitality industry has become more complicated and undergone many changes (Baker Rosa & Hastings, 2018). Job challenges such as diverse groups of employees, job insecurity due to the COVID-19 pandemic, complex operational structures and the transition of

contemporary hotels from independent hotels to hotel chains, the centralization of decision-making procedures (e.g., limited autonomy), and the obligation to report to headquarters about operational concerns and cost management have emerged globally in the hospitality and service industries (Blayney, 2009; Burgess, 2013; Davahli et al., 2020; Elbanna, 2016; Haver et al., 2014). Therefore, due to the high level of stress associated with working in the hospitality and service industries (e.g., people-intensive environments)(Haver et al., 2021), effective leadership is critical for organizational success since organizations in the hospitality industry can only overcome obstacles and accomplish their goals with effective leadership (Liang et al., 2017). In this regard, managerial and leadership competencies are the key to effective leadership and the success of all leaders (Testa & Sipe, 2012).

The leadership competencies literature shows that competencies help in recruiting, selecting, and becoming a general manager. These competencies have been grouped into four dimensions (Bharwani & Talib, 2017; Delamare & Winterton, 2005). These four dimensions, which contribute to a superior level of performance in the workplace, are cognitive competencies, meta competencies, functional competencies, and social or interpersonal competencies (Bharwani & Talib, 2017; Delamare & Winterton, 2005). These dimensions are based on the work of Delamare and Winterton (2005), who present a competency model based on the competencies required in particular occupations in different countries. These dimensions show that competencies are divided into broad dimensions depending on whether they are connected to the functional parts of a job or an individual's personality. Competencies may also be classified according to whether they are linked to mental aptitude or the operational skills to accomplish a given job (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).

Leadership Competencies in the Hotel Industry

Bharwani and Talib (2017) used Delamare and Winterton's (2005) model to establish the competencies necessary for hotel general managers, and 43 items were categorized within these four dimensions to develop a relevant leadership competency framework. This model is shown in Figure 1 (See Appendix B). Therefore, this model has been used in this thesis as a foundation for presenting the different competency domains. We decided to focus only on studies based on empirical evidence, such as observation and experiment studies, rather than theory or opinion. The reason for using the Delamare and Winterton (2005) model is that it is a complete model that categorizes all the different leadership competencies into four main groups. The reason for choosing Bharwani and Talib's (2017) model is that their paper is perhaps the only complete model of leaders' competencies in the hotel industry and one of the few comprehensive studies that explain the importance of the general managers' roles in hotels. This chapter describes all these particular competency dimensions and items. Table 3 summarizes these essential studies on the competencies required in the hospitality industry carried out over the preceding 25 years. The area of focus, nature, size of the sample and country, and the key findings of these studies are highlighted in Table 3: Competency-Focused Research in the Hospitality Industry (see Appendix C). We read 41 academic papers related to the leadership competencies required for hospitality managers and decided to work only on items that were repeated many times and which these studies rated as the most important. These studies with the number of repeated items are collected in Table 4: Repeated and Top-Rated Competencies Based on Hospitality Industry Academic Papers in Appendix D. The four dimensions of the leadership competencies and their most essential items are described in the following sections.

Cognitive Competencies (Knowledge)

Bharwani and Talib (2017) noted that all knowledge-related competencies are categorized as cognitive competencies related to an individual's conceptual knowledge (Bharwani & Talib, 2017). Boyatzis and Ratti (2009) defined cognitive competence as a skill that a leader needs to analyze a situation, ascertain what occurred (understand the cause and effect), and identify the patterns in random cases (Boyatzis & Ratti, 2009). Bharwani and Talib (2017) grouped nine items as cognitive competencies, as highlighted in Figure 1- Competency Framework for Hotel General Managers (see Appendix B). As shown in Table 4, only problem-solving (systems thinking) skills have been selected as a critical and repeated sub-dimension of cognitive competencies.

Bharwani and Talib (2017) used the “systems thinking” item to represent problem-solving skills (Bharwani & Talib, 2017). “Systems thinking” is defined as being able to see the big picture, thinking as a whole, and getting to the root of a problem by examining the links and interactions between parts of a defined entity or a system (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003; Mingers & White, 2010; Testa & Sipe, 2012).

Most of the studies we reviewed included “problem-solving skills” as one of the factors of cognitive competency, so this study also uses this item. Over time, the managerial competencies have changed as the competitiveness and complexity of the hospitality industry has increased. In this vein, some skills, such as problem-solving, have become more important than previously and problem-solving represents one of the essential skills required by current and future hospitality leaders. In fact, this skill is so important that researchers have stated that people without this skill are unlikely to be able to work in this industry (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011; Nelson & Dopson, 2001; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005). Some researchers believe problem-solving is so important for leaders who should be able to effectively manage customer issues because it is precisely what guests

expect from them (Brophy & Kiely, 2002; Testa & Sipe, 2012). Some researchers also expressed that employees rely on their managers for work assignments, performance evaluations, problems, and promotions, hence, their relationship with their leader affects their performance, commitment, and loyalty (Krot & Lewicka, 2012; Sekyi et al., 2016; Stum, 1999; Zhou & Schriesheim, 2010). This leader-employee relationship also shows how essential problem-solving skills are for leaders, and the hotel industry is no exception.

Functional Competencies (Skills)

A large proportion of the competence literature is discipline-specific, focusing on developing specialized skills and “competencies” for a specific career or profession. For example, for hotel managers, knowledge of accounting is essential (Willis & Dubin, 1990). Functional competencies are tasks an employee in the workplace should be able to perform and display (Bharwani & Talib, 2017; Delamare & Winterton, 2005). Based on Bharwani and Talib's (2017) study, this domain consists of 12 items (see Appendix E). In this thesis, IT knowledge and financial management have been selected as functional competencies, based on Table 4 (see Appendix D). These items are discussed in the following paragraphs.

According to Johanson et al. (2010), several leadership competencies have been primarily ignored. One of them is computer knowledge. Given that this will be the area with the most significant development and advancements, which are likely to affect the whole industry, it is anticipated that its relevance will be enhanced, and hospitality managers from all sectors will demand more significant levels of expertise. The expansion of social media and the associated possibilities for companies from all sectors of the economy highlights the need for skill development in this field (Johanson et al., 2010). Law and Jogaratnam's (2005) study show that IT can improve customer service, which is an essential factor in the hotel industry. The industry lacks

hotel managers with IT skills, hence, hotel industry professionals, especially managers, should pay more attention to their IT competencies and their enhancement (Law & Jogaratnam, 2005). Sisson and Adams (2013) also mentioned that hospitality managers agree on the importance of students having IT knowledge and computer skills before entering the actual work environment (Sisson & Adams, 2013).

Financial management involves monitoring spending and using cost-benefit analysis to evaluate financial plans and decisions (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011; Lenehan, 2000; Testa & Sipe, 2012). Some researchers have stated that financial management competencies are critical for leaders. Jeou-Shyan et al (2011), Kay and Moncarz (2004), and Testa and Sipe (2012) argued that “Hotel owners want general managers who understand finance and think about producing value for their businesses”; in their opinion, specific financial skills are necessary for a manager to comprehend the business' performance (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011; Kay & Moncarz, 2004; Testa & Sipe, 2012). Some researchers believe that the hospitality industry should hire managers who have graduated with strong financial management skills to ensure career prosperity and the long-term success of the business (Kay & Moncarz, 2007; Nelson & Dopson, 2001).

Social or Interpersonal Competencies

According to Bharwani and Talib (2017) and Delamare and Winterton (2005), social or interpersonal competencies are related to the attitudes and behaviors of an individual and their ability to connect with other people (Bharwani & Talib, 2017; Delamare & Winterton, 2005). In their studies, social or interpersonal competency consists of the nine items cited in Figure 1 (see Appendix B). In order to engage successfully with superiors, workers, customers, and other stakeholders, managers and leaders must be able to listen, stop, reflect, synthesize, and articulate ideas. These abilities may be exhibited in oral/written communication, presenting, dispute

resolution, and negotiation skills (Sandwith, 1993). According to some researchers, teamwork and oral and written communication are considered the most critical skills in social or interpersonal competency (Christou & Eaton, 2000; Su et al., 1997; Testa & Sipe, 2012). Communication and teamwork are ranked as the first and third most vital items in this dimension, based on Table 4 (see Appendix D), which are discussed in the following.

Communication refers to the ability to communicate appropriately to convey a point concisely and effectively (Brophy & Kiely, 2002; Chung-Herrera et al., 2003; Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011; Kay & Moncarz, 2004; Lenehan, 2000; Testa & Sipe, 2012). According to Lin (2002), the most significant competencies for success in the hotel industry are those connected to communication and adaptability to environmental changes (Lin, 2002). Communication skills are essential for any business, but these skills are even more critical for labor-intensive industries such as the hospitality industry (Harkison et al., 2011; Hertzman et al., 2015; Masole & van Dyk, 2016; Prikshat et al., 2019; Sousa et al., 2019; Tesone & Ricci, 2012; Wessels et al., 2017). Some researchers believe hospitality students should have acquired these skills before commencing their jobs as managers in the hospitality industry (Christou & Eaton, 2000; Su et al., 1997; Testa & Sipe, 2012).

Teamwork skills means understanding the definition of a team. A team may be described simply as a collection of people who work together to achieve a shared aim or goal, often sacrificing personal agendas for the team's greater good (Sohmen, 2013). According to Driskel and Salas (2018), humans are social beings, and teamwork is a fundamental characteristic of human nature (Driskell et al., 2018). Bharwani and Talib (2017) defined teamwork as an ability to coordinate the activities of team members and work effectively to promote the group's objectives via collaboration. However, to realize these aims, effective leadership is required (Bharwani &

Talib, 2017). Collaboration is a crucial component of successful teamwork, and a collaborative group must not only work together but also think together and participate in the duties of each member rather than work as individuals (Sherwood & Barnsteiner, 2021). Today, teams are a critical component of successful organizations, and establishing and inspiring teams are crucial leadership practices (Sohmen, 2013). Developing a successful team takes a great deal of dedication and awareness on the part of the leader since it is both an art and a science (Sohmen, 2013). The “ability to work in a team” is the most critical competency for leaders who want to survive in this industry (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017; Shariff et al., 2014; Tesone & Ricci, 2012). In Norway, organizations are not particularly hierarchical (Ipsos & Zere, 2017), which means teamwork is easy. In Norwegian organizations, the leader’s ability to work in a team refers to being able to avoid behaving like a “boss” and instead see oneself as one of the team members. For this reason, teamwork skills are vital for effective leadership (Lofquist & Matthiesen, 2018). According to Maxwell and Tsitoara (2020), retaining a vision of the big picture in teamwork is another crucial skill every leader should have. Such a vision means that leaders must see the important unified goal of the organization and help everyone else to see it. One of the most important jobs of a leader in a team is to communicate the big picture to team members because without the vision the team cannot strive to reach the goal (Maxwell & Tsitoara, 2020,p18).

Meta Competencies

Meta competencies (motives and traits) are higher-order personal skills that focus on understanding the situation, adapting and using existing skills, or learning new skills (Bharwani & Talib, 2017; Delamare & Winterton, 2005; Symington, 2012). Recent leadership competency models emphasize “meta competencies,” or skills that support or allow for developing competencies and attributes that people will need, such as motivation and critical cognitive

abilities (Boak & Coolican, 2001). Bharwani and Talib (2017) stated that the meta competencies include the 13 items depicted in Figure 1 (see Appendix B). Of these 13 items, based on Table 4, self-management is the most critical competency for leaders (see Appendix D), which is elaborated on in the next paragraph.

According to Erasmus et al. (2013), management is critical for maintaining harmony between a business and its environment (B.J. Erasmus et al., 2013). Strydom et al. (2015) confirm that self-management is necessary for leaders to succeed and contribute to business success (Strydom et al. 2011). Hellriegel et al.(2013) argued that for managers to be responsible for their lives both inside and outside of business, they must have strong self-management abilities (Don Hellriegel et al., 2013). Self-management is the ability to balance the rational and emotional functions of the mind and consider the consequences of one's actions (Agut et al., 2003; Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011; Testa & Sipe, 2012). Another important aspect of self-management is a work-life balance, which means leaders understand whether their work or nonwork actions correspond with their goals and current life priorities (Kaiser et al., 2011; Koubova & Buchko, 2013). Botha and Musengi (2012) argue that before individuals can become managers of organizations, they must first understand who they are (Botha & Musengi, 2012). Understanding who one is depends strongly on one's ability to self-manage (Schermerhorn, 2013). As a result, managers must be capable of leading themselves to be competent in leading others (Ross, 2014). Leaders who lead themselves have high goals and motivation. The quality of a person's motivation or effort to complete certain management duties is critical to a successful job performance (Ismail, 2015).

Leader Challenges

According to a literature review based on the challenges that exist for leaders, few studies have been conducted concerning competency challenges for leaders in the hotel industry, and most

of these studies related to the firm challenges rather than the hotel leaders, such as the leaders' status, industry challenges for leaders such as demographic changes, technological disruptions, poor corporate culture, gender, education level, and skills-based challenges (Bartol et al., 2003; Camilleri & Neuhofer, 2017; Engen et al., 2001; Kearney & Gebert, 2009; Lam & Cheung, 2018; Mansour & Tremblay, 2016; Muñoz & Cohen, 2017; Rosa & Hastings, 2016; Savolainen, 2014; Sousa et al., 2019; Stewart et al., 2017; Westcott, 2014). In this thesis, the leadership challenges are explored based on the previously cited leadership competencies for new leaders in the Norwegian hotel industry. These challenges are discussed in greater detail in the discussion chapter.

Methodology

This chapter presents the project's methodology, including information on the research design, sample, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design

As previously mentioned, this study aimed to learn more about the challenges for newly graduated students who have recently assumed a middle manager position and the competencies they need from the perspective of top managers in the hotel industry in Norway. Understanding the best method to achieve the best possible result for research is essential for a researcher (Denscombe, 2014, p. 227). The exploratory qualitative approach was chosen to achieve the objectives of this thesis. The primary objective of exploratory analysis is to develop new concepts and theories about a research problem (Reiter,2017). According to Denscombe (2014, p. 400), qualitative research techniques are based on reality and focusing on what is “out there” is their most advantageous feature. This makes it possible to obtain rich and detailed information on social reality, which was the purpose of this study, that is, to learn more about the leadership challenges of new leaders from the informants' viewpoint. According to Testa and Sipe (2012), most of the previous studies on leadership competency topics have used a quantitative approach, hence, we chose to use a qualitative method to examine leadership challenges based on leadership competencies. Another reason for choosing the exploratory qualitative approach is that the questions guiding this research have not previously been studied in any depth.

