Breaking into emerging international hotel markets
Skills needed to face this challenge and ways to develop them in hospitality management students

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper examines some of the most difficult barriers that hotel chains must overcome when trying to expand internationally. It argues for the importance of the role of well educated hotel management trainees and new graduates in this process.

Design/methodology/approach – The methodology was to compare the problems faced by three major international hotel chains (Mövenpick, Kempinski, and Radisson) when expanding into emerging markets with those of a “base case”: The Moscow Aerostar Hotel. Data were obtained through interviews and processed in a comparative manner, contrasting it with the contents of the main case.

Findings – Having identified the common issues that the companies interviewed had to resolve when expanding, which skills educators in hospitality management should enhance in order to produce professionals who are mentally equipped to face current and future challenges with regards to the internationalisation of hotels were determined.

Practical implications – The recommendations arising from this piece will be of use to educators in hospitality management when designing programmes of study and curricula to meet the needs of the labour market. Equally, it will warn practitioners of the common problems to be faced when breaking into international hotel markets based on the experience of colleagues in the industry.

Originality/value – Both practitioners and educators in the hospitality domain will benefit from the synthesis offered in this paper, as it puts together convergent views on what currently worries major players in the field during this time of challenging, but unavoidable globalisation.

Keywords Hotel and catering industry, Hospitality management, Hospitality education, Globalization, Emerging markets

Paper type Research paper

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Research methods
Using a case study methodology, we have compared the problems faced by three international hotel chains: Mövenpick, Kempinski, and Radisson with those of a “base case”, the Moscow Aerostar Hotel, which is a joint venture, initiated in 1991, between Russia’s national airline, Aeroflot, and an aerospace multinational, the IMP Group Limited from Canada[1].

Once the common issues resolved by these companies were identified, we determined which skills educators in hospitality management should enhance in order to produce professionals mentally equipped to face the current and future challenges with regards to internationalisation of hotels. This paper will discuss these skills and suggest pedagogical techniques that can help teachers to reach this objective.

Discussion
As noted, we have taken as a basic case the opening of the Moscow Aerostar Hotel in Russia in 1991 as treated by Shea (1994). We chose this case because Moscow Aerostar is a good example of how a hospitality organization ignored (or at least underestimated) the importance and the power of local customs when operating abroad. Moscow Aerostar tried to “westernize” the Russian employees hoping to make them more “efficient”. They forgot that to produce change one must change first, or at least understand the other party’s point of view. Otherwise, many efforts will always be useless and the whole project could turn into a frustrating experience. Fortunately, as we will observe, other hotels have faced similar problems and have resolved them in a more effective way.

Case I. Moscow Aerostar – base case

The Moscow Aerostar is a joint venture between Aeroflot and an aerospace multinational IMP Group Ltd, from Canada. Ken Rowe, IMP’s Chairman and CEO decided in 1988 to transform an old building located in Moscow into a Western-style hotel. It boasted a restaurant offering full buffet breakfast, lunch, and dinner; a steak and seafood restaurant; a business office for guests complete with fax machine with satellite hookup, photocopiers and word processing services; a meeting room capable of accommodating 80 to 150 persons for meetings, press conferences or cocktail parties; a fitness room including sauna, rowing equipment, and universal gym; and a caviar and vodka bar, in addition to 417 well-appointed rooms. Room rates were 15 to 20 per cent lower than the competition. Restaurant prices were comparable to prices at similar hotel restaurants in the West (Shea, 1994)

Problem description. According to the interview conducted with IMP managerial staff by Shea (1994), the major issues to be dealt with by IMP when breaking into the Russian market were:

(1) Political instability. In 1991, Russia was just emerging from the communist regime. IMP Limited was the first western company trying to open a hotel in this situation. Negotiations with political players were a sine-qua-non condition for operating (Shea, 1994).

