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# Desirable Competencies for Middle Managers in the Hospitality Industry

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## Abstract

The purpose of this thesis was to gain an updated understanding of the needs of the hospitality industry, and the desirable competencies for middle managers. Most previous studies have stated the importance of continuant research on desirable competencies to update hospitality educators and students. This study was conducted to explore what competencies are desirable, why they are desirable, and how one can acquire them. Few, if any previous studies have explored how desirable competencies can be acquired. This thesis adapted qualitative methods to gain a better understanding of the informants' perception of desirable competencies. The informants were the general, front-office, food and beverage, and housekeeping managers, at three different hotels of three different hotel-chains. The informants were personally interviewed with the use of semi-structured interview guides and fake CV's the informants had to rank during the interviews. The result demonstrated desirable competencies in seven different competency domains: conceptual/ creative, leadership, human resource, interpersonal/communication, finance, technical and culture/language. The first six competencies are similar to Sandwith's Competency Domain Model (1993); however, this thesis adds another competency domain, culture/language. The competencies were found to be desirable for all manager but were utilized in various ways depending on the manager's position. According to the informants, most competencies could be taught and developed through a mixture of formal education and work experience, while some competencies were considering part of one's personality or upbringing. The results provide a better understanding of desirable competencies in the hospitality industry and the importance of cultural/language competencies which has not been highlighted in previous studies.

**Key words:** *Competencies, Competency Domain Model, Culture and Language, Hospitality Management, Middle Management.*

## Table of Content

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
|  | <b>II</b>   |
| <b>Abstract</b>  | <b>III</b>  |
| <b>Table of Content</b>                                      | <b>IV</b>   |
| <b>Table of Figures</b>                                      | <b>VII</b>  |
| <b>Acknowledgement</b>                                       | <b>VIII</b> |
| <b>Introduction</b>  | <b>1</b>    |
| <i>Purpose</i>   | 2           |
| <i>Research Questions</i>                                    | 3           |
| <i>Outline of the Thesis</i>                                 | 4           |
| <i>Abbreviations and Explanations</i>                        | 4           |
| <b>Literature Review of Competency Domains</b>               | <b>5</b>    |
| <i>Conceptual/Creative Competencies</i>                      | 8           |
| <i>Leadership Competencies</i>                               | 11          |
| <i>Interpersonal/Communication Competencies</i>              | 13          |
| <i>Human Resource Competencies</i>                           | 16          |
| <i>Financial Competencies</i>                                | 18          |
| <i>Technical Competencies</i>                                | 21          |
| <i>Culture/Language Competencies</i>                         | 24          |
| <b>Method</b>  | <b>28</b>   |
| <i>Research Design</i>                                       | 28          |
| <i>Why a Qualitative Study?</i>                              | 28          |
| <i>Sample</i>  | 29          |
| Location and hotels.   | 29          |
| <i>Data Collection and Measurements</i>                      | 31          |
| Interviews.  | 31          |
| Fake cv's.   | 34          |
| <i>Data Analysis</i>   | 34          |
| Analysis method for this study.                              | 35          |
| <i>Ethical Considerations</i>                                | 36          |
| <i>Verification of Empirical Data</i>                        | 38          |
| Validity (or trustworthiness).                               | 38          |
| Reliability (or dependability).                              | 39          |
| Generalisation (or transferability).                         | 40          |
| Objectivity (or confirmability).                             | 41          |
| <i>Limitations</i>   | 42          |
| <b>Empirical Findings</b>                                    | <b>44</b>   |
| <i>Conceptual/Creative Competencies</i>                      | 44          |
| Why are conceptual/creative competencies desirable?.         | 44          |
| How can these conceptual/creative competencies be acquired?. | 48          |
| <i>Leadership Competencies</i>                               | 49          |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Why are leadership competencies desirable?.                           | 49         |
| How can these leadership competencies be acquired?.                   | 52         |
| <i>Interpersonal/Communication Competencies</i>                       | 54         |
| Why are interpersonal/communication competencies desirable?.          | 54         |
| How can these interpersonal/communication competencies be acquired?.  | 58         |
| <i>Human Resource Competencies</i>                                    | 60         |
| Why are human resource competencies desirable?.                       | 60         |
| How can these human resource competencies be acquired?.               | 64         |
| <i>Financial Competencies</i>   | 65         |
| Why are financial competencies desirable?.                            | 65         |
| How can these financial competencies be acquired?.                    | 69         |
| <i>Technical Competencies</i>   | 70         |
| Why are technical competencies desirable?.                            | 70         |
| How can these technical competencies be acquired?.                    | 75         |
| <i>Cultural/Language Competencies</i>                                 | 76         |
| Why are cultural/language competencies desirable?.                    | 76         |
| How can these cultural/language competencies be acquired?.            | 80         |
| <b>Analysis</b>   | <b>82</b>  |
| <i>Conceptual/Creative Competencies</i>                               | 82         |
| Why are conceptual/creative competencies desirable?.                  | 82         |
| How can these conceptual/creative competencies be acquired?.          | 85         |
| <i>Leadership Competencies</i>  | 87         |
| Why are leadership competencies desirable?.                           | 87         |
| How can these leadership competencies be acquired?.                   | 89         |
| <i>Interpersonal/Communication Competencies</i>                       | 91         |
| Why are interpersonal/communication competencies desirable?.          | 91         |
| How can these interpersonal/communication competencies be acquired?.  | 94         |
| <i>Human Resource Competencies</i>                                    | 95         |
| Why are human resource competencies desirable?.                       | 95         |
| How can these human resource competencies be acquired?.               | 99         |
| <i>Financial Competencies</i>   | 100        |
| Why are financial competencies desirable?.                            | 100        |
| How can these financial competencies be acquired?.                    | 103        |
| <i>Technical Competencies</i>   | 105        |
| Why are technical competencies desirable?.                            | 105        |
| How can these technical competencies be acquired?.                    | 109        |
| <i>Cultural/Language Competencies</i>                                 | 110        |
| Why are cultural/language competencies desirable?.                    | 110        |
| How can these cultural/language competencies be acquired?.            | 113        |
| <i>Summary</i>  | 115        |
| Discussion of theoretical implications.                               | 117        |
| <b>Conclusion</b>   | <b>119</b> |
| <i>Answers to the Research Questions</i>                              | 119        |
| 1) What are the desired competencies for each department manager?.    | 119        |
| 2) Why are these competencies desirable for each department manager?. | 120        |
| 3) How can these competencies be acquired?.                           | 121        |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <i>Contributions and Suggested Implications Based on this Study</i> | 122        |
| Theoretical contribution.   | 122        |
| Current and future hospitality students.                            | 123        |
| Hospitality educators.  | 124        |
| Hospitality industry.   | 125        |
| <i>Limitations</i>  | 126        |
| <i>Further Studies</i>  | 127        |
| <b>References</b>   | <b>129</b> |
| <b>Appendix</b>   | <b>138</b> |
| <i>Interview Guide General Managers</i>                             | 138        |
| <i>Interview Guide Department Managers</i>                          | 141        |
| <i>Fake cv's</i>  | 144        |

### Table of Figures

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Table 1 Informants Interviewed for this Study .....                                  | 30  |
| Table 2 Overview of Competence Domains, Competencies and Ways of Acquiring them..... | 115 |
| Table 3 How to Acquire Competencies .....  | 116 |
| Table 4 Competency Domains and Competencies .....                                    | 119 |

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## Introduction

Many education institutions have courses, programs and research focusing on the field of hospitality. What is particularly important for these tertiary educational institutions, is to assess what competencies the hospitality industry desire. This is important for them to be able to provide the students with the necessary competencies, and to be able to combine these teachings with fulfilling the needs of the academic stakeholder groups (Raybould & Wilkins, 2006). Previous studies have indicated that the needs of the hospitality industry have not always been met by the educational intuitions for various reasons. For example, Enz Renaghan & Geller (1993) found that the industry wanted interpersonal, teamwork, adaptability, and leadership competencies. Whereas the educational institution in their study believed that competencies such as analytic skills, conceptual thinking and literature knowledge, were more important for the hospitality industry (Enz et al., 1993). Van Hoof (1991) stated that the industry wanted maturity and experience in their candidates. The author explained that these competencies or attributes could not be to taught, but required experience to acquire. Some of the most cited articles written on the topic of hospitality competencies expressed that continuous research and investigation is absolutely necessary. This will result in an updated and relevant understanding and knowledge of what competencies the hospitality industry believe are desirable in the present time (Wessels, du Plessis & Slabbert, 2017; Sisson & Adams, 2013; Spowart, 2011; Kay & Russette, 2000; Tas, LaBrecque & Clayton, 1996; Okeiyi, Finley, & Postel, 1994; Baum, 1990; Tas, 1988). Okeiyi et al. (1994) as an example, demonstrated the importance of this fact by highlighting the following quote in their article: “Hospitality educators and students most keep abreast of industry expectations and incorporate them into hospitality management curricula” (Okeiyi et al., 1994, p. 27).

This is important because educators have to identify, understand and teach these competencies to prepare future managers with the right competencies, as this is the only way to develop the hospitality industry (Tas, 1988; Baum, 1990). Furthermore, Wessels et al. (2017) argued that future managers need to be equipped with the necessary competencies to function better as trainees. In addition, this can ease the recruitment process for both students and the industry, and finally make the future managers more efficient in their future roles (Wessel et al., 2017). Millar, Mao & Moreo (2010) reasoned that to provide students with these desirable competencies, hospitality educators and hospitality managers must work together to make that possible. In turn, this could have other positive effects, such as reducing the turnover numbers, improving the hiring process, and produce future managers who are better equipped with the right competencies according to Chung-Herrera, Enz, & Lankau (2003) and Kay & Russette (2000). The consequences of not assessing the necessary competencies can be found in a recent doctoral dissertation by Åberg (2017). The author studied the presence of, and the requirements of formal educational in the tourism and hospitality industry. It was found that students were not seen as having the desirable competencies according to the industry. The results demonstrated that the graduates were often found in other industries instead. This lead the author to conclude that the specific tourism and hospitality knowledge possessed by the graduates was not being utilized in the industry. This meant that their unique competencies were not contributing to the development of the tourism and hospitality industry (Åberg, 2017).

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the subjective perception of what competencies different middle managers in the hospitality industry viewed as desirable, why

these competencies were viewed as desirable, and how one could acquire them. The study was conducted in an effort to contribute to the assessment and understanding of the current desirable competencies of the hospitality industry. To be able to identify important competencies for a business or an industry, many use a competency model presented by Sandwith (1993).

Competency models have been used as a base in many studies on competencies, and it has been adapted by many researchers in the field of hospitality (Walsh & Koenigsfeld, 2015; Sisson & Adams, 2013; Testa & Sipe, 2012; Millar et al., 2010; Tas et al., 1996). Millar et al. (2010) explained that competency models give an understanding as to what competencies are necessary for certain positions, as it is used to identify and categorize these competencies. This means that models such as the one by Sandwith (1993) could be used by educational institutions as a blueprint for creating hospitality curriculums (Millar et al., 2010). Because of this, this study used the Competency Domain Model by Sandwith (1993) when presenting the desirable competencies found in this study. The findings of this study is a contribution to the understanding of desirable competencies in the hospitality industry and to minimize the mismatch between hospitality educators and the industry. As Sisson & Adams (2013) so elegantly put it: “In order to ensure that graduates are meeting the needs of the hospitality industry in today’s rapidly changing, global business environment, it is necessary to continually assess which competencies are essential.” (Sisson & Adams, 2013, p. 143).

## Research Questions

- 1) *What are the desired competencies for each department manager?*
- 2) *Why are these competencies desirable for each department manager?*
- 3) *How can these competencies be acquired?*

## Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is outlined in the following way: first, the literature review is presented. This chapter includes a definition of competencies, and a short description of soft and hard competencies. Moreover, the literature review describes all the competency domains relevant for this particular study. Following the literature review is a methodology chapter that explains the overall research design, the research sample of this study and the analysis process. Furthermore, ethical consideration, verification of the empirical data and the limitations of the study is discussed in this chapter. After the methodological chapter, the empirical data is presented in the following chapter to demonstrate the findings of this study. The empirical findings are discussed in the following chapter called ‘Analysis’, which relates and discusses the findings of this study with findings of previous research on competencies in the hospitality industry. The study is finalised by presenting the conclusion of this study, based on the analysis of the empirical data.

## Abbreviations and Explanations

General Manager (GM) – An individual who was in charge of the entire hotel on site. The GM were thereby above the department manager in the hierarchy.

Department Manager (DM) – An individual who was in charge of a certain department at a hotel, for example a front-office manager.

Food & Beverage Manager (F&Bm) – An individual who was in charge of the restaurant(s) and bar(s).

Housekeeping Manager (Hkm) – An individual who was in charge of guestrooms and other areas, as well as the cleaning of the hotel. Front-Office Manager (F-Om) – An individual who was in charge of the front-office.

## Literature Review of Competency Domains

The empirical data of desirable competencies were grouped into seven competency domains. After the analysis when these domains were determined, it was found that they were similar to the competency domains in the Competency Domain Model by Sandwith (1993). This model has therefore been used as a foundation for presenting the different competency domains found in this study. The model consists of five competency domains including competencies necessary for leaders to operate and develop a business. The competency domains in the model are: Conceptual/Creative, Leadership, Interpersonal, Technical and Administrative (which includes Financial & Human Resource competencies). This theoretical chapter describes all these competency domains and another competency domain namely the culture and language competency domain. The culture and language theory is included to be able to build on previous knowledge of culture and language competencies, as these competencies were found to be of importance in this study.

Sandwith (1993) explain that a competency model can be useful for different reasons. First, it can be used to create profiles over the necessary competencies for a specific job position. Second, an individual with various competencies can be compared to a profile for a certain position or team. Third, missing competencies for an individual can be identified, and suitable teaching and/or training can be added. This makes it possible for an individual to acquire the necessary competencies for a certain position or team. Lastly, if profiles are created for most of, or all position, it will result in a framework over the essential competencies needed by the business. Moreover, this will make it possible to plan and train individuals and/or entire teams to develop the entire business (Sandwith, 1993). Sandwith (1993) recognize that managers do not only possess competencies in one of these domains, nor do they use competencies in only one of

these domains on its own. Instead managers utilize competencies in several domains at the same time or in close sequence when performing various managerial activities (Sandwith, 1993). The Administrative Competency Domain by Sandwith (1993) contains both financial- and human resource (HR) competencies. For this study these are presented as two separate competency domains to further clarify the differences between these them.

Woodruffe (1993) describe the difference between competency and competencies in the following way “An essential distinction is between aspects of the job at which the person is competent, and aspects of the person which enable him or her to be competent.” (Woodruffe, 1993, p. 30). The first aspect refers to being competent at a job, the second aspect refers to behavioural competencies that make it possible for the individual to have a level of competence for a certain position. Burns (1997) illustrate these differences with an example of the ability to operate a cash register. The job requires a certain level of competence to be able to operate a cash register and its functions. There are then various competencies, or ‘emotional demands’ that are particularly important to be able to excel in the position of a cashier within the hospitality industry (Burns, 1997). These competencies are further discussed by Burns (1997) who express that successful businesses in the hospitality industry desire employees who do not only possess the necessary competence to perform their job. Instead, employees must possess a number of competencies to provide a value-added service to be able to stand-out from the competition. Burns (1997) reasons that in hospitality employees’ competencies become integrated in the guests’ product and is a natural part of the overall experience. Services in the hospitality industry rely heavily on these invaluable interpersonal competencies of the employees. Failure to understand or recognize this fact, is according to Burn (1997) to demote what hospitality and service truly is. This is why, in this study the focus was on exploring the different competencies,

or emotional demands that were perceived as desirable for middle managers in the hospitality industry.

Some researchers differentiate competencies as soft- and hard competencies. Soft competencies often refer to people skills, and hard competencies often refer to technical and/or cognitive skills. “Hard skills are the technical expertise and knowledge needed for a job. Soft skills are interpersonal qualities, also known as people skills, and personal attributes that one possesses.” (Robles, 2012, p. 453). Previous studies have shown that soft competencies, such as leadership-, interpersonal-, and communicational competencies etc., are often seen as more important than hard competencies such as financial competencies in the hospitality industry (Wessels et al., 2017; Sisson & Adams, 2013; Spowart; 2011; Chung-Herrera et al., 2003; Tas et al., 1996; Okeiyi et al., 1994; Baum, 1990). Research on desirable competencies should according to several researchers be conducted from time to time to update the hospitality professionals, educators and students of the current needs of the industry (Sisson and Adams, 2013; Millar et al., 2010; Christou & Eaton, 2000). Raybould & Wilkins (2006) further express that it is essential for educational institutions to assess what competencies the hospitality industry desire, and at the same time fulfil the requirements of the academic stakeholder groups. Millar et al. (2010) explain that competency models is an effective method to use as a framework to identify and present desirable competencies, and can be used as blueprints for creating curriculums. This could in turn, assist in providing students with the necessary competencies, ease the requirement process, and make future managers more efficient (Millar et al., 2010). Åberg (2017) report that if desirable competencies are not constantly assessed, the consequences could be that tourism hospitality graduates cannot find work within their field. This would result in their competencies not being utilized within the industry which in turn would most likely have a negative effect on the industry’s development. Furthermore, Åberg (2017) explains that the hospitality industry has a

high staff turnover due to low wages, uncomfortable working hours and unclear career opportunities. Changing the view of the candidates and the requirements of tourism and hospitality competencies is therefore necessary in order to develop the industry. This study therefore strived to contribute to the knowledge of desirable competencies in the hospitality industry by answering the research questions. In addition, no previous study has been found that have investigated how desirable competencies could be acquired, but conducting such a study has been suggested by Su, Miller & Shanklin (1997) as an example.

### **Conceptual/Creative Competencies**

The conceptual domain in the Competency Domain Model by Sandwith (1993) is about managers' ability to understand and comprehend the essential part of one's position and how it relates to the organization. For middle managers working frontline as the informants in this study, it is described as being aware of how their position is interdependent to superiors, employees, and colleagues both in their own and other departments. The creative domain is described as one's ability to be creative in one's position, such as having the ability to come up with new ideas and to formulate and conceptualize these ideas. The creative domain also includes the ability to creatively and effectively adapt to changes that occur in the environment (Sandwith, 1993). Millar et al. (2010) describe the conceptual domain as the current ideas, systems and frameworks of the organization that managers need to understand to perform their job. The creative domain is described as the ability to come up with, and conceptualise new ideas. The conceptual/creative competencies are described as closely connected to leadership and communication competencies. Managers have to have the ability to lead and communicate current requirements, responsibilities

and ideas, and be able to effectively communicate and implement new requirements and ideas (Millar et al., 2010).

Enz et al. (1993) report that identifying problems, organizing and writing skills, and leadership were some of the most important competencies to possess for hospitality managers. Moreover, several aspects of conceptual/creative competencies were found to be of importance such as: decision making, objective views and being able to have a “big picture” understanding. A competency model by Chung-Herrera et al. (2003) includes several conceptual/creative competencies such as flexibility and adaptability, commitment to quality, awareness of customer needs, planning, strategic orientation, decision making, analysis, and risk taking and innovation. These competencies were found to be necessary for managers to possess in order to have the ability to acknowledge, adapt to, analyse and make decisions about various factors as part of their position (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003). Millar et al. (2010) explain the importance of hospitality students possessing competencies such as analytic- and critical thinking, understanding trends, the ability to solve problems, and decision making. Furthermore, the authors state that it is essential for future managers to have the ability to be critical, to be able to analyse problems, and come up with the best possible solutions. Tas et al. (1996) found that competencies in leadership, interpersonal, and conceptual were the most important to possess according to hospitality professionals. The conceptual competencies include maintaining a “big picture” viewpoint when working on specific tasks, developing a layout for effective employee work, and creating a business plan for food & beverage. Walsh & Koenigsfeld (2015) report the findings of certain conceptual and creative competencies to be of importance, among them were adapting creatively to changing circumstances and assisting in operational and strategic planning.

Testa & Sipe (2012) created a competency model specifically for service leaders, where one out of three categories is called Business Savvy and focus on a number of competencies

related to conceptual/creative competencies. For example: planning, strategic decision making, system thinking and continuous improvements. Kay & Russette (2000) conclude that different managers require various competencies depending on their department and their level of hierarchy. Regarding the conceptual/creative aspect Kay & Russette (2000) found that having the ability to be adaptive creatively to change was required by all managers regardless of their department or level of hierarchy. Possessing the ability to develop new ideas however, were only found to be important for the middle level F&B managers.

Previous studies have shown that conceptual/creative competencies can be taught and trained both during education and through work experience. Millar et al. (2010) reason that hospitality students should learn how to understand, think and analyse various factors in order to provide solutions to different problems. The authors further suggest that case studies and computer simulations are suitable methods of teaching these competencies during education.ENZ et al. (1993) state that educators should focus on teaching conceptual, critical, and analytic thinking. These competencies were found to be useful and beneficial throughout one's entire career in the hospitality industry. Kay & Russette (2000) recommend that hospitality educators should provide exercises in anticipation and acceptance of change. In addition, it is suggested that hospitality educators should teach the ability to develop and implement ideas that give positive results of changes that can occur. Tas et al. (1996) explain that hotel managers from all departments should assist in providing hospitality students with the necessary competencies through coaching and mentorship, to further enhance various competencies. Tas et al. (1996) advise hospitality professionals to provide trainee positions with the possibility to do cross-department training. This type of work experience would according to the authors benefit the trainees, as they could obtain both competencies unique to certain departments, and common managerial competencies necessary by all managers.

## Leadership Competencies

Sandwith (1993) describe the leadership domain and give several examples of what leadership is, and how a leader ought to be in the following way: a leader is a person who acts on opportunities and turns ideas into actions. A leader can influence people to contribute to their ideas through excellent communication skills. Successful leaders take opportunity to invest in people by empowering, supporting, and give followers the opportunity to contribute to the cause, and develop themselves in the process. A successful leader can manage individual performance and create an effective work environment. This results in creating a culture of trust which reaches beyond the closest individuals, to stakeholders both within and outside the business (Sandwith, 1993). Testa & Sipe (2012) demonstrate that managerial- and leadership competencies are the key to success for all service leaders. The authors contend that in the hospitality industry, leadership is as important as in the manufacturing industry, but that there are differences between them. Testa & Sipe (2012) explain that hard competencies, such as organizational structure, planning, system knowledge etc. are necessary in both industries. Soft competencies for example employee service performance and other behaviour competencies however, become more important for customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. This puts other demands on a service leader to be able to train, manage and improve the behaviour competencies of their employees. Soft competencies are particularly important to improve the service performance by the employees to satisfy their customers' needs (Testa & Sipe, 2012).

Kay & Russette (2000) found that leadership competencies are fundamental to all leaders in the hospitality industry. Leadership competencies are viewed as important in order to train, sustain, develop and manage employees at all different levels of the hierarchy. Similar, Ashley et al. (1995, p. 76) conclude that general management competence are the most important

competence, which includes competencies such as identification of problems and problem-solving, total quality management, and developing a service orientation. Chung (2000) suggest that managerial- and leadership competencies are the most important domain for hospitality managers. This include management analysis techniques and managing employees and jobs. The competencies include decision making and establish frameworks for quality work, build relationship with employees, create a good working environment, allow for the directing and supervision of employees, and finally being able to adapt to changes in the environment. Su et al. (1997) observe that general managers ranked leadership competencies as the second most important competencies to have after people skills. Several of these competencies are related to leadership such as managing information systems, financial management and management of personnel. Testa & Sipe (2012) present a comprehensive summary of the necessary competencies required for a leader in the hospitality industry through a competency model, which consists of three categories: Business, Self, and People Savvy. The authors explain that both Business Savvy i.e. managing the organization, and Self Savvy i.e. managing oneself, are domains of competencies that are important for all leaders. An essential part of being a service leader is the soft competencies found in the People Savvy category. Competencies found in this category are crucial to be able to understand, communicate and manage internal- and external stakeholders, such as guests, suppliers and employees Testa & Sipe (2012).