Sample

Location and Hotel

After searching several library databases, Norway and its largest cities was chosen as the location for the study because no previous studies on this topic have been conducted in Norway.

This choice will lead to a new area of research and add to the overall knowledge of the field. The hotels in this study were chosen for several reasons. First, the hotels had to have a general manager with significant experience in the hotel industry. This made it possible to interview informants with varying perceptions of leadership competencies, who may have faced additional challenges to those already identified. Second, a minimum requirement of 160 rooms at each hotel was set to ensure that the hotels were among the largest in the region. This meant that the informants are likely to have experienced a variety of challenges and tasks, and larger employee groups than would be the case in smaller hotels. Third, hotels should be located in one of the five largest cities in Norway, that is, in Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, Stavanger, or Tromsø. The rationale for these locations was because there are numerous hotels in these areas, the competition level between the hotels is high, guests have high expectations, and there is high workforce diversity. Moreover, the leaders have to work with new technologies. All of these factors may produce distinctive challenges for them.

Informants

In this study, the sampling technique utilized purposive and snowball sampling. Denscombe (2014, p.74) described purposive sampling as selecting precisely who will participate in the research. This choice is often based on understanding the research's objectives and identifying who or what will provide the study with the greatest amount of information (Denscombe,2014, p.74). Therefore, 14 hotel general managers were chosen as informants because they had an overview of the hotels' operations and may have experienced challenges that new leaders are likely to confront based on their competencies. These two sampling techniques are non-probability methods (Acharya et al.,2013). Non-probability samples are ones in which the probability of a subject being chosen is unknown, which may result in selection bias in the research

(Acharya et al.,2013). Snowball sampling, or respondent-driven sampling, begins with a convenience sample of the hard-to-reach population, for instance, someone in our social network. Then participants from the convenience sample suggest that others in their social network participate in the study, and so on (Goodman,2011). The informants who were interviewed are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Informants for this Study

Location	Informants	Gender	Degree	Hospitality specific degree	Years of experience in the industry	Number of hotel rooms	Informant's age	Years of experience as a leader
Stavanger	Inf. 1	F	BSc	No (Economy)	20	215	37	5
	Inf. 2	M	BSc	Yes	15	258	41	4
	Inf. 3	M	BSc	Yes	35	400	49	12
	Inf. 4	M	HS Dip	No (Economy)	12	226	30	4
	Inf. 5	M	BSc	Yes	15	249	37	6
	Inf. 6	M	BSc	Yes	32	296	48	15
	Inf. 7	F	BSc	Yes	17	165	39	10
Trondheim	Inf. 8	M	HS Dip	No (Marketing)	23	397	49	15
	Inf. 9	F	BSc	No (Economy)	20	343	39	13
Tromsø	Inf. 10	M	BSc	No (Business)	17	176	37	10
Oslo	Inf. 11	M	BSc	Yes	36	450	46	15
	Inf. 12	F	BSc	No (Economy)	20	376	37	12
	Inf. 13	M	BSc	No (Business)	18	239	38	9
Bergen	Inf. 14	M	BSc	Yes	25	270	44	13

Note. The parameters in Table 1 are: Inf: Informant, F: Female, M: Male, BSc: Bachelor of Science, Dip: High School Diploma. The average age of the informants was 43 years, and the average length of experience as a leader was 8 years.

Interview Guide

As previously mentioned, we first analyzed academic articles and theories concerning leadership competencies. We then collated a list of repeated and important competencies that were

mentioned in the relevant articles and summarized them in Table 4 (see Appendix D). While analyzing the theories, we found Dr. Bharwani's framework, which was based on the leadership competencies of hotel general managers. Those repeated and important competencies and Dr. Bharwani's framework guided our use of this list to formulate the interview guideline questions.

Contacting Dr. Bharwani

Prior to formulating questions and contacting informants, based on our supervisor's advice, we sent an email to Dr. Bharwani, who generated the conceptual framework and worked on the leadership competencies specifically for hotel general managers. In response, Dr. Bharwani suggested some useful articles and books related to the main purpose of this thesis to investigate and evaluate the information concerning important leadership competencies and hotel general managers. After formulating the questions, the thesis adviser, Dr. Annie Haver, helped us analyze each question, and changes were made to any questions that were deemed to be necessary (see Appendix A – Interview Guide).

Data Collection and Measurement

The first contact with the hotel general managers was performed by email. A message was sent to the email address on the hotels' websites or LinkedIn profiles. After interviewing those who agreed to participate in an interview, some of the informants (general managers) directed us to contact other informants (general managers) by calling them and asking them to participate in an interview. The initial contact process with the informants is further explained in the “Ethical Considerations” section. The interviews were conducted between May 9, 2022, and June 18, 2022, and were approximately one and a half hours long.

Interviews

Using semi-structured interview guides, the informants were interviewed one-on-one and face-to-face in the general managers' offices in the hotels in Stavanger and virtually in Zoom meetings for the other cities (Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, and Tromsø). This approach was selected since the study's purpose was to collect information regarding the informants' views of leadership challenges based on the competencies of new leaders. According to Denscombe (2014, p.254), personal interviews enable informants to express themselves freely, clarify their responses, and use their own language. In this study, we attempted to make the environment comfortable by reassuring the informants that even if they expressed their personal thoughts, rather than professional ideas, the data would be secured and not shared. In this way, the respondents felt free to talk, and we received positive feedback from the informants about this situation.

According to Leech, semi-structured interviews include a predetermined interview format but with open-ended questions (Leech,2002). This strategy was effective since it provided the informants with an opportunity to describe the leadership issues that new leaders may experience in their first role as a middle manager and the necessary competencies among the six listed leadership competencies. For instance, when we encountered information that required further elaboration, we continued asking different questions to obtain more details. Semi-structured interviews are useful for expert interviews, which was the case in this study since the informants were experts on the leadership challenges which new leaders may face in the hotel industry (Leech,2002). All the interviews were held in English language and after each interview, we transcribed the interview with the initial codes related to challenges (The last codes of challenges will be elaborated in greater details in Finding chapter) and checked any details that required attention. We also discussed the answers with each other between interviews.

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research may probe deeply into the informants' personal lives, hence, the informants require clarity about the material's usage and distribution (Denscombe, 2014,p.405). According to Denscombe (2014), ethical considerations should occur at the beginning of the study, during the investigation, and at the study's conclusion (Denscombe, p.414,2014). Along with the scientific usefulness of the research, informants should feel that their input is valuable to the researcher. Denscombe (2014) discusses how researchers have a moral duty to explain and protect the confidentiality and anonymity of informants in interviews (Denscombe, 2014,p.409). Ethical problems may also arise during the transcription, analysis, and reporting of obtained data. The researcher has a moral duty to examine the report's overall impact on the informants and their respective organizations (Denscombe,2014, p.420). The following ethical measures were taken into consideration for this thesis.

First, the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) was notified, and we waited to receive their approval before beginning the study (NSD reference number 202169). The study details were approved by NSD and were carried out following the NSD and University of Stavanger guidelines and regulations.

Moreover, during the initial contact by email with all the informants, we introduced ourselves by name, major, and university affiliation. We presented the thesis by explaining what the project is about, its purpose, what it would include, and how it would be conducted. We described to the participants how the interview would be recorded and estimated how much time it would take. All the informants were notified of their rights as participants and were assured that they had the right to leave the study at any time before, during, or after the interview and before the results were presented. Those who agreed to participate in the interviews were given a consent

form to sign. With regard to the recordings, it was specified that these would only be used by the researchers for this study, and the recordings would be deleted after the final results.

We clarified that there were no right or wrong answers during the interviews and that the informants could choose not to answer questions they did not want to answer because doing so helps to prevent bias in the research. Moreover, it was explained that the informants would be anonymous in the study and that no personal information would be disclosed. This included their name, age, gender, ethnicity, background, workplace, or any other information that may identify them. The informants were allowed to choose the time and place of the interviews to make them more comfortable. Furthermore, it was stated that if the informant decided to participate, all the gathered and analyzed information would be returned to the informant. Finally, our names, addresses, and other contact details were shared with the informants, which allowed them to contact us about anything related to the study during the research period. Ethical considerations and explanations were provided during the initial email contact with all the informants and were repeated before each interview.

Data Analysis

The process of qualitative data analysis is sometimes described in five steps: “data preparation; acquaintance with the data; data interpretation (create codes, categories, and concepts); data verification; and data presentation” (Denscombe,2009). This thesis also followed these stages: 1) To prepare the empirical data for this research, the data were securely saved and copied to protect both the material and the informants' identities. Additionally, before the analysis, the material was prepared by adding notes and comments. 2) Familiarity with the empirical data meant reading the content for various purposes—the first purpose was to obtain an overview and general understanding of the content. The second purpose was to include notes and comments from

the data collection process to easily remember and relate the data to the situation when the content was gathered. The third purpose was to analyze the deeper meaning of the content or, in other words, to “read between the lines.” 3) The process of analyzing and interpreting the empirical data as a directed content analysis is further described under the subheading "Analysis Method." 4) Data verification concerns gaining validity, reliability and, objectivity in the research and is further described in the discussion chapter. 5) The data are presented under the heading “Empirical Findings.” Chapter 4 provides all the empirical data of this study by explaining the important leadership challenges based on the leadership competencies, including quotes from the informants of this study.

Analysis Method

The method that was used to analyze the empirical data was content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is widely used in qualitative research as a “flexible method for analyzing text data” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1277). This thesis used directed content analysis, in which theories and relevant existing research are used to inform the codes and themes initially used in the analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1277), and findings from the study build on this existing knowledge base. In this study, a combination of deductive and inductive approaches was used. Part of this study is based on existing theory concerning leadership competencies for leaders in the hospitality industry, and this aspect represents a deductive approach. The deductive approach studies already existing theories, which means that the researcher has a predetermined idea about the subject under study and begins the research with some pre-existing understanding (Dr. Deborah Gabriel, 2013). However, the questions in this study are new and have not been previously analyzed in other studies, hence, these questions may lead to new findings and theory, which means this study is also inductive. In an inductive approach, the data are used to generate new ideas and

theories. At the end of the analysis, the researcher reflects on the new theory and findings to ascertain its relationship with other theories in the area of focus (Dr. Deborah Gabriel, 2013).

The latest version of NVivo software (released in March 2020) was used to identify data patterns from the interview transcripts. This software is used to code the important parts of interview transcripts. Coding is the process of categorizing words and phrases based on their relationships (Stuckey, 2015). These words and phrases are considered complete or raw data that can be further analyzed to provide deeper insights into the research issue (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). After each interview, the transcript was analyzed, and the codes were created. In this thesis, the main dimensions of each code are based on Bharwani and Talib's (2017) study. If there was any uncertainty in the transcription, the authors contacted the informant again for clarification. Table 2 summarizes the codes related to the challenges for each competency, which were identified during the data analysis. Moreover, the analysis also revealed new findings, that is, nonchallenges based on a lack of competencies. Table 4 is shown in Appendix D.

Table 2*Table of Codes*

Theme	Main Category	Code
		Guests' feelings of dissatisfaction
Cognitive competencies	Challenges based on a lack of problem-solving skills	Declining employee productivity
		Adding to the work of top managers
Functional competencies	Challenges based on a lack of financial management skills	Mistakes about time and staff planning
Social or interpersonal competencies	Challenges based on a lack of communication skills	Leader-employee misunderstandings
		Misunderstandings due to lack of information
		Inability to adopt different communication styles with different people
	Challenges based on a lack of teamwork skills	Inability to see the big picture of the business
Meta competencies	Challenges based on a lack of self-management skills	Work-life imbalance
		Decreased personal drive
		Misunderstandings of local norms and values
Local cultural competencies	Challenges based on a lack of local cultural knowledge	Miscommunications with guests in the local language
		Miscommunications with colleagues in the local language

Empirical Findings

This chapter presents the empirical data collected in this thesis regarding leadership challenges based on four important leadership competencies with the six subcategories mentioned in the literature review chapter. In addition, other skills essential for new leaders who are eager to be future general managers are presented according to the informants' perceptions. An in-depth analysis of the informants' responses yielded a new domain in competencies called “local culture.” Moreover, during the interviews, it was found that “creativity” is an important leadership skill and a “combination of experience and education” is an essential leadership competence for future leaders.

Cognitive Competencies

As previously mentioned in the literature review, cognitive competencies involve nine items. In this thesis, problem-solving skills were chosen as the most important of these skills. The challenges arising from the lack of this skill are explained in the following along with the informants' statements.

Challenges Based on a Lack of Problem-Solving Skills

According to general managers, problem-solving skills follow communication skills as the third most important skill of every leader, and a lack of such skills can cause challenges. These challenges can be divided into "Guests' feelings of dissatisfaction,” “Declining employee productivity,” and “Adding to the work of top managers.”

Guests' Feelings of Dissatisfaction

The informants stated that lacking problem-solving skills can directly affect guests' satisfaction. They stated that if a leader cannot solve guests' issues quickly and willingly, this

failure may cause dissatisfaction. Inf. 8 observed, "If a leader does not have any quick solutions for the guests' problems at the right time, it can cause feelings of total dissatisfaction for guests."

Guests' happiness is our priority, so a leader with weak problem-solving skills can change this feeling to unhappiness. For example, some guests were looking for a way to go to an attraction spot, and they asked the receptionist, who was also the front-office manager at that time, to help them, but unfortunately, he just showed them the taxi website, and I was there, and I saw how much the guests were upset with the job he did (Inf. 9).

Declining Employee Productivity

The informants stated that if leaders have weak problem-solving abilities, it can cause employee dissatisfaction, which may directly affect their productivity. Employees need their issues and problems to be important to the leader. If this consideration is not evident, or the leader shows weakness when addressing their problems or the organization's issues, their loyalty to the leader and the hotel will decline, leading to decreased productivity.

In the hotel industry, employees follow the leaders' rules and try to satisfy both guests and their managers, but if the leader cannot solve their problems and does not care about them, then this leads to job dissatisfaction, and employees ask, 'do they know what they are doing?' (Inf. 6).

A leader with weakness in problem-solving loses their employees. For example, when employees cannot come to work due to sickness or some personal problems and the leader cannot find a solution for this, the employees become upset and cannot see the manager as their leader anymore because they used to rely on the manager in the hard times and a job that makes people's lives hard is considered a bad job. And this even can lead to a decline in work commitment and loyalty to leaders and hotels. (Inf. 12).

When leaders cannot face the problems, their team cannot concentrate on other important things such as providing services to guests and not thinking about the problem, and they start to adapt because the problem is there and they have to do their job with that problem again and again until somebody solves it (Inf. 7).

