Article

Leader 'leadership' perceptions within a luxury hotel environment

Greta Marinotti, Alan Johnston*

York Business School, York St John University, York YO31 7EX, United Kingdom
* Corresponding author: Alan Johnston, a.johnston@yorksj.ac.uk

Abstract: This study considers the role of leadership within the hospitality sector as a key tool in raising performance levels. Hospitality is unique in its service-based approach, which relies on employees to ensure effective service. Post-COVID-19 and Brexit, the hospitality sector has seen a shift in reliance towards a home workforce, and as such, retention has become an area of greater importance. This case study investigation adopted a qualitative approach to consider the perceptions of six managers within a UK-based luxury hotel. Semi-structured interviews were used to draw out their experience of approaches used to ensure effective delivery in their areas of responsibility. The research concludes that a shift in leadership approach (from autocratic to democratic) is a necessity to retain staff, particularly as the shift to a greater reliance on a home workforce due to COVID-19 and Brexit starts to impact the sector. There does, however, remain a need to be more autocratic in certain situations to ensure the quality of service. Subsequently, communication becomes critical in the building of relationships. The research considers leadership approaches from a managerial perspective and is based on individual perceptions. Traditionally, research has been conducted from an employee perspective.

Keywords: communication; hospitality; servant leadership; transformational leadership

1. Introduction

Leadership as a concept is a widely discussed area of debate. As such, Brownell (2010, p. 363) contends that "the history of leadership theory is a fascinating story of evolving views on... the ways individuals acquire power and influence in the workplace", with differing approaches, models, and philosophies developing and changing over time, consisting of differing nuances (Najera-Sanchez et al., 2022). As such, leadership may be considered a toolbox of methods used to influence individuals (Haryanto et al., 2023). The one recurring theme that remains is the importance of leadership (Drucker, 1998). There remains a lack of consistency around the best approach, resulting from contextual factors (Anwar and Asrar-Ul-Haq, 2018). This is particularly true within service sectors, and most notably, in hospitality, ensuring a balance between satisfying business needs, consistency of service, and meeting employee expectations may be deemed impossible or at the very least challenging (Witelaw, 2013). Recent issues such as COVID-19 and Brexit have further raised leadership as an issue for concern as leaders within hospitality seek to adjust and reinterpret their approach (Clark, 2021).

Guchait et al. (2023) undertook a systematic literature review to identify leadership research within hospitality that had taken place since 2000. They identified a series of systematic reviews that focused specifically on the hospitality sector. In it, they identified different approaches to leadership, including differing forms such as abusive supervision, which they also referred to as dark leadership undertaken by Yu

et al. (2020). They also identified servant leadership (Bavik, 2020; Chon and Zoltan, 2019; Gui et al., 2021). In addition, Gui et al. (2020) have identified transformational leadership.

Al-Ababneh (2013) recognizes the large pool of leadership concepts; however, he found a lack of literature on leadership within hospitality. Ryan (2013) suggested that the hospitality sector needed more focused research. In particular, he recognised that trends in human resource management and the challenges faced as an area for development. Research has generally focused on the perception of employees of the approach taken by leaders (Najera-Sanchez et al., 2022), with little investigation from the perspective of leaders (Mishra et al., 2019). This paper therefore considers manager perceptions within a luxury-end UK-based hotel of their approach taken to leadership.

2. Literature review

2.1. Leadership

Leadership is a well-travelled concept that is not easily defined, and a plethora of models, frameworks, and theories exist with many definitions in existence, leading to many interpretations and viewpoints of what leadership is (Mullins and Dossor, 2013). Leaders gather greater importance as organisations operate in increasingly volatile and competitive environments with high levels of complexity (Higgs, 2003), where leaders are expected to be able to foster development and adapt to the challenges around them (Whittington et al., 2020). Contemporary approaches to leadership involve leaders providing thrust and push to help motivate staff to achieve excellence (Haryanto et al., 2024).