Cheung, Law & He (2010) define leadership as the primary competencies needed by hotel managers, to be able to practice, train and develop oneself and others. Because of it, these competencies should according to Cheung et al. (2010) be included in every subject of a curriculum at hospitality educational institutions. Comparable arguments are presented by Ashley et al. (1995, p. 79) who state that general management competencies are indispensable. Hospitality students should therefore be able to train these competencies, which includes how to

think, learn and adapt to different situations. Furthermore, Ahsley et al. (1995, p. 78) suggest that curriculums should include practical experience with hands-on exercises, cases and presentations to practice the managerial competencies for the hospitality industry. Tas (1988) explain the importance of leadership and suggest that hospitality educators should together with the industry provide hospitality management-internships and provide the following reasoning “A manager-in-training position within a structured training program is ideal for a student internship and would greatly facilitate the process of developing primary competencies.” (Tas, 1988, p. 43).

### **Interpersonal/Communication Competencies**

Sandwith (1993) define interpersonal competencies as having “the skills for effective interaction with others.” (Sandwith, 1993, p. 48). The author describes these competencies as a requirement for all leaders. Supervisors and managers need to attend in conversations and be able pause, listen, reflect, summarize and express ideas, in order to interact effectively with superiors, employees, customers and other stakeholders. These competencies can be observed in oral/written communication and presentation, as well as in conflict- and negotiation competencies (Sandwith, 1993). One of the three categories in Testa & Sipe (2012) service leadership model focus specifically on interpersonal- and communication competencies that a service leader should possess. The category includes the following areas of competencies: interpersonal communication, expressive service quality, team orientation, coaching and training, inspiration, cultural alignment and networked (Testa & Sipe 2012). Similar to leadership competencies, interpersonal- and communication competencies have often been ranked as one of the most important competencies to possess. Some of the first studies on hospitality competencies were conducted by Tas (1988) and later replicas of his studies was completed by Baum (1990) and

Christou & Eaton (2000). All of these studies concluded that interpersonal competencies were essential for all hospitality managers. Tas (1988) found the importance of customer and employee relations, and similarly, Baum (1990) state that interpersonal- and communication competencies are needed for employee relations and guest care. Christou & Eaton (2000) found that hoteliers thought that hospitality trainees should possess soft competencies to be able to succeed in the hospitality industry, as for example it was important to have “the ability to manage guest problems with understanding and sensitivity” (Christou & Eaton, 2000, p. 1059-1060).

Other studies on hospitality competencies have found similar results concluding the importance of interpersonal competencies. Some of these examples include Raybould & Wilkins (2006) who report that hospitality managers rank interpersonal-, problem-solving- and self-management competencies as the most important competencies to possess to carry out their work. Su et al. (1997) observe that communication- and interpersonal competencies were ranked as the top competencies to possess according to both hospitality professionals and hospitality educators. Competencies such as people skills, oral- and written communication, employee relations, teamwork and listening skills, were ranked as competencies that were necessary for all managers (Su et al., 1997). Lin (2002) suggest that the most important competencies to succeed in ones’ career in the hospitality industry, are competencies related to communication and adaptation to environmental changes. These findings came as no surprised according to the author, as communication makes it possible to adapt to changes in complex and competitive environments. Furthermore, Lin (2002) state that communication competencies are important for any business to be able to succeed, and that for labour-intensive industries such as the hospitality industry these competencies are crucial. Tesone & Ricci (2006) explain that three out of the four top competencies to have according to hospitality managers were: the ability to work in a team, listening, verbal- and written communication and the ability to empathize with the guest. Even

though Kay & Russette (2000) found that leadership- and technical competencies surpassed interpersonal- and communication competencies in their study, the authors still identified several interpersonal- and communication competencies necessary to possess for various types of managers at different level of the business hierarchy. Some of the examples were: being able to motivate, encourage, train, influence, direct, coach, involve and influence employees.

To acquire these competencies Okeyi et al. (1994) for example, suggest eight competencies that should be included in courses and taught by hospitality educators based on their study. Four of them are interpersonal- and/or communication competencies. This includes competencies such as human relations, verbal-, non-verbal and written communication, customer relations, and team building. Similar reasoning is seen in the study by Lin (2002) who suggest that having specific courses to teach communication- and interpersonal competencies are particularly important for educational institutions to provide. Spowart (2011) recognize the importance of interpersonal competencies and state that students should be taught and have the opportunity to practice the necessary soft skills such as teamwork and communication. Consequently, educators should collaborate with the hospitality industry, to update their curriculum based on the industry's needs. Furthermore, Spowart (2011) reason as Tas (1988) that graduates should be offered internships or other possibilities to work in the hospitality industry. During their work experience students will develop and practice interpersonal, communicational, and problem-solving competencies. The combination of education and work experience will enhance the graduates' competencies and make it possible for them to succeed in the hospitality industry.

## Human Resource Competencies

Sandwith (1993) describe one of his five competency domains as the administrative domain, which includes both personal management systems and financial management systems. The personal management system (in this study Human Resource 'HR'), is described as the product of organizational policies and practices, union agreements and legislations. This includes factors such as human rights, discrimination laws, equal opportunities, health & safety measurement, performance appraisals, employee training and assistance etc. (Sandwith, 1993). Testa & Sipe (2012) explains that HR includes task such as recruitment and selection, job advertisement, and performance appraisal, to implement the right training and development for various careers etc. Testa & Sipe (2012) conclude that various HR-related competencies are needed to analyse what is required for certain tasks. These HR-related competencies are then utilized to develop practices for how to acquire these requirements, and create frameworks for how these tasks should be performed. Baum (1991) explains that HR is a vital financial factor, as HR plays an increasingly important part for a business profitability in the hospitality industry worldwide. Li & Wang (2010) state that HR competencies are required for tasks such as: recruitment and selection of candidates, evaluating, training and coaching employees, cost control of production and labour, and adapting and managing employees and production in during changes in the environment etc. Christou & Eaton (2000) reason that in order to satisfy the needs of both employees and customers, and to become competitive in the hospitality industry, one must have value-adding competencies developed through HR. Chung (2000) conclude that HR competencies are necessary for managing and controlling businesses and improving the functions of directing job and employees. Together with marketing and hotel management, these

competencies improved product knowledge, as well as improve sales and service of these products (Chung, 2000).

Siu (1998) argue that hospitality leaders most valuable asset is their employees. Leaders must therefore utilize their HR competencies to recruit, maintain, and observe their employees in order to develop them. HR requires time, money and effort, but is essential for leaders that are hoping to succeed the hospitality industry (Siu, 1998). Tas et al. (1996) explain that managers should possess competencies in HR and should have knowledge about legislations that could affect the hospitality business. These competencies are necessary to be able to both operate it and adapt to possible changes. Okeiyi et al. (1994) asked hospitality- managers, educators and students about the essential competencies. All three groups ranked human relation competencies as the most important competencies to possess in the hospitality industry. Human relation competencies were seen as competencies that had to be taught in order to handle people both positively and effectively. Kay & Russette (2000) findings supports Okeiyi et al. (1994) by stating that HR competencies are of particular importance, especially when a manager has a large number of employees. Li & Wang (2010) argue that HR is the main source of power and capability to be compatible in the hospitality industry, and employee competencies and teamwork are the most important resource for these businesses. The authors report that it was crucial that supervisors and managers excel at their HR competencies in their position. Kay & Moncarz (2004) demonstrate the importance of HR with the use of a summary of previous studies on hospitality competencies. With the summary of previous studies at hand, and based on their own findings Kay & Moncarz (2004) conclude that HR competencies are fundamental requirements for managers at all levels of the hospitality industry.

One of the core subject suggested in Tas (1988) curriculum is “hospitality law”, demonstrating the importance of HR and that hospitality students and trainees should understand

the fundamentals of HR and how these factors can influence the hospitality business. Echoing Chung (2000) state that more course in HR should be included as “the importance of such courses should not be neglected.” (Chung, 2000, p. 485). Siu (1998) argue that hotel managers should focus most on HR, to provide their managers with the right training in order to develop professionally. This in turn will give all the managers the necessary tools to perform at their best in their own leadership position. Okeiyi et al. (1994) found that these competencies can be learned and trained through a variety of methods and practices by educators, and the authors agrees with Tas (1988) that these competencies need to be taught in during lectures, and practical experience needs to be included through internship or other types of hands-on experience. Okeiyi et al. (1994) suggest that these competences can be taught through “Discussion method, role play/case study/simulation, hands-on experience, lecture” (Okeiyi et al., 1994, p. 40). Lin (2002) further suggests that courses in HR should be incorporate in hospitality educations curriculums. Li & Wang (2010) state that further research is required to determine what the best method for teaching operational and HR competencies is. This requires commitment from both the educators and the hospitality industry to improve curriculum and invest in training opportunities.

### **Financial Competencies**

Sandwith (1993) describe the financial management systems in the administrative competency domain to include some essential financial competencies: accounting procedures, balance sheets, budgeting and cost-benefit analysis. Specifically, in studies of hospitality competencies. Kay & Moncarz (2004) speak of the importance of financial management competencies. For example, the authors state that “Hotel owners want general managers who speak the financial language and think in terms of creating value for their firms.” (Kay &

Moncarz, 2004, p. 294). Kay & Moncarz (2004) add that certain financial competencies are required for a manager to be able to understand the performance of the business. These competencies include: profit margin, operational efficiency ratio, return on assets etc.

Understanding these factors will give the managers the information they need to analyse changes over time, compare the business results with its competitors, handle changes in the performance, and finally conduct necessary operational changes for overall improvements (Kay & Moncarz, 2004). Chung (2000) support the notion of the importance of financial-, accounting- and cost control competencies and reports that these competencies were all clearly linked to management analysis techniques, the ability to adapt to a changing environment, and the ability to acquire new knowledge. Cost control was found to be especially important for managers in food and beverage management. Chung (2000) further explain that these financial/accounting competencies will enhance the management and control of the business, products, services, sales and the employees. Swanger & Gursoy (2010) suggest that competencies in finance are important to understand both the external financial forces on the organization, and the internal basic of finance of the hotel operations. Agut, Grau & Peiró. (2003) identified financial competencies as some of the most important competencies to possess according to the informants in their study. The informants reported needs of specific education and training in some competencies, all of which were related to finance. Millar et al. (2010) demonstrate the fact that both educational institutions and lodging managers consider financial competencies such as revenue management, to be indispensable.

According to Sandwith (1993) the financial competencies are essential for managers to possess across all departments of a business. The author further state that higher management positions often require more developed financial competencies. Accordingly, Kay & Moncarz (2004) express that that financial competencies are important for all managers, especially top-level managers. Consequently, financial competencies are the key competencies to promotion.

Both top-level and middle-level managers reported that financial competencies were necessary and the second most important competencies after HR. Following their line of argument Chung (2000) declare that that finance- and specifically accounting competencies are the foundation for all managers. These competencies will substantially influence the career opportunities, as these competencies are crucial for analysing and understanding changes in the environment. Lin (2002) compared financial competencies to certain dimensions of the hospitality industry. The findings demonstrate that financial competencies correlated with all different dimension, for example, management of jobs and employees, problem identification and the ability to adapt to a changing environment.

Gursoy & Swanger (2004) conclude that the hotel executives in their study believed that accounting was one of the five most important competencies to possess. Based on the findings of their study Gursoy & Swanger (2004) created a suggested curriculum for hospitality educational institutions. The curriculum includes courses in finance, accounting, math and economics, which clearly demonstrates the importance of including these types of financial competencies in the curriculum. Millar et al. (2010) found that both hospitality educators and professionals believed that teaching and training students in financial competencies were important. A suggested method was using project management tools, in order to analyse parts of the hospitality industry and at the same time practice their financial competencies. Furthermore, Millar et al. (2010) state that a dialog and co-operation between hospitality educators and professionals is important. This cooperation makes it possible to update the curriculums and incorporating the competencies currently important to the ever changing hospitality industry. Lin (2002) conclude that hospitality educational institutions should provide students with courses in finance and accounting, and Chung (2000) describe finance and accounting as indispensable competencies which require both education and training. Chung (2000) further suggest that courses are a must of hospitality

educators and for students as they strongly relate to career success. That the basics of finance, and accounting in regards to F&B and hotel management are the most important competencies to learn. Kay and Russette (2000) suggest that hospitality educators should focus on areas of economic revenue and the basic of finance. Wessels et al. (2017) argue that financial management should be taught by hospitality educators. Students should however be able to develop and practice these competencies through hands-on experiences according to the authors, as this will give students a better understanding for these competencies, and how they are integrated in the hospitality industry.

### **Technical Competencies**

Sandwith (1993) describe the technical domain as competencies that are required to perform the “actual work” of a business, regardless of what the business actually does to generate revenue. According to Sandwith (1993) this technical or operational knowledge is essential for all manager to be able to work and improve the business. This includes competencies to understand and operate the necessary equipment, technologies and facilities to provide the products or services that are being produced by the business. These competencies are important as they ensure the production, capacity, quality, transactions and yield of the business. Managers need to be able to monitor, report and evaluate each individual process in order to ensure its function, and to be able to develop and improve it (Sandwith, 1993). In hospitality, Testa & Sipe (2012) define technical competencies as “using systems, processes and standards to provide efficient service” (Testa & Sipe, 2012, p. 654). The authors refer to the systems that are used by both hospitality professionals and customers. The systems are often in use to ease the service for customers and maintain a level of consistency in the services that are provided. Testa & Sipe (2012) further state

that even if these operational competencies are not found in some studies regarding hospitality leadership, possessing these competencies are essential for all hospitality leaders. These competencies are required for operational function, profitability, and ability to development these systems and the business.

Tas (1988) and Kay & Russette (2000) found that competencies required to identify organizational and operational problems, are essential for all manager. This in turn requires the manager to have a working knowledge of how these operational systems and procedures function. Tas (1988) ranked all important competencies for hospitality managers in four different tiers. The top tier mostly includes leadership and interpersonal competencies. The second tier named “competencies of considerable importance” include more technical competencies. These competencies are important to possess as they influence both the internal- and external operational knowledge. Examples of internal working knowledge are: follow established personnel-management procedures in supervision of employees, and use past and current information to predict future department revenues and expenses (Tas, 1988). Examples of external operational knowledge are: meets legal responsibilities associated with hotel operations, and follows federal, state, and local sanitation and safety regulations to ensure compliance by the organization (Tas, 1988). Kay & Russette (2000) studied competencies required by different types of managers (F&B, F-O and sales) at two different hierarchy levels (entry-level managers & middle managers). Kay & Russette (2000) identified that some competencies in operational management that were essential for the manager to carry out their work. One core competencies required by all different managers at different hierarchy levels was “Working knowledge of product-service”. This means understanding the production process of certain product/service by the specific department, and be able to provide it. Some competencies were only required by some managers. “Working knowledge of worker assignments and employee scheduling” for

example, were required by entry- and middle F-O manager and by the F&B middle manager. Finally, some competencies were specific to only one department or one type of manager, such as “Product, service merchandising and selling”. These competencies were only required by the middle sale manager. This meant that having an operational knowledge is required by all managers, however the necessary competencies may be different depending on the type of position the manager has (Kay & Russette, 2000).

Tsai, Goh, Huffman & Wu (2006) state that having knowledge and an understanding for the operation and process of the lodging industry is essential. This is important for managers to understand what makes the hospitality industry unique and how it differentiates itself, and it was ranked in the top three competencies to possess. Breiter & Hoart (2000) specifically studied different types of managers in F&B. The authors found that the primary tasks of operational managers in F&B were in cost control. Other competencies that were found important were: sales, payroll, point of sale, labour, profitability and scheduling competencies, depending on the level of hierarchy and the responsibilities of the managers. Breiter & Hoart (2000) conclude that all managers have to have sufficient operation knowledge and computer/IT competencies in order to operation various systems to perform their job. Mandabach, Vanleewen & Blomquist (2001) state that operational knowledge, such as technology- and computer competencies are some of the most important general management competencies to possess. All managers must possess operational knowledge to be able to work in a number of different systems for inventory, scheduling, menu management, recipe systems and point of sale. A general knowledge and understanding of computers and ordinary computer programs such as in word processing and spreadsheets, are used by all managers in their position (Mandabach et al., 2001).

There are different opinions by researchers about how to acquire these competencies. On the one hand, Breiter & Hoart (2000) for example report that computer and IT competencies

should be included in hospitality education, to prepare the students for operational tasks of the hospitality industry. On the other hand, Ashley et al. (1995, p. 78-79) as an example found that the industry wants the hospitality educators to focus on teaching students interpersonal, communication, and leadership competencies. The operational, or industry specific competencies should instead be trained after the formal education by the industry. Wessels et al. (2017) state that understanding customer service and financial management is fundamental for any hospitality manager. To be able to manage such an environment, competencies in operational management such as problem solving and crisis management are crucial. These competencies should therefore be taught by hospitality educators and the teaching should include practical experience before the student graduates (Wessels et al., 2017). As stated by the authors themselves, Kay & Russette (2000) believes that their study stands out by finding that technical competencies were ranked above interpersonal competencies. Kay & Russette (2000) suggest that hospitality educators should therefore teach operational competencies and that the curriculum should include hands-on training such as internships during the education.

### **Culture/Language Competencies**

Testa (2009) recognize that as globalization continues to evolve, diversity and variety of culture and nationalities within the hospitality industry are on the rise. This in turn, will require managers to be able to manage multicultural workforces. Shaw & Williams (2009) contend that the hospitality/tourism industry contributes vastly to people travelling around the world, as well as increasing labour mobility. Tourist now travel to countries where both the local language and culture is different from their own. Shaw & Williams (2009) reason that because of it, employing foreigners can enhance the cultural- and language knowledge of the industry and improve the

overall service for tourist worldwide. Kriegl (2000) state that interpersonal- and communication competencies are essential, especially when working with individuals of different nationalities and cultures. A cultural sensitivity and open-mindedness of the “do’s and don’ts”, are particular important for a manager in order to adapt and succeed in a management position. A manager needs to care for and assist employees, which may require taking an interest both in their work- and private life. This enables the manager to build trust, and gain appreciation to be able to lead employees in their job (Kriegl, 2000). Baum (1996) express the importance of being able to deliver quality service in the hospitality industry. This requires both interpersonal- and communication competencies to fulfil the various expectations of international guests. This in turn may include using both verbal and non-verbal communication and an understanding of both culture and language (Baum, 1996). Kriegl (2000) conclude that knowing the local language is fundamental for internal- and external communication, and to build trust or credibility among stakeholders. Speaking several languages and/or having a willingness to learn a new one, are ideal competencies for managers working in an international context. The author further explained that that having cultural and language competencies, assisted in creating an atmosphere of comfort and team spirit within the workforce (Kriegl, 2000).

According to Madera, Dawson & Neal (2012) possessing language or multicultural competencies enhance the effectiveness in all operations of a business. The authors describe the hospitality industry as an industry that is heavily dependent on producing services that are consistent over time, and that services should be produced as quickly as possible and for the lowest possible price (Madera et al., 2012). This notion is also found in Sandwith (1993) who explains that all businesses, private and public have to cope with three challenges simultaneously. These are: having consistent and good quality products and services, have the lowest possible production costs of these products and/or services, and finally constantly be able innovative and

develop these products and service. What Madera et al. (2012) found was that managers with several language and/or multicultural competencies could perform task quicker, more efficient and with better results than managers without these competencies.

Testa (2009) conclude that managers needs to have clear view of the business and their own values and priorities, especially when working in multicultural environments. The employees will scrutinize their managers and their leadership, which require the manager to communicate, teach, motivate and lead them in their daily work. Testa (2009) further present similar arguments as Kriegl (2000) that this may include taking an interest in the employees professional- and private life, to get an understanding of their situation and their expectations of their work and their manager. By doing so, the manager can combine the business and their own values and priorities to meet the employees' expectations. This results in a good working environment and a base to produce excellent service quality (Testa, 2009). Li & Wang (2010) report that hospitality leaders valued managers with specific language competencies. The informants in their study stated that managers do not only communicate with superiors and employees, they often meet guests from various countries as well. Possessing various language competencies was therefore viewed as beneficial according to the hospitality leaders. Baum (1991) reason that the hotel industry itself is unique in every country, and that each hotel is also unique both structural and cultural. Kriegl (2000) expand on the uniqueness of the industry and each hotel, and explain that language competencies are different depending on the location. Kriegl (2000) use the example of Europe where speaking several language is a norm in the hospitality industry. This clearly demonstrate a point Testa (2009) presented, that there is no model that fits all needs, it is up to the managers to figure out the best way to manage their employees while still meeting the needs of their business.

Acquiring these competencies are necessary, for example Agut et al. (2003) report that according to the industry, language and economics are linked to the demand of future training for managers in the hospitality industry. Chung (2000) suggest that hospitality educators should include foreign language courses to be able to deliver high-quality future managers, as understanding cultures and languages are valuable competencies to possess. Baum (1990) proposes that hospitality institutions should create a core curriculum over the necessary competencies, focusing on the soft competencies. Baum (1990) further suggest that because of the cultural and industry differences on a national and/or local level, and specific knowledge about these differences should be added to the core curriculum. This will give the students the possibility to acquire the specific cultural or industry competencies needed for that specific location. Lin (2002) found six essential competencies that should be prioritized in higher education courses within hospitality programs. Two of these courses were foreign language and communication, and Lin (2002) suggest that communication specific competencies should be implemented as courses in higher education on an international level. Swanger & Gursoy (2010) argue that to be employed in the hospitality industry students need to have practical experience, and the necessary competencies that require practical experiences include communication-, and foreign language competencies. Siu (1998) explain that cultural differences may affect guest perception and expectations of service in the hospitality industry. This will require managers to understand and possess competencies to be able to meet the various needs of their guests, based on their cultural differences. Siu (1998) therefore suggested that industry leaders must understand the importance of these differences, and provide adequate training and development programs for their managers in different hospitality cultures.

## Method

### Research Design

For a researcher it is essential to understand which methods are the best fit for the study that will be conducted to get the best possible result (Denscombe, 2009, p. 183-184). The research questions for this study were: 1) What are the desired competencies for each department manager? 2) Why are these competencies desirable for each department manager? 3) How can these competencies be acquired? To fulfil the purpose of answering these research questions, an explorative qualitative method was chosen. The informants for this study were the general manager (GM), and the following department managers (DM): front-office manager (F-Om), food & beverage manager (F&Bm), and housekeeping manager (Hkm) at three different hotels. The hotels were part of three different hotel-chains in Sweden, and semi-structured interviews and fake CV's were used to elicit information from the informants in order to answer the research questions. A conventional content analysis was used to analyse the empirical data to get a deeper understanding of the material. Some ethical considerations, limitations and arguments of the verification of the empirical data were acknowledged and are presented in this chapter.

### Why a Qualitative Study?

According to Denscombe (2009, p. 398-399) the most beneficial aspect of qualitative research methods are that they are anchored in reality and investigate what is 'out there'. This makes it possible to get rich and detailed information about the social realities, which was the purpose of this study, to understand more about the perceived desirable competencies of the informants. Another reason for why a qualitative method was chosen for this study was to explore the desirable competencies in the hospitality industry using another approach, as the

majority of previous studies on hospitality competencies has been quantitative (Testa & Sipe, 2012).

## **Sample**

### **Location and hotels.**

Sweden was chosen as no previous studies were found to have been conducted in any of the Nordic countries, which results in contributing with a new research area and to the general knowledge of the research field. The hotels in this study were chosen for several reasons. First, the hotels had to have a GM and all the different DM positions: F-Om, F&Bm and Hkm. This made it possible to interview informants in different management positions and with various perceptions of desirable competencies. Second, a minimum requirement of 130 rooms at each hotel was set to ensure that the hotels were among the largest in the region. This meant that the informants had a variety of tasks and large employee groups. Third, major hotel-chains tend to have clear criteria for what competencies are necessary for a possible candidate to have. This made it easier for the informants too explain why certain competencies were considered desirable, and how these competencies could be acquired. Lastly, the hotels and the university in the region were part of a regional hospitality and tourism development project. The informants were aware of, and in some cases actively involved in developing the educational programs within tourism and hospitality at the university. Thus, making them well aware of what competencies that were taught in hospitality and tourism programs at the university.