Leaders who evade solving a problem mean their guests cannot get their expected service on time, and their employees do not feel comfortable to ask important questions, and they feel that there is no way of progressing in this work and then, unfortunately, we have lots of turnovers (Inf. 13).

Adding to the Work of Top Managers

The informants stated that poor problem-solving skills jeopardize the industry's overall performance and affect others, especially higher managers.

I think this might be the most important one after the communication challenges. For a leader, problem-solving is important because if you, as a department manager, cannot solve problems in your department, it will make someone else or a person in a higher position busy who is already working with other problems, so it is going to be a hassle. I think a person who does not know how to solve a problem is not the right person for this industry (Inf. 5).

I had a head chef who was complaining about one of his staff and one day I asked what your exact problem with her and he is answered she is calling me all the time and asking something. For example, she said yesterday "we do not have strawberries for a fruit platter, what can I do?" and every time that I am home and resting, I answer the phone because I think this time it is an important issue that she might have called me for, but it is not (Inf. 2)!

I have a good example. I had a front-desk manager, and I think she was a person who could not handle problems and so called me whenever she faced a problem and asked me to solve it and I was busy with my problems. As a general manager, I had a lot to do in addition to fixing her problem. Therefore, if it was a serious case that should have been fixed, she was not able to manage it at the same time, and the result of this was the dissatisfaction of the guests. At the end, the finger of blame was pointed at me! Furthermore, I had to do all this work, which caused me a great deal of stress (Inf. 14).

Functional Competencies

Functional competencies comprise 12 items. In this thesis, IT and financial management skills have been chosen as the most important skills. The challenges that arise from the lack of these skills are explained in the following along with the informants' statements.

Nonchallenges Based on a Lack of Information Technology Knowledge

The results from the interviews showed that general managers believe that for a number of reasons, a lack of IT knowledge does not cause any challenges for new leaders. These reasons are divided into “New generation,” “Swift adaptability of the new generation,” “Training programs,” “Receiving help from experts,” “Convenient technological systems,” and “Basic knowledge of IT.” In the following, these reasons are elaborated on with the informants' quotes.

New Generation

The informants claimed that leaders from the new generation would not have any problems with IT because they have grown up with it. Inf. 11 noted, “I think computer skills are really important but with people growing up with everything from gadgets and devices from their young times, it is a rare problem.”

General managers also emphasized that IT is a significant challenge for older generations as the technology did not exist when they were young.

I think the new leaders are far better at IT knowledge than myself from the older generation.

When it is about students coming from universities and getting a position as a middle manager, they have enough skills in IT and even more than necessary (Inf. 12).

Swift Adaptability of the New Generation

According to the informants, the adaptability of the new generation is high, and IT is no exception in this case since IT is involved in every aspect of their lives. Inf. 14 observed, “New leaders are fast and can solve any problem related to IT in a second.” Inf. 1 stated, “I have seen many times that young people learn the IT systems very quickly without any problem and are living with IT every day.”

I think the new generation is comfortable with the IT world because IT has become an integral part of their lives, and all aspects are related to IT in some way. Therefore, they easily adapt to the latest technologies in any situation because of their strong adaptation to the IT world (Inf. 13).

Training Programs

Informants stated that there are IT training programs, especially in Norwegian hotels, that help new leaders to learn IT skills. These courses update new leaders and solve any issues related to this field.

In hotels, the employees and leaders receive training such as video training and other learning programs. After that, they get a pop quiz. These training sessions are also for improving IT skills, so I think there is no challenge with IT skills for new leaders (Inf. 8).

Inf. 10 noted, “Whenever new systems or systems need to be updated, headquarters provides special training programs, so employees solve their problems and get new information.” Inf. 11 stated, “We have an info pack that is regularly updated, which is amazing and useful. This info pack can help leaders learn how to use systems.”

Receiving Help From Experts

Informants expressed that if there is an IT problem, professional people in headquarters are ready to help. These experts are available 24 hours. Inf. 12 stated, “We always have IT experts on call 24/7 who make the job easier for leaders.” Inf. 8 observed, “We always have experts as support that we can get help from if something goes wrong, and the IT department is no exception. We do not have problems with IT skills as we always have someone to help us.” Inf. 7 also noted, “Every job in the hotel industry is related to IT systems and sometimes employees struggle with system bugs, but most of the time, the problems get solved as there are always professional IT experts to help.”

Convenient Technological Systems

Informants said user-friendly hotel systems with all the data required in Norwegian hotels help leaders perform their jobs easily. Inf. 2 stated, “We have strong practical systems that are easy to use, and you just need to look into them. All the information you need is there.”

One of the main tasks of a leader is to control everything at once, and this can only be achieved with excellent systems that are easy to use. The hotel industry is no exception and uses systems where leaders can control everything, such as informing employees of various departments (Inf. 4).

Basic Knowledge of Information Technology

Some informants reported that basic IT knowledge is adequate in the hotel industry, and leaders may not have any problems in this regard. Inf. 9 stated, “If leaders have basic IT knowledge, even though they have not studied it and are experts in it, they are more than adequate for this industry.” Inf. 13 stated,

I have never faced any problems with information technology skills in new leaders because they have developed computer knowledge since, they entered school, but generally speaking, a basic knowledge of how to work with computers is enough in the hotel industry.

Challenges and Nonchallenges Based on a Lack of Financial Management Skills

Informants explained that although the lack of financial management skills does not cause many challenges for new leaders, the lack of this skill does cause one challenge: “mistakes concerning time and staff planning.” Mostly, however, a lack of financial managements skills is not a challenge for new leaders. The explanations for the challenges and nonchallenges arising from a lack of financial management skills are provided below along with the informants' statements.

Challenges

Mistakes Concerning Time and Staff Planning. According to the informants, challenges based on a lack of financial management skills occur only with staff scheduling. Norwegian hotel employees, apart from managers, work on an hourly basis, and if leaders allocate more time to staff when the hotel occupation is low, the financial outcome of this act has a detrimental effect on the hotel.

Leaders need to analyze how many hours they spend with their staff. By analyzing the hours, you can see how the hotel is doing. My boss sends me the hours we can have for

three months; based on that data, I set the hours for every department. If I cannot analyze and manage this time well, all departments will have problems that cause big issues in the hotel's performance (Inf. 1).

Informants also mentioned that dividing the hours between departments is important after analyzing the schedule.

It is critical to explain how much time employees are given because it can significantly impact the entire hotel. For example, in the housing department, we set aside a specific time for each room, typically 20 minutes. If it takes longer, guests may be forced to wait longer than an hour for their rooms, which can be damaging. We should be aware of all these points and apply them in planning department schedules (Inf. 4).

Nonchallenges

According to the informants' quotes, a lack of financial skills is not particularly challenging for new leaders. The reasons for this are divided into "Receiving help from financial experts," "User-friendly systems," and "Basic financial understanding" and elaborated upon in the following paragraphs along with the informants' quotes.

Receiving Help From Financial Experts. As previously mentioned, experts in different fields in the Norwegian hotels always help with financial issues.

I think in our industry we get help from professional people such as accountants, but the point is our accounting is centralized, and we have experts in this field to whom we can ask all questions, and they will help us. In my opinion, it is not a challenge because there are always experts there to help you (Inf. 5).

The participants believe that having good financial experts is important for hotels because there is always someone who can check their work according to the revenues to ensure it is correct.

In my first year as a leader, once I entered the wrong hours for some employees, which caused problems such as less or more salary for some of them. Our revenue managers helped me analyze and check the hours correctly. I am happy we have these people to help us because this is no longer a challenge (Inf. 11).

User-Friendly Systems. The findings of the interviews indicated that in the Norwegian hotels, there are financial systems that managers can use easily. Moreover, some informants believe that the financial systems in Norway are extremely accurate and easy to use.

Hotels try to have proper and updated financial systems because one of the main goals is to get more profit, so they choose systems that leaders can use easily, and whenever these systems are updated, leaders and managers can learn and use them (Inf. 9).

In Norway, we have a special revenue system which is extremely easy to use because it has the kind of data needed for salaries, so as a leader, it is not difficult for my colleagues in other hotels or me to work with this system. This is not challenging because it is so easy to work with the system (Inf. 1).

Basic Financial Understanding. Some of the informants believe that having basic financial knowledge is sufficient for leaders and managers to be able to perform the related tasks, and they can learn the more professional parts of this knowledge in the workplace. Some informants also indicated that there is less expectation that new leaders in the hotel industry will initially be very knowledgeable about finance.

From the start, it helps to know the basics of economics, like how prices work, how much money you make, and how to count. You will learn the rest on the job. I do not think you will have any problems if you know this much about the basics (Inf. 5).

I do not expect everyone to have a complete knowledge of finance to get the job. It is something you will learn; if you already know the basics from school, this is great. You can learn more professional knowledge during the job (Inf. 7).

Social or Interpersonal Competencies

Social or interpersonal competencies consist of nine items. In this thesis, communication and teamwork skills have been selected as the most important skills. The challenges arising from the absence of these skills are explained in the following along with the informants' statements.

Challenges Based on a Lack of Communication Skills

The results show that a lack of communication skills causes different challenges for new leaders. These challenges are divided into "Leader-employee misunderstandings," "Misunderstandings due to lack of information," and "Inability to adopt different communication styles with different people."

Leader-Employee Misunderstandings. The informants reported that communication is the most important part of this industry and that if leaders cannot manage proper communication, this inability can pose many different challenges for new leaders.

Some believe that they can work as leaders in the hospitality industry just because they have been leaders in other industries. NO! Being a leader in this industry requires a unique type of leadership and especially communication skills as we produce a service, not a product (Inf. 13).

The informants stated that the relationship between a leader and employee is extremely important because the quality of this relationship can affect their understanding of each other. Informants also stated that incorrect communication with employees places considerable pressure on the employees and makes them feel insecure, which may result in turnovers.

Without communication skills, solving misunderstandings between a leader and employee is impossible, and when it happens, it poses great challenges because these two groups are the main characters of this industry who try to make everything happen. These misconceptions of each other can grow and lead to other problems (Inf. 7).

One of our managers constantly pointed to a new employee who needed to work faster. The new employee was energetic, and his only drawback was the speed at work, which is a natural thing, and experience has shown that it gets better over time. However, because the manager repeated the request any times during the day and complained to the employee, the employee lost his motivation to work. The manager meant to repeat this sentence to make him more careful. However, due to his weak communication skills, the manager caused a misunderstanding among these employees, and finally, after enduring much pressure from the leader, the employee left this job (Inf. 10).

Misunderstandings Owing to a Lack of Information. Informants noted that if leaders do not send complete messages to their employees and forget to express important points during communication, this may have a damaging impact on the main objectives of the industry which are guest satisfaction and maximizing profit for the industry. Inf. 5 stated,

It was a situation when information was not communicated properly, so the head chef did not know that these people had an allergy to lactose, and he made food with lactose for that group. So, guests had to wait a lot because kitchen staff had to change the food, and it was not our goal to make people unhappy.

There was a time that the receptionist said to the restaurant manager that there are two groups of people who are coming at seven and all of them need fruit platters, and the restaurant manager did not say this to the kitchen staff. So, imagine when the kitchen staff

was busy making food for restaurant customers and had no time; suddenly, they had to make lots of fruit platters at seven. I know neither the restaurant food nor the fruit platters were the usual quality and the guests had to wait a lot (Inf. 12).

Inability to Adopt Different Communication Styles With Different People. According to the informants, since the hotel industry is a people industry, leaders should know how to communicate with different kinds of people. This point can affect the productivity of the employees and the hotel. The leader needs to ensure that the employees with different perspectives and demographics have completely understood the communication, while maintaining respect and the appropriate relationship between them. This is possible if the leader knows how to use different communication styles with each person according to their personality, age, gender, and culture.

As a leader, when I talk to my employees in one way, perhaps half of them understand what I mean, and the other half will have problems, so I need to use different communication styles to ensure everyone understands. If even only one of the employees does not understand the exact message, everyone will have problems while doing the job (Inf. 4).

There are some days that you must do everything on time and deliver the task at the right time because guests cannot wait too long, and if you as a leader cannot convey the message properly, then everything gets mixed up. You know people are different based on their personalities, ages, genders, and cultures, and if you do not know these details about your employees well, then it will be a tough job (Inf. 8).

I need to adapt when I send messages to my staff. Sending a message to receptionists is different from housekeepers. For example, most receptionists are educated, making communication easier with professional words than housekeepers with whom I should use simpler words (Inf. 1).

Sometimes you have to manage many people of different ages and genders, and if you have poor communication skills, that will be a challenge for new leaders. For example, you should communicate with old people respectfully and be kind and aware of female sensitivity because all of these aspects make up that person's personality (Inf 6).

This informant claimed that being nice and having different communication styles with different people is essential, especially in Norway.

Challenges and Nonchallenges Based on a Lack of Teamwork Skills

The informants expressed that a lack of teamwork skills is not challenging for several reasons. These reasons are divided into "Institutionalization from childhood," "Education," "Organizational training programs," and "The concept of collaboration." However, the informants did indicate that the only reason that a lack of teamwork could be challenging is "the failure to conceptualize big picture thinking." Their statements are presented in the following paragraphs.

Nonchallenges

Institutionalization From Childhood. Most informants expressed that teamwork skills are established in people from childhood, and they know how to work together and work in groups.

In my opinion, most people are more than capable of doing their work well and being nice to their coworkers, especially in this era, and I think humans grow up with the skills of teamwork, so it cannot be a challenge for new leaders (Inf. 8).

Inf. 6 stated, "People have gained experience in teamwork from childhood until now, so they know exactly how to work with others and manage the team."

Education. The informants reported that the educational environment, such as completing projects in groups, affects how people learn teamwork. Inf. 6 observed, “I think most people grow up these days learning to work in teams because of the educational environment, so teamwork is normally not a big issue.”

People learn to work in teams from the time they enter schools and do most of their projects together. They learn how to discuss the issues and behave with each other to construct an environment of equality in the group and achieve their goals. This is not a big challenge for them, specifically for young people and new leaders (Inf. 10).

Organizational Training Programs. The informants stated that the training programs and team-building activities that companies provide for employees and leaders, especially nowadays, are one of the easiest ways to acquire teamwork skills and solve problems relating to these skills.

I do not see teamworking as a challenge these days because I think the companies use more and more time to give you the training until they understand that you do not have any problem working with your team and colleagues (Inf. 1).

We have great programs for training in teamwork skills and team-building activities outside the workplace once a year or whenever we think we need it. All these programs help employees and leaders to update themselves, and as a result, we can see how much they have improved their teamwork skills; therefore, it is not a big challenge at all (Inf. 12).

The informants stated that these activities are usually held in entertainment venues, such as cinemas, amusement parks, and other sites.

