

LEADERSHIP SKILLS OF HOSPITALITY MANAGERS

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Abstract: *The research is inspired to study personal skills of Spanish and Hungarian hospitality professionals in order to compare their actual leadership skills with their belief of the skills they possess. In this research, a complex competency test, ProfileXT® is applied in order to receive reliable data of the participants' profiles. The test analyses the complete personality and gives reports regarding cognitive capacity and strategies of thinking, behavioral traits, and fields of interests. Participants' profiles include information about skills, what determines the effective behavior of a leader. The test among other information, examines communication skills, conflict resolution style, energy level, sociability, manageability, decisiveness, independence and objective judgement. The results are based on the competency profiles and a questionnaire which includes questions about the above-mentioned skills and participants indicate how successfully apply them at their job from their point of view. The Spanish and Hungarian manager profile differs in various aspects. Spanish respondents tend to follow fewer rules and require more independency. Hungarians are rather compromise in conflicts; Spaniards are less cooperative and more dominant. Spanish managers are more intuitive and emotional driven, while Hungarians are being more realistic. Hungarians are able to make more stable decisions, but at the slower pace than Spaniards. Comparing the profiles and the participant's beliefs about their abilities, both groups gave higher scores for themselves than their profiles results. The tendency is even more significant at the Spanish sample. These results can be a base of developmental trainings or coaching sessions for each group. Furthermore, soft skills are very important in leadership, therefore developing them could be a focus point even before a leader gets promoted. These findings and other professional results suggest that skill development should start even at university and collage levels, than should also continue during each professional's career path.*

Keywords: *leadership skills, inter- and intrapersonal skills, hospitality managers, self-awareness*

1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is one of the sectors where changes and constant development is essential. Therefore, hospitality managers need some special leadership, inter- and intrapersonal skills to be able to face the challenges and make the accommodations successful in this competitive environment. Besides the skills, one of the most important ability is self-awareness. Leaders with high self-awareness are able to determine their strengths and weaknesses which will make them more successful in people management and leadership. In this study the main focus is on inter- and intrapersonal skills of hospitality managers and the level of their self-awareness.

2. THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

Leadership skills are one of the most researched topics of management and hospitality management. Many studies' aim is to investigate the most important skills what make a manager successful and try to determine what a leader needs to fit the position. One of the earliest and significant studies determine two main categories, these are the interpersonal and leadership

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categories. Within these, there are several skills, competencies and traits what a hospitality manager has to possess or learn. The interpersonal category includes the followings: manages guest problems with care, understanding and sensitivity. Communicates effectively written and orally. The leadership category contains these elements: maintains professional standards, demonstrates professional appearance, develops positive customer relations, and achieves positive working relations with employees [1]. Other early studies also determined some important skills what will make a leader effective. These are assertiveness, high energy level, sociability, emotional stability, conscientiousness, agreeableness [2]. However, determine these skills are not only important in the meaning of effectiveness. They also can be a base of the decision making of the selection of managers. According to other studies, the first step is to study the skills and personality traits of effective leaders. The second step is related to the hiring process, the candidate's skills and traits need to be measured, this way the right person can be selected for the position [3]. In another publication from the later studies, a management competency framework was developed by Sandwith in 1993. His findings influenced the researches and case studies in the following years. The framework identifies five domains, what incorporates all skills and competencies a manager needs to possess. These are the Conceptual/Creative Domain, Leadership Domain, Interpersonal Domain, Administrative Domain, and Technical Domain [4]. During the early 2000's, 10 essential skills were uncovered for hospitality managers: identify and solve managerial problems, demonstrate leadership abilities, control costs effectively, develop positive customer relationships, adapt the organization to meet customer needs, train and coach employees, manage crisis situations, solve customer problems, develop positive employee relations, effective communication skills [5]. Recent studies also aimed to determine the characteristics of the hospitality managers. Most of them examined categories like psychological characteristics, personality, social characteristics, skills for establishing good interpersonal relations, intelligence and ability and characteristics related to work relations. In a Macedonian study more than 200 hospitality professionals participated in the determination of the leadership characteristics and necessary skills of a contemporary manager in tourism and hospitality. According to the participant's opinion, these skills and competencies are energy, mobility, self-confidence, originality and creativity, communication skills and ability to set and track goals [6]. This study also states that possessing these skills, managers will be more self-confident and they will appear more secure as a manager.

Reviewing the literature of the managerial skills, it can be argued that over the years, the management style is also changing from a more controlled style to a style where leadership is more important than pure professional knowledge [7].