Leadership within the hospitality sector needs to be considered within the context of the uniqueness of the sector (Nickson, 2013; Partington, 2016), including the unpredictability and instability of the workplace and the environment in which it operates (Lo and Lamm, 2005). Likewise, hospitality is fundamentally a service reliant on the effective building of relationships with customers (Mishra et al., 2019). Ali et al. (2021) highlight the importance of service quality in relation to customer satisfaction. They suggest that a large portion of customer satisfaction is related to their experience dealing with individuals. Subsequently, the leader provides influence over the actions and behaviours of others (Northouse, 2020). As such, leadership is critical for the effectiveness of and within organisations (Hassanien, 2020). This is coupled with an industry that is associated with low pay and raised levels of pressure on employees and managers, leading to overwork and stress and high levels of turnover (Walker and Walker, 2014). Many of the current issues faced by the hospitality sector are long-standing. Blum (1997) highlighted some issues related to service quality, customer expectations, staffing levels, including qualification levels amongst staff, and sustainability. Costa et al. (1997) highlighted similar concerns. However, they focus more on the management of leadership within organisations and the management of people. Ward (1997), focuses particularly on hotel market trends in the UK, suggesting that increased demand for hotel space will impact staffing levels. This was supported by Duncan (2005).

The sector often requires high levels of consistency of both products and service levels enforced through an autocratic approach, reliant on adhering to rules and procedures, while at the same time embracing a democratic approach where employees are given greater levels of trust and autonomy in an attempt to empower (Muhammad et al., 2015). Contrastingly, how managers are expected to have democratic relationships with their direct reports while maintaining appropriate authoritarian control has become an area of focus (Witelaw, 2013). Managers can often find these somewhat contradictory approaches uncomfortable and a challenge in practice (Peterson et al., 2020). Arguably, consideration of McGregor, X, and Y provides some understanding of employee motivation and outlines potential attitudes toward work that may allow for some consideration (Davies et al., 2008). Theory X occupies the view that people are averse to work, resist responsibility, and are inherently in need of direction, whereas Theory Y assumes that people want responsibility in the workplace and are inherently self-motivated to work and do a good job. While Northouse (2020) suggests that no direct link to the leadership approach emerges specifically from McGregor, tentative associations can be made authoritarian (Pizzolitto et al., 2022), democratic (Bhatti et al., 2012), and laissez-faire (Chaudhry and Javed, 2009). Therefore, assumptions could be made that leaders adopt a style related to the core beliefs of human nature and their attitude to work, which may fundamentally be driven by their own attitudes to work.

Within hospitality, more contemporary approaches such as transformational leadership or servant leadership (Chon and Zoltan, 2019) may be present, coupled with characteristics related to approaches that may be considered autocratic, such as transactional and micromanagement (White, 2010). In practice, however, delineating and oversimplifying them may have difficulties (Muhammad et al., 2015). A key area of development by Guchait et al. (2023) also focused on authentic leadership and ethical leadership, highlighting the need for leadership behaviour to be prevalent in the approach taken. Most notably, it was felt that this had a significant impact on employees, particularly in the development of trust.

2.2. Leadership approaches and their applicability in hospitality

Irawanto et al. (2019) pose the suggestion that the primary function of servant leadership is serving the employee, placing focus on employee welfare and related issues with less organisational concern. Notably, Brownell (2010) highlights the increasing commonality of servant leadership and argues hospitality is a natural fit since it focuses on the leader-follower relationship having a positive influence on employee behaviour and work performance, leading to increased levels of organisational commitment and work engagement (Bussin et al., 2017; Dooley et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2015). Significantly, servant leadership encompasses a moral element, which other approaches appear to lack (McCann and Kohntopp, 2018). As such, values including respect may aide and influence employee decision-making alongside enhancing loyalty and may assist in building self-development through actively involving the organisation (Dennis and Mocarena, 2005; Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2018). While servant leadership is well conceptualised, applying it is challenging for managers. Although servant leadership may lead to the development of a positive

working culture in the long term, in the shorter term, the need for results may be a barrier (Gandolfi and Stone, 2016), as servant leadership requires development and embedding contrasts when quicker decision making or tighter deadlines are in place (McCann and Kohntopp, 2018). Time pressures and service quality pressures are common features of hospitality (Ali et al., 2021), and as such, managers are often unable to adopt this approach.