Concept of Collaboration. The informants stated that these days, the concept of working together has become familiar to people who work in different industries, especially the hotel industry. It has become normal for people to think and make decisions together in a way that means everyone is satisfied.

As a leader, I have the decision-making power, but I do not use it a lot because, first, we are in Norway, and everyone is on the same level, and second, I think we need to manage things together, and I have seen the best results through having meetings and working together. Everyone is trying to collaborate and do their best, so teamwork is not an issue for new leaders (Inf. 6).

We try to have team meetings monthly and work together, and I can see how the employees are satisfied and how everything is going well when we have this kind of teamwork. These meetings help us to solve any issues together (Inf. 3).

In Norwegian culture, we have an expression that states, “*vi må hjelpe hverandre.*” It means that everyone must help other people if they can. This is exactly what we do in our hotel. We believe in teamwork and helping each other, especially when we face a big challenge (Inf. 1).

Moreover, decision-making in the group using the concept of collaboration is effortless because, in the end, everyone is happy as the leader tries to consider their opinions when making decisions.

When I want to make decisions about employees' work shifts, I try to talk with everyone and make the plan together. I can see everybody is happy because we need to show our employees how important their opinions are, so we do not have any problems in teamwork (Inf. 14).

Challenges

However, a lack of teamwork skills also presents a challenge to new leaders in the industry. This challenge is the “inability to see the big picture of the business.”

The Lack of Big Picture Thinking. The results show that leaders who lack teamwork skills cannot see the big picture of the business and think big, which is the main goal in this industry.

Sometimes I see managers that are so happy with the result of their department, and when an issue happens for another department, they act indifferently because they only care about their productivity. However, everything in the hotel industry works with all departments, and guests see us as a whole. Therefore, when the leader cannot see the big picture, we cannot reach our common goal (Inf. 7).

The informants explained that thinking big helps them to develop effective teamwork and plan everyone's tasks.

If I do not understand the importance of having a big picture of the industry and lack teamwork skills and present my job badly, it will not only affect my employees and me; it has bad effects on all other departments, so we need to work together all the time to be able to see and keep in mind the big picture of the industry (Inf. 9).

Meta Competencies

Meta competencies consist of 13 items. In this thesis, self-management skills are the most important of these items. The challenges that emerge from the absence of this skill are explained in the following along with the informants' statements.

Challenges Based on a Lack of Self-Management Skills

Based on the interviews, a lack of self-management skills can harm leaders. The challenges related to these skills are "Work-life imbalance" and "Decreased personal drive." These challenges are described in the following paragraphs.

Work-Life Imbalance. Most informants stated that not having a balance between personal life and work can cause challenges for leaders. Balance is key to self-management. Nothing is possible if leaders cannot balance work and life.

I am not impressed by people who try to work themselves to death. If you can show that you have a balance between your job and your own life, then this makes us work with you because it shows that you can manage yourself (Inf. 7).

I think that is something everyone as a new leader will experience. The feeling of having to show that you are good enough for this job can also make you work too much. It can also make you available anytime because you want to answer everything. After all, you want to be a good new leader, but managing yourself is more important than managing others because if I, as a leader, do not function, nothing will function (Inf. 5).

I think self-management is everything in leaders' jobs, and balance is the main factor in this skill. I mean, if leaders cannot find a balance between their work life and personal life, nothing is possible. Leaders cannot improve their skills and cannot even learn new skills. This is because they cannot specify any time for these things because of their life imbalance (Inf. 11).

Decreased Personal Drive. Most informants stated that not having motivation and a goal can be very challenging, such that it can influence the rest of the necessary skills mentioned in this thesis.

If the new leader has enough motivation, even if there is a challenge for him in all leadership skills mentioned, he will fight and strengthen himself and overcome that challenge. Something like this happened one month ago. One of the department managers did not have motivation and a goal for his job and he only worked for his salary. He said, 'I cannot continue this job anymore, I have had enough,' and he quit just because of some problems that he had with guests' satisfaction and some challenges with his team that I think was because of his poor communication (Inf.2).

The informants also stated that personal drive could motivate new leaders to learn new skills or improve other skills and overcome any challenges they face.

Someone who has a goal and is motivated enough to achieve it tries to learn. They build and strengthen themselves. If new leaders have challenges with all the stated skills, they solve them because they draw strength from their goal. However, alas, the one who does not have this motivation will be hit hard (Inf.14).

Inf. 13 stated, “It is all about motivation and also the eagerness to learn. New leaders who do not have these things cannot control themselves, their group, and their goals. They get stuck somewhere along the way.”

Challenges Based on Local Cultural Competencies

During the interviews and based on the informants' statements, we noticed another challenge, which we have called “challenges based on local cultural competencies.” The general managers emphasized these competencies and challenges for new leaders in the Norwegian hotel industry, especially nonnative leaders who are eager to obtain a higher position such as general manager. No particular questions on local culture were asked during the interviews. However, all the respondents mentioned the significance of this competence and its challenges in some way. The findings show that these challenges are divided into “Misunderstandings of local norms and values,” “Miscommunication with guests in the local language,” and “Miscommunication with colleagues in the local language.” In the following sections, these three subcategories are explained with the examples provided by the informants.

Misunderstandings of Local Norms and Values

Informants described how they could see international new leaders working in the Norwegian hotel industry struggling with problems resulting from local norms and values, which causes challenges, especially with Norwegian colleagues and guests.

I had a manager who was from another country where people are quite warm-hearted, and every time he greeted the employees he would talk to them for at least 15 minutes about various subjects unrelated to the job, and this raised an issue for one of the Norwegian employees because Norwegians are used to focusing as much as possible on the job in the workplace and prefer to be quiet, while that manager enjoyed talking to others in any

situation. I discussed this issue with the manager and told him he should learn about Norwegian norms and respect them while living in this country (Inf. 11).

One of my managers was from another culture and liked being friendly and wanted to connect with different people. One day he ran to me to ask if he had done something wrong because one of his Norwegian colleagues did not introduce him to her friend, and he was upset about that. I told him that this is because it is one of the norms in Norway that people do not want to impose themselves or situations on others. In Norway, norms and values are different, so he should learn them better so he can communicate with people easily (Inf. 14).

I have had managers who were arrogant and thought they were the ones who had the power, and every time they ordered something, they expected employees to follow their orders immediately. They maintained a distance between themselves and others, and the employees could not easily communicate with them (Inf. 3).

There was a manager who was always making decisions on his own and never shared his ideas with employees. This was entirely the opposite of the Norwegian culture in organizations. We always make decisions together because we see ourselves as a family and not only colleagues (Inf. 9).

Inf. 8 observed, "I am a foreigner here, and I know being familiar with local norms and values is mandatory, and every new leader must understand these things, and, if not, challenges hit them. You know, I experienced that several times."

Miscommunication With Guests in the Local Language

The general managers explained that knowing the Norwegian language could be helpful for leaders as they can communicate with guests properly and in a way that satisfies the guests

because they can understand each other. Some informants also emphasized learning the language was important for those who come from other countries to Norway and are eager to work as leaders in the Norwegian hotel industry.

I come from Spain, and, at first, I was a middle manager in a hotel. I know that everyone speaks English very well in Norway, but I noticed that knowing their language [Norwegian], especially in this industry, helps leaders to satisfy guests as the guests can express their problems or feelings easily in their style and causes the guests to feel friendly (Inf. 1).

Before I came to Norway, I had just started to learn the Norwegian language, and I thought only knowing some basic sentences and words was enough. However, when I faced a guest with a serious problem, I was confused about her request because, first, she was not fluent in English, second, she was talking in her dialect, and it was advanced, and I just knew basics. At that time, I perceived that I should learn the language completely to be able to communicate with guests easily (Inf. 3).

If I want to be honest, I must say that if someone is looking for a position as a leader, or especially those who are middle managers in Norway, having Norwegian language skills in the Norwegian hotel industry is a factor that solves many challenges (Inf. 4).

I am from Sweden, and of course I understand Norwegian, but I suggest anyone who comes from another country and wants to work as a manager in the Norwegian hotel industry focuses on learning the Norwegian language because otherwise, they will face too many problems (Inf. 3).

Miscommunication With Colleagues in the Local Language

Based on the interview results, talking with colleagues whose spoken English is not good and who are fluent in Norwegian is one of the challenges new leaders face daily in the workplace. With little knowledge of the Norwegian language, the leader cannot communicate their exact meaning, and it causes considerable confusion and difficulties for both leader and colleagues.

There are some employees who cannot say even a word in English because they are immigrants and just learned the Norwegian language and if the new leader cannot talk in this language, then the main factor that can help the leader and employees to communicate together will turn into a big challenge for both sides (Inf. 2).

I think if leaders and employees cannot talk in the same language, the process of showing what you mean might be time-consuming. As a leader, I cannot spend too much time making the employee understand what I want because in the hotel industry, time is everything, and things should be done on time (Inf. 10).

Once I was not satisfied with the job that one of the Norwegian housekeeping employees did, and as a leader, I could not speak Norwegian, so I had to show him how to do it since the housekeeping manager was on holiday. It was a difficult job for me. In the end, it caused me to stay at the hotel until 10 PM to finish the project because its deadline was in two days. Moreover, there was an occasion when we had a meeting where I started to speak in English, but some of the housekeeping employees could not understand the whole conversation, so I had to ask another person to translate my points, so imagine how much time we spent on that (Inf. 1).

The Important Leadership Skills and Competencies for New Leaders

The informants stated that “communication,” “teamwork,” “IT,” “problem-solving,” “financial management,” and “self-management” are important leadership skills for new leaders, and some also stated, as previously mentioned, that self-management skills are the most important skills. Communication skills are the second-most important, and problem-solving skills are the third. However, informants pointed out that the level of importance depends on the needs of the hotels and other factors.

Recently, hotels are looking for different people because the hotels have different needs and challenges. They are looking for what kind of skill set fits that hotel. Maybe I do not have all the skills of a general manager, but I have a skill that exactly meets the needs of that hotel, and that is precisely what is important. (Inf. 6).

I think it is very challenging to say what competencies are important as they all come together when there is a challenge. Things around us change all the time, much more now than in previous years. That is also a thing you have to take into consideration – that the answers now might not be the correct answers. Moreover, in two years, things do change. So, it is impossible to say what lies ahead because nobody thought Corona would happen (Inf. 4).

You cannot be 100% sure if communication competence comes before problem-solving. This is because the world is changing so fast and the hotel industry too. So, for future leaders, it is essential to know that if they want to work as a general manager, they should have the best of these competencies and be ready for everything because hotels' needs are changing at this time and the importance of these competencies too (Inf. 10).

Moreover, the informants indicated that there are two important factors that new leaders should work on that are important from a general manager's view of point. These are “creativity” as a leadership skill and “a combination of experience and education” as a leadership competence. These factors are elaborated on in the following statements.

Creativity as a Leadership Skill

According to the informants, creativity is an important skill of which new leaders should be aware and try to improve because lacking creativity in the present hotel industry could result in challenges for the leaders. Inf. 11 noted, “As we all know, the hospitality industry is changing a lot, especially after COVID-19, so I believe that creativity can be a key to solving many issues. To succeed, we must dare to do things differently.” Inf. 10 stated, “I believe that as a leader, I need to be creative and innovative to come up with good solutions to many of the problems we face in business and at work.”

I think something we see too little, at least in the Norwegian hotel industry, is creativity. We are so controlled. We have different types of hotels in Norway. Maybe I am using the wrong word, but we have boring products! All of them are sort of the same. I hope new leaders find a way of using creativity; something we miss in the Norwegian hotel industry (Inf. 7).

In this new world, most people can travel anywhere; hotels are one of the big parts of these journeys. In Norway, when it comes to the hotels, most of the services are the same, and this is something that guests get bored with, as they told me many times ‘when we go to different cities in Norway, most of the things in the hotels are the same.’ This is when creativity should start to make a big change in the Norwegian hotel industry, and our new leaders should improve their level of creativity (Inf. 4).

Combination of Experience and Education as a Leadership Competence

The respondents stated that, nowadays, only having experience in the hotel industry or only having the relevant education is no longer helpful for new leaders. They claimed that the world is changing, hence, the hotel industry is trying to make many changes, especially after COVID-19, and these changes are based on different strategies. Therefore, only having education or experience is not enough because these strategies require both. The hotel industry is looking for people who can use both education and experience to develop leadership with high productivity. Inf. 12 observed, “Leadership courses can teach you a lot, but there are two points. First, I believe that being a leader is part of who you are, and second, without practicing, those courses cannot be helpful for you.”

A leader can have a deep understanding of leadership when they use experience and education simultaneously. It is not important whether the leader has education before experience, it is important after gaining experience. Combine them and make a good leading plan (Inf. 14).

When I wanted to enter hotel school, we had to have two years of experience to be eligible to enter the school. At that time, having experience was extremely important for this industry; I did and did agree with this, but the world is changing, and I think leaders like us with strong experience in this industry should also have daily study related to our job. I would also like to say that there is no exception for new leaders either! Some even have masters or PhDs in this field, but they should also learn how to mix education and experience and use them correctly (Inf. 7).

I trust that having experience and a university education complement each other. When I was selected as a housekeeping manager, I just had the related education and had not

worked in that area, so I threw away my formal clothes, wore a t-shirt, and started working as a housekeeper. It helped me a lot because I noticed that I could use this experience to increase my knowledge and develop a different and better strategy for the department (Inf. 1).

Discussion

This chapter discusses the analysis of the empirical findings and compares these findings to the results of previous research, as well as highlighting the unique findings of this thesis. The chapter is presented in the same order as the results chapter.

As previously mentioned, the objective of this thesis was to ascertain the leadership challenges based on leadership competencies that new leaders face in a real environment in the Norwegian hotel industry. This thesis represents new research in the Norwegian hotel industry, and limited previous research on this subject is available. After gathering data and analyzing the results, we are able to address the two research questions of the thesis: 1) What are the leadership challenges based on leadership competencies for new leaders who are eager to be future hotel general managers? 2) What competencies and skills might new leaders need to achieve from the perspective of top managers in the Norwegian hotel industry?