Category	Personal Competencies (Self)	Social Competencies (Other)
Recognition	Self-Awareness (it includes three sub-competencies) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emotional self-awareness ● Accurate self-assessment ● Self-confidence 	Social Awareness (it includes three sub-competencies) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Empathy ● Service orientation ● Organizational awareness
Regulation	Self-Management (it includes six sub-competencies) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emotional self-control ● Trustworthiness ● Conscientiousness ● Adaptability ● Achievement drive ● Initiative 	Relationship Management (it includes eight sub-competencies) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Developing others ● Influence ● Communication ● Conflict management ● Visionary leadership ● Catalyzing change ● Building bonds ● Teamwork and collaboration

Figure 1: Goleman's Model of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is an important and recently well studied field. It is such a complex concept, therefore its components all represent the managerial skillset. One of the several models, the Goleman model was designed for the workplace and includes skills what are essential for a person to be efficient and successful at the role (Figure 1) [8].

One of the components of the model is self-awareness which also includes sub-competencies. These three competencies are also keys for managers to be able to succeed with their employees and with their customers as well. In the hospitality and tourism managerial level, skills are always multifunctional in the sense of using them differently in various situations. Having the skills for a hospitality manager is not enough; they also need to be flexible and use their skills considering the situation. This means, self-awareness and flexibility are two very important skills what make a manager successful in both levels, with their employees and with their customers [9]. There are several studies of emotional intelligence, however, there are less regarding the hospitality industry. An American study researched emotional intelligence level of hospitality managers and found no significant differences between hospitality and non-hospitality participants. However, those, who have participated at leadership courses, the average emotional intelligence scores were higher, than those who had no similar training [10].

The complexity of Emotional Intelligence shows that communication is also part of Goleman's model. Communication is also a fundamental skill in the hospitality industry. In another study, communication was ranked as the most important individual leadership skill in the industry. The study also indicates that the method of communication also depends on the audience and the content of the message. The other finding of this study was the importance of different skill categories. The ranking regarding hospitality is the following: business skills, cognitive skills, interpersonal skills, personal values, and strategic skills [11].

Hungarian hospitality managers' skills were studied with different skill and competency tests in a recent research. It was found that most managers tend to choose assertive communication style, the most developed emotional intelligence components are self-control and empathy, and most of them follow accommodating conflict resolution style. The study also implicates that their assertiveness and some emotional intelligence component scores were quite high [12].

A Spanish study implicates that there are very few researches about the skills of Spanish hospitality managers; however, it suggests that the development of social skills are the most requested skills in the tourism industry [13].

3. MATERIALS AND METHOD

3.1. Data collection and sample

Participants are Hungarian and Spanish hospitality managers from different types of accommodations. In the Hungarian group there are 7 women, 3 men between 36 and 50 years. Five of them work in a hostel, the other five in a 4-5-star hotel. In the Spanish group there are 6 women and 4 men, also between 36 and 50 years. Three of them work in a 4-5-star hotel and 7 of them in a hostel. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, only some personal questions were asked (age, type of accommodation they work at, lengths of employment). Participants were informed properly about the usage of their data.

Data was collected during 8 months period of time, an online survey and the ProfileXT competency test were sent out to Hungarian and Spanish professionals. Managers were contacted via various platforms (social media, professional forums, direct emails to the accommodations in various cities, using the accommodation list of the largest hospitality website). The respond rate is low, as over 400 establishments were contacted in Hungary and Spain. Both in the test and the survey there are various different questions but, in this paper, only the relevant part is analyzed. The ProfileXT is a complex competency inventory designed for work environment. It contains three parts: working motivators, cognitive capabilities, and behavioral traits including specific skills and competencies. In this paper the focus is on the behavioral part, only this one is being analyzed. Six scales were selected: Assertiveness, Accommodating, Objective judgement, Decisiveness, Manageability, and Independence. In the survey one question was selected in order to analyze participant's self-awareness. In this question there is a list of skills, participants needed to rate them on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 stands for "Not my strength at all, should be developed" and 5 stands for "It is my strength, I am good at it". Both, the survey and personality test were available in Hungarian and Spanish.