### **Informants.**

Purposive sampled is described by Denscombe (2009, p. 37-38) as specifically choosing who will

participate in the study. The choice is usually based on knowing what the purpose of the study is, and is used to determine who, or what, will give the best possible information for the study. The GM in this study were purposively chosen as they had an overview of the operation of the hotel and the competencies that were desirable for each DM position. The choice of interviewing the F-O-, F&B- and Hk managers, were purposively sampled as these departments are common in many hotels, and they all have different functions including different tasks and responsibilities. Moreover, the DM had first-hand experience and understanding for what was required by them to fulfil the needs of their own position. The informants that were interviewed are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Informants Interviewed for this Study*

| Hotel   | Informant               | Abbreviation | University degree | Hospitality specific degree |
|---------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Hotel 1 | General Manager         | GM1          | Yes               | No                          |
|         | Front-Office Manager    | F-Om1        | Yes               | Yes                         |
|         | Food & Beverage Manager | F&Bm1        |                   |                             |
|         | Housekeeping Manager    | Hkm1         |                   |                             |
| Hotel 2 | General Manager         | GM2          |                   |                             |
|         | Front-Office Manager    | F-Om2        |                   |                             |
|         | Food & Beverage Manager | F&Bm2        |                   |                             |
|         | Housekeeping Manager    | Hkm2         | Yes               | No                          |
| Hotel 3 | General Manager         | GM3          |                   |                             |

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|                         |       |     |    |
|-------------------------|-------|-----|----|
| Front-Office Manager    | F-Om3 |     |    |
| Food & Beverage Manager | F&Bm3 | Yes | No |
| Housekeeping Manager    | Hkm3  |     |    |

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## Data Collection and Measurements

The initial contact was with each GM, followed by the DM at each hotel, and was done over the phone. The process of the initial contact with the informant is explained further under the subheading “Ethical Considerations”. The interviews were conducted between the 9<sup>th</sup> of March and the 18<sup>th</sup> of April of 2018, and were approximately between one hour, and one and a half hour long.

### Interviews.

The informants were interviewed one-on-one, face-to-face with the use of semi-structured interview guides and fake CV’s. The method was chosen as the goal of the study was to elicit information about the informants’ perceptions of desirable competencies. Denscombe (2009, p. 234-235) explain that personal interviews give the informants the chance to express themselves as they want and have the possibility to elaborate their answers, as well as using their own words to do so. Semi-structured interviews are described by Leech (2002) as something in-between an open conversation and a structured interviewed, and that semi-structured interviews use a pre-determined interview guide but with open-ended question. This method was viewed as useful as it would give the informants a chance to explain why certain competencies were desirable, and how they believed that these competencies could be acquired. These personal interviews would also make it possible to acknowledge, and make use of nonverbal communication, as described

by Denscombe (2009, p. 253). Leech (2002) conclude that semi-structured interviews is an effective method for elite/expert interviews, which was the case in this study as the informants were considered experts of what competencies were desirable in the hospitality industry. Denscombe (2009, p. 233) recognize that expert interviews can contribute to unique and privileged information gathered based on the informants' experience and/or position. This kind of information give "best value for money", and can provide information that other informants may not possess, and provide an in-depth understanding of it. Leech (2002) express that semi-structured interviews can make use of previous knowledge to give the researcher a better understanding of a research field and the informants.

A literature review was done before the interviews to gain a better understand of the research field, and to better understand the informants. Previous knowledge was also used to create the interview guides and fake CV's for this study. The research that has been conducted on the field of hospitality competencies have found some desirable competencies that has been recurring in various studies, such as leadership-, marketing- HR-, IT-, and financial competencies. (Sisson & Adams, 2013; Raybould & Wilkins, 2006; Kay & Moncarz, 2004; Agut et al., 2003). These competencies are found in both the interview guides and the fake CV's. Associate Professor Sonia Agut Nieto and her colleagues were as mentioned in the acknowledgement remarkably kind to share their work on hospitality competencies and their interview guides. This contribution assisted the process of coming up with, and formulate interview questions for this study.

To further increase the quality of the study, two test interviews were conducted to try out the interview guides and the fake CV's, as well as to test the recording equipment. The GM-interview guide was tested on a GM at one of the biggest camping-chains in Sweden. The DM-interview guide was tested on a F-Om at the same company, and the fake CV's were used in both

interviews. After the interviews the informants were asked about the interview guides and the CV's and what they believed could be improved. This resulted in some minor changes to the interview questions and the fake CV's, involving some re-phrasing and clarifications. These interviews were not included in the final results of the study as they were considered test interviews to test the equipment and improve the research method.

All interviews followed an interview guide by Denscombe (2009, p. 256-257), which started with easy-to-answer question for the informant about their name, age position, for how long they have worked in their position etc. This made the informants more comfortable in the situation and more willing to answer other questions related to the research. This was followed by more in-depth questions for the specific research. Finally, the interview ended when it was believed that no new information was provided i.e. when the research was 'saturated'.

The interview guides for this study varied between the managers. The GM and DM had to answered questions and rank CV's for all DM positions. The difference was that each DM also had to answer questions regarding their own position. For example, the GM were asked "Do you think there are candidates in the labour market with these desirable competencies?". The DM were instead asked "What competencies do you think your GM considered to be important when he/she hired you?". This approach gave the opportunity to ask follow-up questions, which Leech (2002) describe is one of the benefit of semi-structured interviews, along with the ability to keep the informant on track and relate their answers to the study. The interviews were recorded and notes were taken to make it easier to transcribe the material and analyse it. Denscombe (2009, p. 259-262) explain that recordings provide the researcher with the possibility to listen to the interview again and/or transcribe it, which in turn makes it easier to analyse. Taking notes during the interview will according to the author assist in the laborious but rewarding process of transcribing the material. The last important factor was that the interviews were conducted in

Swedish, the native language of both the researcher and all the informants. This gave the informants the opportunity to express themselves without being hindered or misunderstood by any language barriers.

### **Fake cv's.**

The fake CV's were created by the researcher to assist the process of eliciting information from the informants. The fake CV's consisted of five candidates with different backgrounds, various length and types of education, and different length and type of work experience. These fake CV's were presented to the informants during the interviews, who were asked to rank the candidates in order of most desirable competencies for the position that was being discussed. All the informants stated that the fake CV's were an exciting part of the interview, and that they were well-made to open up for a dialogue. The fake CV's were proven to be a valuable visual tool that assisted the informants in demonstrating and explaining how certain competencies were considered more desirable than others and why. Because of the various backgrounds of the fake candidates, these fake CV's also made it easier for the informants to describe and argue for how they believed certain competencies could be acquired in different ways. The interview guides and the fake CV's are both included in the appendix.

### **Data Analysis**

The process of analysing qualitative data is often described in five steps: "preparation of data; familiarity with the data; interpretation of the data (develop coded, categories and concepts); verification of data; presentation of data." (Denscombe, 2009, p. 369, translated by the researcher). These research steps were followed in this study in the following way: 1) To prepare

the empirical data for this study, the empirical data was stored safely and with copies in different places, to keep both the material and the informants identity safe. The preparation also included adding notes and comments to the material before analysing the material. 2) Familiarity with the empirical data meant reading the material several times for different purposes. First purpose: to get an overview and general understanding of the material. Second purpose: to add notes and comments from data gathering process, to more easily remember and associate the material with the situation when the material was gathered. Third purpose: To “read between the lines” and analyse the deeper meaning of the material. 3) The process of analysing the empirical data of this study was a conventional content analysis is further described under the subheading “analysis method for this study”. 4) Verification of data was about gaining reliability, validity, objectivity and generalizability in research, and is further described for this study under the subheading ‘Verification of Empirical Data’. 5) The presentation of the data is described under the heading ‘Empirical Findings’. The chapter demonstrate all the empirical data of this study by explaining all the desirable competencies, as well as quotes from the informants of this study.

#### **Analysis method for this study.**

The end goal of the analysing empirical data is always to get a better understanding for the informants, their background and their frame of references (Heracleous, 2004, p. 175). The method that was used to analyse the empirical data was content analysis. The method is reported by White & Marsh (2006) to be a flexible and adaptive method that is used to interpret information gathered from different sources such as interviews. Wilson (2011) explain that qualitative content analysis is used to acknowledge and understand the relationship within the material, and draw conclusion based on what is found. Hsieh & Shannon (2005) state that there are several different approaches of content analysis.

The approach that was chosen for this study is called “conventional content analysis”. The reason for why this was chosen was because it is an inductive approach. Hsieh & Shannon (2005) explain that the researcher uses this approach to search for words and meaning that are specific and unique within the material. The benefit of this approach is that it disregards coding schemes, categories and other types of frameworks from previous studies, as it can affect or even blind the researcher from the unique findings in the material. Because of it, this approach was viewed as suitable for this study, as the goal was to investigate the perception of the informants and their view of desirable competencies. This meant that the findings of this study were unique to these informants and for this study, and no particular coding schemes, categories or other frameworks were used when analysing the empirical data. The downside of the approach is that the researcher could have trouble understanding and/or interpreting the material without the use of previous frameworks (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This study made up for these weaknesses by using previous research and knowledge for the creations of the interview guides and the fake CV’s, which made it possible to gather the empirical data on the specific topic. Previous research was also used to get a general understanding of the field, which made it possible to understand and connect to the informants and the empirical data. Still, during the conventional content analysis an open-minded approach was used to find what was unique in this study, that had not been found in previous research. This meant sorting, coding and reducing the amount of data that was found. The final categories were then compiled into different competency domains based on the findings of this study, which were then compared to the findings of previous studies.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Denscombe (2009, p. 193-195) contend that all research, quantitative or qualitative need to be ethical. This includes respecting the informants’ and their rights, protecting them from any

harm by participating in the research, presenting a truthful representation of what the information have shared, and to being honest and respectful of the informants' integrity. The following ethical measures were taken into consideration for this study. First, it was investigated through the Norwegian Centre for Research Data if this study required any specific ethical considerations. By filling in a questionnaire and presenting the research plan and methodology for this study, it was found that no specific ethical considerations were required, according to the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (2018).

Moreover, the study followed the ethical standards stated by Denscombe (2009, p. 197-200). During the initial contact with all informants, the researcher introduced himself with name, age and university affiliation. The study was presented by explaining what the study was about, the purpose of the study, what it would include, and how it would be conducted. The role of the informants would play in the study was explained and that they could choose if they wanted to participate or not. It was described that the informant would be interviewed, recorded, and asked to take part in ranking of fake CV's, as well as an estimate of how much time participating in the study would take. All informants were informed about their rights as participants, and were ensured that they had the right to leave the study if they wanted to, either before, during or after the interview and before the results would be presented. Regarding the recordings, it was specified that this would only be of personal use of the researcher for the purpose of this study only, and that the recordings would be deleted after the final results.

A clarification was made that there were no right or wrong answers during the interviews or ranking of the CV's, and that the informants could chose not to answer questions that they did not want to answer. Moreover, it was explained that the informants would be anonymous in the study, and that all personal information would be disclosed. This included their name, age, gender, ethnicity, background, workplace or any other information that could lead back to them.

The informants were given the opportunity to choose the time and place for the interviews to make them more comfortable. Furthermore, it was stated that if the informant chose to participate, all information that was gathered and analysed would be brought back to the informant. Lastly, the researcher's name, address and other contact details were shared with the informants, giving them the opportunity to contact the researcher about anything regarding the study during the research period. These ethical considerations and explanations were given during the initial contact with all informants on the phone, and were repeated before each interview, and this approach also included the test interviews.

### **Verification of Empirical Data**

Denscombe (2009) argue that any type of research, quantitative or qualitative need to be trustworthy. This means that the research need to demonstrate that the results are based on the findings in the empirical data, and that the findings have been gathered by using methods and frameworks that are recognised and appropriate for the study. This is equally important for both quantitative and qualitative research to ensure the quality of the research, even though it is achieved through various means depending on the research method. Both quantitative and qualitative research should always strive to be as reliable, valid, objective and generalizable as possible (Denscombe, 2009, p. 378-379).

#### **Validity (or trustworthiness).**

Validity is about how accurate the methods are for obtaining the empirical data. Therefore, the term trustworthiness is often used in qualitative studies. "Validity is about the extent to which research data and methods of obtaining data are considered to be exact, correct and accurate" (Denscombe, 2009, p. 425, translated by the researcher). Factors that can increase the validity of

the study is: considering if the informant is telling the truth, controlling the data with other sources, controlling the data with the informants and considering if the data is reasonable, and interviewing experts on the topic whose information will be considered highly trustworthy (Denscombe, 2009, p. 266-267).

This study was about investigating the informants' perception on desirable competencies and therefore, there were no right or wrong answer. The questions in the interview guides were about desirable competencies and were not considered a sensitive topic, or a topic that would result in the informants not wanting to share their view or not tell the truth. In fact, it was found that the informants answered questions and ranked the fake CV's similar for all DM positions. This implies that the informants felt comfortable sharing their perceptions of desirable competencies and that the empirical data is trustworthy. The interviews were conducted with experts in the field, who were viewed as reliable in possessing the knowledge to answer these research questions. Moreover, as all GM and DM answered questions and ranked CV's regarding all the DM positions, means that the empirical data was controlled by comparing the answers between all informants. The final results were intended to be returned to the informants for them to recognise and confirm what had been said. Most of the informants however trusted the researcher and the analysis and did not want to read through empirical material after it had been analysed.

### **Reliability (or dependability).**

Reliability or dependability is about ensuring that the measuring tool gives consistent results using when using the same method. A high level of reliability means that the exact same type of study will produce the same results (Denscombe, 2009, p. 424). In qualitative studies when the researcher is part of the data gathering process, for example in an interview, it is

impossible to determine if the same results would be found if the study was conducted by another researcher. Instead it is about giving clear explanations for how the research has been conducted, what analysis that has been done, and what the results are showing. This will make it possible for another researcher to imitate or replicate the study and pay attention to how he/she may have affected his or her own research (Denscombe, 2009, p. 381).

The intention of this study was not to replicate previous studies, but rather contribute to already existing research and theories. This was done by investigating data that had not been studied before, and adding unique empirical data. This data was gathered through interviews and fake CV's from informants whose perceptions have not been studied before, and in Sweden, a location that had not been previously researched. The idea was to explain how the study had been conducted through every step. This would make it possible for the reader to understand how the study was conducted, what kind of decisions that were made and why, and how the study came to certain conclusions.

### **Generalisation (or transferability).**

Generalisation or transferability can be described as the possibility of generalize the findings of one study to similar cases or to a wider context (Denscombe, 2009, p. 382). This is a relevant question especially in qualitative studies where a small sample is often used. For qualitative studies the questions should rather be formulated "to what extent could the findings be transferred to other cases?" (Denscombe 2009, p. 382, translated by the researcher).

The sample size in this study was limited, the informants were from similar hotel-chains, in the same lodging segment of the hospitality industry, and in the same region. This obviously limits the possibilities to generalize these findings, however this was not the intention of this study. The intentions were to build on previous research with a unique contribution of a new

location, new informants, a another method, and an updated study on current desirable competencies in the hospitality industry. These types of research should according to several researchers be conducted from time to time to update the industry professionals, educators and students of the current needs of the industry (Sisson & Adams, 2013; Millar et al., 2010; Christou & Eaton, 2000).

### **Objectivity (or confirmability).**

Objectivity is described as the concept that research is almost always affected by the researcher in some way. When gathering the empirical data, the researchers “self” will influence the process, and several studies have shown that factors such as the researchers age, gender, ethnicity etc. will influence the response from the informants. To be able to minimize the effect of the researchers “self”, the researcher should strive to be passive, neutral, open-minded and a good listener (Denscombe, 2009, p. 244-246). Furthermore, the author state that working with qualitative research means that the researcher will be part of the interpretation of the empirical data. The researcher will gather empirical data that is ‘out there’, and it is impossible for the researcher to avoid influencing the material when it is interpreted. This makes the term objectivity a difficult term to use as the researcher is never truly objective. The researcher should therefore state how he/she influences the material and how that might affect the end result. The researcher still needs to have an open mind to empirical data. This means that no part of it should be excluded, even if it does not fit the general understanding or explanations made by previous theories or knowledge. This means that competing ideas and explanations should be explored (Denscombe, 2009, p. 384-386). Denscombe (2009, p. 269) also describe the problem of recording informants. The informants could feel inhibited to speak their mind due to the records to speak their mind.

For this study, great effort was made to create an environment in which the informants felt comfortable to increase the chances of them speaking their mind and also forget the fact that they were being recorded. The researcher of this study had previous work experience in the hospitality industry, as well a formal education in both tourism and hospitality management. The researcher also possessed knowledge about the research field as presented in the literature overview. The previous knowledge and experience was considered an advantage in this study, as the informants stated that they could use words and describe certain aspects of the hospitality industry without having to explain it. Furthermore, the informants expressed that the researchers interview guides were clear and showed knowledge about the hospitality industry and desirable competencies. An open-minded, and unbiased approach was adapted to listen to the informants and also when the analysing the empirical data presented by the informants, which resulted in some unique findings.

## **Limitations**

One of the most significant limitation of this study is the small sample size. Several more managers were asked to participate in the study, however they were not able to participate due to their busy schedule. The data was gathered using face-to-face interviews which makes it difficult to avoid influencing the empirical data in some way. The empirical data was qualitative in nature and based on the informants' perceptions, and an interpretation of these perceptions had to be done during the analysis. This means that another researcher could have come to other conclusions based on the same empirical data. Denscombe (2009, p. 399-401) explains that all of these limitations are common with most qualitative studies. The author state that it is important

for researcher to acknowledge how the material could have been influenced during the study, and to avoid oversimplified explanations for a complex phenomenon.

Another limitation that is important to note, competency studies such as this one, is that they could become obsolete due to several different changes in the environment. This could be changes in guest's demands, introduction of new technologies, legislations affecting the industry etc. Furthermore, no competencies studies can incorporate all desirable competencies that are desirable for all various types of managers. These findings should therefore be viewed with caution, as results of these studies could lead to a false security of what is desirable. Based on a larger sample size with a variety of managers from different levels of the hierarchy, from various segments of the hospitality industry, and from more place around the world, some of the above problems that influenced these results could have been avoided to a certain extent.

Some factors need to be address that reduce the effects of the limitations in this study. First, the interviews were conducted with experts in the field. The findings demonstrate that the informants had a clear understanding for what was needed by them and their colleagues, as well as what competencies were desirable and how they could be acquired. The empirical data was consistent throughout all the interviews and all the informants expressed their perceptions in the similar ways. One could argue that the study was saturated and indicated that the results had a certain significance and credibility. The informants were viewed as being comfortable in sharing their perception of desirable competencies. One example was that most informants said that they did not want the results of their own interview sent back to them, as they trusted that the researcher would present the information provided by them as it was intended. One could say that the analysis of the empirical data was approached with an open-mind, as it resulted in finding the importance of cultural and language competencies and the addition of another domain to the Competency Domain Model by Sandwith (1993).

## Empirical Findings

This chapter presents the empirical data found in this study through seven competency domains that contain a number of different competencies. Each domain contains a description of which competencies were part of each domain, why these competencies were considered desirable, and how these competencies could be acquired according to the informants. To remind the reader, the following abbreviations were used for this study: general manager (GM), department managers (DM), housekeeping manager (Hkm), front-office manager (F-Om), food & beverage manager (F&Bm). The following numbers 1, 2 and 3 demonstrate the different hotels the managers worked for.

### Conceptual/Creative Competencies

#### **Why are conceptual/creative competencies desirable?.**

The conceptual and creative competencies were clearly differentiated by the informants. The two conceptual competencies were described as being closely related to the informants' positions and their practical work. The two creative competencies were expressed by the informants to be abstract competencies that included critical- and analytic thinking. These competencies were instead utilized in order to perform well in the informants' positions and not tied to specific tasks.

#### ***Understand one's role and responsibilities.***

The informants reported that all managers had to understand what they were responsible for, what their tasks were and how they should perform their tasks. This knowledge was found to be important in order to explain the work and the responsibilities to their employees, and train

them in order for the department to succeed. Depending on the department, these responsibilities and task varied for each manager, which is clearly demonstrated throughout this entire study. The informants explained that when being promoted to a managerial position one had to go through certain courses to obtain the necessary competencies. During these courses the informants' responsibilities and tasks were clearly stated and the correct tools for succeeding in their future position were taught. "I have to know what my department is supposed to achieve, then I have to teach this to my employees and explain how our results effect the other departments and the hotel as a whole" (F&Bm2).

All managers have some tasks that are the same for all of them, such as staff responsibility, scheduling and budgeting, but then there are things that separates them. For example, the F&B manager works with revenue management, while the F-O manager of course work with bookings and invoicing. But whatever a manager has to do is taught in our training programs (GM3).

### *Understand the big picture of the business.*

The informants explained the importance of understanding the big picture. The informants had to be aware of how their responsibilities and that their task were interdependent of the other managers work, and how everyone's work effected the hotel as a whole. The F-O managers as an example had a system for which floors and rooms that should be booked in first, to make it easier for the housekeepers to clean. The F&B managers had to be updated on any group bookings, dinner parties or conferences in order for them to prepare their work. Furthermore, the Hk managers had to be updated about the same events in order to prepare the areas and plan the cleaning afterwards. The informants describe that having a big picture was essential for them to

plan their tasks. “If I do my job badly it will not only influence me and my employees, but also the other managers and their employees. We need to work together all the time to keep the boat afloat” (F-Om1).

We must be aware of how our own department and how the other managers’ department work and how we influence each other. The reception and housekeeping work very closely to each other. I know that every day the reception provides the housekeeping manager with a list of rooms that needs to be cleaned and then once again at lunch. If there are any complications, like a room that is completely trashed that takes longer to clean for the housekeepers, or if the reception gets a large group booking than they will have to update each other (F&Bm3).

### *The ability to adapt to change.*

One of the competencies in the creative domain was described by the informants as being able to adapt to change. The informants mentioned several different reasons for how and why changes could occur, and that it was essential for them to be able to be critical and analyse the change, as well as being able to quickly adapt to it. Changes could be due to decisions at the head offices, changes in guests’ needs, introduction of new technology, handling new employees or changes in current employees or colleagues. Changes in guests’ needs for the accommodation side of the hotel required decisions to be made at the respective head offices. For example, regarding prices or having a free Wi-Fi-network. The only managers who had had to adapt to changing trends and needs of guests in their work were the F&B managers.

Being able to adapt to change is according to me one of the most important competencies to have, we get new directions from the head office that we might need to adapt to. But the F&B manager has to change how she works all the time depending on the guests' needs, based on the season, what they have in storage, what the other restaurants are serving and what is popular to have on a menu in town right now (Hkm1).

The managers must be able to adapt, especially to the staff. There is a very high staff turnover in this industry, and being able to adapt to new staff is extremely important. But there may also be changes in the current staff's life that we need to adapt to, for example, if someone is having a baby or as simple as someone getting sick (GM2).

### *The ability to solve problems.*

The informants defined the second important creative competencies as the ability to solve problems and it included critical- and analytic thinking. These competencies were described as important in order to analyse situations that had happened, situations that were currently happening, and to evaluate situations that had already happened. To solve problems, the informants further explained that having the ability to think on one's feet and solve problems swiftly, were extremely important. This was described as crucial especially in service situations that included guests. "Being able to acknowledge possible problems, analyse various situations and be solution-oriented is something that I would say are some of the most important skills all managers should possess" (GM1). "We must extinguish fires quickly. It may not be a perfect solution but we need to give the guests quick and good solutions to problems that occur. Everything else can wait until the guest has left" (F&Bm3).

It is very important to evaluate and analyse various situations and problems, and it can be both situations that has happened or hypothetical ones. Working proactively is invaluable in this industry where things happen all the time, and undoubtedly a lot of these thing will also go wrong (F-Om2).

### **How can these conceptual/creative competencies be acquired?.**

#### *Conceptual competencies.*

It was found that the informants clearly distinguished how one could acquire these desirable conceptual and creative competencies. The conceptual competencies could according to the informants only be acquired through work experience. “To fully understand what a job requires; you actually need to do the job yourself. It is quite difficult to know exactly what a job entails without doing it yourself” (Hkm3). “You can read a job description for a job and see what is required for it, but without actually working with it you will not understand what the job is about or what you have to do” (F&Bm1).

To get an understanding of how the hotel is built and linked requires experience. When we hire, we encourage everyone to take on what we call a ‘combination employment’, which means that you work at different departments and actually learn and understand how the different department works and how they are connected to one another (GM2).

#### *Creative competencies.*

The creative competencies could according to the informants be taught through education and could also be trained through work experience. “Problem-solving skills can definitely be taught during education, but it is something that is constantly trained and developing here while

you work. We always help each other and share our experiences” (Hkm2). “You will learn about analysing various situation here, both through the educational courses but especially in the situations you are in every day. You need to learn to understand why things happen and how it can be improved” (F-Om3).