Transformational leadership is further discussed as suitable within hospitality (Escortell et al., 2020; Liang et al., 2017). While employee welfare remains a focal , the interest of the organisation is central for leaders (Tracey and Hinkin, 1996). As transformational leaders, they will portray a vision in which they inspire their teams to forfeit their own interests in order to achieve common goals (Najera-Sanchez et al., 2022; Shahbazi and Korejan, 2016). This allows transformational leaders to adapt quickly to meet the challenges of the internal and external environment (Coleman and Donoher, 2022). Following Brexit and COVID-19, hospitality in the UK suffers from a labour shortage (ONS, 2021; UK Hospitality, 2022a), due to migrants leaving the United Kingdom and either not being able to or wanting to return (Gardner, 2022; UK Hospitality, 2018a). Coupled with this, there remains a lack of interest in working in hospitality among the domestic workforce, with many not seeing it as a viable or attractive career option (Ferris et al., 2018). Transformational leaders, as such, thrive in identifying ways of making hospitality a viable career option, which may make recruitment and retention of staff easier (Coleman and Donoher, 2022). This may not be so easy to achieve as hospitality is littered with part-time staff, who are also often casual or supplied by agencies, many on short-term contracts. This results in the need for managers to lead teams that change regularly and lack cohesion (Harmer, 2014; Janta, 2011; Kusluvan et al., 2010). As such, leadership efforts in creating an environment fostering commitment and motivation with a drive for continuous improvement become vulnerable. As such, emphasis is likely to be placed on aspects such as customer care (Hemington, 2007), which may lead to adopting a transactional approach and short-termism (Tracey and Hinkin, 1996).

Adopting transactional leadership approaches will tend to prioritise the completion of duties and tasks to a specified level and, as such, may adopt a more autocratic approach, being reliant on transactional forms of reward (Allen and McCleskey, 2014). As such, the transactional approach will emphasize ongoing operational needs, perhaps at a daily level, as also discussed. While discussed separately, transactional and transformational need to be considered contextually and not in isolation, as they may need to coexist within the same toolbox depending on the situation (Bass and Avolio, 2007). Research by Sims et al. (2009) emphasised situational variables as key determiners of when to be directive or empowering. They suggested that a standardised approach in all circumstances was not ideal and that managers needed to adapt as the situation changed.

Arguably, an autocratic approach may lead to micromanagement. Micromanagement may be considered managing tasks using excessive control over the person or the situation (Mishra et al., 2019; Sidhu, 2012). Often, micromanagement is considered negative as it may result in employee detachment, leading to a reduction in productivity due to an inability to make their own contribution by adding value or taking responsibility (White, 2010). Although studies suggest that a key issue

surrounds trust and poor recruitment, there are difficulties in the availability of appropriate candidates to recruit. Several hospitality organisations have raised concerns that new hires do not always possess the required skill levels (Gardner, 2022), requiring high levels of support and guidance from managers. As such, micromanagement aids the learning process and may be seen as beneficial (White, 2010). In principle, taking this approach allows managers to gain knowledge of their team and may alleviate difficult situations through prompt interventions. However, Mishra et al. (2019, p. 2949) question leaders: "who are too worried about daily operational matters are missing the broader prospect and are unable to plan for the expansion of departments and organization", asking whether they cannot avoid micromanagement to concentrate on other aspects of their role (Mullins and Dossor, 2013).