Cognitive Competencies

Challenges Based on a Lack of Problem-Solving Skills

The analysis of the data showed that guests' happiness is one of the main goals in the hotel industry. Guests and their satisfaction with the hotels' service is one of the main factors for the growth of this industry, and satisfaction is the result of the different services that hotels provide. One situation that strongly affects satisfaction with a hotel is when a guest has a problem that requires an immediate solution. If they raise the problem with leaders and employees, they need to feel confident that the leaders can find a solution and also care about their issue. When leaders demonstrate these qualities, guests feel deep satisfaction. These findings were nearly identical to the ways in which Brophy and Kiely (2002) and Testa and Sipe (2012) described problem-solving skills in their studies. Brophy and Kiely (2002) researched middle managers of three-star Irish

hotels with regard to the skills that managers need, and their evaluation emphasized that problem-solving is one of the essential skills that directly relates to customer needs. The degree of importance of problem-solving skills shows that leaders should care about customers' complaints and dissatisfaction and try to solve their problems (Brophy & Kiely, 2002). Testa and Sipe (2012) researched tourism and hospitality managers in different sectors in the United States. They evaluated the leadership behaviors and skills that produce customer satisfaction and cited problem-solving skills as one of the primary skills for managers (Testa & Sipe, 2012). In addition, within the hospitality industry, employees rely on their leaders for help with concerns and questions, hence, having problem-solving skills can give leaders and managers the power to find solutions to any issues arising within their team. However, if a problem arises and the leaders cannot solve the issue effectively or are not able to solve it at all, the performance level of the hotel and its team is likely to decline. According to Zhou and Schriesheim (2010), leaders' attention to employees' needs and problems is one of the main factors influencing employee performance (Zhou & Schriesheim, 2010). Data analysis of this thesis revealed that employees are no different from guests with regard to receiving attention from managers when they have a problem. A lack of attention leads to job dissatisfaction and declining work commitment. Stum (1999) argued that the quality of leadership is reflected in an employee's level of commitment (Stum, 1999).

Moreover, the results showed that when managers cannot solve employees' problems, it directly impacts the employees' satisfaction and, ultimately, the guests' feelings of satisfaction. This means that employees with problems lose their focus on providing appropriate services for guests. Furthermore, if employees' problems remain unresolved, their loyalty begins to decrease, and the quality of the services provided will also decrease significantly, which again results in guest dissatisfaction. According to Sekyi et al. (2016), employee loyalty indicates a person's

commitment to the organization's success and future. Their study also showed that employees' relationship with their leader affects the employee's loyalty (Sekyi et al., 2016). These findings conform with the results obtained by Krot and Lewika (2012), which showed the importance of problem-solving skills for managers because employees rely on managers for many things, such as assistance with their problems (Krot & Lewicka, 2012).

Ultimately, if leaders do not face problems and solve them correctly, other staff members, especially higher managers, will become involved, and once again this situation will lead to guest dissatisfaction. The data analysis revealed that people who cannot solve problems will not get much higher than middle management and are not a proper fit for this industry. However, according to Bharwani and Talib (2017), this skill can be acquired with training and experience. The findings of this study regarding the importance of problem-solving skills for hotel managers are consistent with Bharwani and Talib's research, and the correlation between our results and Bharwani and Talib's (2017) study demonstrates that poor problem-solving skills, or the absence of these skills, may lead to a variety of leadership challenges.

Functional Competencies

Nonchallenges Based on a Lack of Information Technology Knowledge

According to Bharwani and Talib (2017), IT knowledge is one of the primary skills in the functional competencies that all leaders should have (Bharwani & Talib, 2017). Johanson et al. (2010) mentioned that this skill is ignored in the hospitality industry (Johanson et al., 2010). Sisson and Adams (2013) also stated that IT knowledge is a skill that graduate students should be aware of before entering the real environment as leaders (Sisson & Adams, 2013). However, after analyzing the data from the interviews, it appears that IT knowledge and computer skills do not represent a challenge for new leaders in this era. Consequently, these findings contradict those of

the previous studies, and the reasons for this contradiction are elaborated upon in the following. First, people in this era are entirely familiar with computers and gadgets. Second, the new generation are fast learners and can adapt to almost anything in this technological world. Third, training programs are one of the ways that companies allow their leaders and employees to acquire new information and solve their problems; IT is no exception to this. Norwegian hotels use different central systems, and most of the work is systematized, hence, leaders and staff are constantly updated about these systems through training programs. Fourth, in Norwegian hotels, experts are available to help employees utilize systems correctly, answer questions, and solve problems. Fifth, using different user-friendly systems, the hotel industry aims to reduce the workload and increase productivity; leaders can use these convenient systems to control everything simultaneously and ensure that all the workplace tasks are functioned well. For instance, housekeeping department is cleaning the rooms on time in accordance with the reception department's requests and the leader is monitoring all these tasks with the user-friendly systems. Lastly, having basic knowledge of IT and computers is sufficient in the Norwegian hotel industry since the systems are easy to use and user-friendly computers have become an integral part of leaders work to reduce the workload of the industry. *Challenges and Nonchallenges Based on a Lack of Financial Management Skills*

Challenges. According to some research, financial management skills are vital for leaders to create value for the industry and evaluate financial plans by using cost-benefit analysis because such analyses are extremely important (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011; Kay & Moncarz, 2004; Lenehan, 2000; Nelson & Dopson, 2001; Testa & Sipe, 2012). The data analysis showed that a lack of financial management skills only causes one challenge: "mistakes about time and staff planning." Financial skills could be challenging for leaders in terms of inaccurate analysis of time and staff

hours. A hotel may experience financial difficulties when leaders do not have adequate efficiency with regard to hourly schedule plans for departments and employees because of weak analytic skills. In the Norwegian financial system, employees other than managers are paid hourly. Therefore, according to the time budget of the organization, analyzing the time allocated to employees and the amount of time spent is extremely important for the entire organization and its employees. This kind of analysis also affects the quality of the services that are provided to the guests because time schedules are estimated based on hotel occupancy. In high peaks, the number of employees increases, which leads to better service for guests. However, if the manager's time analysis is incorrect and an insufficient number of hours are calculated in high-peak times, there will be a limited time for service, and the quality of the services will be reduced.

Incorrect schedule analysis also creates obstacles for employees since they will earn less income if they work less than their usual scheduled time. However, it also produces problems for the business. For example, if workers are compelled to work longer hours than scheduled, they have the right to register a complaint through their union. Overall, the results of this thesis are consistent with previous studies (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011; Kay & Moncarz, 2004; Testa & Sipe, 2012) concerning the significance of this challenge, as both pointed out the importance of financial analysis for leaders in the hotel industry and the challenge they could face without this skill (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011; Kay & Moncarz, 2004; Testa & Sipe, 2012).

Nonchallenges. Although one challenge was previously mentioned, after a thorough analysis of the data, it was revealed that the lack of financial management skills is not that challenging for new leaders for the following reasons. First, in the field of financial management, professional assistance is available, which consists of experts in finance and revenue. These people are always ready to provide a wide range of services to leaders and employees, such as accounting,

answering financial questions, solving problems, and so forth. Second, easy and efficient systems that organizations have designed to increase the hotel industry's productivity help leaders complete their work without difficulty. It should be noted that the primary goal of hotels is ultimately to generate profit, so they design systems in a way that makes this possible. Third, the comprehensive salary system in Norway helps leaders and companies solve employees' financial issues by containing their previous and current work information. Lastly, having basic financial knowledge is adequate for new leaders who want to reach the position of general manager. As previously mentioned, having user-friendly financial systems means there is no need for professional financial knowledge. It must also be noted that this knowledge can be learned on the job. Accordingly, for the above reasons, a lack of financial management skills in the Norwegian hotel industry does not result in particular challenges. However, some researchers believe that the hospitality industry should hire people as leaders who have financial skills or a degree in finance (Kay & Moncarz, 2007; Nelson & Dopson, 2001), but the results of this thesis show that poor financial management presents only one challenge. The other results indicated that professional financial management or a degree in the finance field is not significant or necessary in the Norwegian hotel industry for those who are eager to become general managers. Thus, the findings of the analysis contrasted with the results of previous studies in this regard.

Social or Interpersonal Competencies

Challenges Based on a Lack of Communication Skills

The data analysis indicated that the hotel industry is a people's industry, and communication can affect the industry's productivity profoundly because it plays an essential role, given that all the work is based on communication skills. With regard to the importance of communication skills, research indicates that it is essential that people, especially hospitality

students, who want to work as leaders in the hospitality industry have these skills before entering this industry (Christou & Eaton, 2000; Su et al., 1997; Testa & Sipe, 2012). Poor communication skills cause a variety of problems. First, if a new leader does not know what to do when there is a miscommunication between themselves and employees, this can result in lower employee motivation affecting the hotel's productivity, and, ultimately, the leader may lose some of the best employees. This is because, as the informants pointed out, subordinates feel pressured when there is miscommunication, and if they have previously been motivated in their work, they may lose their motivation to work in that environment following continuous leadership pressure. Indeed, the leader creates a toxic environment for team members with poor communication.

Second, it is evident that information is transmitted through communication. If communication is not correctly carried out, insufficient information will be transmitted, leading to employee confusion. In the case of persistent problems due to insufficient information and missing information in the communication path, the hotel's goal, reaching customer satisfaction and profit, is threatened. For example, according to one of the informants' statements, in the case of serving food containing lactose to people who are allergic to it, if the general manager does not provide all the information to the head chef, allergic people will become ill, which can result in serious problems for the hotel such as legal problems.

Third, as previously mentioned, everything in this industry is about people. In addition to their cultures, these people have different personalities, demographic factors, and moral characteristics. All leaders should be aware of these factors because managing employees can be challenging if they do not know how to adopt different communication styles with their staff. The failure to consider this point can result in employee dissatisfaction. Previous studies also mentioned that the hotel industry is a labor-intensive industry, and communication is everything

(Priksht et al., 2019; Tesone & Ricci, 2012; Wessels et al., 2017). It is also worth mentioning that behaving well with employees is considered very important in Norway.

Challenges and Nonchallenges Based on a Lack of Teamwork Skills

Nonchallenges. Analyzing the data revealed that teamwork skills do not present challenges for new leaders for the following reasons. First, teamwork is habitual behavior for new leaders; they have been institutionalized in this skill from childhood. People start to learn teamwork in childhood in groups, hence, we concluded that learning teamwork skills resembles working with computer tools in some respects. For instance, children of the new generation are learning to use gadgets and computer devices by imitating adults, and this is the same behavior that occurs in learning team working. When they see their peers or adults working together in groups, children begin to acquire this skill, which represents the process of institutionalization. Driskel and Salas (2018) also mentioned that teamwork has always been a part of human nature (Driskell et al., 2018). Second, the atmosphere in schools or universities, that is, completing projects and assignments together, teaches students how to work together. This means that before they enter the workplace as a real environment, they have teamwork skills.

Third, as the authors noticed in Norwegian hotels, team-building activities with fun as their basis are conducted yearly or when required. These programs enrich the relationships between employees and systematically introduce employees and leaders to teamwork and help them build successful teams. In addition to these fun activities, the formal training programs that the Norwegian hotels also provide are another explicit reason for improved teamwork. Hotels continue these training programs until they ensure that all employees and leaders understand the essence of working in teams.

Lastly, collaboration is rooted in Norwegian hospitality, and people are familiar with this concept and try to help others in hardship. Collaboration means more than teamwork because group members also share their opinions and try to resolve a problem together when the other group members cannot do so. This finding correlates with the study by Sherwood and Barnsteiner (2021). Leaders try to collect the opinions of all group members and make a decision with the help of others. Although the leaders have full decision-making power, they only use it in certain situations and try to make a decision with which everyone feels satisfied. Moreover, they do so because Norway is a society based on equality. It is worth mentioning that monthly group meetings significantly help prepare for group work in which managers are on the same level as the other employees. Several researchers have confirmed this equality between leaders and employees in organizations, especially Norwegian organizations (Ipsos & Zere, 2017; Lofquist & Matthiesen, 2018). As a result, teamwork facilitates all activities and cannot be considered a challenge, at least in Norway.

Challenges. The new leaders need to understand how their tasks relate to the work of other managers and how each person's job affects the whole hotel. Within the analysis, we observed the concept of "big picture thinking" in the hotel industry, according to the informants' statements. If new leaders do not understand this concept, they will face challenges and ultimately violate the hotel's main goal, which is to attain the maximum satisfaction of the guests and thereby increase profit. Because the guests view the hotel as a whole, the coordination of all the service groups ultimately leads to the guests' satisfaction. Although teamwork is not considered a challenge as a result of the training programs and other previously mentioned aspects, teamwork is possible only when leaders have a big picture of the industry and keep the organization's main goal in mind. Maxwell and Tsitoara (2020) confirmed that if leaders have poor teamwork skills, they will face

challenges, such as the inability to envisage the big picture, which is one of the main factors of successful teamwork (Maxwell & Tsitoara, 2020).

Meta Competencies

Challenges Based on a Lack of Self-Management Skills

When leaders cannot balance their personal and working lives, they are not perceived as someone on whom one can rely or trust. Such an imbalance may negatively impact their effectiveness concerning their staff and the whole hotel's productivity. Previous studies showed that self-management is the basis for acquiring other skills (Bharwani & Talib, 2017; Delamare & Winterton, 2005; Symington, 2012). According to Bharwani and Talib (2017) and Delamare and Winterton (2005), learning new skills is related to higher-order personal skills such as self-management skills. People who can manage themselves progress in life and work; as a result, they take the time to improve their skills and work on their personal development with determination (Bharwani & Talib, 2017; Delamare & Winterton, 2005). In addition, these people maintain a balance between their personal lives and work, which the informants considered extremely valuable. This is also consistent with the studies by Koubova and Buchko (2013) and Kaiser et al. (2011), who argued that a manager maintaining their personal life while producing excellent work leads to excellent performance (Kaiser et al., 2011; Koubova & Buchko, 2013). With such a balance, the leaders are able to manage the hotel effectively, and this balance is rooted in personal management. Those who cannot maintain this balance face problems in both life and work because this failure is a sign of a lack of self-management. The inability to manage oneself leads to the inability to manage others. The study by Ross (2014) confirmed that if a leader wants to lead others, they should first be capable of leading themselves (Ross, 2014). Additionally, new leaders

with high motivation and goals perceive a challenge as an opportunity to learn and try to learn from any challenge, mistake, or problem. Their motivation helps them to begin to improve or learn new skills. Such leaders always persevere and resolve the obstacles in their way until they achieve their goals.