Critical- and analytical thinking is something universities always claim that they teach their students, I mean they do. But I think it could be developed through more case studies and exercises that are more interactive. For example, that in the middle of the case the conditions to solve the problems are changed which would require students to reevaluate and solve problems as they arise. This would be much more realistic than getting an assignment that you have two weeks to solve, and if you plan your time well you can go and have a beer on Saturday, that’s not how it works in real life (GM1).

## Leadership Competencies

### Why are leadership competencies desirable?.

Leadership competencies were reported to be essential by all informants. Following are two good examples of the importance of leadership. “Sorry I don't think I understand the question? Leadership is what the managers do, it’s their job and their primary task” (GM1).

I think if you would rotate the roles of all of us managers so we all change department. I still think everything would work well after a while. The operational knowledge is obvious different, but that can be taught. We are managers because of our leadership skills and have the ability to teach service behaviour (F&Bm2).

### *Varied leadership styles.*

The informants used different leadership styles depending on their department. The F-O managers' leadership were said to have a coaching leadership style, required to lead their employees who were described as young and ambitious. The Hk managers' leadership style had to be clear and strict, but at the same time warm, open and supportive. The leadership style was described as being required because of the large number of foreigners working in the housekeeping department. In the F&B department there was a large number of people working that had varied backgrounds with different ages, nationalities, cultures, level education, years of experience and different tasks to perform. Because of this, the F&B managers' leadership style was described as adaptive. "One reason to have a 'coaching' leadership style, is that one needs to be able to motivate and inspire the receptionists. They need to feel like they contribute and grow in their roles" (F-Om2). "I think my leader role requires me to be both a comforting mother or a teacher, but at the same time be able to 'point with my whole hand'" (Hkm1). 'Point with a whole hand' is a Swedish expression referring to the military, where someone gives orders that should not be questioned.

The F&B manager really need to adapt her leadership because of the variety of people without education or experience, and maybe even language barriers working in the dish room, to highly educated and experienced chefs. For a housekeeping manager and that type of workgroup it is absolutely crucial to have a certain type of leadership. You need to be a mixture of a military officer and a comforting mother (GM3).

### *Train and develop employees.*

The informants explained that an important part of their leadership was to have the ability to train and develop their employees. This included training new employees, developing current employees, and be able to adapt various training techniques depending on the employee. "I have to teach everyone to work on their own, and those who already can do it can always get better. We learn from each other, and from our own and each other's experiences" (F-Om3). "To get the cleaners to be as I want them to be, I have to be on them and physically show them what's needed and how to do it" (Hkm1).

One of the most important building blocks for all managers is of course training the new employees. This may require the managers to use varies ways of teaching as some of learn really quickly and for other it takes a while longer. It is also important for the managers to keep challenging and develop those who have been working for here several years (GM2).

### *Motivate and inspire employees.*

The ability to motivate, inspire and encourage employees was described as a central part of the informants' leadership, but varied between the managers. Motivating, their employees was essential for the F-O managers' 'coaching' leadership style. The Hk managers described that they had to show how much they appreciate their employees and had to be there for them through thick and thin. F&B managers were described as needing to adapt to various employees, and to give them what they needed in order to develop. "The F-O manager needs to encourage the receptionists to work on their own and reward them for trying, otherwise they would have to call her every minute asking for help" (Hkm2). "Many of my employees need to be encourage and

comforted as they may have tough situations at home and may not even want to work here but cannot get any other work” (Hkm3). “The chefs do not need me to praise their work, they need me to be tough and critical in order to improve, whereas the young waitresses may need my support and comfort after handling a rude guest” (F&Bm1).

### *Unique hospitality leadership.*

The informants clearly argued that being a leader in hospitality is different from being a leader in other industries. They reasoned that it was because they were working with services or experiences and not with physical products. This required the informants to teach what they described as a ‘service behaviour’. “We’re not producing a product, it is a constant flow of situations that we need to turn into the best possible experience for our guests, and that is what I have to teach my employees” (F-Om1).

Some believe that they can work as managers in the hospitality industry just because they have been managers in other industries. NO! It requires a unique type of leadership and especially communication skills. The hospitality industry is about experiences. I’m not teaching my colleagues to create a product, I’m teaching them how to act, behave and talk to provide a good service and that is what my managers have to teach their employees (GM1).

### **How can these leadership competencies be acquired?.**

The informants had various views for how these leadership competencies could be acquired. An important note is that all three hotel-chains offered mandatory courses in leadership that one had to take before gaining a managerial position. The fake CV’s in this study resulted in

some unique findings, one fake candidate had been a leader for children and teens in a gymnastic club. This experience was viewed as very valuable especially for the F-O managers and GM. Another fake candidate had work experience and practical training as a leader in the military. This experience was viewed as valuable by the F&B- and Hk managers.

### *Education.*

Some informants believed that theoretical education in leadership was a good way to learn more about leadership. “I have done a lot of leadership courses both at university and in other places and I’ve really seen people grow during these course. So I definitely believe that one can learn to become a great leader” (F-Om3). “Everyone here had to take courses in leadership before they were promoted to managers. Those courses are probably similar to the military experience would have given that person, but that education is probably even better” (Hkm2).

### *Work experience.*

Other informants believed that work experience was necessary to learn the essential leadership competencies. “I think everyone can become a good leader, you just need to practice, practice, practice” (Hkm3). “Education is good, but that doesn't mean you are a good leader, you need to have experience, like the candidate who worked at the gymnastic club” (GM2).

### *Personality trait.*

Some informants argued that leadership was a personality trait that some individuals possess. “Well some people just have ‘it’, you know. Some people just have ‘something’ that makes other people want to follow them.” (F-Om2). “I used to work with a girl who was born to lead and I tried to tell her. But she wasn't interested at all, and I was so frustrated to see her

competencies go to waste” (F&Bm3). “Some people just have the right competencies to work as a leader in the service industry. The people who doesn't have these competencies should seek their luck elsewhere” (GM1).

### *Combination of personal traits, education & work experience.*

Even if the informants disagreed on the best way of acquiring leadership competencies, all informants agreed that it required practice and development, and that one was never fully developed. The informants also agreed that the best way was a combination of work experience and education, and in some cases personality traits. “No, I think it all depends on experience. I mean sure, you can be ‘born a leader’ but if you don't practice these skills then they won't develop.” (GM3). “I think it is a big part of who you are, and that you can learn a lot from leadership courses. But without practicing it, I don't think you can really grasp it” (Hkm1). “It doesn't matter if the textbook knowledge comes before or after the work experience, but I think if you have both then you will have a wider understanding of leadership” (F-Om1).

## **Interpersonal/Communication Competencies**

### **Why are interpersonal/communication competencies desirable?.**

Interpersonal and communication competencies were reported to be essential for all informants in order to perform their tasks. These tasks included communicating with guests, supervisors, employees and other stakeholders, through written- and oral communication.

Written- and oral communication are crucial here. The head office talk to me and I have to speak to my managers about what's going on, then they must then tell that to their

employees and discusses how to resolve things. It also goes the other way around, as they need to report to me what is going on in each department and I have to report it to the head office (GM3).

### *Varied communication styles.*

Communication competencies were important for all managers but varied between them. F-O managers reported being responsible for all incoming-, outgoing- and internal communication of the hotels. F-O managers explained that they had to have the ability to filter, prioritize and communicate important information to anyone who needed it. For Hk managers communicating information to their employees was seen as the most important and one of the most difficult part of the job. F&B managers varied employee groups required them to communicate very differently depending on the employee. “If I would say the same thing in the same way to all employees, then only half of them would understand. I need to adapt the way I speak to everyone here so that they understand” (F&Bm1). “For me, my communication skills really come to a test when talking to the employees with limited language skills” (Hkm2). “I’m the ‘spider-in-the-net’ and talk to everyone. I get all the information, and knowing what is important and who needs to have the information is the most important part of the job” (F-Om2). Spider-in-the-net is a Swedish expression referring to someone being in the middle of everything, and is often used to describe the job of a receptionist.

### *Ability to build trust.*

The informants reported that communication competencies were important in order to connect, create relationships and build trust with guests, employees, colleagues and other stakeholders. F&B managers had to communicate in various ways depending on different

relationships with the employees. Some needed to be spoken to in a strict working related way, and others were closer to F&B managers on a personal level and the communication was more free. F-O managers had to build trust as the front-offices were open 24/7 and the F-O managers were not always there. The F-O employees also needed to know that they could always call the manager if they needed any assistance. The housekeeping employee groups were varied with a lot of foreigners, and some of them had a tough time in their personal life. Hk managers had to relate to their employees and build trust by comforting, supporting and taking an interest in their employees' personal lives. "Some joke around a lot and I know them on a personal level, but I cannot be buddies with everyone, some are here only to do their job and are quite formal when they're talking to me" (F&Bm3).

All managers need to build trust and credibility when talking to their employees This is important for the F-O manager who is not always there and for the F&B manager to communicate with a staff with such varied level of competence. But the housekeeping manager, she should be given the Nobel Peace Prize for her work with her workgroup. What she has to listen to, go through, and work with every day, well let's just say that not everyone can do what she does (GM2).

### *'Handing over the baton'.*

An important aspect of communication competencies was often described with another Swedish expression 'handing over the baton', referring to a runner handing over the baton to another runner during a relay race. In this case it was the ability to hand over information to another person, as the hotels were open 24/7. When the managers were leaving for the day, they had to be able to hand over information to their employees, and receive updates and information

when they came back to work. The informants explained that the information also had to go between employees both within, and between departments. “The kitchen, restaurant and bar need to communicate, ‘he is allergic to nuts, ‘we are out of tomatoes’, ‘we need more ice’ etcetera, and it’s my job to see to it that it works” (F&Bm2). “We constantly need to handover the baton, things happen all the time and we must all be able to talk to each other so that the information flows between all departments at all times” (Hkm1).

For us in the front-office it is essential to be able to ‘hand over the baton’ between us as we are open 24/7 and work with three shifts. But it is also to provide information to the other departments in the hotels as we get most of the information. But I think it’s equally important in the restaurant to hand over information between the kitchen, bars and service area, and for the housekeeping managers to communicate with her cleaners who are running all over the hotel and work on their own (F-Om3).

### *Teach service behaviour.*

Lastly, it was explained that the informants had to teach service communication or ‘service behaviour’. The employees had to be able to communicate well with guests, colleagues in their own and the other departments, as well as various managers and suppliers. These communication competencies were reported being especially important for employees working in direct contact with guests, i.e. receptionist in the front-office departments, and bar- and service personnel in the F&B departments. These employees had to learn to think on their feet, solve problem as they occurred, and be able to handle all types of guests in varied situations.

The F&B- and F-O managers had to teach their employees to communicate with, and take care of their guests to understand their needs and be able to provide it. Hk managers had to teach

the employees that they were part of the service, but they often had limited language competencies. This led the Hk managers to teach their employees to smile and be polite, but often this just included guiding the guest to the front-office if they couldn't assist the guest. "They need to learn how to be polite towards the guests and smile. They cannot just wave them off if they don't understand them, we are part of the service we provide at the hotel" (Hkm3). "I need to teach my waitresses and waiters how to talk and behave. I mean it can be a big difference between a sober and a drunk guest, and being able to adapt and handle it is essential" (F&Bm3).

The most challenging part of working with service is to handle anyone at any time, and provide the best possible service. We managers are not here to teach our employees to perform certain tasks, most of the tasks are quite easy to learn and you can learn the job in two weeks or so. We are here to teach them about service. You can't say 'if the guest says this, then you say this', it depends. I need to teach my staff how to behave and communicate, I can't tell them what to say in every situation (F&Bm2).

### **How can these interpersonal/communication competencies be acquired?.**

Interpersonal competencies were stated by the informants as part of one's personality, and something that could not be taught or trained, whereas communication competencies could according to the informants be taught and developed.

### ***Education.***

Some informants suggested that oral- and written communication and certain communication tools and systems could be taught through education. "If you are studying you'll

learn to work in groups and communicate with people and you improve your writing skills. But I also think that you should have specific courses in business communication” (F-Om1).

I think education will assist in learning how to communicate and use various communication tools like how to present something using PowerPoint, or handing in reports. You can practice written communication and learn how to spell and what ‘tone’ you should have when you write and talk to people. But you can’t teach someone to talk, if you understand the difference (F&Bm2).

### *Work experience.*

Other informants’ suggested that practical experience was important to develop one’s communicational competencies. “I think courses in business communication and such are good. But I don't think you can learn how to talk to and handle an angry guest without work experience” (Hkm1). “The more different people you meet in different situations the better. I don't think one can learn how to communicate through reading a textbook. One needs to get experience and meet people in different situations” (F-Om3).

### *Personality trait.*

Some informants were clear and explained that interpersonal competencies were related to one’s personality. “I think it’s part of who one is, some people are just meant to work with people and service and they can go wherever they want in this industry” (F-Om2). “You must be social, open and understand service, otherwise you shouldn't work with people or service” (Hkm3). “Some people are more suitable to work with service than others. And most of us here are pretty

good at finding these people, and if we make a mistake that person usually don't last that long in this industry” (F&Bm1).

## **Human Resource Competencies**

### **Why are human recourse competencies desirable?.**

The informants in this study clearly differentiated between hard and soft HR competencies. Soft human resource competencies were described as interpersonal/communication competencies in this study, as described above. HR competencies in this study were described as hard competencies, or strategic HR by the informants. Each hotel-chain had a specific HR department at their respective head offices. The informants in this study were not personally responsible for HR strategies or development. The informants’ tasks were however influenced by the strategies set by the HR department such as internal strategies for the labour force or individual training programs. Furthermore, the informants work was also affected by national HR legislations such as labour laws.

### ***Recruiting.***

Recruiting was one important aspect of the informants HR related tasks. The informants explained that they had to be aware of these competencies necessary in order to fulfil the job requirements for each position that was set by the HR strategy team. Both the F&B and F-O managers had a challenging task of determine if candidates possessed certain competencies that were described as ‘fuzzy’ or unclear, to perform tasks that were not standardized. These competencies could be creativity, being social, or being able to work well with guests. A lot of the work in the housekeeping department was standardized for the employees for several reasons.

This could be to ease the learning periods, to make cleaning quicker and more efficient to save money, to be able to buy large quantities of supplies to a better price, and finally to keep the same standard at each hotel for both employees and guests. The Hk managers needed to be aware of these HR criteria and recruit new employees that they believe could live up to these expectations. “I think it's easier for me to see what is required of the workers because the job is quite standardized. The problem is that the applicants not always speak the language, which makes it more difficult” (Hkm2). “The recruitment of my employees differs. In the kitchen you’ll have to be creative and in the restaurant you’ll have to be able to handle guests, while in the dish room you only need to do dishes” (F&Bm1).

The HR requirements that I have, is that the new employee should be able to work in our systems. But it takes a lot more than that to be a good receptionist. But how can I read that on a CV? Or how can a person prove to me that they can do it? It’s up to me to decide if I think the person has what it takes to work with service and with people (F-Om3).

### *Training programs.*

Each hotel provided training programs for all of their employees. Some of these programs were mandatory for all employees such as fire drills-, first aid- and general service programs. Some training programs varied between the departments and individual positions. Front-office employees had to do courses in service and the booking systems, and housekeeping employees had courses in cleaning techniques. In the F&B department it varied depending on the employee’s position, for example, chefs had to take courses in health and hygiene, and service personnel had to take course in service behaviour. For the informants it was important to know everything about these programs, such as the courses schedule, the curriculum, learning outcomes,

and foremost who of their employees who had to do which courses. “Thankfully I can login to the system and see who has to take which course, because it is very different courses that each employees have to take. But I think they are equally important for everyone” (F&Bm2). “I need to know about all courses and why the employees have to do them to be able to explain why it is necessary for them. Some courses are really good as well, such as the service course” (F-Om1).

We have some basic courses that everyone has to take like fire and emergency courses, first aid and a service course. When someone has attended one of the course I’ll get a message saying ‘this person has now completed this course’. This is important because we need to be able to show that everyone has sufficient training for their jobs (GM3).

### *Promotions.*

The informants described that promotions were important in their HR-related work. The informants had to be well aware of the HR requirements for each position and be able to acknowledge candidates who could fulfil these requirements and evaluate them accordingly. The candidate was then suggested to the GM and to the head office to start the required training. The Hk- and F-O managers only had one leader position under them known as shift leaders, which usually were one or two at each different hotel. For the F&B managers it was more complicated because of the different areas within the F&B department. The F&B managers explained that they had one kitchen manager and one bar manager. Under these managers there were other employees who were in responsible for different areas such as a ‘garde manager’, shift leaders, head waiter etc., depending on the hotel. “For me and the housekeeping manager it’s not too difficult, because under us is the shift leaders and then the employees, it is more for the F&B manager to keep track of” (F-Om1).

Our system is more complicated or not as 'streamlined' as for the other departments. I have a head chef in the kitchen and a bar manager, and they know what they need. In most cases they come to me with a candidate they want to promote. Of course I have the final saying but they know what is best for them, so in most cases I listen to them (F&Bm2).

An important part of their job is to understand the criteria for each position to be able to promote. When we need to promote someone it is always an open dialog between me, the HR department and the responsible manager, to come up with the best possible candidate and the best possible solution for everyone (GM1).

#### *General human resource knowledge.*

The informants stated that it was beneficial to possess general knowledge about HR legislations such as labour laws. The informants described that the more they knew, the less they had to contact the HR departments and wait for answers. The work was reported to become much smoother and more efficient regarding HR related issues. This type of knowledge was explained to be most important for Hk managers as their workforce included a lot of foreigners. Being able to answer HR-related questions were found to build trust, credibility and a relationship with employees, which for the Hk managers were described as crucial. "It is not their job per say, but the more the managers know about HR the better, that means that they do not have to spend time contacting and asking the HR department for help" (GM2). "I think it is important for the housekeeping manager to be able to answer HR questions about childcare, sick leave, pension etcetera. in order to build credibility with her employees and build a good work-relationship" (F&Bm3).

My employees are in many cases new to Sweden and they do not speak the language, and have no idea about our system, like healthcare, primary schools, labour laws and so on. So they can ask me about ANYTHING! And I feel that it is important for me and for our relationship to answer these questions and help. I don't want to have call or send an email to HR every time, and have my employees just waiting for an answers, or try to find the answers online that are not related to work (Hkm1).

### **How can these human resource competencies be acquired?.**

Due to the specific HR departments at each respective head office, all informants agreed that no HR competencies were necessary prior to a management position. Previous education or work experience in HR was however viewed as beneficial.

#### ***Education.***

If a candidate had done course in HR or HR management, it was viewed as a good experience according to the informants. The fake CV's included one fake candidate who had done a course in HR management and some informants described it as a good course to have completed. "A course in HR is always good, the more you know the better. But as I said, it is not necessary to have before you start" (F&B1). "I saw that this one has a course in HR which is really good, but as I said we have a girl at the HR department who we can ask about anything HR related" (F-Om2).

#### ***Work experience.***

If a candidate had previous experience from HR or leading positions and actively worked with HR it was viewed as a positive experience. "I believe that if one has worked with HR or in

similar positions as me, then that is good, the more experience the better, but leadership or communication skills are more important” (F-Om1). “If you have working experience of HR that’s really good! But you will also be trained and learn everything you need to know here” (Hkm3).

## **Financial Competencies**

### **Why are financial competencies desirable?.**

Comparable to HR, all hotels had a finance department and a financial manager at their respective head office. The financial manager determined the budget and financial requirements for the hotels. The price setting for the hotel rooms were determined by the operational systems based on previous years demands for each night, which was controlled by the respective financial manager.

### ***Overall financial knowledge.***

A general knowledge about finance was stated to be important for the informants in order to understand one’s own financial responsibilities and the overall financial goals of the department. The informants reported that they had to know the financial effect each individual had on the whole organization, as well as having the ability to explain this to the employees in order to motivate them. "You need to have a broad financial understanding, that what I do will have an effect on the overall results, and figure out what I can do to help achieve better results" (F-Om3). “If you have a general understanding of economics such as pricing, gross income, profit margin and are able to count using plus and minus you’ll be fine, you will learn the rest at the job” (F&Bm1).

I need to know how everything is connected in order to explain it to my employees and how their work effects the whole hotel. We work with ratio and the average time it takes to clean a room, which it is about one room per twenty minutes. If I can explain this to my employees that if we clean ‘this many rooms within this timeframe we will contribute this much to the overall total’. Then you can see how they start to understand and also feel that they contribute and that they are important (Hkm1).

### *Budgeting and meeting the financial requirements.*

The managers explained that keeping a budget and meet the financial requirements for their department was essential. The informants had to keep track of expenses such as employee- and material costs, as well as the time cost of performing certain tasks. These tasked varied between the managers. The Hk managers explained that they had strict budgets, and standardized systems and frameworks for performing their job, and had to fulfil financial goals such as room cleaning ratio. F-O managers described that they had a similar strict budget and financial goals such as selling a certain number of additional products in the front-office. The biggest challenge and the most important financial requirement for F-O managers were to sell as many available rooms as possible. This included teaching their employees to balance the waiting list and estimate the chance of “no shows” i.e. guests that would not show up. F&B managers had a strict budget but more options for how to reach and preferably surpass their financial goals. This meant F&B managers had to motivate service personnel to do additional sales, and motivate their chefs and bartenders to come up with enticing menus. This included sales tricks such as lunch of the day or drink of the week to increase sales. “If the managers can keep their budget or even better save some money in the process that is perfect! But the most money comes from getting all our rooms booked for the night” (GM3)

Everyone needs to contribute to the financial goals and everyone needs to work with additional sales. They must understand their own influence on what we do, and it can be as simple as suggesting a coffee after a meal. Then the chefs have a great responsibility to use their creativity to create good menus based on the products available to us. The important thing is that we keep our budget and preferably go past our financial goals (F&Bm2).

### *Accounting.*

The informants reported that accounting were desirable competencies as all managers worked with accounting. These tasks included arranging, compiling, evaluating and reporting financial events within each department. This was important in order to manage and control the business operation such as products, services, sales and performances. This was also important to have the ability to identify changes over-time, and to adapt to those changes, such as change in guest demands. Hk managers had to keep their budget and reach their financial goals and their tasks included fixed costs for supplies, equipment and personnel. The F-O managers reported that they were responsible for all receipts and ingoing- and outgoing invoices for the entire hotel except for the F&B department. The F&B managers were responsible for the accounting of the restaurants and bars, the F&B managers had a lot of administrative and accounting tasks since they worked without the standardized frameworks as the other departments. "All incoming and outgoing invoices that deals with hotels, so the reception, housekeeping, conference and maintenance are my responsibilities to handle the accounting for" (F-Om1). "We work with 'freedom under responsibility', as long as we meet the financial requirements and stay within budget, they're happy. But it's fun to go beyond it and have other F&B managers ask how you

did it” (F&Bm3). “Accounting is what makes us able to analyse how we perform. It is crucial for us to do a good job in order to provide the guests with what they need” (GM1).

The housekeeping manager reports everything from her department to the F-O manager who compiles everything economically for the reception. So everything in regards to the hotel is compiled as one result. The F&B manager then compile everything for the restaurant and everything is brought to me, and I’ll report it to the financial manager at the end of the month (GM2).

### *Revenue management.*

The informants specified the desire of revenue management competencies. Hk- and F-O managers worked with standardized frameworks and because of it, these DM did not actively work with revenue management. Knowledge about revenue management were still considered beneficial according to these DM. F&B managers were the only manager who actively worked with revenue management, as they had to calculate the costs of everything they planned to use. This meant calculating how much extra they had to add to the price of the product in order to cover other expenses such as product and labour costs. The F&B managers had to estimate a reasonable profit to reach the financial goals and preferably surpass them. Furthermore, they explained that they had to have the right products, at the right time, for the right price, in order to satisfy their customers and reach the financial goals. “I don't work with revenue management per say, but I must understand how it works and be able to explain to my receptionists why the price for the room changes. Not everyone understands that” (F-Om2). “We need to calculate for everything, what we use, how much we can profit from it, how much we need to get to cover other costs and still have a price that is competitive” (F&Bm2). “It is up to me, the head chef and

bar manager to figure out the best way to meet our guests needs and at the same time meet our financial requirements” (F&Bm3).

### **How can these financial competencies be acquired?.**

All hotel-chains provided courses to learn the necessary financial competencies before being promoted to a managerial position and take over the financial responsibilities. Furthermore, the informants reported that having financial knowledge were viewed as something beneficial, and could enhance one chances of a promotion. This was demonstrated with the use of the fake CV's. One fake candidate had done one course in revenue management. Another fake candidate had done courses in finance and business economics. “I noticed the courses in economics which is good if you want to get further in your career” (GM3). “I would rank this one above, since he or she has worked with revenue management as well, which is, as I said good if you want to advance” (F&Bm1).