2.3. Forces influencing leaders' choices of their approaches

A key area of development is to consider influences on managers in adopting their approaches and whether these are conscious or unconscious choices. Mullins and Dossor (2013) identified three key forces that need to be considered. Firstly, managerial forces manifest out of individual factors such as knowledge and background, social background, or personality traits (Sethuraman and Suresh, 2014). Central to this are value systems, self-confidence and security, confidence in their staff, and their natural leadership tendency (Kalma et al., 1993). Secondly, subordinate forces may dictate the choice of style by focusing on subordinate levels of independence and their willingness to engage in decision-making. Much of this relates to their confidence in their knowledge and experience and their expectation that they will perform at the desired level (Peterson et al., 2020). Within this, leaders need to appreciate the career aspirations of individual members of their teams while also appreciating the culture of the organisation. Knowing the strengths of individuals and teams is critical to the choice of approach (Mullins and Dessor, 2013). Thirdly, situational forces manifest from the values and vision of an organisation and feed into culture and climate. This is further driven by an organisation's size, history, and ethos, along with the urgency at hand and time pressures (Sethuraman and Suresh, 2014). with a high degree of control. It must be recognised that these forces are not independent but instead coexist and are interchangeable in all contexts. Managers may need to change their approach several times throughout the day.

Central to the hospitality context is the service-based nature of the sector. It therefore becomes an arduous task to ensure that the correct approach is adopted to fit the correct situation, or at least the context of the situation. While McGregor seemingly suggests the importance of knowledge of people and their individual work ethic may dictate or at least influence the approach to leadership, others consider the need to find an appropriate balance between adopting democratic and autocratic approaches. Similarly, it is important to consider influencing forces that may dictate differing approaches influenced by their team, values, and situation.

3. Research methodology

The research adopted interpretivism (Quinlan et al., 2015) as a philosophical approach with the intention of investigating individual experiences using interpretations and developing meanings from individuals' own experiences and viewpoints (Saunders et al., 2018), thus exploring a complex environment that has been self-constructed through individual interpretations based on personal beliefs drawn through memories and the recant of stories (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). This allows for the collection of rich data collated from "opinions and narratives that can help to account for different social realities of different social actors" (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 135). Making use of inductive approaches, the researcher was able to understand the distinct nature of situations drawn from the revelations of each interviewee (White, 2014; Woceshyn and Daellenbach, 2018). The research followed qualitative principles in order to gain deeper insight from managers (Durbarry, 2018), using semi-structured interviews (Gronmo, 2016), and focusing on identifying leaders's rationales for adopting the approaches rather than analysing the decision-making process (Smith, 2018). To facilitate this, a single case study approach (Yin, 2014) was taken.

The adoption of the methodological approach, while not providing any statistical generalisability (Saunders et al., 2019), does provide theoretical generalisability (Tsang, 2014) and analytical generalisability (Yin, 2014) and allows similar people and organisations to consider the relevance of the research and how this applies in context (Ridder et al., 2014). Most notably, the theoretical conventions of the approach provide a firm ground for the approach taken and provide credibility to the process (Farquhar, 2012). This is further emphasised by Johnston (2014), who stresses the importance of management research to be both academically rigorous and practically relevant.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling (Saunders et al., 2019). As such, hotel managers were chosen based on the underlying principle of being most able to answer the questions and provide a 'typical case', (Hennik et al., 2020). Selected managers were the Director of Events {P1}; Food and Beverage Director {P2}; Food and Beverage Manager {P3}; General Manager {P4}; Exceutive Chef {P5}; and Director of Rooms {P6}. The respondents were considered representatives of managers; however, this provided no statistical relevance but may be deemed theoretically relevant if trying to generalise and compare to other luxury hotels (Tsang, 2014). The interviews made use of both closed and open-ended questions, allowing each participant the flexibility to express their views and opinions based on their experiences (Gray, 2020). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, allowing meaning to be considered and discussed. This assisted in the identification of patterns and contrasts, which allowed an in-depth investigation to find deeper interpretations (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Self-perception of approach