The focus points of the study is:

- Inter- and intrapersonal skills: communication, conflict resolution style, manageability, decisiveness, independence and objective judgement
- How is a successful hospitality manager's profile look like according to the test,
- What are their strengths and weaknesses.
- Self-awareness: how punctual are the observations of their own skills of the participants comparing to the test results
- The international difference: the study examines whether there are any similarities or differences between Hungarian and Spanish participants regarding their skills, opinions and personality traits.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The ProfileXT test is available at an online platform, where the answers are registered. The result is calculated by the online program, reports are automatically generated. The graphical report contains scales from 1 to 10 for each skill. Even though, they are numerical scales, the meaning of the numbers is not linear. 1 does not necessarily mean lowest and 10 do not mean best scores. Scores are compared to average behavior, which is determined on a country specific, standardized normal distribution scale. The meanings of the numbers vary by the actual skills and a special license is required to be able to analyze them. Having the license takes to complete an analyzer course and an exam. Therefore, the analysis is based on this knowledge which results in punctual and appropriate analysis. Each participant has their own profile. In this paper individual profiles analysis is not the focus point, therefore average results of the Hungarian and Spanish groups are analyzed in case of some selected skills (Table 1).

4.1. Inter- and intrapersonal skills

Results on the behavioral scales represent the comfort zone of the person, which means in most of the situations he will behave like what the number represents. It is possible to behave differently, but that will cause some stress as the person is stepping out of the comfort zone. In this study group averages are calculated for each skill, which shows the comfort zone of the group.

The Assertiveness scale refers to communication style, level of confidence and capability of influencing others. On the lower scales (1-4) people tend to follow other people's opinion, they do not confront nor express their thoughts. For them it is very stressful to continuously confront others or make them follow them as a leader. On higher scales people are more and more confident and experience less stress when they are in a conflicted situation. They use their skills to convince others to follow their lead. For them, losing and argument would be very challenging, as they are ambitious enough not to let it go. Both groups' average is close to number 6, which refers to people who most likely will confront others, but in the 50-60% of the situations they feel less comfortable doing so, and possibly let a person with strong will win and choose a passive way of communication. However, in situations with less confrontation, their communication style can be assertive (they express their thoughts, feelings, needs, etc. but also listen to what others have to say), but they will only take a lead when nobody else wants to. In this sense, it is possible that they will be able to choose the appropriate communication style in different situations.

Table 1: Test results of the Hungarian and Spanish groups

Average scores	Assertiveness	Accommodating	Objective Judgement	Decisiveness	Manageability	Independence
Hungarian group	6.4	5.8	7.1	5.7	6.7	4.7
Spanish group	6.1	3.6	4.3	6.4	3.5	8.1

The Accommodating scale shows the participants' attitude to teamwork, respecting other people's wishes and the level of need of acceptance. At lower numbers (1-4), people tend to pay less attention to other people's opinion and they have less need for them to be accepted. Therefore, they will find themselves more often in confrontations. Also, they do not respond to social pressure, if they do not agree with something, they would need to be convinced with reasonable argument. Higher the scores are, more likely people will agree with others opinion for the sake of peacefulness. They feel reasonable decision if it serves many other people's opinion around them. From scale 7, people tend to subsume their opinion to others and let theirs go. This scale is a complementary of the Assertiveness scale, because the two of them indicate the conflict resolution style. When someone scores high on the Assertiveness, he usually scores low on the Accommodating scale, and backwards. In case of the Hungarian group, their Assertiveness average score is 6.4 and the Accommodating average is 5.8. This combination means that the average Hungarian manager's conflict resolution style is compromising. In this case people seek for a fairly acceptable solution for both sides. To achieve this, both parties are willing to lose something for the other. In the Spanish group, the Accommodating scale is lower (3.6) and the Assertiveness scale is 6.1 which means, in most situations they will not be able to lose for the other party, as their need for cooperation is lower.

The Objective judgement scale refers to intuitive or objective perception. Comparing this scale to the Assertiveness and Accommodation scales, the combination gives information about the communication style. On the lower numbers (1-4), people are more intuitive and sensitive. In communication they pay more attention to "how" people talk to them. They often take things personal, even if the other party does not mean it. The Spanish managers have low Objective judgement (average 4.3), which makes them intuitive and emotional. This result comes with relatively high Assertiveness (6.1) and low Accommodating (3.6). This combination results a character with emotional communication style, less patience, mood driven decisions. In most situations it is hard to tell how they will react because of the low score of Objective judgement. They will express their feelings not in the diplomatic way if they feel the situation is unfair. Or, if they

do not express it verbally, they will have hard time to control their mimics, therefore their emotions will be recognizable. They can get offended on the communication style of other people and will react on that quite hot headed. The Hungarian group has higher Objective judgement score (7.1). Higher result on this scale means more realistic and objective perception but also can listen to their intuitions. With relatively high Assertiveness (6.4) and Accommodating (5.8), this character will consider others' point of view, emotional and objective information, then will try to solve a problem with mutual benefits. In communication they pay more attention to the actual meaning instead of "how" the message was delivered. They can be more empathetic than the Spanish managers because of the higher Accommodating result. The combination of Accommodating and Objective judgement gives information about someone's empathy. Spaniards have low Objective judgement, which suggests high empathy because of the intuitive ability, but with the low Accommodating score results less empathy because it also shows that they are less open to other people. Hungarians have higher Objective judgement and Accommodating score, which results in higher empathy.