You do not really have to have any financial competencies before you start because we'll teach you everything you need to know. But if you have previous knowledge in economics, for example through education, then that's good! If you're suitable to take a management role, it's definitely something which weighs heavily if it would stand between you and another candidate who does not have it (GM2).

### ***Education.***

The informants explained that financial competencies could be taught and developed through education. Some informants explained that what one learns during a formal education is similar to what is taught in the internal programs at each hotel-chain. “Courses in economics or

finance are always good as you will learn the basic and that is pretty much all you need” (Hkm2). “If one has studied economics then you will have a lot of the knowledge that we teach here, so that is always positive (GM1).

### *Work experience.*

The informants described that financial competencies were taught in their programs but also further developed in their job as managers. "You will learn everything through the management courses, but I mean I'm still learning on the job and I always try to improve on my own and become more efficient" (F-Om2). “If you have worked with accounting and revenue management before like most restaurant managers have then it's no problem at all, but you if you haven't then you will learn everything you need here” (F&Bm2).

## **Technical Competencies**

### **Why are technical competencies desirable?.**

The informants reported that the majority of tasks required by them were administrative and computer based. Similar to HR and finance, each hotel chain had a technical department and a technical/IT manager at the respective head offices who were responsible of all technical and IT related issues. Each hotel chain provided specific training courses to acquire the necessary technical competencies before becoming a manager.

### *General technical competencies*

General technical competencies were described by the informants as competencies in Microsoft Office programs such as Word and Excel. Some informants could not specify exactly

what competencies that would be sufficient, instead it was described as possessing knowledge that is used in today's modern society. Most informants stated that if one were under the age of thirty, then one would have sufficient competencies just by being born in the 'technical-era'. "Look at the youth today, if you are thirty years or younger, you know twice as much about computers than I do without even trying, but just by being born in that generation" (F&Bm2). "Most people have good skills in the Office-Package, if you have completed high school or gone to university, you definitely have the required computer skills. Everything else will be taught here" (F-Om3).

### *General understanding of operational systems.*

The informants explained that a general understanding for the whole operational system (i.e. the hotel wide computer system) was important. The systems contain all the administrative work that all informants had to do for their individual positions. These systems include: scheduling, bookings, accounting, invoicing, supply ordering, revenue management etc. All informants work in the same operational systems at each hotel, but the operational systems were specific for each hotel-chain. These competencies were described as being able to understand how the operational system influence them and their work, their colleagues and their work, as well as the organization as a whole. The general understanding included third-party webpages and systems, such as booking-, information- and rating sites, as well as pages for controlling companies credit values and net worth. Some systems were used by both guest and employees and the managers described that they had to understand how the systems worked from the guest perspective as well. The booking service at each hotel as an example, included the possible for guests to check-out online and how to do that was necessary knowledge for all front-office workers including the F-O managers. These competencies were taught by each hotel-chain

through their internal courses before being promoted to a managerial position. "It is very important for me to have an overview and understanding of what happens in all departments like in the reception, in housekeeping, at the conference and with the maintenance" (F-Om1). "You have to understand how the system works, and I think everyone knows and want to know how one's work affects one's colleagues and their work" (HKm3). "Besides our system you also need to understand other company's systems and webpages too, like booking sites and check a company's credit values, net worth and such if we can or already have a partnership with them" (F-Om2).

You need an overall understanding of the system to understand how the system works, how it is to be carried out and what effects it has on everyone work and the entire hotel. That is something you cannot understand before working here and that's why we have these courses you will have to complete before you get a management position (GM1).

### *Specific technical tasks for each manager.*

All informants worked in the same operational systems, however their tasks and responsibilities in these systems varied. Some task had to be performed by all informants, other tasks had to be performed by only one or two of the DM. Specific tasks required by only one managers could be F&B managers who were the only managers who worked with revenue management, or the F-O managers who were the only managers who worked with handling bookings, credit checks, membership registrations etc. The variety between the managers' responsibilities meant that the they had access to various tools in the operational system to complete their tasks. "I do some specific tasks like revenue management that others don't have to do, but the reception will do things that I don't do, like register company member applications"

(F&Bm3). “We all do things like scheduling, budgeting, placing orders. Then some things are unique, the front-office manager example has to do invoices, credit controls, register memberships and so on” (HKm1).

The operational systems are hotel-wide so everyone works in the same system but they use it in different ways. Some administrative tasks such as scheduling is necessary by all managers, but then they have unique task like for the front-office manager who handles all the invoices for the hotel including housekeeping. But the housekeeping manager has to order all cleaning supplies in the systems that goes to the head-office first and then to the suppliers (GM3).

#### *Common technical tasks for each manager.*

Some tasks were as mentioned common for all managers and the informants explained that these task included: budgeting, scheduling; employee reviews, employee development programs and supply ordering etc. These tasks were however described as being performed differently by the managers due to the specific needs and goals of each department. Supply ordering for the Hk- and F-O managers were explained as ordering what was needed and having a good estimate of what, and how much was needed for them to perform their tasks. For the Hk managers this included mostly cleaning supplies, and for the F-O managers it was office supplies. For these DM it was described as a relatively easy task as it did not change much from time to time. The F&B managers supply ordering however could vary from day-to-day both for the kitchen and the bars. Various factors such as number of guest, product prices, which season it was and what the competitors did, could influence the ordering of supplies. Another example was scheduling. The Hk managers scheduled the employees during normal working hours during the

week and some extra during the weekends and the required competencies were always the same. The F-O managers had to schedule their employees 24/7 every day of the week, and schedule extra receptionists during high pressure periods in the front-office. Furthermore, certain competencies were required during the dayshift with conferences and a lot of guest contact. During the nightshift the needs were more administrative, and required competencies to be able to fix mistakes done during the day, and prepare for the coming day. Lastly, the F&B managers had to schedule a variety of employees for the kitchen, bar and service areas based on their competencies and the different shifts. For example, the morning shift required fewer chefs, no bartenders and less service employees. The later shift required more personnel at each area and the last shift required less employees in the kitchen as the kitchen closed before the other areas. "I have to schedule cooks, dishwashers, bartenders and waitresses for up to three different shifts a day. So even if we all work with scheduling and in the same system, we still do it differently" (F&Bm1). "I know about what I need to order and what's going on. It's worse for the restaurant that has lunch of the day, the drink of the week and other things that change all the time" (HKm2). "Everyone order supplies, but it is very different between the departments. It changes quite a lot from day-to-day what is used in the kitchen and the bar compared to one day in housekeeping which is roughly the same" (F&Bm3).

I have to schedule receptionists around the clock and there are two groups of receptionists, those who work only night and the others that work either morning or afternoon. I also need to estimate if there is a lot of check-in and check-outs and maybe take in an extra receptionist for a few hours. The housekeeping manager only needs to schedule regular working hours during the weeks and sometimes some extra during weekends. But we talk

to each other all the time and determine what is needed and how we best solve the situations (F-Om1).

### **How can these technical competencies be acquired?.**

#### *Work experience.*

All informants agreed that general technical competencies were sufficient and that most people already possess these competencies, especially the younger generation. The necessary technical competencies such as computer and operational competencies were according to the informants taught by the hotels and through work experience. The informants further suggested that educators should focus on soft competencies such as leadership and communication competencies. “I hire the individual based on their personality. I don't hire skills such as a cashier system or even a booking system. I hire you for you, I can teach you the rest” (GM1). “I think universities should focus on teaching leadership and communication, instead of technical skills. Personal skills are much more difficult to learn and requires more training” (F&Bm2). “The problem is that the actual system is unique to most hotels, learning it would be difficult without actually working at the hotel” (F-Om3).

I want to have employees who can work with service and with people. Everyone can learn a booking system, it may take longer for some but if you give good service and treat the guests well, then you'll be perfect! If you want to work at a higher level, your personal qualities are even more important and you will also get more training in both soft and hard skills such as leadership and economics (GM2).

## Cultural/Language Competencies

### **Why are cultural/language competencies desirable?.**

Cultural and language competencies were described as vital for the informants to increase the understanding of other's, and provided the ability to communicate more efficient with both employees and guests. These competencies have not been highlighted in previous hospitality competency studies as much as for example leadership, interpersonal or financial competencies. This meant that no specific questions regarding culture and language were asked during the interviews. All informants however described the importance of these competencies in one way or another. All hotel-chains had a lot of employees of other cultures and a high employee turnover number. According to the informants themselves this was partly because the service industry was viewed as a stepping-stone into society. "For foreigners it is very easy to get a job in tourism because they rarely require any special skills" (GM2).

Work in the service industry is a good way for migrant to find their way into society. They take these jobs before they are able to apply for other jobs they have to learn the language for, or before they have done something so that their degree from their own countries becomes usable here (GM1).

### ***Cultural competencies to handle employees.***

One of the most important competencies for the informants were leadership competencies. The informants who had employees of other nationalities and cultures often described it as challenging for their leadership. The informants were often unsure of how to lead these employees or what was required or expected by them as leaders in other cultures. Possessing

certain cultural competencies was stated as enhancing trust and build a relationship with employees of other cultures. Cultural/language competencies necessary to lead employees were often more visible in the F&B- and the housekeeping department, as they often had employees from various countries and cultures. The front-office department had requirements of being able to speak and write fluently in Swedish and English, which meant that there were none or a few employees of other cultures who worked in the front-offices. "When I hire someone new, they often come from other countries, and then it's a challenge for me to figure out what's required by me to be able to lead that person" (HKm2). "I think having an understanding for other cultures gives me credibility and helps me build a trusting relationship with my employees" (HKm1).

Sometimes leadership is complicated when it comes to employees from other cultures.

Some do exactly as I say without questioning because that is how it works in their culture, whereas others discuss and questions everything I ever say, although they know that I am the boss. It's just part of their culture (F&Bm3).

### *Language competencies to handle employees.*

Interpersonal- and communication competencies were found to be essential for the informants, and various language in the hotels created another challenge for them. The informants had to consider how they could communicate with employees in order to get the information across. Being considerate of how to communicate with various cultures was described as essential and it included body language, verbal, and non-verbal communication. Once again these competencies were most visible in the F&B- and housekeeping department as the front-offices required the employees to be able to speak and write Swedish and English. "I have to have a small booklet in my head for how to communicate with different cultures, so that

the person I am talking to right now won't become angry or sad because of something I said" (Hkm3). "You must understand how to communicate with other cultures. If I'm too friendly or 'too much of a friend' to some employees, then I run the risk of being viewed as a 'weak leader'" (F&Bm1). "The housekeeping manager needs to be at such a high level of English that she is able to understand really bad English, and be able to speak really bad English so that the employees understand" (GM1).

For a new housekeeping manager, the biggest challenge would probably be how to communicate. Every person I work with require that I communicate in a certain way to get them to actually listen to me. And not only what I say but also my body language, some hand movements mean something completely different in other cultures (Hkm2).

### *Cultural competencies to handle guests.*

Understanding differences between various nationalities and cultures were reported as being essential for all informants. In most cases it related to understanding the expectations of the guest to be able to provide the best possible service. To do so, many of the informants explained that they used stereotypes of various nationalities and cultures to fulfil the guest the needs. The cultural understanding of guests was more predominant in the F&B- and front-office department which had daily contact with guests compared to the housekeeping department. "We have guests from all over the world and service is about recognizing the guest's needs in order to provide good service. Understanding different cultures is therefore among the most important thing for both me and my staff." (F-Om1). "Cultural differences affect how we provide service as well. Something as simple as knowing that Americans often give good tip means that my waitresses might smile an extra time because of that reason" (F&Bm2).

Germans want fast and efficient service, the French may need help to understand the menus or maps, the Danes are likely to order alcohol for lunch, even if they are here for a conference, and so on. Even us Swedes are known to not want to bother anyone if something is wrong, and it can be seen as prejudice. But it can also be seen as guidelines for us to be able to provide really good service for our guests, if we can predict what is expected of us (GM3).

### *Language competencies handle guests.*

Providing excellent service to guests from all over the world was essential for all informants. This included being able to understand and communicate well with the guests. Being able to communicate in more than one language beside Swedish and English were not seen as necessity but a great asset in this aspect. Being able to communicate with their guests' in their native tongue were viewed as a tool to better understand their guests' specific needs without being hindered by a language barrier. This was viewed as that 'little extra' that made the guests' experiences even better, and providing the same service without these language competencies could be difficult to achieve. These competencies were more important for the informants with employees that had a lot guest contact and were therefore viewed as more important in the F&B- and F-O department. "We have a French chef and when we have French guests in the restaurant, he usually goes out and presents the food in French, and it is always incredibly appreciated and seen as great service (F&Bm1). "To understand our guests needs and provide the best service, is our goal and that's why I think language skills should be seen as service skills, I mean it makes it so much easier" (F-Om2). "Speaking seven languages is not necessary but if you can speak more languages, like German than it's really good because it usually makes the experience so much better for the guest" (GM3).

You do not need to be able to speak several languages in the restaurant or the reception, but I think of language as a service. We have a girl at the reception who speaks Finnish and when she hears that a guest speaks English with a Finnish accent, she switches to Finnish. That usually makes the guest really happy and also comfortable. It makes them feel extra welcome and they can also express themselves without any language barriers. So I believe that the more language- and the better we can understand our guests the better service we can offer (GM1).

### **How can these cultural/language competencies be acquired?.**

The informants clearly stated a difference between how one could acquire cultural and language competencies, even if these competencies often were related to one another.

#### ***Cultural competencies.***

Cultural competencies were reported as being acquired through work experience and social interaction with individuals from other nationalities, cultures or religions. The fake CV's included one candidate who had studied abroad and this was viewed as a good experience to learn about other cultures according to the informants. "To learn about other cultures and be able to communicate well with people of other cultures, I think you need to work with them or be around them a lot, for example having friends from other countries" (F&Bm2). "In a service job you always learn a lot about different nationalities and maybe stereotypes. But you need to work with other people to actually learn the truth about other nationalities and cultures" (F-Om3). "Doing a semester abroad is a good way of learning about other cultures and experience a variety of people with other viewpoints than yourself" (GM2).

### *Language competencies.*

Language competencies were viewed as being part of one's heritage for example having another native language other than Swedish or English. Another way of acquiring language competencies according to the informants were through education. The fake CV's included one candidate who was fluent in French which was viewed as beneficial foremost by the Hk managers. Another candidate was a native German speaker who had study Spanish, and was acknowledge as positive competencies to possess by all managers, especially the F-O managers. "Language is something you have with you from your parents or something you learned by studying for several years. We cannot have a three-week course in French and expect all managers to speak French." (F&Bm3). "I think languages are part of one's childhood or you can study it for years. Sure you can travel and try to learn another language but that will still require you to study the language" (F-Om2). "If you have an additional native language other than Swedish, like Spanish or French than that's good since a lot of our employees are from Spanish and French speaking countries" (Hkm1).

Learning a new language takes years of education and practice and that's not really something we can provide or even expect of our managers. However, if one has all other credentials in leadership, good communication skills and work experience and in addition to that be able to speak for example French or German than it's clearly a benefit and will increase your chances of being hired or promoted (GM3).

## *Analysis*

This chapter will present the analysis that have been made based on the empirical findings and compare these findings to results of previous research, as well as highlight the unique findings of this study. The chapter will be presented in the same order as the literature review, and as a reminder, the following abbreviations have been used for this study: General Manager (GM), Department Managers (DM), Housekeeping manager (Hkm), Front-Office manager (F-Om), Food & Beverage manager (F&Bm).

### **Conceptual/Creative Competencies**

#### **Why are conceptual/creative competencies desirable?.**

All hotel-chains provided specific training for their future managers before gaining a management position, to teach them the conceptual competencies necessary for their future position. This could be interpreted either as the hotel-chains not believing that the applying candidates possessed these competencies beforehand, or, that all managers should be given the same training no matter their background. For the informants however it was clear that understanding one's role and responsibilities was viewed as essential. These findings were close to identical to how Sandwith (1993) describe the conceptual competency domain in his model. Most previous studies on the topic of hospitality competencies have found the importance of having the ability to solve problems and make decisions (Millar et al., 2010; Testa & Sipe, 2012; Chung-Herrera, 2003; Enz et al., 1993). One could argue that in order to do so, it would be necessary for the informants to understand one's role, responsibilities, resources and have a big picture understanding. Furthermore, as suggested by Millar et al. (2010) conceptual/creative competencies relate to leadership and communication. In this study the informants had to

understand their own role and responsibilities for the whole department. This knowledge was important in order to lead and communicate with their employees and to teach and train them to fulfil the requirements of the department.

The informants had to understand how one's work influenced other's work, and how other's work influences one's own work, and thereby understand the big picture. This big picture thinking was vital to be able to analyse situations and come up with suitable solutions to the problems that occurred. Tas et al. (1996) and Enz et al. (1993) came to similar conclusions in their studies of the importance of understanding the big picture even if one worked on specific tasks. The informants described that they had to understand how their decisions on specific tasks could influence others and their possibilities of solving a task. This understanding was required by the informants in order to plan their work. Similar arguments of the importance of planning have been found in previous studies, such as: planning and strategy (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003), developing a layout for effective employee work (Tas et al., 1996), assisting in operational and strategic planning (Walsh & Koenigsfeld, 2015), and lastly, planning, strategic decision making, system thinking and continuous improvements (Testa & Sipe, 2012). To understand one's role and responsibilities and understand how it affects others may seem self-explanatory for some, which in this case makes the importance of including the conceptual domain in this study even more clear.

Sandwith (1993) described that the creative domain includes both coming up with new ideas and implementing them, as well as adapting to changes that occur in the environment. In this study it was found that changes constantly occurred and the informants had to be able to be flexible and adaptable to these changes. Being able to adapt to change and being flexible as a manager has been reported previously, for example by Walsh & Koenigsfeld (2015). The most common factors the informants had to adapt to were in regard to their employees, such as an

employees' not being able to work due to sickness. One finding was that the industry was described as having high employee turnover, which is a common understanding of the industry, for example stated by Åberg (2017). This meant that the informants had to be able to adapt to employees quitting their jobs and to adapt to new employees and learn how to train, communicate and lead them. One could suggest that it was important for the informants to quickly adapt to these changes in order to uphold a certain quality of the services. If an experienced employee quit and had to be replaced by a new employee without the same work experience, then training and developing the new employee becomes essential to provide the same service quality and guest experience. This suggestion could relate to what Chung-Herrera et al. (2003) found, which was the importance of commitment to quality. Moreover, it was found that being creative and coming up with new ideas and implementing them was very limited for the informants. The structure of the hotel chains seems controlled by the head offices and most major decisions had to be made by the respective head office.

All the various DM had to be creative in their way of communicating and leading their employees and in certain tasks. The F&B managers were the only managers who had to be creative as part of one's tasks and responsibilities on a daily basis. The F&B managers for example had to be creative and develop new ideas to attract guests through lucrative menus, and other "sales tricks" such as drinks of the day. These findings are similar to what previous studies have concluded, for example Tas et al. (1996) found the important task of creating business plans for food and beverage, Millar et al., (2010) concluded that it was important for managers to understand various trends, and Chung-Herrera (2003) who stated that an awareness of customer needs is essential for managers. The F&B managers also had to be creative when working with revenue management. They had to acknowledge, analyse and make use of various possibilities to fulfil, and preferably surpass the financial requirements set for the department. The findings of

the F&B managers having unique creative requirements were suggested by Kay & Russette (2000) who found that all managers had to be creative and adaptable to change, however the middle level F&B managers were the only managers who had to develop new ideas. As stated, it is believed that the cause of these results is because of the hierarchy structure of the accommodation part of the hotel-chains: That decisions regarding the accommodation and the work of the Hk and F-O managers were strictly controlled by respective head office. The F&B managers work process and frameworks were considered less strict and the F&B managers had to work with “freedom under responsibility” as stated by one of the informants.

#### **How can these conceptual/creative competencies be acquired?.**

As demonstrated in the results, the informants clearly distinguished between how one could acquire these competencies. According to the informants, conceptual competencies were viewed as closely related to the actual work and the uniqueness of hotels according to the informants. To acquire these competencies an individual would have to work in a certain position in order to fully grasp the role and responsibilities of that position, and understand the big picture. Based on these findings, one could argue that practical experiences should be added to educational curriculums as suggested by Wessels et al. (2017), Su et al. (1997) and Tas et al. (1996) to name a few. This practical experience would teach hospitality students what a certain job or position actually entails, what one’s role and responsibilities are and what competencies are necessary to succeed in such a position. Tas et al. (1996) suggest that hospitality trainees should be given the opportunity to work in various departments to further enhance their training and understanding. Based on the findings of this study, one could argue that this would also give the hospitality trainees an understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses, and what competencies they need to acquire for their future career. Furthermore, one could suggest that

cross-department training programs could give the students an opportunity to gain a better understanding of what type of management position they would like to work in. The creative competencies were according to the informants viewed as the ability to adapt to change, and to solve problems. These competencies were found to be closely related to possessing competencies in critical- and analytic thinking, which were according to the informant possible to learn during education. These competencies could also be developed further during one's career according to the informants. Comparable results were found by Enz et al. (1993) who describe that educators should teach conceptual-, critical- and analytic thinking, as these competencies are both necessary and beneficial throughout one's entire career. These findings also support Millar et al. (2010) findings, that these competencies should be taught through case studies and computer simulations. One could argue that this type of learning could result in a more interactive teaching method that is closer related to reality and real work experience. Even better would be if one managed to create teaching methods that were suggested by Kay & Russette (2000). The authors recommend that the teaching methods should include exercises in anticipation and acceptance of change, as well as for the students to have the ability to develop and implement ideas. A similar suggestion was presented by one of the informants, and one could argue that this would give students the possibility to analyse a situation, and develop and test their ideas. It would give the students an opportunity to practice their analytic- and critical thinking, not only for the situation, but through evaluating the results of their ideas, and train these competencies to re-think and re-implement these ideas.

## Leadership Competencies

### Why are leadership competencies desirable?.

Sandwith (1993) states that leadership competencies are essential for all managers and was clearly demonstrated in this study. All managers reported the importance of leadership competencies. Without hesitation the managers explained what type of leadership style they used, and gave several examples of their leadership and leadership competencies. A clear distinction between managers' leadership in the various departments was acknowledged. F-O managers used a coaching leadership style focusing on encouraging, motivating and inspire their employees. F&B managers had an adaptive leadership style, and had to lead a large variety of employees with various backgrounds and in different positions. Hk managers' leadership style was a combination of a comforting warm mother or teacher, and a strict and just military officer. Hk managers were often described as being able to 'point with the whole hand'. These leadership styles were described in relation to the employees at each department. All three hotels described the employees in the different departments in the same way, and used similar descriptions of the leadership styles required for each respective department. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is that the managers had to adapt to the leadership style required for each department, rather than they having a certain leadership style. Kay & Russette (2000) suggest that leadership competencies are important in order to recruit, train and develop employees. This was one of the most important aspects of the informants' leadership. The F-O managers tried to teach their employees to work independently and assist each other and develop together. The Hk managers had a more hands-on approach in order to train their employees whereas F&B managers' training and development depended on the employees' positions. For example, chefs were taught to think independently and to be creative whereas the employees working in the dish-

rooms had routines for performing their tasks. This was interpreted as the recruitment training, development depended on the needs of each department. When the informants described the recruitment, training and development of their employees, they spoke of the employees' behaviour rather than their position. Words such as 'service thinking' and 'service behaviour' was used when describing their employees' development. It was important for the employees to understand that they were part of the service 'product' and part of the experience that the hotels were providing. Instead of producing a product to satisfy their guests, the employees had to be trained and develop a 'service behaviour' to excel in their positions. Similar arguments of the importance of service performance and customer satisfaction, has been presented by Testa & Sipe (2012). The authors state that service behaviour is the difference between working in the hospitality industry and the manufacturing industry. In this study it was viewed as crucial to be able to inspire, encourage and motivate employees in order to get them to perform well. F-O managers did it through their coaching leadership and for the F&B managers it varied depending on the employees' positions. Some F&B employees needed constructive criticism in order to develop, and others needed more support and encouragement. For the Hk managers it was essential to build trust and develop a good relationship with their employees. Once again, it was acknowledged that the leaders adapted their leadership style to the employees rather than the other way around. Sandwith (1993) states that leaders can create effective work environments to improve the individual performance and Chung (2000) emphasize on create a good working environment and for directing and supervision of employees. Similar, in this study the informants spoke of the service behaviour and that they had to teach their employees how to act and behave. Thus, one could argue that managers' knowledge and experience were required if problems would occur, and assist their employees when needed. Su et al. (1997) reported comparable findings where their informants' led their employees in person and developed the necessary service

competencies, rather than using HR-frameworks or other operational systems. The overall work culture of the departments and the entire hotel was important for all informants. The informants stated that employees should feel welcomed and encouraged to go to work, and do their best to give the best possible experience to the guests. According to Sandwith (1993), leaders should strive to create such a positive work culture that reaches out to all internal- and external stakeholders. For the informants the work culture was often associated to enhance the 'service behaviour' of the employees in order to provide excellent service.