Challenges Based on a Lack of Knowledge of Local Cultural Competencies

Local Norms and Values

Every culture has its own values and norms. Logically, a leader who seeks to be a suitable leader in a different culture must first study and learn the values and norms of that culture well. Doing so will help leaders to adopt a leadership style that is effective and specific for that environment. One of the main aspects of effective leadership is gaining the trust of employees in order to build strong working relationships (Kriegl, 2000). In this master's thesis, we discovered that if a non-Norwegian leader shows interest in the culture or language of their Norwegian employees, it enhances their credibility and employee trust and contributes to developing a healthy working relationship. According to Kriegl (2000), knowing the culture of the personnel and the dos and don'ts of other cultures is critical for leaders to be able to adjust and perform in a managerial role (Kriegl, 2000). In the Norwegian culture, some norms and values are important, and new nonnative leaders, especially in the hotel industry, should pay more attention to these to achieve successful leadership and productivity. According to Ipsos and Zere (2017), in Norwegian culture, especially in organizations, a flat structure exists, which means there is no distance between leaders and employees (Ipsos & Zere, 2017). If nonnative new leaders do not recognize the value of involvement in Norwegian culture and try to maintain the hierarchy and distance themselves from employees, they will face many challenges and are unlikely to continue working in Norway. In addition, new leaders in Norway should include others in the decision-making

process. This method may be time-consuming, but the process of decision-making is based on everyone's ideas, not just the leader's, and this inclusion affects job satisfaction and the well-being of employees (Ipsos & Zere, 2017,p.22).

Local Language

The data analysis revealed that a lack of local language knowledge may cause challenges for new leaders since there is a deep connection between accurate communication and language. As previously mentioned, a lack of communication skills can create challenges for future leaders. During the interviews, we concluded that knowing the Norwegian language is an important issue in the Norwegian hotel industry, especially for nonNorwegian future leaders. Kriegl (2000) elaborated on this concept and claimed that speaking the local language is essential for leaders, and that it is valuable for leaders to speak many languages or be eager to learn another language (Kriegl, 2000). This was also the case in this research, as promotion to a general management position in Norway requires fluency in the Norwegian language. The informants require leaders with high proficiency in Norwegian, hence, future leaders need to amend their language skills for improved communication. However, it is not only necessary for leaders to understand employees but also to understand the guests. According to the informants, in the Norwegian hotel industry, if Norwegian language competence does not exist, leaders will not be able to fulfill the guests' needs. When leaders can talk to Norwegian guests in their own language, guests can easily express their concerns and problems rather than attempting to do so in another language. This helps the guests feel more comfortable and welcome and allows them to enjoy their stay without any language struggles. They will feel that they are receiving distinctive service, which will result in satisfaction with the whole service package of the hotel. When a new leader knows the local language, which in this case is Norwegian, the hotel's productivity increases because a valuable service is given to

the local guests. The analysis showed that some guests feel well-disposed when the hotel leaders speak to them in the local language. Moreover, there are many dialects in the Norwegian language, and results showed that when the leader only knows the basics of this language, they will have problems understanding guests' requests or problems correctly, which results in misunderstandings. Similarly, according to the informants, not all employees can speak English; some have only learned the Norwegian language owing to immigration and other factors or because they are not comfortable with other languages. In addition, if leaders need to explain something to their subordinates in a language other than the employees' language, it will be a time-consuming process and may mean services are not carried out on time or in the way the leaders have instructed. When leaders cannot speak Norwegian, it will be extremely difficult for the employees who only speak Norwegian to report something to the leader or ask for help. This results in poor communication between the leader and employee, leading to poor productivity for the industry, leader, and employee. The analysis showed that knowing the Norwegian language is an influential factor in the hotel industry's success in Norway.

The Important Leadership Skills and Competencies for New Leaders

According to previous studies, three skills are crucial for leaders: first, communication skills; second, problem-solving skills; and third, self-management skills (Brophy & Kiely, 2002; Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011; Testa & Sipe, 2012). However, the order of these priorities in this thesis is different; this may be for several reasons, such as the different needs and challenges of hotels, the recent developments in the hotel industry, the differences between the countries in which the research was conducted, or changes after COVID-19. The analysis showed that self-management skills are the paramount skill for leaders. If the leaders do not know themselves (for example,

strengths and weaknesses), they cannot learn any skills or even improve their existing skills and will be unable to successfully lead people (Bharwani & Talib, 2017; Botha & Musengi, 2012; Ross, 2014). As previously mentioned, self-management skills fall under the category of meta competencies. As Bharwani and Talib (2017) noted, meta competencies help leaders learn new things or improve their abilities. This result concerning the priority of self-management is consistent with previous studies (Bharwani & Talib, 2017; Chung-Herrera et al., 2003).

In the analysis, communication skills were considered the second-most important skill, and problem-solving the third. Communication skills are essential for any business, especially people-intensive businesses such as the hotel industry; however, we concluded that if a leader is able to know and manage themselves, they will be able to manage others. They will also be able to utilize appropriate and professional communication with employees by using different communication styles, which demonstrates that self-management is the first step to proper communication. Moreover, we also observed that if leaders do not know themselves and cannot connect with employees, even if they have the best problem-solving skills, they will still be unable to solve problems because the previous two skills are the main steps to using their abilities to solve problems.

Although the order of essential priorities was arranged as previously stated, based on the current analysis, we concluded that the needs of each hotel will determine the prioritization of the skills. This result is consistent with previous studies. For instance, some studies showed a significant relationship between hotel ratings, hotel location, and the required leadership competencies (Narangajavana & Hu, 2008; Tavitiyaman et al., 2014). According to Lim and Noriega's (2010) study on leadership techniques in resort hotels with financial restrictions, some resort hotels were experiencing financial difficulties and were reducing or downsizing their

employees. To overcome these challenges, the resorts' general managers needed to develop leadership characteristics, including vision sharing, empowerment, and a pleasant working atmosphere (Lim & Noriega, 2010). For instance, a manager with strong communication skills should be appointed in a hotel with challenges with employees in which the employees feel dissatisfied.

Ahmad and Zainol (2011) also discussed the leadership competencies required for the general manager of a five-star resort hotel. These competencies were completely different from those required in the previous example since the general manager of this kind of hotel should have a complete package of leadership competencies (Ahmad & Zainol, 2011). These two studies show that the leadership competencies and skills that general managers are utilizing in hotels are completely dependent on the characteristics of each hotel and are therefore not the same for all hotels. It should also be kept in mind that the prioritization of these skills and competencies might change in the future for reasons other than those explained in this thesis.

Creativity as a Leadership Skill

The analysis showed that creativity is another crucial leadership skill for new leaders in the Norwegian hotel industry. Since the lack of creativity in Norwegian hotels is noticeable from the perspective of Norwegian hotel general managers, it must also be obvious to the guests. Consequently, creativity could be one of the main factors distinguishing a hotel from its competitors. Creativity entails obtaining new perspectives on situations, challenging old methods, and creating and implementing new or cutting-edge ideas (Suh et al., 2012). Bharwani and Juhari (2013) observed that creativity helps all hospitality employees understand the nuances of the host-guest relationship, evaluate the guests' requirements, and create great experiences for the guests

(Bharwani & Vinnie Jauhari, 2013). According to Sternberg and Vroom (2002), creativity is an imperative part of being a leader because it is how a leader develops ideas that others will follow. A practically intelligent leader may be able to work well with others and motivate others to follow them, but they may do so with poor or old ideas. Many leaders are educated and intelligent regarding practical matters but also uncreative. They can lead people through their abilities to influence them but not as a consequence of their goals or creativity (Sternberg & Vroom, 2002). Ottenbacher and Gnoth (2005) indicated that because of the growing competition in the hotel industry, creative skills are becoming more critical for hotel leaders (Ottenbacher & Gnoth, 2005). Bharwani and Talib (2017) also stated that since the world is changing so rapidly owing to new technologies and competition between hotels, the guests' expectations are higher, and they require new services. For this reason, leaders should change their old routines and bring their creativity to the market to create these services and meet customers' requirements. Bharwani (2015) expressed that the key to success in the hospitality industry is utilizing intangible sources such as creative people who make a difference, however, current leadership lacks creativity (Bharwani, 2015). This is precisely the point stated by the informants about the Norwegian hotel industry. They observed that the services offered to guests have become repetitive and boring, and the lack of creativity in providing these services can be considered the main factor in the hotel's stagnation instead of the hotel itself being considered the main attraction for guests. As a result, new leaders need to cultivate creativity.

Combination of Experience and Education as a Leadership Competence

A powerful competence can be created by combining knowledge and experience, which enables the leader to look at issues and problems with a more open perspective and make the right

decision according to what requires change. The data analysis also revealed that not only is experiences necessary in the hotel industry, but experience along with knowledge helps leaders to lead in the best possible way in this industry. In this way, leaders can provide fully satisfy the guests and themselves, thereby increasing the industry's productivity. The analysis also showed that from the viewpoint of the informants, new leaders are divided into two groups. First group is extremely proud of having an academic degree in hotel management. These new leaders think that by knowing some theories they can lead a hotel without experience. Conversely, second group only have experience in the industry without related education and do not agree with the first group. From the informants' statements, we inferred that education and experience should converge in leadership, especially in the hotel industry, because some aspects require experience, while others require education. The analysis identified that a combination of education and experience as a leadership competence for new leaders is extremely important in the Norwegian hotel industry. However, Hodari and Sturman's (2014) study showed that the importance of education and experience for senior managers depend on the type of hotel. For example, independent hotels only care about the leader's experience as a senior manager, and chain hotels emphasize a combination of education and experience in senior managers (Hodari et al., 2014). Consequently, the findings of this thesis regarding the importance of experience *and* education contradict those of Hodari et al. (2014). According to the analysis of this thesis, the combination of experience and education is important in the all types of Norwegian hotels, however, in Hodari et al. (2014) study, the importance of experience and education is based on the type of the hotels.

Trustworthiness of the study

Validity

Validity refers to the accuracy of the empirical data collection techniques (Denscombe, p394,2017). Factors that may improve the validity of the research include determining whether the informant is telling the truth, comparing the data from the informants with other sources, determining whether the data are reasonable, and speaking with specialists whose opinions are regarded as highly reliable (Denscombe, p395,207). As previously mentioned, this thesis investigated the informants' perceptions of leadership challenges based on the leadership competencies; therefore, there were no right or wrong answers. The questions in the interview guides concerned leadership challenges, which were not considered a sensitive topic or a topic that would result in the informants not wanting to share their views or tell the truth. The informants answered all the questions, implying that they felt comfortable sharing their perceptions of leadership challenges and that the empirical data is trustworthy. The interviews were conducted with experts in the field whose ability to answer these research questions was considered to be reliable. The final results were intended to be returned to the informants to acknowledge and confirm what they had stated. The informants, however, trusted the researcher and the analysis and did not want to read through the empirical material after it had been analyzed.

Reliability

The term “reliability” refers to the ability of a measurement instrument to provide consistent findings when the same approach is repeated. A high degree of reliability indicates that identical studies of the same type will generate similar results (Denscombe, p394,2017). Reliability involves providing clear explanations for how the study was conducted, what analysis was performed, and what the data indicate. This information enables other researchers to repeat or

replicate the study, while considering how other researchers may have influenced their research (Denscombe, p394,2017).

The goal of this study was not to repeat past research but rather to add to current research and existing hypotheses. This was accomplished by studying previously unstudied data and incorporating new empirical data. This information was acquired via interviews with informants whose perspectives had not previously been explored, in Norway, an area that had not previously been researched in this regard.

Objectivity

For this study, great effort was made to create an environment in which the informants felt comfortable speaking their minds and could forget that they were being recorded. As the researchers, we have prior work experience in the hospitality industry and formal education in tourism and hospitality management. We are also familiar with the research field, as evidenced by the literature review. The informants stated that they could use words and describe certain aspects of the hospitality industry without having to explain them, so prior knowledge and experience were considered an advantage in this study. In addition, the informants mentioned that the interview guides were clear and demonstrated an understanding of the hospitality industry and the leadership challenges based on leadership competencies. According to Balderstone (2012), interviewers must be objective to produce successful interviews, which means trying to listen, avoiding inappropriate comments, using neutral verbal answers, avoiding comments such as “good” and “excellent,” and avoiding non-verbal communication such as nodding or frowning (Balderstone, 2012.p69). Therefore, we followed Balderstone (2012) description of an interview and an open-minded and unbiased approach was used to listen to the informants, and during the transcription process, we

paid attention to the informants' voices, tone, and body language. The authors used a recording device – not a mobile phone – because mobile phones can be unreliable owing to technical problems, such as low battery and lack of memory space, resulting in low recording quality. The recording device was also used to allow us to have more time to listen to the informants rather than writing because writing is distracting for both informants and interviewers.

Limitations

The major limitations of this study were a small sample size and data saturation, which meant that as we progressed in the interview process, the answers became repetitive and most of the managers agreed on the answers to some questions in some way. Another limitation is that the empirical data could have been influenced during the process of gathering the empirical data or during the interpretation of the empirical data. However, these limitations have been countered to the best of our ability, as noted in the methodological chapter of this study. It is also important to remember that these findings are based on the informants' perceptions of leadership challenges based on leadership competencies for new leaders at this time. This means that the results of other studies on leadership challenges might be different if other informants such as department managers or middle-level managers, fresh managers, or housekeeping managers from other cities were interviewed or if the study was conducted in another location such as another country. Moreover, these results can also change over time as jobs and methods of working are constantly changing, leading to various challenges and competencies becoming more or less important for certain positions. Another limitation is that the results are not generalizable because they are only from one country and its large cities. In addition, time was a limitation of this thesis, which had an effect on the writing in several ways. First, no pilot group was used to check the interview questions. Second, the literature search only included publications in English, however if there had

been more time, literature in Norwegian language could also have been included and used to analyze the local culture. This may have enriched the outcomes on that topic.

In summary, the results indicate that the lack of some skills causes challenges; however, the lack of other skills appears to cause no challenges or only one. From the general managers' point of view, a lack of communication, problem-solving, and self-management skills create many challenges. However, the lack of skills such as IT knowledge are not a challenge for new leaders, while not having skills such as teamwork and financial management create only minimal challenges. The interviews and analysis also revealed new information, as the data suggest that a lack of "local cultural competence" can cause challenges for new leaders in the Norwegian hotel industry. Concerning the essential skills for new leaders, the data show that all six leadership skills under the main four leadership competencies (cognitive competencies, functional competencies, social or interpersonal competencies, and meta competencies) are essential for new leaders. However, we also identified "creativity" and "a combination of experience and education" as a new essential skill and competence, respectively, for leaders.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes the study by summarizing the key research findings in relation to the research aims and research questions, demonstrating the value and contribution of the research to the academic and business communities. This chapter also proposes opportunities for future research.

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

1) What are the leadership challenges based on leadership competencies for new leaders eager to be future hotel general managers?

The results indicate that a lack of some skills in four groups of competencies might be challenging for new leaders, while some present no challenges or only cause challenges in some facets. The skills that might cause considerable problems for new leaders who lack them are problem-solving skills, communication skills, and self-management skills. The skills that could cause problems at some points if they are absent are financial management skills and teamwork skills, and the skills that do not appear to be problematic for new leaders if they are absent are related to IT.

2) What competencies and skills might new leaders need to obtain from the perspective of top managers in the Norwegian hotel industry?