The Decisiveness scale indicates the speed and amount of information when someone makes a decision. Both Hungarian and Spanish managers are in the medium range, which means they are able to make decisions relatively fast. As Spaniards have higher scores, therefore they are even faster and are willing to take more risk. This results that in most situations they can be more flexible and modify the decision if it is not relevant anymore.

Manageability is a scale of need of structure, rules and certainty. On this scale the Spanish group has relatively low scores (3.5) which means they do not like to follow any strict rules. If they do not agree with some rules or regulations, it is not likely they would follow it, most likely those rules will be questioned. With a combination of their Assertiveness score (6.1); this character is able to question their bosses, decisions or people with authority when they don't agree with something. The other party will need to take time and provide explanations for them to be convinced. The Hungarian leaders have higher score, which means, they feel safer when rules and expectations are clear and well drawn. This also means, they could be less flexible about changes than the Spanish leaders. It is also shown at the decision-making process. As their Decisiveness score combines with the Manageability score for Spanish leaders, it seems they are more flexible, fast, and also independent.

This brings to the Independence scale, which indicated the need for control. Typically, when the Manageability scale is low, the Independence scale is high, then backwards, high Manageability score comes with low Independence scale. High Independence scale means, people need more freedom and less control at their work. Spanish leaders have 8.1 score on this scale, which matches with their low Manageability. Most likely they do not need any instructions from others; they would make their own ways, rules and regulations. With a combination of their low Accommodating score, it shows less willingness for cooperation. On the other hand, they are quite flexible and probably manage a business well alone. However, could be difficult for them to manage other people in an assertive and empathetic way. Even though, they will give freedom for employees to work their way out. The Hungarian leaders have quite opposite results on the Manageability and Independence scales. They score higher on the first one (6.7) and lower on the second one (4.7) which means they are more comfortable with rules and they do not have too much problems with following them. Even though, this combination still indicates some flexibility. When the roles and responsibilities are clear for them, they will be more than fine with working independently and making their own decisions. They would have more control over processes and employees too, but it does not mean micro managing, or stubbornness.

The combination of low Objective judgement, Accommodating and Manageability with high Independence, results in a free minded, emotional character, which will follow his own rules, decides fast and will not be shy to express positive or negative opinions. This character describes the average Spanish participants.

The other character reveals to the Hungarian group, their score combinations describe someone who is cooperative, but can stand up for themselves, feels more comfortable when the situation is well-defined, can be flexible, but also can follow instructions. Makes decisions based on enough and objective information, and able to take time to make a stable one. The perception tends to be more realistic and empathetic at the same time.

4.2. Self-awareness

In the survey, participants rated their skills according to how good they feel themselves at them in their working life (Table 2). Both groups gave similar rates, they both are relatively high, although the Spanish group tend to rate higher their abilities than the Hungarian group. This indicates that in general Spanish managers are more confident, than Hungarians.

Table 2: Survey results of the Hungarian and Spanish groups

	Hungarian group	Spanish group
Communication	4.1	4.1
Conflict resolution	3.9	4.2
Self-control	3.8	4
Empathy	3.9	4.5
Sense of reality	4.5	4.4
Decision making	4.1	4.2
Flexibility	4.1	4.6
Average	4.1	4.3

The average rating of the communication is the same (4.1) in both groups, which means most participants are quite satisfied with this skill. The test result confirms it, because the average is close to 6 points on the Assertiveness scale in both groups, which means they are able to choose the right communication style in most of the situations. Spanish participants find their conflict resolution skills better than the Hungarian group. However, the test results show more confrontational style for Spanish managers than Hungarians, which makes more difficult for Spaniards to please customers and give in, even when they feel they are not right. Most likely this will cause some stress for them, because most of the times they will feel that it is unfair that they make themselves do the opposite they would in their comfort zones. Even though, Hungarians' test result of conflict resolution style fit more to the hospitality manager position, they feel worst about it than Spaniards.