### **How can these leadership competencies be acquired?.**

Leadership- interpersonal- and language competencies were the only three competency domains that could be associated to one's personality or upbringing according to the informants. Tas (1988) presented similar arguments in regards to recruiting future managers for higher education. Tas (1988) speaks of recruiting candidates possessing certain competencies, or candidates who have the possibility to acquire/develop these necessary competencies during education. This would mean that some candidates already possess certain leadership competencies before they start their education. In this study, no matter if the informant believed in the concept of being "born to lead", all informants agreed that leadership could, and must be developed in order to become a good leader. Some informants suggested that leadership courses and theoretical education was a good way to learn about leadership and to understand others. Similar, Cheung et al. (2010) and Ashley et al. (1995, p.78-79) suggest that leadership should be trained during education and should be part of every course and give the students the possibility to learn about leadership. Other informants focused more on the importance of work experience to acquire the desirable leadership competencies. These informants argued that without actually leading others, and being confronted by a variety of situations, one could not understand what it

really means to be a leader. Ashley et al. (1995, p. 78) present comparable arguments and state that practical experience should be included in higher education. These practical experiences would teach the students how to act and develop their leadership competencies. All informants concluded that the best possible way to acquire or develop one's leadership competencies was a combination of education and work experience. All the hotels had training programs for teaching leadership competencies for their GM and their DM. This mixture of theoretical teaching and practical experience has been suggested in previous studies to develop and enhance leadership competencies (Wessels et al., 2017 & Tas, 1988).

As described, the fake CV's that were presented had candidates with different leadership backgrounds. A fake candidate with experience of being a gymnastic trainer for children were often ranked higher by the F-O manager's and the GM. The fake candidate with a military background was preferred by F&B and Hk managers. One possible explanation based on these findings is that the gymnastic leader for children could have a more coaching leadership style similar to what the F-O managers' leadership style had to be. Whereas a stricter leadership style of a former military and the ability to 'point with the whole hand' was preferred by F&B and Hk managers. A military leadership could include being able to handle stressful situations and lead a variety of people in various tasks. All these leadership experiences could be examples of practising and developing one's leadership, and to demonstrate leadership competencies for future employers. These practices could improve one's leadership competencies before a hospitality education or before starting to work. These experiences could also help when trying to pass educational recruitments tests, like the ones Tas (1988) suggests that hospitality educators should have for their recruitment process.

## Interpersonal/Communication Competencies

### Why are interpersonal/communication competencies desirable?.

Sandwith (1993) states that interpersonal/communication competencies are essential for all leaders and communication is a big part of their job. In the chapter 'Empirical Findings' an example of how communication worked for a hotel, how the chain of communication came from the employees up to the head offices, and the other way around was presented by one of the GM. The example demonstrates the importance of communication competencies in order to operate a hotel, and that everyone is part of it. The informants gave a lot of examples of the importance of communication for their various tasks. For F-O managers', communication was important in order to process, filter, and prioritize the information they receive and communicate it. The expression "spider-in-the-net" seemed suitable for describing the when the F-O management position, as all the other DM and the GM often had to ask the F-O managers for information. Oral- and written communication was essential between shifts as the front-offices were opened 24/7. For the F&B managers it was important that the communication worked well between the different areas of the department i.e. the kitchen, bars, dish room and service area, as it was a constant flow of information between these areas. For the F&B managers it was also important to be able to communicate well with the GM, the front office and external suppliers. The Hk managers often had to communicate with the front office to gather information about their job and communicate it to their employees. The communication focused on getting the employees to understand the information, sometimes using a limited language competencies and body language to communicate. Hk managers had to be proficient, clear and short in their communication to get the information across. This relates to what Sandwith (1993) stated, that managers need to be able to communicate with various stakeholders and be able to listen, reflect, and communicate one's

ideas. Certain differences were acknowledged, for example being able to communicate with various stakeholders, especially external stakeholders, was more important for the F-O and F&B managers than Hk managers. The Hk managers had to communicate with the GM and the F-O manager and their employees. Hk managers had to listen, reflect and communicate much more slowly, carefully and more concisely with their employees than the other two DM.

All informants reported that they had to be able to connect, relate and build relationships through interpersonal- and communicational competencies. Similar findings were presented by Christou & Eaton (2000), Baum (1991) and Tas (1988) who concluded that it is essential to be able to connect and build relationships with employees and guests. For the F-O managers it was important that the employees trusted them even if the F-O managers were not psychically there all the time. The employees had to work independently and because of it they needed to know that the F-O managers were there as a safety net. For the F&B managers it was important to adapt to various employees in different ways. The F&B managers needed to adapt their way of communicating quite a lot during a day to various employees and guests. The F-O and F&B managers had to connect and communicate well with their employees to have a good work environment. The F-O and F&B managers had more contact with the guests, which required them to be able to connect, relate and assist guests in their daily service, which required good interpersonal- and communicational competencies. These findings are similar to the service leadership style that Testa & Sipe (2012) found to be essential for all managers. The personal relationship with each employee was important for the F&B- and the F-O managers, but even more so for the Hk managers. For the Hk managers it was more difficult to build trust and connect to their employees because of the cultural and language barriers. Building a relationship with one's employees was however most important for the Hk managers. Taking an interest in the employees' personal life as well as supporting, caring for, and comforting their employees

were essential parts of the Hk managers' job. These findings relate to what Testa (2009) and Kriegl (2000) found, that taking part of employees private life and build trust and credibility is essential when working in a multicultural environment.

'Handing over the baton' was described as an important aspect of communicational competencies. To hand over important information to someone else was important for all DM. This could be handing over information between departments, between shifts, between areas within one department or just between two individuals. These competencies seemed most important for the F-O managers, as much of the information for the entire hotel ended up in the front-offices which were open 24/7. Therefore, it was important for the F-O to constantly be updated about what was going on and hand over information and work to other departments. The constant flow of information between the various areas of the F&B area was an important aspect to control for the F&B managers. The communicational competencies were also necessary when switching personnel between shifts, similar to the front-office. Good communication with the front-office, the GM and external suppliers was necessary for the F&B managers. For the Hk managers these competencies did not seem to be as important for communicating with various stakeholders, as for the other DM, good communication with the GM and the front-office was still necessary. For the Hk managers it was more important to focus on the internal communication. The challenge for them was rather to even be able to 'hand over the baton' to their employees because of the limited language competencies. These findings relate to Su et al. (1997) who report the importance of oral- and written communication and employee relations. Furthermore, all DM had to have good teamwork, team spirit and be able to trust each other to be able to 'hand over the baton'. Similar findings of the importance of teamwork was stated by both Tesone & Ricci (2006) and Su et al. (1997). It was also essential for the informants to teach their employees the necessary communication competencies, such as teaching and training their

employees in how to act, talk and behave. The F-O managers believed services behaviour to be essential for them to teach. F-O managers stated that since their employees had a lot of guest contact, and that it was crucial that they act and behave in certain way. For the F&B it was important to teach their service personnel these competencies in order to provide good service. Hk managers described that it was important for them to teach the employees to be friendly when interacting with a guest, and refer them to the front-offices. However, it did not seem as important to refine the service behaviour within their employees as it was for the other DM. One could argue that it was important for all informants, but only necessary to teach the employees who interacted with guests and had a large impact on the service experience. This relates to what Kay & Russette (2000) found that it is important for hospitality leaders to be able to train, direct, coach and motivate employees to encourage them to behave in a certain way. Furthermore, as suggested by Lin (2002) communicational competencies are important, especially in labour-intensive industries such as in this case. All of these interpersonal- and communicational competencies seem to correlate well with the findings of Testa & Sipe (2012) and the people savvy category in their service leadership model. However, once again the findings seem to suggest that it depends heavily on which department a manager was working in.

### **How can these interpersonal/communication competencies be acquired?.**

Previously it was mentioned that all managers concluded that interpersonal competencies are related to individuals' personalities. Several managers suggested that some people are more suitable to work in the service industry because of it. It was clear for most managers that the easiest way to acquire these competencies was actually to be born with them or acquire them at a really early age. Communication competencies however could be developed through experience by interacting, communicating and working with various people and in various ways. These

findings are similar to the arguments put forward by Spowart (2011) and Tas (1988): that students should be able to do internships or other work related experiences to develop the necessary communication competencies. Some informants suggested that educators cannot teach anyone to be open, social and to communicate, but they can train students in how to communicate in certain settings. Some informants suggested courses such as business communication to practise these competencies, and similar conclusions have been presented by Lin (2002) and Okeiyi et al. (1994). When asked about the benefits of higher education, some managers suggested that it could improve one's oral- and written communication competencies. In addition, educators could teach students about what "tone" to use when communicating with various stakeholders when using different channels such as emails. This could be interpreted as learning "Business English" or similar, even if that specific course was not mentioned. Still, these findings are similar to what Spowart (2011) suggested, that competencies such as teamwork, oral- and written communication competencies and other soft skills should be integrated throughout the whole educational curriculum.

## **Human Resource Competencies**

### **Why are human resource competencies desirable?.**

Human Resource (HR) competencies were according to the informants, considered hard competencies about labour laws and internal HR systems. Sandwith (1993) described what he called personal management systems similarly, namely a product of organizational policies and practices, union agreements and legislations. The informants explained that HR competencies were not necessary for them to possess, as all hotels had a HR department at their respective head office. HR strategies and standardization for certain jobs and tasks were determined by the HR

departments. These strategies and standardizations were often determined for financial reasons, for example to make work processes more efficient, or to be able to purchase large quantities of products from suppliers for a better price. Baum (1991) argued that HR is an important profitability factor in the hospitality industry as HR strategies and standardizations make it easier to control costs for products and workforce, similar to the findings in this study. Furthermore, this made it easier for the informants to adapt to changes in the environment, for example easing the training process for new employees. These findings are comparable to what Li & Wang (2010) stated that such factors are some of the most beneficial aspects of a good HR strategy. Testa & Sipe (2012) explain that job advertisement was part of HR.

In this study, the criteria set for a certain position were done by the HR department but was reported as being used by the informants. However, judging candidates and determining if they possessed the necessary soft competencies, which often was the deciding factor, was still up to the informants to decide. All hotels had various courses their employees had to take such as fire and hazard training, first aid training, and courses in service. These courses served as a baseline of necessary competencies for all employees to possess. One could assume that the HR department had analysed the needs of all hotels and for certain tasks. The results could then be used to create courses and work processes to develop the necessary competencies, and to create frameworks for how to perform certain tasks as efficient as possible. This could be how to act in case of a fire, or standardized frameworks for how to clean hotel rooms, which would improve the production- and cost efficiency of some tasks. Testa & Sipe (2012) came to similar conclusions that HR-related competencies are used to analyse what is needed for a certain position or tasks. With that information, practices of how to learn these competencies should be created, and lastly one should create systems, frameworks or manuals for how to perform these tasks. This method was similar to the findings in this study, additionally the informant reported

that these practices and courses gave them the comfort of knowing that their employees had taken specific course and possessed certain competencies.

Chung (2000) concluded that HR competencies are necessary for directing jobs and employees and that these competencies could improve product knowledge, sales and services. Based on this study, if all employees had taken the same courses and gone through the same training, one could then assume that all employees would possess at least some basic competencies and comparable knowledge. This could result in a more efficient communication between managers and employees, that the overall knowledge would be improved and that the efficiency of the production/service could be improved. Christou & Eaton (2000) state that hospitality businesses need to have value-adding competencies developed through HR to stay competitive in the industry. This was clearly demonstrated as the most important courses were in service behaviour. All employees, including employees who did not necessary interact with guests such as chefs, dish washers and housekeepers had to take various courses in service. These findings support the notion of Testa & Sipe (2012) that working with service is different from other industries, such as the manufacturing industry. Basic courses in fire hazard- or first aid training would most likely be found in other industries. Practicing one's service behaviour however, to be able to interact smoothly with various stakeholders such as guests, would be considered essential for the hospitality industry. The informants stated the importance of being able to acknowledge, train and develop employees in their careers. Testa & Sipe (2012) state that performance appraisals and providing training and practices in order to develop employees for various careers is an important part of HR. The responsibilities of the informants in this study included observing and suggesting possible candidates who would be given the possibility to develop, and participate in certain courses to acquire necessary competencies. It was important

for the informants to understand the content of these courses to understand what was required by candidates to succeed.

Siu (1998) concluded that the most valuable assets in hospitality are the employees. Providing them with the right competencies was therefore seen as one of the most essential aspects of HR, which would require time, money and effort to succeed. This was found in this study as well, as the informants' choices regarding their employees would have consequences. Promoting someone would most likely be time consuming as the employee would have to go through a specific training, and it might even require hiring someone else for the first employee's position. This recruitment process would in that case require the manager to take time, and both the training and the recruitment process would result in extra costs for the hotel. The process of developing an employee was therefore done through an open dialogue between them, the GM and the HR department, to make sure that the right decisions were made. Okeiyi et al. (1994) state that HR competencies are particularly important when a manager has a large number of employees. In this study this was true for the F&B managers who had a lot of employees, and the biggest challenge was the department had a lot of various positions, career paths and areas in which the F&B managers had little or no experience. The F&B managers met these challenges by having a good working relationship with their respective head chef and bar manager. This system made it possible for them to control the department and the large employee group. The informant wanted to have general HR knowledge about legislations such as childcare vacation-, pension-, labour laws and other aspects that could influence their own and their employees' work. Similar, Tas et al. (1996) state that HR competencies and knowledge about legislations are important for managers to possess, as it gives managers the ability to understand how it affects the business, its ability to operate, and how they can adapt to possible changes. Moreover, the informants wanted to understand the internal HR systems, frameworks and requirements. Comparably, Chung

(2000) state that HR competencies are important to manage and control business and employees and improve both operational and HR-related functions. As seen in the literature review chapter, previous research has found the importance of various HR-systems because of their financial and operational effects. For the informants it was more important to assist their employees by answering questions and building trust. The result of this could lead to managers spending less time on researching HR-related issues, and more time on other tasks. This could lead to positive effects on the operational effectiveness that could have financial benefits. These findings were most visible for the Hk managers, who wanted to assist their employees with any questions they may have had. Li & Wang (2010) contend that employee competencies and teamwork are the most important resources for hospitality business, and that HR is required to achieve it, which was the case in this study. Furthermore, it was important for team building and building good relationships with employees which has been stated in previous studies (Christou & Eaton, 2000; Okeiyi et al., 1994; Baum, 1991; Tas, 1988).

### **How can these human resource competencies be acquired?.**

The informants were clear about the importance of HR competencies. All desirable competencies in HR could be taught while working. The informants had a HR representative and they did not believe that it was necessary to possess any HR competencies before one started working in their positions. Lin (2002) & Chung (2000) argue that HR courses should be included in educational curriculums as the competencies are important to possess. The informants in this study believed that HR competencies could be acquired through education and/or experience and was viewed as something positive. One example of this was demonstrated by the fake CV's which included one candidate that had done courses in HR. Tas (1988) suggested a course in "hospitality law", which according to this study would be beneficial but not necessary. The

course name that specifies the industry in Tas (1988) case, could be viewed as more appealing to the industry professionals. Okeiyi et al. (1994) and Tas (1988) suggest that educators should provide internship where these competencies can be trained. Based on the findings of this study, this could prove to be a good idea. One example could be by combining a DM internship with an internship at the HR department at the head office. This would provide the students with an understanding of commonly asked questions by employees and the issues a manager has to deal with. This would also give the graduate the possibility to understand the work of HR managers, and how they assist the DM in answering these questions. Siu (1998) suggests that HR competencies should be taught by the industry and equip the managers with the necessary competencies. For the informants in this study, it would be beneficial to have specific HR training to answer the most common questions. More general knowledge about HR, legislations and unions could be taught to the Hk managers as they got the most questions and some not specifically related to the job. This would provide the Hk managers with the tools they need to build trust and credibility, and gain a better relationship with their employees. This would also provide each hotel with an “in-house-expert” on HR-related issues and relieve some pressure on the HR representatives at the head-offices. Lastly, one could agree with Li & Wang (2010) who state that the method of teaching operational and HR competencies needs further research.

## **Financial Competencies**

### **Why are financial competencies desirable?.**

The results demonstrate the many reasons for why the informants believed that financial competencies were important. The importance of managers having an overall understanding of the financial aspect of a business has been stated by several researchers (Swanger & Gursoy,

2010; Kay & Moncarz, 2004; Chung, 2000; Sandwith, 1993). Swanger & Gursoy (2010) state that it is important to be able to understand the internal- and external financial forces that affect the operation of the hotels operation. Kay & Moncarz (2004) emphasize on the importance of managers being able to understand the performance of the business. The informants in this study emphasised the importance of understanding the effects of the operation and the individual contribution. Kay & Russette (2000) state that leaders have to train and develop their employees to understand the performance of the business. Explaining the effects and the individual contributions to the employees were important for the informants in this study. One could argue that possessing this knowledge was therefore essential in order to teach and train the employees, and that these competencies could be viewed as a part of the informants' leadership. Similarly, to be able to understand the financial effects and being able to communicate it to the employees, assisted their relationship towards them. Being able to explain the individual financial impact and providing the results of it helped to encourage and motivate their employees. One could argue that this is another example of how the informants gained trust, credibility and built a relationship with their employees. Testa & Sipe (2012) demonstrate the difference of working in the service industry compared to other industries. Like other industries the informants in this study had to work with additional sales especially the F-O and F&B managers. One could argue that teaching a certain service behaviour and working with people however, was essential for the employees in the hospitality industry. Some competencies such as budgeting and reaching the financial goals were common for all informants. Similar statements have been presented by Sandwith (1993) who concluded that balance sheets and budgeting are essential competencies that all managers have to possess. For this study some differences between the informants were acknowledged. For the Hk managers budgeting and reaching the financial goals were all that was necessary. The F-O managers had to do a lot of financial tasks for the entire hotels except for the F&B department.

One could suggest that financial competencies were important for Hk and F-O managers, however, the F-O managers had to keep track of a lot more budgets in their position. This because they were responsible for the budget for all departments of the hotel except the F&B department. The F&B managers were the responsible ones for the budget and accounting of the F&B department of the hotels. The F&B managers had the opportunity to use creativity and more freedom in ways of reaching the financial requirements. Because of it, products that were used were constantly changing depending on the menus both in the bars and kitchens. Consequently, the F&B managers had a more challenging task of knowing what to do with their budget, and also keeping track of it. One could argue that because of this freedom, F&B managers needed more advanced financial competencies in order to handle it.

Lin (2002) expressed the importance of financial competencies to be able to manage jobs, employees, identify problems and adapt to changes. As demonstrated however there are differences between the needs of these competencies and how they are utilized by each DM. The F&B manager for example, would probably have to identify problems and adapt to more changes because of the structure and strategies of their department. Accounting competencies were utilized by all DM was stated as one of the most important finance competencies. The importance of accounting was used as an example of demonstrating the importance of financial competencies by Sandwith (1993). The author explain that accounting procedures are necessary for all managers in order to perform well in their position. In this study, accounting was used to be able to constantly evaluate the managers' operation and their performance, in order to improve and adapt to changes. Comparable findings have been reported, for example Chung (2000) who suggests that accounting competencies are important to manage and control products, services, sales and employees. Kay & Moncarz (2004) state that it is essential for managers to be able to analyse changes over time, compare results with competitors and evaluate their own performance

in order to improve. Similar to budgeting, accounting competencies varied between the DM. The Hk managers had to handle the accounting for their departments and the F-O managers were in charge for accounting for the whole hotel except the F&B department, i.e. the front-office, housekeeping, conference and maintenance departments. The results described accounting for Hk managers as quite standardized. The F-O managers however were responsible for the accounting for the whole hotel except for the F&B department. F&B managers had to be very meticulous in their accounting because of the variety in number of guests, sales, menus, products etc. One could suggest that because of the structure, accounting competencies would be more important for the F-O and F&B managers compared to the Hk managers.

Revenue management competencies were viewed as important for all DM, even if F&B managers were the only managers who worked with it. Similar, Sandwith (1993) suggests that balance sheets and understanding cost-benefit analysis are important for managers and Millar et al. (2010) found that revenue management was essential for lodging managers to possess. Kay & Moncarz (2004) argue that profit margin, operational efficiency ratio, return on assets etc. are important to understand the operational performance of a business. The F-O and Hk managers stated that competencies in revenue management were not required for their position. Still a general knowledge of how it worked was still viewed as beneficial. F&B managers worked a lot with revenue management as it was important for them to calculate the costs, set prices, estimate profit, cover expenses etc. These findings support the findings of Chung (2000) who concluded that cost control and other financial competencies were specifically important for F&B managers.

#### **How can these financial competencies be acquired?.**

All informants agreed that desirable financial competencies could be taught and developed at work. If an informant needed assistance they could contact the finance managers

who would assist them. Interestingly enough, even if all informants stated that the competencies could be acquired at work, the informants still had to take specific courses to learn these competencies. One could therefore argue that even if they are taught at work, they are still taught through an educational system. This supports the findings of the informants suggesting that these competencies should be part of educational curriculums. Close to identical findings were presented by Agut et al. (2003) whose informants explained that financial competencies were essential for the hospitality industry and that their work training included learning these competencies. This led the authors to conclude that these competencies should be taught during formal education, which would result in minimizing the needs of further training. Several authors suggest that financial competencies should be taught during formal education, for example Wessels et al. (2017), Gursoy & Swanger (2004), Lin (2002), Kay & Russette (2000), and Chung (2000), to name a few. Gursoy & Swanger (2004) believe that finance, accounting, math and economics should be included in the educational curriculum, clearly demonstrating the importance of teaching these competencies. Millar et al. (2010) believe that financial competencies should be part of educators' curriculum. The authors add that certain project management tools could be utilized to analyse parts of the industry. This in turn would according to Millar et al. (2010) assist the graduates in developing these competencies through experience. Wessels et al. (2017) state that economics should be included as courses, and that students should have practical experience to train these competencies through hands-on experience. Based on the findings in this study, integrating students in the real work of the hotels could be difficult to achieve. First, it might be difficult to determine if the students have the necessary competencies to perform certain tasks, especially as the hotels provide their specialized courses to teach these competencies. Second, as the tasks are performed in the hotels own operational systems it could include classified information about the operation systems, the hotels strategies, and/or the

contracts with their various suppliers. If it were possible to arrange so that students could gain practical experience however, it would most likely be viewed as an excellent experience by the hospitality industry based on the findings of this study. What was specified by the informants was that financial competencies were merit competencies to possess if one wanted to advance in the hierarchy. Leadership, operational and interpersonal/communication competencies were viewed as essential for all managers to possess to gain their position. Possessing financial competencies was seen as a merit that could be the deciding factor between two or more candidates and Kay & Moncarz (2004), Chung (2000) and Sandwith (1993) came to similar conclusions in their respective studies, that financial competencies were important and could positively influence one's career opportunities.