(2) Development of managerial talent. The communist philosophy, being reluctant to business initiatives, had promoted the development of an apathetic mentality with regards to managerial drive and decision-making skills and business travel (Shea, 1994).
(3) Inexperienced staff in the hotel business. As tourism had not been encouraged in the former Soviet Union, and because Russians had been unable to travel outside the communist borders, local staff were unaware of the basic requirements for operating in the service industry (e.g. there was no “smile and help” attitude, no telephone courtesy, no sensitivity to customer needs, etc.). Other issues linked to the same problem had to do with the complete ignorance about the hotel business. Candidates to be recruited ignored even which areas of the business they could be interested in (Shea, 1994).

(4) Absenteeism. No-shows at work just because of home commitments and doctors delivering unjustified medical certificates of absence were customary. People would often take 1-2 weeks off just to rest. There were complaints also on having to work too hard. Work would sometimes even be considered as an interference to private life.

(5) Infrastructure. Meetings and recruitment interviews were hard to schedule because most candidates did not have a telephone line (Shea, 1994).

(6) Lack of initiative and self direction. Russian employees were used to being told exactly what to do, and how and when to do it. They would prefer not to make decisions and to work under a somehow coercitive management style. Questions of memory and repetition (wine list, menus), however, were not a problem. Scenarios such as “what would you do in this unusual situation?”, though, would leave employees frozen in a state of shock (Shea, 1994).

(7) Communication problems. Direct questions such as “why should we hire you?” or “what good qualities do you have for our business?” were interpreted as rude. If not, the answers were unsatisfactory. For example, asking, “why would someone else be hired instead of you?” could lead to “because he is better suited for this job”. A question like “why you?” could lead to “because I am better suited for this job” (Shea, 1994).

(8) The issue of status. Many potential employees, when asked what they had done in their previous jobs, would simply give answers like “we had meetings, we discussed problems, issues, etc.”. Achieving, winning, being competitive or simply being concerned about self development did not seem to be top priorities in the agendas of the Russians. Being promoted to supervisory positions was not appealing to them. Russian employees would only go to supervisory training because their bosses had asked them to do so. Being promoted was interpreted as having to assume more work, but not necessarily as gaining more status. No pride was then associated to this fact (Shea, 1994).

(9) Communitarian issues. In Russia, it was customary not to bad references, even if an employee had been dismissed in bad terms. It was just not customary, so it became quite hard to evaluate future potential capacity (Shea, 1994).

(10) Physical appearance. Local uses of makeup and grooming were incompatible with the industry standards (Shea, 1994).

(11) Lack of social attitude. Little respect for table manners and etiquette (Shea, 1994).

(12) Disconformity with salaries. Russian employees would complain about their salaries even if their opportunity cost was very low (they could hardly find
comparable opportunities in the marketplace). Nevertheless, they would feel disappointed when comparing their income with that of their colleagues in headquarters, and also with the expected total income of the hotel (Shea, 1994).

(13) **Lack of interest in the hotel industry.** Russian employees would be very much more inclined to intellectual work rather than to manual work (Shea, 1994).

**Problem synthesis.** The problems previously explained as taking place between the Canadian headquarters and expatriates and the Russian population include infrastructural as well as cultural issues (Shea, 1994), and can be synthesized as follows:

(1) **Canadians are socialized to be more individualistic than Russians.** This difference explains the misunderstandings stated in points (1) and (9) of the previous section; namely the fact that in Russia children and family are of utmost importance, bragging is not accepted, reference checks are not the norm (Shea, 1994). Russians expect their company to determine compensation according to the company benefits (an equal distribution of these) rather than on labour market conditions. An anecdote that illustrates the Russian employees’ concern about what they consider to be a “fair distribution of wealth” includes the story of the employees from Aerostar Moscow being annoyed when they realised that the New Year’s celebration in the hotel was supposed to include only guests and not them (Shea, 1994).

(2) Russians are socialized to be more power-distant and ascribers. Canadians are socialized to be lower power-distant and achievers (as referred to in points (1), (2), (6), (8), (12) and (13) of the previous listing). This categorization explains the difficulties in boosting change, the necessity to negotiate with Governmental entities, the reluctance to assume responsibilities and the preference for clear and top-down indications (also linked to uncertainty avoidance). Also, the preference for intellectual rather than practical work, the lack of interest for promotions, and the disconformity with salaries while never asking for a better pay (they assumed that their payment should not be linked to purchasing power, but to profit, as stated before) (Shea, 1994).