The Objective judgement scale gives information about the self-control. Spanish managers have lower result than Hungarian managers, which means Spaniards can act more emotional and because of this, control themselves less. Higher number on this scale means more realistic perception, also communication. Therefore, Hungarians most likely control themselves more often. Both groups have similar perception of their own self-control skills. In case of the Hungarian group this perception of themselves is more realistic (3.8) and probably works better with employees and guests in conflicted situations, as they will be able to put aside their emotions and act more professionally than Spaniards, whose test result and perception (4) differ. It is similar

to their perception of empathy. The test result gives somewhat higher ability for the Hungarian group, than the Spanish, but they rated themselves higher (4.5) than Hungarians (3.9).

It depends on the situation what is more efficient; to make a fast decision, than change it along the way of the process, or to collect more information and wait until a very stable one can be made. The test result of the two groups are very similar, however Spaniards are somewhat faster than Hungarians. Both groups scored very similar at the self-reflection scale (Hungarians 4.1 Spaniards 4.2), which means they both see themselves quite realistic.

Spanish leaders' test results show more flexible attitude to changes and rules, than the Hungarian group. At the self-reflection scale the average scores are very close to each other (Spanish group: 4.6, Hungarian group: 4.1) which means, they both see themselves quite punctual, as Spaniards are more flexible, Hungarians need more certainty, but they are still not rigid. Overall, in most perspectives both groups are close how they see themselves and how their test results are. In some sores Hungarians perceptions are more punctual than Spaniards.

5. SUMMARY

In the analysis of the test, it is a very important determination, that there is no "good" or "bad" profile. The result always needs to be compared with the circumstances and the aims. In this study, the participants are hospitality managers, therefore the expectations to the position need to be considered. A successful hospitality manager should be able to communicate confidently, needs to influence others in a polite and persuasive way. Flexibility is very important on the Assertiveness scale, because different communication style could be successful when they deal with guests or employees. Usually when the manager's presence is requested in a conflicted situation with a guest, most likely guests are already emotionally involved. In this case, managers need to be calm, and very understanding in order to provide a great customer service. Usually the "guests are always right" mentality applies in many of the establishments, which indicates that managers will give in and let the guests "win". In the other hand, communicating with employees require a much more confident style than a submissive one. Therefore, on the Assertive scale the ideal level is around 6-7, which indicates that people can choose to behave lower or higher on the scale depending on the situation. In sense of customer service, resolving a conflict as smoothly as possible is crucial. Therefore, for those who have about 5-6 on the Accommodating scale will be less stressful to give in and make guests feel more comfortable. For the same reasons, self-control and empathy are very important skills in the industry. Therefore, Objective judgement ideally has medium for self-control, then combines with 6-7 Accommodating scores for empathy. Flexibility is not only important in communication styles, but also at everyday work situations. Managers should be able to resolve problems in flexible and creative ways, so guests can feel valued and comfortable. Also, people management needs flexible thinking, because dealing with different personalities can be challenging. Therefore, a balance between rules, regulations, and comfortable environment should be established at the accommodations. This means, medium scores on Manageability and Independency scales are ideal.

Both Spanish and Hungarian groups rated their skills relatively high, which means they believe they are able to use them successfully at their job. However, Hungarians test results show that in most situations their behavior and traits can be more successful in the hospitality manager position. This means, their self-awareness is more punctual and realistic.

Analyzing the results of the two groups, an average profile can be determined for each group. The Hungarian character: tries to please others, make more compromises in order to be accepted, well defined situations are more comfortable, tend to accept rules and follow them to a point. At the same time, they can change them if they are not applicable. They are realistic, decisions are based on facts. Their communication style could be more objective.

The Spanish character: assertive but tend to be dominant in emotional situations, free spirit, less rules, freedom is important, less control for them and they don't like to control others, situations are personal, emotionally driven. They are flexible, but will be more offended by others. Decisions are based on intuitions.

Most stereotypes describe a Spanish person a flexible, fun and free spirit person. Hungarian stereotypes are more about rigidity and more formal attitude. In this study, the test results show quite a match to these stereotypes.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Analyzing the personality types, skills and self-awareness of managers are the first steps. Afterwards, developing them is also very important. The success of an establishment starts with good management. Most decisions and rules are made by the management; the atmosphere depends on the way of leadership and people management skills. When employees feel valued and like their job, it often comes from the management. Even though, it is just one part of the complete picture. Employees are playing a very important part in the success as well. Once they are comfortable at their job and with their management, their personal skills are also very important, especially because they are the ones being in contact with customers. Therefore, skill development for them is also very important. More skilled the management and staff are, more professional the accommodation will be. In a professional, friendly and calm environment guests will feel more comfortable, which will result more positive online feedback, which will increase sales and eventually profit as well. As next steps of the study, it would be also important to research employees' personal skills. In addition, with the results of present study, a complex developmental plan can be drowned both for Hungarian and Spanish establishments.

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