## **Technical Competencies**

### **Why are technical competencies desirable?.**

As described by the informants, their responsibility and their required them to be able to lead and communicate with their employees, and their tasks were almost exclusively administrative work using various operational systems. Understanding these operational systems was essential for them to fulfil these responsibilities as managers. These findings were similar to the technical domain presented by Sandwith (1993). The informants had to be able to operate various systems and technologies in order to monitor, report and evaluate various processes. Without these operational systems the informants would have difficulties of performing fundamental tasks such as handling bookings, accounting, scheduling, revenue management etc. Testa & Sipe (2012) describe that operational systems are used both by customers and hospitality professions to maintain a level of consistency for the services. Similar, in this study it was found

that the operational systems used by the informants included programs that both they and their guest utilized. For example, a booking service that made it possible for guests to check-out online and that was controlled by the F-O managers. This operational system made it possible for the guest to check-out without having to queue up at the front-office, which meant less work for the front-office. This provided both consistency and various options to suit the guests needs. One could argue that understanding the operational systems was necessary for the informants to gain essential information about the operation. The information was needed in order to lead their employees and to be able to communicate what needed to be done, what could be improved, how it should be performed etc. One could state that understanding the business flows and the operational systems were also essential for the informants to teach their employees these competencies and improve the overall operation. The informants described that they used different operational systems to perform various tasks depending on their position. To perform these tasks, the informants explained that it was necessary to have basic computer knowledge. These findings are comparable to Mandabach et al. (2001) who state that ordinary computer competencies are important for all managers. The authors use examples of programs such as word processing and spread-sheets to be able to work with various systems such as inventory and scheduling.

Interesting enough, all informants argued for the importance of having a general knowledge of technical and computer competencies, to be able to work as a DM. At the same time, the informants suggested that everyone below the age of thirty in Sweden would possess these competencies because of the environment they had been raised in. The informants continue by suggesting that everyone would be able to work in these operational systems after they had completed the courses provided by each hotel-chain. As mentioned, both Mandabach et al. (2001) and Breiter & Hoart (2000) express the importance of possessing general computer/IT

competencies. In this study the informants shared the same view, however the informants trusted that everything they would need to know had been taught by the internal training at each hotel-chain. Based on these findings, one might suggest that possessing certain computer competencies would perhaps ease the learning process of the necessary competencies taught during the training. The informants suggested that an overall understanding for the specific operational systems was important. The informants wanted to understand the overall operational system, how it worked, how it influenced them, their colleagues, the whole hotel and even the overall chains.

Both Kay & Russette (2000) and Tas (1988) suggest that managers needed to be able to identify problems within the operational system. One could suggest that in order to do so, one would require an understanding of how these operational systems and procedures work. The operational system was used by all informants but in different ways for various purposes. With that in mind, it is reasonable to argue that it would be important for the informants to understand how everyone works with the system and how it affects the overall operation. Tas (1988) explains that there are both internal- and external factors that influence the function of the operational systems and a managers' responsibilities and opportunities to work with it. Furthermore, Tsai et al. (2006) present the idea that managers have to have knowledge of the overall function and operation of the hospitality industry. One could suggest that the informants in this study needed to have knowledge about the hospitality industry, and how internal- and external factors influence their operation. To give an example, the F-O managers had to be able to work with, and understand third-parties' webpages and systems. This demonstrates that the informants did not only have to learn their own operational system or their own way of working to complete their tasks. Moreover, one could argue that the informants should understand the increased mobility of people and changes in travelling patterns of tourists as stated by Shaw & Williams (2009). These changes would influence the needs and demands of tourists and

consequently how hospitality managers have to operate to fulfil these needs. The informants described that they depended on each other and that their responsibilities and tasks were intertwined. One example is if the front-office received a lot of booking, it would influence how much the housekeeping had to do, and the number of guests could influence how many guests the restaurant would have. These findings could be interpreted as having an overall understanding of the operation and how different responsibilities are intertwined. This is essential in order to cooperate, meet the needs of the guest and provide excellent service.

The informants reported that their positions included certain responsibilities and tasks that were unique to them in their position compared to the other DM positions. These tasks and the required operational competencies to perform these tasks, were also viewed as essential to the informants. Similar findings have been identified by Breiter & Hoart (2000) & Kay & Russette (2000). The authors conclude that depending on the type of manager, and the level of hierarchy of the manager, will in turn require them to complete different operational tasks and require different operational competencies. The informants in this study were on the same level of the hierarchy i.e. a middle manager responsible of a department. Depending on the department however the informants' responsibilities and required competencies varied. The F-O managers for example had to work with third-party websites, and the F&B managers had to work with revenue management. Kay & Russette (2000) found that some tasks were similar even if their informants worked in different departments such as "Working knowledge of worker assignments and employee scheduling". What was found in this study was that even if the informants had to perform similar tasks, these tasks could still vary depending on the needs of the department. Two examples are demonstrated in the chapter 'Empirical Findings' were employee scheduling and supply ordering varied depending on the department's frameworks, the needs of the department, and the employees' competencies. This means that general competencies for the operational

system were required by all DM such as budgeting and scheduling, but specific training was required for each DM position based on their unique needs.

### **How can these technical competencies be acquired?.**

The informants demonstrated that technical competencies required for their position would be taught before gaining a managerial position. Possessing basic computer competencies was still desirable, even if the informants believed that most people under the age of thirty possessed these competencies. Breiter & Hoart (2000) suggest that computer competencies should be included in hospitality education to prepare the graduates for the operational work. According to some informants completing a university degree, without specifying which type of degree, would give an individual the desirable technical competencies. This would mean that specific courses may not be necessary to include in the educational curriculum to teach these competencies, based on this study. Ashley et al. (1995, p.79-79) found that their informants would like the educational institution to focus on leadership-, communication- and other soft competencies and leave the training of hard competencies to the industry, and similar conclusions can be drawn based on this study. Wessels et al. (2017) suggest that hospitality students should focus on competencies in customer service and financials, as well as other operational competencies such as problem solving & crisis management. Based on this study similar argument would be reasonable, that students should focus on leadership, communication, HR, language and financial competencies. This would provide the students with the desirable competencies in order to lead, and fulfil the responsibilities of their position as a future manager. These courses should include work in various programs such as word processing and spreadsheets as suggested by Mandabach et al. (2001) to have the students practice these competencies for future operational work.

## Cultural/Language Competencies

### Why are cultural/language competencies desirable?.

Sandwith (1993) states that all businesses need to constantly be innovative and improve their quality and at the same time reduce costs. Madera et al. (2012) found that managers with multicultural and language competencies could perform tasks faster, more efficient and with better results than managers without these competencies. In this study it was clear that the informants had to have certain knowledge, understanding or at the very least an openness to other cultures in order to be able to lead their employees. The informants had to understand how to adapt their leadership depending on the employees' various nationalities, cultures and languages. One could argue that being able to be a considerate leader with the ability to inspire people to work for a common goal, would require knowledge about the employees' needs, expectations, ambitions etc. These factors might also be influenced by the employees' nationality, culture or language. Consequently, one could suggest that having a better understanding of these factors could result in a better leadership. Testa (2009) reasons that constant globalisation results in more people with various backgrounds, nationalities and cultures working in the hospitality industry world-wide. This fact was confirmed by the informants who explained that they had a lot of foreigners working for them, and a high employee turnover. The informants described that the foreigners used the service industry as a stepping-stone into society. One interpretation of these results could be that a lot of the jobs in the service industry such as cleaning, serving and doing dishes, do not require any formal education or specific competencies. Comparable reasoning of the high employee turnover has been presented by Åberg (2017). This high employee turnover could result in a challenge for managers to be able to learn enough about employees, to understand their needs, expectations, ambitions etc.

Kriegl (2000) suggests that understanding the employees and the do's and don'ts of various cultures is important for managers in order to adapt and succeed in a management position. As previously stated, an important aspect of leadership was to gain trust and credibility in order to have a good working relationship with employees. This was found to relate to cultural consideration in this study, if an informant took an interest in employees' culture or language, it would increase their credibility, trust and assist in developing a good working relationship. Similar, both Testa (2009) and Kriegl (2000) found that taking an interest in employees' work- and private life enabled managers to build trust, gain appreciation and create a good working environment to provide excellent service. For the informants it was also important to be able to communicate with the foreign employees in order to build trust and credibility, which is similar to the findings of Chung (2000). Shaw & Williams (2009) explained that the hospitality/tourism industry contributes to a large portion of increased labour mobility, which leads to foreigners working in the hospitality/tourism industry with other cultural- and language competencies. This was clearly demonstrated in this study, mostly in the F&B and housekeeping department where a lot of foreigners worked. Being able to communicate with these employees was of course as important as communicating with any other employee. Possessing these interpersonal/communication competencies has been proven to be of utmost importance for leaders, for example by Sandwith (1993). It was essential for the informants to get the information across, and could be more complicated if the employees did not speak the language. Kriegl (2000) observed that interpersonal- and communication competencies are important when communicating with employees of other nationalities.

In this study it was found that managers possessing language competencies or in other ways being able to communicate with their employees was important for them, and the effectiveness of the operation. It was found that communicating in a certain way not to upset the

employees, or give them the wrong idea of information and their leadership was crucial. One could therefore argue that possessing the cultural and language competencies necessary to communicate with their employees was essential to be able to lead them. The communication included “bad English”, body language, simple terms or even words in the language of the employee. The communication itself was essential for the operation to function and also to improve employees and the overall operation. Kriegl (2000) found that it was important to create a comfortable work culture and create a feeling of team spirit. Similar conclusions could be drawn from the findings in this study, as it was important to make the employees feel part of the team and that they contributed. Moreover, Kriegl (2000) expands on that notion and states that local language is fundamental for managers and being able to speak more languages or have a willingness to learn another language is ideal for managers. This was also true in this study as all managers had to be able to speak Swedish and English to be promoted to managers. For the informants it was essential to be at such a high level of English that they were able to adapt their language competencies to the receiver and get the information across. For the informants it was not only important to understand the various cultures of their employees, but their guests as well. This included understanding the guests needs and expectations, which according to them were sometimes based on stereotypes. Shaw & Williams (2009) explain that tourists travel to countries where they do not speak the language or are part of the same culture. The informants and the employees had to serve international guests from all over the world and had to adapt to all these guests needs and expectations.

Baum (1991) reasons that all countries and hotels are unique in their culture. To be able to adapt to various cultures and guests could therefore be seen as valuable competencies to possess. In this study for instance, being able to speak the same language or being from the same country as a guest, made it easier to understand the guests needs and expectations and made it possible to

provide the best possible service. Moreover, Baum (1996) suggests that to being able to fulfil various expectations of international guests could require a certain understanding of the guest's culture and language. Shawn & Williams (2009) build on that line of argument and suggest that hiring foreigners would enhance the cultural & language knowledge of the business and increase the overall service quality. The informants valued the employees' competencies in various cultures and especially language. The benefits of language competencies were clearly demonstrated when it came to service and guest communication. For the informants it was valuable to possess language competencies especially in the languages that were spoken by a large number of their guests, in this case it was German. Those employees who did possess language competencies were seen as being able to provide better service or give something extra that those employees without them. Similar, Wang (2010) reasoned that hospitality leaders valued managers with specific language competencies as they often meet guest from various countries. Baum (1996) came to the same conclusion and added that both verbal and non-verbal communication was used to fulfil the guests needs, if the language competencies did not exist. Based on the findings of this study one could argue that being able to communicate in a guest's own language would minimize the risk of misunderstandings due to language barriers. It would most likely also increase the chances of understanding the needs and expectations of the guest. Finally, one could claim that it would make the guest feel more comfortable, more welcome and even feel appreciated. This based on the fact that they could feel that they had received special and unique treatment that would improve their overall impression of the service quality.

### **How can these cultural/language competencies be acquired?.**

The result demonstrated the clear difference between how one could acquire cultural competencies versus acquire language competencies according to the informants. Cultural

competencies could according to them only be acquired through experience. An individual would be required to socialise and experience various cultures, preferably for a long period of time through living abroad, working with people of other nationalities and cultures and/or having friends and family of other nationalities and cultures. Languages on the other hand had to be inherited by an individual's parents or studied for a long period of time. Agut et al. (2003) presented that language and financial competencies were the biggest demand for future training in the hospitality industry. This study revealed that having language competencies would greatly increase the managers' effectiveness, but at the same time it was expressed that it was too many languages to be able to learn and the need of specific languages was constantly changing. Baum (1990) suggests that hospitality educators should create core curriculums that focus on soft competencies such as communication and leadership. Furthermore, Baum (1990) suggests that added to that core curriculum should be courses that would help understand the local culture. Siu (1998) suggests that the industry needs to provide adequate training and development programs for their managers in cultural competencies. According to the informants in this study, learning about culture would not be possible during education as the topic would too wide and include too much to be able to learn it all. Language courses were suggested by both Chung (2000) and Lin (2002). Based on the findings in this study being able to be fluent in Swedish and English was essential. One could suggest that courses in 'business language' could be an appropriate suggestion. In this case having courses in "Business Swedish" and "Business English" could be beneficial in order to communicate well with both employees and guests.

## Summary

Two different tables are presented to summarize the findings of this study. First, Table 2, summarize what competencies were considered desirable in their respective competency domains, as well as a short description of how these could be acquired. Table 3 present an overview of how each competency domain could be acquired according to each informant.

Table 2

*Overview of Competence Domains, Competencies and Ways of Acquiring them*

| Competency Domain               | Competencies  | Acquiring competencies   |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Conceptual/<br>Creative         | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understand one's role &amp; responsibilities</li> <li>2. Understand the big picture of the business</li> <li>3. The ability to adapt to change</li> <li>4. The ability to solve problems</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1-2 Can be developed through work experience.</li> <li>3-4 Can be developed through education &amp; work experience.</li> </ol> |
| Leadership                      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Varied leadership styles</li> <li>2. Train &amp; develop employees</li> <li>3. Motivate &amp; inspire employees</li> <li>4. Unique hospitality leadership</li> </ol>                                | Considered part of one's personality, but can be developed through education & work experience.  |
| Interpersonal/<br>Communication | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Varied communication styles</li> <li>2. Ability to build trust</li> <li>3. 'Handing over the baton'</li> <li>4. Teach service behaviour</li> </ol>  | Interpersonal competencies were considered part of one's personality. Communication can be developed through education & work experience.                              |
| Human Resource                  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recruiting</li> <li>2. Training programs</li> <li>3. Promotions</li> <li>4. General HR knowledge</li> </ol>   | Can be developed through education & work experience.  |
| Finance                         | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overall financial knowledge</li> <li>2. Budgeting &amp; meeting the financial requirements</li> <li>3. Accounting</li> <li>4. Revenue management</li> </ol>   | Can be developed through education & work experience.  |
| Technical                       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. General technical competencies</li> <li>2. General understand of operation systems</li> <li>3. Specific technical tasks for each manager</li> </ol>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Can be developed anywhere, including education.</li> <li>2-4 Can be developed through work experience.</li> </ol>             |

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|                      |  |  |
|----------------------|--|--|
| Culture/<br>Language | 4. Common technical tasks for each manager   | Cultural can be developed through various experiences.<br>Language can be part of one's heritage and be developed through education. |
|                      | 1. Cultural competencies to handle employees |  |
|                      | 2. Language competencies to handle employees |  |
|                      | 3. Cultural competencies to handle guests    |  |
|                      | 4. Language competencies to handle guests    |  |

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Table 3

*How to Acquire Competencies*


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| Competency Domain | Education | Experience | Part of one's personality or heritage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|---------------------------------------|
| Conceptual        |           | X          |                                       |
| Creative          | X         | X          |                                       |
| Leadership        | X         | X          | X                                     |
| Interpersonal     |           |            | X                                     |
| Communication     | X         | X          |                                       |
| Human Resource    | X         | X          |                                       |
| Finance           | X         | X          |                                       |
| Technical         | X         | X          |                                       |
| Culture           |           | X          |                                       |
| Language          | X         |            | X                                     |

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There are some important factors regarding these findings that one has to take into consideration. 1) Each of the three hotel-chains had a head office with managers working specifically with finance, computer/IT, marketing and HR. Consequently, these resources could have influenced the desirability of these competencies among the informants in this study. The managers at each respective head office were responsible for a large number of the tasks in each

of these competency domains. 2) Each hotel-chain provided sufficient training for their future managers in conceptual/creative, leadership, communication, financial, HR, and technical competencies. This training could have influenced the desirable competencies for future managers as many of them could be taught on site. An example of this influence could be the fact that only one out of twelve managers in this study had a formal degree in tourism/hospitality. 3) The importance of certain desirable competencies demonstrated above also varied depending on the type of manager. For example, F&B managers were the only managers who worked with revenue management.

#### **Discussion of theoretical implications.**

The study concludes that all informants utilized various competencies in their leadership roles. Important to this study, was that all informants utilized various cultural and language competencies in their roles as managers, and they all agreed on the benefits of possessing these competencies. Based on these findings one could argue that cultural and language competencies are important for all managers to possess in the hospitality industry. The Competency Domain Model by Sandwith (1993) include the other competency domains found in this study, and the model is twenty-five years old. The model was applicable in this study and is viewed as still being relevant for leaders today even if the business world, including the hospitality industry has changed during these years. Testa (2009) and Shaw & Williams (2009) found that globalization leads more people to travel to, and work in various countries that are culturally different from their own and where other languages might be spoken. Moreover, Åberg (2017) found that the tourism and hospitality industry has a low thresholds regarding education and knowledge and is often described as something ‘anyone can do’. This would make it easy for people from other countries to enter the hospitality industry, which was confirmed in this study. A lot of the employees,

especially those in the housekeeping departments were foreigners who used their hospitality jobs as a stepping-stone into society. Possessing cultural and language competencies were found to be vital for the informants to enhance their leadership and communication competencies to make their business more efficient. These competencies were also essential for the informants to develop and sustain better relationships with their employees. Similar, Madera et al. (2012) concluded that managers with several language and/or multicultural competencies could perform tasks quicker, more efficiently and with better end results than managers lacking these competencies. Furthermore, the informants in this study described the advantage that they themselves or their employees had in relation to service if they possessed cultural or language competencies. If they possessed these competencies they could communicate more easily and better understand the needs of the guests, which lead to better service. Baum (1996) expressed that being able to deliver quality service in the hospitality industry requires both interpersonal- and communication competencies to fulfil the various expectations of international guests.

Other competencies such as marketing has been researched in previous studies (Kay & Moncarz, 2004; Chung 2000; Kay & Russette, 2000; Su et al. 1997), and it has been found that the needs of these competencies vary depending on the management position. In this study marketing competencies did not appear to be important according to the informants. Culture and language competencies is however, are viewed as important to communicate with international colleagues, employees and guests, and is important no matter where in the hospitality industry one works. This further enhance the importance of possessing cultural and language competencies for hospitality managers. The culture/language competency domain is therefore a viewed as a valid contribution to the Competency Domain Model by Sandwith (1993).

## Conclusion

This study has explored the perceived desirable competencies of different hospitality managers. The results have provided a better understanding of which competencies are desirable, why these competencies are desirable, and how one can acquire these desirable competencies. Most of the desirable competencies found in this study are in-line with what previous studies argue are the essential competencies for hospitality leaders. This study explored how these competencies can be acquired, which had not been studied to the same extent. Furthermore, it was found that cultural and language competencies had a larger impact on hospitality managers work and responsibilities than previously stated. This has led to the conclusion that these competencies should be part of a new competency domain and that they are in fact vital for all managers in the hospitality industry.

### Answers to the Research Questions

#### 1) What are the desired competencies for each department manager?.

The desirable competencies for the informants are presented in Table 4. in each respective competency domain

Table 4

#### *Competency Domains and Competencies*

| <b><u>Conceptual/Creative</u></b>             | <b><u>Leadership</u></b>         |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Understand one's role & responsibilities   | 1. Varied leadership styles      |
| 2. Understand the big picture of the business | 2. Train & develop employees     |
| 3. The ability to adapt to change             | 3. Motivate & inspire employees  |
| 4. The ability to solve problems              | 4. Unique hospitality leadership |

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|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b><u>Interpersonal/Communication</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Varied communication styles</li> <li>2. Ability to build trust</li> <li>3. ‘Handing over the baton’</li> <li>4. Teach service behaviour</li> </ol>  | <p><b><u>Human Resource</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recruiting</li> <li>2. Training programs</li> <li>3. Promotions</li> <li>4. General HR knowledge</li> </ol>  |
| <p><b><u>Finance</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overall financial knowledge</li> <li>2. Budgeting &amp; meeting the financial requirements</li> <li>3. Accounting</li> <li>4. Revenue management</li> </ol>   | <p><b><u>Technical</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. General technical competencies</li> <li>2. General understand of operation systems</li> <li>3. Specific technical tasks for each manager</li> <li>4. Common technical tasks for each manager</li> </ol> |
| <p><b><u>Culture/Language</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cultural competencies to handle employees</li> <li>2. Language competencies to handle employees</li> <li>3. Cultural competencies to handle guests</li> <li>4. Language competencies to handle guests</li> </ol> |  |

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## 2) Why are these competencies desirable for each department manager?.

The reason for why these competencies were desirable were related to the tasks and the responsibilities of each type of manager. This study demonstrated that the managers relied on the same competency domains, and most competencies in these domains were important for all managers but were utilized in various ways. The following is a short summary over the competency domains. **Conceptual Domain:** These competencies were important for the managers to be able to perform well in their jobs, to understand how their tasks were interdependent of others, as well as understanding how their performance affected the overall results. **Creative Domain:** To be creative was essential for the managers in order to solve problems and adapt to changes in the environment that affected their own jobs, their department and the entire hotel. The F&B managers were the only managers whose creativity was part of their daily tasks and responsibilities. **Leadership Domain:** Leadership competencies were vital for all managers to lead their employees. The managers’ leadership styles were clearly different and had to be adapted depending on the department rather than the managers’ personalities.

**Interpersonal/ Communication Domain:** These competencies were crucial for the managers to lead and communicate with employees and to communicate well with guests. The way of communicating varied between the managers depending on the needs of each department.

**Financial Domain:** The financial competencies were important to keep track of to improve the financial performance of the departments. The F&B managers were the only managers who actively worked with revenue management.

**Human Resource Domain:** These competencies were desirable for all managers to teach, train, and develop the employees in their jobs. These competencies were specifically desirable for the Hk managers in order to gain trust, credibility, and to build a relationship with their employees.

**Technical Domain:** Technical competencies refers to the competencies required to perform one's tasks and was necessary for all managers, however, these competencies varied depending on the manager's position.

**Cultural/ Language Domain:** Cultural and language competencies were essential for all managers to be able to

understand and communicate with their employees and guests. The Hk managers mostly utilized

these competencies to understand, lead, and communicate with their employees. The F-O

managers mostly utilized these competencies to better understand and communicate well with

their guests. Finally, for the F&B managers these competencies were important to understand and

communicate with both their employees and their guests.

### 3) How can these competencies acquired?.

Based on the findings in this study, it was concluded that some competencies could be taught through formal education and/or be developed through work experience. These competencies were found in the following competency domains: creative, leadership, communication, financial, HR, and technical. Furthermore, it was concluded that interpersonal competencies were considered part of an individual's personality and could not be taught or

trained. Similarly, leadership competencies were viewed by some managers as part of one's personality and that certain individuals were "born to lead". The difference between leadership and interpersonal competencies, was that all managers believed that leadership competencies could be developed through formal education and/or work experience. Language competencies were considered to be part of one's heritage or upbringing, for example, by having parents who speak several languages. Language competencies were seen as teachable or that they could be developed further through formal education. To acquire cultural competencies, the individual would have to be exposed to various cultures in their personal life. This could be through international education, or through work experience with various cultures according to the informants. The informants stated that conceptual competencies required work experience where the individual had to be in a certain position with certain tasks and responsibilities to be able to fully understand what was required for that specific position.

## **Contributions and Suggested Implications Based on this Study**

### **Theoretical contribution.**

The study concluded that all informants utilized various competencies in their leadership roles. An important finding of this study was that all managers agreed that cultural and language competencies were essential for them in their roles as managers. These competencies were vital to lead employees of different cultures, who may also have other language competencies from the managers. Furthermore, these competencies were essential to understand various guests, their needs and their expectations of the service that was being provided. Globalization will keep developing and more people travel for pleasure and for work. Moreover, the tourism and hospitality industry is viewed as an industry that does not require any special competencies,

making it easier for a foreigner to use the industry as a stepping-stone into society. This will lead to more international and intercultural meetings across the world between tourists, employees, and hospitality leaders. Based on these findings one could argue that the need of cultural and language competencies in the hospitality industry will continue to increase, and will become essential for all hospitality leaders to possess. The Competency Domain Model by Sandwith (1993) that was used in this study include all the other competency domains found in this study. The Competency Domain Model is twenty-five years old, but was still applicable in this study, and was viewed as relevant for leaders today. The business world including the hospitality industry has undoubtedly changed since the introduction of the model. The cultural/language competency domain is therefore viewed as well suited contribution to the Competency Domain Model by Sandwith (1993) in order to update its function for today's hospitality industry.