The findings show that there are some skills and competencies of which new leaders should be aware in the Norwegian hotel industry as future general managers. Moreover, during the research, we identified another important competence that could present challenges for new leaders in the Norwegian hotel industry – local cultural competence. It was found that “local norms and values” and “local language” are points of which new leaders, especially nonnative leaders should be aware. Apart from the three most important skills of new leaders – self-management skills,

communication skills, and problem-solving skills – we found during the analysis that “creativity” as a leadership skill and “a combination of experience and education” as a competence are also important for new leaders in the Norwegian hotel industry. Moreover, the priority level of skills changes based on different reasons over time and new leaders should always pay attention to these changes.

Thesis Contributions and Suggested Implications

Theoretical Contributions

The evaluation of the existing literature found that although various studies on general managers and hospitality industry-specific competencies have been conducted independently, there is no research on the competencies required for new leaders who are eager to be future general managers in the hotel industry. In addition, we could not find research related to the new leaders' challenges based on their competencies. By collecting competencies from earlier studies from 1988 to 2018, we categorized the most important leadership skills under Bharwani and Talib's (2017) leadership competency framework. Based on these skills, we tried to ascertain the challenges that new leaders in the Norwegian hotel industry may face. This is the first research to be conducted on challenges for new leaders based on competencies in the Norwegian hotel industry. The results of this thesis could be helpful for future researchers of leadership challenges based on competencies in different sectors of the hospitality industry. The conceptual competence model by Bharwani and Talib (2017) that was used in this study includes all the competency domains found in this study; however, the world is rapidly changing, and the results of this study show that some competencies, such as IT knowledge, are no longer important for new leaders. We conclude however that the new competence, “local cultural competence,” can be added to Bharwani and Talib's (2017) framework, especially when future researchers want to investigate a

specific country as was the case with this study in order to update its functions for today's hospitality industry.

Practical Contributions

Current and Future Hospitality Students. One could argue that it is important for current and future hospitality students, especially those who are interested in reaching higher positions in the industry, to understand what the industry requires of them. In other words, it would be helpful for these students to know what competencies and skills are important and what challenges arise from a lack of these competencies. In addition, these findings could help students in applying for programs and elective courses that they believe will give them the opportunity to develop these competencies. These results provide students with understanding the leadership challenges in hotel industry and the opportunity of adapting their education and work experience toward achieving their desired careers. The findings of this thesis may also help some students change their beliefs about education and experience in the hospitality industry since some only believe in education and some only in experience. Therefore, this study may help such students to recognize that a combination of education and experience is advantageous, especially for those who are eager to become hotel general managers in Norway. Moreover, this research could be helpful for international hospitality students who aspire to be future general managers in a country other than their homeland. The results show that they should consider learning that country's language and culture before entering the real environment in order to be a successful leader.

Hospitality Educators. These findings could be viewed as guidelines indicating exactly what the hospitality industry is looking for and how hospitality educators could help prepare their graduates to face challenges in the industry. Educators must balance fulfilling the academic

requirements established by national laws, regulations, universities, and standards with meeting the needs of the industry. Academic requirements are usually clear and controlled, but it is also important to ascertain what the industry needs and change the curriculum to meet those needs. The findings of this study may also help educators to encourage the industry to provide possibilities such as trainee programs and internships for their students. Knowing the challenges that exist in a real environment could be helpful in improving the quality of education, the educational experience for students, and their future possibilities. According to the important leadership skills mentioned in this thesis – self-management skills, communication skills, problem-solving skills, and creativity – hospitality schools and universities could plan special courses based on the aforementioned skills to prepare the students who might be the general managers of the future.

Hospitality Industry. The greatest benefit of these types of studies for the hospitality industry is the further development of this industry because graduating students will have knowledge of the competencies essential for leaders and the diverse problems, they are likely to face in that position. The results of this thesis could also be helpful for current leaders or those who have been admitted to top management positions. The findings could help these leaders in the hospitality industry learn ways to develop their skills and, for example, pay more attention to areas of the hotel industry that they did not consider may be challenging. From the practical perspective, the proposed challenges and competencies can help organizations such as hotels to improve their strategies and choose leaders who have qualifications that will meet the needs of the organization. In this way, fairness is observed through the selection of competent people and the organizations achieve their desired results. Choosing a leader is important and difficult because the organization should be aware of the skills that affect the leader's performance. A leader's superior performance

can be attributed to their meta-competencies, which are deeply ingrained and innate compared to functional competencies. It should be considered that identifying these inherent abilities throughout the recruiting process is critical to making an appropriate selection of high-potential applicants who show the best fit for the position of a leader. Moreover, knowing the challenges that leaders face in the hotel industry, especially in Norway, helps the industry to look for new ways of improving their productivity. For instance, the analysis of this thesis showed that not having enough creativity could be challenging in the Norwegian hotel industry. Consequently, having and improving creativity skills in leaders can be one of the ways to solve some of the challenges in the industry. Obtaining “local culture competence” as a new finding in this study is also helpful for the hospitality industry in other countries to evaluate the effect of this competence on their improvement in this regard.

Future Studies

Gaining a better understanding of the leadership challenges new leaders in the hotel industry are facing and the competencies they lack that are creating these challenges will require further studies. These studies could consist of larger samples such as informants at different positions and levels of the hierarchy, and from various segments of the hospitality industry. These studies should be conducted in other locations, both in Norway and abroad, to be able to compare and even generalize findings in the future. Leadership challenges of hospitality leaders could be studied through a comparison of the perceptions of newly graduated hospitality students and the perceptions of top managers. Another approach could be to study hospitality educators and the academic requirements they should fulfill in their curriculum and how the necessary skills and competencies could fit into these requirements. Based on the findings of this study, universities and skills could also conduct research on how to design a curriculum to teach skills such as

creativity and self-management to hospitality students. Researchers could explore the effectiveness of various trainee programs and/or internships that teach the skills required for new leaders. Another study could address the leadership challenges for new hospitality leaders based on the different leadership styles. One study could use a pilot group to choose the important competencies and interview questions. Although this study found that IT skills do not represent a challenge for future leaders, there should be further and specific research on this topic, especially concerning the effects of this skill on other competencies such as social competencies. Future research could also examine the leadership challenges that middle-level hospitality managers are facing as limited studies on this subject currently exist.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

This interview is for academic purposes and the progress of our final master thesis at the University of Stavanger (UiS). Your participation is highly appreciated.

Background:

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your education level?
4. How long have you been a hotel general manager?
5. What is the size of the hotel you are managing?

Challenges Based on Cognitive Competence

Challenges based on lack of problem-solving skills

- Please describe the possible challenges that lack of problem-solving skills can pose for new leaders.
- Have you experienced this challenge in your position? If so, in what way? Can you give us some examples?
- Have you experienced this challenge with guests, employees, and crises?

Challenges Based on Functional Competencies

Challenges based on lack of information technology knowledge

- Please describe the possible challenges that lack of IT knowledge can pose for new leaders.

- Have you experienced this challenge in your position? If yes, in what way? Can you give us some examples?

Challenges based on lack of financial management skills.

- Please describe the possible challenges that lack of financial management skills can pose for new leaders.
- Have you experienced this challenge in your position? If yes, can you elaborate more?

Challenges based on social or interpersonal competencies.

Challenges based on lack of communication skills.

- Do you think that new leaders suffer from lack of communication skills? If so, in what way? Could you please give us some examples?
- Have you experienced this challenge in your position? If yes, can you elaborate more?

Challenges based on lack of teamwork skills.

- Do you think the lack of teamwork skills is challenging for new leaders? If so, in what way? Could you please give us some examples?
- Have you experienced this challenge in your position?

Challenges based on Meta competencies

Challenges based on lack of self-management skills.

- Please describe the possible challenges that lack of self-management skills can pose for new leaders.
- Have you experienced this challenge in your position? Can you elaborate more?

Concluding question

- Is there anything you would like to add that you have not discussed on the subject?

Exploratory question to deepen the interview

- What do you think are the essential skills for new leaders?

Appendix B: Figure of Competency Framework For Hotel General Managers

Cognitive Competencies	Meta Competencies
<p>Strategic thinking Decision-making skills Creativity and Innovation Systems Thinking Information Gathering Skills Planning Prowess Critical Thinking and Analytical Skills Risk Taking Change Management</p>	<p>Emotional Resilience and Composure Optimism Achievement Orientation Self-Awareness Self-Confidence Self-Management Initiative Diplomacy Time Management Ethics and Integrity Adaptability and Flexibility Tenacity and Perseverance Openness and Willingness to Learn</p>
Functional Competencies	Social Competencies
<p>Service Orientation Business and Industry Expertise Revenue Management Skills Interviewing and Selection Skills Commitment to Quality Resource Allocation Skills Crisis Management Skills Employee Performance Appraisal Skills Ability to Manage Stakeholders IT (Computer) Skills Financial Analysis and Cost Control Knowledge of Statutory Compliances</p>	<p>Effective Communication Skills Cultural Intelligence Networking Skills Conflict Management and Resolution Teamwork Orientation Diversity Management Skills Fostering Motivation Active Listening Skills Developing Others</p>

Note. This framework adapted from Bharwani and Talib (2017)

Appendix C: Table of Competency- Focused Research in the Hospitality Industry

No	Author(s)	Focus of Study	sample	country	Key findings of the study
1	Tas (1988)	Hotel manager trainees	75 general managers	(USA)	36 competencies required for hotel manager trainees were identified such as communication, financial management, and computer use. Human relations skills emerged as the essential competencies.
2	(Baum, 1990)	Hotel managers	118 general managers	UK	Similar findings as Tas (1988) study except for that UK managers rate legal/regulatory competencies higher than their US counterparts.
3	Okeyi et al. (1994)	Entry-level F&B managers	20 food service managers 30 hospitality educators	USA	Human relations and managerial skills were rated higher than technical competencies.
4	(Hsu & Gregory, 1995)	Entry-level hotel managers	222 hospitality students 30 industry professionals	Taiwan	Communication and leadership skills were rated as the most important.
5	(Tas et al., 1996)	Entry-level hotel manager trainees	107 lodging managers	USA	The study is based on Sandwith's (1993) five-domain managerial competency model. Interpersonal and leadership competencies were rated as the most important.
6	(Siu, 1998)	Middle-level hotel managers	145 senior hotel managers	Hong Kong	human relations skills as essential competencies for middle-level hospitality managers.
7	Christou and Eaton (2000)	Hospitality graduate trainees	91 general managers	Greece	Soft skills related to guest care and employees emerged as the most important competencies same as Tas's (1988) and Baum's (1990) studies.
8	Kay and Russette (2000)	Hotel management competencies (F&B, Front Office, Sales)	52 hospitality managers	USA	Customer-centered leadership competencies are rated as the most important.
9	Lenehan (2000)	General managers	48 general managers	Ireland	67 dominant competencies were identified. Oral communication and interacting with people were the most important competencies.
10	(Yup Chung, 2000)	graduates of hotel management programs	800 graduates	Korea	The most important competencies were directing and supervising the work of others, enhancing socialization and.
11	Nelson and Dopson (2001)	Hotel executives, human resource specialists, alumni of the hospitality school	302 hotel managers, 94 human resource specialists, 250 alumni members	USA	The most important competencies were problem-solving, leadership abilities, financial management, and communication skills.
12	Brophy and Kiely (2002)	Middle-level managers and general managers	21 general managers 38 middle managers	Ireland	Customer care and managing staff were identified as key competencies. Strategic competencies were found to be more relevant for GMs.

No	Author(s)	Focus of Study	sample	country	Key findings of the study
13	Agut et al. (2003)	Hotel and restaurant managers	80 hotel and restaurant managers	Spain	Economic-financial management and computing emerged as key gaps.
14	Chung-Herrera et al. (2003)	Senior hospitality managers and leaders	137 senior hospitality executives	--	Self-management competencies emerged as the most important.
15	Kay and Moncarz (2004)	Hospitality managers	82 senior managers 102 middle managers	----	Human resource management skills may be more advantageous for and often employed by entry-level and middle managers, executives with excellent financial management skills may demand senior-level roles
16	Brownell (2004)	General managers	111 general managers	USA	Leading teams, effective listening, and coaching employees were identified as critical competencies.
17	(Mayo, Cynthia R.Thomas-Haysbert, 2005)	Hospitality and tourism management graduates	24 industry professionals 36 hospitality educators	----	Revenue management, communication, and change management were rated as top competencies.
18	(Tsai et al., 2006)	Entry-level hotel managers	47 industry professionals 57 hospitality educators	Taiwan	Interpersonal competencies were identified as the most important and technical competencies as the least important.
19	Raybould and Wilkins (2006)	Hospitality graduates	371 industry managers 211 undergraduate students	Australia	problem-solving, interpersonal skills, teamwork, and leadership were identified as important competencies.
20	(Çizel et al., 2007)	Middle-level managers	168 middle-level managers	Turkey	Human resource management was identified as most excellent skill as Agut et al.'s (2003) study.
21	(Staton-Reynolds & Ryan, 2009)	Entry-level hotel managers	127 hospitality recruiters 161 hospitality educators	USA	The top three competencies for both groups were integrity, enthusiasm, and ability to learn.
22	Jeou-Shyan et al. (2011)	Senior managers	25 senior managers	Taiwan	Leadership, crisis-management, and problem-solving emerged as the most important.
23	Spowart (2011)	Hospitality students	65 final-year hospitality management students	South Africa	Customer service and the ability and willingness to learn were considered the two most important competencies.
24	Testa and Sipe (2012)	Service leadership	110 industry managers	USA	Developed a service leadership competency model comprising 100 behaviors, clustered into three broad areas- business savvy, people savvy and self-savvy
25	Suh et al.(2012)	Hospitality managers	147 hospitality managers 149 students	USA	listening, effective guest interaction, and leadership were identified as essential competencies
26	(Bharwani & Vinnie Jauhari, 2013)	Frontline hospitality employees	-	-	Proposed the construct of hospitality intelligence (HI) which included emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence, and experiential intelligence.
27	Tavityaman et al. (2014)	General managers	503 general managers	Thailand	Team building, ethics, leadership, and communication skills emerged as the most important competencies as Chung-Herrera et al.'s (2003) study.
28	Sisson and Adams (2013)	managers in lodging, food and beverage, and meeting and event management	102 managers	USA	The essential soft, challenging, and mixed skills such as Developing positive customer relations, Working effectively were identified as the most important competencies that should be taught to hospitality students.