4.1.1. Adapting to change

Each manager self-evidenced a combination of characteristics that pointed to their approach; however, it was within this self-selection that it became apparent that there was no definitive approach taken by any of them; instead, they displayed a combination of differing characteristics pointing to an array of differing styles. This was further complicated by the inability of some to narrow down their choices, while others were more able to be specific. This, they noted, was down to situational variables (Sims et al., 2013), which may influence the approach they adopt. P4 and P5 highlighted that all were crucial characteristics and could be relevant at some point during the day, depending on the people involved and the circumstances of the situation. Further to this, P5 explained that there is a need to change depending on the situation, and all should be able to adapt and change to fit the situation.

While P4 notes that

'You need to know your people, I spent a lot of time on trying to understand them, know what makes them tick, because then that changes your approach to them. I have to speak to 'Director of Rooms' differently to how I speak to 'Director of F&B', they are both leaders, senior in the business, but they both have different characters … you really have to have an individualised approach to managing the team to get maximum engagement'.

As such, responses from P3, P4, and P5 align closely with the ideas highlighted by Mullins and Dossor (2013) and uphold the view of Peterson et al. (2020), suggesting the situation, including the role of the subordinates, influences a leader's approach. In contrast to Huertas-Valdivia et al. (2018), who suggest a clear distinction separating approaches into clearly defined groupings based on their characteristics, this research suggests a more integrated and blended set of characteristics with less clear boundaries. P2 is associated with the intervener based on his experience, recognising his ability to "step in" if required, solving the issue or providing guidance to those involved, and helping them come to the appropriate decision. P2 may appear to fit the 'box' of the micromanager, while at the same time demonstrating the traits of servant leadership through empowering others to make decisions, learn, and make effective use of resources, in line with Dennis and Mocarena (2005).

P5 contends that you "probably need a little bit of all of them," suggesting, 'I'd like to think I'm a perfectionist, but I'm also a realist. I like to be in control, but life's full of the uncontrollable, and I do like to empower the team', believing he has to give staff the opportunity to develop, and this is done through empowerment, allowing staff to make decisions and take responsibility for their personal development.

These comments suggest P5 combines micromanager (Mishra et al., 2019), transformational (Tracey and Hinkin, 1996), and servant (Irawanto et al., 2019) approaches. The notion of being a perfectionist while also being a controller may, on the face of it, appear to contradict the notion of being a good listener or having the ability to empower the staff, but it does not exclude them. It is possible for them to co-exist (Bavik, 2020; Hay, 2006).

Although subordinates and/or the situation play a major part in the choice of approach, it is also important to recognise that the manager will also be influential (Mullins and Dossor, 2013). P3 highlights how his personal values and experience may influence approaches, depending on the circumstances and the individuals concerned.

'My leadership style is my leadership style obviously. Every organisation that you work for has their different goals and different benchmarks and values that they set themselves to, but I'm not going to change who I am just for a company. I will obviously adhere to all the values, but most of the time, if you are in a leadership role and you've been hired into a leadership role, you have the values that the company is looking for and you personify so in those circumstances'.

In line with Kalma et al. (1993), managers lead depending on their values and backgrounds. Prior experience has a major influence on the approach they take. This may come about from experience with previous situations, managers, or colleagues that molded them. In addition, core values are intrinsic and central to behaviour and are not likely to change. Often, this is underpinned by integrity and authenticity, which should be a key part of why they are recruited {P5}.

4.1.2. It is all about people

All interviewees confirmed the need to be adaptable to be able to effectively influence team members (Northouse, 2020), taking into account individual characteristics and circumstances. As such, each identified the importance of the 'people' and sought a 'best approach' to bring together differing factors to get the best out of everyone, including appreciating differing needs and wants aligned to their own expectations and an understanding of individual potential. All interviewees recognised the centrality of people in being effective. Mishra et al. (2019) and Ford (2020) emphasise the importance of this within the context of hospitality. P3 acknowledged the positive link between contented employees and satisfied customers, who often repeat business due to the positive experience, in line with Azik (2017).