(3) **Russians and Canadians communicate differently.** Russians seem to communicate more frankly, even if sometimes this could deem inappropriate in the hotel business (refer to point (3)). This frankness could sometimes reach the limits explained in point (7), which is an example of how little they care about diplomacy in their day-to-day exchanges with other people (Shea, 1994). This behaviour was also noticeable when they showed lack of social attitude (as detailed explained in point (11)). The conception of grooming (e.g. excessive use of makeup) was also different in both cultures (Shea, 1994).

(4) **Russians are uncertainty avoidant.** They were used to learning in a structured environment, so when asked to role-play, they were confused and did not benefit from that type of training. Supervisors told them to attend and this seemed to be the only reason for their presence (Shea, 1994).

(5) **Russians are synchronic and Canadians sequential.** Punctuality had to be stressed many times, schedules were hectic, and the time boundaries between leisure and work were unclear (Shea, 1994).
(6) **Infrastructure problems.** More concrete problems, for example, the precarity of the telephone system could also be considered as a barrier for development under these circumstances (Shea, 1994).

**Solutions found by the property.**

(1) **With regards to the gap due to individualism/collectivism.** The trainer explained that what the Russian employees did when entertaining guests at home, were exactly the same procedures they were expected by the hotel to follow with its guests, such as cleaning the house, buying some vodka, and wearing one’s good clothes. Issues such as disconformity with payment standards and compensation were not solved, however (Shea, 1994).

(2) **With regards to the gap due to power distance and ascription.** There was an emphasis put in payment for performance and the bonus in hard currency was given for attendance. Nevertheless, as the Russian culture rejects these methods, the problem remains the same. On the other hand, the property gave direct guidelines and at the same time taught different leadership styles during the training programme (Shea, 1994).

(3) **With regards to communication difficulties.** The property organized a “Smile and Help” Seminar, which consisted in teaching the five steps of how to meet a guest’s requests. Employees were also taught “telephone courtesy”, and how to apply makeup and grooming. An activity called “the broken telephone line game”, in which each participant whispered a predetermined message to the next person and the message became garbled by the time it reached the end of the line was also used as a training tool (Shea, 1994).

(4) **With regards to uncertainty avoidance.** The trainer encouraged employees to ask questions by explaining that when they said nothing, this demonstrated lack of interest. This issue of uncertainty avoidance lead to longer expatriate resident periods, staffing doubled the expected numbers (twice as much as in the west were necessary to perform the same amount of work), and 22 expatriates were finally required, instead of the ten initially planned (Shea, 1994).

(5) **Regarding the issue of the notion of time.** The trainer closed the doors at 9am sharp and anyone not in place on time was not allowed to entry (Shea, 1994).

(6) **Regarding to infrastructure.** This is an issue that the hotel could only solve through adaptation. Nothing else could improve these conditions (Shea, 1994).

**How to develop skills in our students that would make it easier for properties to solve these problems.** Firstly, the Moscow Aerostar management in headquarters seemed not to understand the local culture. They attempted to “westernize” the Russian employees. Some of the American practices could be taught if using for this methods that were compatible with the local mental programming (ex. use hierarchical power to impose punctuality, or give the example of receiving guests at home to explain the notion of service). These solutions worked very easily. Others, completely alien to the destination country, were rejected from the very beginning (e.g. the compensation scheme).
The example of Moscow Aerostar shows once more that a Corporate Culture cannot easily be imposed to a national culture. Assuming that training would easily change the mental programming of a group of people is wrong. How we understand reality is basically in our minds since childhood, so breaking into a new country and imposing one’s own point of view without expecting rejection on these points that oppose normal expected behaviour could be frustrating. Only practices introduced as compatible with the local manners were conceived as acceptable and were accepted.

Having said this, it is true that hospitality schools can help their students and future employees of companies (like Moscow Aerostar) develop certain skills, capacities and qualities that could help properties like Moscow Aerostar to develop abroad. For example:

- **Awareness of the importance of punctuality.** Some schools prefer to use a corrective system of discipline to be applied to latecomers. Teaching by example and explaining the value of punctuality could be another option.