#### **Current and future hospitality students.**

One could argue that it is important for current and future hospitality students to understand what the industry requires of them, what competencies that are desirable, as well as how these competencies could be acquired. These findings could assist students in applying for programs and elective courses that they believe will give them the opportunity to develop these competencies. The results could inspire students to work while studying, as it was perceived as enhancing a lot of the desirable competencies. Similarly, students could consider studying, working, or living abroad as these experiences could develop and/or improve various competencies such as cultural and language competencies according to the informants. Another benefit of this study is the explanation and comparison between the different managers, as it could provide an understanding of what the different managers do and what is required of them. These results can give students the opportunity to decide what they want to work with, as well as

the possibility to adapt their education and work experience towards achieving their desired career. One important finding was what many of the informants argued for, which was that leadership and interpersonal competencies are to some degree part of one's personality. This finding should encourage future students to evaluate themselves, do personality tests or even seek advice from industry experts to understand if they possess these competencies. As one informant clearly put it: "Some people just have the right competencies to work as a leader in the service industry. The people who doesn't have these competencies should seek their luck elsewhere" (GM1).

### **Hospitality educators.**

These findings could be viewed as guidelines for what the hospitality industry desires and what hospitality educators could provide to make their graduates more desirable to employers. Educators must have balance between fulfilling the academic requirement by national laws, regulations, university and standards, and at the same time meet the needs of the industry. Academic requirements are often clearly stated and controlled, however it is equally important to explore the needs of the industry and update the curriculums to adapt to these needs. Educators should strive to include the industry in an open dialog of possible improvement, and in the development of programs, courses and teaching methods. Educators should also encourage the industry to provide possibilities such as trainee programs and internships for their students and adapt their teaching method to complement these methods. These changes could improve the quality of education, the educational experience for students as well as their future possibilities. One could argue that these changes could increase the chances of a graduate getting a job after graduation. If educators do not adapt to the industry's needs, hospitality graduates could run the risk of not obtaining a position in the hospitality industry. Instead, they may have to work in

other industries, resulting in their knowledge and competencies not being utilized to develop the hospitality industry. One could add to this notion by suggesting that if educators adapt to the industry and graduates start working in the industry, it would not only develop the industry, but it could also result in an increased interest of hospitality education, and attract more ambitious students to these educations. This could result in a positive spiral as more ambitious students would graduate and continue to contribute to the quality of the hospitality industry and hospitality educators.

### **Hospitality industry.**

The greatest benefit of these types of studies for the hospitality industry would be if it leads to developing future hospitality students that possessed the desirable competencies. This does not mean that the hospitality industry should be passive in this process. On the contrary, the industry needs to communicate and cooperate with hospitality educators to improve students learning opportunities. The industry should provide educators with clear information about what competencies they believe are necessary and desirable in the industry. Preferably, the industry should be involved in the program and course development to ensure that these competencies are taught. The industry should provide the educators with suggestions for how certain competencies could be trained, to simulate real-life situations of the work in the hospitality industry. These learning methods could, for example, include case studies, scenarios, role-playing, or even live projects that the industry is working on. As found in this study many of the competencies were according to the informants, possible to teach, but could also be improved through practical experience. One could argue that providing opportunities such as trainee programs or internships for ambitious students could result in gaining the desirable work experience that the industry desires. Moreover, one could suggest that this type of cooperation with hospitality educations

could improve the financial aspect of the hospitality industry. By providing students with the desirable competencies the industry desires during education, it could lead to less training requirements when entering the job market. For example, the industry today must have mandatory courses to teach some essential competencies such as budgeting and accounting for their future managers. If the industry had good communication and cooperation with educations, then these competencies could be taught during education. This would result in graduates already possessing the desirable competencies, which in turn would save the industry both time and money not having to train these competencies. By doing so, the industry could focus on training conceptual and technical competencies specific for their business, that according to them, could not be taught during education. Another suggestion could be further training of their employees in leadership and communication that were found to be competencies that could always be improved. Furthermore, if graduates would possess the desirable competencies through communication and cooperation with educators, it could lead to improved service quality and guest satisfaction. This could lead to a better development for the business and the industry as a whole. Moreover, these results and similar studies could be used as guidelines for job descriptions to ease the recruitment process for the industry, and ease the recruitment process if graduates possessed the desirable competencies.

### **Limitations**

The major limitations of this study were a small sample size, and the fact that the empirical data could have been influenced by the researcher. The empirical data could have been influenced during the gathering process of the empirical data, or during the interpretation of the empirical data. How these limitations have been countered to the best of the researcher's ability,

can be found in the methodological chapter of this study. It is important to remember that these findings are based on the informants' perceptions of desirable competencies for the specific positions that were studied, and at that present time. This means that results of competency studies such as this one can be different if one would ask other informants or if the study had been conducted in another location. Finally, these results can also change over time as jobs and methods of working are constantly changing, leading to various competencies becoming more or less important for certain positions.

### **Further Studies**

Gaining a better understanding of what competencies, the hospitality industry desires, why certain competencies are desirable, and how one could acquire them, will require future studies. These specific studies should preferably consist of larger samples, informants at different positions and level of hierarchy, and from various segments of the hospitality industry. These studies should be conducted in other locations, both in Sweden and abroad to be able to compare and even generalize some findings in the future. Desirable competencies of hospitality leaders could be studied from the perceptions of employees, customers or industry experts. Another approach could be to study hospitality educators and the academic requirements they should fulfil in their curriculum and how desirable competencies could fit into these requirements. One could explore the effectiveness of various teaching methods such as lectures, case studies, simulations, roleplaying, trainee programs and/or internships to teach the desirable competencies. One important aspect that should be explored further is how various competencies can be acquired. In this study, it was found that the desirable competencies could be taught through formal education, developed through work experience, was part of one's personality or heritage, or that they could

be acquired through mixture of these methods. Future studies on how competencies can be acquired, trained, and developed or if there are competencies that are part of one's personality, should be studied in further detail. Lastly, as this study resulted in finding another domain, i.e. the importance of cultural- and language consideration. It is strongly advised that future studies should explore these findings. Future studies could investigate if these competencies can be found in other management position, in other segments of the industry, or if the same or other needs of these competencies can be found in other locations around the world. Moreover, future studies could scrutinize if more competencies can be found within this domain or how the domain could influence other domains such as the leadership or communication domains. For example, how it could affect one's leadership and communication, what opportunities and challenges it entails, or how the service is positively affected by cultural or language competencies or negatively affected by any cultural or language barriers or misunderstandings.

Finally, as stated over-and-over throughout this thesis, desirable competencies in the hospitality industry are constantly changing and these results are not consistent. Future research, communication, cooperation and understanding is required by hospitality students, hospitality educators, and the hospitality industry to develop together for a better future in tourism and hospitality.

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## Appendix

### Interview Guide General Managers

#### Bakgrund

1. Vad heter du?
2. Hur gammal är du?
3. Vad arbetar du som? (position)
4. Hur länge har du arbetat som ...?
5. Vad har du arbetat med innan?
6. Har du någon tidigare utbildning?

#### Allmänt om kompetenser

7. Finns det några bestämda krav på erfarenhet eller utbildning för att få arbeta som hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping) hos er?
  - Om ja, Vilka? Varför finns dessa krav? Vad är din åsikt kring dessa?
  - Om nej, anser du att det bör finnas? Vilka krav? Varför?
8. Finns det kompetenser som du anser vara önskvärda för att arbeta som en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?
  - Utöver de nämnda kompetenserna, finns det andra kompetenser du anser vara meriterande?
9. Anser du att det finns kandidater på arbetsmarknaden med dessa önskvärda kompetenser?
  - Finns det kompetenser du anser saknas hos kandidaterna? Vilka? Varför?
  - Hur tror du att kandidaterna skulle kunna lära sig dessa kompetenser?

#### Hotellchefen

10. Vilka kompetenser anser du att studenter bör lära sig under sin utbildning för en framtid inom hotellbranschen?
  - Varför bör dessa läras ut?
11. Vilka personliga egenskaper anser du vara önskvärda att ha för att vara en bra hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?
  - Varför är dessa viktiga för en person att ha?
12. Vilka kompetenser anser du utvecklas och förbättras i yrket som hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?
13. Finns det någon kompetens som du gärna skulle vilja ha? Eller en kompetens du skulle vilja förbättra?
  - Varför då?
  - Hur tror du att du skulle kunna lära dig/utveckla dessa kompetenser?

### Avdelningscheferna

14. Om vi ser till samtliga DM positionerna, finns det kompetenser som du tror är viktiga oavsett vilken typ av management position man har? (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att de är viktiga?

15. Finns det specifika kompetenser som du anser vara unikt viktiga för en manager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför tror du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga och unika för just den positionen?

16. Vart tror du att dina kollegor har lärt sig dessa nödvändiga kompetenser

- Utbildning, vilka kompetenser? Varför?

- Arbetslivserfarenhet, vilka kompetenser? Varför?

- Personlighet, vilka kompetenser? Varför?

### Gästerna

17. Vilka områden lyfts fram av era lojalitetsgäster? Vad är viktigt för dem för att bli lojala gäster?

- Finns det specifika kompetenser som du anser ligger till grund för detta?

18. Finns det specifika kompetenser hos er personal som gäster specifikt uttryckt har varit bra/viktigt för dem och deras upplevelse?

19. Om missnöje framkommit från gäster, finns det något specifikt område där vissa kompetenser kan förbättras eller utvecklas för att förbättra det området?

### Kompetensutveckling

20. Finns det några internutbildningar för era DM?

- Om ja, vilken typ av utbildning? Vilka kompetenser utvecklas där? Kan du vara med och påverka vilka kompetenser som tränas?

- Om nej, är det något du skulle vilja ha? Vilka kompetenser skulle du vilja utveckla? Vad tror du är det bästa sättet att lära sig dessa på?

21. Finns det något du gör för att utveckla de nödvändiga kompetenserna hos dig själv och era managers?

22. Finns det något som managerna själva kan göra för att utveckla dessa kompetenser?

\*Presentation av Fake CV's\*

### Specifika kompetenser

23. Finns det specifika kompetenser inom ledarskap som du anser vara önskvärda för en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga? På vilket sätt?
- Hur tror du att man bäst utvecklar dessa kompetenser? Genom akademisk/praktisk utbildning eller genom erfarenhet? Eller är det något man har med sig som person?

24. Finns det specifika kompetenser inom IT/data som du anser vara önskvärda för en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga? På vilket sätt?
- Hur tror du att man bäst utvecklar dessa kompetenser? Genom akademisk/praktisk utbildning eller genom erfarenhet?

25. Finns det specifika kompetenser inom ekonomi som du anser vara önskvärda för en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga? På vilket sätt?
- Hur tror du att man bäst utvecklar dessa kompetenser? Genom akademisk/praktisk utbildning eller genom erfarenhet?

26. Finns det specifika kompetenser inom marknadsföring som du anser vara önskvärda för en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga? På vilket sätt?
- Hur tror du att man bäst utvecklar dessa kompetenser? Genom akademisk/praktisk utbildning eller genom erfarenhet?

27. Finns det specifika kompetenser inom HR som du anser vara önskvärda för en hotellmanager inom (Deras position - F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga? På vilket sätt?
- Hur tror du att man bäst utvecklar dessa kompetenser? Genom akademisk/praktisk utbildning eller genom erfarenhet?

28. Finns det andra kompetenser du tycker är viktiga inom organisation/företagande? S.k. hårda kompetenser en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga? På vilket sätt?
- Hur tror du att man bäst utvecklar dessa kompetenser? Genom akademisk/praktisk utbildning eller genom erfarenhet?

29. Finns det andra egenskaper du anser viktiga kring social kompetens? S.k. mjuka kompetenser för en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga? På vilket sätt?
- Hur tror du att man bäst utvecklar dessa kompetenser? Genom akademisk/praktisk utbildning eller genom erfarenhet?

30. Finns det andra personliga egenskaper du anser vara viktiga för en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga? På vilket sätt?
- Hur tror du att man bäst utvecklar dessa kompetenser? Genom akademisk/praktisk utbildning eller genom erfarenhet?

32. Är det något du skulle vilja tillägga som vi inte har diskuterat kring ämnet kompetenser idag?

## Interview Guide Department Managers

### Bakgrund

1. Vad heter du?
2. Hur gammal är du?
3. Vad arbetar du som? (position)
4. Hur länge har du arbetat som ...?
5. Vad har du arbetat med innan?
6. Har du någon tidigare utbildning?

### Allmänt om kompetenser

7. Finns det kompetenser som du anser vara önskvärda för att arbeta som en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?
  - Utöver de nämnda kompetenserna, finns det andra kompetenser du anser vara meriterande?
8. Vilka kompetenser tror du att din GM ansåg vara viktiga när han/hon anställde dig?
9. Vart har du lärt dig dessa kompetenser, akademiskt/praktiskt-utbildning/erfarenhet?
  - Finns det personliga egenskaper som du har och som du anser vara viktiga egenskaper i ditt arbete?
  - Varför anser du att dessa kunskaper är viktiga för dig i ditt arbete?

### Avdelningschefen

10. Vilka kompetenser anser du att studenter bör lära sig under sin utbildning för en framtid inom hotellbranschen?
  - Varför bör dessa läras ut?
11. Vilka personliga egenskaper anser du vara önskvärda att ha för att vara en bra hotellmanager inom (Deras position - F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?
  - Varför är dessa viktiga för en person att ha?
12. Vilka kompetenser anser du utvecklas och förbättras i yrket som hotellmanager inom (Deras position - F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?
13. Finns det någon kompetens som du gärna skulle vilja ha? Eller en kompetens du skulle vilja förbättra?
  - Varför då?
  - Hur tror du att du skulle kunna lära dig/utveckla dessa kompetenser?

### De andra avdelningscheferna

14. Om vi ser till dig och dina kollegor, finns det kompetenser som du tror är viktiga oavsett vilken typ av management position man har? (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att de är viktiga?

15. Finns det specifika kompetenser som du anser vara unikt viktiga för en manager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför tror du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga och unika för just den positionen?

16. Vart tror du att dina kollegor har lärt sig dessa nödvändiga kompetenser

- Utbildning, vilka kompetenser? Varför?

- Arbetslivserfarenhet, vilka kompetenser? Varför?

- Personlighet, vilka kompetenser? Varför?

### Gästerna

17. Vilka områden lyfts fram av era lojalitetsgäster? Vad är viktigt för dem för att bli lojala gäster?

- Finns det specifika kompetenser som du anser ligga till grund för detta?

18. Finns det specifika kompetenser hos er personal som gäster specifikt uttryckt har varit bra/viktigt för dem och deras upplevelse?

19. Om missnöje framkommit från gäster, finns det något specifikt område där vissa kompetenser kan förbättras eller utvecklas för att förbättra det området?

### Kompetensutveckling

20. Finns det några internutbildningar för dig och dina kollegor?

- Om ja, vilken typ av utbildning? Vilka kompetenser utvecklas där? Kan du vara med och påverka vilka kompetenser som tränas?

- Om nej, är det något du skulle vilja ha? Vilka kompetenser skulle du vilja utveckla? Vad tror du är det bästa sättet att lära sig dessa på?

21. Finns det något du själv gör för att utveckla dessa nödvändiga kompetenserna?

\*Presentation av Fake CV's\*

### Specifika kompetenser

22. Finns det specifika kompetenser inom ledarskap som du anser vara önskvärda för en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga? På vilket sätt?

- Hur tror du att man bäst utvecklar dessa kompetenser? Genom akademisk/praktisk utbildning eller genom erfarenhet? Eller är det något man har med sig som person?

23. Finns det specifika kompetenser inom IT/data som du anser vara önskvärda för en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga? På vilket sätt?  
 - Hur tror du att man bäst utvecklar dessa kompetenser? Genom akademisk/praktisk utbildning eller genom erfarenhet?

24. Finns det specifika kompetenser inom ekonomi som du anser vara önskvärda för en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga? På vilket sätt?  
 - Hur tror du att man bäst utvecklar dessa kompetenser? Genom akademisk/praktisk utbildning eller genom erfarenhet?

25. Finns det specifika kompetenser inom marknadsföring som du anser vara önskvärda för en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga? På vilket sätt?  
 - Hur tror du att man bäst utvecklar dessa kompetenser? Genom akademisk/praktisk utbildning eller genom erfarenhet?

26. Finns det specifika kompetenser inom HR som du anser vara önskvärda för en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga? På vilket sätt?  
 - Hur tror du att man bäst utvecklar dessa kompetenser? Genom akademisk/praktisk utbildning eller genom erfarenhet?

27. Finns det andra kompetenser du tycker är viktiga inom organisation/företagande? S.k. hårda kompetenser en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga? På vilket sätt?  
 - Hur tror du att man bäst utvecklar dessa kompetenser? Genom akademisk/praktisk utbildning eller genom erfarenhet?

28. Finns det andra egenskaper du anser viktiga kring social kompetens? S.k. mjuka kompetenser för en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga? På vilket sätt?  
 - Hur tror du att man bäst utvecklar dessa kompetenser? Genom akademisk/praktisk utbildning eller genom erfarenhet?

29. Finns det andra personliga egenskaper du anser vara viktiga för en hotellmanager inom (F-O, F&B, Housekeeping)?

- Varför anser du att dessa kompetenser är viktiga? På vilket sätt?  
 - Hur tror du att man bäst utvecklar dessa kompetenser? Genom akademisk/praktisk utbildning eller genom erfarenhet?

30. Är det något du skulle vilja tillägga som vi inte har diskuterat kring ämnet kompetenser inom hotellbranschen idag?

## Fake cv's

### *Arbetslivserfarenhet*

|            |                 |
|------------|-----------------|
| Arbete 2år | Hotellreception |
| Arbete 3år | Hotellstäd      |

### *Utbildning*

|                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Gymnasieutbildning | Samhällsvetar-programmet |
|--------------------|--------------------------|

### *Övriga utbildningar, kurser och kompetenser*

#### *Högskolekurser*

#### *Andra Utbildningar*

|                          |                                  |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Internutbildning 1 vecka | Utbildning i nytt bokningssystem |
| Språkutbildning 4 veckor | Språkresa Madrid (Spanska)       |

#### *Förtroendeuppdrag*

#### *Språk*

|          |                                 |
|----------|---------------------------------|
| Svenska  | Modersmål                       |
| Tyska    | Modersmål                       |
| Spanska  | Goda kunskaper i tal och skrift |
| Engelska | Goda kunskaper i tal och skrift |

#### *Övriga kompetenser*

|                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Bokningssystem Opera    | Väldigt goda kunskaper |
| Bokningssystem Cenium 6 | Väldigt goda kunskaper |
| B-körkort               | Sedan 2013             |

## *Arbetslivserfarenhet*

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Vikariat 1mån | Vikarierande kökschef hotellrestaurang under semestertid |
| Arbete 2år    | Kock hotellrestaurang                                    |
| Arbete 2år    | Kock/Restaurangbiträde restaurang                        |
| Arbete 1år    | Värnplikt  |

## *Utbildning*

|                      |                               |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Yrkesutbildning 6mån | Försvarmaktens kockutbildning |
| Gymnasieutbildning   | Samhällsvetar-programmet      |

## *Övriga utbildningar, kurser och kompetenser*

### *Högskolekurser*

### *Andra Utbildningar*

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Hälsoutbildning 1vecka      | Akutsjukvårdsutbildning                     |
| Ledarskap 3veckor           | Konflikt-, stress- och situations-hantering |
| Livsmedelsutbildning 1vecka | Livsmedel, förvaring och hygien             |
| Fordonsutbildning 2veckor   | Lastbilskörkort                             |

### *Förtroendeuppdrag*

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Gruppchef 1år | Gruppchef för 8 personer under värnplikten |
|---------------|--|

### *Språk*

|          |                            |
|----------|----------------------------|
| Svenska  | Modersmål                  |
| Engelska | Kunskaper i tal och skrift |

### *Övriga kompetenser*

|           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| B-körkort | Sedan 2013 |
| C-körkort | Sedan 2015 |

## *Arbetslivserfarenhet*

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Arbete 3år       | Medarbetare inom möten och konferens Visit Kommun |
| Praktik 10veckor | Bokningsansvarig eventföretag                     |
| Praktik 5veckor  | Administratör eventföretag                        |
| Praktik 5veckor  | Bokningsagent resebyrå                            |

## *Utbildning*

|                     |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Yrkesutbildning 2år | Evenemangsmanager        |
| Gymnasieutbildning  | Samhällsvetar-programmet |

## *Övriga utbildningar, kurser och kompetenser*

### *Högskolekurser*

Arbetsledning och Ledarskap, Branschkunskap, Business English, Event Design, Event Management, Event Marknadsföring, Event Säkerhet, IT, Hållbarhet & Event, Projektledning vid Event, Revenue Management för Event, Sociala Medier, Säljteknik, samt 20veckors praktik

### *Andra Utbildningar*

### *Förtroendeuppdrag*

### *Språk*

|          |                                 |
|----------|---------------------------------|
| Svenska  | Modersmål                       |
| Engelska | Goda kunskaper i tal och skrift |

### *Övriga kompetenser*

|               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| Officepaketet | Goda kunskaper |
| B-körkort     | Sedan 2013     |

## *Arbetslivserfarenhet*

|              |                       |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| Arbete 6mån  | Hovmästare restaurang |
| Arbete 1,5år | Servitör restaurang   |

## *Utbildning*

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Universitet 3år    | Kandidatexamen i Turism                    |
| Utbytestermin 5mån | En termin i USA under kandidatutbildningen |
| Gymnasiutbildning  | Samhällsvetar-programmet                   |

## *Övriga utbildningar, kurser och kompetenser*

### *Universitetskurser*

Branding, Destinationsdesign, Destinationsutveckling, Evenemang, Forskningsmetod, Hållbarturism, Kultur & Samhälle, Produktion & Konsumtion inom turism, Projektledning, Samhällsplanering, samt C-uppsats inom turism,

### *Andra Utbildningar*

|                         |                     |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Yrkesutbildning 4veckor | Bartenderutbildning |
|-------------------------|---------------------|

### *Förtroendeuppdrag*

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Utbytes-Ambassadör 6mån | Representant/informatör för utbytesprogram |
|-------------------------|--|

### *Språk*

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| Svenska  | Modersmål                               |
| Engelska | Väldigt goda kunskaper i tal och skrift |

### *Övriga kompetenser*

|               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| Officepaketet | Goda kunskaper       |
| SPSS          | Begränsade kunskaper |
| B-körkort     | Sedan 2013           |

## *Arbetslivserfarenhet*

Arbete 6mån                      Städare hotell

## *Utbildning*

Universitet 2år                      Masterexamen i Hotell Management (Engelska)  
 Universitet 3år                      Kandidatexamen i Hotell Management (Engelska)  
 Gymnasieutbildning                      Hotell och Turism Programmet

## *Övriga utbildningar, kurser och kompetenser*

### *Universitetskurser*

Affärsjuridik, Arbetsmiljö, Arbetsrätt, Ekonomistyrning, Evenemang, Forskningsmetoder, Företags-Ekonomi, Human Resources Management, Hotell Management, IT & Sociala Medier, Ledarskap, Marknadsföring, Organisationsledning, Projektledning, Organisationskommunikation, Servicemanagement, Strategi & planering, samt C- & D-uppsats inom hotell management.

### *Andra Utbildningar*

Kvällskurs 1år                      Franska  
 Föreningsutbildning 1vecka      Ungdomstränare idrott Steg 2  
 Förening utbildning 1vecka      Ungdomstränare idrott Steg 1  
 Föreningsutbildning 2dag      Ungdomsledare  
 Föreningsutbildning 2veckor      SportAdmin (System för bokning, fakturering, hemsida)

### *Förtroendeuppdrag*

Ordförande 3år                      För Studentföreningen  
 Kassör 1år                          För Studentföreningen  
 Programrepresentant 1år          För Studentföreningen  
 Klassrepresentant 2år              För Mastersprogrammet  
 Klassrepresentant 3år              För Kandidatprogrammet  
 Ungdomstränare 6år                För Idrottsförening

### *Språk*

Svenska                              Modersmål  
 Franska                                Modersmål  
 Engelska                              Väldigt goda kunskaper i tal och skrift

### *Övriga kompetenser*

Officepaketet                      Väldigt goda kunskaper  
 SPSS                                  Väldigt goda kunskaper  
 GIS                                    Väldigt goda kunskaper  
 SportAdmin                        Väldigt goda kunskaper  
 B-körkort                          Sedan 2013