Although the literature may suggest that managers struggle to adopt an appropriate balance between service consistency, staff empowerment, and autonomy (Peterson et al., 2020; Witelaw, 2013), each of the interviewees appeared to demonstrate a clear understanding of their workplace context and strategies for action.

4.1.3. Challenge and the 'perfect storm'

The combination of the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit significantly impacted the hospitality sector, creating a perfect storm (Gardner, 2022). While the pandemic significantly affected businesses generally, the easing of restrictions had a particular impact on the hospitality sector and led to unanticipated and unexpected circumstances and ultimately a crisis (Gursoy and Chi, 2020), which, coupled with Brexit, brought about a significant staffing issue within the sector (UK Hospitality 2018a). In addition, it must be remembered that the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns resulted in many individuals reflecting on what was important and their individual priorities. As they focused on this, individuals often leaned towards career changes, changes to the value system, and most notably, expectations in the workplace setting (Redazione, 2021).

Each interviewee acknowledged that society had changed post-pandemic, and as a result, the emphasis had shifted from recruiting employees to retaining them. As

such, adapting, or at least having the ability to adapt, was even more crucial. (Buchanan, 2018; Birkin, 2019). Walsh and Johnston (2023) emphasise the importance of leadership at a time of crisis and highlight this rotational need within the leadership crisis wheel.

4.2. Adopting democratic approaches

Although interviewees were from different backgrounds and had differing personalities, there remained a commonality of belief in the need to adopt a more democratic approach as the answer to retaining more staff. This is heavily influenced by the growing importance of domestic workforces coupled with a greater understanding of generational differences, which are at the forefront of leaders' thinking.

A worthwhile career

Partington (2016) notes that hospitality is still viewed negatively, with P2 identifying comments such as 'this is hospitality', while also referring to the 'ugly' side of the sector. This, according to Ferris et al. (2018) and Janta (2011), results from hospitality being associated with low pay, long hours, limited work-life balance, and the perception that it is often a temporary role that can be used to step into another career. Quite often, it is associated with younger workers, perhaps students, who tend to be more transient. P2, however, argues for changes to this—'But this should not happen', as the environment has changed and this perception needs to change; however, this can only be done through re-inventing the sector and making it more attractive. Elements of this rely on changes to the leadership adopted. P2 notes that changes are happening, particularly to working conditions, pointing to the need to attract the domestic workforce. This has meant seeking to attract graduates and university students on placement (Ghani et al., 2022).

As such, businesses are more conscious of individuals's needs, and attempts are made according to P6 to ensure 'their motivation to be part of a professional family' is supported. As such, successful accomplishment of this improves retention, reducing the costs of recruitment and developing people, as staff are retained for longer {P2}. This sense of supporting and perhaps nurturing students links with servant leadership approaches while also having linkage to transformational leadership. A better reputation will perhaps change the analogy of what 'this is hospitality' means. This is particularly relevant as Ghani et al. (2022) argue that although recruitment strategies may have changed with a focus on hiring graduates or taking students on placement, internal cultures have not changed, making roles more attractive and fitting needs and expectations (beyond the temporary job), and retention remains a key issue.

P3 notes the time to invest in people, particularly referring to the new generation of staff, acknowledging that this is not a quick fix but needs to be adopted as a long-term strategy. This will allow managers to better understand people and 'what makes them tick' {P4}.