- **Intercultural awareness.** Sensitivity to cultural differences can be enhanced through promoting day-to-day experiences with colleagues from different horizons, doing practical training in multi-cultural environments, changing location for studies and work, dealing with teachers, staff, and management from various nationalities, etc.

- **Initiative and managerial drive.** Leadership can be developed through case studies, practical exercises of mini-managerial experiences, etc.

The main problem faced in this case was the lack of communication between two parties. This was misunderstood by the Canadian team as bad attitude, eternal disconformity, or even incapacity to get through the obvious, whereas the Russians would just behave like Russians. Unless, the Canadians would understand this and adapt their practices to the uses and conduct of the local culture, they would keep on wasting resources in overstaffing and expatriate salaries.

Reciprocally, the Russians, with their lack of intercultural awareness, would make it hard for the North Americans to get a profitable operation up and running.

**Case II. The opening of Kempinski in Vietnam**

Founded in Germany over a hundred years ago, Kempinski Hotels & Resorts have long reflected the finest traditions of European hospitality. Today, as ever, they represent the highest standards wherever they are found. Located in many of the world’s most well known cities and resorts, the Kempinski collection includes hotels in the grand manner, pace-setting modern establishments and older hotels of individual charm. All blend gracefully into their surroundings and offer luxurious accommodation, superb cuisine and unrivalled facilities – complemented by impeccable service. For leisure and business guests alike, the name Kempinski has long been synonymous with style, nobility and efficiency[2].

**Problems faced.** The major challenge when starting operations abroad was an unavoidable level of uncertainty in many areas. Issues to be considered were:

1. **Legal issues.** Dealing with paperwork was a burden. Legal barriers to overcome included company registrations, licences (e.g. liquor licence, etc.), tax and accounting issues, labour laws and regulations (e.g. work permits, staff housing, unions, etc.).
(2) Cultural differences. Personnel dealings among international staff was hard, in particular when working with experts, but also when having to deal with local customs, traditions and expectations, when interacting with local business people (e.g. negotiating with local suppliers), and when adapting to local customer’s needs and tastes (e.g. for patronage of your restaurants).

(3) Political issues. Lobbying and dealing with local decision makers implied major challenges.

Problem synthesis. The most challenging issues had to do with infrastructure, which normally were solved either through a good contact with the local authorities whenever it was possible to get a local partner, or otherwise through licencing. Good negotiating capacities were useful, as well as excellent contacts with key players in the local business landscape.

The cultural factor influenced business once again. Dealing with expatriates, local customs, traditions and expectations, local business behaviour, local customer’s needs and tastes, was a key success factor.

Solutions found by the property. Kempinski invested efforts into the preparation of a business plan before the investment. This included research on cultural issues to be eventually faced once they arrived to the market destination.

This company also hired locally, as many line-staff and management as possible, even if sometimes local educational level made selection quite difficult. New employees were often sent to cross-training sessions to other hotels of the company.

The use of local lawyers, consultants/auditors, bankers,, etc. helped to cope with many political as well as infrastructural problems. Local professionals have connections with important entities in general and know the common practices. They know how operations take place there.

Key executives, especially GM and DOSM arrived quite early, so that they could “melt” into the local market. Also, the timely arrival of foreign staff/expats was crucial in order to facilitate acquaintance with the local customs, expectations, etc.

The selection of open-minded staff (culturally sensitive), even at the expense of better suited (trained or experienced) was a good solution.

Finally, the involvement of local opinion makers in the whole process, and making sure that they were on the property’s side was an idea that worked well.

How to develop skills in our students that would make it easier for properties to solve these problems. The most important skills required to solve these problems as identified by Kempinski are:

- human resources skills that would allow careful selection of key staff with ties to the local population;
- flexible, open-minded staff; and
- knowledge on how to prepare a business plan which includes cross-cultural factors.