No	Author(s)	Focus of Study	sample	country	Key findings of the study
29	Shariff and Abidin (2015)	Hospitality graduates	30 industry experts 116 hospitality graduates	Malaysia	Forty competencies were clustered under eight broad domains. Communication skills, fundamental business skills, and interpersonal skills were among the top-rated competencies.
30	Jiang and Alexakis(2017)	Hospitality graduates and managers	260 hospitality students 252 hospitality managers	Southwest Florida	Managers identified, "willingness to learn" and "time management skills" as essential competencies while Students think that "teamwork skills" and "knowledge of the hospitality industry" are vital.
31	(Weerakit & Beeton, 2018)	middle-level managers in hotels and resorts	820 middle-level managers	Thailand	The most critical leadership competencies were "coaching and empowerment," "intellectual stimulation," "interpersonal skills," "role-modeling," and "inspirational motivation.

Appendix D: Table of Repeated and Top-Rated Competencies Based on Hospitality

Academic Papers.

No	competencies	Cite	Number of repetitions
1	Communication (oral and written)	(Tas, 1988) , (Okeiyi et al., 1994) , (A.Ashley et al., 1995) , (Lenehan, 2000), (Lin, 2002), (Brophy & Kiely, 2002) , (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003),(Kay & Moncarz, 2004), , (Brownell, 2004),(B. D. V Tesone & Ricci, 2009),(Cheung et al., 2010)(Huang & Lin, 2010)(Cheung et al., 2010), (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011),(Johanson et al., 2011) ,(Spowart, 2011)(Johanson et al., 2011), (Suh et al., 2012) , (Sisson & Adams, 2013), (Tavitiyaman et al., 2014) , (Jackson, 2014) , (Hertzman et al., 2015), (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017), (Mistry et al., 2021).	25
2	IT(computer) skills	(Tas,1988), (A.Ashley et al., 1995), (Breiter & Hoart, 2000), , (Lenehan, 2000), (Nelson & Dopson, 2001), (Mandabach et al., 2001), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Agut et al., 2003), (Kay & Moncarz, 2004), (Brownell, 2004), , (Buhalis & O'Connor, 2005), (B. D. V Tesone & Ricci, 2009), (Johanson et al., 2011), , (Cho & Menor, 2012), (Testa & Sipe, 2012) , (Jackson,2014), , , (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017),(Sisson & Adams, 2013),(Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	19
3	Teamwork orientation	(A.Ashley et al., 1995), (Lenehan, 2000), (Brophy & Kiely, 2002), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Agut et al., 2003), (Brownell, 2004), (Kay & Moncarz, 2004), (B. D. V Tesone & Ricci, 2009), (Cheung et al., 2010), (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011), (Testa & Sipe, 2012), (Sisson & Adams, 2013), (Tavitiyaman et al., 2014),(Hertzman et al., 2015),(Jiang & Alexakis, 2017), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	16
4	Financial analysis and cost control	(Tas, 1988) , (Brophy & Kiely, 2002) , (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003) , (Kay & Moncarz, 2004) , (Bennis, 2007) , (Bharwani & Talib, 2017) (Tas,1988), (A.Ashley et al., 1995), (Breiter & Hoart, 2000), (Lenehan, 2000), (Nelson & Dopson, 2001), (Lin, 2002) , (Brophy & Kiely, 2002), (Agut et al.,	15

No	competencies	Cite	Number of repetitions
		2003), (Kay & Moncarz, 2004), (Swanger & Gursoy, 2010), (Millar et al., 2010), (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011) , (Sisson & Adams, 2013), ,(Wessels et al., 2017) , (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	
5	Problem-solving/system thinking	(Tas,1988), (A.Ashley et al., 1995), (Lenehan, 2000), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003),(Agut et al., 2003), (B. D. V Tesone & Ricci, 2009), (Huang & Lin, 2010)(Johanson et al., 2011),(Testa & Sipe, 2012),(Becket & Brookes, 2012), (Sisson & Adams, 2013), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017), (Mistry et al., 2021).	13
6	Self-management	(Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Agut et al., 2003), (Raybould & Wilkins, 2005), (Garavan et al., 2006), (B. D. V Tesone & Ricci, 2009),(Cheung et al., 2010), (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011), (Testa & Sipe, 2012), (Yang et al., 2014),(Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	10
7	Commitment to quality	(A.Ashley et al., 1995) , (Lenehan, 2000), (Nelson & Dopson, 2001), (Brophy & Kiely, 2002), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011),(Testa & Sipe, 2012), (Suh et al., 2012), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	9
8	Developing others	(Lenehan, 2000),(Agut et al., 2003) , (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003) , (Brownell, 2004) , (Kay & Moncarz, 2004) (Bennis, 2007) , (Bharwani & Talib, 2017) , (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011) , (Testa & Sipe, 2012).	9
9	Crisis management skills	(Lenehan, 2000),(Agut et al., 2003),(Chung-Herrera et al., 2003) , (Brownell, 2004) , (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011).	5
10	Resource allocation skills	(Lenehan, 2000), (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011), (Testa & Sipe, 2012), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	4
11	Fostering motivation	(Tas, 1988) , (Brophy & Kiely, 2002) , (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003) , (Kay & Moncarz, 2004) , (Bennis, 2007) , (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	6

No	competencies	Cite	Number of repetitions
12	Critical thinking and analytical skills	(Lenehan, 2000), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011), (Hertzman et al., 2015),(Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	5
13	Creativity and innovation and initiative	(A.Ashley et al., 1995), (Lenehan, 2000), , (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Testa & Sipe, 2012), (Hertzman et al., 2015), , (Bharwani & Talib, 2017),(Mistry et al., 2021), (Ngayo Fotso, 2021).	8
14	Decision making skills	(Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Brownell, 2004), (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011), (Suh et al., 2012), (Testa & Sipe, 2012),(Jackson, 2014),(Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	7
15	Information gathering skills	(Lenehan, 2000), (Kay & Moncarz, 2004), (Testa & Sipe, 2012), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017), (Ngayo Fotso, 2021).	5
16	Interviewing and selection skills	(Lenehan, 2000),(Nelson & Dopson, 2001), (Kay & Moncarz, 2004), (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011), (Suh et al., 2012), (Sisson & Adams, 2013), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	7
17	Revenue management skills	(Brownell, 2004), (Kay & Moncarz, 2004), (B. D. V Tesone & Ricci, 2009),(Millar et al., 2010), (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	6
18	Optimism	(Bennis, 2007) , (Mistry et al., 2021).	2
19	Planning prowess	(Brophy & Kiely, 2002), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Brownell, 2004), (B. D. V Tesone & Ricci, 2009), (Testa & Sipe, 2012) , (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	6
20	Openness and willingness to learn	(Lenehan, 2000), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Suh et al., 2012) , (Testa & Sipe, 2012), (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	6
21	Time management	(Lenehan, 2000), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Agut et al., 2003), (Brownell, 2004), (Testa & Sipe, 2012), (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	7
22	Business and industry expertise	(Kay & Russette, 2000), (Lenehan, 2000), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Brownell, 2004), (Cheung et al., 2010), (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011), (Suh et al., 2012), (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017) ,(Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	9

No	competencies	Cite	Number of repetitions
23	Risk taking	(Lenehan, 2000), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Testa & Sipe, 2012), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	4
24	Conflict management and resolution	(Agut et al., 2003), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Brownell, 2004), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	4
25	Optimism	(Agut et al., 2003) , (Brownell, 2004) , (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011) , (Testa & Sipe, 2012), (Mistry et al., 2021).	5
26	Ethics and integrity	(Lenehan, 2000), , (Agut et al., 2003), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Brownell, 2004),(Suh et al., 2012), (Sisson & Adams, 2013),(Tavitiyaman et al., 2014) , (Mistry et al., 2021).	8
27	Strategic thinking	(Lenehan, 2000), (Brophy & Kiely, 2002), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Brownell, 2004), (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011), (Suh et al., 2012),(Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	7
28	Diversity management skills	(Chung-Herrera et al., 2003) , (Brownell, 2004) , (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	4
29	Adaptability and flexibility	(Lenehan, 2000) , (Agut et al., 2003) , (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003) , (Brownell, 2004), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	5
30	Diplomacy	(Lenehan, 2000) , (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003) , (Testa & Sipe, 2012), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	4
31	Self-confidence	(Lenehan, 2000) , (Agut et al., 2003) , (Brownell, 2004) , (Testa & Sipe, 2012), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	5
32	Change management	(Lenehan, 2000), (Brophy & Kiely, 2002), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Suh et al., 2012), (Testa & Sipe, 2012), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	6
33	Achievement orientation	(Lenehan, 2000) , (Agut et al., 2003) , (Testa & Sipe, 2012), (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).	4
34	Active listening skills	(Lenehan, 2000), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Brownell, 2004), (Suh et al., 2012).	4

No	competencies	Cite	Number of repetitions
35	Emotional resilience and composure	(Lenehan, 2000), (Agut et al., 2003), (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011).	3
36	Self-awareness	(Lenehan, 2000), (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011), (Testa & Sipe, 2012).	3
37	Tenacity and perseverance	(Agut et al., 2003), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Brownell, 2004).	3
38	Openness and willingness to learn	(Lenehan, 2000), (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Suh et al., 2012), (Testa & Sipe, 2012).	4
39	Employee performance appraisal skills	(Lenehan, 2000), (Brownell, 2004), (Kay & Moncarz, 2004).	3
40	Ability to manage stakeholders	(Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), (Suh et al., 2012), (Testa & Sipe, 2012).	3
41	Knowledge of statutory compliances	(Lenehan, 2000), (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011), (Suh et al., 2012).	3
42	Cultural intelligence	(Brownell, 2004), (Jeou-Shyan et al., 2011), (Suh et al., 2012).	3

Appendix E: Table of Nonchallenges Codes

Theme	Main Category	Codes
Financial Competencies	Nonchallenges Based on IT Skills	New Generation
		Swift adaptability of the new generation
	Training Programs	
	Receiving help from experts	
Financial Competencies	Nonchallenges Based on Financial Management Skills	Convenient Technological systems
		Basic Knowledge of Information Technology
		Receiving help from financial experts
Social or Interpersonal Competencies	Nonchallenges Based on Teamwork Skills	User-friendly systems
		Basic financial understanding
		Institutionalization from childhood Education
		Organizational training programs
		Concept of collaboration

Appendix F: Information Letter and Consent Form

Are you interested in taking part in the research project?

“Investigating the Leadership Competencies Challenges of New Leaders from the Perspective of General Managers in the Norwegian Hotel Industry”

This is an inquiry about participation in a master thesis project. The primary purpose is to explore the leadership challenges that newly graduated students who have recently been given a middle manager position and are eager to be a general manager face. In this letter, we will provide you with information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

This project aims to increase our knowledge of the challenges for newly graduated students who have recently been given a middle manager position and are eager to be a future general manager and what skills might need to be achieved from the view of top managers in the Norwegian hotel industry. The new leaders might figure out what kinds of skills they might need to be successful with this knowledge. A detailed review of the literature shows a few research about possible challenges that new leaders face. Therefore, the aim is to increase our knowledge that might help new graduate students eager to be a manager in the Norwegian hospitality industry.

Who is responsible for the research project?

The University of Stavanger is the institution responsible for the project. The project supervisor is Associate Professor Annie Haver, University of Stavanger. Faculty of Social Sciences, Norwegian School of Hotel Management. The researchers are master students Armin Joneidi and Atiyeh Kheirabi of the Norwegian School of Hotel Management.

Why are you being asked to participate?

You have been approached to participate in this project as you are an experienced leader. We have already talked with some of the general hotel managers in Stavanger, and they agreed to participate in this master thesis project.

What does participation involve for you?

This qualitative study involves an in-depth interview based on an interview guide made in advance. If you chose to participate in this project, you would be participating in this interview conducted by researchers for this master thesis. The interview will be completed in English and will take approx. 1 hour and half. The interview includes questions about leadership challenges that new leaders may encounter when taking a step in the management area. Your answers will be sound recorded electronically and will be transcribed. Recordings will be deleted after the transcription. The recording will remain anonymous throughout our entire research.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences if you choose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your privacy – how we will store and use your data

We will only use your data for this information letter's purpose(s). We will process your data confidentially and under data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

Personal interviews will collect data, but data will not be identifiable as we will use pseudonymization, meaning processing the data collected in a way that one can no longer be linked to the person. We remove identifiable information such as names, age, contact details, and ID numbers. Data will be recorded during the interviews and transcribed after. Recordings will be deleted after the transcription.

The only persons who have access to your data are the writers of the master's thesis and supervisor.

- Only the researchers, Armin Joneidi, Atiyeh Kheirabi, and the supervisor of this master thesis Annie Haver connected with the institution; University of Stavanger, Faculty of Social Sciences, Norwegian School of Hotel Management is responsible for the project and will have access to the personal data.

- The data collected will be coded to ensure that it is kept anonymous. Names of managers and the company will be replaced. Participants and the company will not be recognizable in publications. However, at some point in the thesis, we might write about age, gender, occupation, level of education, and the company size.

What will happen to your data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end middle of June 2022. All data collected for this project will be transcribed and deleted at the end of the project. Your contact information will be deleted immediately after the interview is conducted. Data archived for potential future research for Associate Professor Annie Haver at the Norwegian School of Hotel Management until June 2023; after this date, all data will be deleted.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal information that is being processed about you
- request that your data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection
- The authority regarding the processing of your data

What gives us the right to process your data?

We will process your data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with the University of Stavanger, Faculty of Social Sciences, Norwegian School of Hotel Management, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that personal data processing in this project follows data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- the University of Stavanger via Project Supervisor: Annie Haver by email: (annie.haver@uis.no) or by telephone: (+47) 415 365 02
- Researchers: Armin Joendi, by email: (a.joneidi@stud.uis.no) or by telephone: (+47)467 49 043
Atiyeh Kheirabi, by email: (a.kheirabi@stud.uis.no) or by telephone
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by telephone: (+47)464 12 562
(personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Sincerely,

Master's thesis supervisor:

Annie Haver

annie.haver@uis.no

Authors:

Armin Joneidi And Atiyeh Kheirabi

joneidiarmin@gmail.com

atiehkheirabi90@gmail.com

(+47)467 49 043/ (+47)464 12 562

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project " Investigating the Leadership Competencies Challenges of New Leaders from the Perspective of General Managers in the Norwegian Hotel Industry" and have been allowed to ask questions. I give

consent:

- to participate in a personal interview (in case of covid in the Zoom Meeting) with the Researcher, Armin Joneidi, and Atiyeh Kheirabi of the project.
- For the information, I tell to be a part of the master thesis authorized by the researcher, expect the personal data to be made de-identifiable.
- for the de-identifiable data to be stored after the end of the project
- for potential further research on the Leadership field at the Norwegian School of Hotel Management

I consent for my personal data to be processed until the project's end date, approx. *August 15th, 2022*

(Signed by participant, date)