4.3. Finding the right balance

4.3.1. Applicability of the autocratic approach

P2 acknowledges the challenges of recruiting people and then subsequently managing them. Adopting an autocratic approach is often a simpler strategy and perhaps more natural based on experience, as the organisation often gave legitimate power through hierarchical structures (Mullins and Dossor, 2013). Directing and instructing focused on what employees needed to do and how; however, this often leads to a lack of staff engagement and job satisfaction, ultimately leading to turnover. To retain staff, employees need to be people. This requires staff to be motivated, to be engaged with, and usually to be empowered and allowed to think. Additionally, employees need to be considered and cared for. The relationship becomes a partnership. What the organization does for them and what they do for the organisation. Further consideration could and should be given to the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995). At a basic level, though, consideration needs to be given to development opportunities and a career (Agarwal and Vaghela, 2018).

Alongside this, the interviewees acknowledged the desire of individuals to value open dialogue and discussion, to know and understand their role, and in particular, the why of what they are being asked to do. P3 considers his 'open door' approach, which allows employees to know he is always available to discuss issues and concerns. Staff welfare is a key priority. P2 points to how things have changed in the past five years. 'I am on this bus; I am driving it; if you do not want to get on it, get off'. This is no longer the way; you will soon have a 'pretty empty' bus.

'You still need a vision, your own journey and goal, you need to be on few more detours and maybe you need to go on a scenic route, so that everyone is going on this bus for a lovely journey'. {P2}

Recent changes and the challenges within hospitality (UK Hospitality, 2018b, 2020a, 2020b, 2022b) have suggested that the old way cannot continue. Expectations have changed as generations have changed, but most significantly, the workplace environment has changed. Thus, managers need to be able to adapt to situations and better understand people, their needs, and, most importantly, their expectations. This requires them to understand their employees, consider factors affecting job satisfaction, and incorporate empowerment and career development opportunities. Al-Ababneh (2013) links the approach taken to leadership with job satisfaction. Servant leadership and, to some extent, transformational leadership assume that employees are at least listened to (Brownell, 2010; Coleman and Donoher, 2022).

4.3.2. The grey area

While this paper argues for the adoption of a more democratic approach, and more specifically, the adoption of servant leadership, there should be some reflection as to whether an autocratic approach should be abandoned completely. This is legitimised by interviewee responses, which, although recognising the shift, still suggested that command and control still had a place. There is a need for balance {P4}. While there is value in employees expressing opinions, it remains the job of the leader to make decisions {P4}. It must also be recognised that hospitality relies on consistency of service (Witelaw, 2013) and does not, in many cases, allow for creativity and innovation. Management control measures will more likely ensure this,

alongside the need to check and reassure, particularly the need for short-term contracts, which are not likely to attract career-oriented people but instead perhaps Theory X people who may require higher levels of supervision {P2, P4}.

Again, not all micromanagement techniques are negative; often, they can help individuals and teams grow and can be used in a supportive manner. P6 suggests that

'It is important that employees know that I can jump in and assist the team that may need more support but also step back and watch them and tweak things to make sure that it is a very well-oiled ship and let them work on progression and development'.

And going deeper

'I would be like a football coach making sure that the team is getting the support and the drive that they need but also holding them accountable and making sure they provide that service to the guests and continue to evolve'.

This aligns with Mishra et al.'s (2019) view that micromanagement may be an appropriate approach in the correct circumstances, particularly within hospitality. Ultimately, hospitality needs to maintain standards and quality control. This notion of control needs to be actuated to ensure 'things are done properly' but 'it is how you switch it on and off' {P4}. It is important to know when to adopt an autocratic approach. This is clarified.

'I wouldn't necessarily hold the hand all the way but I will hold employees' hand up until they feel comfortable to branch out and be independent and I think it is better to empower your team, give them the right guidance and framework and make sure that they realise that there is a line that can't be crossed'. {P6}

The use of autocratic and democratic methods may therefore be viewed as tactical. Allowing independence and advocating empowerment when there is room, but adopting an autocratic approach when the situation is more rigid and requires it.

4.3.3. Communication

Central to the whole process is effective communication. Appreciating individual attitudes is central to this; commencing at the point of hire, employing the right person for the job counters any future issues. This can then be embedded over time to ensure individuals are settled and comfortable. Working in the right place will allow them to develop and reach their potential.