These skills can be developed by lecturers in hospitality management in different ways:

- through cross-cultural exposure. For example, by requiring and offering work placements in two different countries or cultures;
by enhancing and promoting cultural exchanges wherever and whenever is possible;
by offering courses in languages, intercultural studies, etc.
by teaching how to research and prepare for posting abroad; and
by showing methods on how to find the necessary information in order to prepare a proper business plan, taking into consideration local aspects.

Case III. The opening of Radisson SAS in Equador

Radisson SAS in Equador belongs to the SIH Group that operates globally as a hospitality management company. Their business concept is to manage brands, people and properties in order to deliver superior value to guests and property owners. Their vision is to become one of Europe’s leading hospitality management companies, with a focused collection of leading brands in world-wide operations. Their ultimate goal is to operate an optimized set of own brands, jointly owned brands (such as Malmaison), and franchised brands (such as Radisson). The main financial goal is to grow at least 20 per cent annually[3].

We will study in particular the case of the Radisson SAS opening in Equador, which was a franchise.

Problems faced. The major problem detected by the management of Radisson was recruitment of people with service-minded attitude, including positive disposition, willingness to help, and easy-going personalities.

In the particular case of Equador, where there are no hospitality management schools, quality human resources are rare. From the technical point of view, as well as from the relational side, people able and willing to work properly are missing. Employees in general show difficulties in keeping the pace in periods of high stress and pressure. Punctuality is also an issue. It is even frequent to see staff arrive late and even sometimes in state of drunkenness.

There is no passion for service and the industry, as a whole is perceived of an employer for unqualified and low status manpower. There is little pride linked to working in hotels.

Problem synthesis. Service and technical skills, as well as attitude and capacity to work under pressure are important issues.

Solutions found by the property. Radisson SAS recruits as many natives as possible at all levels, they try not to disturb ways of operating by imposing corporate culture on local culture. They do what they can to contribute to local development. They expand mainly through franchising, so the owners of the hotels are local. They take care of the regional recruitment and regional teaching skills.

They also organize international exchanges for employees having worked for the company for more than 18 months.

Radisson SAS organizes on the job training (especially in food and beverage), also they have an attitude programme called “yes, I can”, classroom lectures on supervisory skills, they have also an internal Management School organized in cooperation with Oxford Brooks, EH Lausanne, and Cornell University.

In order to improve attitude, Radisson managers promote “teaching with feeling”. This is the best way they have found to transmit passion for the industry and willingness to perform. Communication is based on praise and recognition on day-to-day details (pat on the shoulder, organization of little birthday parties for
personnel, etc.). It is also taught that screaming is not the best way to convey messages. Managers who shout are those who have failed in all other ways of transmitting messages.

*How to develop skills in our students that would make it easier for properties to solve these problems.* As basic skills differ from property to property, and as these skills can be easily trained in the short run, hospitality programmes should not put an emphasis on teaching operational basics, but on attitude, on transmitting passion for the industry, and on teaching managerial skills that should allow the trainees to progress in their career in the long run.

Successful managers have frequently been coached by lecturers that had a good idea of the practise as well as a solid academic background. This allows them into think during their career proactively, and by themselves.

Responsibility and attitude, contact with reality through in-training and with teachers with experience in the field are key. Schools are being expected to develop a sense of responsibility and an idea that success depends mostly on customer satisfaction and that this role should be assumed by everyone in the hierarchy. Respect for those exerting more manual jobs should also be underlined, because in elitist societies certain disregard towards co-workers from areas such as housekeeping and room service cause demotivation.

Radisson SAS has chosen a practical solution for its international expansion, which is franchising. This way, even if coordination and standards are more difficult to ensure than through central ownership, the intercultural problems seem to be much more in hand and easier to cope with.

Nevertheless, franchising as an option, offers different disadvantages, such as dealing with operators (owners) and their willingness to participate in Decision making, ensuring a worldwide standard of service and general quality, risk of damaging reputation if one of the local owners proceeds wrongly, barriers for change coming from local owners, etc.

*Case IV. The opening of Mövenpick in Lebanon*
Mövenpick – as opposed to Radisson SAS in Equador, owns the hotel that it opened in Lebanon.

The Mövenpick Hotel & Resort in Beirut creates a relaxed atmosphere of true luxury and incomparable hospitality. It is the only hotel with a private bay, 140-berth marina and an exclusive beach. Situated right by the Mediterranean Sea, between the Ramlet Al Bayda bay and the Raouche rock, the resort is only a short distance away from the bustling Beirut Central District and elegant Verdun shopping area[4].

*Problems faced.* One major problem for management of Mövenpick in the Middle East seems to have been the timing. A “one man show” in which the GM gets to the destination property in the middle of nowhere and has to make thousands of decisions at the beginning. Then, the whole scenario becomes even more complicated when the team starts growing and speed starts picking up.

Training and production needed to be performed at the same time and this was a particularly hard issue to manage. The GM arrived and had to select a close assistant, after what he had to hire some single expatriates (budget requirements) and immediately start operating.
Staffing was also a problem. In the Middle-East networks are key. Most employees are recruited because of their family links or acquaintances. Then, the key players have to be sourced carefully and if possible from different nationalities, in order to avoid the constitution of ethnic clusters (the “Chinese group”, “the Indian group”, etc.). Impersonal recruitment does not seem to be a good solution, because trust and personal feelings seem to be the basis of any business. Then, the problem becomes how to hire people you trust, and you know, but without having them constitute different internal “mafias”.

Teamwork constitution and its ensuring its smooth functioning was another challenge. Communication problems, no oneness due to some groupings and therefore lack of motivation, lack of cooperation, lack of sense of responsibility in some areas, mutual blaming and other issues of defective interaction would make the situation very challenging.

The short hiring, selection, opening and preparation, training and forming of a cohesive team where at least three key departments heads were replaced during the opening phase were the main source of the above problems encountered.

Tools and equipment were also less abundant, especially in the back of the house, than they should have been.

Problem synthesis. Centralized leadership and team coordination seemed to be major issues. Lebanon was a new country for the Swiss chain, where the Lebanese way of doing business needs to be clearly channeled by clear rules and personnel policies and where top-down management is seen as the preferred style.

Standards and policies are very well defined in the Mövenpick manuals and extremely detailed. Unfortunately almost all staff had to be locally hired and had no previous Mövenpick experience and therefore the transfer and implementation of the standards and policies require more than a few months to implement, especially in a society which is rather relaxed when it comes to rules and regulations.

Solutions found by the property. Mövenpick in Lebanon hires employees from as many different horizons as possible, in order to avoid this different internal groupings, that could have negative consequences from the operational point of view.

Each employee has to deal during the recruitment process with both the GM and the HRM at least. This is in order to test attitude from a more objective (or at least intersubjective) point of view. This means that having two people to evaluate the potential of a candidate is more likely to lead to a better hiring decision than if only one manager was assuming the responsibility for all the interviews. In Lebanon, and in the Middle East in general, whom you know is more important that what you know, and this often results in unwanted favouritism.

With regards to the issues of training, leadership, and general structure, the line of commandment was strongly reinforced through different initiatives. Some examples included:

- Putting together operational materials, standard manuals and filing systems.
- Conducting training courses on: teamwork, team building (supervisory and managerial level), team meetings, staff gathering and through organizing social activities.
- Conducting staff evaluations, staff surveys, and applying awards systems (employee of the month, employee of the year, honesty award, etc.).
• Delegating tasks to all team members followed by proper evaluation to check whether the tasks have been fulfilled or not and investigate reasons of failure and taking the proper action plan to improve quality of performance.

• Changing formal leaders in some situations (unqualified managers).

• Giving direct feedback and comments from supervisors.

• Providing handouts with job descriptions according to the company standards and the hotel operation needs, distributing all related policies and procedures, making sure that operational standards manuals are available and accessible to the concerned staff, and collaborators.

• Sharing and discussing customer complaints, applying and keeping a complaints record system, conducting brainstorming meetings to solve the problems occurred and finding out solutions.

• Organizing brainstorming sessions within each department and within the executive committee.

• Making sure to have all tools needed to operate and facilitate the job for better performance, smooth operation, and guest satisfaction.

• Asking for staff suggestions to improve quality of product and service.

• Setting clear and “smart” objectives and starting to work accordingly.