'You also look at people move them around and put them in the best slot for them. And then the whole thing is like an orchestra: it's no good having the cello player if he can't play, because he is better on drums … and then the whole thing comes together, and you obviously make music better because you are utilising the team and their abilities and their qualities to the best of what we want'. {P4}

Recognising the importance of effective communication in tackling problems and/or achieving solutions can be deemed a strategic tool through the building of effective relations built on trust and understanding, particularly when there is a disparity between the needs of an employee and organisational needs. The use of effective communication may help to solve issues as they arise before they become more problematic situations. This may be particularly prevalent when dealing with casual staff, temporary staff, or staff employed through an agency. This may be heightened if staff are part-time. Finding out about an individual's experience and

background (P3) or explaining 'reasons why everything needs to be perfect' (P6), thus adhering to appropriate standards, has an impact on service quality. This potentially appears to be a time-consuming task and may at times be a challenge; however, adopting this approach in the short term may have benefits in the long term. Whether individuals fit neatly into the Theory X or Y box does not remove the fact that they still often want an explanation of what they are doing and why. Individuals still have needs and want to fulfil their expectations in their role. P3 emphasises 'It all needs to be tailored to the individual'.

5. Conclusion

The hospitality sector potentially has a bad reputation as a career choice. As such, leaders realise that in order to make the sector more attractive, changes in leadership approaches are necessary, and the adoption of democratic approaches would appear to be sought after. A key goal within the sector is the retention of high-quality staff, which many suggest can and should be achieved through empowering employees who feel listened to, understood, and appreciated. They need to be provided with training and development opportunities and be able to visualise future opportunities for themselves. Servant leadership and transformational leadership approaches would appear to value this. Although leaders may recognise themselves through adjectives such as mentoring and empowering and may associate themselves as a listener or being sensitive, they also recognise themselves the need to be controlling and demonstrate a willingness to intervene when necessary, which are more characterised within autocratic approaches. Micromanagement cannot be discarded entirely. The use of micromanagement techniques can achieve positive outcomes, particularly in the short term. As such, restricting hospitality managers to one approach becomes limiting, and it must be recognised that managers in hospitality need to make full use of the toolkit they have to hand and adopt a balanced approach. As a result, due to the nature of hospitality, managers need to embrace compromise, which allows them to adapt to the team, situation, and organisation demands in the pursuit of service excellence.

Central to this appears to be effective communication. Through this, coupled with open dialogue, managers should be able to build effective relationships with their teams based on understanding, empathy, and mutual trust, allowing challenging circumstances to be solved more readily. Critical may be empowering individuals, giving them responsibility, and allowing them to grow and develop. As such, employees who are happy in their workplace, feel part of it, and have high levels of fulfillment and satisfaction tend to remain and not seek alternative employment opportunities. The pandemic and Brexit have come and gone, and hospitality has faced unprecedented challenges. This is nothing new, and so hospitality needs to be ready for the next challenge. A key component of this rests with a manager's ability to understand people, adapt to change, and apply effective communication. The hospitality manager requires a toolkit that allows them to adapt between democratic and autocratic approaches as needed.

6. Limitations

The research undertaken was a single case study, within one hotel, and as such, the sample of both of organisations and individuals could have been expanded. This may allow for a broader perspective and take into account more varied situational variables. The subjective nature of qualitative research, associated with the lead researcher having previously worked at the organisation, elements of bias have tried to be avoided but, as always, may have been present.

7. Future research

Although there is a plethora of leadership research, this paper presents a viewpoint on the complexity within the hospitality sector, acknowledging the need to be both democratic and autocratic in leadership to meet individual and organisational needs. The research gives a voice to managers who are able to express their perception in contrast to the more commonly explored employee view and subsequently contributes to the literature base. Further research may also be conducted outside of the UK to allow for cross-cultural comparisons and perhaps identify different types of hotel environments.

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