• Conducting Quality Assurance Audit on regular basis in order to achieve the hotel and company mission.

• Asking for guest comments/feedback to adjust and improve quality of product and service.

It was not hard to overcome most of barriers and troubles faced at the beginning, due to the fact that most of the management team members were fully aware of the problems and their sources, which in fact helped them very much to accomplish their targets, to increase and improve customer satisfaction.

*How to develop skills in our students that would make it easier for properties to solve these problems.* The basic requirements seem to be flexibility, and openness. In the Middle East plans change, the whole situation can change any minute. Then, making long-term plans (like business plans) seems to be a bad idea. Relationships are stable in time, and therefore, managers should develop them, trust them and keep them.

In these situations of uncertainty and frequent states of extreme alert (one never knows when the next earthquake or change of political regime or change of economic conditions will take place), top-down, unilateral management is demanded and required. Therefore, in this situation it is necessary to be able to count on people who are able to react quickly to unexpected events, but also who are willing to submit to a central line of command, who would give clear directives on what to do in these particular situations.

An expatriate dealing with cultures that are power distant must know that employees expect them to tell them what to do clearly and directly. A manager who is unable to do so is inevitably going to be considered as weak and respect will be lost. Teams are unable to act independently and without explicit guidelines.

So on one side, hospitality teachers should prepare students to be creative enough to be adaptable, and also we should show them how to think on their own and make
decisions based on their own analysis of each situation. On the other hand, we need our students to be humble enough to accept that in some cultures centralized direction is the quickest way to ensure fast reactions in a continuously changing environment.

Our students should then be at the same time flexible, creative and autonomous, but also eager to report to a hierarchy which should rapidly indicate the right way to go in a sometimes hectic and unstable general situation.

Hospitality institutions could then play a key role as network makers (students meeting new “useful friends” for their careers). In the Middle East, one only does business with partners with whom a relationship was established.

Enthusiasm, initiative and quick smart short-term solving attitudes and adaptation are to be underlined.

Capacity to deal with other cultures, delegation of problem-solving situations, and hard work seem to be the key skills to be developed by educators.

**Conclusion**

We see that the requirements for success in different countries vary because competitive advantages to be developed vary both depending on the corporate vision, and strategies, but also on the uses of the destination market. Mövenpick broke into the Middle East with a strategy that is the absolute opposite to the one of Moscow Aerostar, where the planning and the operations were designed in headquarters and imposed downwards to the rest of the world regardless cultural specificities, and even to the one of Kempinski, that decided to go for “glocalisation” (think global, act local).

Movenpick in the Middle East seems to be playing incredibly local. Being extremely flexible and using as a base the local way of operations relying on relationships and short-run solutions to day-to-day problems. They need students that are autonomous decision-makers, quick to react, that have networks, that can communicate with colleagues from other cultures that are flexible and adaptable. They must be more focused on problem-solving than in planning.

Kempinski and Radisson SAS, on the other hand, need people able to understand the central strategy and apply it locally. They focus on the international standards of professional attitude and the management knowledge which is key for future development. Even if an impeccable attitude and passion for the service industry are signaled as key, adaptations to local cultures would be taken over by the local management of each hotel. Headquarters would need interlocutors that understand their operational philosophy, but at the same time can act like locals.

As a synthesis, the qualities required by all properties participating in the study were:

- open mindness;
- cultural awareness;
- planning and adaptational capacities;
- managerial skills;
- quick capacity of reaction when facing new problems;
- service attitude; and
- team playing skills.
The role of hospitality management schools as shapers of future managers able to deal with the challenges of going international, should include: constituting groups of different nationalities among their staff and student population, organizing exchanges with other schools in different countries, planning in-training periods in more than one region, focusing on professional attitude either through example or through any other more corrective methods, and organizing team-building activities and academic exercises.

According to the research analysed in this paper, these are the leading paths to a more market-oriented type of professional education in hospitality management.

Notes
1. All data regarding Moscow Aerostar, was taken from Shea (1994).
4. www.asiatravel.com/lebanon/beirut/movenpick

Reference

Further reading

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